



Turning clay into living art

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Hoorik's ceramic – Clowns

The ceramic artistry of Hoorik Issakhanian

Glendale, Calif. - Turning clay into a piece of art is no small feat. If you have ever attempted to manipulate a pottery wheel while earthen clay seeps uncontrollably through your fingers, you know the difficulty in working with this malleable medium. Hoorik Issakhanian can tell you, however, that the process of working clay into a beautiful creation is simply magical and rewarding.

"Clay makes you think more creatively because it's three-dimensional... and it's functional," says Issakhanian, who got her start in ceramics design five years ago. Since then, her work has been featured at the American Museum of Ceramic Art, the American Ceramic Society, as well as the "Artsakh is Armenia" photography and art exhibition. In addition, Issakhanian was among the 60 finalists, out of a pool of 700 international entries, whose work was selected to be exhibited at Cal State Pomona's annual Ink & Clay Competition. Her signature style, which incorporates human figures onto glazed surfaces, has earned recognition for aesthetics and functionality alike.

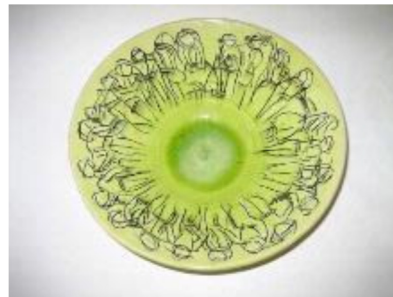
Issakhanian feels that the process, from beginning to end, is what makes ceramic art so unique. "The experience involves interacting with earth (clay), water, air, and fire, the most fundamental elements of the universe," she says. "These elements provide their own unique expressions." Shaping and molding that which oozes from her hands gives clay a very human dimension. Then comes the fateful kiln, which fires the clay until it solidifies. Afterwards glazing, which protects the surface from harsh environments, gives the product that smooth, glowing, and colorful complexion.

Issakhanian has also mastered the use of iron oxide to literally "draw" pictures onto her ceramic bowls. Applying her stylized figurative studies to a bowl, she portrays musicians, dancers, and other human figures that almost seem to come alive on the clay "canvas" - as though fusing a painting and a sculpture together. The possibilities of creating work with clay, she says, are infinite.

Born in Iran to a sculptor father, Issakhanian was exposed to art at an early age. Her family later moved to London, where she attended Ealing College, studying fashion and textile design.

After settling in the United States, Issakhanian found work in textile design and furniture painting/design. She even had a short stint as a stylist at Nordstrom, where she created window displays. It was not until she studied at Glendale Community College's ceramics department that her craft truly began to take shape. "I wanted to learn the craft first," she says. By first learning to manipulate clay into objects such as bowls, she was able eventually to meld her love of drawing and design with the craft of clay.

Glaze, oxides, and the "unending challenges that ceramics offers" are the essence of her work, Issakhanian says. Her inspiration is the human form. "I love to draw people and the ambience that they create," she explains. "I think human beings are the most complex and interesting creatures in the world." These days, Issakhanian says, she is often approached by more traditional ceramics buyers, and believes it is her job to give them a different perspective. "I'm not thinking of selling, I'm thinking of creating," she says. "It's never about selling."



**Hoorik's creations are inspired by the human form.
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