

NEW CERAMICS

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Future LIGHTS in CERAMICS

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Karolina Bednorz, espresso cup and saucer "Tri-Angle Mini" photo - Giulio Camilletti



Karolina Bednorz, multifunctional modular vessel "Aloe" photo - Bridgette Chan



Monika Müller, bottle, Veins - photo Monika Müller



Wendy Ward, from the Lace Droplet Collection, slip-cast porcelain photo - Glenn Norwood

In November 2016, the Future Lights in Ceramics contest was held in the village of Fiskars, Finland, organised with EU funding under the auspices of the project "Ceramics and Its Dimensions". It was an opportunity to discover 18 shortlisted specialists in the field of ceramics at the start of their careers. The results of this event was on display in February 2017, after the six winners had participated in a workshop at the Meissen Porcelain Manufactory. Then they presented their works at the Ambiente consumer goods trade fair in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. At this time the young talents had received their most important gift – a chance to present their works and get feedback from the jury, comprising major figures in European porcelain.

This was the second outing for the competition, and this time its theme was

"Traditions and Innovations". Whether it is ceramics or another material-specific field, applied art is a vivid representative of "tradition." Over the centuries, fields such as ceramics have developed so closely with society, culture and the environment that it is impossible to think about ceramics without minding the people, society, location and culture in addition to the physical properties of the material itself, means of artistic expression or production. However, the competition also sought to uncover how this traditional aspect is manifested under today's conditions and industrial situation.

Although the theme of the competition imposed the structure of thinking and acting within the bounds of tradition, tradition emerged in some interesting forms and with interesting starting points and

results. One artist invokes her artistic family history, with memories of her father's sculpture workshop carried like a torch by the daughter in her creative practice, working on utilitarian objects with a distinctly individualistic sculptural component. Another artist appreciates the classic values of porcelain and its creation. Yet another uses regional materials in creative work set in urban or natural settings, with the combinations or arrangements of colours serving as a raw material for the material's graphic and formal solutions, utilising special technologies to expand the possibilities of handwork with graphics software, digital engraving and industrial production. Contemporary technologies are employed at a specific stage of the work to gain a particular result or achieve specific effect.

On the issue of the production of works,

there was an interesting contrast between the message heard in the competition regarding the relationship between the applicants' creativity and the industrial establishment with the traditional experience of former communist states. On the other hand, in the former USSR and Warsaw Pact countries, factory artists had a lower status than fine artists, thus discouraging people from entering production. The Russian representative also mentioned his father's specific experience in the second half of the 20th century, which it is tempting to move away from to return to the manufactory's roots. On the other hand, the competition participants frequently mentioned their desire to gain factory experience and produce their objects as a means of having their work reach a wider audience, since by purchasing and using designed objects people pay a great compliment to their authors. Several artists superbly combined the industrial aspect with a unique, individual touch, the energy which is one of the cornerstones of ceramics. Furthermore, they used this industrial+unique approach to model new scenarios for tomorrow's society to possibly impact on its habits and values.

Respective of how interesting the creative work is, as in all competitions an important role was played by the presentation and its ability to answer the focal

points of the theme i.e. to convincingly demonstrate that the applicant is not only a young specialist whose career would benefit from the support offered by the competition but also a person whose activities will inform a wider audience about ceramics and its possibilities and relevance in the contemporary situation. The evaluating panel, comprising both people with a practical desire to discover interesting concepts and possibly acquire production-worthy objects as well as persons viewing ceramics in aesthetic and spiritual categories, created an atmosphere conducive to intense, fruitful discussions.

The 2017 competition was announced, and its theme is: "Diversity – of materials, people, methods, approaches and cultures". In my opinion, the fact that the themes change from year to year is wonderful.

These days, creative personalities must promote themselves, while institutions, organisations and environments are pressured to maintain the status quo, leading to a lack of analysis or criticism within the given field. Conversely, the theme is a prism through which important processes in the field of ceramics can be drawn together, transcending the boundaries of categories such as art, industry, craftsmanship, design, business, history, research, ideas, concepts etc. With the passage of time, today's "competition theme" will become a description of a trend, while the winners will be authors embodying this tendency.

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Maria Juchnowska, set of vessels, Useful Unique - photo - Maria Juchnowska



Sabrina Vasulka, Mandala Set - photo - Nahuel Hernandez



Karolina Bednorz, Wendy Ward, Monika Müller, Sabrina Vasulka, Rhianon Ewing-James, Maria Joanna Juchnowska – the Future Lights in Ceramics 2017/2018 with Stefan Weber, head of the board of Staatliche Porzellan-Manufaktur Meissen GmbH and Wilhelm Siemen, director Porzellanikon – Staatliches Museum für Porzellan in Hohenberg a. d. Eger / Selb and leader of the EU-project "Ceramics and its Dimensions". photos © Porzellanikon

