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A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE POTTERY WORKSHOP

A creative workshop for young ceramists on traditional skills in Slovenian ceramics in the framework of CerDee project

The **National Museum of Slovenia** in collaboration with his associated partner **Pottery Atelier SEM**, has successfully completed a **7-day creative workshop** in the framework of the project CerDee – our European project that supports contemporary artists in ceramics.

The main goal of the workshops was to teach participants regional techniques and skills, used in traditional Slovene pottery in the Prekmurje region, and with it preserve regional traditions of ceramics design and share knowledge from the past and present.

The main part of the workshop took place from 28th September to 2nd October 2020 in the pottery studio of Slovenian Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana and was concluded with a 2-day event in June 2021, dedicated solely to the process of black firing in Prekmurje. The workshop was led by a recognized and highly acknowledged Slovenian potter Štefan Zelko and the head of the SEM Pottery Studio Eva Peterson Lenassi.

The participants of the workshop had to already master the basics of wheel-throwing. They had to be able to create a ceramic cylinder at least 20 cm high and repeat an identical bowl shape several times. During the workshop they additionally improved their skills of wheel throwing and mastered traditional techniques of Slovene pottery making.

In the first part of the workshop, the candidates learned the techniques of producing different traditional Slovene ceramics shapes, as “majolika” (wine jug), “pütra” (a water storage pitcher) and several other traditional bowls, cups, etc. They also developed their own modern interpretations of the learned ceramic forms.

The created ceramic products were then air-dried and fired for the first time in an electric kiln, without any glazing process. The second and final firing of finished products was carried out in a traditional wood-fired kiln in the region Prekmurje (north-east part of Slovenia), where the candidates spent two days. For the “black firing” process (in reduction atmosphere) the candidates had to complete a couple of tasks. The first step was to gather red pine roots, which were added to the kiln in the final hours of firing. They produce a smoke, rich with resin particles, which fills all micro-holes on the ceramics. This procedure is a part of the local ceramic’s tradition. The participants assisted in the whole process of firing – in loading and closing of the kiln, creation of the reduction atmosphere by closing all air holes, and final opening of the kiln after cooling. The whole firing process lasted for more than 20 hours.

As a result of the workshop interesting new ceramic products that appeared, with clearly visible **intertwining of past and present aspects of design**.

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