

I am an artist, drummer and composer. I've played in rock band for 20 years in London, Los Angeles and Oslo. High energetic hard rock is the essence of my daily engine and is the music genre closest to my heart, yet I'm also a visual artist who works primarily with ceramics and sound. My experience with hard rock has had an impact on my artistic practice, which veers away from traditional ceramics and sound works while combining these media in novel ways. During my MFA studies at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts, I studied ceramics, but I ended up at the Norsk Teknisk Porselen in Fredrikstad, which produces large-scale ceramic electrical insulators. To develop my compositions, I frequented Mic Productions recording studio as well as the composer Henrik Hellstenius with whom I did tutorials at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo. By mixing these fields of experience, I have been able to turn ceramics into visual artworks (from sculptures to installations), sound works and audio-visual performances with instruments playing my own compositions.

Since my creative output is intermingled and inseparable, it makes little sense to perceive my works in isolation. While music is in its essence ephemeral and both immediate and complex, the same thing might be said about my artworks. Through a lyrical engagement with the materials, composing through rhythm, repetition and pauses, I hope to transform music into physical manifestations. Rock music is vulgar Romanticism, according to Robert Pattison, and while my artistic method shares the spontaneity and excess of rock'n'roll, it necessarily needs to take into account the fragility of ceramics, and it is this somewhat improvised dialogue that materialises in my works. Through experimentation with the ceramic object, I seek to reach an abstraction that transcends one fixed set of meanings to open up instead a more immediate, physical interpretation. *Jørgen Frederik Scheel Haarstad*

## Jørgen Frederik Scheel Haarstad



**Lethal Assumption** 2015, detail, porcelain, white concrete.  
All images courtesy: the artist; photograph: Geir Dokken.



Jørgen Frederik Scheel Haarstad (1969) is an Oslo-based artist, drummer and composer of experimental music. He makes sculptural objects and sound works, including unique musical instruments, in ceramics. While completing his MFA studies at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Haarstad participated in several group shows, including the Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale in Korea in 2015, and the travelling exhibition »Transformator« held at the Bomuldfabriken Kunsthall in Arendal, Hydrogenfabrikken Kunsthall in Fredrikstad and RAM Galleri in Oslo in 2014–15.

Jørgen Frederik Scheel Haarstad recording and mixing in the studio.

## Other Services

We tend to associate ceramics with the domestic realm: crockery, vases, figurines. Not Jørgen Frederik Scheel Haarstad. The artist looked to a ceramic form which is just as prevalent and beneficial as homeware in our daily lives yet not as visible: the electrical insulator. Perched on high-voltage power lines far above our heads or hidden away in a dark fuse box, the insulator is a kind of abstract Minimalist sculpture, yet valued for its resistance, water-tightness and strength. In contrast to domestic ceramics, ceramic insulators know few rivals because the material outperforms others. Plus the slightly flawed »rejects« are unlikely to find a home – unless of course they were produced in Fredrikstad at the national porcelain factory Norsk Teknisk Porselen where Haarstad collects both split and faulty insulators in monochrome white and black. He positions these large-scale sculptures in even larger installations which may be dangerous – not for any electrical current, but for the fatal sharpness of the shards. Again, in contrast to homeware, the insulators must be handled with even more care and caution when they are broken than when they are intact. Works such as *Lethal Assumption* (2014) – white shards, crowded tightly together, like the incisors in a tyrannosaur's mouth – manage to combine shattered fragility with lethal menace. Such installations might be viewed as industrial readymades, but Haarstad is also a professional musician and composer who decided to fashion his own musical instruments from porcelain: extra-large tiles, pipes or smaller pellet-like shapes. He plays these unique instruments in unconventional ways: hitting them with drumsticks or with other rough pieces of porcelain and even letting them crash to the floor. The sound generated by a large ceramic tile can last up to 45 seconds and ranges from 9 Hz to 17,000 Hz (human hearing rests around 20 Hz). The artist-musician will use a mixer to transform these sounds into a composition which shifts eerily from music to silence for human ears. With his unusual ceramic sound works, Haarstad multiplies the uses of industrial materials while rejecting their traditional destinations. His oeuvre – artworks, musical instruments, compositions, performances – blurs the division between these domains. By making music that can escape human perception, he not only challenges the ideal that music should be made for human beings but also questions the anthropocentrism of all arts. *Jennifer Allen*



**Lethal Assumption** 2015, porcelain, white concrete, 90 x 45 x 600 cm. Photograph: Geir Dokken.



Porcelain waste at Norsk Teknisk Porselen.

Jørgen Frederik Scheel Haarstad



**1972** 2013, porcelain, car spraypaint, loading straps, sound sensitive lights.