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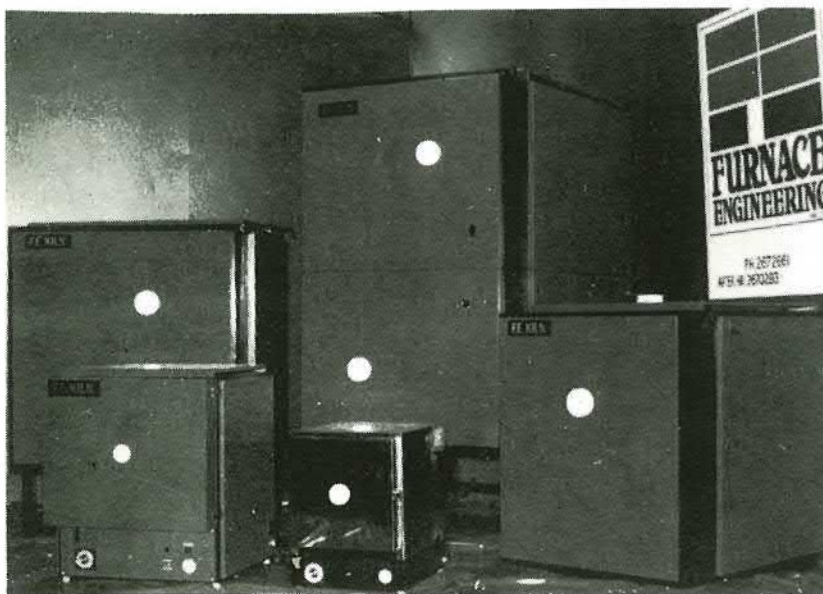
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NEW ZEALAND POTTER  
VOLUME 33: NUMBER 3: 1991

**Editor:** Howard S. Williams  
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**Subscriptions,  
Publisher and Distributor:**  
NZ Potter Publications Ltd  
P.O. Box 881, Auckland, N.Z.  
Fax (09) 393-247

**Managing Director:**  
Cecilia Parkinson  
**Design:**  
Cecilia Parkinson, John Parker,  
Howard Williams

**Typeset by:** Mills Typeset Ltd  
Tel/Fax: (09) 605-250  
Auckland 3, N.Z.

**Paste Up:** Sheena Reeves

**Printed by:**  
World Publications  
Singapore

**Copy Deadlines: 1st day of  
February, June, September  
Issued:** April, August,  
December

**Price:** \$8 per copy incl. GST  
Annual Subscription:  
\$24 incl. GST  
Overseas Subscriptions sent  
surface mail: \$NZ28.50

**Advertising Rates:** GST not inc.

**Display: 4 colour:**  
Back cover: \$1650  
(Min. 3 issues)  
Full page: \$759. Half page: \$550

**Display: Black and White**  
Inside front/back covers: \$532  
Full page: \$485. Half page: \$295  
Quarter page: \$179

**Potter's Market:**  
Full page: \$418. Half page: \$253  
Quarter page: \$154.  
Eighth page: \$93

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ISSN 0113 - 583X

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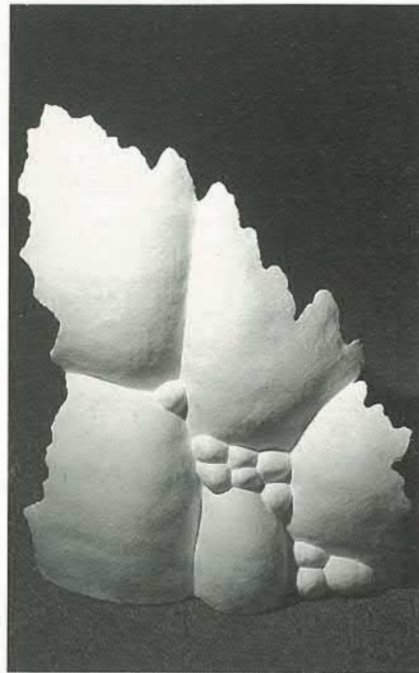
### COVER PHOTO

Vase by Jeannie, bowl  
and lidded jar by  
Andrew van der  
Putten, see page 19.  
*Photo by:*  
Howard S. Williams.



# THROUGH THE FILTER PRESS

EDITORIAL  
HOWARD S WILLIAMS



Botryoidal Sail

**Tim Currey**, winner of this year's *Fletcher Challenge Ceramics Award* (see cover photo of our last issue) had his first ceramics exhibition at *Master Works Gallery* in Parnell, Auckland, just before he left permanently with his family, to live in Australia.

**Helen Mason** has recently been to his now vacant workshop at the well-structured *Moehau Community* at Sandy Bay, 3 kms north of Port Charles on the tip of Coromandel Peninsula. Many of his clay objects are there to be discovered in odd corners. She writes:

"When I saw that the famous bronze casting workshop (next session 11-17 January 1992) was in the same building as Tim's spacious and well-set-up pottery I began to understand some of the origins of his very personal style. A walk on the sand of the adjacent rocky cover revealed even more of his sources."

Tim is now settling in to life on Lamb Island on the Great Barrier Reef. He can't wait to get his gas kiln, which he took with him, set up — the environment is so stimulating to his creative eyes and hands.

Meanwhile, at Sandy Bay there is a good workshop, much raw material and two brick kilns, one small diesel and one large wood-fired, waiting for a potter. Anyone interested should write to the *Moehau Community, Port Charles, RD, Coromandel*. ■

## CONE CITY CLAY

The *New Zealand Society of Potters* annual convention and exhibition is to be held in Auckland over Queens Birthday Weekend, May 30-June 1, 1992. It will be one of the biggest events yet in the pottery calendar as the *National Exhibition* will be on simultaneously with the *Fletcher Challenge Ceramics Award*.

All galleries in the area will also hold special exhibitions and marvellous things are planned for the conference happenings — *Cone City* may erupt in a pyrometric manner! Look further in this issue for the *NZSP* advertisement which gives more details.

□

## FLETCHER CHALLENGE CERAMICS AWARD 1992

For the first time in the 15 years of this award, the 1992 exhibition will be pre-selected by slide submission. Many local ceramic artists and potters will be taken short by this change in selection procedure, for two major reasons.

Firstly, it brings the date of entry submission forward by an alarming amount — slides are required to be in New Zealand by 13 December — around the time you may be reading this! The slides submitted (up to 3 taken from different angles of the actual work for the show) are then sent overseas to the designated judge for the pre-selection. Those artists whose work is accepted will then be notified in order to physically freight the work to the venue, where of course a second screening will take place — the work must not vary too much from what the slides portrayed.

Secondly, well before the slides are sent, the work must obviously already be made and a photographer found who can do justice by showing it correctly. The best pot or sculpture can be dullsville if photographed badly — or conversely a mediocre piece can be made to look quite stunning if the photographer is skilled. Neither extreme is helpful in this exercise. Nor are slides where a 'product photographer' dresses up the work in an 'arty' setting — draped fabrics, long grass and tree trunks, lichen-covered stones — the piece should be shown clearly on a plain non-eye-distractive background. Obviously the judge is jurying the ceramic work, not the photographic statement!

The reasons for changing to selection by slide are several, but the main one is the sheer physical problem now encountered with having

hundreds of pots freighted in for unpacking, selection, repacking and back-freighting of unselected work.

The cost of this work and the extra potential for accidental damage is another factor. Also many people would be prepared to send larger works if they have been accepted by slide first. This reduces the possibility of expensive packing, freighting and insurance, being fruitless in the event of the work not being accepted.

What this may do for 1992 is produce an exhibition with a far greater proportion of overseas works, to local works. In New Zealand, it has been almost unknown for exhibitions to be selected this way so we are not geared up for such a system. Most other countries are, so entries are likely to pour in from artists who are prepared and familiar with the process.

Perhaps in following years we will have adjusted our thinking and be working with the earlier lead times required — not to take that latest pot out of the kiln to deliver it to the venue, scorching a towel wrapped around it, on the final acceptance day.

## CATALOGUES

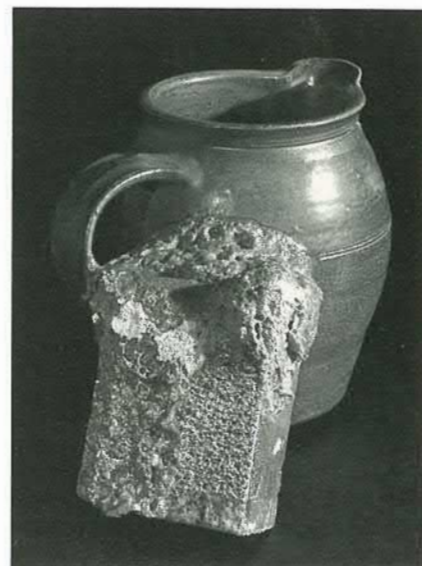
Catalogues from *Fletcher Challenge* exhibitions are still available in limited numbers from:

**Auckland Studio Potters**  
PO Box 13-195  
Onehunga  
Auckland

The 1990 catalogue is \$5 and the 1991, \$6.80. Add a dollar for p&p.

□

"Kiln Wasters". Salt-glazed, wood-fired jug/kiln prop by *Renton Murray*. Exhibition "When Mistakes become Art" at *Albany Village Pottery*.



## A HINT ...

for decorators, from **Libby Boyd** of Thames who has been maddened by the continual ruination of her expensive decorating brushes, when using latex. Having tried many cleaning agents she eventually confronted *DSIR* with the problem. Their suggestion was *Kumclean*, and having tried it she writes:

"No problems at last — it's marvellous stuff! Watch out though — I said *stuff*, not *snuff* — it has a powerful nose-ruining smell, but it sure works well on the brushes."

## ANOTHER HINT ...

for those who have work at a shop or gallery, on commission. In these recent hard economic times, more than one gallery has been unable to continue and has faced receivership. If this occurs, work which was on commission, been sold, but not yet paid for to the artist, may slide away into oblivion. The artist will probably not be paid as they are obviously less important than solicitors, landlords, IRS ...

Works on commission and not yet sold, should still be the property of the artist and reclaimable, if they are correctly documented. Just be careful, out there.

*Michael Keighery and Moyra Elliott at the University Club, Brisbane. See article pages 30-32.*



## CERAMICS TRADE EXHIBITION

An International Ceramics and Glass Forum *C92* is to take place in Limoges in 1992, from 22 to 25 September. There will be 5,000 sq m of stands, 220 exhibitors, 1,000 participants in the conferences and over 6,000 international visitors.

Primarily concerned with plant and equipment for the ceramics industry, this year *C92* is enlarging its scope by including glass-making techniques.

Major conference topics will cover Promoting Ceramics; Environment and European Standardization; Energy.

For more information contact:

**Pia Abildgaard**  
Ceram Expo, C92  
27 bd de la Corderie  
87031 Limoges  
Cedex  
France

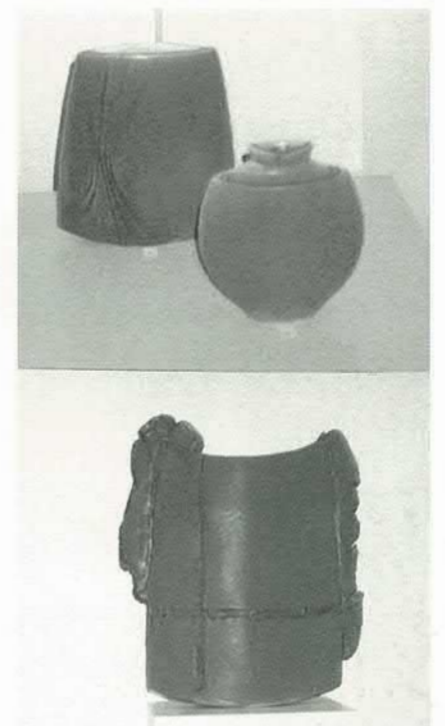
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## SALZBRAND

*Salzbrand* is the major international exhibition and competition for salt-glazed ceramics. All types of clay objects will be considered, but they must be salt-glazed. The exhibition by the *Galerie Handwerk*, Koblenz will be held in the 1992 northern summer; closing date for entries is December 31, 1991, while the actual work must be delivered between March 1 and April 15, 1992. The awards total DM18,000.

The organisers are:  
**Handwerkskammer Koblenz**  
**Galerie Handwerk Koblenz**  
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Germany  
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The *NZ Potter* has entry forms and conditions; photocopies can be had for \$2 from us; **PO Box 147 Albany**



"Slab Happy". Exhibition of slab-built pots by *Ian Firth* at *Pots of Ponsonby*.

□

## RUMOUR ...

has it that there could possibly be a new ceramic award exhibition next year in April, held under the auspices of the *Royal Easter Show*, Auckland. Watch your local newsletter and that of the *NZSP* for further development of this potential addition to our exhibition calendar.

□

## NEXT ISSUE . . .

Owing to lack of space we have had to hold over two articles intended for this issue — **John Parker's Middle Fire Glazes, Part II**, and the continuation of **Acme Marls' Modern Kiln Furniture**.

□

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# EXPO '92

Louise Guerin, Wellington



Barry Brickell, handbuilding

New Zealand's pavilion at *Expo 92* in Seville next year will have a very special focus, on New Zealand ceramics. Altogether 14 people who work in clay will be represented, along with one glass worker, **Ann Robinson** of Kare Kare.

The exhibition will be the first major showing of New Zealand ceramics and glass in an international arena and will reflect in part the *Expo 92* theme *Voyage in the Age of Discovery*. Christopher Columbus receives particular attention, along with tuataras, eels, nikau palms, Pacific elements, and the activity of the earthy's crust.

Exhibition designer and curator, **James Mack**, has held Pacific navigators in focus, while drawing together exhibition themes. "Whether you like it or not, 1500 years at least before Christopher Columbus did what he did, there were great ocean voyages happening in the Pacific."

The evidence of these voyages is ceramic, the *Lapita* culture (N.Z. Potter, Vol 31, No 3, 1989). This then ties in closely with the past history of one ancient building still in existence on the *Expo 92* site. It is a twelfth or thirteenth century monastery, which in the nineteenth century was turned into an encaustic tile factory. Its beehive kilns are still there.

Mack completed a mid-making tour of all the participants in early September and was very pleased with progress. "What started out looking like becoming a very good show, has moved a million miles into being a show I have no hesitation in saying is going to be spectacular", he said.

"The exhibition was put together with an absolute belief that the people invited to participate were capable of extending themselves so that when we take the show into a European arena, we'll be able to stand up with stuff that's as good aesthetically, as any of them are doing. The consideration of taking an exhibition into that environment means that it's got to be bloody good, strong and vital; it must be seen as a statement strongly evocative of New Zealand, otherwise it's not worth it."

So, what will the exhibition be saying about New Zealand? "It's reminding the rest of the world that even though human habitation here is young, we have found our place in our land and are able to project its strength into our art."

"It's also reminding Europeans that materials available to New Zealanders are the same materials that they know. It's the same deterioration of rock and stone into clay. It's reminding Europeans about their knowledge of clay before they start seeing the way New Zealanders interpret it. It's reminding them that in terms of geological time, we once were the same continents, and we are now their antipodies — that if you drill a hole through from Spain to New Zealand it's the same earth, same magma and the same rock in between."

Mack says he chose ceramics as the medium to represent this country in this way "mainly because I believe it is the branch of the arts making the strongest portrayal of who and what we are as New Zealanders."

And how did he come to choose the people he chose? "Every one of them was already doing fantastic stuff and every one of them had a capability of taking the curatorial dream and marching with it to their own tune. I mean, it was absolutely imperative that every one of these people who was already great became better, for themselves and for the show, so that we can stand up in the extremely rarified aesthetic environment in Spain."

Robyn Stewart working on *Godwanaland* series



Daryl Robertson and James Mack



Christine Boswijk



Richard Parker's pots in progress



Ann Verdcourt's *Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain*

"Another important thing was that in an exhibition like this you do have to show the individual people, but you must also show a cohesive force that sits like an umbrella above the total show, otherwise it's just another arty farty experience."

"So the show has been looked at to reflect all those things about New Zealand's place and its relationship with Spain, and I have no hesitation in saying I have chosen the people who do it superbly and who are best at it. All those who are upset about my judgement forget that I've been looking at New Zealand ceramics as a non-participant for something approaching 30 years and I don't care whether they think it's big-headed or not, I now believe that I've been around the people long enough to see those who do ceramics because they can't stop; those who do ceramics just to make their bread and butter; and those who do ceramics as a dilettante activity. Every one of the people in this exhibition has clay in their blood, for god's sake." Photos by Louise Guerin ■

# LOMBOK, INDONESIA

## Crafts Project Update

Jean McKinnon, Wellington



Project potter bringing his pots in to the Centre

The Sasak potters of Lombok, Indonesia, need no introduction to readers of this magazine, nor does the *Lombok Crafts Project* which has been working there since February 1988. The Indonesia-New Zealand *Lombok Crafts Project* is part of the official development assistance programme of the Ministry of External Relations and Trade. Most of us had our first glimpse of Lombok in **Robyn Stewart's** article in 1987 (*New Zealand Potter Vol 29 No 1*). **Helen Mason** provided an update in 1989 (*Vol 31 No 3*) based on a letter written by **Peter Yeates** who by that time had been working as Ceramics Adviser for six months.

What then has the *Lombok Crafts Project* been doing in the last three and a half years? Plenty.

We began with two New Zealanders, myself and **Ann Ambler-Woodroffe**, and one Indonesian assistant. **Peter Yeates** replaced Ann in early 1989. **Jean Hastedt** was to replace me as Project Manager in the beginning of 1990, but due to ill-health was able to stay only six months (in which time she made valuable contributions in both technical and management work). Peter and I stayed on until the middle of this year when we handed over to a new team of advisers; **Bill Parr** whose background is business management, **Janet Clougherty**, a potter and ceramic archaeologist who has worked in Britain for many years, and **Gail Sammons**, a potter and teacher from Wanganui. They are working with a staff of twenty-five dedicated and overworked young Indonesians, most of whom are Sasaks from the pottery villages.

The Project has long since outgrown its original modest and probably naive goal of improving potter incomes through technical and marketing assistance. It has become a development organisation actively working not only in technical and marketing areas, but also in the equally important areas of community development and participation. Significant changes have been made in the potters lives and the first steps taken to make those changes

sustainable. The most noticeable changes are in the pots themselves.

Our first impression of Lombok pots was their striking beauty and variety of form, and the sheer quantities produced by these amazing women working in little cramped spaces between their houses. The forms especially have a faultless integrity that is the result of generations of refinement. Each village has its range of specific and unique pots, each with a function and a name, and often a ritual use. The forms needed no help.

Yet we began to see that these marvellous pots in no way realised their potential. No one bothered much with aesthetics, burnishing was careless, everything was fired as little as possible. Priorities were determined by economics. Pots to be sold for a few cents or a few dollars to another villager must be made at minimum cost in materials, fuel and effort. That's all. Refinements were of no significance.

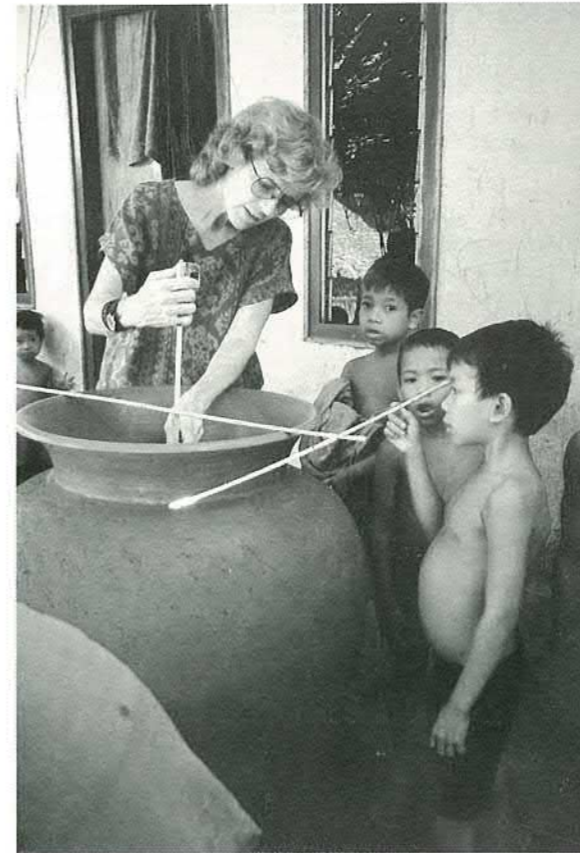
The technical programme worked towards changing all this, by working on clay preparation, finish and firing. Pots now being made in Project villages are stronger, shinier, more richly coloured and generally have that nice ripe glow of well fired terracotta. Clay is now slaked for several days before drying and wedging with temper sands (instead of being pounded and dry sieved, mixed with water and used almost immediately). Burnishing is given the time and effort needed to bring up a good rich shine. And firing . . .

Because it was clear that clamp fired pots which reached only 600°C were very fragile, the most technical work has been on firing. In Penujak where we built three types of experimental kiln and spent a long time on trials and training with small core groups of potters, kiln firing has now become the norm, representing a major achievement. All kilns are variations on a simple updraught design, little more than above-ground pits with fire boxes. When properly stacked and fired the wares reach an optimum temperature (800-900°C) in about two hours, with excellent fuel economy, using wood, coconut husks, garden rubbish, rice straw and husks. Although to us such kilns are primitive and uneconomic, to the Sasaks they are revolutionary and to gain acceptance of kiln firing has been a long and frustrating task.

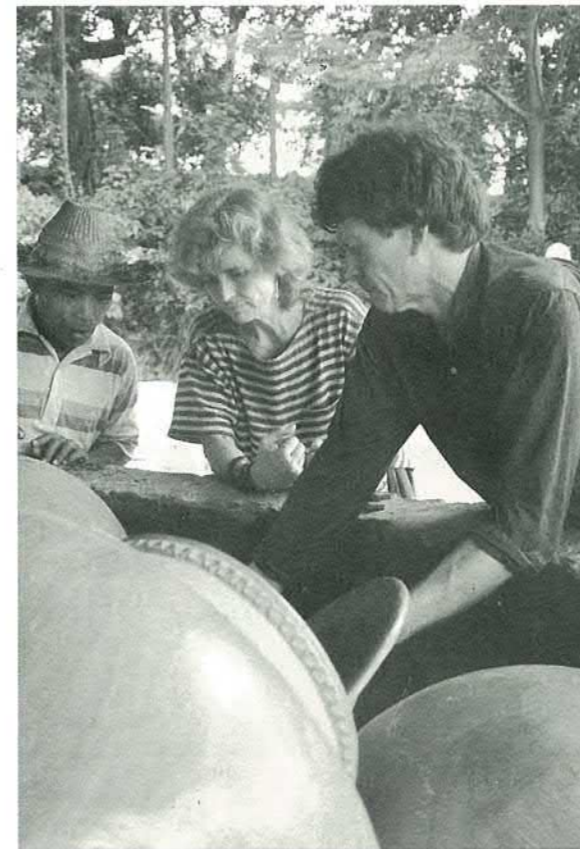
With every small departure from the normal working habits, whether it was clay preparation, burnishing methods or firing, a whole campaign of motivation and persuasion was required. Pete regularly made his morning entrance to the office dancing a little shuffle and singing, "One step forward, two steps back". Perhaps Sasaks aren't much different from the rest of us in this respect. "Why should I do it differently just because you say it will be better? Even if you can demonstrate to me that it is better I don't want to do it because I never have before." It's simple. It's human nature. It can drive a well intentioned and optimistic development adviser to despair.

A good example of this was when Pete built a domed kiln in Penujak. It was wonderfully efficient and yielded lovely pots. But the potters wanted to tear off the dome after the first few firings. Why? "We don't like giving the responsibility of stacking to one person. With the open top kiln we could all put in our own pots." The last reports I heard from Lombok were that, after months of discussions and many more trial firings, the kiln has at last been accepted and is being fired correctly and turning out wonderful pots, at even lower cost than the open-topped kilns.

continued page 9



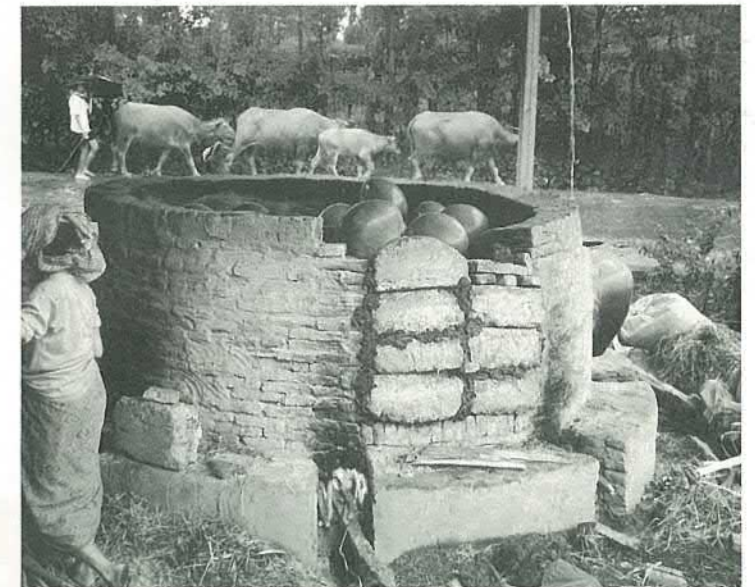
Jean McKinnon calculating shrinkages



Peter Yeates, Jean McKinnon and fire-master Sayuti



Jean McKinnon with Penujak potters committee on the steps of the gallery built in 1990



Peter Yeates' Penujak kiln



Jean Hastedt with potters and training assista

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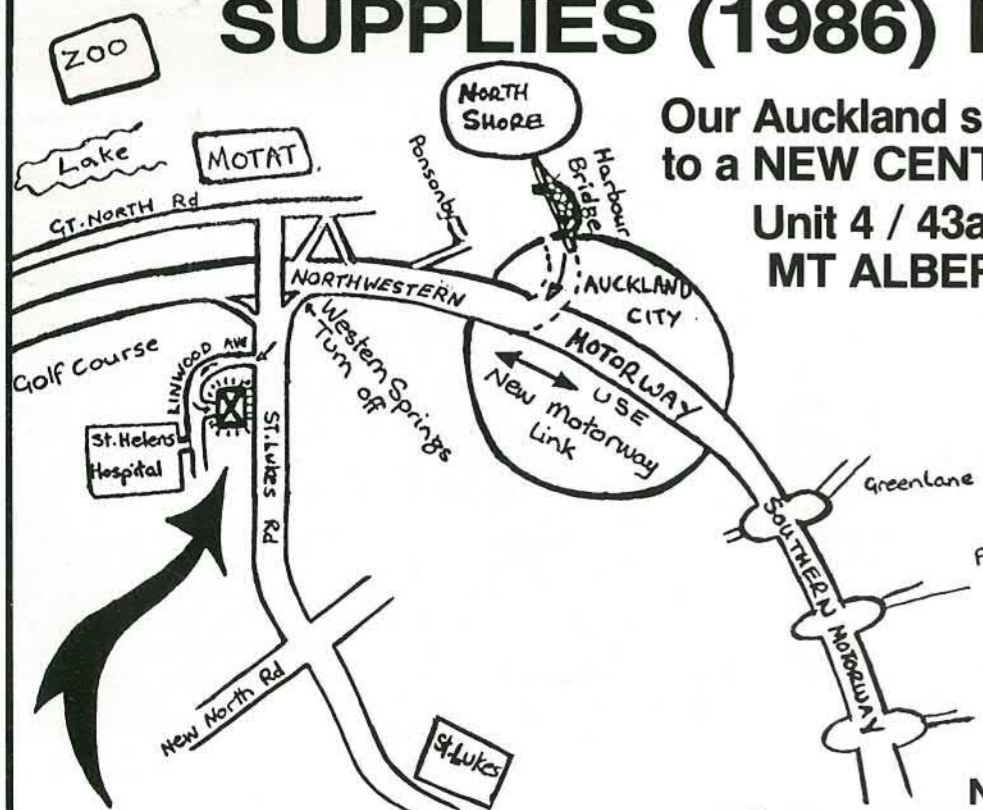
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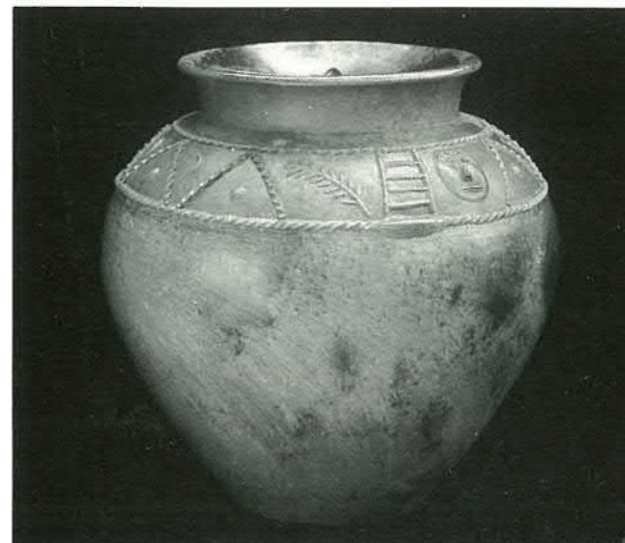
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With such difficulties we were naturally reluctant to rush into kiln building in the other two villages, where clamp firing is still the norm. We found that clamp firings could be improved by using more fuel, making sure fuel is dry, and taking more time, but the inevitable unevenness within the stack continues to produce some pots with underfired spots. The potters in these villages have seen the Penujak kilns and are eager to start kiln firing.

From the very beginning our approach has been to nurture and promote, and in some cases revive traditional forms. That said, we did find room to tamper with tradition by adding decoration to plain pots, improving on pots with ill fitting lids or badly designed handles (only necessary in pots the design of which had been borrowed from manufactured metal household wares), and developing some new forms.



Banumulek rice storage jar. Coiled with symbolic decoration.

In the villages of Banyumulek and Masbagik Timur many pots have always been decorated with specific traditional burnished or applied patterns. Some decorations had ritual significance and complex rituals associated with their making. In Penujak however there were very few pots still being made, none of which were decorated. We developed a style of incised decoration and a range of small domestic ware that would appeal to the bus loads of tourists beginning to visit the village in search of souvenirs.

In an environment where the influx of "foreign" ideas grows by the day, we insisted that any new form or decoration must be derived from Sasak art. New forms were based on modifications of older pots. Decoration introduced, while never before produced in clay, were borrowed from other Sasak crafts such as the incised patterns on bamboo containers, carved patterns on wooden domestic decorations and implements, and shell inlay on wooden dowry boxes.

The rich variety of Sasak decorative arts reflect Lombok's cultural links with Bali and Java, but is nevertheless a distinct style that developed alongside their unique syncretic religion. This tradition has gradually been degraded in the past century due to the various influences of modernisation, opening up to the outside world, and Islamisation.

In the past five years tourism and export trade have brought about a new demand for crafts, resulting in a proliferation of "primitive" Sasak art that is neither attractive nor traditional. The handicraft shops of Java and Bali abound in ersatz "traditional" Indonesian art, amongst which pottery stands out as the best example of how manufactured "tradition" excels in ugliness. In such a climate the Lombok Crafts Project has a clear responsibility

as a major influence on pottery production to safeguard and foster genuine Sasak pottery forms. Our confidence that an appropriate marketing approach could make this policy profitable has been borne out by the preferences of an increasingly sophisticated and experienced buying public, from the middle class of Jakarta to the interior designers of Europe.

Meanwhile the Lombok Pottery Centre has evolved to meet this growing market interest from within Indonesia and abroad. With guidance from the New Zealand advisers, Indonesian staff members coordinate all aspects of the business including promotion, order processing, pot production, retail sales, packing and shipping, invoicing and management information. Village men have learned to make bamboo shipping baskets and crates (designed by Peter), providing another source of income. An average of four to five container loads of pottery are sent off each month to Bali and Java, Europe, Australia, USA and New Zealand. Local retail sales to foreign and domestic tourists, local hotels and restaurants account for a significant proportion of the income.

All this has meant a lot of change in a relatively short period. Life has clearly improved for the potters. Women who formerly churned out as many pots as possible, fired them as quickly and cheaply as possible and sent them off for sale would earn about \$1.00 a day, for many the only income for a nuclear family of six, plus grandparents. Now the best potters earn more than five times that much. Husbands freed from the exhausting job of peddling shoulder poles of pots around the countryside help with decoration, finishing and firing. This improvement has led to concrete changes like long-term debts paid off, new or repaired houses, kids in school, eye diseases treated, better health for both adults and children, wells that don't dry up in the hot season, and even a day of rest on Sundays.

Equally gratifying to see has been an emergence of self-confidence and self-worth, creativity and pride in what they make as they begin to understand that people out there in the wider world buy their pots for lots of money simply because they are beautiful.

To gain these rewards has required the potters to change more than their potting techniques. They are now selling to a market that insists on high quality standards and production deadlines. They have had to learn cooperation and organisational skills. For their enterprise to be sustainable they must eventually own and manage everything. Most potters are poorly educated, illiterate and unable to speak the national Indonesian language. To build up a self-managed organisation you don't start with teaching book keeping and management skills, you start with literacy.

In a society with an ingrained "bottom of the heap" mentality, where poor people expect to remain poor and to have little power over their fate, where cooperation rarely extends beyond family boundaries, and where village women do not run organisations, it is an unusual idea. Nothing of its kind has ever existed in Lombok. To the potters themselves it was until recently totally incomprehensible. Now it is beginning to dawn on them that not only might it be a good idea, but just maybe it is also possible.

Helen Mason's article in 1989 was titled *The Lombok Experiment*. It remains an experiment, but the experimenters are no longer New Zealanders trying to help a group of impoverished village potters. The experimenters are now those potters themselves, and their goal is to secure the dignity and improved quality of life that self-reliance will bring.

**NOTE:** The best Lombok pots to be seen in New Zealand to date will be exhibited next February at the Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt. ■

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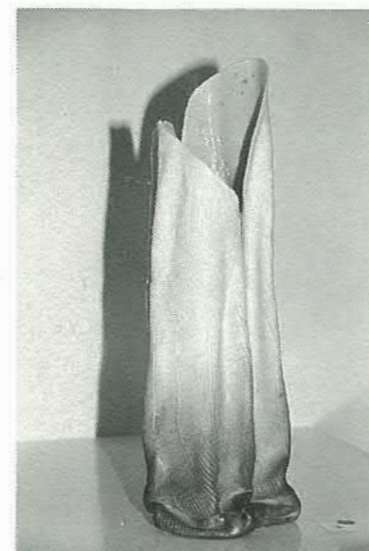
Photos by Maxine Waters



■ Valda Woods. "Head"



■ Elaine Williams



■ David Brokenshire. Porcelain vase



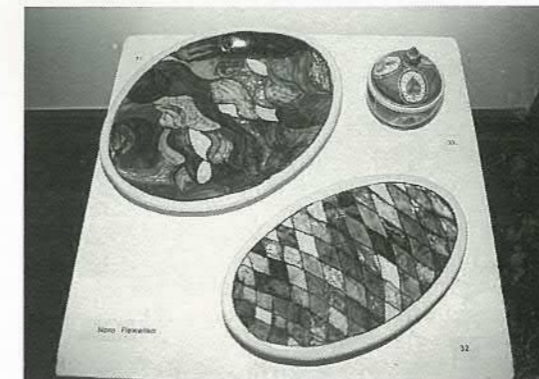
■ Maureen Johnstone, CPA President



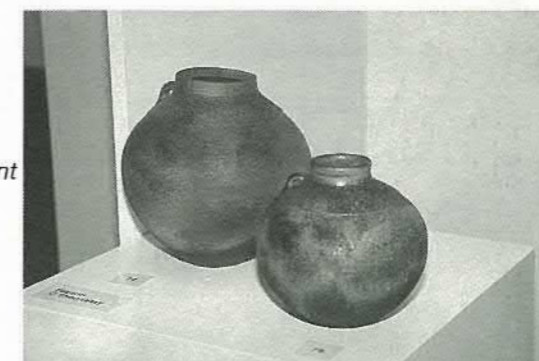
■ Guest Exhibitor, David Walker. Earthenware jar, "Waves"



■ Sabrina Idiens. "Seaborn", pit fired



■ Nora Flewollen. Earthenware



■ Susann O'Shannessy



■ Margaret Ryley



■ Hilary Lakeman. Salt glaze teapots

# THE LAND AS A GALLERY

## FRACTAL GROWTH: An Ephemeral Installation

Pat Sinclair, Auckland

**Sue Wink**, American ceramic artist, visited New Zealand from June to August this year. The first month of her visit was spent touring the North and South Islands, visiting museum collections, experiencing the unique environment and attending the *ClayAzArt* conference in Coromandel-Rotorua. She also attended the fifth National Ceramic Conference in Brisbane and took a side trip to Lady Elliot Island on the Great Barrier Reef. The final month of her visit was spent at *Carrington Polytechnic* as Visiting Artist constructing an outdoor sculpture in the grounds.

Sue teaches ceramics fulltime as Associated Professor of Art at the *Central Michigan University*. Her sculptures are installation-oriented; she designs site-specific works for indoor and selected outdoor locations. Inspiration for her work is derived from natural phenomena — organic systems of growth and pattern. Her arrangements of multiple ceramic forms represent metaphorical statements about human growth.

*Fractal Growth*, the sculpture she created at *Carrington*, was designed specifically to fit within the chosen hillside location. Alternating raw clay forms and ginger plant stems were arranged in random fashion between fracted channels dug into the lawn. Movement within the continuum of the 6 metre circle was suggested by placing egg-shaped pieces of a contrasting reddish-pink clay at opposing poles.

The kinetic quality became a reality as you circled the piece and it changed from round to elliptical and quietly vibrated with your movement.

The use of the ginger plant stems, found by chance in a nearby pile, gave rigidity and strength to the matrix. Your surprise when you first came upon the piece gave way to fascination and absorption. It made for an easy relationship, a subconscious reminder perhaps of our own passage through the scale of time.

The completion of the piece took nearly three weeks, the challenge made difficult by the rains of July. The work had to be constructed one section at a time and each section covered from the elements by a sheet



of plastic, but this provided an unexpected bonus for it created patterns of condensation on the raw clay and acted as a greenhouse to promote rapid grass growth.

Even the autumn leaves that settled on the piece became part of the whole through the harmony of the colours of leaf and clay.

*Fractal Growth* was left on location to weather and decay with the elements. Within the next two weeks it was submerged in grass and the clay was sinking into the soil, emphasizing the intended impermanence of the sculpture and its circular theme of growth, decay and new growth. ■

Photos by Sue Wink





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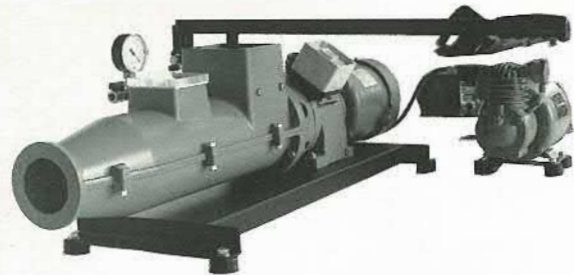
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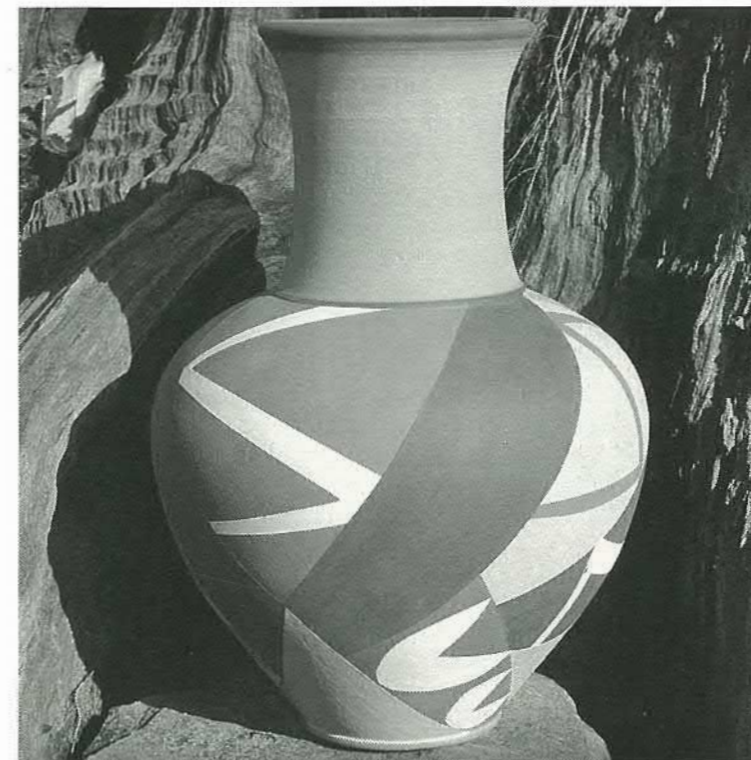
### STANDARD PUG MILLS

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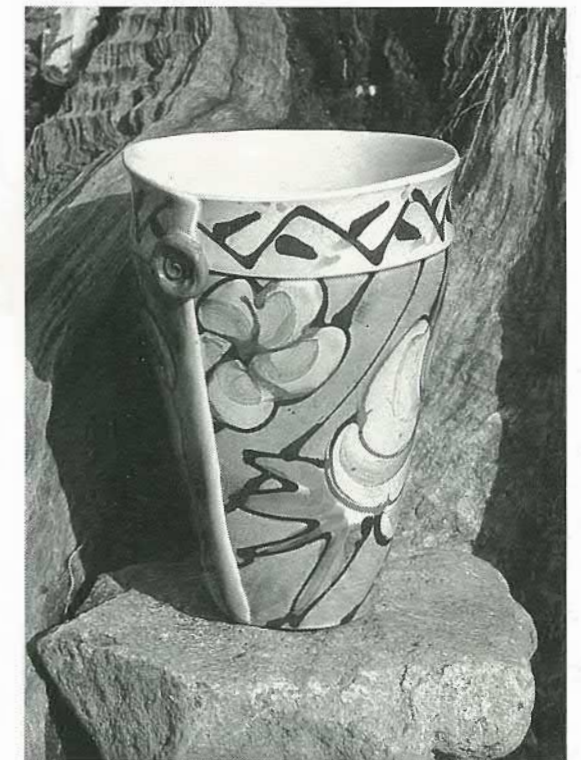
### DE AIRING PUG MILLS

75 mm NOZZLE 136 mm BARREL SINGLE PHASE	\$1650.00
87 mm NOZZLE 150 mm BARREL SINGLE PHASE	\$2300.00
100 mm NOZZLE 200 mm BARREL SINGLE PHASE	\$2900.00

# CLEVELAND CERAMIC AWARD 1991



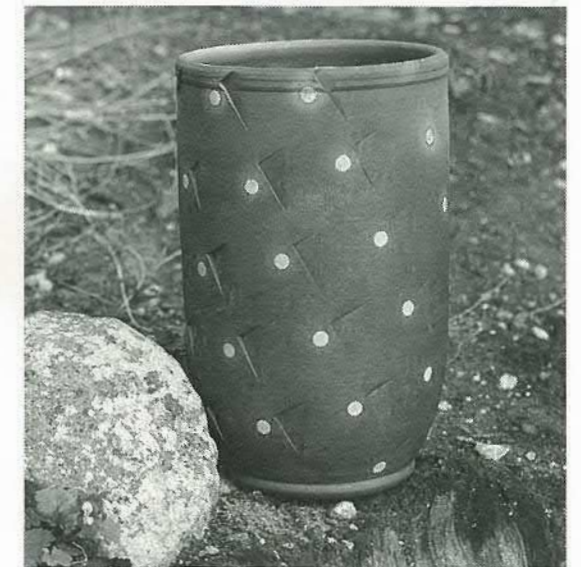
Cleveland Award Winner. Suzanne Spannagl. "Pacifica"



Otago Daily Times Award. Jo Howard. Vase



Rick Rudd. Raku Bottle



Glenfalloch Merit Award. Kenneth Winter. "Annulose"

The inaugural *Cleveland Ceramic Award* exhibition was held in the *Glenfalloch Woodland Garden* chalet, Dunedin, 9-18 August 1991.

The response from ceramic artists nationally was very enthusiastic, 146 entries being presented for the judge to select the exhibition from. Otago was very well represented.

The judge who selected and staged the exhibition was **Ms Cheryl Sotheran** Director of the *Dunedin Public Art Gallery*.

The winning entry was the work of

**Suzanne Spannagl** from New Plymouth. Her pot *Pacifica* is wheel thrown and slip painted.

The *Glenfalloch Merit Award* went to **Kenneth Winter** of Nelson. His pot, *Annulose* he described as "the hazy surface of this pot brings to mind the annular eclipse early in 1991, with the glazed portions representing 'multiple suns' as viewed from Golden Bay through the overcast sky."

The *Otago Daily Times Award* for an Otago resident was awarded to **Jo Howard** for her slab built vase.

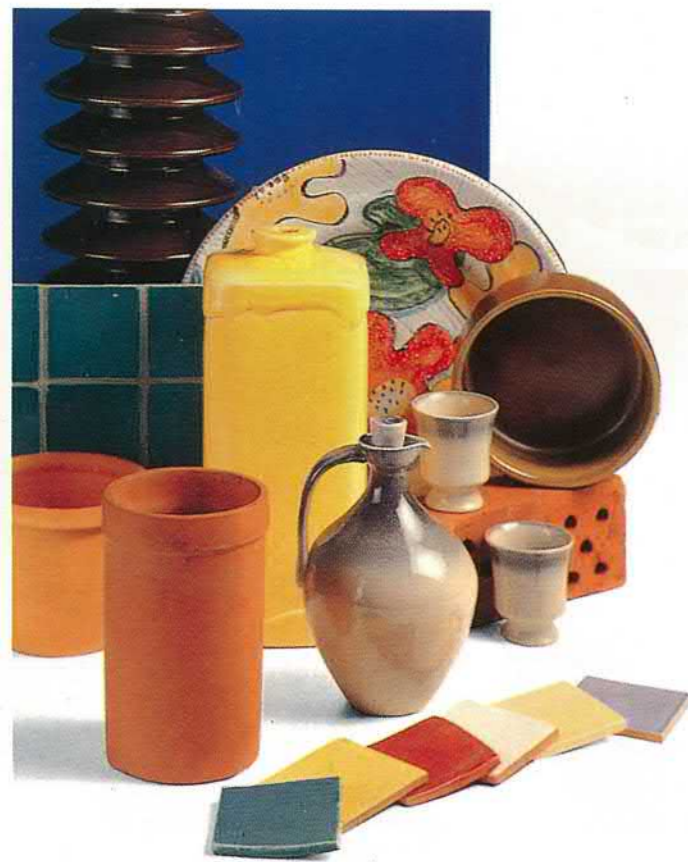
The sponsors, *Cleveland Charitable Foundation Inc* were very pleased with the exhibition and **Les Cleveland** has indicated that the Foundation will, in all probability be offering the Award annually.

If anyone wishes to receive a 1992 entry form please send your name and address to:

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Photographs by Robert Brown

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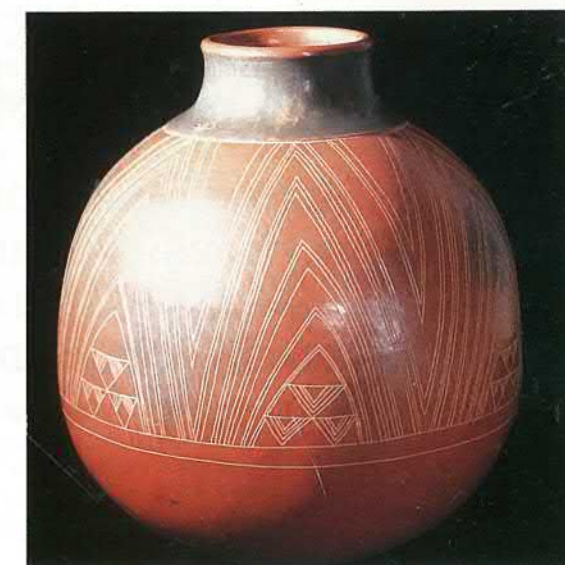
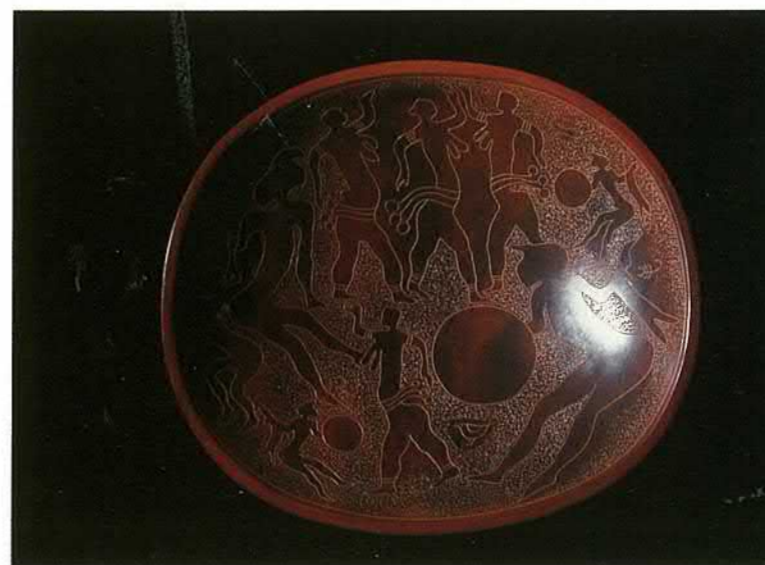
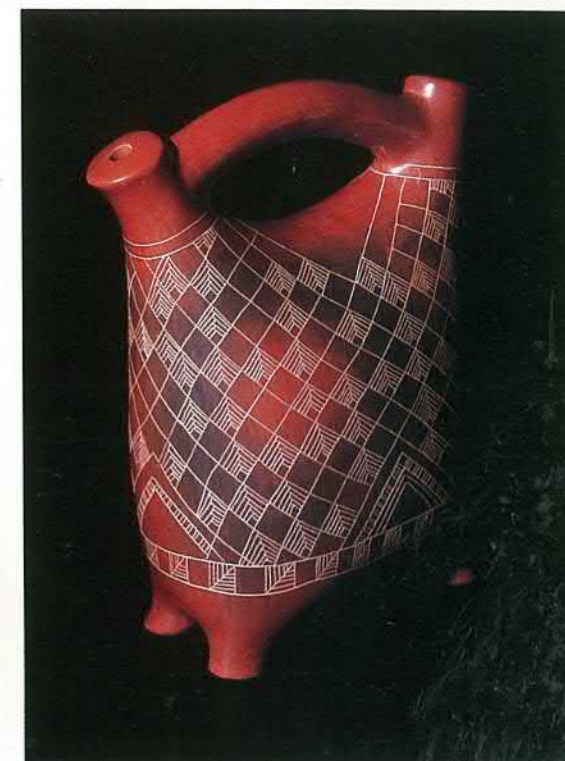
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Burnished Terracotta  
Exhibition at Pots of Ponsonby

Photos by Howard Williams  
Photo by Siddig with students by Chris Mules





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## CITY CERAMISTS

### Jeannie van der Putten

It might seem an anomaly that in our high-tech society people are increasingly captivated by hand-made things, and by doing things by hand. But it seems to me a reasonable response to a world in which cosmopolitan communications and peripatetic customers have made it possible for virtually identical products to be available almost anywhere.

As country potters we were barely aware of the pot-buying public. That public, of whom dealers would speak in varying tones of condescension, exasperation and gratitude, were kept at a distance by the buffer of shops and retailers with 'personality'. We stayed in our rural ivory tower and did the job, and had, I guess, an enviable life style.

The move to Auckland, to the urban confrontation of our shop/workshop/house in Grey Lynn changed all that. Hardly a week goes by without some stranger falling through the door claiming they've been collecting our work for years, naming shops and galleries no longer in existence. Occasionally one of these stalwarts will leave disconcerted by the change in our work, but more often will have turned the same corners and enjoy mixing the bright earthenware with 20 year old woodfired salted favourites.

And who is our market? The director of a soft-ware firm buying ten slightly different staff presents; the production assistant choosing a 'prop' for an Olivetti ad; the trade unionist selecting two pieces for a boardroom; the student paying off a bowl; a fringe actress treating herself ... and then there are the most reliable, the gift-givers. They've really done the ground-work! They've wandered through the turbid aisles of import barns, checked out kitchen and design boutiques with their reproduction Portuguese, Spanish, French and English ware, cast their eyes over the ubiquitous Italian ceramics (one million dollars' worth imported into New Zealand last year alone) and they're looking for the hand-made individual pieces which say something about here and now. I'm amazed that in spite of the vicissitudes of life in Enzed, these people are staunch!

**Bruce McLean**, the Scottish conceptual artist-turned-potter constantly questions the parameters deemed necessary to define an object or event as 'art'. He has always preferred the idea of art-as-process, to that of art-as-object and insists that his pots are intended to play an active part in their owners' lives. He is defining pottery as a branch of performance art! That idea appeals to me and I believe it is this sentiment that many of the pot buyers I've described are putting into practice.

Oxidised gas firing at a lowered temperature has been a breakthrough for me. I delight in decoration, ornamentation and pattern, and colour is central to my work.

If find the stimulation of city life a persistent influence on my pots. There's a propensity of contemporary pottery, which has a serious bent to it, a weighty and contemplative cast to it, an obvious allusion to other and older cultures. I find the 20th century more than enough to get on with. You only have to see a **Peter Greenaway** movie, eat a meal at *Guadalupe*, visit the *Artiture* exhibition and take in an *Inside Out Theatre* production to assault your senses to the point where a couple of Aspro and a lie-down are in order!

Although primarily drawn to the 'container', I no longer feel that function is the first consideration of today's potter. The exploration of surface treatment, of pushing the form, represents a whole new aesthetic.

As it is put by **Denis Dutton**, lecturer in Philosophy of Art at *Canterbury University*, "Pottery should fulfil the general



criteria of exploring the formal and expressive properties and possibilities of the medium, and also be pleasing at the level of the imagination."

I feel we are managing to do this.

### Andrew van der Putten

In spite of well meaning friends warning us of the dangers lurking in the big cities, and reminding us of the beauties of the countryside (the only place apparently, where you'll find real people) and on which we were about to turn our backs early in 1985, we set off for Auckland. Here, seven years on, we are not thinking of going back.

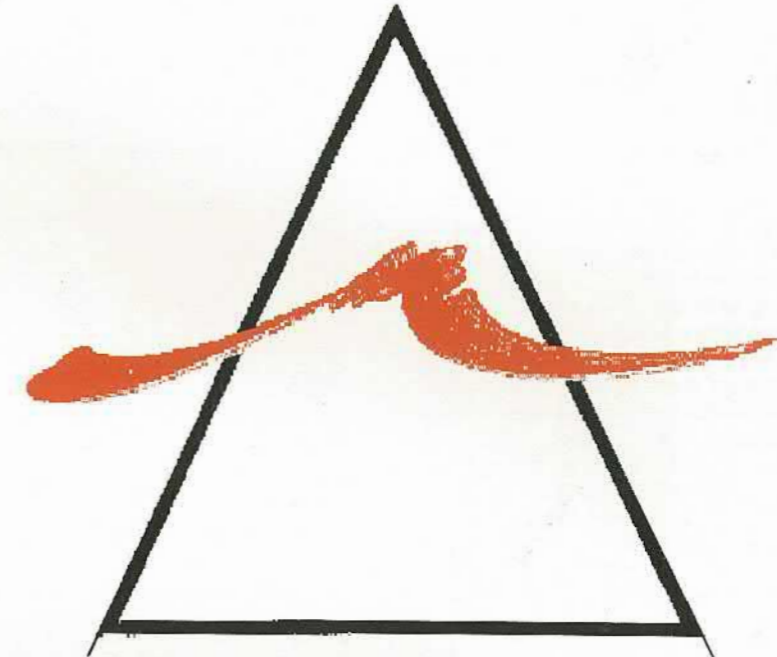
Although country living and potting has its appeal and we certainly don't regret the ten years we spent in Coromandel, it also has serious drawbacks. I found the various farming type jobs which had to be done frequently, a frustrating experience and an intrusion into my potting time. I also find Nature quite daunting, especially if it means fighting flooded rivers (in vain) and coping with incessant winter rain. Life at times took on a *Vigil* like quality, romantic perhaps, but I prefer Nature to stay well within the confines of a terracotta planter.

On the technical front, the major change has been the switch from wood firing to gas; from a large kiln which required 18 hours of slog to fire (thankfully once a month only) to a much smaller kiln which seems to be going all the time. I still relish the luxury of being able to light up late in the afternoon and turn off at midnight.

This quick turn-around has meant a much greater inducement to experiment with new clays and glazes and  
*continued page 22*



Photos: Table setting, above, by Maggie Blake.  
Jeannie's fish platters, below, by Jeannie.  
Andrew's pots by Howard Williams.



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see results fast. It also coincided with our own needs to make a different type of pot. After years of stoneware pots loosely based on *Leach-Hamada* tradition adapted, for better or worse, to New Zealand conditions, we both felt strongly about making pots which were inspired by life in this country in the nineties.

Working from Auckland, often in touch with other like-minded craftspeople and continually exposed to the pot buyers, plus the use of a versatile small gas kiln, eventually resulted in a total embrace of colour.

In order to achieve the results we lowered the temperature to 1180°C and fire in a strictly oxidised atmosphere, as even a whiff of reduction adversely affects the glaze and colour quality. No longer do we rely on the kiln being 'kind', or assume it to have arcane qualities. What comes out of it is pretty much what went in — every mistake clearly visible.

The clays we use are white burning, finely grained bodies — *Adrian Cotter's* and *Abbott's White*. Occasionally, perhaps nostalgically, I use a Coromandel terracotta clay, a wonderful potter-friendly material which spontaneously induces relaxed throwing. Being a dark clay, it has to be covered with a white slip, before the coloured stains are applied.

We work in a fairly cramped space which doubles as our showroom and shop. However, we do manage to keep our work quite separate, that is, we do not work on each other's pots as some people assume. We do share a kiln space as the glazes and stains used are the same.

After years now of working with coloured earthenware, our pots have reached a point where subtle changes, often only important to ourselves, are more the case than the early dramatic ones. As compensation there is the satisfaction that we have achieved a certain fluidity in our work which hopefully reflects in the end result.

Our approach to pot making is, and always has been very basic. We try to please ourselves and by doing so, the market. To be able to work like this, especially nowadays, is particularly gratifying. Long may it last. ■



## CATHERINE ANSEMI: There is life after Crown Lynn

John Parker, Auckland

Photos by Robin Morrison.

Catherine Anselmi is an immensely practical lady.

Her early work was in precisely turned porcelain in simple glazed non-functional vessel forms. Her transition into the raku firing of similarly severe forms gave the raku medium an unexpected sophistication which moved it clearly from the Orient to Middle Europe.

Her most recent work has been in the area of slip-cast domestic ware. The acute sense of simple form is still there, but the surfaces now are bold explorations of colour fields and brush decoration which has roots in industrial ceramics, but which is essentially contemporary.

Catherine operates a large workshop and markets her range through stalls in Auckland's Victoria Park Market.



Around 1986, when she had been making pots for 10 years Catherine felt she had acquired a sound knowledge of the medium and needed to create a way of making her pots earn her an income. She thought this preferable to getting another job and slip-casting seemed the logical answer as forms could be easily repeated. Also she could employ people to assist in production and produce a volume of very usable table ware, vases and planters at affordable prices.

"I started my own retailing at the Market because I was desperate for money. After the 1987 crash, my usual retailers began ordering less and were very slow to pay. Retailing my own work means I can watch, respond to and even influence buying trends. I try to go beyond what the public is asking for and gauge their reaction."

Although industrial methods are used to produce pots made by employed people, she knows that a healthy working environment, flexible working hours, a variety of work and involvement in the whole process are essential for morale.

Everyone who works for her and their contribution is extremely important to the survival of the business. Three people work full time: **John Tai Tin** (Ex-Crown Lynn) who

makes clay, casts and fetters; **Angela Thomas** and **Melanie Prince**, who decorate and do studio work. Others come on a casual basis, mostly for decorating, and with some studio work. As well as Catherine, the present part-time decorators are **Susan Firth**, **Pamela Lim**, **Keely McGlynn**, **Alice Smith**, **Rosanne Sullivan** and **Phillipa Taylor**.

"The decorators are paid by the piece, to paint their own designs, with some guidelines from me, as in effect I am buying their designs. What we produce has to sell well as I have to pay wages, overheads and for materials.

I don't think innovative art/craft and good design are incompatible with being commercially successful. The finished object is what is important rather than the process used in making it. I have no heirarchy of techniques, but I like a piece to show exactly how it has been made whether by wheel-throwing, hand-building or slip-casting.

When I first started decorating, I realised quite quickly that although I had a reasonably well developed sense of form, I knew very little about the application of line or colour. I have spent the last three years investigating ways of decorating forms to enhance rather than negate them."

*continued page 25*

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■ *Daffodils painted by Susan Firth*

When ceramic colours are formulated, they are ground differently and have different fluxes added as either body, glaze or underglaze stains. Catherine found local suppliers didn't have full information and didn't know exactly what they were selling. A huge amount of time was spent experimenting, trying to improve colours and get rid of problems like pinholing, chattering and crawling. She now imports her own glazes and colours to get more choice of the mode the pigment is in and finds she has access to a much wider range of colours, but this also means the expense of having to always buy in bulk.

Six months were taken to build the studio which has been the centre of workshop operations for the last two years. The ware trolleys, slip-casting benches, decorating tables and various other bits and pieces, all came from an auction when *Crown Lynn* closed down. The studio has a 15 cubic ft and two 20 cubic ft kilns. The white casting slip is bisqued to 1000 °C, painted, sprayed with a transparent leadless frit glaze and refired to 1150 °C.

Catherine refuses to take orders and does not sell wholesale. Interested retailers are simply directly to the Victoria Park Market Stall. Last year a second stall was opened in Wellington's *Wakefield Market*. This went well for a while, but ultimately closed because it was difficult to maintain without the constant monitoring that was more feasible for her in Auckland.

She has recently employed a woman part-time to deal with wages, bills, PAYE Income Tax, GST payments and other paperwork. Catherine wanted to devote more time developing new forms or painting or to do something more stimulating.

In reality her time is now divided between: supervising the



■ *Grapes painted by Catherine Anselmi*

production side; glazing and packing kilns; discussing other decorators work with them; development of new forms, colours and decoration; assessing the market and displaying and restocking the stall, which takes up considerable time as the market is open 10 hours a day 7 days a week. She is not involved in actually selling as she feels it is not one of her great skills. She prefers to employ people who are good at selling and dealing with the public.

"When I first went to the Market I intended keeping on as a studio potter, making individual pieces, but I quickly realised that slip-cast decorated ware was my real creative work and not just something that I had originally done as bread and butter income.

Decorating well is the hardest thing I have ever attempted to do. After three years, I feel that only now, I am beginning to do some really important personal work.

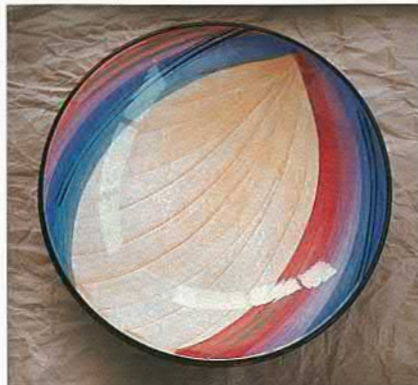
Of course I am influenced by everything I see. Whatever you do, observe, or think about, (and I don't mean by direct copying), becomes part of you. Specifically over the last few years I have been drawn to very early Egyptian, Persian, Celtic Decoration and European Majolica.

I am particularly attracted to the more extreme forms of ornamentation and I see distinct parallels between the late 19th century and the late 20th century interest in embellishment. So I am fascinated by the work of **Antoni Gaudi**, **Christopher Dresser** and **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** as well as African and Oceanic Art and acknowledge their influence on contemporary architecture, furniture, painting, sculpture and fashion.

It is really good for my present work that we are now moving away from the modernist ethic where decoration was considered inappropriate and in bad taste." ■



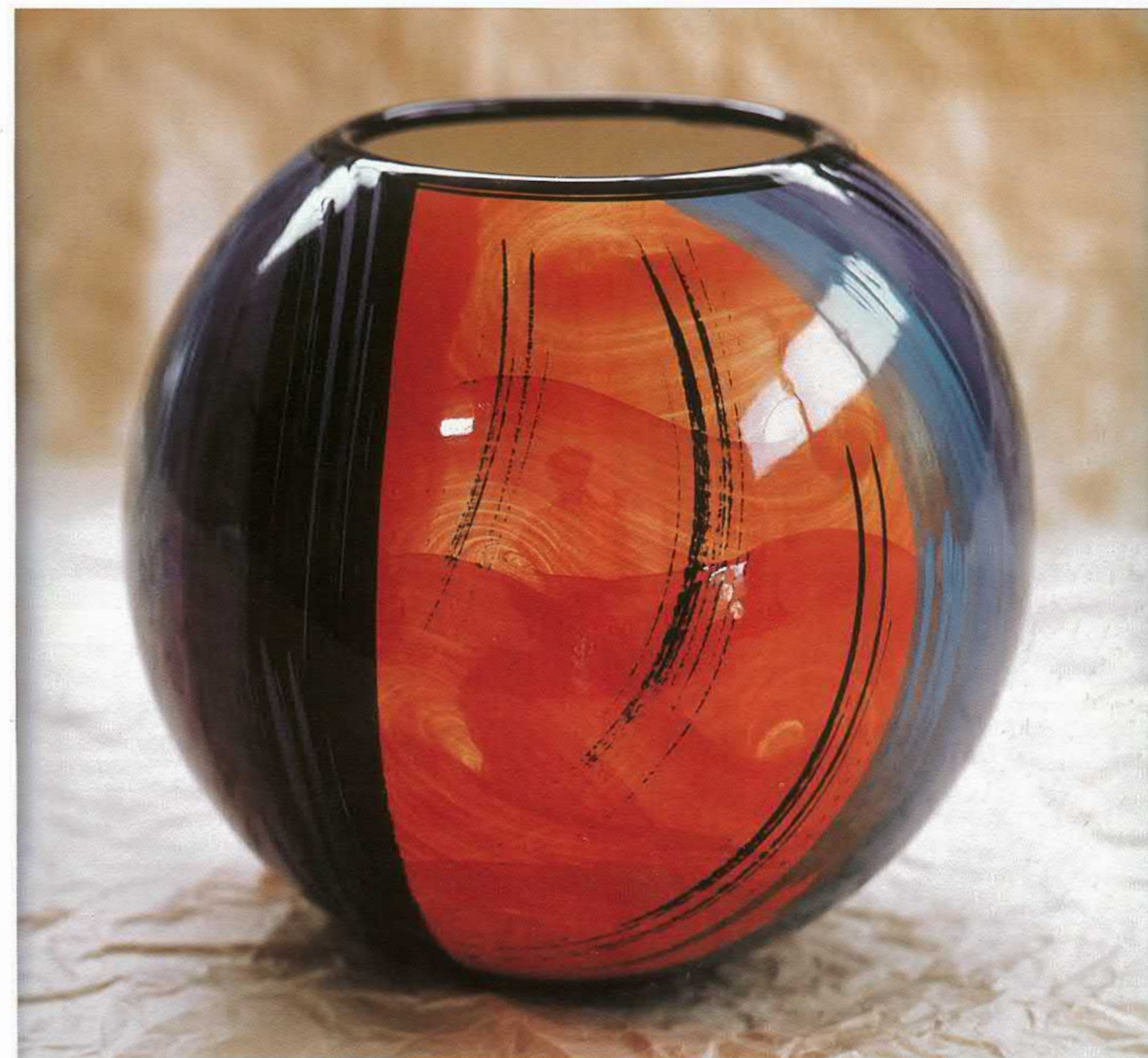
■ *Brown bowl by Alice Smith*



■ *Pink bowl by Catherine Anselmi*



■ *Green bowl by Susan Firth*



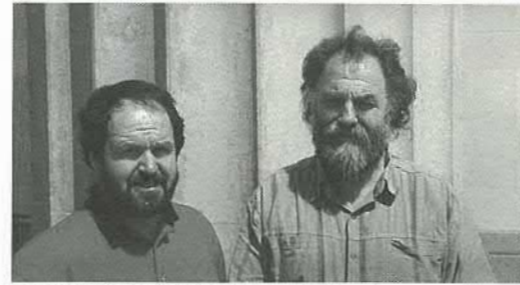
■ *Orange sphere painted by Catherine Anselmi*



■ *Capaccino painted by Phillipa Taylor*

**AUCKLAND STUDIO POTTERS  
ANNUAL EXHIBITION; AUCKLAND MUSEUM**

Photos by Howard Williams



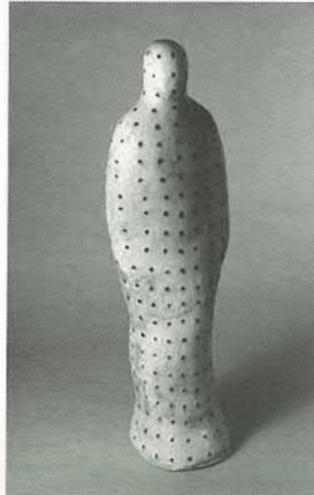
Selectors: Peter Collis and Peter Lange



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Christine Thacker



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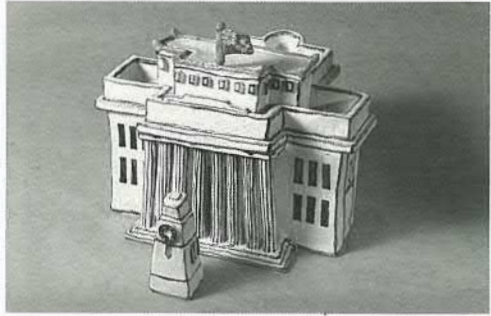
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Margaret Mawston



Margaret Sumich



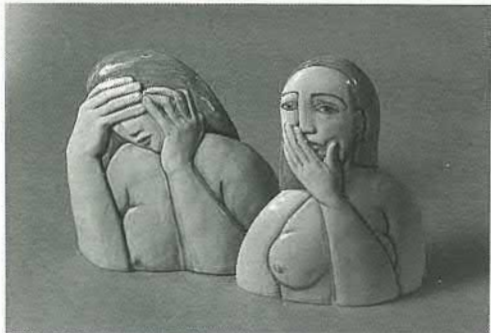
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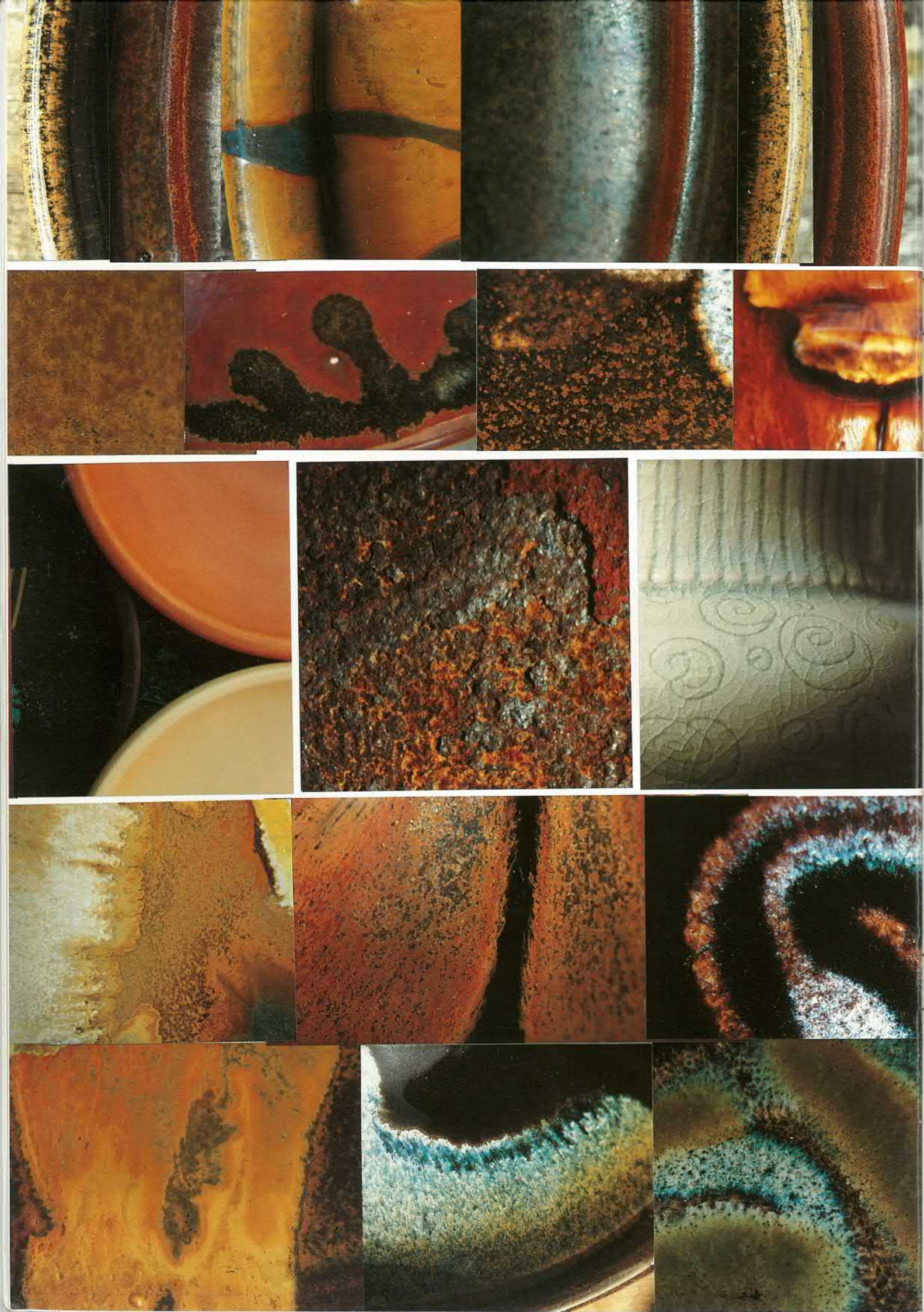
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# RICH IRONY

- I opened my *Dictionary of Cliches* before I started this sentence. It fell open at HOW NOW BROWN COW? — quite appropriate and quite a coincidence. It would have made a good title. The *Brown Cow* was an 18th Century way of referring to a barrel of beer and the general meaning is "What's up? What's next?".
- Pondering on rich irony brings to mind lots of contradictions, contrasts and opposites.
  - Its ironical that when the mind is engrossed and the spirit fulfilled and having a really good time, realisation usually comes afterwards, when it's over.
  - In the same way geniuses don't usually realise that they are geniuses.
  - Some of the most expressive work comes when we are unconscious of it.
  - When a person knows the answers they often keep on asking the questions.
  - When we stop trying it often becomes clear.
  - When we want to emphasise a point it helps to say the opposite.
  - The more is explained, the less is understood (often) and our extension of that is the most significant learning can take place outside of schools and colleges. Most of my learning takes place when I am teaching.
  - Just when it seems we've got things right something will remind us it's better not to be so sure. "Pride comes before a fall." I am reminded of the words according to **George**:  
"When you're green, you grow.  
When you think you're ripe,  
You get rotten."
  - Often, the meanings are clearer when we read between the lines.
  - Changing from craft to art, changing from pottery to ceramics, labelling and changing the names of things seems ironical when the activity stays basically the same.
  - Irony flourishes when success comes from a glossy photo and printed explanation while the object, pot, or art remains largely unseen.
  - It's ironical that I spend so much time creating, making, testing and writing about glazes while dreaming about a clay and glaze that materialises "as one" like the results of a long hot flame in a wood kiln.
- My favourite iron glaze is mixed from six ingredients and can be measured in parts, slack handfuls, cups or buckets in the ratio of:
 

4 parts Borax Frit	4 parts dry clay
2 parts Silica	2 parts Feldspar
1 part Whiting	1 part Talc

 Add 8-10% red iron oxide
- These parts and ratios can be varied and the glaze will still melt at the temperature of 1225°C. I always fire as quickly as possible in an electric kiln and soak for at least two hours.
- Here are some notes about the glaze.
  - **Borax Frits**, for some reason, keep changing their numbers. The one I use has been known as *Ferofrit 3134*, *Ferofrit 4508* and recently as *Ferofrit 4108*. It melts well and gives lively colour. My general feeling is any Borax Frit could be used, with slight difference of effect on any oxide colours involved. Increasing the proportion to 6 parts causes the glaze to be more fluid.
  - **Clay** seems a natural ingredient in a glaze and any clay is acceptable as long as it is finely powdered. I choose to use a China clay. *New Zealand Superfine* was my favourite for years, but after its disappearance from the local market I used an Australian clay.

**Brian Gartside** has a workshop and retail showroom 2km west of the southern motorway at Ramarama, RD 3, Drury. He will be teaching glazing at a workshop this summer.

EDGES		
Thickness		
Sigillata	Rust	Celadon
Zinc	Rutile	
Zinc	Rutile	

Lately I have been informed that Australian clays tend to contain more Titanium than normal and I assume this is the cause of some dulling of my glaze surface, and of the surface decoration when I use Rutile. So now I'm involved in a search for a China Clay with little or no Titanium.

Increasing the proportion of clay to 8-10 parts is possible in my glaze, if a more matt surface is required.

— **Silica** can be increased up to 4 parts with a corresponding decrease in the Feldspar.

— **Feldspar** has much in common with clay and decreasing its amount has an unnoticeable effect on the glaze.

— **Calcite Whiting** and **Talc** are closely related and help in the melting and fusing of the glaze mixture. The introduction of Talc assists in the prevention of crazing on some clays.

- **Edges.** Some of the most interesting variations are seen on edges and lips. Fluidity causes a thinner coating here and beauty can be created. Temperature and soaking can have an effect on this colour, as well as the underlying clay.
- **Thickness.** The application of the glaze is usually by dipping so **thickness** can vary. Once again underlying clay affects the colour. Very white clays don't yield so much orange colour.
- **Sigillata.** The iron content in different clays can produce silky sigillatas.
- **Rust.** This is the fundamental source. To some potters, iron oxide is the most pernicious stain and much effort is invested in trying to eradicate this ubiquitous red and yellow colour.
- **Celadon.** A traditional Celadon is fired in reduction at 1300°C and the Sigillatas to 1000°C. These are the only two photographs that do not relate to the iron glaze previously described.
- **Zinc Oxide** and **Rutile** are two oxides that mix readily with iron glazes and can give rich results when used in amounts up to 4%. The most beautiful blues often result from a 3-4% Rutile addition to the clear glaze which is then trailed onto the basic iron glaze surface. Thin washes of a thin 50/50 Zinc/Nepheline Syenite mixture over an iron glaze surface yields rich yellows and oranges.
- Tans, ochres, oranges, yellows, black, red, blue, green — rich colours, smooth or textured and all difficult to find in a packet of stain, or commercial glaze.
- Rich iron can become even richer when fired a third time to 1060°C.
- A good iron glaze belongs with salt and wood firing. They maintain a stature that fashion or trends cannot touch. It's good to remember that these glazes don't belong to a specific time — maybe to all times. Like some of the musical 'standards' that never seem to age. ■



# BRISBANE

In July several New Zealanders independently travelled to attend the Ceramics Conference in Brisbane. Here, Aucklanders Bronwynne Cornish and Moyra Elliott share their informal jottings on the goings-on, and Lynda Harris from Hamilton looks at one specific aspect of the conference agenda.

## Arts Industry Interface

Lynda Harris, Hamilton

This was the theme for the week-long *National Ceramics Conference* hosted by the *Queensland Potters Association* at *Griffith University* in Brisbane last July. Ceramists, designers, architects and manufacturers gathered to explore the relevance of this theme for whereas the collaboration between artists and industry is accepted as commonplace elsewhere in the world, it is not so in Australasia.

The intention of the conference was to examine the potential benefits and possible disadvantages of professional interaction between individual artists and industrial manufacturers and architects thus the list of guest speakers reflected these concerns.

The keynote address to the theme was given by **Penny Smith**, lecturer in ceramics at the *University of Tasmania*. With her husband **John**, she runs *Design in the Round*, a furniture and ceramics production, design and consultancy business. For many years Penny has realised the potential that working with industry can offer and her own studio production tableware has benefitted by adapting and using industrial ceramic processes.

To date in Australia the ceramics industry has only made tentative approaches to artists — *Bristile* in Western Australia now produces a few Australian designs on its hospitality ware. Also there is often a negative response to Australian made products in the marketplace and a lack of confidence in producing designs with an Australian identity. The industry tends to cling to what is safe, familiar and economically sound.

Any new product or design is very expensive to produce and as there is always the potential to lose money, innovative design takes second place to economics. Experience shows that most commercial potteries therefore do not keep up with current trends, often producing uninteresting or shoddy ware. Penny believes that small scale workshops offer the opportunity for more flexibility and therefore greater creativity. Well designed, environmentally sound products with a strong cultural identity may be the key to the future.

The view of an industrial designer in Europe was offered by **Lord David Queensbury**, a senior partner in *Queensbury Hunt Design Consultants*. This company designs for *Rosenthal*, their subsidiary *Thomas* and various international companies which manufacture ceramic bathroom fittings, glass and ceramics.

When producing any product, design is unavoidable. However just because large numbers of a particular article sell, it does not necessarily follow that it has been well designed. *Queensbury Hunt* design for the mass market and are aware of their responsibility to produce good design, designs with which the consumer will feel at ease. Therefore a designer must come to terms with the commercial world, whereas an artist does not need to work for the marketplace.

With the increasing technology now available, it is difficult to set up a new design without a high capital investment, and the role of the designer becomes increasingly important.

Four to five million dollars may have been spent by the time the prototypes have been produced so by this stage the design cannot be altered.

Industry is always profit-led rather than design-led, with technological improvements bringing down the unit price and opening up whole new markets. With high pressure casting it is now possible to cast small pieces of dinnerware in less than one minute and the printing of decals has become totally automatic. This makes smaller companies much less competitive and in the future we could see the production of industrial ceramics solely in the hands of a few large companies. An interesting point was made that while most ceramic companies have in-house designers they are more likely to employ an interior, fabric or graphic designer rather than consult a ceramic artist.

New York designer and ceramist, **Dorothy Hafner** designs for leading American (*Tiffany*) and German (*Rosenthal*) manufacturers. Coming from a Fine Arts background, Dorothy began to design functional porcelain dinnerware in limited editions after she realised the potential of the ware she made for her own use. Her shapes and decoration are lively, highly personal and constantly changing in response to what she is seeing and hearing at any one time. For many years Dorothy has maintained staff in her New York studio to produce pieces for her dinnerware collections, but due to the pressure of many other design commitments she has recently decided to discontinue making studio ware.

When initially commissioned by *Tiffany*, she was asked to design tableware that reflected her country's character. Her pieces at that time were hand-built, but she soon saw the need for skills and techniques to slip-cast them. The 'language of industry' needed learning so she could retain control over the final product, keeping it exactly how she envisaged, rather than it being left to the imagination of the mould maker or technician.

Other skills followed — mechanical drawing, plaster carving and model making, artwork preparation for decals, and most importantly, selling an idea to a client. Perhaps this is a testimony to what can be achieved with a lively imagination and tireless energy for as Dorothy puts it 'you gotta keep yourself entertained'.

A contrasting low key approach was given by **Karl and Ursula Scheid** from Germany who both lectured and demonstrated at the conference. They are renowned for high quality craftsmanship and purity of form of their high-fired stoneware. Since 1979 they have collaborated with *Rosenthal* to design their *Campana Studio* line.

Karl has found that using the slip-casting technique in industry led to new ideas and changed the direction of his own studio work. In Germany, manufacturers commission studio potters to design for them, a tradition in Europe resulting in industry and potters developing in parallel.

The Swiss-born potter, **Sabina Teuteberg**, uses semi-industrial techniques to produce her tableware with a hand-operated jigger and jolly, which she demonstrated at a workshop. A pre-cut slab decorated with colourful clay inlays is pressed onto the mould. The jigger and jolly process spreads the clay around the form, altering the pattern so there is always an element of accident and surprise in the resulting piece. This adoption of an industrial process allows her to achieve the quality she wants, in that the patterns flow over a shape in a way a painted design cannot.

The sole ceramic tableware manufacturer in Australia, *Bristile*, was represented by its Managing Director, **Stewart Knott**. This company produces tableware for government, hotel and restaurant markets. Ceramists **Sandra Black** and **Jill Smith**, have recently been asked by *Bristile* to design for its middle to upper market niche, in direct competition with European tableware manufacturers.

Their brief was to capture the vibrancy of Australia by

producing designs that are simple, memorable and elegant using four or fewer colours! A number of their designs are now in production, however only for the conservative hospitality market rather than for the general retail market. The lower end of the market was not seen as economically viable as the company cannot compete with cheap Asian imports, which even when loaded with 100 percent duty, still cost out at 20 percent of an Australian produced article.

One of the most popular seminars during the conference must have been *Earning a Living from the Arts* with standing room only in the lecture theatre. No magic formulas here for instant success, but a few thoughts from one of Australia's leading ceramists, **Greg Daly**. "Do you enjoy making pots? One needs to take care in making a pot and that will show. Do you believe in the work you do and its quality? What market are you seeking and can you create that market? Maybe the local craft shop is no longer the right place to market your work, but perhaps a retail store is."

**Su Hodge** who has been involved in marketing crafts stressed that there is the need to be professional in one's approach. This combined with personal commitment are essential ingredients for success in the marketplace. In the current economic climate in Australia, as in New Zealand, we can no longer expect the halcyon days of a few years ago when anything sold.

Until recently potters have made a product and expected the public to buy it. That is not how the industry approaches marketing. Firstly, they look for a gap in the market, then manufacture a product to fill it. There is now a need to learn new skills, put more thought into design and take on a more entrepreneurial approach.

The full conference programme from nine to five, often left very little time to take in the workshops and exhibitions running concurrently on campus. The *Griffith University* campus is set in bushland about ten kilometres south of Brisbane and offered welcome respite from the often heady lectures. Brisbane was basking in sunny, twenty degree-plus days so it made one wonder why more New Zealand potters hadn't taken advantage of the cheap airfares to escape the cold, frosty mid-winter days back home.

In addition to the lecture programme there were about twenty exhibitions held either on campus or in Brisbane galleries, so there was never a dull moment with exhibition openings to attend, galleries to visit, the launching of **Janet Mansfield's** new book *Salt Glaze Ceramics*, a 'barbie' (of course) and an evening of Greek food and dancing where *Bristile* plates were ceremonially smashed.

In this article it has only been possible to focus on a few aspects of the conference programme. Overall, the conference was well worth attending and succeeded as the organisers had hoped, in being thought-provoking. Although here in New Zealand we do not have a 'ceramics industry' to work with, there are undoubtedly many areas in the design and ceramics industries from which we can learn.

## The National Ceramics Conference, Griffith University, Brisbane

**Bronwynne Cornish**: Arriving in Brisbane and stepping off the plane, I sniffed the air in anticipation. New territory — balmy warmth and Frangipani.

I took a taxi to Griffith campus — a good choice as the taxi driver, true to type, turned out to be a great raconteur. He told me racy little stories while driving at breakneck speed through nighttime Brisbane freeway traffic. The sandstone escarpments spot-lit along the banks of the Brisbane river remain with me.

The *Hub* at *Griffith University* is aptly named. A weary, but welcoming band of workers greeted and registered me,

gave me a room key and managed to squeeze yet another drop of dry white out of the casket.

**Moyra Elliott**: Travelling north from Sydney to Brisbane for two days wasn't as interesting as I had expected — the Pacific Highway certainly wasn't, as it was just gum trees by the thousand all the way. Also, instead of perfectly reasonable placenames like *Ngongotaha* and *Waipukurau* there were outlandish names like *Mullumbimby* and *Murwillumbah*. The other difference was dead kangaroos instead of opossums!

**Bronwynne**: Day 1. Located a friendly face in the auditorium and settled in to hear the keynote addresses. Chairwoman **Penny Smith** from Tasmania introduced the speakers and also the workshop demonstrators who showed slides of their work. An excellent introduction as it gave a good insight as to what was available.

**Dorothy Hafner** was very N.Y./N.Y., a real go-for-it lady who made anything seem possible. I liked her attitude — she seemed to personify in many ways what the conference was about. She operated more as a designer than a maker, employing a team of artisans who slipcast, decorated and fired her designs which were basically domestic ware. She talked sense and seemed organised and creative in a practical way.

**David Queensbury** of *Queensbury Hunt Designs* based in London, and ex-head of the *Royal College of Art*, spoke convincingly in well-modulated tones about Global Design. I was not altogether convinced by his rhetoric, personally enjoying the differences engendered by a change of locality. Being 'global' seems to involve lots of faxing and setting up factories in Third World Countries — this was the larger overview.

**Moyra**: Interesting to hear **David Queensbury** talking about his London design firm. He was obviously the PR man and salesman — very articulate. I wanted to ask him why the *Royal College of Art* now doesn't produce ceramic artists of the calibre of **Fritsch** and **Britton**, but instead has a few students only, working on industrial design. Wish I had.

**Queensbury** talked a lot about Global Design, but he really meant White Western Style.

**Bronwynne**: **Karl and Ursula Scheid** of Germany, presented an interesting combination of designer/makers. From their slides I could see a simplicity of colour and line that spoke of many years of working with a material, combined with the weight of a strong tradition. The area they came from in Germany had historically specialised in salt glazed *Bellarmines*.

From listening to **Rod Bamford** and looking at his slides, I decided to follow through his workshop processes. He talked at length about his extruding process of building up blocks and explained how his *Domestic Trophy* series had been inspired by the couple-next-doors' "domestics". This series had a demented, but delicate look — somewhat as though they had been sculpted in beaten egg whites.

One of the bonuses of the conference was being domiciled on the campus. *Griffith* is a really special place, set as it is amongst native Australian bush. Early morning walks were rewarded by unexpected birds with unaccustomed songs.

Lots of good discussion over mealtimes. The Panel Discussions in the auditorium made direct interaction difficult. The *University Club* became a bit of a haven.

Good to see students from all over Australia, at the conference — I met some while playing darts one evening — *Fosters* improved some of the dart playing, but mine definitely deteriorated.

Camping in bush hut overnight somewhere halfway between Sydney and Brisbane was a new experience. The absence of electricity meant that quick checkups on mysterious noises immediately outside couldn't be made. I just prayed it was wallabies, not goannas.

NZ doesn't have a premium on roadside kitsch — while we have the giant Kiwifruit and the huge L&P bottle, the Pacific Highway harbours restaurants cunningly disguised as enormous oysters or prawns (and not a drop of ocean in sight all the way — they were surrounded by gum trees). The giant oyster — half open with vertical panes of glass — looked like a massive set of false teeth. Other eating houses were modelled on Ayers Rock, or simulating a colossal pineapple, or a big banana — which didn't bear comparison with anything!

**Bronwynne:** I wore boots while walking around and kept a weather eye out for snakes. No, I didn't see one, but was amused at a group of people one night, admiring a possum in hushed tones.

**Moyra:** First day started well with introductions of all the guests, who each made a short statement about their work and workshop intentions together with slides, so that it was possible to start the many choices to be made — what to attend/drop-in-on/disregard.

**Karl and Ursula Scheid** were at the launch of *Janet Mansfield's* new book on salt glaze. They presented her with a *Bellarmino* shard (on a piece of string) that they had dug up in their back garden in Germany. A touching moment.

**Moyra:** Small scale industrial practices of 10-20 people were talked of as being one means of making a national cultural and economic contribution. Makes sense I suppose, but the context was odd when viewed alongside the obvious push by the Australian art schools to get ceramics considered seriously as ART.

**Brian Gartside** was there and very pleased with the positive response to his glaze column in the *NZ Potter*. Pity he had to travel to Brisbane to discover that people do actually read it.

**Bronwynne:** **Joan Campbell's** talk made us all sit up and take notice, as did her ceramic sculpture which takes pride of place in the centre of a new shopping mall.

The bus tour left heads spinning — with 23 exhibitions around the city — how many objects made from clay can you look at in one day? **Milton Moon's** quiet 'Australian Zen' salt glazed bush pots remain vivid in my memory.

**Moyra:** Impossible to see all of the 23 shows on around the town — of the ones I saw, most were of mixed quality; fine strong work through to frankly boring — perhaps ineptly curated. Each was curated around a theme. *South Australian Ceramics Today. Pots from the Top. Decorated Clay. The Teapot Show. The Vessel As Art. Firing Now ...* Exhibition spaces ranges from a converted department store's top floor to the magnificent *Queensland Art Gallery* (courtesy of **Joh Bielke Petersen**).

**Bronwynne:** *Technology and Innovation* was one of the panels I most enjoyed. Particularly **Michael Keighery's** slides of his performance in his other life as one of the *Torch Bros*. Making an Art Form out of Pyromania. And his marvellous Kookaburra laugh.

**Moyra:** *Arts/Industry Interface* included being talked to by captains of industry about why their designs were so popular (and of course, the best). Found it pretty baffling myself, particularly the *Villeroy and Boch* representative.

Very interesting session on *Craft Critical Writing*, **Janet Mansfield** editor of *Ceramics, Art and Perception*, talked of too much Artspeak; affectation and adulation — too many superlatives and a danger that the writing becomes more important than the works under discussion.

**Ken Leveson** — a critic and professor of ceramics at *Monash* warned of a very real problem in Australia, that of the ceramics/craft dealer having a role as a writer, critic — a resurrector or destroyer. He spoke scathingly of the non-practitioner being a critic and of 'humble-pie' writing, careful not to offend. Writing should be analytical and not subjective, and rarely address technique. Writers have to be clear whether they are writing for a general, or a specific audience. Subjective writing of the order of "I didn't like ... clumsy form ... strong lift from the base ..." should disappear — descriptive writing is not necessarily bad, but is not criticism.

**Jenny Zimmer**, also from *Monash* was cheerful and positive and didn't believe a critique made any difference. She hoped writing was due to an urge to contribute to the culture and not just an ego trip. Theory and interpretation are essential to every field of human endeavour.

**Robert Bell**, crafts curator of the *West Australian Art Gallery* stated that not being published barely hinders the progress and art of pottery. Ceramics speak to us from history and we'd have a lot less pottery from the past to look at, if it had been subjected to criticism.

Another session looked at education and relevant issues in that area. Yet another was on marketing with sensible advice on all levels from *Crafts Council* through to personal.

How to avoid absolute personal disaster — Geography, Job and Relationship — never change all three at once!

**Bronwynne:** Moyra was very popular as "Queen" of the *Fletcher Challenge*. She was a great ambassador as usual, but we both felt sorry we hadn't set up a stall with catalogues and a sweepstake for next year's judge. **Greg Daly** claimed **Jeff Mincham** had correctly guessed who the judge was going to be, two years in a row! We decided that before his entry is accepted next time, he has to submit his guess sealed in a plain brown paper envelope!

I found the conference very rewarding — a heady mix of good company, thought provoking discussion, great stuff to look at and plenty of socialising.

Thanks *Brisbane Potters* for a monumental effort for five fabulous days. You're Good Blokes.

**Moyra:** A very good conference with plenty of interesting socialising, but also much more 'meat' than we customarily experience here in NZ. The natives were really friendly — its an experience to be recommended — next one is in Adelaide in 1993 — start saving! ■



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# COAL FIRED SALT GLAZE

Barry Brickell, Coromandel

Well-known for my unbounded enthusiasm for coal-fired salt-glaze, I remain determined to outlast those who accuse me of ranting and raving about something unfashionable and idiosyncratic.

Oh yes, this almost forgotten technique which gives the ultimate in richness of glaze colour and texture in stoneware, is much too strong a part of our colonial ceramic tradition to be ignored.

I was born at the very time that enabled me to see, first hand, the last of it in spectacular action at those huge round kilns at places like New Lynn, Auckland, where "heavy clay products" such as glazed drain pipes, tiles and bricks were made.

In those years, the first potter I ever met, **Len Castle**, was having his big classical thrown pots richly salted in the coal-fired kilns at *Crum's Brickworks*. It was a long time before I was able to start doing the whole thing myself, but **Mirek Smisek** was already experimenting with the method at a Nelson brickworks that he managed before he became NZ's first full-time stoneware potter in the late 1950s.

The first coal-fired salt-glazed kiln built by a studio potter in this country was probably my big round one at Coromandel, in 1964. Mirek's oil drip-feed one was turning out splendid pots which were pioneering in their day and legendary now. There is scarce mention of coal in the western tradition of salt-glaze, except for passing references (see ref 1 and 2).

My reasons for loving this type of firing, lie in both the wonderful richness obtained with the glaze and the nitty-gritty of firing the kiln with such a smelly, aromatic-burning fuel as bituminous coal. There is nothing namby-pamby about it; smoke, fire, sweat, work, clinker — and if you get it right, RESULTS. Ordinary coal is not required; it must be coking coal, usually known as bituminous coal. Not all bituminous coals will coke however, so when asking for the right stuff, one must order bituminous, coking coal.

Most young people will never have seen coke, except for that Yankee stuff that comes in bottles and cans — real coke is the equivalent of charcoal when wood burns, an intermediate stage between fresh fuel and final ash. Most coals burn straight to fine ash which builds up on the firebox grate and blocks the draught, causing the fire to go dull and lifeless. The coke that forms as bituminous coal burns, is lumpy, like black pumice and allows the draught to suck freely through the fire-bed, thus creating a true incandescence; white-hot, like a blast-furnace.

A coal-fired kiln requires a good wide chimney stack and generously proportioned flues to give a strong natural draught, perhaps more so than a wood-fired kiln. With coal, working up to a full cone 10 temperature, the draught passes entirely through the grate or fire-bars, and as little as possible is allowed through the stoking hole. This is why the coal is banked up against the firebox opening after every stoking (see drawing). Smaller lumps of burned-out coke that drop through the fire-bars should be incandescent-white with the strength of the draught. This is a good indicator of the "health" of the fire.

Too much stoking and poking can dull the fire, as it breaks up the coke lumps into finer material that slows down the draught. If clinker (fused ash) forms, it too will block off the draught and have to be removed. This is a hot, sweaty and difficult job, as one must thrust a long, heavy steel poker into the underneath of the searing hot fire, to try to break it up. The answer is to obtain a coal of low ash content, which will be described later in these notes.

Now, about this special richness of coal-fired salt-glaze. Bituminous coal from Greymouth/Buller coalfields of the South Island, contains titanium as well as iron and other minerals in its ash. During firing this ash rains down on the pots in the same manner as with wood-firing, but with a subtle difference in results. Wood ash does not contain the colour-forming minerals so characteristic of coal ash. An unmistakable warmth and beauty permeates the pots from the titanium-iron salt-fluxed ash of the basic salt-glaze — a hue perhaps best described as a finely crystal-spangled mahogany yellow-brown of unending variation, even on one pot. It is also very responsive to slight ridges, finger marks, undulations or designs in the clay, which gather the fluxed ash in a manner that emphasises the pattern.

If properly fired, no pot is boring, even if it has a bad form! Like any good salt-glaze there is also the bonus of natural colour and texture variation all around the pot. And then the hand of the Almighty might come in and cause rich, darker brown goobs of molten glaze off the kiln arch to land in "just the right place" on the pot. It takes a number of firings to achieve this build-up of dripping glaze on the arch bricks.

All this splendour is dependent upon achieving a really good cone 10 temperature in the kiln; there is nothing worse and more deadening than to open the kiln and find everything dulled with a lifeless grey-green-brown-yellow slime trying to pass as a glaze. Such pots can be refired in an ordinary stoneware kiln and they will usually respond in a brilliant way; I am used to this and call it "annealed salt-glaze". Or else, borax (up to 10 per cent) may be added to the salt to improve the gloss in case the kiln fails to reach cone 10. Neither of these tricks gives the real answer, and herein lies the challenge.

With the *ClayAzArt* conference in Rotorua looming up for this past June, I was asked to set up a pre-conference salt-glaze firing here at Driving Creek, Coromandel. This was intended as a sequel to the kiln I built at Flagstaff, Arizona in 1968 for the ceramics department of the *Northern Arizona University*, under **Don Bendel** and **Joel Eide**.

Despite a lot of research, good bituminous coking coal was not available from anywhere in the whole of the USA, so we ended up firing the kiln quite successful on wood.

The new kiln at Driving Creek was built as a repeat of the Flagstaff one, with the good help of **George Sempagala**, our visiting potter from Uganda, and **Andrew Hope**, a resident student from the *Otago Polytechnic* ceramics course. We had a good firing, despite a broken shelf near the bottom, which tilted one whole bung of pots against the bagwall. A row of experimental "bagwall beakers" was reduced to fused lumps by the intense heat and fluxing, but these happenings were taken in good faith as an offering to the spirits of fire and salt.

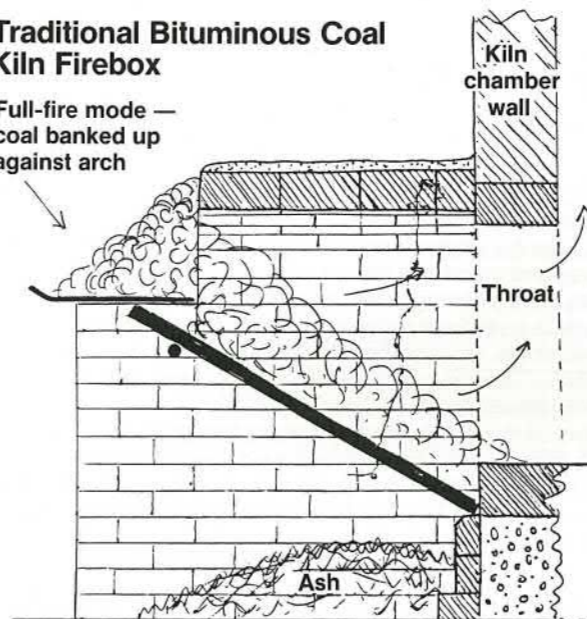
The coal we burned was *Webbs* from Stockton opencast mine near Westport, owned by *Coalcorp*. For North Islanders it is available in bagged form from *Waikato Coal Supplies Ltd*, Box 11-102, Hillcrest, Hamilton, whose main customers are blacksmiths. They had never heard of it as a kiln fuel, but in the days of local gas-works, such coal was commonly available throughout the country. This is the coal we are exporting to Japan; it is one of the world's top quality steel-making coals and is internationally acclaimed.

## The effects of different salts.

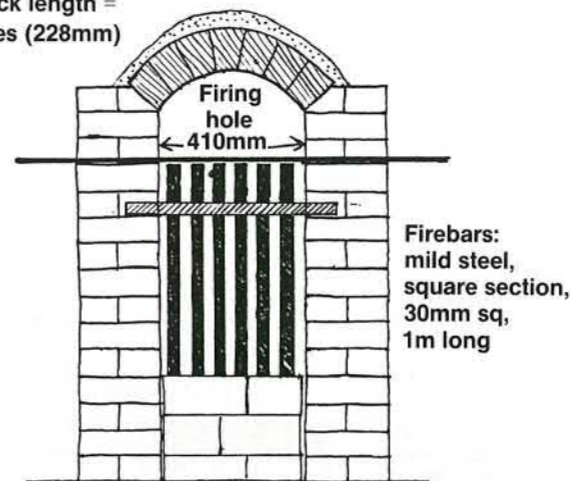
It was decided to use the pre-conference salt-glaze firing as an experiment to compare the effects of different sodium salts on the glaze. With two fireboxes we used common salt (sodium chloride) in the left one and a mixture of washing

## Traditional Bituminous Coal Kiln Firebox

Full-fire mode — coal banked up against arch



One brick length = 9 inches (228mm)



and baking soda (sodium carbonate and bi-carbonate, see ref 3) in the right firebox. This mixture had been used in a previous firing with perfectly satisfactory results in both fireboxes. A difference in colour and hue could later be discerned in the glaze on the bricks of the kiln walls just above the firebox throats.

There was little chance to really analyse the results on the pots because of the general excitement among all those present at the opening, and the rapidity of the removal of everyone's pots from their positions in the chamber. However, I was able to come to a few conclusions.

Firstly, sodium chloride brings out the darker iron colours in the clay body and ash. The carbonate salts are obviously more fluxing and enhance the celadons. This is also reflected in the way the glaze runs; more runny with carbonate; a little more "orange peel" with chloride. Why, I just don't know — one would think that sodium is sodium. Maybe it is to do with acidity levels affecting surface tension in the slowly forming viscous glaze. Sodium chloride is obviously powerfully acid; one only has to suffer the acrid white fuming "smoke" from conventional salt-glazing to see this. Carbonate salts are pollution-free; instead of hydrochloric acid gas out of the stack, one only gets carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) reasonably harmless stuff.

Carbon dioxide is getting a bad name these days because there is a sort of political movement afoot to reduce the levels of it in our atmosphere. Well, if we were to plant more forests instead of ripping them out all over the world, carbon dioxide would cease to become a problem causing the "greenhouse effect". Instead it would be a major source of

atmospheric food for the growing trees. Go back to school and study the carbon cycle.

Trees convert CO<sub>2</sub> into biomass such as wood. When you burn wood, you are releasing the sun's condensed energy which caused this transformation in the first place. Coal is condensed biomass — it is wood and other plant material which has been compressed under millions of tonnes of stream-deposited silt for millions of years. During this huge squeeze, water has been driven out and the carbon content increased. A higher carbon content means a higher calorific value — the heat content of the coal when it burns. The change from biomass to coal is a geological process, that is, it takes millions of years.

The stages are: wood, stems and leaves (biomass) → peat → lignite (brown hydrous coal) → sub-bituminous coal (our most common coals, such as Waikato and Southland) → bituminous coal → anthracite. Geologically speaking, Aotearoa (New Zealand) is a young country, so we have no true anthracite coal. There is an interesting pseudo-anthracite coal at Roa, Westland. It was formed from bituminous coal by volcanic heat. Such coal is almost pure carbon and is less use to potters as it burns with an intense, but short flame.

It is our bituminous coals from the Westland-Buller area that are so very special. The best of them, mentioned earlier, has a very good calorific value, a low ash content (less than 2%) and a very strong coking ability. As it burns it goes through a sticky, swelling stage, emitting an almost sweet-smelling smoke with lots of long yellow flame. Yes, it does make quite a lot of black smoke when the fire is disturbed by poking, but although it looks terrible, it is only carbon or soot. For diplomatic reasons it is not a good thing to do coal-firing salt-glazing in suburbia, let alone downtown; pollution is the rave these days.

Finally, an historical view of coal-firing industrial ceramics in New Zealand is perhaps of some interest. Salt-glazing was big business in our early days; bricks, tiles, drainpipes and culverts, ink and storage bottles, crocks, gardenware, sinks and even urinals. Fired in huge round or rectangular kilns, they had a richness of colour and texture in the glaze, though it was not appreciated then. Bland is the word that not only describes the modern plastic or sanitised ceramic products which replaced them; it also describes the manner in which they are made.

Lucky was I as a youth, to experience the drama and fascination of peeping actively around the dark and shadowy kilns of the old *Amalgamated Brick & Tile Co's* works at New Lynn, watching the sweaty nightshift fireman stoking all those hungry, glowing, sucking fire-boxes on his predictable rounds. I followed him, missing nothing, learning heaps, including new four-letter words whenever his shovel hit the side of the firemouth by mistake.

The coarse salt went in the same way as the coal, but with an extra thrust to get it right in, where it crackled and spat until the next shovel of coal clammed up the glowing, furious hole. The fresh coal smoked silently, grimly. I waited until he thrust the long iron rod into a spyhole — a breaking of his rhythm. Withdrawing a glowing test-ring and putting it on a ledge to cool, he would do something quite indescribable, then have closer look. Should I take it home with me? "Do the whole thing yourself one day boyo, and that too."

I did, indeed, I still do. ■

## References:

- 1 *Salt-Glazed Ceramics*, by Jack Troy. (Watson Guptill Publications Ltd 1977). Doulton Potteries, Lambeth, England. Page 37.
- 2 *The Martin Brothers, Potters*, by Malcolm Haslam. (Richard Dennis, 1978). Page 147.
- 3 *Salt-Glazed Ceramics*, by Jack Troy. Page 133.



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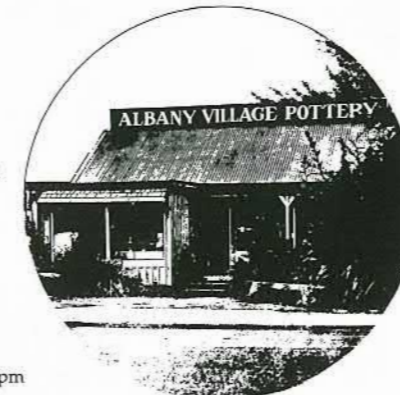
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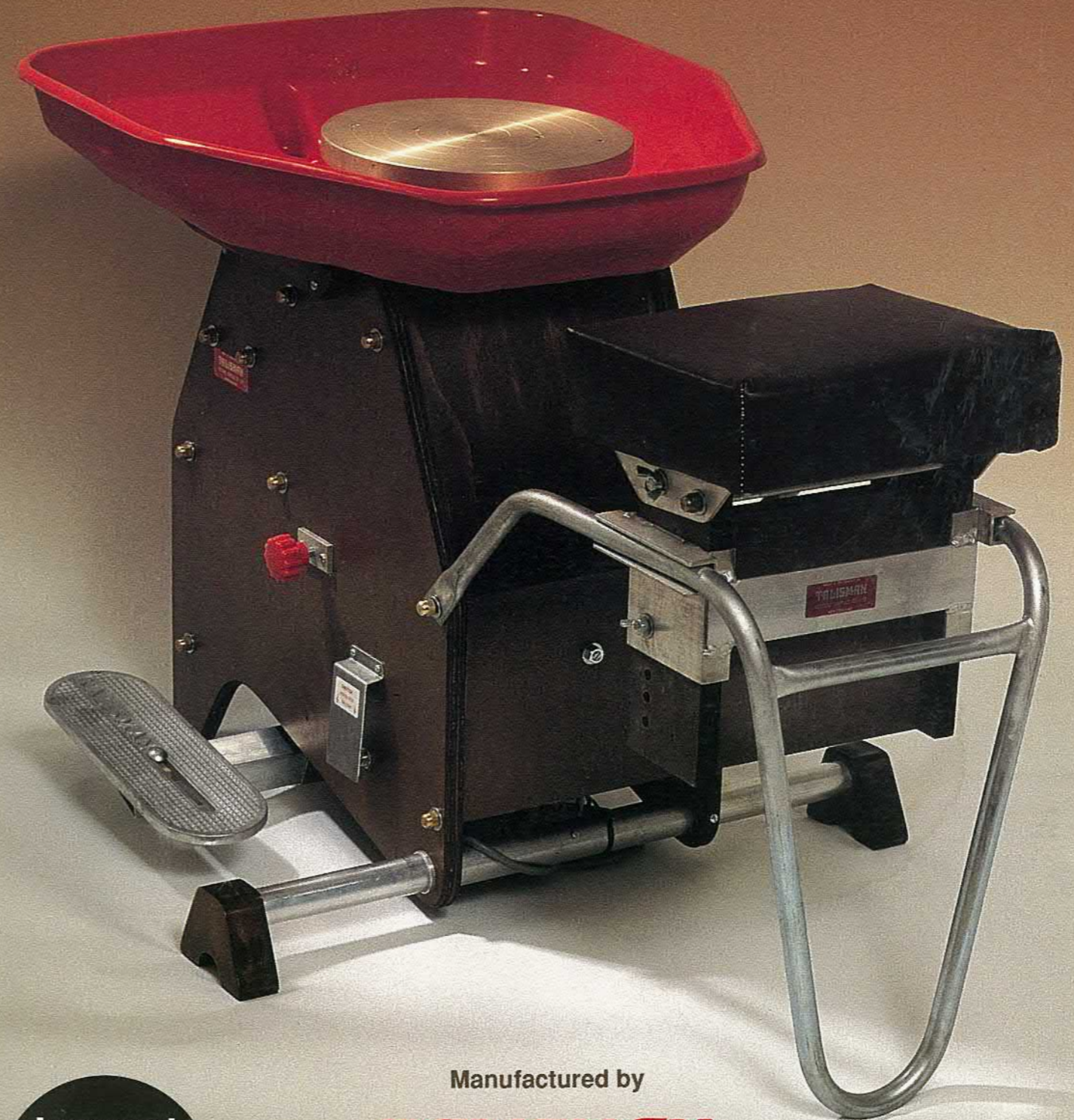
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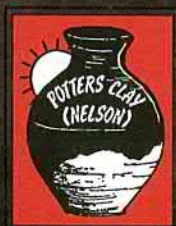
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