

# Lutz Könecke

## “Waiting for the God Vase”

Siegfried Stöbesand



**G**roßenrode near Göttingen in Lower Saxony. I enter Lutz Könecke's studio. It is equipped in businesslike fashion, tools and implements, exhibition pieces and every day private possessions all laid out functionally. It is all about work in this room. Lutz Könecke seems to be a modest, independently minded person who maintains a sense of balance in his life. He is not concerned with order for order's sake, but his requirements are geared to the essentials. A decorative touch in the studio is a quote that faces the visitor when they enter the studio: “Waiting for the God Vase”; this is a saying that may be taken as characteristic of Lutz Könecke's work: perfection has priority, successful pieces that should no longer be worked on. What has been taken to the highest level can not be elevated any further; otherwise there is a danger of destroying it.

The dialectic of working artistically becomes visible here, he works towards a perfect result without hoping for divine intervention, but nevertheless, this quote is expressive of the hope of achieving a result that transcends the genius from the subconscious towards a quasi planned random result.

above

Tea and coffee pot, 2015  
h 27 - 55 cm, stoneware  
thrown and assembled  
matt black glaze

opposite page top

Coffee pot, 2014, h 35 cm  
stoneware, thrown and  
assembled, matt black glaze

opposite page bottom

Vase, 2014, h 33 cm  
stoneware, thrown and  
assembled, unglazed

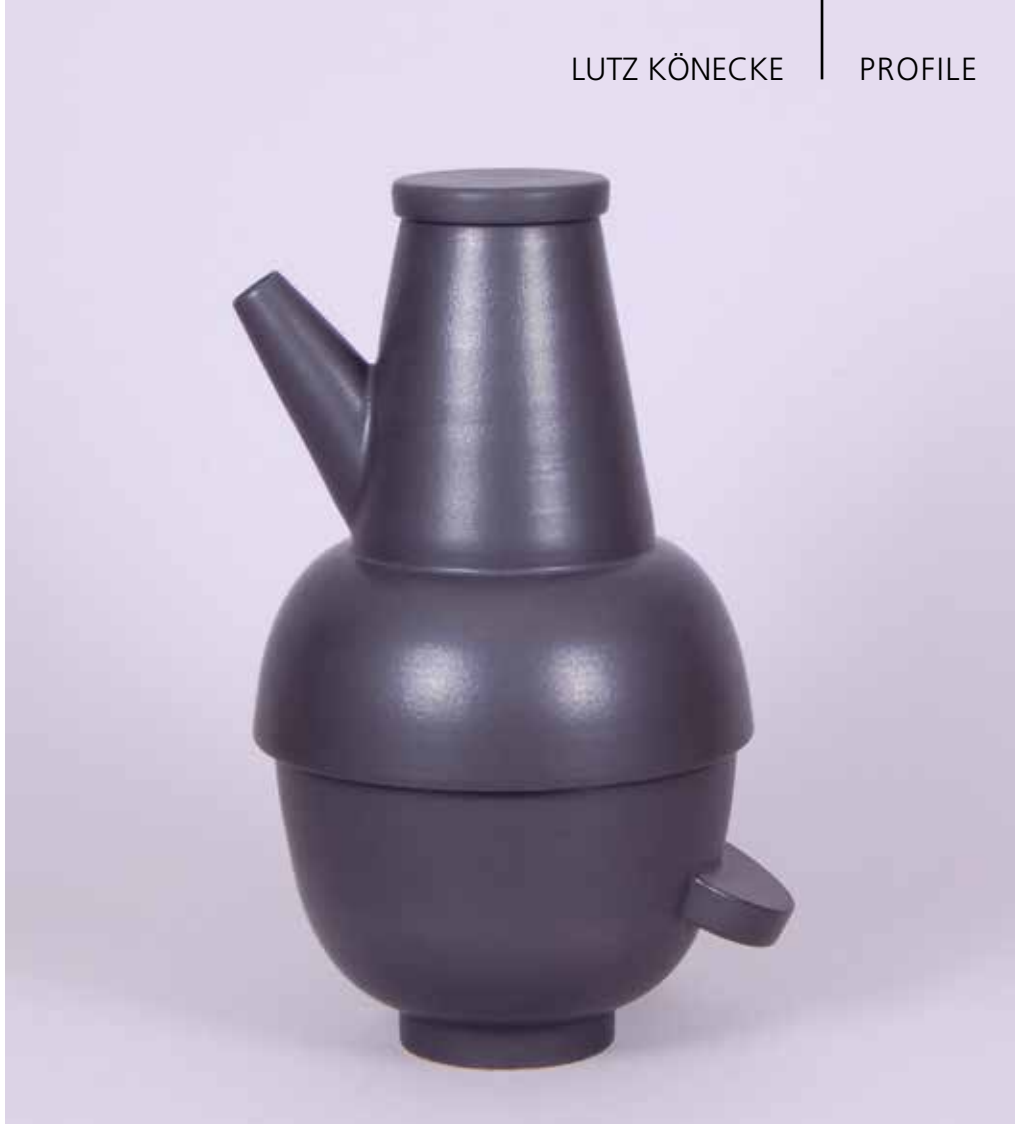
Lutz Könecke is animated by ceramic craftsmanship and working in art; as if to the manner born, he is one of the lucky ones who do not feel tradition and a legacy as a burden but as a maturing karma, with a charmingly modest sense of nonchalance. In his biography, several force lines related to ceramics manifest themselves: the famous Bauhaus potter Otto Lindig is his maternal great grandfather, and his craft background comes to him through his mother, with whom he shares a studio. On the paternal side, he has been influenced by his great aunt, Rosemarie Könecke, who trained in ceramics under Helma Klett.

Lutz Könecke grew almost playfully into surroundings which allowed him to grow up with clay.

Classic behaviourist theory proves itself in practice. Force lines that define life; seeds grow, not yet fully formed but always present. The eye is schooled, not ostentatiously aligned, almost certainly prepared unobtrusively for a later time without planned intent.

His father was an inveterate collector of ceramics, both of them scoured flea markets; always in search of suitable finds, his aesthetic senses were sharpened here; a sense of taste was formed, judgements on proportion and colour are trained quite incidentally.

As a conscientious objector, he worked for Göttingen department of conservation as an alternative to military service, thus becoming acquainted with actual remains in their historicity, gaining respect for them: arrow heads and shards from waste tips fired his imagination. He was holding the rudiments of human work from prehistoric times in his hands. His interest was there but his ultimate passion had not yet been awakened. He turned his attention to photography, took on a work placement with the established photographer Marc Theis. With him, Könecke learned basics that would accompany him later: schooling his perceptions: an eye for essentials was trained in connection with the necessary technical precision. He stayed





left  
**Vase**, 2013, h 36 cm  
 stoneware, thrown and assembled  
 unglazed

opposite page left  
**Two vases**, 2015, h 26 - 36 cm  
 stoneware, thrown and assembled  
 white and light blue glazes

opposite page right  
**Two vases**, 2015, h 25 - 29 cm  
 stoneware, thrown and assembled  
 matt black and white glazes

could not have been thrown in one piece; precision and an aesthetic exploration of space in the relationship between inner and outer structures are what is important to him. The focus of his ceramics is on form, which expresses the essential more strongly. Complex forms are given a monochrome glaze or retain the colour of the bare clay; in simple forms, he makes the interplay of glaze colours shine out.

His style: clear line, clear form, clear result. Without craftsmanship, without experience, without knowledge of technique, there would be no art. His workshop is his studio, always with the

with Marc Theis until 2000, but the urge to create something of his own was becoming ever stronger. He had never really lost his ceramic creativity from the focus of his life. All the signs pointing too a future in ceramics were too immediate. So he applied for a place at the Kunsthochschule in Kassel, and was accepted on the basis of his photographic work on light and shade.

He started out under Professor Ralf Busz, and after his retirement, he found someone to further him in Professor Urs Lüthi. Lüthi provided him with positive feedback, which made him feel valued and made him unconditionally wish to continue working creatively. Besides his concern with craftsmanship and art, the presentation of his work became a defining constant. Urs Lüthi pointed the way: "Ceramists are at an advantage because they do not need to look for a meaning, there is already meaning in a vessel." The question of meaning had been answered for Lutz Könecke; he had thus discovered his profession and his passion. The tradition of Walter Popp, who founded the Kassel School, found an adept eager to learn in Könecke.

The centre of gravity of his work is on assembled vessels made of a number of individual elements. Forms are developed that

primacy of craft. Lutz Könecke's work is impressive, the community of his fans is growing all the time. Especially abroad his work has been much appreciated; eighty percent of his work has gone to the USA and Canada. The 2014 Auguste Papendieck Prize was recognition of his evolution in art in the course of which his formal vocabulary has increasingly become his trademark. His ceramics have a high recognition value, they are at once art and craft.

When I leave this workshop studio, I do it with the wonderful sense that in this location ceramics are being made quietly and modestly that continue the tradition of established masters of their craft, without having made clandestine borrowings from them; works that make their own mark without chasing after modernisms of taste typical of our times. What Exupéry said, that one could only see rightly with the heart, what was essential was invisible to the eye, is further enhanced by Lutz Könecke in his aesthetic endeavours to make the invisible visible.

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#### TECHNIQUE

Apart from drinking vessels and smaller vases, all of his vessels are made from two or more elements. Each element is wheel thrown. They are then dried until they are leather hard, turned and assembled with slip. They then rest for around a week under plastic sheeting before they are further refined. Then they dry in the workshop until all of the moisture has evaporated.

In the first firing, in an electric kiln, crystalline water is driven off. After the bisque firing, the surface of the pots is sanded and then glazed. The vessels are fired in a gas kiln to 1280°C in reduction.

The pots in brown clay are made in the same way except they are not glazed. They are fired in an electric kiln to 1140°C and treated with hard oil.

This surface treatment makes them more resistant to stains and gives them a slight silky gloss. These pots are also waterproof and can be cleaned with a damp, lint free cloth.

“The focus of my work is on the assembly of vessels from two or more components. In this way, forms grow that would not be possible if thrown in one piece. It is not about a highly complex form but more about working precisely with it. Working in this fashion offers me the opportunity to observe volume and tension in the body of the vessel and to test variations.

“It is about the concentration on one form, about space and its aesthetic exploration, the relationship between interior and exterior – with the means of the ceramic vessel.”

#### LUTZ KÖNECKE

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#### Lutz Könecke

was born in Northeim in 1973. He trained as an electrician between 1991 and 1994. After community service in lieu of military service working for the department of urban conservation in Göttingen (1994-5), he attended a technical upper secondary school in Göttingen. After a further year in the conservation department in Göttingen he was an assistant to the photographer Marc Theis in Hanover between 1998 and 2000. From 2000 – 2005, he studied fine art at the Kunsthochschule in Kassel under Prof Ralf Busz (until 2004) and Prof Urs Lüthi. In 2007, he opened his own studio in Kassel, and in 20010 he relocated to Großenrode. Lutz Könecke has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions since 2002. His work is present in various private and public collections.

