

My Turn

Turning Stoves Into Works of Art

BY SHARON SANDERS

ICONIC DANISH ARTIST AND DESIGNER MONICA RITTERBAND HAS NEVER BEEN ONE TO SHY AWAY FROM CHALLENGES; IN FACT, SHE THRIVES ON THEM. Voted Danish Artist of the Year four times, she has an amazing ability to express herself through works of art that range from miniature glass mosaics, paintings, and textiles to enormous steel sculptures that adorn public squares,

sonality because the hearth is the center of one's home.

"It's important to me for a stove to look friendly and bring life to a room," Ritterband says. In many of her sculptures, she works with molds and metals, including cast iron, bronze, and steel. She knew that cast iron would be the perfect metal for her stove concept because it was the only one pliable enough to form the

Danish artist MONICA RITTERBAND has DESIGNED an EXCITING new LINE of CONTEMPORARY STOVES and accessories for MORSØ.

parks, and shopping centers across Europe. Earlier this year, one of Ritterband's biggest design challenges came to life in the form of a contemporary cast-iron stove collection for Morsø, a prestigious Danish wood-stove manufacturer.

Morsø proudly introduced the Monica Ritterband 7600 wood-stove series at HPBExpo in March 2009. Ritterband applied her elegant and refined style to the new cast-iron collection, which includes the curvaceous 7644 and 7642 models, the wall-mounted Morsø 7670, and the pedestal Morsø 7648. Each model features the largest viewing area of any product in Morsø's 156-year history. They are truly pieces of visual and technical art. Craig Shankster, president of Morsø U.S., Portland, Tenn., says, "Monica Ritterband has taken cast-iron stove design to a new dimension."

One can hear the excitement in Ritterband's voice as she speaks passionately of the inspiration behind her design, but she admits that the road to the final product was not easy. In 2004, Ritterband approached Morsø with her idea for a cylindrical stove with a dramatic, oversized glass viewing window. She called it The Circle. "In much of my art, I use organic shapes, and a circle is one of them. I find the circle to be divine," she says, adding that a stove has to have a per-

smooth, soft edges that her circular design required. Ritterband spent countless hours perfecting her design before presenting it to Morsø.

Morsø executives loved everything about Ritterband's initial design—its organic touch, feminine curves, and refined elegance—but the technical team was skeptical. "Initially, they told me that it was going to be impossible to make a functional stove from my design, but there was no way I was going to give up that easily," she remembers.

Ritterband took the technical suggestions to heart and spent six months retooling her design before presenting it to Morsø a second time. She vividly remembers the excitement and relief she felt when Morsø told her that she had gotten it right. Together, Ritterband and Morsø spent the next four years bringing her design to life. "It was a long, technical process, but I loved every minute of it," she explains. Ritterband also designed some quirky, fun cast-iron accent accessories (called Feet), including a teakettle, a trivet, a firewood holder, and fire tools.

Today, Ritterband feels that her partnership with Morsø has been successful not only from a business perspective, but also from a personal standpoint, because she and the company have the same mindset when it comes to focusing on the process.



Danish artist Monica Ritterband expresses herself through her art. Her latest work is the contemporary 7600 wood-stove series for Morsø.



The wall-mounted Morsø 7670 stove shows off its modern curves in any room.

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The pedestal Morsø 7648 stove has a contemporary look with a classic feel—a combination that Ritterband is passionate about in all of her stove designs.



Ritterband's quirky cast-iron accessories, called Feet, include a teakettle, a trivet, a firewood holder, and fire tools. They are the perfect match for her 7600 series of wood stoves.

"Morsø only makes one new stove a year, so it puts all of its energy, heart, and soul into the project—and so do I," she says. "It cares about the designs it makes, and that's important to me, as an artist."

When asked about her philosophy of stove design, Ritterband explains that she doesn't believe in crazy designs. "They are charming, and I enjoy looking at them as pieces of art, but they're not practical. It's important to combine contemporary and classic design. It's a balance," she says. Morsø has

long been a prestigious stove company offering classic designs, and Ritterband believes that her modern take on the stove has helped the company begin to branch out in a more contemporary direction (which is the same direction in which the industry, in general, is heading).

Ritterband says that she has learned a tremendous amount about the hearth industry throughout the process, and she sees stoves going through an evolutionary process. "People not only want

stoves for warmth, but want large viewing windows, so they can see the fire—and they want stoves that look good even when they're not burning," she says.

Ritterband looks forward to partnering with Morsø again in the future, and she reveals that they are already discussing some new ideas. "It took four years for my first design to go to market," she explains. "When the time is right, I'm ready to pour my heart and soul into my next project." ■

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