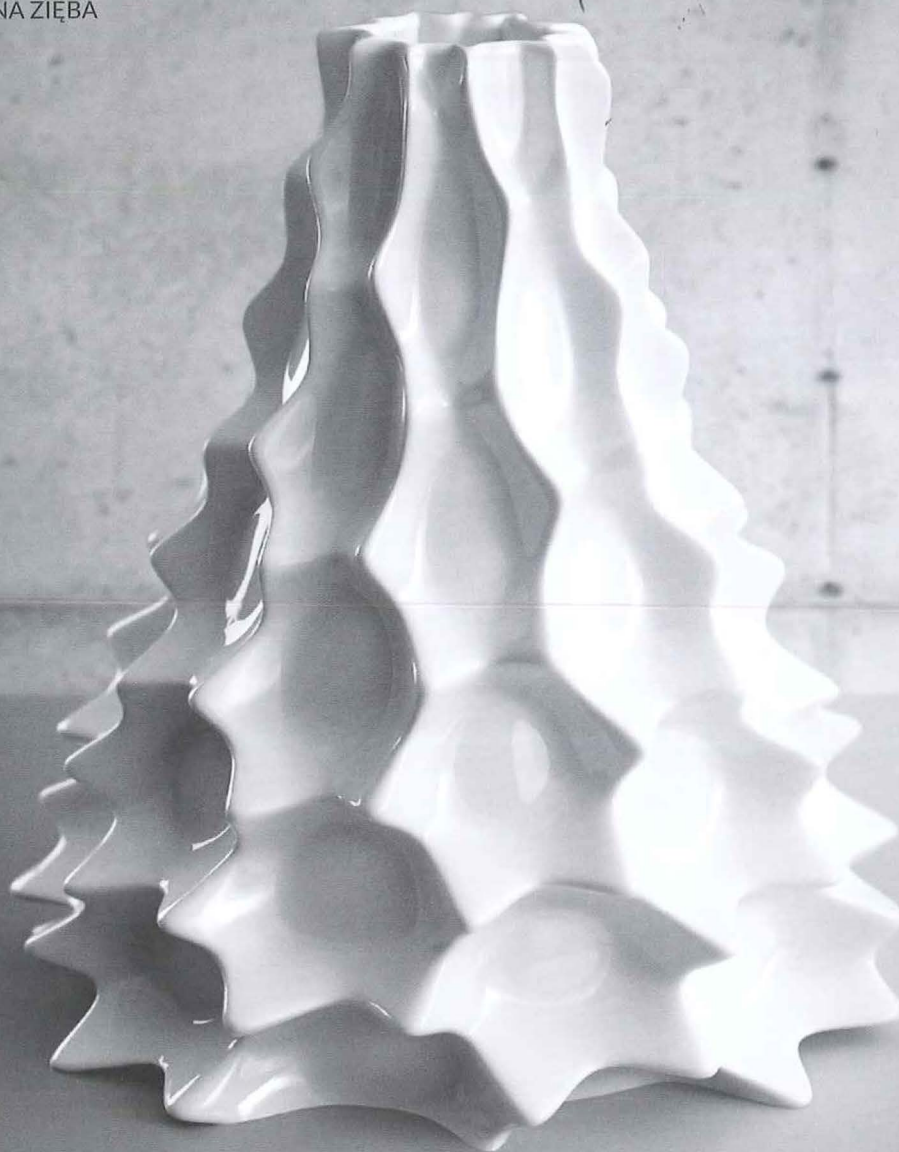


# FORM, TEXTURE AND DECONSTRUCTION

Ceramics

by MAGDALENA ZIĘBA



Bartek Mejer, Polyp © Bartek Mejer Studio

Ceramics is one of the oldest crafts; its earliest examples are pottery objects, including almost thirty thousand year old figurines, made from clay, or mixed with other materials, hardened and sintered, in fire. Ceramics' structural and creative potential still fascinates artists

who attempt to master the technique of shaping and manufacturing it. Its various types such as porcelain, stoneware or Bone china are composed of different proportions of ingredients, and thus are characterised by diverse moulding as well as casting features. Polish artists of

a younger generation take advantage of the rich Polish heritage of hand-made and industrially crafted ceramics, creating both collections of tableware, and artistically conceived non-functional forms, of a conceptual meaning.

## KARINA MARUSIŃSKA

Marusińska acts on the verge between design, art and social activity, attempting to blur the lines that separate them. In her oeuvre, we find both unique objects and limited series of tableware, as well as abstract sculptural forms, where she exposes slight differences of textures and colours of various materials such as: grog, clay, slipware. Marusińska draws inspiration from material reality — she deconstructs common objects that we rarely pay attention to and transforms them into aesthetically poignant artworks. She is fascinated with organic characteristics of porcelain and the ecological aspect of every work she creates. However, her works being quite suggestive are extremely minimalist in form: naturally white, with visible nuances of their surfaces. In her works, she applies the technique of deconstruction: of the structured matter and of its symbolic meaning. Her early practice was focused on new functions of unnecessary items and their fragments; she recycled them and bestowed new life upon them. In the 'Cores' series from 2008 she intervened into the structure of the object already during the process of production, before the baking: she bit a piece of every bowl and cup, and then decorated defragmented objects with gold paint. Recently, the artist has been working on even more conceptual objects whose form echoes the world of things we live in and the sphere of our own physical existence. 'Object with a Hole' is a non-functional object resembling a shallow bowl with a very small hole in a form of human's anus. Its aim is to awake emotions and it is exactly what it does — it is intriguing and attractive, but at the same time, repulsive; beautiful and strange, artificial, but corporeal. 'Safeguard' and 'What has remained' are two series of works also playing with convention and, additionally, with our perception of everyday entities. The former was a temporary realisation of several dozen security clippers commonly made of plastic and used in shops to prevent clothes from being stolen, while the latter is a pile of fragments of paper ripped from a diary's corner. Marusińska remade these small, insignificant things in porcelain, forcing the viewer to review her/his visual customs. In her latest intervention, 'Hug', she investigated the

problem of social exclusion; first, she talked with the inhabitants of Wrocław about situations from their own lives when they experienced rejection — at the same time they could imprint their hand's mark in soft ceramics. After the interviews, small pieces with hand marks formed a banister of one of the city's bridges.

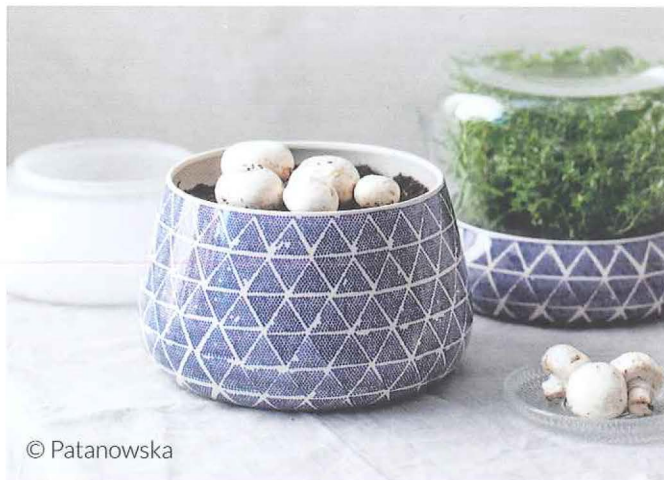


## ALICJA PATANOWSKA

Alicja Patanowska lives and works in London and Wrocław. Her understanding of porcelain, its modelling and textural possibilities, and its artistic potential, has been shaped mainly during her studies at the Istituto Superiore per le Industrie Artistiche in Faenza and Royal Academy of Art in London. Similarly to Marusińska, Patanowska is captivated with the idea of recycling and sustainability, and tries to translate the ecological rationale into the way of creating art and ensuring its usability. At the beginning of this year, she presented her series 'Plantation' at the exhibition 'What Goes Behind... Contemporary Polish Ceramic Design' during the Inno Design Tech Expo in Hong Kong. After this presentation the innovative series was bought by the Museum of Glass in Shanghai and included in the museum's permanent exhibition. 'Plantation' is a set of porcelain elements designed for growing herbs and ornamental plants using the principles of hydroponics: each element is unique and distinctive in form, each one placed in a glass — an objet trouve. Thanks to



the use of only water and no soil, this method allows observing the growth process of both the stems and the roots of plants; it is also a perfect solution for rooting plant grafts. The whole idea came from a need of finding new, unusual and also symbolic ways of using abandoned objects. While working on this installation, Patanowska spent months looking for old glasses on the streets of London. The fact that she found so many undamaged vessels is a proof of unacceptable extravagance that became the norm in the modern world. Thus, the artist draws our attention to the widespread problem of insatiable desire to acquire new things, which is stronger even than the desire to own them. Similar concepts led to the 'LAB Series'; a beautiful decorative piece inspired by forest morning dew: a series of small greenhouses with a base made of stoneware, which ensures the right humidity under the dome, and a lid of matte glass that dims the light. Such solutions make it possible to grow mushrooms inside these mesmerising objects. Patanowska creates objects of familiar shapes but provides them with unexpected functions thanks to her outstanding knowledge of the material and imaginative approach to the creative process.



© Patanowska

### NATASZA GRZEŚKIEWICZ

Grześkiewicz is a young designer, who creates modern interpretations of dinnerware. The 'Service Collection' was her graduation project at the European Ceramic Workcentre in The Netherlands. The artist compared the process of creating it to the process of preparing food: Grześkiewicz walked away from the standard methods of preparing the material, and mixed the raw material with nonchalance, not really sticking to the typical recipe. The effect of this casualness is stunning: plates with irregular texture, with runny raw in the form of splashes and drips, with traces of a knife used by her to smoothen out the casting as if she were spreading butter on bread. Each piece in this din-

nerware is original and bears the traces of the creation process, telling us a poetic story, where spontaneity and experimenting play the main role. Grześkiewicz redefines traditional porcelain by introducing new elements to its structure: rough surfaces and undefined edges, visible cracks and irregularities. On the one hand, she works with fragile and subtle material, but from the other, she treats it with no delicacy. Distortions and unique marks visible on her vessels are her hallmark.



© Grześkiewicz

### BARTEK MEJOR

Mejor studied in England, attending the Bath School of Art and Design and later, the prestigious Royal College of Art in London, where he graduated in 2011. In London, he also worked as an assistant at Daniel Reynolds Contemporary Ceramics. Now, he works on building his own brand, characterised by white, geometric and wavy forms of exceptional tactility. In the process of designing, he uses both a computer and experiments with prototypes — such process results in highly sculptural forms inspired by nature and its elements. He is especially interested in transitional, temporary states and transformations that take place in the natural world. The 'Cyclone' pendant lamp is a reinterpretation of movement: the lampshade is formed of twirling stripes that symbolise a vortex, frozen moment of a movement, reminiscent of natural forces such as hurricanes or cyclones. Digital modelling can be traced also in other forms such as 'Polyp', which is an intriguing decorative vase inspired by the organic forms of underwater coral reefs, or 'Surf', a centrepiece inspired by marks left by waves on wet sand. In addition, Mejor often reaches for geometric forms — as in the 'Quartz' and 'Quartz Black' collections of vases, where he plays with the tradition of origami, converting the creases of paper into embellishing patterns. On the other hand, the form of the series 'Matrix Vases' was motivated by deconstructivist architecture — with its simple, geometric shapes and textures. As the artist says, he gets the most satisfaction from projects 'which retain their unique,



artistic form, but at the same time are things produced on a larger, industrial scale. That causes these projects to be more accessible than authorial projects exhibited in galleries, and to reach a large number of people.'

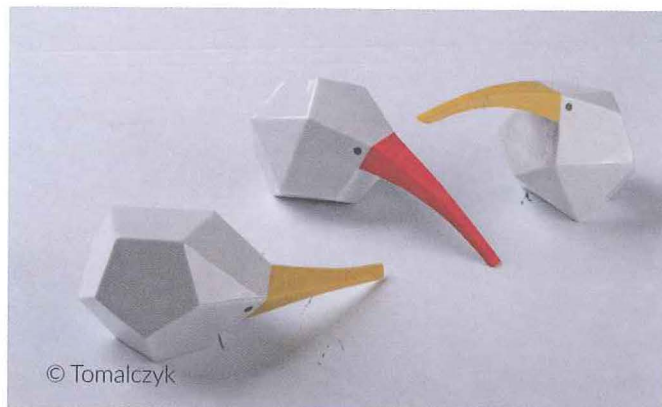


© Mejor

### COZ DESIGN STUDIO - AGNIESZKA TOMALCZYK

Tomalczyk is a designer and owns an interdisciplinary design studio COZ located in Łódź. The studio undertakes projects from various fields such as product design and its implementation, visualisations, creation of prototypes and 3D printing. The studio also creates innovative products made of porcelain. One of its most interesting products is the 'Rocking Set', a tea set which aim is to stimulate the user's senses by its unusual form drawn from the ideas of cognitive science, interactive design and experiments with water led by Japanese scientist, Masaru Emoto. With its apparent lack of stability, the object stimulates the passive situation of consuming tea – prompting to awaken coordination by playing with its rocking elements. Moreover, rocking helps to release aromas of tea and, thus, stimulates the senses of smell and taste. Also, the set is devoid of typical handles and forces the user to embrace the cups with whole hands – which makes brewing and drinking a more intimate experience. The studio also releases collections of more common objects such as 'KIWI Project', a series of forms announcing a new product series of porcelain figurines created for Ćmielów Design Studio. The whole collection is an interpretation of shape and movement of the exotic kiwi bird: shapes are captured in pure geometric forms with a long, distinctive bird beak. What is interesting here is the process of developing the project in several stages, including: use of paper, plaster and 3D printing. The effect is a collection of sim-

ple, minimalist shapes that unify the aesthetics represented by COZ: geometric forms and unique solutions reached in a process of intricate production.



### MACIEJ KASPERSKI

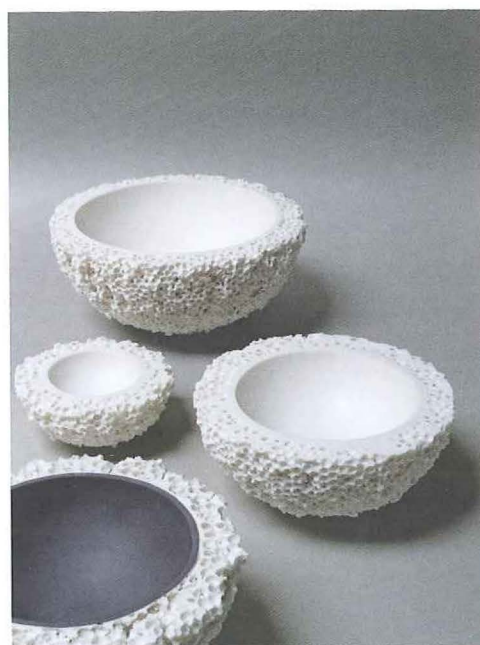
He practices both sculpture and design. His source of inspiration is mainly the world of nature and organic, sequential forms, which he applies to most of his projects. His recent works can be classified as ceramic sculptures of purely aesthetic value: with forms taken from totemic symbolic repertoire and of various textures often resembling the structure of hemp strings, mushrooms overgrowing a tree and plants' thorns. In his latest series, 'Worn Ceramics', he balances between ceramics and fashion by creating objects fitted to bodies; a kind of mobile sculptures worn by models – without any special function, they are similar to microorganisms that live on our skin only visible under a microscope. The artist interprets these forms into sculptural entities whose aim is to create a harmonious whole with the person 'wearing' them. Kasperski portraits common people with his sculptures: they wear them as scarfs and shawls, enormous muffs and hold as bags. Neutral colours and organic patterns of objects are in tune with every person's character and overall look and, thus, create a specific bond between a living being and inanimate object that imitates nature.



## MONIKA PATUSZYŃSKA

Patuszyńska considers herself an artist more than a designer as she is more interested in the technological process of creating porcelain itself than in the final outcome with its functional and non-functional implications. She is a well-renowned artist belonging to the Académie Internationale de la Céramique in Genève, whose works were exhibited prestigious locations such as Puls Contemporary Ceramics gallery in Brussels or Royal College of Art in London. Patuszyńska draws inspiration from the moulding and casting possibilities of porcelain. She looks for uniqueness and, thus, deforms well-known shapes and transforms functional vessels into objects of art: raspy, unsymmetrical, sometimes even creepy like in the series 'Ex-forms, Papforms, Transforms and Paraforms'. The artist is interested in the porcelain industry. In the project 'Bastard & Orphans' (2012-2013) the plaster moulds from closed European porcelain factories such as 'Książ' in Wałbrzych, 'Manufacture Royal Boch' in La Louviere, or 'Porcela-

na Śląska' in Katowice, became a carrier of history and identity of the factories. Working in the post-industrial space was a part of the whole project which sought to restore the proper meaning of the abandoned places and unwanted objects. Patuszyńska created a series of objects that are a variation on old industrial forms, which long ago lost their *raison d'être*. Deformed teacups, sugar bowls, sauce boats, ladles and jugs bear in them a dose of melancholy and longing for the past; but in the hands of the artist they gain new lives and again become objects of desire – with old ornaments and decorations that look even more subtly mixed with rough structures of unpolished porcelain. As the artists put it, they are merely a by-product of the project, which is fixated on 'the very process of working with the tissue of an abandoned factory: the order of corridors hallowed by time, the structure of decay, attempts to record it'. The final objects are mute witnesses of the world that has been there a while ago and disappeared suddenly from the landscape.





## NATALIA GRUSZECKA

Natalia Gruszecka is a ceramics and glass designer living and working in Wrocław, where, with fellow designer, Jakub Kwarciński, she opened the ENDESIGN studio. Her favourite material is porcelain because of its pure white colour and transparency. Gruszecka first encountered porcelain in the factory of Ćmielów and fell in love with it instantly. One of her most famous designs is her porcelain doll head cups, the idea for which came about during work experience at the Ćmielów Porcelain Factories where she found a pre-war mould for casting porcelain dolls. And this is how Gruszecka's 'Tête à tête' cups came to life, cast from an antique mould in the shape of a doll's head. The cups come in several forms: white or black, with classic, gold-plated or patinated handles. She works with a special type of porcelain called Bone China, which can be manufactured in a small workshop conditions. Her other pieces include beautifully crafted minimalistic mugs and vases with folds similar to the texture of crumpled paper: in white and black, with gold-plated details.



## BOGDAN KOSAK

Kosak runs Modelarnia Ceramiczna in Cieszyn in Southern Poland; he mixes his own creative endeavours with commissions from large producers. His works are usually of multifunctional use, with conceptual background behind their creation. 'A Sentimental Centrepiece' is a collection of decorative wreaths made of 'own, entrusted or found' porcelain. Composed of objects serving as vases, candlesticks, incense stands, and from jewellery, they are perfect for creating sentimental compositions with feathers, flowers, beads, ribbons, laces and other objects collected as souvenirs. Kosak's creations are simple and elegant, but also ambiguous — they are meant to inspire contemplation and reflection about their own history and function. 'Encirclers' are oval bowls reminiscent of natural forms of river stones, skulls, vegetable bulbs, or cocoons; 'Lace Badge' looks at first sight like a traditional crocheted mat, but in reality it is covered in a layer of porcelain, and can be used as a wall decoration. Kosak's inspiration comes from his own particular understanding of the craft's material dimension, from his memories, his own sketches and drawings. For him, the most interesting part of creating useful utensils is that they may also be seen as sculpture or an abstract form. ■