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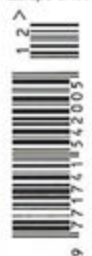
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Carved Earth

The splendour of the earth is seen in a new light with the use of simple yet ingenious techniques, together with carefully considered angles and lines. **Fatema Zehra** meets sculptural ceramicist Halima Cassell who talks about beauty carved from nature.

At first glance, these neutral wall hangings, bowls and other objects may seem relatively straight forward and simple. However, upon closer inspection it is quickly apparent that each piece is carefully constructed and moulded with a compilation of complex angles and dynamic shapes that create a highly creative and original structure.

Cassell was born in Pakistan and brought up in Manchester. Her natural creativity became evident at a young

age when she carved her way through an art-based education. Her multicultural background is apparent in her fusion of African pattern work with her passion for architectural geometry. Cassell has enjoyed a string of successes, with her work being showcased in exhibitions all over the world from Tokyo and Barcelona, to London's V&A.

Cassell combines strong geometric elements with recurrent patterns, adopting architectural principles. Her work

is characterised by dramatic angles and an infinite sense of movement with ever-fluid yet defined lines and angles. Cassell's work is inspired by an ability to 'communicate with the universal language of numbers and patterns' through her artwork. "Geometrical beauty can be found all around us in all natural things created by God," she says. A distinguishing quality of Cassell's work is the strong geometrical patterns, and an evident understanding and



appreciation of geometric principles throughout art.

Cassell works with a variety of materials from bronze and wax, to wood and stone, but has a 'natural intuition with clay'. The appeal of this 'natural source of material from the earth' is its versatility. Cassell achieves the solid yet fluid nature of her pieces by working with heavily grogged clay. This technique allows her to work on a large scale and use the relatively thick surfaces of the clay to carve to the desired depth.

it." In her early work, Cassell explored the methods of operating, infusing Islamic influences heavily drawn from carved art and architecture. This led her to expand into examples of intricately carved and constructed buildings from around the world, which incorporated repetitive motifs and patterns.

Furthermore, the hue of the original clay body is vital in the overall feel of each artwork, as rather than using pre-chosen glaze colours, Cassell adopts the use of stoneware or earthenware to pro-

"When creating a piece, the most exciting moment is when the flat designs become dramatically transformed and taken to another level by heavily carving into it."

Cassell's work originates from simple patterns laced together into strong geometric shapes, and heavily contrasting contours. This seemingly simple method allows her to create a scene of playful dynamics, and clever use of shadows to bring a sense of drama and intrigue in every piece.

According to Cassell, "when creating a piece, the most exciting moment for me is when the flat designs become dramatically transformed when charted over a structure and then taken to another level by heavily carving into

vide colour to each piece. The unique structure of every art piece creates its own tones and textures simply through the effect of light and shadow from the various textures and angles. It is, at first glance, within the simplicity of these pieces that an outstanding beauty of the use of natural material is found. Moreover, the uncomplicated notion of simple repetitive shapes carefully and intricately carved in a particular depth and arrangement leaves a dynamic, playful and unique take on sculptural ceramics and the use of geometry. ●





R.E.M., 2006, Un-glazed piece.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT
Rubicon, 2007,
bronze piece; R.E.M
2006, unglazed Clay
piece; Whispering
Gallery, 2006, clay
piece; Three Tier
water feature, 2002,
barium glaze with
black iron oxide
on clay.

