

# DISSERTATION REVIEW

Nataliya Zuban

Date of birth, 31-1-1992

The transition between industrial and natural  
landscape within the realm of abstract ceramics

The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław  
Faculty of Ceramics and Glass

Doctoral thesis in the field of the arts, in the discipline – fine arts and conservation



Nataliya's dissertation covers some very important ground in the relationship of industrial and natural landscapes, looking at the present and past, focusing partly on the 1950's industrial archaeology throughout the United Kingdom as well as the Industrial Revolution era of sites and structures, then going into domestic sites in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. She also observes environmental destruction of architecture and sociology, looking at and within the Ukraine buildings which are abandoned and dissolving back into the natural landscape.

Research has been undertaken by studying and observing different artists who have utilized a common ground within architectural based structures.

1. Irina Razumovskaya, Russian Federation, who is making crossovers of art practice into social and domestic arenas.  
(Zuban, Dissertation; Illustr. 3,4,5,6).
2. Enric Mestre, Spain, who uses an expression of abstraction of architectural shapes, negative spaces, scale and shape of an abstracted brick.  
(Zuban, Dissertation; Illustr. 7,8).
3. Sara Jeffries, Denmark, who's work looks at decay by using and firing clay at different temperatures. These structures look closely at how space is occupied through the technique of coiling.  
(Zuban, Dissertation; Illustr. 9,10,11).

The three artists which Nataliya has researched, capture conceptual approaches to the topic in which she has undertaken – from industrial landscape to the natural.

By creating artworks in reference to the above artists, Nataliya has extensively gone into researching different approaches through firing temperatures, utilizing low and high fired porcelains and mixing the two together, which in turn gives a sense of fragility to the surface, which then makes reference to a sense of decay. (Zuban, Dissertation; Illustr. 15).



Some of these treatments have resulted in structures by using a mix of cellulose fibre with different self-made grogs. These techniques have allowed her to move into the direction of sand blasting the surfaces which then plays with the eye of the surface from a solid mass to a sense of skin and hollowness. (Zuban, Dissertation; Illustr. 12,13).

Another area of research has been accurately achieved through the usage of volcanic and lava glazes. These bring out a parallel visual extension to surfaces appearing on abandoned buildings. (Zuban, Dissertation; Illustr. 21,22,25). This undertaking has been observed and tested through percentages of silicon carbide to shape the chemical reaction of the glaze components. These testings have been researched in a detailed manner to allow a sense of growth of texture to appear which gives a stronger layering of deterioration to surfaces. The quality of surfaces was also taken beyond this point through sandblasting these glaze surfaces which then in turn resulted in breaking up the air pockets within these textures.

The clay bodies have also played a very important part to give the duality of surface treatments as there is much manganese present in the matter where once fired high in temperature to a stoneware (1200° C) has resulted in bloating, being bubbling in the clay. (Zuban, Dissertation; Illustr. 26).

I believe that much of the testing of clay bodies, glazes and surface treatments through sandblasting and many different foreign materials used along the way, have resulted in an extensive and fulfilling way to bring the understanding of the relationship between industrial and natural landscape to the viewer.

Much testing has been achieved by dealing with adding different percentages of borax fluxes to create an observation of each melt within the surface applied and also the clay body to carry this surface. This has all allowed the experimentation to take on an organic and natural feel as many of these testings have created craters of texture through the firing cycle. (Zuban, Dissertation; Illustr. 30).



Some of these testings have brought an interesting approach through the mixing of calcium borates, stains and glazes into the mass body which have resulted in a historical reference back to Egyptian pastes used by the Pharaohs. (Zuban, Dissertation; Illustr. 29,32,33).

Many of the testings have been taken to extremes which once again bring us to view decayed surfaces of deteriorated architectural constructions. From these experimentations, a series of works have been produced to be seated alongside of deserted industrial buildings. These fragments produced resemble shards fallen away from the decaying industrial architecture, which in turn occupy their own space through the interest of the objects made. (Zuban, Dissertation; Illustr. 37,38). They bear a strong geometric relationship to friezes from buildings and seat themselves comfortably as major artworks and not obvious replicas from the decayed buildings. This has been achieved in a very strong manner to give the observer a conceptual understanding of the relationship between then and now – historical and contemporary.

Many of the forms bear a relationship to contemporary archaeology. Any of these pieces could be scaled up and seat themselves in a gallery space to give a sense of decay of an architectural mass. They take on a conceptual and minimal visual approach and along with the smaller forms give the feeling of rhythmical and mechanical tool like objects, which in turn give you a sense of installation where multiples of these objects read strongly back to the industrial and also natural as the surfaces retain a textural feel. (Zuban, Dissertation; Illustr. 40).

Nataliya Zuban has undertaken her doctoral thesis with a great deal of commitment and knowledge building in the contemporary ceramic world identifying major outcomes through the field of ceramic technology and the making of works achieved from these innovative solutions.

Her research activities have shown that the outcome of all the testings and technological experimentation conducted during her research period have arrived at substantial outcomes which have shown us the engagement



between artistic and scientific activities. Nataliya is an accomplished maker and researcher and I believe that her knowledge gained during this period will connect with and be shown widely throughout the ceramic world.

As an examiner, I strongly feel this research will have a continuity to grow into furthering the discussion between industrial and natural worlds. This is an area in which Nataliya has shown that her technology and making have extended themselves through clay and glaze research, within analyzing different heat registrations and mixtures of materials which are commonly used. Through this, she has broken the boundaries of tradition.

Nataliya has been articulate in conversing between the making and the theory so this has created a common balance between the two which gives her dissertation credibility to work between the industrial built and the natural landscape. Her dissertation has a coherent thread running through her written and practical research. Both areas complement each other and give a consistent flow to the reader. She has analyzed her works in a relevant manner to project a visual sense of decay. She has also shown critical engagement within her findings and documentation. I have observed that her artistic research has been carried out in an innovative manner and all works have been conceptualized to a relevant academic level. Nataliya has remained consistent throughout her research and writings and her argument is convincing.

Nataliya's findings will contribute to a diverse area throughout the clay community. I look forward to seeing further experimentation of chemical testings through the usage of fluxes, oxides and the mixing of non-commercial glazes along with major works being produced from these findings.


Natalia's previous artistic and didactic achievements have been extensive by participating in many international forums as well as symposiums and workshops including residency programs. These areas which were undertaken, have been professional roles in exposing and offering her knowledge in making along with much theoretical output to students who have been assisting her during these programs.




In observing her works, I saw a great deal of confidence within her communication in being able to exercise her investigations at a level where it gave much knowledge to the viewer.

Based on my reading and analysis of Nataliya Zuban's dissertation and her conceptual and creative output as well as her professional practice in the field of art, I highly recommend that she be awarded an academic Ph.D. title in the field of art, in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation.

Professor Neville Assad-Salha

NEVILLE ASSAD-SALHA 

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## RECOMMENDED POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH

These are some strong and relevant artists which may give a stimulant on a conceptual and material basis to carry on working and investigating projects in the future.

El Anatsui

El Anatsui's works depict a strength alluding to structures decaying into organic forms showing both fragility and resilience.

<https://elanatsui.art/series/clay-ceramic>

Beth Pitcher

Beth's hand built clay works accommodate organic textures and natural forms.

<https://bptakoma.wordpress.com/>

Zsuzsa Füzesi

Many of Zsuzsa's works are produced from porcelains that bear a relationship to the feel of fungi.

<https://fuzesi.ch/>



Aneta Regel

Aneta's works are constructed forms using colourants to identify form and space, looking at interior and exterior spaces with a sense of decay.

<https://www.anetaregel.com/>

Brian Rochefort

Brian's ceramics extend themselves with overlays of surface over surface taking the forms into colourful fragments.

<https://brianrochefort.net/>

Gareth Mason

Gareth's work contains the feel of modern architecture in the process of decay using traditional vessels.

<https://www.jasonjacques.com/contemporary/gareth-mason>

<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/gareth-mason-smith-of-dreams> - 'Unruly Behavior' Series.

The above-mentioned artists all depict certain areas within architectural structures with the feel of growth and decay.

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