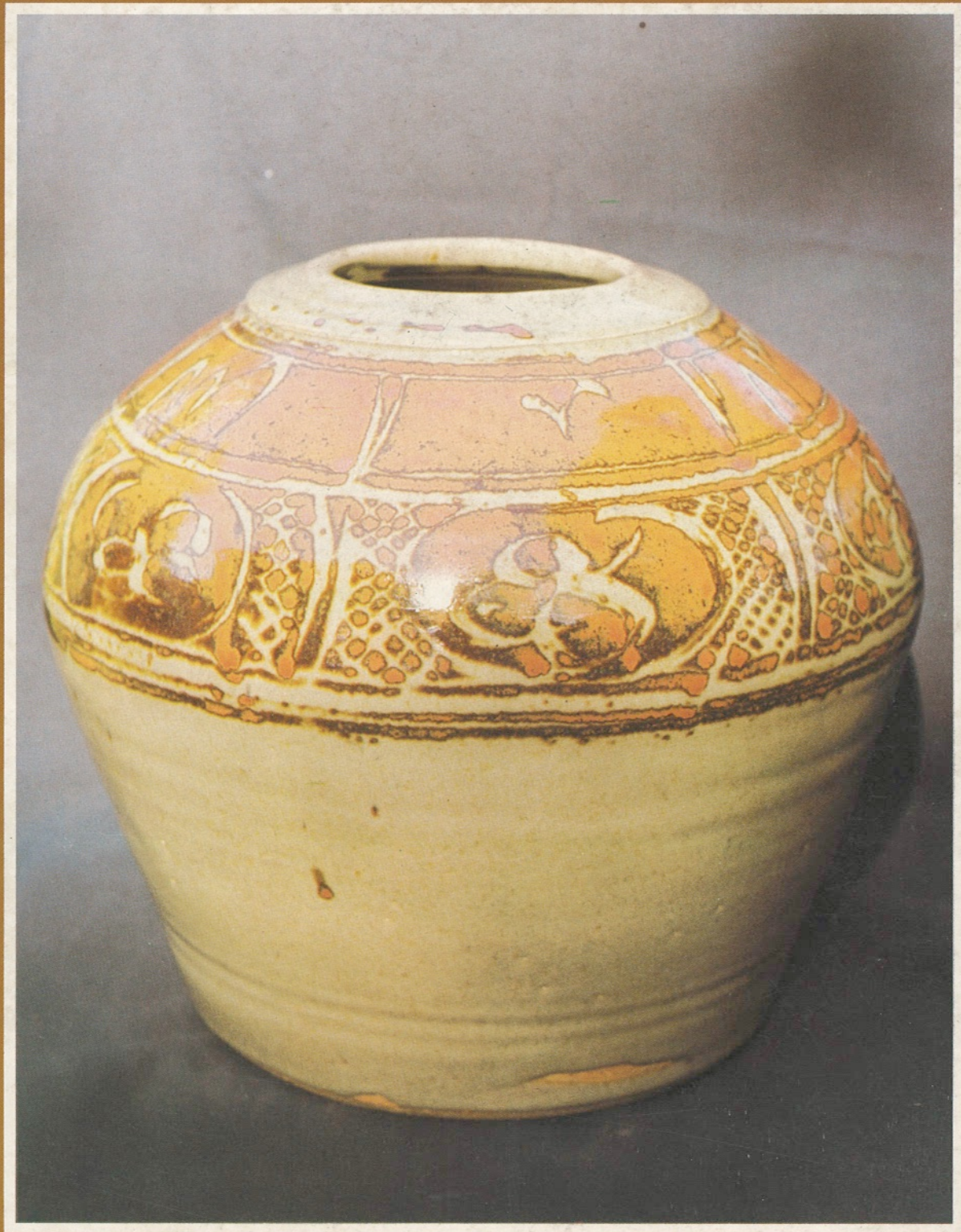


National Ceramics

Quarterly

SPRING 1987 R3.50



1987 NATIONALS · HYM RABINOWITZ · COPPER REDS · JULIET ARMSTRONG

Contents

Editorial comment	1
Letters	3
1987 Corobrik National Ceramics Exhibition	4
Juliet Armstrong – ceramic lecturer and artist	8
Potpourri	11
Studio tips	11
In conversation with Hym Rabinowitz	13
Barium glazes	14
Decorating with coloured slips	15
Who is Bonnie Ntshalishali?	16
Personally speaking	18
Links between past and present	20
Experimenting with copper reds	21
Larger than life – Digby Hoets	25
Book reviews	29
From chicken feathers to clay dust	29
Regional roundup	31

Cover: One of the beautiful jars Hym Rabinowitz exhibited at his retrospective exhibition.



Reds, reds, copper reds!
See pages 21 and 29.

EDITOR Michael Guassardo
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Rosemary Lapping

Published by National Ceramics
P.O. Box 101, Franschoek 7690, telephone (02212) 2107, in conjunction with The Association of Potters of Southern Africa. The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily those of A.P.S.A.

Advertising information can be obtained from the Editor at the above address.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you are not a member of the Association of Potters of Southern Africa but would like to receive 'National Ceramics Quarterly', please write enclosing your cheque or postal order to:

NATIONAL CERAMICS QUARTERLY
P O Box 101
Franschoek 7690

Subscriptions are R12,00 per year for four issues. A limited number of this issue are available at R3,50 each.

Editorial Comment

In this issue of NCQ we have what I think is a very controversial article on the 1987 Corobrik National Exhibition. One point, however, does stand out and that is what has happened to the many well known potters and ceramicists? Some are members of our Association and, indeed, a few were founder members, others have lost interest and left. Why? I understand another issue being mooted is whether the Association should change its name.

I would like to offer this magazine as a forum for dialogue to all those concerned with these issues. To those actively involved, to past members and non-members, let's hear your voices.

Unfortunately Potpourri is a little shorter due to the length of the Corobrik National article.

We also have a very fine story from Juliet Armstrong on the South African ceramic industry which will appear in February and will follow up on the one in this issue.

February will also feature the start of a series on throwing and pot making, more details on page 3.

Thank you all for your letters, some of which are certainly food for thought. Brian Collins, I trust you will be pleased to see the article on Hym Rabinowitz.

Please, we are always looking for contributions, details on page 32.

To our advertisers, I am sure you will be pleased to know that we have sold over 2,300 copies of our first issue, an increase of more than 500 over Sgraffiti.

I am very pleased to see the added interest in Regional Roundup. Up to five regions from last issue's three.

On behalf of NCQ I would like to wish all our readers a peaceful Christmas and happy New Year.

Michael Guassardo

EDITOR.

ADVERTISING RATES AND DATA

Cover positions and rates on application.	
Full colour run of magazine, full page only	R500
Full page black and white	R260
Half page black and white	R140
Quarter page black and white	R80
Smalls are charged at R7,50 per column centimeter.	

Mechanical details: Printed by lithography.
Material required for colour advertisements separated positives to size. Cost of bleed on application. Black and white material either litho positives, bromides or PMT's. Additional setting and make up of advertisements can be arranged at client's expense.

Deadline for bookings, 15th of January, April, July and October 1988 and material by the 25th of the same month.

Letters

Dear Editor

Congratulations on a lovely first issue – on a par with any of the overseas magazines to which I subscribe.

It's lovely to see COLOUR! Black and white just does not do justice to ceramics. But it is not without a note of sadness that I lay my last Sgraffiti down to rest . . . not in peace though. I shall enjoy paging through old Sgraffitis – there is always something which takes on a new relevance or something I'd forgotten about.

To all the people who put so much hard work into Sgraffiti, congratulations to you too.

LYNNLEY WATSON

Dear Sir

As a past member of your association and fellow potter, may I take the liberty of urgently appealing through your magazine for a design for a wood fired kiln and operating instructions. I am not experienced enough to attempt anything on a 'trial and error' basis and therefore appeal for a tried and trusted local design. I would be most grateful if anyone could help me as at present I am a very frustrated and impatient potter.

MRS Y ENGELBRECHT
DAWLISH ESTATE
P O BOX 23
CHIREDDZI
ZIMBABWE

Dear Michael

I have just received my first National Ceramics Quarterly and I would like to offer my hearty congratulations to you, Rosemary Lapping and other staff on a truly surprising magazine. Words can't fully express how thrilled I was to see the superb quality of NCQ; it's more than one could ever have hoped for, and I do hope it continues to grow from strength to strength. As a longtime subscriber to both Ceramic Monthly and Ceramic Review, it is really fantastic to now have a South African ceramic magazine with the same quality paper and colour photography. It should now provide a real incentive for people to contribute articles and pictures as well as hoping to have their own work included one day.

CAROL HAYWARD FELL

Throwing with Bruce Walford

In our next issue we start a series of pictorial throwing and pot making lessons. This will be an eight part series with wall charts being produced at the end of each year. These charts showing four lessons each will be ideal for schools and teaching studios.



Vallauris

XIth International Biennial of Ceramic Arts July 1st — October 31st, 1988.

Since 1968, the town of Vallauris has held an International Biennial of Ceramic Arts in the form of a contest, the aim of which is to develop artistic creativity in the field of ceramics.

The contest is organized, under the auspices of the Municipality, by a Biennial Committee, holding office at the townhall of Vallauris, 06220 France. All correspondence and documentation should be addressed to this committee.

A catalogue will be prepared to present the exhibition and will include all work on display and the address of each exhibitor.

The exhibition will be held at the Chateau-Musee (Castle Museum) of Vallauris from July 1st to October 31st, 1988.

Any artist, craftsman or manufacturer presenting entirely original works in their first exclusive showing may enter the contest. Four different categories are proposed:

- architectural pieces
- thrown pots
- enamel
- creativity

Full particulars can be obtained from Miss G M Clasquin at the Department of National Education, Oranje-Nassau Building, Schoeman Street, Private Bag X122, Pretoria 0001, Telephone (012) 26-9971

or you can send me a self addressed envelope and R2 and I will photocopy my copy for you.

EDITOR.

OBITUARIES

Mollie Fisch

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Mollie who served A.P.S.A. with unstinting dedication. Her editorship of Sgraffiti for the past 14 years did much to aid the growth of the Association. She will be mourned by all who knew her and deepest sympathy goes to her husband Jack and their two daughters.

Norman Wolff

It is with regret that we learnt of the sudden death of Norman who was a member of long standing with A.P.S.A. Always an active member, Norman taught pottery to many children and was Headmaster of Groote Schuur Hospital School. The Association will greatly miss this member.

1987 Corobrik National Ceramics Exhibition

This year's exhibition held in Cape Town at the Nico Malan Theatre Centre was opened by Mr K. H. L. Nurcombe of Corobrik before a large and enthusiastic audience. The award winners were Digby Hoets, Southern Transvaal, Tineke Meijer, Northern Transvaal and Sue Meyer, Southern Transvaal. Highly commended were Jean Greenhorn, Southern Transvaal, Dawn Lomax, East Cape, Bruce Walford and Maarten Zaalberg, both from Western Cape. Altogether about 350 pieces were on display representing the seven regions as well as works by guest potters Maureen de Beer, Hym Rabinowitz and Evette Weyers.

The judges were asked to give their comments and here follow comments by Irwin Plaut and Lesley Ann Hoets. Marius Beuster refused to comment.

I was asked to be one of the judges for the prize winning piece of ceramics at the 1987 Corobrik National Ceramics Exhibition. On viewing the exhibits, I felt that among the large number of exhibits there were some items I found unworthy of any exhibition as they were in very poor taste without the saving grace of being amusing. A few items I found would have been better executed in another material rather than clay, such as metal or wood, i.e. they were not true to the material in which they were executed. These, of course, are my personal views and may not hold good for other viewers.

I also found it a pity that some well known potters had apparently chosen not to be represented on this National Exhibition. In spite of this there still was a wealth of good pottery shown.

I found it impossible to pick out one item only for the first prize as it is impossible to compare utility items with purely sculptural pieces just as it is impossible to compare apples with pears. For this reason I urged the other judges to split the prize, which was agreed on.

For future judging I would suggest that there should be at least four judges, two of whom should be potters or people with a knowledge of pottery. The other two should be artists or people with a knowledge of fine arts, as many pieces shown on the exhibition transcend pottery per se and should be judged as works of art and not just ceramics.

IRWIN PLAUT

Despite the success of the National Exhibition, I should say that it was unsuccessful in terms of representing ceramics in South Africa today.

For whatever reasons, there were just too many obvious gaps and too many individuals, great and not so great, who chose not to submit pots. As a result there was really very little to choose from. As a judge, I found it unexciting.

LESLEY ANN HOETS

Review by Steve Shapiro

This year's Corobrik National Exhibition in Cape Town was successful in that it stimulated and irritated some of the easily languid cerebral processes into a range of reactions, not all of them complimentary.

There was, as always, tremendous enthusiasm for the range, standard and todayness of much of the work, the display, the financial success and the general public enthusiasm, all of which beg more sober reflection now that the danger of 'psylicosis' has passed.

It is not my wish to censure or decry the laudible efforts



SUE MEYER



DIGBY HOETS

of all of those involved in the presentation of this essentially successful spectacle. Indeed, I offer respectful thanks and a measure of guilt, in anticipation of any of my remarks being deemed hurtful. Criticism is too often easy, although not always as easy to write.

Most marked about the array of goods displayed within the portals of the Nico Malan was the measure of success achieved by the ceramicists in their relentless campaign to drive the potters to some dark places where presumably temmoku is the colour and function is the purpose. Objects rule, how much of it is really sculpture? Vessels were found in scattered pockets but pots were thin across the ground.

What self-limiting, narrow-minded folly. And it is not only the barrage of academic and trendy verbosity of the marching legions of ceramicists that is responsible for this but also the tedious self-righteousness of the potters. Too many of the 'household names' were missing from this year's exhibition and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, one must assume that their work was not put forward for selection. Why?

However, to my mind, the main cause for the headlong rush into superficiality which is the hallmark of so much 'ceramicism' can be blamed on the over-educated and under-employed graduates of the American myth of unmitigated and schmaltzy self-indulgence. Get wise. The most simple pot is also a work of art. Certainly, it may be argued, the function of the pot has changed in its essence and its symbolic and spiritual values have become more important than its function. But it is still a pot and it is still, at its most lowly and humble level, collected and treasured as it has been for thousands of years by more people than will ever peer, even just quizzically, at some of the junk which passes today as ceramic art.

Maybe we have to do here with fundamental psychological differences or philosophic diversity at its polarized extremes. But, however difficult and even

distasteful it may be, the effort towards amity must be vigorously pursued for healthy growth based in craft and reaching towards art.

I found Sue Meyer's award winning bowl among the most pleasing articles on display, the exemplary fusion of decoration and form were quite poetic. I thought Digby Hoets' prize winning piece less successful although by no means unimpressive in its monumental presence. I am a great admirer of his work and prefer the forms with smoother flowing lines. If I have grave personal doubts about my qualifications to criticise pottery, I feel totally inadequate in the field of sculpture. Ian Gelb's tribute to stone was appealing in its strength and strangely amusing in its potential to function at a very basic physical level. Jenny Johnson's locusts and millipedes were executed with consummate skill and humour but what about those menacing shadows? But the only sculptor who 'talked' to me was Evette Weyers, although it would be most unlikely if what she actually said and what I actually heard have much in common. It was in her work only that I sensed or experienced a dip below the superficiality of most of the other objects and while I will not descend to the fashionable realm of verbose psychological interpretation, allow me just one 'deeply moving'.

Back to the pots and vessels. Barry Douglas' copper sprayed vessels were most striking but possibly a little too gaudy to live with for a long time. Number 56, the "Serpent" pot, being the quietest, I found the most successful.

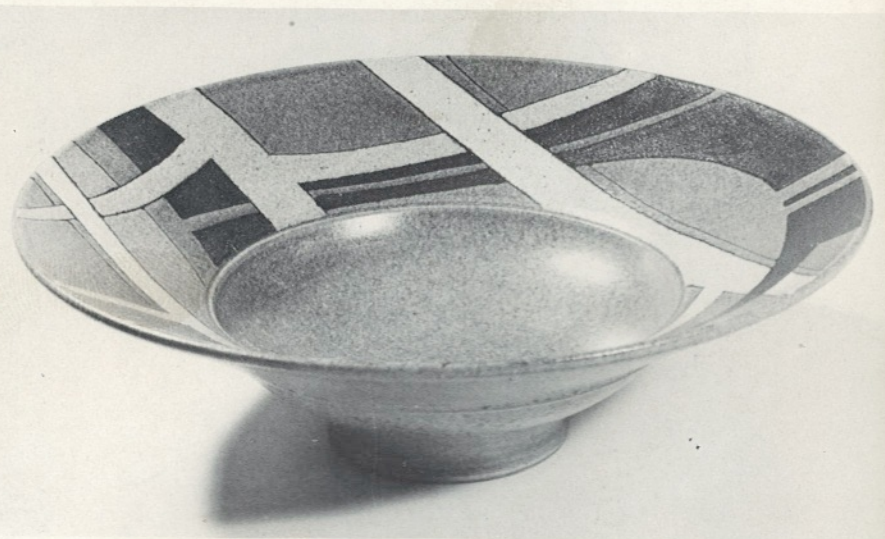
Bruce Walford's application of gold lustre certainly moves in the direction of rounding off his unsurpassed craftsmanship in his medium and calling now only for a little loosening up somewhere in the whole to reach fullness. Much of the work exhibited was good but there were still too many trendy clichés which, like boot polished raku torsos and dangling ethnicity, no longer serve any other function than to bore. Non-functional ceramics have a tendency to become boring very quickly and the jam jar may still have the last laugh.

Finally, I would like to question the very basis of this annual extravaganza. What is the goal or what are the goals of the national exhibition? So much was said about the record sales achieved on the opening night that one is almost lead to believe that, in the world of

TINEKE MEIJER



GARTH HOETS



clay too, the only true and final measure of value is money. It is arguable but ultimately untenable. This is a prestige event and not a Saturday morning market. Stricter selection, with all its concomitant problems, far fewer pots and a more open, professionally mounted display without crowded corners and with the only pots on the ground being pots that were meant to be on the ground would, in spite of a loss of turnover, ultimately be of greater service to the art/craft and its practitioners.

Less is More . . .

A Serious view taken on the Nationals

by Rosemary Lapping

For any serious critic, approaching the Corobrik Nationals held in Cape Town this year developed into a thoroughly daunting experience – a strange response for what ought to be a celebration in clay. Long deliberation has led me to share the reasons why I believe a constructive fair review to be not only daunting, but a virtually impossible task. Allow me to explain:-

1. The Venue and Display of Clayworks

The foyer of a large theatre in the middle of a city must draw the crowds and for this reason the choice is a good one. However, the 'gallery atmosphere' which encourages serious viewing cannot be manipulated or constructed in a busy highway which joins theatre to restaurants and cloakrooms. Anyone who wants to see fired clay join the ranks as a serious art media is going to feel uncomfortable in a large foyer space where good lighting, generous yet private space, and an 'art' atmosphere are all totally lacking.

Decorum aside, the display of hundreds of clayworks packed closely side by side, cheek to jowl – some too high, some too low, is destined to failure at the outset. To look at a single pot and to see it in relation to its surrounding space is utterly impossible. Too many. Too

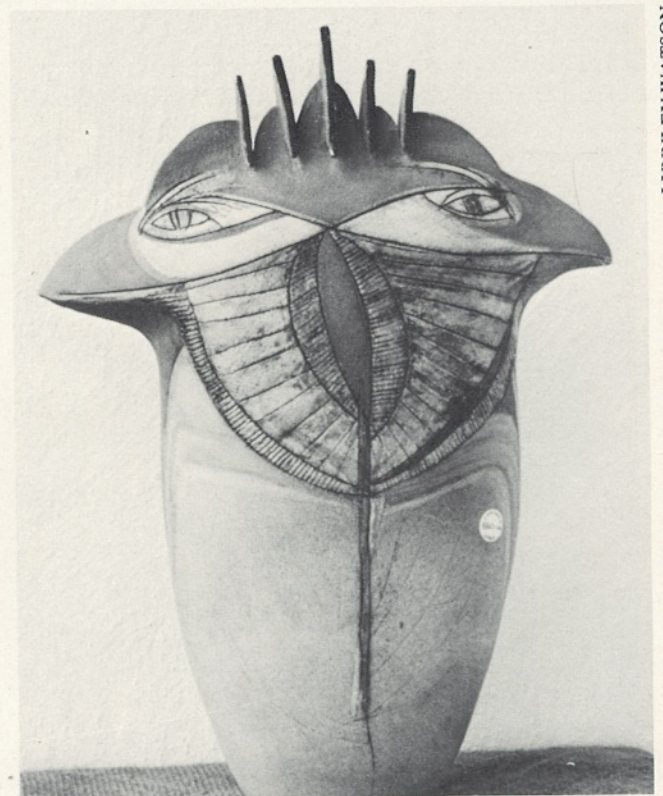
crowded. Too close. The popular adage "Less is More" rang audibly – its intrinsic truth never more relevant. No matter how good an individual is at display, nor how sincere his/her efforts are, I would suggest that to set up such an exhibition of so many diverse objects of so many sizes, shapes, types, colours (and to do it well) is a totally impossible task and tantamount to failure at its very outset. Heaven knows the best was done, and one can only compliment and commiserate simultaneously.

Recently the 27th annual exhibition of ceramics was opened at Everson Museum of Modern Art in New York. At the last count it was estimated that there are over 200,000 practising ceramicists in the USA today. Presented at this American equivalent of our Nationals were exactly 83 clayworks. An air of dignity, an accepted decorum must pervade – something grossly lacking in our bazaar presentation.

Grant you we have no Museum of Modern Art, but we do have a National Gallery and I ask that if ceramics is to be seen as a serious artform, it is of paramount importance that it is presented in a manner worthy of its potential. We may then attract some really good artists who work in clay and who shun APSA, seeing the Nationals as an extension to and grand version of a white elephant stall. What a pity when there are superb pieces being produced at Technikons, Michaelis, Natal University, the Community Arts Projects and the like. And may I ask why do we not attract more black artists? A reassessment of APSA and its intentions may be at the heart of the matter . . . after all "Association of Potters" is pretty archaic now. The whole issue of Clay needs looking into – we need a spring clean . . . old values, wornout principles (valid twenty years ago) must now be given a respectful burial and with fresh paint, a spotless canvas and a brush loaded with enthusiasm let us make a new start.



CAROL HAYWARD FELL



LYNNLEY WATSON

2. The Craftspeople / Artists Exhibiting

The craftspeople and artists who have chosen to submit clayworks to this exhibition are essentially members of APSA – thus slotting them into a small minority group of privileged means – most of whom do not view selling their work as a vital source of income. This most definitely affects the type of work produced, the prices asked. It is indeed a privilege to be able to afford hours and hours spent on a single piece of work, not worrying at all where the next meal is coming from. The result of this is that collectors are afforded the pleasure of finding a really good piece at a relatively low price – certainly considering the time spent on it. It is important to stress the select group of people who are members of APSA and to realise that this exhibition is a reflection of a small minority group.

3. The Variety

Eclecticism at its best, the range of fired clay was enormous. From delicate porcelain, paperthin bowls to a large chunky terracotta pelican . . . from a metre high fountain structure of thrown shapes, to a mural with the metamorphoses of the life of a grasshopper. Every viewer had to find something to please: and yet is this the aim? I believe such catholic conglomerate leads to confusion and breaks down the dignity of a serious show. National Ceramic Exhibition? - no . . . more accurately, the atmosphere was one of a craft fair or clay market where every shopper could find something to please – and there were some really pleasing pieces, if you could find them.

4. The Prices

Talking of shopping, this inevitably leads to raising the issue of price. A cry for realistic pricing was heard from many quarters – who with R2 000 to invest today would dream of buying a really poor piece of porcelain sculpture, or a sculptured box, raku with red glaze – about 20 cms high, for R675!!! The explanation is that the artists are reluctant to sell their masterpieces, but I must stress that this does lead to a false value system and ought to be severely discouraged. It makes the work of Bruce Walford seem ridiculously low-priced

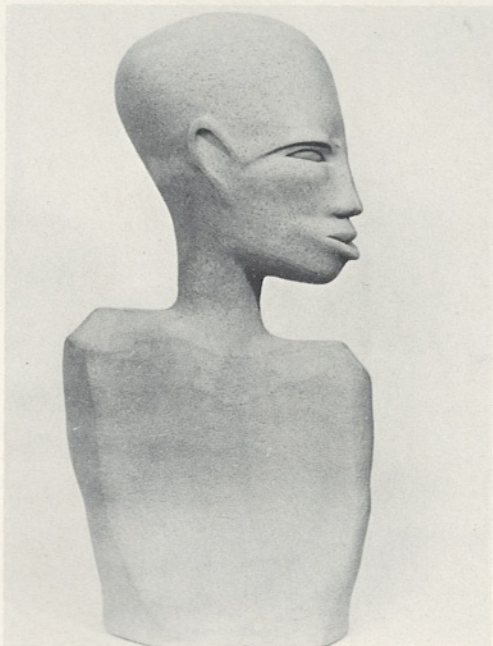
when one reviews a really superb bowl of at least 50 cm in diameter for R180 . . . a piece emanating quality and integrity. Pricing will always remain a very personal thing but it is imperative to draw attention to the above observation and to ask the artists to think more carefully when assessing their wares.

5. The Bad News and the Good News

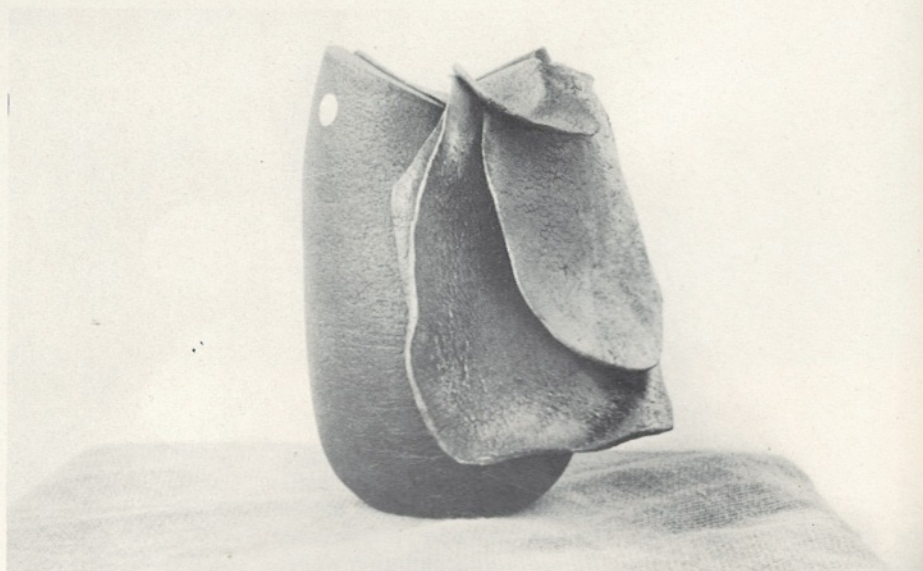
An assessment of the ceramics ought in fact to have dominated this article – however sharing an overall view of problems facing APSA members, and ceramicists in general, is essential prior to 'pot-talk'. Of course the bad news is always going to be the fact that there are bad pieces still being made and exhibited on all exhibitions, but bad work makes the good work look really good . . . and that is only half of the good news! The other half is that there were some really superb pieces on the Nationals if one had the time and the inclination to look for them.

Porcelain remains a visually seductive and challenging medium, and viewing the vessels of Carol Hayward Fell, Ann Norgarb and Sue Meyer assured me that works of this nature are hard to beat, even applying international standards . . . these things of beauty must be a joy forever, pots easy to live with, radiating timeless appeal which we artists all aim to achieve. Walking off with the honours for whimsical, anthropomorphic creatures, the Eastern Cape had little competition; however with the odd unresolved exception, the work was challenging. Ansie van Zyl's animals were well considered, and would have carried even more clout had they had some space to move instead of their allotted one square metre. Stoneware amphorae came in all shapes and sizes – from the most successful rounded jar of Steve Shapiro to the yard-high vessel of Digby Hoets – a highly competent work and most pleasing to behold. I have come to realise that talking ceramic sculpture leads one down a precarious alley of clichés, and I choose to abstain from this area until a few basic aesthetic criteria have been discussed. It must be acknowledged that the quality of workmanship in South Africa is of high standard amongst some of our ceramicists; what is sorely lacking is innovative ideas, content, art-orientated vision and just thoroughly better, well rounded pieces.

PHILIP UYS



LIZ ALBRECHT



Juliet Armstrong . . . Ceramic Lecturer and Artist

A shift from porcelain 'gardens' to earthenware 'shelters' tells us, if nothing else, that Juliet Armstrong is not prepared to allow her creativity to stagnate. Restlessly she searches for words to explain her continual need to develop, to grow, to change.

Juliet needs no formal introduction – a Masters graduate from Natal University, she now heads the Ceramic Dept. in Pietermaritzburg. A highly respected ceramic teacher and artmaker in clay makes her one of a rare breed, of which the University can be justly proud.

Her recent 'shelters' were on display at the Art Gallery of Stellenbosch University, Dorp Street – discreetly placed they emanated a quiet presence amongst the remaining artworks of her associate Natal colleagues. She explains, "I was working with the papermaker, Sue Rosenberg, when we decided to swop and mix our

media – houses as extensions of childhood fantasy, cardboard houses, houses as shelter – the idea of 'house as contained space' became my point of departure. The idea of a precious dwelling raised the issue of a pedestal, and so a bunched twig form became a base." Juliet is comfortable with the shift in her newly discovered area of creativity, with the same token she does not see her houses as a big art statement – but rather as a transitional stage in her constantly moving oeuvre. The shelters are well considered and carefully assembled – clay as matter plays an important role in the final aesthetic statement. Now that Juliet has foregone the rather decorative quality of the bone china pieces, for the really quite gutsy earthenware matter, it will be interesting to follow her next move. She stresses the feeling for material, and the need to use it to express the interior and exterior of the clay form.



On the far right one of Juliet Armstrong's new and exciting 'shelters'. The body sculpture, made in six pieces out of stoneware, is typical of Juliet's earlier work.



Potpourri

Harpers ceramic teapot competition drew 67 entries from all over the country and the shapes, sizes and colours were as varied as our landscape. However the judges, Rosemary Lapping, Peter Lee and Bruce Walford, were unable to find an outright winner. Four pots were selected to share the prizes, the first prize having been withdrawn, two extra prizes were added. In order of merit the prizewinners were Hym Rabinowitz, Rae Goosen, Norma Guassardo and Maureen Gertenbach. The Madhatter Teaparty was great fun and enjoyed by all.



Hym Rabinowitz



Rae Goosen

WHERE TO JOIN APSA

E CAPE – APSA P.O. Box 12329, Port Elizabeth 6006

W CAPE – APSA P.O. Box 6009, Parow East 7501

N TRANSVAAL – P.O. Box 36411, Menlo Park Pretoria 0102

S TRANSVAAL – APSA c/o P.O. Box 47182 Parkland 2121

VAAL TRIANGLE – APSA P.O. Box 53 Henley on Klip 1962

NATAL – APSA P.O. Box 1353, Durban 4000

O.F.S. – APSA P.O. Box 3958, Bloemfontein 9300



Norma Guassardo



Maureen Gertenbach

STUDIO TIPS

Using rubber latex instead of wax as a resist on glazes has many benefits.

- * Mistakes and spillage can be gently pulled off.
- * Borders and very fine lines are easier to paint.
- * Less chance of the overglaze running, particularly when spraying.
- * The same area can be used again whereas wax precludes this.
- * For very fine work add a few drops of water to the latex which you have taken from the bottle for use.
- * Chlorinated rubber thinners is ideal for cleaning your brushes prior to washing with soap and water. This must be done as the thinners contain a certain amount of oil. Do not leave your brushes standing in the thinners as they could be damaged.

FOR SALE

1 – Passet Blower (blue) with 3 h.p., 3 phase motor.
1 – Rotovac W2 Burner.

Both in excellent condition for a total price of R1 000,00.

Terry Ellis, 28 Edgeley Road, Durban North 4051,
Telephone 841661.

FOR SALE

18 cubic foot Reinders electric kiln with controller
R2 800,00.

Phone Anton van der Merwe (021) 750852.

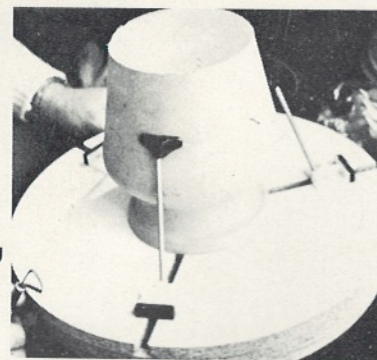
TRIMMING PROBLEMS? Solve them with

POTTERS GRIP

The perfect trimming attachment! Proven for seven years!

*Now!
New!
New!*

**The
"Studio"
Grip**



- No setting up required, fits any wheelhead up to 330 mm diameter instantly.
- Ideal for studios with more wheels.
- Same versatile gripping facilities as basic "Potters Grip".
- Holds bowls up to 400 mm diameter from inside.

AGENTS:

TRANSVAAL: The "Clay Pot" Tel: (011) 640-7316 Johannesburg.

OFS: "Clay Cottage" Tel: (051) 47-2711 Bloemfontein.

CAPE: T. Reinders Tel: (021) 902-2977, Shaw-Tec Tel: (021) 61-8686.

NATAL: Trade enquiries welcome.

MANUFACTURED BY: Potters Pride Products (Pty) Ltd, P.O. Box 41, Tableview 7439. Tel: (021) 57-3357.

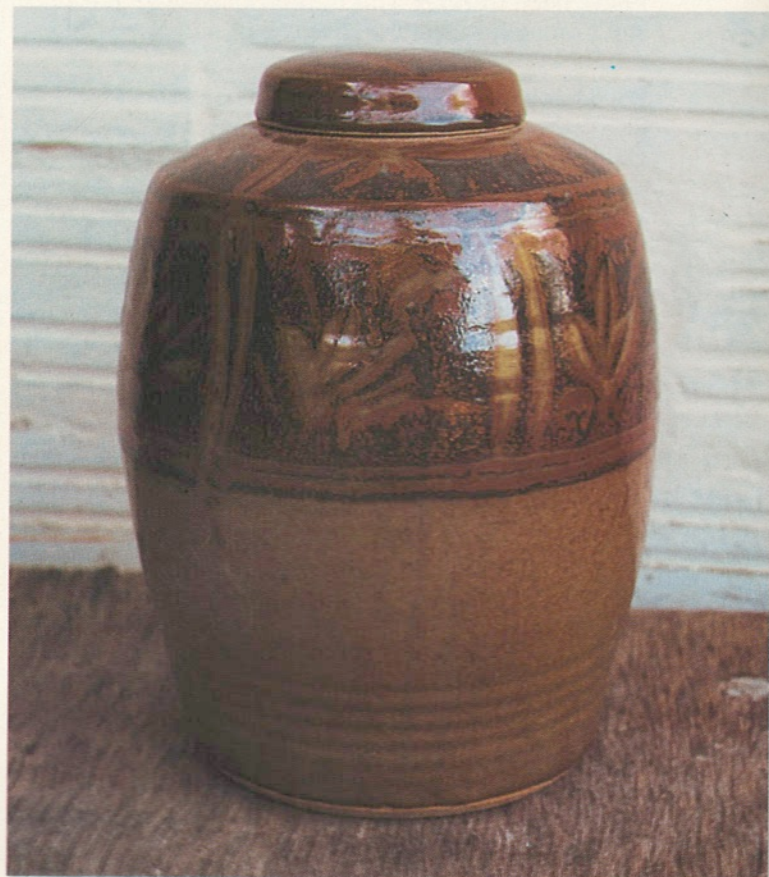


In conversation with Hym Rabinowitz

by Michael Guassardo

The beautiful balmy evening of Sunday the 8th of November, 1987 will long be remembered by all, and there were literally hundreds who attended the retrospective exhibition of Hym's '25 years a Potter'. Another milestone had been reached and in an insecure world, the Rabinowitz's in their hearts must feel as solid as a rock.

It all began nearly forty years ago. After matriculating at SACS, Hym became an articled clerk. The war however put an end to his studies and he and his two brothers were called up. During their services in North Africa his brothers were captured at Tobruk and spent the rest of the war in a concentration camp. Demobbed after the war, Hym returned to accountancy and qualified. Never really happy with his choice of career, his interest in art and travel drew him to Europe and the Middle East where he indulged himself in the architecture, art and sculpture. Eighteen months later saw him back in Cape Town broke and weary after his long hike down Africa. Back to the office but now with his heart set on art and, as it so happened, a young lady. One evening Hym accompanied her to an art class. The 'art' class turned out to be a pottery course given by Audrey Frank, then principal of the Frank Joubert. The classes were solely for her ex pupils and outside students were not encouraged. But Hym did not go away, he was fascinated! More out of exasperation than anything else, Audrey allowed him to join. Hym lived for Friday nights. The clay bug had bitten and soon he built his own wheel and this was where all his spare time was spent. It was during this period that he first met Michael Gill who advised him to work with a potter he admired. So 1956 saw Hym in Cornwall where he was able to work with Kenneth Quick at Tregenna Hill Pottery in St. Ives producing oxidised stoneware. Together with Bill and Scott Marshall they were frequent visitors to the Leach Pottery. At this time Hym also met Michael Cardew who was about to return to West Africa. Having finished his sojourn with Quick, he decided to follow Cardew and embarked on a French ship headed South. Eventually after a long trek he got to Abuja only to find that Cardew had already left. On to Kano where he arrived tired and hungry. Having cleaned up, he enquired where he could get a meal – the only place was the French Hotel. Hym rushed over in time for lunch and who should be sitting there larger than life – Michael Cardew! He spent some time with Cardew who invited Hym to join him in Sokoto. After much careful thought, influenced by Cardew's violent temper when dealing with his students and the fact that his funds were running low, he decided to trek on home. A decision he has many times regretted. On his return to South Africa, he visited Esias Bosch and here a door was opened which eventually led to him becoming a potter. The next five years saw Hym pen pushing and once again his evenings and weekends were spent potting. A wood fired kiln, designed by Michael Gill



was built in the garden of Sonja Gerlings' parents in Higgo Vale. Towards the end of this period his potting was becoming really intensive and then the chance came to help Esias Bosch establish his new pottery in the Lowveld. Once this job was completed and Bosch could manage on his own, Hym felt it was time to return to Cape Town. May 1962 saw the start of his fulltime career. He met Sybil and Connel Maggs who allowed and encouraged him to build his pottery on their property 'Eagles Nest' in Constantia. After a long, hard and, as he recalls it 'coldest winter I have known', the pottery was complete and by November he was firing. Hym's life seems to work in ten year cycles, so 1966 found him back in Europe for a year, six months of which were spent at Wenford Bridge working this time with Michael Cardew.

In 1976 Hym married beautiful dark haired Jeni and their lives took on a new meaning when later they were blessed with their son Nikolas. A decade later and Cape Town, like never before, shows its support. November seems to be a good month for Hym.

"Well Hym, you've arrived!"

Arrived! Hell no! I have just begun. You have to be a potter for forty years before you can think of arriving.

"Are you staying with reduction, oil fired, stoneware?" Stoneware was my first love and still is. I would have to live a hundred lives to explore all the fields in

stoneware, developing and improving all the time – for me it is a continual development. I am always having problems with my throwing. Each time I start to throw bowls for instance, I look at my last lot and invariably I feel there is something not quite right. So the next session is spent trying to iron out that problem.

"Why do you pot, Hym?"

Well, first of all for the simple pleasure of it. Then I suppose to fulfil a basic need in man to provide; that's why I like to produce functional ware. It's great to know that your little pot is being used in the daily lives of others and I am also motivated by the fact that people like and want the pots I make.

"What do you like doing best?"

Throwing. Yes, definitely throwing. As Cardew and Leach both expounded, repetitive throwing provides the deep mental basis of creative work. I often lose self confidence with throwing and especially with decorating – but at the end of the day when sometimes all has gone well, nothing is more satisfying.

"And for you what makes a good pot?"

Well, let me see . . . I think the excitement and freedom of a pot much more than the cleverness of a pot.

Well it would seem to me the above statement about sums up the man himself.

Barium glazes

Taken from Eastcape's newsletter as written by Dawn Lomax

I have been working with Barium Carbonate $BaCO_3$ and I thought I would share some of my recipes and results with you.

$BaCO_3$ is poisonous in the raw state and should be handled with great care – it is the source of Barium Oxide in glazes. Barium Oxide (BaO) is very refractory and small amounts are used only in high-fired glazes as a flux. It produces a matt glaze with an attractive soft, satiny surface; if used in excess a very dry surface will result.

1% – 2% Barium Carbonate added to terra-cotta will help prevent lime-scumming, which is a common fault with our local red Clay. One can add 40-50% to any shiny glaze to make it matt.

1. The first Barium glaze that most people try is Emmanuel Cooper's Shocking Pink: Cone 7, 8 glaze.

Feldspar	35
Barium Carb.	40
Zinc Oxide	15
China Clay	5
Flint	5
	<u>100</u>

Nickel Oxide 1,5%

Fired to cone 8 just bent this glaze is a bright pink when thick and blue-mauve when thin. When very thin, brown will occur. Do not over-fire - you will lose your colour. By adding 2% Copper Carb. a lovely soft green is obtained and ¼ Cobalt Carb. a rich blue results.

2. Purple Pink Cone 5.

Nepheline Syenite	25
Barium Carb.	37
Lithium Carb	5
Zinc Oxide	12
Flint	18
Bentonite	3
	<u>100</u>

Add Nickel Oxide 1,5%

Do not over-fire as this is a runny glaze and is best used on a light clay body – do test using other oxides.

3. Purple Surprise. Cone 5.

Turquoise Delight:	
Feldspar	35
Barium Carb.	35
Lithium Carb.	3
Zinc Oxide	3
Talc	4
Ball Clay	5
Flint	15
	<u>100</u>

Add Nickel Oxide 1,5%

For Turquoise 2% Copper Carb. a rich colour results.

As you will have noticed all three glazes have Zinc Oxide as an ingredient in them. Zinc Oxide (ZnO) is a useful flux in the middle and higher temperature ranges, if used in small quantities. Larger quantities produce mattness and dryness. It is a valuable material to smooth and even out a glaze. Copper and Zinc together produce brilliant turquoise greens.

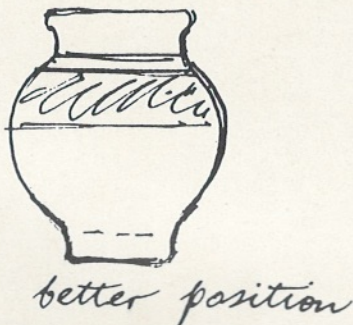
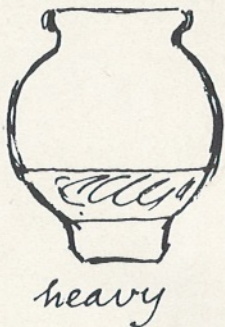
Take these recipes, do your own tests and make them your own. Happy testing.

Decorating with coloured slips and then burnishing

Taken from A.P.S.A. Natal's newsletter and based on notes supplied by Minette Schuiling.

The wheelthrown pot must be totally smooth – no throwing marks. Use a kidney to get the outer surface as smooth as possible. After turning, a further smoothing is done with a hard rubber kidney to ensure that grog grain is well pressed into the clay. Best results will be obtained by using fine throwing clay, especially if one is to make lined patterns (Sgraffito) after burnishing.

After turning and smoothing, but **not** burnishing, the slip is painted on. A wide band of slip can be applied, or only in areas, or in more than one colour. Carefully observe the shape of your pot. Never have pattern too low down – that will make the pot look bottom heavy. Observe the rim and leave enough breathing space, a border or “frame”.



Slip: Should not be painted on too thickly. (You are working on a Leather Hard Pot). Mixture must be thin enough to apply but must also cover well, so aim for the happy medium.

Your clay body slip can be stained darker with oxides. A rough measure is a 250 yogurt bottle of slip plus one teaspoon of oxide if using **cobalt**, if using **iron or manganese** use **two** teaspoons of oxide. A white slip is necessary for brighter colours, and this will have to be measured, more – or less.

Engobe: An engobe would be ideal if you want to apply it on dry or bisque ware. Engobes contain materials usually considered glaze materials. Therefore it can be mixed to shrink at the same rate as the clay body to which it is applied. Recipes which can be tried are as follows:

For Damp Clay: Cone 08 – 1 (Daniel Rhodes)

Koalin	25
Ball Clay.....	25
Leadless Frit	15
Talc	5
Flint.....	20
Zircopax.....	5
Borax.....	5
	100

Engobe for Wet Clay (John Kenny)

		Bone Dry or Bisque ware
China Clay	25	6
Ball Clay.....	20	6
Flint.....	30	20
Feldspar	17	10
Whiting	2	3
Magnesium Carbonate	6	—
Borax.....	—	3
Nepheline Syenite.....	—	12
Frit 3124 (Ferro)	—	20
Zircopax.....	—	20
	100	100

The beautiful burnished sheen disappears above 800° or 900°C. The surface is still very smooth and only needs a bit of polish. I use a natural, colourless shoe polish which I apply with a cloth and allow to dry for a few minutes. I then use a nail brush to brush it up. An old toothbrush can get into small corners. The smooth burnished surface will disappear at stoneware temp. It is still fine at 1140°C – don't go much higher. And now to HOW to burnish.

Burnishing: Pot must now dry to hard leather stage before burnishing, otherwise the pattern will be smeared. You will soon see when the pot is just nice to work on. Make use of the slight pattern caused by the spoon – those direction lines can be very attractive.

There is no law which stipulates burnishing on a smooth surface. It is only my own preference. Try it out on all surfaces.

Any scratched pattern is done **after** the burnishing. The lines will remain clear and crisp. A fairly sharp porcupine quill does a good job, or any metal point – not too sharp.

Who is Bonnie Ntshalinshali?

In our last issue of the NCQ (Winter 1987) we referred vaguely to the work of one Bonnie whose piece dominated a full colour page under the title of 'Candelabra' exhibited at the Cape Town National Gallery. We were fortunate enough to have a letter from Fèe Berning who enlightened us about Bonnie and her work . . . she cites, "Bonnie started working with me in March 1985 as an apprentice/student. She was born in 1967, daughter of our Zulu maid Janet and the Induna Gwen Ntshalinshali and grew up in Winterton. I decided to teach Bonnie and give her direction with various media, and especially clay and paint (both media being readily available and cheap) rather than hi-tech glazes. Should she ever move away, these materials would always be readily available to her and she could thus work independently of me. In Zimbabwe the craftsmen frequently use this media-combine so it seemed the obvious one for Bonnie to follow.

In the beginning I greatly influenced her work, but now she has developed her own patterning, interpretations and mythology, inherent in her person and her Zulu culture. She works mainly from animal books and her own vivid imagination. By November 1985 she had sold her first works to the Durban Art Gallery, and Cape Town bought the 'Crocodile and Zebra and Snake'. Most of her work goes to the United States. However she has exhibited at Helen de Leeuw in Johannesburg, all over Durban and at the last exhibition at the National Gallery Cape Town".

The work of Ms Ntshalinshali reflects the spontaneous relationships of claymaker and concept, inspiration and manifestation. It is an unspoiled, untouched by outside influence, relatively uneducated realisation to be celebrated, and one can only hope that as she progresses along the road of life's experience she will be able to sustain this free-child expression which is so precious and unspoiled. We look forward to witnessing the progress of this remarkable young Zulu woman and hope to see much more of her work.

Note

There will be an exhibition of Ms Ntshalinshali's work at the Gallery International, Hout Street, Cape Town at the end of January, 1988. She will be exhibiting with Fèe Berning, Carrol Boyes and Barbara Jackson.

Photographs courtesy Norman Morrison





Personally Speaking

Rosemary Lapping to one Peter Smith

P. S. There is a Fourth Dimension to our marvellous MUD.

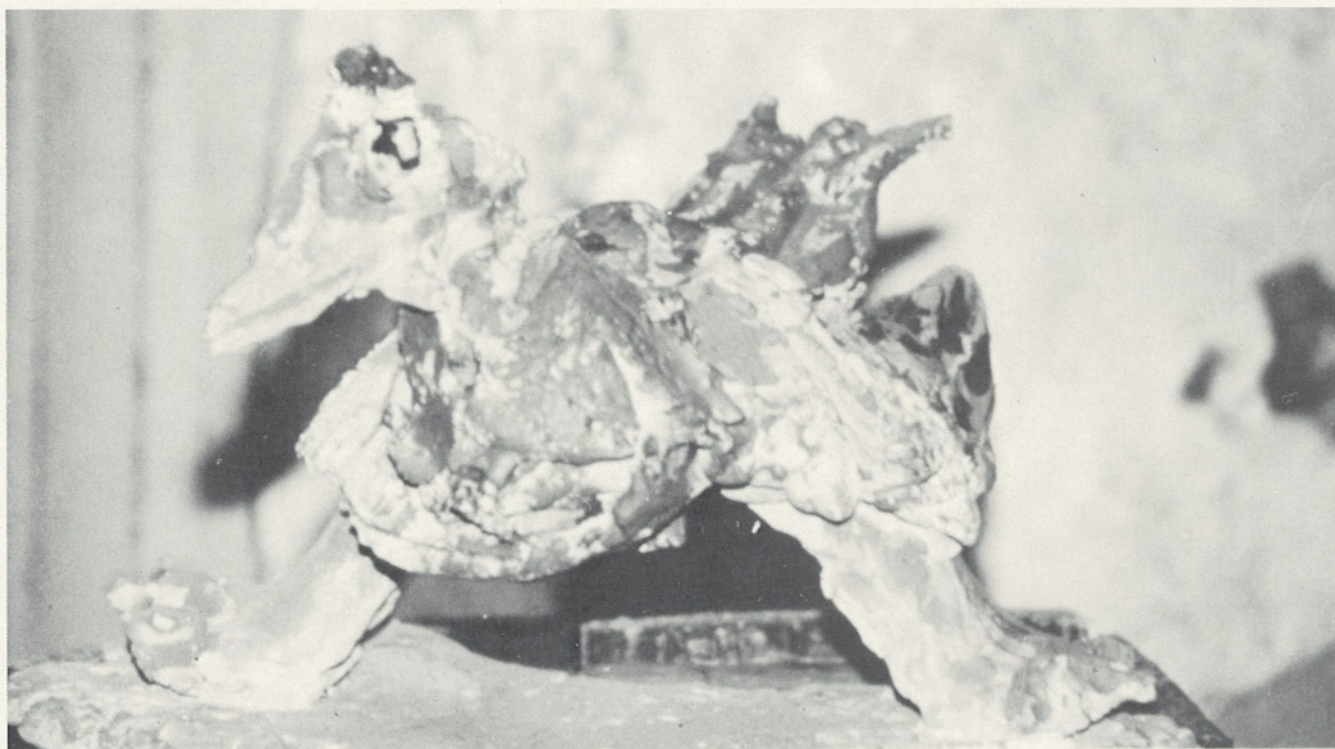
Imagine a somewhat isolated and misty corner on the Cornish Coast, feel the sensation of a soft, cold wind bringing the rolling puffs of mist ominously closer – see the winding lanes, the hedges, the grey sea - listen to the foghorn – the solitude is tangible. Centrally placed, yet obscure is one Peter Smith.

The stage was thus set for my visit, when I sought out the studio of a man whose work I had seen depicted in black and white in *Ceramic Review*. I knew I had to pursue my quest, I wanted to know more, and so planned a visit three months earlier.

Peter Smith is very much of an individual and his work reflects this in his every gesture. It is likely that he is associated with a particular type of plate, an off-centre jug – these are one-off pieces which are highly thought of and sell well. However there is another dimension to this man and his clay, and what was revealed to me was an extended fourth dimension to our marvellous, mundane mud.

One of the reasons for wanting to be granted eternal life on earth, would be to have revealed to oneself a new dimension to the everyday banalities – a shifted perception of the simple things of life. In that way each day would hold magic, a fresh challenge, a new start. Boredom is a more voracious killer than cardiac failure, although very often one of its causes!

It took a long while to talk to Peter, and a longer while for him to open up, to share, to tell me of his work. He is involved with wonderful constructions called 'Incidents at Breakfast', and these could become the



basis of any Masters thesis . . . but once we had discussed these at length, he took me into his second studio – well locked and very private. Peter plays with chemistry and its seeming miracles. He has come to work with slip and cement in combination and as the mix starts to set he builds his organic forms which are spontaneous and very powerful. These are never fired, but when finished allowed to dry and then painted with commercial oil paint. Now, the purists amongst us may throw up their hands in horror and say, “Too far, now THAT is going too far!” and had I not given all this much thought, I may never have allowed myself to appreciate just how pure this all was. I thought that the reader may like to know that the chemical breakdown for Portland cement goes as follows:-

Lime	60%
Silica	25%
Alumina	5%
Ferric & Gypsum	10%

Now this stands to reason that when this compound is subjected once more to heat it will perfectly stand the test and thus be in line to claim its ceramic heritage. It would still be a bit crumbly, and so add a bit of clay, and voila! a potential viable medium for the potter. Tch, it is so simple, and admit it . . . it's exciting.

I spent six weeks after I met Peter thinking of this miracle and all the time I travelled I made pots in my head, waiting to get back to my kiln. I have subsequently made a number of tests and had some very exciting and remarkable results, right up to stoneware temperatures. Of course the firing bit is not essential, but I wanted to prove that the piece could go through the final test to join the esteemed ranks as ceramic worthy.

Paint of course is often lead, titanium or some flux base and that in combination with a combustible element leaves one with a film of slight shine . . . the lasting reminder of the traces of paint. I am not suggesting that all the potters now start trading smocks for builders overalls; far from it. I am merely offering you all nothing more than a fourth dimension to the wonderful stuff called clay which we all love. It may just give you something to consider when you need an alternative to a particular idea, a new expression for an artwork, a shifted perception of what may be a boring stage in your lives. If this does this for ONE reader. I may have erased boredom from someone's day, and if that is the case, I may even have saved a life! A lovely thought.

On a more serious note

Judging generally by what has been happening abroad for quite some time now, it is very obvious to us all that the potters' craft has long ceased to be constrained by the functional dictates of the utilitarian clay object . . . Where once clay was the accepted medium of the potting craftsman and let's face it, in industry it was and still is the best material available for bathroom furniture, it has now become accepted as a perfectly respectable medium for artmaking.

If I may play the devil's advocate for a second and while we are on the subject of bathrooms, would you not say it rather significant that what stands out as the single renegade symbol which possibly epitomises the shift in attitude to the art object is nothing other than the

URINAL of Marcel Duchamps back in 1907 . . . a fine porcelain piece it was and still is!

However, be that as it may, creations in clay confirm the fact that ceramics has been accepted as an art genre and, what was once revolutionary, has now become mainstream. Where once the pot was seen as volume containing space, it now seeks status as MASS - which of course touches on the sculptural.

We can blame and thank the irreverence of the Americans for the revolution in clay aesthetics and what has happened to ceramics since the 50's. . . The very term 'ceramic' had no particular connotation or value until twenty years ago . . . and then suddenly there were two camps. The potters and the ceramicists. Not to be outclassed, the humble pot sought its own private place and became THE VESSEL . . . and so within three decades the world of clay, its makers, its admirers, its market and its art critics, were asking everyone to RELOOK AT IT with anewed interest. It was back in the fifties in the States that men like Peter Voukos and his colleagues took clay and plunged holes through it, slashing it and treating it as nothing more than the material it was - no illusory devices, no pretensions. What happened subsequent to this revolution is history, but what I believe is important to stress is that it was this very irreverence which put us all where we are today.

The traditional craft of the potter to which integrity of form is firmly imbedded in the notion of function is by no means dead, in fact it is alive and very much well. However as the new expressive potential in clay has been realised and established so there is a need to reassess the criteria upon which we base our final judgement. Alison Britton, a British ceramicist and art critic cites that the pot today plays with the “gap between the expectation of use and the actuality of contemplation” . . . to elaborate on that I'd like to draw the analogy of the dilemma of the art collector who buys an expensive and truly wonderful vessel . . . he or she will display it with all the decorum of an artwork, that is, until there is a party and a desperate need for a container for lasagne . . . how do you explain to the serious-minded critic such a problem as you waltz past him with the precious piece – brimming with melted cheese and steaming noodles?

This recent phenomenon of clay's uprising has challenged all those involved in the arts to restructure their concepts of category. Yet ceramics defies categorisation, it asks simply to be judged for itself. Today's potter is no humble artisan . . . he/she is a serious artist who asks to be taken seriously, and I would say that for me ceramics only really becomes a minor art when it is obvious that the hand is more in evidence than the mind. In addition we are privileged to have easy access to chemical technology and so the world of computerised kilns, glass fibre additives, bright colours all add a further dimension to our expressive creativity.

So look at clay works with a fresh perception of what the visual arts are all about, do not impose alternative criteria, but look to clay and its wonder, the miracle of fire, as possibly one of the most exciting things about our potting lives.

Links between past and present

by Angela Wallace

photographs, courtesy of YOUR FAMILY magazine

Ceramics achieved the status of an applied art with the advent of transfer-printing, a process that transformed the ceramics industry . . .

A fascinating collection of ceramics, housed in the Villeroy & Boch museum at Castle Ziegelberg, Mettlach, Germany, traces the history of industrialized development in the ceramics industry over a period of 230 years.

During the first quarter of the 19th century, ceramics achieved the status of an applied art with the advent of transfer-printing. This significant innovation led the way to the use of lithography, chromolithography, and silk-screening for printing patterns on ceramic ware – much quicker and cheaper than hand-painting.

The families Villeroy and Boch, were pioneers in perfecting new methods of manufacture, and masters of the new transfer-printing process. They were among survivors of the economic devastation which hit the continent of Europe after the Napoleonic wars, when many flourishing ceramics factories, unable to adapt to the mood of a new social and economic order, collapsed.

In keeping with the progressive strides being taken to advance production methods, there was a pronounced swing away from the use of porcelain for the manufacture of ceramic ware, to a preference for cream-coloured earthenware.

“Porcelain,” said Champfleury, “is too delicate and too princely.” Certainly, it was much too refined for the tastes of a new breed of consumer.

A whole new language in forms and patterns was born. There was a move away from the extravagant styles of decoration which had dominated pre- 19th century art. Forms were elegant and functional, more dignified.



Stylized plants and flowers were very much in favour at the end of the 19th century. Worked in supple lines, it was an art form which ushered in the period of Art Nouveau.

Decorative ware depicting the campaigns of Napoleon, myths and legends, well known romantic landscapes, and portraits of famous people, found its way into even the poorest household.

From having specialized exclusively in tableware, Villeroy & Boch set up a separate factory for the manufacture of tiles and mosaics. Major commissions for wall and floor tiles, decorated with designs by well-known artists, resulted in the tile factory becoming the largest of the firm's concerns.

Towards the end of the 19th century, stylized designs came to the fore, heralding the beginning of the Art Nouveau period. Stylized plants and flowers, worked in supple lines, were greatly favoured, at a time when the technique of raised, stamped wall tiles was developed.

Apart from an historic record of their own wares, the Villeroy and Boch collection includes many fine examples of ancient tiles from other cultures, which illustrate the close links between past and present in artistic development.



This handsome earthenware dish was painted in polychrome, and is dated somewhere around the middle of the 19th century.



A set of five earthenware tiles, printed in colour, depict everyday scenes that appealed to a growing market for ceramic ware. 1900-10.

Experimenting with copper red glazes

by Gillian Bickell

Recently I decided to clean and sort my vast collection of glaze test bowls, which meant re-assessing the glazes as well as throwing out disasters. The last box to be sorted was labelled 'scrap' and contained among other things, bowls with beautiful copper red glazes ranging from rich ox blood to delicate peach bloom. Some had only pools or flashes of red in them and others had variegated and mottled colours. Some had streaks of green on the inside edges, and most were crazed where oxidized. Without exception all were now beautiful to my 1987 eyes.

I decided to unravel the notes which accompanied these tests and can only assume that the reason for abandoning the series was the inconsistency of results from firing to firing and between kilns used. The most likely reason would have been that results at the time did not live up to my expectations of what a 'perfect' copper red glaze should look like. Bearing in mind that our perception changes with the years, the first pearl of wisdom is:-

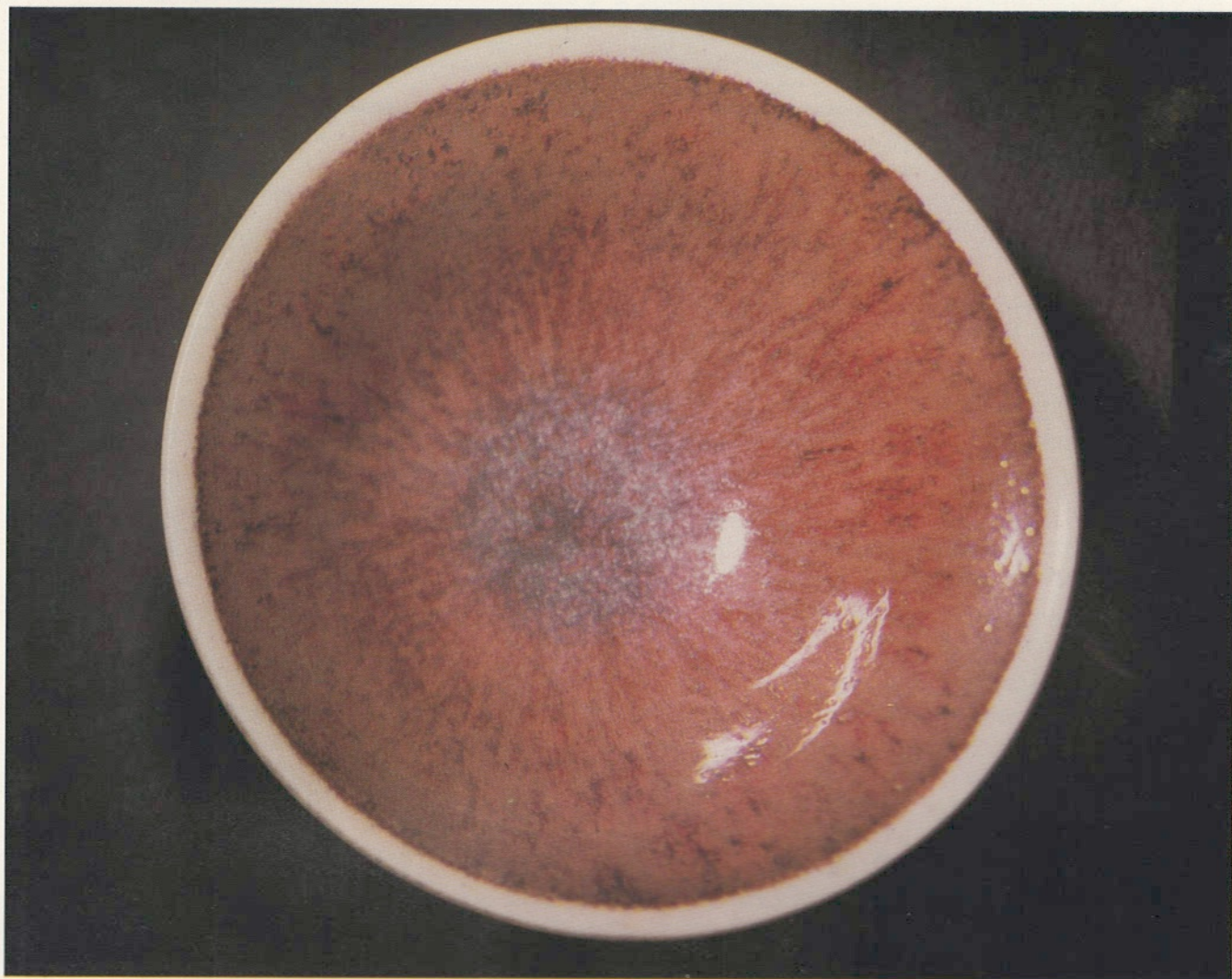
NEVER THROW AWAY YOUR TEST POTS, AS YESTERDAY'S REJECTS MAY BECOME TOMORROW'S TREASURES. (that is providing you have unlimited storage space!)

The notes I made 10 years ago were both copious and legible and yet incomprehensible today. Second pearl of wisdom:-

MAKE SIMPLE AND UNAMBIGUOUS NOTES AND RECORD INFORMATION ON YOUR TEST PIECES.

The notes which follow are intended as a guide for your experiments and are open to correction and amendment.

Inside of bowl by Author. Glazed with Red 1 – Cone 9 – Electric Kiln. Photograph courtesy of Noel Wheeler.



The formula I used as a starting point for my first copper red glazes was as follows:-

NaO	0.3	Al ₂ O ₃	0.6	SiO ₂	4.0
K ₂ O	0.3	B ₂ O ₃	0.4		
CaO	0.4				

I think this formula was one used in the Staffordshire Potteries and found to be reliable.

I used Frit 142 to fulfil the B₂O₃ requirements, and the formula given to me for Frit 142 was:-

CaO	0.5	B ₂ O ₃	0.623	SiO ₂	2.5
Na ₂ O	0.5				

Molecular Weight 252.5

I did in fact try to fit other Frits to the formula without much success.

My first calculations gave me a recipe which I call GB Red:-

GB Red with error in calculation		Red 1 for Orton cone 9 with error corrected
Frit 142	37.0%	30.0%
Potash Felspar	38.0%	40.3%
Whiting	7.0%	2.0%
English China Clay	18.0%	18.6%
Copper Carbonate	0.3%	0.3%
Tin Oxide	1.0%	1.0%
Silicon Carbide (300 mesh or finer)	.2%	.2%

The comments I made at the time for GB Red were:-

Runs like hell and crazes
Red only showing on edges

I had very little literature on the subject and assumed that the colourless result was due to the minute amount of copper carbonate used. I could hardly believe that 0.3% was enough to produce the strong red I wanted. For this reason I made up one test batch with 3% copper and 2% of silicon carbide in the glaze and the results were not nearly as disastrous as one would expect.

Grebanier, who researched and reproduced Chinese Copper Red glazes, says in his book that the use of more than 0.5% of copper oxide would be most inadvisable since it would tend to muddy the colour of the fired glaze. The result that I had was in fact muddy but also had an orange peel texture due to the excess of silicon carbide used.

Finally I decided to start from square one and check all my figures and calculations and then discovered that I had copied the formula from the book incorrectly, CaO: 0.6 instead of 0.4. Back to the calculator, I then arrived at recipe Red 1, but kept the copper carbonate at 3% and silicon carbide at 2%. Several disasters later I arrived at the Red 1 recipe given above. Needless to say, the first test pot was more beautiful than any of the pieces which followed, but then my test pots always are my best (and I know what the moral of the story is!) The first successful recipe – Red – was fired in an electric kiln using fine silicon carbide as the reducing agent. This red works equally well in a reduction atmosphere without the silicon carbide in the glaze. My best results were in a gas kiln with full reduction from 1040° up to completion of firing at Cone 9. In the 50 cu. ft oil kiln, which I have since abandoned, the results

were disastrously patchy and very muddy. That may have been because I never learned to handle the kiln correctly.

The reason I quote the unsuccessful GB red recipe is that it may in fact fire successfully at a lower temperature. One or two of you may find it worth trying.

Also the two recipes shown together demonstrate how sensitive the balance of the copper red glazes are. The slight difference in the CaO was the cause of the colourless and running glaze in the first tests.

Such is the fickle nature of copper red glazes that I cannot give any guarantees of results. The 10 cu.ft. electric kiln was very slow to reach temperature – about 17 hours – and also very slow to cool, and the best results were with Orton Cone 9 just touching. Later tests were conducted in smaller, faster kilns and some of these also worked well. Looking through my notes I can't find any definite firing schedule which must be followed.

I have selected the most useful comments from my notes which may be relevant to your experiments.

1. The glaze works best on a porcelain body. (I did try it on many different clays).
2. Correct thickness of glaze is very important, neither too thick nor too thin. It is difficult for me to give you any guidelines on this because a lot depends on the porosity of your pieces and their thickness at time of glazing. I did find that if I was careless with the thickness I would get white patches. This patchiness may have been due to crawling.
3. The glazed pots should be bone dry before firing.
4. This glaze deteriorates with age and should be stored dry.
5. **Very** accurate scales are needed to measure the minute quantities of oxides in your tests.
6. If you are using the glaze in electric kilns the silicon carbide you use should be as fine as possible, preferably 300 mesh or finer. I tried coarser grades and these did not work, giving peculiar blotchy results.
7. The tin oxide in the glaze can be increased to 2% if the glaze requires stabilizing.
8. If adjusting the formula, extra alumina will tend to dull the colour.
9. Overfiring (beyond Cone 9 touching) of this glaze seemed to produce an orange peel surface.
10. My best results were on the inside of bowls.
11. The glaze was successful over certain very matt white glazes.

This article is not intended to be a learned or scientific treatise, but rather to demonstrate how personal one's collection of glaze trials are. No amount of recipes from books or from other people can compare with the challenge of designing and adapting one's own, and the knowledge one gains in the process.



Larger than life: Digby Hoets

By Nigel G. K. Tharg

Late adolescence, or the Navy, or just getting out of school does wonders for some people. Certainly **something** got into the endocrinal system of that toothy rather gangly bloke I used to know at school simply as Hoets. Nowadays Digby Hoets cuts a somewhat daunting figure. He is tall, supremely fit, supremely (and sometimes infuriatingly) self-confident and does nothing that cannot be shown to be twice as big, twice as far or as fast as his nearest rival. It is surprising in fact that with these characteristics, he has any friends at all. But he also has **charm**.

It is important to make this point because at 38, Hoets has established himself in the forefront of South African potters. If there were any doubt that one person was to take the place of Sias Bosch as the supremo of studio potters, then Digby's recent second win of the National Award in Cape Town ought to have dispelled those. It is hard to imagine any list of five South African ceramicists of any persuasion which did not include Digby. Much of the journalism which focuses on his work concentrates on the scale and the generosity of his pots. Enough has perhaps been said of the development of the gargantuan forms and their architectural qualities. In this article, which is perhaps more a tribute to Digby's outstanding achievements in ceramics than a documentation of them, I want to concentrate on how the pots are generated from a lifestyle and an attitude which is risky, uncompromising and committed to Digby's chosen craft. I want to make the point that he **deserves** to be a winner.

Digby gets written about a good deal. Lady columnists get excited by the hairiness of his arms and his "leonine" physique. Hermeneuticists get carried away by the ontological dualities of sculptural form and the exigencies of the vessel in his work. **Everyone** finds his pots big, expansive, generous and without too many intellectual pretensions getting in the way of one's enjoyment. Hoets pots, you would say, if you knew Digby, are just Digby fired to stoneware.

In 1967 Digby was slogging through the farcical gestures of a matric course. It was clear that the art master did not hold high hopes for his future in the field and he dismissed the young Hoets' request that he be allowed to work in clay as part of his practical work with scorn. By that stage Digby had already had some experience in pottery through working in his mother's studio in Albu House (where his father had been Dean of Residence) and then, after his father's death, in the family home in Highlands North. In a more flexible and perceptive educational context, Digby might have had the opportunity to achieve success and find his natural direction much earlier than he did. As it happened, there were three misdirected years at university (Natal and Wits) before two important things happened. In 1972 Digby won the major award at the Brickor exhibition with a throwware chess set. A little later, the Johannesburg potter-teacher John Edwards and his wife Val had decided to sell their house-cum-business in Fairwood and to go farming in Natal. Digby, now a

married man, raised the money to secure a mortgage and in 1973 the Hoetses were ensconced and Digby and his sister Lesley Ann teaching, while both produced work of an excellence and originality which quickly drew the attention of the art world.

So after a few years in the wilderness during which it was painfully clear that he was not going to be the **best** zoologist or geologist or biologist on the scene, Hoets found himself in precisely the right posture and in the right consistency of butter to begin to attract the reputation of a person who always manages to turn adventure into either profit or a good thing. But he is not just born lucky. People have to make their luck. Picasso's most memorable piece of advice to those wishing to make it in the art world was, "take risks". This Digby does. He is prepared to do anything even if it's just for a challenge. He sails hobie cats in the national championships, he has often done the Duzi canoe marathon, he rides a bicycle tolerably quickly, he has rowed for S. A. Universities (captained the Natal team), jumped off cliffs in (or under) a hang-glider and paddled most of the wilder parts of the South African coastline in a ridiculously unseaworthy paddle ski. In short, the man causes his friends, who are more sedentary, deep unease whenever it appears that the potter may want some company on one of his diversions.

It is comforting to know that at one stage of his career Digby wasn't at all sure of what he was to do with his life. While he was taking the stony road of academe (and doing odd jobs for the Natal Roads Department) he met Penny Hunter – a young woman apparently weightless but with a firm set to the jaw and a will which could halt stampeding bison with a **look**. It is hard to imagine that there would be any compatibility between these two **hardnekkige** characters, but it seems that Penny took about twenty minutes to enslave and thoroughly tame the bearded science-type in the shorts and flip-flops. In turn she allowed herself to get proposed to by a man who apparently had as many prospects for success as a bald peacock. No doubt she realized that if all else failed she would have the qualifications and the gumption to be able to support them both for a while.

The first time I went to visit Digby and his wife after not being in touch for the four or five years since we'd left school I was surprised at how marvellously domestic and **Habitat** he'd become. There were tasteful carpets on the floor of the **bijou** cottage and his wife looked like she had just been interviewed by **The Tatler**. I began to feel a little gauche but all was well because as we were leaving, Digby showed that he was still the same simple soul by throwing me (and a fellow guest) into the swimming pool. After that I didn't have to worry about whether I'd have to be on even my second-best behaviour and all was well. Ever since that evening I've been trying to get him at just the right spot next to a pool . . .

It turned out that the Hoetses had been flagrantly

breaking Municipal By-laws by conducting a business in the sacred groves of Fairwood and in any case there was a limit to the amount one could expand on John Edward's eighth-acre, so in 1976 they bought a 2¼-acre stand opposite the N. G. Kerk in Halfway House and set about turning old chicken/rabbit runs into a studio and a wasteland into a wondrous house and garden. Form the shifting sward of blackjacks and khakibos has arisen a splendour of trees, whitewashed studio buildings and reflecting ponds; the poplar trees planted in thick profusion ten years ago have turned the bleak plot into a shady park. One walks from the lush garden surrounding the house to the studio through about a dozen full-size trees. Digby has always felt that it is necessary for one's spiritual well-being to be able to move about one's property with the ever-present sound of poplar leaves rustling underfoot. Digby is a person who acts upon certain strongly-felt suppositions about the way things should be. When his two children (Penny is by way of being symmetrical and orderly in all things, so the elder is a boy and the younger a girl) could walk they were given a pony since it was felt that children should be able to ride and to have access to the means to do so. Never mind that the pony was a carnivorous Shetland with a long history of infanticide, Adam and Harriet rode till they dropped (which was quite soon after the saddling stage) or had been scraped against some indigenous and consequently thorny tree. Nowadays we who stable their horses don't see the younger Hoetses as frequently as we did before they

had learned enough English to tell their bearded parent to lay off.

This is all going into a ceramics magazine and some readers will, with some justification, be wondering why things are reading like the woman's page. Perhaps there are readers who would like me to give some slip recipes or something. Frankly, I don't know anything about **that** side of things. I do know about some of the processes of art-making however, and much of the preamble is to make the point that the Hoets **oeuvre** arises from an attitude to life – to doing things in general – which does not admit to petty interferences. Digby has a T-shirt (given by a sponsor of some Stygian canoe race) which reads "Ain't a Thing I Won't Do". I



am sure that his swift rise to eminence in South African pottery is the result of this kind of **insouciance** directed to his work. The first effect of Hoets' acceptance of challenges in pot-making is to make the work as expansive as he can. Secondly, he must balance this exuberance with technical understanding **and** a thorough insight into the principles of form and design. Thus, while the pots are often bigger than anyone else's, they tend also to look good in their bigness, like a tall girl who has learned to walk up straight and be proud of herself. A year or two ago I saw illustrations of some pieces belonging to a West Coast collector whose sole interest was in prodigiously large floor pots. It was interesting to contrast these side-show freaks and their self-conscious and angular altitudes with the dignity and proportion of Digby's best work. Clearly the difference is a combination of brain and eye with brawn!

So, while one can read about Digby Hoets in a variety of journals and get quite involved in the shades of aesthetics suggested by his work, it is also very useful to understand that the expansive, accommodating floor pots with their user-friendly handles and organic proportions arise from a person whose week is divided almost evenly in the business of clay and the business of being fulfilled on a wide range of levels. Being successful (and being married to an equally successful woman) means that there are none of the meannesses of anxiety surrounding Hoets' life or his work. He can afford to be uncomplicated and direct, even in an art world which shrieks for intellectual attitudes and a full set of matching socio-political baggage. And somehow I think his work will survive a good deal of what is currently being touted as the only "relevant" kind of expression.

NEW! MINI BAT HOLDER

The Samaria Pottery 'Wonder-Bat Holder' which takes bats from 150 mm — 680 mm in diameter now has a new, clip-on, MINI BAT HOLDER which takes bats from 100 mm — 250 mm in diameter.

The new Mini Bat Holder's price is **R35,00 plus GST and postage**



Samaria Pottery Manufacturing C.C.

P O Box 44
KALKBAY 7990
Telephone (021) 86 2456

From chicken feathers to clay dust!

Harpers Potters Supplies originated about seven years ago on a smallholding in Kuilsrivier. Tony Laaper can remember first chasing the chicken off his desk and then dusting away chicken feathers, amongst other unmentionables, before a client could be entertained at ease! Even though the business has grown astronomically, not much has changed regarding the desk – he first clears away old burnt out elements and bits of overfired shelves, sweeping away clay dust before business can be discussed over a pot of hot filter coffee.

The original potter's wheel that emanated from the Kuilsrivier workshop caused a smile and a giggle – potters had not seen a wheel lined with carpet. Not to be outdone, another attempt was made and this time the effort bore fruit.

Tony comes from an engineering background and spent many hours at sea working as an engineer for Safmarine. With this experience, the development of clay processing equipment appealed to him. A recent request for a Puggalomix from a neighbouring country took the team by surprise – WE NEED YOUR MACHINE TO PROCESS AND EXTRUDE DOG FOOD!

The need to extend the range of equipment into the kiln market led to Paul Pepworth becoming a part of Harpers. Paul came to Harpers with an immense amount of energy, enthusiasm and knowledge. Tony comments that Paul's ability to work hard often astounded him – this must be the 80% sweat that business is made of! The growth of a sound range of ceramic equipment was all but done. With the addition of a few slabrollers and miscellaneous odds and ends, the search was on for the next avenue – the supply of raw materials, glaze, clay, tools and paraphernalia.

The basics of a supply business was established and yet Harpers did not have its own identity as far as clay and glaze design was concerned. Tony never envisioned acting as a retail ceramic agent and continued his search for expansion into independence.

With this idea in mind Tony approached Patricia Harpur to form a partnership. Some say the choice was made to give the NAME of the business legitimacy and logic but others know better. She comes from a scientifically orientated environment and is an avid clay student – she takes the Ceramic Monthly to bed on a cold winter's night! Coupled with an astute marketing approach, the team has had a stronger technical orientation since Pat and her copy of Hamer's dictionary and many other publications joined the team.

The Harpers Potters Supplies shop as it is today was established in an accessible area – factory facilities could also be utilised at reasonable rates. The shop is close to freeways and shopping areas and is kept full of stimulating ideas with ongoing workshops on the widest possible range of ceramic topics. The kettle is always ready in case a long-distance potter pops in.

The Harpers team is constantly aiming for improvement in supply, service and product range. The clays have been on the market for just over a year and although the process is not without hitches the 10 clays offered all have a special quality to them – they've been processed in a de-airing pugmill.

The Harpers team now consists of 15 dusty people, ALL of whom have certain ceramic qualities in common: they are plastic and malleable, they do not crack when they get all fired up, when glazed they are WELL glazed, when raw they still manage to be decorative and reliable!

Book Reviews

THOSE CELADON BLUES by Robert Tichane
(214 pages) Price \$17 plus postage

The author, Dr Tichane of the New York State Institute for Glaze Research, explores Chinese glazes of the Sung dynasty by the application of modern technology such as scanning electron microscopy, etc. applied to authentic Sung shards. The results make very interesting reading in terms of understanding the effect clay bodies, raw materials, glaze thickness, kiln atmosphere, length of firing, etc. all have on the final result. This is not a book of glaze recipes but rather a guide to formulating glazes and bodies that fit within the framework of this analytical study of glazes of the Sung era.

REDS, REDS, COPPER REDS by Robert Tichane
(306 pages) Price \$22 plus postage

Here again Dr Tichane thoroughly analyses the formation of copper red glazes and states that the aim

of his book is to enable ceramicists to make good copper red glazes consistently. This is a very comprehensive collection of information on copper reds and includes translations of some of the papers published by authorities on this subject. For anyone interested in copper reds, this book should prove a valuable addition to their library.

Both of these books are beautifully presented with good quality paper and very attractive hard covers but considering the subject matter, one does feel that a few pages of colour reproductions would have greatly enhanced these works.

These books can be ordered from: Book Department, New York Glaze Institute, 511 North Hamilton Street, Painted Post, NY 14870.

POTTERY by Anwabi Postma (48 pages)
Price R18,50 plus GST, published by Tafelberg Publishers Limited, 28 Wale Street, Cape Town.

A very basic practical guide for the beginner. Simply written and easy to read with many illustrations. Also available in Afrikaans: POTTEBAKKERY

Regional Roundup

The copy deadline for our next issue is the 10th of January 1988. Let's hope we have a full house next issue. Please remember to put me on your Newsletter mailing lists. EDITOR.

EASTCAPE BRANCH

NEWS ABOUT EXHIBITIONS:

The sales at Corobrik National Exhibition at the Nico Malan Theatre in Cape Town were R31 500,00 – a record. The Cape Town Committee really worked hard and were well rewarded. We congratulate and thank them.

Now for some very exciting news for the 19th March 1988. Barry Douglas has agreed and confirmed to give us a workshop, both here and in East London. Barry will also be bringing some of his work for an exhibition so save those cents. His pots are worth buying.

JO ZEELIE is having an exhibition with LINDA HARRIS at the Bay Potters Studio, 31 Jeffreys Bay Street, Jeffreys Bay in December.

NATAL REGION

CERAMICS EXHIBITION

There will be an exhibition of ceramics – mostly sculptural – at Grassroots Gallery 119a Jan Hofmeyr Road, Westville, opening on December 9th and showing until end of December. There will be ten potters taking part – from Natal, Transvaal and the Cape, and all award winners or 'highly commended' exhibitors at regional or national level.

ISRAEL FOR ARTISTS:

A tour for Artists has been arranged for May 1988. There are expected to be special exhibitions in the large centres at this time to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. Anticipated cost R2,998 per person ex Johannesburg. For further information contact Janet Aldworth at Voyager Travel, Cowey Centre, Cowey Road. Phone 287210 or 28354.

NORTHERN TRANSVAAL REGION

Report back by the selectors of the National:

The general standard of articles entered was good but in most instances the entries were not of National Standard. A greater diversity is to be recommended. One should be careful of "unmatched" sets or pots and bowls that do not form a set. Very often the balance between body and foot or opening is insensitive. The shape of a pot is often satisfying, but the design falls flat. One should not lose the natural "freshness" of conception by trying to achieve too contrived a form.

Exhibition: Birds and beasts and other animals

Date: 21 November to 13 December 1987

Place: Gallery Sharon Mitrie

Willows Nursery & Tea Garden

Lynnwood Road, Lynnwood Ridge.

VAAL TRIANGLE REGION

We only have about 100 members in our region and many of those are in far flung places, e.g. Francistown, Secunda and Standerton. We are pleased, but surprised, when our workshops are well attended. However, we continue to hold workshops on a very regular basis relating to as wide a variety of subjects appertaining to ceramics/pottery as possible.

During 1987 we have had workshops with Sue Campbell (large slabbed patio pots), Soma Allais (Sumi painting on ceramics), Kim Sacks (general throwing and glazing techniques) and Leo de Kok (mould making and slip casting). Last month Elza Sullivan gave us a participation workshop at our usual venue for this type of activity – the Ceramics Department of the Vaal Triangle Technikon. She concentrated mainly on handles and lugs but showed us many of her methods and talked about her ideas which she has used and developed over the years. Elza clearly has a passion for her work but is a serene, uncluttered and unperturbed person with a lovely sense of humour. It was one of those workshops which makes one feel really good about pottery and inspired to greater personal effort.

In November Noel Bissicker (who is a lecturer in the Art Department in the Johannesburg Technikon) will be showing slides from Greece. His talk will be on "How to Conceptualise", "How to Seek Inspiration" and "How to Form Abstractions" – this workshop is a must for those of us who have problems working up ideas. The venue is the informal atmosphere of the home of one of our members who lives at Henley on Klip.

Our end-of-year workshop relates to a workshop our region had in 1985 which involved members participating in the creation of a mural. This was done at Buxi Ceramics in Daleside who concentrate mainly on slabware. The subject for the mural was the sea – not everyone's cup of tea – but very effective when completed. It turned out to be a lot of fun (despite low attendance!) and proved to be exactly what was required by a gentleman who was building a new home on the banks of the Vaal River.

To end 1987 we are having a similar full day workshop at the same venue and are hoping to make a party of it. Slabs of 22cm x 50 cm will be prepared and members may use as many as they wish to make their mural with. Mrs Inge Buxbaum will attend to firing of the slabs and we will get together again early in the New Year to glaze our "object d'Art".

Already planned for 1988 is our Mini Exhibition which

we usually hold early in the year. The venue is the public library in Vanderbijlpark. This is open to all our members, particularly with a view to encouraging new participants. The exhibition is not judged, tho' 1st, 2nd, 3rd and student prizes are offered. There is a special section which is to be "Garden and Patio" this year and a general section. Members have already been advised via our regular Newsletter so that they can get started good and early.

NANCY EAGAR

The Vaal Triangle Technikon has recently launched a full-time three year diploma course in Ceramic Design. Their first Diploma graduate is Jeannine Louw who



emigrated from Bloemfontein Technikon to the Vaal Triangle. Jeannine intends to further her studies by enrolling for the National Higher Diploma in Ceramics during 1988. Her work proved to be of an excellent standard of design and craftsmanship and was therefore awarded the prize for the best third-year student. Potters Supplies & Mail Order kindly donated prizes for the Ceramic students.

A new building for the School of Art and Design is almost completed, situated on the main campus. It incorporates a spacious ceramic studio facilitating growth for the ceramic department.

The ceramic department of the Vaal Triangle Technikon, School of Art and Design is in close contact with members of A.P.S.A. Vaal Triangle, many of whom have expressed a need to further their ceramic art and technology by enrolling on a part-time basis with the Technikon.

It is hoped that with further interaction and communication with A.P.S.A., local commerce and the ceramic industry, ceramic art in the Vaal Triangle will increase in demand and popularity.

(RITA TASKER) Lecturer in ceramics at the Vaal Triangle Technikon.

WESTERN CAPE REGION

Many thanks from all the East Cape Potters for arranging our tour to the 1987 Nationals in Cape Town. All the Cape Town Potters welcomed us into their homes and studios in the most friendly way and we all had the most wonderful time.

Yours sincerely,
Dawn Lomax.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your Highly Commended - it was well deserved.

Gallery International

"SPECIAL THINGS" EXHIBITION

Special Things at Gallery International in December - opening on the 9th and running through January.

Esther Rouso, owner of the gallery, will again create a cave of artistic delights for Christmas shoppers and holiday visitors - exhibiting works across the whole spectrum - from special wearables through jewellery, ceramics, African ethnic items to fine art . . . (South African and Overseas) all chosen for their creative energy and quality.

Ceramics will be substantially featured and include Transvaal, E. Cape, and Natal artists such as Kathy and Deon Venter, Fèe Halstead and Bonnie Ntshalinshali, Tineke Meyer etc.

Fèe and Bonnie are exhibiting together with Barbara Jackson and Carol Boyes in early February, and the Venters before Easter (probably together with Hilary and Diane Graham).

The planning for early 1988:

The A.G.M. of A.P.S.A.W. Cape will be on Saturday 13 February 1988 at 3 p.m. at the Frank Joubert, Rondebosch.

Corobrik regional ceramics exhibition 1988 at the Nico Malan from 29th May until 12th June 1988. Details to follow early in 1988.

Corobrik national ceramics exhibition 1988 will be in Durban towards end September/early October 1988.

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.

Please post to: The Editor
National Ceramics Quarterly
PO Box 101
Franschhoek 7690

Telephone: Michael Guassardo (02212) 2107