Potter

New Zealand Potter

Volume 30, Number 1, 1988

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THROUGH THE FILTER PRESS

The Editor Typetalks

As all our readers must by now know, this magazine changed ownership during last year. A group of potters and their business associates formed *New Zealand Potter Publications Ltd* and bought the publishing rights to the magazine. The last issue of 1987 was our first, put together by a totally new production team, who somehow managed to produce an excellent issue, on time.

We are, however, still having teething problems with this venture. The inherited computer listing of our subscribers was in a very poor state and the office is still working to get this correctly up-dated. There will be some people who received a magazine they have not paid for and a few we have missed, who have paid. Access to the computer file that held the listings of shops' wholesale orders was not gained until February, making the issue very late on shop and gallery shelves. We regret any inconvenience caused by these problems, but are confident that we are righting the situation and will have everything in place by the time this issue goes out. If there are still mistakes made, please write in to our office, **New Zealand Potter Publications Ltd, P.O. Box 881, Auckland, New Zealand** and let us know so we can correct them.

We have also found that the magazine is far more expensive to produce than we expected. We do not wish to drop the quality of production, nor the colour, so we have reluctantly had to increase its price. From this issue the retail price is $7.50 including GST, or $22.50 per annum — still one of the world's cheapest pottery publications.

The overseas price to all other countries is NZ$27.50 including postage. This does not allow for posting by airmail as the extra cost is prohibitive.

To avoid further price increase to our readers in the future, we are starting a special exercise to gain more revenue from the sale of advertising space, and promoting the magazine more widely overseas to increase our overall sales. The future of our magazine looks good.

NZSP Annual Exhibition and National Conference, Wellington 13 — 15 May.

Guest Artists, **Susan** and **Steven Kemenyffy** from the USA. **Neil Grant** — fibre repair and kiln lining. **Melanie Cooper** — glaze technology. **John Scott** — psychology of Art. **Brian Buchanan** —element management, gas fittings and firings. Decoration demonstrations. For registration contact:
National Ceramics '88,
Wellington Potters Association,
P.O. Box 6686,
Te Aro,
Wellington.

Ceramics '88 — Sydney, 15 — 20 May

The 5th Australian National Ceramic Conference. University of New South Wales, Kensington, Sydney. For information contact:
Potters Society of Australia,
48 Burton Street,
Darlinghurst, 2010,
Australia.
For registration contact:
Ceramics '88,
G.P.O. Box 128, 2001,
Sydney,
Australia.

World Crafts Council Conference, Sydney, 8 — 13 May

For information contact:
World Crafts Council Conference,
100 George Street,
Sydney, 2000
Australia.

Fletcher Challenge Pottery Award 1988

Auckland War Memorial Museum, 4 — 9 June.

Overseas entries must be in by 6 May. New Zealand entries by 19 May. Entry forms available from:
The Auckland Studio Potters Centre,
P.O. Box 13-195,
Onehunga.

New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, Wellington

At the recent opening of the exhibition *Images of Celebration* the *New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts* presented the *Governor General Art Award*, 1988.

This is a very prestigious national award with previous winners including **Evelyn Page** and **Brian Brake**, and is given only occasionally to a person who has made an outstanding contribution to the arts over their lifetime career.

Winner this year was **Roy Cowan** of Wellington, seen in the photograph with the **Governor General**, in front of his exhibit, a glass wall piece titled *The Navigators*. Photo courtesy *New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts.*

A WINTER'S TALE
By Mirabel Hawthorn, Northland

There was a potter with an electric kiln and she never ceased to covet the glaze quality that the wood-firing potters get; she lusted after reduction — those copper reds, that celadon . . .

She made a sort of hollow six-faceted thing as a table-top sculpture and it wasn't bad, but she glazed it green and then it was unbearably brash. It stayed a year in the garden and one cold night she thought, 'well it doesn't matter if it explodes', so she put this hollow thing in a tinful of sawdust with a tight lid and put it into the oven to warm and then into the heart of a wood fire in the *Visor* stove and built the fire up, roaring.

In the morning it hadn't exploded and it wasn't blood red, but the brash surface had changed subtly and there were very small areas of red. The surface was now rather like a real woodfired glaze and the green had become acceptable.

At the end of winter she gave the same treatment to two small green bottles. They didn't change completely, but the neck of one was a soft pink, and on the other there were spills of truly bright and bloody red, and both had a little of the woodfire gleam.

It is summer now, and you can't have that sort of fire in the living room. Come winter she'll be trying again and again. She wants more copper red, more of the rich gleam. And pines for iron blues and greens. It's all wonderful fun.

Arrangements of quarter size plaster stamp.

A design based on a Maori Kowhaiwhai rafter pattern of a very unusual type.

Photos are of Barry Brickell's tiles, 1987.

White slip inlaid on hard-fired terracotta.

MAKING ENCAUSTIC TILES

By Barry Brickell, Coromandel

The word *encaustic* means *burning-in* and although it is a popular term to describe medieval English tiles with slip decoration, I prefer the term *inlaid.*

These terms refer to the use of clay slips of contrasting colour to the clay of the tile, being poured into depressions in the tile. Sometimes these tiles are described as *embossed,* though this implies relief or a standing-out from the surface and not necessarily the use of contrasting slips to achieve the effect.

There was a very rich and beautiful tradition of inlaid tiles in medieval England, lasting about 350 years from 13th C, mainly as floor pavings which required an even surface and good wearing ability yet with contrasting patterns. They were used in monasteries, churches, palaces and later, private houses of wealthy merchants.

The present day rising tide of archaeological interest (seeking our ancestry) has brought to our attention for the first time since before the Industrial Revolution, the beauty of this tile tradition, and what's more, how to revive it for our own use. I was very excited about this possibility after visiting the *British Museum* in 1986 and on returning home later that year, began experimenting with inlay. These notes are concerned only with the inlay technique — in further articles I will describe other types of tiles.

Making tiles by the ancient process of hand-pressing plastic clay into shallow wooden moulds is just as relevant now for many potters, as it was in medieval times, thank goodness. Modern industry has developed tile presses of various types, and if you want to turn out large quantities of identical tiles, then this is the way to go. But it could end up like a tread-mill, in the need to pay for the equipment. Hand-moulding is a semi-skilled activity that anyone can easily learn and such work should be having a greater impact on unemployment than it is currently. Just recently, the country's two major tile manufacturing works have closed down (Dunedin and Plimmerton).

Also, we must maintain a continuous battle with architects and clients to make more use of tiles in buildings. This would go some way to improving our lot, if we care to begin a "tile renaissance" now.

Clay Preparation

The ideal clay body for hand-moulded tiles contains a fair proportion of grog to limit drying shrinkage and warping in the firing. I cannot give a proportion here as this depends on the type of clay used, but as a guide, our local (Coromandel), plain yellow clay has a drying and firing total shrinkage of about 18% to 1,150°C (cone 1 to 2) and we add almost an equal volume of sieved local river sand, as grog. (The sand must not contain limestone or shell particles.) This knocks back the shrinkage to about 12-13% which is acceptable. Our river sand is naturally coarse and results in a rough-surfaced, but pleasantly coloured and textured tile.

For floor paving tiles we have found that a mould of 160mm square by 25mm deep is easy to use and the tiles easy to stack on edge in the kiln. Complex shaped tiles for mosaic work may have to be placed on tiers of shelves, reducing the number one can get into the kiln. (See *A New Zealand Potter's Dictionary*), by Barry Brickell, page 134.)

Tiles intended for inlay work should be finer in grain; a sieve no finer than about 16 or 20 mesh should be used for the grog or sand. Because of the much greater quantities of clay required for tiles than for pottery, a cheaper source is necessary. Adding grog to the cheapest of bagged commercial clays is still an expensive approach. One really needs to use bulk clay and wedge or pug it oneself. Perhaps this is why there are so few tile-making workshops, yet clays suitable for tile-making are much more common than pottery clays. The extra grog is necessary because of the much greater thickness of tiles compared with pots, and for very thick ones, say over 30mm it may be necessary to add some sawdust as well. The firing time can then be reduced (see *Potter's Dictionary*, page 71).

Inlay Stamps

In medieval times, carved wooden stamps were used, mainly with end-grain for durability. (See *NZ Potter* Vol 29, No 2, 1987. Page 33). The stamp was hit with a mallet to impress the leather-hard clay. My own method is to use plaster of paris stamps that have been carved in relief to a depth of about 3-4mm. The stamp is pressed firmly, but gently into the wet clay before the tile is removed from the mould. This way the tile retains its proper shape and requires minimal trimming. Also, the stamps last longer, and being plaster they should not stick to the wet clay. A plaster stamp 150mm square should be at least 30mm thick for strength.

Plaster is an easy material to carve with a small sharp knife. The design is drawn on first, with pencil. If you have a "reversing" brain such as mine, you may dither as to which way to carve the pattern; the spaces to be left raised, or the lines between them so? It is interesting and a test for good vital decoration, to carve two stamps of the same pattern, one positively and the other negatively if your design will allow it. The similar designs alternating with each other on the completed tiles can be very interesting to the eye.

The action of pressing in the stamp raises the clay around the edges, which can be a nuisance if the pressing is uneven, though this can be turned to advantage by simply using a roller and gently flattening the excessively raised areas. This will introduce a variation of some subtlety in the pattern to help prevent the eye from becoming bored.

Application of Slip

The basic slip consists of about equal parts by weight of ball clay (Kaolin H) and NZ china clay (Northland), with the addition of about 20% gerstley borate. This latter is the secret as it thickens the brew by thixotropy, allowing it to run, in application, but to stay put straight after. I think it also helps to bond the slip to the clay by partial fusion during firing. Alter the proportions of the first two to suit your particular clay base, by tests, so there is no peeling or cracking of the slip during drying and firing.

The slip is prepared with water addition and fine sieving until it is of a creamy thickness. Keep in smaller sized jars with tight fitting lids and shake before use. A fine-tipped rubber bulb squirter with gentle squeeze just does the trick; work the slip uphill into the finer gaps of the partly dried tile, avoiding bubbles — or pricking them with a needle if they do occur. For wider areas, build up the slip by side-to-side parallel beads from the squirter nozzle. When slip application is done, pick up the tile and gently "dump" it on the table. This will make the slip beads settle into a smooth surface.

Coloured Slips

My basic off-white slip has a pleasant opaque, but slightly vitrified surface which contrasts with the terracotta tile body and works well in the wood fired kiln. Its recipe is:

NZ china clay	**4**
Kaolin H (Hyde ball clay)	**3**
NZ feldspar	**0.5**
Gerstley borate	**0.5**

To this basic slip may be added the usual metallic oxides to give colour. At cone 1 there is sufficient vitrification to allow the oxides to convert to their proper fired colours of a pastelly hue and if a clear glaze is applied over them, the colour deepens and more fully develops.

Dark green: add 10% copper carbonate (by weight)

Turquosie: add 12% copper carbonate and 4% cobalt carbonate

Deep blue: ad 5% cobalt carbonate

Plain black: add 20% manganese dioxide

Velvety black: add 1% manganese dioxide to the turquoise as above.

Note the greatly increased proportions of oxides as compared with those in coloured glazes.

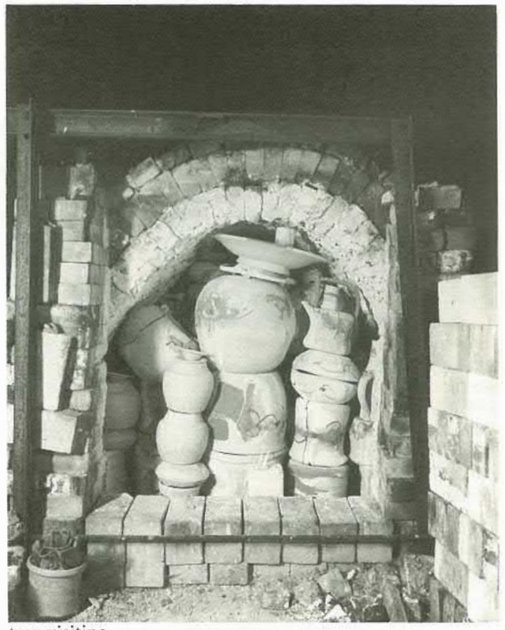
If the turquoise slipped tiles are left in the dry state for too long, a kind of patchiness or uneven fading seems to occur which lasts through the firing. I cannot explain this yet, except that perhaps it is due to partial migration of iron from the tile clay into the slip. Thus the slip should be injected or applied as late as possible during the tile drying phase, say at a late leather hard stage. Normally, I like to apply the slip at an early leather hard stage, for ease of handling.

VISITORS from the U.S.A.

Neal Townsend, salt glazed stoneware, steel and concrete sculpture *Yo Mama.*

Neal from U.S.A. will be touring New Zealand during June and July.

For information on these two visiting potters contact:
Peter Gibbs,
Omaio Pottery,
R.D.1., Brightwater, Nelson.



Sandra Johnson, salt kiln stacked with greenware ready for firing.

Sandra, from U.S.A. will be touring New Zealand giving schools during June.

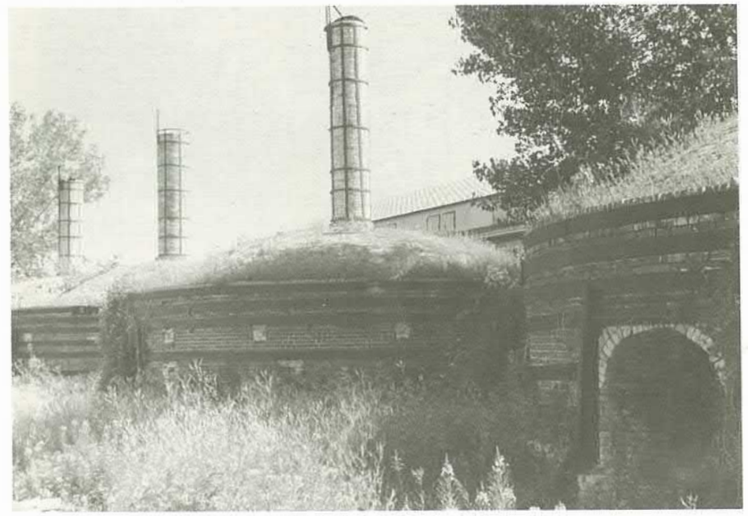
MEDALTA POTTERY, CANADA

By Peter Stichbury,
Manurewa.

In May 1986 **Diane** and I set off on a tour of part of California, the West Coast of USA, across Canada to New York and Boston. This was a lecture tour where I was able to give 14 one or two day schools, slide lectures on New Zealand pottery and film sessions, plus one 10 day school at *Cera Coso College* in Ridgecrest California — up in the Mojave Desert. **Paul Meyers** is Head of Ceramics and Sculpture here, and it was he who suggested and organised the tour. Paul and his wife stayed with us on two visits to New Zealand to visit his great friend the late **Harry Davis**. His second trip, December/January 1986 was to help in the filming of **Stan Jenkins'** latest film on **Harry** and **May Davis**. (Now complete — an excellent 57 minute documentary).

In July we stayed with **Glenys Marshall-Inman** and her husband **Basil** at their home near Calgary. Both from Papatoetoe, Glenys was a member of the *NZSP* and is now firmly established as a successful potter in Canada. She was one of 30 artists selected to exhibit at the Winter Olympics this year.

From there we visited Medicine Hat (sister city to New Plymouth) and met **Jim Marshall** and his wife, **Lorine**. Both are highly skilled and respected artists working in pottery, textiles, graphics and sculpture. Their work is prominently displayed in public buildings such as the City Hall. Jim has been working to preserve the *Medalta Potteries* for the last 11 years. He took us to a meeting of the Preservation Society (where we became life members) and the next day took us to see the pottery. The article on *Medalta* is a follow-up from our visit.



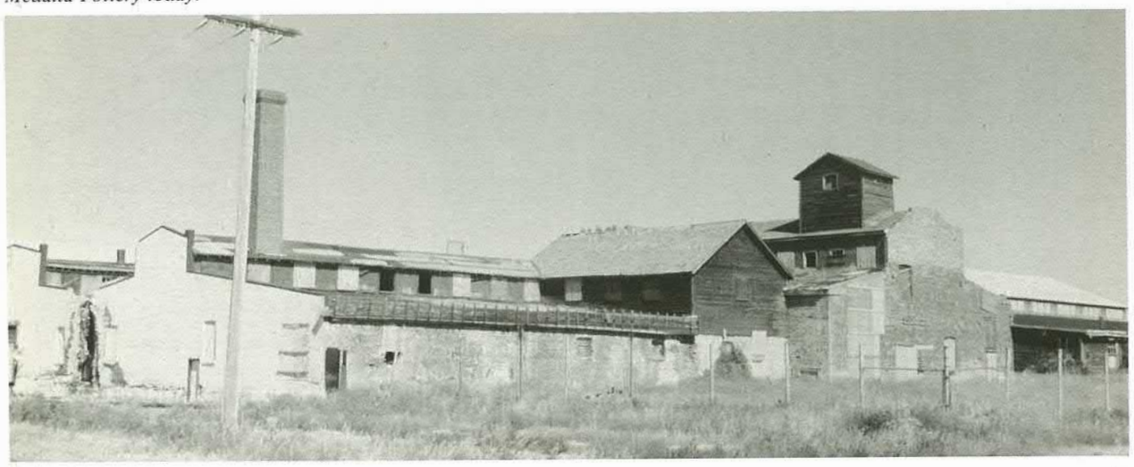
Four of the large round kilns left standing — overgrown but still in very good order.

Inside a kiln showing fireboxes and the low continuous bagwall — plus some saggers.

Photos by Peter Stichbury

The beautifully constructed dome, with the central flue looking like a supporting pillar.

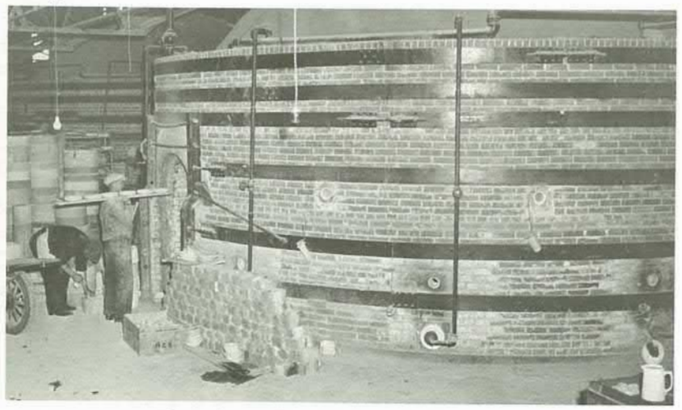
Medalta Pottery today.



Moulding oval bowls, 1953.

Press moulding cup handles.

One of the kilns.



MEDALTA POTTERY

By Arne Handley

Medalta — the word synonymous with pottery in Canada, synonymous with a place called Medicine Hat in Alberta, and now synonymous with a move to restore and retain part of the heritage of Canada and its ceramic industry.

Medalta was a pottery, started in 1912, that operated until about 1960. It was the first manufacturer to send finished goods by the rail-car load back to Eastern Canada. It had one of the first women foremen in Canada. It supplied 75 per cent of all the dinnerware used on the railways and in many of the hotels. At the peak of its production in the 1920s, it used about 50 tons of clay per week. It employed 350 men and women producing a line of functional, gas fired white stoneware crockery to be used in most of the kitchens in Canada at the time.

Medalta produced during the booms of the 1920s, the Great Depression lows of the 1930s and with the help of German POWs, in the 1940s. They couldn't, however, make it through the advent of Japanese re-industrialisation and a couple of fires in the 1950s!

The original buildings still exist as does a lot of the machinery — and many of the people who operated it. The problem is now one of keeping those buildings existing as a working museum. They would make a unique tourist destination point — not just for Canadians, but for anyone interested in the history of industrial ceramics.

If New Zealand potters would like to show their support or interest by writing letters or joining the *Friends of Medalta Society* ($5 Can) they can do so by contacting:

The Friends of Medalta Society
247 — 11th Street SW
Medicine Hat
Alberta, T1A — 4S5
Canada.

"We look forward to hearing from you or meeting you in the future when you tour the Medalta Potteries — a world class working museum to ceramics."

Photos courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

WANGANUI REGIONAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Second Year Craft Design Students' Exhibition at Sargeant Gallery, Nelson

Photos by Richard Wotten.

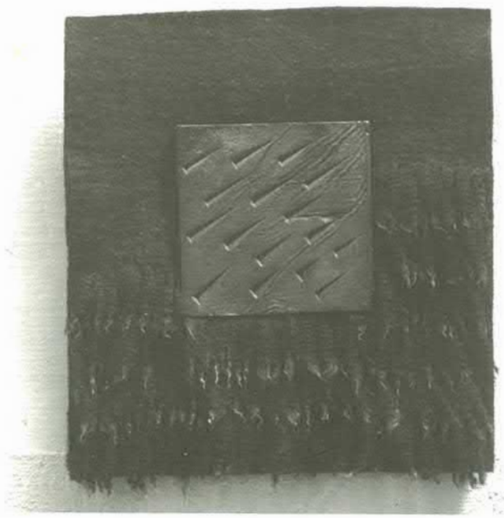
Rebecca Puben. *White slab clay. Press moulded form bound with slip-soaked fabric coloured with a universal stain. Fired to 1,100° C. 40 x 15cm. Diploma course at Nelson this year.*

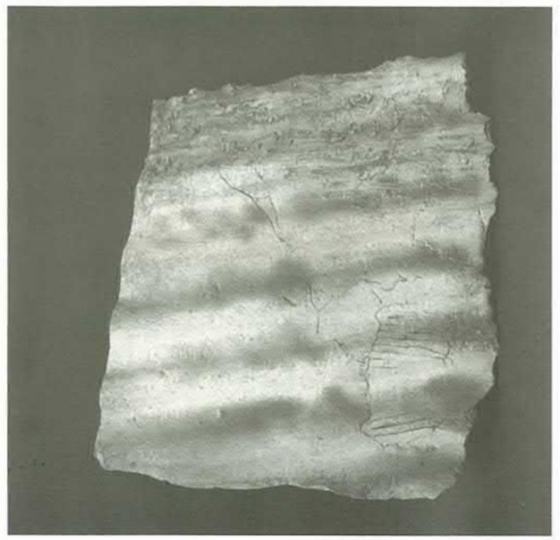
Rona Barrett. *Stoneware clay thrown and handbuilt. Oxided and reduction fired to 1,280° C then low fired with commercial glazes. Addition of kiekie, plaited and woven. 42 x 26cm. Advanced CCD at Wanganui this year.*

John Wells. *Press moulded white slab clay and porcelain slip. Lightly anagama fired. 50 x 25cm. Diploma course at Nelson this year.*

Yonna Gibson. *Raku fired tile on hand felted wool. 40 x 36cm. Advanced CCD at Wanganui this year.*

Karin Shadwell. *Stoneware clay draped over corrugated iron. Surface effects from rust and sandblasted matt glaze. 40 x 40cm.*



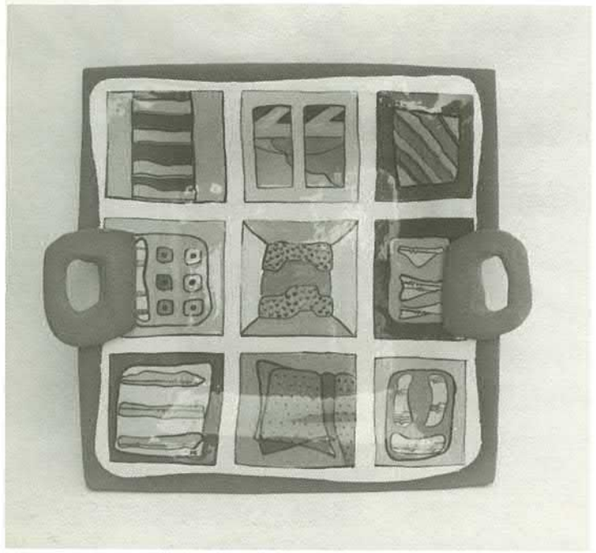


WAIKATO SOCIETY OF POTTERS

15th Annual Exhibition

1987

Riverlea Theatre and Arts Centre, Hamilton



Moyra Elliott, Auckland Guest Potter. 'Hip City Squares.' 34cm w

Photos by Philip Knowles

Moyra Elliott, Auckland Guest Potter. A 4-piece plate or a 4 plate piece. Slip decoration on terracotta

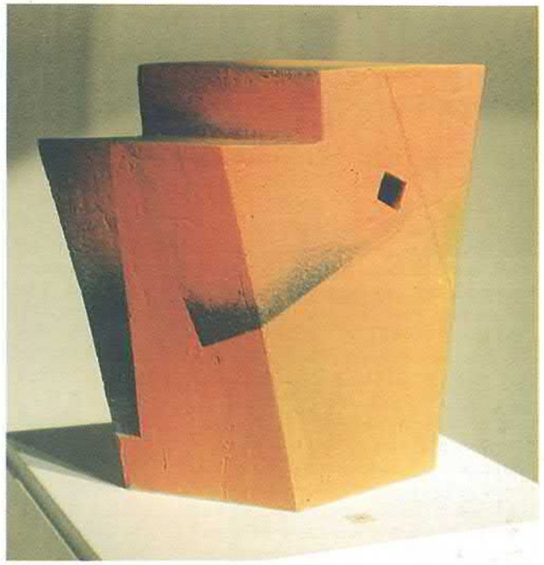
Raewyn Atkinson. Stoneware fish jugs, tallest 16cm h

Lyn Alves. Raku dishes, 26cm w

Tony Sly. Majolica, 9cm h

Raewyn and Michael Irwin. Multifired stoneware and raku vessel, 10cm h

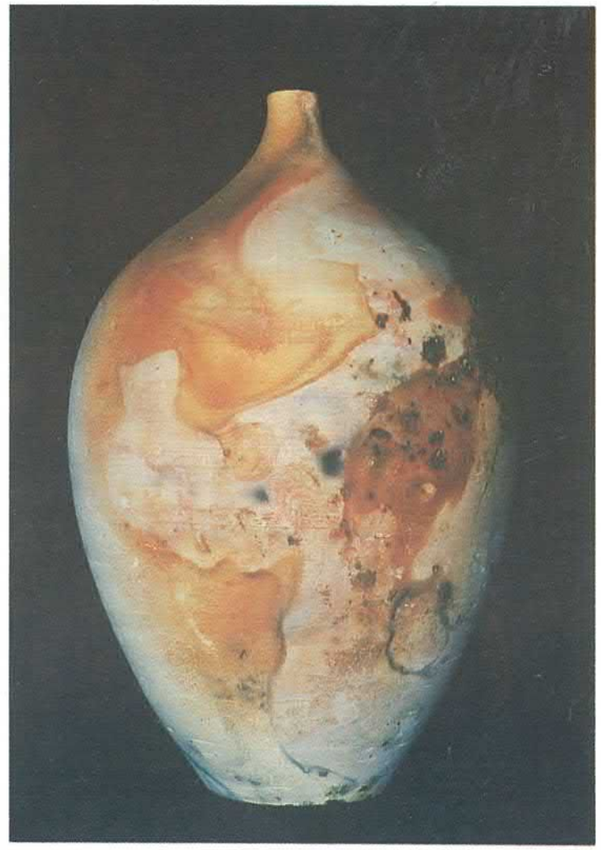
Photos by Elizabeth Woodfield



Don Thornley. 'Hermetic Box No 10.' Low fired, 42cm h

Sandra Webb. Pitfired pot, 35cm h

Lynda Harris. Raku Vase, 23cm h



MAKING A CELLO

By Peter Stichbury, Manurewa

Cello making is a new challenge for me — a fascinating if time consuming interest. There is not much time available when one is a full-time potter! I have worked a lot with wood — hoarded kauri, rimu and other native timbers, and over the years have made much in the way of furniture, two small yachts, and have done some carving and turning.

Cellos combine my love of wood with a long fascination I've had with instruments of the violin family. Unfortunately I cannot play any of them, but our three daughters play violin, viola and cello.

Our second daughter, **Rebecca**, has played cello since she was nine years old. Her first (Chinese made) cello was abandoned when it was badly damaged by another member of the Intermediate School's Orchestra, when she tripped over it. News of this came to **Len Stanners**, retired Commodore RNZN, who purchased the cello to rebuild it. Len is a hobby maker and repairer of cellos, violas and some other ancient stringed instruments. From contact and friendship with him grew the idea of making. Later I went to two weekend schools on violin repair run by **Ian Sweetman**, renowned luthier from Hamilton and learned a few of the secrets of these instruments.

Wood for instrument making is not easily obtained in New Zealand. Most makers import European spruce and sycamore (maple) for their needs. Canadian spruce is imported for the construction of light aircraft, and Len and I purchased a quantity between us — enough for me for about five cello fronts. Later, as a substitute for sycamore, Ian Sweetman gave me enough black poplar for the back, ribs (sides) and inside blocks for one cello. This was cut from a very old log found in the Rotorua area. Black poplar was used by some of the old masters, including **Amati**, for making cellos. The European timber was probably harder. than the log used here. (New Zealand timber specific gravity 0.3 — European timber specific gravity probably 0.5 to 0.6).

The second cello, complete at this stage apart from the varnish, has back and ribs made from mangeao — a comparatively little known North Island New Zealand timber. This, after thorough testing of most native timbers, is the only one apart from South Island beech, that has any value for instrument making. It was used for ribs in boat building and for the construction of railway cattle trucks. The *Beehive* has a large inside panelled area of beautifully grained mangeao.

I imported a book *The Techniques of Violin Making* by **H.S. Wake**, which had a supplementary folder of cello patterns — shape of belly and back with contours, neck and scroll. It also had the instructions and pattern for making the mould around which the cello is assembled. I had almost completed the mould when Len Stanners offered me the use of his — plus patterns based on a *Stradivarius* cello. His mould was an "outside" one i.e. the cello ribs or rib "garland" is made and fitted inside the mould. I found this to be somewhat of a contradiction, as one cannot see the corner joints as they fit very tightly into the corners of the mould. For the second cello, I made an "inside" mould, where the cello ribs are assembled outside and the joints are exposed, easy to work on and check for accuracy.

The first cello took about 300 hours to make — my wife **Diane** says much more! I had the patient help and guidance of Len Stanners, Ian Sweetman and his son Noel, who is also a brilliant luthier.

All the timber used is "cut on the quarter" i.e. the grain is vertical to the plane along the length of the instrument. Timber, cut for instrument making, is split from the log radially into wedge-shaped pieces and left to air dry and season for up to 10 years. For the back, ribs and neck block, makers like to choose wood with the typical fiddle-back or flame pattern. This, when the two wedges are matched together, and with matching ribs and neck, give an instrument such visual beauty and life. The more striking the "flame", the more expensive the wood.

The tonal quality of wood is of prime importance and makers test for this with a "tap tone" when selecting. The belly of spruce is a sounding board, crucial to the tone of the instrument, and the grain must be fine, straight and even, and as vertical as possible for the transfer of sound vibration. The ribs are also quarter cut — starting at 5mm, thicknessed to 2mm and finished at 1.5mm. This might vary slightly according to the timber used.

Back and belly plates are matched pieces of wedge-shaped wood, glued carefully together along the centre line. The cello shape is transferred to these plates and cut out with a bandsaw. The shape is carefully finished with the two plates held together until completed, so that their shapes match exactly. Then, taking a long time, contours are fashioned, using gouge, thumb planes and scrapers. These conform to exact shape, using templates to start with, and finally a pencil caliper which gives contour lines around the shape which can be altered and corrected to complete the desired form. The edges are left slightly thicker and flat to allow the purfling strips *(see note b)* to be set in — and then finished to their final shape.

The insides of these two plates are hollowed out by firstly using a drill press set to required depths. The plates are "graduated" i.e. thicknessed to their required specifications. The drill bit removes much of the wood and the tip of the bit gives a small mark as an indication of the thickness of the wood at that point — on the belly, from 6mm around *f* holes graded down to 3.5mm; on the back, 7.3mm down to 3.2mm.

The two plates are then compared for flexibility, the front being more flexible than the back. Makers have a body feel about this, but it can be tested more accurately. The tap tone of each plate is also checked. The aim, for cello, is to have a difference of approximately two semitones between them. This can be tested acoustically with special equipment, but is mostly done with simple tapping of the plates.

A lot of the fun of starting is in the assembly of tools and equipment. Bandsaw, drill press, chisels and gouges, reamers and clamps. The making of small "thumb" planes from stag antler and machine hacksaw blades. Small knives, purfling cutter, scrapers, and a drum sanding/thicknesser machine for the ribs. I also had to import an electrically heated rib bending iron, finger planes and a dial thicknessing caliper.

Animal glue — hot glue is used to assemble the cello. If the instrument has to be taken apart for repair and re-glued, animal glue is the best in allowing this. The test of this is to see an instrument over 100 years old which is still in perfect condition. I have seen a very good cello thoroughly ruined by being repaired with fibreglass.

The trickiest processes for me were —

a Fitting the bass-bar. This is a 590mm long shaped and curved bar, 10mm thick and 22mm high at its highest point, which lies at a shallow angle to the axis and has to fit precisely the compound curve of the inside of the top plate (belly). The bass bar is an integral part of this "sounding board" and amplifies the lower notes of the cello. Facing the cello, the bass bar lies just under the left foot of the bridge, which it also supports.

b The purfling. Inset about 6mm around the edges of belly and back. Purfling strips are made from three layers of wood — two stained black and one white, usually willow, or one white and two black fibre. These strips are set into a shallow trench 1.7mm wide by 2.5mm deep, marked out with a double-bladed purfling knife, then cut and chiselled out with a fine sharp blade, such as an engraver's tool. Purfling is both decoration and protection. It prevents splitting of the plates from the edges. To a beginner, the corner mitres are the most difficult part of purfling.

c Fitting the neck. A precise and correctly angled, tapered mortice is made in the top block to hold the neck at the correct position and angle. The fingerboard is glued to the flat plane on the neck and must finish at a precise height above the belly and in relation to the strings and bridge settings.

I like the scale of the cello to work on, and have not as yet been tempted by violin or viola. The shape, wood quality and finish, and above all the sound, combine to make an instrument of lasting quality and beauty.

The *big* moment is when the instrument is fitted up "in the white" (unvarnished) and is played for the first time. Craftsmanship and finish are important, but the sound makes the instrument. Instruments mature and develop in time as they are played. Varnishing alters the tone a little — varnishing is another story!

An added plus is to have a daughter who plays cello. In December 1987 Rebecca gained her *L.T.C.L.* performance exam with very high marks — playing on the first cello I made.

My grateful thanks to Len Stanners and Noel Sweetman for their help, time and encouragement.

Yes! I did get asked once "how do you make a cello in clay?"!

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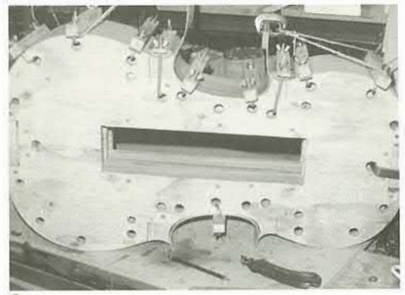

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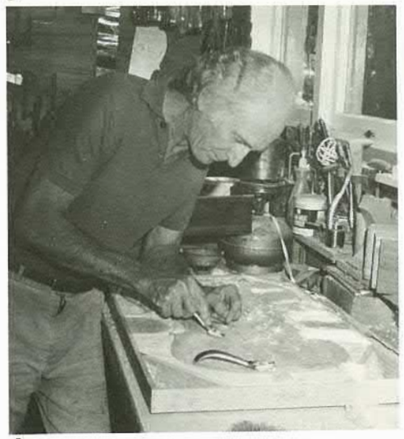

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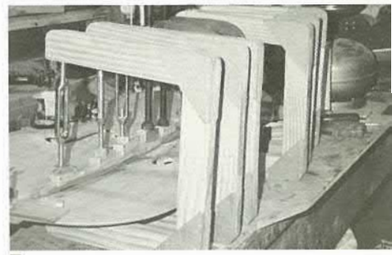

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1 *Two wedges of mangeao glued together for the back plate.*

2 *The inside mould showing corner and end blocks which are temporarily glue-tacked to the mould. Corner blocks are trimmed when the rib garland is finished, to about one third of the size shown. The end blocks house the tail pin and the neck mortice. Also shown are sections of ribs clamped into place after being bent into shape around the heated bending iron. Thin linings are glued to the top and bottom of the inside of the ribs to give a wider glueing area for back and belly.*

3 *Carving the scroll from a piece of locally grown sycamore — a beautiful timber to carve.*

4 *Finishing the hollowing out of a plate which is sitting in a cast plaster bed for support.*

5 *Glueing on the bass bar using home-made clamps made with turnbuckles.*

6 *The belly glued on. The back and neck are already in place. The "f" holes —to let the sound out — are tricky to cut out. They can be individually designed from maker to maker.*

7 *Peter Stichbury with number two cello before the final glueing.*

8 *Rebecca playing Peter's virst violin-cello.*

JAMES GREIG: 'GOING THROUGH' THE WORK

By Ian Wedde, Wellington

1. A note written by **Kimitoshi Sato**, a Japanese admirer of **Jim Greig's** work, at the time of the New Zealand potter's death contains the following observation: "What is the best way do you think to experience a Japanese garden? You must 'go through' it yourself."

This simple advice turns out to be subtle. It demands an individual response to an extremely formal cultural artefact — the Japanese garden. It demands a subjective experience of something that, by its nature, has predisposed a number of responses.

The advice also demands that the viewer's looking should *move*. The ergonomics of James Greig's memorial show in the *Ginza Art Space Gallery* in Tokyo are revealing in the light of this. The pieces were shown with obvious regard for the viewer's need to 'go through' them.

And the experience of Greig's later free-standing pieces in particular is, mesmerically, one of 'going through'. Choose a place on the circumference of a work, and move around it. What is slowly revealed is an extraordinarily poised relation of volume to line: the body of work will constantly be shearing away to disclose profile, outline will constantly be replaced by mass. There are constant adjustments and disclosures of planes, of planes against profiles, of turnings or rotatings of planes in space around a vertical axis, and in the case of larger scooped shapes, around a horizontal axis.

And because line, plane, and volume are given such materiality by Greig's surface textures and by his attentions to the surface lightings of works, viewers 'going through' the works find themselves involved also in looking at relations of internal to surface space. They have to measure volume and weight and the ways in which these are conveyed — including those instances of closed forms where the hollownmess of the piece is one of its 'secrets', the conceptual knowledge of which affects all perceptions of mass and weight.

In the late, large sculptural works, 'going through' involves considering the historicity of that profile: its throat, shoulder, belly. This profiled historicity is one of the clearly signposted formal aspects of the work. And of course many pieces must also be 'gone through' from above. It's possible to spend a lot of time carrying out the simple admonition to 'go through' the work. It becomes hard to imagine how an artist, from a more or less fixed point of making, could have visualised so much narrative.

The sense of narrative comes from a time factor in 'going through'. Time is involved both in the sense of physical movement — you have to take time to go around the pieces; and in their historicity — their quotation of throat, shoulder, belly, etcetera, their investigations of archetypal form.

Any conclusion viewers may come to about a work will depend on where they began — at what point on the circumference of the work, whereabouts in its vertical radius, at what intersection of plane, line, and volume, they began their contemplation. They will end where they started. But then, they can start again any number of times, at different places, and discover other narratives.

A relativity is proposed in this, but one which differs fundamentally from a philosophy-of-science relativist position, in that *consciousness* is included. Becoming involved in the narratives of relativity proposed by Greig's work, viewers are acutely aware also of being involved with his consciousness — with design, and with an extraordinary level of premeditation.

Such personal encounter with the most exactingly formal conveyance of consciousness, is at the heart of James Greig's art. What the experience proposes is that individual consciousness can be formally conveyed in archetypal ways; that reciprocal responses to these forms are open to any number of personal variations. The maker's individual consciousness and the viewer's personal response, encounter each other on a site cleared of anything extraneous to its universal forms.

2. Even without prior briefing on James Greig's beliefs (Anthroposophy, for example) we might learn from the experience of 'going through' his work that he was a Romantic at the Platonic end of the scale.

Such a profile might look quaint in a contemporary climate suspicious of Modernist essentiality, of the assertion of individual creativity against cultural determinants. Greig's work deals calmly with such doubts. It disarms them because it manages the difficult task of reasserting the viability of transactions between the formal and the personal.

His now-deserted studio offers clues. A table of 'failures' and experiments repeats certain forms. One whose variations emphasise its importance to Greig is a partially volute vase form which turns its axis upward through a classic swelling or belly into a slender neck which Greig has then inclined slightly, with perfect poise, over the rondure.

This form combines elements of at least two 'international styles': one profile gives us a slender reminder of a classical throat and belly form; another, rotated within this classic frame, recalls the volution of certain highly stylised Art Deco forms, particularly as these made their way into glassware.

And yet it is clear that Jim Greig was not bowing to the cultural determinants of given forms. What his elegant and austere solution asserts is that such 'received' forms in culture — the classical and the Deco, for example — have themselves been 'found', and in their essential forms will go on being rediscovered by individual consciousnesses.

In the catalogue notes to his 1982 *Transformations* exhibition, Greig wrote:

> "I can look back and see . . . how the progressive development of these pots has mirrored the human chronology of childrens' drawings of the early years. — First the spiral and curved gestures; then closing the circle and finding a centre; then turning to face outwards beyond the self to the surroundings; then the introduction of the square and triangle, and so on."

Greig also writes of 'universal form' — of 'the full formal vocabulary — wave forms, spiral, circular, square, triangular, intersections, and the twisted plane, which is very much a living form.'

And in his generous notes to the disastrously mounted 1986 *Wellington City Gallery* exhibition of large pieces, he elided such formal considerations as the above with their process counterpart, the elemental forms of his materials:

> "Looking imaginatively at mineral forming processes in the earth, following the lead of the Romantics, we can see that images of developing life-forms are reflected in them. The earlier primal granite (rocks show granular structure skin to the globular structure in the morula stage of

Photos of Jim Greig's exhibition at Ginza Art Space Gallery, Tokyo, courtesy of Rhondda Greig.

embryology: the following schists and slates, and porphyry, show flat plate-like surfaces relating to the differentiating of organs and cavity-forming processes of the gem layer stage; the later Jurassic limestones, as sediments, relate to ossification and calcium depositing life forms."

3. Given such universalist beliefs, and given also his development out of the *Hamada-Leach* line, it's not surprising that James Greig should have made the connection with Japan. What is worth thinking about, is the different regard in which he is held here and there.

In Japan last year's memorial exhibition at *Ginza Art Space* in Tokyo, and much larger exhibition at *Kyoto's Tachikichi Gallery* showed, James Greig is regarded as a major artist deserving acknowledgment at the highest levels of authority. In New Zealand, where his reputation is secure among committed observers, he still lacks that acknowledgement.

This may have something to do with differing cultural conventions: in Japan, important art is endorsed by authority and in return enhances the prestige of such authority. In New Zealand, somewhat in the wake of Modernism's dissafection with civic authority, such endorsements remain suspect: art retains a somewhat oppositional stance.

Edith Ryan, the *Art's Council's* craft advisor, went angrily (and joyfully) ahead and bought a work at the *Art Space* memorial. She now has to persuade government that it should be repatriated for the nation. In Kyoto, all 200 pieces in the *Tachikichi* exhibition were sold, and will never be seen in New Zealand.

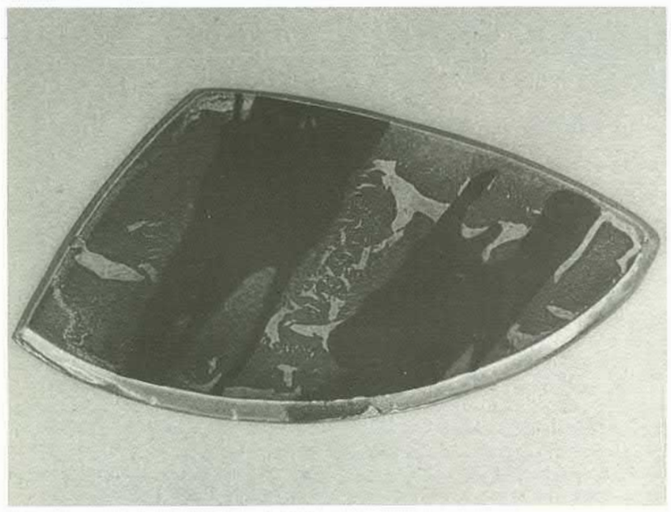
And yet, despite this apparent incompatibility of cultural attitudes, a remarkable kind of meeting did take place over James Greig's work. In Tokyo, the work became a still centre around which a number of encounters were able to circulate. For example, *Sheseido Corporation's* **Yoshiharu Fukuhara** and the New Zealand ambassador to Japan, **Richard Nottage**, were able to meet on the same site.

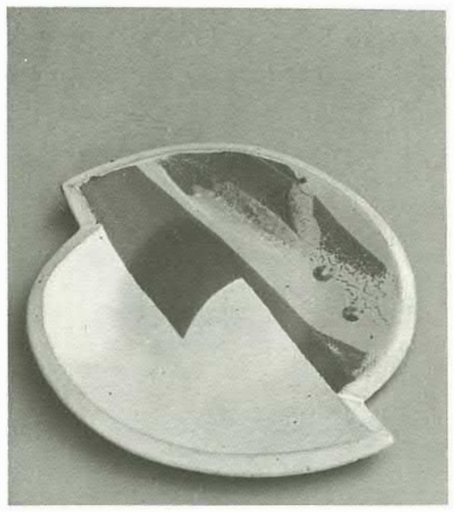
Fukuhara's *Sheseido* building, houses the *Art Space Gallery* where Greig's memorial show was mounted. The alliance represents one of those endorsements, essential in Japan, whereby art can redeem the (still) face-losing enterprise of making money. It's an alliance whose significance is beginning to be explored by corporations in New Zealand as well. Its impliations reach well back into the power and authority structures of both societies.

Fukuhara, though invited to all *Art Space* events, is known to make about one five-minute appearance a year. But he stayed through the Greig opening, and what's more had an extended conversation with Nottage. This is not just material for the diplomatic and corporate gossip circuit; it is, in its way, a vindication of the vision you encounter when you 'go through' James Greig's art. And even at the more disenchanted and pragmatic level of transcultural trade and understanding, where opportunism cannot be ruled out, the importance — the focus — of James Greig's work cannot be overestimated.

Though Greig's work proposes a relationship with the planet hardly subscribed to by Late Capitalist economics, it also provides a site on which two cultures can meet to discuss ways in which they might manage their part of that planet. Art has, in practical fact, become that universal point of reference that Greig believed it could be.

It seems appropriate that the small, intense, thoughtful man who accomplished this should also have been seen on occasions drifting across the Wairarapa plains in a hot air balloon — that he should even, in the 1970s, have crossed the Sandia Mountains in Mexico in this spectacular craft, at once so precariously optimistic, and so entirely natural, logical and successful.



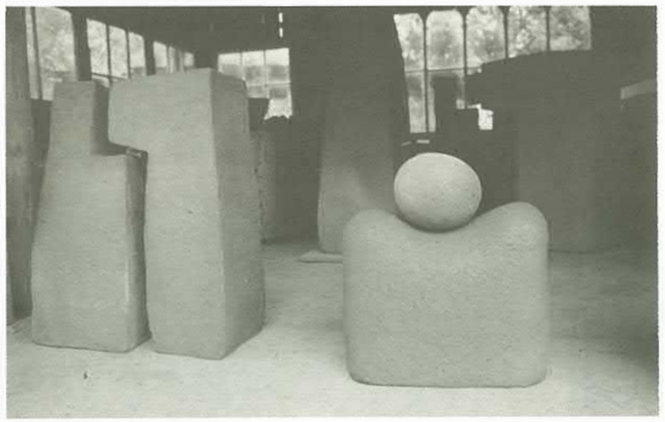


Jan White of Coromandel, produces work of substantial proportions in ceramic, wood and metals. She began working as a painter and was introduced to clay when she moved to the Coromandel Peninsular about 10 years ago. Since then, her exhibition work has focussed on the three-dimensional.

She draws a great deal and keeps prodigious notebooks of her ideas. Her work contemplates the principles of human existence and the spiritual interweaving of the Human Being with the seen and unseen cosmos.

Jan White has a disciplined intellectual approach to her work and from this standpoint, works of diverse concept are produced.

JAN WHITE, CERAMIC SCULPTOR



CHRISTINE BELL-PEARSON —

The Villas Gallery, Wellington.

A joint exhibition at the *Villas Gallery,* Wellington in February, brought together for the first time, work by **Christine Bell-Pearson** and **Margaret Maloney.**

Christine is a ceramist and Margaret works in a variety of media. Both are highly regarded in their respective fields. Christine, on the *Crafts Council* Selected Index, has had work in prestigious exhibitions such as *Faenza, Fletcher Brownbuilt, N.Z.'s International Potters, 100 NZ Potters* and this year has been selected to exhibit in the *11th Biennale International de Ceramique D'Art* at the Museum at Vallauris, France. In addition to her exhibition work she also produces high quality domestic ware which is in constant demand.

Margaret's recent work has been largely experimental, moving on from structured landscape painting to more abstract work in mixed media. The success of her experimentation has been reflected in her winning a *Montana Art Award* and the *ANZ Fabric and Fibre Award* at the *NZ Academy of Fine Arts,* Wellington last year and an invitation to exhibit work at the NZ pavilion at *Expo '88* in Brisbane.

Christine and Margaret have steered curiously parallel courses. Both are from the North of England and trained for 5 years at regional art colleges to gain their National Diploma in Design. Both arrived in New Zealand, finally settling in Nelson.

Christine's ceramic career includes glaze research at the *Royal College of Art* London, *Design School,* France and her own studio in London. Her design training has spanned many activities including dress design and painting.

Margaret, until 1981, was involved in education and since then has spent more time developing her own work. She has had several solo exhibitions in Wellington, Christchurch and Nelson and both artists have regularly contributed works to national exhibitions.

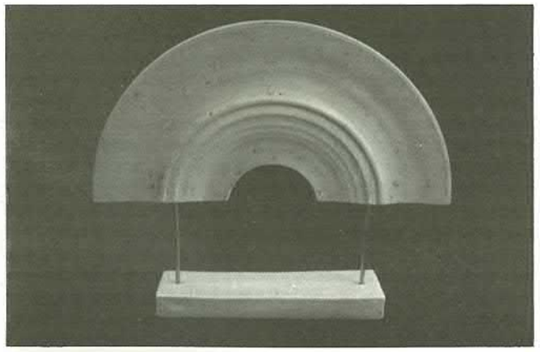
Their parallel courses converged when they met in Nelson where they committed themselves to the establishment of the Certificate in Craft Design Course at *Nelson Polytechnic* in '86. Christine was instrumental in the setting up of the course being course co-ordinator and tutor in art and design and Margaret tutored in art and design, later becoming course supervisor. It was while working so intensively together they realized how much they had in common. Both share the same ideals and philosophy, having an uncompromising approach to their work.

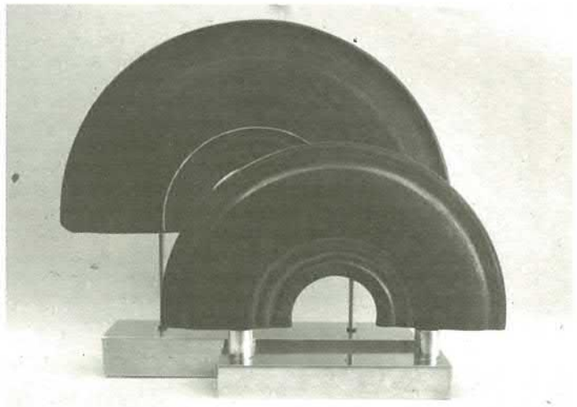
Their recent joint exhibition at the *Villas Gallery* was very successful.

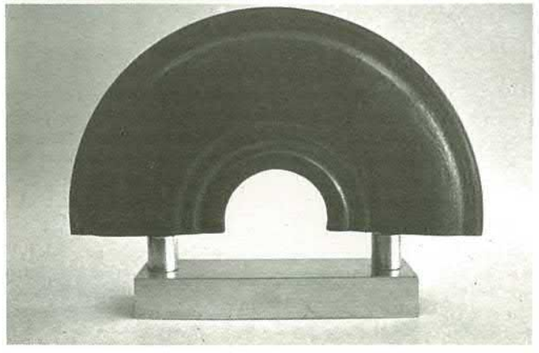
"The collection of works, rich in variety of use of materials and techniques, forms a strong and harmonious whole. Christine's porcelain work demonstrates a refinement of techniques resulting in strong clean sculptural forms cutting into the surronding space; the porcelain is allowed to show its fine qualities. The adornments and embellishments serve to give emphasis to the purity of the line. The more rugged stoneware pieces have textured surfaces, slashed and carved, using subtle colour. All ingredients of good design. There is a variety of scale in the ceramic works and mixed media pieces.

Margaret's mixed media work is based on a Pacific theme and provides strong abstract compositions in which hard edge painted fabric pieces shine from a cotton background. Attention has been given to surface treatment, in both paint and stiching, to give subtlety or emphasis to certain areas. Works using paper, perspex, paint and thread are more contemplative and subtle.

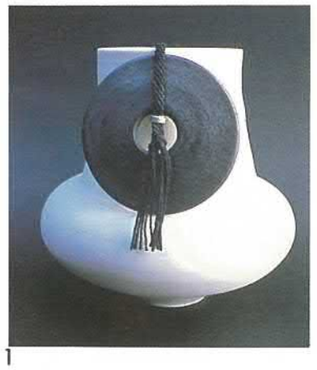
These two artists are combining again in July, being featured as Craftspeople of the Month at the *Crafts Council Gallery* in Wellington and Dunedin.







The Arches by Christine Bell-Pearson are all porcelain with aluminium



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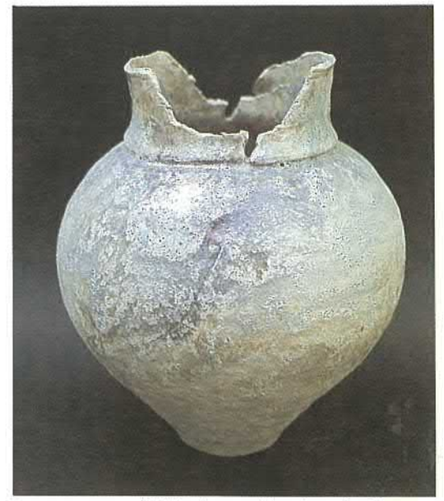


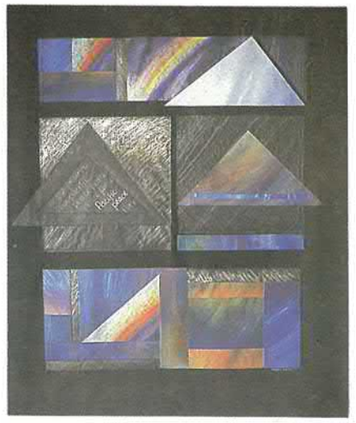
Stoneware multi-fired vessel selected from Vallauris exhibition, France

1 *Polished porcelain vessel*
2 *Stoneware vessel form*
3 *Stoneware vessel form with aluminium and cotton*
4 *Multi-fired lidded vessel*

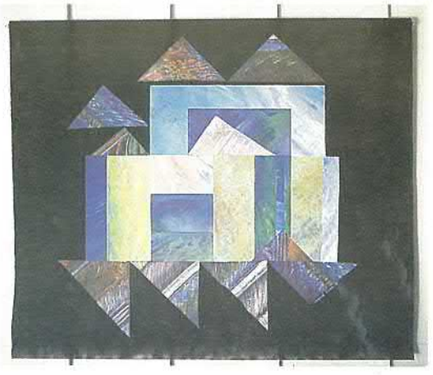
MARGARET MALONEY

"Pacific Series". Multi-media works by Margaret Maloney

Paper, perspex and thread. 200 x 300mm



Fabric, paint and thread. 1m 15 x 1m 50



Fabric, paint and thread. 1m 15 x 1m 50

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THE FOLK POTTERY OF THAILAND

By Graeme Storm, Auckland

The folk crafts of Thailand are many and varied and as is often the custom in S.E. Asia, they operate in villages as a seasonal alternative to rice farming. At certain periods, outside planting and harvest times when it is literally 'all hands to the plough — or sickle' the village activity can switch to furniture production, weaving, puppet carving, umbrella making, pottery, or a host of other side line activities in the craft field. These activities are not regarded as an art form, but merely as another source of much needed income.

The first of the country potteries I visited in January 1988 was located near the ancient capital of Ayutthaya. It produced both roof and floor tiles (unglazed) which were stamped out singly in a press and balusters made in a two part press mould, bisque fired, then glazed a shiny green. There was also a small range of earthenware cooking pots.

The floor tiles (similar to our quarry tiles) were enhanced by some lovely flame marks from the wood/brush fired kilns. So too were the lighter weight roof tiles seen behind the stack of balusters *(Photo: 2)*

The bottle type kiln *(Photo: 1)* was being unloaded while still very warm. I was amused to note that the man at the top inside was wearing a woollen balaclava! It was after all, midwinter and only a 'cool' 30°C outside. Heaven knows what the kiln interior was like, but they were all fairly heavily dressed.

The balusters *(Photo: 3)* are being made by the man who grabs a handful of soft clay, flings it into the plaster mould, spreads it quickly up the sides with his thumb, proceeding down the length of the mould as he goes. The girl is rolling snakes of clay with which to form a strengthening rim around the inner edge of the form. The second half of the mould will be completed in a similar way and the two butted together to form the cylindrical baluster, seen in its completed glaze state in the first photograph.

People working in this pottery considered themselves very fortunate not to have to labour in the rice fields. They were paid the equivalent of $2NZ per 12 hour working day.

Another village on the outskirts of Ayutthaya was situated on the banks of a stream — near its clay sources. It was the women here who made the pots. They worked both on the wheel and by a combination of pinching, coiling and paddling against an anvil of fired clay held on the inside of the pot. The woman working on the low stone wheelhead, *(Photo: 4)* now makes miniatures for the tourist trade of the pots which she formerly made for local consumption. Plastic and enamel wares have deprived her of a once thriving market. As she worked she also explained, through an interpreter, how it saddened her that the young people no longer wanted to learn to make pottery. As she talked, turning the wheel with one hand and throwing with the other, her little pots appeared with an ease born of long practise which was a joy to watch. She threw off a lump and when the piece was exhausted, grabbed several handfuls from a soft sticky mass next to her, threw them one on top of the other onto the wheelhead and began throwing. So much for wedging!

Across the river, another woman still making the traditional flat-bottomed cooking pots with paddle and anvil, *(Photo: 5)* thwacked softly away as she sat in the shade beneath her house on stilts. The pots sold for 25 cents each.

Under the trees nearby stood the kiln *(Photo: 6)* shared by several families. Open at the top, it was stacked full of pots, covered by a layer of sherds and fired through a short tunnel leading to the base of the chamber. Fuel consisted of small sticks and palm fronds to start, then

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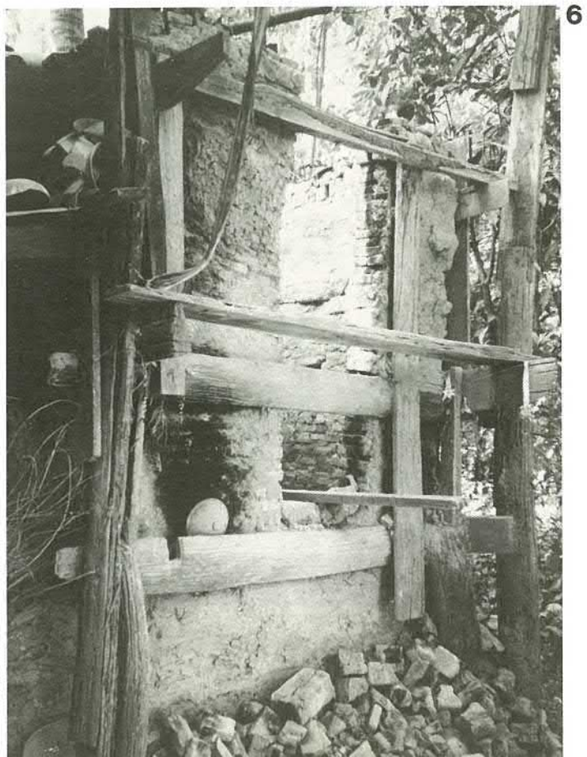

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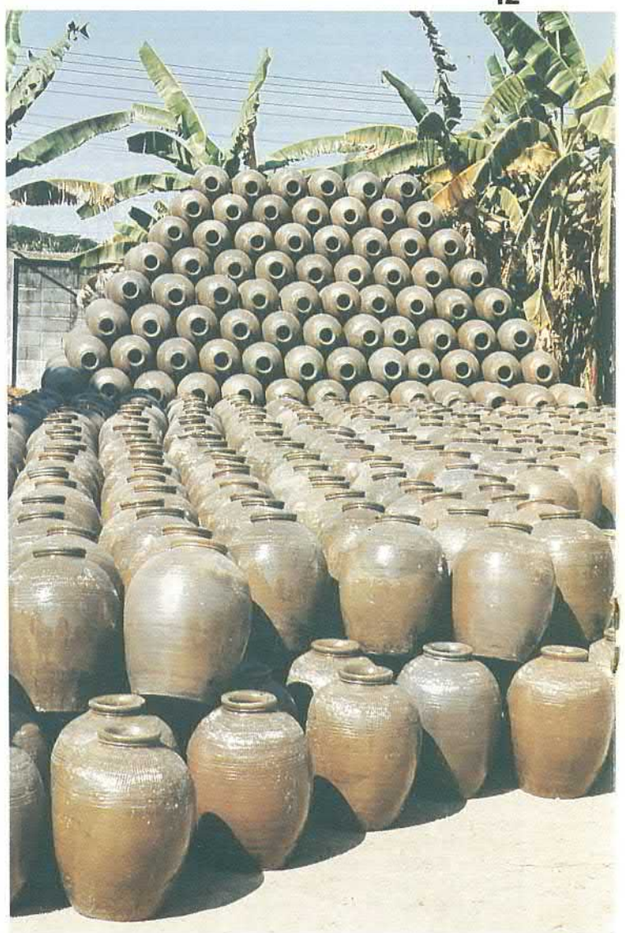

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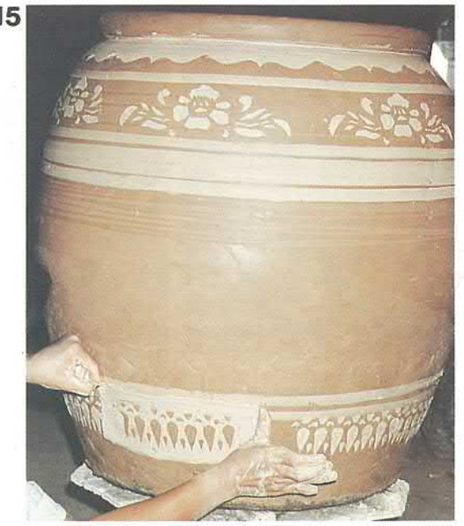

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slightly heavier material towards the end. The entire firing took about 4 hours and with timber supports to hold the kiln together, it obviously did not generate very high temperatures.

The town of Ratchaburi, some 100km north-east of Bangkok has about 50 potteries specializing in the making of *Dragon Jars*. These large urns, *(Photo: 7)* slip decorated with concentric bands and a frieze above and below a dragon curled around the belly, are to be seen throughout Thailand. They stand outside houses, in use as water butts and are now beginning to appear in New Zealand as planters.

I watched a husband and wife team at work on a common type of pickle jar *(Photo: 8)* also to be found here in New Zealand. Her job was to be constantly wedging 8/9 kg lumps of clay which he quickly threw into the first stage of the pot. She lifted the piece directly off the wheel, with the aid of a bamboo hoop placed inside to minimize distortion and help recorrect the shape after it was placed on the floor. This was a continuous process as they were paid by the piece.

Later, after the top section of the pot had been added, the woman did the final shaping with a paddle and anvil, adding a decorative pattern to the shoulder with the paddle shown in the foreground *(Photo: 9)*.

An interesting point I noticed about the throwing was that the pots were not cut off the wheelhead. After kneading, the bottom of the lump was dipped into a bowl of ash, prior to being dropped onto the wheelhead. Similarly, inside a ring of clay which remained on the wheelhead, was another sprinkling of black ash. These two surfaces then, did not adhere to one another. The weight of clay held the pot being worked, in position. After throwing and without any wire or cord having been used to sever the piece, it came away perfectly, every time.

Glazes were mixed up in large urns *(Photo: 10)* and glazing itself was very deftly done — inside and out at the same time — by rotating the jar in a large wok, then inverting it on two boards for a moment, to drain. *(Photo: 11)* A second person then lifted the jar to the floor. The glaze recipe was very simple. Ash from the kiln firebox; borax; and a small amount of clay *(Photo: 12)*.

Another of the Ratchaburi potteries I visited, produced quite excellent copies of Martavans and Chinese export blue and white wares, for export to Japan. There are a number of these potteries in Thailand producing 'antiques' made yesterday. Their wares, after a bit of judicious distressing, can look very convincing indeed. Caveat emptor!

One of the most fluid and easy pieces of decorating I have ever seen, was done by a woman working on the large Dragon Jars. These pots were big enough to require two people to carry them *(Photo: 13)*. Once on her turntable, she applied the bands of slip. She picked up some very soft, fine-grained, white clay — milked it out as if to make a handle — spun the pot slowly, and pressed the soft clay on with her thumb.

Above and below these bands a simple template was used *(Photo: 15)* for the floral and border patterns — the same sticky clay being pasted on through the template.

The dragon itself, was done freehand. Thumb and fingers just smearing on the clay *(Photo: 16)*. It was completed by some sgraffito work done with the edge of a piece of stick *(Photo: 17)*. This whole operation took 8-10 minutes and she could decorate 70 pots in a day. Her pay was 4 cents per pot! A large finished pot, if first class, sells for about $6. Inferior ones fetch less.

The massive 30 metre long, continuous chamber climbing kiln (not unlike the Korean Kimchi) took 24 hours to fire *(Photo: 18)*. It was stoked first from the front into a very large firebox, then from the roof by smaller sticks drying in racks above the main arch *(Photo: 19)*. The kiln held 500 pickle jars (about 50cm high) and 100 dragon jars (about 1 metre). Profit from a firing, after all expenses were met was 3000 *Baht* — $188.

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Transport of the Dragon Jars away from Ratchaburi was either by large truck (with jars stacked 4 or 5 high) pickup van (which sometimes broke down under the load) or river barge. *(Photo: 20, 21).*

Chiang Mai, in the north of the country, revealed yet other styles and methods of making village pottery. Here throwing was done on lightweight turntables being spun continuously with one hand, while the pot was thrown with the other. The shaft of the wheel (a piece of hollow bamboo) was impaled on a metal rod driven into the earth *(Photo: 22).*

In one case the wheelhead was set at an angle leaning well away from the perpendicular. When I asked the potter why, he replied that he found it more comfortable that way. (Ask a silly question!) The pots were made in two pieces, with a tall cylindrical neck to follow. There was irtually no momentum to such a light wheelhead and it required continuous turning by the left hand.

The *Thai Celadon Works* in Chiang Mai are famous for their reproductions of early Thai ceramics. Much of the work is slip cast or made by jigger & jolly. The place is an interesting combination of traditional and high tech. For instance, bisque firing to 800°C is still done in simple, circular, unroofed brick kilns such as can be seen in any village pottery throughout Thailand. The final stoneware glaze firings however, are now done in modern trolley loading, gas fired, fibre kilns, equipped with alumina props and silicon carbide shelves *(Photo: 23).* Their latest kiln is in fact a large, gleaming, stainless steel, fibre lined *Port-O-Kiln* from Australia.

The clay used is a very dense fine grained body which fires white. The elephants *(Photo: 24),* show this in its unfired grey state. Two glazes only are used. Both are of the celadon type. One a dark olivy-brown, the other a pale green. They both seem to run severely and grinding off the bottoms was accepted as par for the course. Much of the work has fluting or engraved designs, which is moulded initially then cleaned up by hand later.

The glazes are based on ash and clay, without any oxides. Local farmers supply the pottery with the type of ash needed — presumably rice straw. Pots are glazed three times. First by rubbing the glaze on by hand, to enable it to penetrate the fine lines and carved areas. Then the pieces are dipped, dried and dipped again, to build up the required thickness.

The only modern studio pottery that I visited was that of *Taweethai Boriboon,* who has established the *Thai Ceramic Co* near Bangkok. He has some 230 employees. The pottery is clean, modern and airy, with excellent working conditions for staff. Boriboon has built it up from a one man studio operation and he now exports to Europe, U.S.A. and Australia, with glossy brochures and an obviously successful marketing technique. Apart from pots he produces wall tiles *(Photo: 25)* and has done restoration work for the government on the *Ceramic Temple* in Bangkok *(Photo: 26).* Many of his latest designs for pots incorporate modelled palm leaves held in place with ceramic ropes *(Photo: 27).* There were many kilns — both electric and gas — including a large, computer controlled tunnel kiln. But I rather liked an old wood fired one, which had not just a small resident god on top, but an entire temple! *(Photo: 28)*

Thailand is rich in folk crafts. Wood, natural fibres, lacquer, silver, clay, bronze, stone, flowers — even fruit carving for ceremonial purposes is invested with almost unbelievable skill. There is a large arts and crafts college in Bangkok with over 3000 students. One of its faculties, with a staff of 30, is devoted specifically to the teaching of traditional arts, so hopefully these skills will not be lost.

From the cool northern climates inhabited by the Hill Tribes with their animistic beliefs, through the central plains with their ancient Buddhist culture, to the hot southern areas where Moslem influences show, the visitor to the Kingdom of Siam can be assured of a wealth of fascinating material to study and a welcoming and friendly people.

MARABA MARABARKU!

By Jan Kiesel, Nigeria

It's early afternoon and Umaru is busy firing the big wood-fired kiln while I decorate pots for the next firing. Little Baba and his sisters have just carried the mid-day meal from the village to their father Hassan, who is making large pitchers in the work-shop. Their chatter greets me as they pass by with the two-buckets balanced on their heads. The air hangs heavy as rain clouds build up and intensify the sweet scent of wood burning. A Fulam herdsman waves as he wanders past the window with his stately herd of cattle.

Sounds idyllic? Well, I expect it does, but one is usually so busy, daily trying to keep the show going that there's little time left to appreciate its beauty. In fact its only in coming to write this report on our pottery that I make the effort to step back and look objectively — and then realise how good it is. (Even Karen Blixen had to get "Out of Africa" before she could write about it!)

Maraba pottery has been in existence for two years now and lies on a laterite plateau behind Maraba Village 21km from Kaduna, Northern Nigeria. It has superb views out over surrounding farms to Kangimi Dam and Pam Beguwa Rock.

In the dry season the world appears to hybernate. Birds disappear or take on a dull sandy colour. Grass dries up and dies off. Water becomes a serious problem.

In the rainy season storms seem blacker and wilder here. The track is a bog-mire. Mushrooms appear and as if by magic, the world is full of frog and bird song. But every small ground indentation forms a lake bed, a breeding ground for mosquitoes. It is, in fact, the sort of place Nigerians long to leave rather than a place to migrate to. It requires more than a little pioneer spirit to live and work there. We have that pioneering spirit.

Nigera has a rich tradition of local low-fired pottery with which we had no wish to compete, but apart from government owned *Abuja Pottery,* there is little in the way of high-fired ceramics. There's a wealth of raw materials to produce this, and with the economic recession in Nigeria and the resulting lack of imported goods, a market. So we felt we could succeed.

Land for the project was obtained by **Alimadu Yakubu**, an interested business-man from Kaduna City. With a kiln plan and supervision by **Michael O'Brien**, the technical father of the project, **Umaru** — an University graduate — got to work with some local mud-builders and built the down-draught, circular wood-fired kiln — 2m internal diameter, four fire boxes, enormous chimney — our landmark!

Workshops and accommodation are also in mud and thatch and have been expertly finished by **Malam Nuhu** (who reminds me of a small wizened pirate, his baggy red trousers whipping around his legs as he perches high on a ladder at his work).

The major potter in the project was **Dan Hami Aliyu**, Umaru's elder brother and he was with the project for a year. He's taught **Hassan** and **Garba**, and they in turn, are teaching **Gambo**. **Dan Hami**, who potted under **Cardew** in Abuja and also studied in England, left the pottery for personal reasons and returned to his home town of Minna. He now comes to the pottery every weekend on a very welcome consultancy basis.

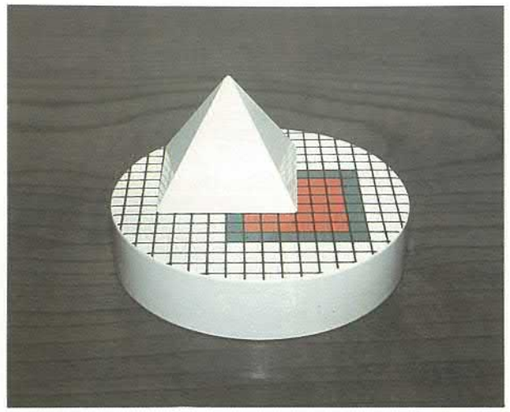
I spend my time between my small workshop at home where I make my own pots, and look after my family, and Maraba, where I decorate other people's. I'm also sort of P R Officer — putting up posters in the various meeting places in town, taking city dwellers out to the pottery, trying to organise small exhibitions and widen our sales outlets.

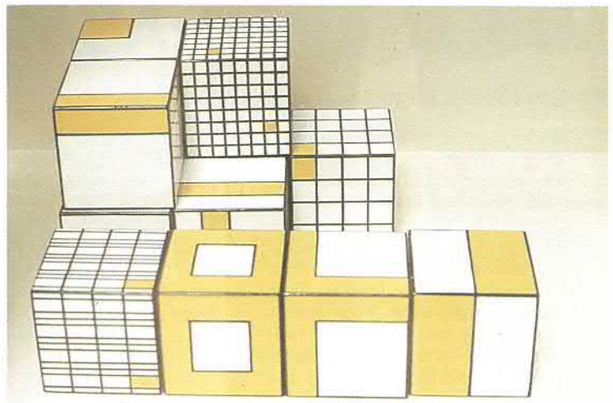
We make stoneware, utility articles fired to cone 10. Our clay comes from outside Zaria city, an hour's drive away, our china clay from Kankara up towards the old city of Katsina on the border to Niger. Glazes are made from locally found clays, granite, felspar and different ashes. The result is a smoothly fired well finished product, grey/green, grey/blue in colour and decorated with iron-red painted design. Our kilns were made with refractory bricks we made from local china clay and the kick wheels were made in our small carpentry workshop. We have no machinery but hope to be able to build a ball mill to grind our raw materials, as up until now we sieve as much as we can through a 200 sieve, and grind the rest at either Abuja or University Aaria. We have two small gas-fired kilns which provided the ready cash necessary to build the wood-fired kiln.

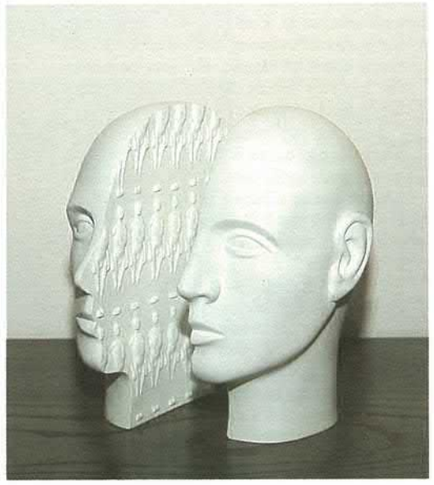
Interest in both the process and the finished article is high. All — from the Fulani herdsman with his cattle to the sophisticated city dweller in his car, find the same fascination in watching the unpacking of the kiln and usually join in the human chain which passes the pots from hand to hand, placing them on the ground where they are sorted into groups; orders, exhibition, general sale, rejects.

We hope we've passed the roughest financial patch, but knowing Africa and its ability to surprise, we probably haven't. In the meantime we'll try to keep our idyllic situation in mind, and occasionally capture it in photo if not in word.

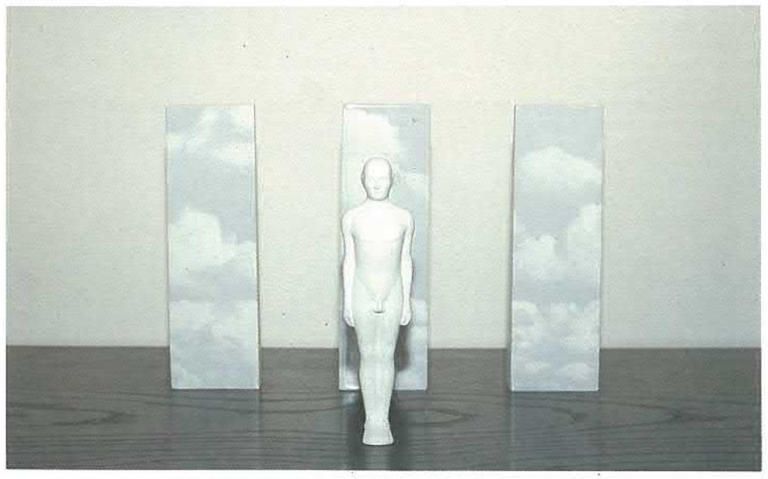
Jan Kiesel is a New Zealand potter who has lived in Northern Nigeria for 12 years. She wrote an article *A Kiln for Pioneers* which appeared in *New Zealand Potter Vol 25 No 2, 1983.* Jan's address is P.O. Box 153, Tech Gp Dornier, Kaduna, Nigerial. *Marabaku* is Hausa for Welcome.





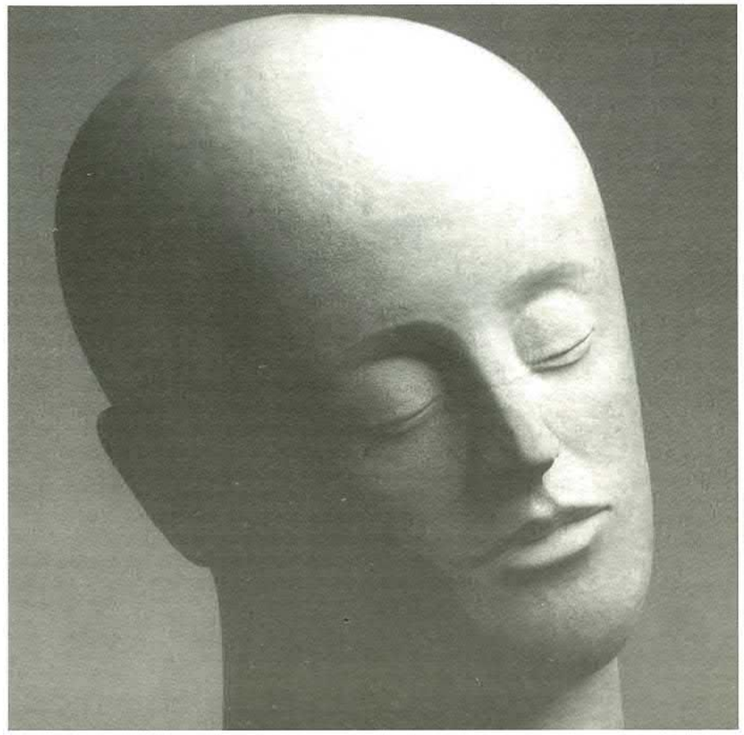


Photos by Leo King



GLENYS BARTON

By Leo King, Auckland



Having been born in Stoke-on-Trent, the English town which is the industrial centre of the Potteries in that country, one could conceivably expect **Glenys Barton** to have some associations with clay.

However there is no association, and never has been, in her work with the aspect of function which predominates in the products for which the area is best known.

Looking at her work produced in 1985/86 and exhibited in late 1986 at *Angela Flowers* gallery in London, it is obvious that her concerns are both sculptural and figurative, but go much further than the formal aspects of the portrait head. Also one might be tempted to ask why she uses clay for work which is traditionally the province of other materials. Without doubt the answer lies in the 15 to 20 years of her involvement with clay, with her realisation that she could use it successfully to express the conceptions which were important to her by pushing it towards its limits, and because her confidence in her own capability to do so allowed her to disregard the traditional barriers, which in the eyes of many in the art world, restricted its use.

Glenys Barton's interest in sculpture ranges over the antique in Egyptian, Indian and Graeco-Roman models, Chinese ceramic sculpture and Mexican figures. Of more contemporary artists she had an admiration for the work of **Giocometti**. Some of her latest heads use the same flattened form with the emphasis on profile which characterise some of Giocometti's bronzes.

The main concern in her figurative work involving the human figure is with the relationship of man to his environment and to space. In later work she appears to need to express the intellectual depth and emotional range which lie within the recognisable formal limits of the human skull.

In order to demonstrate the former relationships Glenys Barton has required some of her forms to be represented with a high degree of technical accuracy. This appeared early in her career in a number of exhibitions of work, including a two-woman show of bone china in 1973, with her friend and fellow student **Jacqui Poncelet**. This was after leaving the *Royal College of Art* in London in 1971 where she had studied for the previous three years.

Apart from winning a travelling scholarship and a prize for design, Glenys Barton was British prizewinner in the *International Ceramics Exhibition* of 1972, the jury which included **Nino Caruso** who was, he told me, very impressed by her work.

The need for precision and purity of form, the requirement that the work should emerge after forming and firing as it had been originally designed, i.e. without uncontrolled effects, coincided, as a stage of Barton's development, with some seemingly revolutionary attitudes with regard to crafts within the *Crafts Advisory Committee* of Great Britain. (This body had responsibilities similar to those of the *Crafts Council* of New Zealand). As a result, the facilities of the *Wedgwood* factory at Stoke-on-Trent were extended to her for a period of two years. The aims and objects of *Wedgwood*, in terms of representational accuracy and excellence of product paralleled Glenys Barton's perceived requirements for her work.

At the *Wedgwood* factory she was offered access to the skills of the model shops, of moulding and casting, to the design of graphics and to the manufacture and application of transfers. This added greatly to her own experience in the handling of that most difficult of materials, bone china.

From this period emerged some innovative work, of which too few examples are available here. From what seem to have been experiments to assess the accuracy of reproduction achievable in blocks of bone china, some of which were ground and polished after firing, and in the replication of grids and colours, she moved to the production of miniature representations of the nude male body which were strategically placed upon bases. These bases, mostly circular, suggested stepped arenas or terraces or stepped columns, scaled in size to create the illusion of perspective perceived distance. These assemblies, created in white bone china, where the absence of distractions resulting from colour or inaccuracies of form helped to create an impression of the vastness of space and its relationship to man. At the same time they allowed an appreciation of the dignity of the human body itself.

A different interpretation was proposed by the English art critic **Edward Lucie-Smith** commenting upon the exhibition of work in 1977 which resulted from Barton's *Wedgwood* experience. He saw the relationship between the figure and the surrounding space as a territory,

in the sense in which a bird or animal patrols and attempts to dominate, or as the boundary of the elaborate pattern of leaps and steps which form part of a dancer's performance.

An example of this aspect of Glenys Barton's work was included in the exhibition of the work of British ceramic artists entitled *Image and Idea* shown at the *Auckland Museum* in 1981 which included work by **Gordon Balwin**, to which I referred in *The New Zealand Potter Vol. 29 No. 1.*

Another variant of the same approach is the work where the male nude is seen together with three ceramic blocks each about 20cm high, the front surfaces of which support transfers depicting bright blue sky and cloud forms reminiscent of the surrealist **Magritte**. Although the blocks have been arranged laterally behind the figure in the illustration, I believe that they have been exhibited in 'line astern' thereby creating a strong feeling of recession — each block representing an increment of the infinite depth of space and the whole, its relationship to man.

The pose of the hairless nude male figure with clenched fists held tightly to the sides of the body is interesting, as it refers strongly to Egyptian tomb sculpture and frescoes and supports the feeling of stillness which is an increasing feature of Barton's work.

The vertically divided head also made during the time at *Wedgwood*, precedes the interest which is apparent in her current work. A little larger than life-size the head, which is very finely modelled, appears sexless and is devoid of lines of expressive animation or excrescences such as hair or individual defects. By reducing the possibility of associations Barton is able to place emphasis upon the essential qualities of the species. The division of the head and the consequent exposing of a frieze of identical low-relief human forms may be freely interpreted, but with some appreciation of Barton's interests, may be seen as an expression of human consciousness of our basic uniformity and a corresponding awareness of the infinite possibilities of our individual perceptions. Such interpretations are assisted in their impact by the accuracy of the initial modelling and the uniformity of replication achievable only in a material having a high density.

Glenys Barton's interest in the human head and in the figure was maintained. The latter appearing in both male and female form, being used to explore personal directions, embody external influences, such as surrealism in modified form, or to explore techniques.

A tendency to move away from the tightly controlled forms of her *Wedgwood* period became apparent in figures which were articulated and separated into structural units such as the torso, arms, legs and hands much in the same way as marionettes. Some sculptures took the form of drooping figures, others appeared as low relief on plaques and with these, she took the opportunity to experiment with porcellanous bodies. To some of these she applied raku crackle glazes and others were torched and smoked. Similar treatment was given to reliefs where the subject matter was self-portrait executed in three superimposed views of a hairless human head conjoined with a single view in intaglio.

Although the influence of surrealism in Barton's work has been suggested and may be supported by her interest in sculptors such as Giocometti, some of whose forms and interest in drawing parallel her own, it is also likely that the works which apparently embody this influence are deliberate excursions away from the *Wedgwood* period which had served its purpose, and are indications of increasing maturity and form links between her early conceptions and the latest work in portrait heads.

Many of these developments came together in a exhibition in London in 1983 and included pieces such as *Triangular Hands*, a triangulated assembly of 10 hands with fingers uniformly outstretched and held tightly together. The random patterning of the crackle glaze, emphasised by smoking, served to unify the assembly. The same technique was used upon a seemingly sexless human form *Inside '83*, where the glaze was sandblasted to produce a softer finish and thereby enhance the self-containment which the modelling suggests.

Over the last few years Glenys Barton has worked almost entirely upon portrait heads in the round, some of which were commissioned, others made quite recently were included in her latest exhibition at *Angela Flowers Gallery* in London in 1986.

The size of the heads has now increased dramatically, up to two or three times life size which gives them great impact and monumentality. While some contain idiosyncracies which one has come to expect, the smooth skull, the lack of identifiable personal blemishes, and the emphasis upon bone structure, which necessarily relates the work to individual models, are still apparent. Two such heads are those of her contemporary **Jacqui Poncelet** and husband which are modelled with closed eyes and masklike features as in *Weeping Madonna* poised upon elegant necks and with the same look of introspection which has appeared in earlier work.

While other pieces display the same structural interest and personal interpretation, the surface finishes show remarkable change. Instead of the purity and classical simplicity which has been a continuing expectation they are now the subject of much experimentation. The volcanic effects of Egyptian paste invest the heads with rich textures and glazes and dress the sculptures in brilliant blues, greens and bronzes providing a wide spectrum of colour. These finishes add different qualities to the works enhancing the timelessness of some by bringing them within the scope of human experience and investing others with a feeling closer to reality.

Despite the emphasis of this commentary upon the sculptural aspects of Glenys Barton's work it is important to remember that the basic material with which she has continued to work is clay, whether it is bone china, sometimes ground and polished to achieve the required precision, cast porcellanous bodies with raku glazes or hand built, one off pieces with coloured or encrusted surfaces. The material may therefore be seen to be adequate to meet the expressive needs of a British artist of increasing importance, who has perceived its potential for exploration to be compatible with the complexity of her own subject matter, that of Mankind.

N.B. I would like to acknowledge the helo of the *Craft Council of Great Britain* and its permission to photograph items of Glenys Barton's work in its collection and similarly *Angela Flowers Gallery* of Tottenham Mews, London who also provided other information. *Leo King.*

LANDMARK GALLERY — NELSON

By Amy Brown, Northland

From the first day that it opened its doors in early December 1987, *Landmark Gallery* of Nelson showed that it was a force to be reckoned with.

Perfect venues for displaying fine crafts and superb pottery do exist in New Zealand, but they're few and far between. While generally the best venues are to be found in major cities, some provincial cities have also provided good, if small galleries to display the best in New Zealand crafts. *Landmark Gallery* has a few unique features which make its future success look certain.

Firstly it's a gallery dedicated to the best, in not only applied art but also fine art. The combination of paintings, graphics and sculpture with pottery, glass, fibres and jewellery is a rare one to find. Secondly, while size is generally no criteria of quality, this is an enormous privately owned gallery.

The 3000 feet of space has been developed into a simple but splendid showcase. Based on an H plan, the first wing is devoted to pottery, glass, woodwork and jewellery. Extending across between the wings is a coffee bar/restaurant, seating 50 people and serving a series of delicious dishes. This follows into the second wing which is devoted to fine arts, fibre arts, fabrics and furniture.

The gallery has extensive street frontage with large ceiling to floor windows; a great visual showcase and drawcard for the attractions indoors.

Thirdly, and probably the most important feature is Landmark's owners, **Betty** and **Bill James**, recently shifted back to Nelson after years of Auckland city living. These two provided the fulcrum for the gallery's success. Their taste, their selection of fine crafts, their preparedness to deviate from the old and established, to the new and unknown in craftsperson terms.

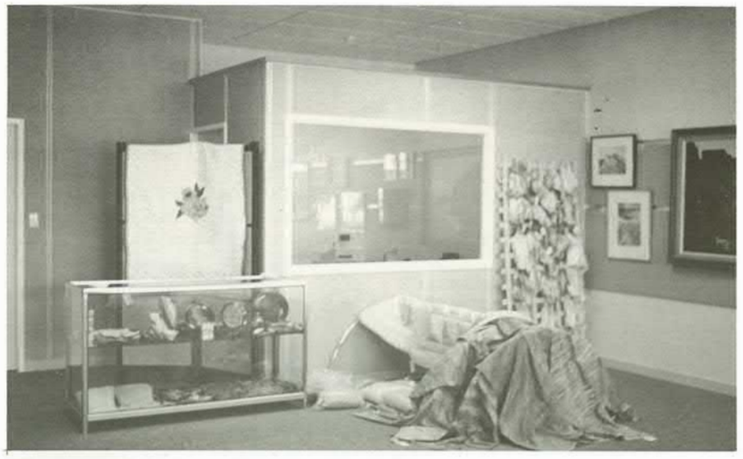
While it's the James' intention to show the best of Nelson, Marlborough and West Coast work, they hope that the ratio of local to national craftspeople will be somewhere in the area of 60/40.

The Gallery's opening exhibition was a wonderful display of pottery and glass by predominantly Auckland craftspeople. In fact if I had been reviewing the opening for the *New Zealand Herald* I would have given it a rave review, something I rarely do.

The James's intend to have exhibitions by out-of-towners and want to sponsor a Nelson Province Secondary School craft work award, plus a Crafted Wood Award. They intend to encourage and promote both craftspeople and the viewing public to produce and buy the best of New Zealand craft.

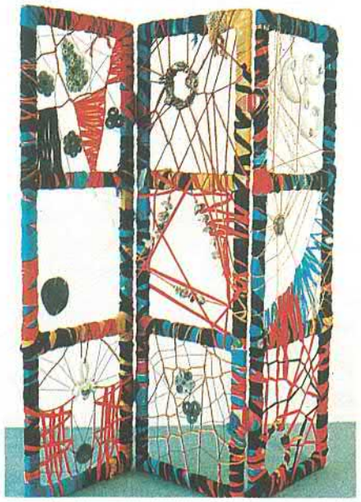
Both Betty and Bill James have already found that some of the work they have purchased they can't bear to part with, so *Landmark* is also building up a collection of irresistables which will form a permanent showcase for New Zealand Art and Craft.

LANDMARK GALLERY



PENNY EVANS, CERAMICS — JULIE COLLIS, FABRIC

New Zealand Crafts Council Gallery, Wellington

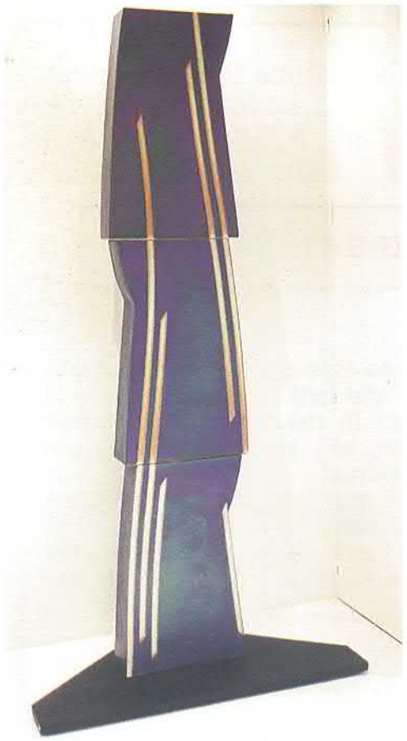


"Jewel Screen". 1.4m high. Fabric: dyed cotton, muslin and cords. Ceramics: clay objects, raku fired with lustres.

Photos by Ces Thomas.

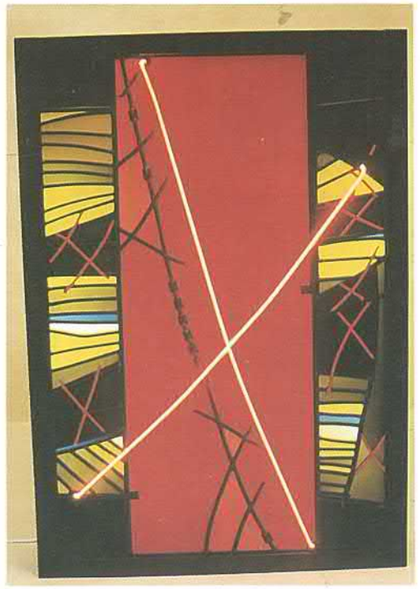
"Gothic Windows". 1.5m high. Fabric: dyed, printed and painted cotton panels mounted on dyed canvas. Ceramics: window frames of extruded clay, raku fired.

KEITH BLIGHT



Slabbed stoneware sculpture, 1.9m high. The three sections are joined by a steel rod through their centres and screwed into the wooden base.

APOLOGY



In our last issue we incorrectly attributed this photo. The work entitled *Lightscape*, a stained glass and neon panel, won a merit award for **Margaret Wesley** of Warkworth. It was exhibited in the *Winstone Crafts Biennale* at the *Auckland Museum*. Our apologies to Margaret Wesley for this error.

CREWENNA REACTIVATED

By Helen Mason, Coromandel

Having blown the dust off the two thousand biscuit pots which were left in the workshop when she and **Harry** went to Peru in 1972, **May Davis** is busily engaged in decorating, glazing and firing them.

Using a gas kiln instead of the large brick kiln, which took 36 hours to fire, she is producing beautiful pots with that superb *Crewenna* quality. Some of the glazes are new, and some are those used before.

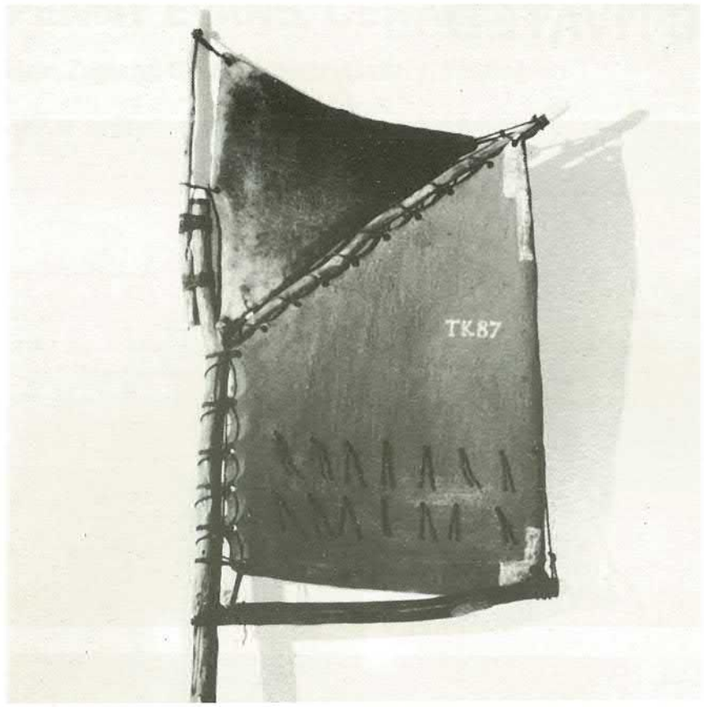
May started work in September of last year and will continue until all the pots are through, which she estimates will be about May of this year.

The showroom, which is in the house at Wakapuaka, Nelson, in the room where the old bread oven is still situated, is open every Thursday, Friday and Saturday mornings from nine until noon. May emphasises that she cannot take orders or mail orders; the work is available only to those who call, purchase and take away during those hours.

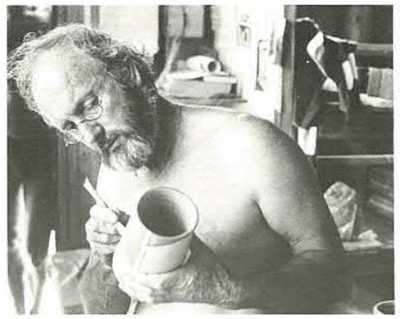
Also for sale, from the pottery itself, are saggars of many shapes and sizes, sillimanite kiln shelves in varied sizes, props and assorted kiln furniture. As well there are many machines such as a power drill and saw for metal, a vacuum filter press, blunger, forge, rock crusher, diesel engine and many other such items. Prices have been put on these, but they are available only to those who can come and take them away.

Harry's book *The Potter's Alternative,* has been published at last, and copies may be obtained at a cost of $46.50 includes postage and packing from **May Davis, Crewenna, Wakapuaka, RD1, Nelson.** These will be posted if necessary. This book is the technological one on low impact technology. The more personal one giving his life story, which was largely written in the late seventies, and has been completed by May, also includes his philosophical writings, but has not yet found a publisher.

Photos: May Davis working on the Crewenna pots.



Boat pots and sail sculptures by Peter Oxborough.



Photos by Howard S. Williams.

Peter Oxborough Helen Johnson
Photos by Anna Campbell

Tree pots and cactus planter by Helen Johnson.

PETER OXBOROUGH — HELEN JOHNSON

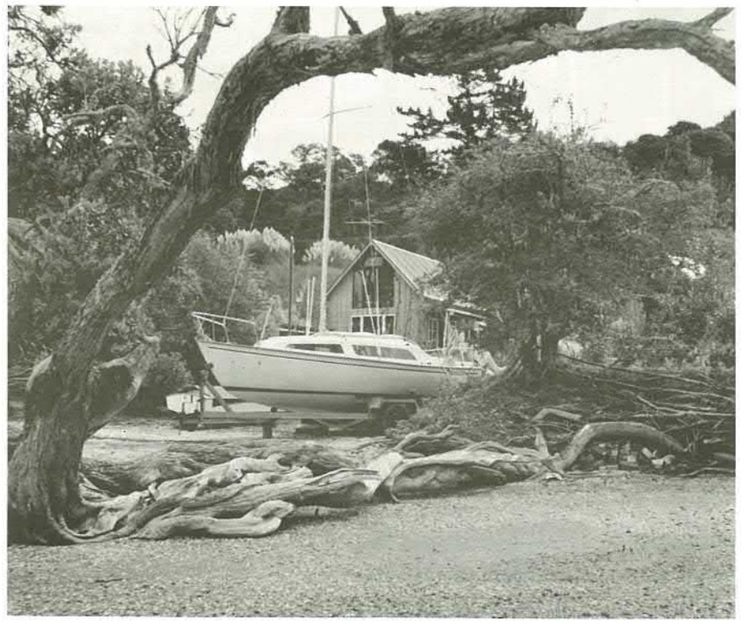
By Howard S. Williams, Auckland.

Te Kapa on the Mahurangi Peninsular, north of Auckland is one of New Zealand's special places — land-locked estuary waters with a multitude of coves, beaches and islands. Here, with tuis singing in the bush, shellfish popping as the tide goes out and gnarled pohutukawas overhanging, is a permanent ambience of childhood holidays — sun, sea, sparkling light and not a care in the world.

To this idyllic place came **Helen Johnson** and **Peter Oxborough** in 1983 to build a small board-and-batten house and studio. A place where they could make their pots, sail their yacht from the bottom of the garden, and collect pipis off the beach for dinner.

Now, this environment is affecting their work — Peter is increasingly exploring the boat theme in his pots, while Helen continually models trees and rocks in bas-relief with different coloured stoneware clays.

Peter started potting full-time in 1972 after a background of painting and commercial art in the advertising world. He has been part of **Brown's Mill** craft co-operative in Auckland, the *Hive* in Browns Bay and is currently a member of both the *Albany Village Pottery* and the *Warkworth Craft Co-operative*. He has won merits for his domestic pottery in the *Scamper Award* and *Fletcher Brownbuilt* and is well known for his range of stoneware pots-for-the-kitchen and candlesticks.



The boating interest, which has been with him all his life, started to show in his pots as drawings on plates and mugs — now it has become a full fascination with using his skills in clay to express his feelings about boats and sails.

Te Haupa, Saddle Island, appears on tiles and on clay-sculptured sails. *Te Kapa*, TK 87, becomes the registration number on a sculptured sail rig — clay sails lashed to mast and booms of driftwood carefully selected from the beach. Even his coffee mugs become vessel vessels. The craftsman becomes an artist.

Helen joined Peter and started helping with the pottery in 1975, reluctantly at first, making dozens of tiny ceramic spoons for his salt and mustard pots. Now she is a potter in her own right, a member of the *Warkworth Craft Co-operative*, a potter letting the atmosphere of her environment colour her work.

POTTERS MARKET

FOR SALE:

Pottery Business for sale. Superb space, 850 sq.ft. on Devonport waterfront. 40 cu.ft. natural gas kiln, shelving, wet cupboard, showroom, lighting. Established eight years, good turnover. Rent $75 per week, price $12,000. Contact Andrea Barrett or Campbell Hegan (09) 453-212 (studio) or (09) 450-271 (home).

For Sale
Pottery. 3½ acres, new two bedroom 97 sq.m. house, 67 sq.m. studio, 170 cu.ft. wood fired, two chamber climbing kiln.
$85,000 — Mike Regan, Box 13, Broadwood, North Hokianga. Phone Broadwood 856.

Wanted: De-airing Pug Mill 4 inch Single Phase. Phone: (09) 426-7057 Auckland.

New House and Pottery. Exquisite intimate colonial cottage under construction by Italian cabinetmaker. 2-3 bedrooms. Architect design; stained wood, brass, porcelain fittings, leadlights, skylights, french doors, dormer window, beautiful details — all amenities. Vehicle access to house and pottery. Old stone walls set in bush clad artists' community and historic fishing village. Two minutes to shopping centre, 15 minutes to Dunedin and Otago University. Magnificent efficient 60 cubic foot crossdraft single chamber wood-fired kiln. Stone-ware temp in 12 hours, one person casually stoking — abundant free fuel — best kiln anywhere. Large kiln/pottery shed. Price around $80,000. On the market July-August. Owner going overseas to study drama.

Please write — Pottery, c/o 23 De Lacy Street, Maia, Dunedin, for full details and phone number.

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