

# Object Factory: The art of industrial ceramics

## Beauty in the practical at MAD

By **STUART KURTZ**

All the conventions of ceramics get thrown out and spun around in the latest exhibit at the Museum of Arts & Design in New York. More craft than trade, artisans whose work is displayed in "Object Factory: The Art of Industrial Ceramics" splice traditional forms with clever visual puns.

In other pieces, industrial designers find new applications for new and versatile ceramics. You are advised to come with a sense of humour.

The exhibit's introduction describes how artists and designers have collaborated with industry in ways that enhance and subvert the industrial process.

Perhaps the most patent example of this subversion is the tea set Spanish Lace by Edyto Cietloch. The vessels are carved into filigree screens that imitate Spanish lace. Not, obviously, intended for practical use of any kind, the functional objects turn into objects d'art. By extension, we might question our perception of everyday reality.

For more on twists on expectations, look at 5.5 Designers Ensemble Cremlers Coulage no. 2 et no. 4. A sauceboat has some strange hitchhikers, the kind we usually try to keep out of the sauceboat. By having these little guests collect at the top, as if they were the sauce, the artists play with enticement and repulsion. What is food and what is not get lumped together with the gravy.

Following this questioning of reality theme is the dinner plate series by Robert Dawson entitled Willow Pattern with Uncertainty. The name says it all. Reminiscent of Bleed Pattern English China tradeware of the 1700's, the floral scene becomes blurry for two thirds of the plate. The effect is a little cinematic and definitely not the way to show off your fine china. The seeming embodiment of china itself is depreciated

by this parlour trick and the art of porcelain becomes the art of the gallery.

Blurring boundaries between objects is what Gesine Hackenberg does with jewellery. In Spoon Set a jewellery ensemble takes the form of the eponymous title. In the artist statement, Hackenberg says, "Occasionally the realm of jewellery and commodities shift together very closely... By using materials, shapes, fragments, and typical patterns out of another daily context as a base for my jewellery, I transfer their meaning and emotional impact in my works."

The craft of porcelain merges with the perhaps more rarefied art of jewellery. Industrial design and fine arts cross-fertilize each other.

Then there are moments when fine arts lock horns with commercial design. In Jo Meesters Ornamental Inheritance, the lower portions of vases carry traditional Dutch Delft floral patterns. About midway up flowers recede in favour of a contemporary industrial landscape, replete with McDonalds monopoles instead of marigolds, and turbine windmills instead of traditional ones, and what looks to be the CN Tower in Toronto. The play on old vs. new and high culture vs. low is humorous and dignified at the same time.

Paul Scott pushes Meester's idea to the limit. In Scott's Cumbrian Blue[s] series the English countryside of traditional table settings is given a new and candid interpretation. In After the By-Pass a bucolic village is interrupted by tourists on the motorway. Barsbacke 2 substitutes a factory for the English manor house. In Foot and Mouth No. 5 the expected grazing cattle are instead the victims of foot and mouth disease.

A bulldozer is assembling them for disposal, as a funnel of smoke belches for its sacrifices. This is a far cry from dinner



LOCKING HORNS: Ornamental Inheritance by Jo Meesters, 2004, porcelain, sandblasting. LISA KLAPPE

in polite society. This removes the genteel manners of the dining room and invites controversial discourse. The title may also suggest diner's putting their feet in their mouth as a result.

One gallery in the show omits the tongue-in-cheek (let alone the foot-in-mouth) puns. The mood is serious for serious applications of technology to industrial ceramics. Elisha Tal's, Eyal Cremer's, and Danny Lavie's Nomad series features toaster, kettle, and pitcher. Conductivity of heat with ceramics to this extent was not possible until this point.

Ami Drach's Hot Plate extends its heat-

ing element over the surface of the plate depression. The artist refers to it as a conductive silkscreen. Here is the marriage of function and design at its height. The function is the design.

The Kyocera knives and cleavers series prove that ceramic cutting tools can now be as sharp as metal. It is cutting edge technology of today.

Of course, visual puns are what give this show its artistic edge. You may want to linger a bit at Khayasar Naimanan's Incognito (Hidden Wealth project). What is going on here is really a challenge to the decorum of the dining ritual. The designer creates the

usual floral design and flip-side hallmark, but it is reversed...flowers on dish bottoms and hallmark on dish surfaces.

While keeping the decorum of centuries of fine dining, Naimanan disrupts diners' complacency just a tad. Maybe it is enough to make us reconsider the daily customs we take for granted. Or maybe it is just a clever way to intersect an artist's touch into useful objects.

Stuart Kurtz is a free-lance arts, travel, issues writer at <http://www.stuartkurtz.blogspot.com/>. You can reach him at [deco-phil@hotmail.com](mailto:deco-phil@hotmail.com).

## Saudi Arabian artist highlights women's rights

By **CHERYL CASATI and DOR LEVINTER**

Epoch Times Staff

Muneera Al-Kaltham, a budding female painter from Saudi Arabia, has brought her work to the United States. She plans to highlight the women's human rights situation in Saudi Arabia through her work. Titled "Feminizing colors: Modern Interpretations of a Woman's Role in Society," her artwork speaks in bold colours and an impressionist style.

Her name, Muneera, means ray of the light in Arabic, which is exactly what she hopes to shed on the women's rights issues in Saudi Arabia. "The exhibit is about the women, and it reflects my belief that women and men deserve the same human rights," she explained.

She believes that this exhibit could have a positive effect on how her culture treats and sees women. While she admits some changes are happening, her hope is that the art will speak to people in a way that hastens changes for the better.

In many of her paintings, the eyes of the depicted women catch one's eyes and heart. Often filled with sadness and despair, their eyes underscore the plight of living in a male-dominated society—one where a woman can be murdered for just talking with a man in public. Such an occurrence happened recently when two young women, Reem, 21, and Nouf, 19, were shot to death by their brother with full support from their father.

Saudi Arabia is a country where violence against women has been an ongoing problem. Saudi Arabia's Islamic sharia legal code does not allow unrelated men and women to mix together, and the religious police actively enforce the rules by patrolling areas frequented by young people. This is just one of the many laws that make women the brunt of brutal treatment.

Several dignitaries attended opening night of Al-Kaltham's exhibit, including U.N. Ambassador to Israel Gabriela Shalev and Mr. Mohamed Fathi Edrees, U.N. deputy representative to Egypt.

For more information on the artist see: [Muneera-al-kaltham.com](http://www.muneera-al-kaltham.com).



Muneera Al-Kaltham, Saudi Arabian artist, at Gelabert's exhibit. DOR LEVINTER/THE EPOCH TIMES

## To Dietrich Buxtehude with love

By **KREMENA KRUMOVA**  
Epoch Times Staff

As the connection between Heinrich Schütz, the father of German musicians, and J. S. Bach, the giant of German composers, Dietrich Buxtehude occupies an obscure, yet unique place in the history of Baroque music. Young organist and composer Simone Stella, aspiring to revive interest in Buxtehude, initiated a series of concerts in the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance—the city of Florence.

The concert series, called Complete Organ Works by Dietrich Buxtehude, will be performed in the historic Orsanmichele Church in Florence. On Aug. 30 the fourth of a series of ten free concerts will be held.

Mr. Stella shared with The Epoch Times his joy at being able to organize and participate in the event. "The wish to perform the Complete Organ Works by Buxtehude comes from my love for Buxtehude's music which is really rich and full of fresh musical ideas."

Simone Stella, who is also the titular organist at the Orsanmichele Church, revealed that the purpose of the initiative is to make Buxtehude's organ music better known to the public, since it is not played as often as, for example, Bach's music.

"I scheduled ten concerts between March 2009 and June 2010 in the Orsanmichele Church in Florence, where every Sunday of the year there's a free classical concert at 5:30 p.m." The church is situated in the historic center of Florence, so Mr. Stella was sure the concerts would attract a large number of visitors.

### THE CONCERT PROGRAM

In every concert the young organist has tried to incorporate sacred as well as secular pieces by Buxtehude. He aims to help the audience know the spiritual as well as the social aspects of the composer's music.

"I will play three Preludes in the next concert: D major, F-sharp minor, and G minor. They are secular works written in the stylus phantasticus, a style which combines improvisation and rigorous counterpoint."

"Then I will perform a ciaccona—a series of variations on an ostinato (obstinate) bass, and several chorale preludes like Vater Unser im Himmelreich and Von Gott Will Ich Nicht Lassen—sacred pieces composed on the basis of liturgical melodies."

The chorale preludes chosen for the program match the liturgical calendar.

"In this way the public can listen to the musical fireworks and virtuosity of the secular works and then be immersed in a sweet spiritual atmo-

sphere with the sacred pieces."

### ON THE ORGAN AND THE TAMBURINI ORGAN

Although only 29 years old, Simone Stella has been in love with music since he was nine. That was when he started piano lessons at the Conservatory "Luigi Cherubini" in Florence. His real love, though, is the organ.

"My experience with organ started when I was a child. I was already in love with the organ; every time I entered a church and listened to it, I felt a unique sensation."

Mr. Stella started playing the organ when he was 15 in a church near his house where there was a Renaissance organ. But his interest became professional at the Conservatory of Florence some years later under the guidance of Mariella Mochi and Alessandro Albenga.

"Very important for my Baroque training were the organ lessons of Matteo Imbruno, organist of the Oude Kerk of Amsterdam, and the harpsichord lessons in Rome with Francesco Cera—they gave me a lot in terms of technique and musicality."

The organ in the Orsanmichele Church is a Tamburini organ. Its name comes from its builder, Tamburini, an Italian organ builder from the town of Crema. The organ in the church was built 20 years ago.

"It's a charming mechanical in-

strument, a bit small, maybe not the ideal to perform Buxtehude, but yet able to highlight the magic of his music. Although small, it can reproduce the powerful sound of a great cathedral organ."

The name of the church —Orsanmichele—translates as "Kitchen Garden of St. Michael." It was actually built on the spot of the kitchen garden of the monastery of San Michele which no longer exists.

### ON BUXTEHUDE AND MUSIC

As an active musician and composer of instrumental music, Simone Stella cherishes the chance to bring the music of a brilliant and prolific composer like Dietrich Buxtehude back to life.

"German-Danish Dietrich Buxtehude (1637 – 1707) is the ultimate genius of the 'North German Organ School,' which was founded previously by the Dutch composer Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck."

Inspired by early Italian Baroque music, Buxtehude was considered the most famous organist in Germany prior to Bach.

"Unfortunately, he's placed between two great phenomena in history, Heinrich Schütz and Johann Sebastian Bach, so his importance is not duly recognized."

Nevertheless, Dietrich Buxtehude remains a remarkable composer of sacred vocal music, ranking with the

likes of Schütz and Bach. He left behind outstanding pieces of extraordinary simplicity yet of great artistic value.

"I'm very inspired by Buxtehude: his language is honest, simple, but sophisticated at the same time; very instinctive, sometimes aggressive. I feel his compositions are really close to my heart."

Simone Stella shared that J. S. Bach also inspires him a lot and spoke of how Bach's music represents perfection.

"Bach's music was always written with a balance between rationality and instinct, mind and heart—everything perfectly balanced."

The young Italian musician believes that music is capable of touching the deepest strings of the human soul. He is confident it's an essential element for our life. We need to feel those sensations which only music can reach. Moreover, music plays an important role for human morality.

"Music can lead to faith, and faith can improve morality."

Mr. Stella spoke of the responsibility of being a musician, for, in that role, an artist can help people live a better life.

"The musician is not just an entertainer; rather, he is the physical instrument that brings emotions to the hearts of the people, and interprets those emotions to help people feel less alone in this hard world."



Simone Stella sitting at the beloved organ. COURTESY OF SIMONE STELLA

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For more information on the artist see: [Muneera-al-kaltham.com](http://www.muneera-al-kaltham.com).

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