

COPENHAGEN CERAMICS

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Press Release:

Bente Skjøttgaard: Cumulonimbus

27 March – 26 April 2014

Cumulonimbus are the kings among clouds – the ultimate stage in the development of a cloud of the cumulus type. At Copenhagen Ceramics Bente Skjøttgaard shows new results of her ceramic elaborations on the cloud theme: the weight of clay as a means to express the airy and intangible.

Over the last five years Bente Skjøttgaard has been working with clouds as her subject. For the exhibition at Copenhagen Ceramics her clouds have reached the Cumulonimbus stage. Cumulonimbus are the kings among clouds – the ultimate stage in the development of a cloud of the cumulus type. Cumulonimbus are formed when smaller cumulus clouds merge into a bigger formation; the thermal winds increase within the cloud and it stacks up and rises vertically. Fascinatingly, cumulonimbus clouds loom up, heralding bad weather conditions.

Bente Skjøttgaard explains: 'My clouds now stack up and the scientific source of inspiration is being transformed into personal, imaginary cloud compositions. Somewhere between the recognizable and the undefined. To a certain degree they are figurative, but always with the starting point in the qualities of clay as regards texture as well as balance. My clouds intend to neutralize gravity. To work with ceramics always means to be occupied with the heaviness of clay. The pivotal point of my work is the natural thermal rising of clouds versus the weight of the clay, and the cloud inspiration continues to provide material for new ceramic ideas: The clouds must be floating and in motion. They should be intense, synthetic marshmallows in psychedelic colours – the colours of the sky: red, orange and purple. In short, clay that doesn't want to be clay, yet it must be highly ceramic. I am looking for a glaze, that seems frayed, crisp and porous to mimic the changeability and volatile volume of clouds. A shimmering mass of electrifying, overexposed, fluffy scrawl, that makes focusing difficult for the eye'.

Clay is initially soft, then hardens during the firing, while a cloud remains unattainable, vaporous and constantly in motion, retaining the ability to transform into something else. This 'non-static-ness' makes clouds interesting to explore sculpturally, and to relate to as volume, material, motion and colour.

Bente Skjøttgaard makes rough sketches, but the clouds evolve during construction, partly because they rely on balance and what is actually possible to realize in clay. She is always trying to keep the freshness of the sketch and avoid the objects becoming too rigid as finished results. Moreover, ceramics has an inherent unpredictability because it is out of your hands during the high-temperature firing. Here everything again becomes soft, so keeping the balance right is important. The clouds must be in motion, but they should not be tipping over. This unpredictability is a challenge – opponent and co-player at the same time. You are handed new gifts - more or less intentionally – leaving you to decide how to make use of them.

Over the years, Bente Skjøttgaard has shown her works at numerous exhibitions in Denmark and abroad, e.g. Design Miami, USA, 2013 (with Galerie Pierre Marie Giraud); 'Aire de Repos' (solo), Galerie Maria Lund, Paris, 2013; 'We would be delighted to see', Art Center Silkeborg Bad, Silkeborg, DK 2013; MINDCRAFT 12, by Danish Crafts, Milan, 2012. In 2010 she made 'Traces', an art installation along the ancient road Hærvejen in Jutland - a project by the Danish Arts Foundation.

Her works are represented in many museums and private collections, e.g. Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Fond National d'Art Contemporain, France; Musée National de Céramique de Sèvres, France; The Danish Arts Foundation; Holstebro Art Museum, DK; Erik Veistrup Collection at Museum of International Ceramic Art, Denmark; Annie and Otto Johs. Detlefs' Foundation, DK. In 2005 she was among the first recipients of the Annie and Otto Johs. Detlefs Ceramic Award.

The exhibition will be opened on March 27 at 5 pm by Maria Lund, who has been Bente Skjøttgaard's gallerist over the last ten years, and who last year invited Copenhagen Ceramics to collaborate on the show, 'Terres - Copenhagen Ceramics Invites' at her gallery in Paris.

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Further information is available at www.copenhagenceramics.com
from where photos can also be downloaded.

Copenhagen Ceramics
Smallegade 46, baghuset, 2. sal tv
2000 Frederiksberg

Contact: Martin Bodilsen Kaldahl
martin@copenhagenceramics.com

Wednesday — Friday: 13 – 17

Saturday: 12 – 16