

# National Ceramics

Quarterly

Winter 1987 \$3.50



BARBARA ROBINSON · CLARICE CLIFF



FUNK-tional · FIGURATIVE CERAMICS

## Contents

Editorial comment	1
Letters	2
Potpourri	3
Book reviews	7
A recent exhibition of Figurative Ceramics and Decorated Textiles in Cape Town	8
Priced out of the game?	10
Positively FUNK-tional	11
Reduction firing — technical notes	14
A new approach to porcelain	15
Studio tips	15
In conversation with Barbara Robinson	16
Clarice Cliff . . . a phenomenon in her time	19
A Priceless Collection	22
How it all began!	23
Operation Hunger — 'African Heritage'	25
Top Office	26
Personally Speaking	26
The influence of fluxes on iron colours	29
Regional Roundup	31
Contributors	32



David Leach joins Maggie Thatcher in the 'Top Office', see page 26.

**EDITOR Michael Guassardo**

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR Rosemary Lapping**

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Ceramics' on page 8.

Photograph courtesy of the National Gallery, Cape Town.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

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## Editorial Comment

It is with great excitement and not a little trepidation that I write this first 'Editorial Comment' in our new magazine. By way of introduction, I would like to tell you a little about myself and my Associate Editor, Rosemary Lapping.

Having studied architecture at Wits for a couple of years, I switched to art and obtained my diploma at the Johannesburg School of Art. Later in London, I was elected a member of the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers and also became a member of the National Union of Journalists. In Canada, I was elected a member of the Typographical Designers of Canada, at that stage concentrating on graphic design. Prior to starting a pottery and lately editing the Cape Potter, I owned and ran an accredited advertising agency with branches throughout the Republic. I have exhibited in several Regionals, a National and in group exhibitions.

Rosemary Lapping was one of South Africa's first graduates in Ceramics when she obtained her B.A. (Ceramics) from the University of Natal in 1961. Rosemary then headed the Ceramics Department of the Port Elizabeth Technicon and subsequently, for nearly fifteen years, gave ceramic and glaze chemistry instruction throughout South Africa. In 1985 she obtained her B.A.F.A. (Hons.) degree from the University of South Africa. Since 1983 Rosemary has been head of the Ceramics Department of the Herschel School for girls. She has exhibited in many Regional and National Exhibitions as well as one man shows in Stellenbosch and at the South African Arts Association in Pretoria.

We have been ably assisted in this issue by Angela Wallace, Editor of Your Family, in Natal and by Steve Shapiro and Rosten Chorn in the Cape. At present Gillian Bickell is putting together an article on 'Copper Reds' for our next issue. In the months to come I hope to get round to each region personally and meet as many of you as possible. We need to set up a dialogue and use this magazine to its full potential as the vehicle it is intended to be. We will also be paying nominal amounts for articles, etc., please see page 34 for details.

It is our editorial policy to try to produce a balanced magazine, one that we hope will be visually exciting to all with balance in articles for the beginner and the expert, the avant-garde and the traditionalists, bringing you up to date news from around the world, new technical developments as well as an in depth look into ceramics at home, the people who make them as well as the firms that supply us with the materials to produce them. Most important, in future issues we will discuss trends, influences and above all ceramic education.

This issue got off to a late start and has taken four short weeks to put to bed. We could never have achieved this without the unstinting long hours and hard work put in by my wife. Thank you.

I hate to end on a note of discord. 'Regional Roundup' is a column of total interest for each region or APSA branch. What's happening in Natal, O.F.S., Vaal Triangle and the Western Cape? Surely someone has done or made something of interest. Let's hear from you.

*Michael Guassardo*

EDITOR



## Letters

### A message from the Chairman

Welcome to 'National Ceramics Quarterly'

For this first issue of National Ceramics Quarterly, I took a look at the first issue of Sgraffiti dated August 1973 and edited by Mollie Fisch.

Her first column, as in the following 46 issues which she so ably edited, was called 'through the filterpress'. I quote from there — 'David Ben Gurion was asked, years ago, how it was that the State of Israel had achieved so much in so short a time. He said: 'The impossible we achieve yesterday; miracles take a little longer!' Were we not a modest association, we might claim (with a certain deference to Mr. Ben Gurion and the State of Israel) that his words might ALMOST apply to A.P.S.A. But as we are modest, all we are prepared to say is that we've arrived and are doing splendidly.'

Indeed as Mollie Fisch wrote 'All we are prepared to say is that we've arrived and are doing splendidly.' For 47 issues all of us enjoyed Sgraffiti and because we did so splendidly it was time to insert new filtercloth in the filterpress.

Thank you Mollie, once again, for all you have done for Sgraffiti and A.P.S.A.

It will be a different type of cloth adjusted to the needs of 1987 and onwards.

On behalf of the National Executive of A.P.S.A., I wish the new magazine 'National Ceramics Quarterly' and the editor, Michael Guassardo, a good future.

And like the clay to be put in the filterpress, all region's members have to partake in filling the filterpress. Michael will keep the pump working for the filterpress, but the type of clay we get out of it depends on your co-operation.

Clay from the filterpress has a better plasticity and with de-airing we'll have a super magazine.

MAARTEN ZAALBERG  
CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

## Cape Town triennial 1988

South African artists still have eight months to prepare works for the third Cape Town Triennial to be held next year. The Sponsors, the Rembrandt van Rijn Art Foundation, have announced that artists will be able to submit works from 11th to 16th April, 1988 at seven collection centres in the country.

It has also been decided to increase the prize for the winning entry significantly.

'The Triennial has grown to be the foremost showcase of South African art and is the only national exhibition of its kind' said dr Raymund van Niekerk, director of the SA National Gallery.

'The Cape Town Triennial 1985 made a tremendous impact on the art community and public and still is the subject of lively debate. Hopefully this development will continue with the coming Triennial' he said.

Because the Cape Town Triennial is a travelling exhibition, it offers the public a unique opportunity to simultaneously view art from all spheres of the South African society. It also enable artists to present their works country-wide.



### Obituary: Con Purchase

We acknowledge the passing of Con Purchase on the 25th May, 1987. Con was instrumental in the founding of the Durbanville Cultural Society. When the lovely 'Rust-en-Vrede' building, in Wellington Road, Durbanville, was handed over to the Durbanville cultural Society, there was space available and through Con's initiative the idea of the Durbanville Clay Museum was born.

Notwithstanding her ill health over the past year, the Clay Museum was officially opened on 26th October, 1986.

Our sympathy goes to Richard Creel and family.

Maarten Zaalberg.

# Pot pourri

## Harpers ceramic Teapot Competition 1987

From the response received from all corners of South Africa, this event promises to provide some stimulating ideas! Judging takes place on Saturday 3rd October and Sunday 4th October. The winners will be announced on Sunday 4th October at a Harpers Madhatter Teaparty. Wine will be served to conscientious objectors at 1630.

### PRIZES:

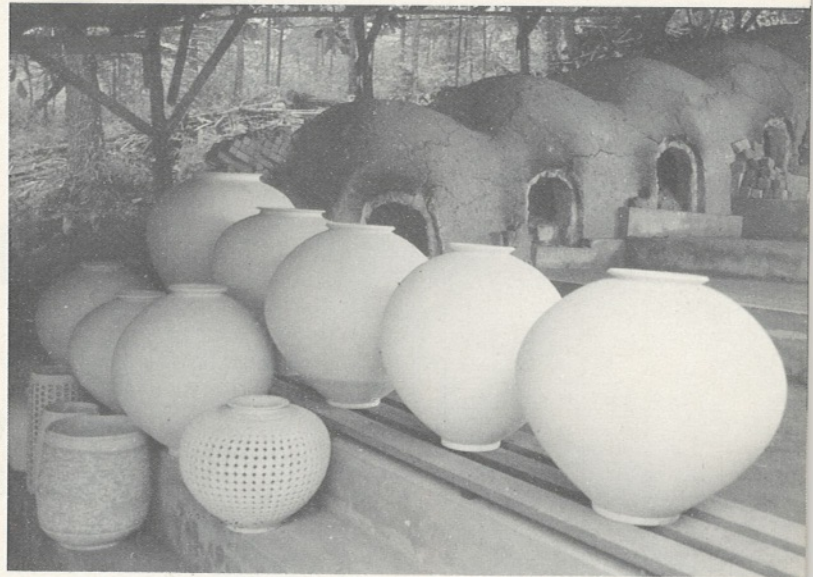
First Prize Harpers Studio Potters Wheel value R850,00

Second Prize Harpers Table Top Slabroller value R360,00

Third Prize Harpers Stoneware Clay — choose your own 200 kg.

### RULES:

1. The only requirement is that the teapot should be entirely ceramic and functional. You may use any clay, any technique, any glaze and any ideas you like. The handle may be of any material.
2. A maximum of two entries per person is allowed. If two entries are submitted, they should be different to each other.
3. The decision of the judges is final.
4. Each teapot must be carefully labelled with a price or Not for Sale sign. Attach your name and telephone number.
5. The teapots will be on display at Harpers for about two weeks, thereafter the exhibition will be moved to a prominent exhibition area. Please allow a period of about 8 weeks before pieces are collected or returned.
6. An entrance fee of R5,00 per teapot is being charged to facilitate catering, administration and postage.
7. Harpers does not accept any responsibility for pots damaged in transit or on exhibition.
8. The competition is open to all potters in South Africa and entry forms are available from Harpers Potters Supplies, P O Box 32, Steenberg, 7945, Telephone (021) 75-3029 or 75-3044.
9. You have until Friday October 2nd to hand in your entries.



Pictured above is a postcard sent to us by John Rudd on a recent visit to Korea. In the foreground are large biscuited pots and behind them the front view of a typical 5 chambered, woodfired, climbing kiln in Bugokdobang.



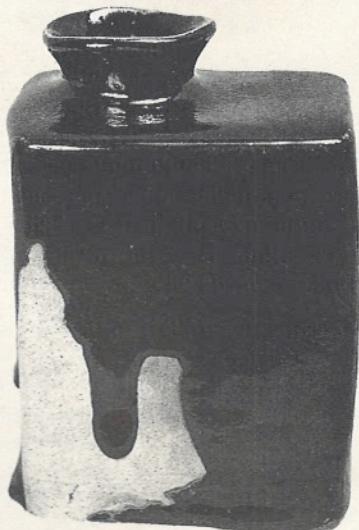
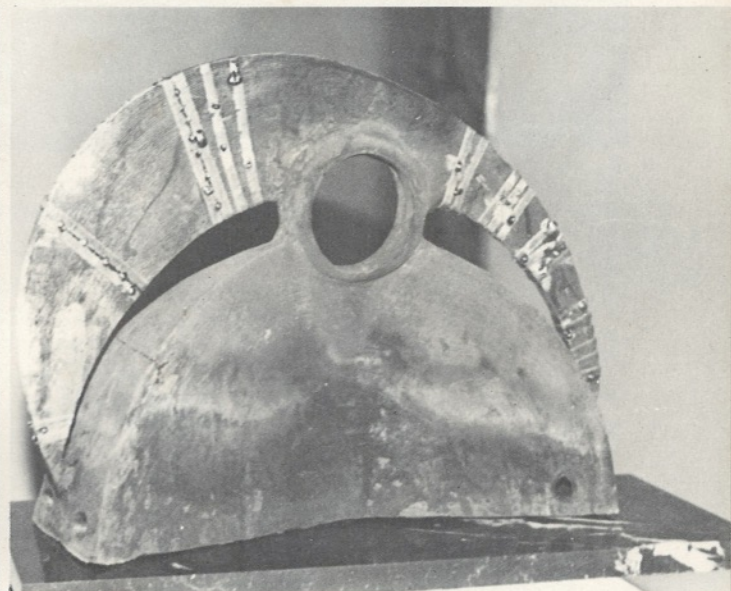
The Craftsmen Potters Association's 'New members Show' at the Craftsmen Potters Shop was varied and exciting. The very delicate terra sigillata bowls by Gary Wornell in pale greens and rusty orange made a striking display, pictured left. Perhaps the most outstanding piece was James Tower's upright earthenware form decorated with white and black glazes, pictured above.

# Pot pourri

## Natal Corobrik 1987 Regional ceramic exhibition

Mrs Ray, a lecturer on ceramics in the Fine Art Department of the Natal Technikon has sent us some pictures of this year's winners. The exhibition, shared by the Weavers' Guild, was an interesting and varied one, well supported by the Natal ceramicists. For the first time in Natal, prizes were awarded. The award winning pots are featured here.

First prize went to P. Lerata, top right. Second prize was for Huby Wiid's 'Empty Chorus' made in earthenware, top left. Bottom left, Liz Brown got third prize for her teaset and bottom right, Rodney Blumenfeld received a highly commended for his Raku piece.



An exhibition entitled 'The World of Mrs Keiko Ryu' was recently held at the Mall Galleries, London. Japanese art has been a source of inspiration and fascination to the West for many years. The work of Mrs Keiko Ryu undoubtedly reinforces this fascination. Her influences are a combination of traditional and modern art as is clear from the exhibition. The work on display is in three art forms — ceramics, Ukiyo-e (wood block prints) and symbolic abstract paintings.

For inspiration Keiko Ryu chose ikebana as a theme to build her pots around and these reflect a simplicity of design, symbolising a closeness to nature. Each vessel is moulded in a strong simple shape, fused with a feeling of sensuous power and glazed in deep changing hues of blues, greens and browns. This was the first time her work has been shown outside of Japan.

## Book Reviews

**FUNCTIONAL POTTERY** Form and Aesthetic in Pots of Purpose  
Author Robin Hopper  
Chilton Book Co., Radnor, Pennsylvania.

This book is dedicated to 'lovers of pots, whomever they may be' and whatever further may be said, that sums up the content and general appeal this excellent book offers.

The book is divided into four parts. Part 1 entitled 'Made to be used' covers origins; functions; making methods; development of shape. The author's concern here is about 'pots made for purpose with love to be loved'. Part 2 deals with form — proportion and ratio — the inter-relationship of geometric symbolism and forms. In a simple (understandable) and concise way the reader is shown how mathematics form the core of life itself and permeate everything we are and do. This provides the foundation of understanding and developing form for both functional and one of a kind pottery.

The chapter on pots and anatomy with X-ray photographs of the handbone structure and coffee mug may seem excessive and the concern of weight of jugs plus weight of water and leverage even going too far, but these are vital factors to both the maker and the user and if we are to make pots which are easy to use, comfortable in the hands and give pleasure, studying these concerns may just help us to make better pots.

Part 3 is devoted to the practicalities of functional studio pottery and here Robin Hopper presents us with his thirty years' experience of making 'pots with a purpose'.

The final section is a portfolio of eight contemporary potters from different parts of the world who work with the thrown vessel ranging from traditional to fantasy — from earthenware to porcelain — electric fired, wood fired and salt glazed.

Just published

**ASH GLAZES** by Robert Tichane

Well illustrated and eminently readable, Ash Glazes is designed to provide practical information on ash glazes and glazing to both the beginner and experienced potter. In addition to information on how to formulate glazes, Robert Tichane has included:

Over 50 ash compositions from alfalfa ash to wheat straw ash; from oak leaf to walnut wood ash.

Detailed instructions for making synthetic ash glazes.

Eighty halftone photographs of sample glazes and distinctive ware.

More than three dozen ash glaze recipes.

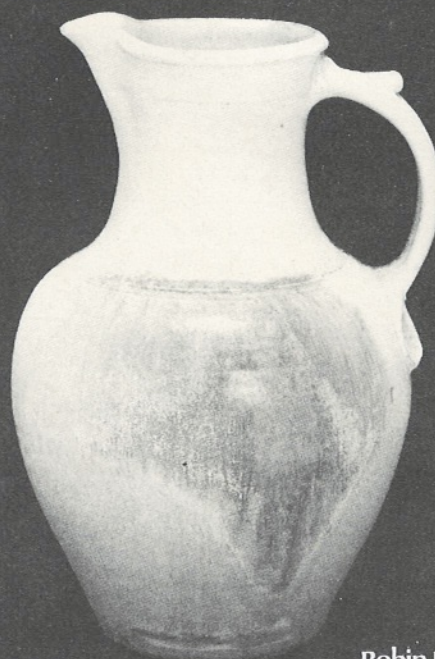
Salt wash glazes and cement glazes.

You can order this 210 page book from: Book Department, New York Glaze Institute, 511 North Hamilton Street, Painted Post, NY 14870. Price \$22 plus postage.

In our next issue we will have a local evaluation and review of Robert Tichane's 'Those Celadon Blues' and 'Reds, Reds, Copper Reds'.

## Functional Pottery

Form and Aesthetic in Pots of Purpose

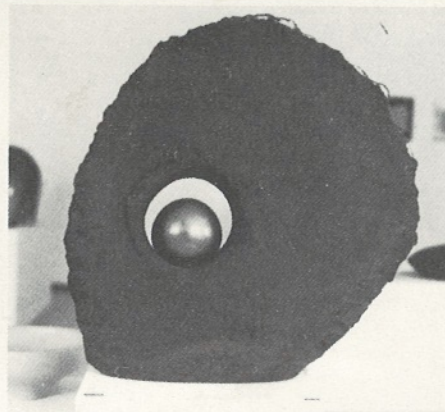


Robin Hopper

Functional Pottery is abundantly illustrated with hundreds of drawings and photographs.

A book to be read and re-read by everyone who makes or is interested in making pottery or who just loves ceramics and wants to further understand some of the qualities to be found in a 'good pot'.

BARBARA ROBINSON



### La FAENZA

The editorial department at La Faenza, Italy, have brought out the second edition of their acclaimed catalogue 'The Masters of Modern Ceramics'. It is a basic work of the major ceramicists in Europe and abroad which is produced to enable Museums, Galleries, Institutions and serious collectors keep pace with the latest developments in ceramics. This 204 page book sells for about R60 and for further information you can write to: Faenza Editrice S.p.A., via Pier de Crescenzi 44, Faenza 48018, Italy.

# A recent exhibition of Figurative Ceramics and Decorated Textiles in Cape Town

During the second quarter of this year, the S.A. National Gallery has hosted an exhibition of ceramics and textiles in their Annexe or Touch Gallery. This venue was originally appointed to house classes in clay for blind children — and hence the name Touch Gallery. Since its foundation, the Mobil Oil Co. of S.A. has sponsored annual exhibitions there and the Cape Town public has been fortunate enough to witness a happy marriage of good craft and art together with Western and African cultural influences.

The pieces have been drawn from the permanent collection of the Gallery itself, from commercial art galleries, from individual collectors and from people working in community art centres. The resulting exhibition of work is exciting, informative and contemporary.

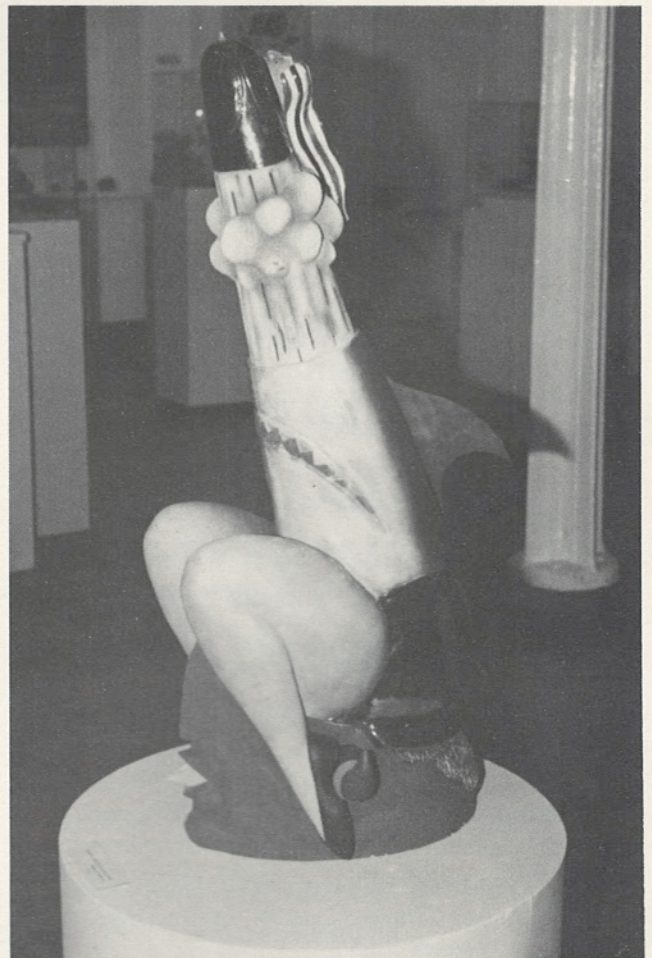
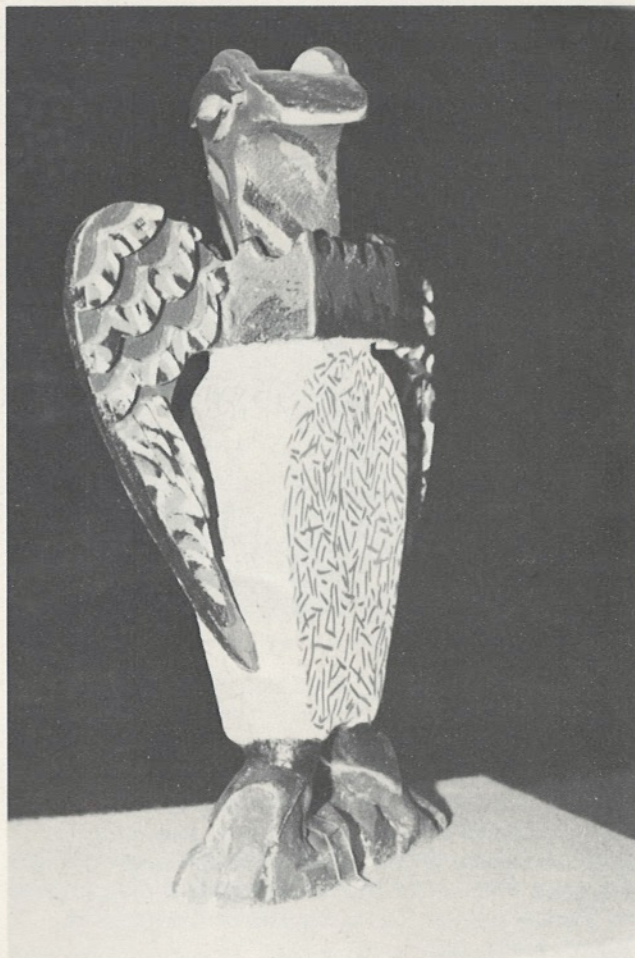
The most obvious element is the strong contrast of lifestyles and traditions between the rural African potter working in relatively primitive conditions and the urban potter who has access to a greater range of glaze materials and sophisticated kilns.

Yet despite these primitive conditions, the works produced by the African people have a ring of integrity

that almost always equals that of their Western counterparts, and at times even exceeds it. And not having ready access to the same diversity of materials, the rural artists have evolved some original and refreshing responses to mundane objects and everyday visual stimuli. An artist like Bonnie Nthlshali, who works with Feé Halsted a ceramicist on a farm near Winterton, uses a simple object like a broken china cup together with an amusing scene of dogs barking at birds up a tree, to create a fine artwork called 'Candelabra' in earthenware bisque painted with poster paint. It is exciting to witness the work of a young, untrained woman who intuitively and spontaneously understands the feeling of shape, form, content and colour and in addition to this, she has quite unconsciously touched on the Duchampian principle, by adding found objects in the form of tiny pieces of broken china to complete her statement.

In future editions of this magazine we'll talk more about some of these ideas and draw attention to the manner in which local and overseas ceramicists create figurative objects.

ROSEMARY LAPPING



Below: 'Candelabra' by Bonnie Nthlishali. Opposite page left:  
'Remnants of a false morality' by Clementina van der Walt and,  
right: 'The joy of a hypocrite is but for a moment' by Eugène Hön.  
Photographs by kind permission of the National Gallery, Cape Town





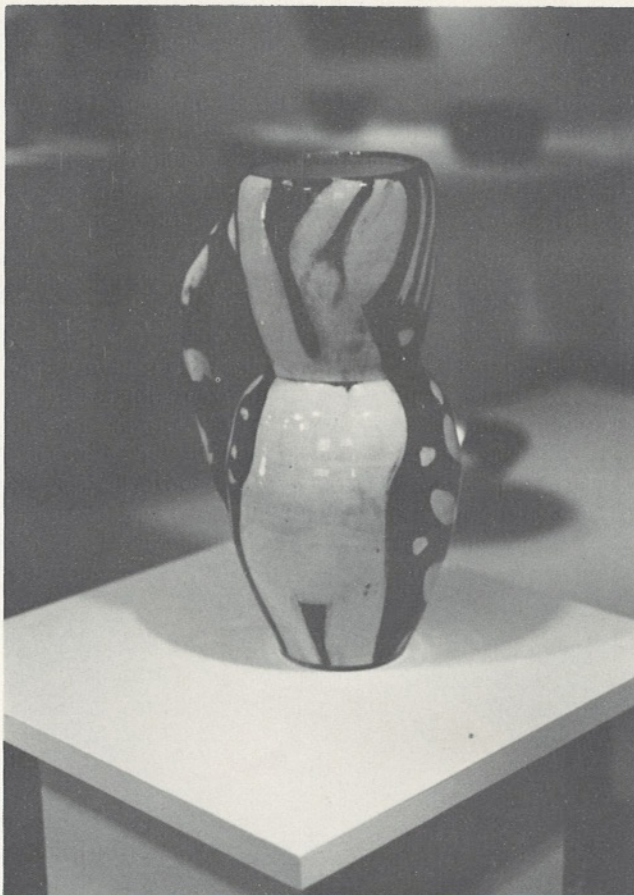
## Priced out of the Game?



I recently attended an exhibition by David Garland at the Crafts Council Gallery, Waterloo Place, London. This exhibition entitled 'New Ceramics', mainly of tableware, showed David Garland at his best with informal and unconstrained shapes and decoration.



Garland was originally an artist and came to potting through his painting. His well thrown and boldly decorated pots quite clearly show his artistic instinct. Garland says 'Analysis is death to art and I hope my work speaks for itself. I struggle with technique in order to disregard it and work freely'.



The bowl above, approximately 450 mm wide by 200 mm deep, made from red clay and painted with oxides, sold for R5 800. The jug, below left, about 450 mm high, made from white clay, slipped with manganese and iron with wax resist and sgraffito and decorated with cobalt oxide, sold for R4 000. The cups and saucers and plates sold for R165 each. I would estimate that about 40 pieces were sold from the 60 odd on display! Nice money if you can get it — but it poses one or two problems for exhibiting ceramicists. Garland usually sells pieces similar to the above for R1 500, R1 000 and R50 each respectively. The prices for the exhibitions, I understand, are set by the Crafts Council Gallery and the ceramicists are in a dilemma. To be asked to exhibit is a great honour and may only happen once in a decade. However, how do they go on selling their products when such a high value has been put on their pieces? These ceramicists are after all full time potters whose livelihood depends on a steady income. Can they continue to sell at these inflated prices?

No they cannot. If they continue at their pre-exhibition prices what about the credibility of the exhibition prices? Will the exhibitions continue to sell so well — I doubt it. Somewhere a more realistic attitude must be struck which is fair to all concerned. I trust this trend will not raise its ugly head here.

MICHAEL GUASSARDO

## Positively **FUNK-tional** by Rosemary Lapping

Life's humdrum surrounded by mass production is a perfectly acceptable platform from which to take one's daily step. Indeed, only a few of us consciously analyse the mass produced ceramics extruded and moulded on the production line by the thousands which have become part of our very existence. From toilet bowl to teacup, facepack to facebrick, clay is as much part of our domestic world as bread and jam. Clay is so intricately involved in our daily lives that, like the air we inhale, its presence hardly warrants comment — in fact more often than not the consumer reflects an anaesthetised response to any aesthetic standard as long as the product functions well and aspires to an acceptable norm. After all a loo is a loo.

It is therefore refreshing to see common or garden objects like the teapot, teacup or toast rack given a new dimension, an altered status. British ceramic artists Angus Suttie and Carol McNicoll are craftspeople who play with metaphorical concepts and challenge the consumer to rethink the very nature of each functional object. What makes a teacup a teacup? When is a cheesedish no longer a cheesedish? It is but the devil's advocate himself who would ask whether a spout is necessary for a teapot and why.

Thus it is along these lines that one is asked to view the present day ceramics in Britain which are being exhibited in some of the well known galleries and at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Carol McNicoll works mainly with moulded shapes, often asymmetrical and complicated, which she assembles in a free manner. Very often her large bowls, woven and interlaced, challenge the very essence of function as they stand firmly — their presence demanding justifiable space. She also has a small range of domestic ware which is decorated in a spontaneous way, using stains, slips and glazes — the surface frequently built up with layers of colours and as many firings. At leatherhard stage the pots are sgraffitoed, painted by hand and sprayed, building up layers of colour in an intricate pattern. A similar process is repeated at the glaze stage when both glazes and oxides are used to achieve the desired effect. Both the teapot and teacup which are shown here are moulded pieces in earthenware clay fired to 1150°C. Innovation has led Ms McNicoll to create a range of exciting new pieces — traditional pottery values have been translated and shifted into a different aesthetic plateau, exhibiting a flair for the original, a ring of the avant-garde.

Angus Suttie approaches his work in a deliberate manner, spending hours on each piece. There is a surrealistic quality in the final product which has undergone many changes in the making. Distanced from the realm of utility, the work emphasises its own uniqueness, claiming time and space for itself. The simple full-bellied teapot with elementary spout has now become Vessel as metaphor for Teapot. It challenges the viewer to relook at the very nature of the teapot and once this challenge is met, it will be with a fresh response that the everyday is seen and recognised.

Mr Suttie starts from a collection of flat slabs randomly

shaped, which he joins together, allowing the form to develop as he works. He may pursue a number of forms concurrently, allowing maximum space for creativity and development. Colour is applied during the process becoming a very integral part of the form itself, the final artwork being the result of much soul-searching and time spent. Surface decoration takes on a myriad of forms and shapes, often stressing the line of the body and then veering off in direct contrast to the total form. The resultant vessel is sculptural, tense and more than pleasing to the eye. He does not work to achieve a range of anything, rather settling for individual one-off pieces. Suttie achieves a unique quality in his work which is lyrical, intellectual and quite spiritual. The works illustrated here are some of his recent pieces whose structure emphasizes how far the cry is from straight utilitarian objects. Their very nature breathes a breath of joy and fun. However do not underestimate the seriousness of both Suttie's and McNicoll's works, for they are the works of tomorrow.

It is the element of challenge which the Eighties is about — the spectator/consumer is confronted with the request to question his/her response, no longer able to trail through the halls of mass production which have rendered him or her impervious to reaction. The concept of function has been extended to encompass a far broader spectrum of aesthetic demands; and form, surface, structure and content jostle in the hierarchy of importance when the viewer comes to pass judgement on a functional object. This is demanding, this is positive, this is nothing more than the high standard set by the discerning spectator and art-collector of the Eighties, and frankly it is positive because it puts each artist on his/her toes to sustain this standard and not to assume a complacent attitude of mediocrity.

Teapot by Angus Suttie.



## Positively FUNK-tional

Photographs in the article by kind permission of Angus Suttie and Carol McNicoll. Below: 'Teapot' 18 cms high, earthenware, 1987 and 'Teacup and saucer' earthenware by Carol McNicoll, photographed by R.Lapping. Right: 'Breakfast with the one you love', earthenware fired to 1150°C by Angus Suttie, 1985, photographed by Karen Norquay.

N.B. Carol McNicoll will be in South Africa at the end of 1987 and Ms Lapping is organising a workshop seminar which will be directly related to Ms McNicoll's work and especially her process of mould-making. Should anyone be interested, please contact Ms Lapping by writing to her at her studio — 58 Tennant Road, Kenilworth, Cape Town.





**GUARDIAN**  
Friday May 3, 1985

are rises  
optimism

# Reduction firing — Technical notes

by Rosten Chorn

Reduction is defined as any process which removes oxygen atoms from compounds, while oxidation is defined as any process which adds oxygen to compounds. Both processes occur in a variety of conditions, for instance iron and steel corrode (oxidise) in the presence of air and water.

When a pottery kiln is fired the quality of the atmosphere is crucial in determining which materials will reduce and to what extent.

Three types of atmosphere are available to the potter, namely:

**NEUTRAL:** Commonly achieved in electric kilns or muffle kilns where heat exchange from the source to the ware is by radiation rather than by combustion.

**OXIDISING:** Where a well-draughted fuel kiln is raised in temperature in the presence of sufficient oxygen to allow complete combustion.

**REDUCING:** Where oxygen starved conditions are induced by altering the draught in a fuel kiln so that incomplete combustion forms carbon monoxide which, hungry for oxygen, leaches it from ware materials in which oxygen is weakly bonded to allow the formation of the stable carbon dioxide. While it is usual to achieve reduction of pottery wares by altering kiln atmospheres in fuel burning kilns, potters have evolved ways of achieving reduction by alternative means in electric kilns and by post firing reduction, for example in the raku process.

Electric kilns may be turned to the production of reduced wares by the introduction of combustible material into the kiln (for example wood slivers or charcoal) at the appropriate times during the firing cycle — this with the caution that carbon monoxide and other fumes stimulated in the reduction process are poisonous and that electric elements are damaged in the reduction process. Despite these negative aspects, reduction in electric kilns is generally more complete and controllable than in fuel kilns because the two variables — temperature increase and degree of reduction — are independent. Furthermore, the electric kiln offers better opportunity for precise temperature and cycle management thus assuring replication and possible modification of results.

The raku process, while often achieving glaze melt with fuel burning systems, achieves reduction after firing. Here, mature wares are removed red-hot from the kiln and covered in a bed of combustible material or alternatively, quenched in oil. The exclusion of air necessary for combustion in the immediate vicinity of the ware reduces the glaze surface in characteristic ways.

While many metal oxides respond to reducing atmospheres, only a few do so with permanent and pleasing results:

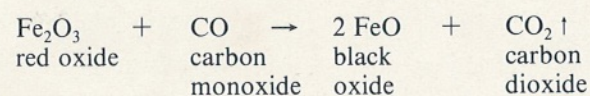
## 1. TIN OXIDE:

Tin oxide reduces easily but when reduction is effected

before glaze melt has taken place, tin oxide is reduced throughout the glaze layer, producing an unattractive grey. When reduction is effected in the period between glaze melt on the heating cycle and glaze hardening on the cooling cycle, an attractive iridescence results on the glaze surface.

## 2. IRON OXIDE:

Iron oxide is responsible for the most widely known variations of glaze and body reduction, indeed reduced iron oxide is the key to the best of the oriental stoneware and porcelain range. The most common form of iron oxide is ferric oxide (red) with the formula  $Fe_2O_3$ . In reducing atmospheres this becomes ferrous oxide (FeO, black). The chemical reaction is represented thus:



It is possible to reduce iron oxide above  $700^\circ C$  and it is common to reduce the small amounts of iron oxide in stoneware and porcelain bodies at between  $850^\circ C$  and  $1050^\circ C$ .

Were it possible to maintain complete reduction in the ware chamber, complete reduction of the iron oxide present in glazes could be maintained. However as reduction is usually only partial and as the different glaze oxides share oxygen between them, reduction of the iron oxides in glazes is partial, resulting in the attractive variations between black and rust characteristic of oriental tenmoku glazes.

In addition it is well to remember that in its reduced form, iron oxide (FeO) is a powerful flux. Care should be taken therefore, to adjust iron-bearing glazes, used normally in oxidation, when one intends using them in reduction conditions.

The precise colour of the iron bearing glaze in reducing conditions depends on three variables dealt with below:

## RELATIVE AMOUNT OF IRON IN THE GLAZE:

Where the percentage of iron oxide introduced is between 1 and 6 percent with a modal amount of 2 percent, the delicately coloured grey-green, green or blue celadons are possible. Where the percentage of iron oxide rises from between 6 to 15 percent, variations of the black tenmoku family of glazes result. When it exceeds fifteen percent, khaki glazes result. (The categories mentioned here are loose and the percentages only approximate indicators of limits)

**COMPOSITION OF THE GLAZE:** The glaze composition itself is of critical importance to the final glaze colours, especially in the celadon range where apparently minor changes in glaze composition may affect the fired colour dramatically. In summary, blue celadons result from glazes low in alumina, high in lithia and soda and with small additions of phosphorous pentoxide. (These glazes may be considered as related to the Chün family.) Green and grey-green celadons result from glazes higher in alumina, potash and calcia.

Tenmokus are best generated in glazes relatively more fluid than those necessary for the khaki family.

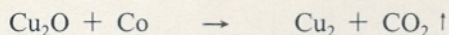
**GLAZE MATURATION POINT:** Generally purer colours are attainable the higher one fires, this because reliance on fluxes, which modify glaze colour and surface are kept to a minimum.

### 3. COPPER OXIDE

Copper oxide is easily reduced from green to red in glazes and also easily reoxidizes. The chemical reaction is as follows:



Where copper is used at one percent of glaze mass or more, reds, tinged unattractively with brown or purple, result. Best results are attained with small quantities of copper oxide (usually half of one percent of glaze mass) to glazes high in alkalis, especially soda. Here the colour is scarlet to crimson and the chemical reaction is:



Measures taken to prevent the reoxidation of copper-red glazes include the firing of the copper glazed pot in a saggar containing hard charcoal and reduction during the soft phase of the cooling cycle. In addition copper red glazes are adversely affected by flame impingement which necessitates their careful placement in the kiln.

Sources: 1) Hamer, F. (1975) *The Potter's Dictionary of Materials and Techniques*. London: Pitman  
2) Petersen, S. (1974) *Shoji Hamada*. Tokyo: Kodansha International.



## A New approach to Porcelain

The ultimate in ceramic masochism seems to have been the difficulty which porcelain presents to even the most skilled mind and hands! The memory capabilities which normally elude the 20th century survivor provide a favourite "porcelain-torture" quality.

Harpers Potters Supplies has entered the "CLAY-GAME" late in the history of South African ceramics and has had the benefit of learning from the early pioneers. However, after an extensive tour overseas, we realised that there is still room for an innovative approach. We examined the porcelain requirements long after developing our range of Earthenware and Stoneware clays. We are convinced that, besides a good recipe, the de-aiing process is essential for the production of a superior quality product.

Some East/West ceramic differences emerge when considering the desired porcelain qualities in Europe and China. The European ceramists believe whiteness and translucency are the supreme qualities of a good porcelain. The Chinese feel that translucency is not vital and whiteness is not essential, stained porcelains are used

extensively. However, the vitrification factor is very important, requiring an intimate relationship between clay and glaze with a resultant sharp resonance.

We have designed our porcelain to match certain criteria. The porcelain should vitrify within the firing capabilities of every pottery studio, whether oxidation or reduction techniques are used. Whilst maintaining as high a degree of whiteness as possible, the plasticity of the porcelain is paramount. A critical moisture content has been established to ensure that the porcelain is as workable as possible. Shrinkage has been minimised to facilitate glaze fit from cone 6 to cone 10, using Orton pyrometric cones. No artificial aging additives have been utilized to speed up the souring of the clay. The plasticity and maturity of the product can be attributed to our Harpers Clay Combine. This machine is a mixer/de-airing two-tier pugmill, the first of its kind, designed and manufactured by Tony Laaper. At present, we sell the ONLY de-aired porcelain in Africa — you need not wait any longer for GREEN HAIRS to develop before you tackle a project in porcelain!

The porcelain does not vitrify completely at cone 6 but has certain advantages at that temperature. We are in a very colourful era in ceramics and the lower the firing range involved the less elusive the colour spectrum. Dorothy Feibleman stained porcelain fires from cone 5 to cone 7. It's about time these stained clays were readily available in South Africa. We HAVE available black, turquoise, green, yellow and mauve porcelain together with a stable cone 6 transparent glaze.

PATRICIA HARPUR



## Studio Tips

FOOTRINGS FOR FLOWING GLAZES e.g. Copper Reds, etc.

I saw in the Victoria and Albert Museum a bottle by William Straithwait Murray and a bowl by Tatsuzo Shimaoka that coped very nicely with this problem. Editor.



for a bottle or vase shape



for a plate or bowl shape

Sysser Waspe of the East Cape Branch has a suggestion for protecting your eyes.

To help protect your eyes when looking into a kiln at cones, buy a small piece of welders' lens and trim the edges with masking tape to protect your fingers. The cost for a suitable size is approximately R2 including G.S.T.

# In conversation with Barbara Robinson

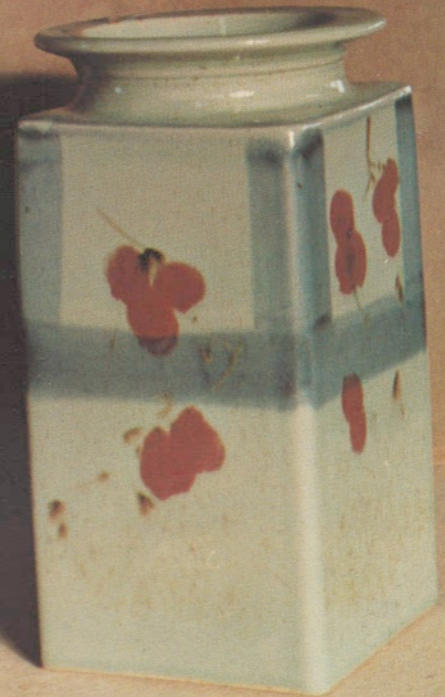
by Michael Guassardo

Barbara has exhibited as well as having been a judge in numerous regional and national exhibitions. Recently she enjoyed a very successful joint exhibition with Ansie van Zyl at the Yellow Door in Cape Town. She was a guest potter at both the opening of the Durbanville Clay Museum and the 1987 Western Cape Regional Exhibition.

Last month I went to Kleinmond near Hermanus to visit Barbara in her new pottery. The property she bought is only a stone's throw away from the small picturesque fishing harbour and provides her with an idyllic setting and plenty of room to move about. Like so many of us who discovered clay midway in our professions, it too changed her life.

Barbara started to forge a career in tennis. She played for Southern Transvaal as a junior and later for Eastern Province. Just over twenty years ago she turned professional and started coaching with Leon Norgarb, mainly at schools. Later she moved to the Transvaal where she set up her own coaching school with Val Forbes. Towards the end of this thirteen year stint, Barbara became aware of pottery as a living thing. She had always been interested in the East and in particular with the Eastern philosophy and more particularly Zen. She now started to visit museums on her trips overseas with her husband and in Japan to attend tea ceremonies. This more than anything else brought her face to face with pottery and she soon started to collect it. The idea







of becoming a potter was born and she dreamt of becoming a country craft potter such as those she had seen in Holland and England. She was taken with the 'mingei' tradition and pictured herself as a 'Hamada'. Not a dreamer by nature, she soon set about learning to be a potter. She started classes at Gloria Holden's 'London School of Pottery' in Johannesburg and completed her diploma course. During this period she decided clay was for her and bought a wheel and electric kiln. She loved wheelwork and was soon selling her tea bowls via her Japanese tennis students.

While on holiday in the U.K., she decided to join Helen Hattori's pottery classes at Camden. Helen incidentally comes from South Africa and met her husband, a Japanese journalist, while she was working with the Fujiwara potters — mainly sweeping the floors she recalls. Helen later got her ceramics degree at Harrow. Barbara stayed on for three months. During this time the students would be taken to the Victoria and Albert Museum for study and discussions on shape and form.

'What I related to most of all were the early Chinese celadons and chuns, the reflectiveness of the glazes. The acknowledgment of the incredible depth and quality of those glazes reduced me to tears' says Barbara.

On her return to South Africa, Barbara decided to give up her tennis career and move to the Cape where she set up shop with Lesley-Ann Hoets in Hout Bay. Six months later Lesley-Ann left and Barbara took over the studio. Always having wanted to do reduction firing, she built a 75 cu. ft. oil fired kiln. A couple of years later she started the Valley Pottery, also in Hout Bay, and had a new oil fired kiln and a salt glaze kiln built. For the next five or so years she worked basically on her own with the occasional visiting potter sharing the studio. Geoff Wilson from New Zealand worked for a time before setting off to give workshops throughout the Republic as did Chris Green from Zimbabwe who later moved to the U.K.



Towards the end of 1982, Paul Pepworth and Bruce Walford came down from Natal and shared Barbara's studio. In August 1983 she went to Nieu Bethesda and Bruce remained at Valley Pottery.

Rob Nairn, Professor of Law at U.C.T. wanted to start a Buddhist community and Sheila Fugard knew of a place at Nieu Bethesda and they needed a fulltime potter.

'Why did you go?'

Barbara: 'The idea of the project appealed to me, sort of fulfilling a part of my fantasy to be a glorified country craftsman — a little God. I was successful in Hout Bay but I had no set objective. I wanted to go and help people, create work and help build up a creative community. I wanted to experience living and learning with new people — and perhaps find myself.'

Barbara set about developing the pottery at Nieu Bethesda where she worked with about fifteen people, at most times under trying conditions. They fired their wares in a 200 cu. ft. oil fired kiln. Eighteen months later Barbara was in desperate need of help and her now new son-in-law Bruce Walford sold up Valley Pottery and joined Barbara in Nieu Bethesda. Although they both gave it their all, things did not quite work out as Barbara had imagined they would and slowly plans were made to return to Cape Town.

'Did you find yourself Barbara? Did you get anything out of it?'

Barbara: 'I think so. I was making a mistake trying to develop in too many directions. I had too many choices. I needed a lot more conviction. I needed to be comfortable with myself. Being isolated in the Karoo was a sort of self-inflicted personal discipline. I learnt to develop my own style and I now feel comfortable with it. I think the general problems, the lack of communication and the shattering of my dream really helped me to find myself. It taught me to discard the junk of life and realise the present is the only reality. It helped me to grow in understanding.'

Barbara makes her own white stoneware clay and fires in a new 40 cu. ft. gas kiln. She has carefully developed her own glazes to fit her clay and mixes her own pigments for decorating. The results, I must say, are fantastic as witnessed by those who have seen her recent work here in the Cape.

Barbara has given us her celadon glaze and iron overglaze recipes and her white stoneware body formula. All are fired to Orton Cone 10.

For Barbara's many old friends her new address is P.O. Box 227, Kleinmond 7185.

#### CELADON

Feldspar .....	300
Silica .....	200
Serena Kaolin .....	155
B13 Ball Clay .....	85
Wollastonite .....	225
Talc No. 1 .....	30
Synthetic Red Iron Oxide .....	5

#### IRON OVERGLAZE

Feldspar .....	545
Silica .....	92
W.P. Ball Clay .....	125
B13 Ball Clay .....	80
Wollastonite .....	55
Talc .....	60
Iron .....	60
Titanium .....	20

#### WHITE STONEWARE BODY

Kaolin G1 .....	8
Kaolin Serena .....	7
Ball Clay .....	5
Bentonite .....	1
Feldspar .....	5
Silica .....	8
<i>Optional: Fine Grog 1 to 3</i>	

# Clarice Cliff . . . a phenomenon in her time

by Angela Wallace

Clarice Cliff hand painted pottery,  
in dazzling colours and novel,  
often eccentric designs,  
made her a household name in the 20s and 30s.  
Today, collectors of Art Deco  
pay a premium for Clarice Cliff ware.

Few of us can look at a piece of Clarice Cliff ceramic ware, without it evoking some form of emotional response.

"Awful!", exclaimed the late Queen Mary.

"Magnificent!", enthused the press of the day.

"Beautiful . . .", murmur today's collectors, as they pay ever increasing sums of money for what, only a few years ago, was collecting dust in attics and not-quite-antique shops in Britain, Australia, America and South Africa.

Famous in the 20s and 30s for her innovative designs and bold use of striking colours, Clarice Cliff was not only a gifted designer, she was an astute businesswoman.

Bizarre, the first comprehensive range of her early designs for hand painted crockery, was an instant success. The first load to leave the factory was a sell-out, and the British public clamoured for more.

Coming from an unpretentious family in the drab surrounds of the industrial pottery centre of England, Clarice blossomed like a butterfly in the world of ceramic design. Within a year of Bizarre being marketed, an entire factory was given over to its production. Teams of apprentices, straight from school, were taught to paint the novel geometric designs, first traced in black, then filled with vivid red, orange, blue and yellow.

Bizarre was displayed at exhibitions and trade shows; special display units were designed for the retail trade; Clarice gave workshops and her girls gave demonstrations of hand painting. The press loved it . . . so did the customers.

Tea sets, dinner services, fruit bowls, bon bon sets, bowls, vases, signs of the zodiac, candlesticks, book ends, ink wells, ash trays, comical figures, birds, and masks, were all designed by Clarice Cliff. Her ceramic shapes were built from basic geometric cones, circles, triangles and squares. Designs developed to include landscapes, stylized flowers and tree motifs. Colours were rich, clean and thick. "A gargantuan feast of colour!"

Clarice left school at the age of 13 to become an apprentice enameller at a small ceramics factory, where

she was taught to paint freehand on pottery, adapting designs to fit all sizes and shapes of domestic ware. Within a few years she had moved on . . . to another company, and lithography, a method used to transfer printed designs onto pottery before it was fired. At the age of 17 she joined A J Wilkinson Ltd., Royal Staffordshire Pottery, and it was here that she was to become established as a household name.

A course of evening classes at the Burslem School of Art, in her early years, gave her an introduction to art nouveau, which would account for the clearly identifiable influences of cubism and expressionism in her work.

As company Art Director at Wilkinson and their subsidiary, the Newport Pottery, Clarice employed and trained, with the help of two assistants, 150 boys and girls in her decorating shop. Shapes and patterns were designed by herself, she then taught her apprentices the techniques of colouring which she had developed.

On-glaze painting was used for Bizarre ware, as the brilliant colours used for decoration could not withstand high temperatures. This meant that these mass produced, hand painted items were given three firings. When Europe went to war, the potteries were absorbed into the war effort. After the war, a new era of industrial design and manufacture began to flourish and there was no place for the production of hand painted pottery. It had become uneconomic. The demand was now in favour of more conventional designs.

In 1940, at the age of 41, Clarice married the recently widowed managing director of A J Wilkinson, Colley Shorter. They were a devoted couple until his death in 1963. A year later, Clarice sold the business and went into retirement.

A retrospective exhibition of her work was staged at the Brighton Museum in 1972. Clarice contributed some of her own collection, which she later gave to the museum, but she did not attend. She died suddenly of heart failure towards the end of that year, at the age of 73. Her name lives on . . . and her joyful pots continue to amaze and delight new generations of admirers.

Below: Bizarre biscuit barrel illustrates the joyful use of brilliant colours, and stylized scenic decoration.

Top right: Bizarre dinner plate, dessert bowl, and meat platter in the Biarritz shape. Biarritz was one of Clarice's earlier designs, and it caused endless problems at the factory when it came to firing the ware. Plates had to be buried in sand at the bottom of the kiln, and weighed down to prevent warping.

Top left: Bizarre fruit bowl.

Middle right: Gravy boat in the Biarritz shape. Two extruded coils fitted to the base provided stability and complimented the shape.

Middle left: Clarice's designs here, clearly show the influence of her art nouveau orientated training at the Burslem School of Art.

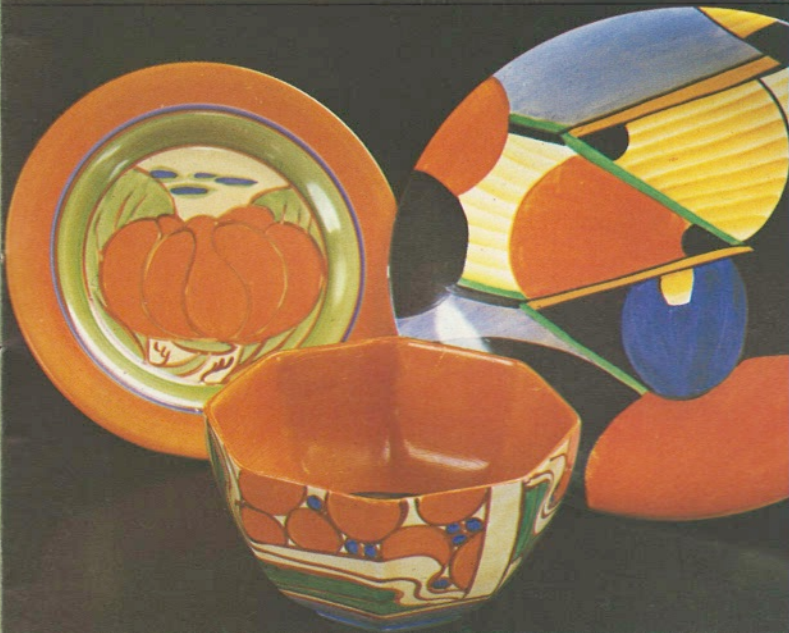
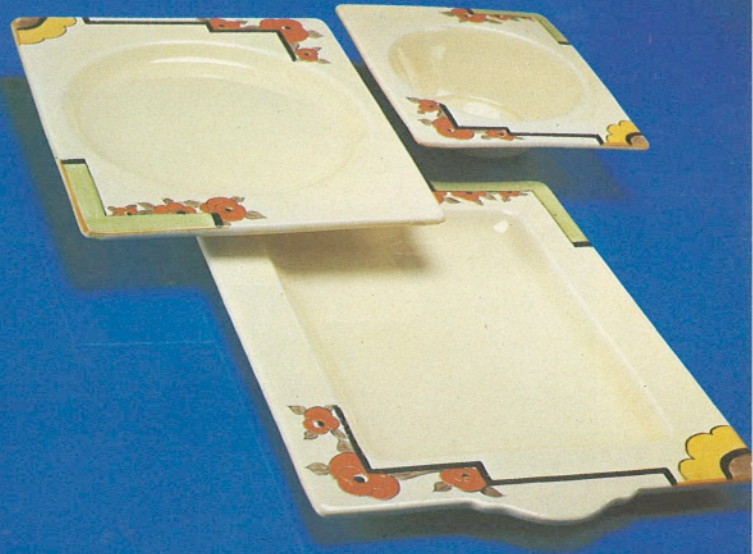
Bottom right: The Crocus pattern which was to become one of the most popular designs in the Bizarre range of crockery. Each item was hand painted, on shapes that were mass produced.

Bottom left: Stunning decoration in glorious colours were to become hallmarks of Clarice Cliff domestic ware.

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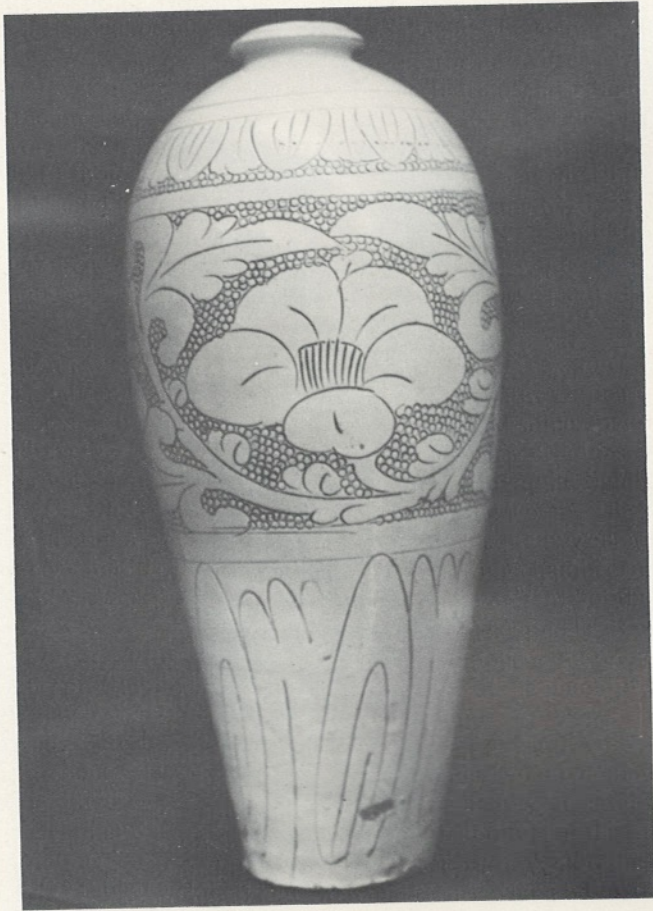
Clarice Cliff ware, courtesy of Recollections, Cascades Centre, Pietermaritzburg; and private collectors.





# A Priceless Collection

by Steve Shapiro



My quite considerable 'Shorter Oxford English Dictionary' is inadequate in explaining the term 'priceless', offering two absurdly contradictory meanings, that which is least used being 'concise and defying qualification,' the other, a clichéd tool of the superlative-crazed popular press, 'relative to the point of meaninglessness'. I mean, doesn't everything have a price?

And yet I can report with utter sincerity to have spent a day with a 'priceless' collection of Chinese pottery, knowing that even if there is, however high, some pecuniary value on the material objects, the EXPERIENCE of seeing the pots 'in the round' — freed from the limited dimensions of photographic reproduction — is an experience immeasurable in our jaded world of weight-and-measure values.

Part of the collection of the late Dr Arthur M. Sackler was on display recently at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. It was, at the time I saw it, regrettably uncatalogued but in a certain sense this was no disadvantage for many of the pieces were already familiar from countless books and magazines and from the songs of praise that had accompanied these publications: to which I now add my little voice.

The collection begins with stunning Neolithic pots in perfect repair and thoroughly 'modern' and makes its way to the climax of Chinese pottery in the simple yet profound pots of the Sung Dynasty.

Given that there were at least a thousand pieces exhibited and that my time was limited, I chose to spend a day with the Tang and Sung pots, inexpertly sketching as many as possible — photographing not allowed.

What joy! I once read that 'Sung pottery was produced for and by the intellectual elite' who 'with classical beauty of form and glaze turned error into virtue'. What a splendid bunch the 'intellectuals' of those times must have been. I would happily trade all of the present members of that class to have one or two of them with us now! The pots are all and more than what I thought they might be. Powerful ash-glazed Tang bottles and jars in stoneware and the white-slipped Tz'u chou stoneware of Sung, fat 'hares-fur' and 'oil spot' temmoku and the breathtaking celadons: chüns, Koryos and olive northern celadons.

The porcelain, and particularly the celadons, was easily the most pleasing aspect of the entire exhibition: the detailed engraving (some free and some obviously press-moulded) under the thin 'northern' celadons. Translucence and superb turning quite rightly puts these pots at the pinnacle of the potter's craft. The white porcellaneous wares, although equally well-crafted were almost certainly fired in oxidising chambers and for all their beauty lack the jewel-like presence of the well reduced celadons. The 'fat' blue chun glazes were voluptuous and full, thickly applied and often 'worm-tracked' and rolling down to fat, petulant, protruding lips and allowing a seductive glimpse of the clay body at the foot. A few pieces were not disadvantaged by freely administered inlays of lavender coloured copper glazes. The colour range within the 'family' generally was astonishing — given that the potters of the time were denied the dubious privilege of the ubiquitous 'commercially prepared stains' which today threatens to reduce this aspect of the craft to a 'glaze-by-numbers'

Shown here are typical examples of the pots Steve writes about.



exercise. Porcelain teabowls were garbed in the legendary 'hare's fur' and 'oil spot' temmokus — glazed about two-thirds of the way down and allowed to take their own erratic and tasteful courses to various altitudes — all well clear of the foot ring forming with, here and there, lush teardrops of running glaze.

The Sung stoneware was the acclaimed oxidised, white and black slipped, sgraffitoed and iron brush decorated Tz'u Chou ware, mainly bottles and jars, about which Bernard Leach was so enthusiastic. The brushwork was joyous and cavalier and to my inexpert eye it seemed as if all the pots had come from the same kiln although one particular example made it pretty clear that they were not made by the same potter. Two bottles, seemingly identical in size, basic proportions, slip, decorative motif and glaze were displayed side-by-side — but without explanation. I took the liberty of assuming an intentional attempt to show that a new apprentice had been taken on and had been thrown in at the deep end. The surprising thing is that the 'bad' pot was actually fired. It was very bad, in every aspect of its execution — throwing, turning and decorating. And yet it was fired. Sounds familiar.



## How it all began!

Potters Supplies and Mail Order  
— José and Harold Fowell

### WHO ARE THEY?

In this column we will be bringing you the people behind the name. So many of us obtain our ceramic supplies from all over the country and perhaps only get to meet one or two first hand. Here we hope to put a face or a personality behind that telephone or post box number.

Where did it all begin? At Stoke-on-Trent Technical College in 1949 where Jo and Harold, both from their different abodes, used to set out on foggy, smoggy nights five times per week to study for 'Pottery Honours', the Ceramic Diploma Course. At the same college John Edwards was a fulltime student of the same course.

Harold and Jo met for the first time in the Chemistry Laboratory at the College. They were asked to pair off for various chemistry experiments. Three years later they succeeded in obtaining their Ceramic Diplomas 'Pottery Honours'.

Harold became manager of a factory specialising in colour and glaze technology and José pursued a career in the manufacture of bone china and also wall tile production. In 1953 they married and three children and several years later, Harold and Jo were 'sent' to South Africa by Blythe Colours for the purpose of starting the manufacture of glazes for the South African market.

They arrived in South Africa in 1968 and once again met up with John Edwards and his wife Valmai. John had been living in South Africa for some 18 years. He had pioneered Studio Pottery and had a keen following of student potters at his studio in Orange Grove. John

taught mainly wheelwork and Val taught handwork. John spoke of the difficulties experienced by potters in obtaining supplies in South Africa. They had to fetch clay from a brickworks and there was only one supplier of glazes and colours. John suggested that they pool their resources and open a shop bringing all these items together under one roof and so a partnership was formed. Val discovered an empty shop in Louis Botha Avenue. The rent was R60 per month and with a capital of R750 the shop started and Val and José were partners.

The opening of The Potters Shop was on April Fool's day 1969. What a funny little shop it was — more like a hole in the wall recalls Jo. Very often people from the street would wander into this unusual little shop with a look of utter bewilderment on their faces. They couldn't make head or tail of the 'set-up'. What were these strange items labelled spurs, saddles and stilts? — or 'jiggers and jollies' on request. There were packs of powders labelled 'Donkey's Breath' or 'Purple Surprise'! Obscure telephone conversations could be overheard, e.g. 'You must wipe your bottoms' (referring to a kiln disaster of pots stuck to shelves), or 'I like John's body, but I'm mad about Tims.' or 'What is your body like?' or 'Hannah says she has honey in her crevices' (referring to a customer's lament on a runny honey glaze).

It was decided to establish on the first Saturday of each month their 'Heyday'. On this day wine was served and customers would congregate at the shop bringing with them their pots and 'flops' for discussion with their team of experts. Apart from José and Harold and John and Val, Sammy Lieberman and John Raine were also involved in the 'panel'. At these lively and informal gatherings, the idea of a Potters' Association was often discussed and Jo wonders if this is where the seed of APSA was sown.

In 1971 The Potters Shop was sold and the very small nucleus of a potters' mail order business retained. This was named 'Potters Supplies & Mail Order'. In 1974 Harold started full time and from then on almost all the clay bodies and glazes have been manufactured by 'Potters Supplies & Mail Order'. Harold and Jo were fortunate in being able to supply a need when it was most required and since pottery has become so popular as a hobby, the business has consequently boomed. They often pause to wonder where all the pots go? They sell over forty tons of clay per month which must make a vast number of pots!

In 1983 Jo and Harold's son Simon joined the business and has concentrated on expanding the kiln manufacturing department.

Every week by post and by railway, goods are despatched all over the Republic and also to Swaziland, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Harold and José are fortunate in having a very hardworking and dedicated team in Ann, Margie, Paul and Jill. The factory and showroom are situated at Daleside which is a somewhat remote place south of Johannesburg but this does not deter their customers from finding them and on Saturday mornings it resembles a busy supermarket. Through Potters Supplies & Mail Order, Jo and Harold have met a great number of wonderful people and have made many friends throughout the country and both of them greatly enjoy their work.



# Operation Hunger — 'African Heritage'

Eighty-three pots to be filled with money to feed the hungry has brought the talent of the artist into contact with the three dimensional problems of the ceramicist. The well known Cape ceramicist, Maxie Heymann, provided each artist with a hand thrown pot of biscuit fired stoneware, thus providing a unique 'three dimensional' canvas. Various techniques were brought into action — acrylics, ink, gouache, oils, varnishes and many more. A small number were treated in traditional pottery methods — underglaze, crackle glaze, stone glaze and ash fired. It was a pity however that some recognised ceramicists opted to decorate their pots in another medium as in some cases their regular ceramic style and glazes would have been perfect and, one feels, made their particular work more collectable.

The overall impression of the exhibition was one of brightness and hope although many were poignant and to the point. Peter Clarke's pot 'Reflections on Hunger', Lyn Smuts' 'Potboiler' and Billy Mandindi's 'Hunger' spring to mind. Paul Emsley's 'Sky-Sphere', Sheila Nowers' 'Plett Pot' and Mary Hendry's 'Kalk Bay' on the other hand produced warm, happy pots of land, sea and sky. There were many based on traditional African design and the Skotnes', Cecil, John and Pippa all added to their pots with lid type decorations and sculptures.

For a change let's hear what a member of the general public has to say and we quote from James Ambrose Brown's column 'As I see it' in the Weekend Argus, August 1 1987:

"... But Operation Hunger is not just feeding people. It has found that people with empty bellies do not have the energy to work. Food is fuel. In Kwa-Ndebele, for instance, the operation fed 10 000 in 1982.

This famous artist clan began to market its beadwork — today it is feeding nearly 2000 on its own resources.

Feeding, as Ina Perlman puts it, is 'crisis intervention'.

The long-term solution is to help people realise their potential as a community and as individuals.

This is a marvellous concept.

This is not just hand-out charity of the white man's plenty. It is about caring. It's about this future land we're all discussing over the dinner tables.

This is what these pots are all about.

The talent and caring that went into this exhibition — from its concept by Andrea van Niekerk and Philip Todres — to its completion by the artists is one of the most wonderful unleasings of highly sophisticated skills that has ever come our way.

Take the skill of photographer Gerald Hoberman, for example. This man (he's been called a photographic genius in New York) spent over 60 hours to make the catalogue in which each of the 83 pots is presented in stunning detail by superlative colour printing.

The catalogue itself is a collectors item because in a

unique way it makes a statement about 83 of our best artists. No two of these once-ordinary clay pots are remotely alike.

They have become a window into the personality of those who decorated them.

Some are gentle, some are angry. Some are whimsical and some are political statements.

Some have the quality of storybook illustrations.

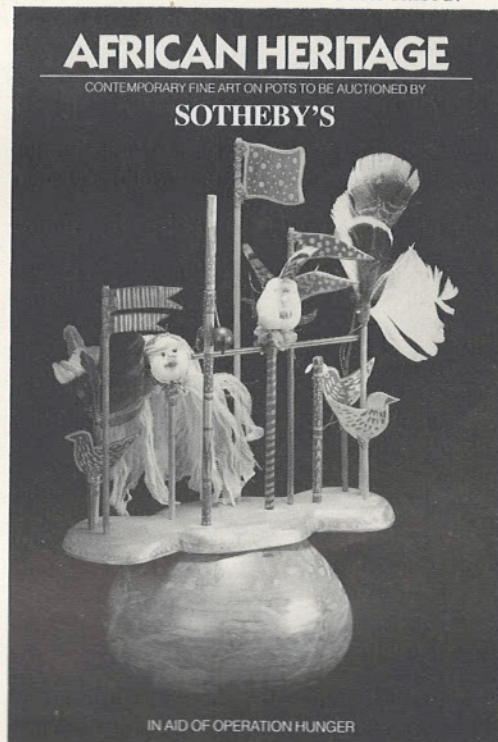
Some have deep roots in African art, some are sophisticated fun. Some are frankly erotic and some are used as the basis for pieces of sculpture.

I suggest that very few of these are not going to be valuable artefacts in the future.

As auctioneer Stephen Welz will no doubt intone: 'These fine collectors pieces eloquently confirm our belief that talent transcends all boundaries and illustrates the diversity of craftsmanship that abounds in Southern Africa. Ladies and gentlemen, what am I bid'...

## STOP PRESS

These pots were auctioned by Stephen Welz of Sotheby's on Saturday night August 1st. The bidding was more than enthusiastic and a grand total of R62 750 was realised. The highest bid of R6 500 was for Cecil Skotnes' pot 'The Keepsake Jar'. An overwhelming success for the organisers and all concerned, but without the generosity, time and effort of the artists, this handsome amount would not have been raised.



A limited number of beautiful, full colour catalogues, each pot illustrated, are still available at R3,00 each from: Operation Hunger, P.O. Box 18542, Wynberg, Cape Town, 7800 or you can telephone (021) 77-1481.



## Top Office

Last month we visited David Leach at Lowerdown Pottery near Bovey Tracey in Devon. While discussing the work in the Showroom, David showed us a tea set he had just finished. This magnificent tea set made in porcelain and glazed in a truly lovely translucent celadon was commissioned by the Arts Council to be presented to Margaret Thatcher for her new office. David has named the set 'Top Office'. Pictured here the first photograph taken of this unique tea set. Editor.



## Personally speaking

**Rosemary Lapping comments on the colour used in Ceramics today.**

There is a veritable colour explosion in the potter's palette of late — or so it would seem when one sees the kaleidoscope of contemporary ceramics passing rapidly before one's eyes. It is tempting to leap up and rush to the nearest ceramic supplier — to join the queue and to have some fun.

The conservative middle-aged's will remind the enthusiast of the bright maiolicas of Andrea Della Robbia of the early sixteenth century or the vivid enamelled Islamic vases during the Ottoman rule, and in bored fashion will ask — 'What's new?'

In response to that — PLENTY!

Advanced technology in glaze chemistry today has enabled the potter to make use of a range of brightly coloured stains which will keep their saturated colour up to 1250°C. Joseph's coat pales in comparison to the range of brightly coloured powders, jars of liquid, tubes of colour, pencils of stained leads which are all forms the stains take and which seduce the potter down a technicolour highway of slip, stain and surface. Potters having discovered a newly found freedom of expression, can now visualise and extend the pots surface to a three dimensional canvas. The powdered stains can be used as additions to slip or glaze, they can be ground with a little liquid gum arabic and painted onto the surface or added to the clay itself and used as applied or imbedded decoration.

The potter may like to try to make his or her own range of pencils by making a stiffish mixture of 50% ball clay, 50% stain and the additive of liquid gum. Roll into drawing sticks, allow to dry and fire to 1000°C. Subsequent glazing usually requires little more than a

thin coat of transparent glaze if gloss is desired. Overglaze colours, i.e. coloured liquid glazes and enamels, are also available and can be used. These often require grinding well before mixing with a little oil of turpentine and subsequent careful firing to a specific temperature, depending on the brand.

All in all there is no excuse now when Aunt Milly wants a brightly coloured poodle to sit on her dressing table to match her marvellous floral curtains — if the artist won't comply with the request, it will not be the fault of the ceramic chemist. Forward, colour! (By the way, conté drawing chalks are nothing more than sticks of iron oxide plus, so try these too.)

The odd bit of advice . . .

Mixing gum tragacanth or gum arabic can be a frustrating business if, like me, you want it NOW and NO LUMPS. I have figured out a method of mixing this gum by putting one teaspoon of the powder into a plastic cup to which you then add two tablespoons of alcohol (I use meths), this is called wetting it. You will now have a powdery liquid with no lumps, to which you then add 250 ml warm water and put it into your microwave for thirty seconds. The resulting liquid is now ready for use.

There are marvellous Chinese brushes available and I should like to suggest to those of you who own good brushes to take precautions to preserve them carefully. Take time out when you have finished with your work to wash the brushes very well with soap (a cake of Sunlight is the best). Gently rub the hairs of the brush on the surface of the soap. When the brush is clean, shape the hairs into a point with more soap lather, it will preserve the shape and neutralise the acid process which goes on eating into the glue which has stuck the hairs together.

Try to hang the brushes up, point down when not in use. The late Prof. Jack Heath taught me this ages ago at Natal University and I still have some perfectly preserved brushes.

# The influence of the fluxes on Iron colours

The colour range that can be achieved from the use of iron oxide in glazes is tremendously varied. There are a great many factors which contribute to this diversity but here lets consider the role the various fluxes play.

When calcium is the major flux, iron will give a range of yellows, yellowish greens, tans, ochre type browns and a tenmoku that breaks brown rather than rust.

On the other hand, when the alkaline fluxes, potassium, sodium and lithium are employed as the chief flux, colours can be expected to go from chun type blues to tenmokus which break red through to a rusty red which is achieved by saturating the glaze with iron oxide.

It would seem that calcium favours the solution of iron while the alkalis favour crystallisation. This is borne out

by the fact that glaze B below needed considerably less iron than glaze A to achieve saturated effects.

Glazes fluxed with large amounts of magnesium are usually a matt brown. However smaller quantities of magnesium (about 0.2 to 0.3 molecular parts) in a low alumina glaze tend to form the greenish crystals known as teadust.

Below are three glazes which were formulated with the above in mind and reduction fired with progressive increases in the amount of red iron oxide to Orton Cone 10 in a gas kiln. However results may differ according to the clay used and the firing/cooling cycle of the kiln.

NORMA GUASSARDO

## GLAZE A — CALCIUM FLUX

RECIPE	SEGER FORMULA	OXIDE	WT. %	
Potash Feldspar,	K <sub>2</sub> O	0.08	K <sub>2</sub> O	2.25
Blesberg	Na <sub>2</sub> O	0.03	Na <sub>2</sub> O	0.49
Kaolin, Serena	CaO	0.82	CaO	13.66
Whiting, Kulu 2	MgO	0.07	MgO	0.78
Silica	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	0.46	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	13.78
	SiO <sub>2</sub>	3.89	SiO <sub>2</sub>	69.04
Plus Red Iron Oxide ½ to 15 %				

Glaze A produced colours from yellow/green to various shades of brown with metallic surfaces at the higher end of iron additions.

## GLAZE B — ALKALINE FLUX

RECIPE	SEGER FORMULA	OXIDE	WT. %	
Potash Feldspar,	K <sub>2</sub> O	0.4	K <sub>2</sub> O	9.13
Blesberg	Na <sub>2</sub> O	0.1	Na <sub>2</sub> O	1.65
Kaolin G1	Li <sub>2</sub> O	0.1	Li <sub>2</sub> O	0.87
Whiting, Kulu 2	CaO	0.4	CaO	6.38
Lithium	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	0.5	MgO	.36
Silica	SiO <sub>2</sub>	4.0	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	15.03
			SiO <sub>2</sub>	66.58
Plus Red Iron Oxide ½ to 15%				

Glaze B produced blue toned celadons with the smallest iron additions, red breaking tenmokus with 6 to 8% red iron oxide and very bright red saturated glazes with the higher additions.

## GLAZE C — MAGNESIUM FLUX

RECIPE	SEGER FORMULA	OXIDE	WT. %	
Potash Feldspar,	K <sub>2</sub> O	0.17	K <sub>2</sub> O	6.59
Blesberg	Na <sub>2</sub> O	0.05	Na <sub>2</sub> O	1.19
Kaolin G1	CaO	0.48	CaO	11.25
Magnesite	MgO	0.30	MgO	5.17
Whiting, Kulu 2	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	0.25	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	10.93
Silica	SiO <sub>2</sub>	2.58	SiO <sub>2</sub>	64.87
Plus Red Iron Oxide ½ to 15%				

This glaze with its 0.3 molecular parts magnesium produced pyroxene crystals over the full range of progressive iron increments.

# Regional Roundup

*Many thanks to the Northern Transvaal, Southern Transvaal and especially to Dawn Lomax of the East Cape Branch for your very welcome and unsolicited support. I sincerely trust that all the regions and branches will participate in the Regional Roundup in our next issue. Copy deadline 10th October. Please remember to put me on your Newsletter mailing lists.*  
Editor.

## SOUTHERN TRANSVAAL REGION

The Southern Transvaal has recently held a regional exhibition with a difference, at the Craft Gallery, Mutual Square, Rosebank.

The idea of this exhibition, entitled "New Signatures" was to encourage unknown potters to come forward and present their work without the possible daunting thought of being judged against more established ceramists.

The stipulation was that the potter should not have had his or her work accepted for a national exhibition before. Acceptance at a regional level now being a necessary qualification for entry at national level, the rationale behind the "New Signatures" was to make new people feel more comfortable about qualifying for this opportunity. In this respect it was a most successful exercise, though a tendency towards excellently crafted derivative work was apparent. The equation seems to be technical proficiency, emulating a teachers' style, versus original creativity, untempered as yet by a sound technique.

One interesting aspect of the regional was that at least two of the entrants were 14 and 16 years old respectively and that the 16 year-old, Jack Latti, received a highly commended for one of his pieces.

It was not a great financial success, with A.P.S.A. and the Craft Gallery sharing 40% of the sales. At this point, one must examine what the main objective of A.P.S.A is when staging exhibitions. I think that we would all agree that an ever increasing standard of ceramics in South Africa is that objective. If the National Exhibition is an exposition of the best clay work to be seen, once a year in the country; then the function of regional exhibitions should be to feed that source.

Our minds then turn to the question of how to generate income. Workshops, in this region, are enormously popular, and become booked out very soon after being announced. We plan to arrange more frequent events of this kind. So far this year we have had two mould making workshops by Karin Vermeulen, a very successful Cone 5 glaze workshop by Karin Boyum, a glaze and decorating workshop by three of our members and a sculpture workshop by Effie Joffe. We have also arranged for a workshop by Ian Glennly on throwing techniques, a Raku workshop by Elsbeth Burkhalter and a porcelain workshop by Kim Sacks. We have another one or two workshops in the pipeline for 1987.

Then there is our magazine. We have felt for a long time that our regional newsletter contained material that

deserved better presentation than its original format. An editorial committee was set up to establish a journal with full colour cover and as many colour pages inside as possible. We didn't realize just how much effort and voluntary time this project would consume. It amazes me how much of these commodities people are willing to give in a time when remuneration for effort must surely be a serious consideration.

After much nail biting, we decided to purchase a computer. Veronica Visser, our secretary, says that she could not possibly manage without it now. A further work load for this already invaluable piece of equipment will be the subscription arrangements for our new magazine.

So we almost share a birthday! We wish you as few pangs as possible and a most successful launch.  
SUE MEYER

## NORTHERN TRANSVAAL REGION

Two workshops to be held in the next two months.

Workshop on handwork by Sue Campbell

Date: 12 September 1987

Place: 80 13th Street  
Parkhurst, Johannesburg

Time: 09h00 to 13h00

Phone: Marcha Schwartz at 46-7320

More information on this workshop will be supplied in the next newsletter. Interested members must organize their own transport to and from Johannesburg.

At last the workshop that had to be cancelled earlier this year:

Participating workshop: Mould making by Karin Vermeulen

Date: 3 October 1987

Place: Verwoerdburg Technikon

Time: 09h00 to 15h00

Cost: R5,00 for members, R7,00 for non-members

Bring: An article to mould (about 20 cm). Select an article that you would like to reproduce

Tools for moulding

Board

Plaster of Paris or R5,00 to buy the plaster

Bucket

Soft soap dishwashing liquid

Teaspoon

Surf-form — preferably with a handle

Boards/container to hold moulds

Own chair and lunch

Phone: Marcha Schwartz to book: 46-7320.

Full supplies of our usual large range of potters' tools have just arrived

The Clay Pot  
3 Dunottar Street  
Sydenham 2192  
Telephone (011) 640-7316

## EAST CAPE BRANCH

### East London News

Anne Marais' workshop will be on the 12th or 13th September, 1987.

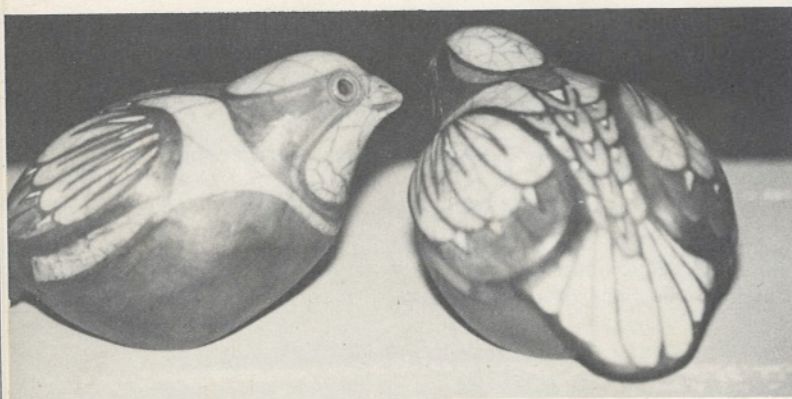
### Comments on the Regional Exhibition

The general feeling among the judges and those who had been involved in selection over the years was that the standard has improved, which doesn't necessarily mean the standard of the exhibition will be higher but that there was a lower percentage of rejected pots. There seems also to be a departure from the "pot" to something combining creativity with craftsmanship, but I personally felt that therein lay a problem in that the basic quality was often being forfeited in an effort to create something "different". Simplicity . . . less is very often more . . . does it add to the pot or detract?

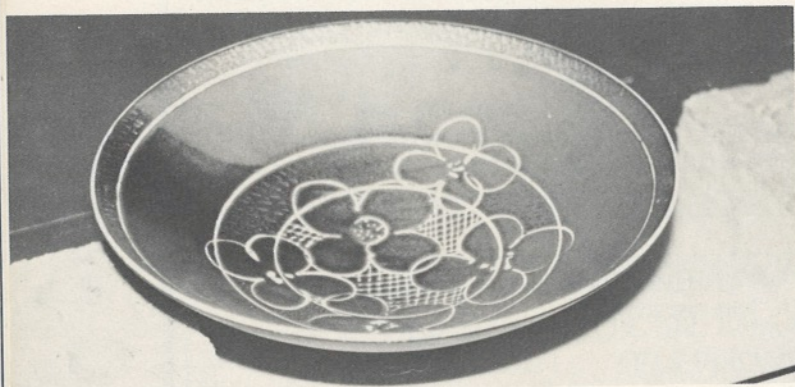
In many cases the pots were let down by the glaze. More thought could be given to selection of glaze which can do so much or so little for the pot.

There were some very large Raku pieces which were an exciting achievement and the judges enjoyed the fun figures.

IONA BENNIE



This award winning pair of raku birds by Lynnley Watson were bought by the Art Gallery.



Award winning large bowl by Iona Bennie was bought by APSA for the Corobrik collection.

### Pots of Pleasure

DONVÉ VLOK

If I had to describe this exhibition I would call it Africa Explored. It is interesting to see the tentative swing to our roots with the potters being influenced by Africa. This is a significant move away from previous years when many potters favoured the traditional English School. To my mind the potter who has best succeeded at the combining of traditional and Modern Africa is Iona Bennie. The purity of her porcelain is enhanced by the colour and richness of the design. Too often the meeting of the old and new Africa is jarring to the senses. Ikhwezi Lokusa Pottery's unglazed floor pot is superb, while their other pieces lose something in the glazing.

Other pots that particularly appealed were: Ansie van Zyl's 'Reenvoël', Natalie Ann Morris' Bottles and Charmaine Peterson-Haines' Figurehead.

The Guest Potters, both from Cape Town, show very well crafted pieces. Bruce Walford has 6 pieces in reduced stoneware and Birgit Schrupf has burnished unglazed ware in a warm pink clay.

What I am trying to say is that I feel we should all be influenced by Africa, after all Africa is in our blood. In our country beautiful colours and textures can be observed, which have been used successfully by our black crafts people. Many of us make mistakes while trying to marry the two cultures. Don't follow other potters blindly — try to evolve your own style.

### CONTRIBUTORS

We pay a minimum of R25,00 per page, for example 1 000 words or, say, 500 words and two pictures would roughly approximate a page of printed matter. For longer articles we pay a minimum of R50,00 and for short items such as studio tips or a photograph and caption a minimum of R10,00 each. The above excludes items sent in on behalf of regions for the 'Regional Roundup' section.

Black and white photographs are preferable but if this is not possible, colour photographs should show as much contrast as possible. If you are contemplating a feature article which lends itself to colour, then colour transparencies or slides should be taken. However, it would be advisable to give me a ring first.

All items submitted for publication should be thoroughly checked and, when applicable, in the cases of glazes or technical data, a reference should be given. If possible copy should be typewritten with large margins and double spacing. A self-addressed, stamped envelope should be enclosed to facilitate the return of your material. Although every care will be taken to look after the material, the publication cannot be responsible for any loss or damage.

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