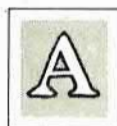




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New Zealand Potter  
Volume 29, Number 1, 1987

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Cover: Photo by Chester Nealie. Pots from his five day wood firing

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**STOP PRESS**  
Winstone Award  
\$10,000. See page 44.

# THROUGH THE FILTER PRESS THROUGH THE FILTER PRESS THROUGH THE FILTER PRESS

By Howard S. Williams

So this is the beginning of my fourth year as editor of the NZ POTTER. It has been a fascinating time and a great learning experience for me.

My major aim has been to upgrade the content and presentation of the magazine to reflect the high standard of studio pottery in New Zealand. One successful move towards this was the introduction of colour, and I must compliment the printers *Tablet Printing Co* of Dunedin, for the excellent colour reproductions they gave in the last two issues. I must also thank the contributors of articles and photographs. The standard of copy I am receiving is improving all the time. I trust my readers agree, and show their appreciation in the usual manner. No — not a round of applause from clay-spattered hands, thank you — just keep buying your subscriptions and make your mates buy their own copy, instead of borrowing yours!

These years have also had frustrations, chief among which has been the word deleted lateness of so many issues. Apologies are due for this stage of affairs, not only to readers, but also to advertisers whose copy has so often been out of date by the time the magazine has been on sale. This has mainly been due to a succession of owners of the publishing rights to the POTTER.

This year, the now owners, *Communication Associates Ltd* of Christchurch, have tightly organised the production schedules to avoid this problem in the future.

Editorial deadlines for copy to me are 15th of February, June and October, giving the 3 issues on-sale dates of 20th April, July and December.

**Change of address:** Furnace Engineering have moved to 6 Holmes Road, Manurewa, Auckland. Their postal address is Private Bag, Manurewa and their telephone number is (09) 267-2661.

## Salzbrand Keramik '86

This major international exhibition of salt glaze held recently in the *Galerie Handwerk* in Koblenz, Federal Republic of Germany, included work by two New Zealand salt glaze potters, **Mirek Smisek** from Te Horo near Wellington and **Terry Williams** from Cambridge. Their pots are illustrated in the magnificent catalogue. Congratulations to them both for being representatives of NZ pottery in this prestigious salt glaze exhibition.

## Fletcher Challenge Pottery Award

As I sadly intimated in my last editorial, *Fletcher Brownbuilt* have pulled out of sponsoring the annual award exhibition — the premier event on NZ potters' calendars. We will miss the enthusiasm and hard work put into the last 10 years of this exhibition by **Trevor Hunt**, **Ernie Fuller** and their team from the *Fletcher Brownbuilt* staff.

When *Fletcher Challenge* took over the sponsorship they elected to hand over a specific amount of money to the *Auckland Studio Potters Society*, with no further involvement on their part. This meant that the *ASP* were left to do the total organisation — an enormous task for people unskilled in this area. A steering committee was set up, which then appointed **Leo King** as paid organiser, to the overwhelming approval of the members.

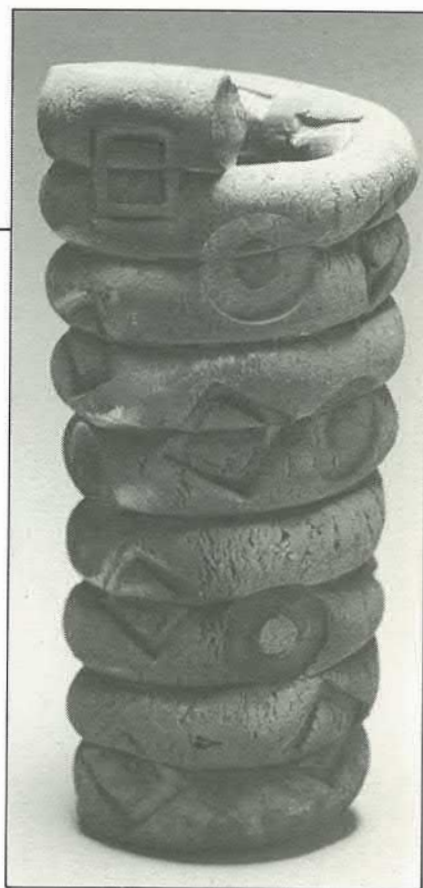
Time was already short so with the help of *ASP* president, **Ann Ambler** and **Lex Dawson**, the director of the *ASP Centre*, the machinery was set in motion to get the *Fletcher Challenge Pottery Award Exhibition* under way for 1987.

Due to all this fluffing around, the information given in the *Fletcher Brownbuilt* advertisement in the **POTTER 28/3, 1986** is incorrect. The entry closing dates will have passed by the time you read this, but I can give you the correct dates for the exhibition itself. The official opening and presentation to the winner of the cheque (\$NZ5,000) will be in the *Auckland War Memorial Museum* on Friday 29th May. The exhibition will be open to the public from Saturday 30th May to Sunday 14th June. We trust this exhibition will be just as special as in the past — *ASP* have yet to convince the new sponsors that it will be worth their while continuing this Pottery Award in future years.

*Rational argument can be conducted with some prospect of success only so long as the emotionality of a given situation does not exceed a certain critical degree.*

## Wanganui '87

Preparations for this event are well in hand. The 1987 Convention of the *New Zealand Society of Potters* will be held at the *Wanganui Regional Community College*, from 15th to 17th May. It will



Pot by Michael Keighery, photo by Matthew Keighery

include glass as well as clay, as the main guest is to be **Michael Keighery** of Sydney, Australia. Michael is also the guest exhibitor at the accompanying *NZSP 29th Annual National Exhibition* in the *Sarjeant Gallery*, Wanganui. He is currently working with both these materials and has this to say about them:

### Clay

"It is when clay is worked upon that it takes on a personality. The processes of stretching, drying and fitting all show characteristic marks. Whether one chooses to ignore, change or use them, the marks of the processes have a power and presence that I find fascinating. Even a piece that shatters in the kiln can be extraordinary, but often not noticed because expectations of a particular result have not been met."

### Glass

"By and large we think of glass as fragile, everyday and somewhat dangerous. Glass has been used as currency, Napoleon is interred in a glass blanket and Victorian ladies held glass eggs or hand-coolers while being wooed. Glass is used to send light around corners, internal combustion engines have been made of it and glass saucepans can contain and melt aluminium saucepans. Amazing stuff!"

Michael will be demonstrating hot glass work alongside another glass tutor,

**Tony Kuepfer** from Taranaki. He will also be demonstrating his clay work with potter **George Kojis**, senior pottery tutor at the College.

Another pottery tutor at the convention will be **Steve Fullmer** from Nelson, winner of the *Fletcher Brownbuilt Award*, 1986.

The programme for the convention includes *Pyrotechnics* — a performance, a special dinner and dance, discussion sessions with the tutors and of course, the *AGM* of the *NZSP*. Further information can be obtained from:

Wanganui '87  
P.O. Box 7035  
Wanganui



WANGANUI REGIONAL  
COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE

He who slings mud, is losing ground.  
Anon.

## EXHIBITION

Clayshapes Gallery, Wellington

April 4 — 20. "Something Blue" Easter Gifts

April 4 — 20. "Something Blue" Easter Gifts

Pots of Ponsonby, Auckland

June 8 — 20. Winter Dialogue I. Painted plates and terracotta by Gretchen Albrecht and Pat Baskett

July 6 - 18. Winter Dialogue II. Barbara Skelton, potter and Keith Mahy, glassblower

August 10 - 22. Winter Dialogue III. Penny Evans, raku and Julie Collis, fibre

Albany Village Pottery

April 10 - 24. Barry Brickell

May 4 - 31. Andrea Barrett, inlaid porcelain

July 1 - 31. Barbara Hockenhull, pots and flowers

August 2 - 31. Anita Thompson

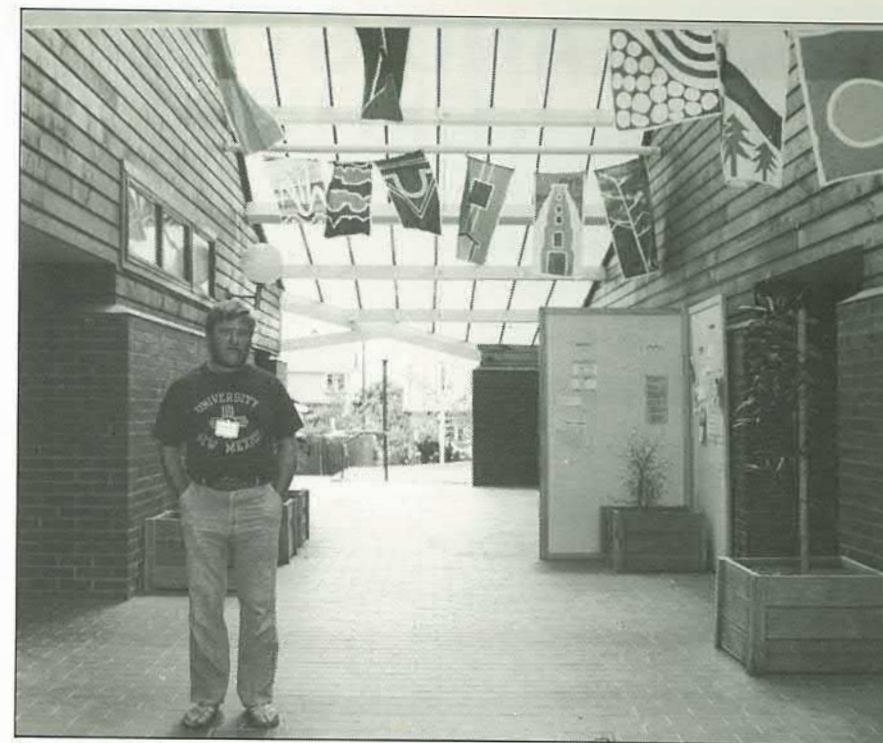
Pumphouse, Takapuna

June 2 - 21. Anita Berman. "Feathers, Fans and Fibres"

Exhibitions to be held from September on can be listed free in this column if relevant details are sent before 20 June to:

The Editor  
NZ Potter  
P.O. Box 147  
Albany

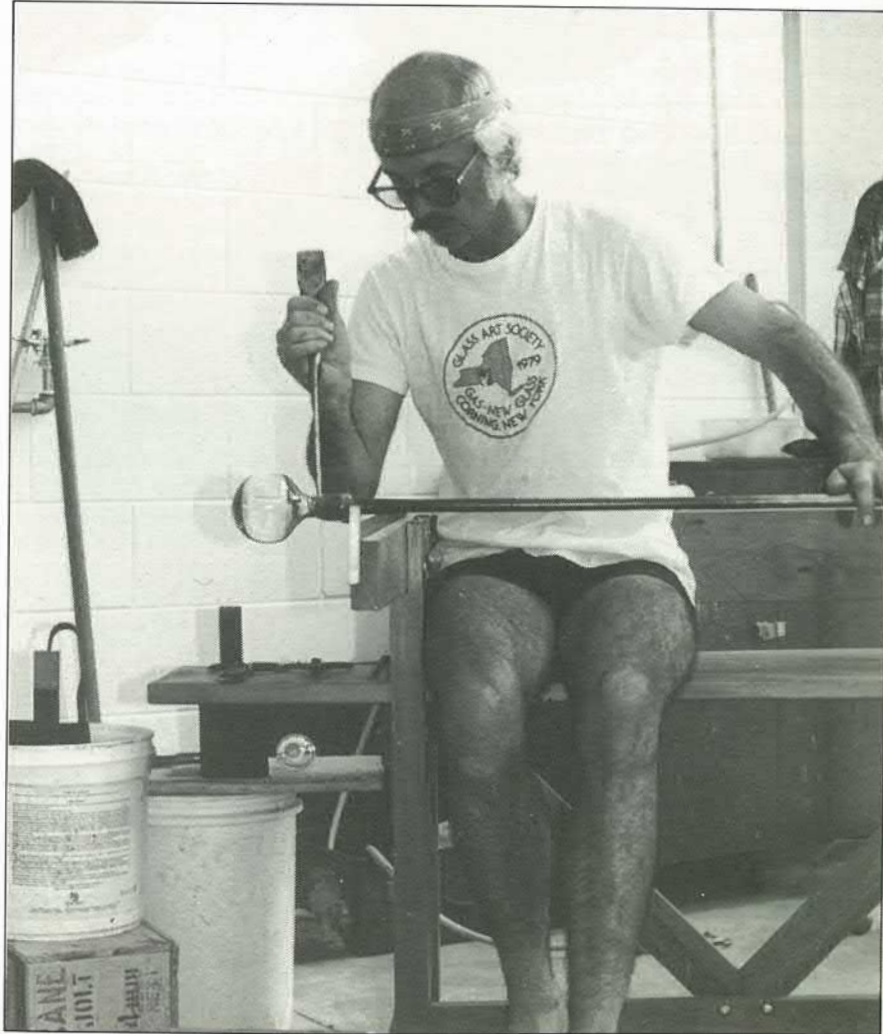
## CALENDAR



George Kojis in the main college foyer below banners made at the summer school

Artist to critic, "I prefer the way I do it, to the way you don't".

Tony Kuepfer demonstrating glass blowing in the college glass studio



# AUCKLAND STUDIO POTTERS ★ EXHIBITION ★

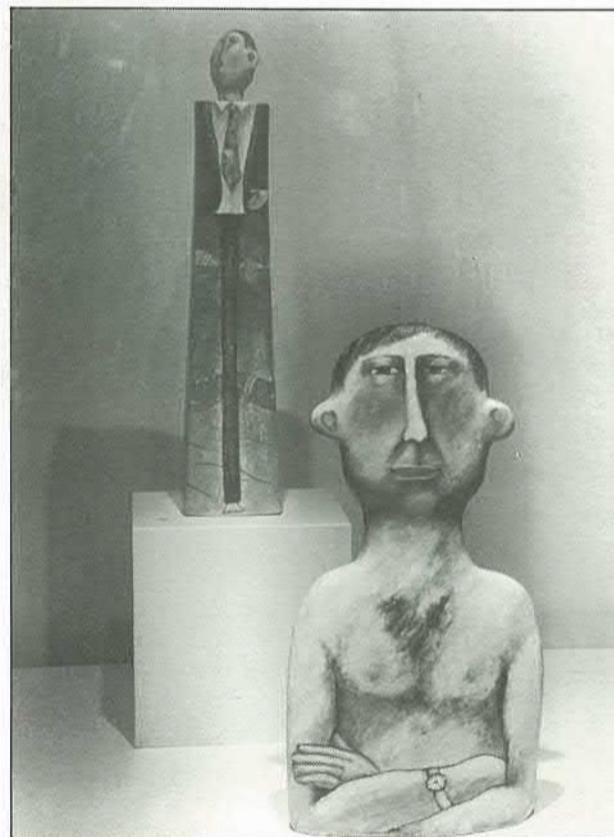
AT THE SUTER GALLERY  
NELSON 1986



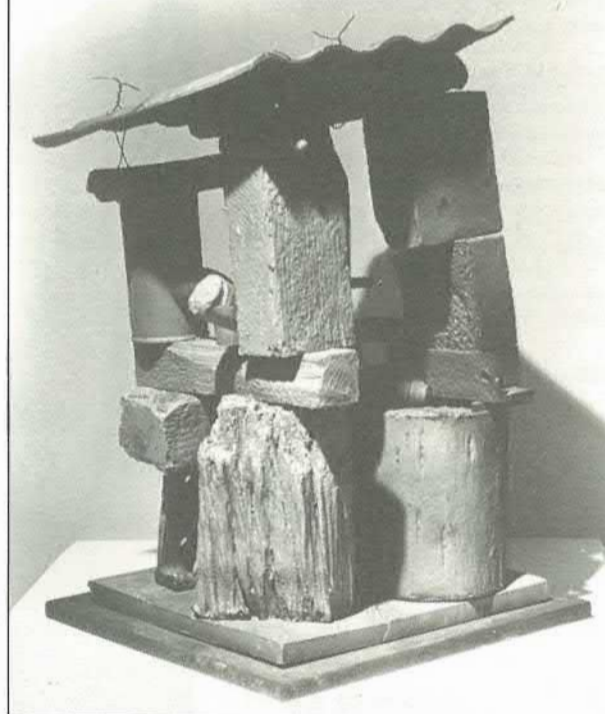
▼ Sculptures by Chris Thacker

Photos by Lynne Griffith

▲ Porcelain boxes by Beverley Luxton



Slip cast (yes, all but the wire twists)  
sculpture by Peter Lange



## Greg Reid

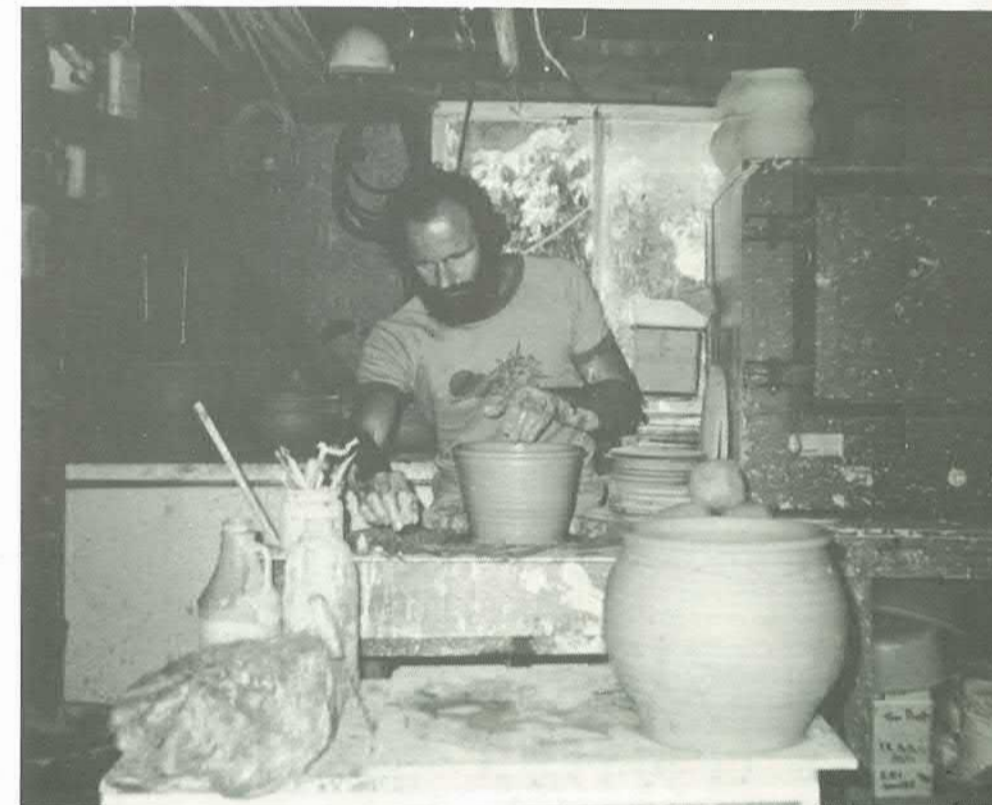
By Paul Johnston,  
Whakatane

In Whakatane, isolated as it is from the mainstream of New Zealand society and therefore isolated from the mainstream of New Zealand pottery, there are only a few practising potters of national standard. One potter who has reached that standard is **Greg Reid**.

Greg has been potting since 1976 when he was working on a farm, but after 2 years attending night classes at *Edgecumbe High School*, he left the farm and moved into Whakatane. Unable to make a full-time living from pottery he was forced to take up his old trade of engineering to supplement his pottery sales, and he now works roughly 4 months of the year full-time in pottery, with the other 8 months being taken up by engineering.

After initially making earthenware and firing it in a small electric kiln, a change to the higher fired stoneware and the building of an oil-fired kiln, meant that Greg made great strides into his understanding of the craft. Now a further phase is unfolding with the completion of a wood-fired kiln which is fired *Anagama* style over 30-36 hours.

Greg's pots have changed to suit this kiln — instead of churning out domestic ware, the casseroles and coffee mugs, he is instead making more one-off pots, with the effects of the wood-firing in



Photos by Greg Reid

mind. He uses a bought white clay which turns to an orange hue and becomes glazed where fly-ash from the firing fuses with it, on the exposed surfaces of the pots. Only the inside of his pots are normally glazed, using traditional Japanese glazes such as the white Shino or

*This article is reproduced by courtesy of HORIZONS, Whakatane, in which publication it first appeared.*

black/brown Tenmoku. Some of his pots are coated with an iron slip which shows a darker colour after firing.

A shortage of good teachers in the Whakatane area has meant that Greg has had to go out of the area to schools, or bring in potters through the *Society of Arts*, of which he has been president since 1983, to increase his and other's knowledge.

One such potter was **Len Castle** whose visit to Whakatane in 1982 was a turning point in Greg's development as a potter. Len's deeper philosophy in pottery showed Greg that there was a certain amount of each individual potter in their work and this made him look more deeply at his own pots. He began to develop his own style.

Married with 4 children, Greg involves himself, in the little spare time he has, in the *Whakatane Society of Arts* where he is trying to establish a permanent potters' workshop.

While working for a period at the local hospital as an engineer, he also found time to build a potter's wheel for the *OT* department and gave pottery lessons to those interested there. He has also built his own wheel, a pug mill and his oil and wood-fired kilns.

His own potting has always been done in a converted garage, but having received planning permission to build a larger studio workshop, he may at last be closer to the position that he wants, that of a full-time potter.



# NELSON COMMUNITY POTTERS

By Peter Gibbs, Nelson

For an area short on population, Nelson is pretty tall on pottery groups. During the 1970s, no fewer than 3 were established in the city's urban area. *Craft Potters*, a workshop group based in the Richmond area was first to open for business, followed a few years later, in 1976, by *Nelson Community Potters*, operating in a similar way and providing classes and tuition, as well as a small sales area. Finally, in 1979, the *Nelson Potters Association* was established to serve the interests of the more established potters.

Last year, *Community Potters* looked back over the impressive achievements of their first decade. The most obvious is their mortgage-free building close to the central city area. Purchased in 1978, using debentures raised from members amounting to \$4500, the group got under way with five wheels and a 3.5 cu.ft. *Cobcraft* electric kiln. Since then, the workshop has been extended, a gas/diesel fibre kiln built, and the premises, both inside and out changed from a rundown old property to a comfortable, well organised workshop and clubrooms. In fact, *Community Potters* have been leaders in obtaining sponsorship from sources ranging between paint and timber firms, clay suppliers, government and local body agencies, and arts councils.

In the early days of settlement of the Nelson area, intending pioneers could purchase a package consisting of 150 acres in the country and one town acre, prior to leaving England. Unfortunately, early estimates of the area of the province were astray and insufficient good farm land was available. John Sylvanus Cotterell sailed from London on the *Fifeshire* in September 1841, and subsequently took possession of his town acre close to central Nelson. Unfortunately for him, his training as a surveyor led Captain Arthur Wakefield to appoint him to lead a party into the Wairau Valley searching for more farmland for the fast arriving settlers. As might be expected, the Maoris already in residence there took exception to this threat, and the infamous *Wairau Massacre* terminated Mr Cotterell's short stay in the colony. Just two months before this event, Cotterell, along with other Quakers marked the establishment of their first Meeting House in Nelson with a plaque,



Community Potters, Nelson. Circa 1981



Interior showing the workshop space

Members firing the top hat kiln ▶

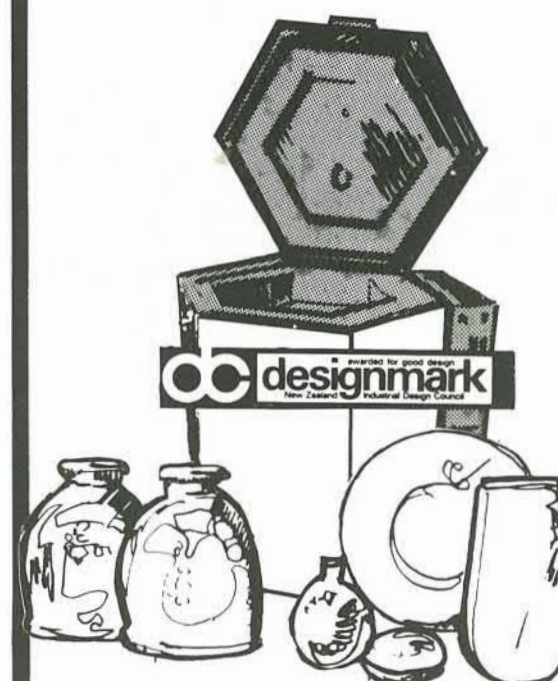
still in place in *Community Potters'* grounds.

Apart from the tangible signs of their activities, the group have added much to pottery in the area as a result of their many workshops. **Harry Davis** gave one of his rare workshops for the group in 1979, and he has been followed by a list of other national and local celebrities as long as your arm. Regular classes are held with a variety of local tutors, but members can also make their own hours to come in and use the facilities offered. One transient member who spent some time working on the premises, and is now making big waves across the Tasman, is Australian **Marc Sauvage**, and many other members have joined the ranks of full time potters in the Nelson area.

The tenth anniversary of *Community Potters* was celebrated in style late last year with an exhibition and dinner.



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# POTS AND FLOWERS

To Brighten the Early Days of Spring

**Keith Blight, potter, with the Ichiyo School of Ikebana at the Pumphouse Gallery, Takapuna**

*Photos by Keith Blight*

Keith Blight from Remuera, has been a full-time potter since 1974. He won the \$1,000 *NatWest Beyond Craft* award from the NZ Academy of Fine Arts, Wellington last year. He has been particularly interested in making special pots for the Japanese flower arrangement system *Ikebana*. In this exhibition in Takapuna's Pumphouse gallery, he combined with the Northcote *Ichiyo School of Ikebana* to present a particularly fine show of this type of work. Lorna Withers, the director and tutor of this school was the featured *Ikebana* artist along with several examples from each of her students.

The NZ Herald critic Amy Brown wrote "The strength and dominance of Keith Blight's pots, combined with the natural fragility of flowers and branches, produces some rare combinations of beauty ... he has achieved some superlative colours in his glazing ... strong dominant ones, rich reds, fierce oranges, citrus yellows, with tones that flow between, producing some very exciting effects. The flower arrangers, using the bounty of nature, were creating and measuring their design skills against the skill of a potter who creates especially for *Ikebana* specialists."

Asked to write about this exhibition, Keith said he would rather the photos of the work speak for themselves.

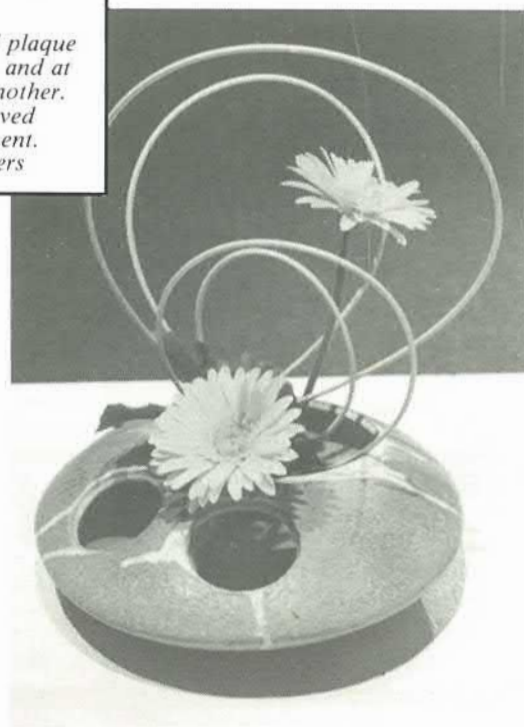
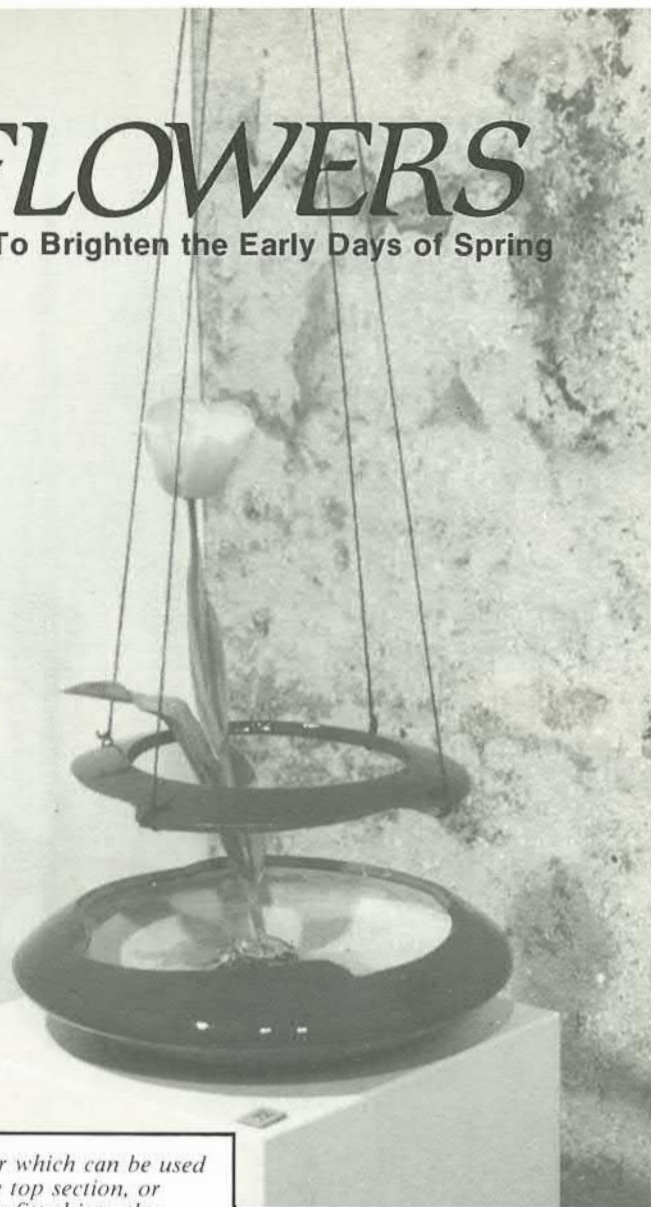
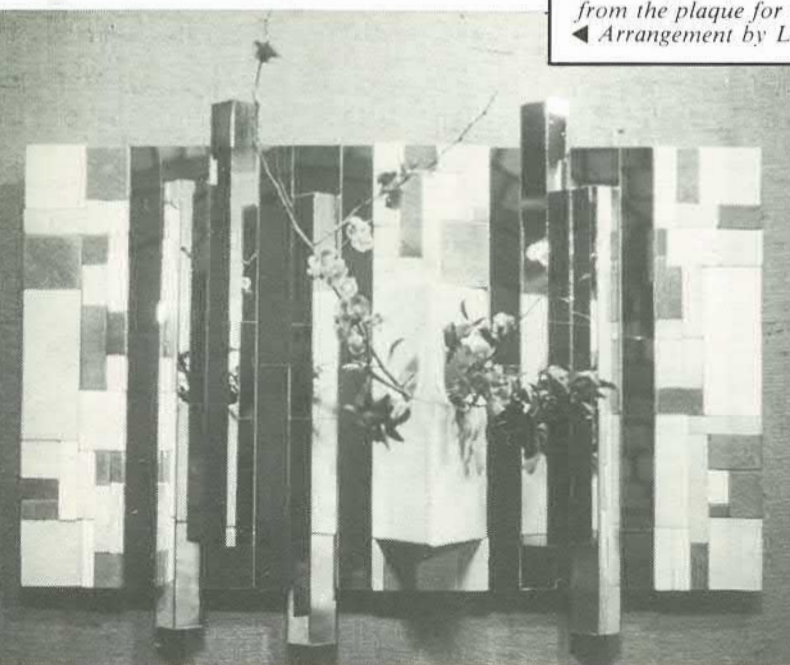
Two-piece container which can be used with or without the top section, or with the top section fitted into the base, string removed.

Arrangement by Mary Dunkley▲

Yellow discoid pot. Arrangement by Kay Greenheld ▶

"Reflections". Multi-media wall plaque with strips of mirror set on flat and at 45° angles to reflect into one another. The triangular pot can be removed from the plaque for replenishment.

◀ Arrangement by Lorna Withers



▲ Burnt orange slab pot. Arranged by Joan Fletcher

Pair of "Free Glaze" triangular pots. Arrangement by Pat Harboard

◀ Brilliant red pot. Arrangement by Linda Skelton



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"Take a cushion to sit on and something to nibble" (A friend? — Ed)

# LOMBOK INDONESIA

By Robyn Stewart, Waiwera

In February 1986 the *Department of Foreign Affairs*, NZ Government, asked me to travel to Indonesia to be technical advisor for a feasibility study. The assignment came under the *Overseas Development Assistance Programme* and involved investigating the feasibility of establishing a pottery production and marketing project on the island of Lombok.

Located 8° south of the equator, the island is separated from Bali by the turbulent Strait of Lombok. This strait is part of the geographical feature known as the *Wallace Line* — the boundary between two contiguous tectonic plates in the earth's crust. It also separates east from west in the world of flora and fauna.

Only 4,700 sq.kms. in area, Lombok supports 2 million people, though there are still great areas of land unoccupied or uncultivated. Mt. Rinjani, the highest active volcanic peak in Indonesia, towers over panoramas of rice paddies, small villages and deserted beaches. There are however, towns where photos can be developed in 45 minutes; neon lights and garish posters advertising vintage movies decorate the main streets, and a jet can carry you off to the Indonesian capital, Jakarta.

Lombok has an agriculture based economy. Fishing is the second major occupation and 86% of the population live in villages.

I visited 3 areas of pottery production, the largest of which, Masbagik Timor has some 600 families involved in ceramics.



Burnished water containers (kendi) ▲

“Cookie” cookers set out to dry ►



The “paddle and anvil” method used throughout Lombok ▲

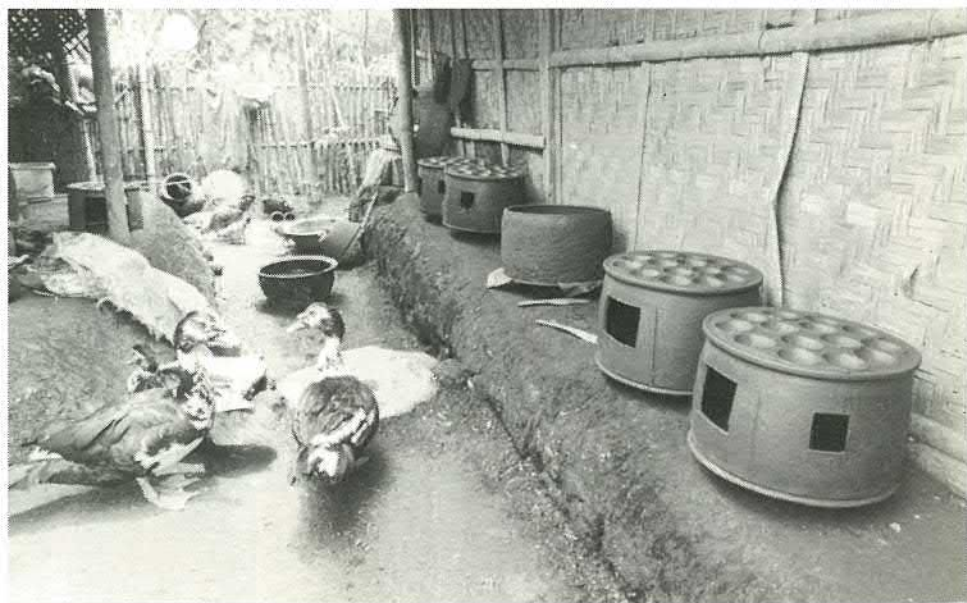
In some villages the men dig and transport the clay, in others it is bought from vendors. Pottery making is women's work — nothing special — pots are made in between producing babies, planting rice and dealing with all the other household tasks. The making of pots is intensified when demand for labour in the rice fields is slack.

Methods have not changed for hundreds of years. In a small area often adjacent to the cooking space, pots are hand-built using a few basic tools — a smooth rounded stone, a wooden paddle, a couple of cutting and scribing sticks and a piece of glass or obsidian (natural volcanic glass) for burnishing. Apart from a rudimentary burnishing on much of the pottery seen, little decoration is done.

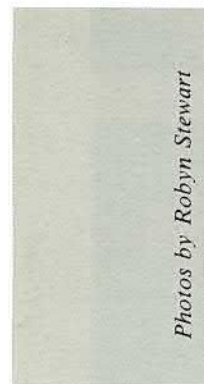
The range of pottery produced includes storage jars for rice and water, cooking pots of various sizes, cookers and stoves, kettles, woks, money boxes and planters. While all three villages visited make more or less the same things, there is some variation in the shapes and sizes of items made.



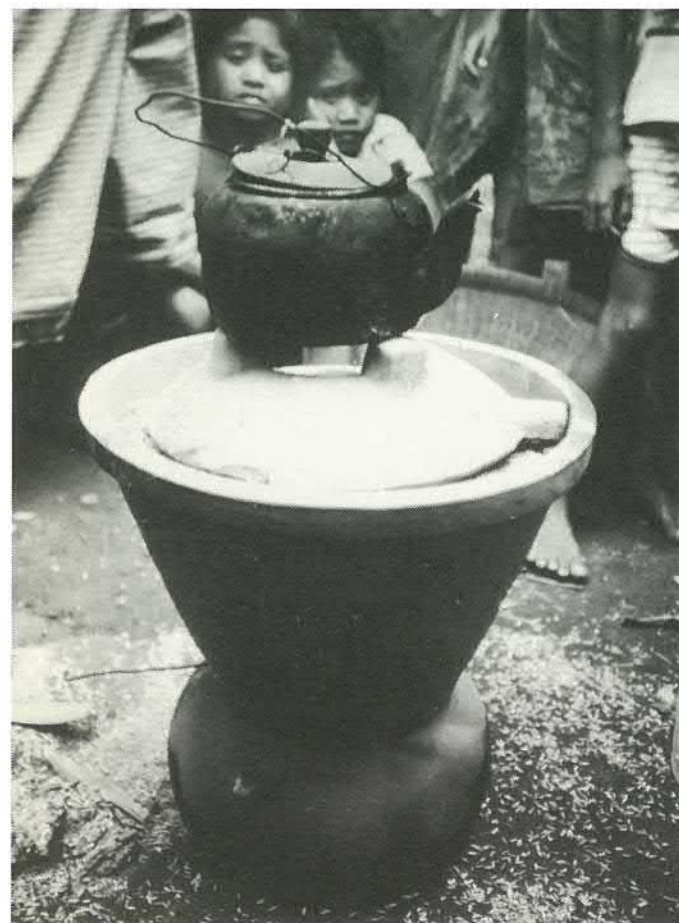
Burnished kettle ▲



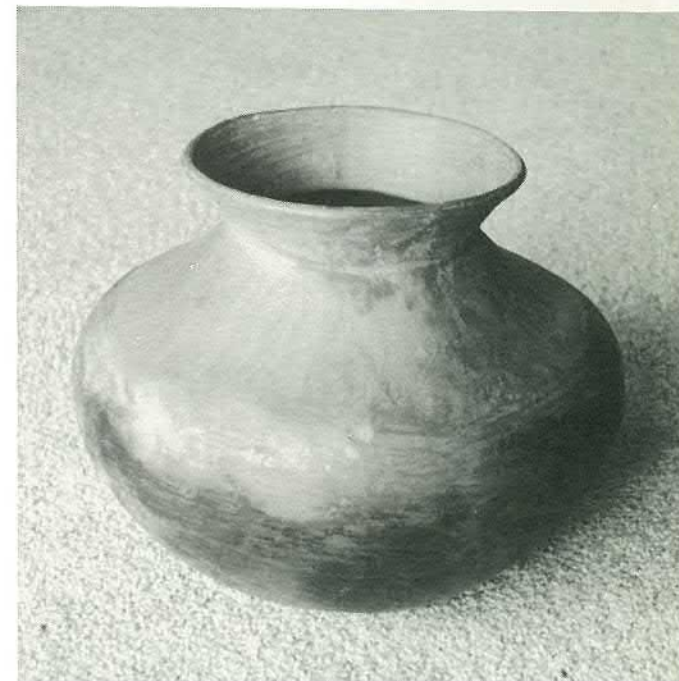
◀ Carbonising a kettle in rice husks after firing



Stove fuelled by rice husks. This was a copy of a metal example and made by one of the few men potters ▼

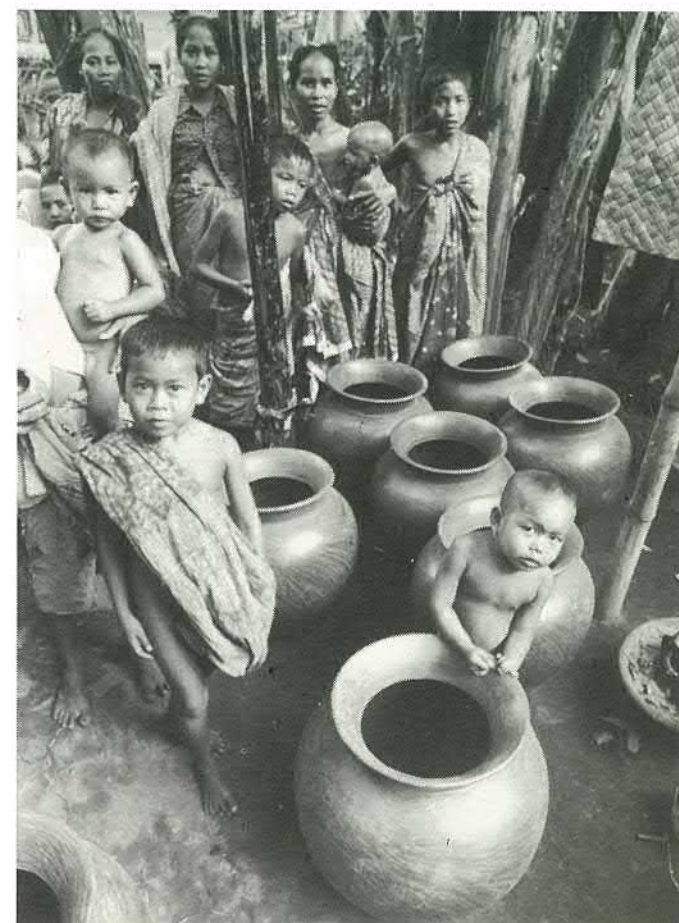


Firing is communal and done by a primitive clamp method. Large pots are pre-heated; dry sticks, grass, leaves, rice husks and any other available combustible materials are piled on top and firing begins, lasting 1 — 2 hours. Some pots are carbonised by completely covering, or perhaps by just sprinkling them with rice husks at the end of the firing. They are very fragile, but I saw surprisingly few breakages during the whole procedure. The finished pottery is then transported to market, normally slung from a pole across the men's shoulders. They go on foot, stopping to sell at households along the way.



Water jar. Photo by Howard S. Williams ▲

Pots ready for market at Masbagik, Lombok  
Photo by Brent Hesselyn ▼



Sometimes traders come to the villages to purchase pots for their market stalls. Nearly all pots are sold within a short time of being fired, and their production is geared to the local, mainly rural, market.

Whenever innovative or ornamental pottery is produced, it is the men who are the potters. I only discovered four of these, one of whom had been sent to Java for training.

Over the years the Indonesian government has attempted to introduce kiln-fired glazed pottery in Bali, with the aim of producing tableware. As an extension of these projects a few kilns have been built on Lombok in the traditional pottery villages. None are being used and in one village the kiln has been dismantled. Apparently, little training in new techniques, assistance in firing, purchasing of materials or the marketing of new products, accompanied the introduction of kilns!

The beautiful forms of this traditional pottery and the simplicity of making a firing, will stay forever in my mind. I wonder though, how much longer these things will continue on Lombok, as the preference for containers swings towards longer lasting "prestigious" plastic buckets and bowls.

**Post Script:** An example of one of many humbling experiences for me while on Lombok — a woman potter had been having a "bad week" producing 75cm high water storage pots, of superb form. She usually made about 25 in a week, but because of wet weather had only managed 15. If I could complete in a week just one pot of equivalent size and standard, I would be very pleased with myself! Incidentally, we often refer to these pots as "primitive". The only thing primitive about them is the price the potters get for them. These beautiful water pots sell for about one dollar.



▲ Preheating large pots ready for firing



Stacking of large containers and lids ▲

◀ Firing

**Editor's Note:** Our well-known, yet still sensitive, maker of burnished and dung-fired pots, **Robyn Stewart**, was very appropriately sent by *Foreign Affairs* to Lombok to conduct a feasibility study on the pottery described in her article above. Can it in any way be upgraded or made strong enough to be transported out of the island to more lucrative markets, thus raising the financial return and sequentially the living standards of the people of Lombok? Such, in brief, was her brief.

Robyn has written her report and at the time of this writing the proposal for a Lombok Craft Project is under consideration by the governments of Indonesia and New Zealand. If this project goes ahead, I promise further articles from Lombok in the future.

## POTTERY IN NIGERIA — 1959

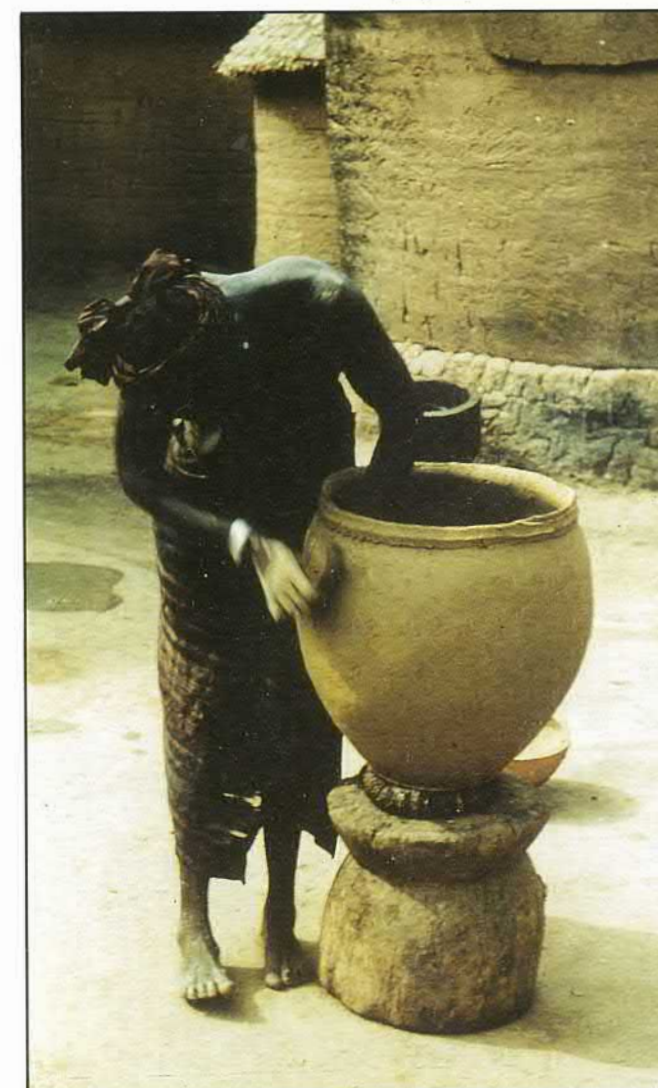
By Peter Stichbury, Auckland

*With the article in this issue on the potters of Lombok, by Robyn Stewart, it is interesting to look back at the potters of Nigeria with Peter Stichbury, for comparison.*

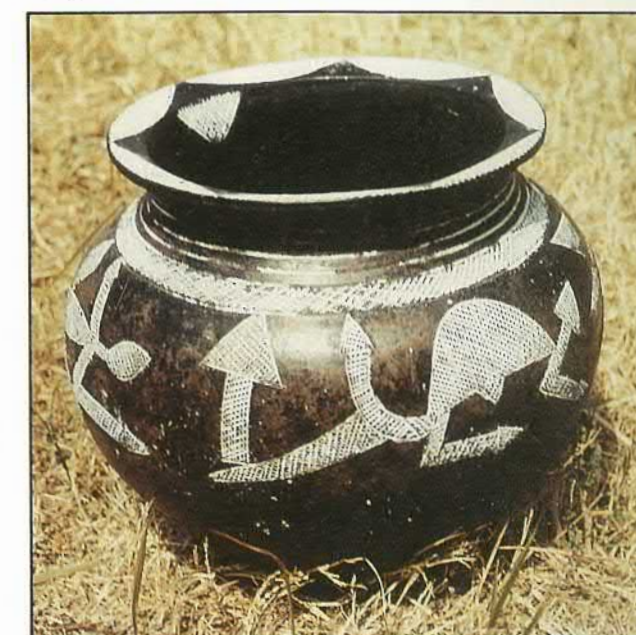
June 1959. My wife Diane and I went to Kwali, a village in Nigeria, 25 miles from Abuja where we were working with **Michael Cardew**. Kwali was the home of the well known potter **Ladi Kwali**. We were with **Donald and Marjorie McCrow** — Don was editor of *NIGERIA* magazine located in Lagos and had arranged this visit through Michael, to see Kwali pots being fired and to record this for a future article in his magazine.

Ladi came with us, dressed in her finest clothes — very striking and elegant. We were met by the Headman and after ▶

*Paddle and anvil, and skill, build a perfect form ▼*



Sgraffito decorated Kwali pot ▲



Kwali pot with chameleon motif ▲

▼ Pre-heating



Photos by Peter Stichbury

formalities, sat awhile in a compound and watched a huge pot being pre-heated the usual process before firing in clamps. On this occasion two clamps were set up by the women potters, one with a single big pot, the other with three smaller pots.

Pre-heating drives off the colloiddally held, or adsorbed water which is attached to the smallest particles, even though the pores in the clay are quite empty. It is driven off at about boiling point. The pots would otherwise crack and they must now be fired or they will re-adsorb moisture from the air if left to cool.

The beds of the fires were of guinea corn stalks or small wood — the larger pot had bigger pieces of wood — and both fires were lit before the pots were placed, still hot from the pre-heating. Wood was then stacked around the pots and when this was almost burned away, dry grass was thrown over the fire. This evens the temperature, which reaches an average of 650° C, throughout the clamp.

Traditional potters all over Nigeria take good care to keep their fires within this range and avoid exceeding it. The clamps range from the individual large pot to the huge ones of Ilorin in the West, and simple kilns are found such as in Sokoto in the far North. This temperature is the lowest at which a pot can be fired and is done for a very good technical reason. At this temperature the pots develop their optimum resistance to thermal shock, i.e. they can be used for cooking over an open fire without cracking.

It is not that traditional potters do not know how to obtain higher temperatures — consistently higher firings are reached in their methods of firing bricks in clamps.

These pots are brittle, the clay is coarse and easily broken. Kwali potters, as do others in Nigeria, mix up a brew called *Makuta* which is made by boiling the empty pods of the locust bean tree until a dark mahogany coloured liquid is obtained. Pots are lifted from the fire with a long pole and this liquid is brushed inside and outside them with a brush made from threshed guinea corn stalks. The brew boils and blisters, some soaking into the pores. When cooled it forms a kind of varnish which is permanent, making the pot stronger and easier to clean.

Kwali pots are some of the most beautiful and striking in Nigeria. Made since Neolithic times, they usually feature fine strong traditional patterns. Impressed string and roulette, sgraffito decorations of stylised lizards, chameleons, snakes, birds and scorpions. Often cornstarch is rubbed into the texture to highlight the pattern.

I don't know the potting scene in Nigeria today, but with an increase in population from 37 million in 1960, to over 80 million today, I guess the pottery activity is as vigorous and fascinating as ever.



Starting a clamp ▲



A one-pot clamp is gradually built ▲

▼ Sealing with *Makuta* varnish



# master works

Photos by Theo Chapple

Ann Porter and Sara Sadd opened "Master Works" Gallery in the Habitat Courtyard, Parnell, Auckland, in April 1986.

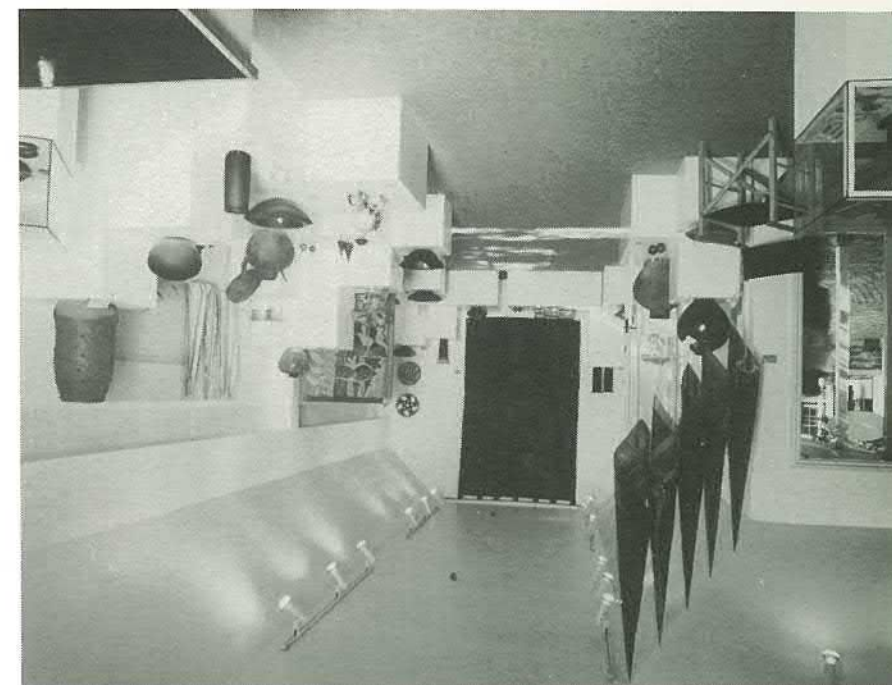
By the time this goes to print our multimedia gallery will have been open for one year. It has been a year of fun, excitement and hard work.

We are not an exhibition gallery, choosing rather to show work from several artists at any one time. The contrast and balance between ceramics and glass, fibre, wood and stone, is the basis for our display — using colour and space to create visual excitement.

Both of us are serious about marketing and committed to promoting work — for public spaces, building interiors and private and corporate collections. Response from the public has been excellent. We find ourselves introducing original New Zealand work to a whole range of people as well as the traditional buyer.

For 1987 we plan further exploration of the tourist market, aware that as yet, only a small number of interested overseas visitors find us.

There are many people who have helped us towards a first successful year, but in particular we thank the artists and craftspeople who have given us support and encouragement, and without whose work there could be no *Master Works*.



Interior of Master Works Gallery, Parnell



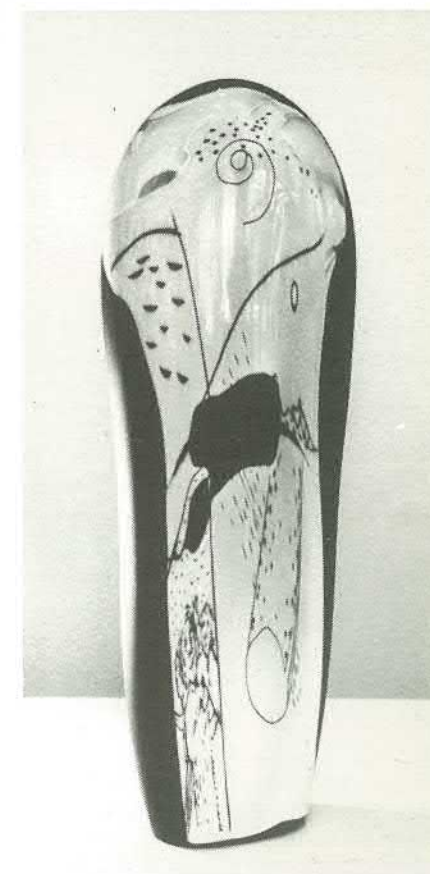
◀ Terracotta with slip decoration by Raewyn Johnson, Wanganui



Terracotta female torso by Rick Rudd, Wanganui



Pair of gourds by Ann Robinson. Photo by Burke Harper



Large glass form by Garry Nash, Auckland

Following extensive research on Pugmills from around the world, Winstone Pottery's Clay have selected a new super-duty Pugmill to bring improved plasticity to all their clays.

The clay's plasticity has been improved as a result of a maximising of the de-airing process, which also means maximum green strength and improved crack-resistance in throwing.

But that's not all ... the new machines stainless-steel construction means no rust which minimises iron spot and bleeders in the clay, and an extra kneading and mixing device delivers a more consistent-blended, uniform product.

Plus, their convenient new 20kg pack in a strong, single plastic bag means no more staples.



# Now Winstone Potters Clays have improved plasticity.

## A COURSE OF GREEN'S

By Sam Halstead, Albany

I must confess that my heart sank at the end of the first day of John Green's weekend course when I looked over the day's production. It seemed like all we had done was copy his style using his and even his equipment (who else do you know with a tool for wrinkling elephants' knees?). If I had stopped then and given it all some thought I might have accepted — and even expected — those imitations but it wasn't until the end of the second day that I really got a perspective on it all.

The course had started with an unusually quiet Mr Green mumbling a brief introduction and proclaiming "Well, this is what I usually do. I... um... start with the feet and work up". At his urging we all produced variations of some of his basic themes — sitting man (legs akimbo) on a rock — standing man with long tail (a three point base is more stable) — elephant at rest etc. One or two of the more terminally talented among us managed some fairly good pieces but mostly we preferred to work by the rule that you learn more from your mistakes.

What we all lacked was the deftness that John has acquired from years of manipulating little people. He knows just how much of a squeeze is needed to produce the required bulge in the right place. I like watching experts at work — whether it is a farmer digging a post-hole or a jeweller carving a precious stone — they all exhibit the same grace and economy of movement that is only developed through practise and repetition.

I found it interesting that in the first day and a half most participants finished two well-crafted pieces and yet in Sunday afternoon alone, added another three or four pieces to their tally. This output was dramatic not only for the increased rate but even more-so for the shift in style. While the previous work had been openly derivative, the later work became more original with every piece made.

At this stage I was reminded of something I had read years ago about creativity that seemed to be borne out by what happened on our course. Although I feel that too much analysis of the creative process can have a retardant effect upon it, I think there really are typical stages in the process and that a broad understanding of them is, at very least, enlightening.

The theory contends that first up there is the intake stage in which a problem may exist that requires a creative solution. (We are not just talking craft here, but creativity in general. Even so, the concept of art as providing answers



for the artist is well understood.) This first stage is at once an awareness that "something needs to be done" and a researching analysis or taking stock. The second phase is a kind of incubation period in which the mind reuminate consciously or unconsciously towards a solution or resolution. And thirdly is the resolution or revelation — the creative idea — the original thought. The solution may dawn slowly or arrive in a "flash of inspiration". It may happen in a few seconds or years later.

Possibly the creative person works in a continual flux of the first two stages — always feeling a need to resolve, always receptive, always with ideas or projects on the boil. Most of us are heading in a general direction of our own choosing — even if we haven't consciously defined it — and are picking up everything useful along the way. This is why we read so much, experiment, observe, daydream, and go on weekend courses.

Of course no artistic talent is needed for those activities and they of themselves don't actually produce. Creativity has to do with bringing new things in to being, so we are inclined to consider the third and final phase to be the "creative act". In reality those first two stages are the real

source of expression — especially the middle "incubating" period where all sorts of influences and thought processes can do wonderful things to quite ordinary input.

That third "project" stage is the really exciting one though. That's the buzz we are all after. The glorious moments when from out of our own thoughts, from our individual lives come ideas or products of true personal meaning. OK, so it doesn't happen with every piece but its the feeling and remembering of the times when it does all happen, that keeps us going.

### Postscript

(A roadside conversation two weeks after the course.)

JOHN: How's things? All right?

SAM: Yup! Fine, fine.

JOHN: Bad news about your elephant I'm afraid.

SAM: Oh?

JOHN: Yeah. It blew up in the kiln. Millions of little pieces.

SAM: Oh well. Who cares — it wasn't that great anyhow.

JOHN: And it took eight other pieces with it.

SAM: Good God! Is that the time? Must fly.

## kerry rombouts

By Julie Obren, Wellington

Some 20 years ago Kerry Rombouts, recently arrived from Holland, bought 3 spice jars, little realising that was the beginning of a love affair with clay, pots and New Zealand. Now, 2 decades later, Kerry is settled in Wellington's suburb of Mirama having brought up a family of new Kiwis while pursuing her experiments with clay and glazes and developing her skills.

Like many young mothers she attended night school classes at the local college. After 3 years as a hobby potter she knew she was committed. Moving aside the washing machine, she put up shelves in the laundry, installed a small electric kiln and a wheel and devoted herself to her passion.

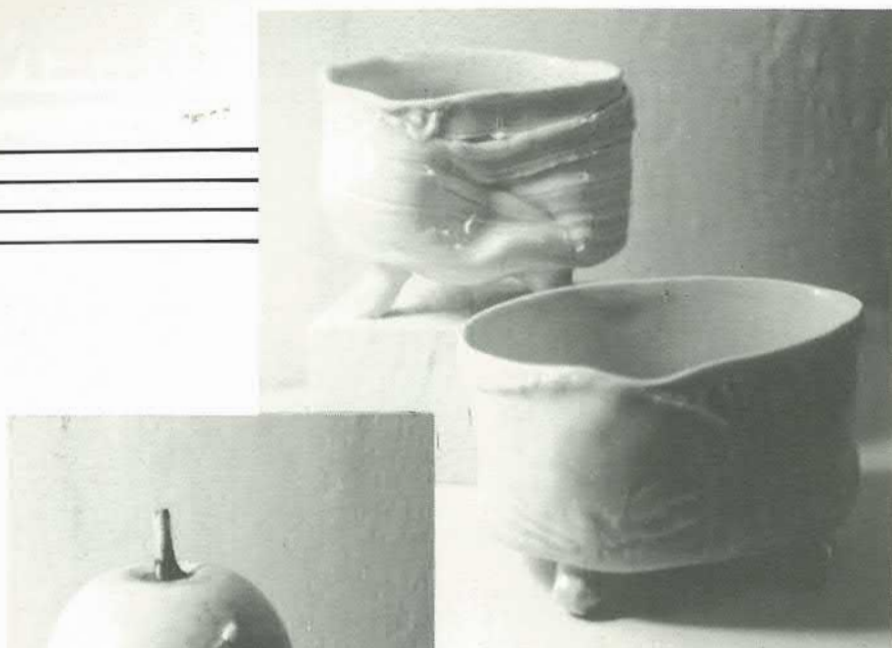
Kerry firmly believes in returning to potting all the joys and skills that she has experienced, involving herself with teaching night classes at *Onslow College* for the past six years and exhibiting regularly. Always an active member of the *Wellington Potters Association*, she has helped with the running of the Rooms, served on the committee and assisted with exhibitions and promotions for 15 years.

Having recently rebuilt a ceramic fibre kiln, converting it from updraught to downdraught, Kerry is shortly to commence building a salt glaze kiln set into her neat garden and concealed when not in use, underneath a slatted timber cover.

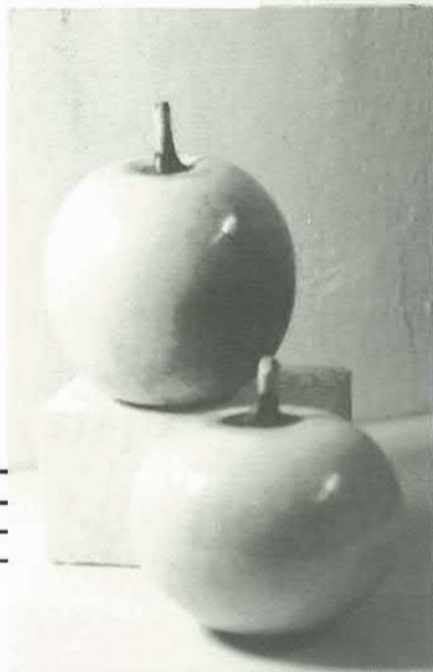
A versatile potter, Kerry enjoys experimenting and is strongly influenced by nature. Her work ranges through domestic ware, saggar fired forms, raku, pit-firings, humorous animal caricatures, rugged slab pots and neriage ware. She is equally interested in hand-built or wheel-thrown work. Her early training as an art school teacher in Holland has assisted her to develop an eye for, and appreciation of colour, form and design. Her brushwork reflects her European background although many other design aspects come direct from the bush, hills and streams of the New Zealand countryside.

Kerry had three striking saggar fired orbs accepted for the 1986 *NZSP* exhibition in Christchurch and was selected to exhibit at the recent *Spheres* exhibition in Invercargill. Her pots are to be found in private collections both here and overseas.

As a member of *Clayshapes*, a co-operative potters' gallery in up-market Oriental Bay along Wellington's scenic Marine Parade, Kerry is receiving a high profile, with work being purchased by tourists and Embassy staff — having come a long way from her initial fascination with a chance purchase of 3 modest little spice jars, so many years ago.



Photos by Julie Obren



## Kerry Rombouts



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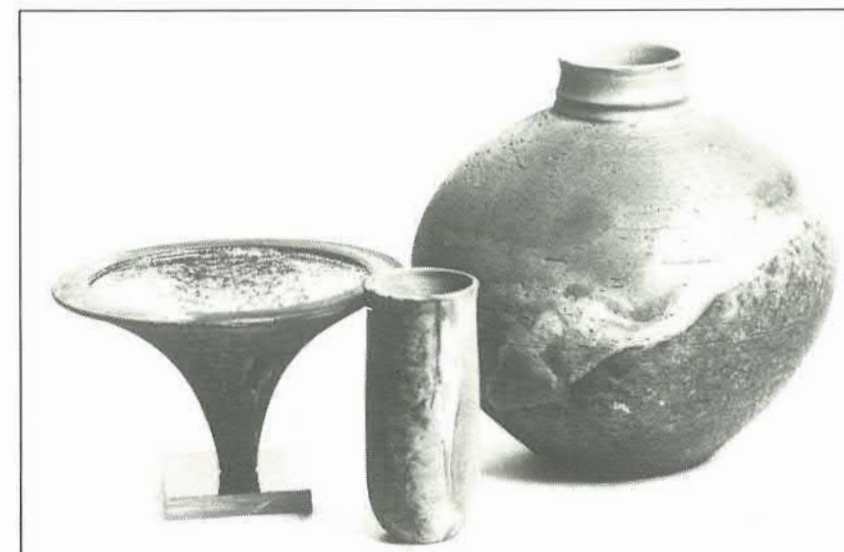
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# Giovanna Ponti

By Cecilia Parkinson, Albany

*The completed mural in Fletcher Challenge House, Penrose*

**Giovanna Ponti** came to New Zealand February 1986, from the world famous town of ceramics, Faenza, situated north of Florence in Italy, where she was awarded an Italian/New Zealand Exchange Scholarship to study ceramics at the *Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland*.

1977 - 1982: Attended the *Istituto d'Arte per Ceramica di Faenza*.

1980: Gained a diploma in ceramic art.

1982: Started a two year course specialising in industrial ceramics, at the same time attended the *Bologna Fine Arts Academy*.

May 1986: Won the *BP Art Award* at the *New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts*.

December 1986: Received the *Fowlds Memorial Prize* for most distinguished MFA student in the *Fine Arts Faculty, University of Auckland*.

Our friendship blossomed after being introduced at the *Auckland Studio Potters Centre*, when **Maria Kuzinsky** was demonstrating her sculpture technique. Giovanna became a frequent visitor to my home and workshop.

Giovanna attended the *Elam School of Fine Arts*, gaining a Master of Fine Arts Degree. Facilities there were sparse, but with an excellent technician, **Robin Lusk**, she soon had a work table, shelves, a new *Cobcraft* kiln and other bits and pieces.

Her first year at *Elam* was not easy, what with the language — though she mastered this very quickly — and the difference in the materials we use. However, after many months of testing and firing, she finished two earthenware slip-cast ceramic murals, which can be seen in the entrance foyer of the main building at *Elam*.

Towards the end of 1986, Giovanna had settled into her new surroundings, fallen in love with Auckland, and was beginning to feel she would like to stay a further year to finish her degree.

The scholarship from Italy was for one year only, so the Dean at *Elam* wrote to a number of large manufacturing firms around the Auckland province, asking for a sponsorship. He got one positive reply — from **Trevor Hunt** (now retired) of *Fletcher Brownbuilt*. In return Giovanna made a slip-cast, glazed earthenware mural *Oceano*, consisting of 68 tiles each 28cm square; total size 360 x 139cm, which can be seen in the reception area of *Fletcher Challenge House, Penrose*.

The making of this mural posed several problems — the size of the tiles, their drying and firing. **Reg Taylor**, a retired chemist from *Crown Lynn*, who had helped Giovanna with her glazes during her first year at *Elam*, arranged with

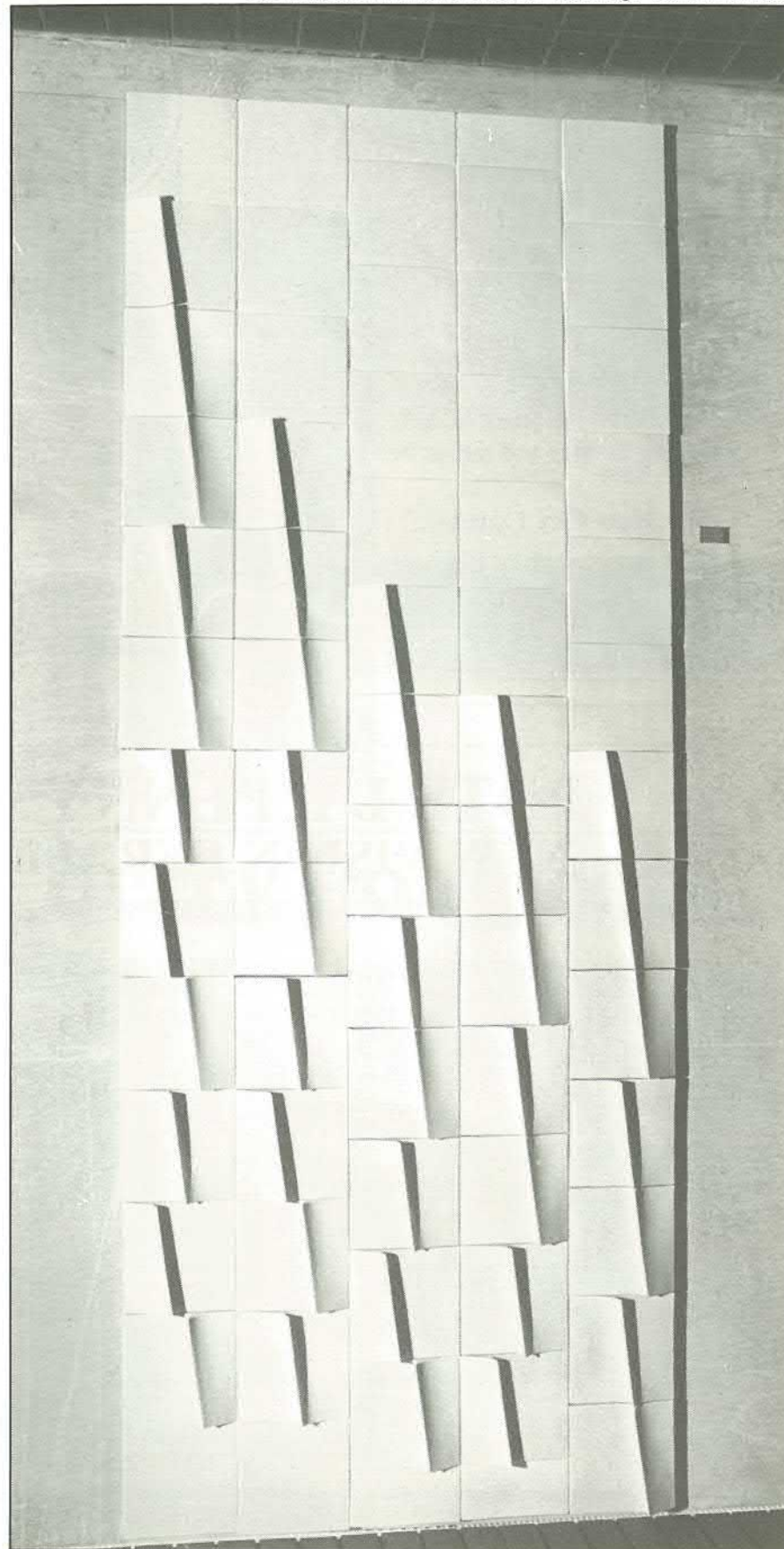
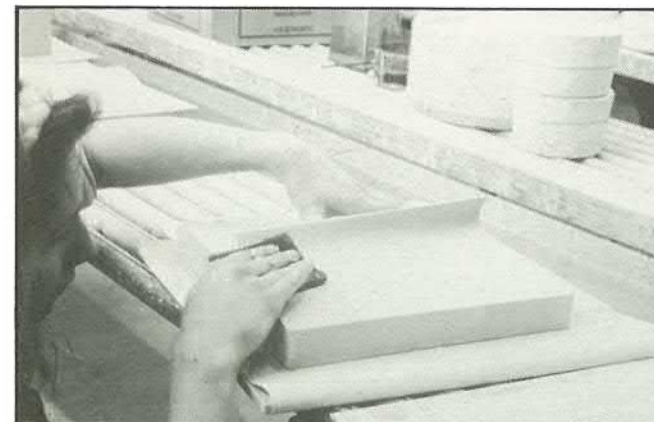


Photo by Paul McCreadie



Giovanna fills a mould with slip at Crown Lynn ▲

Smoothing a tile fresh from the mould ▼ Spray glazing a tile ▶



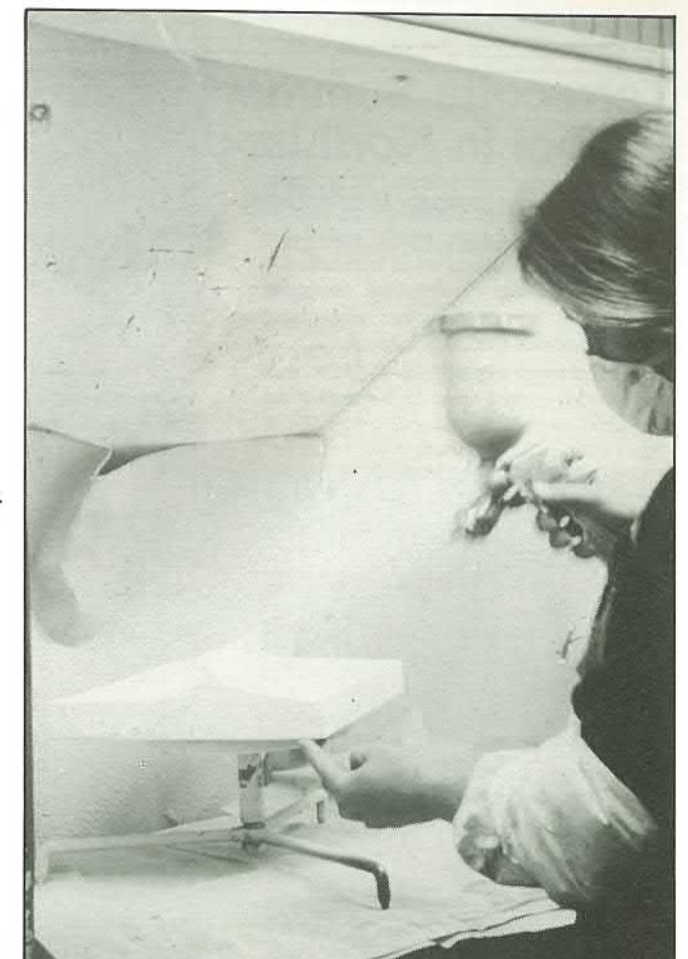
*Crown Lynn* for Giovanna to slip-cast, glaze and fire the tiles in their kilns. In exchange, Giovanna slip-cast salt and pepper shakers on their production line. She found working at *Crown Lynn* extremely valuable from an educational point of view.

"I was interested in producing a piece

of work that utilised industrial technology, rather than the handmade approach which New Zealand ceramists seem to adopt on a project of this nature. The production people at *Crown Lynn* were wonderful to me. They helped to formulate the luscious pink matt glaze and advised on all technical aspects

involved in the manufacturing and firing of the mural. They gave generously of their time and facilities."

Giovanna is now back at the *Bologna Fine Arts Academy* in Italy, to finish her degree. Perhaps one day she will be able to do what she wants — return to New Zealand to work.



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# THE QUARRY

## Terracotta Summer School in Northland

By Jon Anderson, Northland

More than 60 potters and craftspeople converged on Whangarei in late January for an eight-day Terracotta Summer School to brush up on technique, exchange views and experiment.

The event, cheap at \$150, was organised by artist-teacher **Yvonne Rust** and held at the *Northland Craft Trust Quarry* from January 20.

The students, many fulltime potters, came from as far south as Dunedin and north to Kaitia to work with some of New Zealand's top craftspeople.

As they ambled out of town after a last-night hangi and live band performance, people were bubbling with enthusiasm and hoping *The Quarry* would stage further schools.

Among the tutors were master potter **Barry Brickell**, who steamed up from Coromandel in a fishing boat, well-known painter and environmentalist **Michael Smither**, who arrived in an old van (his studio on wheels), and sculptor **Chris Booth**. Chris, from Kerikeri, rolled into *The Quarry* in a truck loaded with bronze ingots and a portable foundry.

Tutoring from Northland were **Yvonne Rust** and resident *Quarry* potters **Paul Pritchard** and **Richard Parker**.

Wellington potter **Flora Christeller**, who works with crystal glazes and pit-firing, tutored as a guest of "old mate Yvonne".

The tutors were paid by the *Northland Polytechnic* which also loaned wheels and kilns, organised film evenings and videoed the event for an educational film. For those without friends to stay with or the money for a motel, nearby *Whangarei Intermediate School* offered sleeping space in its hall. In the balmy summer some chose to sleep under the stars.

The school was run on the lines of "organised freedom".

"It cannot be too tight. Tutors, after all, can be quite stroppy and you just can't order them around. The key is getting enthusiasm going and that carried it," said Yvonne Rust.

Tutors held sessions each day, sometimes on a specific technique, or after a request.

Barry Brickell gave demonstrations, and tips on technique as well as a talk about his travels overseas. He packed them in.

Richard Parker, an ethnic potter, passed on his experimentation with slab and slip work. Paul Pritchard had tips



A rare glimpse of two masters together. Northland artist and teacher Yvonne Rust, the dynamo behind establishing *The Quarry* and organiser of the Terracotta School, and Coromandel master potter Barry Brickell, the chief tutor.

on kiln work and Northland clay and the use of wood ashes, while Yvonne was always around with helpful advice.

Flora Christeller staged a pit-firing and tried a crystal glaze firing in an electric kiln. The tricky process of holding and dropping the kiln heat unfortunately failed to produce the desired result this time. However, a number of her crystal glaze works were on display at an exhibition run in conjunction with the school.

The exhibition at Whangarei's *North Gallery* consisted of 119 works from tutors, invited artists and some students.

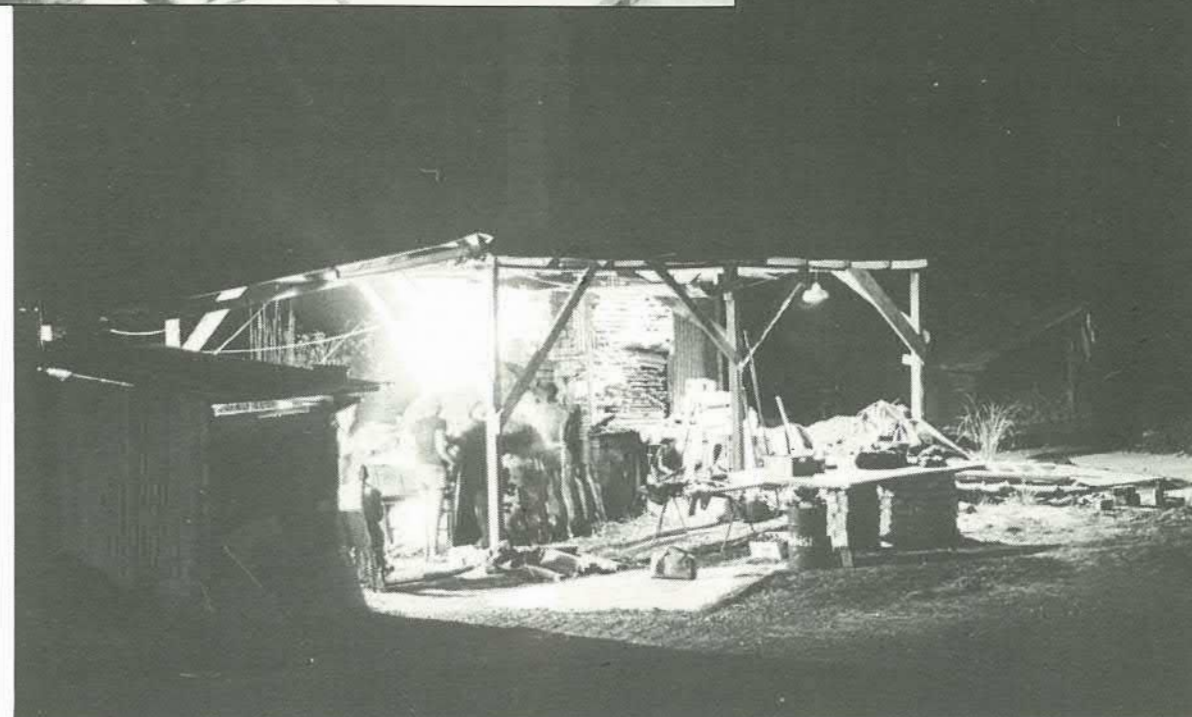
It was put together by *Quarry* painter **Stephanie Sheehan** who also painted a mural using clay paint produced by another *Quarry* painter **David Sarich**.

For many attending the school it was a chance to get away from making domestic ware, and to experiment. Sculptures were being constructed in every corner. There was also the aspect of exchanging views and getting an injection of enthusiasm.

Five potters from the West Coast of the South Island had made the journey up to the school in "the faithful old Holden station wagon". One of these,



Life is at times so simple, that it is often at its most complicated only because you do not believe in its essential simplicity. Alan Sillitoe.



**Roger Ewer**, arranged for a two-tonne shipment of West Coast coal and the two all-night coalfirings in *The Quarry's* 70 cubic metre kiln proved spectacular and popular.

Barry Brickell organised some modifications to the three fire boxes and after the first firing the kiln chimney was rebuilt. He also built a three-chamber raku kiln which was fired flat-out for the last two days.

Despite firings every day, there was a mountain of work left for *The Quarry* to fire after the school finished.

Apart from clay work, the school offered life drawing classes by Taranaki painter Michael Smither, and sculptor Chris Booth had an enthusiastic group working with him. After field trips to gather materials, this group made moulds in silica sand they had had trucked in. The bronze pouring from

Chris's portable vacuum-cleaner powered diesel forge was spectacular and popular, particularly at night. The cast bronze was then incorporated into other natural materials.

This school was the first big one for *The Quarry* which was founded by Yvonne Rust in the 1970s. It has always functioned as a work place for artists, but much of its activity centered on training the young in the crafts under *PEP* schemes until they were axed by the government last year. The pottery and studios housed in unusual H shaped soil-cement and wood buildings are being rented to artists and craft workers. At present 3 painters, 3 potters, a leather worker, weaver and landscape gardeners work from *The Quarry*. Yvonne is hoping some who attended the school might return to work fulltime.

*The Quarry* is already running pottery classes and this year students from

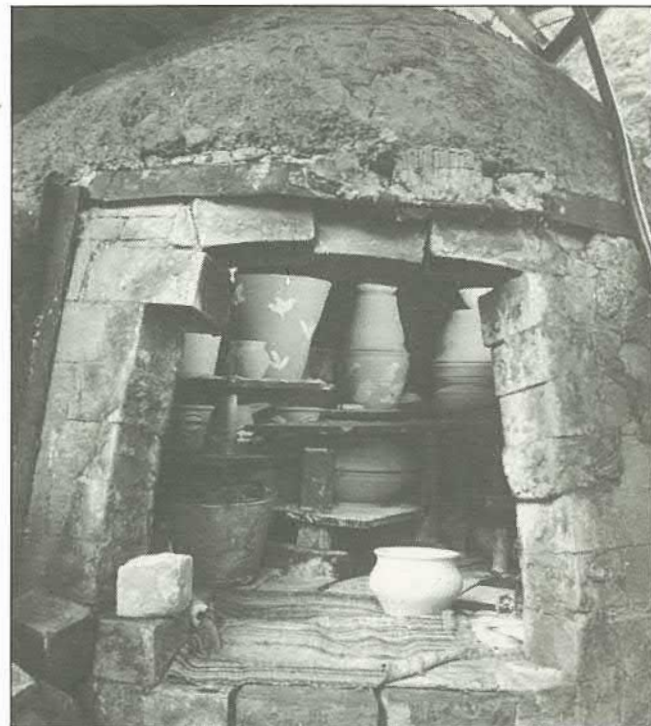
Sculptors Graeme North, left, of Whangarei Heads and Chris Booth pour molten bronze into moulds pressed into silica sand. The day-time and spectacular after-dark pourings drew large crowds.

Photos by Jon Anderson

One of the two all-night West coast coal firings.

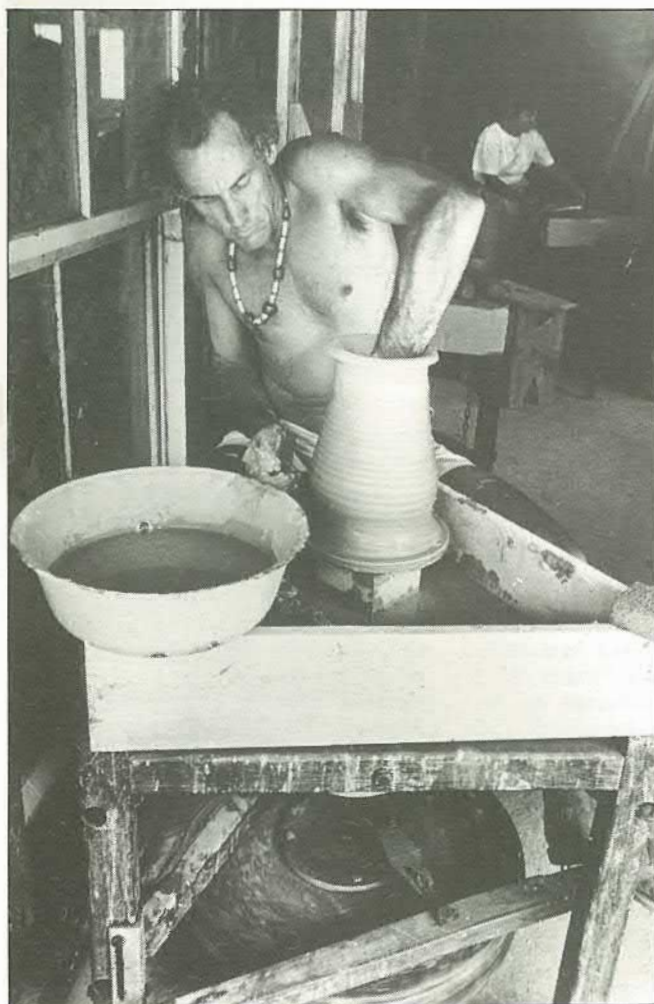


Kerikeri sculptor Chris Booth checks the state of molten bronze in his portable forge. The bronze, an alloy of tin and copper, is brought to 1125°C before being poured.



Loading the 70 cubic metre kiln with terracotta ware.

Roger Ewer from the West Coast works on part of a garden vase.



Paul Pritchard, a fulltime Quarry potter and summer school tutor, works on a terracotta planter.



Painter Michael Smither takes time out from life drawing classes.

Chris Booth and Murchison clay sculptor Jenny Doole erect one of Chris's works for the accompanying exhibition. "Raft, Te Pahi Island" incorporates a bronze sail cast on Te Pahi Island and lashed to a manuka raft. This work commemorates the murder of Te Pahi and family by whalers in 1809.



# THE FLETCHER CHALLENGE

(PREVIOUSLY FLETCHER BROWNUILT)

## POTTERY AWARD 1987

IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
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### ★ Closing Date

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### ADDRESS THE PACKAGE TO:

The Competition Organiser,  
Auckland Studio Potters Centre,  
95 Captain Springs Road Extension,  
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This award is being made annually to encourage excellence in ceramics in New Zealand by Fletcher Challenge in association with the Auckland Studio Potters (Inc.).

### ★ The Work

This year each potter is invited to submit one entry for the 1987 Pottery Award. There will be no category or theme. Each entry will be judged on excellence.

### ★ The Award

The Judge will seek one outstanding winning entry for which an award of \$NZ5,000 cash will be made. A limited number of Certificates of Merit will be awarded at the Judge's discretion.

# BARRY BRICKELL

By Jon Anderson, Northland

New Zealanders are basically a lazy bunch letting too many opportunities slip by, according to master potter Barry Brickell.

Barry said during a terracotta summer school at Whangarei's Northland Craft Trust Quarry in late January that people were thinking too much of the fast buck and moaning about how hard done by they were.

The potter from Driving Creek in the Coromandel cited examples of where the country was missing out — the export of clay as a raw material and the reluctance of pottery manufacturers to draw on craft knowledge.

"There is a vast deposit of the world's whitest china clay at Matauri Bay in Northland and we have been exporting it to Japan in increasing quantities each year. Now it is coming back as imported Japanese porcelain.

Why don't we do something about this? It is typical. I think we are bloody lazy, we are too well fed. We need to be more inventive."

For a country with a history of innovation New Zealand was today losing too many opportunities because the people with the ideas "are not being listened to", he said.

"For example, New Zealand was among the foremost countries in steam locomotive design between 1910 and 1930. It was the case of the right people in the right job. And that does not seem to be happening today."

His second bone of contention was the need for crafts people to be used in industry.

"I think industry has a lot to learn if it wants to be progressive. Industry needs to be leading rather than trailing public taste and that's where craftspeople come in. They are deeply involved in public taste."

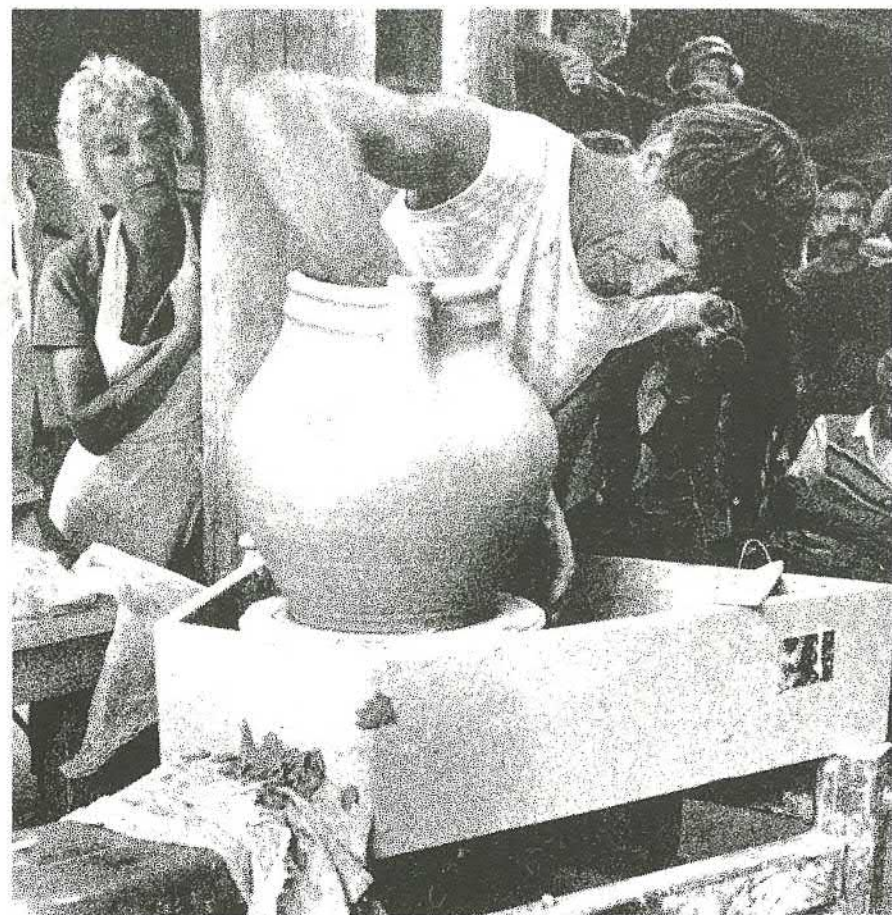
Barry said he was not decrying industrial-manufactured pottery.

"The people need 10,995 million cups, saucers and plates. But at the same time you need something to complement it like crafted work."

He believes New Zealand could offer something unique on world markets. To this end he would like to work with industry on design and has already approached Crown Lynn. "But at the moment they are not interested. Somebody else might be."

He said he was "tinkering" with pots he

Photo by Jon Anderson



believed could be produced for overseas but this was in its early stages.

"It is hard to get someone to listen. They all complain about GST, the political system, going out of business or unemployment."

During his eight days as a tutor at The Quarry he touched on other issues — the resurgence of the crafts and associated means of training people, and his own desire to get on with his work.

"The state of pottery and clay work in the Western world is shocking. Since the industrial revolution there has been this emphasis on academia. But not everyone is academic and you find those with a craft in their hands have a better humour about life. I believe it is changing and people are asking to be taught. Look at this school for example."

Barry said he had noticed the same in his travels in the United States, Australia and Spain.

"In Barcelona the young people are beginning to study the old potters and realising just how beautiful the work was. But where do they learn?"

"For a start I believe the education system has to do something. And until it does we are going to have a lot of unsatisfied people."

As for schools like The Quarry "Do", Barry is rather critical.

"I have an increasing belief that these so-called workshops don't achieve very much in my terms. However, they might in someone else's terms in a social sense. They are really not much better than an amusement centre. You are paid to come because you are a recognised expert in your field, but it makes you into some sort of guru. I don't want that. I'd sooner get on with the job and let my work do the talking. This is my last school, but mind you, I said that at the previous school in the United States."

To Barry the master-apprentice system seems to be the only way to pass on detailed knowledge and discipline. He also believes in starting young.

"If you are going to be a good thrower it's a great advantage to start about 12 years old. I started about then."

Though advocating training, Barry wonders if there comes a time when teaching can be left to others.

"Maybe the solution is that at a certain stage of your development you do that (teach), but as you get on perhaps you are justified in living a hermit's existence. If you cannot concentrate on your own work to the exclusion of almost all else, how are you going to end up with something magnificent, really fine? I've trained a lot of people so perhaps I am now justified in getting on with it."

To this end Barry says he operates his own studio well away from the phone. He also does work on commission and restricts visitors to lunchtime and in the evening.

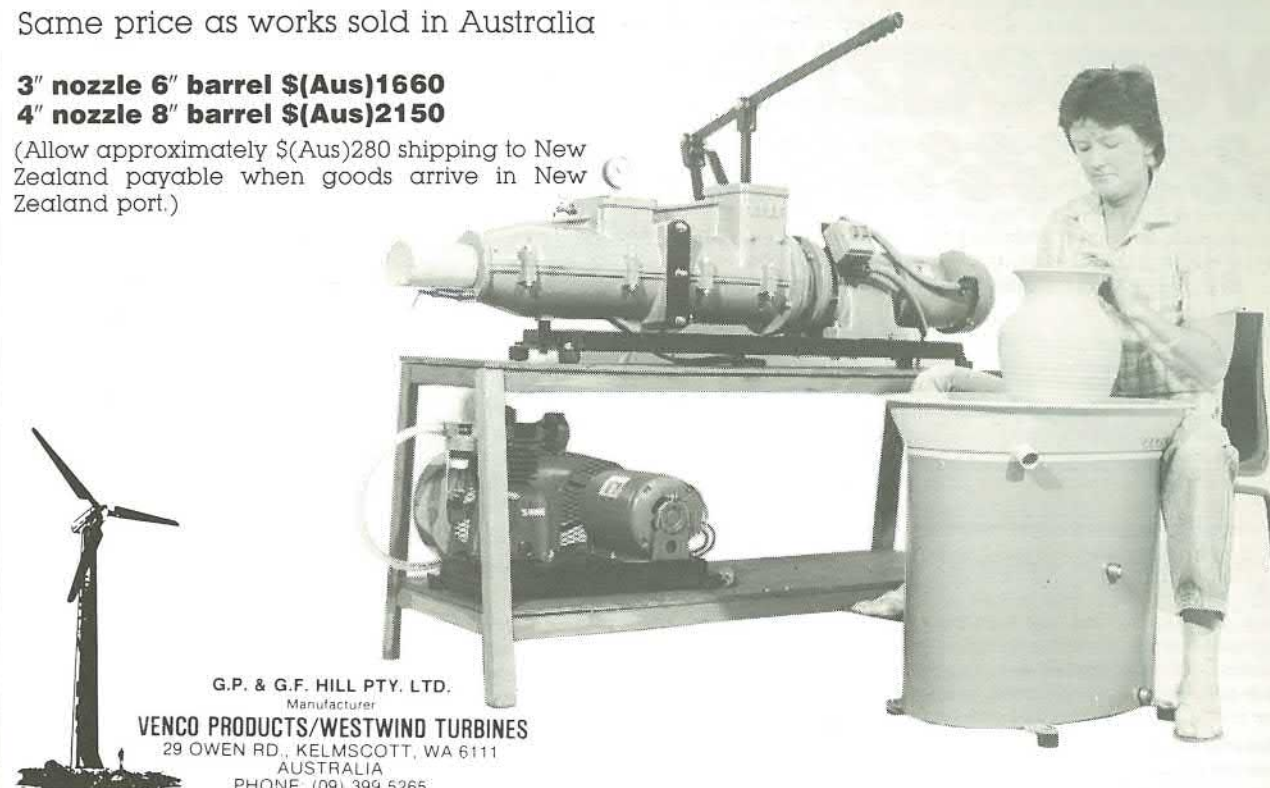
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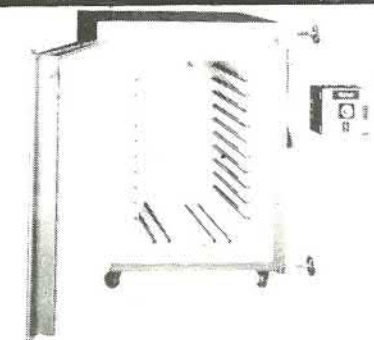


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# overseazure

By Barry Brickell, Coromandel

The diary of a travel grant awardee visiting the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Spain, France and the USA, during the Northern Hemisphere summer of 1986, with an emphasis on ceramics. A series of three articles for the *NZ Potter*.

## Part I.

### Introduction, England first impressions, Arabia Pottery Factory, Finland.

Although this was in fact my fourth overseas trip, I had never contemplated overseas travel during my earlier years as a potter. In fact the reverse; a stubborn advocate of staying at home, getting on with the job and gaining that irreplaceable asset called work-experience, together with a well-grounded knowledge of one's own country.

To this very day, I still believe that to dispatch young people overseas can have the effect of promoting their *national inferiority complex* in the realm of arts and crafts. For cultural development, it is commendable for a colonial society to look studiously and reflectively at not only its own roots, but also the culture of the people of the land. The things that make our country unique and valuable to the world at large are very positive and deserve to be known about. It is these things that we should be exporting.

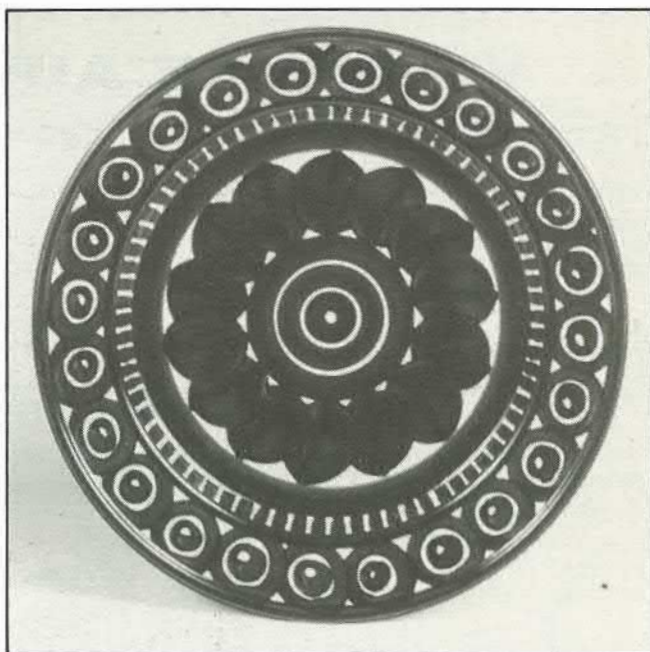
My recent overseas trip was the direct result of an invitation by the ceramics department of the *Northern Arizona University* (USA) to attend their *Clay Az Art* symposium at Helsinki, June 1986, and later, to build a coal-fired salt glazing kiln on their campus at Flagstaff. In July of the previous year, the *Clay Az Art* symposium, organised by the University's Art Gallery director, Joel Eide, was held in Rotorua, the venue being at the suggestion of Mark Chadwick, of Rotorua. Here, Don Bendel, professor in charge of the University's ceramics department and some well known exponents of contemporary American sculptural ceramics such as Peter Voulkos, Jim Leedy and Bruce Howdle gave demonstrations the audacity of which shocked some of the local audience. Slide shows were also given, one of which I was invited to present. The following year's venue in Helsinki, Finland, was at the well-known Arabia Pottery Factory.

In order to attend this symposium as well as undertake the kiln job at Flagstaff, I requested advice on travel concessions and was offered one of the four travel awards granted annually by the *QE II Arts Council/Air NZ*. The long flight was made pleasant by the hostesses and the services — the final leg over the Atlantic being greatly enhanced by an arranged visit to the flight deck of the Boeing 747 to learn from the flight engineer about its interesting technical workings. I was also able to witness the marvellous spectacle of the sun rising over the fluorescent icy vastness of Greenland, an unforgettable sight.

Being met by my cousin and a friend at London's Gatwick airport and driven to her home was a wonderful relief for a raw colonial such as myself. The late May greens of the English summer were about as vivid as our parkscapes here. The solidity of all that mass of conservative brick urban housing is a contrast to our spaced-out, highly variegated bungalow approach. I suffered no jet-lag and enjoyed an evening walk through an English common, Peckham Rye, to an English pub and cafe with my friend, but got mildly lost on my way home.

With about a week in London, acclimatising before the trip to Helsinki, I soon learned how to use the Underground to get lost among the incredible manscape, vertically and horizontally in that confusion called London. "You're not doing bad, hermit from the hills of Coromandel," I had to keep on telling myself.

I checked out my mural at *Waitaki International's* London office and



A sample of Arabia hand-painted "Valencia" ware. 1786

at last got a chance to make a note of its ditties about our sheep and cattle which I had failed to do before it left home in 1982. Tramped miles visiting libraries searching books on topics such as Western history of terracotta, majolica, the effects of the Industrial Revolution and the retort process of wood carbonisation. Not allowed to spend time on train books I told myself, but did sneak off to the odd steam engine and maritime museum and learned how to find the music concert halls and chambers for essential evening enrichment.

I booked my passage to Helsinki by train, boat, train, boat, train and boat lasting four days. This gave me a rail-side glimpse of Holland, West Germany and Denmark from the roomette of the fast, comfortable express. I spent time in Copenhagen and Stockholm en route to Helsinki, checking museums and galleries and shops for ceramic work old and new. There is a great and recent proliferation of ceramic murals and sculptures in many modern buildings.

Ulla Viotta of Sweden, whom I was to meet at the symposium, is one of the better known clay artists with her very energetic use of textures, organic compositions and often large scale. Alev Siesbye of Copenhagen makes the most beautiful bowl forms I have ever seen; at last, a potter (ceramist) echoing the Danish tradition of highly sophisticated furniture design. One of my aims was to discover the reality of the various labels called "Scandinavian design".

I strolled about the pleasant pedestrian-only central part of Copenhagen searching for pottery and found some good work including a well-thrown salt-glazed jug which I purchased. Much of the pottery was almost platonic in its sophistication and high degree of finish. The two manufacturers of porcelain, *Royal Copenhagen* and *Bing & Grøndahl*, both have splendidly appointed multi-storey shops near each other, their products being fine white-bodied stoneware with impeccable glazes and a great range of designs.

Factory, owned by the *Arabia Nuutajarvi Company*, is sited conveniently near Helsinki at the end of a tram route (yes, real street trams) but the name *Arabia* does not imply any connection with Arabian traditional ceramics.

The *Arabia* Factory is a shining example of Finnish industry, management and design. The original 9-storey block is now used for administration, including the artists' studios, display galleries and sales department, museum and cafeterias. Everything is well appointed and meticulously clean. The *University of Industrial Arts* has also been given a home there after having to move from an old building in Helsinki. The pottery factory started production in 1874 under Swedish control with the objective of gaining access to the Russian market, but total Finnish control did not eventuate until 1916.

Today the factory turns out high quality domestic and sanitary ware and a small quantity of translucent porcelain while another plant manufactures sanitary stoneware and special industrial bricks for chemical works. Since 1947, *Arabia* has belonged to the *Wartsila* organisation, which also has shipbuilding and engineering interests.

I was most interested in their translucent porcelain *rice ware* as it seems that very little true porcelain is presently being manufactured in

the West. Resembling some Oriental porcelain in its great refinement, the rice ware contains decoratively placed cavities filled with feldspathic glaze. Some of the production stoneware is hand-decorated by ladies who follow standard patterns executed by the design staff, but individually signed on the underside. I brought back samples of both these types of ware. The cobalt blue is to my mind a little too harsh for us in the Southern Hemisphere with our clear, unpolluted light, I jokingly explained.

Of greatest interest to potters, however, is *Arabia's* unique symbiosis with its individual studio clay artists. Pride in Finland's only ceramic enterprise led the company's director in 1932, to engage some full-time artists in the design department. "It is one of the tasks of industry to provide the artist with vehicles of expression" said Carl Herlitz, in 1948 at the opening of the company's ceramic museum. "The artist shall enjoy full freedom to develop individuality within the boundaries of technical possibilities."

During the forties, individual work of the *Arabia* ceramic artists was exhibited throughout Europe, the acclaim from which purportedly boosted the name and sales of the production ware. However, owing to increasing management emphasis on production ware, a gradual separation of the art department on the top floor, from the factory, has been taking place. Since the completion of the artists' studios in 1944, the artists have been less involved in production work while their present role is in making unique pieces. In 1951 a special kiln was installed for their use. The artists are fully supported by the company and they are free to make use of the factory's technical know-how and materials. Although this arrangement is a cost to the company, it brings that needed touch of prestige to the company as well as to Finland. Most appropriately, the question is now being asked as to how much input the artists should be having into the factory production side, which is a separate activity.

The designers have their own department on the third floor and work closely with the factory staff. It would not be easy, according to the management, to put into practice a system "assignment oriented with a fine mechanism and constantly flexible". Myself, I believe it has to come in time. The commercial world is driving civilised humanity slowly towards a natural reaction in which use and appreciation of craft and human talents is more highly valued. In fact, it has taken commerce, since the Industrial Revolution, to increase human awareness and enable some very important stocktaking to be done on this level. I admire the example that Finland's *Arabia* has been setting; we have good reason to attempt it here in the nearest future.

While in Finland, I took the opportunity to study the subject of Finnish glassmaking. As with the ceramics activity, I have to ask why it

was and is, that in a country so bereft of essential raw materials, these industries arose and are so important today. It seems that the huge wood fuel resources of Finnish forests, and the possibility of fresh markets, were incentives for the glassworkers, but *Arabia* has always imported almost all its raw materials for ceramic manufacture. The geology of the Nordic countries is mainly granitic and during the migration of the ice sheet after the last ice-age, virtually all clay materials have been transported south, leaving the granitic basement rock exposed on the surface. Some feldspar and silica are mined in Finland and at North Cape, the northern tip of Norway, is a source of high potash nepheline syenite.

Finnish business acumen, centrality to markets and water transport seem important reasons for *Arabia's* success, and of course, the much vaunted commodity "Finish design" is a promotion tactic the like of which is an envy to many other countries. To my raw colonial eye, there is no lack of *zeit* in Scandinavia; professionalism is the key word. (See article to come, in *Craft NZ* magazine.)

The three-day *Clay Az Art* symposium at the *Arabia* complex turned out to be a dialogue mainly between Scandinavians and Americans. About 20 American ceramists were represented of which five were invited to make works in clay. All the Nordic countries were represented and Norwegian Arne Ase (formerly professor of ceramics, Oslo, *National College of Arts and Crafts*) demonstrated his interesting research and work with water soluble salts as ceramic colouring agents in fine porcelain pre-fired bodies. (A book on this subject is presently in preparation.) The demonstrations served well as a communication aid and the Scandinavians were impressed with the spontaneous, powerful and "disrespectful" manner in which the Americans handled their clay. The Americans, however, indicated their respect for the Scandinavian approach to craft and design excellence, noting their sympathetic treatment of the material and the conscientiousness of their workmanship, leaving little to chance. The organisers had prepared a schedule of slide shows and lectures, ten of the participants including myself, being invited. Among these was Rudi Autio, Finnish-born American ceramist.

Tapio Yli-Viikari, head of the *Arabia* studio Art Department acted as our very willing guide, host, interpreter and organiser. He made our visit most pleasant and informative. Bob Shay who was artist-in-residence at the 1985 Wellington Arts Festival also presented a slide show as did Don Bendel ceramics professor at *Northern Arizona University*, who will be remembered from the Rotorua symposium of 1985. Japanese-born American ceramics professor John Takehara, *Boise State University*, Idaho, also showed slides of his individual wheel-thrown pots.

▼ *Arabia Ceramics Museum*





*Stainless steel monument to Sebelius, Helsinki. By Ella Hiltunen, 1967*

A sense of fun, audacity and energy coupled with a kind of soul-searching philosophy characterised the American work and presentations. **Don Bendel** gave a light-hearted but informative synopsis of contemporary American studio ceramics, **Frank Boyden** of Oregon illustrated drawing and painting on clay surfaces, and discussed the use of the rare earth metal oxides as colourants. From Finland, **Anna Maria Osipow** showed slides of a variety of modern Finnish ceramics.

In my own presentation, I attempted to give a general synopsis of the variety of claywork and sculpture in contemporary New Zealand but was aware that my collection of slides had some major gaps in it. I was concerned to introduce Maori approaches to sculpture and design as well as the effects of international "art" trends upon our work, and to give some idea of our lifestyles. A lot of interest was shown in our environment, climate and social attitudes towards artists.

I formed an impression that Northern Hemisphere people are not as free to follow their own personal whims with clayworking as they would perhaps like to be; the competitive element for success is ever present and their vision of an idyllic, free lifestyle varies with political and economic stability. I was rather amused at the positive reaction to the slides I introduced for "comic relief" — scenes on my narrow-gauge railway set in tree-fern green bush. **Tapio Yli-Viikari** had organised the projection equipment well and I was also able to show the film by **Lynton Diggle** of my coal-fired salt-glazing kiln and pots of 1967, as well as a video film *Treasures of the Land* depicting four craftspeople of Aotearoa associated with a travelling exhibition presently in USA, sponsored by *Foreign Affairs Department*.

Amassing a good and representative collection of slides has proved to be difficult. Even my own records are patchy and evidently this goes for most folk who are heavily involved in their work. While I was able to draw upon the *Art Council's* slide archives and some from the *Craft Council*, for my presentations, I was aware of many gaps. It would be marvellous for overseas-bound people involved in cultural matters, to have access to a comprehensive, central bank of material. I have always advocated the idea of a travelling arts and crafts archivist whose business it is to record contemporary work throughout the country. May I dare once again, compare sporting and cultural activities in New Zealand — the overseas image has to change; cultural sponsorship is no longer a poor investment. Sports patronage by large commercial firms is well known. They have also of late, been buying works of art for investment, but perhaps the time has now come for direct commercial involvement in such things as art archives.

While in Helsinki, I arranged to visit some of the local potters after

the three-day symposium. **Erkki Stenius**, who attended, showed me his large electric kiln situated under the family house. It was a hot sunny day, but during the bitter winters the kiln helps to keep the house warm. Erkki makes a living from his pottery and has a jigger and jolly apparatus rigged up for plate-making as well as a wheel for throwing. Like all potters in Scandinavia, he has to buy his clay from an agent, ready prepared. The only local clay is a rather coarse terracotta formed from weathered glacial detritus material.

I also enjoyed a very pleasant visit to the studio/display room in a fine old stone barn, of **Jaap Borgers** and his pottery partner **Pike**, set in rural south Finland. The landscape reminded me of Southland; low rolling hills partly covered in forest (larch, fir, deciduous species); wide valleys, their cereal crops being harvested, with huge old wooden, tile-roofed barns scattered about in clusters. It was inconceivable to me that this area, so mildly warm, yellow and bright green, could be engulfed in metres of snow with permafrost most of the year. No wonder the barns are so huge, to house the stock and their winter feed and the intense harvesting activity while the warm weather lasts.

All terracotta bricks, tiles and outdoor pieces have to be well fired and more or less vitrified to withstand the frost action. Ingenious systems of insulation are used in walls and ceilings of older wooden houses and designs of wood-burning heat-storing stoves with large tiled sides are traditional. During the winter, Jaap and Pike move south to Holland to pot, but their love of the Finnish countryside around the old rural settlement of Favervik always lures them back for the summers.

Individual craft pottery as we know it is a comparatively recent development in Finland and perhaps in the Nordic countries, to my surprise. The work lacks the sophistication which I expected to see. The more professional ceramic artists (as it is right to term them) do indeed produce sophisticated work, some of it very design-conscious, but they tend to operate on a commission basis, being linked with commercial design companies which seem to flourish. Professionalism is a key concept in this branch of the culture, but there is a gap on the superbly laid-out shelves and displays of the craft and utilities shops that line Pohjoisesplanadi, Helsinki's "Queen Street". The "animated" pot as we know it here, seems to be missing.

Before leaving Helsinki, a return to the clay body preparation department of *Arabia* proved to me to be the last word in modern technology and industrial design at work. From the bulk raw material storage bins, right through to the slip-casting and plaster-forming areas of the factory, everything was electronically controlled, automated and fully accessible to viewing on closed circuit television

monitoring screens. Little or nothing is left to chance, and instant fine adjustments can be made to the prepared material as it passes through the system. A well-appointed testing laboratory is linked to the processing department. The mind boggles at what a technically minded ceramic artist, who has a fine knowledge of clay mineralogy, bodies and glazes, as well as a strong "art" sense could get up to in that place.

After a rewarding week or so in Helsinki, I moved north on my *Nordrail* pass, staying at pre-arranged student hotels, comfortable and cheap at this time of the year during summer vacation. I visited two important glass museum-studio complexes and various art museums and galleries.

The *Sara Hilden Art Museum* at Tampere was a delight, restful, not too much data, nice sculpture park, some actually emotive paintings and a few hellishly well-designed pots; made one do comparison sums with dear old homeland, down under. Coffee at the top of a 500 metre tower with the kind of revolving restaurant and view that Auckland will have to have one day.

I left Finland, passing by rail through North Sweden (change of gauge from Russian broad to European standard) at Kemi, top of the Gulf of Bothnia, then over the marvellous iron ore railway via Kiruna, down the arm of a fiord with spectacular engineering, to Narvik on the Norwegian coast, and well into the Arctic Circle. My rather tight schedule precluded my meeting potters for the next few remaining days in Scandinavia, but the art and culture museums made up for this.

The Viking period, in its extraordinary accomplishment in wood craft and maritime activity has a strong parallel with Polynesia. Of course this must be parallel evolution, nevertheless it served to deepen my appreciation of Maori culture and what was achieved. The climax in wooden architecture and relief carving appeared to me in the form of the great Heddal *stave* church near Notodden, mid-Norway. It contains richly carved panels, lintels and poles with much curvilinear and some geometric designs, reminding me of the inside of traditional Maori meeting houses. The term *stave* refers to the panel-like method of construction of these old churches. This fine, tall, multiple-spired, shingle-roofed building dates back to 1250. With my notebook, I made sketches of some of the carved designs and obtained booklets to bring back home. I am always interested in patterns and designs, with a view to translating them into clay. I visited two other *stave* churches and chanced across a potter in the process. He was enjoying a quiet, cool white wine during the firing of his fibre-lined bottle gas stoneware kiln as I walked by, and stopped. We managed to converse about the similarity of our lifestyles. His specialty was porcelain portraits.

Mostly there is no problem about being understood in Scandinavia because English is the chief tourist language. Finnish is a language

unlike other tongues and is difficult to pick up, I found, mainly because of the habit of running several words together into long, awkward ones. Museums and galleries often print information in more than one language, usually including English and the quality of the publications is very high.

The final few days in Norway were the climax; actually so, when one hot, fine Sunday I joined an Australian girl in sharing a taxi after the ferry trip across the Stavanger harbour. We did an energetic three hour tramp and climb to Pekestolen (preaching pulpit) a famous granite table mountain top over two thousand feet vertically above the fiord below. Wonderful scenery with that standard Northern Hemisphere blue haze, stunted pines, semi-alpine shrubbery (not unlike our own) and lots of white-skinned people, old and young, toiling quietly (no transistors) in their quest to get fit before the cold sets in. Scandinavians do not greet you verbally, one gives a nod; I suspect no one knows which language to use.

The railways of Norway are superbly engineered through all that rugged granite terrain and I could write a chapter on this alone. The trains are clean, comfortable and reasonably punctual and the conductors are courteous and helpful. Norway is a very physical country and I loved this aspect after the tameness of other places; it reminded me more of home.

In the highly picturesque city of Bergen one can savour the old wooden architecture of a preserved harbourside trading settlement. The woodcraftsmanship is magnificent and the multi-storied buildings are constructed like ships with great timber knees for strength. Woodworking is a tradition handed down from the Vikings and the souvenir shops contain many "artefacts" relevant to this. I struggle to bring in pottery here largely because I saw very little apart from some cheap lead-glazed tourist items.

In conclusion, I have to mention how important it is while on overseas trips, to make previous arrangements for meeting people at their work places. I felt rather deficient in this respect as almost the only Scandinavian clayworkers I met were at the Helsinki symposium. I have always found it difficult to promote myself and to be sociable and can only hope that my impressions, as given, are some sort of recompense.

In terms of one's work, I continue to hold to the belief that new directions and stimuli are best provided by one's own experiences, catalysed by one's own personal work/experience and tempered by observations. It is difficult while on an overseas trip, to gain real experience; one is forced to become a piece of computerised blotting paper. You can only sort it all out after you have returned home back to the workshop. What you think has impressed you the most, often ends up as trivial in your work and the converse is equally true.

*Thomas Emmerson of Walla Walla, Washington, USA, demonstrating at the symposium at Arabia.*



# THE BURIED ARMY



## We Did It Our Way The Reconstruction of the Discovery in the Pit

By Bronwynne Cornish, Auckland

When *Outreach* first asked me to suggest a proposal in conjunction with the *Qin Shihuang Buried Army* show, I was at a bit of a loss until I had the bright idea of recreating the discovery of the terracotta warriors by a Chinese peasant digging a well in his field.

There were many times in the following months when I wondered if it had been such a bright idea!

Having written up the proposal and had it accepted I then approached Sarah McKenney and Dean Oxborough to help me with the construction, as I knew they had both done figurative work in the past. They were keen to be involved and after some initial discussion, Dean decided to tackle the warriors' bodies and Sarah the horses' heads, leaving me to do the soldiers' heads and hands and the co-ordination of the project.

As there was no single space large enough for us to work together, we worked individually in our own studios. Reference material was mainly photographs as at this stage we had not seen the real thing — in fact it was not until we had finished our figures that we saw the originals.

We settled on a *Samian* terracotta body, to be painted with a white slip at the leather-hard stage. This would pick up the soft effects of the wood firing, and was also how the Chinese ones were made.

I found actually building the heads quite difficult and remade the first one numerous times — it always came out with the same cruel expression! The second head was easier, and more serene, while the third gave me even fewer problems. I supposed by the time I'd reached number 7000, I could have done it with my eyes closed.

The completed works were transported up to Albany to be fired by us in Ian Smail's two-chambered wood fired kiln with a Bourry fire-box, though none of us had fired this kiln before. Fortunately Dean's father, Peter Ox-



Dean Oxborough, left and friends carry a warrior torso from the kiln.

'Outreach' is a Community Workshop facility, funded by the Auckland City Council.

Photos by Max Walls  
Bronwynne Cornish



borough turned up to help with the nervewracking job of loading and he ensured that the initial stages of the firing went smoothly. We proceeded with great caution and on day one never went above 100°C. That night we left the kiln drip feeding on gas and got some sleep.

Day two began with us realising we couldn't stay at that temperature for ever so we began to push it up towards 200°C, ears straining for that potters' nightmare, the muffled boom — and we heard a couple. This is when you wish for a glass-fronted kiln!

Gradually the kiln climbed up to 600°C, struck there for 3 hours, then began dropping back, to 520°C. Despair set in at 1.30am. Dean rang Peter for advice, Sarah went to bed and we continued the struggle, changing the firing pattern gradually — made some progress and by 4.30am the second chamber was ready for side stoking.

The next trauma was opening the kiln after it had cooled, something I always like to avoid. Dean and Sarah were keen so down came the first bricks. Sighs of relief. Everything looked reasonably whole and nicely toasted. The clay body had held up.

Max Walls and Howard Williams turned up as we were unloading and took photos of the 2,500 year old horses and warriors — newly made, Kiwi style.

Next came the best part, the assemblage of the fired pieces in the pit dug in the gardens of *Outreach*. I was very pleased with the final result, to see the horses and warriors back in the ground as the originals had been found. I often thought of those former craftsmen and women while I was working, and now feel I'm somehow connected to them.

We have our own little piece of China at *Outreach* to remind us of the fantastic show of the *Buried Army*, thanks to all those people who were involved in making this project a success.



Terracotta warriors in the wood-fired kiln.

Photo by Peter Oxborough

Terracotta warriors and horses permanently sited in pit at Outreach, Ponsonby. Photo by Peter Oxborough.



# SUMMER SCHOOL OF THE ARTS — WANGANUI COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By Ann Ambler-Woodroffe, Wayby

Photos by Ann Ambler-Woodroffe

I travelled a circuitous route to Wanganui. Cecilia Parkinson and I drove from Auckland on a hot, cloudy, humid day and faced blue skies and clear air at Awakino, a small settlement on the coast north of New Plymouth. So much for travelling without a map! But, what a bonus. The Mokau coast is stunning with river estuaries and small inland harbour settlements. We turned inland at Waitara to see Mt Taranaki encircled in billowing white cloud with just the tip emerging, a perfect snow clad cone. Fujiyama san has nothing on our own Mt. Taranaki!

I stayed at the Quaker Settlement on the outskirts of Wanganui about 7km from the College. It is very comfortable with a peaceful atmosphere. The accommodation is dormitory style, with a shady courtyard, large lounge, piano, library and communal kitchen. I felt I was really staying in someone's home rather than a hostel. The preparing of meals gave us all a chance to get to know each other and exchange impressions of the School.

I was unable to gain a place in the Jeff Mincham workshop, as it was fully booked, so elected to attend as an observer. The focus is quite different when in this role, as one is not intimately involved in a specific subject. The broad impression of the location, facilities and tutorship was one of excellence.

The professionalism of the organisation by Lynn Kelly and Ko Sonnoy, administration assistants, and John Scott, Director of the College, plus the quality of experienced tutors — among the best in each field — made a dynamic and exciting School.



John Scott at the bronze furnace

Students seemed to be working with a dedicated spirit in order to gain the most from their time. Not to say that there was no fun, just that those involved in each course seemed very committed to spending their time productively. I think people respond intuitively in this way when they are offered the best.

The Wanganui Community College is set in grounds with old shady trees and the buildings have been designed around this established site. Low-slung rooms of stained wood and red roofs interlaced with shrub-filled courtyards give a warm, human perspective. There is nothing institutional about it. The environment is harmonious and the tranquility conducive to creativity, which was evident this summer.

The new glass-blowing studio is very impressive and is directed by Tony Kuepfer who had three separate groups of four students throughout the course.

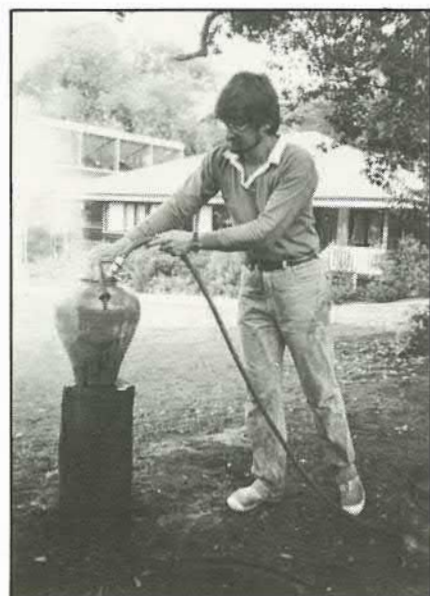
The bronze-casting and pottery workshops overlapped when the demand for gas pressure in kilns and furnace was high, so it was easy to see Jeff Mincham and David Mune, both from Australia, and John Crawford and John Scott working with their students. It was intriguing to see established artists trying a different medium — potters doing glass or bronze, finding enormous satisfaction in translating their skills to another dimension. If one could not pursue a first choice of workshop and took the opportunity to try something new, the basic disciplines still held.

Visual Diaries with Carole Shephard produced some very rich, colourful, intimate books, some too personal to be on general display. Those that I saw were quite special and very moving.

Malcolm Harrison had a large class bent over sewing machines, making very individual and eye-catching quilts and they were obviously delighted by their efforts. It is great to see people blossoming as they enjoy newly found skills. This feeling pervaded all areas of study.

Phillip Trusttum had no spare space on floor or wall in the newly finished art room. All was covered with paintings and still more paintings.

Warwick Freeman had the jewellery workshop studying design from com-



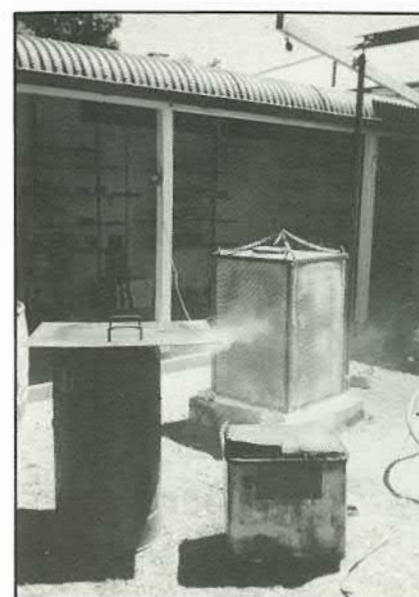
Jeff Mincham hosing down a raku pot

binations of strange and different materials in juxtaposition. The place was a jackdaw's delight, with brilliantly coloured leather, plastic, wire, shells, wood, glass, bone and shiny objects.

On a visually quieter note, Aromea Te Maipi coaxed her flax weavers to forget about cut hands and broken nails in their effort to produce some intricate and beautiful woven flax articles, using traditional designs and techniques.

Albert McCarthy introduced his group to colour and carving for Kowhaiwhai. The painted panels posed a problem for those going home by car!

Woodcarving with Rua Cribb concentrated on carving bowls and gourds. It seemed very difficult to keep the design even and balanced on a curved surface.



Jeff Mincham's gantry operated top hat raku kiln, with reduction containers in the foreground

All those studying Maori Art were offered a Marae programme and many who went told of the clear nights and early morning mists rising from the mighty Wanganui River — a place steeped in Maori history.

There were other workshops where I felt that my presence as an observer would have been an intrusion, e.g. the piano master class, painting and writing, and some of the performing arts.

My particular interest was with post-firing reduction. Rick Rudd had introduced this group to pinching and coiling small and large pieces with an emphasis on form and design. Jeff Mincham carried on using the wheel and explored a variety of firing related effects. He built a small top hat kiln from wire mesh and fibre and demonstrated vapour glazing, fuming and carbonized surfaces. Putting his own pots to the test first, he suffered some spectacular disasters before success. Thus seeing the hazards of the firing technique the students were very appreciative of their own successes. It helped me too — I didn't feel so bad about my failures!

There were plenty of social gatherings. Barbecues, Chinese Dinner, Swimming Pool Dinner and Happy Hour from 4.30 p.m. each day. Also slide shows by Jeff Mincham, Jerry Rothman (visiting from USA) and Rick Rudd. A lecture by John Scott on the Psychology of Art held everyone's attention despite the intense heat. The work gathered impetus as the School neared its conclusion. Finished work was exhibited in the library for all to view. I recommend that anyone who has an interest in any of the topics offered by the Wanganui Summer School of the Arts makes it a priority next year, as I found it a very rewarding experience.



Jeff Mincham pot ready for raku firing



Tony Kuepfer instructing students in the hot glass studio

## BOOKS

Reviewed by  
Howard S. Williams

### The Potter's Dictionary of Materials and Techniques By Frank and Janet Hamer (A & C Black, \$99.95 incl. GST)

OK, so it has a high price, but it is a very valuable book. The first edition was published in UK in 1975 — this second edition has been completely revised, updated and expanded. In particular, new developments in the field of kiln insulation are fully covered in an extended section on kilns. There is a new section on instrumentation, concerning the wide range of firing control devices, and more stringent precautions for safe workshop practice and the handling of toxic materials are detailed. Some re-writing of the original articles has been undertaken for greater clarity and there are many new line drawings and photographs.

The layout of the Dictionary is excellent, being set out as an index of key words and phrases. This gives quick access to as much, or as little information as is required on any particular topic. Each item's heading is followed by a simple dictionary type definition. Most are then followed by a short explanation and many are further expanded into detailed articles giving in-depth information accompanied by line drawings, diagrams and photographs.

All this, means that the book is ideal as a quick reference, easily understood by less experienced potters, yet it has a great deal of technical information for those

serious in their study of pottery, students or full-time professionals alike. Though the price may frighten the individual, this dictionary is easily the most comprehensive of its kind; indispensable to groups — clubs, workshops, schools, libraries. Leaving aside aesthetics, style, schools of pottery philosophy — the art and why potters make pots — here the how is fully detailed.

It covers the sources and character of materials, the behaviour of clays and glazes during forming and firing processes, forming methods and glaze construction, together with explanations of terminology and historical developments.

To find something the authors had omitted would be nit-picking — and to be nit-picky, they give, as is seems many publications do, a 4 year outdated address for the NZ POTTER!

Overall, this must be the most comprehensive work of its kind and well worth every cent of its seemingly high price.

Talking about prices — in my review of Harry Fraser's book *Ceramic Faults and their Remedies* (POTTER 28/2, 1986) due to incorrect information supplied at the time the price was given as \$39.95. It should correctly have been shown as \$68.45 incl GST. My apologies.



David Mune, left, directing a bronze pour.



# SPHERES

Southland Museum and Art Gallery Invercargill  
By Ann Bain, Invercargill

The specialist exhibition of "Spheres" was held in the Southland Museum and Art Gallery in Invercargill, 8 - 23 November 1986.

This was an invited exhibition from members of the New Zealand Society of Potters, 60 of whom expressed their ideas and expertise in this challenging subject. They were selected regionally by delegates of the NZSP.

Much interest was shown in work by Brian Gartside, Rosemary Thompson, John Crawford, Sue Knowles, Vic Evans, Jeannie van der Putten and Maureen Hunter whose large raku sphere was bought by the Southland Museum.

The pots were exceptionally well displayed by the gallery using off-white and dark blue plinths which showed them at a good viewing height. Wide variations on the theme of the sphere were exhibited as was a varied range of colours and ceramic techniques. This exhibition was enjoyed by potters and visitors alike.

Photos by Lindsay Hazley

▲ "Sphish Sphere" by Vic Evans, Nelson  
Inlaid porcelain by Jeannie van der Putten, ► Auckland

▼ Porcelain on stoneware by Julie Mair, Hastings

Abstract Sphere by Sue Knowles, Hamilton ▼



Oil Bottle, unglazed, flame-flashed, 20cm high. Lynn Spencer



**Mike and Lynn  
Spencer, Taranaki**

At 12 Potters, Remuera

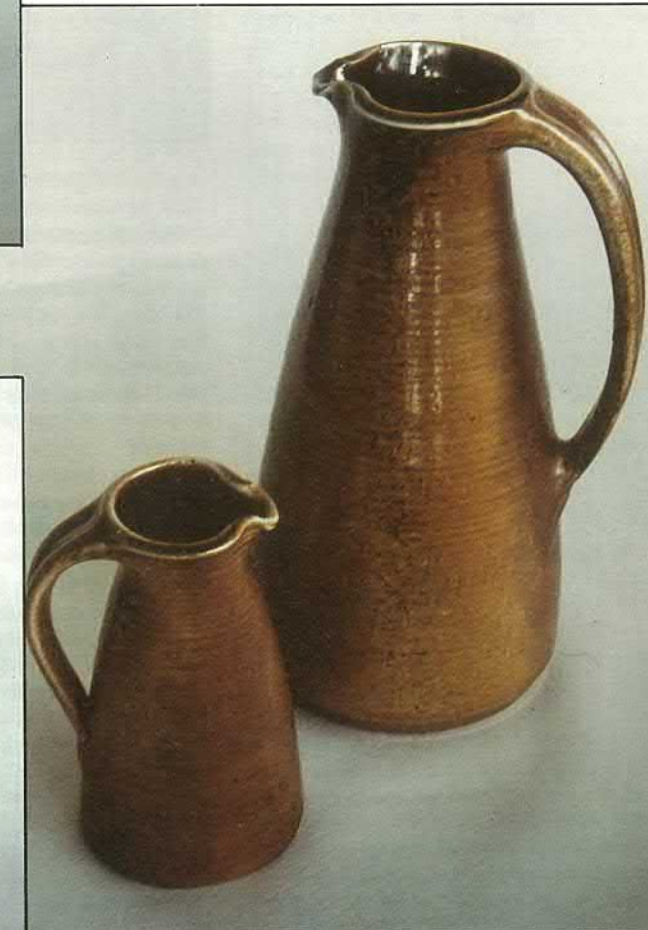
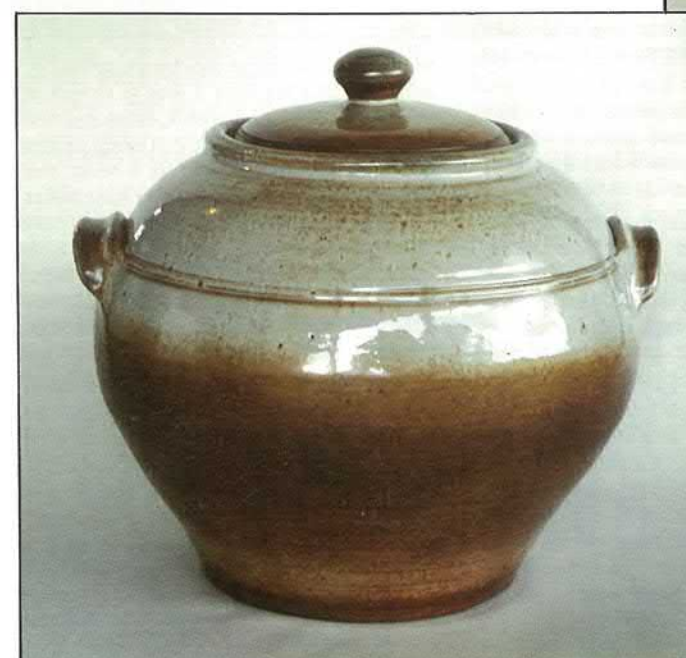
Photos by Gary Bastin



Teapots, Shino, 14 to 17cm high. Lynn Spencer

Jugs, unglazed, flame-flashed, 16 and 30cm high.  
Lynn Spencer

Storage Jar, Shino, 55cm high. Mike Spencer



# GORDON BALDWIN

## BRITISH CERAMIC SCULPTOR

By Leo King, Auckland

I have always been interested and intrigued by the work of Gordon Baldwin which was included in an exhibition of contemporary British artists entitled *"Image and Idea"* and shown at the *Auckland War Memorial Museum* in 1981.

I was fortunate to be able to meet and talk with him recently in his studio at *Eton College* near Windsor where he has taught ceramics and sculpture for the past thirty years. During this time he has also taught at the *Central School* in London.

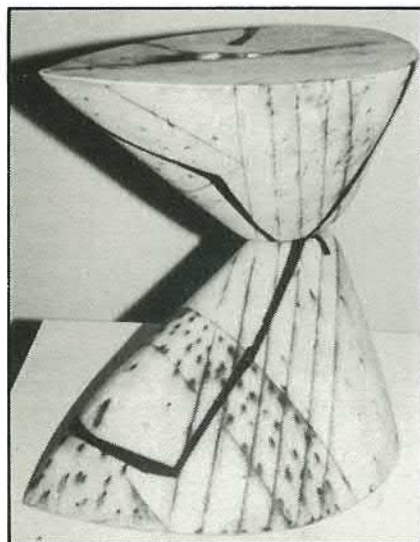
Born in the early thirties his initial training at *Lincoln Art School* included pottery. Later he moved to the *Central School* where the artistic approach was generally traditional and conservative, but where he absorbed the high standards of craftsmanship and discipline. It was here that he came under the influence of Kenneth Clark and Bill Newman, but more significantly that of Eduardo Paolozzi.

Paolozzi, described as the most volatile sculptor of the twentieth century was born in Scotland of Italian immigrant parents. He had worked with many artists including the *Surrealists* who gathered in Paris in the forties, amongst whom were Max Ernst, Magritte, Jean Arp and Dubuffet.

The artistic views of Paolozzi coincided with Baldwin's emerging rejection of the rigidly defined boundaries which existed within Art and helped to liberate his prejudices about what subject matter was acceptable within them.

Baldwin admits that experience with Paolozzi impressed him very much, not necessarily by what was done, but by the high level of activity and the energy with which it was pursued.

At Stoke-on-Trent he made contact with industrial methods and after Army service, where he used his free time to develop his interest in painting, he became a technical assistant at the *Central School*. In 1957 he moved to *Eton*.



Photos by Leo King

His present studio is quite small, somewhat crowded and situated above the ceramic and sculpture studios used by the boys. He teaches a large number and the boys have free access and are encouraged to visit the studio. While he uses this as part of his teaching method he says that the boys seldom try to copy his work.

He has worked in media other than clay, including concrete and aluminium alloy, but amongst these works the use of wood has predominated.

Although he has made domestic ware on commission and for private use, including kitchen ware, lamp bases and garden ware, he confesses that he found it unsatisfying even though he enjoyed the process of making.

The early work in clay paralleled the sculptural work in the other media, tall pieces initially with bilateral symmetry but later, as the result of a developing interest in the relationship of cylinders and planes, it became asymmetric and more abstract. He has continued to develop these ideas. Although he has made assemblages using wheel thrown and

slabbed forms, much of the work was coiled and this is the method which predominates today.

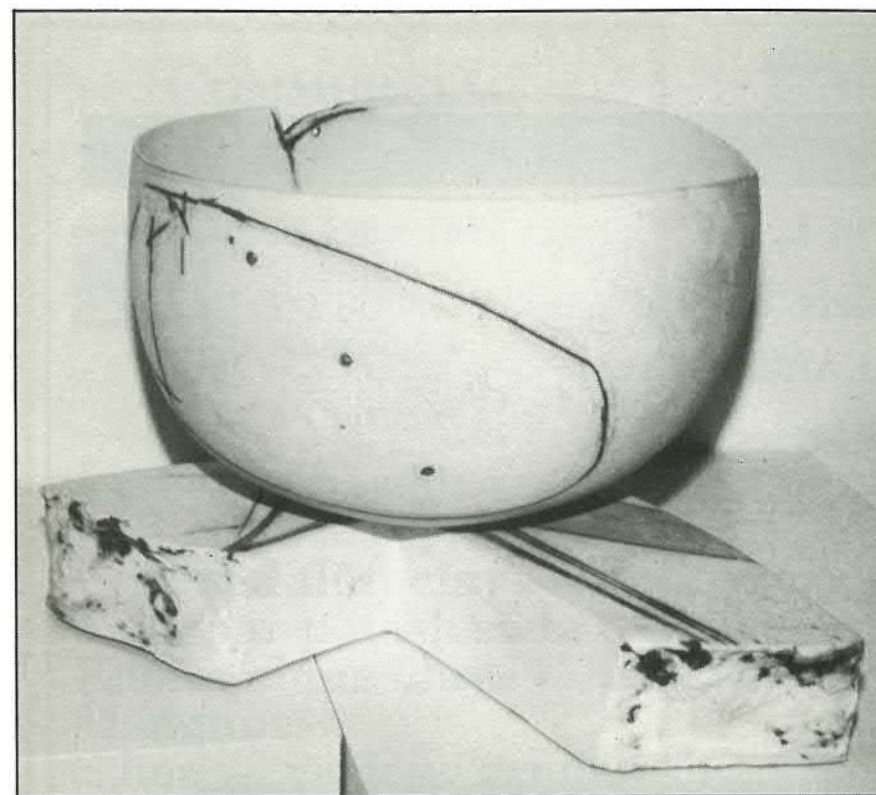
His appreciation of the value of highly glazed surfaces used in contrast with the matt dryness of slips was obvious from the start. Slips were used more and more, with oxides of copper and manganese rubbed in or applied in various ways. In this, his knowledge and affinity for the work of Hans Coper is evident.

Apart from some pieces in the studio, I viewed an exhibition of Gordon Baldwin's work at the *Solomon Gallery*, just off New Bond Street in London. This consisted of about forty pieces catalogued under indefinite headings such as *Perched Form*, *Anthropomorphic Vessel* or *Dark Bowl with Grey*, the latter being about 0.5m in diameter and height while the others ranged from 1.8 to 0.8m.

All of this work is handbuilt from extruded coils of a *Potclays* white stoneware body and paddled to an extraordinarily thin wall thickness. Freedom is allowed in the construction of each piece thereby allowing the form to grow, and develop an individual shape.

To the form is applied layers of slip which provide a matt anonymous surface to support the linear markings, colour or other surface features. Lines or stripes of varying density and width, often defined by masking tape, are applied using oxides in liquid wax which acts as a resist and consequently allows the water based slips to be applied more closely. Oxides may be rubbed into incised lines and enamels — bright pink, blue or black are used. Five or six pieces are in work at any one time and many of them are subjected to ten to twelve firings.

Baldwin uses his clay forms as a canvas, which gives rise in my mind to the speculation, is he really a sculptor or a painter? Indeed one of his early vessels at present in the collection of the *Crafts Council* (Gt Britain) is entitled *"Painting in the form of a Bowl"*. He has of course a very well developed sense of the three dimensions.



The marks on the surface of the pieces are of great importance to him and although it may appear to the contrary, each is the subject of much deliberation. Often long periods occur between firings while consideration upon their position and form is undertaken. Each mark is an event and therefore becomes a specific record which exists and is never subjected to correction or retouching.

The relationship between marks upon assembled pieces such as the perched forms is intuitive, as until they are joined it is only possible to view them supported at arm's length. In any case Baldwin would, I am sure, not wish a pre-conceived relationship. It is the aspect of chance and indeterminacy which seems to appeal to him and associates him with *Surrealism* as expressed by Arp or Magritte. Particularly the latter as the finished works demonstrate the same air of mystery and provide enough seemingly unconnected elements to provoke the viewer into seeking his own explanation.

This deliberate lack of personal statement, the anonymity and indeterminacy is further pointed up by the state of unbalance, the precariousness of the perching forms which seem unstable and about to topple. (In practice, of course, they are very stable having been joined together using a steel insert and epoxy resin in a similar fashion to that used by Coper for his late pots which were dubbed *Cycladic*.)

Baldwin's anthropomorphic pieces bear a relationship to those of Hans Coper and he admits that a knowledge of him and his work made a deep impression. He also spoke of his love of

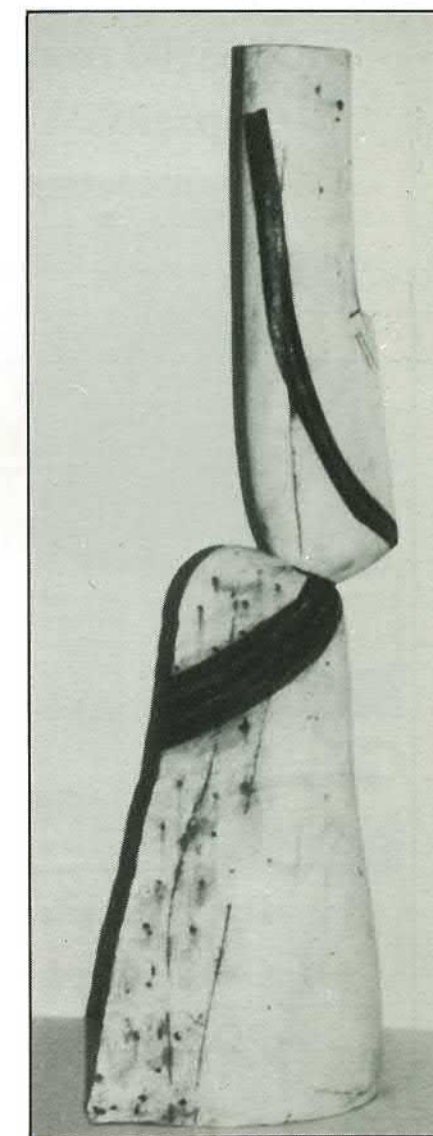
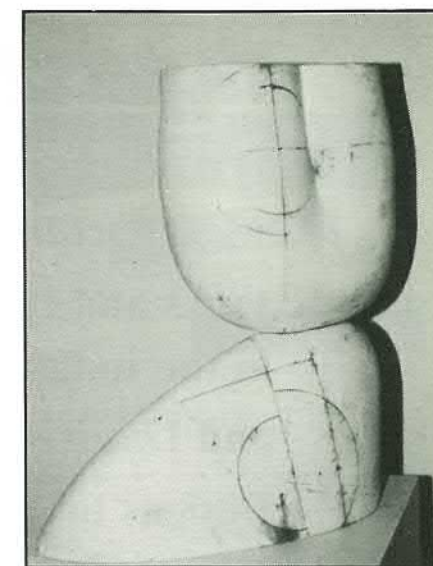
Matisse, his nudes and of the work of Picasso and his contemporaries.

His own work he finds difficult to define and hesitates to classify it totally as sculpture, but says that he is aware of a continuing and unexplained affinity for the vessel with its cross-culture uniformity of purpose as well as its magical and ritualistic associations. Baldwin's vessels are powerful, seeming ponderous and immovable, firmly attached to the ground and yet open, inviting, offering a revelation of their internal secrets and often overlaid with a savage and barbaric display in black and white.

Upon the stimuli for the origins of his work he is indefinite and suggests the possibility of things he has seen or experiences he has had. Perhaps the detail of some piece of sculpture, is an elbow or a knee joint, which he can no longer identify and in any case has no wish to do so. Equally it may be from nature resulting from his many visits to the Welsh and English countryside. One collector said that Baldwin's work was all about the sea, quiet but not still, an interpretation with which I personally find little sympathy.

As an artist Baldwin is highly respected in the United Kingdom, but is probably more appreciated and understood in Europe, particularly Germany and also in the USA. He has exhibited in Japan, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Soon after our conversation he was to send one of his pieces to Barcelona, which pleased him as he felt his work would be sympathetically received in the homeland of Miro and Picasso.

Gordon Baldwin, using the material



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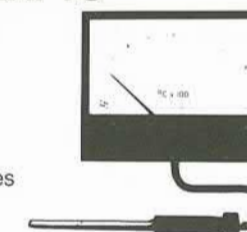
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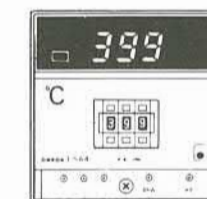
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# I know how Cinderella felt

By Pamela Webster, Ponsonby

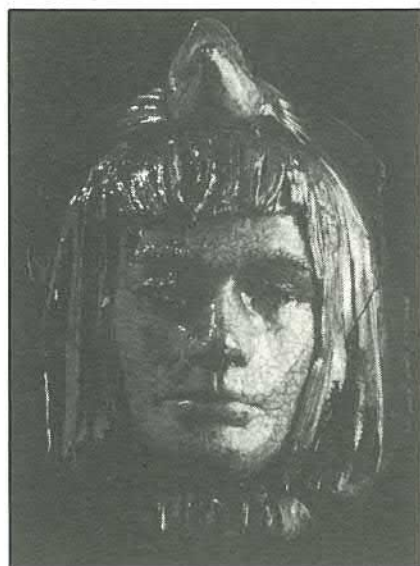
My love affair with clay/fire/glaze has been going on for seventeen years. In the early seventies, like most kiwi potters my obsession was with domestic stoneware. In 1972 I left my safe, suburban life as a housewife in Auckland and took to the mountains in central Otago where there was peace and space and, for five years, time to dig my own clay, build a large diesel fired kiln and enjoy the long, sooty firings and the reduced glazes that came out. Potters from all over the world dropped in and we spent hours talking pots — and firing the kiln into the wee small hours of the night.

There was just sufficient money from door sales to pay the bills. When the purse was quite empty my hens would provide me with eggs and the garden yield vegetables to ward off actual starvation. Sad thing was my pots never looked very good. They never pleased me. Dunting, glaze crawling, cracks, horrendous kiln accidents were my lot.

In 1980 my Dad died. Concern for my old mother brought me back to Auckland. I reluctantly sold my kiln and handed over the lease of my beautiful adobe house to **Graeme North**.

After the wide open space of Central Otago I felt like a goldfish in a too-small bowl back in Auckland. I set up a studio in the basement of our family home in Ponsonby, acquired an electric kiln and set up a hate relationship with this awful piece of equipment. No reduction now in my glazes. No hum. Nobody wanted to buy my grey mugs and brown bowls either. Auckland potters were all producing very sophisticated work. **Don Solomon** at *Outreach* took pity on me and offered me a job teaching adults and then eventually a full time job teaching street kids on the *Steps* programme. I started playing around with the raku kiln at *Outreach*. Joy. Jubilation. The pots started to please me.

Trevor cat and Raku cat ▼



In 1984 I went to Japan with **Ann Matheson**. What impressed me was the way the Japanese potters coped with their lack of space. Absolutely beautiful work is made, very often in tiny little rooms ... time to pull finger out I decided.

I had many discussions with **Adrian Cotter** and at last he came up with a large, top loading gas kiln. It's a humdinger, and enables me to make large raku pieces when I feel inclined. The kiln is in our small back garden in Ponsonby.

Since this decision to concentrate on raku, things have come right for me. Pieces have been accepted for the *Fletcher Brownbuilt* exhibition, and I have been able to give up teaching since being accepted as a working member by the *Artisan* gallery in Newmarket.

In 1986, enter fairy god person in the shape of a family friend returning here to make a documentary about New Zealand for Scandinavian TV.

On the day he called I was firing in the back yard, surrounded by smoking sawdust bins. Next day he came back with the film crew and put on film my raku process and shots of the studio with me yakking about my love of pottery. Since then this film has been shown in Denmark and **Lissa Ladefoged**, a Danish potter and folk singer, wrote to me and arranged an exchange. Lissa has just been here. I arranged an exhibition for her at the *Carnegie* gallery in Dunedin and she gave a wonderful evening of slides at the *Auckland War Memorial Museum* to the *Auckland Studio Potters*.

Lissa has organised an exhibition for me at *Gavlhuset Gallery*, Arhus, Denmark. I will also be giving a lecture about New Zealand Pottery as I know it, showing slides of New Zealand potters I admire and talking about my raku techniques at the *Arhus Kunstakademi*.

At present I am packing into crates the raku pieces I have been working on over the past three months, which will be shipped to Denmark soon.

If this work sells I shall return via America and be able to take in a raku school over the summer.

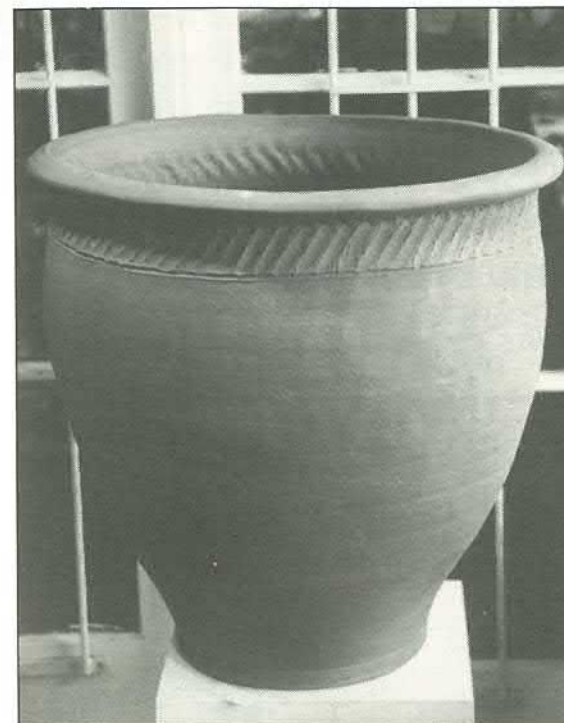
So I know how Cinderella felt. The old hippie from Central Otago is off to Europe. I'll let you know what it's like at the ball.

▲ Raku sculptured head



▲ Cooling part of triptych for Denmark

Post firing reduction ▼



**TERRACOTTA PLANTERS BY  
MARK LORIMER  
COROMANDEL  
AT ALBANY VILLAGE POTTERY**

Photos by Howard S. Williams



## POTTERS MARKET

**THE INTERNATIONAL ART and CRAFT COMPETITION** — NEW YORK. An open, ALL-MEDIA competition. Jurors. Beatrice Kernan, Museum of Modern Art — NY; Lisa Philips, Whitney Museum — NY; Lynn Gumpert, New Museum — NY; Ivan Karp, O.K. Harris Gallery — NY; Nan Rosenthal, National Gallery, Washington, D.C. Winners exhibit: Art 54 Gallery, located in Soho, New York City — NY \$10,000 Cash/Purchase Prizes, Awards. Benefit Art Auction will be held in conjunction with this competition. All applying artists may participate. Deadline: JULY 30, 1987. For applications write to: METRO ART, P.O. Box 286-H, Scarsdale, NY 10583 U.S.A. Tel: (914) 699-0969.

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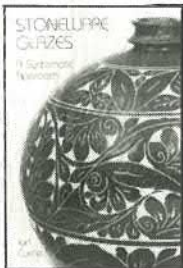
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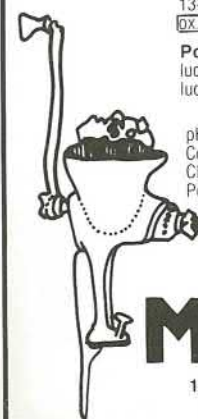
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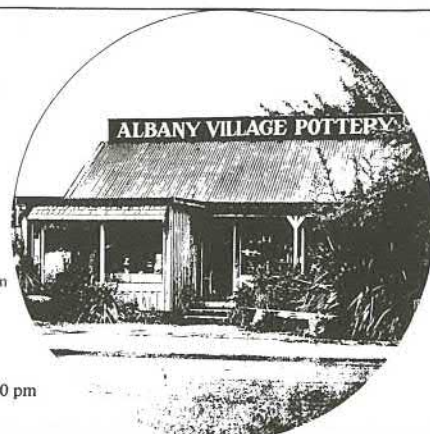
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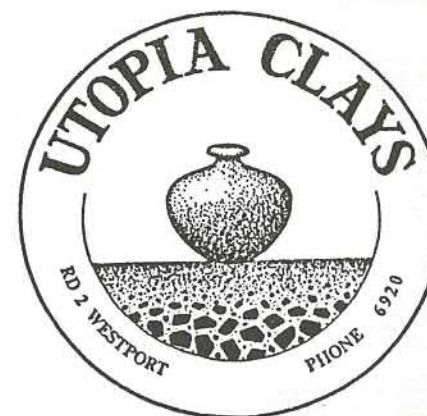
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