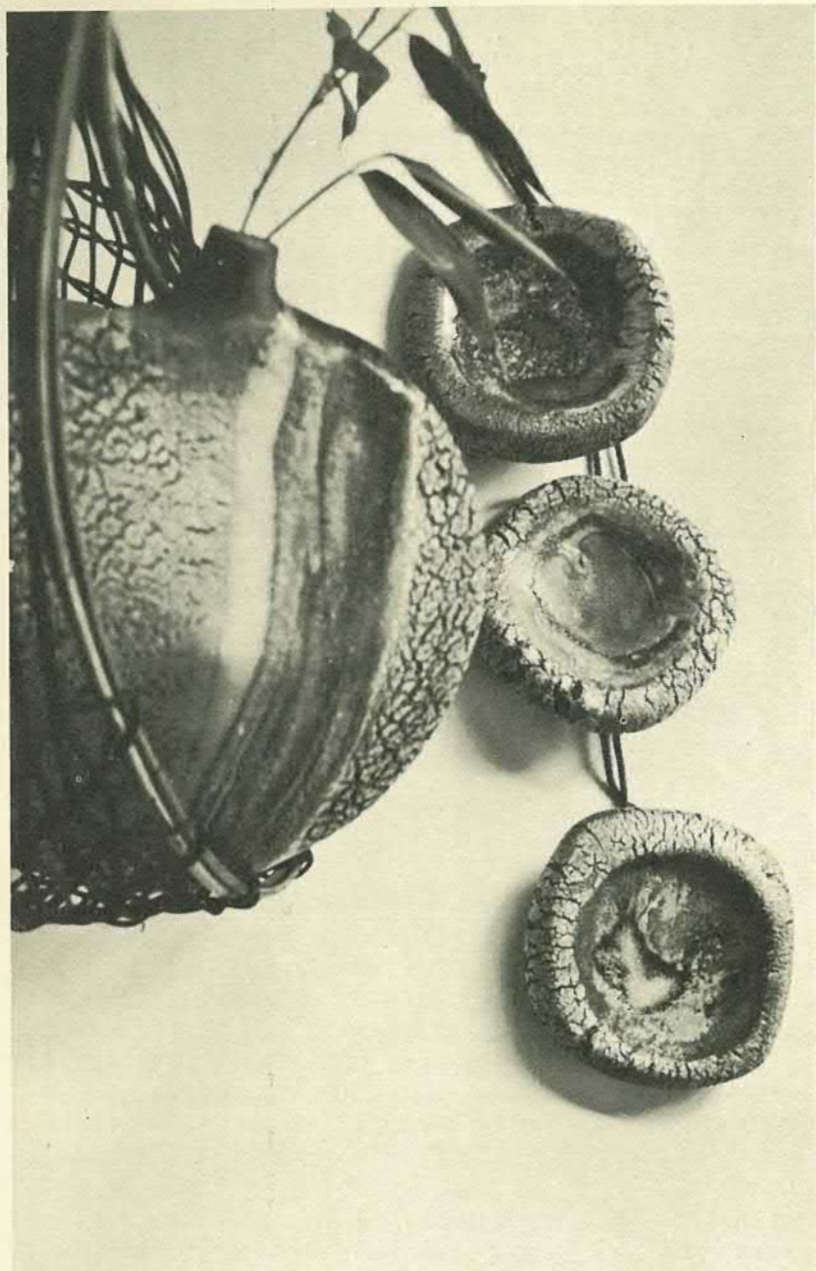




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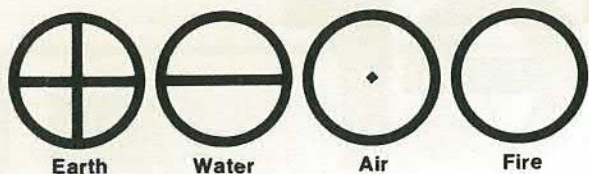
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The N.Z. Society of Potters Inc.

17th National Potters Exhibition 1974



All credit to Ian Firth, Chester Nealie, John Toland and other Auckland Studio Potters who worked so hard to mount the New Zealand Society's 17th National Exhibition at the Auckland War Memorial Museum in October. The committee did a first rate job of organising the exhibition itself, the workshop, Colin Levy's public lecture and the many associated activities.

Col Levy guest potter from New South Wales was tremendous value both as a person and as a potter. The work he showed was masterly in form and in his handling of glazes. These were real "potters' pots" and we have seen nothing quite like them before.

It would be a pleasure to dwell on each of the Levy pots, savouring the recollection of superbly controlled ash and feldspar glazes with their rich subtleties of colour and texture. And it might save discussing the rest of the exhibition! At that, the 17th National was a great public success, though many visitors apparently looked askance at the guest exhibitor's pots while admiring the rest! Previous attendance records were surpassed and most of the 420 exhibits were sold.

I wish I could be more enthusiastic about the over-all quality of the pots shown. Perhaps we need to look again at the purpose of a national exhibition. It involves hours, weeks even months of work, and it carries, or should carry, a great deal of prestige.

Each potter has earlier had to submit work of sufficient standard to become a member of the N.Z. Society. Studying this 17th National-it is not easy to understand how some of these potters were ever accepted. Was the Society short of members at some stage? Did they not have time to study the submitted work with sufficient care? Was there a degree of parochialism? It is a sobering thought that the six pots currently required

can be accumulated over many firings. There may well be better ways of sorting up new members which could be investigated.

Certainly a good deal of the work on display would have been rejected by a selection panel. As Hamish Keith suggested in the Auckland Star, potters may well be poor judges of their own work and there is much to be said for an outside opinion.

There is a real problem for potters torn between trying to show serious new directions and being guilty of mere gimmickry in the endeavour to produce something different. There were few new directions in this show, too many gimmicks and too often a lack of sound basic craftsmanship.

Somewhere too, there need to be decisions about "pottery" or "ceramics" At what stage does clay sculpture, abstract or figurative, become irrelevant in an exhibition of pottery? Is the fact that it is made of fired clay sufficient justification for its inclusion?

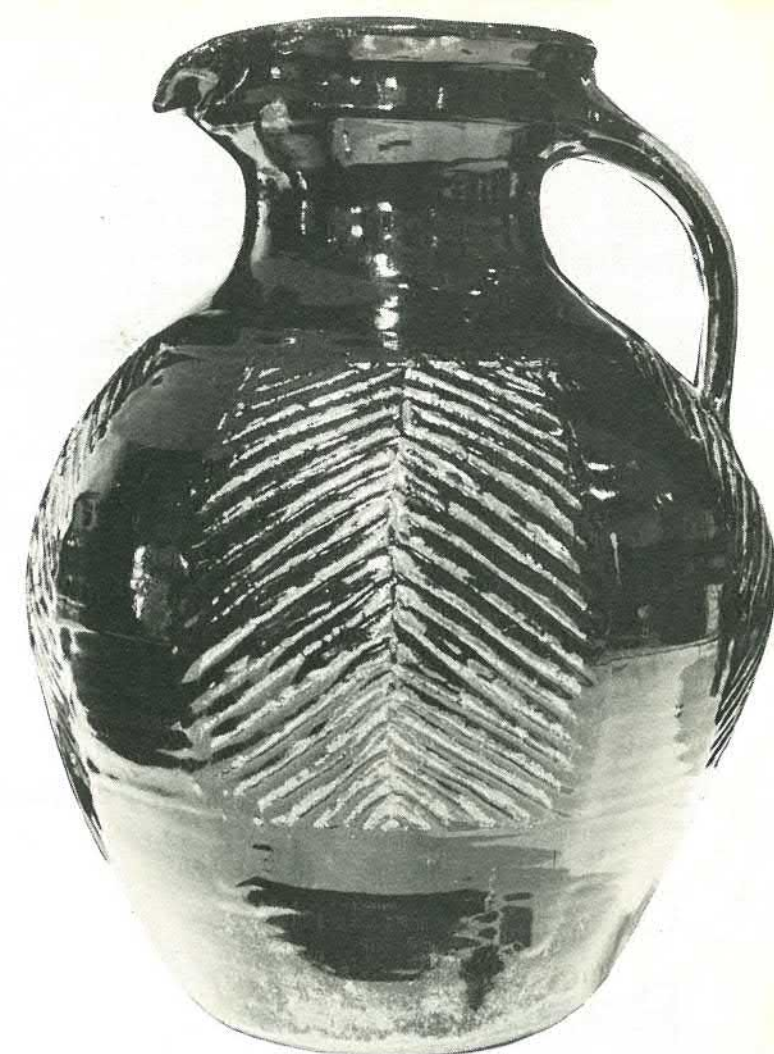
The business of selection may well have to be re-thought. Guest potters are obviously a solution, or a partial one, but unless membership of the N.Z. Society itself becomes more selective (and this may necessarily involve present members also) then probably non-juried shows are going to become more and more a business of quantity rather than quality. Very few people this year could resist sending in their full quota of four pieces or sets. Top marks to those who managed to restrain themselves.

Too many of our good potters are choosing not to show at the National. Unless the standard improves dramatically they will probably be joined by others, understandably reluctant to be part of exhibitions of this calibre. If the National Exhibition is to be meaningful potters will have to conscientiously collect their best pots from each fir-

ing over the year, rather than hoping that the very last one will produce sufficient pieces.

This is not to say that all of the pots were poor. Not many were really exciting with potters surpassing themselves, but there were a number of very handsome pots. Brian Gartside showed intriguing slab constructions superbly made, and for me at least they were the most interesting new direction in the show. Anneke Borren had a delightful set of ceramic flowers which never lost sight of the fact that they were still pots. Mary Hardwick-Smith, Rosemary Perry and Clifford Ellis all had beautiful domestic ware, and domestic pots are fine — if they are fine pots.

Jane Capon and Hazel McCaughern had competent and attractive pots with decoration that enhanced the form, although Ms.McCaughern's



platter was a little heavy-footed. Nick Brandon showed strong tenmoku jugs with lively decoration, and Margaret Milne, despite being away with the potters group in Asia, had submitted some beautiful bowls.

We have seen much more expressive work in the past from David Brokenshire whose ceramic sculptures have lost the vigour and direct simplicity of his earlier work. Peter Stichbury's bowls and platters were well above average in this company but by no means his best work. Likewise with Don Thornley's shino pots. Perhaps we are spoilt by the range and quality of work available in Auckland.

Doreen Blumhardt had a large subtle grey-green wheel-thrown branch pot which was very much the best of her four pieces: Roger Brittain scored with two of his four pots, both chosen by the Society for purchase by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Mirek Smisek had a handsome stoneware crock. Chester Nealie's group were of good quality and were quietly craftsman-like.

But the real excitement lay in Australian Col Levy's twenty or so pots, from the magnificent asymmetric large vase with its incredible feldspar



glaze to his precisely controlled shino tea-pot and the little lidded bowl. There was a richness of surface and joy in form and texture, and a craftsmanship that must have given inspiration to potters fortunate enough to see it, and to speak with the potter about his work. Levy himself was quite impressed with the exhibition and thought that local potters — and critics — were too harsh in their judgments. I just regret that on this occasion we didn't have better pots to show him, because the 17th National didn't begin to represent the true quality and depth of New Zealand pottery in the mid-seventies.



Dawn Percy.

Dawn Percy is Art Education Head of North Shore Teachers' College and pottery reviewer for the NZ Herald.

Reactions

Anneke Borren

"Frankly I was disappointed. One concludes that an awful lot of potters cannot judge their own work because either they are too close to it or because they don't understand the intrinsic values of it any longer. This is not a fault in the potter, but an inability to judge one's own work. There would have to be two personalities, one to make the pots and one to judge them."

Muriel Moody

"The exhibition was so well displayed that the first impression was very favourable. After viewing the pots in the central area, the exhibition fell away and it was clear that what appeared to be a promising exhibition, was disappointing. There were some thoroughly bad pots. There was also some interesting work. Those who are accustomed to what has become the standard at the National Exhibition were not surprised when it

was reviewed unfavourably. On the other hand it was not as static as previously. What this exhibition showed more than anything else, was the need for selection of some kind. Perhaps an unselected show every few years is a good thing, as it puts the onus on the potter to protect his own reputation."

David Brokenshire

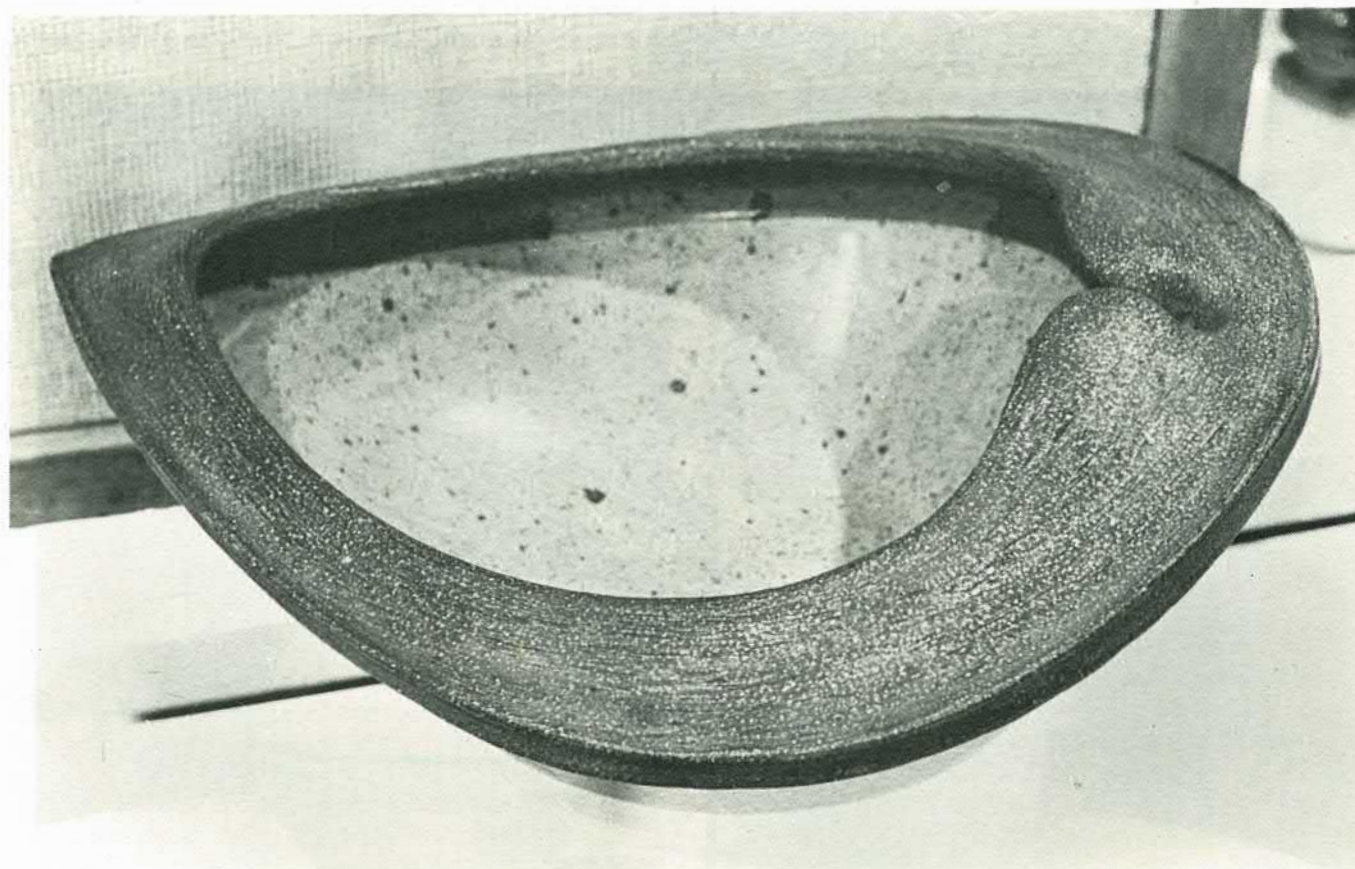
"I think the 17th Exhibition was a very valuable experiment. For the first time it showed exactly the standard of the work which those members of the Society who exhibited have achieved. If it had been selected many pieces would have been rejected and numbers reduced. Possibly a more cohesive and stronger show may have eventuated but no more highlights could have been uncovered. I think the layout of the exhibition was masterly. Overall I enjoyed the show and was pleasantly surprised at the standard realized."

The New Zealand Society of Potters 18th exhibition is to be held in Hastings at Labour weekend.

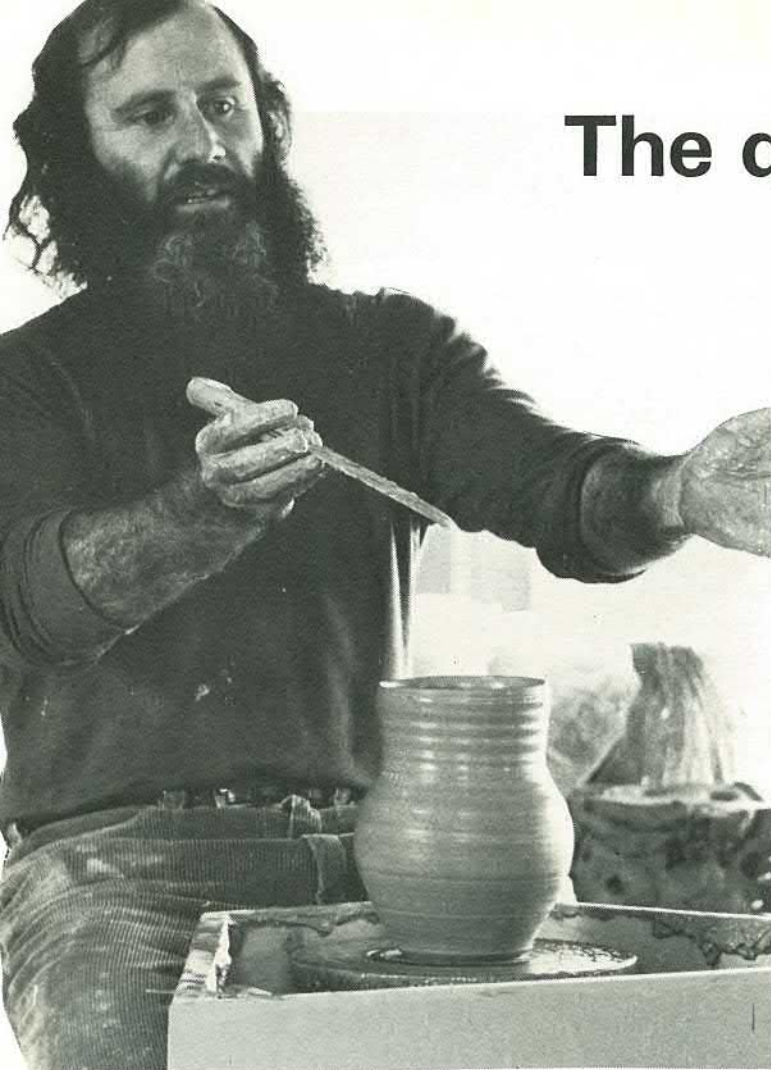


Charles Holmes, John Fuller and below Ian Firth

photos: Stan Jenkins



The quiet Australian



Col Levy's first appearance at the public demonstration associated with the 17th, was a surprise to those who knew his photo in "Nine Australian Potters." Distortion from the low angled camera shot made him seem a giant. Col Levy in reality is a spare framed man with a carefully enunciated and musical voice. On stage at night with lectern light reflecting on to his bearded face as he talked on Zen Buddhism and the tea ceremony, he had the appearance of a mystic.

In a prepared lecture, given at the museum, on Tamba pottery of the Japanese villages, Col Levy expressed his deep feeling for the spiritual qualities expressed in these pots. Some of the same free, and vital qualities in the Tamba pottery are also in the pots made by Col Levy. They have heart.

Col Levy spent six months in Japan in 1973 working at Bizen. One got the feeling that there was some disillusionment over the values that



have been allowed to develop in Japan where the pots being made today are not for the person who needs them, but for the person who can afford tens of thousands of yen to buy them.

Sayings of Col Levy

from the sound track at the demonstration

"Throwing makes up only one tenth of the expression in the making process. It might take three months to get to know your clay. It has its own character and responds to different methods of handling."

"Work on one object until you can do it loosely and easily, so that you don't need to be measuring and exacting to the point where you lose concentration on making the complete pot, or the result will not be free."

"You must have a kiln that doesn't work very well. But there is a difference between the kiln that doesn't work, and one that doesn't work well. Some potters personally impose firing hazards to be overcome."

"Pots must convey the human qualities that make you feel part of them. Exact symmetry is embarrassing correct and unnatural."

"There's very little that's new. Its all been done before, but we modify techniques for our own use. Extract what suits you, adapt and practice it and make it your own."

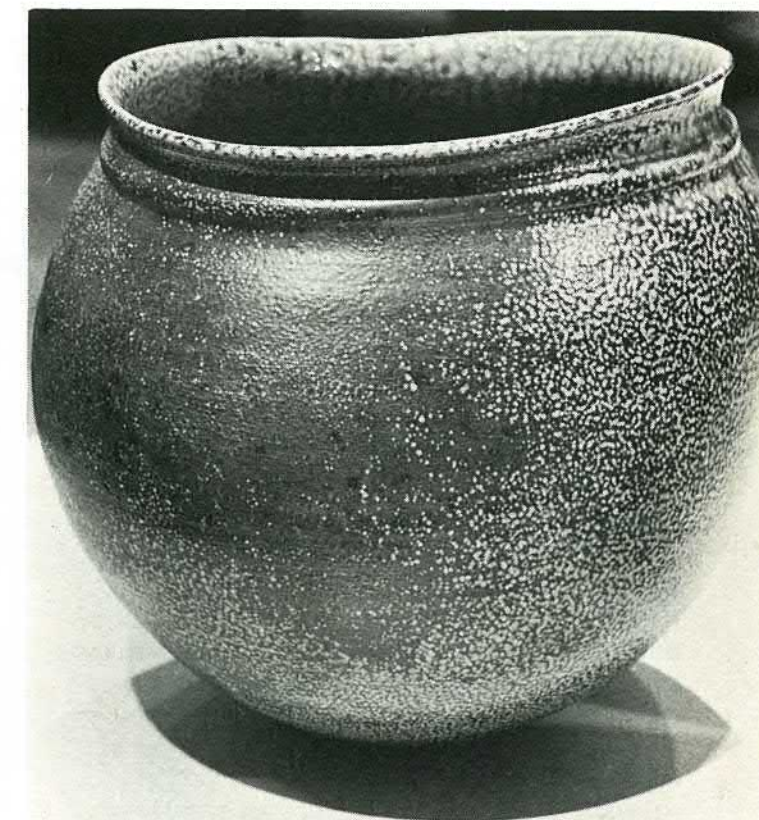
"Always knock down an unsatisfactory pot. Never try to save it. Break it down and do it again, improving it. That's craftsmanship. Nothing is so precious."

"Craftsmanship must become so instinctive that everything you do is part of the expression. The marks made when taking the pots from the wheel are irregularities that are part of the expression."

"There must be a clean first movement. When you need a second cut or weld you haven't acquired craftsmanship."

"Get away from precious approaches."

M.M.H.



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Anneke Borren's Earthenware

Being a 20th century potter, if I can make use of technical devices of this age, I see no reason not to do so. Therefore I buy my clay — two different kinds ready to use, from the South Island — and glaze materials fine enough to go through a 150 mesh sieve. As long as the clay does what I want it to from the plasticity, firing-temperature and workability angles, and it is relatively colourless (no damnable iron oxide that New Zealand earth is afflicted with), and I know the chemical analysis of it, I can relate my glazes to it and it serves my purpose.

Technically my work is only partly earthenware, because it's fired in the 1140°C — 1250°C range. (Definition of earthenware 5 — 15% porosity clay body fired between 900°C — 1200°C), and even the earthenware techniques I use are specifically designed towards the end products of my particular work and are therefore not applicable to earthenware potters generally.

I want to achieve in ceramics an object full of colour, decoration and with an identity of its own in which the potter's identity is infused, but the object overtakes it: and the method, uses and procedures are adapted to the end.

Basically I use three glazes —

- 1140°C glaze, mostly for decorative sculptures
- 1200°C glaze, alkaline with nickel oxide colourant variations, by itself
- 1250°C glaze, dolomite, matted and whitened by quantities of zinc and tin oxides. The zinc/silica crystals formed give a depth to the glaze. Used for domestic ware and theoretically stoneware in temperature.

These three glazes are all matt because of their surface interest. I chemically analysed them and adapted them to the two types of New Zealand clay I use. Within this basic range of glazes are all the colour possibilities using nickel, cobalt, iron, chromium and copper oxides.

I like a matt glaze, because it gives a smooth tactile surface. Its personality blends in with the overglaze decoration I brush on. A matt glaze gives no light reflections from its surface like a shiny glaze, which would upset the decorative patterns.

The glazes mature in the overlap temperatures between earthenware and stoneware. Chemically most of the oxides produce their most effective

colour intensity in this range. A combination of alkaline influenced colours, lead influenced colours and the subtleties of dolomite and other feldspathic glazes are all at their best when fired in this range.

The 1140°C glaze is a slip glaze. It contains 25% of the clay of the body that it's used on. It therefore needs a highly developed flux to bring its fluid qualities back, a good amount of it, 40% or more, in my case, because the clay body fires to a high temperature before maturing. If the clay matures at a lower temperature you use less flux. As well this glaze requires some feldspar. One per cent or 2% of cryolite (a highly developed flux), will make the glaze more flexible in its adaptation to the clay. It fuses well and gives a desirable smoothly tactile surface.

The clay in the glaze gives it a certain amount of stability — and it's the stability of the glaze, the 5°C between a staying, and a running glaze, that I need for the decoration to be flowing yet precise and defined in line.

The 1200°C glaze is alkaline in nature and is sufficient by itself. Its difficult to adapt and its main use is to give a deep red/purple coloured pot.

The 1250°C glaze is a typical dolomite glaze — flat and uninteresting by itself without oxides, yet as a background beautifully blending. This was brought home to me by Gratton Freyer, an Irish potter touring this country for two months. He is an experienced slip trail earthenware potter and he tried this method with my materials. Then he overglazed the pot with my usual 1250°C glaze. The fired pot that had considerable charm in biscuit form became totally insipid.

The decorative possibilities of these glazes as a basis for fitting the applied decoration to the forms of the pots provides my main interest.

glaze decorating methods

Basically there are three:

- under the raw glaze (underglaze decoration)
- over the raw glaze (overglaze decoration)
- over the fired glaze — with lower temperature colour decoration

I use the overglaze method. This means handling a dipped biscuit-fired then glazed, highly vulnerable, easy-to-smudge pot on a stand, or in the hand at eye level, while the brushed on decoration is placed in the right way. A large pot with a



lot of patterning can take from ½ to ¾ of an hour. This takes practice and an eye for interpreting the feeling of the pot, (also a sore wrist.)

The decorating fluids I use are highly concentrated and thinned with water. The composition is 10% of the glaze they are used on and 40% oxides — iron oxide copper oxide, cobalt oxide plus a little iron to tone the blue down. This gives reddish brown, greyish green, blue. Combined it makes black. The mixture needs 50% of water and a stick is necessary for constant stirring.

Designed decoration is part of the pot. It blends in; sometimes stands out; fits the form of the pot. Sometimes it accentuates the shape. It's full of contradictions — different stresses. It's a feeling, part of the image, part of the personality of the pot and therefore of the potter. It's sometimes based on conventional design principles — sometimes it goes right against them.

It's part of the nature of a human being to embellish. It's an instinctive feeling and it varies so

much that it is difficult to write about. Photographs and sketches communicate this feeling better than words. Personally I've always seen things in patterns, graphic images against a flat background. There is no depth, the single line evolves in an unending movement, thickening and thinning. I relate to it emotionally and follow the line.

When I'm at work this movement is limited to the shape of the pot and the nature of the glaze. I can make only one generalised statement. If the weight of your pot is in the bottom, from the point of view of form (hopefully not in clay), accentuate it with the bulk of the decoration there, and make it appear heavier, because the eye follows a line downwards. It also follows an image from left to right, or gets shocked into a focal point.

I use Japanese brushes, but the application of my brushwork is in direct contrast with the flowing line of Japanese calligraphy. Mine is laboured. Gone over again and again because of the poros-

ity of the glazed biscuit, with fairly small brush-strokes blending into a single line. The only similarity is the precision of the placing and the decisiveness of putting it on.

My advice about brushstrokes is don't dither. Make up your mind about it and be bold. Don't worry if you make a mistake. You can accentuate a mistake by turning it into another image, a drop somewhere or a splash is converted into a flower, a leaf or the centre of a spiral. Human mistakes on an otherwise carefully made object become part of the flow of events; the continuity. The unexpected is readily accepted. If you have a bowl rim and you are brushing a continuous pattern on it, and find at the end that you are running out of space, change the pattern completely so that it is noticeable. Have people say "Look isn't that nice — the've run out of space." This attitude gives rein to your adaptability and creates its own imperfections making the work lively and humorous. Early decorative pieces of any culture give examples of this.

One of the hard things when you are decorating is to know when to stop. But there again that's a feeling you develop based on a certain kind of sensitivity towards the end result.

What themes will you base your decoration on? I started with sketches of imaginary birds, fish, flowers — over simplified and adaptable to the short brush stroke. I now find that when throwing the pot shape on the wheel, before manipulating it into its final form, I already have the finished pot in mind. Therefore the feelings for the next step are instinctive, formed after 15 years of potting, decorating and working with precision. Only when the craftsmanship becomes second nature can the instinctive feeling for design fuse, to realise the intention for the whole pot. That's not to say that the craftsmanship can't go on improving. You seem to work intensively towards bettering your expression then one day you don't fight it any longer — it's there. You can't exactly analyse when you've reached that point — you just have a feeling, and the feeling develops. I believe it's in line with your knowledge of yourself as a person.

Due to Owen's long standing interest in Maori artifacts and Maori life, I find myself becoming influenced by more abstract forms and the flowing and rounded Maori designs. Having been told by Owen that I've managed to penetrate New Zealand by one inch I'm wary of adapting the designs without appreciating their meaning. Therefore tentatively, afraid to offend or misuse, yet definitely being influenced, I'm watching this development within myself.

A sense of wistfulness, of humour in the deco-

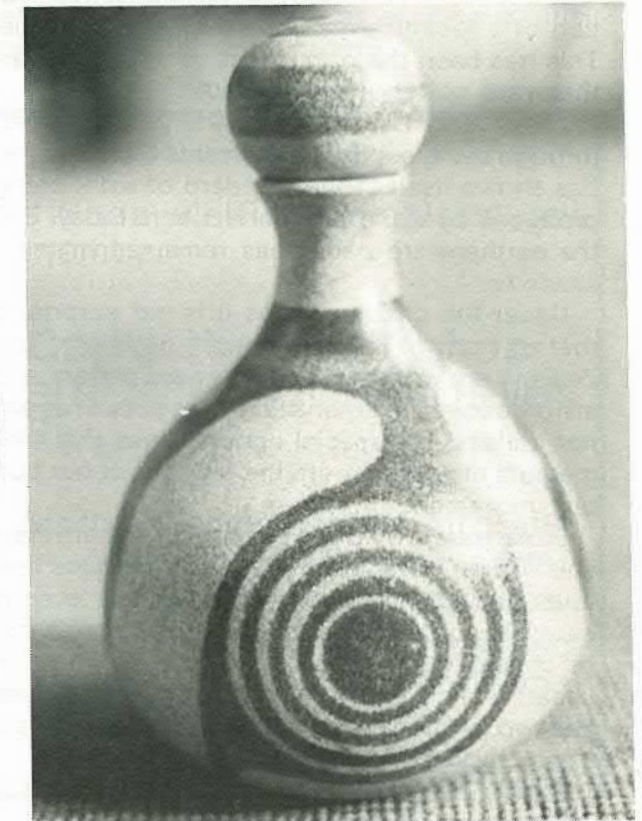
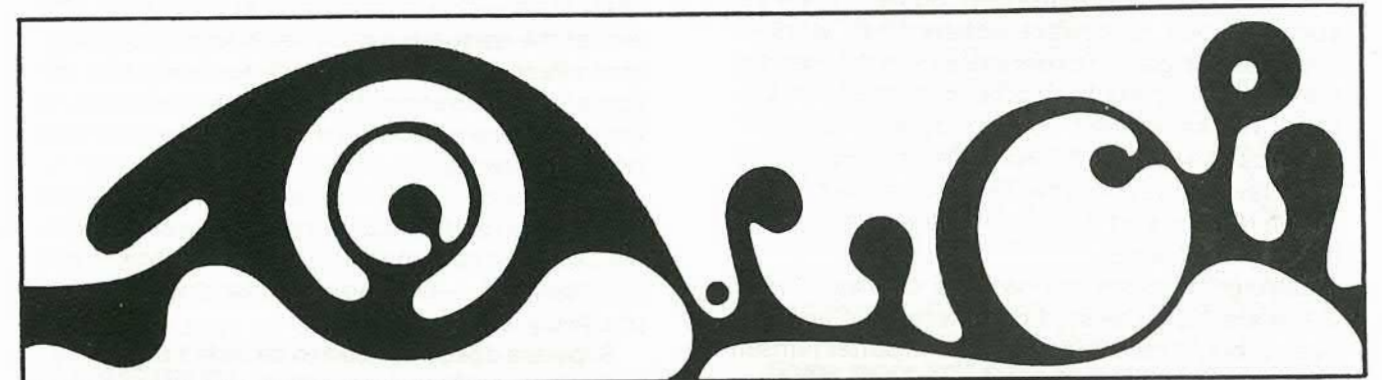


ration can give a pot a poetic image, provided these feelings are genuine.

In the long run it all comes down to being recognised by a similar sensitivity to your own, responding to it and therefore being recharged by it.

Anneke Borren was educated in Holland, came to New Zealand in 1962. After one year at Ilam School of Fine Arts in Christchurch she returned to Europe for 2 years of study and work in ceramics in Holland, Denmark and Sweden. She is married to Owen Mapp. More about Anneke's training abroad appeared in Potter Vol 12/2.

Right: fish design on round bowl. Centre: cross section of decoration on sphere. Below left: top view of another sphere. Below right: decorated bottle. Opposite page: Totems, flowers and sphere on display at the 17th National Exhibition.
photo: Stan Jenkins



Let's make Earthenware

Gwyn Ace

Stoneware is easier to make than earthenware because the high heat used in firing enables better results to be produced with less care.

Many potters would disagree with this sweeping statement but the fact is that much stoneware is self decorating — the natural texture and colour of the glazes produced in the fire can enhance even a poor pot. Earthenware is a hard master since the clay normally contributes nothing to the fired result. All the finished pots that come from the kiln are the direct result of the potter's hand.

Stoneware pottery in New Zealand has developed over the years to a standard where we can claim to be up with the best. Some of our most accomplished stoneware potters have worked overseas and gained experience from the world's masters. There has been other stimulus from abroad. We have been host to Bernard Leach, Hamada, Kawai and Michael Cardew. Harry and May Davis moved to New Zealand to start a pottery in Nelson, and their work has set an example in high standards.

During the same period, one display of earthenware from the studio of Kenneth Clark has been brought here and a visit by the potter himself followed, but for commercial reasons no information of a technical nature was made available. This has been the only direct contact with earthenware pottery from abroad.

The strength stoneware pottery has gained through being exposed to currents from outside, has shown itself in the standard of work being produced by stoneware potters here today. But the earthenware potter has remained in the shadows.

Under the circumstances it is not surprising that so many of the earthenware potters in New Zealand are working to a stoneware pattern and are producing imitation stoneware pots. They are not utilising the special opportunities that their medium offers. They are the orphans of our pottery movement.

Stoneware is fired to a temperature where clays and natural materials in the glazes produce textures and effects which cannot be achieved at earthenware temperatures. Stoneware pots can be considered self decorating and it is not unusual for one glaze to produce a range of textures and two or three colour tones due to variations in glaze thickness and in firing.

When Michael Cardew was demonstrating in

Christchurch he was asked for his opinion on firing in an electric kiln. He replied "Wood firing makes the greatest contribution to the pot and oil firing also contributes greatly. An electric kiln gives almost nothing to the pot so I would have to be a much better potter."

This statement should be taken as a challenge by earthenware potters who use electric kilns and work in this difficult field.

The characteristics

A normal earthenware glaze is glossy and the potter who cannot tolerate a shiny glaze is unlikely to develop a sympathy for earthenware. The aim of the earthenware potter is to produce vibrant effect, and there is scope for lively and imaginative decoration. Leave the muted tones to the stoneware potter and make pots that can only be earthenware.

Majolica and slipware are the two strongest traditions in earthenware and these two fields can provide limitless opportunity for experiment and development — making pots that are boldy and positively earthenware.

Slipware does not need to be little timid dishes and ash trays. Big, strong platters, bread crocks, cider jars and casseroles can show what slipware should be like.

Majolica should be bold, bright and cheerful — the sort of coffee mug or plate to greet you on a gray morning.

The body

To make good earthenware pots you need a tight body without excessive shrinkage. Don't expect a pipeworks clay to be a good pottery body. Most natural clays have an abrupt maturing point but modification with fireclay and other non plastic ingredients will produce a more pleasant body with greater fired strength and a more gradual maturing range.

Strength is improved by the presence of a wide range of particle sizes. Blending a very plastic clay with a less plastic clay and red river silt can give a body which is more efficient to use and makes a better fired result. Most commercial bodies are made with factory forming processes in view and do not contain this range of particle sizes. Most potters find these clay bodies lifeless but they can be valuable for blending.

There is nothing more unsatisfactory to the ear-

thenware potter than working with a body he doesn't like when fired. He then finds it necessary to hide it with every colour of glaze and slip. So develop a body you like in the beginning and then you can start to make pots which are in sympathy with it.

Many earthenware pots are underfired and leak badly. A hard fired body approaching vitrification will usually be much stronger and therefore more useful. Warpage can be higher but a balanced body fired on a perfectly smooth shelf will control the problem. Three-pronged stilts are made for commercial high bisque to lower glaze firing, but they are not suitable, nor intended, for use by studio potters firing where body and glaze are matured together. A good earthenware body is suitable for any use and can be as serviceable as stoneware for oven use.

The slip

Slipware requires a fairly tight body. A clay too open in texture will absorb excessive water and will collapse. Developing a range of slips to suit a clay can involve many tests, balancing plastic and non plastic ingredients and sometimes bentonite, to find a shrinkage which will match the body.

Dark slips are based on the body clay itself. From then on development work and experiments with dozens of bowls and cylinders will lead to a range of techniques and effects.

The decoration

Try to track down some early Winchcombe Michael Cardew or Raymond Finch pots and note the free easy way the decoration is used. Decoration for earthenware should be decisive. The cake icing approach to slip decoration is not good to look at. Combing, sgraffito in wet or firm slip and marbling can be practiced. Don't try just one pot. You will need a dozen or more to work on and the results will be a worthwhile exercise in improving technique.

The glaze

Slipware needs a clear or amber lead glaze. Borax glazes are usually slightly milky and are not in sympathy with a red or brown body and can give a pastey result. A good lead bisilicate glaze will give a crisp clarity which will enhance a darker body.

Majolica requires a reliable opaque tin or tin-zircon glaze. Many of these are available commercially or you can formulate your own glaze. The glaze should have a low flow and some commercial glazes could require a small kaolin addition to control the flow. Lead or borax glazes are suitable and each will produce different colour effects from some oxides and glaze stains. No

chromium oxides or stains containing chrome should be used unless you are aiming for some strange effects. Most glazes will require an addition of gum to provide a good decorating surface, and are often easier to decorate while still damp.

Test decorating ideas built up from easy brush strokes and using wax resist before applying to the pot. Bisque a dozen or more similar test pots and decorate them all. Chose the most successful to retain, and wash off the rest for redecoration. Tests to find out the right strength of colour required for each effect will take time, but lessons learnt will stay with you.

A red brown body can be used for majolica but a lighter or buff body is more generally used and avoids unwanted colour bleeding through the glaze.

You must remember that whatever glaze is used for food containers it must not present a health hazard to the user.

All of this testing means a great deal of seemingly unproductive work, but earthenware requires the mastering of this knowledge and technique, and the results are very worthwhile.

With natural gas now available it is possible to build a gas-fired kiln suitable for reduced lustreware and any of the earthenware techniques requiring oxidising or reduction firing. The opportunities in the earthenware field are vast and little has been done in New Zealand yet.

Some more first class exponents of colourful earthenware would make an exciting contribution to this country's pottery.

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High fired Earthenware

Frances Frederic

My interest lies in high fired earthenware — around the 1160 — 1200°C range, which I believe has much to offer and presents many challenges. One criticism often levelled at this ware is that it is "poor stoneware". Nothing could be further from the truth. High fired earthenware bears no resemblance to oxidised stoneware from an electric kiln, which is yet another field which could be explored more widely.

In high fired earthenware the line of clay and glaze begins to merge, the clay usually red, beginning to show through on the high spots of rims, handles, throwing marks and textured edges which is pleasing. The colours consequently can be subtle. At these high temperatures some clays vitrify offering possibilities of leaving large areas of body unglazed, but perhaps textured or oxide washed, depending on the purpose for which the pot was designed.

The opportunity offered for decoration in this range of temperatures is almost unlimited. This could be said of the whole range of earthenware temperatures, and is one of its greatest attractions.

The importance of glaze fit is probably the biggest challenge the earthenware potter has to face, but in the higher temperature range this problem is lessened. Other basic glazes than the usual lead bisilicate or similar need to be explored, such as those with an alkaline base.

There are many basic recipes available, often to be found in American publications, which are worth trying. I've no use for the so called "catalogue glazes", and use only the basic oxides of iron, copper, cobalt and manganese for colourings, though I've read recently that prepared stains are safer. I like to vary the colours and textures of glazes by using different glaze bases with the four oxides either separately or in combination, and there are endless possibilities here. I also like to use modifiers such as tin, zinc and rutile.

One of the features of high fired earthenware is its suitability for domestic ware. There is no comparison for its heat retaining qualities. The contents of a casserole remain hot for a much greater time than those cooked in a stoneware one. I can hear the rumbles of protest already, but it is a simple truth. Recently after a half cold meal from a stoneware dinner plate, too hot to hold without a cloth when brought to the table, a test was

made. Two plates, one of the stoneware set and one of the earthenware set were tested and timed for heat retention. The earthenware plate was warm long after the stoneware one was quite cold.

Casserole dishes make a similar comparison. Of course all casseroles need care in the hands of the cook to avoid breaking by thermal shock, but I firmly believe a good earthenware casserole contributes to much more tasty meals than any other type of casserole dish. Naturally earthenware is not unbreakable, but in my experience neither is any other kind of pottery, which is just as well for the potters pockets. It's not my intention to argue the pros and cons of earthenware versus stoneware, but rather to point out that good earthenware has some desirable qualities to offer in its own right.

The question is often asked about where the clay comes from. I use imported clays and make no apology for it. I haven't the time or the knowledge, although it seems one can acquire the knowledge by experience, to dig my own. There are certainly many areas of good clay in Southland and some potters, mainly in the west of the province, do use local clay. But until someone in New Zealand will prepare and market a good high temperature earthenware body of a consistent quality and in readily available quantities at a reasonable price (we live at the southernmost end of the country where the freight from say Auckland is incredibly high), then I'm afraid I'll be using imported clays. I'm no purist in this respect and believe clay is clay whether it comes from Staffordshire, Lake Hauroko or Timbuctoo. After all does not the artist buy his paints? It seems to me the most important point is what one does with the materials available.

I believe that earthenware potters in New Zealand who have persevered and reached a certain level of achievement have done much to dispel the idea that earthenware is in some way inferior. Many people begin their pottery experience with earthenware in evening classes. To work with it beyond this level and try to meet its many challenges can be a rewarding experience.

To demonstrate our belief in earthenware, the Southland Potters' Association is planning a nationwide invitation exhibition next August in the art gallery of the Southland Museum, on the success of which we hope to report in a future issue of the Potter.

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Earthenware clay

Mari Tohill

Good earthenware clay though fired at comparatively low heats must reach vitrification to achieve practical and durable pieces. This is not easy to achieve unless a suitable clay is found and tested.

In New Zealand there is a wide variety of low-firing clays if one knows where to find them. Brick and pipe works usually have medium firing clays, some buff and some terracotta. River banks, roadside cuttings and on the South Island West Coast near coal deposits, good plastic clay can be found. To test clay for plasticity a piece, when damp and rolled into a coil and bent, should not crack or break. A short clay will crumble. The addition of some bentonite or ball clay will improve the plasticity of medium short clay. A fair degree of plasticity is essential for handwork, such as rolling, slabbing, and pressing. Coarse materials such as sand or grog can be added for strength when building large forms but usually for earthenware fine textured clay is required.

Having tested a red clay and found it has good plasticity it will be necessary to clean it of impurities. After the more obvious of these have been removed the clay is dried out. It is then crushed and added to water and left to soften for about 24 hours after which it is reduced to a slurry and brushed through a 60 mesh sieve. When the clay has settled and the water which has come to the top is poured or sponged off the clay will finally reach the wedgeable state and it can then

be stored away in plastic bags.

The next step is to test the clay for shrinkage which is variable depending on the amount of water the clay takes up and holds. If the shrinkage from the wet plastic to the dry state exceeds 1/5th or 1/6th it is too much. Shrinkage is easily measured by making a strip of clay 6 in. long, 1 in. wide and 1/4" thick and measuring, first for the drying shrinkage and then for firing shrinkage. This latter should not be more than 1/8" in total measured from the dry state; the sample fired at first to 1000° should survive without cracking or warping. If it is properly fired and does not blister, crack or warp there is hope for it. But if any of these things should happen to it don't bother any more with it.

The terracotta clays produce a lovely red body which is ideal for large flower pots, terrace and hanging pots. The body too when burnished on the outside and glazed inside can give good colour combinations.

For potters aiming at fine domestic earthenware a light body may be desirable. White low-firing clays are less common in New Zealand but they can be found.

Many potters through circumstances have to buy their clay otherwise they will have no time left to make pots.

It is fun to find one's own supply. Sometimes this is no further away than one's own property and there is one case I know, of husband and wife potters using the clay they excavated from their basement. Happy hunting.

REMINDER

Have you renewed your subscription? We do not send reminders so if you have not received your Potter its because you have forgotten to renew. A renewal slip is enclosed in the second issue each year.

The Tohills built their house from home-made clay blocks "When visiting Otago, we noted with interest the old pioneer cob method of building and we decided to use stabilized earth in the construction of our new house. Building it ourselves, with occasional help from the family and friends, was a fairly slow process which did not matter as we were in no hurry.

It was cheap as a do-it-yourself job but with paid labour definitely not!

Clay was near at hand and was lightly sieved and mixed dry in a cement mixer with pea gravel and cement. The formula was 10 of clay 2 of pea

gravel and one of cement. This was moistened a little before being rammed into a light metal form which we used for the walls. The size of the form was 9" wide, 9" high and 22" long for the outer walls while the inside dividing walls were 6".

It was necessary to have a damp course on top of the foundations and a reinforced concrete band on the top of the walls for attaching the roof. A cement plaster was used on the outside walls and a plaster finish on the inside.

With solid walls and floors and insulated ceiling, the house is warm in the winter and cool in the summer."

6 Coromandel potters

Margaret Harris

Ley Macassey + John Macassey

John and Ley Macassey are full-time potters. They are partners on a fifty-fifty basis. John does the throwing, Ley does the glazing and together they decide on what they will make and the other aspects of running a pottery. They have been operating for two years and worked full-time almost from the beginning.

The Macasseys had land — ten acres of scrub and bush in the Otama Forest six miles north of Whitianga on the east coast of the Coromandel Peninsula. They came back from years of travelling in Russia, Bulgaria, Brazil, wanting to take root in their land. They might have made their living in other ways but seeing Bryce Stevens at work in his pottery up the coast decided them to give pottery a try. They liked it and found that they had reasonable proficiency from the beginning.

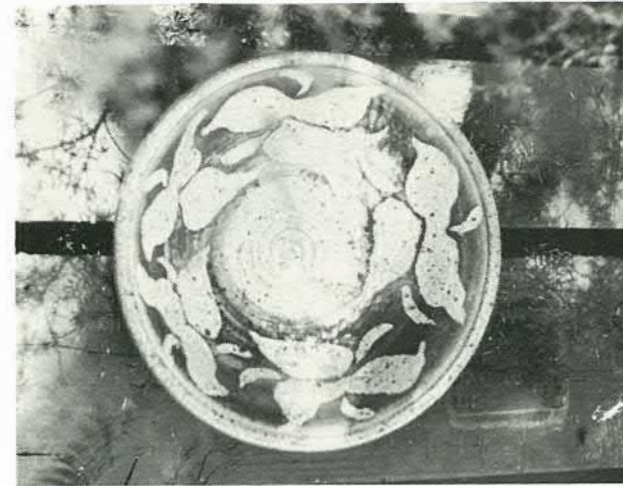
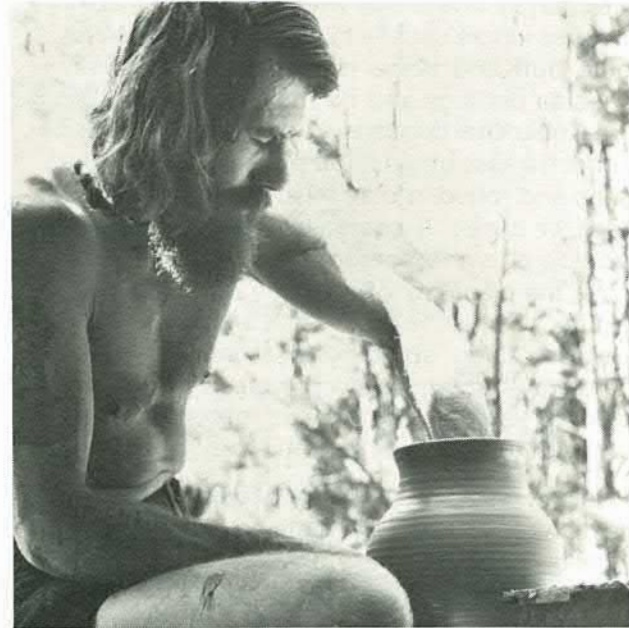
Having grown up on a farm, John is mechanically minded, which has been a great help in building the equipment.

Ley at one time worked in Auckland in one of the first dealer galleries. Becoming potters for the Macasseys was not exactly a shot in the dark.

"When we decided we would be potters we were amazed by the ready help forthcoming from established potters. This giving attitude surprised us because we had come straight from New York where no-one would go out of the way to push an elevator button for you. This generous attitude is an on-going thing and we like to share what we have discovered with potters of serious intent."

John says they can't imagine doing anything else now, (he has been sheep farmer and world traveller for fifteen years doing many jobs), and nothing they have done before gives them the same enjoyment as their work as potters and the way of life it offers.

The present kiln is 80 cubic ft, two-chambered, oil-fired, natural draught, with six drip-feed burners. They want to change to a wood-fired kiln, backed up by oil firing if necessary. They feel strongly about sources of wood for fuel "We are surrounded by regenerating forest which needs every leaf that falls. We don't consider it an ecological proposition to take wood from the



forest floor any more than it is to cut down trees. We will get plantation timber from other sources not being used for anything else."

John likes a clay with tooth. He is mixing a third to half of his own clay dug from the property with a prepared mix based on crum stoneware. "We are fortunate in having good clay on the place and from this we hope to develop a wholly indigenous body. We will have to overcome some present difficulties with warping.

Our next priority is a de-airing pug mill and this itself should bring about an improvement in the clay. We don't know what type of pug mill to get and we'll probably buy one. One of the difficulties of starting from scratch like this is that there are so many projects going on at once. It's hard to decide on priorities — workshop — living quarters — orchard — bridge over stream — water supply. We lived in a tent for the first six months."

Ley does all the glazing. She has two weeks before firing so she can afford to take time. "My objective in decorating is to finish the pot in the way it was started. The pot decides the decoration. It is not a vehicle for expressing myself."

The Macassey's pottery has a high proportion of applied brushstroke decoration "We have noticed that people new to buying handmade pottery often prefer the decorated pot. It's closer to what they are used to. Later they may see the same beauty in an undecorated pot. We try to offer as wide a range of choice as possible."

The offering of a wide range of choices reflects an attitude to their way of life as well as to their pottery. "We enjoy being away from it all, living on the land; we don't feel that this obliges us to reject the 20th Century. Machines are fine as long as you control them rather than vice versa. To us, making pots or exploring the bush is more important than pioneer-type drudgery. And we still use the city's theatres and exhibitions as a different sort of inspiration. We want to keep all avenues open. With pottery it is too easy to say I will be *this* sort of potter and only *this* kind of pot is valid — a purist attitude can become a totalitarian one. Our property is called "Eleuthera" which in translation means "freedom" and we'd like to live without too many imposed boundaries."

Ley works freehand and is conscious of the need to keep improving her brush work. She is concentrating on developing glazes from local fern ash and iron sand.

They sell entirely through their own shop on the property, which is open on Sundays and holidays and daily in January. "Having our own shop we can sell at more realistic prices. We are a cottage industry and want to provide pots at prices people

can afford. We like having direct contact with the buyer and hearing remarks about the pots. We feel this criticism must improve our work."

Living on their own, in tune with their environment, gives Ley and John deep satisfaction, and making pottery has been their means of realising it. They have built their own house, workshop and shop. Later they intend to rebuild the living quarters in a secluded clearing in the bush where they can be totally private. They combine gardening with potting and sell any surplus, but they like the idea of callers being able to pick and eat some plums or apples so that the exchange of a pot between the maker and the user will take place in a relaxed way.

Lyndsay Bedogni

Lyndsay Bedogni took up pottery full-time two years ago. He went straight into it without any knowledge or formal instruction. He was helped in the beginning by Bryce Stevens whose place in the country he took over at Kuaotuna, over the hills to the north of Whitianga on the east coast of the Coromandel.

Lyndsay took over the kiln that Bryce had been using for three years. It needed rebuilding and this he did on basically the same design because he knew it worked. It is 24 cubic feet, twin chambered with six drip-feed burners. "Only country potters can belch out smoke with impunity." He fires every three to four weeks.

He makes solely domestic stoneware. Now he is starting to question the design aspects of form and function. He's thinking out the whole philosophy of pottery making, but he wants more experience before making any emphatic statements about how things should be done. Meanwhile he's working at improvements in form.

"I was interested in pottery before the opportunity came of taking it up. A good handmade pot takes something from the person who makes it which can be shared with the user." Music was Lyndsay's former occupation — he was bass player with the Hamilton County Bluegrass Band.

At present he is using a prepared clay mix — Mapua from Nelson — and is firing with oil. "I hope eventually to be able to use naturally-occurring clays and other materials. I would like the pots to express the nature of the environment from which they come."

Soon he moves to a new place two miles from Tapu on the gulf coast of the peninsula, to a block of fifty acres with already established pine trees

Yvonne Rust's pottery school

Ten day school for experienced potters 3rd January - 12th January

The course will include a low salt firing to experiment with local clays, (bring your own clays).

Practical work with smoke courses in a natural draught model kiln

Two day trips to the Poor Knights (bring your own snorkel and gear) and several days of potting. Cost all inclusive \$140. Numbers limited to 20

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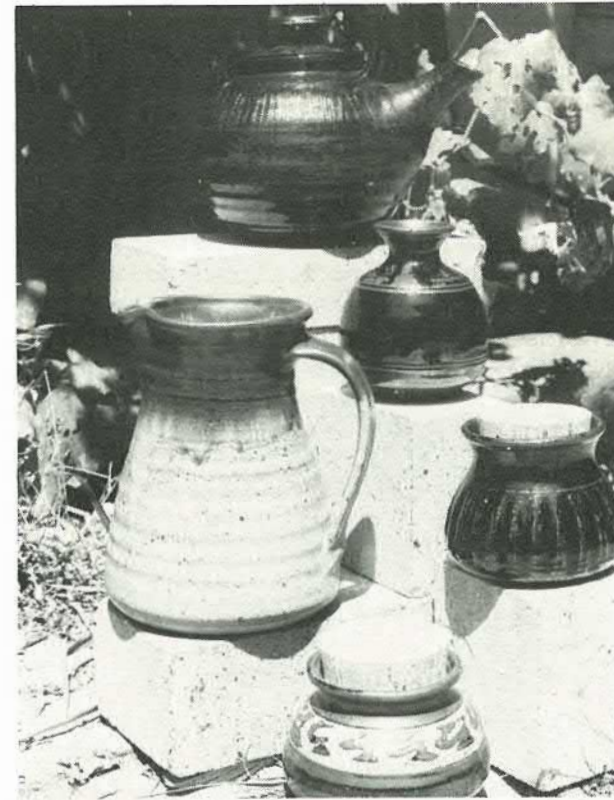
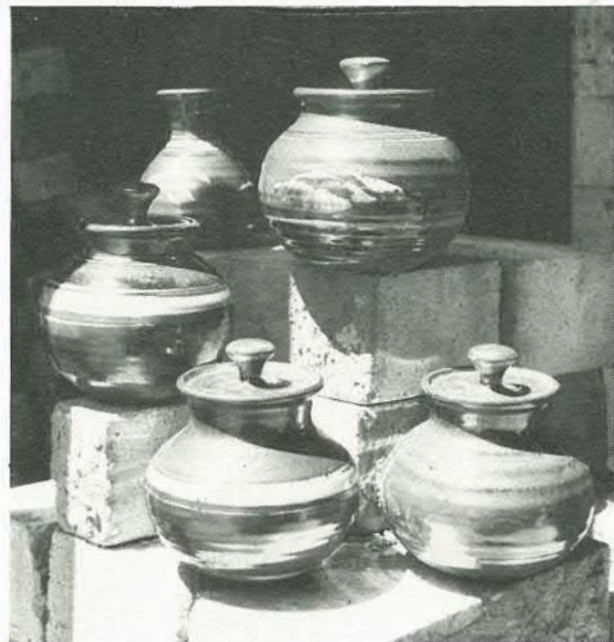
Two seven day schools for potters

17th January - 23rd January

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Cost \$70

Applications close 30th August RD4 Whangarei



growing. Here he will build a wood fired kiln and an oil fired kiln for salt glazing. After seeing Barry Brickell's kiln in action he wants to fire with wood, but will try to adapt his own kiln to smaller dimensions, with two chambers. "Otherwise the kiln takes too long to fill and the creative process becomes too long. I get fully involved with every process, but I particularly enjoy the glazing. Each firing is a new revelation."

Lyndsay sells his pots to craft shops. He puts prices on regular items, for the others, he relies on what the dealer suggests. He believes that domestic pottery should be moderately priced, but that if a pot turns out particularly well because something extra has been put into it, a higher price than usual is justifiable, and he hopes that the buyer recognizes that it has this extra quality.

Lyndsay Bedogni is another young man with a basic desire to do something on his own piece of land. He will leave his present place which is rented from the Coromandel County Council. The solid Kauri house was built in the gold-mining days of 1890 for the schoolmaster. It sits on an elevated site with a view across the sea to Great Barrier Island. Another potter waits to take over.

Bill Roberts

Bill Roberts of Waihi on the Coromandel/Bay of Plenty boundary is a part-time potter, but he will be full-time as soon as his kiln is perfected. He's been potting seriously for two years, but has been making pots since Muriel Moody taught him as a boy.

He makes mainly domestic ware, although he intends doing a range of plant pots. They will be biscuit fired only, because he likes the mellow look of pots outdoors with mould growing on them.

Bill Roberts is a potter because he likes the way of life. When he left the city he looked over Coromandel and fixed on ten acres in Waihi. He lives in an 80 year-old miner's cottage and leases out his land. One day he hopes to run his own stock. The country around Waihi retains the character of its rollicking days when the gold and silver mines were operating. Early in the century four hundred people took a Sunday walk up the Roberts road in Bulltown.

Before going to Waihi, Bill had used only the Point Howard Art Society's electric kiln so he started with a top loader kitset oil-fired kiln with natural draught and louvre burners. Here his bat-

tle with the kilns began. The perlite insulation over the layers of brick across the opening on the kitset kiln disintegrated and dribbled down inside.

With the help of a friend he decided on an 80 cubic feet catenary arch kiln with two louvre burners. "The first firing didn't have enough draught so I pushed out the side of the shed, but I couldn't get up to temperature for glaze firing. There was a disastrous firing when I used sump oil and there were clouds of black smoke. Even the spiders' webs in the pottery turned black and most of the pots were spoilt by the carbon. Lack of draw was our main problem. The chimney was too small and the floor ducts also were too small, causing back pressure within the kiln."

Inspired by Michael Cardew he then built another catenary arch kiln for wood firing. Barry Brickell gave advice on combustion space, flue sizes, bag wall heights etc. Again this kiln when fired was satisfactory for biscuit, but too much heat was lost from the crown to raise satisfactory glaze temperatures. He learnt also that this kiln was too big for one person to handle alone.

In the meantime he is contenting himself with a 20 cubic foot drip fed catenary arch kiln with one louvre burner. This kiln creates no problems, but Bill is set on mastering wood firing techniques using pine slabs that are readily available from nearby forests. "I'll get into garden pots and biscuit firings only, until I get to know the kiln thoroughly before making adaptations."

He does not resent the time spent on kiln building — he could have sought more advice but he is learning more by coming to grips with the problems himself.

A local deposit of clay filled with quartz and coarse grains, dug from the mine when the shafts were put down, gives a rugged texture to the garden pots. Nearby there is also terra cotta clay which is satisfactory when mixed in a fifty/fifty ratio with Crum clay. "I would like to use local clays exclusively but I'll need to do a lot of experimenting which I've not time for yet, and I'd need clay mixing machinery. I've started to get some engineering friends thinking about making a pugmill."

Reduction glazes suit the body he's using at present. The glaze recipes have been handed on to him. Experimenting to formulate his own will have to wait.

Bill Roberts sells his pottery from his house. His output is not great as yet. He prefers to sell from the house because the price to the user can be less and because they like the sociability of meeting people. He puts one price on the pots so they

are the same for the dealer as for the personal buyer. Later he would like to have Open Day sales, perhaps with other local artists and craftsmen. He'd like to exhibit too.

Bill Robert's drive and enthusiasm will secure him his goals. Barbara Roberts supplies support and labour. His is a practical approach to pottery. He has his piece of land because he likes to live in the country and he is not too concerned with the philosophy of it. For the present he is working towards establishing himself as a full-time potter and other developments can start from there.



David Floria

David Floria has been potting at Driving Creek Potteries for a year. Potting, building, demolishing and processing clay because that's the pattern of things at Driving Creek. For the first six months, half the day was spent at the craft and half on helping to establish the place. When he came, there were three people working permanently at the pottery. The number grew to ten and now its back to four including Barry Brickell. This is practical workshop experience for David after a ceramics course within the Fine Arts framework taken at the University of Denver, Colorado.

David makes a range of domestic ware and an occasional non-functional pot, but his university approach was necessarily the opposite of that of the production potter who makes runs of the same item. It was a one-off approach — "Not everyone need go through the domestic ware discipline first, but probably most people would benefit."

For David potting is a total way of life — more than just making a living. "Being a potter is a valid and real occupation to have in 1975 if one is very environment conscious, and strives to provide for the needs of the community honestly and beautifully.

To use a Buddhist term this is "right Livelihood."

"I recently heard someone say that there were 'too many potters in New Zealand. . . .' I don't think there'll be enough potters in New Zealand (or anywhere for that matter) until everyone who likes pottery has all they need. If there was a potter in every little town, selling his work at real prices, people could stop buying plastic ..."

In Denver he used a gas fired kiln at the university and a small gas fired raku kiln: and later a wood fired kiln.

"Here I helped build the wood-fired kiln. At present I'm firing a small drip feed oil kiln by myself. Its a two chambered climbing kiln with the biscuit chamber climbing up the bank from the glost chamber: it was built by Paul Tobin when he was here. I mix my own glazes and fire independently and more often, and in this way I learn more. I'd prefer to fire with wood. Its more real in an ecological and world energy sense. Besides its cleaner

and more enjoyable. The kiln has home-made louvre and pan burner and fires to cone 10 in 12 to 13 hours."

He is using the local terra cotta clay and white clay with commercial Huntly brick grog to cut down the iron content, and New Zealand feldspar in a four to one ratio.

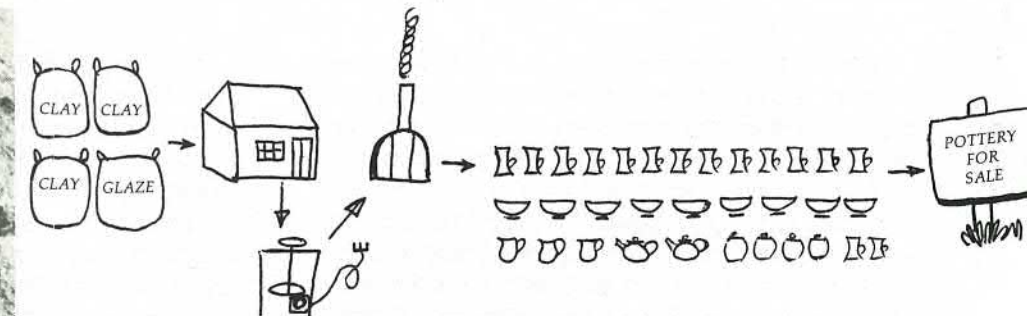
His glazes are basically the same as Barry Brickell uses — a small number of glazes in which the parts are varied as often as possible to get different combinations "I'd like to experiment more with glazes. I enjoy glazing from the point of view of application and results. I'm not so interested in the chemical composition. Working on the forms and practicing throwing skills are the primary aims at present."

"Decoration has been mostly through glaze application. I'm starting to do more decoration on the pot before glazing.

"When I leave Coromandel I'd like to continue working communally with other potters; two may be a good number, and I think it would be good to work and live with craftsmen working with other materials; a weaver, glass blower, jeweller ... I may go back to The States for a while, but it would probably be only for a visit. I feel very much at home in New Zealand. I've never been anywhere I like more."

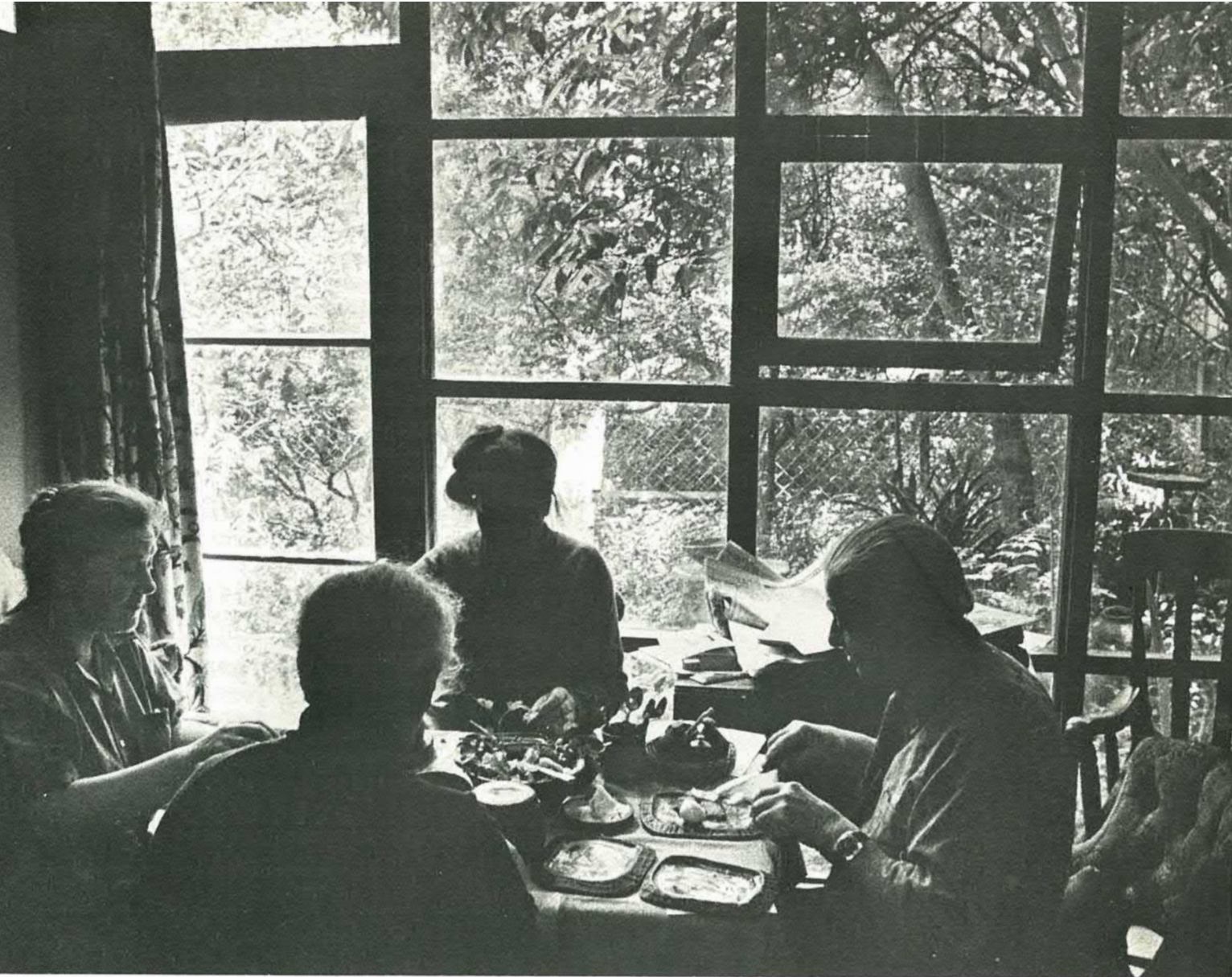
We also visited Warren Tippett one of our first full time potters. He is now established at Colville, further up the Coromandel Peninsula. An account of his current work will be given in the next issue.

Bryce Stevens



TAPU CREEK POTTERIES (SINCE 1969)
... TO PAY THE GROCER'S BILL ...

This most eloquently sums up why I am a mud-man



The PERRINS

Those familiar with Patricia Perrin's pottery from as long ago as her first exhibition in 1948 will know that she has not been influenced by any particular trend — she has continued to develop the forms she has in mind to make. Her first pots were onion shaped liquid storage jars with imported wooden taps. Other jars followed in different sizes, often corked and with rope handles, and they have remained characteristic Patricia Perrin pots.

She prefers a matt glaze which enhances the richness of the clay body and does not detract from the form. Sometimes she uses a splash of poured on glaze as decoration. Hers is a sculptural approach to pottery and current work is concerned with more form than function.

Margaret Harris.

Patricia Perrin was the first of a number of people to turn to pottery after the war when a new interest in handcrafts emerged which has lost no momentum since. Her sculptural approach to her work is probably the outcome of early training in a sculpture course taken at Elam School of Fine Arts. In 1947 she began potting at Avondale College evening classes held by Robert Field. The young Len Castle was getting his introduction to pottery at the same time and she recalls that the clay they were using came from England. Later she took over some of Mr Field's classes. Many long established potters will remember the inspiration and guidance she gave them during these lessons. She still teaches. At Auckland Teacher's College, and at Avondale College, and Otahuhu

College evening classes.

Pat Perrin works full-time from her studio at home. The kiln is a large one built to Yvonne Rust's design. It is a natural draught drip feed oil burner with a big 24 inch diameter flue which provides such good suction that the kiln heats to 1300°C in eight hours. "Yvonne sent the plan and said she would come and build it in the May school holidays. She duly arrived with friends and we all got to work, with Yvonne in charge gesturing and exclaiming "My God I've forgotten . . ." We worked hard and in two weeks the kiln was built."

Two Perrin sisters also work in their own studios at home. Yvonne is a potter. She makes slab ware for domestic use. Fifteen years ago Tina Hoss, who sold Pat's work in New Vision Gallery, suggested that Yvonne make ceramic jewellery which would find a ready market at the gallery. So she did, using a locally made electric kiln. "When the oil kiln came, beads got a bit lost in it so I made slab ware to help fill it up."

Phyllis is a print maker.

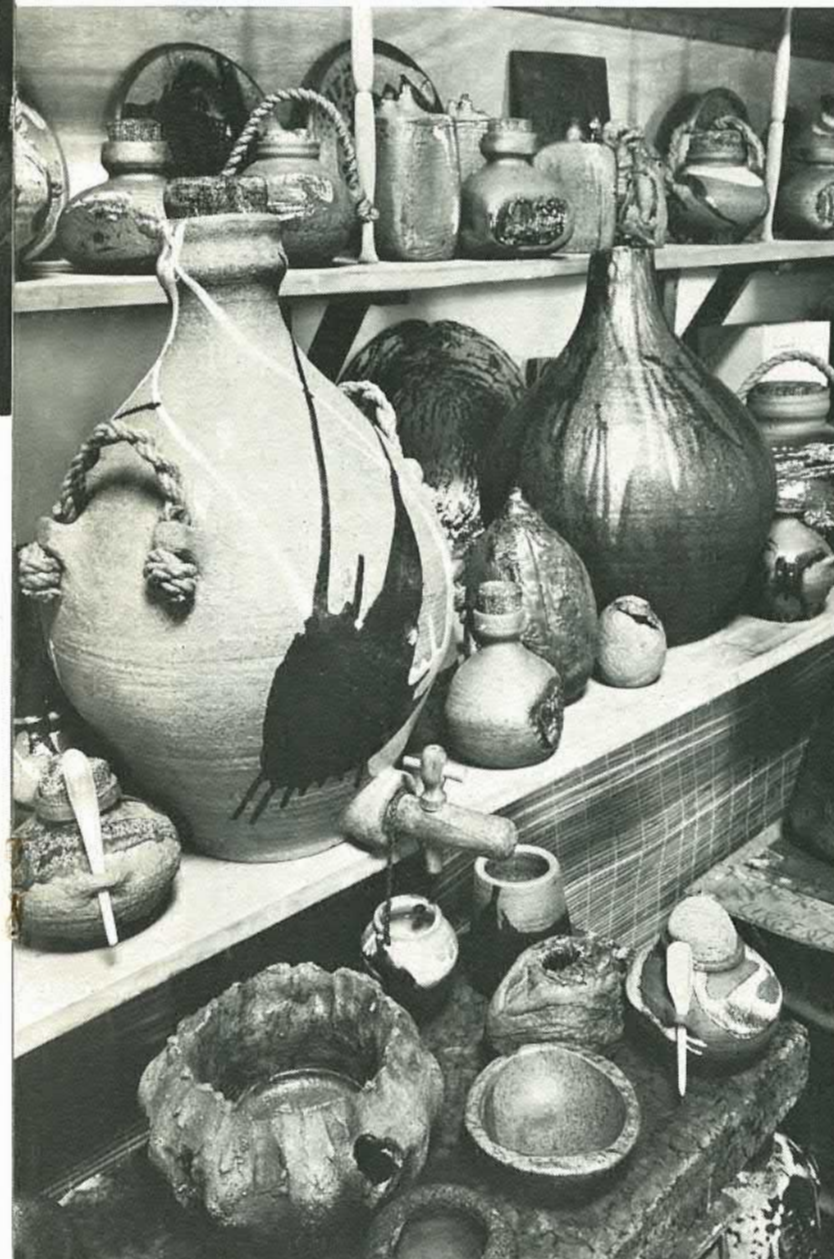
The Perrins were brought up to be interested in handmade things. Their parents believed in eating natural foods before wholemeal and herbs were fashionable. The family has not ever been influenced by fashion — and the kinds of values they held are perhaps shared by more people today than forty years ago.

To visit the Perrins is an experience in some ways like being projected back in a time machine. The illusion is created because they live in a leafy island in a sea of dreary Auckland suburbs. Its so rural inside the gate that its hard to remember that you are in the city.

The garden is surrounded by a thicket of trees. The walk up the drive around branches that are allowed to encroach, and where the large leafed sub tropical growth is luxuriant, is like one of

Patricia Perrin working in her studio.

Photos: Steve Rumsey





Above left: Yvonne stringing a planter. Right: Phylis relief printing Christmas cards

photo: Steve Rumsey



Rousseau's paintings. The house can hardly be seen at first because the weathered timber is hidden behind a close planted screen of fig and bamboos. Inside, the Edwardian furniture crowded into large rooms continues the illusion. But the illusion soon stops. There are the television set the latest copy of the Listener and the Perrins themselves, welcoming and warm. They joke about their accumulations.

The family came to live in the 100 year old house 50 years ago and collected the furniture when ceiling heights became lower and the trend was to throw these big pieces out. They have gone on collecting, furniture, paintings, pets, bees, a peach faced love bird which turned into an aviary.

Three sisters and an active octogenarian father have made fulfilling interests besides their work within the seclusion of this home.



MOULD MAKING AND SLIP CASTING

by Howard Williams

Slip-casting is an industrial manufacturing process allowing mass-production of identical clay shapes using plaster-of-paris moulds. The life of a mould depends on the quality of the plaster and the care with which the mould is used, but an average number of 50 casts should be obtainable from any one mould. For the studio potter this would seem to limit creative potential to the initial design of a shape, production thereafter being a dull repetitive process. However, it does present a challenge in the area of glaze treatment and surface decoration. Once a good shape has been determined, then all the potter's energies can be applied to experiment and control of varied visual treatments of that shape. An exciting and unlimited field of work is provided for those particularly interested in ceramic decoration.

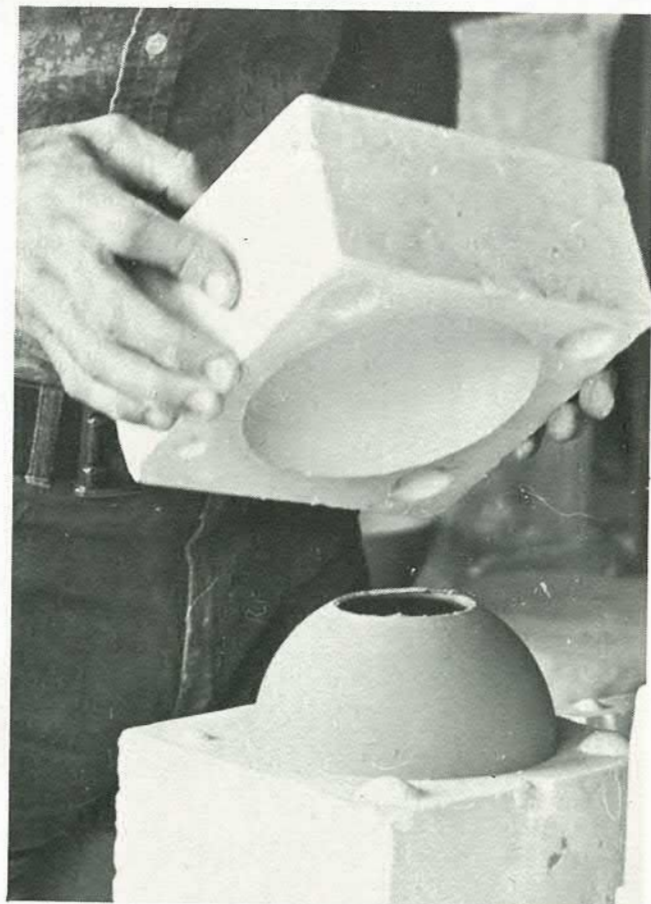
Very few New Zealand potters have worked in slip-casting, but overseas it is fast becoming a common medium particularly for ceramic sculpture. Clay walls can be cast paper-thin, or shapes made virtually solid. Several cast elements can be assembled and slip luted together, making for infinite variations of shape not necessarily restricted by the initial shape of the mould. The deeper one explores into slip-casting, the more exciting become the possibilities of its use as a creative medium for individual work.

Plaster

Plaster-of-paris is made by heating gypsum, $\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ to 160°C , converting it to plaster, $\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot \frac{1}{2}\text{H}_2\text{O}$. This is done in two different ways. "Alpha" plasters are heated in a steam autoclave which makes a strong, dense, less absorbent material such as dental plaster. "Beta" plasters are made with dry heat, the crystals formed are larger and less densely packed, thus making a more absorbent final plaster which is better for pottery moulds. In use, alpha plaster requires to be mixed 45 parts water to 100 parts plaster, beta plaster needs more like 70 water to 100 plaster.

Mixing plaster.

Before mixing plaster, all work surfaces should



be covered with paper or polythene and the plaster should be kept well clear of clay storage, wedging tables etc. Any plaster which finds its way into clay bodies will have disastrous results during firing. After using plaster the work areas and tools should be well cleaned. Unused plaster must be stored damp free, and marked so it cannot be mistaken for other pottery materials, particularly in schools and night class pottery rooms. Used, waste plaster must be thrown away, once slaked it cannot be reconstituted. Plaster should be mixed in a clean plastic basin, preferably a flexible one, with clean cold water. Always put water in the basin first, then add the plaster to it by gently sifting it through the fingers, spreading it evenly over the water surface. When the water has absorbed all it can, the plaster will appear as a small heap on top. This is left for a few minutes to settle, and then can be gently stirred using one hand flat in the bottom of the basin. This will break up any lumps of plaster and allow air bubbles to escape. When the plaster feels like thick cream the basin can be lifted slightly and bumped on the table-top several times to shake any bubbles up to the surface; these can be skimmed to one side and the plaster is ready to pour. Pouring is done steadily to prevent splashing or air bubble

trapping, and the job must be completed in one pour. Two batches of plaster will not make a good mould, and it is better to have some left over to waste, than not enough mixed for the job. Never, but never, pour excess plaster down the sink, it sets quickly and permanently in outlet pipes with horrible results. Either tip it out onto newspaper or into a cardboard box — this way small bats can be made or plaster blocks for later carving. Immediately clean the basin out with a rubber kidney, fill it with cold water to wash off all the plaster before it sets and dispose of it in the garden. You may find it advisable to use a barrier cream on your hands for plaster mixing. Any tools used with wet plaster should be cleaned before it sets. For model making or sculpture, plaster can be made to set more slowly by adding a little vinegar or gum tragacanth, or the process speeded up by using warm water or a little salt in the water. However plaster should be used on its own for pottery moulds.

Making a mould.

The first thing is to design the shape you wish finally to make. This is a most important step because if you make a mould with a bad curve or unpleasing line in it, every cast will faithfully reproduce that fault. Beware of trying to cast thrown clay work to imitate pots complete with throwing marks etc., cast ware has a quality peculiar to itself and it should not attempt to reproduce pots made by other means.

The simplest shape is an open bowl or plate which can be made in a one piece "drop-out" mould. More complicated shapes, or those with undercuts will require two or three piece moulds which can be opened to withdraw the clay cast. It is best to make the original model in solid clay — imagine it as a jelly turned out of a mould — in this case we make the "jelly" first in clay, and then cast the mould around it. Figures 1, 2 and 3 illus-

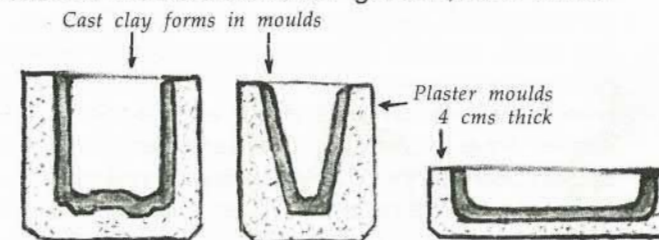


Fig. 1, 2, 3. Sectional views of open moulds

trate open moulds and their casts in section. Make your model in solid clay upside-down on a bat. It can be wheel-turned or handbuilt. Fig. 4. Place a cottle wall around the model, using stiff card or linoleum, leaving about 4cms gap bet-

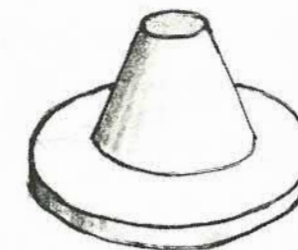


Fig. 4. Solid clay model upside down on bat or wheelhead.

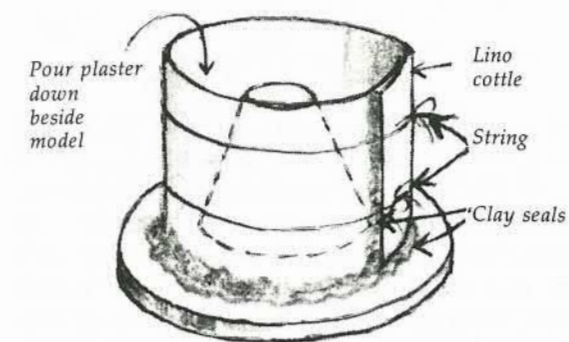


Fig. 5. Model surrounded by Cottle wall, 4 cms away, at closest point.

ween it and the model, and making the wall about 4cms higher. It must be bound with string or rubber rings cut from a car tyre inner tube, and firmly sealed at its ends and down to the bat with plastic clay to prevent the plaster from leaking out. Fig. 5. This sealing with clay needs to be securely done — if this dam bursts while the plaster is being poured in, one finishes up with a useless half-filled mould, a ghastly mess to clean up quickly, and plaster filled shoes! Experience will tell how much plaster to use for a given mould size, mix as already described, and when it has the consistency of thick cream, pour it in carefully beside, not directly onto, the model so there is no splashing. As pouring starts it is a good idea to hold one hand on the top of the model to prevent plaster flowing under it and floating it off the bat. Pouring should finish when plaster covers the model to a depth of the same 4cms. The thickness of the mould walls can be greater for larger moulds. All walls of a mould need to be of fairly consistent thickness, otherwise casts taken from it later will tend to have the same disparity in wall thickness. When the plaster pouring is finished, gently tap the outside of the cottle wall to raise up any air bubbles. Dispose of any excess plaster, (remember, not down the sink!) and clean your basin, hands etc. The plaster should set in about 20 minutes, growing quite warm in the process.

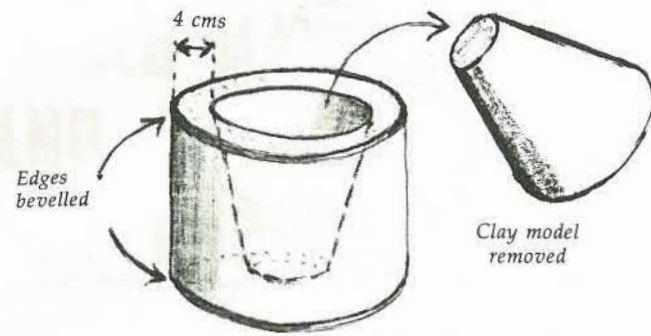


Fig. 6. Open mould completed.

Now the cottle wall can be dismantled, the mould lifted off the bat, turned over and the clay model removed. Fig.6. All clay used must be disposed of in case it has been contaminated with plaster. The inside surface of the mould is washed using a soft brush, and any tiny bumps removed by gently polishing with a damp tea-towel. All exterior corners on a mould are prone to later chipping if they are left sharp, so whilst the plaster is still in its warm state, it is a good idea to bevel off all corners with a surform blade. The mould must then be set aside to dry for at least a week before it can be used for casting. Forced drying of plaster is not recommended as too much heat quickly destroys the casting qualities of the mould.

Separating plaster-to-plaster casts.

When casting plaster onto a clay model, the two will subsequently come apart easily, as will plaster from a smooth surface such as glass or formica. If casting, using wood as the cottle, it may help to oil the wood before use. Casting plaster to plaster is a different thing again as they need a separator if the two halves are to come apart later. Best by far for this is soft soap. The soap is dissolved into hot water, using quantities about 50 grms of soft soap to 100 grms of water. When this solution is cold it is rubbed in with a small sponge all over the plaster surface which is to be cast on, until it is well lathered. This is clean sponged off, and this process repeated 6 or 7 times until the plaster has a shiny slippery surface. New plaster can now be cast against this and the two should not stick together. Whilst still warm from setting, they should be separated by running cold water over the join, and then by being gently prised apart. This allows for the original model to be made of turned plaster if desired, instead of clay.

Soft soap separating is also necessary when making a two-piece mould. This type of mould is required where the shape is undercut so a cast will not withdraw unless the mould can be

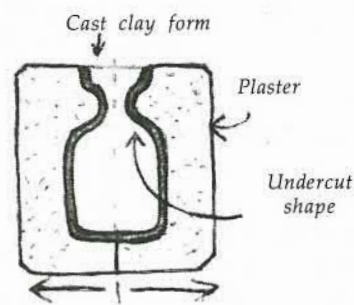


Fig. 7. Two-piece Mould opens sideways, to withdraw cast.

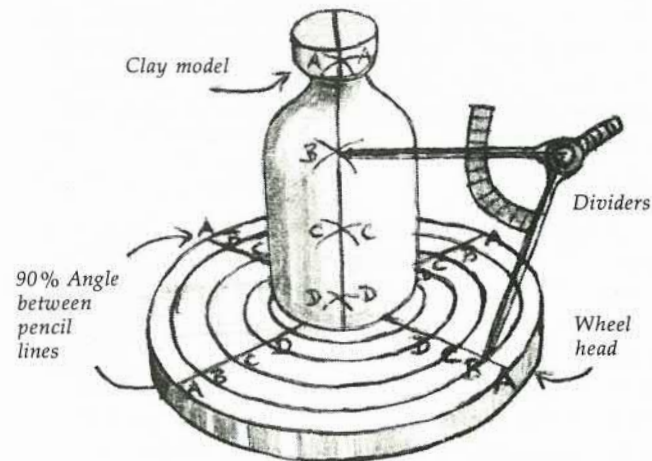


Fig. 8. Method of dividing model equally into two halves.

opened. Fig.7. The dividing line must go directly through the vertical centre line of the model so the two halves of the mould will withdraw cleanly from the cast. First design your shape and make the model. The centre line can be marked on it by the method shown in Fig.8. Pencil two lines at right angles to each other on the head of a banding wheel, so that they cross dead centre. Place your model on the wheel-head and centre it. Now with a pair of dividers make arcs against the model from points on the pencilled lines as shown. Joining these points will give you the perfect vertical division of the model. Using a piece of fine nylon fishing trace as a cutting wire, slice the model completely in half down this line. Carefully place half "B" under plastic to prevent it from drying; place half "A", cut side down on a bat and treat it as a model for an open mould as already described. Fig.9. Put up cottle walls, mix and pour plaster, remove cottle and turn mould over. Do not remove embedded half "A" of model. Now cut

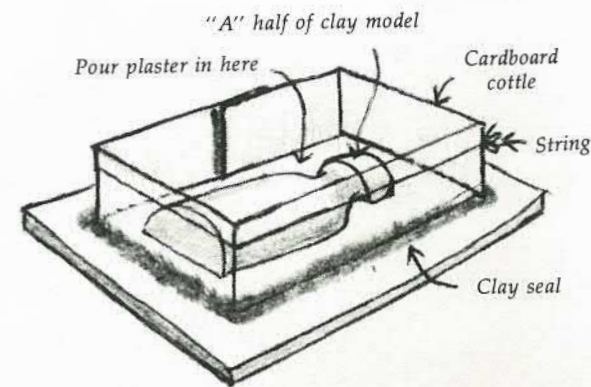


Fig. 9. Half model positioned on cottle walls, ready for plaster.

3 or 4 notch holes into the top surface of the plaster, using a back and forth twisting movement of a 10 cent coin. These notches will act later as keys to locate precisely the two halves of the mould. Now soft soap the entire upper surface of the plaster, including the notch holes, but trying to disturb the buried half "A" of the clay model as little as possible. Fig.10. Take half "B" from under its plastic sheet and place it, cut face down to exactly mate with its other buried half "A". Put up cottle walls, Fig. 11., mix and pour plaster, remove cottle, bevel all corners with a surform blade, and then separate the two halves of the mould as previously described. The two halves of the clay model can now be removed and the mould interior cleaned. While the plaster is still easily worked, use a knife to cut a slip pouring hole or reservoir in both halves of the mould down into the opening of the shape. Fig.12. Then hold the two halves of the mould firmly together with an inner tube rubber band and put it aside to dry.

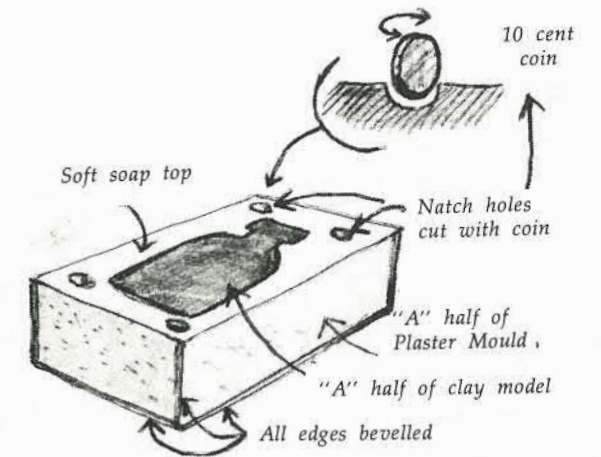


Fig. 10. Half clay model still buried in plaster.

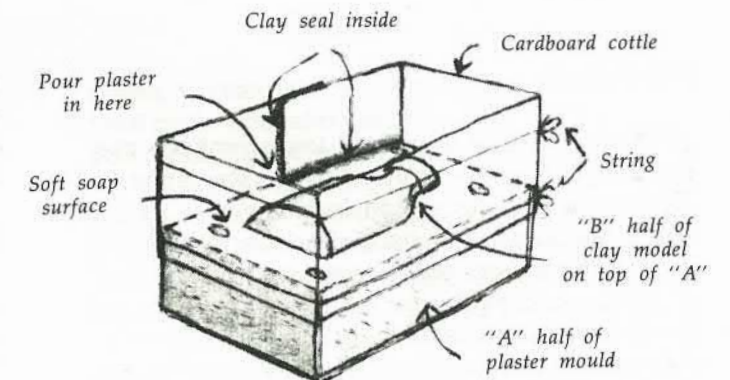


Fig. 11. "A" half of mould set up ready to pour plaster for "B" half.

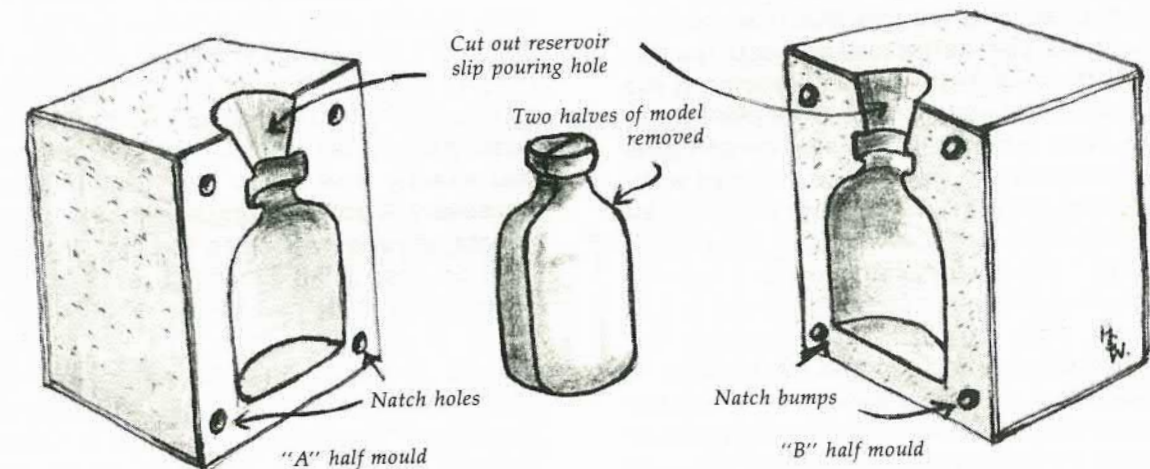


Fig. 12. Two halves of mould completed.



Slip from blunger is screened through 80 mesh sieve before use

Filling open "drop-out" moulds

After casting, excess slip is poured back into blunger and mould left to drain.

Cast now lost its shine and is beginning to shrink away from mould walls. Spare clay from draining is being trimmed off.

Firm but still pliable cast is removed from mould.

Leather hard cast is fettled with surform blade and knife, then sponged smooth
photos: Brian Wilson
drawings: Howard Williams

Slip casting.

This consists of pouring a low shrinkage clay slip into a plaster mould. The plaster absorbs water out of the slip, solidifying the clay in a layer at the mould/slip interface. The longer the slip stays in the mould, the thicker becomes the wall of the clay casting inside. When the clay wall is of the required thickness, the mould is inverted to drain off the still fluid slip inside, leaving a hollow clay form behind, which conforms in its shape to exactly that of the mould. A casting slip is different to an ordinary clay slip, in that it is made chemically liquid; it contains far less water and therefore shrinks far less. This chemical wetness is obtained by the use of alkalies such as sodium silicate and soda ash which "deflocculate" (the opposite to coagulate) the clay. Due to some electrical process the deflocculant destroys the magnetic attraction between the particles in the clay, which immediately ceases to be plastic and becomes fluid. Having a low water content this slip will cast quickly in the absorbent mould without saturating the plaster, will air dry quickly, so the cast can soon be removed from the mould, and having a low factor of shrinkage it will not readily crack during this quick drying cycle. Any type of clay, from red earthenware to porcelain can be used as a casting slip and the addition of the deflocculant does not appear to affect the firing qualities at all. A deflocculated clay body differs from a plastic one in that its particles are distributed at random, as are the wood chips in a sheet of particle board. In a plastic body, once it

has been thrown, the particles tend to be streamed into a grain, so the two bodies will have different patterns of shrinkage stress during firing.

Slipping a clay body.

Clay can be made into a casting slip from either dry powder or the plastic state. In both cases the water content must be about 40% by weight to that of the clay, and the deflocculant approximately 0.3%. I would test a clay as follows. Take 1000 gms of dry clay and 400 gms water. Heat about 60 gms of the water, and fill a graduate with it to 25cc. Add and stir into it 3gms of soda ash, and 3gms of sodium silicate, then top up with hot water until the mixture makes 30cc. This solution then contains in every lcc, 0.1gm each of soda ash and sodium silicate. Mix the clay and the remainder of the water together, then add the solution drop by drop, stirring all the time, until the total mix suddenly liquefies. This should be a correct casting slip. What remains in the graduate will tell you exactly how much deflocculant has been necessary. A good casting slip should have a pint weight of roughly 35oz to the pint. If the slip liquefies, then jells, too much deflocculant has been added. If the clay will not liquefy, add a few drops of sodium tannate. This can be made by boiling 100cc of distilled water, and adding 10gms of soda ash and 10gms of tannic acid. If this fails it means that the clay is of a type that probably will not slip. Start all over again with a different clay! The relative amounts of soda ash and sodium silicate can also be altered according

to the slip's casting qualities. Soda ash is better for use with very plastic clays, and it drains well in the mould. It does however tend to make more flabby casts which are difficult to handle out of the mould. Sodium silicate makes a hard, more brittle cast and a more fluid slip. I find I use only sodium silicate now, the recipe for my white earthenware body for firing to 1100°C being as follows:

Australian Ball clay	34.
China Clay	17.
Silica Quartz	34.
Feldspar	15.
Sodium Silicate	0.3
Water	45.

If the slip jells or goes sludgy after standing for a time, this may be remedied by adding up to 0.5% of Barium Carbonate. Starting with a plastic clay, the procedure for slipping is the same, it is just a little more difficult to estimate the water content of the clay. Throwing clay contains about 22% water, by weight.

Casting slip in the mould.

The slip must always be stirred just prior to use, and I also brush it through an 80 mesh sieve to make sure it is free of any lumps. (Any flakes of dry clay dropped into the slip will coagulate the liquid around them into sludgy lumps.) The mould must be dry and absolutely free from dust, or greasy finger marks. Pour the slip in steadily, moving the jug around to prevent the slip from pouring onto only one point on the mould's inner surface. If the slip is poured in continually at the same spot, this

seems to make for a denser patch in the finally fired body, and later glazing will be thinner at this point making for a glaze fault known as "balding". Fill the mould right to the top in one pour; interrupting the flow to refill the jug will leave a line in the final cast. As the slip casts, the level of liquid will drop, needing to be topped up in a few minutes. When the desired wall thickness of the cast has been reached, in perhaps 10 to 15 minutes, depending on the viscosity of the slip, dryness of the mould, and vagaries of the weather, tip the still fluid slip out into the slip bin, and leave the mould propped up to drain at an angle. In another 15 minutes or so when the cast has lost its wet shine, the mould can be opened and the cast carefully lifted out. Then when leather hard the cast can be fettled with a sharp knife, the top trimmed with a surform blade and the complete pot sponged smooth with a damp sponge. Given good air drying or sun, this pot could be ready for bisque firing within a few hours. There are many small things to be learnt in the handling of the slip-casting process, but these are best discovered by experience and experiment. Very little has been written on the subject for studio potters, though several good pottery books deal with it in a perfunctory manner. It would be worth reading the following;

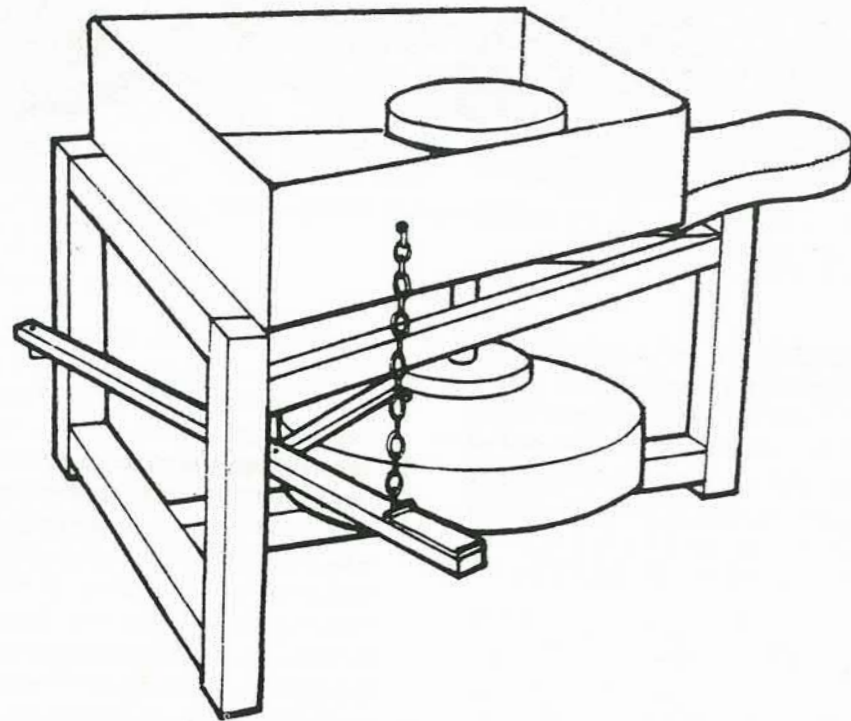
"The Technique of Pottery" by Dora Billington.

"Ceramic Design" by John B. Kenny.

"Practical Pottery and Ceramics" by Kenneth Clark.

Articles by William Hall in the English "Ceramic Review" Magazine numbers 9 and 10 of 1971.

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Potters carry goodwill

Five New Zealand potters spent two months, from September to November visiting Korea, China and Japan on a tour sponsored by the Foreign Affairs Department. This is the first venture of this nature that the Department has undertaken.

Members of the party were Len Castle, leader in Japan, Trevor Bayliss, leader in Korea and China, Margaret Milne, Graeme Storm and John Fuller. The stated aims were to study past and current ceramic activity in the three countries; to meet and work with Chinese, Korean and Japanese artists academics and craftsmen in this field; to show a representative collection of outstanding New Zealand pottery, slides and films on New Zealand art subjects of general interest; and to engender goodwill between New Zealand and the countries visited.

John Fuller comments:-

"That these aims were not fully achieved was perhaps to be expected — for we found the schedule over the first half of the tour so crowded that we seemed to be constantly on the move. We barely had time on occasions to "see" much less study — and the same could be said of the intention to work alongside the potters of Japan and Korea. To be of any real value, one would have to work in these potteries for several weeks, if not months. On the other hand in China, where provision was made for us to fit into a factory "production line" for several days we declined as we felt, for a number of reasons, that there was little to be gained on either side by our doing so.

The travelling exhibition of the work of 23 New Zealand potters was shown in a number of Japanese centres and it created interest and some comment. But in Korea and particularly in China it was less successful, except from a "Diplomatic" point of view, for it soon became apparent, especially in the last two countries mentioned, that our Ambassadors there considered the final aim to be the main one and of utmost importance to them — enabling them to make useful contacts outside the normal political area. It also became obvious to us, particularly in overwhelming moments — moments almost of awe — as when from a high flying jet we watched the sun set in a long, red streak across the whole breadth of Asia — as it has done for millenniums. Or when passing from our car to a banqueting hall through an applauding throng of onlookers — that we had nothing really to offer these people but goodwill, and we wondered at such times just why we were there and why this great nation of eight hundred million people should go to so much trouble and expense on account of five, humble New Zealand potters.

I would like to say from the start that although I may seem, in my comments, to criticise and show impatience at the many frustrations encountered, we were at all times and in all three countries treated with warm friendliness and every possible courtesy — to a point of embarrassment at times — and I only hope we managed to convey to our hosts the genuine feelings of gratitude and friendship we all felt.

It was a wonderful tour."

Pottery in Australia

Published by the Potters' Society of Australia, twice yearly in spring and autumn. The yearly subscription is \$A3 and the magazine may be obtained from the editor Pottery in Australia 39 Mary Street, Longueville, Sydney 2066.

Dear Editor,

In July I sought information on the building of the Roy Cowan mini kiln and you supplied me with a back copy of the Potter. (Vol. 13/1) I have built the kiln — the double chamber design and have had several firings and am delighted with its performance. Thanks for your assistance.

Brian Gordon
Tauranga

natural gas kiln in next issue

Jane and Don Capon have written an article on the natural gas kiln built by a group of New Plymouth potters. This kiln incorporates further developments and improvements of the gas fired kiln built by Ian McClymont and described in a previous issue of the Potter.

pickle jars and peasant pots

by John Fuller

Our host is not so much interested in "kimchi" jars as pots, as by the fact that he can find no trace of their existence prior to this century and he would like to know how Koreans pickled their cabbage in earlier times. The Eddys are Americans who have lived in Korea and have been collecting Korean pots from a time when such pottery was easier to find and cheap to buy and before the attention of Japanese collectors created a flood of imitation Koryo and Yi ware with the subsequent rocketing of prices. The Eddys have renovated a fine old Korean house — white walls and radiating rafters of honey-coloured wood, round and polished, with a garden, terraced and planted to catch the cooling breeze — all surprisingly tucked away behind a crowded street front and approached through an alleyway so narrow it prohibits the passage of our car.

We do not think we are very interested in "kimchi" jars either — we have seen them around, in fact we can see clusters of them on the flat roofs below our hotel. Large, open-mouthed pots, all very similar in shape and dark brown glaze, but we ask about the lack of any historical evidence of them when we visit the University, and the answer is uncertain and unsatisfactory. Most jars only last some ten years and are then broken up; the fragments, we are told, probably disintegrate because they are made of such coarse material!

However, after our disappointment with contemporary Korean ware, our visit to a "kimchi" jar pottery proves most rewarding. The potters work at their wheels in the gloom of a low-roofed shed lit only by a few small windows covered with plastic sheeting. The clay is prepared on the floor with large wooden beaters. One man pounds out a pancake of clay for a base while another makes thick rolls several feet long. A third, with a deft alternation of coiling and throwing, builds one of the large jars in a matter of fifteen to twenty minutes — it is all very direct and vigorous. The piece is then carried outside to dry on bamboo wands crossed under the belly of the pot.

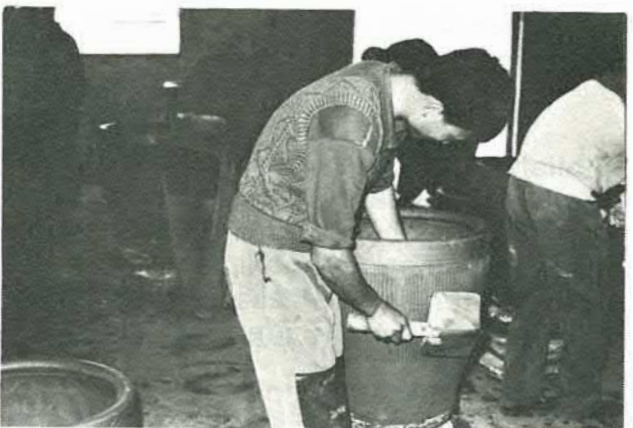
The climbing kiln, unlike the multi-chambered Japanese kilns, is a continuous tunnel climbing the slope for what I estimate to be at least eighty yards. Another similar kiln climbs the opposite slope. They are loaded from the lower ends and through arched firemouths that regularly punctuate the whole length. Pots are piled high and crammed together and the wood firing takes a



Loaded for the kiln — Yheising. The largest pieces are slab built — the next largest are formed inside a canvas bag.



Peeling the canvas bag off a newly made pot — Yheising.



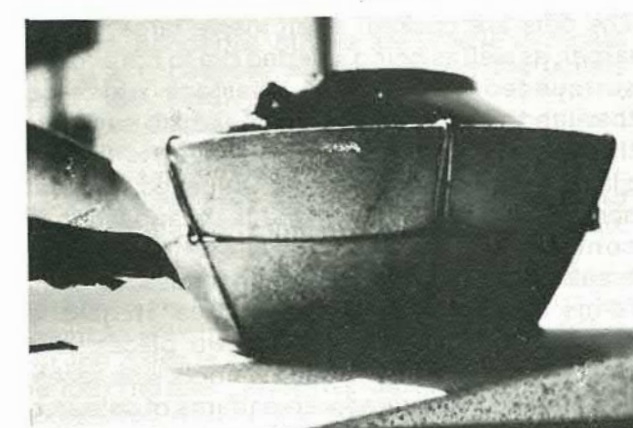
When stiffened the pot is beaten with a patterned wooden beater.



"Storm in a teacup". Graeme Storm looks at the huge pots made at Soochow, Kiangsu Province.



Raw glazing of large jar — Soochow. Normally the pot would stand on a dish to catch run-off.



Chinese "stew-pot". (Especially good for chow-dog)
photos: John Fuller

week or more — when taken from the kiln they have a rich brown to black glaze sometimes relieved by a lighter, freely brushed decoration. Breakages, if the vast "slag-heap" of wasters alongside the kiln is any indication, are numerous. The hundreds that do survive are roped into straw padded bundles and loaded on trucks for transport to the city where, I am told, they sell for about \$2 N.Z. each.

It is probably the most authentic production of the traditional large pot that we will experience on the tour for, from what we hear, we will not be able to find its like in China.

In Peking we spend an enjoyable afternoon with Rewi Alley — and I think he also is pleased to have someone from New Zealand with like interests to visit him. He is surrounded by art and artifacts collected over his many years in China and he treats them with a fond casualness born of familiarity and a keen interest in the social aspects of a piece as much as the thing itself. So carved Mongolian pigeon whistles and whistling arrowheads and ear-drums for detecting approaching cavalry, share drawers and shelves with bronze and pottery vessels and jade ornaments, while our tea is poured from an old Ming teapot that rubs shoulders on the table with a thick glass jar of New Zealand marmalade. Rewi tells us that there is peasant pottery still being made in China — in the back mountains. He shows us a handsome, narrow necked jar with a rich iron glaze, but he doubts that we will ever get to see them being made.

Flying back from Sian we see a number of the open-topped mounds and the chimneys — "They are pottery kilns," we say. — "No, they are brick kilns." Later we see many of them from the road to Wusih and Yheising; but always it is "We will stop on the way back." — eventually we do stop at one but with time only to take a quick photograph and there is no sign of recent use or of pottery at this one. There is a noticeable reluctance on the part of our Chinese companions to let us look at these things — in part, it is probably because we are under the care of the Ministry of Light Industry and they want to show us their factories and what they produce. But it is also a reluctance to show us anything of the old China, tombs and former palaces excepted, and an uneasiness at any desire on our part to photograph the junks, the water buffalo or the old and clustered houses — what we would call the picturesque are to the Chinese remnants of a past they long to replace.

At one of the pottery villages near Yheising we notice that the walls of the houses are made of glazed pots, standing one upon another and

basted over with plaster or clay daub so that the pots are left exposed in varying degrees. We are the first foreign delegation ever to visit Yheising and I wonder how many other Europeans have ever seen or known of this town made of pots — and it frustrates me to think that I am here but once in a lifetime and after thousands of miles of travelling am to be denied a chance to photograph these things. But the crowds line the streets, close pressed — they stare, they smile and call out "Yellow hair!" so that we have difficulty persuading our escorts to stop the cars — just once — a quick shot at a climbing kiln and another "pot-shot" at a wall from an already moving car. I would love a photographic record of some of the faces, like old carved ivory, that press close to the window — but it is not prudent to try. Common courtesy dictates ones choice of subject.

So we continue to be thwarted in our attempts to inspect peasant potteries and peasant pots. We have seen pots, tied in bundles on railway station platforms or roped in threes and fours onto the back of bicycles — but never close enough to touch. When we do at last find one it is not in a pottery but in a restaurant — and we have our minds on other things. We are in Canton and we offer to take our three companions to dinner as a gesture of thanks for their hospitality. Mr. Li chooses "The Snake", a typical, narrow, four-storied building on an equally narrow street. In one window is a huge, lethargic but slowly palpitating coiled python, in the other a tree-stump festooned with smaller snakes, dripping like necklaces in a jeweller's window display. One drops off and lies inert; it is probably cold. We enter and climb up three flights of narrow stairs past open eating rooms full of Chinese faces — spilt soy sauce stains the white table cloths. We are ushered into a curtained-off corner in the top room and we order a few bottles of beer — a thin, miserable, ginger cat with a corkscrew tail slinks mewingly in and relieves itself in the middle of the floor then pitifully tries to cover it up by scratching the floorboards. I make a sick joke about it having a nervous pee before going to put its head on the block and I am nearer to the truth than I imagine. The first course is a round of brown meat I take to be heart and a roll of white — I don't like either and it turns out later that it is the famous Cantonese dish "Dragon and Tiger" — snake and cat. we work our way through several courses — rolled snake fillet, Bean sprouts, a snake soup, and then the casserole arrives. It is unglazed with straight sides, a lid which can be inverted as a dish and saucepan handle and it is enclosed in a

wire frame. A peasant pot at last. It contains steaming rolls of a brown meat. I am not really enjoying this meal and this dish has a peculiar, strong flavour. "What is it Mr. Li?" "DOG" says Mr Li, and adds encouragingly, "we eat dog in the south." We all quietly put down our chopsticks. Mr Chen, a northerner, has not touched his plate — Margaret's face is a study in off-white. Even Trevor looks a little pale around the gills. "I'll bet it was a nice friendly little creature," he says bravely.

Only in Kiangsu Province do we find potteries making hand made pots. Everywhere else it appears to be the production of porcelain by press-moulding and jigger, decorated by on-glaze handpainting or transfer. The huge open pots being made at Soochow and Yheising are not unlike the Korean "kimchi" pots in form and glaze. However, they are not coiled and thrown but built up from slabs. The clay is beaten flat and scribed in an arc with a simple tool consisting of a stick with a nail at each end. Two such slabs are stood on edge on a base and the edges are pinched together — they are beaten into shape and then carried outside to harden and so permit further building. Smaller ones are made by an ingenious method of using a canvas bag as a mould. It is reinforced around the rim with a metal ring. When hung on a machine, plastic clay is dropped inside and a lever brings down the template which forms the interior surface. The "pot" is then carried away in special tongs and the canvas bag peeled off immediately. The finishing is done later by beating. All glazing is done raw by sloshing around the interior with basin and brush and on the outside by pouring from a watering can. The glaze, we are told, is "just clay" — and this could be so. Firing is in a modern trolley kiln, continuously moving and oil fired for 20-24 hours. The pots are packed, small inside large, inside larger, as well as being inverted rim to rim and are surrounded by lumps of limestone which go through the kiln for calcining — which suggests that perhaps a limestone flux is added to the slip glaze. The finished pots are unloaded at great speed while still quite hot and there appeared, in contrast to the Korean kilns, to be few breakages. Other large slab and press moulded forms are made in these factories. Huge and heavy baths slab moulded in two pieces, and cylindrical and faceted garden stools with recessed handles, decorated with patterns of coloured clays pressed through acetate stencils or painstakingly applied by hand. And of course the intriguing, red clay teapots from Yheising which are another story in themselves.

4 potters talking

Shoji Hamada the respected Japanese potter visited England a time ago and Craft Magazine recorded a conversation he had with Bernard Leach and Janet Leach, Victor Margrie and Michael Casson. What they had to say is valid for us all.

Victor Margrie Before you fire your kiln you perform a religious ceremony that involves a blessing gesture. Do you do this every time you start work, or only in relation to the kiln firing?

Shoji Hamada This is a traditional activity with its roots in Shintoism. In the old days in Japan people believed in, and worshipped the spirits of fire, earth, water, trees, wind and all the things in nature. Nowadays the beliefs are not so strong, but people still feel uncomfortable if they do not perform the traditional ceremonies. For instance when I get up in the morning, I open the window, bow to the sun, and clap my hands twice, an ancient tradition.

Victor Margrie Is the tradition related to flame rather than heat? For instance would you do the same for an electric kiln?

Shoji Hamada Yes. Before building an electric kiln we would call a Shinto priest and have a ceremony to establish the new kiln. These traditions are gradually dying and I do not think that future generations will feel the same, but I do not think that it can be helped. At the present time people do not believe in the old traditions, but they withhold disbelief. They draw comfort from them because they have known them all their lives.

Janet Leach Do you feel that the traditional ways are being lost in England in the same way that they are in Japan?

Shoji Hamada I think that there is still a good deal of tradition left in England. In Japan it is still to be found mainly in the country areas and particularly on Okinawa. The pottery in Okinawa is the best in Japan at the moment and I think that the difference in traditional feeling is reflected in the pottery. In the rest of Japan things are made with the head and the hands, but not with the heart. So now things that were made in the old days are wonderful, but we are unable to repeat them today because we do not have the beliefs which they had.

Michael Casson Was it partly because they lived closer to nature than we do today?

Shoji Hamada There is a great deal of destruction of nature today, but there are still people who achieve this affinity with the natural environment. Particularly in Okinawa.

Bernard Leach Can I ask you to make a comparison with Europe — Chartres Cathedral for example, which you know quite well. How different the glass is from the glass of the Victorian period! The later period has lost the simplicity and connection with nature, the belief; the very core of things it seems, begins to decay.

Shoji Hamada The carved writings on grave-stones in England were very fine until about two hundred years ago. Their character survived

changes in style and technique. Then they deteriorated, perhaps as a result of the industrial revolution. The same thing happened in Japan about three hundred years ago. Until then people had not been concerned with whether the things they were making were art or not. Then they became self conscious about what they were doing.

Once things start to deteriorate, it is almost impossible to reverse the trend. However pottery has been an exception. It started to improve in the Meiji period (1868-1912). Bernard Leach was one of the regenerative potters of that time.

Zen priests introduced tea to Japan from China in the early ninth century and it was used as a stimulant. During the time of Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1435-90), people started to appreciate the feeling of "Shibui" (a subtle refined taste) and the taking of tea developed into a ceremony. Senno Rikyu, the famous tea master (1520-91), was the first to make direct connection between the tea ceremony and the aesthetics of pottery. He introduced tea bowls from China, Korea and even Holland, and led society in the appreciation of them.

Michael Casson What is your reaction to the West? We know that you have been to two or three of our most adventurous schools of art.

Shoji Hamada What they are doing there is not genuine. They might have some value in stimulating people — waking them up, but things don't go deep into the mind. They are making designs which are just masks, that have nothing to do with the real thing — what goes on inside. Nowadays people are trying very hard to create "good" design but I don't like that attitude. Things which are "born" are good, but not the things which are "made". When I was in America I saw many people making large pots. People do this when they begin, to impress other people. A tea bowl made by a good potter looks much larger inside than it does from the outside. Soon the students learn, and stop making big ones.

Michael Casson What is your opinion of ceramic sculpture?

Shoji Hamada I think very few objects are good. The field of ceramic sculpture has not settled yet. In this genre I prefer the things which were made in China in the Han and Tang dynasties.

Victor Margrie You have often said that you have to lose consciousness of oneself in order to make a good pot. Is it possible to make good pots now and can it be done by a younger person — under 30?

Shoji Hamada I think there is a possibility of very good pots being made by a young person. An example is Kamota Shoji, who is about forty years old. He is an outstanding potter, one of the best in Japan. However, now that he is praised so highly, he has a problem. His progress is halted and he no longer exhibits. There are very few good craftsmen in Japan today. Or for that matter outside Japan.

Michael Casson Can we have your feelings about the use of natural materials — clays and glazes?

Shoji Hamada You have to find the clay. Most clays will do, as long as they have plasticity and

will stand the heat of the kiln. Don't demand too much, don't look for a perfect clay. Natural clays have their own character, so do what the clay dictates — and perhaps add something for better quality, but it is best to use one clay only. The design owes everything to the clay's colour and substance. The best clays are the most difficult. I would rather use a low grade clay with the hope of making good pots rather than first class clay and face the shame of making second class work with it. Mashiko clay is a low grade clay, but I like its character, and that is why I can manage well with it. It took me 15 years to learn to manage Mashiko clay. With first class clay 30 years would be needed. Once I found a very good natural clay near Nagoya. I had a small quantity of it sent to Mashiko, but I was never able to use it — it is still there in the corner. I would not even dare to make a sample with it.

Michael Casson What about your glazes?

Shoji Hamada It is the same thing with the glaze. I use Mashiko material. We have a fire in the household fireplace and my wife tends the ashes almost as a mother tends a child, to get the very best ash. She makes sure that there are no impurities mixed with it, so that the ash is as pure as possible. We also use rice husk ash. The best ash is from the rice husks we eat at home. The ash from Moschi husks is too sticky. Wheat husks are rather yellow and we cannot get white from them. Natural glazes are more complex than glazes compounded from basic minerals.

Victor Margrie Do you raw glaze a pot or can you biscuit fire?

Shoji Hamada Mostly I biscuit fire, but sometimes I raw-glaze.

Victor Margrie How can we today find a way forward. Especially the young potter?

Bernard Leach Well don't you think that the first thing is to know yourself? Its very difficult for the young potter to know enough to drop the self, the egotism, the ambition, the racing, the snatching of other people's thoughts and secrets.

Michael Casson You would ask the young potter to deny what the West is trying to promote in him?

Bernard Leach I would ask him to do what the idealism of both the East and the West has been; to become so associated with nature, their own nature, and the totality of nature around them, the "me" and the "not me" being really one. That is the beginning. The humble potters never got that, they were never out of the Garden of Eden. We are all out of the Garden of Eden, we have been told so over and over and we will not remember it.

Bernard Leach was Created Companion of Honour in 1973. This is one of the highest official honours that can be awarded to an artist. It is public recognition both for Bernard Leach, and by extension, to the craft world in general.

Michael Trumic is spending the first term instructing at the ceramics course at the Otago Polytechnic. Then he hopes to finish his house and workshop in Loburn on the North Canterbury downs near Christchurch.

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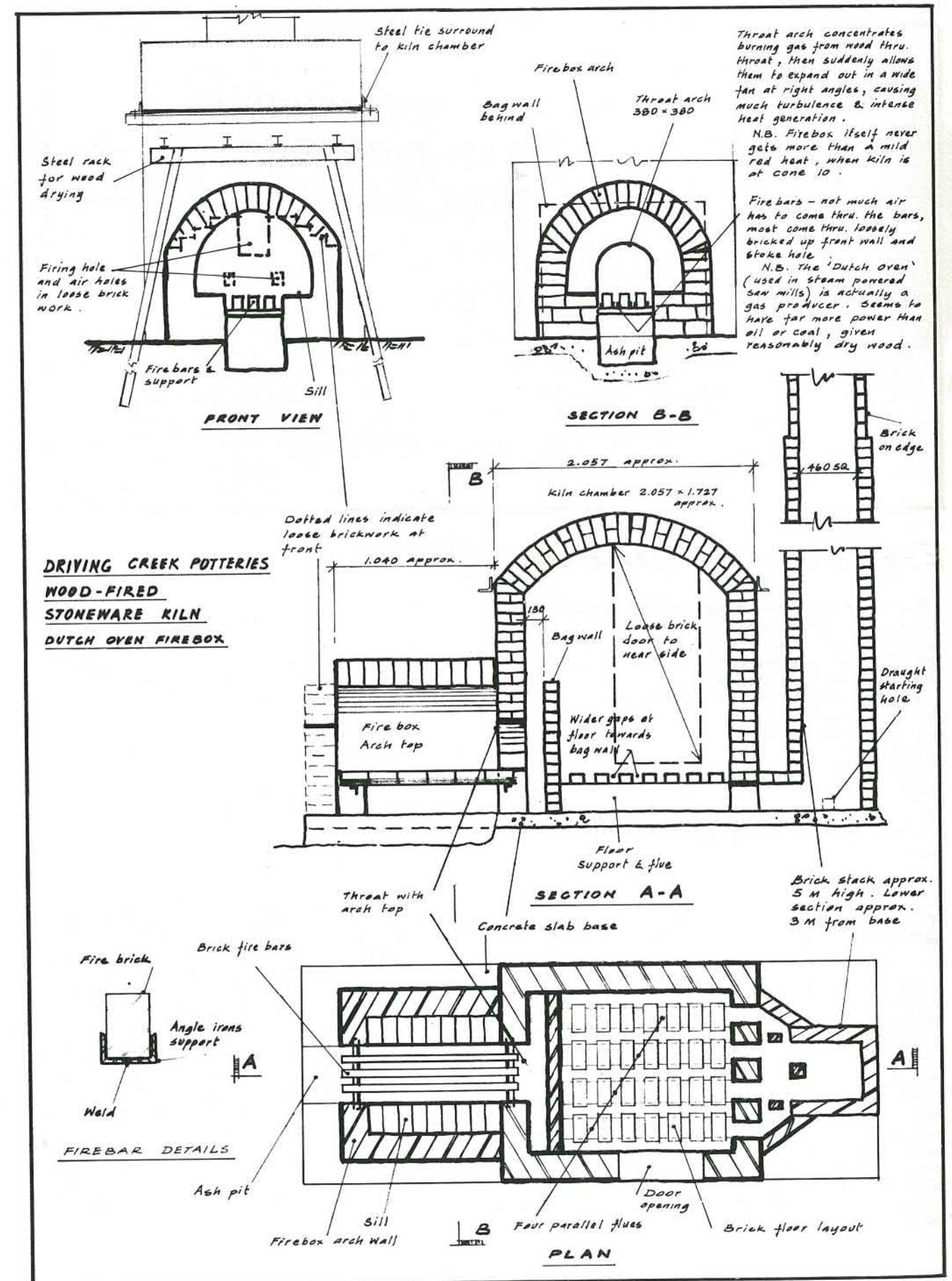
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Driving Creek wood fired kiln

On the opposite page we publish for the second time a drawing of the Driving Creek wood fired kiln. It is hoped that this will give a clearer picture of this kiln than given in the previous issue 16/2.

Barry Brickell wishes to correct the dimension he gave us for the height of the catenary arch fire-box. It is 915mm not 610mm as given in Vol 16/2.



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Exhibiting in Blenheim pottery/weaving

Guest potter at Marlborough Arts Society Exhibition, June Palmer of Hope, is another potter from the Nelson area whose work is becoming known in other parts of the country. After seven years working at Waimea pottery, June started to work on her own two years ago after building her own kiln.

She uses prepared clays from Potters Supplies in Nelson but makes her own glazes from local materials. It takes about nine hours to fire the oil fired trolley kiln to 1280 degrees centigrade.

June looks for colour and design in her pots and favours browns and celadons. All her work is thrown.

Ngairé Hands

Southland potters

The 1974 annual exhibition of the Southland Potters' Association was held at the Invercargill Museum and Art Gallery. This event has become a highlight of the cultural year. The Southland Potters are somewhat isolated, but they are an enthusiastic body and have several members of the New Zealand Society of Potters.

Guest exhibitors this year were Doris Dutch and Denys Hadfield, who between them presented an interesting variety of work which differed markedly from the idiom which has developed in Southland. In all, 182 sets or pieces were well displayed in the intimate and attractive galleries of the museum, and most were sold on the opening night.

Visitors from the North Island were favourably impressed by the gay colour of much of the work. Most pots were functional

Stephen Carter and Anna Correa-Hunt both of Nelson held a joint exhibition at Rothmans Gallery in Wellington in February which was opened by May Davis. Both these craftsmen hold the view that every item made must have a purpose.

Stephen Carter's fine craftsmanship shown in strong thrown forms and careful finish is the result of a long apprenticeship. He was with Harry and May Davis in England and came with them to Nelson and helped establish Crewenna Pottery. He has since worked for other potters and is now on his own.

Anna Correa-Hunt also served a long apprenticeship — hers in Germany for weavers. The technical skill shown in her work is of the highest standard. In this exhibition were a typical range of woven pieces — bedspreads, table cloths and mats, shawls, skirt lengths, cushion covers mostly in natural and muted tones.

Nelson has other competent weavers and it is hoped to use some of their skills in a course for learners to be established at the Nelson Polytechnic. This would be the first training offered in New Zealand for this craft.

M.M.H.

and the visitors said they were modestly priced compared with pots seen at exhibitions up north. Opinion suggests that the standard was as high as elsewhere in the country.

Earthenware predominated, but some robust stoneware pieces were also displayed. There was not much on a large scale because the mass of firing in this area is done in electric kilns of modest dimensions.

One felt after viewing this exhibition that though the Southland potters are eager to make contact with potters from elsewhere, their geographic isolation is causing them to create a flavour that is distinctively their own which it would be a pity to lose.

Geoff Hughes



photos: Robert Franken

Doris Dutch at Van Helden's

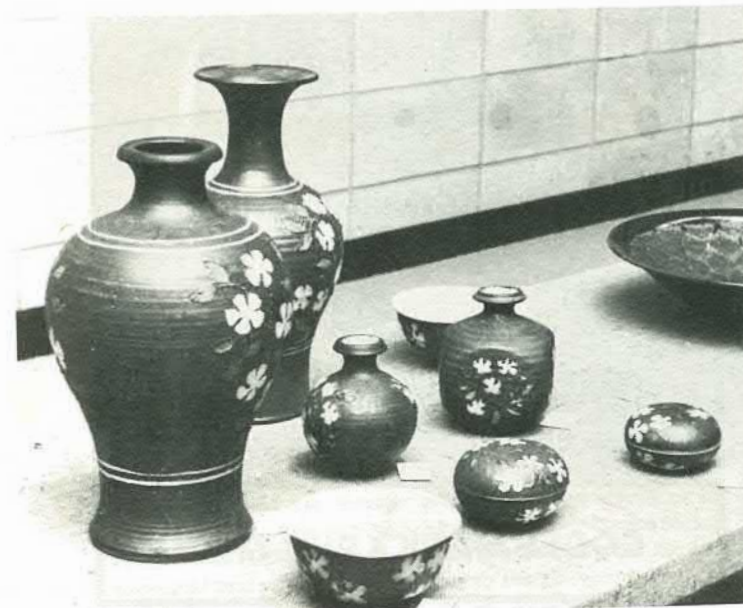
August 31st to September 6th saw this smallish gallery crammed with a catalogue of 278 pieces.

The collection was diverse in form with relatively few large pots. Characteristic "lettered bottles" dotted the shelves; the containers and "hanging grass holders" cried out for a dried branch or two, or a bunch of grass; while the more traditional thrown forms were an expression of Doris Dutch's love of colour and texture.

One of the most impressive and original pieces was the wall ceramic "earth, air, fire and water."

All told the exhibition was a welcome, lively and successful showing.

AB.



Storm exhibition

Graeme Storm was the invited potter to the Dowse Art Gallery for its 1974 one man show. It is unlikely that so many pots by this man will be seen together for a long time. Over a hundred were on exhibition, which was opened by the Hon. Allan Highett, M.P. for Remuera, on 25 October.

A wide variety of work was shown — the traditional blue glazes were conspicuous, but there were also white slip glazes, deep green glazes, tenmoko glazes and Sung glazes. Very little of the work was domestic ware — only about six pieces and sets. Also, the prices were higher than many people expected. Similar pieces shown at the Dowse in 1972 for \$40 were now priced at \$75. Despite these two factors, two thirds of the exhibition was sold.

A high technical skill, and rigid selection, resulted in work which was of a high standard. One or two pots had sagged or bellied, and the occasional wax resist lacked crispness. But these lapses were rare, and were only apparent in contrast to the control of the medium shown by their colleagues on display.

An enthusiasm for Korean and Chinese pots was everywhere apparent. For those interested in the creative process, as well as technical expertise, however, I had a feeling that perhaps a little more individuality — of "fire in the gut" — would have added to the attractiveness of the show. But possibly when the allure of the East has been absorbed, more originality will emerge, and the experimentation with shapes, when done, will show more assuredness.

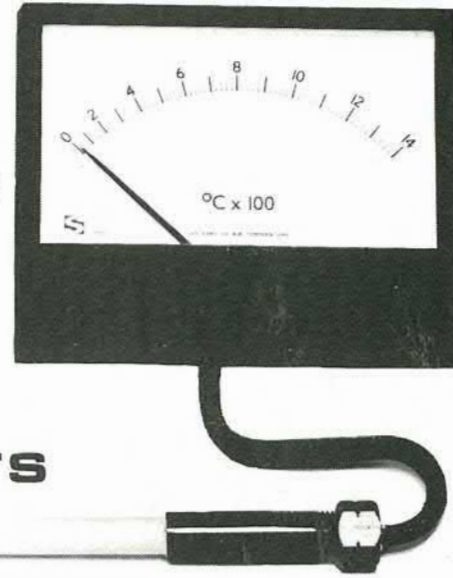
The Dowse has three pottery exhibitions scheduled for 1975. Ten Wellington Province Potters 24 April — 9 May, ceramic sculpture by Muriel Moody 12 — 30 November, and a one man show by Len Castle 21 October — 9 November.

Douglas Stewart



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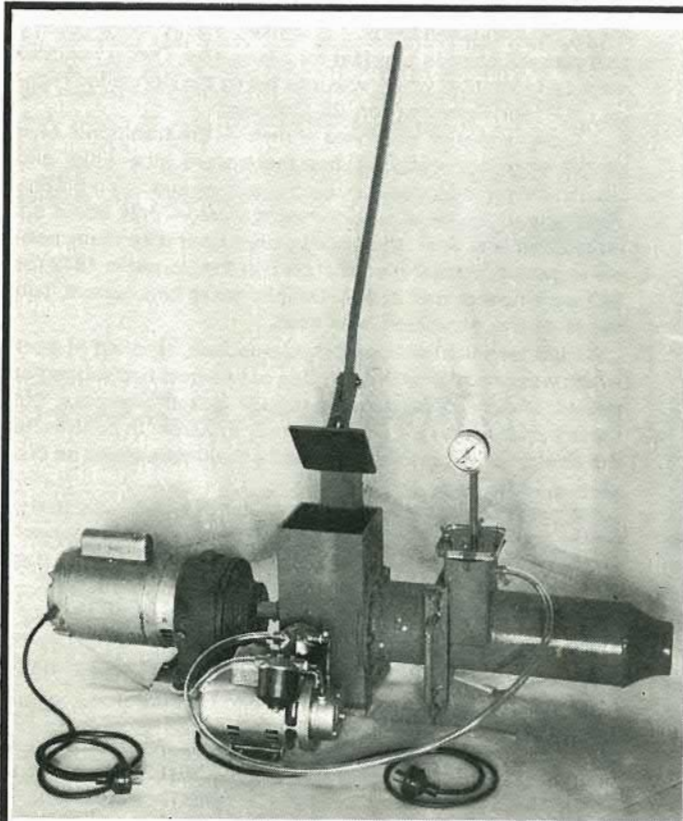


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Barraud / Carlsen

In November 74 Gail Carlsen & Arnaud Barraud held an exhibition of pottery in conjunction with handcrafted furniture by Peter and Hans Geytenbeek at Several Arts — Christchurch. In general — these crafts went well together — forming a thoroughly delightful exhibition. The centre piece of the show was a fine pegged dining table and benches made in beech on which was arranged part of a 44 piece dinner set by Arnaud. As a complete whole it would have graced any home, anywhere. The fine craftsmanship of Arnaud was particularly evident in his plates. I enjoyed the "delight in clay" showing in his wine goblets and the generous swelling form of his wine bottles.

For a number of years Gail Carlsen's pots have entranced me in their quaint whimsical forms. It was good to have the opportunity to see such a number of them assembled together. However, I feel the heavy salt glazing was a definite detraction from the tiny forms. The pair of oil and vinegar bottles — ash glazed with a smooth surface was so much more successful than the other salt-glazed pieces.

The evident care, craftsmanship and magnificent finish of the furniture was grand to see. Furniture obviously has its evident function as prime consideration and I liked so many pieces that were apparently simple. I hesitate over such pieces as "Ornamental Spanish Hall Chair".

In all — this was a fine and successful combined exhibition.

David Brokenshire



Potter readers are familiar with the written signature of Esme Marris. It's been on the business correspondence for six years. When Esme first started helping with the Potter her life was quiet and domestic and handling the subscriptions and accounts was a useful outside interest. Now she is executive secretary of the New Zealand Chambers of Commerce and

*development of a
 potters society*

In the Southland area many potters have chosen to work in earthenware. The Ceramic Club in Invercargill was formed 14 years ago. The position of its clubroom made the building of an electric kiln mandatory, as did the limited experience of the handful of people forming the club. From this beginning other clubs grew.

Now there are two clubs in Invercargill, (each in disused butcher shops), a club in Winton (a disused saleyards building), one in Otatau (a farm cottage), one in Tuatapere (a disused school), one in Clifden, Riverton, Dipton and one in Maitaura (a cottage shared with other arts and crafts.)

It only requires a few enthusiastic folk, some hard work and ingenuity for fund raising and the conversion of any available building. The Ceramic Club began in an old brewery, since demolished. Then you need a set of firm rules to ensure the smooth running of your club.

Some more experienced members of a well established club are always willing to help a newly formed group with a weekend school. The Invercargill clubs and the Southland Polytechnic ran several Saturday seminars on basic technique last year. These have been appreciated by the new clubs and follow-up workshops are planned.

The pottery clubs offer not only facilities which all members share, but also companionship of people from many and varied daily occupations all with one absorbing common interest, pottery.

To link together these interested but widely scattered potters, the Southland Potters's Association was formed three years ago, with 150 members from all districts. Its aims include the conducting of schools, and exhibitions for its members and guest potters. So far we have had two schools, one with Doreen Blumhardt and in conjunction with the Polytechnic, one with Michael Trumic, and others are planned.

The Potter's Association provides its members with the opportunity to exhibit with selection in its annual exhibition. Selection is usually severe in an endeavour to strive for high standards. The first exhibition was held in conjunction with the National Wool Festival. We were allocated the army garage area in the Drill Hall, a dismal prospect if one lacked imagination. However, it was soon transformed with army camouflage nets, and wool bales, filled and borrowed from a handy woollstore which made display bays. The display of colourful earthenware pots became one of the main attractions of the Festival.

the next two exhibitions were held in the Art Gallery of the Southland Museum, a relatively new gallery, well lit and most suitable or the displaying of pots.

Our guest potters have included David Brokenshire, Doreen Blumhardt, Doris Dutch, Denys Hadfield, and for our fourth in March we have Carl Vendelbosh and Nancy Malcolm both of Nelson.

So from a humble beginning in 1961 with the formation of the Ceramic Club, enthusiasm has spread throughout Southland. Now the more experienced members work in their own workshops, continuing in the earthenware field with one or two exceptions, at the same time retaining their membership and interest in their club.

Frances Frederic

Director General of New Zealand's committee for the Pacific Basin Economic Council. Recently she was the sole woman delegate among 40 men to the first Japan — New Zealand businessmen's conference in Tokyo where she prepared and presented the final joint communique. When does she find time to work for the Potter? At the weekend!

Barry's 'do' 1975

January the 7th saw a steady stream of arrivals at Driving Creek and the place took on the look of the gold rush days. Tents of all shapes, sizes and colour were dotted from the road side to the bush and there was a temporary swelling of the population by at least 80 people. Some potters came from nearby hills, other potting families came from the Auckland area, New Plymouth, Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu, Wellington and two people from Dunedin and Christchurch. Besides Kiwis we were lucky to meet well known Australian potter, Peter Rushforth and his wife Bobbie. Peter had already been working for a few weeks and we were able to see his fine pots emerge from the kiln — some of them destined for an exhibition in Japan.

Another passing visitor was Mitsuo Shoji, a graduate from the Kyoto City University of Arts. Mitsuo, at present lecturing at the Caulfield Institute of Technology in Victoria, showed some slides of his recent work. This was very diverse and included skilfully decorated classic-type bowls, domestic items with unusual twisted knobs and sculptural pots verging on "funk art." The Coromandel sun was very hot this year and for those with young families a lot of time was spent in the water. The delightfully cool creek in Barry's property is surrounded by punga and bush. After judicious building up of stones the children created a couple of small swimming pools. The beaches nearby were not only good for bathing but a low tide offered a plentiful range of shellfish. For the first few days we had a steady diet of cockles and tua tuas followed by tua tuas, cockles and sometimes mussels.

From the potting angle there was plenty to see and learn. The resident apprentices were hard at work throwing pots a lot of the time. For two or three days they patiently glazed and stacked with visitors milling around observing any differences in technique. After this we saw the kiln fired. Again lots of eager helpers to stoke the "Dutch oven" with pine offcuts for the next 15 to 16 hours. During firing hardly any smoke was coming from the chimney. When the wicket was broached one and a half days later, the pots showed that plenty of reduction had taken place. This practical demonstration of the charm of wood firing impressed many. It was good not to have the usual blower whining away in the background.

A highlight of the week was a day-long picnic excursion to an island in the harbour. The trusty steam driven launch which collected two loads of passengers from the wharf was provided by Les Bodle (better known as Bo). After he safely landed us on the golden sands of Woolshed Bay we picniced under the shade of a huge Norfolk pine and had another great feast of tua tuas. At this stage I was able to put a lot more names to faces, further helped by after dinner get togethers in and around the tents as well as a couple of evenings at the "snake pit" (communal gathering place at the barn.)

On one afternoon a meeting was held to discuss some of the problems potters are having with clay bodies. This discussion was most informative.

Plenty of visitors participated in the clay dig and were fascinated by the speedy pugmill and the steam power behind it. A few found time to use the terra cotta clay they had helped prepare to make coiled garden-type pots. These were left to be fired later.

Our thanks again to Barry who so kindly provided his premises and his time to make another perfect potter's "do".

Jenny Shearer

Yvonne's summer school

"During the year I get many requests from people wishing to become an apprentice, but time does not allow me to give proper instruction to more than one full-time apprentice. So by holding annual summer schools over a period of three to four weeks I'm able to help many students.

As teaching has been my life I actually miss the invigorating experience. A teacher receives as much as he gives, and I find one month's teaching with so many enthusiasts exhilarating."

Yvonne Rust has located her house and studio to overlook Parua Bay and the distant hills near Whangerei.

This year's school was divided into three groups of either beginner or experienced potters. There was a feeling of creativity throughout all groups. The emphasis was on experiment, as students were encouraged to explore glazes, textures, form and to test a new substance called Enright.

A raku kiln was built using a fondu cement mixture cast around a barrel.

The elements of wedging clay, wheel throwing and coiling to make big pots were taught to all the beginners. The experienced potters extended the type of work they had been doing and some interesting pots were produced ranging from

fine, hand moulded porcelain to large stoneware crocks. Yvonne covers as many aspects of pottery making as possible and each student gets a clear picture of what is necessary to produce good pots.

Clay prospecting and processing is a fundamental study for the course and there is plenty of lively discussion on a range of subjects.

All the fired work comes out of a huge kiln with an eight fire-box drip feed burner, with beautiful reduction colours and textures from Yvonne's ash and dolomite glazes.

Denys Hadfield and Jean Hastedt

postscript from students

"What's wrong with buying ready made English clay?" That's a good way of starting an argument at Yvonne's place. It's a question that few of us had considered and we had been content to use processed clays. One of the most important aspects of the summer school was learning how to take clay in the raw state and make a good workable medium from it.

There are some who say to be a potter you must know your clay and follow it through from the raw state. Others can't afford the time and effort to process their own clay and wonder why the ready made mix doesn't work well.

Massey summer school

Stan Jenkins says the summer school in ceramic design held this year at Massey University was very successful.

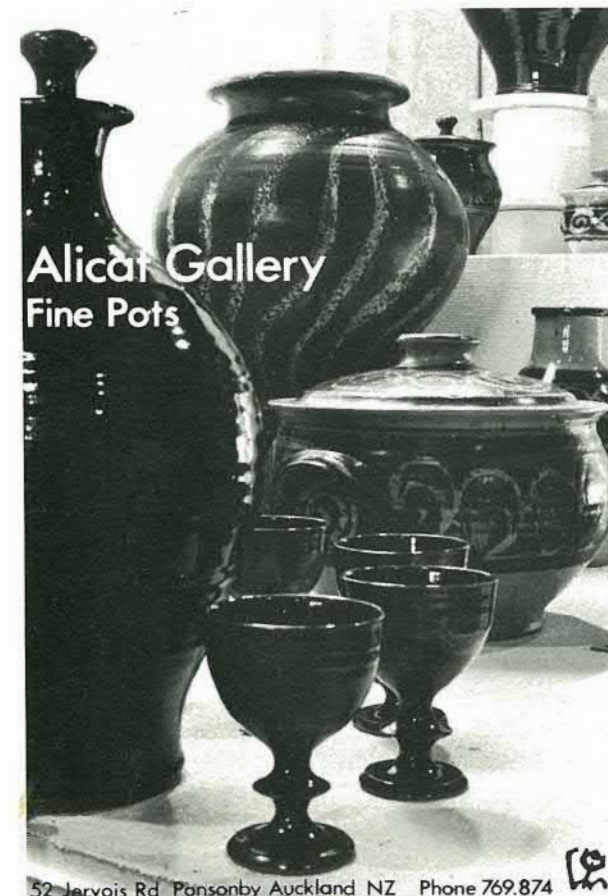
reflections on a weekend school

I am relatively new to the New Zealand pottery scene — to the pottery scene in general come to that. As such it is easy to be overawed by the apparent ease and speed with which visiting tutors to our schools demonstrate their techniques. How encouraging to one struggling on the lower rungs of the ladder to watch and listen to Doris Dutch.

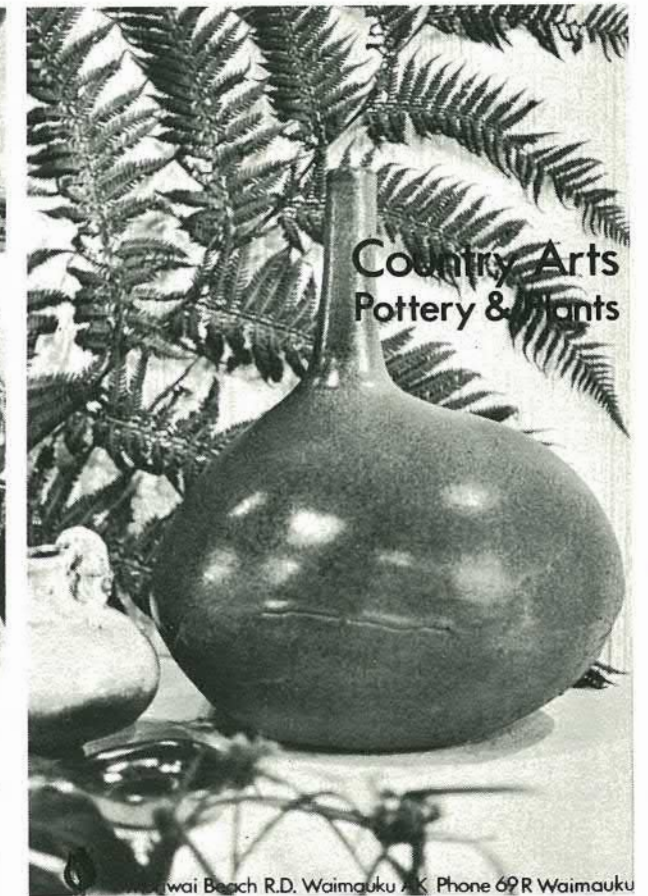
Her quiet philosophy and example throughout the school, convinced me that there is no easy way to potting. The qualities of tenacity and determination are handrails to the ladder one is climbing.

To see Doris's beautiful pots arranged in the seaside setting of Leo Van Helden's Arts and Crafts Studio seemed singularly appropriate. Her love of nature came through with great impact during the school in the quietly spoken warm and unreserved discussions accompanying her working sessions with us. The influence is evident in her pots, which are objects of beauty to look at and to handle. Movement of the elements is integrated into all of them — wind over sand — sun — baking crusted earth — water striating weatherworn rocks.

Lorna Frazer



52 Jervois Rd Pansoby Auckland NZ Phone 769.874



Wai Beach R.D. Waimauku A.K. Phone 692 R Waimauku

Work Wanted

An English potter would like to work in New Zealand. Her experience has been obtained mainly by offering technical advice to studio potters and teachers through a firm of craft suppliers, but she studied ceramics at Stoke on Trent College of Art. Any one requiring an assistant from August '75 could write to Miss P.J. Mitchell, 15 Bridge Court, Stone Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, England.

New Zealand Pottery Collection for Waikato Art Museum

For the last two years the Hamilton Motorcycle Club have run a most successful Grand Prix, the proceeds of which have been donated to Waikato Art Museum to buy New Zealand works of art. This has so far amounted to \$4000.00 and has given the Art Museum the means of actively pursuing its policy of purchasing New Zealand crafts. In 1974 a portion of the donated money was set aside to begin a collection of the works of New Zealand potters. Eleven pots by Len Castle, seven by Graeme Storm and one large Mirek Smisek branch pot were procured. The collection was officially handed to the Art Museum in December 1974 by the President of the Club and accepted by the Mayor of Hamilton. Using further Hamilton Motorcycle Club donations it is hoped to widen the Art Museum pottery collection in the years to come.

Ken Gorbey
Director

New Plymouth group taking root

Five wheels are in use and a three and a half cubic foot kiln is rarely cool. The kiln has a coin meter to cover power and kiln replacement costs. Lessons in stacking and firing are given to those wishing to be approved operators. One member does the bulk buying and selling of clay, two others handle small lots of clay and glaze materials which are also sold through the workshop.

Workroom members buy a key for an initial sum so they can use the workroom at any time. They pay a workroom fee annually in addition to their subs. All members finished pots may be sold in the "vicarage" for a small commission.

We have had some weekend schools. In April, Massey arranged for John Crawford to show us how to throw larger pots. In July we had our first schools in our own workroom — Nicholas Brandon was tutor for teaching basic throwing methods. Later Muriel Moody gave a course on sculpting. This was the first school Muriel has conducted, and 26 people thoroughly appreciated working in what was a new field for most of them.

In November we staged our first exhibition with 206 pieces passing selection.

Nora Banks

QE II award

The Potter has been acknowledged by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council by a grant to myself as the editor towards an overseas study tour.

In my application I stated that I wanted to further my own knowledge of ceramics, to make contact with people overseas who might have something of a philosophical or technical nature to contribute to the magazine, and to be able to

see New Zealand pottery more objectively by comparison on my return.

At the thought of a study tour abroad the minds leaps from one interesting prospect to another from Mexico to Finland. But it is not possible to see all one would like in eight weeks. So I'll be spending a week in the U.S.A. four weeks in Britain and three weeks in Europe, the fruits of which will be seen in future issues.

M.M.H.

Book reviews — Mangrove Curtain Moves North.

New Zealand pottery workbook by Howard Williams Beaux Arts, Auckland \$9.50

In eighty three pages Howard Williams covers a sometimes curious and mostly useful mixture of topics of interest to the potter in New Zealand or elsewhere for that matter.

The meat in the sandwich is the forty eight page section (pp 13-60) that describes in practical detail the processes and methods involved in most aspects of pottery making from preparation of clay through wedging, pinching, playing, rolling, tile-making, slabbing, wrapping, moulding, coiling, throwing, designing, decorating and glazing — and some pages further on — to firing.

Curiously there is nothing on slip-casting.

The processes described are illustrated with informative sequences of photographs taken by Ray Ericson and Brian Wilson. The pairs of hands in these illustrations, apart from those of the author himself, belong to Roger Brittain, Ian Firth, Charles Holmes, Chester Nealie and Graeme

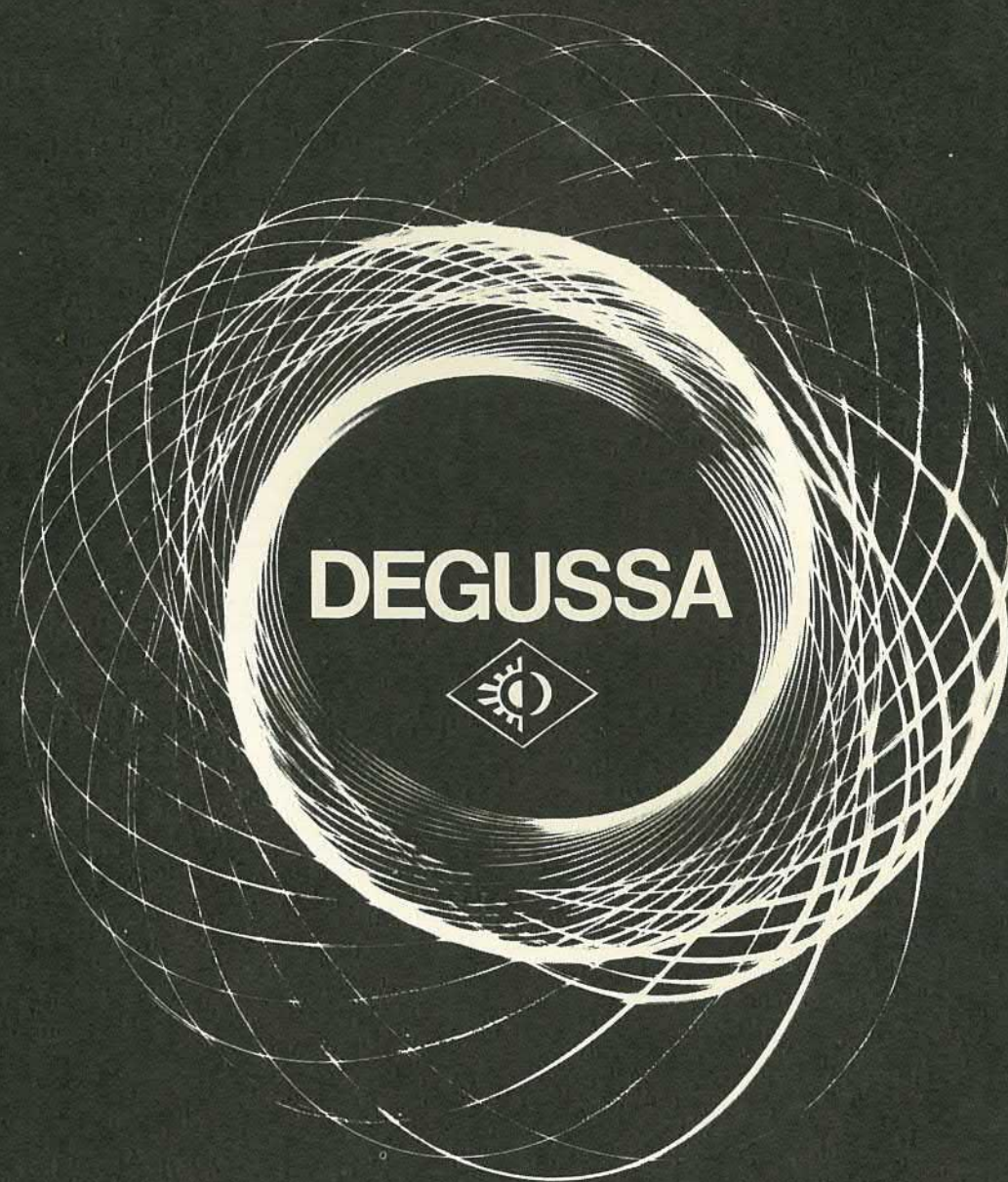
Storm. Perhaps the title should have been "Auckland Pottery Workbook"? Indeed most of the participants are from north of the Waitemata.

This middle level how-to-do-it section is preceded by some elementary definitions of clay and pottery types (with some of which e.g. "Ceramics", not all would be happy.) It is followed by notes on glazes, oxides and glaze recipes; a glossary of pottery materials; a list of equipment and materials suppliers and a thirty nine item bibliography.

It's a comfortable compendium that won't break new ground for established potters but provides a useful backstop for the middle grader and an essential base for the beginner.

The book is further illustrated by twelve elegant colour plates from photographs by Brian Wilson.

Audrey Brodie



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