

Artist Feature.

In conversation with Alexandra Standen

We are so excited to share this interview in our Women in art series, especially following a very exciting Melbourne art fair.

At the studio we specify art for clients on a daily basis and our relationships with the artists we work with is of the highest importance. Our artist today is none other than the multifaceted talent [Alex Standen](#), whose work has featured in multiple projects we curated and is one of our all time favourites in the KB-ID studio. In a recent conversation, we had the privilege of delving deeper into the creative process behind the captivating works that have captured our hearts.



"I called this body of work "shiny Objects" as I found myself started to research the origins of gold lustre in ceramic ware."

How did you discover your love for Ceramics? Was this something you have been doing since a young age?

I really had no idea ceramics was something I needed in my life until I went to the National Art School (NAS), Darlinghurst, in 2008. At 19 years old I was accepted in to the undergrad program and I just thought maybe I will be a painter, who knows, but the beauty of the atelier system that NAS provides is you get to sample all the studio disciplines before committing to a major. One hit of first year ceramics and I was hooked, it felt natural and inspiring and I needed it to be my daily practise. I had the best 4 years of my creative life at NAS learning from and working with my favourite ceramicists. Coming out of art school I went straight into a pottery in the Southern highlands and just experimented with everything from form and glaze to gas and wood firings, I absorbed as much as I could.

How do you overcome creative blocks or moments of self-doubt?

I find myself doubting what I'm making all the time, I have stages of real anxiety about creating a body of work for an exhibition and that of course effects a natural creative flow. It helps me to leave the studio at those points, have a cup of tea with an artist friend and have a debrief or just go home and work on my tax (it's so boring that getting back into the studio the next day I feel elated and privileged). In other words, Step back and take a deep breath, it's all going to be ok.

3. You love to travel, having spent time living in Tel Aviv, London, Hanover and Paris. Where is your next dream trip destination!?

In 2019 I spend more time living and working oversea than in Australia, based in Paris and Istanbul predominantly. This allowed me to make work outside of my comfort zone and forge connections with artists and creatives, to experience a new country or culture through the lens of the artist community is extraordinary. There are so many places, including within Australia, that I want to spend time making work in, but I guess I have been thinking about Japan a lot, I would love to do a residency in Shigaraki, Bizen or Kasama. Even as I'm writing this I'm thinking about Italy and going back to France, oh yeah and there's this residency in Ireland. The list is endless...

If you didn't undertake a career in art, what do you think you would be doing?

No Idea! I honestly don't know; I do have other interests and I do teach ceramic classes (which I love) but nothing I can safely say I would love as much as my art practice. Even when I'm having a stressful or frustrating day in the studio it's still a good day and that's got to mean something.

What are three things that add up to make your perfect weekend?

I am a very 'simple pleasures' kind of girl, three perfect things: A slow morning, a swim in the ocean and an afternoon glass of wine with my best friend.

Do you have a favourite quote or mantra that you live by?

A very wise friend once told me, at the very beginning of my art career, "an art practise is just that, A practise." This seems so obvious to me now that, making work is exactly like practising your instrument. I live by that idea that while I am creating new bodies of work for exhibitions, I am also practising my craft daily and seeing how I can extend myself and build on my skills.

Your new work at the art fair was so striking it stopped us in our tracks! How did this concept come together?

I called this body of work "shiny Objects" as I found myself starting to research the origins of gold lustre in ceramic ware.

Lustre comes from the decorative technique invented by 9th Century C.E Abbasid potters of the Islamic Civilisation, in what is today Iraq. Throughout the 9th and well into the 12th century, potters travelled within the islamic state developing the

lustre recipe and it was believed that making lustreware was true Alchemy because the process involved using lead based glaze and silver and copper paint to achieve the lustrous gold affect without using any gold at all. The technique was a carefully guarded secret and it traveled with artists from its origins in Iraq to Egypt, then to Syria and Persia and finally made its way into Europe where houses were adorned in lustrous tiles and tables. Today the recipe has been refined and the gold I use comes from Northern Ireland and does include a percentage of 24 carat gold. Throughout the history of lustreware, gold lustre has been painted over Italian Majolica glaze to achieve the high shine and vibrant gold surface so converted. I wanted to follow with tradition with this gold body of work so I have also used Majolica glaze as a base for the gold surface on my work. This series for Melbourne Art Fair is a celebration of historical ceramics vessels and an ode to the magical alchemy of the 9th century.



Image courtesy of the artist via [This is no fantasy](#) gallery

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