

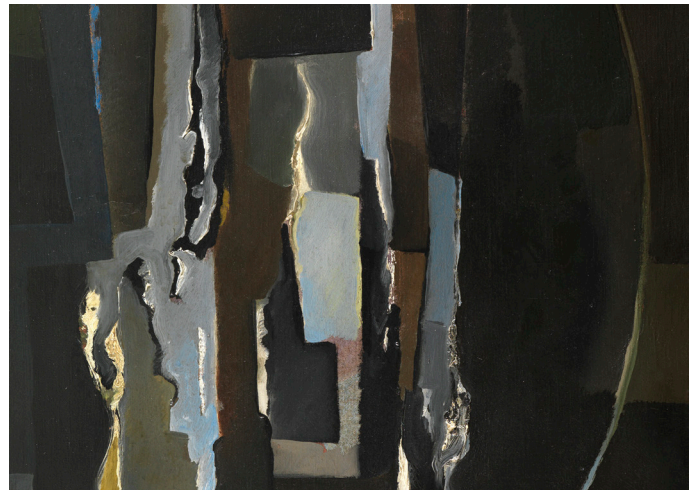
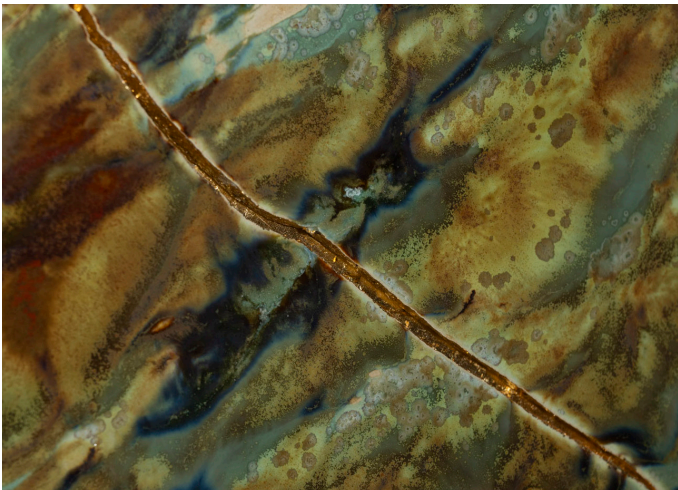
Exhibition Gazette

Vol. 2

2026

IN BETWEEN THE LINES

A dialogue between the past and the present
with works by Caziël and Isabelle Nothomb



Caziël (Polish-British 1906-1988) and **Isabelle Nothomb** (Belgian b. 1963) are artists that seek the basics of existence. Working in different centuries and in different countries, they each chose as a core practice the stripping away of noise to focus on raw sensory perception, space, and being. They each chose peaceful studios in the countryside in their quest to live with purpose and authenticity and invite the viewer to ask deeper questions about the nature of time,

space, free will, and consciousness. Their individual spiritual exploration and dialogue with their chosen materials has led them to work with similar visuals: broken lines to reveal light and lacerated effects, Caziël in his abstract painting and Nothomb in ceramics.

Curated by An Jo Fermon, the exhibition illustrates Whitford's dedication to promoting art that offers a soothing humanistic experience.

- Vernissage -
17 October 2026
2 - 7 pm
- Finissage -
29 October 2026
6 - 9 pm

Exhibition
18 October -
7 November 2026
-
Tuesday to Saturday
11 am - 6 pm



Address:

Oude Graanmarkt 11 rue du
Vieux Marché aux Grains
B-1000 Brussels



Left: Portrait of Kasimir Zielenkewicz, known as Caziell, c. 1968.

Below: Isabelle Nothomb in her studio, 2026.

Whitford Fine Art hosts an exhibition of 1960s paintings by Caziell in dialogue with contemporary ceramics by Isabelle Nothomb. As such, the viewer can experience a meeting of minds sourcing their art from an authentic and intuitive exchange with their surroundings and materials, lived out in different epochs.

In 1966, Caziell commented on his practice with the following statement:

'Sometimes while I am working - and it is hard to work one's way out of chaos - suddenly I feel rising within me a tension like a taut string, and that is a good sign.'

I never conceive things beforehand. The contact of my hand with the tools puts me in a state of orgasm. One can draw a parallel with love: without love one cannot conceive.

I believe I am influenced too by the grand play of light in Nature. I go into the studio, I begin to work under its spell. Perhaps it is the strongest impulse. Thus I know that I invent nothing. It is Nature which speaks in me, for all things exist in Nature. Every painting must have its gem of mystery.'

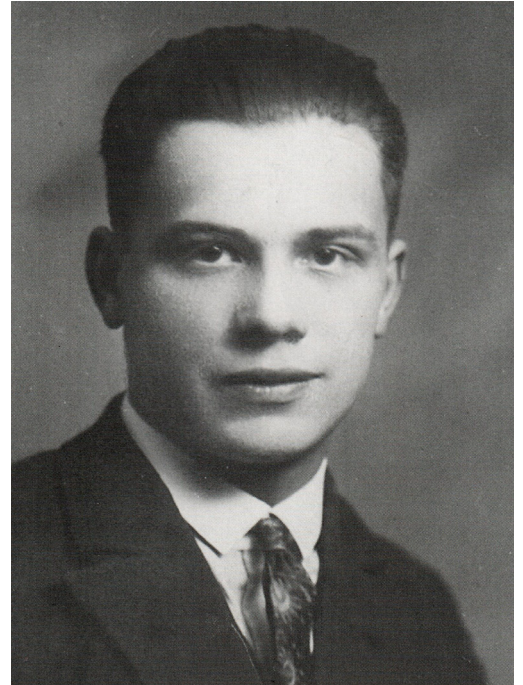
Likewise, Isabelle Nothomb explains her work in the following terms:

'I have learnt that the creative process requires acceptance, resilience, humility and trust. I do not want to control everything. The clay will always contribute to the final result. The spark comes from that space between intention and openness, between what I bring to the work and what the material reveals.'



KASIMIR ZIELENKEWICZ known as CAZIEL (Polish-British, 1906-1988)

Kasimir Zielenkewicz' childhood was played out against the tragic events that unravelled during the fall of the Russian Empire and the displacement and poverty it entailed. Aged eight, Caziell was taken by his family from his birthplace Sosnowiec in Poland to Moscow. In 1917 at the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, Caziell, his mother and his Tsarist stepfather settled in the Polish colony of Novosibirsk, from where they made their way to Krasnoyarsk, a city in Siberia where they had to lay low from the Communists. Aged fourteen Caziell became the protégé of the local art school director. Finally in 1920, the family could return to Poland, and Caziell was able to finish his schooling in Łódź. Caziell attended the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts during 1931-36. Here the influence of French Post-Impressionist painting



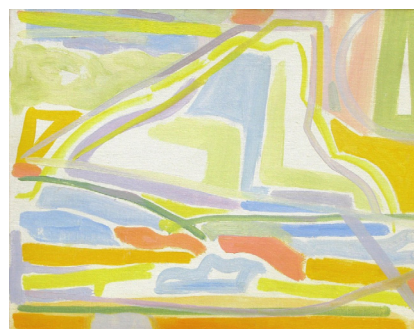
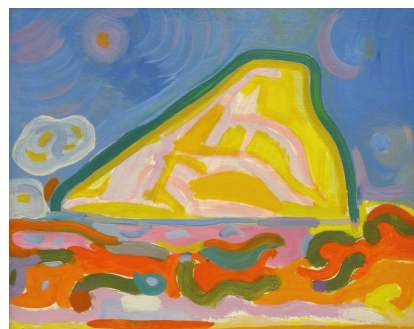
Top left: Caziell, WC113 - Paradise Lost (study for stage design), c. 1937, watercolour on paper, 32 x 37 cm.

Bottom left: Caziell, WC175 - Polka, c. 1935, gouache and watercolour on paper, 62 x 47 cm.

was omnipresent. Revered masters amongst the students and significant influences on Caziell's early development as a painter included Paul Gauguin, Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse. His rhythmical successions of floating nudes express feelings of emotional liberations and hedonism, and evoke pagan rites as celebrated in Igor Stravinsky's ballet 'Rite of Spring' (1910-1913). These works were also informed by the religious Apocalyptic beliefs as illustrated in the 11th century manuscript of Saint-Sever Beatus. In a few works, Caziell united the Post-Impressionist vocabulary with imagery and stylistic elements borrowed from Polish folklore.

On the occasion of the Paris World Fair in 1937 Caziél obtained a grant to visit Paris. On his way to the French capital, Caziél visited Italy where he was captivated by the works of Giotto, Paolo Ucello and Piero della Francesca. Upon his arrival in Paris, Caziél worked and studied frantically, earning the respect of some elders. Caziél also visited the city's museums and galleries; the Cézanne show at the Rosenberg Gallery left a deep imprint. Once his bursary ran out, Caziél returned to Poland, but no other than Édouard Vuillard defended his case and convinced the Polish authorities to extend Caziél's bursary. It was the year 1939 when Caziél left his homeland for good.

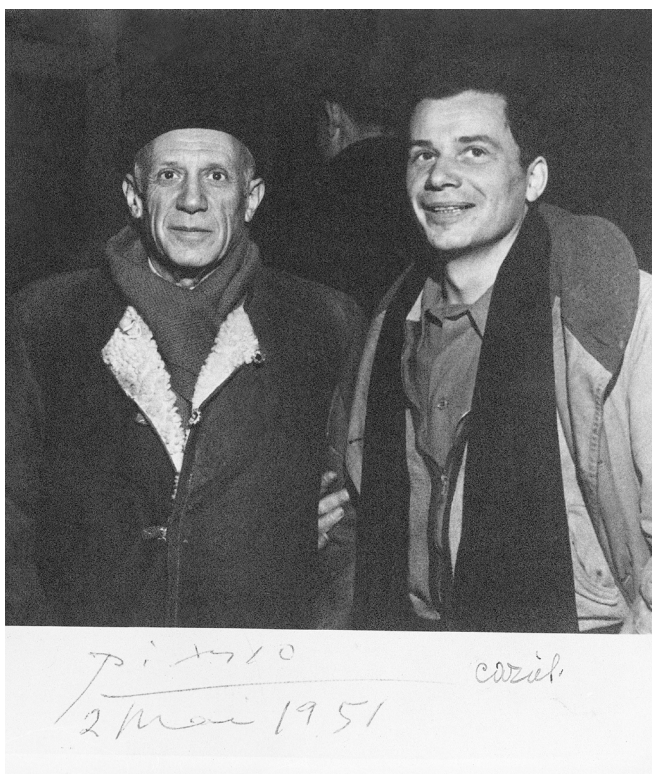
When France declared war on Germany in September 1939, Caziél stepped forward to join the Polish army in France. When the Franco-German Armistice of 1940 led to the army's disbandment, Caziél and his Jewish wife, the painter Lutka Pink, were forced to escape to the so-called 'zone libre', the unoccupied partition of Southern France. They found refuge in Aix-en-Provence, welcomed by Blaise Cendrars. Whilst they lingered there, on and off until autumn 1946, Caziél delved deeply into Cézanne's legacy, honouring the master through a series of nudes distinguished by bold contours, striking depth and perspective, and a pared-back palette. Caziél also turned his gaze to the famous Mont Sainte-Victoire, capturing its presence in a series of intimate oils in a Fauvist style.



Right from top to bottom: Caziél - different variations of Mont Sainte-Victoire, c. 1944.



Left: Caziel's design for UNESCO International exhibition of Modern Art, 1948.
Below: Caziel and Picasso in 1951.



During that period, Caziel's stylistic preoccupations were divided - strong lyrical and expressive compositions, much indebted to Picasso, alternated with works revealing his quest for Abstraction. These works were exhibited at Galerie Allard and at Bernheim Jeune. In 1951, Caziel largely abandoned figuration and joined the group Espace.

GROUP ESPACE

Founded in Paris in 1951 by architect André Bloc, Espace, or 'space' in French, promoted art located in the physical and social environment; their mission was to unite Constructivist art with architecture in pursuit of a new visual environment suited to modern society. The movement also promoted light as a compositional element and inspired Caziel how to paint light passing through an artwork. The group members were influenced by the various avant-garde movements of the time, including Constructivism, Abstract Expressionism and Art Informel.

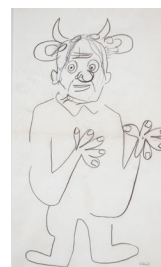
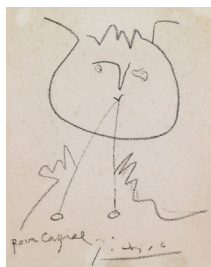
In 1946 Caziel moved back to Paris, where he met Le Corbusier, Brancusi and Picasso. His meeting with the latter proved impactful. The Polish government had charged Caziel with the task of offering the Spanish master a coat made of black polish heath sheep.

Caziel presented himself at Picasso's atelier at the Rue des Grands Augustins where Picasso showed him that he already "had something Polish".

Caziel was baffled to see that attached to Picasso's easel was his very own design for the Polish pavilion of the 1948 UNESCO exhibition, which Picasso was using as inspiration for a portrait of his son Claude.

Imagine the surprise of the two men, who had a 25-year age gap and had grown up in very different countries but shared an understanding of the emotional hardships of the displaced. Thus, the young Caziel and middle-aged Picasso became friends instantly.

Between 1948 and 1952, Caziel and Picasso nurtured their friendship, spending summers together in Juan-les-Pins and drawing caricatures of each other.



Above left to right: Caricature drawings by Picasso and Caziel portraying each other as a faun, a bull and a priapic painter c. 1950;
Above: Caziel, *Les Parques*, c. 1947, oil on canvas, 103 x 133 cm.

That same year Picasso's dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler invited Cziel to join his stable of figurative artists, under the assumption that Cziel's abstract work was merely an experiment. However, Cziel declined the offer with the auspicious words 'Non, je suis abstrait' – No, I am abstract. Cziel's adherence to Abstraction was a logical and emotional development, instead of a choice merely based on aesthetic grounds. As such, his statement of 'I am abstract' instead of 'I am an Abstractionist' is all telling.

In 1952, after four years of intense friendship, Picasso had a jealous fit over Cziel's alleged flitting with his partner Françoise Gilot and the two men fell out.

During April of the same year Cziel fell head over heels in love with the young Scottish painter Catherine Sinclair. Because Cziel was still officially married to fellow Polish painter Lutka Pink, they tried to suppress their mutual instant feelings of intimacy, passion and commitment.



Top right: Cziel and his beloved wife, Catherine Sinclair at home in Ponthévrard, c. 1954.

Above: Cziel, WC136 - Architectonic composition, c. 1951, oil on canvas, 108 x 133 cm.



When Lutka left for America in May of the same year, Catherine moved into Cziel's studio on the rue de Saxe but in 1954 the couple decided that a home in the country would be more suited. In Ponthévrard, 30 miles outside Paris, the lovebirds found their rural paradise, providing the backdrop to their four-year secret love-affair. In order to avoid a society scandal, Catherine could not introduce her penniless married lover to her parents. As such she spent winters in Scotland as the dutiful daughter consigning her love to countless letters. During summer the couple reunited with the help of Catherine's former governess.

In Ponthévrard, Cziel's 1950s Abstraction was informed by the ideas of Wassily Kandinsky and Joan Miró on transcending the second and third dimensions to reach the fourth dimension. Cziel's expression of the fourth dimension resulted in paintings of superimposed biomorphic shapes and lines in strong colours, often set against a black background, with the paint applied in a traditional fashion. These works reverberate with light, space, and rhythm, evoking emotions similar to those engendered by music. Cziel's annual submissions to the 'salon de mai' during 1948-1956, where his work was shown alongside Victor Vasarely and Hans Hartung, confirmed his dedication to the abstract cause.

Finally in 1957, when his divorce from Lutka Pink was finalised, Cziel and Catherine were married and able to live together with the blessing of her family. A year later, their union was blessed with the birth of their only daughter, Clementina.

By 1963, Caziel's paintings show long streaks of colour, reminiscent of the 1950s so-called 'affiches lacérées' of Jacques Villeglé (French, born 1926). The technique of tearing dry paper freehand and building up layers of torn paper imitating used publicity billboards was introduced by the 'Nouvelles Realités' movement. This practice was shaped by the philosophical discussions dominating the French intellectual elites of 1950s. Caziel's painted 'déchirages' are highlighted with white as to let the light shine through from the back, resulting in thoroughly modern and original works.

The philosophical method of inquiry known as phenomenology, as defined by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) in the early 20th Century took centre stage again when the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) closely studied Husserl's published works. Phenomenology rejects the rationalist partiality in favour of a method of reflective attentiveness that unveils the individual's 'lived experience'. Intentionality, self-awareness and embodiment are basic features of the phenomenological consciousness. In an equivalent way, in his practice of painting, Caziel understood and demonstrated that the goal was to understand experience by comprehending and describing its genesis, the process of its emergence from an origin or event. Caziel was aware of the theory of phenomenology, but his understanding of experience as a description of its genesis seems to have been innate. As such, Caziel's development during 1963-1967 reflects the essence of the contemporary French philosophical debate.



In a letter to his wife Catherine, Cezail wrote on 10 September 1965: 'Yesterday it seemed that I painted my canvas only to unpick it to its limits. I understand the painter Malevich, who painted the white square on the white ground.' In 1966 and 1968, Cezail showcased his latest works in London at the renowned Grabowski Gallery and the Royal Academy. (and a photo of a lacerated work) These achievements inspired him to relocate to the UK. In 1969, Cezail and Catherine made their home in Somerset, a place they would cherish for the rest of their lives.

*Left: Cezail at his one-man show at the Grabowski Gallery in 1966.
Top right: Cezail, Composition lacérée, 1963, oil on canvas, 70 x 71.5 cm.
Underneath: Composition, 1965, oil on canvas, 65 x 54 cm.*



Isabelle Nothomb (Belgian, b. 1963)

Isabelle Nothomb is a Belgian ceramist based between France and Belgium. She studied history of art in London at the New Academy for Art Studies. During the 1980s Isabelle Nothomb worked for Christie's in London and lived in Thailand for four years, where she was active as a museum guide to the National Museum of Bangkok. Isabelle Nothomb met fellow art historian and curator An Jo Fermon in London in 1999 and decades of artistic exchange enriched their friendship.

When Isabelle Nothomb started working with ceramics in 2012, An Jo encouraged her newly chosen path. As time elapsed Isabelle felt the need for further academic research and during 2019-2023 she studied Theology of Arts at the Catholic University of Paris.

In 2019, Isabelle Nothomb had her first exhibition in London, curated by Preston Fitzgerald, a well-known authority on contemporary ceramics, craft, and design. Her success increased in more curated shows by Preston in London in 2020 and 2021.

In France Isabelle Nothomb exhibits at Argile Design Gallery, Paris and participates in Zeramika, a yearly summer exhibition organised by ceramic expert Ombeline d'Arche in Sare, Pays Basque.

Isabelle Nothomb's ceramics are frequently used as presents during official Belgian state visits. Her works are included in private collections across France, Belgium and in the cities of London, New York, and Geneva.

In 2025, following Whitford Fine Art's move from London to Belgium, co-director An Jo Fermon started exhibiting Isabelle Nothomb's work. The present exhibition shows Isabelle Nothomb's work in an historic art gallery setting for the first time.

In the Q&A An Jo and Isabelle shed light on the philosophical, the emotional and the physical aspects of transforming raw clay into an artwork.



Top left: Isabelle Nothomb in the studio, 2026.

Top right: Isabelle Nothomb, Bouleau d'Ecosse II, enamelled stoneware, 51 cm Ø.

Bottom right: Tea Tree, size, enamelled earthenware, 29 cm Ø.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Trained in art history and theology, I have always had a contemplative approach to the world. From childhood, I was introduced to the meticulous observation of nature and art.

This attentive gaze taught me to capture details, to feel the balance of forms and materials. It awakened my capacity for wonder, allowing me to experience profound emotion, to be filled with joy, and to imagine that beyond all these tangible beauties, there is something greater that speaks, capable of touching my heart and conveying a message.

While my studies in art history provided me with a framework of references and rigorous criteria to guide my thinking, my studies in the Theology of the Arts freed me from certain constraints, allowing my perspective to become more personal and to be moved by the senses. This renewed perspective, born from the union of knowledge and experience, gave me the audacity to use a language other than words to express myself through clay.

Being athletic and efficient by nature, practicing art didn't seem like an option to me: I thought I possessed no talent whatsoever. Yet, one day, a phrase resonated within me like a revelation:

"Every human being possesses an artistic talent. You must discover yours, develop it, and cultivate it. This will help you reach your full potential and bring you immense joy."

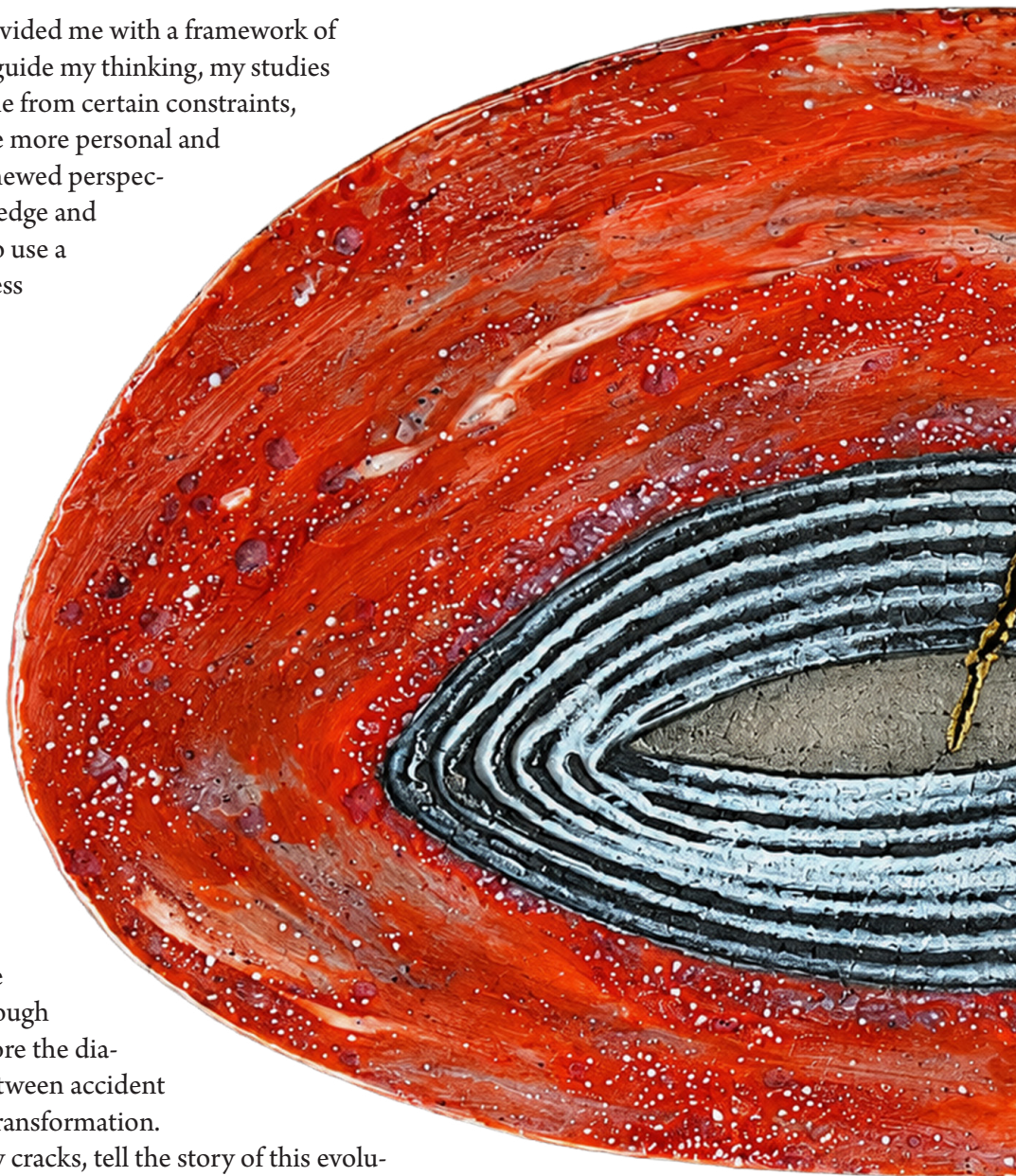
Ceramics has become this point of convergence, this space where all facets of my journey come together: patient observation, physical engagement, spiritual exploration, and the expression of the imagination. Through stoneware and earthenware, I explore the dialogue between matter and time, between accident and repair, between memory and transformation.

My circular works, often marked by cracks, tell the story of this evolution. Each crack becomes an imprint of the process, a metaphor for the inner journey.

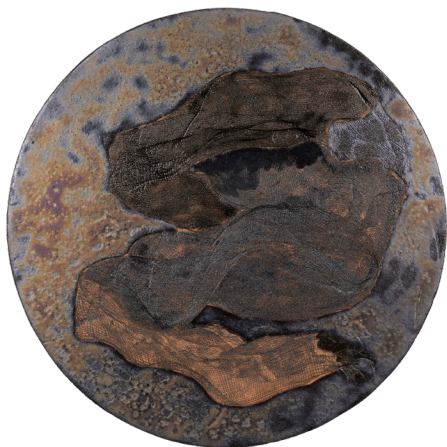
Rather than masking these marks, I choose to reveal them: gold, mirror, glass, or zinc highlight the beauty of the fragmented; the accident becomes a revelation.

Through these cracks, I seek to express the idea that our imperfections, far from being weaknesses, are instead strengths that shape and transform us. They carry the history of what has been, of what has been endured, of what has been repaired and reinvented. Ceramics, in its fragmented beauty, becomes for me a means of expressing this dialogue between imperfection and perfection, between fragility and resilience.

Thus, each piece is an act of creation that, while striving for a certain harmony, accepts and celebrates the process of transformation. The ever-evolving material becomes a mirror of our own inner quest: a journey where each step, each rupture, each repair, has its place in the construction of self.



AN JO FERMON IN CONVERSATION WITH ISABELLE NOTHOMB



Why did you choose ceramic as your artistic medium?

At the age of eighteen, someone told me that every human being possesses an artistic language waiting to be discovered. That idea stayed with me throughout my life. I felt that finding mine would be an important step towards becoming more fully myself. Creative expression allows us to reveal emotions, convictions and insights that words alone cannot always convey.

For me, ceramics became that language. I have always been a tactile person. Touch is one of the most profound ways of connecting with the world and with others. Clay, as a raw material, is both grounding and alive with possibilities. It has a language of its own.

Working with clay is a dialogue for me. It requires respect, patience, observation and, above all, listening. As I shape the clay, it continually responds, inviting me to adapt, to question and to discover. Through that dialogue, I am not only learning about the material; I am also learning about myself.

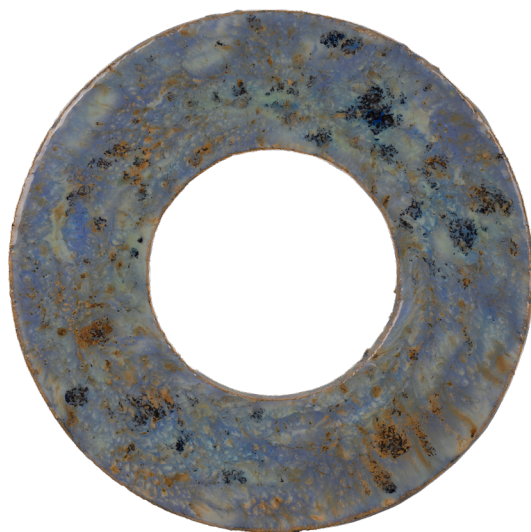
Over the years, I have realised that ceramic is far more than an artistic medium. It has become the language through which I explore transformation, embrace the unexpected and make sense of the world. Like a dance, it is a continuous conversation in which the clay and I respond to one another. Perhaps that is why I never feel I have reached the end of the journey, a bit in a sense that Caziél felt as Odysseus on his travels.

You work with different types of clays. Could you explain the determining factor for the use of each specific material?

Each type of clay has its own character, its own potential and I would even say, its own language. Earthenware is fired at a lower temperature, whereas stoneware and porcelain require much higher temperatures. Each firing range also calls for its own glazes and produces distinct visual and tactile qualities.

I work mainly with stoneware because it offers me the greatest freedom. It comes in a remarkable range of natural colours, textures and geological origins, and I enjoy working with different stoneware bodies fired at different temperatures. This gives me the freedom to explore a wide variety of glazes, surfaces and finishes.

Technical considerations are, of course, essential but they are never my only criterion. I choose a clay for the dialogue I know it will invite. Every clay body responds differently, and each one asks something different of me. This relationship is what interests me most. The material is never simply a means to an end, it is an active participant in the creative process.



Top left: Isabelle Nothomb, Vent des sables, patterned enamelled stoneware, 52 cm ø.

Right: Isabelle Nothomb, Pebbles in the Sky, enamelled stoneware 29 cm ø.

Opposite page: Traditionally mounted Chinese 'pierre de rêve'.

What informs your choice of colours?

Colour is probably the aspect of my work over which I have the least absolute control and I rather enjoy that. I may have an idea of the atmosphere I want to create but the final colour is always the result of a conversation between the clay, the glaze and the firing.

The same glaze can produce completely different results depending on the clay body beneath it. A red glaze on white clay will never be the same as a red glaze on black clay. The firing temperature also transforms colours: pigments may deepen, soften, burn away or create unexpected effects. Every stage influences the next.

I also rarely record my exact glaze combinations. This is not because I do not value the process, but because I enjoy the fact that each piece remains unique. The colour belongs to that particular encounter between a specific clay body, a specific glaze, a specific firing and a particular moment in time.

Rather than trying to reproduce exactly the same result, I am more interested in allowing new possibilities to appear. Experience helps me understand the behaviour of the materials but it never removes the element of surprise.

So, I would say that I do not begin with a colour as much as with an atmosphere. I ask myself whether I am looking for light or depth, calm or energy, simplicity or complexity. The colours then emerge through the process itself and that is one of the greatest joys of working with clay. It is also, at times, quite terrifying.



What is your inspiration? And how are you able to renew your creative spark.

My inspiration comes from many places. Nature, art in all its forms, colours, shapes, fashion, atmosphere; in fact, almost anything can become a source of inspiration. Since I started working with ceramics, my powers of observation have greatly increased. I find that when we truly pay attention, the world constantly offers possibilities.

One of my greatest influences is Asian art. The Chinese 'Pierre de Rêve' inspired the circular form of my ceramics but it is especially Japanese art that has deeply influenced my creative approach: its simplicity, its sense of balance and the philosophy of Wabi Sabi, the beauty of impermanence and the acceptance of imperfection. In eighteenth-century Japanese Hiroshige landscape prints, less becomes more.

With regards to the renewal of my creativity I can say that after an exhibition, there are inevitably expectations from viewers, collectors and also from myself. The first exhibition, although intimidating, carries a certain freedom because everything is new.

The challenge afterwards is to remain truly creative and not simply repeat what has already been appreciated. If I find myself trying to reproduce a previous success, I know I am moving away from the right path. I am no longer listening, I am trying to control. The dialogue becomes a monologue. The clay has a language and I have to listen to it. Renewing my creativity is therefore a constant challenge. I believe inspiration exists on two levels. The first comes from the outside: what I see, read, hear, touch and experience. The second is much harder to explain. It emerges from within without conscious planning, like a spark that appears and asks to be welcomed.

This is where the relationship between the clay and myself becomes most interesting. Of course, technique, knowledge and experience matter but creativity itself cannot be entirely controlled by the mind. If I begin with too precise an idea, the work often takes another direction. There is a moment when decisions seem to come naturally: why I add something, why I stop, why I continue, why the glaze is applied carefully or allowed to flow freely. I cannot always explain it.

I have learnt that the creative process requires acceptance, resilience, humility and trust. I do not want to control everything. The clay will always contribute to the final result. The spark comes from that space between intention and openness, between what I bring to the work and what the material reveals.

Let's elaborate on the oriental influences, especially in the use of the Japanese Kintsugi technique and your admiration of the Beauty of Imperfection that's inspired by Wabi-Sabi. Metamorphosis also plays a part in your oeuvre. And is there ever a point where a piece becomes too broken even for you? Please enlighten us.

Originally, I did not know what to do with my broken pieces. They were a real disappointment. I either set them aside or kept them, waiting to understand what they might become. Something always stopped me from getting rid of them completely.

Over time, I began to transform them either by refiring or by introducing new elements such as glass, mirrors or gold leaf. The break was no longer something to hide or repair, it became the starting point of a new creative path.

When I acquired my own kiln and began working from home, I gradually became more familiar with the firing process. I learnt how to avoid breaking my round, flat pieces. For a while, I enjoyed the beauty of the unbroken circle and explored the possibilities of colour. But quite quickly, I realised that I was repeating myself. I had gained control over the process but in doing so, I had lost something essential, the unexpected. I was no longer asking myself the question that has always guided my work: "What do I do with this?"

The accident had disappeared and with it, part of the dialogue between the clay and myself. The heart of the conversation was missing. So, I decided to embrace the fragility again. With a better understanding of the firing process, I learnt that I could influence the conditions of the kiln: adjusting the firing curve and the rate of temperature increase to encourage certain reactions without ever being able to fully predict the outcome. The dialogue returned. The clay once again revealed its strengths and weaknesses, and I rediscovered the sense of discovery that lies at the heart of my work.

What emerged from these transformations was something stronger, something with a story. The pieces became closer to us as human beings: fragile, imperfect and constantly transforming.

So yes, some pieces can feel too broken at one moment but perhaps not forever. What interests me in the beauty of imperfection is not only the final object, but the whole journey of transformation. Imperfection brings movement, life, serenity and authenticity. It gives the piece an inner beauty that allows it to resonate with people on a deeper and more truthful level.

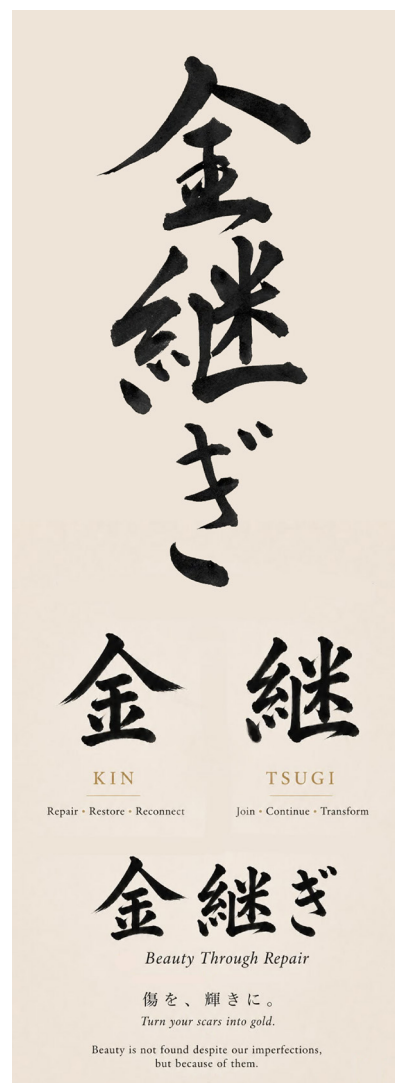
Like us throughout our lives, clay is transformed through every stage of its existence. It carries the traces of what it has experienced. It has a story to tell.

WABI-SABI

The wabi-sabi technique is a Japanese aesthetic philosophy centered on embracing imperfection, impermanence, and natural beauty. Instead of chasing symmetry and flawless finishes, the technique uses organic materials, asymmetrical forms, and visible wear. Common practices include hand-building ceramics, layering cold wax in paintings, and the famous kintsugi repair method.

KINTSUGI

This iconic technique repairs broken pottery using lacquer mixed with powdered gold or silver. It highlights the cracks rather than hiding them, making the damaged piece uniquely beautiful and part of its history.





You seem to love the circular shape. How did you arrive at it and what makes you come back to it. Can you tell us a little about your development as a ceramicist?

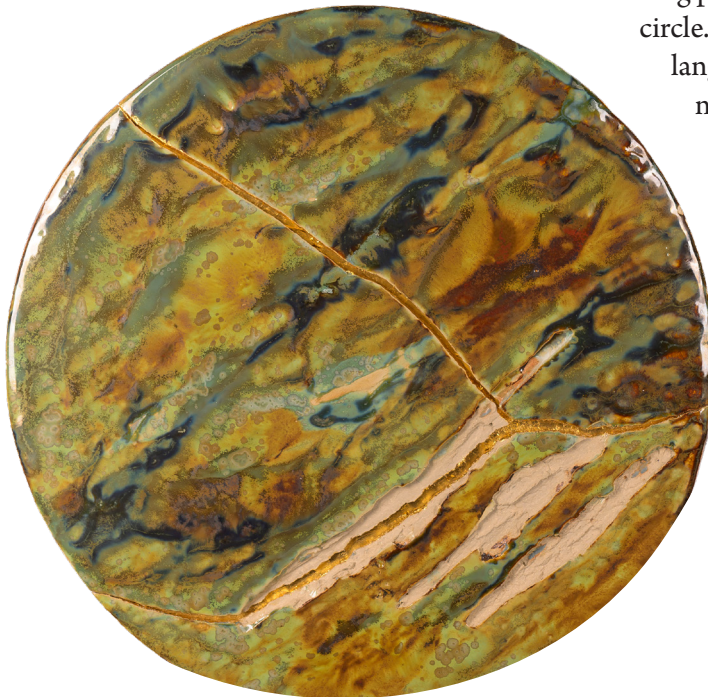
Every piece begins with wedging the clay to remove any trapped air. It is an essential technical step but also one of my favourite moments because it is often then that unexpected forms begin to emerge. Rather than correcting them, I pay attention to them. For me, the clay has a language of its own. It responds, resists, surprises and sometimes suggests a direction I had never anticipated. My work begins with observation and listening.

One day, while wedging the clay, an unexpected circular form appeared. Instead of reshaping it, I chose to trust what the clay seemed to be suggesting. After the first firing, I applied a simple glaze and showed it to my son. He immediately encouraged me to explore the potential of that form. Looking back, I realise that this was a turning point. Today, I deliberately choose to work with the circle. It is no longer an accident but has become my artistic language. Yet every piece still begins with the same openness. I decide on the form, but I never fully control what the clay will become. Cracks, layers of glaze, textures and colours all emerge from the dialogue between the clay and me.

People often ask why I keep returning to the circle. The answer is simple: I did not choose the circle because it offered infinite possibilities. Its infinite possibilities revealed themselves because I chose to remain faithful to it.

To me, the circle is an invitation to listen, to explore, to embrace the unexpected and to discover that beauty often reveals itself when control gives way to dialogue. On a more philosophical level,

the circle reminds me of the importance of remaining centred while continuing to grow.



Top: Isabelle Nothomb, *Bouleau d'Ecosse I*, enamelled stoneware, 51cm ø.

Middle: Isabelle Nothomb, *Mémoire d'écorce*, enamelled stoneware and 23 carat gold leaf, 50cm ø.

Bottom: Isabelle Nothomb, *Impression Japonaise*, enamelled stoneware and 23 carat gold leaf, 60cm ø.

Whether turning around its centre or radiating outwards in ever-expanding waves, it is never truly static, even in stillness. What may appear to be repetition is, in fact, a continuous exploration of transformation.

Every new piece reveals something I had not seen before. The circle is never the same. It can be still or full of movement, fragile or resilient, empty or complete. That is what keeps me coming back to it.

*Perhaps that is the greatest paradox of my work:
I always begin with the same circle, yet it always reveals something new.*

Is there a message you wish to communicate through your works?

From a simple block of clay to the finished piece, there are countless stages, countless transformations and countless decisions. At every step something unexpected can happen. A crack may appear, a glaze may react differently than anticipated, a texture may emerge that I had never imagined. Each time I have a choice either to reject it, to fight against it, or to embrace it and allow it to become part of the work. Working with clay has taught me that life follows the same pattern. We cannot control everything that happens to us but we can always choose how we respond.

What first appears to be a failure can become an opportunity. What seems imperfect can reveal an unexpected beauty. When I say that working with clay has made me more human, I mean that it has taught me that life is never a solo performance. It is a 'pas de deux', a constant dialogue. Whether with the clay, with the people we love, with unexpected events or even with ourselves, life continually invites us to choose how we engage with what comes our way. Ceramics has transformed the way I see the world. I have always liked being in control, and perhaps I still do. But clay has taught me to welcome the unexpected instead of resisting it. Rather than asking, "Why did this happen?" I now find myself asking, "What can I create from it?"

Perhaps that is the quiet message running through all my work: transformation is always possible, if we are willing to enter into dialogue with what life places in our hands.

11/ You have said that theology teaches that meaning lies beneath the surface. Do you believe a piece of ceramic can carry something invisible, something the maker never consciously put there?

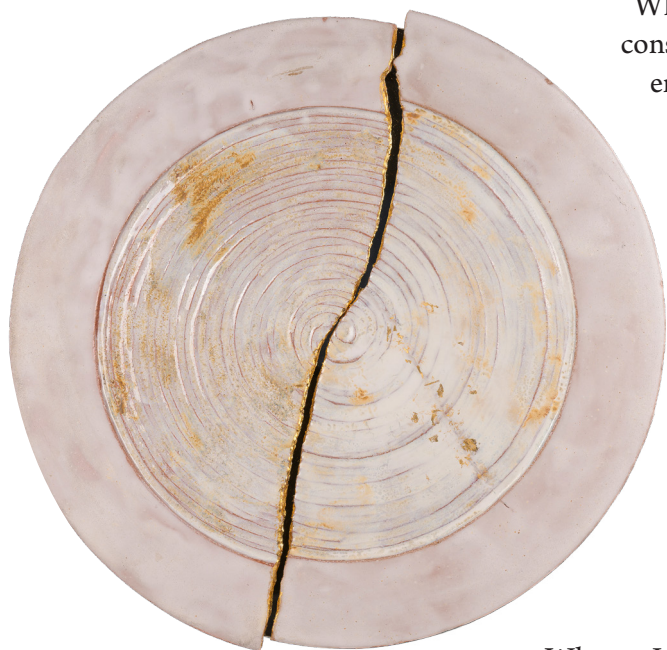
Yes, I do. I believe every ceramic carries something beyond what I consciously intended. Not something mystical but something that emerges from the dialogue between the clay, the process and myself.

Clay has a language of its own. It is a living material with a long geological history before it reaches the ceramicist's studio. Every clay body has its own character and responds differently during drying and firing. Colour changes, shrinkage, textures and glazes all evolve in ways that can be anticipated to some extent, but never completely. That is why working with clay requires both technical knowledge and attentive observation. My background in theology has profoundly influenced the way I work. Theology taught me that meaning often lies beneath the surface. What we first see is rarely the whole story. Whether I am looking at a person, a text or a piece of clay, I have learnt to look beyond appearances and to ask what else might be present.



Right: Isabelle Nothomb, *Tosenkyo*, enamelled stoneware and 23 carat gold leaf, 37 x 50 cm.

That way of seeing has become part of my artistic practice. A lump of clay tells us very little about the forms it may become or the transformations it will undergo. Throughout the making of a piece the clay continually responds to every gesture, every stage of drying, every firing and every layer of glaze. It keeps revealing something new.



When a piece is finished, I often feel that it carries more than I consciously placed there. It seems to possess a presence, a quiet energy or a story that emerged through the process rather than through my intention alone. I cannot claim full authorship of that. The finished work is the result of a conversation between the clay and me.

Working with clay has also changed me. It has taught me patience, attention and humility. The clay constantly asks me to observe not only its reactions but also my own. It challenges me to go beyond my habits, to trust my imagination and to discover resources within myself that I did not know I possessed. Perhaps that is why I often say that while I shape the clay, the clay is also shaping me.

Do you listen to any music in your studio?

When I do listen to music, it is usually classical, sacred or traditional music from South America, Japan or Africa. I rarely choose music with lyrics because I find that words draw me away from the quiet concentration my work requires. Perhaps I am not really listening to the music in the usual sense. Rather, it creates a space in which my own thoughts become quieter. It frees my mind from its constant chatter and allows intuition to take over. In that sense, music becomes less a background and more a doorway into a different state of attention. Whether through silence or music, I am ultimately seeking the same thing: a state in which I can truly listen.

Could you say that the kiln decides in a way the course of your work and to what point can you dictate what happens in the kiln?

I would not say that the kiln decides. The kiln is an instrument and I am the one who controls it. By adjusting the firing curve, the rate at which the temperature rises and the final temperature, I can encourage certain reactions. I control the firing, but I never try to control everything the firing reveals.

What happens next belongs to the clay. Every clay body responds differently to heat. Glazes develop in unexpected ways, textures evolve and colours gradually reveal themselves. The kiln creates the conditions, but it is the clay that responds.

That is why I do not see the kiln as a partner in the creative process. The real dialogue is between the clay and me. The kiln simply enables that dialogue to unfold.

What is the question about your work that no interviewer has ever asked, and that you have always wanted to answer? If I could choose one question, it would be: “Do you believe that everyone has an artistic language waiting to be discovered?”

My answer would be yes.

I believe we all carry within us a unique way of expressing who we are. The difficulty is not that we lack creativity but that our understanding of art is often far too narrow. We tend to associate it with painting, sculpture, music or literature, whereas I believe art begins wherever something deeply authentic seeks expression through us.

For some, that language may be ceramics or painting. For others, it may be listening with extraordinary attention, telling stories that touch people’s lives, teaching, cooking, gardening or bringing people together and creating places where others feel welcome and truly seen. Whenever we create something that comes from our deepest self, something that somehow feels greater than ourselves, we are already speaking our artistic language.

I never imagined that ceramics would become mine. Looking back, however, I realise that everything I had loved throughout my life was preparing me for it. Theology taught me to look beneath the surface. Human relationships taught me the importance of dialogue. Clay brought those strands together and gave them a form.

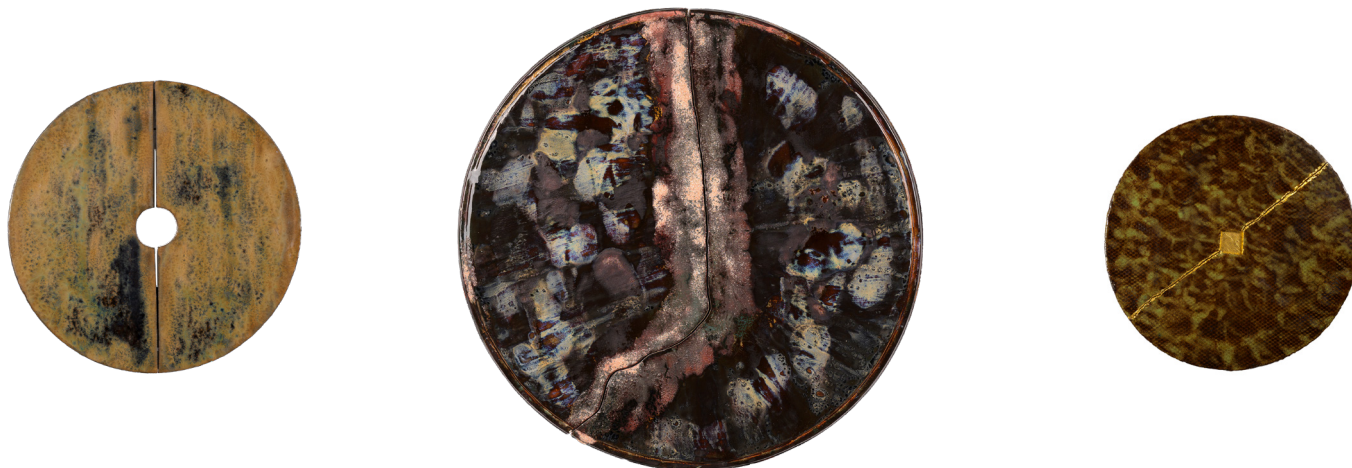
Perhaps that is what art really is. It is not simply about making objects. It is about discovering the language through which we become more fully ourselves while expressing something that, in a way, is greater than ourselves. That language is never fully mastered because we are never finished becoming. Art is not a destination but a lifelong path towards fulfilment.

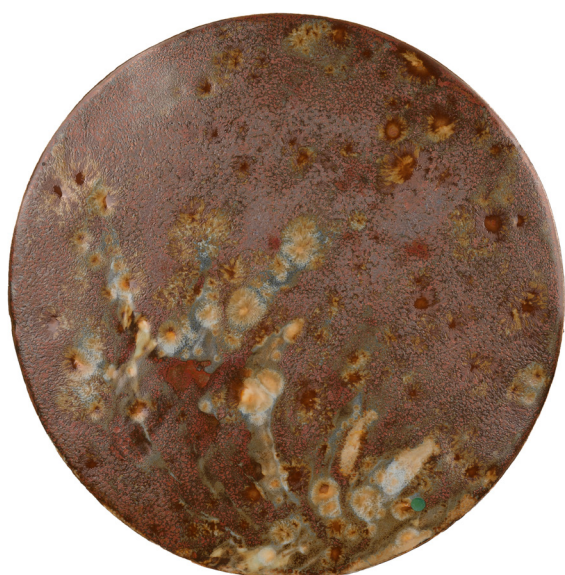
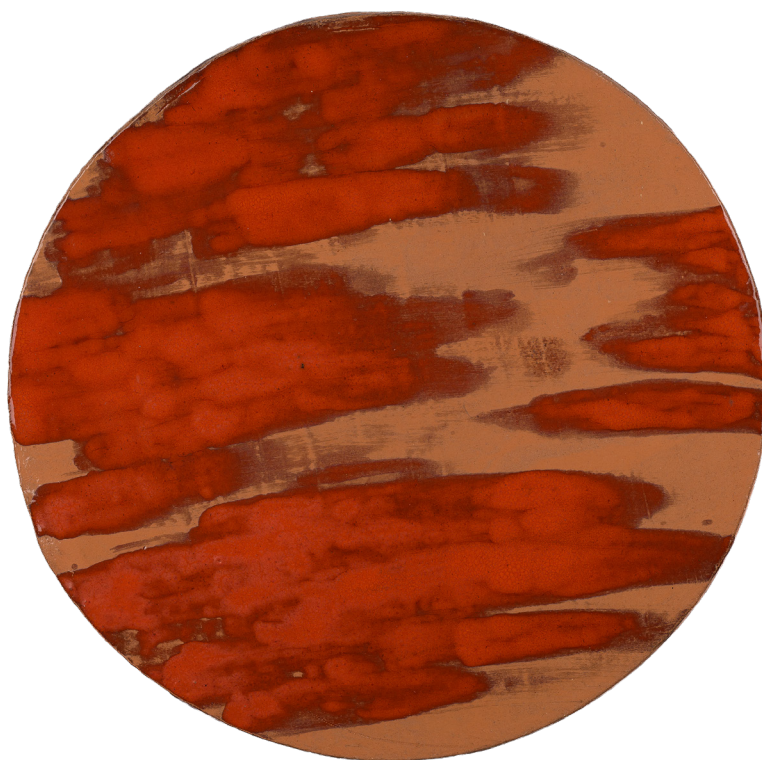
**Is there something that clay has taught you
that no book, no teacher, no conversation ever has?**

Absolutely. Working with clay has taught me things that no book, teacher or conversation could have taught me. First and foremost, it has shown me my ability to go deeper, to search for what is not yet formed, to reach the place where my most authentic expression begins. It has taught me to trust the clay itself, to learn its language, to understand its responses and to engage in a true dialogue with it.

Again, I repeat that clay has also taught me resilience, perseverance and humility. It constantly reminds me that the unexpected is not something to fight against, but something to welcome and transform.

I never imagined myself becoming an artist. Even today, I still describe myself as a ceramicist. But working with clay has changed the way I see myself and the world around me. It is teaching me to become more human, more connected and more faithful to who I truly am.





Top left: Isabelle Nothomb, Blanc d'Etretat, enamelled stoneware, 53cm ø.

Above: Isabelle Nothomb, Mars, enamelled earthenware, 50cm ø.

Left: Isabelle Nothomb, Autumn Magic, enamelled porcelain, 34cm ø.

Opposite page (Left): Aube Verte, enamelled stoneware, 36 cm ø.

Opposite page (Middle): Vol de nuit, enamelled stoneware with granite grit, 49cm ø.

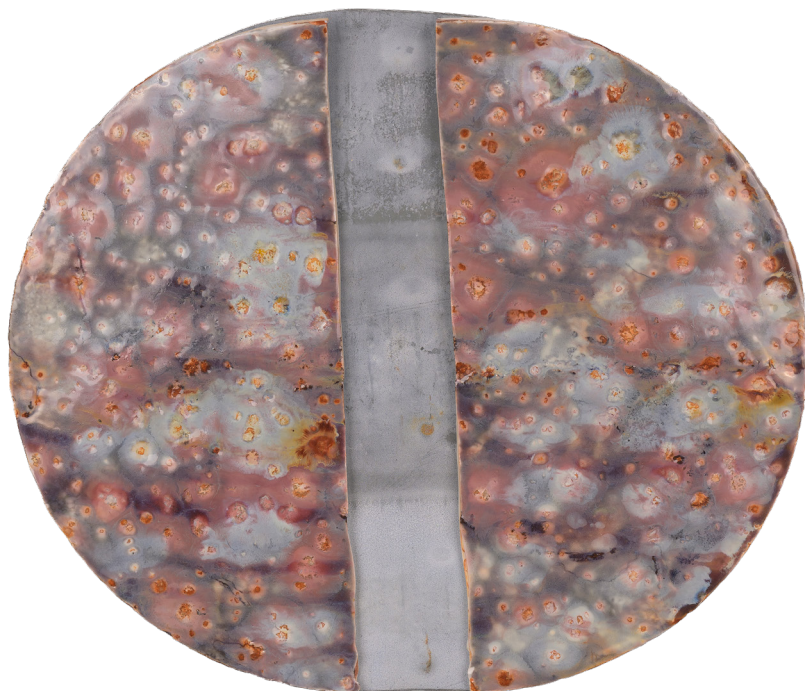
Opposite page (Right): Canopée, enamelled stoneware and 23 carat gold leaf, 29 cm ø.



Above left: Cazel, WC826 - Reflets, 1964, pastels on paper, 65 x 49.5 cm.

Above right: Cazel, WC829 - Composition 9.66, 1966, pastels and gouache on paper, 65 x 49.5 cm.

Right: Isabelle Nothomb, Golden Lines, enamelled stoneware and 23 carat gold leaf, 52cm ø.



Top: Isabelle Nothomb, Morphée, enamelled porcelain and zinc, 34cm ø.

Left: Cazel, WC823 - Rythme Lacéré, c. 1965, oil on canvas, 46 x 33 cm.

Right: Cazel, WC822 - Rythme Lacéré, c. 1965, oil on canvas, 41 x 33 cm.

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