

Rita Spaan-Klauss (1963) : Ceramics

Having started her creative career as a fashion designer, Rita Spaan-Klauss became more and more attracted to working with ceramics. For her 40st birthday she decided that the best present she could have, was studying ceramics. She took a three year course in ceramic techniques at the SBB Gouda, then topped it with an extra year of glazing techniques, a year of throwing techniques and a 'masterproof' of throwing.



Today she works at her own ceramic studio in Rotterdam. At DEiNiNG a series of ceramic pebble boxes is on show. In this series Spaan-Klauss combines throwing ceramics with different firing and glazing techniques to create boxes that look just like pebbles on the outside and have bright blue colors on the inside. Inspiration for these boxes was found on a pebbled beach in Scotland.



The pebbles are thrown on a potter's wheel as one hollow shape and then cut in two halves. These are glued back together for firing. This is to overcome differences in shrinkage that would otherwise occur. Different types of decorative techniques are being used to give the boxes their stone-like appearance. Some pebbles are decorated with glaze in an almost painted fashion, other pebbles are made by roughly mixing together different colors of clay.

A third technique used is Raku. The pebbles are heated to 1000⁰C (1800 degrees F), the kiln is opened and each molten glazed pebble is removed with a pair of tongs. Thermal shock of this rapid cooling is stressful on the pottery and causes crackling of the glaze, known as crazing. The extremely hot pebbles are placed into containers of sawdust which produces thick black smoke. The carbon is wicked into the porous clay body, blackening the clay and accentuating the crackle pattern of the glaze. After about 15 minutes the pebbles are removed from the smoking chamber and doused with water. The soot covered pebbles are scrubbed clean to expose the crazed surface and unusual patterns created by this firing process.

The insides of the pebbles are all glazed in shades of blue, sometimes glass is used to give extra depth.

