



Shangyu Tales, from the Debris series, 2017

Polish ceramist

# MONIKA PATUSZYNSKA

BY JAMES CLARK

**D**uring my forty-year career as a ceramic artist, curator and administrator, it is safe to say I never met anyone who even remotely works like Monika Patuszynska. Her porcelain sculptures assume almost otherworldly forms of mysterious origin. They could be micro-organisms magnified millions of times, or particles fallen from a comet's tail. At any rate, they often bear little resemblance to the industrial products once produced from the same moulds.

Patuszynska achieves these unique results by smashing, cutting or recycling ceramic moulds and assembling the broken elements to create an entirely different form. She is often unaware what the resulting form will look like and embraces the spontaneity and serendipity of the process. As she puts it, "I like to let accidents lead me. I like accidents, feeling that they occur when the world turns a blind eye, loosens vigilance and reveals the truth about itself."

Her long journey to this unique process has its roots in Monika's education in ceramics. "In Poland," she explains, "we learn art and industrial design along side one another. One day would be devoted to art, the next design."

As could be expected, employment was easier to find as a designer and Monika embarked on a design career that has run parallel to her artistic career. She was successful and won several awards for her conceptions. The work was slipcast and the resulting product was pristine in form and execution.

Over time however, Monika grew weary of the perfectionism of industrial ceramics and turned her fascination toward the imperfections of the process. She found herself drawn to the casting lines that form in the seams between the mould sections. Rather than sanding away these protrusions as was usually the case, she began to enlarge and elongate them by purposely using old and worn mould elements and loosening the bonds that held them together.

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Philadelphian Chronicle of Kindness, from the series TransForms Plus, 2013





Operacja Ksiaz, from the series Bastards and Orphans, 2012

From there she began to experiment with casting in myriad and sometimes almost amusing ways. She would place paper pulp or breakfast cereal in the moulds and cast around them. After the burn off of the organic elements in the firing the results were intriguing honeycombed structures. She employed cardboard moulds intended for cement casting and began to construct once-use moulds with sheets of cardboard.

Nevertheless, her most important innovation was the assembly of a new mould from fragments of diverse moulds that she binds together. This technique remains the core of her current work.

After completing her education, Patuszynska took advantage of a one-month residency in the Ksiaz porcelain factory in Walbrzych. She was thrilled with the huge tunnel kilns and the endless supply of casting slip. The residency was critical in her development as an artist. She visited the now closed and deteriorating factory ten years later and was fascinated by the slow but steady process of nature reclaiming the land. She discovered moulds altered by age and water damage and decided to cast in the moulds marking nature's reconquest of man's intrusions.

Working with Marta Gliwiska and Lukasz Jamroz from the collective Lurid Lord, Monika has made a video of the project "Bastards and Orphans" that

records her working in the dilapidated factory. It is spooky watching her rattling around alone in this gigantic structure once the scene of intense activity, now eerily still. Every sound she makes, reverberates around the cavernous space. It captures a moment in time, caught between the demise of the industrial age and the resurgence of nature.

Patuszynska became impassioned with this theme particularly as it related to her own life. She followed it with visits to shuttered factories: The Royal Boch in Belgium and Spode in Stoke on Trent in the U.K. Each site shared a similar history but was also distinct in its own way. A layer of coal dust permeated every surface of Spode, as that was how they fired there. Monika cast into the coal dust achieving another effect particular to that location.

Although she maintains a studio in Warsaw she finds great stimulation in artist residencies throughout the world, including Bali, several in China and the US. She has worked all over Europe including Spain, Austria, Italy, Hungary and Great Britain

In 2008 she assumed responsibility for the Walbrzych International Ceramic Symposium Porcelain Another Way, taking over from Anna Zamorska, her long-time mentor and dear friend. There can be no doubt that Monika's approach to porcelain is "another way"

Throughout her career Monika Patuszynska has pushed the physical and aesthetic limitations of porcelain. She continues to pursue new possibilities and welcomes the unique challenge each opportunity presents.

She sums up her never ending artistic pursuit thus:

*"Slip casting*

*Chasing accidents*

*Always checking what is through the looking glass"*

**JAMES CLARK**

*is an internationally renowned ceramist. He lives and works in Philadelphia, USA.*

Bernese stories, TransForms Plus, 2016 photo - Olga Grabiwoda



**Monika Patuszynska** born: 1973, Warsaw, Poland, 1993-1994 Den Danske Husflidshojkole, Kerteminde, Denmark, 1994-1999 Academy of Fine Arts (Department of Ceramics), Wroclaw, Poland, 1999 graduated from Academy of Fine Arts, Master's Degree, 2014-2015 SWPS, Design: History and Criticism, 2001 designer at ZPtS Pruszkow, Poland, 2008-13 president of the International Ceramics Symposium "Porcelain Another Way", Walbrzych, Poland, 2014-16 Artistic Director, Institute of Design, Kielce, Poland, since 2014 lecturer at School of Form, Poznan, Poland, 2002 set up own ceramic studio, Milanówek, since 2009 member of International Academy of Ceramics (AIC/AC), Geneva, Switzerland. She lives and works in Warsaw and many other locations all over the world.

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