New Zealand POTTER

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BACKHOUSE.

Pamella Amsonte
Te Horo
M Smisek

NEW ZEALAND POTTER

This issue is published at Wellington by the Editorial Committee of the New Zealand Potter: Doreen Blumhardt, layout and drawings; Lee Thomson, advertising; Jocelyn Thornton, assistant editor; Helen Mason, editor, 29 Everest Street, Khandallah, Wellington.

Volume Three Number Two December 1960

With our Fourth Exhibition we have reached the status of having our work considered seriously in the realm of pure art. The fact that even our sternest critic admits that eighteen or twenty pots are worth looking at from this point of view means that we have accomplished something in our short history. We are nearly all amateurs and have no greater claim to talent than the practitioners of other arts in our country. What we do possess is a unity among ourselves and a tradition of shared difficulties. Without these there could be no Exhibition.

The mistake we made this time was in letting the Exhibition get out of our hands, because even the best of pots finds it hard to hold its own in an unsympathetic atmosphere.

The old argument of whether pottery is art or craft has been resurrected. Does it really matter? Let's get on with the work of perfecting our skills, something that calls for hard, disciplined work and clear thinking. As one of our contributors says, 'If a spark of creativity and curiosity is also present then that odd pot of superlative and lasting quality will surely happen.'

C O N T E N T S

The price of this magazine is Two Shillings and Sixpence. It is published twice yearly in August and December. The annual subscription for the magazine only, is Six Shillings post free. Well-wishers and potters wishing to take part in the Annual Exhibition pay a subscription of Ten Shillings per annum. In May a circular is sent to all subscribers telling of plans for the year and calling for subscriptions. News of interest to potters is always welcome.

Editor: 29 Everest Street, Khandallah, Wellington.

NOTES ON BRISTOL GLAZES

Mary Hardwick-Smith

Bristols are a group of glazes developed in England early in this century to replace raw lead glazes for use on durable, cheap kitchen ware. They belong in the mid-temperature range, cones 4 to 8. Zinc Oxide is the principal flux, carefully proportioned with Calcium Carbonate and Feldspar; Alumina and Silica vary according to the maturing temperature. Their long maturing range gives considerable variation in type of glaze, texture and colour. For instance, the lower mature temperature usually gives rather a thick, opaque glaze with duller colours. This probably accounts for the unpromising reports in pottery books of these glazes and their limited colours. If fired higher the same glaze will become glossy and brighter in colour, and higher still will develop considerable texture and colour changes, with 'breaking' on the ridges. Variations in Silica and Alumina have a considerable influence on colour also. A glaze high in Silica and low in clay will give a bluish tinge, e.g. Copper will give turquoise; whereas a higher proportion of Alumina to Silica will produce truer, softer colours, e.g. Copper gives a soft green. The iron colours are many and varied.

These glazes are very hard and durable, with good smooth surfaces. They are a good standby for domestic ware as they are technically reliable, they are economical, and the ingredients are easily available.

The following are some glaze bases that have proved satisfactory on my stoneware and porcelain bodies. Fired to cone 8 to 9, in oxidising atmosphere of electric kiln.

BRISTOL GLAZES Cones 8 to 9

	1	2	3	4	5
Zinc Oxide	28.3	28.3	28.3	28.3	28.3
Whiting	35	35	35	35	35
Feldspar	178.8	178.8	178.8	178.8	178.8
China Clay	5	10	7.5	30	5
Silica	120	60	90	60	80
Red Lead	-	-	-	-	26.5

Number 1: High in silica, very hard, glossy, bluish, flakes, possible free silica.
2% Copper Carbonate gives blue green to turquoise where thick..

5% Manganese Carbonate gives fawn to pinkish mauve where thick.

Very useful for jewellery, colours bright but flakey and textured. Glaze slip is inclined to settle quickly but a few drops of vinegar added will thicken it.

Number 2: Similar to above but slightly lower maturing temperature (Cone 7 - 8).
Colours softer, still some silica blue.
2% $CuCO_3$ - green to blue, better on pots than No. 1.
Vanadium 6%)
Iron Fe_2O_3 1% to 2%) soft, golden yellow.

10% Fe_2O_3 (Red Iron) gives several interesting results depending on the firing. A slower cycle with 'soak' at Cone 8 gives warm, reddish brown with large mottle. At Cone 9 less gloss, and colour becomes orange, breaking dull and greenish on the ridges. At this temperature it will run if too thick.

Number 3: A combination of above two glazes, colours different again but still bluish. Glaze slip stays in suspension longer.

$CuCO_3$ 2% to 4% a dark green blue, very pretty colour, but hard if too thick.

Fe_2O_3 5% a dark glaze, mottled, bluish where thick. Breaks kaki at Cone 9 - runs if too thick at this temperature.

Number 4: This glaze is best on a white porcelain body as the colours are softer and truer.
2% $CuCO_3$ - soft green
5% $MnCO_3$ - soft fawn with tinge of mauve
$CoCO_3$ 1/4%)
$CuCO_3$ 1/2%) grey blue
Fe_2O_3 1/2%)
This glaze may crawl on stoneware. Deflocculating glaze slip with a few drops of sodium silicate may remedy this.

Number 5: To reduce maturing temperature of above glazes add 8% to 10% of Red Lead.
This glaze is glossy at Cone 6; more subtle texture at Cone 7 with different colours again. The silica blue may disappear altogether.

7% of Colemanite instead of Red Lead gives the same type of bright colour but makes the glaze crawl badly.

It is difficult to give a true picture of glazes without discussing the body in conjunction with them, as fit and to some extent colour depend largely on the body. However, should chittering occur it is easily controlled by additional felspar in the body.

Remarks by Dr. W.B. Sutch, Secretary of the Department of Industries and Commerce, when opening a One Man Show of Pottery by Doreen Blumhardt at the Willeston Galleries, Wellington, on 18th September, 1960.

One of the jobs of my Department is to encourage New Zealand industry, but industry with a standard equal to, or, if possible, better than the rest of the world. Ceramics particularly interest us, and the Department hopes to foster a marriage between the crafts and the commercial world. Above all craftsmen must keep the high standard as demonstrated by Doreen Blumhardt's show.

The pottery in this exhibition is made from Wellington materials as far as possible, and all this has been accomplished in four months of hard work. The pots are well finished and carefully thought out both for function and looks, and much care has gone into the fashioning of non-drip spouts and lids deep enough not to fall out in use.

Doreen is a teacher, and over the years she has had a tremendous influence on young people at Wellington Teachers' Training College, where she is Head of the Art Department. This time she thought she would create something herself instead of inspiring others to create. There is a strong flavour of both Japan and Bernard Leach about her work, but we in New Zealand have to work out our own traditions and this is a reliable basis to experiment with.

I would like to see built up over the years at the Dominion Museum a collection of the best of New Zealand pots so that we can trace the gradual emergence of characteristic differences between the pottery from different districts of New Zealand.

DOREEN BLUMHARDT'S EXHIBITION AT THE WILLESTON GALLERY

ARUNDEL POTTERY REO FIRE TRUCK
JOHN KINGSTON AND THE ROSES

ARUNDEL POTTERY KICKWHEEL

KILN UNDER CONSTRUCTION

A CORNER OF THE SHOP
AT ARUNDEL POTTERY

This work of Doreen's could hold its own overseas, and we should one day be able to produce enough of this type to enable us to export. Her pots are very reasonable in price, and this is good because we should hope to create a tradition whereby every New Zealand household contains some handmade New Zealand pots.

It is upon the level of taste in any society that the progress of the visual arts depends. The better informed the taste, the greater the integrity of the work that informs it. It is upon this delicate and inevitable ambivalence that the future of aesthetics in New Zealand depends.

- Ngaio Marsh in Perspectives, the second Annual Art Lecture sponsored by the Auckland Gallery Associates and published by them.

A LETTER FROM AMERICA

November 3, 1960

John Kingston, from whom this letter comes, is well-known in the art world of New Zealand. He instituted a unique way of living in an early Auckland house at 7 Suiter Street, Newmarket (now demolished to make way for an extension to a brewery). Barry Brickell moved in with John and the two lived a fine life surrounded with clay, wood, stone and tools. With the brewery over the back fence, a timber yard next door, and the railway line so close the house shook as the trains passed by, Suiter Street had an atmosphere that engendered creative thought.

Greetings from Maine, otherwise the 'Granite State' and Arundel Pottery, otherwise 'the workhouse'.

It is difficult for me to believe that in the short space of seven months I have become so immersed in an occupation that it has become a way of life. A year ago I had not thrown a pot. Admittedly I had a little experience at pinching and coiling - not too far removed from some of the aspects of sculpting. Technically, the step is not a large one, but a man must have some strong conviction that his way of life as a teacher-cum-sculptor is not as complete and full as it could be, to take a ship to a strange land to help start a new venture with as little knowledge and experience as I had.

Roland Rose I met in Paris in 1955. We found much in common in our dislike of pressure living, enjoyment of the fine arts, mutual addiction to 'vin chaud'

and disgust at the cold, wet, Paris December. We took off together to visit a friend in Spain. There, and through later meetings the following year, we made a fast friendship which had more far-reaching effects on our subsequent lives than we then imagined.

A year ago our sporadic correspondence brought to light the fact that he and his potter wife had purchased an old farmhouse in Maine; that I had gleaned a passing knowledge of kiln construction and expanding interest in pottery as a means to make bread and butter. Could we combine resources?

By a miracle of good chance I was able to assist in the finishing stages of construction of the big, circular, salt glaze kiln at Reikorangi Pottery before I sailed. Also to witness its first firing and to meet many Wellington potters, especially Minna Bondy, whose fine little book on rock glazes has given me many leads towards the successful use of local Maine minerals for glazes.

I arrived here at Kennehunkport in mid-May, to find a magnificent old barn, with bags of open ground about, for the pottery. There was much to do before any serious pot making could take place (our first load of production stoneware awaits unpacking as I write). The barn frame and roof was in good condition, but the floors were rotten, walls had to be moved and windows installed, workshop, glazing, throwing and kiln rooms divided off and weatherproofed, for winter here is severe and a barn 50 feet long, 40 feet wide and 35 feet high would cost a fortune to heat. Like the making of a potter, the building of a pottery is the work of a lifetime, but at least we now have the fundamental equipment: a kick wheel, small earthenware test kiln, a large two chamber downdraught kiln for stoneware, clay storage bins, shelving and an oil

heater to heat the potting and glazing rooms and shop.

All the while this construction programme has been taking place I have been making glaze and body tests, and I have now formulated some workable glazes: tenmoku, high feldspathic white and grey, saturated iron red and olive drab slip glazes. The local clay is earthenware, but rather spongy to work with due to a high percentage of carbon and possibly mica. However, with the addition of fine quartz sand from the field at the back of the pottery we have a body from which we can make good red flower pots - hanging, bonsai, and common and garden. The nearest source of mined stoneware body is Ohio. We are using a dark firing body called 'Jordan' purchased through a Boston agent at about fourpence per pound dry, powdered. Kaolin we get from the wharf at Portland twenty miles north. It comes by clay ship mostly from Fowey, England, every month or so to supply the big paper manufacturers in Portland. Roland and I have a field day at the dockside with shovel and cement bags rescuing some of the tons and tons that are dropped inadvertently in the bulk transfer, arriving home looking like abominable snowmen.

Maine is the chief U.S. producer of feldspar for ceramic industries so mines abound, but we are using as our source a fine pink granite quarry nearby where orthoclase granite dust of a beautiful assorted mesh can be collected from the crushing plant. It is my greatest joy to pile into the car or our 1926 Reo fire truck and rattle off to the quarries or down to the sea where the potter's fundamental ingredients lie waiting to be gathered. How can a potter, weekend or full time, not avail himself of these joys?

But the greatest single fillip a pottery affords is the pleasure of group activity. So much more quantity is possible and, I argue, quantity production in the studio craftsman sense will eventually produce an infinitely finer feeling for form. If a spark of creativity and curiosity is also present then that odd pot of superlative and lasting quality will surely happen.

Pottery is one of the very few occupations today that can offer the maximum of satisfaction to several individuals working together. They can work happily together only if making ware for everyday use. This is the one great lack I feel in New Zealand (and American) pottery. So long as we continue to produce primarily for exhibitions and not for basic needs, no true worth will show in our work. We must foster the growth of communal potteries. From them would come a revelation to the rest of the thinking world of the need to return to simpler things for the retention of our national and international sanity.

I await with impatience the arrival of the August issue of the New Zealand Potter. It is unique as a craft magazine with no counterpart, that I have discovered, in the U.S. These copies I brought with me have been devoured by those potters to whom I have shown them, and commended even though much of the content is local New Zealand. Likewise the special issue on Bernard Leach. To all who were concerned with its publication and especially to Terry Barrow, congratulations.

Later I hope to tell you something of American pots and potters.

Good Potting -

JOHN KINGSTON

FESTIVAL OF WELLINGTON 1961
CERAMIC COMPETITION

What is almost certainly the most ambitious competition ever conducted among New Zealand studio potters - it involves more than £300 in prizes - will close in January next. It was mooted by Dr. W. B. Sutch, who, both as Secretary of the Industries and Commerce Department and as chairman of the Festival of Wellington Arts Committee, has been an ardent advocate of closer bonds between New Zealand designers and New Zealand industries. It is being sponsored in the financial sense by Crown Lynn Potteries Ltd. of Auckland who, as their recent record shows, warmly concur with Dr. Sutch's sentiments in this matter.

Crown Lynn has, as most potters will know, already conducted two national contests for surface designs on dinnerware. In at least one respect, this new competition will have a similar aim - to give potters the widest possible measure of freedom in creating their designs. Although the competition is for New Zealand-designed pottery, there is no stipulation that designs should incorporate a New Zealand motif; and the merits of each design are left to an independent panel of judges, uninfluenced by any consideration of what will, or will not, 'sell'.

However, the articles selected as the basis for the competition have been chosen because of their suitability for production, even in limited quantities, in a commercial pottery. In this way both the Festival committee and the commercial sponsors are hopeful of finding several designs which will in fact be manufactured - and will win a large measure of public support, not because they have been scaled down to any pre-determined level of public taste, but because their sheer excellence demands it.

These various classes are as follows:-

Section 1: Coffee set consisting of coffee pot, cream jug, sugar bowl and cup and saucer combination.

Section 2: An oven-to-table casserole, including cover.

Section 3: A drinking mug suitable for adult use.

The prizes for the coffee set will be 100 guineas first, 50 guineas second, and 20 guineas third. Those for the other classes will be 50 guineas first, 20 guineas second, and 10 guineas third. The contest will close on January 18 and -- for those readers who have not already received them -- entry forms are available from the Public Relations Officer, Wellington City Council.

Because there is virtually no restriction on design, not a great deal need be said in the way of guidance to prospective competitors. Some practical points relating to the articles' use will suggest themselves readily to the experienced potter, however. The casserole, which in use is quite likely to be taken hot from the oven and put down on a cold stainless steel bench, needs (to prevent cracking) to be as nearly as possible to a uniform thickness. Its handles or knobs will be handled with an oven cloth, rather than the bare fingers; it will need to be designed accordingly.

Similar practical considerations apply to the coffee set, especially the pot. Can the handle be easily gripped, without burning the fingers? Is the lid easily manageable? Will the pot pour easily? Will it keep the coffee hot? These are a few of the questions which the designer will bear in mind.

In practice, the articles in all three classes would probably be manufactured commercially by the slip-casting method, rather than being thrown on the wheel. This creates no special problems, for almost any shape is possible and there is virtually no restriction on decorations in relief. Save one - a cast article normally needs to be fettled along the lines where the two halves of the mould meet. In the case of a coffee pot or mug, these lines are down the middle of the handle and down the side of the article immediately opposite the handle. Embossing, in a commercially-produced article, needs to be kept clear of these lines.

Surface decorations? There is no restriction here. Underglaze or on-glaze patterns, free-hand painted or by transfer, coloured glazes, all-over line patterns, - any of these can be reproduced by hand or mechanical methods, and all are commonly in use.

The time given us is short, and this is the busiest time of the year. Nevertheless this is the first time that studio potters in this country have been taken seriously as a possible source of creative ideas. It is up to all of us to see what we can do.

N E W S

Dermot Holland has opened the Victoria Gallery at 6 Victoria Street, Christchurch. He wishes to sell pots on a commission basis and would like to hear from any potters interested. His terms: tell him what you want for the pottery and he will sell it at his own price.

Mirek Smisek has settled down in his 'new old home' near the Nelson Airport. He and his wife have worked hard to make the place habitable and now feel it worthwhile. As well as the house he has a large studio and here he has built a new kiln using the same design but with more steel round it to hold it together. Salt glazing is still his mainstay, but he is trying his hand at other glazes using local rocks, from which he is getting some interesting results.

Since the beginning of this year Lawson Fraser has been instructing in pottery at the Nelson Technical School, and Colin Bateup is Pottery Instructor at the Waimea College. Both these men learnt their pottery from Mirek Smisek. There are now about ten kilns in the Nelson District, and about six of these were built by Lawson Fraser for school use. The countryside around Nelson is changing its face due to the efforts of local potter-prospectors!

In October we were pleased to have a visit from Helen McKenzie, another potter working her way around the world. Born in New Zealand, Helen studied pottery at night school in Canberra, before setting out for Canada, where she kept on her nigh school study at Vancouver Art School and the University of British Columbia. Two Summer Schools with Carlton Ball, Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Southern California, made

Helen enthusiastic enough to give up her bread and butter job and take a position as Pottery Tutor in Edmonton, Alberta, where she was able to spend part of her time on her own work. She also visited potters in Mexico, where she was particularly impressed by Castano, a well-known Mexican potter who fortunately speaks good English. On her way back to Australia, where she thinks her fate will probably be to starve on a clay bank as she tries to live off her pots, Helen called on many New Zealand potters. We enjoyed Helen and the news she brought of other pottery worlds and wish her well in her pursuit of the sun and the clay.

In Invercargill nearly 30 keen potters have got together and formed the Southland Ceramic Club which meets in a room in the old Brewery. Among their number is an electrician who is building them a kiln, and the manager of a brickworks who has a good knowledge of glazes. They would be glad to make contact with any other similar groups who could help them with the drawing up of a workable set of rules or a constitution. Mrs. E.R. Latham, 104 Islington Street, Invercargill, would be most grateful for any information along these lines.

In September Rachel Renaud and Lawrie Mills introduced to New Plymouth the idea of pottery demonstrations at a flower show. Part of the hall was roped off to contain two tables, one for fired ware and one for slab work and general paraphernalia; the wheel, two sacks of prepared clay, and some plants in pots. The demonstrations proved to be very popular; for two afternoons and evenings the crowds watched intently and asked many questions, from 'What's in your clay?' to

'Do you demonstrate at all the flower shows?' Both potters felt that the interest shown and the information they were able to give to people who knew little about the processes involved made the hard work a pleasure, and they recommend the experience to other potters.

Jack Laird, potter, and Tom Johnston, sculptor, had an exhibition at the Willeston Galleries, Wellington, opened by Dr. W.B. Sutch on the 27th November. Unfortunately this show was too late in the year for us to be able to review it, but here is a quote from the invitation:

> 'Mr. Laird is an Englishman from Watford who saw war service with the Royal Armoured Corps. On a Rehab. grant he studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, London, continuing at Chelsea School of Art and London University till 1948. From then till 1959 he divided time between teaching and working potteries (Eynsham in Oxfordshire, and Fulham), and in 1952 took a post as head of Art Department of Hautlieu Grammar and organiser of Evening Institute art classes on the Island of Jersey, during which period he made frequent visits to France, built his eleventh kiln and produced earthenware till 1959, when he came to New Zealand as Senior Tutor in Art to Victoria University Council of Adult Education. He planned the Decorative Art and Design Centre now being built at Palmerston North University College, which is to become a focal point for potters, ceramic and decorative designers, and a research centre for materials and methods.'

VISIT TO JAPAN

Some notes and photographs by Terry Barrow.

Dr. Barrow (Editor of our publication Bernard Leach - Essays in Appreciation) has just returned to New Zealand after eight months in the Pacific area. In Hawaii and the Philippines he was working as a SEATO Research Fellow, and from there he went to Japan as New Zealand delegate to an Asia-Pacific Museums Seminar organised by UNESCO and the Japanese Government. Fortunately his duties were usually compatible with his interest in ceramics. Here he tells us something of his experiences in Japan. In a later issue we hope to hear of Hawaii and the Philippines.

During a short stop-over in Japan when en route to Manila from Hawaii I raced to Mashiko, where I had been invited to stay by Shoji Hamada. The Tokyo Travel Bureau did not know where Mashiko was located but I studied a map, then went to the appropriate Tokyo station. The ticket seller was also puzzled, for he asked 'Why for you go to Mashiko?' I replied that I was visiting a gentleman called Hamada san, which seemed to please him immensely, for he beamed with pleasure, drew his breath through his teeth in Japanese style and replied 'Ah, very good - a very famous man!' In no time I was being whisked away from the congested environs of Tokyo into the open landscape of rural Japan. I knew I had arrived at Mashiko when I saw a collection of local wares cemented to a concrete base on the platform of the station. I was not surprised to see fine pots so treated as I had quickly learnt that in Japan one can always expect the unexpected. In a few minutes I was carried to

Hamada's estate to find the great man standing at his gatehouse with a warm welcome, and English style lunch awaiting me in the house. For hospitality, kindness, good food, good pots, and courtesy, the Hamada household is unsurpassed. I was asked if I would care for some Japanese food during my stay and I made it quite clear that I preferred it to English food, in fact I wore 'yukata' after the 'furo' each afternoon and adjusted myself easily to Japanese custom. It was a season of local country festivals, so on one or two evenings I went off with Hamada, who appeared to enjoy greatly the spectacle of these ancient festivities.

In A Potter in Japan and elsewhere Bernard Leach has given us excellent accounts of Hamada, and Janet Leach has provided us with good accounts of working at the Hamada pottery in Pottery Quarterly. What I wish to say is that I found Shoji Hamada to be all that I expected him to be, and more. To be with him is a pleasure, and to experience his warmth of personality and lively humour is a delight. His skill in throwing or decorating is fascinating to watch, but I was amazed at the rugged direct methods of the pottery workers and their apparent indifference to glaze dribbles or finger marks. They work with a rhythmical ease and I found that things not considered possible in the West are ordinary actions in the East. Space does not allow me to say much about Mashiko, but I should mention visits to the artist-potters Shimaoka, Sakuma, and the Narui brothers. I also called at several of the thirty or forty traditional kilns of the district.

When in Kyoto I enjoyed the hospitality of my potter-school-teacher friend Markoto Tashiro, and Abbot Sohaku Ogata of the Chotokuin Shokokuji Zen Temple. I also met John Chappell, his wife, and the Mexican girl Graciella Diaz de Leon, whom I had known at

Hamada's kiln. As Hamada had generously written ahead to a number of people, including potters Kanjiro Kawai and Tomimoto Kenkichi, the way was open for me to call without hesitation. Kawai had recently returned from a trip to Hokkaido with Shoji Hamada, and took great pleasure in showing me his collection of Ainu wood carvings. Kawai's son Hiroshi had just returned from a trip to India where he had collected folk art objects, so there was interest in my own recent collecting venture in the Philippines. Kawai was sufficiently well-informed to ask me whether I had been with the Ifugao or Igorot tribes. Kawai's personality is astonishing, and his verve, originality and technical skill as a potter quite remarkable. I think it is important to note my impression that most of the Japanese potters I met had a very universal view, and that their appreciation of other arts was intense. There was nothing cultish about them. Of the other Kyoto potters I should mention Kawai's adopted son Takeuchi, who works near Kawai in an adjoining workshop. His style is related but distinctive. Another potter of special note is Ueda, whose delightful home and kiln is situated in a village on the outskirts of the city. I am not unappreciative of the other schools of potting in Japan, or the work of potters like notable Rosanjin, but I feel the Mingei group is the most significant in Japan and offers the most meaningful lesson to Western potters.

Kenkichi Tomimoto is not nowadays a member of the Mingei group, but his work in decorated porcelains represents a modern expression of a traditional art, and in its own right may stand with the more austere stonewares of Hamada and Kawai. I found Tomimoto a delightful character, the most English of the potters, very gentle, and expressing a devoted regard for Bernard Leach. Tomimoto gave me a porcelain plate cobalt-decorated with brushwork which I think will testify to the opinion that he is one of Japan's

greatest calligraphers. At all the potters' kilns I received a bowl or some pot as a gift, along with all the courtesy of the tea and other refreshment. I wish to express my regards to all those Japanese friends who were so kind to me.

As a delegate to the Museums Seminar I was taken to the Katsura Imperial Summer Palace, temples, and scenic centres, but of all places the Ryuanji sand garden in Kyoto appeared the most wonderful. For those interested in Zen I should mention the Rinzai Zen Honzan of the Daitoku-ji Temple, where the American Rev. Ruth Sasaki receives Western students who may study Zen for extended periods.

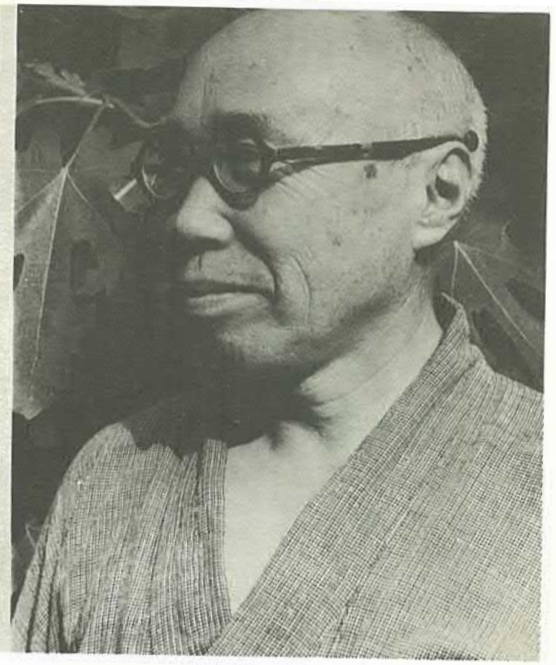
At Fujina near Matsue, and on the shore of Lake Shinji, I found Michitada Funaki, and also met his son Kenji. They were both very hospitable. I like their slipware and am impressed with its stoneware-like quality. Potters would also find interest in the group of museums at Kurashiki, particularly the Folk Craft Museum of Dr. Tonomura.
Dr. Takeouchi, Director of the Ohara Art Gallery, and a great friend of Bernard Leach, took me to his home to see his collection of pots, and also to the kiln of his son Seijiro. Seijiro lost one arm in China during the war, so to work as a potter is a conquest over physical handicap.

The Tokyo museums offer much to visiting potters, particularly the Folk Art Museum of Dr. Soetsu Yanagi. I found Dr. Yanagi very generous, and interested to know about pottery-making in New Zealand. It was gratifying to see that he displayed artifacts from Polynesia (including Fijian pottery) with a feeling for the intrinsic beauty. He kindly arranged for me to visit Dr. Daisetz Susuki at Kita Kamakura. Dr. Suzuki drew me a large Zen

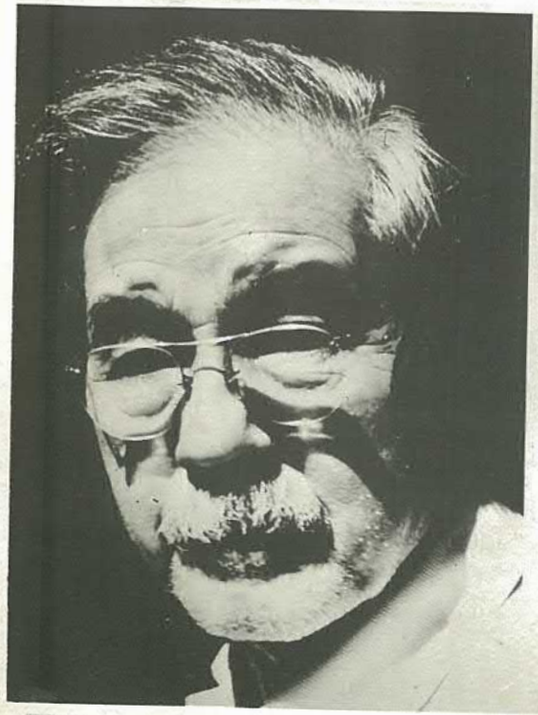
character which I think is my most precious treasure brought back from Japan. Professor R.H. Blyth, who has told us so much about haiku and the essentially humorous character of the Oriental mind, sent me away from his home with a number of his books under my arm. When I recall such people everything I write here will be inadequate.

The return journey to New Zealand via Manila and Darwin and Sydney was uneventful. The daylight flight over the great ochre coloured waste between Darwin and Sydney is impressed vividly on my mind, but coming to Sydney after Japan is like running head-long into a brick wall! I last bucked across the Tasman Sea on a ten day voyage as radio operator on an old tramp ship, but the Electra flight from Sydney to Auckland took three hours. Barry Brickell was waiting for me at the air terminal with his own variant of an air conditioned limousine, and in the cold October air I realised that I was back in New Zealand.

DR. SOETSU YANAGI TOKYO



SHOJI HAMADA MASHIKO



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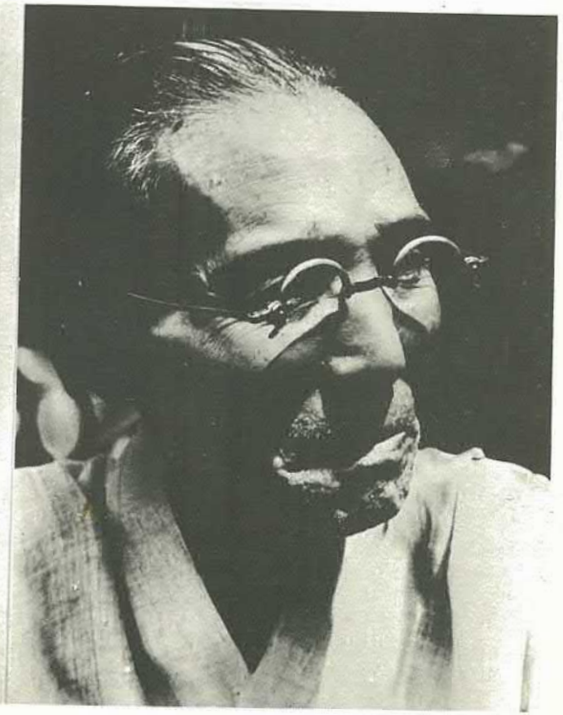

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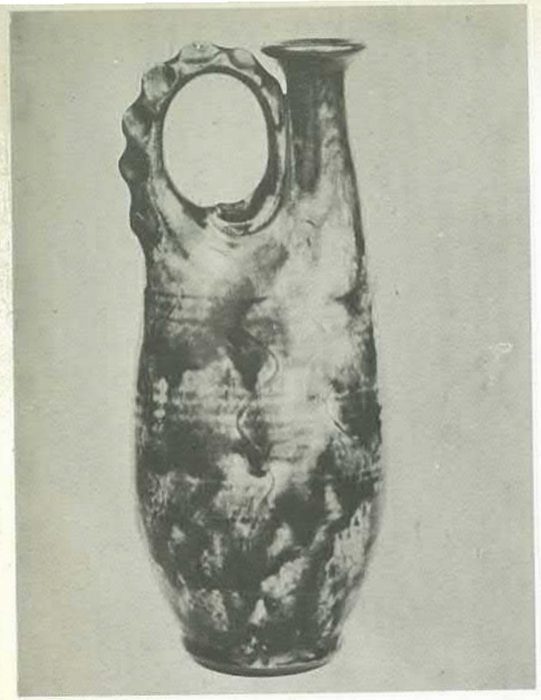
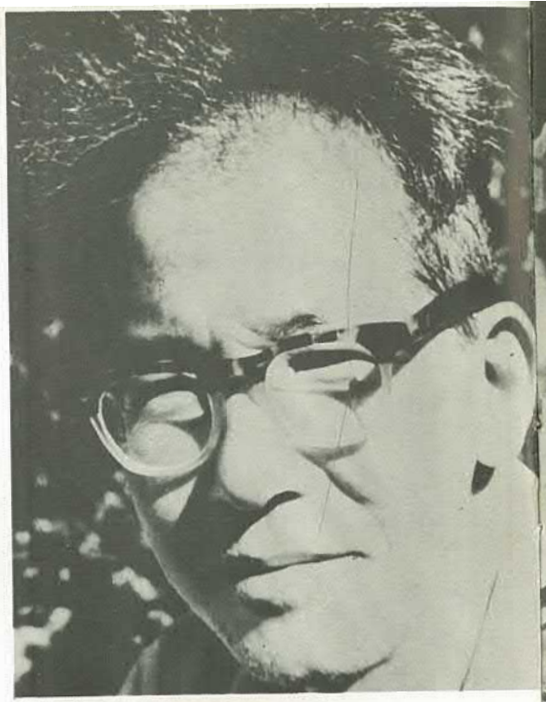
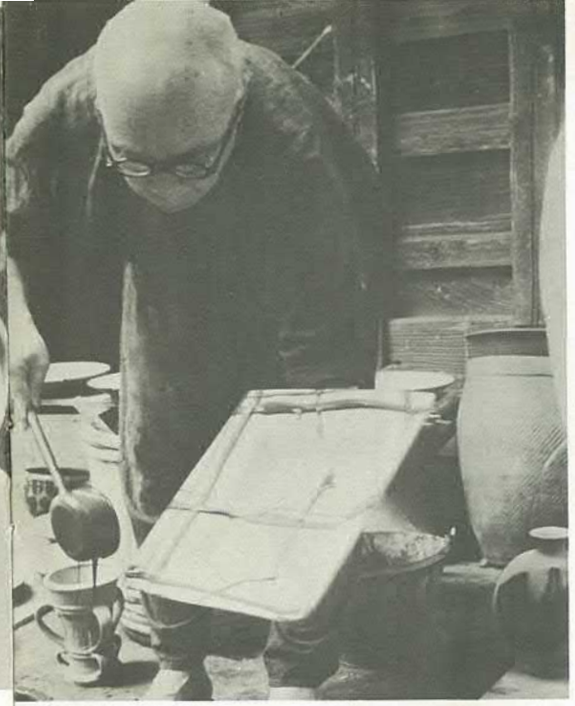


SLIPWARE BOTTLE - FUNAKI 1957
HT. 10 in. BROWNE COLL.HONOLULU



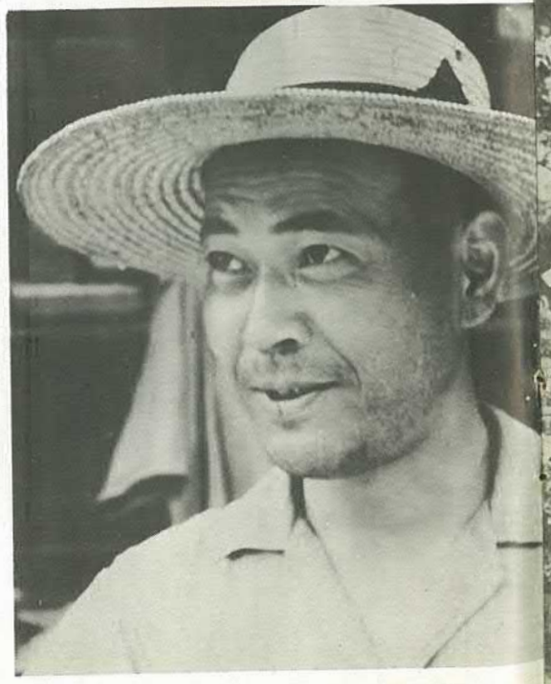
MICHITADA FUNAKI FUJINA



SHOJI HAMADA DECORATING POTS

PHOTOGRAPHS - T. BARROW

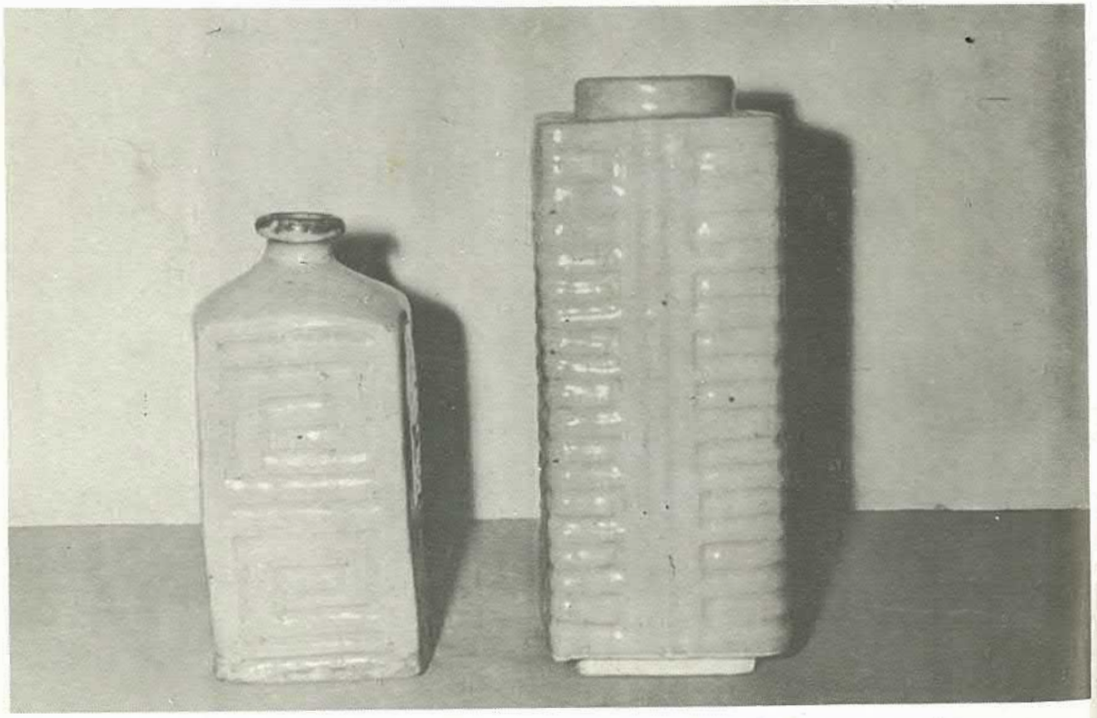
STONEWARE JAR - SHIMAOKA 1960
Ht. 9"



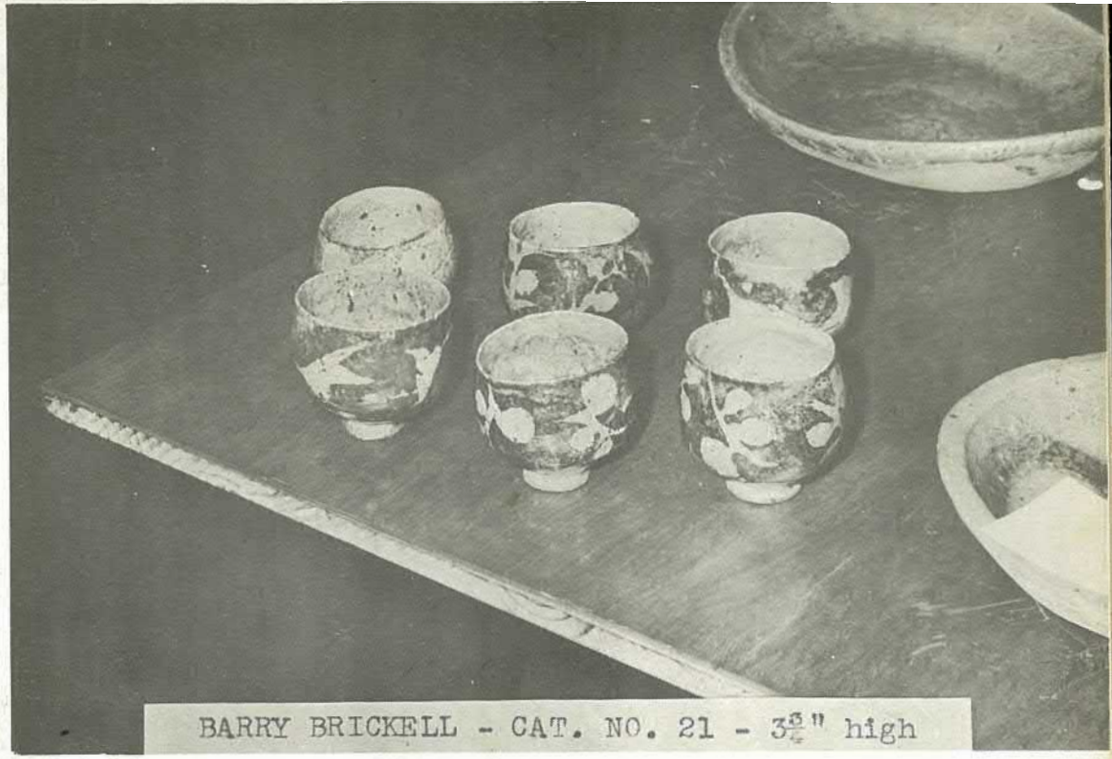
SHIMAOKA MASHIKO

WORKSHOP SCENE AT HAMADA'S KILN

MIREK SMISEK - CAT. NOS. 83 & 85 - 10" diam. 7¼" high



WAILYN HING - CAT. NOS. 56 & 55 - 8½" high 11" high



BARRY BRICKELL - CAT. NO. 21 - 3⅝" high

LEE THOMSON - CAT. NO. 93 6⅝" 6½" 6⅝" high

PAULA KING - CAT. NO. 62 - 5½" high

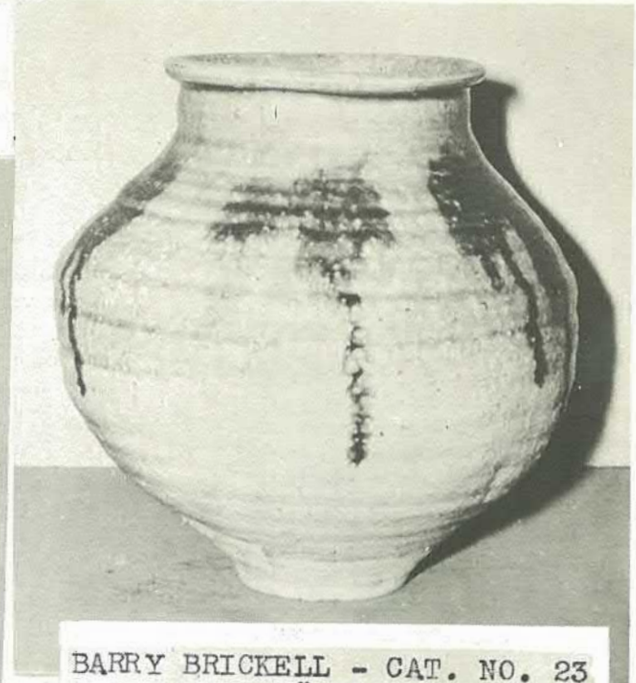
MAVIS ROBINSON - CAT. NO. 81 - 4½" high

MARY HARDWICK-SMITH - CAT. NO. 51 - Jug 5" high

DOREEN BLUMHARDT - CAT. NO. 18 - 8¼" high

COVER PHOTOGRAPH
MARTIN BECK
CAT. NO. 8 - 10" ht.

JUNE BLACK - CAT. NO. 16
2' 8" ht.



BARRY BRICKELL - CAT. NO. 23
9" high

PATRICIA PERRIN - CAT. NO. 75
10½" - 9⅝" high

OTOGRAPHS - P. STICHBURY

FOURTH NEW ZEALAND STUDIO POTTERS' EXHIBITION - Auckland Art Gallery, 29th October - 19th November, 1960

Now that the New Zealand potters have held their Fourth Exhibition, a pattern is slowly beginning to emerge. The essential factors on which a successful exhibition is built would seem to be these: First, a body of working potters who are prepared to contribute the best pots from their year's work for the judgment of the Selection Committee. Second, a Selection Committee of which at least one member is a potter with a knowledge of the essentials of the craft and who is also familiar with the work that is being done throughout New Zealand as witnessed in past shows. Next essential is a strong body of local potters who will cope with the tremendous amount of sheer hard work involved, not only in packing and unpacking pots, but also in staffing the exhibition and dealing with the questions of the large number of interested people these exhibitions seem to attract. Last essential is a planned layout, and for this it would seem best to leave one experienced person in charge to work on a scheme approved by the Exhibition Committee. But it would appear most necessary that the potters themselves keep control of all these facets of the Exhibition. Mistakes due to inexperience are inevitable, but a body of potters working together are less likely to make mistakes of policy.

The 1960 Exhibition of Auckland seemed to me to have few outstanding pots, but appeared to contain a slightly greater number of better quality pots than has been shown in previous years. I felt it most unfortunate there had been no working potter on the Selection Committee.

There were 104 exhibits from 38 potters on show; roughly 50% of the entire were accepted and 80%

of the exhibits were sold.

The members of the Committee were: Chairman, L.R. Castle; Secretary, Wailyn Hing; Treasurer, Mavis Robinson: Jean Weir, Betty Brookes, Paula King, Mary Hardwick-Smith, Olive Jones, Patrick Pierce, Doug Watkins, Case Beck and Peter Stichbury.

The display was bad and had obviously not been done with an understanding hand. Cramped up in a small corner of the Auckland Art Gallery, many of the pots were placed on low tables all the same height, with no attempt at grouping. The remaining pots were displayed on long shelves at eye level and above eye level - possibly the most unflattering angle for any pot to contend with. I understand that by having the Exhibition in the Art Gallery (which undoubtedly saved much expense) the Potters' Committee found itself unable to have any say in the display.

The catalogue was a fine one and the photographs on the wall by Peter Stichbury of African potters and of the Leach Pottery at St. Ives were excellent. So was the small collection of ancient and modern pots from overseas. The inclusion of these features is an idea worth developing at future exhibitions.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the whole show was the way in which the general public came flocking in - there were 3,571 people in twenty days - and stopped to look and to ask many searching questions that taxed the knowledge of the minders. Well attended demonstrations of throwing were given by experienced potters. Perhaps it would be as well in the future to regard these exhibitions as not only a chance to see how one's pots measure up to those being made in the rest of New Zealand, but also as an opportunity of meeting the general public and of interesting them in our craft.

H.M.

COMMENTS FROM THE SELECTION COMMITTEE OF THE FOURTH NEW ZEALAND POTTERS' EXHIBITION

Colin McCahon

Not being a potter myself the refinements of technique, the fact that certain glazes are difficult to use, and that certain shapes require immense skill to produce, could only slightly influence my selection of pots for this exhibition.

What I did look for and rarely found was a form that looked as if the artist had intended it to be as it was and not a mere translation of already well used themes usually poorly and uselessly reworked.

Very few pots submitted had any appearance of inevitability. Too often the potter's mind could be seen working - 'what shape shall I make next'. A vague idea is then drawn from a remembrance of past pots, the mind closes on this secondhand image and the pottering starts. The result lacks any life and has no reason for existence and certainly no place in an exhibition.

The lack of definite thinking leads to the very usual lack of a beginning or an end to a pot. The majority of the pots stood on bases mostly quite adequate to keep them from falling over but rarely considered as an essential part of the form. The same applies to the pot rims - 'what to do there?' The usual answer would appear to be 'forget it', and so this invariably hideous top and bottom would ruin all that might be going on between them. This usual fault comes from a lack of understanding of the need to be definite, quite precise, and direct, that a curve in one direction must be answered by a straight line or a

curve in another and opposing direction. It is largely through this reconciling of opposites that strength and vitality and also a feeling of intention and order are built into a pot. The line that is neither a curve nor straight, but loose, weak and accidental, has no place in either painting or pottery.

In this exhibition weak line dominates - the eighteen or twenty good pots are drowned in a sea of indifference.

Patrick Pierce

The pottery we had to judge seemed to me to be of a general excellence and competence. The fact that so many nice pots were rejected shows that the standard throughout the country is in many respects of a high level. In the last ten years of pioneer potting this country has made immense progress and the potters are to be heartily congratulated. But in a national exhibition competence is not enough; there has to be something more in glaze or shape or texture - something that stirs the imagination or excites our admiration. It's either there or it's not there. Very few pots did reach that exalted state.

Criticism of each pot rejected is just not feasible, though it may have been of the accepted ones.

Pottery seems to suit the practical New Zealand outlook on life. Pottery is more than 'art to be looked at' and accepted or rejected on looks alone. It has to be handled, and its strength and texture felt through actual contact. Glaze is important to the eye; it is also important to the touch.

Can words really express what fingers and eyes are telling you? Shape is important and the general form

of a pot. Can you really say what it is your eye sees in a shape that fills you with delight? It is hard enough to find words to describe the pots you like, but how to find words to describe the pot that leaves you flat and disinterested?

Pottery in New Zealand is only beginning. The mature potters are still only a bare handful.

But in another ten years?

I believe that distinctive thing, that indefinable something, will be there in plenty to say to posterity - 'this was made by one of those superb potters in New Zealand.'

Vernon A. Brown

These are random notes made after acting as one of the Selection Committee; they take the place of remarking on the forms attached to the exhibits. There is no doubt that the exhibitors would prefer each object to be discussed, but this is not possible in the form space or in the time.

First the judging. Pottery is a fusion of art and craft; it is the marriage of these that produces significant work. To form a considered judgment a working potter should be included in the judgment with two non-potters. Unless this is done the opinion must be - in the best sense - superficial, overlooking the content of the work.

It is the linking of purpose content and the aesthetic which has kept potting going when cabinet or picture painting has lost much of its significance and is meaning less and less to fewer and fewer and is becoming defunct. The hanging of pictures in museum galleries will hasten this process.

The work in the exhibition is, I consider, of a high standard, and does not require the applying of a double standard. It would be harsh to hang a Braque among most of our New Zealand non-figurative painting; one could hardly say the same for the inclusion of work by Leach, the Braque of the pot world.

One reason for all this is the potter's working within a discipline and purpose. Painters working within some terms of reference have produced and may still make a great painting. The Renaissance is an example where they worked for the enlargement of Christianity.

The presentation and development of standards of design in New Zealand is important and cannot be overstated. In older countries there still remain standards prior to 1830 both aesthetic and functional; these exert a pressure on the manufacturer. In the plastic press age the potter will prevent our getting too far away from the source, working as he does with simple function.

The machine tends to restrict, and where we lack standards the manufacturer will impose. Only where objects are subject to use in our tradition will standards remain - these standards we measure in terms of use. The potter, linking use and beauty, will keep those standards. For these reasons it is important that the potter concerns himself with things that we use. In this regard it is interesting that among the exhibits this year was an example of non-use form: such objects enter into the sculpture field and must be subject to other considerations.

The basic unity of all design is its relationship to life; this has been said many times and should be kept in mind. Potting is one of the few arts which can do more than pay lipservice.

The exhibition has survived the display, which is a new low. Never again must the showing of the work be let out of control of the potter. I cannot imagine the painters allowing a potter to hang their work, although the results could never be as inept as they are in this instance.

Finally I would urge that the potters seek representation on the museum and gallery councils, and see that a representative collection is placed in all galleries. This would do no more than follow overseas practice.

(The underlining is the Editor's).

GUIDE FOR THE ARRANGING OF FUTURE EXHIBITIONS

(Suggestions, amendments and better ideas will be welcomed by the Editor)

1. The New Zealand Potters' Exhibition will be held at Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington and Dunedin in rotation. If a provincial centre wishes to have a Show and can put up a strong enough case, this application must be received by the Editorial Committee at Wellington by the beginning of November each year in time to be included with the December issue of the magazine. This case will be put forward in the Potter and all subscribing members will have a vote as to whether it should be allowed.

2. Any important or controversial matters should be referred in the first instance to the Editorial Committee, who will take steps to refer the matter to other centres. If the matter is considered important enough it should be put to the vote of subscribing members of the magazine.

3. Suggestions for the running of Exhibitions:
(a) The Exhibition should be held in October of each year and run by a representative Committee of potters in the area specially elected at a general meeting called in June, and which all local potters have the right to attend.
(b) Entry Forms as drawn up by the Exhibition Committee will be sent out in the August issue of the New Zealand Potter. A high standard of typography and layout should be observed, and for this reason the Exhibition Committee should appoint a qualified person to deal with this aspect of both Entry Form and Catalogue.
(c) The display and running of the Exhibition should be kept in the hands of the Exhibition Committee, and there should be at least one potter on the Selection Committee.

(d) As soon as possible after the Exhibition Catalogue is printed all potters contributing pots, whether accepted or rejected, should be sent one.
(e) During the Exhibition it should be staffed all the time by competent potters who can handle the queries of the public. If possible demonstrations should be arranged.
(f) It is advisable to appoint one potter to handle the publicity, and all reporters, photographers and broadcasters should be referred to him or her.
(g) To the New Zealand Potter should be sent:

1. Black and white photographs of pots and layout for use in the magazine.
2. A photographic record in colour of a selection of pots which can be lent to groups on request.
3. Cuttings of reports and photos appearing in the local press.

The magazine will pay the cost of film if requested.

(h) The New Zealand Potter will collect all subscriptions and entry fees and from these will make a grant to the Exhibition Committee of as large a sum as possible for the running of the Exhibition.
(i) The Exhibition Committee will collect the proceeds from sales of pots and will pass these on to the potters less a commission to be decided by the Committee.

Martin Beck has given us thirty colour slides of pots from the Fourth New Zealand Potters' Exhibition. These may be borrowed by interested Groups on writing to the Editor.

REVIEW OF THE FOURTH NEW ZEALAND POTTERS' EXHIBITION

Hamish Keith

It is not usual for a reviewer to begin with an apology, but I feel it necessary. The standard of this exhibition is so generally mediocre that a review, in the real sense, seems impossible, and technicalities seem redundant in the face of more urgent considerations.

Whether the individual potters represented here are good or bad, capable or clumsy, does not seem to matter when the exhibition urges the questioning of their whole activity. There is ample evidence that the potters of New Zealand are active, but it seems equally evident that much of their activity is without purpose or definition.

No art or craft exists solely for the gratification of its practitioners; if it does it is not really art or craft at all, but more properly therapy. Nor can craft remain the prerogative of quaint old ladies, with homespuns and herb gardens, earnestly producing tons and acres of pseudo folk art. As the old saw goes, 'Life is real, life is earnest' and so, most definitely, is art.

If potters are determined to do what they please, let them, but if their work is to be exhibited and sold it must satisfy other demands than theirs. To question these demands is to discover what art and craft really are; it is easy, and not particularly helpful, to say what they are not.

This review, then, is an attempt to discover what potters could be doing, and although I would not claim to be successful in such a pursuit, I hope at

least to encourage some consideration of the question.

The studio potter claims distinction from the artisan in that he claims, either directly or by implication, to be an artist. Not merely an artist in the sense that all men who exercise the human gift of creativity are artists, but in the narrower sense of the painter, the sculptor or musician. Like the painter, his productions are often single works which,he may argue, have a significance beyond mere utility, qualities which he may describe as beautiful or even philosophic.

This attitude seems paradoxical since pottery is a craft and the arts and crafts are by their nature distinct. It is necessary to see as separate those activities which satisfy the mundane needs of man and those concerned with his spiritual needs. The arts exist on the frontiers of human experience creating forms, words and images, to satisfy man's need to grasp and understand his new discoveries. The situation, being ambiguous, is fraught with dangers. It is a situation only possible in a society where the term manufacturer has come to mean a man who sells things made for him by machines, since the qualities which can make an artifact a work of art are instinctive in the productions of a society which does not see life and work as disparate. In our unfortunate condition the artifact can only become a work of art by conscious endeavour, that is, by choice.

It is unfortunate, because the failure to realise the true nature of this choice can only lead to the most unhappy of compromises - a compromise only too apparent in this exhibition; a compromise which surrounds the work of potters with a snobbish mystique creating a cult of the handmade and often

obscuring the real value of this work. For it is snobbish to prefer a handmade article merely because it is handmade. The claim made by the catalogue, that 'Handmade pottery keeps alive the warmth and life which all handmade objects have...' does not seem to be enough. Pottery can do much more than this; on one level it can function as a work and on another not merely, as the writer goes on to say, contrast with the sterility of machine made objects, but change their nature.

With these two levels it seems possible to resolve the paradox. In the present exhibition these divergent categories appear to be best represented by the work of Barry Brickell and Mirek Smisek.

Smisek is a craftsman. His pots lack those qualities of inventiveness and surprise that make them works of art. This lack, however, is only disturbing if his pots were to be measured by the wrong yardstick. It would be pointless and confusing to compare Smisek's casserole with a pot by Hamada - they are markedly different things - but contrasted with a similar article from an industrial pottery its qualities become apparent. It would be wrong to see Smisek as opposed to industry; it is precisely the absence of talent such as his, that makes commercial products 'sterile'. His pots could be reproduced in large quantities and lose nothing of their value.

If this machine-made quality is Smisek's strength, it is the weakness of many potters represented. One coffee pot has the appearance of being turned on a lathe from a solid lump of clay. This appearance of solidity is a common fault. Jars and vases are, after all, containers, and if their curves lack sufficient spring, or their glazes are too glassy and brittle to give any sense of the space within, they cannot avoid dullness.

It is the sensation of containing that Barry Brickell explores fully with most of his pots, particularly his two vases. Both these pots are vital and alive, they spring richly from the foot asking to be filled or emptied, full-bellied and open. Because Brickell explores, and exploits, the sensations associated with pottery, he is as much an artist as a craftsman. The criterion here goes beyond utility.

It is only possible for an artifact to be a work of art if it accepts the same limits as the craft. That is to say, that the area of human experience explored and extended by a work of this nature, can only be that normally associated with the artifact. For instance, drinking, like sitting or running, is a plastic sensation, and the ideal cup would be that which most perfectly gave form to that sensation. This ideal is, of course, the basis of all good cup and beaker forms, and is subject to countless variations. The artist, however, realises this form completely, and by subtle adjustments can modify, extend or enrich our experience of the sensation. It would be impossible, I think, to drink from Brickell's pinched beakers without completely reconsidering the whole action. A cup, however abstractly beautiful, which has no real connection with this sensation, can be neither a work of art nor an artifact. A useless piece of pottery is an aberration impossible to classify. It is an error to consider that originality has any real place in craft or art. As Dufy says, originality is monstrous, for there are no new forms, only new relationships. We can only perceive the new in terms of things already known and experienced.

Pottery cannot be justified as only answering the creative urge - it must extend beyond its maker

and into life, and it can only do this if the potter, craftsman or artist, questions and clarifies his motives.

This exhibition makes it seem urgent that this clarification and questioning must happen, for any potter or artist who fails to realise the responsibilities implicit in his work, or its limits, must inevitably fail to produce anything of worth or meaning.

If this failure is general, an art or craft leaves itself open to the enervating attentions of the amateur or dilettante. This, I feel, has happened to pottery in New Zealand, as it has to most of the arts. The amateur reigns supreme.

PITHOI POTS IN CRETE

Robyn F. Wallis

Robyn Wallis, niece of a potter, and her husband Frank, are at present living on the island of Hydra, in Greece, while Frank is writing a book. They left New Zealand in February of this year, equipped with sleeping bags and packs, prepared to see Europe the hard way.

Potters, like most artists, seem to be a race who carry their techniques in their heads and are far too busy creating ever to set them down.

The Minoans, who lived in Crete between the 28th and 14th centuries B.C., seem to have been no exception. Many examples of their work exist, but hardly a line about the methods they used.

The Museum in Heraklion, Crete - a few miles from the Minoan Royal Palace at Knossos discovered by Sir Arthur Evans - contains many beautiful and varied examples of Minoan pottery. Pots made towards the end of the Minoan civilisation tend to be ornately designed and over heavily decorated, but pots from the middle Minoan period (2000 to 1700 B.C.), show a clear-cut simplicity.

This simplicity of design is particularly revealed in the 'giant & pithoi' at the palace at Knossos. The pithoi, which are stacked on marble and stone shelves in the royal storehouses, or scattered throughout the ruins, were used for storing oil, beans, grain and wine. The average height of the majority of pots is about four feet to five feet, though a few reach ten to twelve feet. One of the smaller pots is shown in the accompanying photograph.

The most finely made pithoi were all found next to the royal apartments, and it is probable that they were used for storing the king's personal treasure, including that brought by visitors to the court.

No evidence remains today of the type of kiln used for firing the pithoi. A great many are misshapen, indicating crude firing methods, or possibly pressure exerted by three thousand years' burial.

The clay is very coarse textured and the pots had a reddish-purple glaze. The decoration is fairly uniform and the surface design consists of either dots or wavy, rope-like lines, or, on the 'king's pithoi', medallion rosettes.

The shape used in the pithoi has endured, and today in Greece pots of similar design, but without decoration, are still made. In fact, no peasant home is complete without its pithoi-type water-butt.

PITHOI POTS IN CRETE

JOHN CHAPPELL IN KYOTO MAY 1960

FOURTH NEW ZEALAND POTTERS EXHIBITION 1960

Statement of Moneys In and Out

	In			Out		
Grant from New Zealand Potter	20	-	-			
Donations: Auckland Potters' Group	10	-	-			
: North Shore Potters' Soc.	10	-	-			
: Titirangi Group	3	-	-			
: Mavis Robinson	5	-	-			
: Stanley Weir	2	2	-			
Commission on total sales £175-13-7	26	8	7			
Profit on sale of catalogues: paper donated, printing £19-16-0	12	-	-			
Entry Forms				8	6	6
Expenses of Opening Function				4	5	-
Timber				5	-	5
Miscellaneous expenses				4	15	3
Freight charges on rejected and unsold items				25	1	1
Balance on hand				41	2	4
	£88	10	7	£88	10	7

The Auckland Exhibition Committee decided to dispose of the balance as follows:

To New Zealand Potter Trust Fund (for future Exhibitions)	£35 0 0
Retained for probable local Exhibition next year	£ 6 2 4

JOHN CHAPPELL

Helen Mason

My first acquaintance with the name of John Chappell was in the second issue of the English Pottery Quarterly when he wrote an article on the successful setting up of a salt glaze stoneware pottery on a borrowed £100. After building kiln, wheel, and getting raw materials together, he and his friend had £5 left to live on until they started selling pots. This seemed an excellent way of getting into quick production!

Three years later we heard of him in Sweden, and in Pottery Quarterly No. 13 he delivered a polemic on how Swedish potters had sold their soul to the industrial monster. In 1958 John and his Swedish wife were on their way to Japan and again through Pottery Quarterly we learnt of their meeting with potters in Indo-China. Meanwhile John and another bearded potter, Michael Gill, were corresponding about odd esoteric Japanese books.

Michael Gill is an Englishman who worked his way round the world for six years, spending some months in New Zealand. He is now in Uganda training Africans to make pottery in more durable ways than their own traditional ones, in a similar setup to that of Michael Cardew.

When I was lucky enough to visit Japan, Michael Gill sent me John's address. John replied to my letter saying that he also would be at the World Design Conference in Tokyo. In the strangeness of Tokyo, where even using the telephone was a challenge to one's ingenuity, it was good to be called by an English voice speaking of potters' matters. During the Conference John boarded at

a Buddhist Temple (advantage: cheapness, disadvantage: rising bells at 4 a.m.) and did a lot of useful liaison work between Japanese and foreign delegates.

John had been working for nearly a year and a half with his Japanese sponsor Uchida, master potter of Kyoto, and one of the founders of the Designer Craftsmen's Association of Japan. John was a very good friend to Helen Dawson, my husband, and myself, and through his insight we were able to understand much more of Japanese life than would otherwise have been possible.

We learned that John and Anja, his wife, had used up all their visas for Japan, and would have to leave the country for six months before they could re-apply. This seemed too good an opportunity to miss, and several potters and potters' husbands have combined to find the necessary funds to bring the Chappells to New Zealand. They sailed from Japan on 14th November on the "Iberia", arriving in Sydney on 30th November. It may take some time to get a passage across the Tasman Sea at this time of the year, but they should arrive here some time in December.

John is a man with a wide knowledge of pottery, of Japanese life and art, and of the world. We would like to make the most of his stay in New Zealand. He will probably be lecturing for Adult Education and at the Otago and Canterbury Museums. He is bringing with him a collection of his own work and has also arranged for two other exhibitions to be sent - one from the Mingei Society and one from a group of modern craftsmen.

This is the first time we have been able to arrange for a visit from a potter with an international reputation. We hope the support and interest shown by New Zealand potters will make the experiment worth while. Groups who wish to arrange schools or lectures should get in touch with me in the first place.

THE VALUE OF LOCALITY IN ART

M.T. Woollaston

Extracts from a lunch-hour talk given by Mr. Woollaston on 5th October, 1960, at the Centre Gallery, Wellington, where his paintings and drawings were being exhibited.

Our country is one of the most isolated in the world; and perhaps for that reason might be expected to grow its own distinctive art. Yet our isolation is incomplete compared with that of the Maori people before us. In their five centuries in New Zealand they produced an authentic local variant of the Polynesian tradition of art.

Comparing their isolation with ours - ours does not exist. We are constantly exposed to all the influences of modern international art, whether we would be or not. Ours is not a simple situation of applying and developing our own sensibility with the material of the country and the ideas of our forebears. If we paint, we are pressed upon to choose which of the Paris movements to follow if we wish to be modern: or if not, we are left with the formula for realism in which painting finally abdicated to the photograph. The choice is a personal one; and that it is there to be made emphasises our individualism, our point of view, and brings into art those clashes and stridencies of egotism so characteristic of the phenomenon we call the art world. In our mixed exhibitions we see confusion rather than any recognisably New Zealand character or quality that might unify the works of all the exhibitors. The different sorts of painting are notoriously difficult to hang together. There is a painful lack of unity. We don't seem to have any

big enough national devotion to master us and bring the work of our individuals into harmony.

Perhaps someone from another country might see some New Zealand character in all of it, being able to contrast it with another place altogether. Surely it stands to reason that, if we are exposed to international influences, we are at least equally exposed to our environment. If the first gives our work manner, the latter should give it character. It may be so already to some slight degree: but I would hazard that, if so, it is accidentally rather than purposefully, passively rather than productively.....

It seems to me that painting has always thriven and will continue to thrive on the painter's capacity for profound enjoyment of, and relation with, his visual environment. With occasional lapses, the history of all the traditions of art in the world bear witness to this.

A great work of art in our time, Boris Pasternak's Dr. Zhivago, seems to me to have exactly this value. It has as its base, man's delight in his environment. It gives an assurance that the world is still the best place for man to be in, and that bit of it a man can make contact with is the best place for him. It carries this delight, this assurance, triumphantly through all the vicissitudes men can experience.

To us, who happen to be born in this country, and to no one else, can fall the task of making New Zealand art. Though this seems too obvious to be said, yet we have some habits that make one wonder if we believe it. We grizzle and growl that New Zealand is not a good enough country for a painter to spend his lifetime in. Even if that is true in some ways - lack of public support for serious painters, for instance -

surely we can only make it truer for a longer time by running away from it as we do constantly. We still hardly feel a painter is sanctioned as a New Zealand painter until he has had his overseas baptism at the Slade, the Royal College, or in Paris. Yet, can anyone seriously suppose that New Zealand painting can be taught overseas? I know of no department of it in any school or college.

I think we might reap our wished-for harvest of New Zealand painting sooner if we begin now an opposite policy to that prevailing hitherto; and if we begin now to offer painters support to remain and work in New Zealand.

What can we acquire by going to Europe, except the ability to offer them our compliments to their ways in the form of our rather less expert, less civilised imitations of their manners? Though flattered perhaps, they can hardly be deeply interested, and we only succeed in making of ourselves a faraway, backward province of the prevailing cults. But the people of Europe, or some of them, probably would have enough aesthetic sense of taste and smell to notice and savour with interest any authentic artistic result of our delight in our own land.

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Teachers' College,
ARDMORE.

5th September, 1960.

Seaboard Joinery Ltd.

Dear Mr. Cohen,

I wish to express how much I appreciate the potters' wheels which this college purchased from you at the end of last year. In the past I have used many wheels of different design, and can genuinely say that the article you make, based on the plan of Bernard Leach, is one of the very best. I find that the students at College, taking pottery for the first time, can soon master the use of these wheels with ease.

The construction and materials used are excellent. I have recommended your wheels to several friends, and would unhesitatingly recommend them to any potter who desires an article of lasting value and sound performance. The interest you have shown and the time you have spent in developing this wheel, taking into consideration every minor detail, is worthy of every praise.

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) PETER STICHBURY
Art Department.