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N E W Z E A L A N D P O T T E R

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Volume Three

Number One

August 1960

Even today there are still many countries left in which craftsmen-potters earn a living by filling a need in their community. In this issue we have articles about potters of this type in Africa, Spain and Japan. But in New Zealand no-one will thirst because we have made no water-pots. Therefore we have to create a need, we have to prove to our fellow-countrymen that a handmade pot has value in a world increasingly moulded into the same pattern by every new technical advance.

If our pots have the human values of warmth and vigour as well as usefulness they will find their own response and their own value in our community. But it is up to us to see that our work is not just a poorly made copy of factory produced ware or a stilted reproduction of pots that come from another age and another society.

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COVER

The cover photograph is of ceramic figures made by Muriel Moody and exhibited at her excellent show at the Architectural Centre Gallery from 14 - 26 February. Muriel Moody's work is sensitive and thoughtful. The variety and delicate imagery of her sculpture, in a setting well-designed by Geoffrey Nees, made the Gallery alive with a rare individuality.

EARTHENWARE GLAZES

Jack Laird

Earthenware glazes, like all other glazes, are glassy coatings to pottery formed by melting silica compounds. Apart from aesthetic reasons they are needed to compensate for the porosity of the body by giving an impermeable covering to its surface.

As the melting point of silica is 1685°C ., powerful fluxes are required to bring the fusing point down to below the vitrification point of the body. It is as well also to understand what happens to silica during the application of heat. Many potters think that because they have successfully fired a pot to a good biscuit temperature at a steady pace the glaze fire can then safely be quite rapid. This is true as far as the body is concerned but considerable changes go on in the crystal structure of silica from 250°C . upwards and particularly at 600°C .. If the grain size of the silica content of a glaze is not very fine, and if the temperature rise is too rapid, stresses are set up in the glaze which may not be resolved at the end of the firing.

The top range of earthenware temperature is usually considered to be about 1150°C .. This is below the point where the crystoballite Beta content of the glaze exerts its maximum thermal expansion effect and helps to render glazes fairly crazeproof. The difficulty in handling earthenware glazes lies in balancing them to make them a perfect fit to the pot. Under some conditions all glazes will craze. One of these is too rapid firing. A rise of 100°C . per hour is a fairly safe maximum, and 50% longer than the time required to reach maximum temperature should be allowed for cooling. Also if the body of the pot has an absorption of more than 10% the glaze is liable to craze. If the absorption is 15% or more it is practically bound to craze. Thirdly, too thickly applied glaze tends to

craze readily. This may be seen when the glaze has run into the bottom of a bowl. Crazing cracks appear there and often not where the glaze is thinner.

It is necessary, when searching for a good earthenware glaze, to start with an examination of the body of the pot. As the whole process involves a lot of trouble, it is just as well to make sure that there is a good and continuous supply of that body to use when the glaze has been stabilised. An earthenware body should be tested for absorption, deformation and shrinkage. The percentage absorption is determined by weighing a piece of biscuited body before and after totally immersing it in water for 24 hours. If the weight has increased by more than one tenth, the firing temperature should be raised to nearer the vitrification point, until the absorption is at a satisfactory level. To this temperature a tile of clay $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick, 8" long and 3" wide should be fired with each end supported so that the tile bridges a gap clear of the kiln floor. If it sags, the body is unlikely to be suitable. If the overall shrinkage is more than $\frac{1}{8}$ ", avoid using it also.

When a suitable body has been located, its maturing temperature will be known by the tests, and the next problem is determining and adjusting a basic glaze.

The amount of lead handled by a studio potter does not constitute a health hazard if used with care and normal precautions are taken. It is as well however, to avoid glazes in which lead oxide or lead carbonate forms substantially the bulk of the flux on vessels likely to be used for storing acidic liquids such as vinegar or fruit juices. There have been cases where the acid-soluble part of the flux in a glaze has not entirely combined in the firing and subsequent contact with acidic liquids has led to lead poisoning. Lead is, however, a most powerful and valuable flux imparting a fat smoothness to a glaze and enhancing colour.

The most usual form for handling lead is in lead-bisilicate or incorporated into a low-solubility frit.

Earthenware glazes, to mature at low temperatures, require high proportions of powerful fluxes. It is a fact, although the reason is obscure, that a combination of fluxes is more effective than one alone, and that lead readily combines with others in this way. Generally the more complex forms of low temperature glazes behave better, and are more tolerant than the simple forms, and for this reason many potters use a basic glaze compounded from a frit, either low solubility or leadless, and other added ingredients. It is interesting to note that a "leadless" glaze can in fact contain lead, although none of it is soluble in an acid test.

If the porosity of a body is satisfactorily low at a temperature of 1080°C ., at a firing rate of 100° an hour, pots made from it should be biscuited to this point. It has been noted that crazing problems decrease as the maturing temperature rises, as does the hardness and durability of the finished pot. So it would be advisable to fire the glaze as near to the maturing point of the clay as possible, perhaps somewhere about 1120°C .. To work out a glaze from a basic frit by empirical methods it would be necessary to choose one that matured about 1060°C ., and to it add silica and alumina to increase the maturing temperature and correspondingly increase the tolerance. As most substances of use to the potter that have an amphoteric action in glazes also contain quantities of silica, it is reasonable to concentrate on adding materials which will increase tolerance (i.e. a larger firing range and craze resistance) and let the silica content look after itself to the point where the maturing temperature becomes high enough. As an example - to 60 parts of frit maturing at 1060°C .. may be added -

Kaolin	10 parts
Steatite	5 parts
Feldspar	25 parts.

The Kaolin gives greater firing tolerance, raises the maturing temperature and makes the glaze more reserved and less glassy. Steatite (talc) gives greater craze resistance when used in small quantities. Feldspar combines with the fluxes in the frit and reduces the firing temperature. As a matter of fact, this particular glaze fires with a comfortable range of 1080° - 1130° C. There is no point in giving earthenware glaze recipes unless the body is stated as well, as every body has to have its glaze adjusted to it, and what may work on one body may not on another. This glaze was used as a basic glaze for domestic ware in England, showing no sign of craze when properly fired, and although it was never claimed to be so was, to a certain degree, ovenproof. To it was added tin oxide as an opacifier and various oxides for colours. It was also used clear over slip decorated ware.

Accuracy in weighing and making up glazes is a very important factor and the potter must be prepared to own a really good pair of scales, particularly for the small quantities that the studio-potter uses. The small country pottery may make up glazes in 200 lb. lots and a few grams either way will not make very much difference, although even then great care is exercised. A good balance of the 'Butcher' pattern that does not need weights and weighs up to 200 grams is very useful. Care should be taken to check that it is perfectly level before use, and that small quantities, say 3.5 grams of oxide, are added to say, 150 grams of glaze already in the pan, and not weighed separately. This is because the balances are rather insensitive at the bottom end of the scale.

Other fluxes that may be added to adjust the maturing temperature of a glaze are:-

Limestone - This is a powerful flux used in small quantities, and is very useful in conjunction with tin oxide. Dutch Delft ware has a body rich in limestone and the glazes contain it too, and these glazes are notably crazefree.

Feldspar - Potassium or pink feldspar gives a glaze a fat rich look and increases tolerance.

Colemanite - This natural combination of lime and borax is the only form of borax which is insoluble and can be used in an unfritted form.

Dolomite - This combination of lime and magnesium contains no silica and is a useful flux in leadless glazes.

For red clays with the most characteristic quality of the traditional English earthenware, a generous warmth, the cold clear glazes of the modern ceramic chemist are less attractive. The old litharge glazes with their pale honey colour are particularly suitable, easy to handle, and fairly tolerant. They really need the complete oxidation of a well-controlled, flame-fired kiln to reach their true quality, but the electric kiln can fire them quite well. Litharge is very suitably combined with lime and feldspar, and a good basic glaze known as 'lead lime and potash' glaze makes a suitable point of departure for experiments.

Litharge	123	or lead carbonate	42
Whiting	5.2		
Feldspar	28.9		
Kaolin	6.7		
Flint	17.4		

A basic litharge glaze is	Litharge	53.5
	Kaolin	18.6
	Flint	27.6

Both fire at 1100° C. The previous notes about solubility will of course apply to these glazes, as will the caution that they may have to be adjusted to suit different bodies. The 'lead lime potash' glaze is suitable for the addition of tin oxide, but the plain litharge glaze is not. A harmonious decorative effect is achieved by using a buff body with decoration in dark red slip and the whole covered with the litharge glaze, to which has been added not more than 2% copper carbonate. The resulting soft yellow-green glaze turns that body a deep olive and the slip a warm black.

The best quality of an earthenware glaze appears when it is fired to a point where it seems just on the verge of beginning to run. This is particularly true of tin glazes when they will lose their dead opacity and have a certain depth. The glaze runs thin on lips, rims and throwing ridges, allowing the body colour to show through and modify the effect of the glaze. Speckles show just the faintest trace of softness, and that rather unpleasant soapy texture of a glaze overloaded with tin and fired well on the safe side of maturity is avoided. The two extremes of bright glassiness and dead opacity should be carefully avoided. Overfiring in which a pool of glaze runs to the bottom of a bowl and produces large cooling cracks is to be avoided also.

As we have lost our natural unsophisticated sense of design, brushwork and sgraffito and other forms of decoration should be used only after a great deal of consideration and study. The biggest trap for the potter in earthenware is the range and intensity of colour available from the ceramic chemist. The only safe thing to do is to throw away all prepared glazes, glaze stains, underglaze colours and overglaze colours, etc., that one buys from the big ceramic suppliers (and it should be remembered that these are designed for use in industrial pottery plants

on 'bone china' and earthenware that is refined to the point of deadness) and use just the basic simple oxides that have been the mainstay of potters from very early times; i.e. iron oxides, cobalt oxides and carbonates, copper oxides and carbonates, manganese oxides and dioxides, basic yellows prepared from antimony; with perhaps a discreet use of some chromic compounds and prepared metallic lustres. In this range there is enough scope for the most adventurous designer. By adjusting the glaze base, and using additional agents such as zinc oxide, a wide range of intensities and colours is available.

These appear to be the 'natural' colours for earthenware. They have stood the test of time and always seem to live in harmony with each other and with the bodies they clothe.

There is a lot to be said for experimenting with a basic glaze and adding different simple oxides in various proportions to create a wide variety of coloured glazes with rich textures. Textures are an aspect of glazes which may be given a lot more attention and the quality of depth and tactile qualities explored. Speckles, spots, shading, roughness, etc., produced by the interaction of ceramic materials under heat and not by spray guns have a considerable part to play in the development of new earthenware glazes. Impure materials like rutile which break up and cause crystals to form in the glaze, some wood ashes, in smaller quantities than the stoneware potter uses, lumpy grains of borax dusted on to the wet glaze to pull colour out of the glaze, oxides dusted on with a bag of fine nylon, and glazes laid over glazes; all these are means of enriching the quality of glazes.

Underglaze brushwork on the live textured surface produced by the potter's fingers, is not often very satisfactory, and to use a brush well implies as much study and practice as, for instance, learning to throw.

Far more satisfactory is the effect of painting on an unfired tin glaze, although very much more difficult to execute. The very nature of the absorbent, friable surface and the unsympathetic muddy mixture of oxide and water imposes a discipline that restrains the decorator from going too far off the rails. It is made somewhat easier in execution by the addition of a fair quantity of gum to the glaze and by grinding the oxide with a quantity of the same glaze together with gum and water.

Unfortunately New Zealand does not possess any quantity of good examples of Majolica painted ware, but at its best the freedom and certainty of brushwork, usually in one or two colours, and the boldness of conception in the decoration yield nothing to Sung decoration, although the idiom is utterly different.

There is a great need here for some bold experimenting with materials. The quality of a good earthenware glaze is totally unlike a stoneware glaze, and it is usually more difficult to control. Earthenware potters must look to their own materials. They will find that the restraint and austerity of stoneware glazes merely look weak when applied in earthenware. The true nature of earthenware is far more lighthearted, flamboyant and emotional.

Rock Glazes - M. Bondy 5/-
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PLEASING OURSELVES

Michael Cardew

Originality or - to use the shorter word - style, in pottery is not to be attained by taking thought; it is just something which may (or may not) shoot out indirectly, as a result of taking thought about other matters - of continual striving to perfect your craftsmanship, to overcome technical difficulties and to surmount all the kinds of obstacle which Nature puts in the path of Art. You cannot do anything about it in a direct way. 'We who dwell on earth can do nothing of ourselves. Everything is conducted by spirits, no less Digestion and Sleep.'

If all good pottery is a humble form of art, and all good art, even that of the most conscious individualist, is unconscious, what can a potter do to make his pots good? 'Without unceasing practice nothing can be done. Practice is art; if you leave off you are lost.' But besides struggling to perfect his skill or to overcome his lack of it, he must above all please himself. There is a West African proverb which says, 'If you like yourself, people will like you.' So, if you make pots to please yourself, there is a very good chance that you will thereby also serve your neighbour truly, by pleasing him as well.

Simple utilitarian pots from remote primitive communities were not made to be viewed and judged as works of art. They were made for the satisfaction of the maker quite as much as for the satisfaction of the user, and so they bear naturally 'the lineaments of gratified desire'. That is why they are admired by us as works of art, though the uses for which they were made may be obsolete in Twentieth Century society.

The potters at Abuja are working for new uses and new applications, and are in process of gaining

familiarity with new technical dimensions and bearings - throwing on the wheel, glazing, high temperature firing. Their constructive effort is pre-occupied by these things, and the conscious inspiration for their pots is a practical one - for food and drink. There is no striving for originality, no anxious theorising about what is or is not 'creative', no feeling about copyright or 'property in design'. New shapes are seen simply as parts of a developing tradition. But like other good potters, they know by instinct that every element of human personality can - in fact inevitably does - find its unconscious expression in clay, and that above the effort to achieve technical success, there dwell the august forms of proportion, harmony, and that energy which is itself without motion.

(Taken by permission from the introduction to the catalogue for an exhibition of stone-ware pottery by Michael Cardew and pupils at the Berkeley Galleries, London, from 16 September - 10 October, 1959.)

PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1, 2, 3. Pots in Spain
4. Wall plaque by Kato Syunto
5. Kato Syunto, Master Potter, Seto, Japan
6. Hausa potter beating out water pot
7. Boy adding tops to water pots
8. Variety of pottery for firing
9. Firing takes $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours
10. Unpacking the kiln
11. Method of carrying water pots
12. For sale in the market next morning.

AUSTRALIAN POTTERS

Australian hospitality is proverbial, Australian potters' hospitality deserves to be even more so. The moment we arrived in Perth there was Eileen Keys who waited patiently for hours while we wound our way through the complications of landing in Australia from a tropical country. She cared for us and showed us the beauties of Perth, a lovely city. We were very interested in her pottery. Eileen is doing some excellent work with glazes made from local materials. Western Australia is rich in minerals, and she is getting some wonderful colours from different copper, gold and other mineral bearing rocks. The rocks are ground patiently by hand in a miner's dolly-pot, so Eileen deserves the success she is getting.

In Melbourne we unfortunately were only able to contact Mr. Hughan by telephone, but we saw several of his pots and were particularly impressed by the quality of his celadons. Mr. Hughan is an expert on Chinese glazes. He is soon to have a show in Perth.

In Sydney Wanda and Denys Garnsey (who came to the Auckland Summer School last January), took us in and looked after us royally. Wanda is making good quality stoneware, and Denys fires the kiln in the back yard. Ivan Englund and his wife are doing some interesting work with well thrown pots. Peter Rushforth is a very fine potter with his own kiln and workshop at home. He and Mollie Douglas have established a Ceramics Department at East Sydney Technical College. The equipment and facilities would make any New Zealander most envious.

We paid a visit to Ivan McMeekin's old pottery at Mittagong and found that Les Brakebrough, his ex student, was carrying on the sound traditions laid

down by Ivan and adding something more of his own. He is one of the few potters in this part of the world actually getting down to the business of producing domestic ware in quantity for a market. The glazes produced in the wood-fired Sevres type round kiln in a thirty hour firing were excellent.

Ivan McMeekin himself is now in the Industrial Arts Department of the Sydney University. Australia is very rich in the raw materials for pottery making and the research that Ivan is doing is most valuable. His collection of Chinese pots and his knowledge of this vast subject kept me enthralled for an afternoon. We would find Ivan's ability and skill of great help in our exploration of the possibilities of New Zealand raw materials. Perhaps we could borrow him for a University vacation.

H. M.

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NEWS

Several stoneware kilns have been built in the last few months. Veronica Clear and Kathleen Caughley of Takapuna have learnt a great deal about bricklaying during the process of building their new kiln. In Takapuna also the Scotts have built for themselves a downdraught kiln. Nan and Oscar Janett of Napier have their two chamber updraught kiln under control. At Reikorangi near Wellington Barry Brickell has constructed a large round downdraught kiln for Wilf Wright and the last two salt glaze firings were excellent. Bobbie Winchcombe and her husband of New Plymouth have built a 6-burner drip feed downdraught kiln 27" x 30" x 30". Jack Laird, Mirek Smisek and Roy Cowan all have large new oil-burning kilns. Something good should come from all this activity. The Fourth New Zealand Potters' Exhibition in Auckland should let us see what is happening.

Graeme Storm has left England for a teaching position in Canada. He writes: I was at St. Ives recently and once again met Leach and had a look around the pottery. While there I had a long interesting talk with Bill Marshall. Incidentally, there are still jars labelled 'Len's glaze' on the shelves of the workshop. Harry and May Davis have their pottery at Crowan, not far from St. Ives, so I called in there and was shown over the place by Mr. Davis. It is an absolutely fascinating set-up as everything is water powered and driven off a huge wheel to which the water is carried from a storage pond by means of a wood aqueduct. Power is thus generated for lighting, driving the throwing wheels, and operating the mixers, blunger, pug mill, glaze grinder, etc. Just about all the materials used at Crowan are locally procured, including the bulk of the clay and all of the glazes. Here in London over

the winter months there have been several interesting exhibitions of ceramics. One held at the United States Cultural Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Grosvenor Square had some most unusual and interesting work in it, and I look forward to seeing more of American ceramics in the future. Another excellent exhibition was of Ruth Duckworth's work. I have been working under her at the Central school so have got to know her quite well. Lucie Rie also had an exhibition not so long ago at a West End Gallery, to which she invited me, and I saw once again some of her typically fine work.

In Morrinsville there is a busy group of potters in their fifth year. These enthusiastic folk began with three potter's wheels at the Morrinsville College under the Adult Education Scheme, the tutor being Mrs. Henry Hall (Elizabeth Lissaman). Many local clays have been used, some very successfully. There is now a fine new electric kiln which is giving excellent results, with many types of clays and glazes. After working without a kiln for three years it is now most satisfying to be able to put into practice the theory that has been learned. Each year this group holds a small local exhibition.

The North Shore Society of Potters still meets once a month and is playing a helpful part in organising of the Fourth New Zealand Potters' Show. Increasing interest in pottery making on the Shore has resulted in Westlake High School classes increasing to 36 enrolments for 1960. Two classes have been started under the tuition of Betty Brookes and Nancy Beck. Veronica Clear is also in charge of a full class at Takapuna Grammar School. At a recent fashion parade on the Shore one of the frocks shown featured large blue porcelain buttons made by Mary Hardwick-Smith.

Everyone at Summer School this year will remember

Mr. Macarthur, the quarryman from Bethlehem, Tauranga. He has built himself a wheel out of 4 x 3 rimu and an old Dodge car engine crankshaft. It looks very plain but is as the old car was - good. Based on the design of Jack Laird's wheel and on advice from Peter Stichbury (at least 45 lbs. fly-wheel, he said), it is a most efficient machine.

In Dunedin Jim Nelson, with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Dunn of the Crafts Centre, Christchurch, held a five day pottery school in the large basement of Mr. and Mrs. Coker. It was a memorable five days for the keen Dunedin potters. Mr. Nelson took them through what would normally be a five year plan in wedging, throwing, turning, together with lectures on the chemistry of pottery, the making of coloured slips and their application, design and the dipping and pouring of glazes. His aim was to make them see the extensive possibilities of earthenware. Two evenings were given to looking at Mr. Nelson's fine collection of coloured slides of pots owned by the Dunedin and Christchurch Museums.

Dr. Terry Barrow, still working on his SEATO Research Fellowship, has left the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu and is now at the Museum of Ethnology at Manila in the Philippine Islands. En route to Manila Dr. Barrow was able to spend a week in Japan as the guest of Shoji Hamada at Mashiko.

The Leach Issue has been very well received in Japan, and Dr. Yanagi made the observation that they had no idea Bernard Leach was so highly thought of in New Zealand.

IDEAS FROM THE WORLD DESIGN CONFERENCE

Yusaku Kamakura: Tradition is a problem and a burden imposed on the designer. He cannot reject it. He has the duty to take tradition apart and to put it together again in a new way.

Tomas Maldonado: With regard to the Bauhaus movement, there is on one hand a Bauhaus which has become mystical and popularised and which has descended to the level of academism; but the true Bauhaus must always continue to develop. And its true spirit has been one which always provided the solution for its age, has been something discovered that industrial design might be better organised and unified. It is necessary to give free play to this spirit in order to grasp correctly and to solve the problems of industrial design today.

RELIABILITY EXPERIENCE AND TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE COUNT

Six kinds of clay: Plastic School Modelling clay in 56 lb. plastic bags: White earthenware body in 4 gallon tins: English 'Studio' earthenware body, 190 lb. drums: S.N.1 powdered body 20 lb. and 80 lb.: C.M.N. industrial earthenware body 14 lb., 40 lb., 1 cwt.

Four Glazes: H26 transparent glaze for 1000°C.: M glaze for 1080 - 1120°C.: P craze-resistant glaze for 1100°C.: 302M opaque new-type zircon glaze.

Oxides and stains for slips, underglaze and glazes: Good stocks of most colours.

Raw Materials: Imported feldspar, flint, Cornish stone, ball clay, china clay, N.Z. silica flour.

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EARLY POTTING IN AUCKLAND

Olive Jones

The beginnings of pottery in Auckland are somewhat obscure, but would seem to start with Briar Gardner, now an old lady of 80. Her Grandfather Clark farmed in the heavy clay soils of Hobsonville. To facilitate drainage on his farm he procured a pug-mill from England and commenced making field tiles for himself and his neighbours. From that beginning has grown the Amalgamated Brick & Pipe Coy. As a child Briar watched the pipes being extruded from the moulds and the flanges expertly turned. She could not resist dabbling in the lovely plastic stuff.

Some years later the Gardner Brothers decided to install a wheel in the brick yards. A worker from overseas with some knowledge of throwing used the wheel, and again Briar watched and could not resist. In time she built up a collection of pots and had them biscuit fired in the brick kiln. Made of coarse pipe clay, over and underfired, and with many blemishes, Briar decorated them with barbola, paint, and gold lacquer and held her first show. This was about 1925.

The family's reactions were divided. One brother said 'waste of good clay', another, 'go ahead, learn to glaze'. Those in favour won, so a small coal-fired kiln was built in the brick yard. Briar took lessons in modelling with Mr. Wright at Elam School, and in Maori design with Mr. Trevor Lloyd. She hunted the libraries for information, reading all she could of ancient Greek and Roman methods of making pottery. There were none of the present day 'How to Do It' books; there was no Mr. McClure to consult on any and every problem; 'A Potter's Book' by Bernard Leach had not been published. Eventually

a Wenger's catalogue was obtained and a hit or miss selection made of glazes and colours from those vast and, to the uninitiated, unintelligible lists. Then the trials and tribulations of experimenting with firing and glazing began. The kiln, over large for experiments, the door too small; hours of all night stoking; a sooted up chimney; a whole batch coming out navy blue, another in all shades of pink, puce and purple instead of off-white (the fashion of the moment). However, popular interest grew: women wanting to make flower containers came for lessons; the ever fascinating wonder of the potter's wheel was demonstrated to crowds at the popular winter shows.

In the early nineteen thirties the slump came, and Briar potted on, often working alone in one of the large and temporarily unused brickworks buildings. About this time the Yugoslav Rancich contacted her. He had had some experience of pottery as a child in his own country. For a time he used her wheel, and after trying unsuccessfully to persuade her to go into partnership with him, he started a workshop pottery of his own on the Titirangi Road. This became a popular stopping place for passing motorists who were attracted by the brightly glazed peasant type of pots showing in his window. Rancich continued some years until his death in early middle age, when his widow attempted to carry on for a time but eventually returned to her home country.

While these pioneering efforts were going on in Auckland two students from New Zealand met in London at the Central School of Arts and Crafts. In 1934 they both returned to New Zealand, Robert Field to a teaching position in Dunedin and Olive

Jones to set up her own pottery in Auckland.

Olive Jones' first kiln was an oil-burner built with her father's help in a three hundred gallon iron tank. There were the usual teething problems to start with, not the least being opossums which took up residence in the chimney, and starlings who decided the same place was good to build a nest of wet straw well stamped down. But with equipment, materials and experience brought from overseas these difficulties were as nothing compared with Briar Gardner's.

With the war years from 1939 onwards came a great shortage of imports, which naturally created an increasing demand for locally made goods. Olive built a larger kiln. Briar had to leave the brick yard and built what eventually became an oil-burning kiln in her own back yard. The Amalgamated Brick & Pipe Coy. started experimenting with table wares, a venture which later developed into Crown Lynn Potteries. Returned and handicapped Servicemen were sent to Briar Gardner for remedial occupation.

At the conclusion of the war the American Services Hospital became Avondale College. The Crown Lynn Works, which is in the same area, required young workers with some training, and so prevailed upon the Education Department to start pottery classes in the College. Robert Field from Dunedin was put in charge. About the same time Auckland Teachers' Training College set up a pottery wheel in its Art Department (then under Hillary Clark). David McClure, with his practical knowledge of ceramic chemistry,

came from Otago to the Amalgamated Brick & Pipe Coy. (or Crown Lynn as its China Department is now called) as chief chemist. He later set up as a consultant and supplier of pottery materials, a boon for oncoming students and for schools. So now the way was open for students to train, and to pass on to schools and colleges their enthusiasm for pots and potting.

Outstanding among the many students, who have passed through Avondale and Training College and are now working in their own studios, are Patricia Perrin, Leonard Castle, Peter Stichbury and Nancy and Martin Beck.

Patricia started her art training at Elam School of Art, continued with Robert Field at Avondale, and now works in her own studio in the daytime and teaches adult school classes in the evening.

Len Castle, who is now on the Training College staff, had his early pots saltglazed in brick works kilns, which perhaps started his flair for stoneware. He was awarded the Fellowship of the Association of New Zealand Arts Societies for overseas study and spent 1956-7 working in the Bernard Leach Potteries at St. Ives, Cornwall.

Peter Stichbury also received this Fellowship in 1958 and used it for study, both with Leach and with Michael Cardew in Nigeria. He is now on the staff of Ardmore Teachers' College.

The Becks have their kiln and studio at their home in Takapuna. They take a keen interest in the

North Shore Potters' Group.

So it all began. Now there are many potters, known and unknown, and many opportunities for learning the right way in schools and classes. Small groups are meeting for pooling of ideas and experiences; larger groups are meeting in Summer Schools. All these should bring a higher standard and a greater development in the work of the present generation of craft potters.

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POTS IN SPAIN

'Graeme Storm

Pot hunting in Spain is easy and rewarding. Here water is the staff of life and water, in all but the largest cities, is carried in or drunk from earthenware pots. Look for water and you are bound to find the vessels connected with its drawing or carrying - it is as simple as that.

The first pots I saw in the north west of the country were the water drinking jars, about one foot in height, unglazed (the seepage keeps them cool), of a creamy white body, with a pulled handle on top, a nozzle and an air hole. Except for a few minor variations to the foot and handle of the vessel, the shape remained the same right throughout Spain. The method of drinking from this jar is to hold it slightly above and out in front of the head, cant it forward and direct the jet of water into the mouth - in my case invariably after having received it full in the eye for a few eternal seconds. It is easier to write about this than to actually accomplish the deed!

Water sellers, usually women, sit in shady spots on the footpaths or congregate outside the bullrings with their water pots, selling drinks to parched passers-by for a few centavos. Wherever there is a crowd of people you can count on finding a drinking pot. Each village has its well or fountain, usually situated near the central square, and it is there that you see the women and children filling their water jars and carrying them off on heads, shoulders, hips, in wheelbarrows or in panniers slung across a donkey's back.

In the north these jars ranged from about one to two and a half feet in height, with rich full bellies, a broad generous bevelled lip, and one short broad

pulled handle. About central Spain the characteristic shape changed slightly. The jar became taller, slimmer, had a wide cylindrical neck and two handles, one on each side from neck to shoulder. None of the water pots were glazed, and they varied in colour from an orange bisque to a dark terracotta red, with a few the creamy-white of the drinking jars.

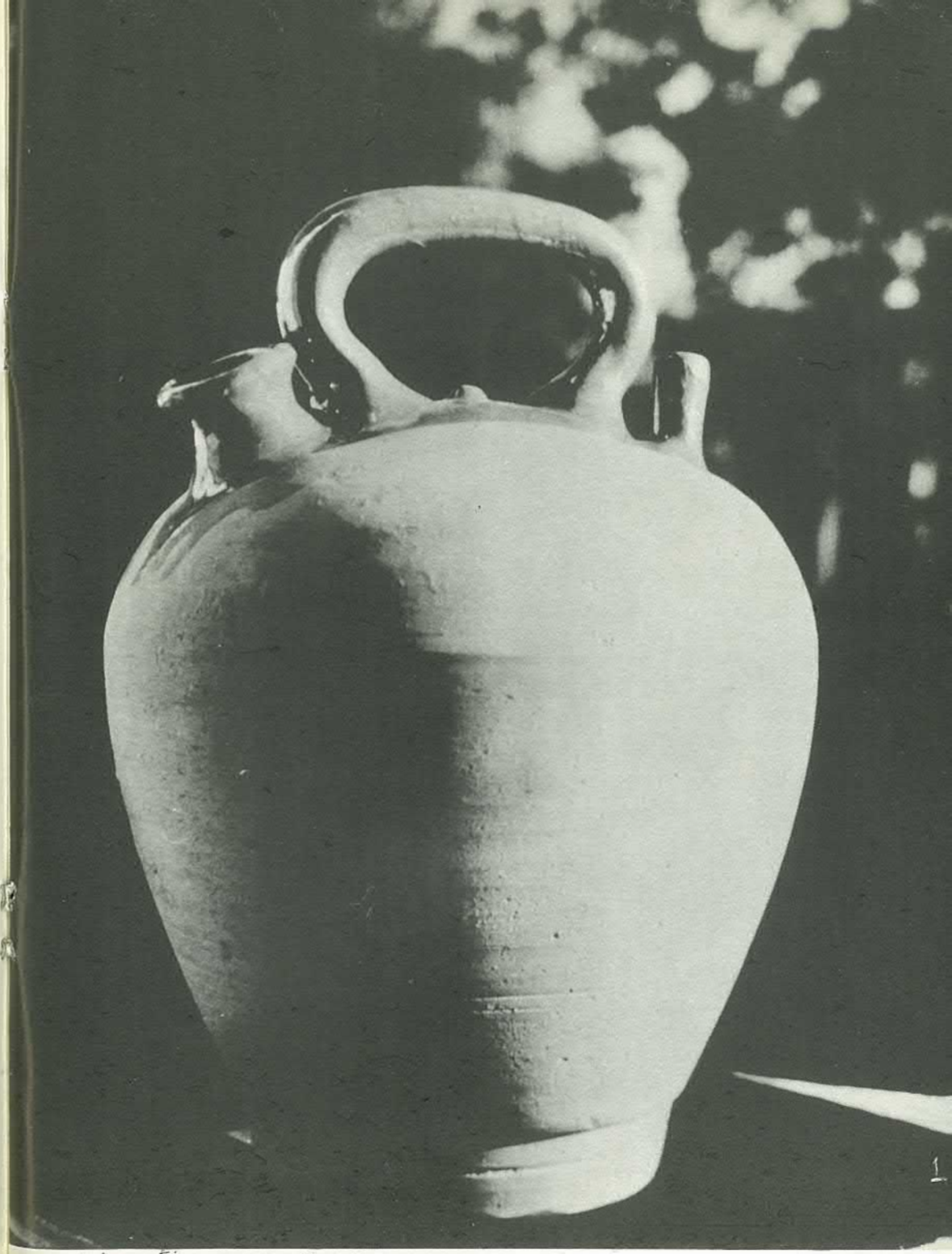
My first indication of a pottery in the offing was a typically whitewashed Spanish building with the word 'ceramica' incorporated in the name. Earlier in the day we had passed about a dozen brick kilns and I had been hoping to find a pottery where the beautiful water and wine jars I had seen in every village were made. This then was it, and the products were strewn all over the yard, stacked up five or six feet high against the wall, standing in orderly rows in front of the kilns waiting to be packed, or lined up in the shade in various stages of drying.

The men working the pottery were extremely friendly, and although we could not speak a word of each other's language, I soon discovered that there is an international sign language for talking about pots and their making. The main products of the factory were water jars of varying sizes, drinking pots, large shallow dishes of anything up to two feet across, and wide necked food storing jars, ranging from about nine inches to three feet in height. The only articles that were glazed at all were these food storing jars, and then only on the inside.

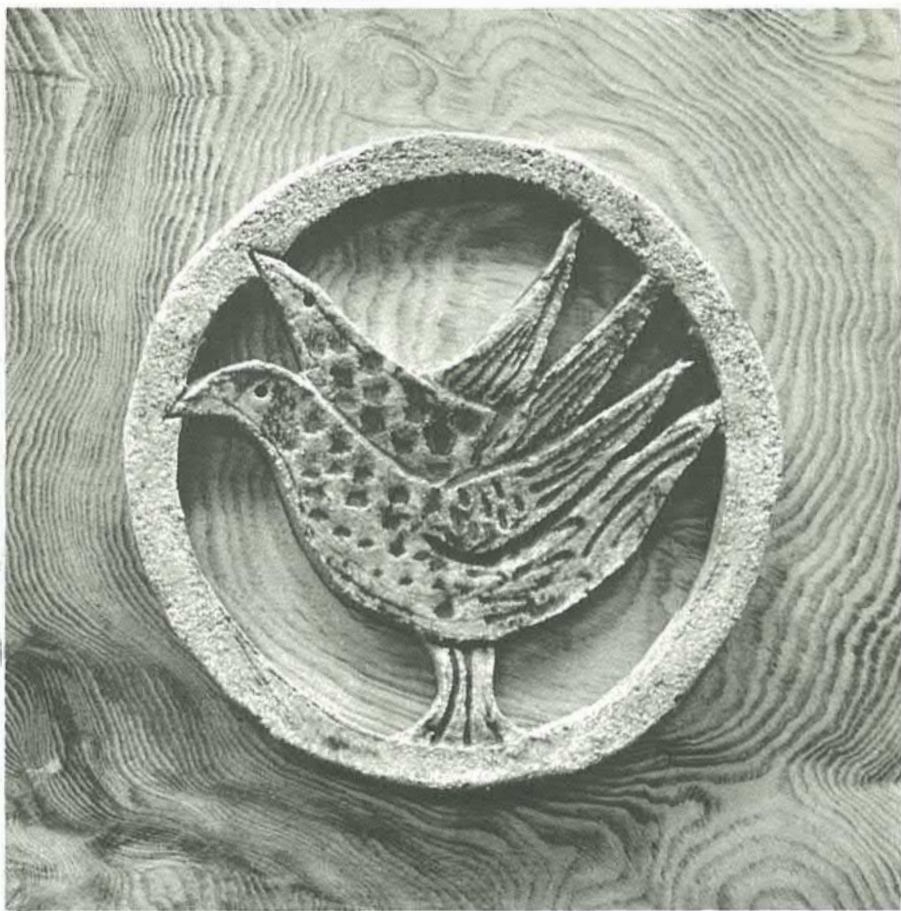
The whole pottery was self contained. It had been built on a suitable clay site (the pit was situated behind the kilns) with its own water supply in the form of a well. There were three drying ponds for the clay, which after being weathered, reduced to a slip and dried out, was eventually cut from the

pond in blocks of about one foot square. From there it was taken inside to the throwing shed, where it became the task of a young lad to knead it into a more workable state by tramping round and round in ever narrowing circles on a large dollop, after which the the throwers themselves handwedged whatever quantity they required at that particular time. There were four wheels in the shed, of the variety where the motivation is provided by kicking directly on to a large wooden fly-wheel. Except for a narrow aperture which enabled the thrower to slide into position above the wheelhead, the whole affair was surrounded on three sides by a clay bench. Pots straight off the wheel were stored inside for a while, then moved outside to the shady side of the building, and finally into the sun, before being stacked into the kiln. The kiln was a fairly large one - about seven feet high and twelve feet deep - with two chambers. One was in the process of being fired, while the other also stacked but left open, was utilising heat from the first to dry off any excess moisture in the raw pots. The clay being used was a low firing, red burning mixture, and the actual firing process took seven hours all told. The fuel used was wood in the form of small branches fed into fireboxes at the rear of the kiln.

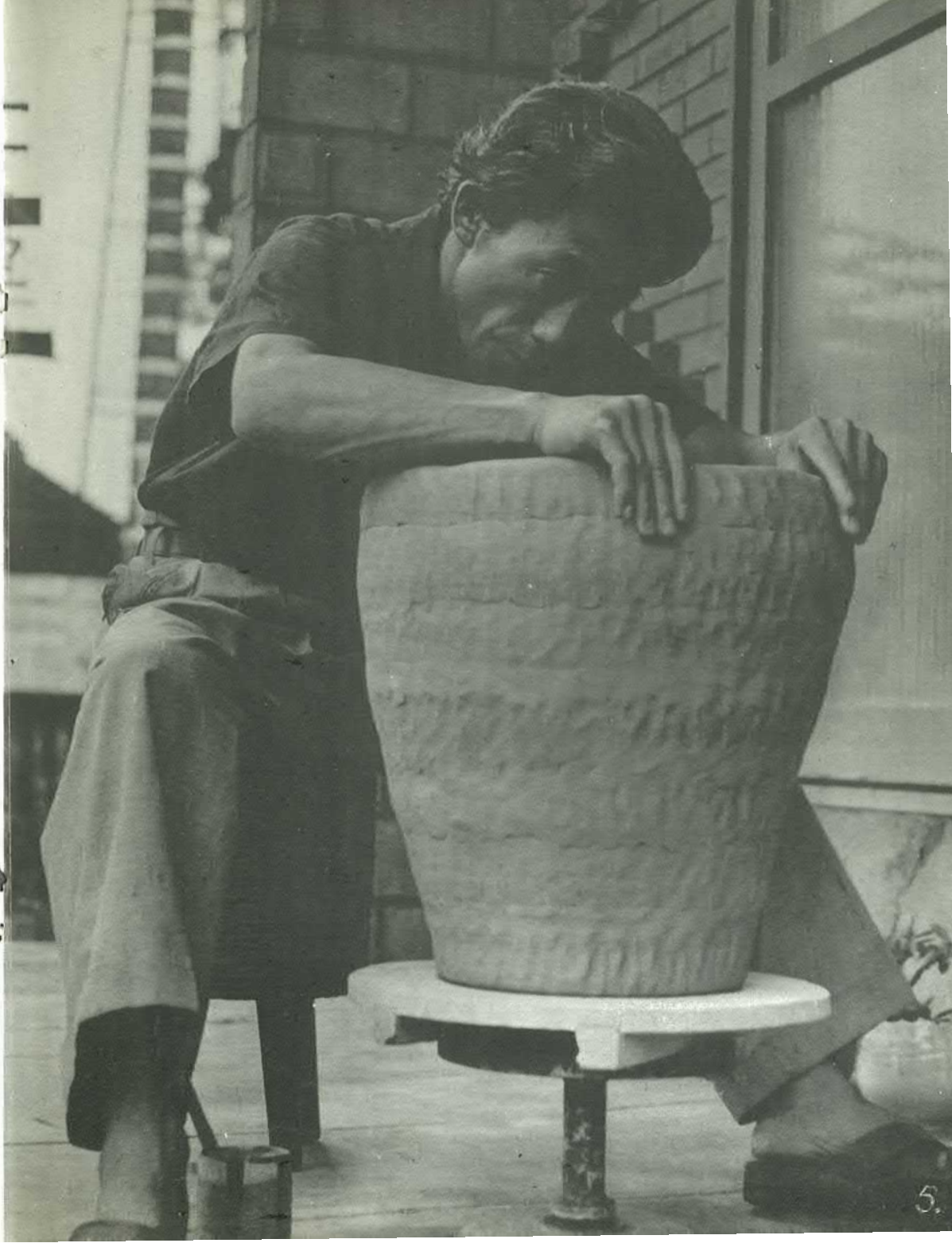
Before I left I couldn't resist buying a pot though I had to nurse it on my knee for the next 3,000 miles. What potter could resist buying for 1/6d such a beautiful eighteen inch reminder of a visit to a Spanish pottery?



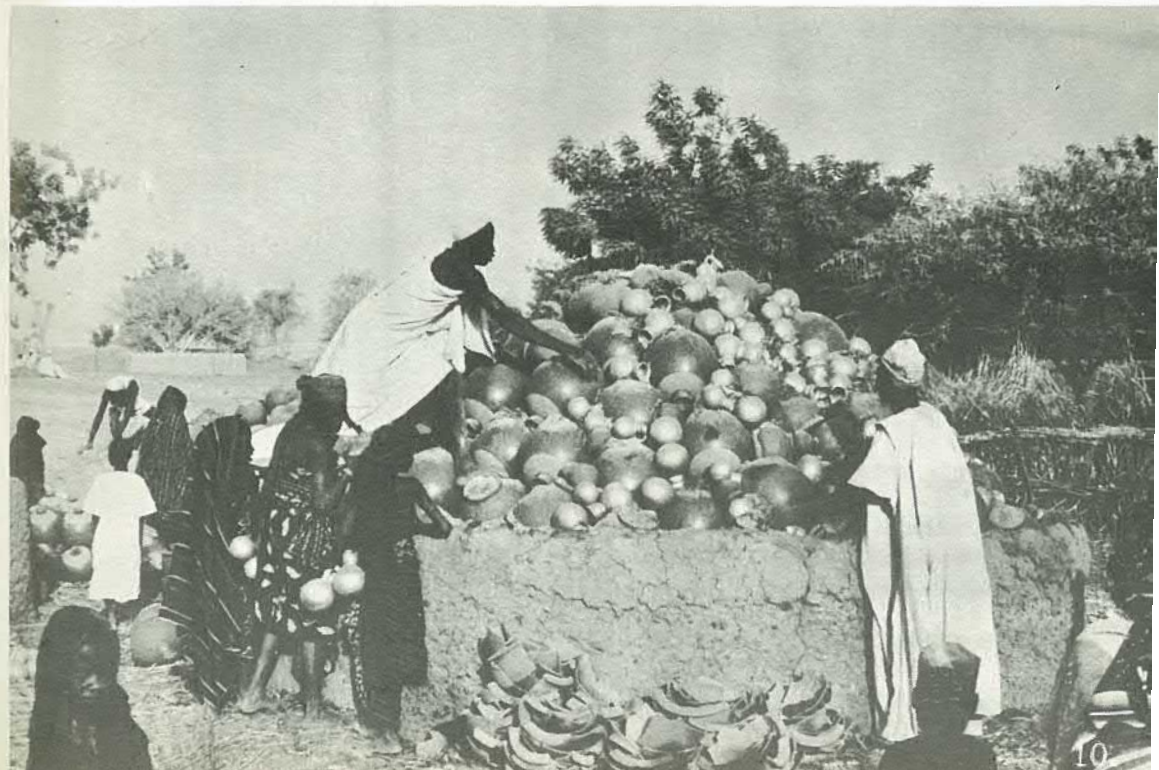




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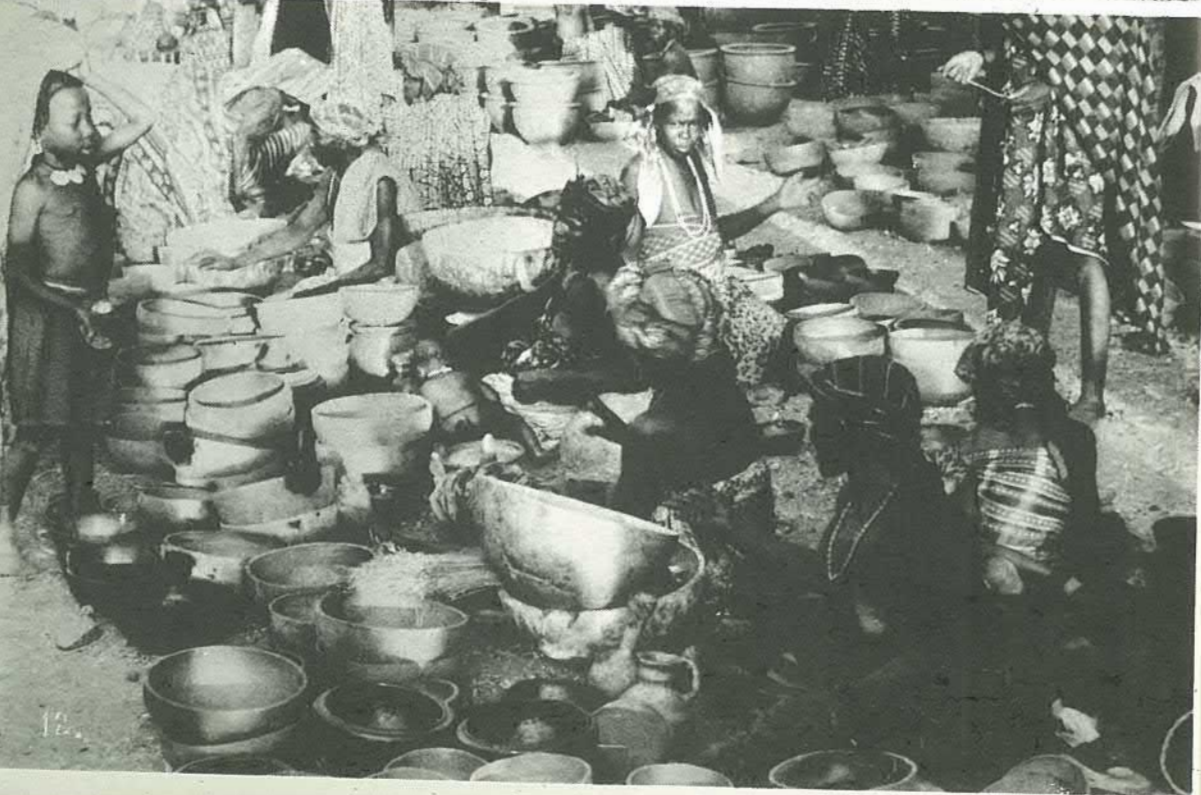
HAUSA POTTERY

Peter Stichbury

Sokoto is a large town in the far north of Nigeria, close to the border of French territory, and about 400 miles from Abuja. We toured there in February, via Jos, Zaria and Kano. Our main purpose in visiting Sokoto was to see the Hausa potters at work.

On the north side of the town, about half a mile from the palace of the Northern Premier, the Sardauna of Sokoto, is an old market place. Here is found the community of potters who live at the rear of the area, with their work huts in front and their living quarters behind. The kilns are in the large space in front of the work huts. Also in the market place is the small pottery established and maintained by the Native Authority for one of Michael Cardew's ex-pupils, Sidi 'Sokoto'. Sidi is regularly visited by Mr. Cardew, who gives advice and assistance. There is a similar pottery at Kano, and more are to be established elsewhere as pupils of Michael Cardew graduate.

The potters are poor people, for theirs is a lowly trade. In the north, pottery is a man's trade, in contrast to the southern areas where it is the women who make, fire and sell pottery, in addition to all their other tasks. We spent a lot of time watching and photographing, and were fascinated by all that was going on. The skill of the men and boys was very high and it was a delight to see them at work. We peered into the small huts and saw the making of the typical Hausa water pots, step by step. The clay, dug locally of rather coarse texture, is mixed on the floor of the hut, then kneaded by foot, and when ready is shaped into regular round flat lumps, which are stacked and kept damp with wet cloths.



The body of the pot is shaped on a concave, half-spherical wooden block, which is set into the ground at a slight angle towards the potter. First a flat bowl is formed from the lump of clay, by revolving and thumping the edge into the wood. This raises a rim. Then, with the aid of a beater (a shaped, fired piece of clay - see photograph), the pot is gradually formed by revolving and beating. All the while the wood is dusted with fine ash, sieved from the kiln. When the clay has reached a deep cup shape it is set aside to harden for a brief period. The form is completed by beating until a very regular oval shape is achieved, the rim is dampened, and with the aid of a stick on the outside, and careful use of the fingers on the inside, the opening is reduced until about two inches in diameter. A small band of decoration is added at the shoulder by pressing a small piece of string into the clay (see pots in photographs) in regular line. Later, when the pot is firm, the top is added. We watched a youth at work outside the huts, adding these tops very skilfully. The rim of the opening is moistened, and a coil of soft clay pushed on; then by deftly spinning the pot in and with one hand, the neck and rim are shaped with the use of a soft wet piece of leather held in the other. Each top takes only a few minutes to complete, though the boy was very particular about his work. Later, when the pot is harder, ochre is rubbed on to just below the line of impressed decoration. This ochre is given quite a high polish when nearly dry, by rubbing firmly with wooden beads held loosely in the hand.

As well as the water pots in two sizes, we saw other forms being made. Long drainpipes (see photographs) from sheets of pressed out clay, the two long edges being pinched together and smoothed and strengthened with added clay. These are used

for drainage on the northern type roof. Huge bowls, also, probably for water storage in the home - simple cup-shaped pots with a heavy rim. The potters were interesting people, some reacting, some indifferent, to the prying eyes of the 'bature', but all working hard and skilfully.

Every Thursday is firing day, for Friday is market day when the pots are sold. We spent a fascinating day watching the potters getting ready for the firing. Apart from the numberless pots made in the community thousands more seemed to come in from every direction: in large baskets on the heads of young girls, old women and young boys; on donkeys, carefully placed in nets; under arms in ones and twos; pots arrived nearly all day. These were stacked until each kiln had a huge pile by it of pots of every size and shape. How each person accounted for his or her pots, we haven't the faintest idea! Water pots, water coolers, small 'boutas' (drinking pots, or ceremonial washing pots) of many shapes, casseroles with lids and coloured with gold mica dust rubbed into the clay. Drain pipes, money boxes, ink pots, shallow cooking pots, cooking pots with three legs, small pots with a hole in the side and three legs used for holding fire. Over these meat is cooked, on a grill of heavy wire netting.

Packing of the kilns started about 3.30 p.m. The kiln is simply a circular wall of bricks plastered with mud, banded at the top with odds and ends of wire twisted together. Woe betide any child who leaned on the wall of the empty kiln - punishment was swift! The large kilns were twelve feet in diameter, the smaller ones (two out of the fifteen) were nine feet in diameter, both sizes having a height of three feet six inches. Walls were about four inches thick, and around the bases were spaced

a series of holes - seven inch on the larger kilns and six inch on the smaller. These were the fire-mouths.

The method of stacking was interesting and ingenious. Old water pots (seconds) were placed in first, stacked very openly, and kept apart by bits of broken pot which were also used to keep the pots away from the wall. As the packing progressed pots were stacked more and more tightly, mouth down to hold the heat. All the small pots were saved until last and stacked very closely, until a dome of pots about three feet high protruded above the wall. This was then covered completely with sherds, the packers not hesitating to stand on or rest a foot on the raw pots while reaching to the top. At the finish a layer of straw, then a covering of straw dust and dirt scraped from the ground round about, was placed over the dome.

Firing started about 7.30 p. m., not all kilns being lit at once, however. One firebox at a time, gradually moving round the kiln until all were lit. Fuel was the very long stalks of guinea corn which were stacked in tied bundles nearby and chewed at by patient donkeys. At first, though not for long, fires were kept small. There were two men and a boy firing the particular kiln we watched, and the amount of fuel they used seemed extremely small. The cornstalks were fed in crosswise a few at a time, and as the fires increased they were pushed in further and further and lifted now and again to ensure better combustion. Occasionally sparks would set the top layer of straw alight, but a casual throwing on of more ground scrapings would remedy this. It was a grand sight to see the flames leap up from the different kilns and spirals of sparks shoot into the dark night air. Even more exciting was it towards

the end of the firing, when the straw burnt fiercely and more was added to feed the flames. Firing finished about two and a half hours from the start - a remarkably short period of time.

The scene during firing is wonderful. The leaping flames lighting up the ragged figures of the stokers moving calmly about; dozens of children running around and being chased away by suddenly irate kiln men; men and women standing about in groups or walking through the area, casually indifferent to the whole procedure; donkeys and sheep nibbling the straw; and at the far end of the area a small market of food sellers with their tiny oil lamps and cooking pots and vendors of peanuts, krola nuts, cigarettes and other items of African food.

The amazing part about it all is the fact that these huge kilns (each kiln and dome of pots would, at a rough estimate, average about 550 cubic feet capacity) reach a temperature at the bottom of about 900°C. ranging to about 650°C. at the top in two and a half hours, with a small amount of fuel of reported low calorific value. A remarkably efficient and economical set up.

The kilns are unpacked at first light the following morning. After sorting away the pots go in the traditional manner - on heads, in baskets, on donkeys. The water pots are carried in the most ingenious fashion, the openings being pushed over a series of crossed sticks, and a rope tied loosely round the necks and the middle of the sticks to stop them moving. About eight big pots are carried in this fashion. We went to the market later, and there were pots in their thousands, with the patient potters and families sitting beside their particular group

waiting to sell them. Trade was brisk, for everyone uses these pots, they are an integral part of their lives. We bought a few from the potter whose kiln-firing we had watched: a small water pot for 6d., a money box for 4d., an inkwell for 6d., and two small cooking pots for 4d. each. Not very big prices for the amount of work involved.

It is most satisfying to see these pots used everywhere for food and drink. The Hausa water pot is not a particularly good form and potters from other tribes in the region produce pots of better shape and decoration. But they are most useful objects, and it is a fine sight to see a group of women crowding round the village well with pots balanced on heads, or being filled, or carried away. Pots in use.

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BOOK REVIEW

Bernard Leach: A Potter in Japan, 1952-54
246 pp. Faber & Faber. N.Z. Price 45s.

Since it was first published in 1940 A Potter's Book by Bernard Leach has become known as 'the potter's bible'. It has opened up a new world for many a potter for whom the making of pots is not an end in itself but a stage in inner development. His latest book, A Potter in Japan, is a more personal one and gives a greater knowledge of the man himself and his own philosophy.

The book is also a fascinating glimpse into the folk craft life of Japan as exemplified in the Mingei movement. Leach's friends, Dr. Yanagi and Hamada, together with Kawai and Tomimoto, have spent years in trying to preserve and establish on a sound footing the traditional crafts which in Japan reach a very high degree of skill. Leach's book is a very fair summing up of the problems that beset the traditional potter in an increasingly industrialised society. Perhaps Japan has a better chance of finding a solution to this problem than the rest of the world because her people seem to have a natural appreciation of the beauties of a handmade pot.

Leach also has some pertinent remarks to make about the sophisticated potter who strives to be primitive in the midst of a modern world.

This book has value for the person interested in present-day Japan. It also has value for the potter who thinks as well as pots, and will provide the basis for many a discussion round the kiln. It is good to find a book that deals so thoughtfully with many of our problems.

Well-illustrated with photos and with delightful brush and pen drawings by Leach himself the book is a fine production and deserves a place on every potter's bookshelf.

H. M.

FOURTH

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SAGGERMAKING

Carel C. Vendelbosch

The Clay must be an open firing plastic fire clay. This is mixed with up to 50% dry weight of grog. Sometimes kaolin (china clay) is added for really high temperature firing (up to 1300°C. and higher).

The Grog is pre-fired fireclay, or crushed fire-clay bricks. In the grog it is important to have the right balance in the size of grains. Grains bigger than 1/4 inch cannot be tolerated. But do not use the finest dust either. Here is a guide to the right proportions:

40%	of the grog can be grains up to 1/64 inch
25%	" " " " " " " " 1/32 "
15%	" " " " " " " " 1/16 "
12%	" " " " " " " " 1/8 "
8%	" " " " " " " " 1/4 "

If you make your own grog by prefiring some fire-clay, try to get these proportions before firing, and don't use much of the real powdery dust. Dust that passes through your glaze sieve is too fine for the sagger clay.

Mixing the grog and clay. Do it the way concrete is mixed by hand, with a shovel on a concrete floor or big board. Mix the clay and grog dry first, then add water in the middle. Knead the last stages with a pair of old boots on, a healthy exercise. Let the clay mature for a couple of days, and keep it rather wet.

Making the Sagger. Take two boards, about 1/2 - 3/4 inch thick, and 3 feet long. Nail them parallel on an old table or box, as far apart as the height of

your sagger - four inches is a handy size. Line the space on the table between the boards with a piece of sackcloth or rag. This will need to be a strip three feet long and four inches wide.

Now take a piece of hardboard or some other flat board bigger than your sagger will be, and throw some sand over it, as is done with flour before the dough is rolled out. Then take a big enough lump of wedged clay to make the bottom and beat it out with your fists. Roll it flat between two battens about half an inch thick, and make it about an inch bigger than you want your sagger to be.

To make the sides fill the space in between the two boards with strips of clay cut off a wedged lump, and pack it tightly, hammering it home and scraping it level with the boards with scraper or wire.

Now we need something the size of the inside of the sagger - an old pan without a handle, a round cake tin or even a piece of round firewood will do. Cut the clay strip on the table to the length of the circumference of the tin or pan (a piece of string is the easiest measure). Now place the tin sideways on to the clay strip and lift it with the sackcloth, wrapping it round the tin. Then lift the whole lot on to the prepared slab of clay. It is a good thing to have the circle for the bottom already marked out, roughened a bit with a fork and moistened with some fireclay slip. You will find that it is important to cut the strip the right length; overlapping is not good but too short is worse. Model the joints well together, and then cut away the excess clay round the bottom. After taking out the tin model some clay coils to the inside joint and set away for slow drying.

A few extra cylinders without a bottom are useful for making a sagger higher for taller pots, and don't forget some flat bottoms only for covering the top sagger in the bung. You will also need a sagger with a hole cut out of the side for putting cones in opposite the peephole in the kiln.

POTTERY MATERIALS

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THE HILLSBOROUGH GROUP

Jean L. Morland

We are a group of five friends who love potting and enjoy working together. Time is our greatest enemy, as Ngaira Bowater, Doris Holland and Wyn Reed have to satisfy the demands of home and family, and Jean Herbison and I find our leisure limited by our work as teachers.

The studio was founded six years ago when our friend Dorothy Crumpton, then Director of the Risingholme Community Centre, was planning to retire. She had become a keen potter, and among the many ideas well-wishers showered upon her for the disposal of her future leisure was that of a pottery workshop where she could continue her craft. A few months later the pleasant L-shaped studio was established, furnished with a Johnson wheel and imported Grafton electric kiln (EP₂ model), plus the usual assortment of domestic articles commandeered for ceramic use. An Electrolux in reverse answered admirably for the spray glazing and a turntable of an ancient gramophone stood in the glazing bay. Considering its location in the garden close to the compost, I am never quite sure that the studio should not be termed 'the potting shed'.

The kiln was first used in September 1954 - a memorable occasion. We had only the experience of a very slow-firing kiln at Risingholme to guide us, and according to custom we left the kiln on all night. Next morning a shapeless and flattened cone told its tale. Fortunately the precious kiln and its contents were not irreparably damaged. I suppose that the pots that emerged were the only true stoneware we have ever produced.

Within the next month our pottery group was stunned by Dorothy Crumpton's sudden death. When we gathered ourselves together we had to plan a future on a vastly different basis from the one originally envisaged. Jean Herbison joined us then and was responsible for all our glazing and firing until Wyn Reed came in.

Wyn was keenly interested in glaze experiments and this has been made easier by the addition of a small test kiln to our equipment. Methodical testing is bearing fruit in interesting glazes to fit the pale red clay from Devon imported in powder form which we use. This clay was introduced to us by Jim Nelson of the Craft Centre, who knew it from experience. We biscuit at 900°, gloss fire to 1080°, and are very pleased with the effect of a tin glaze on this clay. We hope to evolve variations in colour using the tin glaze as a base, but meanwhile are trying brush decoration on the tin in a wide variety of glaze stains. This gives Doris, with her artist's training, great scope and her skill with a paint brush is an asset rarely possessed by a potter. A second clay waiting to be used is a buff coloured stoneware clay from the same Devon firm at Kingsteignton (The Devon and Courtenay Clay Coy.). This vitrifies at 1180°.

Gradually we have discarded the commercial glazes on which we were at first dependent and the astonishing collection of New Zealand clays which we acquired through the years in the inevitable attempt to discover a cheap source of clay locally and a suitable glaze. We are grateful after many attempts with both local and imported clays that failed to please to have obtained a clay that gives us complete satisfaction and pleasure. Because of the limitations imposed by time and circumstances we have been forced to choose essentials or forego the satisfaction of producing anything.

Each of us has a wheel at home where a considerable amount of work is done, and once a week Ngaira, Wyn and Doris gather at the Studio at 17 Hillsborough Terrace, St. Martins. Then Doris throws or decorates, Ngaira makes slips and Wyn does glaze tests. Pots recently fired are discussed, disappointments and mistakes investigated as only potters know how, and plans are laid for future efforts. Very rarely Jean and I tear home in the lunch hour to add to the general clamour, but more often our get-togethers take place in the evening as there is so much to be said. Occasionally we can enjoy the pleasure of gazing at something that came out just as we'd hoped or even better, but never often enough for us to lose the essential humility before the mystery of this most fascinating craft.

We have paid our bills by developing a 'bread and butter line' of small dishes; we expected New Zealand to reach saturation point in this direction, but so far this has not happened. As long as we are firm and decline to make more than a certain number this is fine, but so steady is the demand that it has not been easy to meet it and leave enough time over for the more interesting pots we all long to produce - and the making of which is our reason for existence as a group.

We call our ware 'Rangi', which was Dorothy Crumpton's second name, but 'Hillsborough' seems to have become the name by which we are known. We sell direct from the studio as requests arrive (and as the ware becomes available!) but our main effort as regards income is centred on two Open Days held at the end of the year, when we invite friends we know to be interested to view our year's work and buy if they wish. This is the greatest fun, and is a useful rod for measuring progress too, as we recall the previous year's products and compare them with the current offerings. These usually consist of what we

hope are attractive articles for domestic use, earthenware pieces with slip, glaze or majolica decoration. The majority are made on the wheel, although a few moulded dishes are usually included for variety. Most commonly made are mugs, beakers, jugs, bowls, plates, dishes, cruet sets, honey pots, lidded jars, soup bowls, vases, etc.

We have learnt a great deal since the early days, and we owe much to tutors and schools, the Risingholme Community Centre, local Craft Centre, and fellow potters whose enthusiasm and knowledge are always so readily available for beginners and amateurs. We are sure that it is this sharing of experience, knowledge, and the actual processes of potting that has made progress possible in the limited time any of us have.

Without the assurance of gradual progress, as we learn to produce better and better work, our potting would not be the continual source of pleasure that it has indeed become.

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This was a fine and colourful conference on an international scale with many world-famous people in the fields of industrial, craft, graphic and architectural design attending. There were 143 Japanese delegates, and 84 foreign ones from a total of 26 countries. The two official languages were Japanese and English and simultaneous translations were arranged.

Discussions in the main were very abstract, and it was most interesting to compare the different approaches made by different nations to the same subject. Many of the speakers had prepared short addresses, illustrated with colour slides, of the work in which they were engaged. These gave fascinating glimpses of the sophisticated world of thought and design that exists in many large cities today.

New Zealand was represented by three potters - Helen Dawson, Elsie Inkersell and Helen Mason. We listened with great interest to all that was going on, but felt there was nothing we could contribute ourselves. We were very sorry there were no New Zealand architects present.

The arrangements made by the Japanese for our welfare were very good. They seemed to have thought of everything, even to a Welcome Committee of young women speaking excellent English from various Tokyo Universities.

The Kansai Study Tour, which followed the Conference, of Kyoto, Nara and Osaka, was well organised and we saw many things the ordinary tourist would never see. Seeing them through the eyes of the Japanese who accompanied us made the experience all the more valuable.

As is usual with Conferences, the people we met and the contacts made with other races were as precious to us as the actual discussions. In another issue I hope to tell you of some of the potters we met who are accomplishing much in many odd corners of the world.

New Zealand was indeed fortunate to have been invited to this the World Design Conference and we are much appreciative of the warmth of the welcome we were given.

H. M.

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EAST-WEST

Helen Mason

Awkward Western legs underneath the low lacquer table, I sat on the tatami floor. The potter on my left rinsed his beer glass in the finger bowl, with the expert double dipping flick of the wrist that only a potter could make. The table in this Momoyama room of the Hasshokhan Inn, Nagoya, was covered with pottery dishes, feast enough in themselves without the banquet that had been spread on them for this 'sayonara' party with my Seto potter friends. 'Helen-san' said the potter opposite me, with whom I had been working the last few days, 'speak!' Little Oku-san, the potter's wife, demure in her sober-coloured kimono as befitted a woman of over thirty and still slightly uncomfortable at being in a party with men, softly clapped her hands. It was difficult to find words to make these friends of mine understand how I felt. At last, 'Potters are the same the world over', I said, slowly and carefully, for their English was better than my Japanese, but not much better. 'You, me, English, American, Chinese - potters everywhere - same, same', and I put the tips of my two forefingers together in a gesture understood everywhere in Japan 'same, same'.

How fortunate we potters are to have this world passport. In the midst of alien Japan, Western on the surface but underneath completely different in thought, custom and attitude, in any potter's workshop you could feel at home. The wheel, the tools, the kiln, but above all, the clay - a universal language.

Japan is an amazing country, the man in the street has a knowledge and an appraisal of art akin to the

knowledge our men have of football. Every week each large Department Store has one or two exhibitions of paintings, or pots, or flower arrangements or bonsai trees, and students and families go along to discuss and enjoy them. A pot is as much a work of art as a painting and commands as high a price. We in the Western world have all heard of the Leach, Hamada, Yanagi school of thought known in Japan as the Mingei or Folk Art Movement; but there are many other groups with completely different ideas and philosophies, working, arguing, holding exhibitions.

The whole subject is so vast, so hard to unravel, so hedged about with difficulties of language and thought and tradition, that you almost resign yourself to skimming over the surface and enjoying only the scenery and the temples, in itself a major work. But when you cease striving something happens.

A chance encounter at a Rakuyaki party in Kyoto led to a letter of introduction to an industrial designer at Seto. The industrial designer had enough understanding and enough English (most important) to realise that what I wanted, but could not out of politeness ask for, was a visit to artist potters in Seto, instead of a round of factory visits. So there we were in a hired car lurching over the appalling roads, past centuries old clay pits, calling on artist potters, drinking amazing beverages with them, from cocoa to sickly sweet black tea, because their little wives (who waited on us but would not drink with us) thought the foreign woman would not like their own green tea. At last we came to Kato Syunto's house and there, while we waited for the master, we saw pots that were really exciting. Big, strong,

modern, but not overly so, fine colours and textures, intensely full of clay feeling, I warmed to them immediately. By the time the master appeared, small, vital, but with little English, we had only a short time left to talk; but during the six hours train journey back to Tokyo, I thought of those pots and wished I had the opportunity to learn more from them. I was fortunate. After trying all over Tokyo to find out where Kato Syunto sold his pots I found that he was a member of Craft Centre Japan, who were prominent at the World Design Conference to which I had been a delegate. 'If you admire his work' they said to me, 'you had better go down to Seto and stay in his house and work with him. We will write and tell him you are coming.' My doubts and misgivings were waved aside with the useful phrase, 'no need to worry, it is the custom in Japan!'

So there I was, living in a Japanese house with the potter, his delightful little self-effacing Oku-san, and their two small sons. The set-up is ideal and typical of the way many Japanese artist-potters live in a country where the creative artist is cherished. There is the house where the family lives, and in a secluded corner the potter's own room where he thinks and meditates, and where his priceless collection of pots is housed unobtrusively in cupboards. Here he is waited on and protected by his little wife, who brings him his meals, answers the telephone, handles all the visitors and the cash. Then there is the pottery workshop where the master's disciples work seven days a week with only two days off a month. Syunto-san has two disciples turning out domestic ware with amazing craftsmanship to his own designs, occasionally making an individual pot themselves in a free moment, and waiting on the potter when he comes rushing in with an idea which he quickly brings to

life in clay, often on a little slow hand-wheel.

But this is not just one such workshop - Seto is a city of 2000 kilns. Everywhere you look there are chimneys, many of them flying the black flag of a reduction firing. Often after a meal during which I was well drilled in the proper pronunciation of different glazes or types of pot my potter would say 'Come! Uncle!' and up the street we would go and call on uncle, who would take us into his own private room and bring out from a cupboard one ancient and precious pot after another carefully wrapped in silk in its own special wooden box. Or after dinner we would go 'sanpo' (walk) and call on Cousin, relaxing in his post bath kimono, and he would show us his factory, where a type of 'automation' was in progress, with assembly line and electric kiln, but most processes still done by hand with great skill. It was interesting to see in both potting and painting that the best work was being done by those who were building on the Japanese tradition and adding something more to it by their own creative thought. The 'rootless' pots and paintings, pseudo-Swedish or pseudo-French for the most part, seemed very bad to me.

Kato Syunto himself is a disciple of Rosanjin, who died early this year at the age of 80. Unlike the principals of the Mingei group who show a Western influence in one degree or another, Rosanjin belonged to a school of modern ceramics wholly based upon ancient Japanese models. He took the old forms and infused them with new life, and it wasn't until later when I found some of Rosanjin's work in a museum that I realised how strong is that master disciple relationship. A certain subtlety in the treatment of the lip, a contrast in texture, a sureness in the knowledge of when to leave the clay

alone and let it speak for itself, all these betokened a philosophy handed on from master to pupil. (But how subtly are we ourselves influenced! One day in Kyoto I gave a very small dish with ironsand body from my own kiln to the head of a ceramic factory making ordinary everyday ware. He took one look at this small pot and said 'Ah, Mashiko!')

One day Syunto-san said 'Come! Kamakura, mountain!' and we piled into his little car (the possession of which gave him great status among his fellows) and set off for an unknown destination, over the usual appalling roads, armed with a crow-bar. We finally arrived at a lonely slope up among the blue hills, with two or three thatched houses and a few rice paddies down below at the bottom of the valley. Syunto began beating round the sparse undergrowth with the crowbar and for one horrified moment I thought 'Snakes!', but what he was looking for were pot shards, and we pushed through the bushes to some gaping shafts in the hillside, all that remained of the old Kamakura kilns, cradle of Japanese ceramic manufacture. It was here that the potter Kato Shirozaemon set up his kiln when he returned from a visit to China in 1223 as an attendant to the Zen priest Dogen. The wares this Kato ancestor particularly admired were the Sung celadons and the temmoku and these had a tremendous influence on the work of later periods right up to this day.

This is the way it is in Japan. One minute you are in a modern Westernised world, the next pitchforked into a tradition so alien and deep that it could only be understood by being born into it. But alien and deep as this tradition is there is compounded in it a spiritual intensity to which even the Westerner, untutored as he is in such a way of thought, can respond occasionally. To me this explains the fascination and

the growing influence of Japan on the materialistic world of the West.

Nevertheless I have never before realised how deep are our own New Zealand traditions. The framework of our society is English, we have inherited the ideas our forefathers fought for of democracy and the rights of the individual, and yet we are not English, we are New Zealanders, conditioned by our environment and our location in the Pacific. There are only two and a half million of us - a population that seems laughably small when compared with the crowded millions of the East. We have all the faults that arise when there are only a few people to do all the work - the 'she's right' attitude. But just the same we have an independence of thought and an ability to make decisions. This could bring a vigour and an originality into our art forms if we can learn the hardest lesson of all - to be ourselves.

IDEA FROM THE WORLD DESIGN CONFERENCE

Masaru Katsumi: Just as the architect cannot attempt to design individual buildings without bearing in mind the Total Image of urban planning, so also the industrial designer cannot attempt the design of individual products without thinking of the total Image of planning for human living However, inevitable conflicts, inevitable showdowns are foreseen in the fields where these comprehensive images of design, originating each in a different field, meet: for example, between the automobile, a product of industrial design, and the road, a product of city planning; or, the size of the mass produced beer container and the size of the piece of furniture which must accommodate it.

WORLD DESIGN CONFERENCE - TOKYO 1960

Extract from the closing greetings by
Mr. Hsakira Kano

Everyone here feels that now we are at the remarkable threshold of a new age.

The population of the world, which is now 2.9 billion, will go up to 3.5 billion in 1970. Man is not satisfied merely with existence. We want better, higher and more aesthetic living standards.

We are pursuing peace and happiness with unlimited human desire and ever-expanding imagination.

In order to achieve peace and happiness, we have to work more and produce more things.

There arises here the problem of well laid-out cities and towns, well-designed houses, and well-designed furniture and utensils. These are followed by beautiful dams, beautiful roads and harbours, and beautiful airports.

Utility must proceed hand in hand with beauty.

The designer's contribution to human living is so great that more international understanding and collaboration is required.

This Conference is the beginning of a new era for designers in international co-operation.



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The potter's wheel which you were good enough to show me last week is in my opinion one of the best I have ever seen here or overseas.

I was very impressed with the workmanship of your construction. It is obvious that no pains have been spared to make this a high grade article which should ensure it a long life. For potters who are looking for such a piece of equipment I think your wheel would be ideal.

(Signed) J.H. RITCHIE

