

The Particulate of Molis

BY BRIAN BENFER

There is a seriousness and sensitivity at play in Ieva Bertašiute-Grosbaha's ceramic work – it exists as beautiful objects, delicate and fragile, often times translucent in places. You can appreciate them for what they are – the simplicity of the forms, complimented by the patterns, provoking a type of visual meditation. Constructed via small, flattened balls of clay, the true tactility in this work is evident as these impressions are essentially those of her fingerprints. While the technique of creating the work references delicate flower petals or intricate scales from some reptilian entity, the notion of the fingerprint and this process of fabrication expose more methodical and serious concerns.

The works also reference various aspects of mathematical sequences: a hybrid of art and the structure of nature if you will, coexisting with the lyrical feeling of the work. Transitioning from the vessel, the initial sculptural pieces that utilized this process paralleled seedpods, dead and decaying branches and trunk-like appendages – all indications of her interest in the natural world and her conscious reference to such. This makes sense, being that she has a background and interest in biology, her awareness of the parts that make up the whole is physically conveyed by her technique. The more literal translation to nature happened while exploring porcelain at the International Ceramic Art and Research Center in Guldagergaard, Denmark. There, Bertašiute-Grosbaha created a series of objects embodying this, titled *Evolution*. This work takes us down a path that questions not only her personal development and growth, but also our own relationship to larger questions of existence and our role on the planet – revisiting the notion of the smaller elements combining to create larger entities.

In *Gutter* (2009), Bertašiute-Grosbaha intentionally engages in a slightly different conversation by introducing a delicate, fragile object into a space that is both hostile and volatile to it. Essentially creating what is the equivalent of a rain gutter, she installed the piece while working as a resident in Aizpute, Latvia at the artist residency Serde. Emphasizing its presence with cobalt pigment, what seems more interesting than



"Gutter", work made during the artist residency ArtSpot Serde in artists residency place Serde (Aizpute, Latvia), length 165 cm, high-fired stoneware, cobalt, 2010



"Evolution", group of objects, various dimensions, high-fired porcelain and stoneware, 2009



"Clay Royal", installation view, Roja Museum (Roja, Latvia), video, objects, 2012

the ironic juxtaposition is the conversation regarding green building, renewable energy and sustainable product design. Bertašiute-Grosbaha's implementation of historical aspects of ceramics (the relationship to architectural facades, roof tiles, and even ceramic sewer pipes), both in regards to the installation and the larger ecological concerns, could not have been more poignant in discussing the environment and our current battle for sustainable living.

With an obvious affinity for clay and an advanced technical proficiency with the material, Bertašiute-Grosbaha has an interest that goes beyond traditional processes and techniques. Her curiosity for interdisciplinary approaches and currently a part of the PhD programme at the Vilnius Art Academy in Lithuania, she has explored various aspects of the process that speak a language foreign to traditional makers. Utilizing video projections and vitrines with ceramic materials, she discusses more the uncertainty of life and material and its journey through a different perspective.

As an expression of the multifaceted material qualities clay possesses, the installations titled *The States of Clay* as well as *Clay Rojal* delve into a range of work that seems more at home in a science lab than an art gallery. These series of what appear as "experiments" show the potential, as well as the intimate side of a material that is seldom on view for the public. Those of us dealing with the material on a daily basis often find happy accidents, and through our intimacy with the substance, can appreciate the various states and physical qualities it possesses while the layperson is disconnected from this process and typically finds they are left with only the experience of viewing the end product.

Using scientific beakers, glass vitrines and video documentation, Bertašiute-Grosbaha brings to the viewer a look into a process that is both unfamiliar and foreign to most. The natural, unseen fea-

tures and characteristics that create temporary, inimitable figures are, in a way, her rebelling against what is both our perception of the discipline and the traditional permanence of the material. The notion of exploring these processes in public is interesting in many respects, yet what one might find the most compelling is the constant state of flux the material finds itself in.

It changes, it breathes, and takes on various formats. To revisit it numerous times throughout the course of the exhibition you see this transformation unfold. And while *States of Clay* is most likely a reference to the timing and physical material composition, one could also see its translation into the psychological reference of oneself and their journey through the world (i.e. state of mind).

Bertašiute-Grosbaha's most recent work revisits her process and technique of construction via small balls of clay. The work again exists within the realm of the vessel yet she has moved into utilizing a range of roughly a dozen shades of pigment to create objects that incorporate pixelated imagery. They are self-portraits, both literally as well as figuratively, and her reference to them as "finger-printing" carries with it the duality of her actual fingerprint as per the technique parlayed with the imagery of herself. This new series has the potential to provide yet another direction with the work, and having most recently been nominated for the prestigious Martinsons Award at the International Ceramic Biennale in Daugavpils, Latvia this past summer, inevitably Bertašiute-Grosbaha has established some momentum with her practice.

BRIAN BENFER

is an artist with an MFA in Visual Arts from Rutgers University.

He currently lives and works in Southern California (USA).

brianbenfer.com



"Seven white suns in the sea", work nominated for Martinsons Award in International ceramics bienalle (Daugavpils, Latvia), high fired porcelain, kobalt, 29 x 16 x 29 cm, 2016

Artist's statement

Though based on ceramics, my works are interdisciplinary. I'm searching for the points where different disciplines of art and science meet each other. My works usually have two very important sides – a joke and a serious message.

Ieva Bertašiute-Grosbaha lives in Kaunas, Lithuania. From 2004 until 2008 she studied applied ceramics, at Vilnius Art Academy Kaunas Faculty of Arts, Kaunas, Lithuania and got her B.A. From 2008 until 2010 she did her M.A. in ceramics at the Vilnius Art Academy Kaunas Faculty of Arts, Kaunas, Lithuania, and since 2016 she has worked on her PhD in fine art, Vilnius Art Academy.

Since 2008 she has shown her work in group and solo exhibitions in the Baltic countries and internationally, and since 2009 she has joined international residencies, festivals and workshops.

2011 she was a cofounder and member of the NGO Rokuand since 2012 she has been a member of Lithuanian artists' association. Since 2016 she has been a lecturer at Vilnius Art Academy Kaunas Faculty of Arts, Kaunas, Lithuania.

Besides her clear ceramic works, she work with installations like the specific work shown in a video piece quite simply named Clay. The video starts with what appears to be clay in its raw state entering some kind of fluid, and one would naturally assume it is unfired clay entering water and rehydrating.

IEVA BERTAŠIUTE-GROSBAHA

Šviesos 16, Kaunas, Lithuania
 +37061656379 (LT), +37120639689 (LV)
 ievabertas@gmail.com
 www.behance.net/ievabertas
 vimeo.com/grambuolys
 www.facebook.com/ievabertas



Evolution, work made during a residency "Project Network" at the Guldagergaard International Ceramics Art and Research Center (Skaelskor, Denmark), group of objects, various dimensions, high-fired porcelain and stoneware, 2009.

