

Four Questions to CHRISTOPH HASENBERG

What does a teacher do when he retires?

BY ANTJE SOLÉAU

For nearly three decades, Christoph Hasenberg was part of the living inventory of the ceramics college, the Staatliche Fachschule für Keramikgestaltung in Höhr-Grenzhausen. Generations of budding ceramics makers received from him an essential grounding for their later profession. Since the summer of 2017, Christoph Hasenberg has been in retirement. Antje Soléau wanted to know how it felt.

A.S.: Christoph, from 1990 – 2017, you prepared prospective ceramics makers for the demands of their profession at the Staatliche Fachschule für Gestaltung in Höhr-Grenzhausen. And you did it with great enthusiasm although initially teaching was not your career of choice. Since last summer you have been in your well-deserved retirement. How does it feel?

Ch.H.: Yes, teaching was certainly not my preference. My first vocational training was as a glass painter. I trained to do stained glass and to make church windows. It was only after that that I studied ceramics in Krefeld and Dieter Crumbiegel, Fritz Vehring, Horst Goebbels, and then porcelain design under Ernst Sundermann.

I always “practiced” the profession of teaching – quite literally – with passion and with pleasure. There were times when I learned a lot from my students and from my colleagues... And I always had a studio of my own, taking part in exhibitions and competitions, as well as markets together with my wife Ines (author’s note: Ines





Atelier Hasenberg



is a qualified ceramic designer). So I could remain authentic as a teacher.

But “retired teacher” is actually a misleading term. I was never just a teacher, and as a freelancer now I have not retired from anything. Why should I?

It feels great, I now have much more time to work on ceramic projects, to plan exhibitions and “do my own thing”.

A.S.: While you were working, you were always very active, involved in various committees, developing the modularisation of courses for ceramists for instance. What did you plan or what are you planning now for your retirement?

Ch.H.: Well, here too retirement only applies to my role as a teacher at the college in Höhr-Grenzhausen. Modularisation was an important step in the right direction of bringing the teaching of art and craft up to date.

A lot of ideas are going round in my head and I have been able to put some of them into practice, for instance the exhibition *Rheinische Keramik - zeitgenössisch* (“Contemporary Rhineland Ceramics”), last summer at the municipal museum in Siegburg. The *Keramikmarkt* in Siegburg means a lot to me, as it does to Ines and our whole team, and I have the impression that this project is turning out well.

There are a lot of areas in ceramic art, fine and applied that I “need” to explore, such as *Siegburger Ton* (“Siegburg Clay”) is another wide ranging area, developing projects that provide a sense of identity for Siegburg with this rare clay, and in my studio paper and canvases are waiting for me. Yes, it is developing as I had hoped.

A.S.: And has it really turned out like that?

Ch.H.: Yes, it has really turned out as I – or we – had wished. We are currently working on a construction project, large ceramic murals for public buildings.

And you know, I can’t really give up teaching. There was an enquiry, if I would teach drawing at a retirement home. I needed a little time to make up my mind to try teaching elderly, inexperienced people to draw, some of them suffering from dementia.

From the first minute, I was convinced it would be very enriching for my life and that of the people there. There have been wonderful, touching moments in the lessons, great talent in people who even at



Drawing

over eighty had had no idea of their own ability, and were then delighted by it. It gives me great pleasure, and it is often completely quiet when the ladies and gentlemen sit there, stimulating the right hemisphere of their brain, completely immersed in observing and drawing. Then afterwards they tell me elatedly that now they see so many things differently and more intensely.

A.S.: That sounds truly exciting. But is just one project of this kind really enough for you along side your art?

Ch.H.: Yes, of course it is enough. It is a large chunk of experience and I have the opportunity to learn again!

My art takes the time it needs now, and finally I have a "long while" to follow up ideas, to make up my mind for or against an idea, to get into the completely normal creative process of making art.

A.S.: Christoph, we wish you all the success you would wish for yourself for all your various projects. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us.

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Christoph Hasenberg was born in Rösrath in 1954. From 1972 – 75, he trained as a glass and porcelain painter, qualifying at the Chamber of Skilled Trades in Cologne. He then attended a higher secondary vocational school, also in Cologne. From 1978 – 1985, he studied product design at the Lower Rhine University of Applied Sciences in Krefeld, where he qualified as a designer in 1985. Since then he has been freelance, until 1990 in Mönchengladbach, subsequently in Siegburg. In 1989, he was given his first teaching assignment at the Lower Rhine University in the subjects "Concept and Design" and "Product Design". From 1990 – 92, he attended teacher training college in Neuwied, where he graduated in June 1992. From 1990 – 2017, he taught drawing, presentation techniques, sculpture and relief, and mould making at the college, the Fachschule für Gestaltung in Höhr-Grenzhausen. From 1992, he participated in various committees working on the modularisation of courses at the college as well as on quality management, exhibition planning etc. He retired from his teaching post in 2017 but continues to work as a freelance ceramist.

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