

# Project proposal for Art Futures Fellowship

## Artist-in-Residence in Athens: [sic] Space for International Cooperation and Zutphen: Dat Bolwerck



Meng-Chan Yu

November 2023

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# Project proposal for Artist-in-Residence in Athens: [sic] Space for International Cooperation and Zutphen: Dat Bolwerck

## Current Working Practice

As a ceramic artist, I specialize in experimenting with materials and exploring soil as a unique form of artistic expression. In recent years, I have incorporated locally sourced soil into my works. In 2022, I created "Natural or Artificial I" in Fränsta, Sweden, by blending local soil with clay to craft lifelike stones that delve into the relationship between humans and nature. In 2023, I utilized 24 different types of soil from Madou, Tainan, Taiwan, to construct the installation 'Breathing Soil'. Each soil type represents distinct agricultural activities or landscapes. To preserve the soil's original colors, I refrained from firing the pieces and instead transformed my inspiration into a large-scale, site-specific installation, inviting viewers to physically immerse themselves in the soil.

## The Fellowship Embedded in My Practice

During the Art Futures residency, I am continuing to use local soil combined with water to create imagery that delves into the impact of the natural environment, specifically concentrating on the interplay between the ocean, rivers, and human activities. Despite the diversity of human responses to the environment, what are the common human characteristics across cultures and time?

## Art, as a method, enables us to perceive connections among various elements within intricate contexts.

Confronted by the philosophical query, "What is our origin and future?" my attention is drawn to soil. Soil embodies life and death—it nurtures life, such as plants, provides sustenance to other life forms, including humans, and receives and transmutes decay. Athens, nestled in the Mediterranean region, experiences a Mediterranean climate, while Zutphen is situated on the river IJssel and features a temperate maritime climate. Owing to these climatic and geographical disparities, these two cities possess distinct cultures. How can we artistically express regional characteristics while simultaneously resonating with individuals from diverse backgrounds? Soil has the potential to convey stories, as it not only documents regional traits but also serves as a vital foundation for our living.



Image 1: Each soil type represents different agricultural activities.



Image 2: Soil-made image

I intend to draw inspiration from an agricultural perspective, as agriculture stands at the

intersection of nature (each region has its own crops to grow based on natural conditions) and human society (people have an influence on what kind of crops to grow and how to cook them).

### **Creative Outcomes of The Fellowship Period and Digitization**

Drawing from the information I've gathered from the website and Zoom meetings, I am thrilled about the potential to engage with the local community. The creative outcomes of the residency could be interactive events or presentations. My intention is to share these outcomes with the local audience in both Athens and Zutphen.

Digitization serves as a method to overcome geographical limitations. Therefore, I will incorporate the potential for digital presentation into the developmental process, thereby integrating digitization as an essential facet of the artistic practice, rather than merely a recording technique.

### **Sharing and Documentation**

In previous residency projects, I have enthusiastically shared my creative process through Instagram and physical documentation. For instance, I created this book in an attempt to convey a part of the exhibition's spirit through the tactile experience of hands and paper, since soil cannot be taken abroad.

I view this residency period as a valuable opportunity for mutual learning and growth. I am dedicated to establishing meaningful connections and collaborations with other community members, artists, and curators.



Image 3: Sample of documentation (book) and links to instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CtjpGr6lQ-c/>

## Work plan for 4 months on-site residency and pre-research

Date	Plan
1. November 2023 - 16. February 2024	Collection of references, ideas for both residencies
17. February 2024 - 20. March 2024	Working on a more concrete plan
21. March - 14. April 2024	Preparation for the residency, including gathering the necessary tools, materials, etc.

### On-Site Residency in Athens from 15. April to 15. June 2023

15. April - 27. April 2024	Exchange, collaborate, be inspired by the local community
28. April - 11. May 2024	Field research, collection of materials (soil) and development of the artistic concept
12. May - 15. June 2024	Production and presentation

15. July - 15. August 2024	Reflection on the residency in Athens and collection of references, ideas for the residency in Zutphen
16. August - 15. September 2024	Working on a more concrete plan

### On-Site Residency in Zutphen from 16 September to 17 November 2024

16. September - 28. September 2024	Exchange, collaborate, be inspired by the local community
29. September - 12. October 2024	Field research, collection of materials (soil) and development of the artistic concept
13. October - 17. November 2024	Production and presentation

## Curriculum vitae

Meng-Chan Yu | 1988 born in Taiwan

www.mengchanyu.com | She works and lives in Kiel, Germany

## Grants, fellowships (Selected)

**2022-2023** Project grant, Kulturstiftung Schleswig-Holstein, DE

**2022** Project grant, Stiftung Kunstfonds, Bonn, DE

**2020-2021** Project grant, Professionalisierung freischaffender Kreativer, Kiel, DE

**2020** Project grant, Allianz deutscher Designer e.V., DE

**2016-2018** Studio scholarship, Atelierhaus im Anscharpark, Kiel, DE

**2012-2015** Full scholarship, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, DE

**2009-2010** Taiwan Germany Exchange Scholarship of the Ministry of Education Taiwan, TW

## Artist-in-Residences

**2024** Art Futures Fellowship, Athens: [sic] Space for International Cooperation and Zutphen: Dat Bolwerck, GR + NL (Upcoming)

**2023** Hydromedia, Utrecht University of the Arts (HKU), Utrecht, NL

**2023** Atelier Josepha, Ahrenshoop, DE

**2023** Tsung-yeh Art and Cultural Center, Tainan, TW

**2022** Artist-in-residence, Västernorrland in the field of ceramics, SE

**2015** KAHLA-Kreativ at Kahla porcelain factory, Kahla, DE

## Awards, finalists (Selected)

**2023** Finalist, Perron Art Priz, DE

**2023** Finalist, XVIII international contemporary ceramics award CERCO, ES

**2022** Finalist, XV International Biennial of Ceramics Manises, ES

**2022** Finalist, XII Biennial Internacional de Ceràmica of El Vendrell, ES

**2022** Commendation, 4. Siegburger Ceramic Award, DE

**2012** Finalist, Talente, Munich, DE

**2009** Finalist, Kobe biennale, JP

## Solo exhibitions

**2023** Linked by soil, Tsung-Yeh Arts and Cultural Center, Tainan, TW

## Education

**2011-2015** Master of Fine Arts, Muthesius University of Fine Arts and Design, DE

**2013** Applied Art and Design, Aalto University, Helsinki, FI

**2009-2010** Visiting student, Muthesius University of Fine Arts and Design, DE

**2006-2011** Bachelor of Fine Arts, National Taipei University of Education, TW

### Group exhibitions (Selected)

<b>2024</b>	Hydromedia: seeing with water, Technische Sammlungen Dresden - Museum für Wissenschaft und Technik, Dresden, DE (Upcoming)
<b>2024</b>	Hydromedia: seeing with water, AG Gallery, Utrecht, NL (Upcoming)
<b>2023</b>	XVIII international contemporary ceramics award CERCO, Zaragoza, ES
<b>2023</b>	International Pottery and Ceramics Competitions of La Rambla, Córdoba, ES
<b>2023</b>	Perron Art Prize in the category of porcelain, Kunsthaus Frankenthal, DE
<b>2022</b>	XII Biennial Internacional de Ceràmica of El Vendrell, ES
<b>2022</b>	Dornumer Kunsttage, Schloss Dornum, DE
<b>2022</b>	XV International Biennial of Ceramics, Manises, ES
<b>2022</b>	4. Siegburg Ceramic Award, city museum of Siegburg, DE
<b>2021</b>	Reload!, Art association Haus 8, Kiel, DE
<b>2021</b>	BLAUmachen, Eckernförde museum, DE
<b>2020</b>	Ist das noch Kunsthandwerk?, Handwerkskammer Düsseldorf, DE
<b>2020</b>	Ventura Future, Milan Design Week, IT (Cancelled due to COVID-19)
<b>2020</b>	talents, Ambiente, Frankfurt am Main, DE
<b>2019</b>	Dutch Design Week, Eindhoven, NL
<b>2019</b>	InnovationsFestival, Kiel, DE
<b>2018</b>	AtelierstipendiatInnen 2016-2018 stellen aus, Atelierhaus im Anscharpark, DE
<b>2016</b>	Wandellust, Porzellanikon Selb, DE
<b>2015</b>	Wandellust, Bröhan-Museum, Berlin, DE
<b>2015</b>	Masters, Atelierhaus Anscharpark, Kiel, DE
<b>2014</b>	The Connection, Gallery Kunstraum B, Kiel, DE
<b>2012</b>	Talente, Internationalen Handwerksmesse München, Munich, DE
<b>2012</b>	Alle machen jetzt in Keramik, Neue Saarbrücker Kunstverein, Saarbrücken, DE
<b>2011</b>	Abwarten und-, Gallery Marianne Heller, Heidelberg   Schloss vor Husum, DE
<b>2011</b>	Seapots, Teapots and a Sunday Tea Party, PT
<b>2011</b>	Graduation show, Xinyi Assembly Hall, Taipei, TW
<b>2009</b>	Kobe biennale, Kobe, JP

### Artist talks (Selected)

<b>2023</b>	Artist talk on the topic "Material research and conception of artistic workshop", School of Fine Arts, Taipei National University of the Arts, TW
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### Other professional activities (Selected)

<b>Sept.-Nov. 2023</b>	Art in public space "Capturing the colors of stones" invited by IntraGalactic arts collective, SKÅPET at the travel centre in Östersund, SE
<b>2022</b>	Rencontres Artistiques organized by Carré sur Seine, Paris, FR
<b>Since 2022</b>	Board of Directors of the Art Association House 8 (Vorstand des Kunstvereins Haus 8) Kiel, DE

## **Portfolio**

### **Selected works for Critical Friends**

Meng-Chan Yu

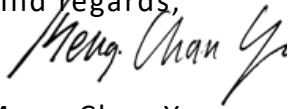
November 2023

Dear Critical Friends,

The selected works in this portfolio represent my artistic development over the past decades from materially oriented to conceptually based and supported by material research. In recent years I have been working with ecology and nature-related themes. Some of them represent blurred boundaries between art and scientific approach, which is connected to my proposed project for the Art Futures Fellowship in Athens: [sic] Space for International Cooperation and in Zutphen: Dat Bolwerck.

Thank you for reading my portfolio.

Kind regards,



Meng-Chan Yu

## Corresponding list of works

Nr.	Titles	Year	Page
1	Breathing soil	2023	9
2	Market vendors, soil microorganisms, the universe	2023	12
3	Natural or artificial I	2022	15
4	Time in Water	2023	17
5	Tea man - Object for daily use that reflects negative emotions	2015	19
6	Movement of clay	2013	21
7	Ugly ones	2012	23
8	Somewhere between sculpture and objects for daily use	2010	25









Photographer: Kist Liang





## Breathing soil

Dimensions: W 1178 cm x H 396 cm | Materials: local clay from Madou, Tainan, Taiwan, traditional chinese paper | Year of completion: 2023

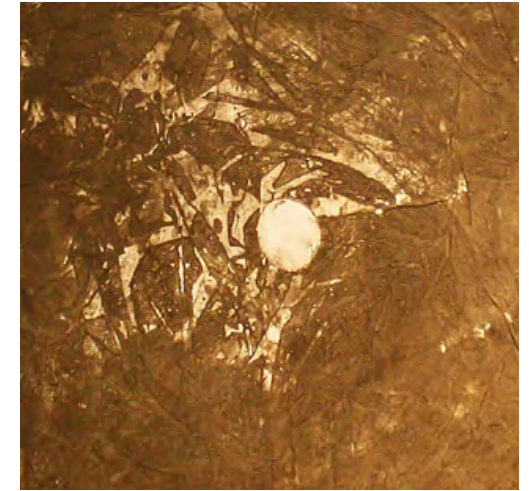
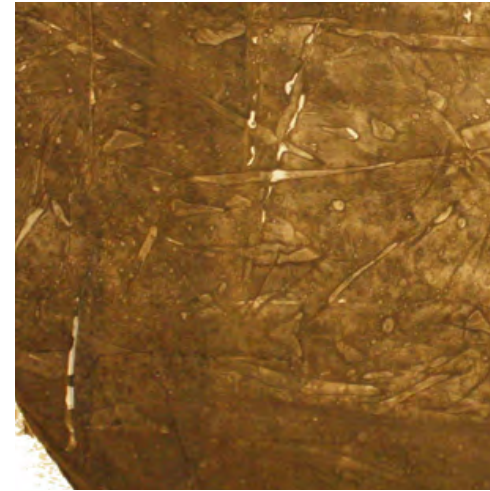
As an artist working with ceramics, I explore soil as a unique form of artistic expression. While I used to rely on store-bought materials of consistent quality, I've developed a curiosity about their origins.

Seeking a more local and distinctive approach, I embarked on an 80-day residency at Tsung-Yeh Arts and Cultural Center in Madou, Tainan. There, I collected 24 types of soil from the vibrant natural surroundings, orchards, and farmland. Back in the studio, I conducted experiments to emphasize each material's unique qualities. By using images created with local soil combined with traditional chinese paper, I invite the audience to view soil from a fresh perspective.

My wall installation consists of 29 pieces of traditional Chinese paper dyed with soil, inviting viewers to perceive soil from a fresh perspective. The inspiration comes from the color chart and the breathing nature of the soil. The colors come from the local soil. No extra man-made pigment was added.

*Documentary film about the artistic process: <https://youtu.be/881rKo5Y-jw?si=2Y0cVQiCyEEvYs5j>*



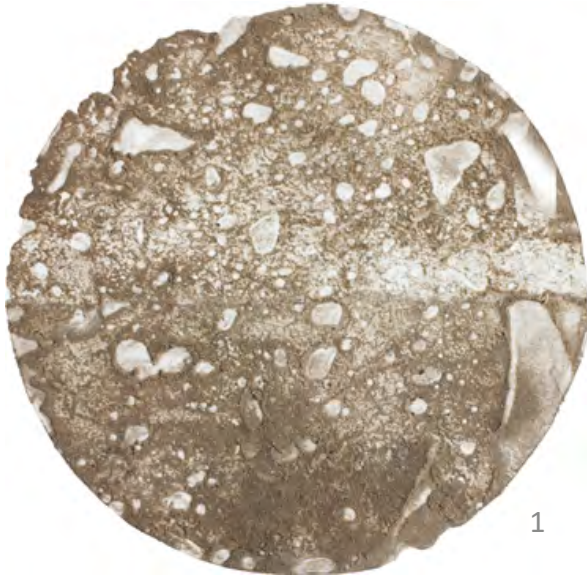


## Market vendors, soil microorganisms, the universe

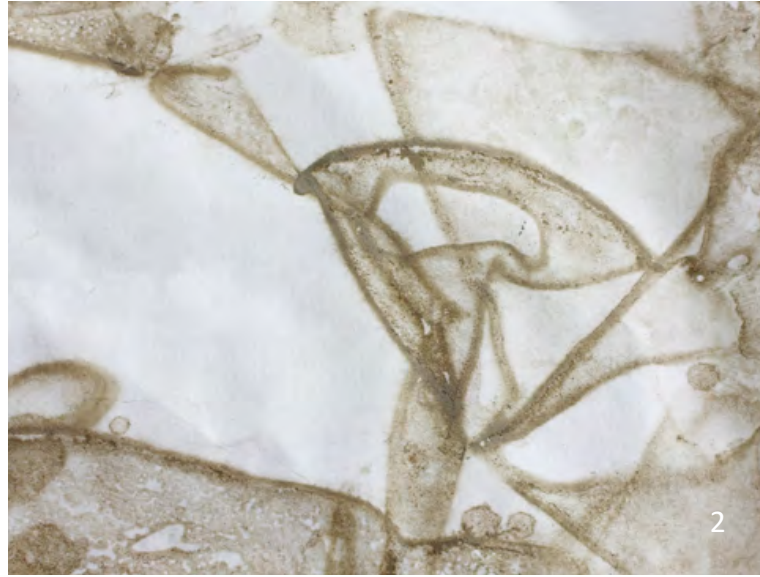
Dimensions: (from left to right) W 250 cm x H 110 cm;  
W 250 cm x H 180 cm; W 250 cm x H 220 cm | Materials:  
local clay from Madou, Tainan, Taiwan, traditional  
chinese paper | Year of completion: 2023

Soil, essential for human survival, connects diverse elements. I use different soil imaging techniques to represent the Market vendors (crops grown from the soil), soil microorganisms (a microscopic perspective. Crops thrive through collaboration with soil microorganisms.), and the universe (soil is part of the universe). Facing the installation, from left to right, it simultaneously embodies a process of transitioning from the concrete to the abstract, from the known to the vast unknown. To convey this concept, the vegetable market imagery is created using a familiar brush dipped in pigment (soil), while the soil microorganisms and the universe are produced using imaging methods developed during this artist-in-residence.

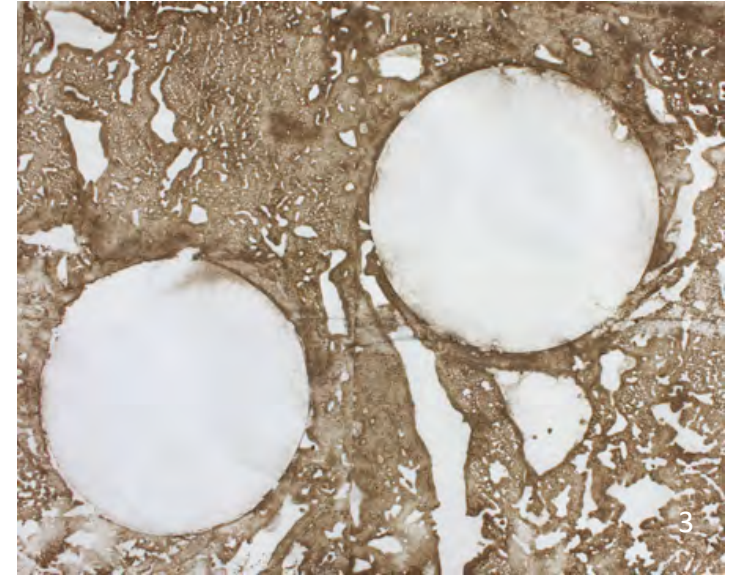




1



2



3

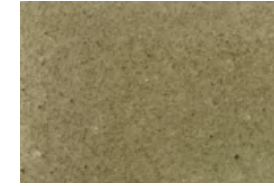
## Seeing water through soil

Materials: local clay from Madou, Tainan, Taiwan, traditional chinese paper

Water plays a crucial role in my soil-made image creation process, influencing the interaction between the soil and paper, as well as facilitating the transfer of materials. These variations in technique and the use of water contribute to diverse outcomes and visual effects. The absence of water may have affected the interaction between the soil and paper, potentially resulting in a different texture. For instance, when creating photo 1 and 2, I must wet the traditional Chinese paper first. However, for photo 3, I didn't wet the paper. Water also serves as an element that enables me to transfer soil onto another medium, in this case, traditional Chinese paper (as shown in page 4).



20, Pomelo farm  
23°10'00.6"N 120°14'21.6"E



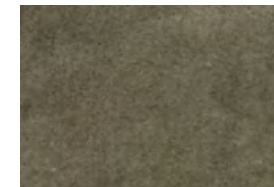
7, Land beside the Zengwen River  
23°11'00.4"N 120°16'51.7"E



11, Pomelo farm  
23°09'43.2"N 120°14'23.8"E



26, Jungle  
23°11'14.6"N 120°16'08.2"E



22, Sugarcane field  
23°09'59.4"N 120°15'59.9"E



13, Pomelo farm  
23°10'44.7"N 120°15'53.1"E



## Soil Color Chart - connection to the local region

For my work titled "Breathing Soil" and "Market Vendors, Soil Microorganisms, and the Universe," I collected soil samples in Madou, Tainan, Taiwan. Here, I present the 24 locations where the soil was sampled. From these locations, I have chosen 6 to demonstrate the relationship between the landscape and soil color.







## Natural or artificial I

Dimensions: various sizes; 16 stones | Materials: soil, sand and natural stones from Fränsta, Sweden, clay, color pigments for ceramics; fired in wood and electric kilns, unglazed | Year of completion: 2022

Rocks and soil are probably the most common and neglected visible elements on earth. In this era of rapid technological development, some might think they can override nature. Can humans really surpass nature?

I created this work during my artist-in-residence in Fränsta, Sweden in 2022. Inspired by the richness of nature in the area, I used locally sourced stones as inspiration and mixed clay with soil and sand, also sourced locally, to make artificial stones.

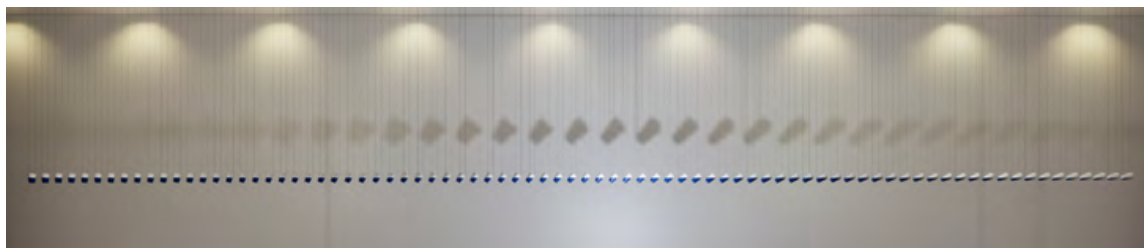
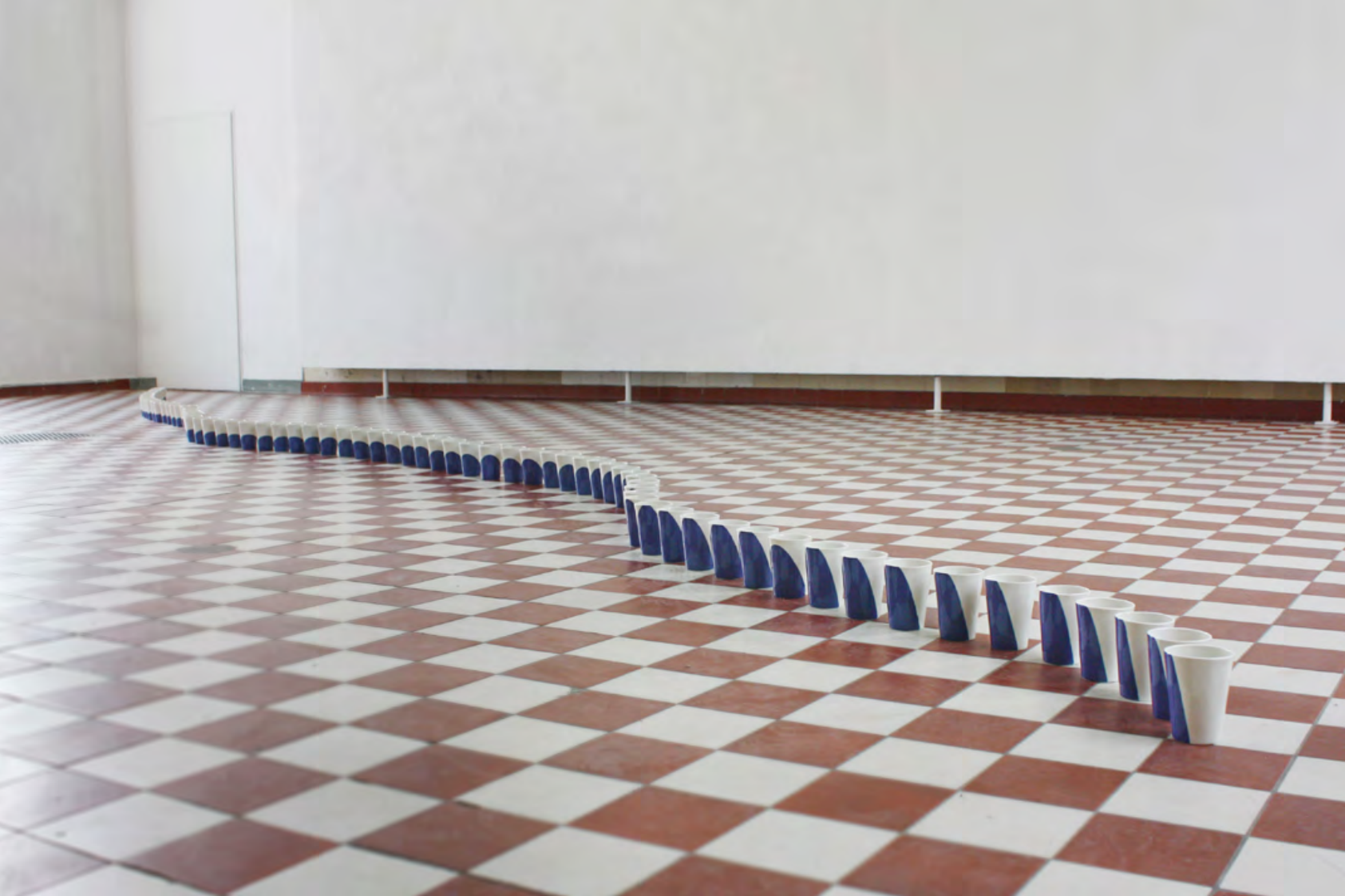


- 1 The middle one is a real natural stone; the left and right ones are the ones I made.
- 2 The natural stones that served as inspiration for this project
- 3 Soil and sand were collected from the local area and are ingredients in the creation of the man-made stones.
- 4 A part of the working process. While sketching, I took a closer look at the stones collected from nature.

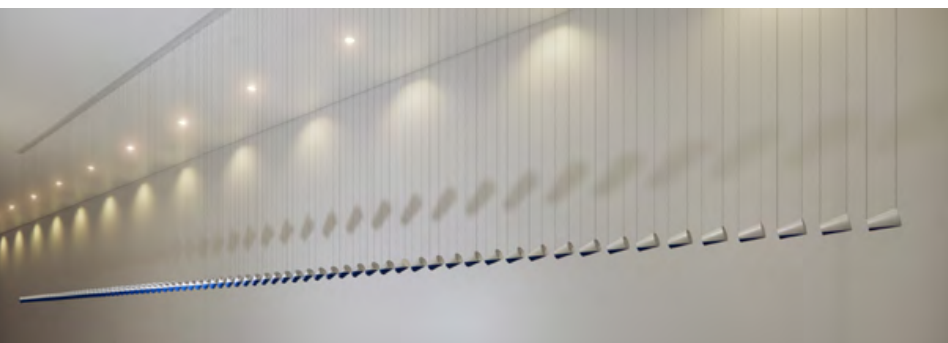
In this installation, 5 artificial stones are fired in a wood-fired kiln, which means that nature (fire and plant ash) largely re-influences the formation of the stones; 5 artificial stones are fired in an electric kiln, which means that I have more control over the appearance of the stones. There are 6 real natural stones from the local area. I present the natural and the artificial stones together and invite the audience to distinguish which ones are real or artificial.

Natural or artificial I has been selected to 2023 XVIII international contemporary ceramics award CERCO, Spain.





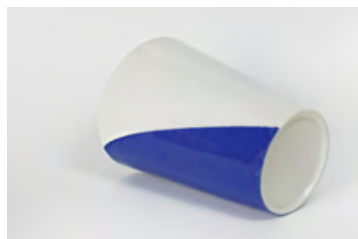
The image above: real pieces of porcelain. They will be suspended from the ceiling according to the exhibition space. | Image below: Sketch of the installation view.



## Time in Water

Dimension: 220 x 973 x 10 cm | Materials: white and blue colored porcelain, transparent glaze | Year of completion: 2023

Time and water are fundamental components of our lives. Both lack a physical form that can be held in our hands. Time is perpetually in motion. By freezing a moment in time, I materialize the transience of the moment.



The surface of water always remains horizontal. Porcelain paste is also liquid, thus it builds the same horizon. Inspired by this fact, I visualize time by dividing the process of a cup tipping over into 81 “frames”. A total of 81 blue-patterned porcelain elements will be created and hung in a row in the exhibitions. Each element is angled by one degree in relation to the previous one; nevertheless, the blue patterns remain invariably horizontal. The row begins with the element titling at 0° and ends at 80°, which almost lies down.

The principle is similar to a flipbook in that a series of images changes gradually from one page to the next. Each page is part of the simulating motion. With 81 frames for 1-second motion, the installation presents the details of the movements in a three-dimensional form that was previously imperceptible to the naked eye. Compared to flipbooks and films, viewers can go around the installation, decide a point to begin seeing, forwards or backward, and enjoy it from different perspectives.







## Tea man - Object for daily use that reflects negative emotions

Dimensions: 5.2 x 5.2 x 5 cm | Materials: colored porcelain, glaze, stainless steel | Year of completion: 2015

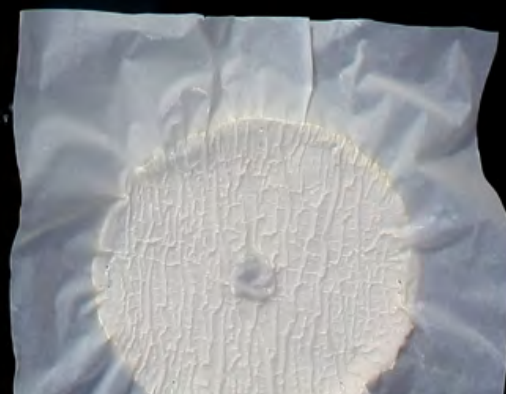
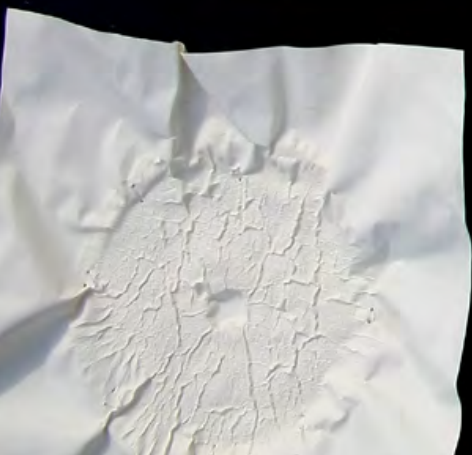
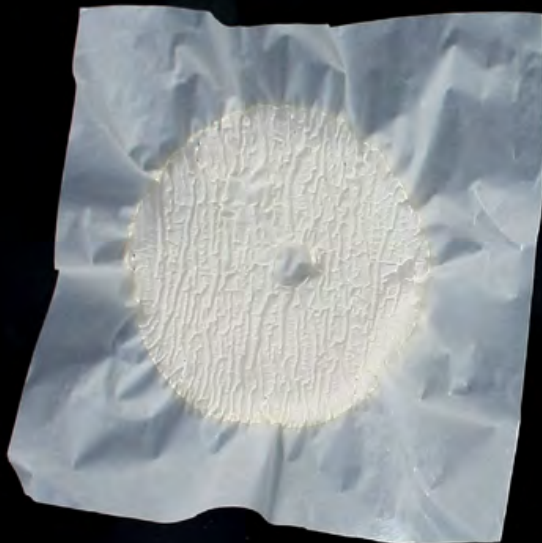
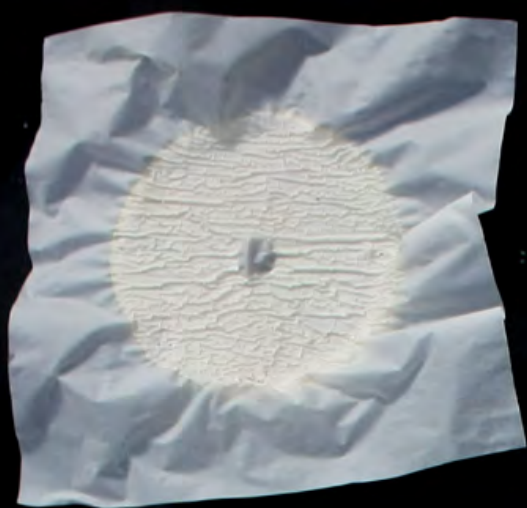
What are the values of life that we should pursue? Is there a norm that defines what is "normal" and what is "abnormal" in terms of lifestyle? For a while, I felt an inexplicable sense of depression. Is it normal to be depressed? How long is it "normal" to be depressed? I have to admit that both negative and positive feelings are part of being human. I wondered if the advertisements and everyday objects we encounter unconsciously instill certain values in us. What would it be like if there were objects for daily use that reflected not only positive but also negative emotions of people?

### The choice of the idea carrier and the use of materials

Water is a fundamental element for human beings. By using water as a base, tea can be found in many cultures. I found an interface between the art concept and people's daily life. To express the discomfort I feel, which is difficult to explain, I used dark blue colored porcelain as a base, covered with a green glaze. This blue-green color is hard to define and is rarely seen in food.

For the preparation of tea, we usually use hot water. At that moment when the hot water is poured over the object, the intangible pain is visualized.

With this work, I would like to reflect on how we deal with negative emotions and how we can adapt. Will it be possible in the future for everyday objects to reflect our diverse values? If so, what is it like to live in such a society?







## Movement of clay

Materials: clay (unfired), transparent paper |  
Year of completion: 2013

The material clay has two states: wet and dried. One forms the wet clay and lets it dry for firing. I am interested in the phase between the wet and dry state; the moment in which the clay transforms itself independently. I visualize this invisible process by placing a piece of paper on the wet clay body. The water leaves the clay and the clay becomes smaller and harder. In the process, the paper is pulled inward. The paper thus proves and visualizes the movement and transformation of the clay.







## Ugly ones

Materials: Ceramics, wood, videos, projector |  
Year of completion: 2012

The installation consists of a video and ceramic objects that can be divided into two groups, which are in recognizable contrast to each other. Objects from the first group have a rough surface, sharp edges, cracks and a heavy weight. The other have smooth textures and invite you to touch them.

I question the relationship between beauty criteria and value. In order to create the visually appealing, that is, "beautiful" ceramics, many regulations must be followed in the making process. An aesthetically successful work

is uniform in texture and free of flawed elements. The compulsion to conform to these specifications inhibits not only the creative development of the artist, but also the autonomous interpretation of the viewer. During the process of making the objects from the first category, I deliberately dispense with aesthetic norms and focus instead on the unfolding and results of artistic genesis.

In the market, one unconsciously associates the value of a good with its price. On a ceramic market I present the "beautiful" ceramics with low price and the "ugly" with high price. In the exhibition, the video shows the reactions of potential buyers at the market.





## Somewhere between sculpture and objects for daily use

Dimensions: 10 x 10 x 13 cm cm / each | Materials: clay, glaze | Year of completion: 2010

Categorizing helps us to understand things and events in our environment more easily. The color gray, however, lies between the extreme poles of black and white. The gray opens up new possibilities to combine and at the same time harmonize the black and the white. With this project I explore the gray zone between a sculpture and an everyday object.

## Contact

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