

# SQUARE ART PROJECTS

## **Q&A with exceptional ceramicist Elena Gileva**

We caught up with artist Elena Gileva about her practice and its role in her solo exhibition 'From the Base Going Upwards' at Square Art Projects.

Gileva's work embodies the age-old interaction between the maker and the object, using traditional techniques to produce timeless, elemental pieces.

# SQUARE ART PROJECTS



Elena Gileva and her dog Laika in her studio in London, 2023.

# SQUARE ART PROJECTS

**Square Art Projects:** Hi Elena, what current projects are you working on at the moment?

**Elena Gileva:** Currently I am splitting time between developing a more commercial ceramic glaze project and an attempt to return to textile work. I took a break from tapestry weaving last year due to a busy project schedule, but now feels like the right time to return to the medium.

In the meantime, I am showing one of my sculptures in an outdoor setting for the first time at Sculpture Fulmer, as well as combining textile weavings with ceramic wall pieces in my upcoming solo show in Cornwall this summer at Hweg gallery.

# SQUARE ART PROJECTS



Glazing samples in Elena Gileva's studio, London, 2023.

# SQUARE ART PROJECTS

## **SAP: Can you tell us more about your working process?**

**EG:** It shifts and transforms depending on the project, and has grown over the years. As my projects have become longer in duration and - most of the time - increased in scale, the development is less intuitive and instantaneous. There are many stages that the work goes through, which feels fitting to ceramics, the work spanning over a few years with pauses and moments of intense concentration. There are stages full of thinking, reading, and sketching as well as testing materials/glazes on a smaller scale that then spurs on an intense period of making. That is usually followed by calm and waiting once again – clay pieces, especially large ones, require drying prior to firing. After the work has been bisqued, glazing begins – it is akin to painting to me. Layers of mixtures are applied one after another to create depth and colour, and the pieces are re-fired multiple times to achieve a wealth of surface and texture. Some see glazing as alchemy, but in fact it is chemistry. This scientific approach has become a big part of my practice over the last few years as well – mixing oxides in the form of white powders and endlessly testing the mixtures in the kiln in search of diverse results.

# SQUARE ART PROJECTS



Elena Gileva, *Blue Swirl*, 2018, stoneware and glaze.

# SQUARE ART PROJECTS

**SAP: Being an artist is hard. What keeps you going?**

**EG:** At times I am not sure myself! It feels like inertia and habit kicking in, a feeling of not knowing what else to do with oneself. And from time-to-time, moments of art 'magic' happen, to remind me why I made this choice in the first place.

However, if I reflect and think objectively, I have a multitude of things that allow me a break from my 'art practice' and give me energy to go back to it. Among these is definitely dancing, something that I took up last year, as well as hour-long daily dog walks and glaze chemistry.

# SQUARE ART PROJECTS



View of Elena Gileva's studio, London, 2023.

# SQUARE ART PROJECTS

**SAP: Can you talk to us about the themes that are present in the exhibition?**

**EG:** The pieces that have been selected for this exhibition come from slightly different moments in my making, spanning over a few years. However, in a very literal sense they are all interwoven with the very process with which they have been constructed: when a piece is coiled, there is an intertwining of clay and thought, and a visceral connection is made through the repetitive and reflective mode of making. In essence, weaving lengths of clay is akin to weaving a tapestry, and the resulting hand-sculpted pieces evoke textiles at the same time as representing stones or pebbles. For this project I wish to explore a theme that has fascinated me for a long time: the integral conversation between ceramics and textiles as a way of thinking and producing. For this I have drawn on the multiplicity within ornamentation and the intimate connection between clay and fibre, with a desire to set a site of cultural connotations, symbols and forms.

**SAP: And finally, if you could exhibit your work alongside any artist - living or dead - who would it be?**

**EG:** Hard question. The first person that comes to mind is Sonia Delaunay or Natalia Goncharova.



# SQUARE ART PROJECTS

## **Elena Gileva: From the Base Going Upwards**

18 May – 16 June 2023

Online viewing:

<https://www.artland.com/exhibitions/from-the-base-going-upwards>

Limited edition print:

<https://squ-are.com/shop/>

### **About Elena Gileva**

Elena Gileva (1992 Saint Petersburg) is a London-based artist whose work is an enquiry into the decorative, historical, and ornamental through the mediums of ceramic, sculpture and installation. Gileva's background is both in ceramics and Fine Art, having graduated from an MA at the Royal College of Art in London and a BFA at Parsons Paris School of Art and Design. Within her practice she combines various historical and personal narratives, references, and processes, with hand-built ceramic objects taking centre stage in her work. Recent exhibitions and projects include: Enso: Coming Full Circle, White Conduit Projects, London (2023); The sound of trees walking: Elena Gileva & Jeltje Laborneman, Centre Ceramique Contemporaine, La Borne (2022); Echo: Elena Gileva & Nicolas Roggy, Galerie du College Marcel Duchamp, Chateauroux (2022); Le Vase: Un Vecteur Culture, Le Don du Fel, Le Fel (2021); London Art Fair, White Conduit Projects (2020); Kleureyck, Design Museum, Ghent, (2020); Nakanojo Biennial 2019, Gunma, Japan (2019).

### **About Square Art Projects**

Square Art Projects is a contemporary art gallery in London. We exhibit and support international emerging artists in exhibitions, festivals and art fairs locally and globally.

### **Contact Us**

For all enquiries, please email us at:

[contact@squ-are.com](mailto:contact@squ-are.com)

0785 0879 837

Instagram: @squareprojects

Twitter: @squareprojects

Facebook: squareprojects