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A PRESENTATION OF
VIEWS ON ART FOR CERAMIC ART AND
A CONCEPT OF PERSONAL ART BASED ON
CERAMICALLY GLAZED CONCRETE

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ABSTRACT

In 2010 I applied for and received the grant of the Danish Art Foundation, grant money from The Realdania Foundation and sponsorship of materials from Densit Aps for a six-month-stay at Guldagergård, International Ceramic Research Center in Skælskør, Denmark. Here I begun the project "Relational sculptures in public spaces made from ceramically glazed concrete". This project is meant to culminate in the production of large-scale ceramically glazed concrete sculptures, whose expression varies between sculpture in the classic sense, the integrated art and architecture. The wish is, through the devices and methods of architecture, to create ceramic sculptures that in scale, shape and material relate to and turn the stock of buildings in urban space inside out, thereby creating new spatiality in an urban context. In this article I will explain the view on ceramic art and the concept that is basis of the relational sculptures I created at Guldagergård and will develop in the future. Through this, I hope to initiate a dialogue with other ceramic artists and initiate a discussion of the possibilities of ceramic art.

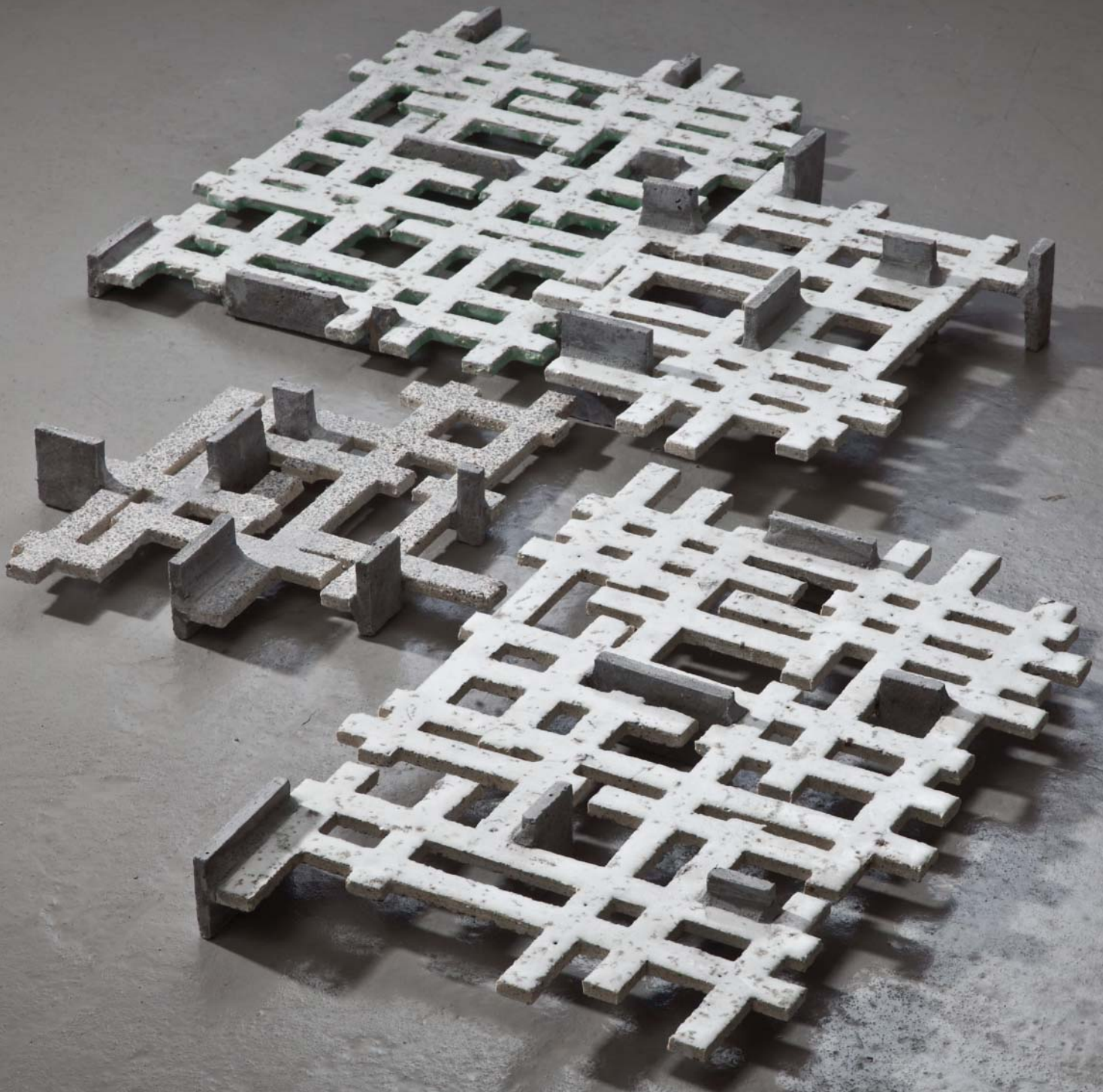
CERAMIC ART IN RELATION TO TRADITIONAL ART

Art is a generic term that denotes a collection of objects, produced within the framework of a narrative called art history. This narrative sets up a critical genealogy semantically and problematizes the meaning of these objects across three subsets: Painting, sculpture, architecture. The word "art" today appears only as a semantic relic from these narratives (the histories of painting, sculpture and architecture). Its exact definition is now as follows: art is an activity that consists of creating a relationship to the world by using signs, shapes, gestures or objects. (Nicolas Bourriaud, 2005)

When I use Nicolas Bourriaud's quote as an introduction to an account of the view on art it is because it fits perfectly with what I do and how I define art. I create relationships to the world by relating and bring together areas that have not yet been brought together. I thereby achieve new relationships and realizations.

The relational art in Nicolas Bourriaud's book from where I take this quote (Nicolas Bourriaud, 2005) is also aimed at interhuman relations. This is where art as human actions comments and makes us aware of the routines and actions we perform. Here, art materializes not by being permanent objects, but through a performance-like action. The art I deal with is permanent objects. It is in the transformation of the idea, the treatment of and dialogue with the material my artistic shape investigations are made. When I create art it is because that is the forum where I can materialize and test my ideas. But it is also because I, in the art, via the visual, perceptual, and sensuous achieve other and often surprising realizations and experiences I would not be able to achieve through linear logical or rational thinking. Art and working with the material, the manipulation via the processes, both expands and encircles my understanding of the surrounding world and functions as an instrument for dialogue with this.

In art, I take my starting point in the avant-garde art of the past that removed the plinth from the sculpture, the minimalistic art that removed the figuration and land art that operated on large scale. I include concept art that provided the idea-based art and the primary research on the premises of



Front page: Object 1. Raised planes. Ceramically glazed concrete, ceramically fired and unglazed concrete. 3-60 cm. 2010. Object 2. Flexible planes. Ceramically glazed concrete, ceramically fired, but unglazed concrete. 20-60 cm, 2010. Object 3. Flexible planes, stacked. Ceramically glazed concrete, ceramically fired, but unglazed concrete, concrete. 20-60 cm, 2010. Ceramic works, Anja Margrethe Bache. Photo: Ole Akhøj.



art itself and connects it to relational art. This is, as Nicolai Bourriaud writes, an activity that creates relationships to the world, where the activity can be signs, shapes, gestures or activities. I create objects by starting from the material, the colour and the shape description, whether these are objects that relate to a place, a context, a relation between persons, to other materials or other disciplines, including technology and science.

For me, it is precisely the meetings, clashes and junctions that make art relevant and where its character and wildness emerge.

I thus consider art, including the future of ceramic art, as it enters into a dialogue and relation to the surrounding world. It does not necessarily have to have the preferences, methods and contents I find in the art, but can also be for the ceramic art, which moves into the figurative, fantastical, mythological and imaginative art. The primary motive of ceramic art is that it relates to and is conscious about its contents and devices and the framework wherein it unfolds.

It is outside the scope of this article to define art, a mission that seems impossible anyways, as the definition of art and ceramic art is constantly changing. The important thing for me to realize, however, is that ceramic art always questions the existence, character and efforts. This is a basic condition for art, which generally only the intentional artist is able to answer. Are the ceramic vase and Duchamp's readymade porcelain urinal both ceramic art? How about the porcelain toilet, which has still not been taken out of the transportation packaging, standing in the entrance of an educational institution; is that art? The latter has a large sculptural effect and affects the room with its scale and difference in material alone. It demands attention and surprisingly has a relevant aesthetic. But is it art? It is not possible to provide a single answer to this question, but it opens up a discussion and a conceptual and visual isolation of the area that should follow the discipline's development and relation to the surrounding world.



A porcelain toilet located in the entrance of the department of building design before installation. Photo: Anja M. Bache. Right: Duchamp's urinal from 1921, readymade. Photo: ?

In the approach to ceramic art I sometimes miss the artist achieving a bird's-eye view of the art simultaneous with a very close contact to the material and the processing of it. This is where the relational aspect can become an important device. This is where space-specific art and the sculpture come in.

It is an art form that partly looks inwards at itself, but also searches its relation to the surroundings, be they in relation to a pedestal, a gallery, an urban space, a building, persons and so on.

Characteristic for ceramic art is that it often evolves from the material, its character and possibilities. Every ceramic artist finds his material and related glazes developed over the course of several years. With those as the foundation, beautiful, humorous or provocative, space-examining objects of art are developed. These are presented in a gallery context, as sculptures presented in public space or as distinctively integrated art as decoration on buildings. In most cases, this is art, which is restricted by the fact that the scale of the clay stays relatively small, and that access to the large kilns is limited. Therefore, ceramic art in galleries tend to be presented on pedestals, public decoration is drowned out by many other larger elements, and as small additions to buildings that in no way interacts with the concept of the building. By moving into the large scale and letting the ceramic art conquer space with large sculptures and elements, this clearly demonstrates its presence. But this demonstration



Object 4. Juxtaposition. Ceramically glazed concrete, concrete, wood, insulation, Height: 40 cm. 2010. Collection. Ceramically glazed concrete, concrete, tile, wood, height: 60 cm. 2010. Ceramic works. Anja Margrethe Bache. Photo: Ole Akhøj.



can also occur without scaling the project up. It can, for example, be achieved, by activating the gallery, the urban space and the building. This is where space-specific art comes in. It is an art form that not merely works well inward, but also takes hold of the lines, progresses, narratives, meetings and rhythms in the spaces. These are the ones that strike the chord that makes everything make a sound, so that we as humans can relate to them.

I saw how a snowball with a diameter of one meter in my running path demanded that I ran around it, as it simultaneously made me think: was it stable, would it keep rolling, how had it been made? Its shape was markedly different from the surrounding snow that had fallen during the night. It had been born from human action and those people must have been up very early because I ran at 7 in the morning.

A static snowball, with its shape, tracks in the snow and location, becomes dynamic in the shape of the thought process it ignites. It becomes relevant; at least a part of the rest of the run. In a similar way, ceramic art can become relevant by approaching a place, but also an experience, an echo in our experience. I would like for ceramic art to come down off its pedestals or that the pedestals become an integrated part of the whole story of the art work in the gallery. Ceramic art can advantageously meet the gallery's floor, corners, ceiling, doors, windows, radiators, pipings, outlets and relate to them. I would like to see sculptures in public space enter into a dialogue with the floor of the urban space, its surface, the colours and shadows of the trees, the cars rushing by, the bus and the people sitting on the benches. Just as I would like ceramic art that acts as an integrated part of the buildings, talks with the building's typology, history, rhythm, elements and the people who work and live in it. Ceramic art must have an affiliation. Then it will make its mark and have a significance that the observer cannot avoid relating to, even for the smallest ceramic objects.

HYPOTHESIS

It is my hypothesis that I will be able to produce large scale ceramic, relational sculptures for public space that vibrates between integrated art, the sculpture in the classical sense and architecture. With large scale relational sculptures, based on new material technology, ceramically glazed concrete, and by using the devices and methods of architecture I will try to unfold an artistic field for the ceramic art in urban space. It must be art that enters into a dialogue, attacks and turns the existing stock of buildings inside out, while still keeping its own sculptural integrity and not be subordinated by an overriding architectural program.

BACKGROUND

Urban space is characterized by an infrastructure, a stock of buildings, users, surfaces, lighting and so on. In this space, art often works through erection of sculptures or art integrated into the architecture. The sculptures often follow traditional traits from classical sculptures by being placed centrally in a plaza with little contact to the stock of buildings, while the integrated art fits itself into and adapts to the overriding architectural program. On the other hand, there are many examples of installation art pieces in galleries, where the object only works through the dialogue it participates in along with the spatial context it has been placed in. Installation art takes hold of the gallery space, turns it inside out, creates new behavioural patterns and spatial angles without adapting as such. I am missing the same approach of the sculpture in public, urban space.

Integrated art is the art that as a subset is part of a larger whole. Here, I am particularly interested in the art that relates to urban space and the exterior of the building. In buildings, integrated art usually appears early on in the programming phase and planning. Architects and artists work closely together to reach, through compromising and changing, a final result to satisfy all parties, especially the entrepreneur paying for the building. There are many fine examples of artistic expression in



Object 20. Juxtaposition. Ceramically glazed concrete. Ceramically fired unglazed concrete. 40 cm. 2010. Ceramic objects. Anja Margrethe Bache. Photo: Ole Akhøj.



Examples of building integrated art. Shin Sang Ko's Gimhae Clayarch Museum, Poul Gerne's Herlev Hospital, Olafur Elisason's Quasibrick in the concert hall in Reykjavik, Iceland and James Carpenter's glass segments in World Trade Center 7, New York Photos retrieved online.

close dialogue with the architecture. We see it as specifically chosen and compounded colour codes, patterns and other kinds of surface treatment. Examples of this is Poul Gerne's interior decoration of Herlev Hospital and Shin Shang's façade at Gimhae Glyarch Museum. These are artistic solutions that stay on the façade level of the building.

Other artists move into the three-dimensional and break with the original façade plans of the building, but stay in the spatial diffusion of the building. This is seen, for example, with Olafur Eliassen's Quasibrick structure in Reykjavik's concert hall's façade and James Carpenter's glass segments and treatment of glass structures on façades. Both work with the three-dimensional aspect on the façade level to create new spatialities and ambiances with light.

The question is where to draw the lines between design, decoration, architecture and art. This is a line I will not draw here, but I ask the question because I miss art in urban space that does not adapt itself to its surroundings. I am missing an art that breaks from the façade level of the building and assumes its own spaces in close dialogue with the space of the buildings; art that engages in the conflict, clash, complexity and edge. I am missing the art that goes behind the façades of the buildings and the level of the surfaces and draws attention to what we do not see.

Urban space is to a large extent planned and arranged by the overriding design program of a municipality. Empty areas, "Terrain Vaque" (Ørskov, 1992) is replaced by designed and well-planned urban spaces. This is where I believe art can be helpful in breaking down the order and create complexity and new spatiality. But it requires that urban art becomes freer and no longer be part of a decidedly integrated art. To me, it must find its fixed place between the classic sculpture in the roundabout, the plaza, and the art that is integrated in for example the building façades or building stock and architecture.

Many buildings are dressed in pretty, beautiful façades and surfaces with no particular connection to what is right behind it. This can give us great freedom in the telling of the narrative, but can, I believe, also make the narrative irrelevant and with no significance to us, because the building loses content, volume and weight.

The façade of a building hides many underlying functional layers, which consist of different materials but each with its own texture, colour and spread. These are the materials I would like to have a dialogue with; I want to go behind the outside of the building and expose it as a part of the building's narrative and the urban scene in general.

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

I wish to work spatially, three-dimensionally with relational sculptures and create new spatialities in the urban scene. The relational sculptures must be visually closely connected and have a dialogue with the building stock and the urban space, but not subordinate itself to or be adapted by an overriding architectural program. The sculptures must with their spatiality search out complexity and conflict visually, just as they must expose what is hidden behind in the building stock and the facing

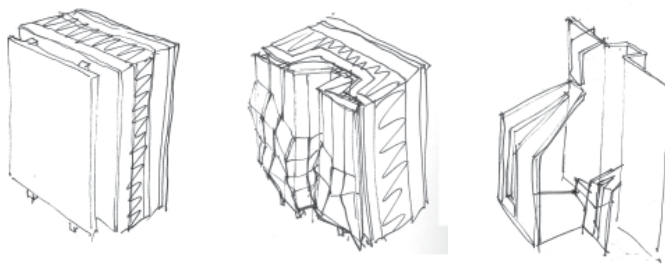


Object 9. Diffusion in space. Ceramically glazed concrete, fired unglazed concrete, wood. Height: 40 cm. 2010. Ceramic works. Anja Margrethe Bache. Photo: Ole Akhøj.



level. They must act as independent sculptures, but still continue the tradition Duchamp, Kosuth and Donald Judd initiated. Hence, the sculptures must not be understood as a closed work, but as place specific object, therefore keeping with one context. The sculptures I wish to unfold must take their starting point in the devices and methods of architecture, to thereby achieve the close dialogue of its idiom. In their expression, they must vibrate between the sculpture in the classical sense, integrated art and architecture. I have attempted to demonstrate this in three sketches on the following page. They show the façade of a building with all the functional layers behind it.

One sketch show the level façade plate, but this is not what I want to produce. The next one shows the façade plate moving out into the space, but still subordinated to the primary shape of the building. This is not it either. The last sketch, however, demonstrates how the façade level and sculpture are connected, but still appear as two separate artistic expressions. This is close to where I want to be. (Not exactly with the sculptural shape sketched here.)



Sketch of how art can enter into the layered wall as a part of the level façade, as a spatial diffusion, but inside the ground plan of the building, and as an autonomous sculptural work, but with a strong connection and dialogue with the level and ground plan of the building. Sketches: Anja Margrethe Bache.

The artist Michael Mørk in cooperation with the architect Lene Tranberg developed with the art installation XX in the BOX 2 gallery in 2006 a piece of installation art that demonstrates how the diffusion and sequence of a room can be changed completely. They have obvious references to the idiom of architecture and interfere significantly in the existing spatiality with their installation. They do this with a stringent and minimized idiom that contain references to Mondrian, Mies Van der Rohe, Rietveld etc. and succeeds in narrating art. Karin Lorentzen similarly demonstrates with installation art that intervenes in the room of her Residens 1 from 2005. Her devices are simple, yet clear and sculptural. They all relate to the spatial context they are a part of, and create new spaces in space with their art. Their expressions vibrate between installation art, the classic sculpture and architecture, but appear as unmistakably independent artistic expressions. They are very inspirational to what I want to develop in urban space with the relational sculptures when I wish to find the ceramic sculpture's place between integrated art, the classical sculpture and architecture with the art as goal.



Michael Mørk and Lene Tranberg's installation in BOX 2, 2006, Karin Lorentzens Residence 1. Pictures retrieved online..



Object 13. Junction. Ceramically glazed concrete, ceramically fired unglazed concrete, concrete. Height: 40 cm. 2010. Ceramic objects. Anja Margrethe Bache. Photo: Ole Akhøj.

RELATIONAL SCULPTURES

I am concerned with the relational; that something relates to something else. That is why I choose to work with the relational sculpture. The relational in my project is divided into three levels, characterised by the distance to and point of view of the sculptures.

It is when I move close to the sculptures and work with colour, materiality, patterns and textures and relate these to each other to achieve contrasts, connections, tensions, harmonies, disharmonies and so on. It is when I remove myself from the single sculpture and compare it with others, to examine space, in-between space, scale, proportions and sequence in the activation of the relationship between light and shadow and to reach a dialogue between the sculptures. It is these two areas I have begun working on during my stay at Guldagergård and that have been discussed in this article. The final angle to the relational is when I relate combinations of relational sculptures to the spatial context they are in, the urban space, surfaces and buildings. This process I have still not dealt with on anything other than a preliminary level.

ABSTRACTION OF THE DEVICES AND METHODS OF ARCHITECTURE

The sculptures take their starting point in devices and methods that architects use when they form a building. Put simply, when the architect is designing a building, he/she begins from the plan, function and light conditions, while the historic and urban context affect the final design of the building as well. The tools of the architect is plan, style and elevation, just like the model is, both the physical and the virtual.

The sculptures I want to create take their starting point in plans, styles and elevations, or abstractions of these as lines, intersections, compressions, diffusions in the plan, but also in the space. They relate to how light creates space and gaps, just like their goal is to create new spatial conditions. I treat them using an abstract conceptual universe with terms such as stacking, perforation, encirclement and demolition. I set up tensions by considering contrasts described with terms such as open/closed, inside/outside, carrying/carried. In the existing urban spaces and building plans I find spaces, lines, sequences, colours and surfaces that I attack. I turn them upside down, insert levels, turn them inside out and pull details or let them become wholes or the other way around. I let the ceramically glazed concrete enter into a dialogue with other building materials' materiality, gaps and transitions and engage the gentle meetings and tensions as shouting, whispering, roaring or dominating voice. I develop structures, scale them up, out of and as repetitions with its own rhythm, steadiness or chaos. And then, after having been inside the material, being wedged in the layered outer wall, having kicked the function plan and slept in the urban space, the large scale relational sculptures in public space are crystallized and relates to and makes its mark in a spatial context. The relational sculptures are expected to point inward, toward themselves in the abstract conceptual universe, but to also point outward in the search of a place to belong. The function is not habitation, but to acknowledge spatial conditions. Neither is it to refer to the architecture, but to explore what architecture as the foundation of sculpture design can teach art and how this on the other hand can move architecture and urban space.

STARTING POINT IN ONGOING DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The artistic project I describe here takes its starting point in the knowledge that an ongoing research and development work, "Ceramically glazed large scale lasting concrete formwork" generates. This was a development project I defined, applied for and received grant money for in 2008, (Bache, 2010), (Bache, 2010) and that I am completing as research associate at the department of Building design (Afdeling for Bygningsdesign), Danmarks Tekniske Universitet. It was started in 2009 and is scheduled to last 2-3 years. In the project, C.F. Møllers Tegnesteue A/S and Gottlieb Paludan Arkitekter A7S, a material manufacturer, a concrete element factory and Glas og keramikskolen, Bornholm participate as sparring partners. In the project I take existing concretes from industrial use and redesign them for use in the building of large scale ceramically glazed and very thin concrete constructions.



Object 7. Torsion. Ceramically glazed concrete. Height: 40 cm. 2010. Ceramic object. Anja Margrethe Bache. Photo: Ole Akhøj.

I search for possible glaze treatments, develop new types of lasting formwork and design a new façade system. The goal is to achieve qualities that are unknown in concrete and in some scales unknown for ceramic material.

I will finish this project at Statens Værksteder for Kunst og Håndværk in March and April, 2012, where I along with the ceramists Peter Battaglione and John Gibson will develop and create prototypes of place-specific large scale ceramically glazed concrete façades. We hope to continue this work at EKWC in Holland during summer, 2012 and in Australia during fall, 2012. We are in the process of writing applications to the two latter artist residencies.

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