

The garden of stones: How a dream transformed the practice of glazing

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Anne-Marie Dehon

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Anne-Marie Dehon, In my garden, 2025, zucchini plants, variable dimensions, photo: Anne-Marie Dehon

Anne-Marie Dehon shares a dreamlike experience of the ceramic glaze as a vibrant, living material, prompting her to consider her glazing practice as a form of “gardening” built on careful observation and collaboration with the transformative nature of minerals.

(A message to the reader.)

I am the glaze... I am the glaze drifting down along the surface of a translucent vase in the red atmosphere of a ceramic kiln. I am floating in a viscous and smooth, glowing mass; it feels extremely light, transparent, and delicately coloured in blue and rose, like oil floating on the surface of water. They are like dancing particles around me, like northern lights in the Arctic night.

At this moment of the dream, my six-year-old daughter subtly wakes me up to crawl into my bed, but my eyes refuse to open. I wanna stay in this moving and living mass, light and coloured. All my body is dissolved in this strong feeling and cannot be anything else. I can only be these crystals that transform and retransform indefinitely in this floating veil. But this veil is not over me, it is me. I cannot be and do not wanna be something else.

This dream is the strongest experience I have had of the ceramic glaze being a vibrant and living material. It happened one night, after I had spent the day intensively researching new glaze recipes. This dream imprinted a strong, long-lasting impression through all my senses.

I am a ceramic artist and teach ceramic techniques for adults in the suburb of the Swedish city of Gothenburg. At the end of the ceramic making process, when eventually the glazing comes, I keep saying to my students this ever-repeated sentence: “It is a very stable material that once fired, has no exchange anymore with the food, in this way: it is safe”. How can I reconsider this perception of glaze as a stable, motionless, cold material?



In the garden, mid-April, around my house, I feel the spring coming slowly. Days become longer. Birds sing joyfully late in the evening while the sun sets on the sea. There is a subtle smell of humus in the air. The bags of planting earth arrived on the island where I live in Gothenburg's archipelago. This yearly delivery at the harbour is like a signal: it is time to think about gardening, preparing the garden, planting the first seeds inside the house. But I know, when I feel the spring coming, that it is still too early; I need to wait a little bit, and then, when I feel it is a good time, I'll wait a few more days. Otherwise, if the same thing happens as last year, the young plantations will be brought outside too early, and the late cold temperatures will kill them.

I come into the cellar and bring up the collection of pots I keep for this use. Some are in plastic, some are in ceramics. I plant cucumbers and zucchinis in them. Those plants are amazing to observe. I water them in the evening, and then sit down and look at them. It will take some weeks until they germinate. Suddenly, the tiny, light-green germ emerges curled up inside itself. And then, almost with the naked eye, you can see the leaves pulling themselves out of the earth that is pressing down on them. They unfold, and a few hours later, the two primary leaves are there: spread out towards the sky like two propellers.

When I am gardening, I apply permaculture principles of collaboration: me with the plants, and the plants with their environment. I water my garden carefully, observing the reaction of the vegetables. Based on my observations, I learn how to care for them. I do the same with the earth. I nurture it by using compost made from the healthy leftovers from the garden, mixed with algae from the nearby sea. I put aside other plants that are known to help each other grow.

While gardening, I thought: could my ceramic practice of glazing be more similar? Could it be or become a deep joy made out of careful observations, observing life growing, and carefully adapting the way I take care of them after small experiences? Could I also be joining the stones in the process of formation? Could my collection of glazes become a garden of stones?



Anne-Marie Dehon, Rose-Chrome Project, 2025, glazed stoneware and porcelain, variable dimensions, photo: Anne-Marie Dehon

The ceramic glaze is made out of minerals: granite, quartz, zinc, chalk, etc. Those stones are then ground into powders and mixed with water before being applied to the clay and fired. Could those stones, even if they feel extremely silent and motionless, be considered other than “dead” material? Could this shift change my practice and enable me to respond more effectively to ecological imperatives?

In her article “Mining the earth’s womb”, the sociologist Carolyn Merchant describes how in the European medieval times, clay and minerals were considered to grow like plants, but in a much slower way from inside the globe. She describes how miners needed some specific preparation to enter the womb of the earth, taking out minerals from the vein of this maternal body. These medieval metaphors imprint in me this feeling of the life of the minerals and the care and commitment we owe to this precious and slow-formed material.

The cold and stable glaze inherently keeps the living movement of the minerals.

I observe my numerous collection of tiny, small glaze tests in my ceramic studio and let my mind wander inside the matter: from the recomposed liquid matter inside the volcano before it cooled down at the surface of the globe. In the same way, the ground minerals, in the red atmosphere of the kiln, melt, move, change, and interchange. The molecules recombine themselves to become another material. While cooling down, the material freezes at one moment of this movement. It can crystallise or recrystallise sometimes. What I observe on those tests that I hold in my hand is the result of this movement: its memory. The cold and stable glaze inherently keeps the living movement of the minerals.

And the life of this material does not finish here. It will come into contact with my hands, with some drink, some food, or sometimes mixed with both. Then, will it be broken? Weathered with time? Repaired? If broken, the particles of fired ceramics will be spread out. Would they mix into sand? Would some vegetables absorb them? Would it dissolve in water? In this way, minerals go back into the circulation of life.

In my glazing practice, I enter the process of transformation of the stones when I start selecting them, mixing them and preparing the conditions of formation of glaze in the kiln. Once in the warm chamber, I cannot reach them anymore; their reformation operates without me. It is through a regular process of mixing, firing, and observing that I can now foresee what will come out and better prepare the conditions of the expected result. This control is only partial as there are too many uncontrollable parameters for me to handle. I often desire and provoke this unpredictability by choosing less refined material. All of those tiny pieces of knowledge I acquired through years of practice.



Anne-Marie Dehon, In my garden, 2025, notebook, dimensions (20cm x 30cm x 2cm), photo: Anne-Marie Dehon

The medieval metaphors of minerals as living matter helped me consider the glaze as a dynamic and changing material. But the parallel between glaze making and gardening lies not so much in the matter or the form. I wish these parallels could lie even more in attitude: collaborating with materials, interacting in the creative process, observing tiny changes, and longing for them to happen.

I wish my garden to be a celebration of living things, where they can grow and bloom, where my children can run, admire the multiplicity of vegetables, taste them, and where the bees and birds can feed by regenerating pollen and leaves.

How could my garden of glazes be born out of the same desire?



Anne-Marie Dehon, Rosa, rose, rose, 2025, glazed stoneware and porcelain, dimensions (30cm x 10cm x 10cm), photo: Anne-Marie Dehon

About Anne-Marie Dehon

I am a ceramic artist from Belgium, based in Sweden (EU). After a degree in political science, I studied ceramics with F. Urrejola (Lodève, FR), and painting at the Royal Academy of Fine Art (Brussels, BE). I worked as an artist in Brussels between 2012 and 2020, before moving to Sweden in 2020. I graduated from Hdk-Valand (Gothenburg, SE) in ceramic art and more recently from the Research Lab at Konstfack (Stockholm, SE). I am one of the co-founders of the Kollektiv Tontouristen. Visit www.annemariedehton.art and follow [@amdehon](https://www.instagram.com/amdehon)

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