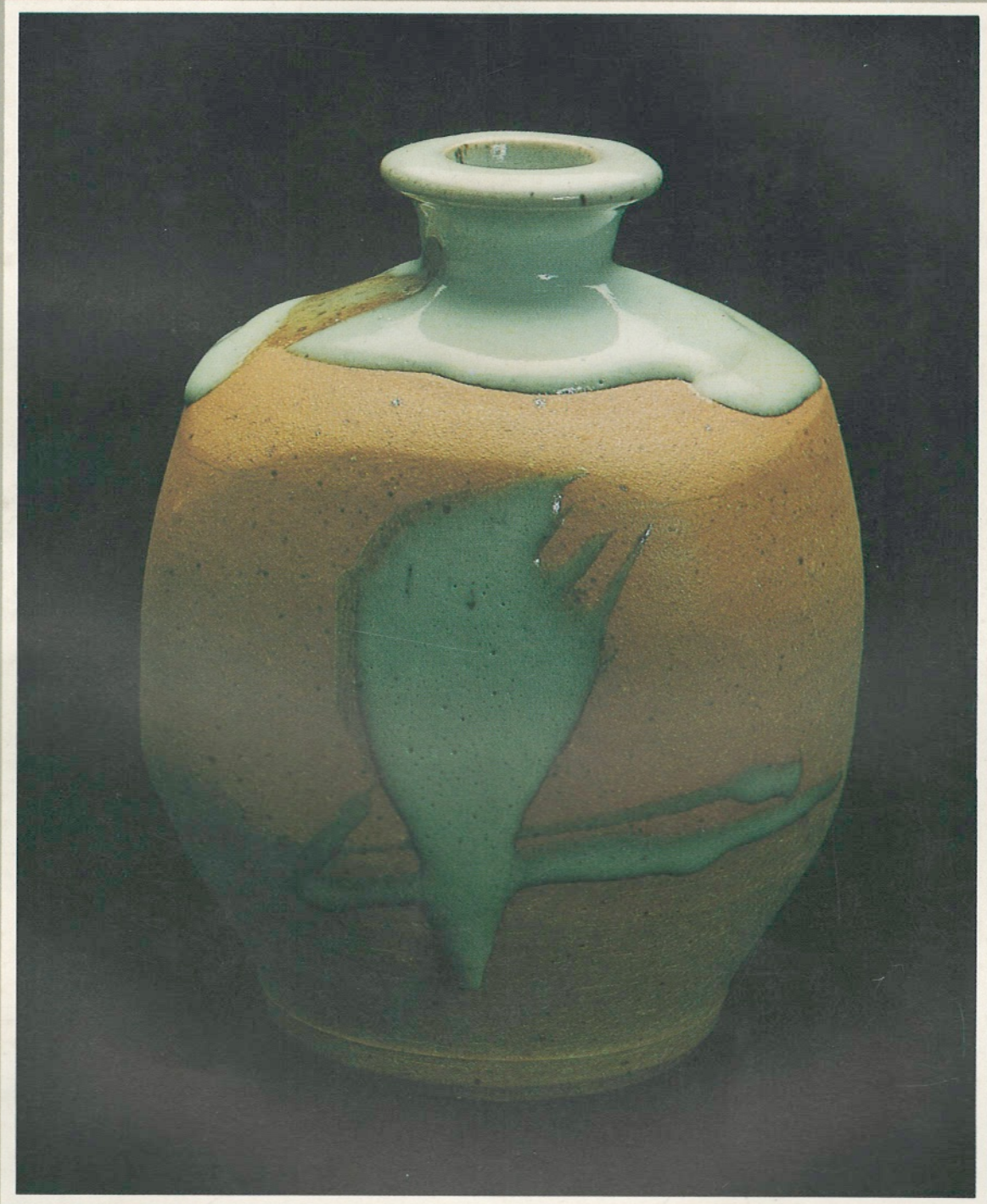


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Quarterly

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ANDREW WALFORD • VENICE BIENNIAL • MICHAEL CASSON • VALLAURIS

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COVER: Reduction fired bottle by Andrew Walford photograph Ted Brien, see page 8.



Above: Typical jug by Michael Casson. Meet the potters at Wobage Farm on page 10.

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Comment

We were greatly saddened to learn of the sudden death of Maarten Zaalberg. It is difficult to imagine APSA without him. This magazine owes its very existence to the effort, drive and negotiating skills of Maarten whose concept it was and I, for one, shall deeply feel the loss of his encouragement and support. In his memory, NCQ has asked the Western Cape Branch to accept an annual award to be made at their Corobrik Regional Exhibitions.

Andrew Walford, one of our leading and most experienced potters, recently held a retrospective exhibition of his work in Pretoria. Andrew is at present possibly this country's finest high firing reduction potter, working almost exclusively in the Japanese tradition being greatly influenced by Leach and Hamada. However there seems to be a shift in his new work; more European and perhaps more commercial. See pages 8 and 9.

Earlier this year the Potters Association of Namibia joined APSA and we look forward to their further involvement in ceramics in Southern Africa. There have been a number of address changes in APSA, please note the revised list on page 3. NCQ offers its congratulations to Stan Russell who has been elected Chairman of the Western Cape Branch.

Various items of local interest as well as some practical tips can be found in this issue's Regional Round-up. Tineke Meijer has sent us a very interesting article on the Venice Biennale which starts on page 15. Earlier in the year we had a brief glimpse of the Vallauris Biennale. On pages 6 and 7 there is a more in depth display of this prestigious event. It is with some interest however that I noted under section 2 of the 1990 prospectus that 'All types of techniques are allowed except for non-fired or synthetic enamel pieces.' Acrylics most certainly fall into this category and this should indeed be thought for APSA, both on regional and executive levels.

This has been a very busy and eventful year, the highlight most certainly being the Corobrik National Ceramics Exhibition in Johannesburg. Outstandingly displayed, with a wide and representative spectrum of ceramics in this country today. It is certainly a sound foundation to build on.

NCQ wishes you all a peaceful, constructive and above all, a happy New Year.

Michael Guassardo

EDITOR

Letters

Judging Judges

The Institute of Architects together with Kenzan Tiles are organising a competition again for Easter 1990 — theme Mosaics. (See Regional Round-up this Issue, Ed.). Your two article in issue No. 9 on Gaudi and the London underground could not have been published at a better time. They both are superb and very stimulating. Thanks to you and your team.

I attach some suggestions on judging taken by the East Cape to the last National meeting. The majority of the items concern procedure; but points 1 and 4 could be of general interest.

Thanks for a stimulating, beautiful magazine and I am sure that you agree with me that the members do get a bit nervous if they don't receive a regular dose of this sort of stimulation.

Ad van Nimwegan
Chairman East Cape Branch

Suggestions from East Cape to improve the judging at exhibitions

- 1 Majority of panel should consist of active ceramists. For example 3 to 4 people from the ceramic world. Each perhaps specialising in a particular field but all with a sound knowledge of techniques, ceramic science, etc. The balance of the panel could then be drawn from other art/craft fields. However as no ceramist is invited to judge paintings, the necessity of a person from outside the ceramic world is debatable.
- 4 Tim Morris, in an old Sgraffiti, said the following: Points to be considered when selection takes place. The order is of no importance.
Craft ability — Saleability — Inspired originality — Function and aesthetics.
His summing up: Is the article well made?
Is the article aesthetically satisfying?
We think that this is still very relevant and could be given to judges when briefed.

The tune lingers on — any comment? Ed.



Note: The issues of NCQ planned for 1990 will be towards the end of March, May, August and November.



POTTERY MATERIALS



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Hatfield, Pretoria

Tel: (012) 43-6414

Where to join APSA

East Cape — APSA, P.O. Box 12329, Port Elizabeth 6006.

Western Cape — APSA, P.O. Box 159, Claremont 7735.

Northern Transvaal — APSA, P.O. Box 36411, Menlo Park 0102.

Southern Transvaal — APSA, P.O. Box 47182, Parklands 2121.

Vaal Triangle — APSA, P.O. Box 53, Henley on Klip 1962.

Natal — APSA, P.O. Box 1353, Durban 4000.

Orange Free State — APSA, P.O. Box 7351, Bloemfontein, 9300.

PAN (Namibia) — P.O. Box 22372, Windhoek 9000.

'Service above self — philanthropist and potter'

Maarten Zaalberg

A year ago, in October 1988 — NCQ Number 5, we ran the same title to celebrate Maarten's '50 years a potter' and I use it once again because it embodies all that Maarten was and stood for. The final paragraph of that article quoted Maarten saying: "Being a potter is a splendid occupation even after fifty years and it could not have been so splendid without the love, understanding, encouragement and support I have received from my wife Truus for the past 42 years." Maarten lived a full life doing what he liked best; making his beloved pots with Truus by his side and helping his fellow men.

Maarten was born in Leiderdorp, Holland in 1924 and, at the age of 14, started to work for three days a week in his father's pottery. He worked on a kick wheel and fired in a down draught peat fired kiln. Between 1940 and 1945 he studied at the Royal Academy for Sculpture and Drawing at the Hague. Thereafter he worked full time in the Loeterwoude pottery with his father until he emigrated to South Africa in 1951 where he founded the Zaalberg Potterij in Parow. In 1982 he sold up and concentrated on working on exhibition pots from his studio at his house in Kenridge, Durbanville; making stoneware vases, bowls and other traditional shapes. Maarten's work was mainly undecorated except for the natural flow of glazes and slips applied with a wooden spoon. The ware was fired in electric kilns, a wood fired up draught kiln and more

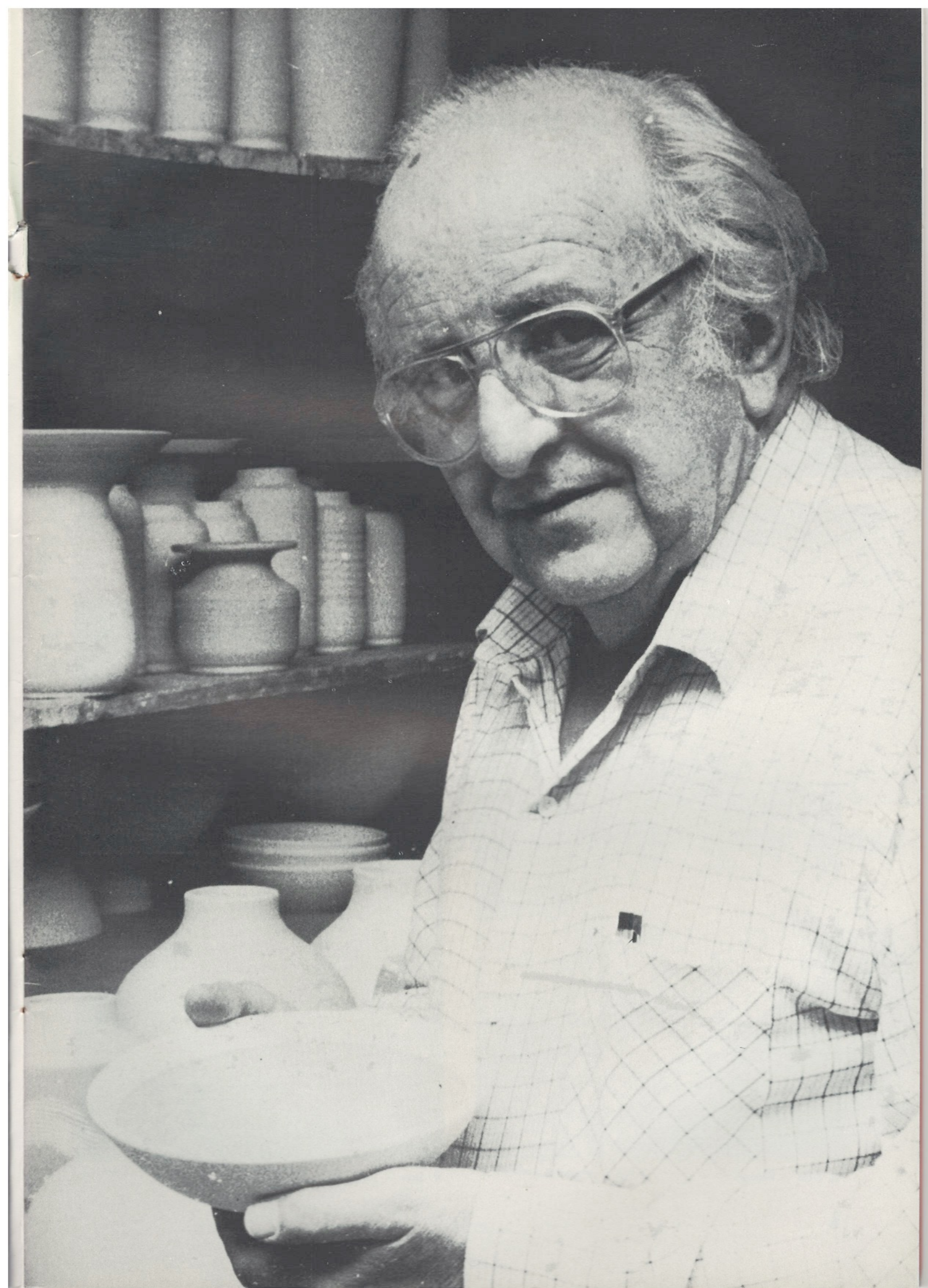
recently in reduction in a gas kiln. Maarten took part in most APSA exhibitions, his work highly commended, and has had several one man exhibitions. His work is in both public and private collections.

On behalf of the National Executive Committee and all members of APSA, we were greatly saddened to hear of the sudden death of Maarten Zaalberg and to Truus and her children we send our deepest sympathy. Maarten joined APSA in 1973 and was several times the National Chairman as well as Chairman of the Western Cape for well over ten years. Through his help and guidance he has built up this region to by far the largest in the Association, its members accounting for nearly a third of APSA. His unselfishness and the unrivalled hard work he put into our Association, has done much to build it into the organisation it is today; spreading knowledge and sharing in the joy of clay. Maarten will be sadly missed and long remembered.

Elza Sullivan
Chairman, National Executive, APSA

Opposite page, Maarten in his Kenridge studio and, below, participating in the 'Throwing the tallest pot competition' at the opening of the Durbanville Clay Museum in 1986 with SATV in attendance.





Fine display at Biennial

Opening speeches are much the same everywhere — but in the French language, on a bright summer's day, in the hills of the Cote d'Azur, they sound a lot better!

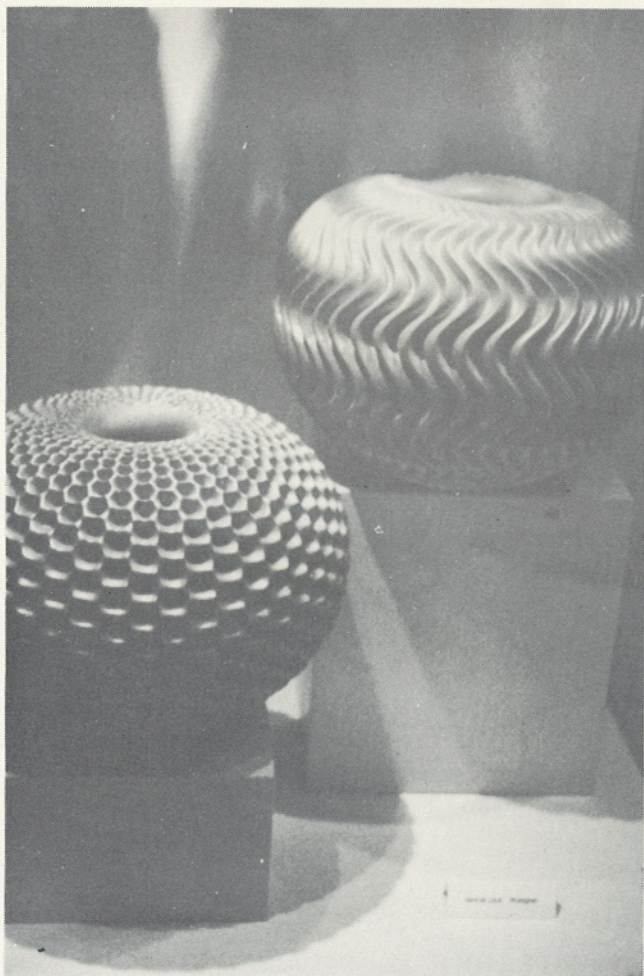
The occasion was the opening of the 11th International Biennial of Ceramics; the venue — the ancient priory of the Monks of Ierins, now functioning as the Castle-Musée of Vallauris. In this surprisingly intimate vaulted setting is displayed ceramic work from some 38 countries, including five pieces from South Africa (200 works on show were selected from 1 800 slides).

It's a fine display — more varied and interesting I feel, than the last two Biennials I've attended. Ceramists' heightened awareness of fantastical and sculptural possibilities (not much thrown work) helps to account for this, as does interest in both adventurous and classical approaches to surface decoration. "Raku pieces are now becoming more colourful as well as more refined,"

comments one of the judges. And it's interesting that application of "cold" colour is not permitted!

Surface treatments range from satin smooth, through thorny, to mutilated! Imitation is still popular, with colour and textures emulating cork and wood, metal and fibre, stone, eggshell — and the inside of cut fruit! Elsewhere pressed lace creates delicate patterns, newsprint and photographic images are screen-printed onto surfaces and drenched fabric looks like — drenched fabric.

While folk art inspires some Polish ceramists, Kalkowski produces a pointed political statement with tiny emaciated figures restrained with wire. Contributors from Hungary and Czechoslovakia are also politically critical. In the work of French award winner Jacky Colville fantasy is allowed full rein and her gargoyle-like multi-coloured figures attracted much attention.



H. Lula — Poland.



N. Hole — Denmark.

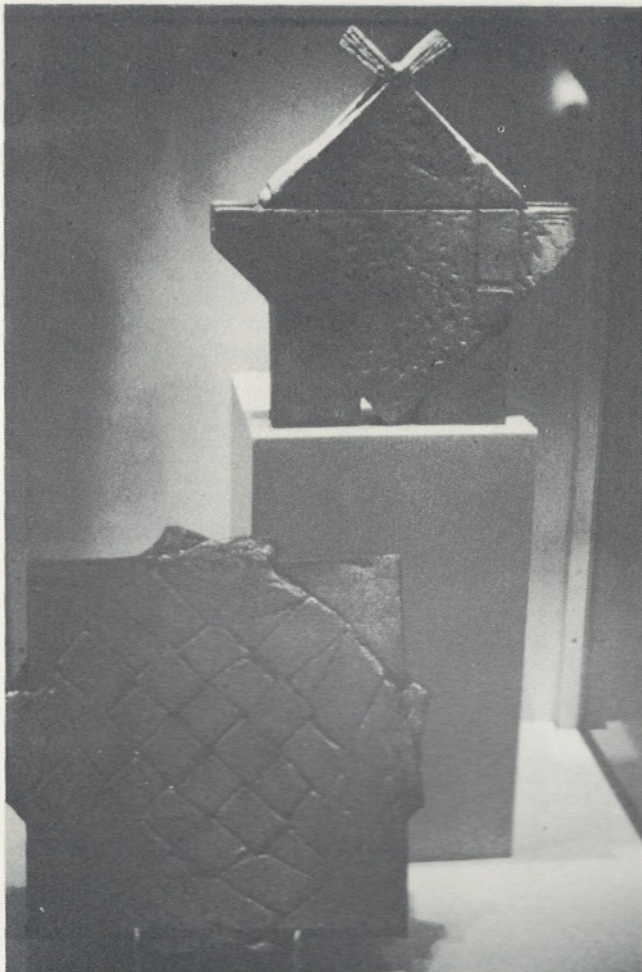
On the other end of the scale, refined skills, beautiful shaping, and superbly subtle glazing was recognized by judges who awarded the Grand Prix, to France's M Musarra for his classic vessels.

South Africa's contribution is not all encouraging. Tineke Meijer's two multi-textured mini-monumental pieces look very good beside international competition, as did two graphically patterned pots by S. Christie. Charlotte Katzen's gape-mouthed hippo, on the other hand, is more suited to a tourist market.

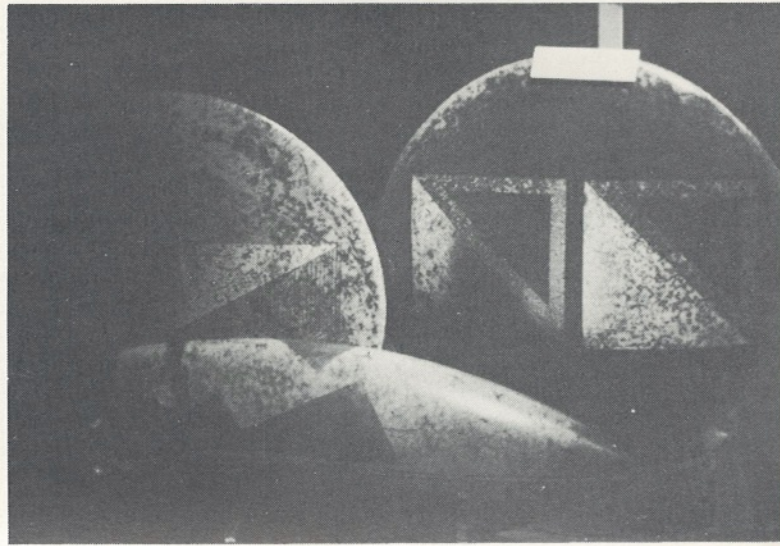
Benita Munitz

Courtesy Cape Times

Note: The closing date for slides is 10 January 1990 and not 30 April 1990 as printed in the prospectus. Address — Biennial Committee, Hotel de Ville, 06200, Vallauris, France.



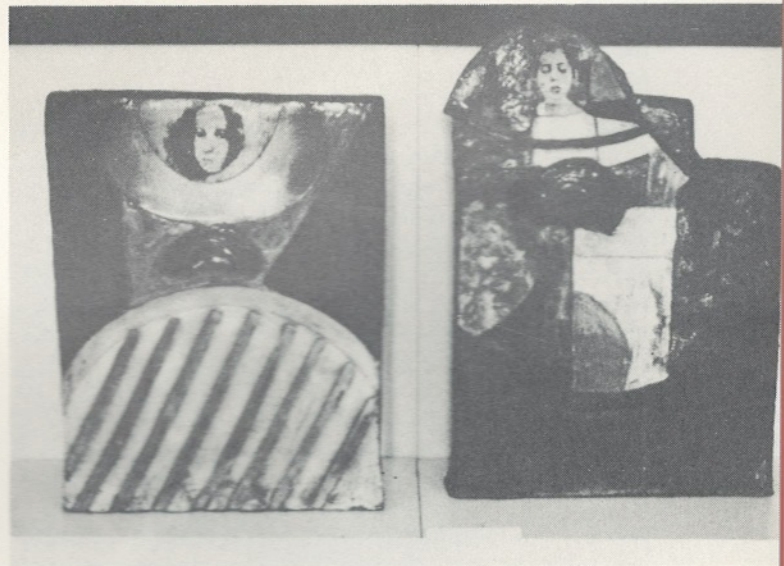
A. His — France.



D. Siegfried Gornskat — Holland.



G. Montushi — Italy.



T. Girones Villancia — Spain.

Andrew Guy Walford

by Minette Zaaiman

Andrew Walford was born in 1942. He was apprenticed to Walsh Marais Pottery at the age of 17 and later worked for Liebermann Pottery. In the early sixties he started his own studio in Natal producing stoneware in oxidation and later changing to reduction in an oil fired kiln. The next few years he spent travelling throughout Europe working with various potters and briefly had a studio in Germany before returning to South Africa in 1968. Later that year he settled in NShongweni, his present home and studio. In 1969 he went on a study tour of the Far East. His work has been shown in many notable institutions both here and in Europe and America. His work is in public and private collections in many countries.

Editor

Andrew Walford's retrospective exhibition opened at the Old Arts Building of the University of Pretoria on Tuesday 17 October. An enthusiastic audience was first treated to a Bocherini concert before viewing the pots in earnest.

Then followed a demonstration on the wheel of both throwing and turning. I wondered whether the public would be prepared to pay the amount for a bowl which seemingly arose in 2 seconds. Fortunately Andrew quoted Hamada who said when asked how long it took him to make a certain pot . . . "50 years and two seconds". That made the point. Andrew's brushwork demonstration went off just as well. The enormous fat-pointed Japanese brush left one gasping at the perfect circle and the ease with which a bamboo shoot appeared.

The exhibition itself was divided into two parts; the retrospective side and more recent work which was for sale.

There were pots from his very early days. The first coil pot at the age of ten and wood sculptures from the days when he studied under Mary Stainbank in Durban. Also a small tenmoku pot from his first oil firing which went to the Smithsonian Institute. A tenmoku bowl from the same kiln travelled Europe with him for his morning muesli. That is the beauty of pottery — not for the showcase but for everyday use. Then there was a slab pot which was exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum — today Andrew looks at it and says nothing. Also on view was a range done in Germany where the Nordic influence is unmistakable. The early studio work at NShongweni of 1969 was there — small porcelain bowls, lidded jars, casseroles and a bean pot with thrown handles. The blue plates are interesting, almost mean in thinness but, as

Andrew says . . . "You always think pottery should be thin when you begin. That is a very legitimate stage through which you must go. The generous rims come later."

In the centre of the main hall was an enormous low table with white wax slabs and small groups of thin white candles. The porcelain pieces were set off beautifully against the almost luminous white wax. There was a sympathetic relationship of tone which could not have been matched easily with any other display material. The exhibition was accentuated with bright spots of red pomegranate blooms arranged simply in some of the tall jars.

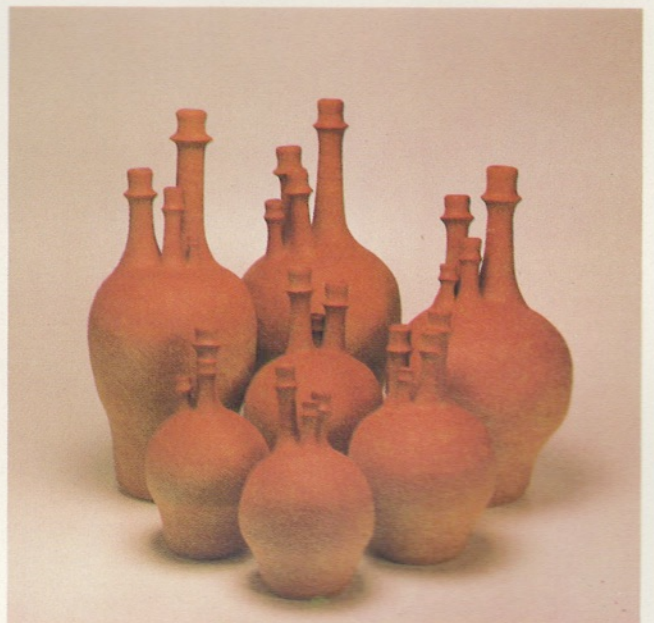
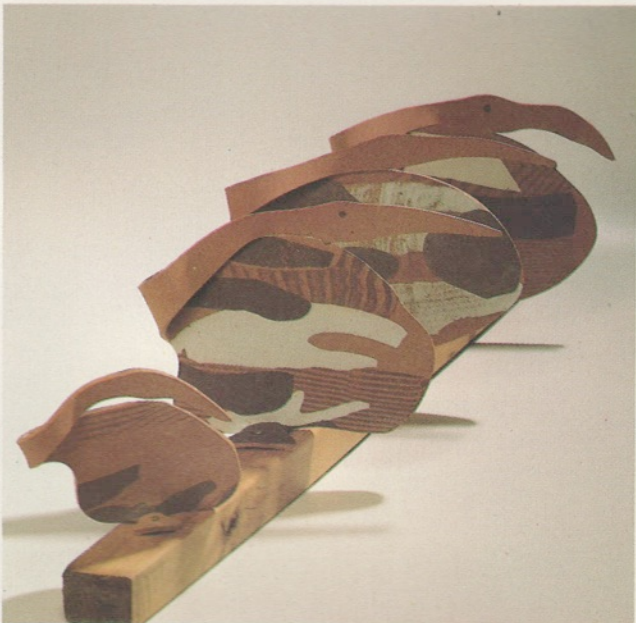
We saw some of Andrew's treasured pieces from his private collection. In particular a jar with slip decoration, dark rim and a single dark leaf pattern. Also several quiet bowls rising from their bases with just a hint of fish or bird resting in the right position. Andrew pointed out a little tea bowl made from clay which he found in a Richmond street. It reduced to a warm ochre brown. The glaze is pearly turquoise forming a delightful contrast to the yellowish clay. Tea sipped from that bowl should taste like a poem.

There were inlay wind chimes, something new for Pretoria. Andrew says they can withstand quite a strong wind and the almost metallic clank is most attractive. A series of unglazed birds, minarets, people, gourds and eggs were similar to ones he had on exhibition in 1970. A new aspect is the inlay slab birds mounted on blocks of wood. There is elegance and movement in these flat birds with long twisted necks. The inlay patterns are lively and interesting within the surround.

This exhibition was of major importance covering a wide range of shapes and glazes. The chun glazes are very special; thick, bluish, creating dramatic shadows where the glaze thickens at the edge.

To those who admire and love timeless treasures — here we have it. The Natal potters and public are truly fortunate to have the age old tradition of clay and flame in their midst. In Pretoria we say thank you to the University for inviting Andrew and to Andrew thank you for coming — we thoroughly enjoyed your exhibition.

Facing page, top, centre of main hall with wax table and candles. Below, inlay slab birds and unglazed oil fired pots, photographs by Ted Brien.





A visit to Wobage Farm

Michael Casson

by Michael Guassardo

Michael Casson has been making pots for more than 35 years now. Initially he produced wheel thrown functional work; however he now concentrates on making individual pieces in high fired stoneware and porcelain.

He was a founder member of the Craft Potters' Association and co-founder with Victor Margrie of Harrow Studio Pottery course. He was also a founder board member of Dartington Pottery Training Workshop and is a committee member of the Crafts Council. He was awarded an OBE in 1983. Today finds him a very popular chairman to a host of pottery events and seminars. His work is in main public and private collections both in the United Kingdom and abroad, mainly in America. He has also published a number of books, one of which is known to us all 'The Craft of the Potter' based on the BBC television programme of the same name.

It was raining when we arrived at Wobage Farm near Upton Bishop in Herefordshire. The weather did not however spoil the lovely views as one looked down over the surrounding hills from the attractive range of old buildings that make up the Cassons' home and pottery; nor did it dampen the warm welcome we received.

Michael Casson's first influences in his approach to pottery were via Greek history and philosophy and primitive and classical Greek pots as seen in museums and pottery books. He was also strongly affected by the work of Picasso as a ceramic decorator.

Michael's work consists of four main groups of forms, namely jugs, bowls, lidded pots and bottles. These are all made in stoneware with the occasional group in porcelain which is fired in one of the wood firing kilns. The Cassons and Andrew McGarva fire in three types of kilns — electric, gas and wood.

The jug is perhaps the form for which Michael has become best known. These come in all shapes and sizes from full-bellied, broad based to tall and slender. His jugs are particularly known for their upwardly exaggerated pouring lips and splendid pulled handles. Some are very large and most are thrown in two stages. He uses a thrown ring of soft clay which is added to a stiffer base. This allows him a greater range of forms. They are decorated, plain wood ash and salt glazed to slip dipped. These are either wiped away or trailed on.

When we were there he was decorating some bowls and bottles with his 'swimmer' designs. For these designs he uses paper resist and painting in area and line. This method allows him to build up layers of colour so that the figures become partly abstract. Once again these are fired salt glazed in the wood firing kilns.

Sheila Casson was turning her porcelain bowls at her wheel and from a doorway next to her came the lovely aroma of caramel. Caramel? Sheila explained to us that the smell was sugar burning off in the gas kiln. Sugar is used in some of the glazes to harden the surface so as to allow further decoration without disrupting the design underneath.

Sheila graduated from Hornsey College of Art in 1951, shared a workshop with Michael in London from 1955 and was elected a member of the CPA in 1958. Her work has been widely exhibited in the UK and also in West Germany and the USA.

Sheila has traditionally worked in porcelain but more recently has started to use a white stoneware body. Her main form is an upright bowl, decorated on the outside with up to about a third of the inside also decorated. Paper resist shapes are wetted and placed in position and a coloured slip is sprayed on. After that some of the resist is removed and latex is painted on in areas



Left, the vital 'Mick' Casson, dressed for the weather, at his wheel and, above, some of his partly glazed pots including some of the 'swimmer' bowls.

Photographs by the author.





Above, large bowl by Andrew McGarva and, below, two pots by Michael Casson. Opposite a typical jug by

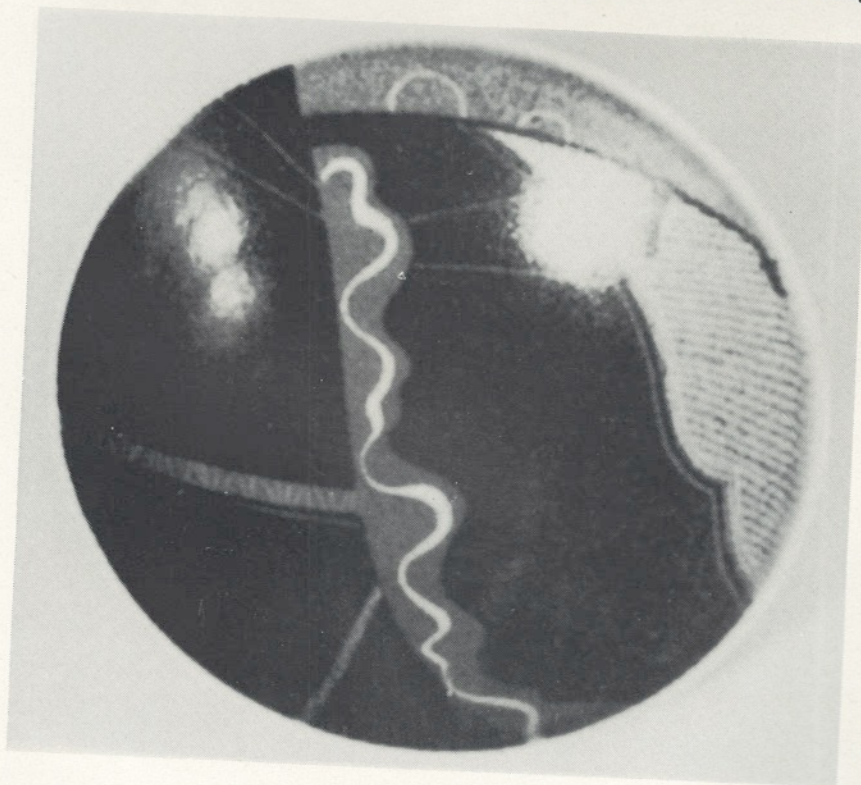
Michael Casson in the collection of Norma and Michael Guassardo.



where the original slip is to remain. Thereafter a second slip is sprayed on producing either darker tones or a change of colour. Sometimes these slips are sgraffitoed for further spraying or cut back to reveal the white body. The pots are then biscuited and receive a final glaze before firing in reduction in a gas kiln. Most of Sheila's designs are influenced by the scenery from the pottery window; hills, fields and trees and these again by the ever changing seasons.

Unfortunately Andrew McGarva, the third member of Wobage Farm, was away at the time of our visit. However his presence and personality was certainly felt in the showroom where his large, warm and friendly pots put a little sunshine into a wet day. Andrew McGarva joined the Cassons at Wobage Farm in 1979 to establish his workshop. Traditionally a big ware thrower and salt glazer, he now makes raw fired, colourful, painted pots from mugs to large bowls. Andrew believes in supplying what the market place wants provided he finds personal satisfaction in producing the ware. To this end he works in close co-operation with the building industry and interior designers. Andrew is a meticulous thrower and does not turn his pots. He also extrudes the handles. When the pots are leather hard they are glazed and, once dry, they are painted in cobalt, iron and titanium. The pots are then once fired in reduction in a gas or oil fired kiln to cone 10. His decorating techniques are bold and simple and are mostly drawings of country life; plants, animals and country scenes. His work has been on exhibitions in many countries.

We found the Wobage Farm showroom a delight to the eye and pretty reasonable on the pocket.



Magnesium glaze 1280°C Reduction — Michael Casson

Cornish Stone	33
Whiting	7
Ball Clay	4
Magnesium Carbonate	2
* China Clay	6
Iron	1,5 — 3

Minus the iron makes white semi opaque glaze at 1300°C.

Dolomite glaze 1280°C Reduction — Michael Casson

Potash Feldspar	100
Soda Feldspar	100
* China Clay	100
Whiting	14
Dolomite	80
Tin Oxide	1

Vitreous Slip — Sheila Casson

Cornish Stone	60
Ball Clay	35
* China Clay	5
Red Iron Oxide	100

Good under or over glazes thick or thin. This slip can be mixed half and half with red clay for variations or 0,25 cobalt gives good blue.

* Serina Kaolin is a good substitute for English China Clay.

*A bowl by Sheila Casson,
thrown with resist decoration
— courtesy CPA 'Potters' seventh edition.*

La Biennale di Venetia — 1988

Photographs: Tineke Meijer

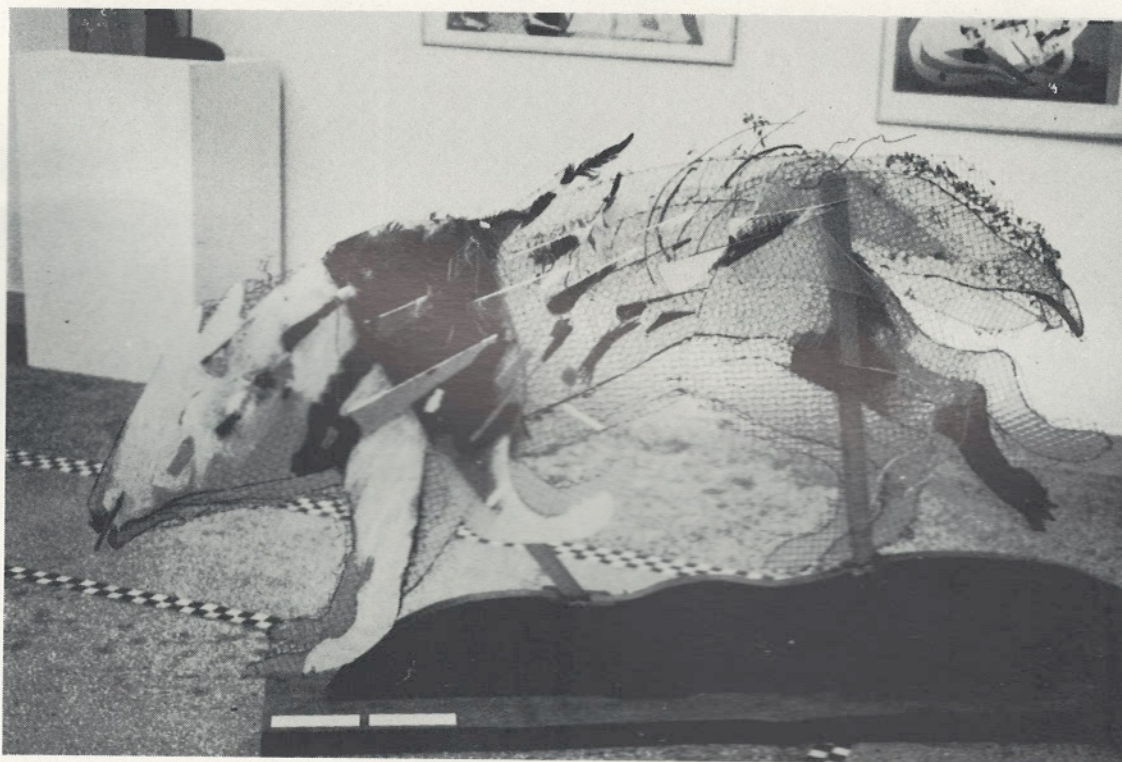
Text: Selected material from catalogue.

"Once more the temple of world art throws open its portals — and the phrase 'Temple of World Art' is the right one since no other place but Venice could fill the part. However one must here pause for thought. The temple is once more becoming an 'attraction' for 'art', that in a certain sense was getting lost in a labyrinth where beginning and end never met, where inventiveness was subjugated to further inventiveness and where fashion was only that and no longer meditation, growth or becoming.... in fact, the

temple doors have always been open. The doubt existed in those who through their own blindness and limitations could not see it, could not interpret the sacred nature of the place and could not (even if only in desecrating it) appreciate its essence. An essence formed first of all by the works and their message, and then by the artists who passed through the place with humility and wisdom."

written by Federico Brook

Dana Zámecnikova — Czechoslovakia:
'Persecution' 1987 — mixed media (mainly glass).



"Ten or fifteen years ago — it is difficult to give a precise date — a generation of new artists who were mainly graduates of the Prague and Bratislava academies of figurative and applied art began to attract critical attention at a national level (though often the attention was not very kind). The Skupina Mladich (Group of Youth) rejected the individual approach to reality, seeing collective work as the best way of interpreting the

real. For this reason they launched specific projects in various individual places making them the vehicle of their artistic message. Dana Zámecnikova (who has chosen glass as her medium — linked to the old Bohemian Glass School) develops the expressive possibilities of glass in her double capacity of writer and painter.

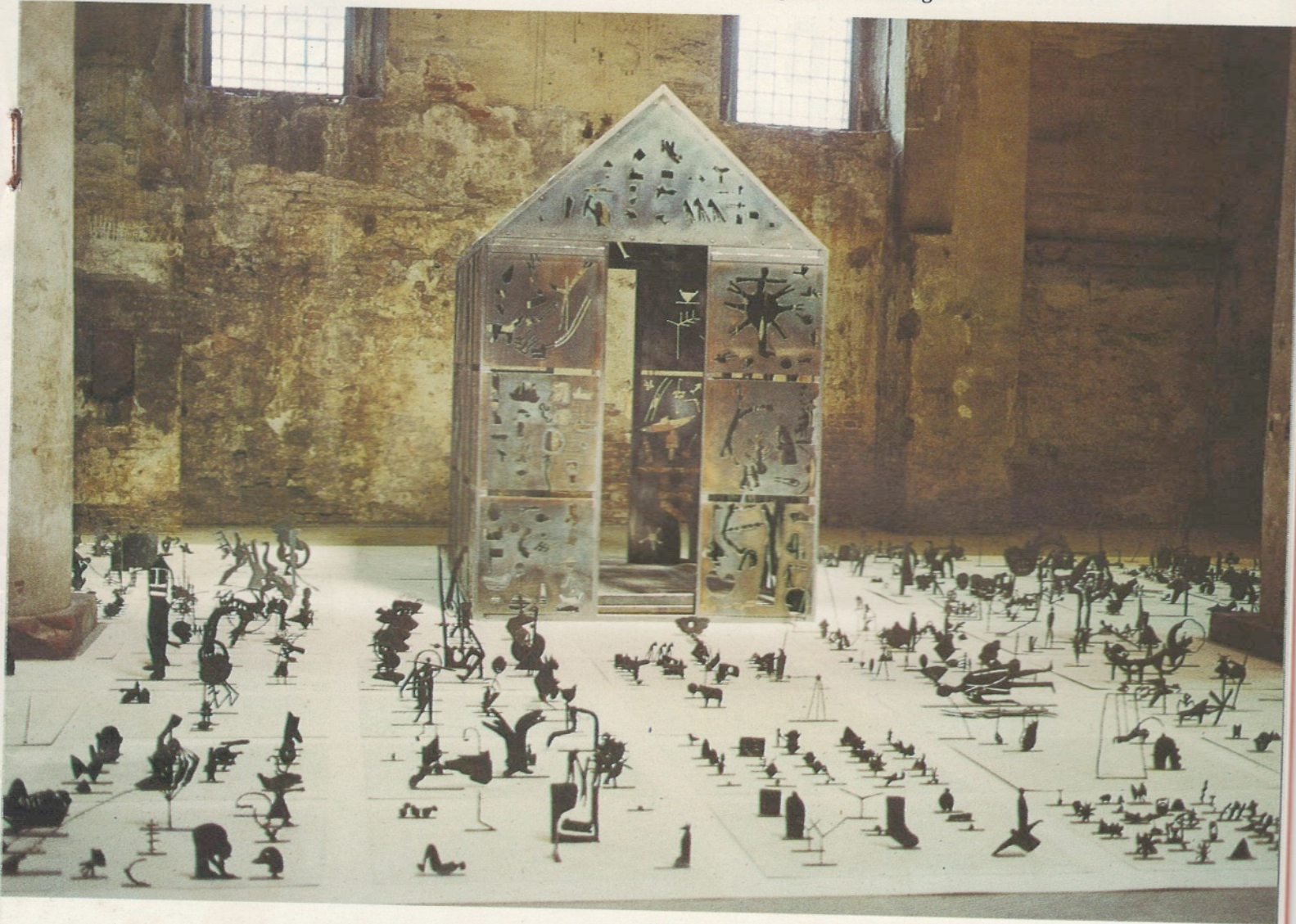
written by Jiri Kotalik

Nikki de Saint Phalle: The tree of Snakes.
Polyster resin with mirror plating, murano glass,
mosaic and gold leaf.

This piece on exhibition is a type of model for a
large fountain that Nikki de Saint Phalle is
putting together for the Schneider's Children's
Hospital of the Long Island Jewish Medical
Centre.



Iorgos Lappas — Cairo: Map of the world 1988.
Iron cutting and soldering.



"Aperto 88 is not looking for confirmation, is not a show for the participants but an interrogation into the possibilities of our world. The world is being interrogated more vastly than in the past — East and West, North and South, the most diverse continents have been placed side by side in order to demonstrate that the consolidated point of view is welcome but not so that it might be demonstrated hostilely, as a contrast with the order but rather in order to be understood as a possibility for living together. For the first time, what is more, 'Aperto 88' is following the basic philosophy of the Biennale. This proceeding together, both East and West, should be maintained in the future through other relationships. 'Aperto' should be allowed to represent, until new orders, in its new spatial quantity, an international quality, provided that quality is not merely assumed as a unilateral vision which is often tied to the commercial aspect, but as a sincere harmony and correspondence between all nations".

written by Dieter Ronte

Shigeo Toya — Japan: 'Woods' 1987, wood acrylic, 28 piece.



"Modern art draws its own ability to transform, its own creative energy from the cultural history of the past. Contemporary Japanese sculpture in wood is indebted to a 17th century Buddhist monk called Enku who spent his life travelling the length and breadth of Japan sculpting statues of Buddha (he produced about 120 000 of them — a monumental act of devotion).

Of the artists who made their debut in the world of contemporary Japanese art in about 1980, Toya Shigeo ranks among the very highest in terms of creative energy. He has avoided various art movements, such as conceptual art in the 1970's, and devoted a long time to experimenting with and exploring the roots of the artistic possibilities within himself. What has triggered his imagination more than anything else is his experience with

nature and specifically trees, which provide a circuit linking the workings of nature to human activities. At the same time his work is an ambitious endeavour to suggest a sense of the symbolic relationship with forests and, by extension, to grasp as a totality the strange quality of the mutations that can be found in forests. The insertion of the countless marks of the chainsaw and the axe conveys the message of the artist who treats the symbiotic relationship with forests as his principal subject. It also reflects an enduring will and can be interpreted as a prayer by the artist, addressed to what is sacred, with the aim of exposing the danger inherent in the 'ecology' of contemporary civilization.

written by Tadayasu Sakai

Personally Speaking

From behind the ironic curtain

Rosemary Lapping-Sellars

Is it not ironic that we clay people still have a problem with our identity? We as a small and somewhat insignificant band of folk who express our creativity through our hands and some lowly mud have yet to establish a confident persona to present to the outside world. We lack guts and I feel that the reasons for this are so deeply imbedded that it is almost impossible to assess them objectively. It is for this reason that there is often an undercurrent of tension when there are meetings or exhibitions or places where potters meet. Some may argue that this is not the case at all and that the above statement is no more than subjective response, and of course this is true, but I do know that a number of my colleagues share this opinion and are distressed by it too.

Being of an unpredictable nature both clay and fire are exceedingly difficult media to manipulate successfully and therefore a good piece of ceramic is not common to find. In spite of the fact that computers have provided the ceramist with the space age kiln, the black devil or element of chance is never far from our door. Opening a glaze firing remains a nerve-wracking experience and until the pots have cooled and we can assess their worth, the tension is tangible. Some potters hang good luck charms over the kilns, the Japanese cite prayers and touch the sealed door with oils and holy waters. A fine fired piece is a rarity and we all know it. Therefore most of what we produce is a compromise and although we do our best, our best is often not good enough. This fact makes for fragile egos. In the art arena ceramists have yet to be accepted as artists with credibility. We teeter on the social brink like stilettoed-heeled teenagers dying to dance . . . and while the music plays on we desperately scuffle for balance.

The modern potter and ceramist has yet to find a 'place of belonging' in the modern world, especially when exposed in the open market where there is an air of uncertainty and the fear of false reason. The much quoted phrase of Hans Coper who in 1969 wrote: 'Practising a craft with ambiguous reference to purpose and function one has occasion to face absurdity. More than anything, somewhat like a demented piano-tuner, one is trying to approximate a phantom pitch', is as real and as relevant as ever. It is this ambiguity that causes the level of dementia which in turn destroys confidence.

Is this ironic and anyhow so what? The APSA Nationals has been and gone and much dispute and haggling took place in front of and behind the ironic curtain. In spite of this however the show was well supported, well displayed and above all very well done. RAU lends itself to providing a superb backdrop for the display of ceramics and full advantage was taken of its space. It is to the credit of the organisers that such a wide variety of fired objects could be seen by the public in one place at one time, and they have every reason to be very proud of their efforts. Why was it then that a number of individuals were uncomfortable? Was it that (and dare we mention it?) one of the smallest and most humble objects on the show walked off with one of the top prizes? Was it that one of the awards was given to a piece whose prototype and inspiration can be found in Britain created by one of her leading potters or was it that the ceramic sculptors felt yet again that they still do not belong with APSA. It seems almost bizarre to consider that two objects like the tiny raku bowl of Rosemary Jaffray could be juxtaposed beside the lifesize reclining nude of Wilma Cruse and judged by the same yardstick. What was the brief given to the judges and what criteria were imposed in assessing the worth of each object? There is no doubt that even the most unquestioning individual would find the answers interesting.

In 1985 The Tate Gallery in London awarded its prestigious Turner prize to Howard Hodgkin and I will never forget entering that gallery and seeing the exhibits of the competing artists. Most of the pieces were very large assemblaged sculptures or triptychs which dwarfed Hodgkin's small canvas. As one struggles to focus from bright sunlight to a dimly lit room so I stood there slowly absorbing the significance of each piece. And as I stood there Hodgkin's canvas grew and its presence became all embracing until it was so strong that the really large pieces paled in comparison. Could this have happened at RAU? Could Jaffray's tiny bowl have become so large that Cruse's nude could have drowned in it? In addition to the judges who did envisage this?

Strangely, on the aircraft to Johannesburg, I had taken with me Peter Fuller's two books, "Images of God", and "Art and Psychoanalysis". Strange because Peter Fuller had been one of the judges in 1985. He and the other judges convened a conference after the award, and I recall vividly their discussion on the criteria of awarding prizes to artworks. So I was reminded acutely of this when I saw Jaffray's bowl and I thought of Hodgkin's work. Ironically in the former book there is an essay by Fuller called "The Proper Work of the Potter" and he does not spare his criticism of the modern ceramic movement and its 'liberators' of clay who often produce works which are 'not only quite useless . . . but singularly unattractive . . . and uninteresting'. He reminds the reader that Cardew had felt that 'the proper



Pablo Picasso 'La Goélette' made in Vallauris in 1949.



Richard Slee 'Cornucopia.'

work' of the potter was to make pots and should this be the case why were today's potters doing everything with clay EXCEPT throwing it into 'beautifully formed and decorated pots'. According to Fuller the Leach tradition purported, and I quote, 'the humblest piece of domestic ware should be a good-looking object; and the finest pot is born, in part, from the health of that tradition which produces good domestic ware. The beautiful decorated pot thus will stand as an indictment of our culture by revealing how, in *aesthetically healthy situations*, art is no more than a dimension of everyday work, and fine art as it were, an intensification of that dimension.' Thus in summary it becomes clear that 'a pot becomes an accumulation of sensations whilst an artwork an expression of emotions.' But if this is the case what is its significance and what does it all mean?

Thanks to Fuller my personal dementia has given way to an objective understanding. Last year Richard Slee, a British potter, addressed the conference I attended in Uley. Slee makes clay objects, and possibly in Fuller's books they would be considered extremely useless. He has been well represented at the Crafts Council, was one of the invited artists to exhibit at the London Amsterdam show and has been the recipient of numerous awards. He treated his rapt audience to a slide show entitled 'A Decade of Development' which consisted of a well documented lecture concerning his work over ten years. 'Am I one of these smart "ceramists"?' he questioned . . . 'not a damn! I am a potter . . . a mantelpiece potter and my work decorates the modern home.' His downright straightforward approach to himself and his work revealed a person who knew where he belonged, and his confidence lay in his honesty and integrity. Slee has considered the clay object, and especially the clay vessel and his resulting artworks are expressions of emotions relating to the concept of vessel. Maybe it is to this cause that APSA addresses its own motivation as after all it is an association of potters, and potters make pots. And pots should stand as an indictment of our culture and should reveal a dimension of our everyday life. The real issue lies in the fact that a lifesize ceramic nude is not a pot and although the medium and process are shared there is no further similarity. The parting of the ways occurs when the object in question is no longer a vessel.

Picasso with his extraordinary insight produced a ceramic piece which epitomises the conundrum posed above. It is a wheel thrown pot, turned into the figure of a woman, its arm is one handle, its other arm, resembling a spout, cradles a small thrown vase. It is in fact a vase holding a vase and is entitled 'Woman holding Amphora'. The question being, is this a sculpture of a woman holding a vase, or is this a teapot? Sara Radstone, a contemporary British potter handbuilds tall crusty rocklike shapes which have the dignity and bearing of a strong piece of abstract art. And yet when questioned about the minute hole in the top

of her 'pots' she replies that these shapes are vessels and are all about pots. Gordon Baldwin shares this view as of course do a number of other potters.

As I see it ceramics fit into three distinct categories. The vessels, the wall decoration and the three dimensional sculptural forms. The vessels can be mass produced or handmade and will function as either domestic ware, decoration or both. The wall pieces can be mosaic, tiles or clay shapes affixed to a flat surface whilst the sculptural pieces range between miniature terracotta funerary objects to the lifesize and larger sculptures of the clay artists.

The polemics of the issue develop when the functions of the object are questioned. Did Picasso intend his 'woman' to be used as a vase and therefore is it a pot? Should the vessels of Rhe Wessels be considered as sculptures and therefore relegated to the ranks of fine art. In my opinion pots are vessels, and vessels have interiors and exteriors produced with the express purpose of functioning practically and aesthetically . . . So what must we think when an artist like Hennie Stroebel wins the prestigious 1989 Volkskas atelier award with a piece entitled 'By Night?' It is an artwork 190 cm high, of a ceramic amphora standing on a column with a thickly encrusted decorative surface. Reminiscent of the surfaces of Gaudi's architecture, the piece is a modern statement in which Stroebel has combined glazed tiles with glass and pieces of embroidery and its richness places it firmly in the regions of high art. Yet it is a pot which reflects an accumulation of sensations and a strong expression of emotions. Twenty years after Coper verbalised his confusion, the enigma remains, the phantom pitch piercing the silence.

Potters are united in their passion for their medium and they will continue to work with clay approaching it as an addict does his daily fix. Accepting this compulsion it is therefore necessary to maximise the output of energy in as constructive a manner as possible. The duty of APSA is to bring potters together, to set a standard for them within the confines of their potential and to direct them to further heights, ensuring that they progress and reflect their culture and tradition in a contemporary context. When competitions take place the stage is set for a fine spectacle, and the duty of the directors and judges lies in the task of presenting the best show of the year.

A show which will ensure that all those players who have taken part will feel that they have a role to play and a function to perform and that they will be given an equal hearing and a fair judgement. So tuned must be the performance that when the final call comes on opening night the curtain which falls is not ironic.

Throwing with Bruce Walford

In this lesson we will throw a casserole and lid. For the casserole you will need 3 1/2 to 4 kg and the lid approximately 1 1/2 to 2 kg of clay. In our next issue we will be turning these and putting on handles.

Centre and open as for a large bowl (NCQ number 9), this time extending the base and keeping it flat; note the position of the hands keeping the clay on centre and the rim firm, fig. 1. Hold the clay firmly in both hands and gently squeeze and pull the clay up, about half the desired height, the left hand keeping the inner wall straight and the right hand forming a slight roll of clay on the rim, fig 2. Now using the thumb of right hand to keep the clay firm and form the galley top, use the index finger of the left hand to gently press down and form the galley, the other fingers pressing slightly inward and keeping the edge firm, figs. 3 and 4. Finally using the finger tips of both hands, pull the wall up to the desired height. Note the palm of the left hand is keeping the galley rim firm and on centre, fig. 5.



1



2



3



4



5

For the lid centre and open by pressing the thumbs down into the centre, the fingers pressing inward, and form a hollow mushroom shape, fig. 1. With the left hand at the centre and the right hand at the base of the mushroom, squeeze and pull outwards and up towards your body, figs. 2



1

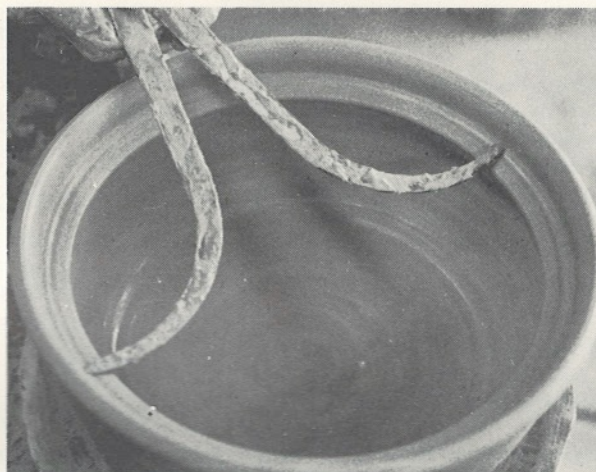
and 3. Repeat until the approximate size and shape is formed; this should take no more than two pulls. Measure the inner diameter of the casserole galley with a pair of calipers, fig. 4. Adjust lid to correct size (rather pull the lid too small than too big), figs. 5 and 6.



2



3



4



5



6

Regional Roundup

From Vaal Triangle branch

Workshop with Alta Fair

A most pleasant and relaxing day was had with Alta Fair and members of APSA on Saturday 14 October. Alta Fair is a lecturer in ceramics at the Verwoerdburg Technical College but resides in Britz, so she came quite a long way to be with us. However, she arrived "bright-eyed and bushy tailed" and was very well organised and prepared for her workshop which dealt with slab work and pinch/coiled pots.

Alta uses the Grey Stoneware from The Clay Pot and finds it suitable for most temperatures though she takes her pots to 1280°. She rolled out her

slabs with a rolling pin on a board covered with canvas. She cuts her patterns from old X-Ray plates which are placed firmly onto the slabs and 'cut' out with a potters needle, keeping the patterns or templates in place when she picks them up so they don't become distorted or fall apart. However, if they do lose their shape they should be pushed back into shape as clay has a memory and if a piece is cut off it will pull back once fired. Drying is best done slowly as placing any clay in the wind will cause uneven drying. Alta's slabs were surprisingly dry/leather hard but they are much easier to work with when they are not wobbly and limp and she proved to us that they can still be joined together without a problem.

Three day, live in, participating workshop

4 — 6 May 1990
24 — 26 August 1990

Norma and Michael Guassardo offer a three day, three nights, participating workshop at their pottery and home, Villa dei Fiori, on the Natal South Coast. The accent will be on glazes and glazing but will include throwing, turning and kiln firing; reduction firing in a 40 cu ft gas kiln and oxidation firing in an electric kiln.

Itinerary

Thursday May 3rd/August 23rd

- 6.00 pm Get acquainted over pre-dinner drinks.
- 7.00 pm Dinner and early to bed to prepare for an 18 hour day!

Friday May 4th/August 24th

- 7.30 am Breakfast
- 8.30 am Demonstration of glazing and decorating techniques and description of glazes.
- 10.00 am Each participant will be given two bisqued pots to glaze and take home after firing. However anyone wishing to bring their own pots should contact us first re clays, etc.
- 12 noon Pack kilns and start firing.
- 1.00 pm Lunch
- 2.00 pm Throwing and turning demonstration of lidded pots, large serving dishes and jugs. Note: These demonstrations will be interspersed with the firing techniques of the kilns.
- 5.00 pm Rest break
- 6.00 pm Braai and kiln firing party. (The gas kiln will include copper red and iron yellow glazes. The kilns should be down around midnight).

Saturday May 5th/August 25th

- 8.30 am Breakfast
- 9.30 am Glaze workshop. Your comprehensive notes on this aspect will have been given to you on arrival. Formulation of glazes. Adjusting of glazes. Physically making and preparing two glazes, one oxidation and a reduction copper red. Participants will be given a sample of the glaze of their choice to take home and experiment with.
- 11.30 am Open discussion and question time.
- 1.00 pm Lunch
- 2.00 pm Trip down the coast to visit two potteries and three galleries where some of South Africa's award winning potters have their pots on display.
- 7.00 pm Dinner followed by 'pottery scrabble' with prizes for the winners.

Sunday May 6th/August 26th

- 8.30 am Breakfast followed by the opening of the kilns! An in depth discussion on the results.
- 12 noon 'Surprise' farewell champagne lunch.

A maximum of eight participants can be accommodated. The cost of R375 includes the workshops, materials, accommodation, meals and the trip down the coast.

'Villa dei Fiori' is in Southport, one hour's drive from Durban on the N2 South.

For an application form please write or telephone:

Guassardo Pottery
P.O. Box 568 Anerley
4230 Natal
Telephone 0391-3216

Please do not send any money until your booking has been confirmed in writing.

Regional Roundup

To cut edges for joining, measure the thickness of the slab — 1 cm seems to be a good thickness. Then draw a line 1 cm in from the edge. Line up with the end of the board or table and mitre it by cutting neatly at the correct slant. Slab edges are cross hatched (a lot), then brushed with water (not slip) and pressed firmly together. Little sausages of clay give a neat finish when pressed into the joins. She picks up the whole structure when complete to ensure that it is not going to fall apart — if it does, then obviously all is not well! Old credit cards cut to a kidney shape and sanded smooth on the edges make the best scrapers. Though she did not demonstrate slip decoration, she usually applies her slip before drying is complete.

Alta then went on to demonstrate her method of coiling/pinching. As with most handwork a coiled pot cannot be made all at once and has to be left to harden up at various stages. She starts with a slab cut round with a bowl. Coils are formed by gently rolling the clay and pulling outwards. The coil is quite thick and should exactly fit the edge where it is to be joined. The join in the coil must be neat with no lumps and bumps. Pinch the coil onto the edge and then continue pinching until a good wall is formed. Trim off excess unevenness.

To make a bulbous pot with a narrow bottom, start upside down making the first coil at what will be the middle of the pot. Make coils smaller and smaller until the 'foot rim' is closed. Once hardened up turn upside down and continue coiling to form the top of the pot.

Alta really did make it look easy and its obvious that a lot of fun can be had making pottery by these methods.

Nancy Eagar



Northern Transvaal Branch

A few very basic tips

- a) When mixing glazes — add the powdered raw materials to the water — not the water to the glaze mix. Warm water also makes it easier to mix.
- b) When using fishing line as a cutting wire always replace before it gets too old. The old line leaves unwanted and uneven grooves which are very difficult to get rid of when turning.
- c) Very easy coloured engobes that work very well on a white body — take some white clay water (the thickness of thin cream) — add

some oxide or body stain until the colour looks right, stir very well and work through an old stocking. Paint on pot at leatherhard stage.

Use more or less oxide or stain for different intensities of colour.

Colours nice under transparent glaze or tin based glaze.

These colours are quite stable to soft stoneware, but have fired to higher temperatures.

These engobes also work quite well on red earthenware clay. Mixture must then be of a slightly thicker consistency.

- d) Use an afro comb with the top cut to be slightly rounded to comb-decorate leatherhard pieces. Always wipe clean before decorating the next piece. If you make a mess even surface with a rubber kidney and start over. You can get a very nice effect if you first apply a band of colour to the piece and then comb — keeping the comb at an angle.



East Cape Branch

Kenzan Annual Competition

Here is an early warning for our members. This exhibition, the third one, will be held during March/April 1990 over Easter. Again it is being organised by the East Cape Branch of the Institute of Architects. Their aim being to promote ceramics in architecture. A bigger and better venue is being organised for the next exhibition, but the important news is the theme that has been chosen for 1990.

This time it will be CERAMIC MOSAICS.

Size application/usage etc? This is entirely left to you and your imagination.

More details will follow as they become available. In the meantime start researching and experimenting now.

Mosaic, for most of us, presents a new challenge from which we can learn a lot. Give it all you have got.

For further details contact: East Cape Branch, P.O. Box 12329 Port Elizabeth, 6006.

Regional Roundup

Calculation of the cost of a firing:

For kilns with a simmer switch and contactor

Rating of kiln x setting of switch x cost per Kw

Say for the first hour your kiln is on setting 3 which means $\pm 30\%$ then your cost will be for that 1st hour

Rating of kiln	6	Kw
x	30% =	1,8 Kw
x Cost per Kw		<u>0,10</u>
	Total R	<u>0,18</u>

Repeat this calculation for every setting and add up your answers to arrive at the total cost.

Please note that the switch setting is not 100% accurate and will therefore affect your final cost.

Rob Picton from Heatwise



Potters' Association of Namibia

Thoughts taken from the Crit given by Minette Zaaiman on the 1989 Swabank/Pan Ceramics Exhibition:

Glaze should be applied to articles with a smooth surface. If clay is uneven, then leave article unglazed for effect.

Do not put too much glaze and sheen on an ethnic looking pot. It detracts from the simplicity of the pot. See that there is a balance of dark and light.

Get the full effect of your pot all round: inside, outside and especially underneath. Pattern should go through to base, not stop half way or three quarters of the way.

Do not hide texture of the clay with glaze, pattern and colour. Use the texture.

Sharp edges are dangerous. Sand them down for smoothness.

Look at rims: lids and corks must fit snugly and not wobble on.

A pot must be nice to pick up — it must feel right — it must not be too heavy. Knobs must "knob" and handles must "handle" comfortably. Lids must fit and not slide off the minute you pick up a pot.

Useful things must be able to stand upside down easily. Mugs must not have handles jutting up over the top/rim of the mug. Consider the person who washes and dries the domesticware!

A drinking vessel should have a lip that comes out slightly at the top to hold the lip of the drinker. Do not let it turn in, otherwise it will dribble on your blouse/shirt!

Articles that do not need a footing, need a sharp bevelling to "lift" the vessel from the ground. Make it a feature of your pot.

Big Platters need a friendly rim to hold and feel.

Sets must belong to each other either in shape, pattern or colour.

Delicate objects must feel light at the rim and at the foot/base.

Do not fold, hurt or torture the clay. It must fall naturally.

Added lines should not detract from the pot. Make them flow if you are going to add lines. Pattern must go right through to the base.

A bowl must be very even and a marble should be able to slide in on one side and out the other without jumping over humps and bumps.

No added decoration is needed for Raku, sawdust, woodfired and burnished pots. They have a natural decoration of their own.

Warn people about Raku, sawdust and wood-fired and burnished pots, in that they are porous.



Biosphere Design Competition

In our last issue we carried an insert on the 'Biosphere Ceramics Design Competition'. A point NCQ raised with the organizers was the production of high fired reduction ware. In this regard entrants should be fully aware of the commercial aspect of this competition. Unless you know of, or can offer a production line process for reduction fired ware, your entries should be fired in oxidation in electric kilns, preferably around 1100°C. For further details contact Biosphere, P.O. Box 23398, Claremont, 7735 or telephone (021) 686 3029.