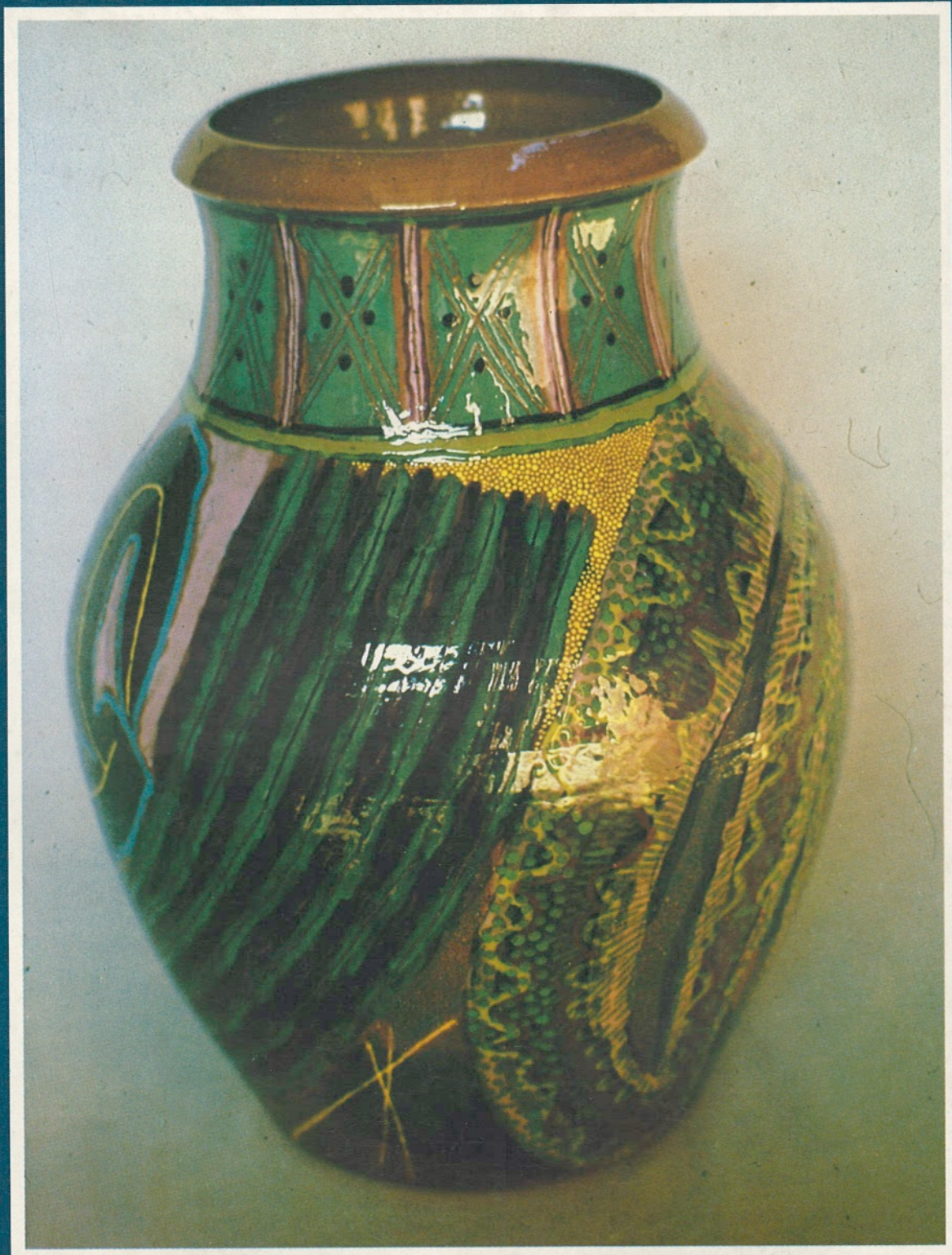


National Ceramics

Quarterly

NUMBER 9 R4,00



COROBRIK NATIONAL EXHIBITION • IAN CALDER • GAUDI • MAGGIE MIKULA

National Ceramics Quarterly

Number 9

October 1989

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COVER: Vase by Ian Calder, 1987. Earthenware, underglaze slips over terracotta clay, overglaze enamels, height 39 cm, more on page 12.



ABOVE: Pots by Natalie-Ann Morris at the National Exhibition, full report on page 7.

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Published by: National Ceramics

P.O. Box 568

Anerley, Natal

4230

Published in conjunction with the Association of Potters of Southern Africa. The opinions in this magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily those of APSA.

Typesetting and page make up by
South Coast Printers, 36 Reynolds Street
Port Shepstone

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you would like to receive National Ceramics Quarterly, please write enclosing your cheque or postal order to:

NATIONAL CERAMICS QUARTERLY

P.O. Box 568

Anerley, Natal

4230

Subscriptions are R15 per year for four issues or R4,00 per copy. A limited number of back copies are available.

Comment

The 1989 Corobrik National Ceramic Exhibition held this year at RAU in Johannesburg was, without doubt, an unequivocal success. The standard and scope of the work on display was by far the best we have seen in this country and compares favourably with many of the exhibitions on offer abroad.

The host region of APSA, Southern Transvaal, had thoroughly done their homework; the pieces were well displayed and the lighting good. The opening of the exhibition by Mr Keith Nurcombe of Toncoro Limited was well attended by potters and public alike.

On this point I would like to mention, as was the case at the opening of the Corobrik Natal Regional Exhibition, that these exhibitions are primarily for the public and not only for the members of APSA and their close friends. An effort should be made by all regions and by this I mean all the members and not only the committees, to ensure that as many of the public as possible attend our exhibitions. After all we work hard for our exhibitions, are proud of our work and it is gratifying to have sold well. To sell well we need the public, which will result in not only more exposure of our work but also greater exposure for our sponsors — Corobrik.

However, as Mr Nurcombe said of the 1989 Nationals, "this exhibition is the turning point in ceramics in Southern Africa" and, like he, I am positive we can look forward to some very exciting and stimulating exhibitions in the future. An in-depth article on the 1989 Corobrik National Ceramic Exhibition starts on page 7. Rosemary Lapping-Sellars is back with her popular 'Personally Speaking' on page 19, followed by an excellent article in a similar vein by Wendy Ross on page 23.

Many thanks to Helene Conradie of Knysna for her contribution to our proposed article on John Edwards. A tribute to the late Maggie Mikula appears on page 26.

Lastly I would appeal to APSA committees as well as our readers in the OFS and Namibia to send us some news from your areas.

In our next issue we will feature Andrew Walford's retrospective exhibition being held in Pretoria this month.

Michael Guassardo

EDITOR

Throwing with Bruce Walford

Throwing a large bowl. Centre about 5 kgs of clay, Fig. 1. Open to the required depth, about 20 mm, keeping the rim firm with the palms of your hands, Fig. 2. Use the left to push out the inside shape and the right hand to keep the rim firm and the clay on centre, Figs. 3 and 4. Now

holding the clay firmly in both hands, once again the left hand is shaping the inside and the right hand keeping the rim firm and on centre, Figs. 5 and 6.



1



2



3



4



5



6

Now you are ready to throw the final shape. Note do not use too much water, a little dripped on the edge of the rim will be sufficient, Fig. 7. With the right hand at the outside base of the bowl and the left hand maintaining the inner shape, pull up the wall. Pull the clay up evenly right to the very

edge of the rim, Figs. 8 and 9. Using both hands, as in Fig. 10, do your final pull keeping an eye on the inner shape, Figs. 10 and 11. As in everything else we have thrown, finally round and firm up the rim, Fig. 12.



7



8



9



10



11



12

Rodney Blumenfeld

Joint winner this year in the Natal Corobrik Regional Exhibition and Highly Commended in last year's National, Rodney continues to extend and refine his work showing understanding and respect for the local ethnic background from which he draws his inspiration.

The *Natal Daily News* published a review by the well known art critic, Carol Brown, which perfectly sums up the man and his work. "Rodney Blumenfeld is a ceramicist who brings another dimension to his craft.

His training and experience as an architect have had a bearing in the interest in forms and spaces evident in his work. His sculptural pieces demonstrate an inherent understanding of weights, thrusts and balances. They refer to architectonic forms in their solidarity and their interest in negative spaces.

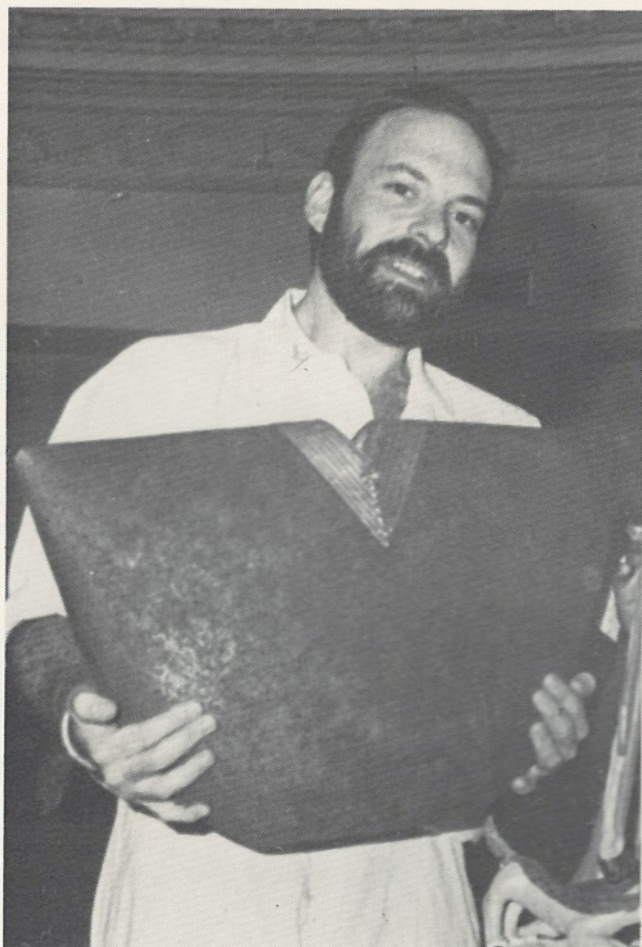
One can look through them and the openings are reminiscent of doors and windows. They are strongly rooted in an African tradition. Their darkness gives them an ageless air and also brings to mind the functionality of the sawdust fired clay

pots used for centuries. Traditional shapes and artefacts are recalled — forms of headrests, animal horns, organic shapes that swell and enclose.

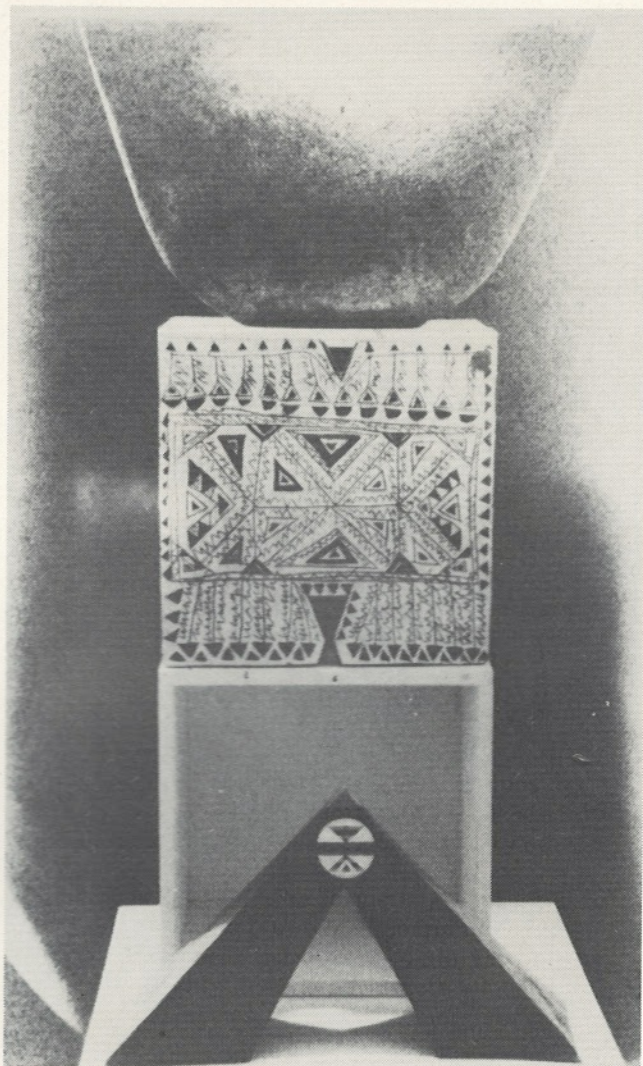
The robustness of the forms is accentuated by a minimum of decoration which compliments them. Many of the pieces incorporate Zulu earplugs — the round, highly decorated objects which are becoming extinct as fashions become more westernised.

These objects are set into the clay forms and provide a focal point of colour and pattern which is often subtly echoed in coloured, oxidised insets. Colour is, however, never dominant and provides accent to the form in a subtle, delicate manner.

Wall plaques and platters are also exhibited and at first glance these appear like the traditional wood or ivory with incisions of patterning. A closer glance shows that they too are made from clay which is handled differently from that of the large sculptural forms. The decoration is beautifully executed and rich and elaborate, drawing from traditional African designs."



Above, Rodney with an award winning pot and on the right a display showing from the top a vessel, a wall plaque and below a sculptural form with a Zulu earplug inset.



1989 Corobrik National Ceramics Exhibition held at RAU Johannesburg during September

A personal overview by Carol Hayward Fell

Joint Award Winner in 1988, Highly Commended in 1985 and 1986 in the Corobrik National Exhibitions. Ex lecturer in ceramics at the Natal Technikon and presently Chairman of APSA Natal.

From the outset I felt optimistic about the 1989 National, having already seen what was chosen from my region, Natal. We had new people, regular people and some whose work had not been seen for a while. Many had excelled themselves and, despite tough selection, we had the largest number of artists represented.

The Gencor Gallery at RAU in Johannesburg is simple, spacious and well equipped with gallery lighting. The Southern Transvaal committee had done an excellent job with the display; a variety of good quality stands ensured there was little crowding and many pieces were elevated to their correct height and displayed to full advantage. It was agreed that the old way of displaying everything in groups according to regions be scrapped and the only works that were separated were the past and present award winners and the student works from the Universities and Technikons, all of which occupied the central foyer area.

Being able to compare the various institutions' student work was very enlightening. Wits Technikon seems to be leading the way with innovative contemporary design, e.g. two slip cast tea sets by Chris Smart. Slip casting lends itself

Marlene Holing of UNISA.



to unusual new shapes, ideally suited to Smart's expressive colourful patterning. Having only seen photographs of Rhe Wessels' work, I was pleased to be able to see the real thing. Apart from the fact that I felt there was a little too much of the surface left dry, I immensely enjoyed the form, concept and use of colour and regard her work as some of the most exciting examples of post-modern ceramics falling within the new expressive vessel tradition in South Africa.

Natal Technikon's work contrasted strongly with that of the other institutions by virtue of its monumental scale. Hennie Stroebe (recent Volkskas Atelier award winner) put ceramics on the map by being the first ceramic artist to win this prestigious competition. Although not one of his better works, 'Flowers for a Blue Lady', a large amphora shaped vessel with swirling scrolls and a female face, is full of vivacity and shows his love of Minoan art. This vessel stood on a tall plinth painted in a faux marble technique.

The University of Natal was represented by four smallish works. Two items that interested me were a fine example of on-glaze painting of fishes on a plate by Kim Behr and a two handled sculptural dish by Sarah Jane Evans.

Marlene Holing of UNISA was to my mind a very deserving joint winner of a special student prize awarded by Michael Guassardo of National Ceramics Quarterly. This highly innovative multimedia piece had a wealth of nostalgic detail. The ceramic element took the form of small individual portrait figures of women; Isolda Kramms, in her bath, Nina Romm and others.

Apart from the Katlehong Art Centre, winners of the Pepworth kiln, the other institutions did not leave me with much of an impression except when I picked up some plain coloured slip cast pieces from Vaal Triangle Technikon and nearly slashed my hands on sharp bits of broken stilt tips!

Also situated in the central foyer were works by numerous past award winners. Although not all of a consistently high standard, it was a pleasure to see so many had responded and sent works. Added to this were the wonderful pieces of Sonja Gerlings who left South Africa many years ago and three delicately crafted pieces by Maggie Mikula who died in July this year. Although very ill, Maggie had tried to complete something for this exhibition but had been unable to do so. The three works on view were loaned by her husband Paul and this sadly will be the last time we will see her work on our exhibitions. Esias Bosch, whose work has not been seen on the National for several years, had a stunning decorative tile of enormous dimensions. It would be wonderful to see more of his work on future nationals as he is of prime importance to our ceramic tradition in South Africa. Hym Rabinowitz, Digby Hoets, Bea Jaffray, Lesley Ann Hoets, Suzette Munnik, Evette Weyers, Katherine Glenday, Bonie Ntshalintshali and Gillian Bickell all had fine examples of their work on show.

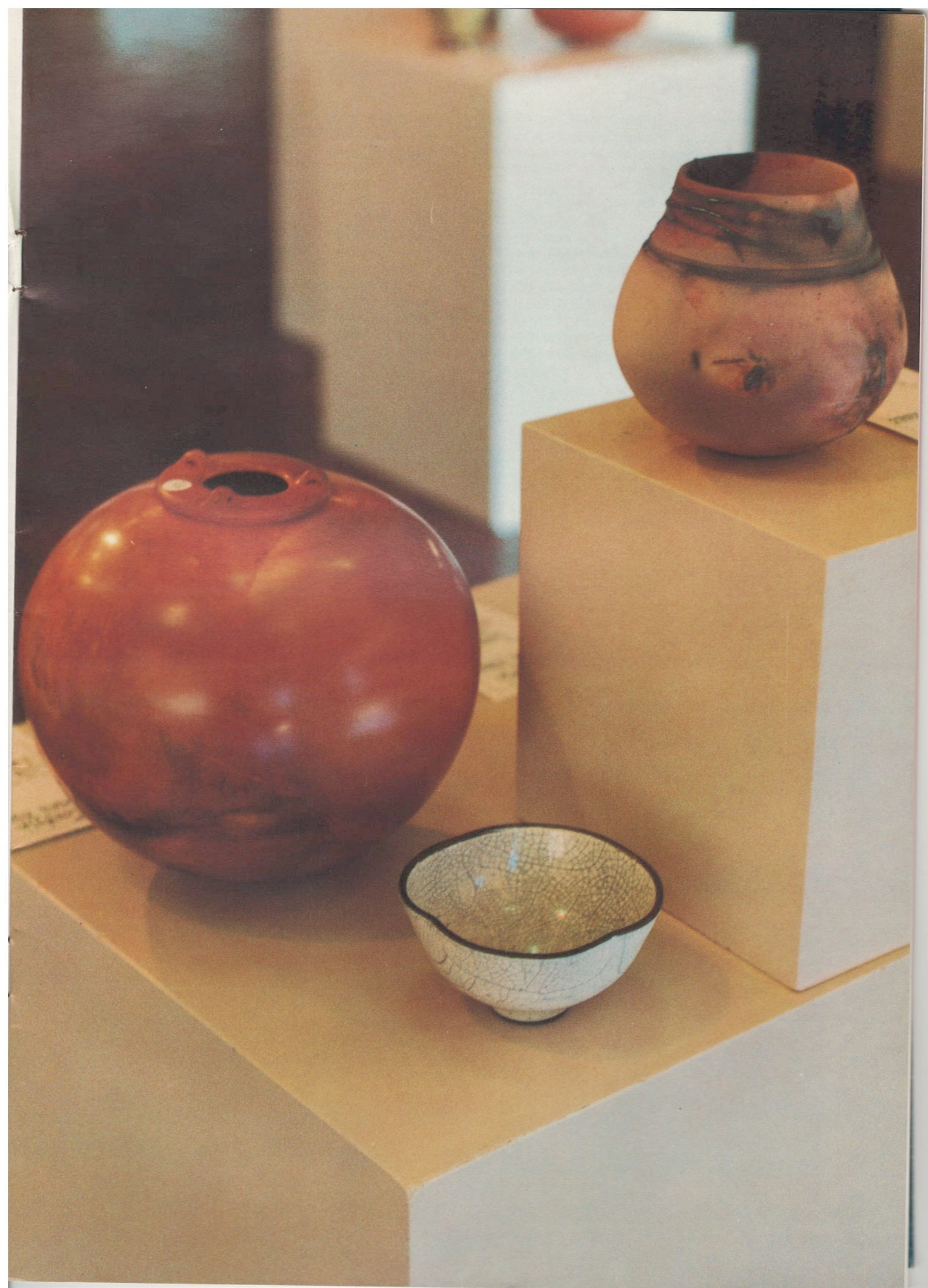
Somewhat overshadowed in scale by the works of these past award winners, were the three works chosen as the 1989 winners of the Corobrik National. Kim Sacks' (Southern Transvaal) low salt fired vessel had a pinkish body pierced with small holes threaded with slender blackened wires which passed around the neck. Cilla Williams' (Western Cape) gleaming rounded pit fired pot with lugs was the largest of the three winning pieces. (All three were less than 30 cm in height). Its full, rounded form and burnished golden surface had an accentuated rim with three small lugs. Rosemary Jaffray (Natal), a newcomer to the exhibition, had the smallest of the three winning pieces; a small hand sized raku bowl. As in all three works, the essence was simplicity and a total lack of surface decoration. The bowl was covered with a white crackled glaze and the circular rim had been altered by means of four small indentations to form a foliated rim reminiscent of Song dynasty Chinese ceramics. This rim had been left unglazed so it had become blackened and emphasised this feature.

Many people were surprised at the conservatism of the judges' choice. However, as the chosen judges, they did what I believe must have been a very difficult task considering the differences in background that existed between them. We should therefore accept their selection as the personal choice of three people who were asked to do the job and let it rest at that.

On the subject of personal choice, I enjoyed many pieces on this exhibition and found this 1989 National a very stimulating one especially its wide variety of different types of ceramics, traditional works, new shapes, patterns, colours, techniques and ideas. My own personal favourite was, without a doubt, a fairly large lidded bowl/turteen by John Wilhelm, winner at this year's Western Cape Corobrik Regional Exhibition. The sureness of form, the jewel colours of watermelon pink, purple and yellow and the striking black knob, rims and foot was for me what contemporary functional ceramics should be all about. I agree with the view expressed by Rita Tasker (in the National catalogue) that the brighter and more contemporary patterns were sadly often applied to rather safe traditional forms. This criticism does not apply to John Wilhelm.

This year there was far more domestic ware, both traditional and contemporary, than has been seen for years. On the traditional side I especially enjoyed the work of Elsa Sullivan as well as that of Suzann and Peter Passmore, Ian Glenny, Michael and Norma Guassardo. The bright copper red flowers set against the brilliant blue background on Norma's luncheon set was

Opposite, the award winning pieces, top right, Kim Sacks; centre left, Cillia Williams; bottom right, Rosemary Jaffray.



especially daring. Contemporary functional ware by Brenda Gomez, Vee Visser, Dineke den Bakker and John Wilhelm showed a new use of form, colour and applied decoration which I hope they will each pursue.

green marks, created by copper wires, contrasted with the subtle pinks and buffs of the low salt fired body as well as the sparkling metallic blackened areas. To my mind, these two works were far more interesting than the one chosen as winner.

Working within the traditions of the contemporary vessel were a large number of ceramists. Two small high-footed bowls with turquoise underglaze slip painted patterns by Anthony Shapiro were particularly enjoyable and despite rather heavy bases, the fresh painterly brushstrokes created an animated surface. Kim Sacks' two sagger fired vessels with brightly coloured oxidised copper

Liz Albrecht's two raku bowls on metal stands were especially interesting if you sat on the floor to contemplate their outer surfaces. As it is virtually impossible to display bowls with interesting outer surfaces, I hope Liz will try to repeat these interesting surfaces on the inside of her next bowls. Katinka Hall, Natalie Ann Morris, Dawn and Lawrence Lomax and Alida Croudace



Daan Verwey



Lynnley Watson



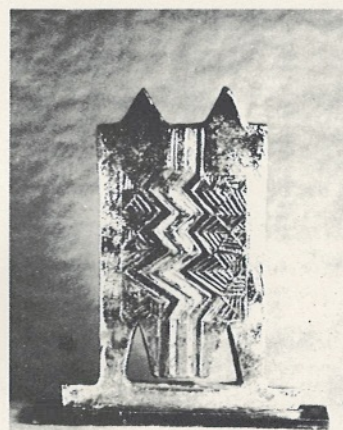
Hendrik Stroebel



Elza Sullivan



John Anthony Wilhelm



Ingrid Meijer



Ilonka McDougall



Ian Glennly



Charmaine Haines

all continue to produce some very attractive raku work. A large stoneware bowl with a feather pattern by Cathy Bouwer and a tall, narrow, pale coloured, sawdust fired porcelain vessel by Ilonka McDougall resembling something from some ancient Cycladic civilization as well as some incredibly detailed work by Uta Leffin were some of the best pieces from the Vaal Triangle. A breath of fresh air from the OFS region was a stoneware plate with giraffes by Ebeth Esterhuizen. This region appears to work in relative isolation so it is good to see somebody moving away from the rather technique-orientated regional style.

Rodney Blumenfeld's three crisply incised square platters had fine linear patterns of fishes and birds. Two had oxide rubbed into the lines. I was sorry to hear the remark 'they should have been made of wood instead'. After all, if an artist chooses to work in clay, presumably because he loves clay, why suggest it would be 'better' in wood. The piece in question was chosen by five judges to be one of the winning pieces at the Natal Corobrik Regional Exhibition; it was unanimously agreed that it was a fine example of ceramics. I would like to challenge the people who make remarks of this kind. Last year it was directed at Bonnie Ntshalintshali's award winning piece and I feel that this sort of negative criticism is not only illogical but also unnecessary.

Iona Bennie, Martha Zettler, Jean Greenhorn Angelique Kirk and Sue Meyer, all using porcelain, exhibited works of considerable refinement; each has developed their own distinctive style which they continue to refine. Working in the same tradition, Christine Smith's earthenware bowls with wide flattened rims have a wonderful band of patchwork applied in a geometric pattern. In earlier works the central well of the bowls were a gleaming pond of copper or platinum lustre. However, in these latest works she has broken up the lustre by means of resist, resulting in organic spots which I feel detract from the crisp geometry of the surrounding patterns.

The sculptural items which I enjoyed the most were 'Sidonia', a gentle head and shoulders portrait of a young girl by Lynnly Watson and also the works of Henriette Ngako, Ingrid Meyer,

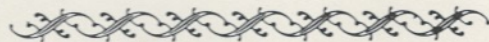


Christine Smith

Rita Tasker, Daan Verwey and Charmaine Haines. The latter produced a small lustre glazed piece 'Divine Inspiration' in the form of a triptych. I far preferred this small work to the two larger ones in glass fronted boxes which I did not feel were entirely successful due to the inclusion of two conical forms.

It may seem as if I have mentioned far too many individuals but I do not believe one does justice to an exhibition of this calibre by summing it up in a few caustic remarks. This 1989 National has shown us what a great number of South African and Namibian ceramists have to offer, creating the most varied exhibition we have seen to date.

There was a very good balance between utilitarian and non-utilitarian ceramics and the new interest in the vessel as an art form has been well explored. There are still many issues that need to be resolved in most of our work but these should be viewed as challenges and not stumbling blocks. Those people who did not have work chosen this year must not be disheartened; as always standards of selection vary from region to region depending on the judges chosen each year. In looking at this exhibition it is no longer relevant to harp on the 'where are all the big names?' theme. Most of them were exhibiting anyway and if one or two artists choose not to exhibit for personal reasons, then that is their prerogative and it should in no way be allowed to detract from what was a great ceramics exhibition.



Magazine Review

Ceramix and Craft South Africa
October • November • December 1989
Price R10,00

The cover is extremely striking, beautifully printed and well balanced — by far the best to date. Regular readers must have been bitterly disappointed by its contents however, as what is proclaimed as a 'bonus feature' turned out to be virtually the entire magazine. The 'bonus feature' was of course the Corobrik National Ceramic Exhibition catalogue which, I am sad to say, was very poorly reproduced both in monochrome and in colour and fraught with errors and omissions. At double the price of a regular issue or of a normal catalogue, the promise of the cover was sadly let down by the contents.

Michael Guassardo

Omission on page 33: Louise Blignaut, P.E. Technikon and Marlene Holing, UNISA, were the winners of the National Ceramics Quarterly Award and shared the R250 cash prize for the best student work.



Ian Calder

Lecturer in the Department of Fine Arts and History of Art, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

Ian is currently interested in Chinese and Japanese export ceramics between 1630-1900, particularly those pieces which have a painterly approach to decoration. He is also interested in 18th century, European tin-glazed ware, where there is a cross current of East/West/East imagery and technique.

In researching the history of blue and white and enamelled vases in this context, Ian has developed his own techniques of majolica painting and enamel application. His figurative iconography of birds, fish, plants and animals he has used as metaphors for rural and urban situations.

The work featured here is tin-glazed earthenware painted with pigments and overglaze enamels, and glazed terracotta vases painted in underglaze colours and enamels.

Facing page top: Dish 'Bantam, Cactus, Wan-li Vase motif' 1988, earthenware, maiolica oxide painting, width approx. 45 cm. Below: Dish 'Angus with Melon Field' 1988, earthenware, maiolica oxide painting, width approx. 40 cm.



Above: Bowl 'Prize Jersey, Fishbowl, Ricegrain motif' 1988, maiolica oxide painting over black slip, overglaze enamel ground, width approx. 26 cm.

Below: Three Vases, 1988, earthenware, maiolica, oxide painting and polychrome glazes, overglaze enamels. Height tallest piece 30 cm.



1989 Corobrik East Cape Regionals

Ad van Nimwegan, their chairman, writes —

“Despite the bottom line being the pennies and pounds, there might be other criteria by which to judge the success of an exhibition. For starters more than 1 700 people saw the exhibition. According to the visitors book, not only people from all over the country but also visitors from overseas. Not only did they admire the pieces, judging by the remarks in the visitors book but they also took an interest in how the pieces were made. My impression was that it could even be regarded as a Trade Fair judging by the requests for addresses of potters. Therefore, without hesitation, I consider that the exhibition has been a success. Our objectives, to promote Pots and Potters, or, Ceramics and Ceramicists, have been achieved.”

Shown here are three of the award winners; photographs kindly supplied by Dawn Lomax.

The sculpture ‘A Tribute to John Ndevasia Mufangejo’ by Liz Albrecht won the Goodwin Jewellers award. Val de Bruyn received a Highly Commended for her brown stoneware pie dish and Iona Bennie received a Highly Commended for a black and white tile sandblasted glass mount.



Liz Albrecht



Iona Bennie



Val de Bruyn

Personally Speaking

by Rosemary Lapping-Sellars

Shards Collaged or What You Will

Tradition and the Crafted Art Object

Customs and traditions, rituals and performances have been and always will be integrally woven into the tapestry of society. Orthodox habitual decorum, and objects associated with it, has established a way of life that is the basis upon which nations have existed for centuries.

Associated with social precepts, the crafted art object, be it a painting, a carving or a pot, is invariably surrounded by traditional dictates, customary habits or emotional politics, and provides meaning and value to its maker, its viewer and its user. Should the object survive the ravages of time its historical significance will by and large provide a critical commentary on the society from whence it came. The artmaker, abandoning an autonomous regime, becomes a type of socio/political commentator whose commitment to the making of art is a reflection of the times, and when the resultant artworks outlive their makers, their relics reflect both an attitude and a way of life. Soetsu Yanagi in his book *The Unknown Craftsman* has suggested 'that all artifacts are twice made, once by the craftsman and once by the perceptive user'. And should the relic reappear centuries later it will provide umpteen other connotations and possibilities.

Consider for example an early earthenware vessel which was made by a potter and given numerous uses over a number of years. It then breaks and is discarded. Years later it is unearthed and stuck together to provide the archaeologist with information pertaining to its maker, its user and its time. The pot then becomes loaded with meaning and is a store of information. It could also be stuck together and used to hold rubber bands on a desk, or its small shards could be used as filler in the bottom of a flower pot. The possibilities are endless.

Antoni Gaudi: Catalan Craftsman and Designer

An Artist who used shards in an extraordinary way, and whose contribution to his own country is well documented, is a man called Antoni Gaudi. Inventor, artist, architect and craftsman, Gaudi hailed from a long line of potters. He, his father, his father's father and his great grandfather were all potters and together with their lives devoted to their Roman Catholic faith they served their God and their community in a humble and zealous manner.

Antoni Gaudi was born in 1852 in the small Spanish village of Reus where he spent most of his youth in the pottery studio. The dictates of the

clay and the rituals of the church provided Gaudi with his creative expression and spiritual development, and his life and artistic output reflect the deep-seated traditions of both his family and his faith. This in turn led to fully integrated works which combined form, colour, texture and spiritual expression in a holistic manner.

There are many who have not heard of Antoni Gaudi nor seen his work. His architecture in Barcelona has certainly provided many a heated argument and at times has been sorely misunderstood, ignored and even rejected. However there is of late a radical reassessment of his oeuvre and the vital contribution he made to Spain as a prestigious Catalan designer, architect and exponent of the Spanish Art Nouveau.*

In 1878 he graduated in Barcelona, then a hub of political and cultural renaissance and a city of some very wealthy families. Gaudi became integrated into the pulse of the Modernist generation and once he had the support of his wealthy patron, Comte Eusebi Guëll, a textile magnate, he never looked back. Within a short space of time he gained the respect of the Catalans as a reputable interior designer, and acquired a reputation amongst the people as an architect of innovative concepts.

Gaudi's early exposure to the plastic qualities of clay gave him insight into the nature of the medium and appreciation of its flexible potential. The empty pottery vessel, perceived as a body which both contains and displaces space, provided an understanding for material structure, whilst the tangible quality of the craft process led him to understand and manipulate mass — the plastic mass of the clay and even the elastic mass of metals. Gaudi's experience with metals led to some very innovative designs in both copper and wrought iron, and today one can still see the magnificent wrought iron gates and lamp posts which he designed. Above all, Gaudi's easy and natural understanding of the craft process gave him the opportunity to use his medium for spiritual expression. His genius united architect and builder, artist and craftsman, and therefore many of the fundamental problems caused by their separation just did not surface in his creative output. He enjoyed the full co-operation of his professional colleagues and was able to employ the finest craftspeople and the best architects to execute his new ideas. Barcelona was enjoying a high-spirited renaissance and Gaudi's creativity united with the vibrance of the city.

Gaudi: The Architect

To behold the work of Gaudi, is to experience a sensation of another dimension. On a superficial level one may equate the collaged exteriors and undulating forms to the architecture of a community of gingerbread folk. The surfaces are visually stimulating and seductively tactile, and in viewing the buildings one starts to appreciate the thrust of the Modernisme movement. It has been suggested that Gaudi was inspired by traditional mud dwellings along with the more sophisticated Islamic and Catalan brick constructions and mosaic tile decorations.

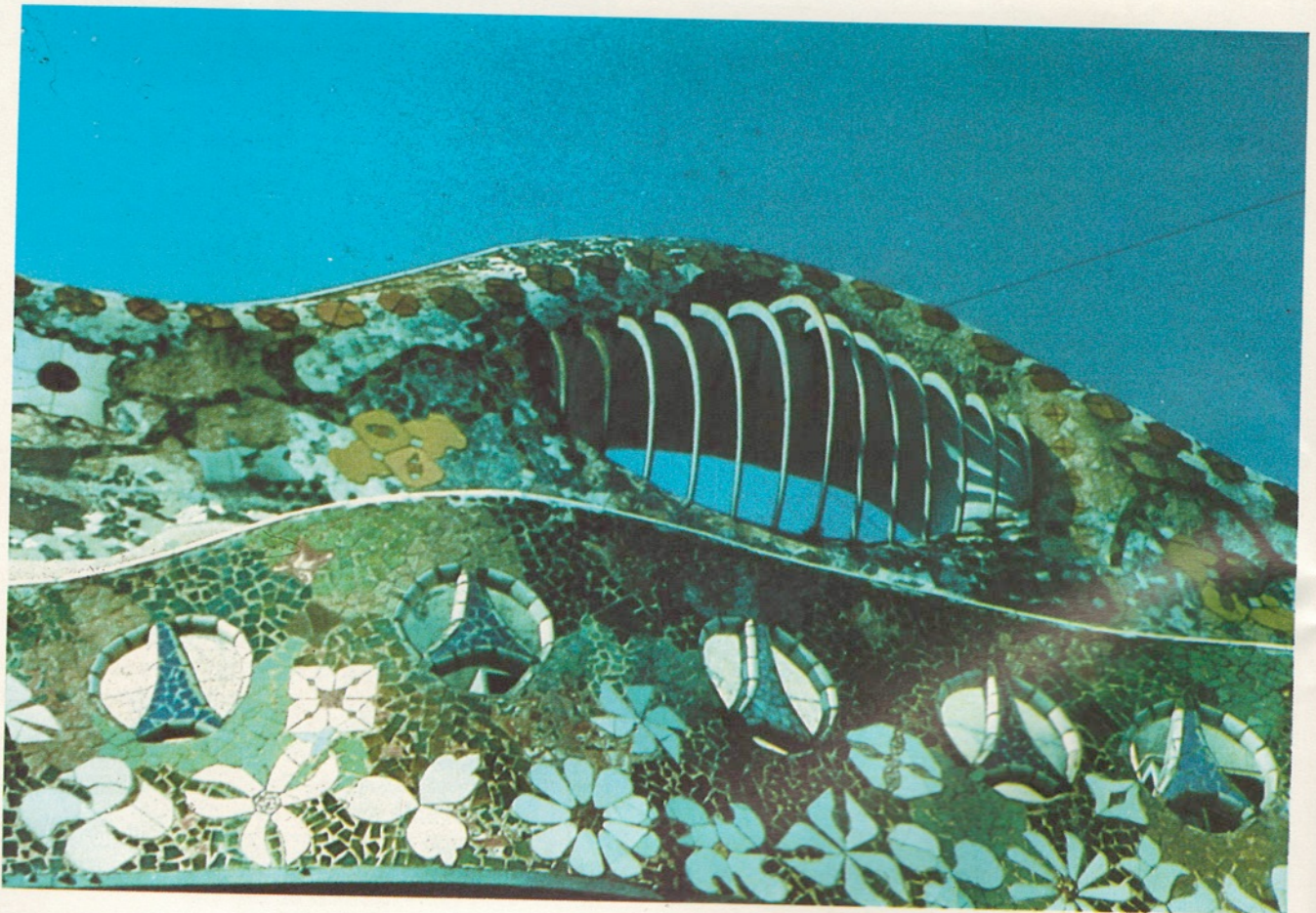
Imbued by a quest for spiritually inspired forms and motivated by an innovative and creative pulse Gaudi abandoned conventional drafting and sought to create structures which had a frozen undulating quality. By building wire and plaster models he came to understand the thrust and counterthrust of brick and stone parabolas enabling him to splay out the angles of the vertical columns. To walk through a Gaudiesque colonnade is to experience a tilted and twisted version of columns that seem to grow like bent olive tree trunks from base to top. Satisfied with the basic distorted forms Gaudi then massed the surfaces with broken pieces of ceramic tiles which gave the impression of a rich patchwork quilt. Adhered in an arbitrary fashion, the broken shards individually remain independent, yet collectively they appear like a montage.

Gaudi designed furniture, wrought iron structures and urban residences, one off the Ramblas and two in the Passeig de Gracia to name but a few. He is especially well-known for his design of the extraordinary church dedicated to the Holy Family, La Sagrada Familia which is still unfinished, and the design of an urban park called Parque Guëll. In this park he actually built a house and lived there so that he could be on site to plan and direct its execution over a period of fourteen years.

What strikes one most forcibly about Gaudi's work is his unconventional approach to each



Above: La Casa Mila in the Passeig de Gracia.
Below: Detail of La Casa Battlo.



medium. One may almost suggest that he challenged each property to its limit, and extended the rules to their absolute, resulting in shapes and forms which are extraordinary and visually stimulating. Borrowing decorative elements from Arab art and the like, he covered his abstracted shapes of chimneys and ventilators with marble, crystal and glazed ceramic pieces. Some of the chimneys are thrown vases which he had glazed blue. These he incorporated with the drain pipes which he assembled by threading together like a long string of beads. The church turrets have the semblance of gigantic barley sugar sticks, some with fat lollipops on the ends.



Above: Salamander at the entrance to Parque Guëll.
Below: Detail of collaged shards in the Parque Guëll.

Each and every shape was carefully encrusted with ceramic pieces for surface decoration, whilst windows were individually designed and murals were carefully painted to reflect the pattern and design of the building itself.

Although Gaudi expressed himself in a most creative and innovative way, it would be understandable to question whether this output was that of an eccentric individual with a rather eclectic frame of reference. Viewing the work of Gaudi and studying his architectural forms does evoke a strong response for no reason other than the fact it is exceedingly unconventional and almost childlike. And yet, on further investigation, the seriousness and integrity of a mature artist becomes more and more evident.

Shards: Visual Interrogators

At the outset of this article reference was made to the nature of custom and the art object, both of which are integrally woven into this concept. Making art is a process of making decisions and those decisions are dedicated to the artist by way of myth, history, society, politics, emotion and even whim. It is an exercise for the imagination, not merely to make objects which satisfy functional and emotional needs, but to make some types of critical commentary on society. Issues, which are today central to postmodern techno-scientific society, appear almost unrelated to those surrounding a medium like clay, which is after all something that belongs to a pre-industrial era.



And yet Gaudi took fired clay tiles and breaking them up re-placed them (no two pieces being the same) into a new context. One may argue that a clay tile is a tile and Gaudi simply put them back on the wall, so to speak. But this is not quite the case, because although the tiles were there, they were not forming part of a pattern as is customary. Each shard remained an independent entity and was thus independent of the rest. By using shards, Gaudi infused content into each individual ceramic piece, giving it a place and a meaning and by changing its context it became an object for contemplation.

The shard itself is a flat piece of ceramic which stands individually as an object in its entirety, bringing with it its own aesthetic. Yet these pieces of benign earthenware do of course refer to their origin and because of it therefore are loaded with meaning. A shard refers back to custom, tradition, ritual and social activity.

Pottery defies easy categorisation as its structure is composed of so many parts. Besides its many functions, its actual body is composed of a definite form, a surface a glaze and a decoration. It is never possible to see the whole pot at any given moment, but a shard manages to disrupt that known form through its fragmented self. The viewer therefore encounters the ceramic piece with no prior concept. A shard is no more than a shard.

It is no wonder that his work enjoys so much attention today. The post-modern movement which in itself acknowledges the significance of the figurative, historical and/or mythological thrust, is not unlike the period when Gaudi himself was working. The viewer is confronted with spiritually religious and visually emotive imagery and is asked to comprehend it all by way of the forms and their surfaces. Viewing Gaudi in this context one may suggest that his oeuvre has a post-modern flavour.

Barcelona today

In 1992 an ancient custom will be re-enacted when the Olympic games take place, this time in Barcelona. For the past two years and up until the eleventh hour the city and its surroundings will be subjected to the spit and final polish of its every corner. Motivated possibly by visions of filling the coffers of the emporia and salesmen at large, it is doubtlessly hoped to present the beautiful Catalan capital in her best array for all to eulogize on her splendour. From a purely pragmatic point of view Barcelona can and will provide a fine venue to host the thousands of frenetic and enthusiastic fans who will gather in the wide streets and sprawling surroundings to witness a tradition that has become a prestigious modern international spectacle.

One of the many unique attractions in Barcelona will be Gaudi's works, which are in the process of

being restored to their original splendour. Tiles are being replaced, painted murals restored to their original colour and design, broken pieces rebuilt and mosaics relaid. It is the intention of the community to complete the building of the beautiful church of the Sagrada Familia according to the plans and the scale model which Gaudi left, so that it may be fully appreciated by the time the Olympic games are held in the Catalan capital. Anyone wishing to see Gaudi's work at its best will be well advised to visit Barcelona during or after 1992.

The work of Gaudi has had an influence on a number of great artists in the twentieth century. Picasso and Miro, who both lived and worked in Catalan country, referred to him; Hundertwasser's buildings and Niki de St. Phalle's murals and sculptures all hint at the influence of collaged surfaces and undulating forms. The unconventional imagery hints at mythological beginnings with a certain childlike gravity and humour. One is reminded of the words of Ian McEwan in his book, *A Child in Time* when he suggests that "true maturity is reflected in attaining the seriousness of a child at play". Thus one is urged to look at this man and his work with the dignity both deserve.

His work as architect, artist, designer and craftsman will be well represented at the turn of the century. Gaudi..... a humble and religious man who came from a family of humble potters.

**This term is also defined as Catalan Modernism which developed at the end of the 19th century, and to quote the Department de Comerc the aim was to update traditional figurative repertories, architectural typologies and decorative elements and to bring them in line with new techniques, new industrial materials and contemporary artistic feeling. During its heyday ... it took the form of a decorative fashion based on curved assymetrical lines and colourful floral ornamentation.. found especially in architecture, but also in the decorative and applied arts: glass windows, ceramics, iron and other metals, furniture, as well as jewellery, posters and printing." It is interesting to note that the fervour of nationalist pride and the ebullient personality of the Catalan identified strongly with the exuberant imagery of Moderisme. The patron saint, St George with his twisted and fiery dragon can be seen integrated into many of the works. Gaudi used the dragon's form intertwined into the wrought iron as well as its horny backbone which in fact formed the railings of the staircase in the Parque Guëll.*

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Architectural Ceramics in London's Underground Stations

by Wendy Ross

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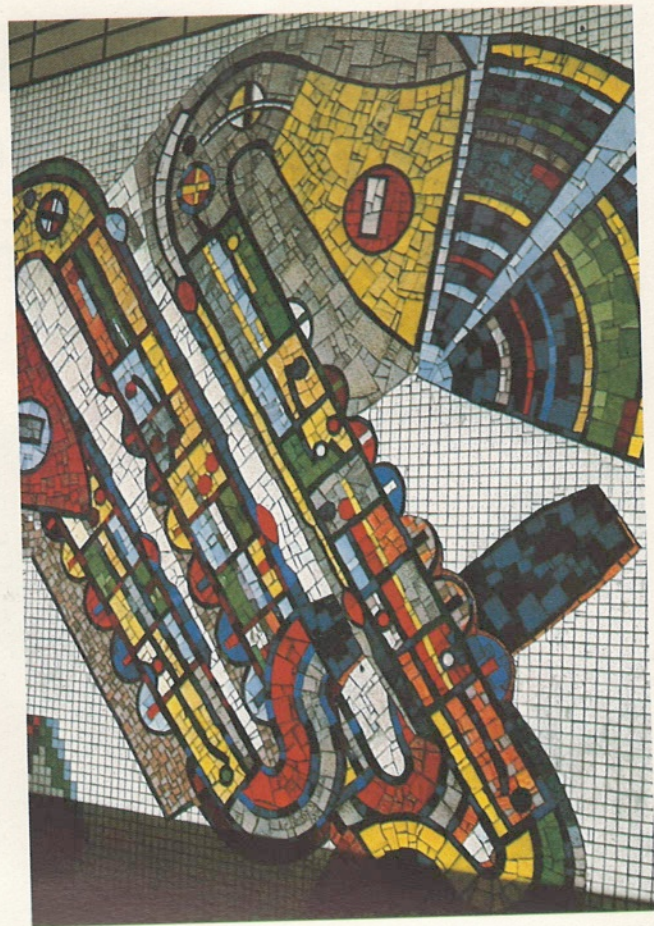


Anyone who has revisited London recently and had the occasion to use the Underground Transport System, will have noticed a vast improvement in the condition of a number of the stations. With at least 2 million people a day using the Underground, modernization of the stations became a fundamental priority. Space-efficiency, convenience and necessary facilities became essential, as is a space which is clean, pleasant to use and aesthetic in its design elements. The regular cleaning and periodic painting of stations proved insufficient in halting the encroaching decay, or in preventing the increasing dreariness and accumulation of refuse in many of the Underground stations.

In September 1981, the then Greater London Council, acknowledged this situation and approved a scheme to modernize and refurbish about 150 stations. A systematic approach to the modernization programme was adopted which incorporated a design philosophy providing each station with either an appropriate theme based on the locality or a historical relevance, or alternatively, with an individuality of its own, while at the same time affording a stronger 'Line' identity to the platforms. The colour-coding system which already existed in the underground map, was enforced and more effectively used by installing the appropriate coloured platform

furniture, fittings and cable-duct friezes on which the station names are displayed. Unity within the whole system was maintained, however, by the use of standardized station furniture, signs, name roundels and the frequent display of the celebrated colour-coded map.

Of necessity, consideration was given to materials which would be durable and easy to clean and, as such, ceramic tiles and mosaics have played a major part in this modernization programme. A prime example of the creative use of mosaics is Tottenham Court Road Station. Artist Eduardo Paolozzi was commissioned to provide designs for the Central and Northern Line platforms as well as the main concourse. In his designs Paolozzi took into account the location of Tottenham Court Road, the people and their activities. His brilliantly coloured mosaic images reflect the hustle and bustle of the hi-fi Tech world above. He has succeeded in capturing the vitality of the vicinity by extending the atmosphere of exuberance to the platforms below. His mosaic designs of the walls and on the vaults of tunnels and corridors descend alongside the commuter, down the escalators, through the corridors to the platforms below. The multi-faceted, brilliantly coloured mosaic saxophones and musical instruments of Paolozzi's designs echo the sounds in the streets.



The Underground system at Oxford Circus is a maze of subways, staircases, escalators and corridors. Trying to find your way around this station complex is like playing a game of snakes and ladders. Appropriately, both the concept of the maze and the game of snakes and ladders have been featured in the designs of the mosaic and tiled panels on the various platforms. The Piccadilly Line platforms at Green Park Station on the other hand, have been covered in flowing bands of pastel shades of blue, pink and green tiles which reflect the growth, peacefulness and organic contrast of the Park above.

At Finsbury Park, Artist Annabel Grey was employed in the design of the ceramic mosaics. She created individually styled hot-air balloons which fill the tunnel walls curving upwards into the vaulted roof. At the platform entrances highly organized designs of richly ornate mosaics create beautiful columns of classical origin. Attention was even given to the end of the platform where mosaic patterning surrounds, incorporates and camouflages arches, dials and mechanical instruments.

Two of the earliest Underground stations are Baker Street, 1860, and Paddington Station, 1868. The well-known fictional English detective, Sherlock Holmes, with his familiar deerstalker hat and pipe, provides the design theme for Baker Street, as 221B Baker Street was the location of his residence. In contrast, the theme at Paddington Station is both historical and educational. Paddington Station prides itself in providing the venue for the commemoration of Brunel's tunneling machine, Specification no. 4204 of A.D. 1818, Jan. 20. Reproductions of his calculations, detailed mechanical drawings and designs for the machine form the basis for the theme. These geometric and mathematical images are silk-screened onto the tiles covering the wall of the concourse, corridors and platform.

Another station complex which combines history and education is Charing Cross. The Northern Line platforms are covered with black and white painted murals of scenes from medieval England. The theme on the Bakerloo Line, however, has been taken from the immediate vicinity. Full-length murals feature representations of works of art by artists such as Rousseau and da Vinci from the nearby National Gallery.

Opposite: Top left, London underground at Marble Arch station, enamelled metal plate. Tottenham Court Road station, ceramic and glass mosaics. Bottom, London's King's Cross St. Pancras station with ceramic tiles completed in 1988. Photographs by the author.

At a number of the stations, vitreous enamelled panels have been used instead of tiles or ceramic mosaics. Of these, Marble Arch is the most lively and playful, exploiting the element of 'the decorative' in Annabel Grey's highly colourful representations of the Arch.

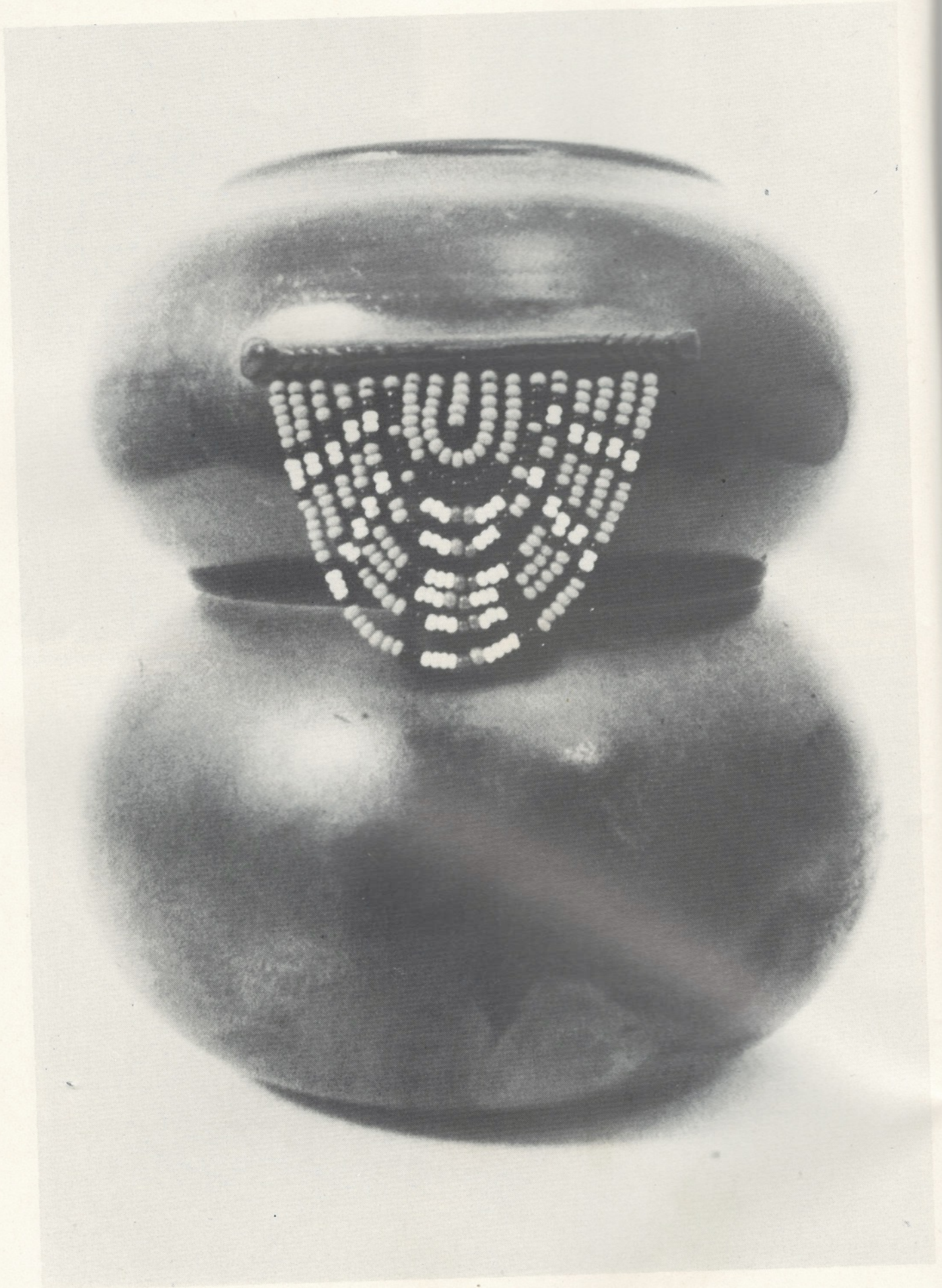
The renovating or cleaning-up process of the Underground stations has provided not only a more pleasant environment, but also a colour-coded system which has made it easier for both local and foreign commuters to identify and recognize the different Lines and stations.

Importantly though, two other vital facts have emerged since the commencement of this programme: firstly, there seems to be more respect for and pride in the renovated stations as there is very little vandalism and graffiti is virtually non-existent; secondly, and surprisingly, it appears that as a result, the brighter, cleaner, more humanized stations have become safer, with fewer muggings occurring and less litter. In most cases the theme or content of the design element has relevance to either the place, time or people. The public can respond to the images as more than mere meaningless patterns. Perhaps it is this relevance or use of meaningful content that has prevented the needless defacement and scribbles over the newly-clad surfaces.

It is significant to note that the programme has included not only the commissioning of artists in some instances but also a more contemporary approach to the use of decoration. In stations where coloured tiles have been used in purely decorative arrangements of shapes and colours, these have been thoughtfully planned. Examples are Piccadilly Circus which evokes the architectural structure of the vaulted tunnelling system of the Undergrounds, and at Kings Cross St Pancras where the large areas of bright contrasting colours are arranged into a design which is simple and bold, yet has a sense of "the new".

Public art is not merely a cultural luxury — it has a function. If well-related to buildings, structures, parks and public spaces, art can be of value to society. Art and design are not, therefore, just aesthetic and elitist. The station modernization programme has shown that art can serve the populace in a positive way by creating environments which are pleasant, friendlier, safer and at the same time, informative and educational.

Public art, if well considered, can lift the spirits, be appreciated and serve the community. This is being accomplished by the ongoing innovative programme for London's Underground Transport System in which architectural ceramics are playing a major role.



Maggie Mikula — an inspiration to all

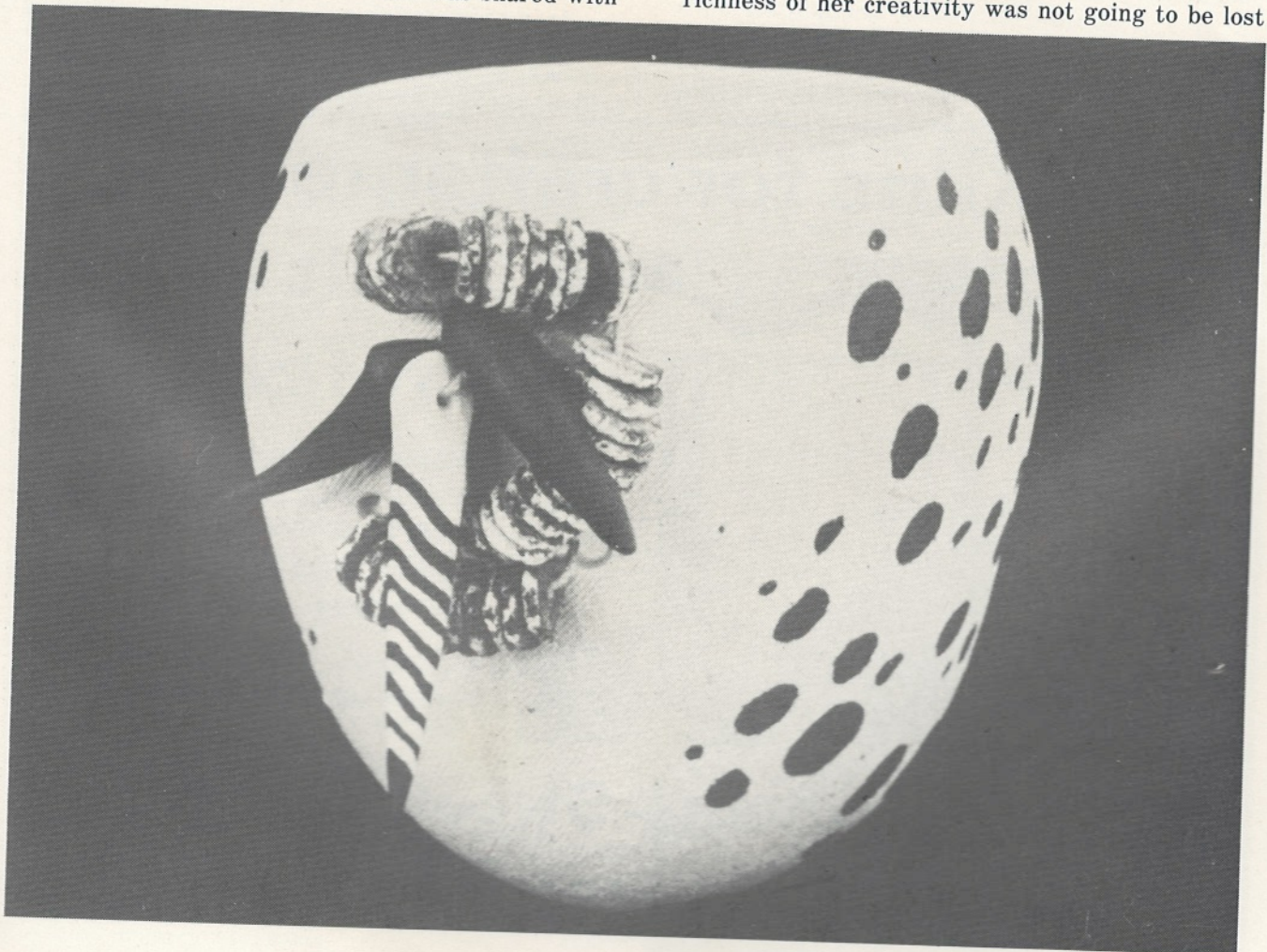
A personal tribute by
Lorraine Wilson

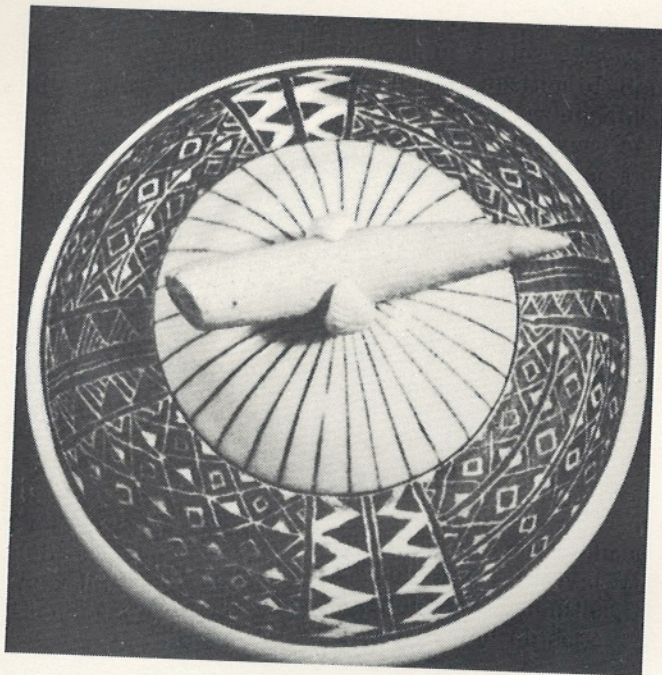
She was a dear and wonderful friend whom I first met some 26 years ago when we studied pottery together at the Natal Technical College under James Hall. She was always special to me, she was sensitive, wise and understanding, with a warm and perceptive view of people. Her amazing creativity in all she did was shared by her husband Paul, and together her art and his architecture reinforced each other to create an environment of incredible beauty. Her eye for detail and design permeated everything she did. In their home Maggie's tiles, rich in beauty and originality, define and highlight the floor and walls. One would constantly delight in her never-ending supply of ideas and in her very own way she could incorporate them into her exquisite works.

She was very modest and had to be really talked into having her first exhibition. This was at the Grassroots Gallery, Westville and was shared with

the well-known painter Lib Steward. The response was unbelievable and within a few minutes of opening every piece was sold.

She was ill for nine years of which the last two years were incredibly tough. During this time she was challenged to work in a different scale altogether as she was awarded the commission to decorate six stair landings of the new E.G. Malherbe Library at the University of Natal. This was against stiff opposition from many well-known artists working in diverse media and so was a great honour. Her inspiration for these roughly two metre panels was derived from the textures, colours and designs of African textiles. Her preparatory drawings filled me with such an overwhelming sense of excitement — this would really be an incredible tribute to Maggie's skill and talents as her work is usually so small. Here would be something for the "world" to see. The richness of her creativity was not going to be lost





in this scale even though we'd become accustomed to looking closely at the fine detail of her work. She heard she had won it in August but tragically it was February before she was given the official go ahead. She was eager to get started and I helped prepare the clay for the first tiles. A week later she once again became seriously ill. It was quite devastating. I begged her to let me work as an assistant and other potters also offered their help, but she was too considerate, a perfectionist and maybe too optimistic that she could do it all herself. Paul also explained that even though her ideas were on paper, there was still much evolving to do from paper to clay and this was always a gradual process for her. In the end only two of the six panels were completed.

Looking back over her work during this period one notices that she had been trying to come to terms with her own fate as her work deals mainly with the beauty and timelessness of death. Her many urn-shaped vessels, her constant return to symbols of eternity and the fragile nature of the decoration and glazes point to this.

It was a great privilege to be a special friend of hers — she enriched the lives of all who knew and loved her.

Maggie died on the 29th of July at the age of 47, leaving her husband Paul and two children Max and Ilse. A few days later a beautifully written article by Marianne Meijer appeared in the *Natal Daily News*, and from it I quote what Durban artist Andrew Verster, who had been a personal friend for many years, said:

“Maggie Mikula was of Africa. It was never an issue. She resolved the question of identity years before the problem became fashionable. She was here and the things she made were of Africa too. The easy conversation between her and the place, its traditions and history, was her life.

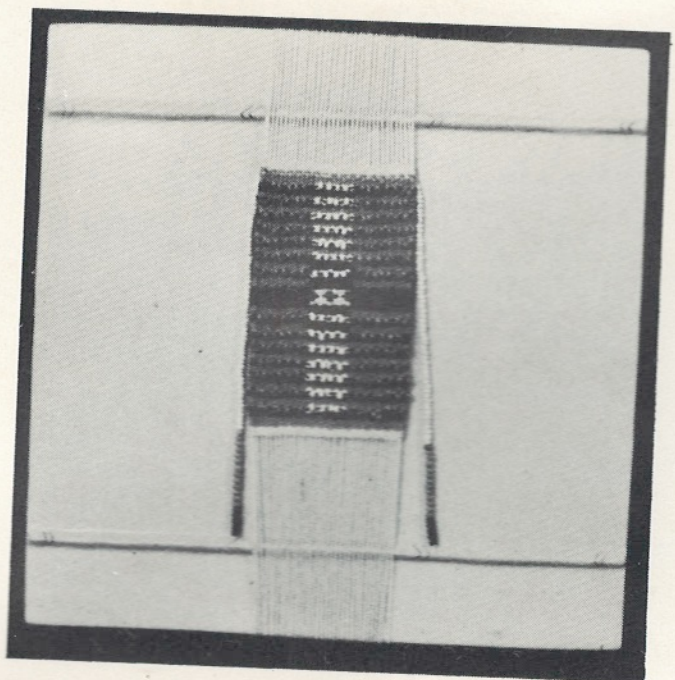
The great lesson of Africa is that everything must be made with the same care — a stool, a house, a village, a bowl, a statue. There is no Sunday best, and there is no hierarchy of beauty. A true African, she would say that she was just another maker of things, no more and no less important than others.

This modesty, this realisation of the interdependence of everyone, is a lesson to a world that prizes ambition and celebrity. She understood this whole myth. In everything she was the same person — wife, mother, friend, companion, writer, maker of objects.

She made small works which anyone could own. Never for her the big gesture, each is unique, she never repeated herself. Each is an answer to a different problem. Each a meditation.

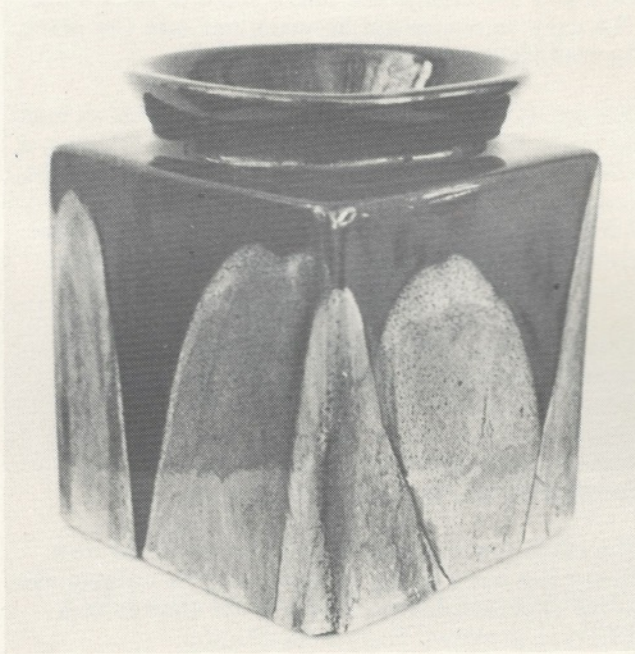
Because she respected the tradition of which she was part, each piece extended that tradition. And belonging to a tradition meant that each object is encased in memories, allusions and associations.

If what you have to say is worth hearing, you can, as she did, speak in a quiet voice and alter forever the lives of the people around you.”



New Work

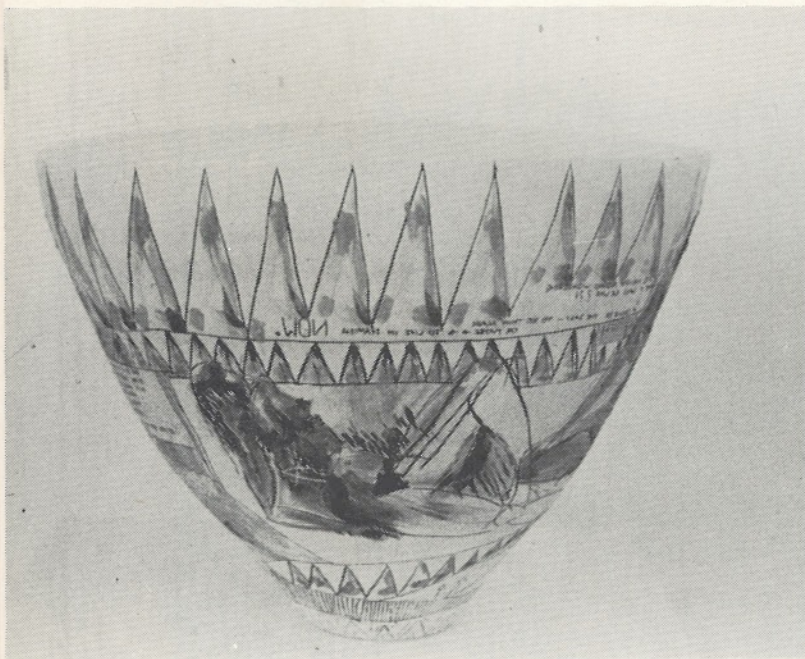
Recently the Dorp Street Gallery in Stellenbosch exhibited new work by Barbara Robinson and Rebecca Tetley.



Barbara Robinson is well known to our readers (NCQ Number 1, 1987) and although her forms have not changed, there is a subtle change in their glazing. Still keeping within the traditional Oriental decorating techniques, some of her platters and bottles have taken on a decidedly Japanese look.



'Shino' type glazes in gentle pastels are generously used superimposed over dark backgrounds with brightly patterned decoration in juxtaposition. Barbara's fine and delicate brush work continues to delight and is still much in evidence.



Rebecca Tetley's ceramics are a combination of soft porn and good humour. Her well-rounded female figures, drawn on full formed bowl shaped pots, are interspersed with both serious and whimsical comments on aspects of the female condition. Rebecca consciously removes herself from her fine arts background by practising a craft, yet the skill in the drawings reveals that the pot serves as a medium, not as an object in itself. The pot remains unglazed and brush decoration is done with oxides. The pot seems to be a three dimensional canvas on which the most important element, the drawings, appear.

Competitions

International Art Competition — New York

International Art Horizons, New York '89, The Leading International Art Competition will be held again at Art 54 Gallery, located in Soho, New York City, N.Y., the centre of the art world. It will be judged by distinguished curators from American Galleries and Museums, and will award winners with \$8 000.

This competition is open to all artists working in the following categories:

Painting	Sculpture
Mixed-Media	Drawing
Watercolour	Pastels
Photography	Printmaking
Computer Art	Illustration
Graphic Art	Design
Ceramics	Jewellery
Metalwork	Glass
Wood	Paper
Fiber	Furniture

Artists will submit slides to be judged by the eminent jurors. Selected artists will be invited to show their actual works in a final exhibition at

Art 54 Gallery, in Soho, New York City, which is known as the Gallery with a Museum touch, and also for exhibiting works of prominent artists. \$8 000 will be awarded. The deadline for slide submission is November 17, 1989. The exhibition will open December 27, 1989 and close January 14, 1990. To receive applications artists should write today to: International Art Horizons, Department PR, P.O. Box 1091, Larchmont, N.Y. 10538, U.S.A., Telephone: (914) 633-6661.

In their letters, artists should write their names and addresses in English.



Vallauris

The 12th International Biennial of Ceramics will take place in Vallauris, France from July 1st to October 31st, 1990.

Four categories are planned:

- Architectural works
- Wheel thrown pieces
- Glazed ware
- Creative works

Only two entries may be submitted. Initial entries to be by early January, 1990. For further information and entry forms write to:

Comité de la Biennale
Hotel de Ville
F-06220
Vallauris
France

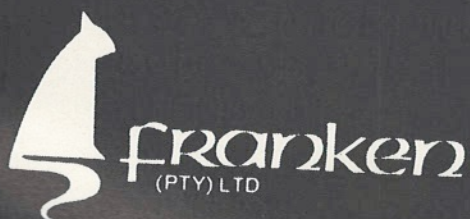


SA Ceramic Awards R15 000 in prizes

Three winners will each receive an equal share of R10 000 prize monies donated by Plascon and R5 000 prize monies donated by the Rupert Foundation

CATEGORIES:
1 THROWN WARE
2 HANDBUILT WARE
3 INDUSTRIAL WARE

POTTERY MATERIALS



445 Hilda Street
Hatfield, Pretoria

Tel: (012) 43-6414

The purpose of these awards is to give potters and ceramic artists an opportunity to compete and exhibit their work, at national level, and to give recognition and reward for standards of excellence.

The competition is open to *all* ceramists, and it is earnestly hoped it will attract not only our established potters, but encourage new names, of aspiring and inspired free spirits who work with clay.

The judges accept that there will be entries which could qualify for both Categories 1 and 2. If this is the case, state both next to Category on your entry form.

A category for Industrial Ware has been included to meet the real need in South Africa for innovative design in this field, and crockery in particular. If we look at decorations, where do we see any reference in designs to our wealth of ethnic motifs or indigenous flora? Here is a wonderful opportunity for inventive minds — those who have the skills to present ideas as realities.

Whatever your chosen form of expression in clay, this competition is open to you.

The exhibition, to be held at the Durbanville Clay Museum, will be run in conjunction with the Durbanville Clay Festival on an annual basis. Works for exhibition will be selected by a panel of five judges.

RULES OF ENTRY

- Works entered must not have been exhibited or entered for any other competition, and must be originals.
- A maximum of three works may be entered. Entries for INDUSTRIAL WARE must include moulds.
- Submit the enclosed Entry Form with up to three slides of each work, 24 mm x 36 mm, in plastic sleeves. Mark entry number at top right-hand corner of each slide.
- Do not send original works until invited to do so.
- Slides of work not accepted for exhibition will be returned only if accompanied by an SAE.
- The closing date for slides and entry forms is November 15, 1989.
- From the slides received, the panel of judges will make a preliminary selection of works for the competition.
- Successful entrants will be advised in writing immediately after the preliminary selection. Final selection of prize winners will be made after viewing the actual works.
- The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Works selected for exhibition must be received by the Durbanville Clay Museum, Wellington Road, Durbanville, between February 19 and 24, 1990.

Personal delivery between office hours only: 9 am to 12 noon and 2 pm to 4 pm.

- Entrants will be responsible for railage or cartage costs, and insurance for works in transit.
- All works selected must be for sale, and when submitted should be marked clearly with the entrant's name and selling price.
- Commission of 30 percent will be deducted from the selling price to defray costs.
- The organisers accept no liability for loss or damage to works submitted for this competition.

ENTRY FEE

A non-refundable fee of R10 will be charged with each entry of up to three works. Your postal order or crossed cheque should be made out to SA Ceramic Awards, and sent together with your Entry Form and slides.

Address your entries to: SA Ceramic Awards, Box 1150, Durbanville, 7550.

The organisers undertake to arrange for the return of unsold works exhibited; but please note that costs will be for the exhibitor's account.

Sample entry form for the R15 000 South African Ceramic Awards. Entry forms can also be obtained from, S A Ceramic Awards, P.O. Box 1150, Durbanville, 7550.

ENTRY FORM

Submit this form or a facsimile, with slides and entry fee of R10. Address to: SA Ceramic Awards, P.O. Box 1150, Durbanville, 7550. Closing date, November 15, 1989.

NAME

ADDRESS

..... CODE

TELEPHONE

Entry No 1/Title

Category

Dimensions.....

Medium.....

Entry No 2/Title

Category

Dimensions.....

Medium.....

Entry No 3/Title

Category

Dimensions.....

Medium.....