



Ceramic artist **Veena Chandran** uses her architectural sensibilities to create stunning works of art in clay



Circumvolution



Sculptural work-part of the Sci-fi series



Part of the work created while working at a symposium in Estonia

How did you get drawn to ceramic art?

VC: My professional career started as an architect working in this ever expanding city of Pune. But I soon realized that commercial architecture was just not for me. I love architecture, I love the essence of it but I don't love the kind of architecture that's growing in my city and could not see myself doing that for the rest of my life. I started pursuing my other interests – animation, painting, baking - but they were all temporary. I could not find something that would challenge me constantly while providing me immense joy and pleasure.

I had attended a small week-long pottery workshop while I was still studying architecture and knew I enjoyed it.

However, I never thought at that point that clay would soon become my life.

I went to Andretta, near Dharamshala to learn pottery for three months but that still didn't seal the deal for me. After coming back I started teaching architecture – trying to instill better values in the soon-to-be architects, along with dabbling a little in clay. The year 2009 was the turning point when I got selected to learn under internationally renowned ceramic artists Ray Meeker and Deborah Smith of Golden Bridge Pottery in Pondicherry. That's when my life began to have a direction and purpose.

Clay has since then been the driving force in my life.

Tell us something about your journey from architecture to ceramic art.

VC: Though I might not work as an architect, my ceramic work is hugely influenced by architecture. I am still building – maybe not brick and concrete structures, but clay structures, be it functional ware or sculptures. All the basic principles of architecture hold true no matter what scale one builds in.



Detail of jar

Get your **print** copy of **POOL Magazine** today!



Creative
INDIA

To subscribe visit Indipool Shop at
www.indipool.com

POOL Magazine is available on iOS, Android, Web, Amazon and Windows 8
www.magzter.com/IN/Indi-Design/pool

CERAMIC DESIGN

How do you balance hands-on work in the studio with teaching architecture?

VC: I have still not figured out that perfect balance between juggling all the various things I do. I like and enjoy the spontaneity that's involved in not having everything planned out. I have started spending lesser time in college and more time in the studio in recent years. The studio work luckily has increased quite a bit and I do need that extra time there but as of now I don't think I want to completely stop teaching architecture either. I have realized that every time I enter college, I leave having learnt new things from the students, which inspires my work at the studio. I get fresh ideas and get exposed to so much more and I truly enjoy teaching architecture.

What would you advise young ceramicists?

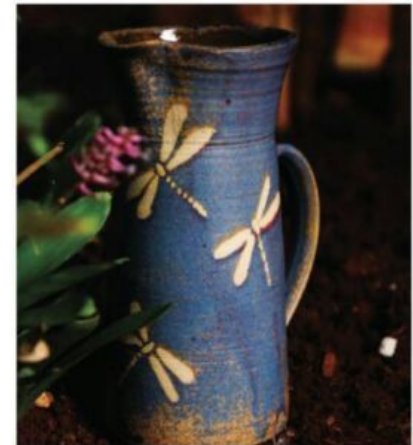
VC: Keep at it! Clay teaches you a lot of life's lessons, so listen to it. Teach and share your knowledge; it's a major way to increase awareness of the medium. We potters tend to form an amazing community. No matter where in the world I have been, I have always felt like I belong because of this community. Be a part of it in whichever way you can. It's incredibly fun and challenging at the same time.

Where do you see ceramic art in the future?

VC: I see ceramic art in every single person's household in the near future. Maybe it's just wishful thinking but I do hope we start replacing plastic with ceramics in our homes. I hope people start appreciating its beauty and also the benefits of cooking, storing and eating out of ceramic ware. I also hope that ceramic art starts being treated at par with other art forms. A lot of people are starting to view it as a serious art and art



Light



First international exhibit

collectors have also started investing in ceramics. I hope that the situation only gets better from here on.

chandran.veena@gmail.com



Functional ware for an Italian restaurant



Functional work - dinner plates and glasses

I also teach, and keep telling my students that the training we receive as architects molds us to be better designers and thinkers: it does not matter what you decide to design once you finish college. This becomes the base with which you look at the world.

I cannot separate or take out architecture from within me. It is an integral part of who I am and I merge it and use it all the time while working with clay.

When did you start Studio Farishtey?

VC: I started Studio Farishtey at the end of 2010 after I finished a two-year stint in Pondicherry, where I was training as a ceramicist.

I run the show singlehandedly and take pride in crafting every single piece by hand. Each piece is unique and painstakingly made with love.

Although I work alone, I have a huge team that supports

me without which there is no way all of this would be possible. My husband and my parents are the backbone of Studio Farishtey. Students who come to learn ceramics fill the studio with great energy and vibes that make working and teaching so much more enjoyable.

What inspires you?

VC: Inspiration comes from anything and everything... trees, birds, my dog and cat, rain, people, architecture, journeys, experiences, circumstances. It's hard to say that there is one particular influence or inspiration in my work. A common binding thought process has always been form and texture. I think this comes from my architecture background. I see the world in forms and shapes and recreate those in clay. Inspirations come from everyday images, things which you see every day and get imprinted subconsciously in your head. Those images get translated in clay and take a whole new form.

What is the most exciting part of the ceramic art process?

VC: Nothing gives me more joy than firing a wood fired kiln - the whole

adrenaline rush I get when I add wood to a wood fired kiln, the process of thinking of the path of the flame while loading the kiln, understanding the play of ash in the whole process, the hard work involved, and the exhaustion at the end of a 24-hour firing.

start appreciating the effort that goes into making hand crafted products and encourage hand-made items as against mass manufactured products.

I realized that the easiest way to build a market for my work was to educate the people in its process. So whether it's classes or workshops or presentations, once people understand what goes behind making a piece they automatically understand its value and the market for the product increases.

Where are your creations available?

VC: I retail out of a couple of stores in Pune and regularly take part in exhibitions in various cities in India and abroad. I also rely heavily on word of mouth, and hope that everyone that enters the studio has only happy things about my work to pass on to other people. I enjoy working on customized orders and commission work and working in close contact with the client.

Getting my hands in clay is also a completely mesmerizing and challenging process. The feel of clay, the smooth earthiness of the material, its plasticity, and the ability to mold it however I want even while I understand that clay has its limits...

Did you come up against any hurdles in the practice of your art?

VC: The biggest hurdle when I started was trying to make a living out of selling my work. When I started off, ceramics was not recognized as an art form. Even now, ceramic art is not held at par with other art forms like painting, but that is slowly changing.

For me anything that I make is art, whether it is a purely functional mug or a sculpture. A thought process goes into making a mug as much as it does when making a sculpture. I wish more people would



Mugs



Sculptural work-part of Sci-fi series