



object factory



the art of industrial ceramics



O B J E C T F A C T O R Y

The Art of Industrial Ceramics

May 15th - September 7th 2008

Curated by Marek Cecula with Dagmara Kopala

Gardiner Museum Toronto



The exhibition 'OBJECT FACTORY' is an international survey of contemporary ceramic products, designs and art. This exhibition is the first major museum exhibition devoted to state-of-the-art industrial ceramic production and that industry's impact on craft, art and design. In addition to contemporary designs produced by leading ceramic manufacturers, the exhibition presents a substantial body of work made by artists and designers who work outside the industrial complex but are still linked to the ceramic industry.

The exhibition is composed of six interrelated sections that are intimately connected through a rich assemblage of objects and vessels representing one material with diverse interpretations. The first section explores the unique cooperation that exists between manufacturers, artists and designers, and shows how inventive dialogue among them can enhance industrial production and generate new attitudes toward design and the creative interpretation of industrial forms. Some examples of the relationships between industry, art and design illustrated in this section include:

- The Rosenthal factory retains the eminent designer Konstantin Grcic to create objects for mass-production while the Nymphenburg manufacture works with artists/designers like Ted Muehling and Hella Jongerius to create precious handcrafted products.
- Sevres factory collaborates with famed international artists Anman and Ettore Sottsass to produce exceptional porcelain works of art.
- Royal Tichelaar Makkum from Holland, which first produced ceramics for Droog Design, is now working with and promoting many young Dutch designers.
- Hakusan produces a diverse range of works by two renowned Japanese ceramic designers, Masahiro Mori and Tomita Kazuhiko.

The section also includes the work of independent designers like Pieter Stockmans and Jurgen Bay, who utilize industrial processes in their ceramic studios, and small design companies such as Tonfisk Design from Finland and Atelier Orange Design from Canada, which produce limited runs of innovative objects.

The two sections dedicated to form and image manipulation offer the most extreme departure from conventional clay operations by showcasing mass-produced industrial objects undergoing radical transformations. For example, a special project by the French group 5.5 Designers implements 'creative disturbances' on the production line of Bernardaud's porcelain factory. These creative disturbances introduce variations in form and decoration that sabotage the conformative values of traditional industrial practice. The Italian design group, Industreal, also adapts production methods to manipulate expectations about ceramic forms and functions. One of their products, designed by Ionna Vautrin and Guillaume Delvigne, is a porcelain bowl with 1,800 equally spaced holes that is sold 'undressed' with an embroidery kit of your choice.

A smaller section on ceramic lights demonstrates the creativity, adaptation and innovation that is occurring in the use of ceramic materials. Most light designs form encasements for a light bulb, but Ingo Maurer in his famous chandelier "Porca Miseria" uses broken white porcelain and cutlery around the light source to create a snapshot of an explosion.

The section devoted to advances in ceramic technology illustrates some of the newest developments in ceramic high-fire materials, such as zirconium and corundum. Developed initially for high-tech industry, these advanced materials are spreading into consumer products and changing popular expectations about what ceramics are. Kyocera, a Japanese technology company, produces extremely sharp knives and scissors from a dense ceramic material that is revolutionizing these traditional kitchen products. Research continues on the potential to use new ceramic materials for architecture and interior structures. David Binns and Alasdair Brammer from the University of Central Lancashire (UK) lead the field by challenging the traditional limitations of clay and investigating the creative and aesthetic possibilities of industrial refractory concrete. Rapid prototyping replaces hand-carved models, yielding considerable economic gain and precision in unimagined detail.

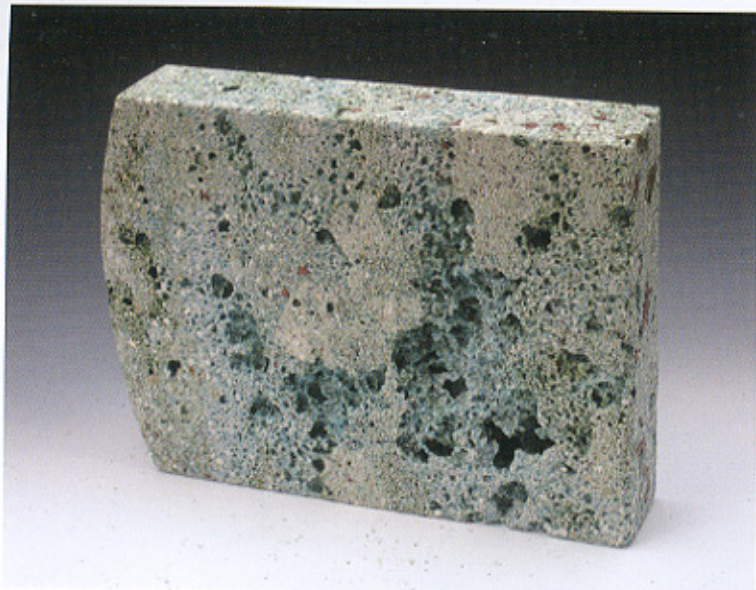
Tavs Jorgensen explores the characteristics and aesthetics of computer-driven prototyping known as LDM (laminated object manufacturing), while Anthony Quinn's "Pierced Collection" pieces begin as 3D prints and end as traditionally hand-pierced clay forms. Designers have also become alerted to the potential of these new technologies and are taking advantage of the aesthetic qualities they can impart. Several Israeli design groups are among the front-runners in adapting many of these innovations to our domestic environment. Ami Drech and Dov Ganchow's "+/-" Hot Plate, for example, uses the conductive properties of silk-screened "amorphous metal" film printed as decoration on a dinner plate with a small battery underneath to keep the food warm.

Evidence of these new directions in ceramics, culled from scattered fragments, demands recognition and credit. Only by juxtaposing these different elements can we fully appreciate the creative progress of contemporary ceramics.

With its exceptional collection of historical and modern ceramics, the Gardiner Museum is the appropriate venue to bring public attention to these developments and to add a new chapter to the history of industrial ceramics.

While this curatorial effort has been equally a joy and a challenge, it has allowed me the unique opportunity to gain fresh insights into the interplay between creators and makers, and to appreciate how artistic innovations in ceramics are a catalyst for larger economic and cultural developments.

Marek Cecula - Curator of the exhibition



DAVID BINNS & ALASDAIR BREMNER (UK)

'TABLEWARE FOSSIL CAST FORM' 2007

Recycled Glass, Ceramic Aggregates & Bone China
Tableware / Kiln Cast. Post Firing Grinding & Polishing
60 x 60 x 5 cm



DAVID BINNS (UK)

'TEXTURED CAST FORM' 2006

Ceramics Aggregates & Glass-forming Materials
Kiln Cast. Post Firing Grinding & Polishing
40 x 31 x 8 cm

DAVID BINNS (UK)

'SQUARE PIERCED FORM' 2006

Ceramics Aggregates & Glass-forming Materials
Kiln Cast. Post Firing Grinding & Polishing
41 x 41 x 4 cm

Statement

The basis for the work shown here is the product of two independent research projects undertaken within the Silicates Research Unit at the University of Central Lancashire (UK).

Binns' project stems from investigating additions of aggregate materials to clay bodies; the aim being to enrich the clay's visual and textural properties. A desire to amplify the visual drama of the conglomerate material led to the inclusion of more reactive materials, including commercial frit (crushed virgin glass).

Bremner's project has been conducted as part of a PhD that investigates the creative potential of industrial refractory concrete, harnessing the properties of the material to challenge the traditional limitations of clay.

Both projects aimed to push technical boundaries, uniting craft with industrial processes and materials and the development of products within an architectural context.

Recognising that both projects involved the use of silicate-based materials led to combining the functional and aesthetic properties of silicate-bearing materials in unorthodox combinations. The intention behind these combinations is to challenge existing narratives of surface, form and material, thereby extending the visual vocabulary of silicates, ceramics, glass and concretes.

Currently we are further extending the repertoire of materials and visual qualities through the inclusion of recycled waste materials.

David Binns + Alasdair Bremner

ALASDAIR BREMNER (UK)

'CONCRETE PEEL' 2006

Refractory Concrete / Large format open cast form in refractory concrete with incised glaze
86 x 82 x 0.5 cm

