

AESTHETIC EXPERIMENTATIONS ON CERAMIC MATERIALS

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ABSTRACT

Aesthetics like sound of ceramics is common in the context of making but not usually presence when perceiving an object. Most of the material aesthetics are knowledge of the maker and happens during the process of making. These aesthetics are potential material for artistic use. Focusing on the aesthetics of the ceramic materials I try to develop new solutions in the context of art. These experimentations are the beginning of a research where the goal is to bring out new artistic potentials from ceramic materials. The used raw materials are fluxes, feldspar, quartz, colemanite, cobalt oxide and copper oxide. To give an idea of material aesthetics more widely, I exhibit with the test pieces also the sound of crackling flux.

INTRODUCTION

In my practice-led research as a ceramic artist and a post graduate student I am interested in the material research that happens in the context of art making. I experiment with different raw materials searching for artistic potential through aesthetics. Through my own art practice and material research, I try to explore the creative side of the research. I begin with testing different raw materials (see figure 1.) and continue to the direction where I experience potential. Test pieces create points of reflection for the process and material for discussing the aesthetics of ceramics.

In order to have an understanding how the material knowledge influence on the perceiving of aesthetics I gather a focus group to reflect on the test pieces. As a maker and a viewer from the inside of the process I invite persons from different areas of expertise. My own reflection is influenced by the knowledge of the process and the materials, hence the aesthetic potential can be discarded without seeing it with the different point of view. In the exhibition I will provide two commentary books with guiding questions on materiality and aesthetics to have constructive comments to work from.



Figure 1: First test pieces with different raw materials

EXHIBITION ITEMS

The work that will be exhibited in Nordes 13 consist of about 100 different ceramic test pieces and a sound file that is from crackling flux material. With this work I introduce aesthetics of ceramic raw material. The used raw materials are fluxes, feldspar, quartz, cobalt oxide and copper oxide. The raw materials are fired in a porcelain or stoneware cup to hold the melting materials in it and to capture the vaporizing elements of the materials into the walls of the inner side of the test piece. The used raw materials are very basic materials for clays and glazes and most of them are used through out the history of ceramics. These raw materials have their own aesthetics as they are and for this exhibition I have experimented with simple mixing of them to enhance the natural properties that they posses and develop through their aesthetics.



Figure 2: Three groups of different materials

The proximately 100 test pieces I will arrange in three groups in the exhibition. In one group there will be the experimentations of different fluxes, in another group the feldspar and quartz with cobalt and copper oxide and in the third variations of colemanite and quartz experimentations (see figure 2.). The three groups are formed so that the viewer would visually recognize the material use in different compositions. The test pieces are to be experience with touching and not only by looking. Tactility is important to ceramic materials and gives more information of the aesthetics than plain visuality. The possible stains can be removed from the test pieces by firing them again in a kiln.

The sound of crackling flux is a strong aesthetic element that enhances the multisensory aesthetic experience when perceiving the objects. Sound gives the idea of the process that usually is invisible to the audience of ceramic items.

FOCUS GROUP

From the exhibition in Nordes 2013 I seek for constructive experience for designing and steering a focus group. Exhibiting the test pieces that are part of the on-going material research process and gathering comments from the audience I aim for insights of the aesthetical properties that viewers encounter with their knowledge of the world. In this exhibition I will place two books with the exhibition work with two areas of issues: the materiality and the aesthetics. The raised issues from the exhibition viewers are important deciding on what kind of the focus group should be and who would be the best individuals to this focus group and what kind of steering should be conducted.

In my study I focus on the ceramic material research. At it best the process of creative making is an experience where the artist is in a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1997) and the experience have aesthetic quality (Dewey 2005). These experiences in the context of making are the interests of this research. The aim of the use of a focus group is to give more insights on to the subjective process during the research process.

A MEMORY FROM A MOVEMENT IN A STILL FORM

In the craft processes it is difficult to document the experiential dimension and distinguish between the conscious and the intuitive. The process is holistic and movement and senses are in the core of the making and creating. The maker acts as an observer and the experiential knowledge accumulates with active working (e.g.: Mäkelä 2003, Mäkelä & Routarinne 2006). The material movement in the act of making from the starting point to the finished form of an artefact is knowledge of the maker. From the form of the finished object only those who are familiar with similar processes can understand the movement and the process

it required. The essence of the process can be sensed from the final object.

Tarja Pitkänen-Walter writes in her dissertation about the happening of painting and the creation of the image. She emphasizes the understanding of the happening of making art. *“The first part of this happening is between the artist, the art piece and the being in the world. The second part with the art piece, the viewer and the being with the world”* (Pitkänen-Walter 2006, p.16). The experiment of the artefact brings the meaning of art to the wider audience, but the creative process and experiential action inside the process are crucial to the arising form.

The still form of the material is born in the happening of the making process. The process affects the end result, although the outside audience can't retrace it from the object. The character of the process is projected to the artefact. The maker is concentrated on the aesthetic experience while working. Guided by the goals and senses the process proceeds towards the form and the realization of the knowledge. Pentti Määttänen writes: *“The detection and the action are being actualized through physical causal processes. The obvious but less noticed alternative is that this concrete interaction is needed so that the thinking can happen”*. (Määttänen 2009, p.13).

CONCLUSION

The artist's relation to an artefact differs from the experience of the viewer. The maker can experience the process within the artefact. To the viewer the artefact is constructed in relation to the viewer's experiences with the world. Thus by exhibiting my ceramic material experiments, I am seeking for wider perspective of the aesthetic properties.

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