

FRANZISKA M. KÖLLNER

MONIKA GASS

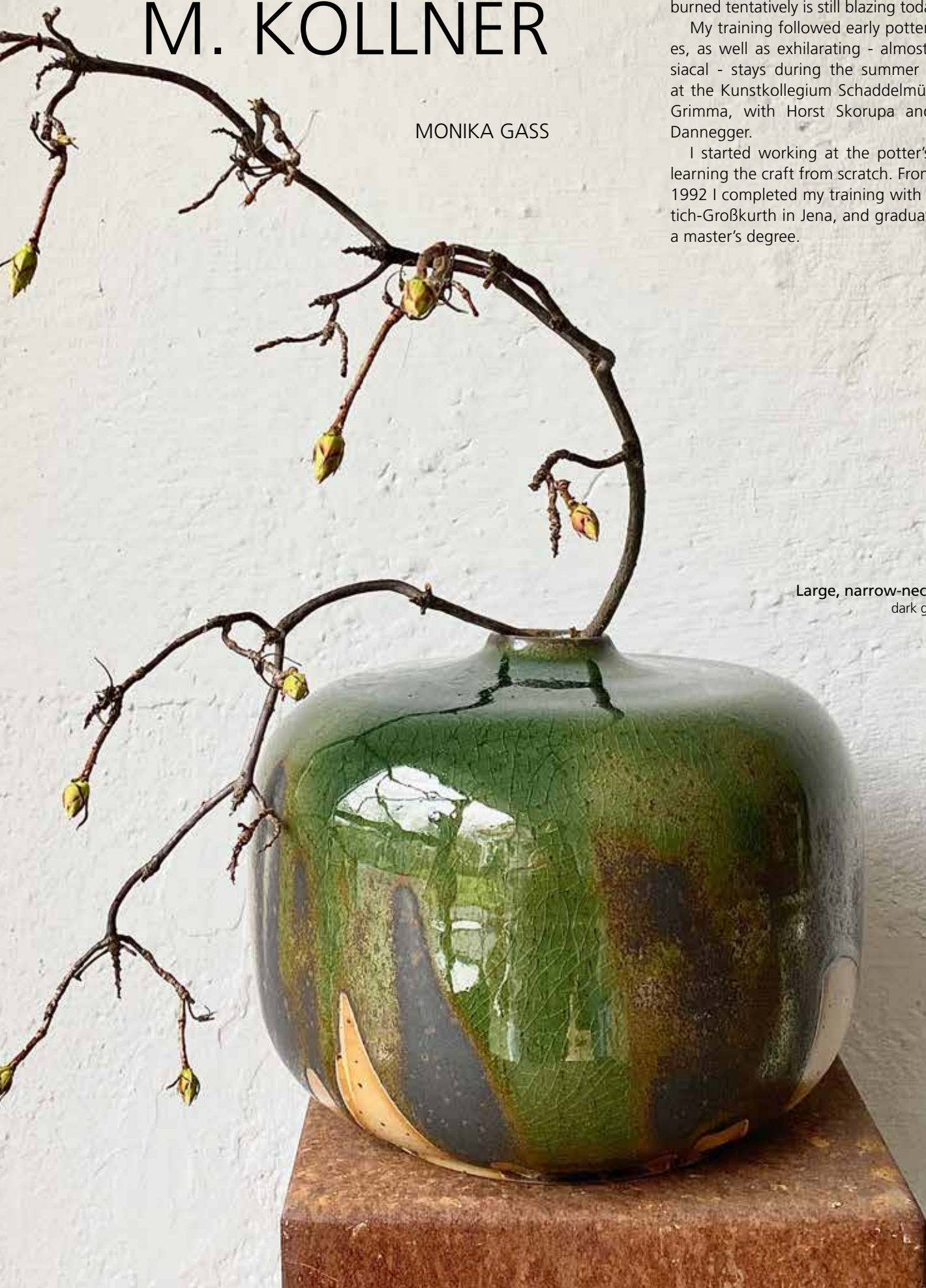
What made you choose ceramics originally?

I have been working with clay since I was a child; the fire that initially burned tentatively is still blazing today.

My training followed early pottery courses, as well as exhilarating - almost paradisiacal - stays during the summer holidays at the Kunstkollegium Schaddelmühle near Grimma, with Horst Skorupa and Astrid Dannegger.

I started working at the potter's wheel, learning the craft from scratch. From 1984 - 1992 I completed my training with Ulli Wittich-Großkurth in Jena, and graduated with a master's degree.

Large, narrow-necked vase
dark green glaze





photos - Nina Emilia Köllner

Matcha bowl, dark green glaze

This is where the sound teaching of the craft, the basics, as well as learning patience and perseverance for repetitive tasks took place. Although there were many artistic impulses in this workshop and a certain curiosity was awakened in me, production was clearly the focus.

Therefore it was important to me to continue to develop artistically through numerous seminars at home and abroad. A study visit to the Royal Academy of Art in Stockholm was followed by trips to Mali, India, Vietnam and Thailand, where I was able to get to know traditional conditions and working methods without any technical aids.

At the beginning of next year I am going to fulfil a big dream. A study trip will take me to Japan to visit ceramists and their workshops in the Kansai region.

Inspiration

I have always been fascinated by the serial production of ceramics for everyday use. I don't find repetitive work processes, shaping uniform plates and cups in large numbers, is like working on an assembly line as it were, or that it is boring, but for me it is rather meditative and calming. This is how I achieved my own individual form and colour for my ceramics.

I have always been inspired by Japanese tea ceremonies and Asian food. When I started working in my own studio in Leipzig in 1993 and worked with various

Matcha bowl, sherry glaze



artists, the urge to create sculptural work grew stronger.

After a study trip to see the clay architecture in Mali, West Africa, and under the impression of the grace and pride of African women, my desire for figurative work increased. I also find inspiration in nature, in flower and plant forms. Here too I am guided by Asian influences, Ikebana and Japanese floral patterns. I want to create ceramics in which vessel and content form a unit.

Another facet of my creative work is free work, detached from immediate use, but still not useless. Vessels whose shapes and surfaces are so unique that they do not require any content to develop their effect. The transition from naturalistic echoes to abstraction is an important force field for me.

It excites me to express my perception of reality through excursions into other arts. Photography and watercolour painting offer me fantastic opportunities to showcase the forms, structures and designs of my ceramics.

Classic stoneware glazes - especially that wonderful GREEN - how did that come about? (Has already become a rarity these days?) Inspired by your training? Your own experiments?

Working with various Asian restaurants brought me to my current shades of green.

Weimar beaker, dark green glaze



The owner of ZCHÄCA in Leipzig was looking for an interpretation of traditional forms with new colours for his food and teas, which he could not find in his homeland. I developed a concept for him in which I drew on my love of nature, my idea of Asia, and what I expect of minimalist design. This motivated me to delve deeper into this world, with the result that I modernized and adapted my entire range a few years ago. In doing so, I obviously struck a chord with my customers.

How important is marketing to you? You seem to be enjoying it a lot. It is how I became aware of you too... Your marketing - in contrast to many other attempts in ceramics - is received very positively and very professionally by interested parties. Have you received training? Are you a natural?

Yes, the marketing.. ;-) Maybe it was something I was born with. As a child of a private family craft business in the GDR, business matters were omnipresent for me. In addition, I had a great love of photography right from the start of my training. This enables me to put my ceramics in the spotlight. I often take some of my work on my travels and I put it in an appropriate context. That's why my tableware bears the names of cities, for instance.

Through social media, my passion for photography has found a platform and I receive a lot of positive feedback for it. That way you tell stories and arouse the curiosity of the viewer. I often work with my daughter Nina Emilia Köllner, a photographer who shares my enthusiasm for photography.

Your plans ...

In the near future I am going to go to Japan, a long-awaited dream and source of inspiration for many ceramists. However, it is very important to me not to copy the culture, but rather to understand it more as an inspiration for my own work. I also feel a great urge to continue working on the topic of vases and to reinterpret shapes from the 50s to 70s.

MONIKA GASS

Graduate ceramist, artist, writer, jury member, curator. Until retirement she was the director of the Keramikmuseum Westerwald and is currently vice president of the AICIAC, Geneva.
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Franziska Köllner has been a ceramics master since 1992. She trained as a ceramist in Jena from 1984-86. 2016-17 developed high-end ceramics corresponding to Japanese tradition for the upscale hotel and catering industry. She has been curator at Galerie Schwarz Weiss since 2011. Cofounded 2009 the Schwarz Weiss Workshop Gallery in the Baumwollspinnerei ("Cotton Mill"), Leipzig. 2002 cofounded the art association and gallery, Terra Rossa, 2001 ceramics prize of the city of Wernigerode, 2001 - 2010 lecturer at the Bildungsakademie, Dresden, 2000 - 2015 course and workshop leader at the KAOS Kulturwerkstatt in Leipzig. Since 1993 she has had her own workshop in Leipzig and is a member of the BBK and the Saxony Artists' Association.

KERAMIK GEFÄSSE UND OBJEKTE

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STATEMENT + METHODS

My passion is to combine traditional ceramic crafts and years of experience in art with modern influences.

"Put something special into your everyday life."

My starting material is usually clay mixed with iron pyrites. All my vessels are made by hand on a potter's wheel from the company August Schnelle in Meissen, which was developed in cooperation with Walter Gebauer and has been in use for around sixty years. For my business anniversary this year, it has been with me for thirty years. The tableware and vases are fired in an electric kiln at temperatures of up to approx. 1,250°C.

For my sculptures I use grogged clay. All pieces are fired in the raku technique, which was first practiced in Korea, China and Japan and developed there to the highest level of mastery, and is governed by fire, smoke and reduction. So it is entirely up to chance what individual character each piece has. Various temperatures up to approx. 1,000°C are achieved in different stages in the gas firing. Not a single piece is repeatable. There are only unique pieces.

Matcha bowl, dark green glaze



Tableware, plates, bowls, dark and mint green glaze

