

# ROSWITHA WINDE-PAULS

"It fascinates me to push porcelain to the limit"

Christine Otto



Ceramic artist Roswitha Winde-Pauls is fascinated by a minimal formal vocabulary. "Simple, sometimes severe vessel forms made of porcelain," is how she describes her work herself.

I first saw porcelain by Winde-Pauls at the Töpfermarkt in Frechen in May 2011. The thin-walled yet powerful pieces that usually have a minimised footprint, made an impression not only on me. Many of the visitors to the market spent some time at her stand. But the ceramist quickly conveys the message that her work is not only beautiful to look at but it is also functional.

Roswitha Winde-Pauls was born in Magdeburg in 1973. She did a course in American studies, with minor subjects of art history and book science at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz. Parallel to her M.A. course, in 1996 she also began to study fine art specialising in ceramics at Johannes Gutenberg under Prof. Volker Ellwanger. She graduated in 2000.

One year after graduation, she received a three year scholarship from the Dr Hans Hoch Foundation to work at the Stadt-

above **Cylindrical Vessels**, h 13 / 6.8cm Ø 18.5 / 25.5 cm, 2013

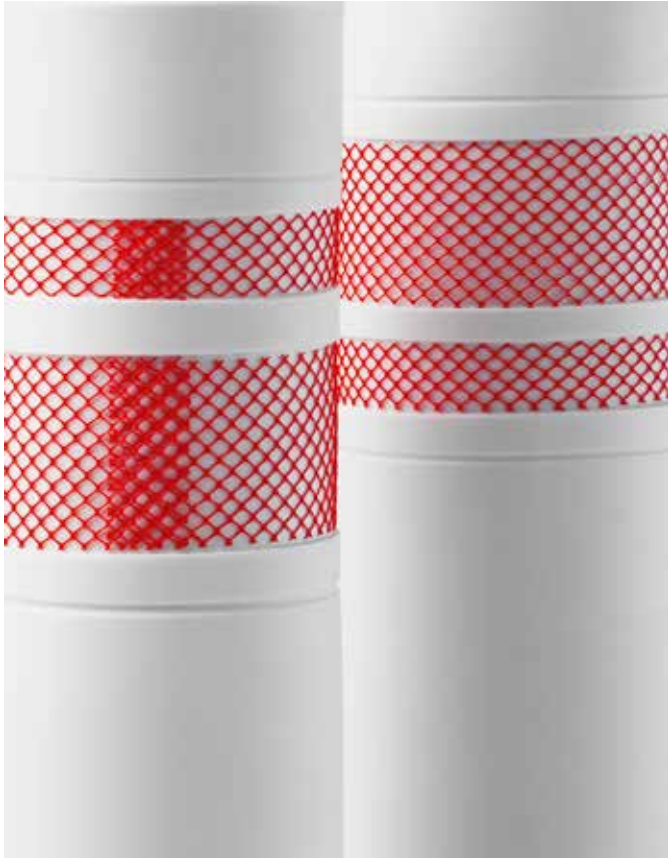
opposite page  
left **Cylindrical Vase with plastic netting**, h 39-41cm,  
Ø 8-8.5 cm, 2013

right **Cylindrical Vase with silicone tape**, h 40 / 41.5 cm,  
Ø 8 cm

töpferei in Neumünster. Nine years ago, she set up her own studio at Wotersen estate in the south east of Schleswig-Holstein, where she still works today.

It is thanks to her M.A. course in American studies that Roswitha Winde-Pauls took up ceramics. During a study trip to Mississippi, she was a guest student for two semesters in the art department, focussing on ceramics and drawing. She remembers this time very clearly: "Americans have a wonderful

Winde-Pauls mainly draws her inspiration for these beautiful, wafer-thin porcelain vessels from nature.



gift for inspiring others. So I came back to Germany highly motivated and then I finally decided to apply to study fine art, specialising in ceramics."

In her intermediate exams, Winde-Pauls discovered porcelain as a medium, Limoges porcelain to be more exact. She has remained faithful to this material right up to the present – she is fascinated by the "bright, white, finely grained material", she says, and it is only with this material that she is able to give shape to her creative ideas. And this she achieves in impressive fashion. Her bowls, vases and beakers not only stand out for their immaculate form, but they also have a function. This is especially important to Winde-Pauls. "I like being able to use these works, integrating them in everyday life. This creates a greater sense of familiarity between the object and the owner."

The cool white of the material and the simple, clear design of the ceramics complement each other perfectly. But before the thin-walled vessels are taken from the kiln, each piece has undergone several processes. After being formed on the wheel and various stages of drying, the surface receives treatment:

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grooves are cut in the clay so that silver threads or silicone tapes can find their place on the vessels; others are treated with wax. The unwaxed areas are wiped away with a moist sponge. This creates walls of varying thicknesses.

Some pieces are given subtly coloured highlights, when Winde-Pauls applies coloured engobes with delicate brush strokes. Only when the surface treatment is completed does the bisuque firing to 1,000°C take place. After this first firing, the ceramist glazes some of the pieces. Then comes the glaze firing to 1,300°C in reduction in a gas kiln. And even then, Winde-

Pauls continues to work on her pots: some pieces are smoothed and sanded, others are combined with non-ceramic materials.

Winde-Pauls mainly draws her inspiration for these beautiful, wafer-thin porcelain vessels from nature.

She made vases entitled "Flipper" for a themed exhibition. Every single piece is reminiscent of the silhouette of a fish diving into the water. She likes to present these vessels as a group. The size of the pieces ranges from 20 – 38 cm in height. They are made as thin as possible to represent a great sense of lightness. And yet for all their beauty, all of these pieces are one thing above all others: usable.

The group "Tornado" stands out not only because of its height and the uncluttered form, but also because these vessels have a particularly small foot. The vessel form is reminiscent of the heart of a tornado. If we look into these vessels, which are up to 48 cm in height, our eye is drawn to the bottom by the broad funnel shape. Winde-Pauls has made these pieces as thin as possible too, and thus it is all the more surprising to discover how steady these porcelain pieces are.

Along side the small footprint, the elaborate and unusual surface treatment of many of her pieces is another outstanding feature, making her work unmistakable and instantly recognisable.

The artist is especially drawn to combinations of porcelain

below group of vessels, "Flipper", h 20-38 cm, Ø 9.5-20 cm, 2011

opposite "Tornado", h 30 cm, Ø 29.5 cm, 2009





photos – Bernd Perlbach

and non-ceramic materials. The colour of the Limoges porcelain body offers the ceramist a bright but neutral basis on which she can give rein to her passion for combining different materials.

Since early 2012, the classic aura of her wonderful porcelain is further enhanced by finest silver wire. These wires, which Winde-Pauls winds around some of her work after the last firing, awaken associations with thin pencil lines.

To achieve this effect to the maximum, grooves are carefully thrown on the surface of the pots, in which the silver wire is later wound.

Especially with the cylindrical vases, measuring up to 41 cm tall and 8.5 cm in diameter, Winde-Pauls uses the extraordinarily fine grain of the body in combination with other materials to decorate the surface. Particularly for a pupil of glaze maestro Professor Volker Ellwanger, it was an independent step for her to adopt non-ceramic materials in her work. Since summer 2013, her cylindrical vessels are completed with red silicone tape or red plastic netting.

But nevertheless, ceramic colour has not entirely disappeared from her work. Red engobe lines are frequently in evidence, initially appearing as a delicate, random line on the vessel surface, but over time increasingly being used more struttually.

For the artist, the colour red stands for a contrast to the white body, but the red nevertheless does not distract from the form, instead enhancing it. Especially these pieces demonstrate the intuitive surface treatment, which Winde-Pauls allows complete freedom to when she is making the individual pieces on the wheel.

Simply the fact that Roswitha Winde-Pauls throws her aesthetic works in porcelain up to a height of 40 cm and a diameter of 30 cm is evidence of her technical skills. Porcelain is often described as the most marvellous ceramic material, but at the same time, it is considered the most difficult body to work with. Using porcelain demands special care and craftsmanship, from the shaping to the firing. This is certainly precisely the attraction of working with this material for Winde-Pauls, a material with so many fascinating properties. "In comparison to normal clay, you have to throw more carefully and with greater concentration, allowing the body to dry more slowly. During the firing, the porcelain has a tendency to soften and distort, unfortunately it is pretty tricky."

For the exhibition, A Feast for the Senses at the Museum in Eckernförde in October 2013, three Danish and three German ceramists presented tableware for a selected menu for 24 place settings. One of the Germans involved in designing the show was Roswitha Winde-Pauls.

The theme was pre-defined: tableware. Although the ceramist concentrates mainly on one-off vessels, she took up this challenge, and surprisingly: "Through this exhibition, I have become much more open towards tableware."

Can we look forward to tableware at the Frechen Töpfermarkt on 17-18 May? I can hardly wait to find out!

**Christine Otto** is the curator of the KERAMION in Frechen. Since 2006 the KERAMION has organised the Frechen Töpfermarkt and since 2007, Christine Otto has been responsible for organising the market.

**Roswitha Winde-Pauls** was born in Burg near Magdeburg in 1973. From 1992-1998 she studied for an M.A. in American studies with art history and book science minors at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, and parallel to this, she took fine art with ceramics as a special option under Prof. Volker Ellwanger. After work experience with the publisher Arnold in Stuttgart, she had a three year scholarship from the Dr Hans Hoch Foundaton in Neumünster at the Stadttöpfererei. In 2004, she opened her own studio on the Wotersen Estate in Schleswig-Holstein. Since 2001, she has participated regularly in solo and group exhibitions in Germany and abroad.

**ROSWITHA WINDE-PAULS  
PORZELLANDESIGN**

Gut Wotersen 12  
21514 Wotersen, Germany  
Tel.: +49 (0) 4158-890379  
[www.winde-pauls.de](http://www.winde-pauls.de)  
[roswitha@winde-pauls.de](mailto:roswitha@winde-pauls.de)

