Nel Bannier, Sculptor

Made in Shigaraki, Japan

Slide presentation

Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural park
Shigaraki, Japan

August 17, 2008
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Frequently Asked Questions

• **Why sculpture?** I like to organize space with my pieces the way a potter organizes a table with his pots.

• **Why clay?** Clay has a crispness and subtleness that I want to see in the end product. And the colors you apply you can touch.

• **Why the figure?** I am fascinated by body language. It allows me to give shape to my emotions.

• **Why body parts and only sometimes the whole body?** I am a portraitist and portray people, not only faces, but feet, hands, and sometimes the whole body.

After WW II the figure disappeared from European art. Sometimes, the negative image of the figure was used.

I am trained as an abstract conceptual artist and had to teach myself the figure. To make the body whole and soft and peaceful, is a mental step in a world torn apart by war.
FAQ

• **Why paint, or glaze?** Because I love to alter the mood of my pieces with colors, the same way you alter your mood by wearing a red T-shirt rather than a green.

• **Why make pedestals?** A box as pedestal tells little or nothing about the piece sitting on it. I like to add a new layer to the meaning of the piece by making a pedestal. It is like shoes you wear, high heels or not, slippers or not.
FAQ

• **Why Japan?** In The Netherlands we grow up with the history of 400 years of trade with Japan. Everybody knows the blue and white porcelain, the colored porcelain, the raku tea bowls, the folding screens, the calligraphy, the woodblock prints, the kimonos, the food. But to be in Japan, means to wake up in a woodblock print environment, what is so different than to look at it.

• **Why Shigaraki?** 13 years ago my professor in the USA gave me a *brochure of Togei no Mori*. Ever since it has been my dream to work here and stay, if possible, for a year.

• **What has being here done to my work?** Besides developing a new technique, due to the clay coming down on me over and over again, I have become softer in touch, more colorful, and more playful. It is a direct influence of the Shigaraki and Togei no Mori environment.
“Sushi Plates”

Test tiles. They develop into an installation called: “Sushi plates”.

Images about my grandchildren in eight different clays and many glazes.
A new building technique develops.

“Tea Ceremony 2008”, about the loneliness at airport cafes.
Politicians’ dinner table center pieces at Kohara Gallery, Shigaraki.

Tomoko and Nel at Kohara Gallery, Shigaraki.
“Pacifiers”

The peaceful and beautiful Shigaraki environment influences me deeply.

Inspired by my grandchildren and the joy of freedom of the new technique.
It took a long time to finish this piece and to dare to cut up an Obi, but I wanted to give the piece a feeling of paradise.
Visit of the Emperor and Empress at Togei no Mori.

A most generous and impressive moment.
Ueda-san teaches the skill of how to transfer inner peace to the clay, so the user of his cups will experience that peace.
Marita, energetic, enigmatic, mean, wicked, this all I wanted to express.

The piece is not yet finished.
Jacques Kaufman, a stick fighter.

He badly wanted to imprint my work with his stamp.

So, I made him a portrait to work on.
“Lost Samurai”
Chris Lo wanted to fly but felt caged. In the piece I wanted to express this feeling.

He had a monks atmosphere and, at the time, a limp.
“Escaping the Cage”
Sometimes I make cups and saucers.
The joy of minigama firing.
Shigaraki High School workshop and the joy of working with students..
Scale models for big new work.
Scale model big legs and preparatory work.
The slow progress of the big legs.

I made them in the hope the pain in my right leg would disappear with all the ladder climbing.
Getting the legs into the kiln and fired.
From the kiln on to the platform.
Repair, re-glaze and re-fire.

Trial and error design for pedestal.
Preparations to move the legs up the mountain.
Going up to the museum and installing the legs.
"Walking through Paradise"
August 12, 2008

Impression of the exhibition at the Shigaraki Museum of Contemporary Ceramics.
Thank you all for coming.

- I want to thank **Togei no Mori** for inviting me to stay as an artist-in-residence for about one year. Also, I want to thank them for the exhibition offered here in the museum gallery.

- I want to give special thanks to **Takai-san, Sugiyama-san, Matsunami-san, Isiyama-san, Komaci-san, and the black smith** for all their patience in communicating with me and helping me to get my work together. Without them it would not be in the exhibition.

- I want to thank **Minori-san and the museum curatorial staff** for the PR and their help with preparing the exhibition.