



Festival banners, Ian Jones, Jasmine Pejčić, Cui Jiuxiao, Simcha Ewen Chen and Chinese artist

International Masters Exhibition at the Fourth International SIVA Woodfire Ceramics Festival

MARC LEUTHOLD

Planners of the 4th Shanghai International Woodfire Festival had a unique challenge this year. How do you have an international festival in a country with closed borders?

The solution was simple. Festival organizers contacted me with the following mandate: “Fifteen international masters for an online exhibition.”

In selecting artists, I remembered the focus of the Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts: excellence through innovation. With little notice, I gathered materials from 50 artists I have admiringly watched for years. Some of the artists (representing 13 countries) I contacted declined or did not respond. One artist told me they don’t participate in online exhibitions. This response made me think about climate change. Being a sensory-centred person, I understand the visceral pleasures of “real” haptic experiences; however, the planet is in a state of flux from human indulgence. Online exhibitions generate far lower CO₂ emissions and have the potential to reach a larger audience. Nevertheless, this exhibition was not undertaken from a perspective of reducing climate-

altering emissions. Instead, this experience induced me to rethink one of my own biases.

There would be no prizes or singular recognition of individual works. Every artist in this exhibit is a “winner” and it is for the viewer to decide and make judgements (if you choose to). This is also why all the artwork and artists are presented in a similar format: a portrait and the artwork with identifying information. Every work in the exhibition is potentially equally important.

A further consideration was the definition of an international master. I focused on artwork significance. Some of the artists have barely finished school. Others are near the end of their career. Most are in prime, middling years. Some of the artists are tech-savvy multimedia geniuses.

One premier European master does not have a computer or an email account. Another great European master, in her 80th year, was preparing for a solo exhibition at a top ceramics gallery in Europe while finishing up the lead role in an international symposium. Some artists, such as the French and English artists, are the sole representa-

Brooke Armstrong, **Flourish**, USA





Martha Rieger, **Medusa**, Israel

tives of their country. Others are clusters of artists from a single country.

Festival organizers assumed that all the artists would be based outside China. I deliberately included Chinese artists because China has many international masters. In some cases – just as with some Western artists, a few of the China-based artists enjoy more recognition outside of their home country. Also, as globalism evolves, nationalities become blurred: one artist, an American, is based in China. Another artist, a Chinese person, is based in USA.

Disappointments include not exhibiting (due to many factors) artists from

Africa, South America, India, and every country in the world. I approached artists from some of these regions, but I was not able to secure materials in time for the exhibition. Some of these artists declined or did not respond to my queries. Often in looking at an exhibition, I have thought, “Wow, how could they not include so-and-so?” Now I know the answer to that question: a curator’s wish-list is smashed by the reality of what is possible.

What unifies this work?

All of it is: Distinct, singular, unique, original, innovative, visually engaging and memorable.

Nikola Knezevic, **Wishing Well**, Serbia



It will likely stand the test of time.

Timelessness: when I look at some old exhibition catalogues or journals, I am astounded by the prescience of curators like Paul Smith, Director of the American Craft Museum and Curator of the Poetry of the Physical exhibition. Ron Kuchta of the Everson Museum. Lois Moran and Pat Dandignac of American Craft magazine. Bill Hunt of Ceramics Monthly. Elaine Henry of Ceramics, Art and Perception. Gustav Weiss of New Ceramics. Or Sevim Cizer in curating the artists of her International Ceramics Symposium in Izmir, Turkey in 2001.

How did they pick such good artists? Looking at 20-50 year old publications or events, I am astounded to see that they selected people who later emerged as major artists. How did these decision-makers know? In writing about artists and curating exhibitions, I hope to measure up to these role models.

Exhibition Contributors:

- Elina Titane, Latvia – Martha Sullivan, USA – Shoji Satake, USA – Robert Boomer Moore, USA – Martha Rieger, Israel – Patricia Cassone, France – Simcha Even-Chen, Israel – Shamai Gibsh, USA – Sin-ying Ho, USA – Anna Holcombe, USA – Wangguodong, China – GengXue, Beijing, China – Steve Hilton, USA – Ryan Mitchell, China – ZhouDingFang, China – Jiansheng Li, China – Cui Jiuxiao, China – Lee Taxoo, Korea – Hsu Chao Ping, Taiwan – Ilona Romule, Latvia – Cheng-li Su, Taiwan – Jasmine Pejic, Serbia – Ofra Kutz, Israel – Brooke Armstrong, USA – Rafael Perez, Spain – Zehra Cobanli, Turkey – Laszlo Fekete, Hungary – An Ran, China – Linda Lighton, USA – Michael Flynn, UK – Slobodan Kojic, Serbia – Maria Geszler, Hungary – Imre Schrammel, Hungary – Greg Daly, Australia – Evelyne Schoenmann, Switzerland – Janet DeBoos, Australia – Jan Guy, Australia – Ljubica Jovic Knezevic, Serbia – Nikola Knezevic, Serbia – Velimir Vukicevic, Serbia – Arnold Annen, Switzerland – Violette Fassbaender, Switzerland – Ian Jones, Australia – Palma Babos, Hungary – Mehmet Tuzum Kizilcan, Turkey – Elaine Olafson Henry, USA – Moraig McKenna, Australia – Harris Deller, USA – Anita McIntyre, Australia

MARC LEUTHOLD

is an artist who has been invited to teach and create art in many locations worldwide. Leuthold has exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the China Art Museum in Shanghai.
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Sin-ying Ho, USA



Slobodan Kojic and his Wall, Serbia

Palma Babos, Hungary



Elina Titane, Sacral Plays, Latvia



Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts SIVA President Dean and former Dean with online exhibitor Linda Lighton artwork

