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NEW ZEALAND

POTTER

NEW ZEALAND POTTER

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Volume Two

Number Two

December 1959

What stage have we New Zealanders reached with our pottery? Let's look at the facts. Most of us have got wherever we are by trial and error, not training. There are very few properly trained teachers of the craft, very few professional potters. The rest of us are amateurs who can therefore afford to experiment, but who, according to our critics, have not yet learned to think for ourselves.

On the credit side we have unbounded enthusiasm and a camaraderie, as evidenced by the small Napier Group, which was able to take the New Zealand Exhibition, cope with the tremendous amount of work entailed, and run it successfully. We also have a keen market for our pots - so much so that it can be a temptation to lower our standards. But biggest asset of all is our own country in which we can find everything we need; not only for raw materials but

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also for inspiration. No one in New Zealand lives more than a few miles from the sea, the bush and the mountains. This environment must affect us all if we can only learn to be ourselves.

Culturally New Zealand is beginning to grow up. Let us take our part in that developing culture by breaking up the safe little pots and making instead vigorous pots that more truly express the New Zealander as he is.

## CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial	1
The Souvenir - W.B. Sutch	3
Build Your Own Kiln - Mirek Smisek	5
Letter From a Potter - Graeme Storm	9
News	13
Letters to the Editor	15
Earthenware Slip Glazes Part Two	16
- Hilary Thurston	
Looking at the World with a Potter's Eye	18
- Elsie Inkersell	20
Abuja Pottery Training Centre	21
The Abuja Scene - Peter Stichbury	27
New Zealand Studio Potters' Third Exhibition	29
The Willeston Exhibition Galleries	31
Comments from the Selection Committee	33
- Len Castle	42
A Critical Appraisal - Jack Laird	43
Exhibitions	45
The First New Zealand Potters' Exhibition	49
- O.C. Stephens	
How to Open an Exhibition - Denis Glover	49
Book Reviews	49

## THE SOUVENIR

W.B. Sutch

This extract from an address on 'Education for Industry' given by Dr. Sutch to the Technical Education Association of New Zealand, at Timaru on 30 September 1959, is reprinted with his permission. It should give all working potters food for thought.

It is very difficult to find in New Zealand some characteristic New Zealand item which a tourist would like to take home with him as a present for his family. A fair proportion of the souvenirs in the shops are not really characteristic of New Zealand nor would most New Zealanders buy them. They are not indigenous, and so long as we think that we must manufacture certain things only for the tourist industry so long will we be handicapped in providing something worthwhile for the tourist. The visitor to our shores wants something of a kind that he cannot get elsewhere: he can get mass production goods at home, in Australia or Canada or Singapore. A tourist wants to take something home that is different, useful, decorative and of high quality. He can get his average quality at home. If he is in the United Kingdom he buys fine woollens, in France fashion goods, perfume or art works, in Japan binoculars, cameras, toys or characteristic craft work. Even Honolulu has developed quality goods which are worth a tourist's taking home.

The tourist used to be able to buy fine rugs in New Zealand and these can still be had, but the demand has fallen off. What else is there? There must be developed something of unique quality, unique to New Zealand. It could be special patterns of cloth, it could be hand-weaving, it could even be fashion goods. It could certainly be pottery. A good deal of the pottery produced in New Zealand could well grace the

homes of visitors to this country. A few tourists have bought New Zealand paintings. Preserved food might be another item if we produced high and unique quality. The items I have listed are based on New Zealand's raw materials. All that is needed is some style, imagination and craftsmanship.

#### SPECIAL LEACH ISSUE

Many interesting articles for this issue have been received by the Editor, Dr. T. Barrow, including contributions from Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie and George Wingfield Digby. Inevitable delays have, however, held up production, but it is hoped that this issue will be on sale early in the new year.

Copies may still be reserved by sending Five Shillings to The Editor, New Zealand Potter, 29 Everest Street, Wellington, but the actual selling price to the public will be greater.

#### BUILD YOUR OWN KILN

Mirek Smisek

If you decide to build your own kiln you can be sure of a lot of excitement. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that the pots which come out of your kiln have been created entirely through your own efforts. Do not be afraid of failures, as they will show you how to do better next time.

The kiln I recommend is a downdraught one, oil fired with a drip feed system.\* It relies on natural draught, which does away with pressure burners, compressors and other machinery, making the firing less complicated. I am very much in favour of the downdraught kiln as the distribution of heat is better than in an updraught kiln. As you can see from the plan, the flames have to travel further than in an updraught kiln, where they hit the pots at full strength straight from the fire box. In the downdraught kiln the flames have time and space to spread out evenly before reaching the pots. From the plan you can see they have to travel about seven feet, which allows the gases to combust completely. Another point in favour of the downdraught kiln is the fact that the heat reaches the pots before it reaches the floor, which means greater safety for the pots and less labour replacing burnt out bricks. This makes the setting of pots easier because the floor is permanent and never out of shape.

I never set more than one layer of pots and they are put directly on the floor on thin firebrick bats sprinkled with good ground fireclay. Large pots are always set against the chimney wall fairly close together. Smaller pots are set further apart against the bagwall. This

\*See Vol. 2 No. 1. page 11

setting stops the flames rushing for the chimney in a straight line, and they are deflected towards the smaller pots. On the plan the floor bricks are spaced evenly, but they are better laid about 1/2" apart near the chimney, and gradually spaced out until at the bagwall they are about 2 1/2" apart. This arrangement is mainly responsible for the even distribution of heat.

The fact that I set only one layer of pots on the floor and waste all the space above might seem crazy, but my reasons are these: When you use props and shelves it takes longer to set the kiln because you have to worry about fitting in the variety of shapes and sizes of pots (unless you mass-produce). At the temperature of 1300°C to which I fire, the risk of props and shelves collapsing is great. The firing time is shorter because the heat takes less time to penetrate only one layer of pots and there is no risk of overfiring the top pots. The cost of firing per pot will admittedly be higher, but the ease with which you fire your kiln will compensate for this. You can concentrate better on your other work while your kiln is in operation.

To fire this kiln to 1300°C takes about seven hours. This might be too fast for plastic clay, but as I use fairly open (sandy) clay it doesn't come to any harm. The fire is started with a piece of rag or other absorbent material soaked in oil. The following description is exactly as I do it. For the first half hour the flame is only 12" long. Afterwards the oil flow is increased every fifteen minutes by about 6" to 8" (length of flame) so that in about three hours the flames are long enough to burn the soot off the pots. Up to this time there is not complete combustion, but once the soot is burned (700 - 800°C) complete combustion takes place and the interior of the kiln looks like an electric kiln. The oil flow is still increased every

fifteen minutes. I usually increase it to the point where it would start smoking, but no further. In the following fifteen minutes the temperature in the kiln is again high enough to cope with more oil. And so on it goes until I see Cone 10 (1300°C) starting to bend. The oil flow is then reduced to stop the rapid increase of temperature and the soaking period commences - how long depends on your clay. I usually do mine in half an hour, and then do the salt-glazing. At this time the cone is nearly down.

The amount of salt (coarse grained) for this type of kiln and for the clay I use is two shovelfuls. I throw two handfuls on each fire at a time and allow it to evaporate before introducing the next lot of salt. This goes on until all the salt is used up. During the salting I have a reducing atmosphere in the kiln. The oil is then turned off and the kiln is allowed to cool off rapidly. This stops crystallisation and the glaze stays brilliant. As I said before, not all clays will stand this rapid increase of temperature - every clay needs individual treatment.

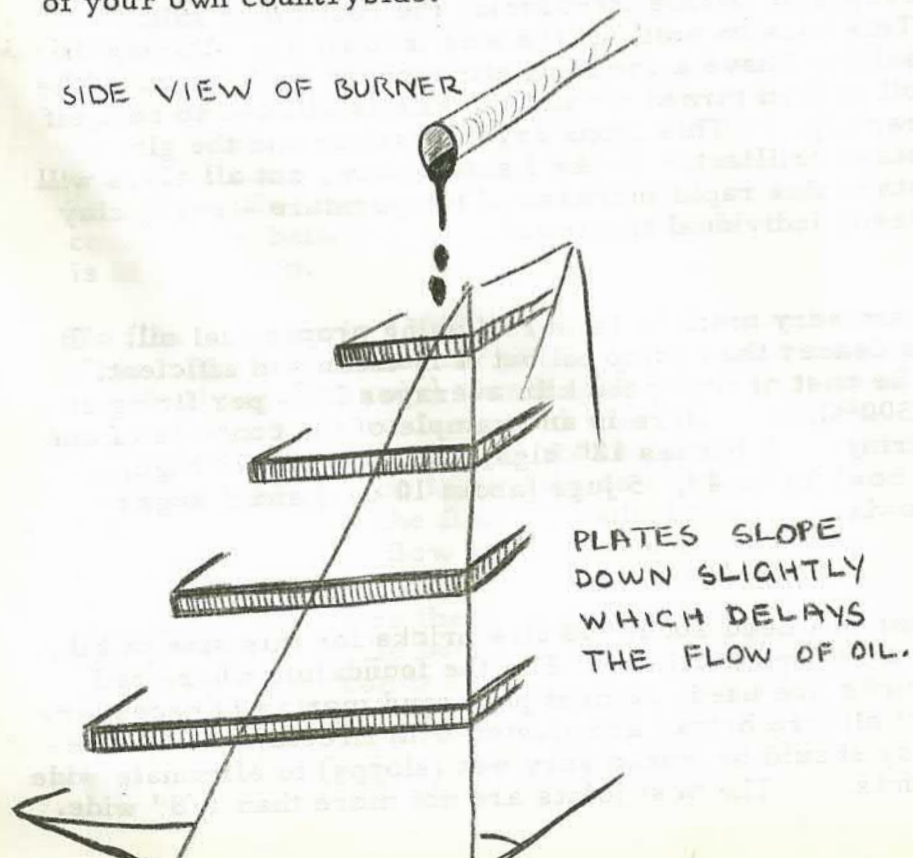
I am very much in favour of using proper fuel oil. It is dearer than sump oil but it is clean and efficient. The cost of firing the kiln averages 25/- per firing at 1300°C. Here is an example of the contents of one firing: 3 bottles 12" high, 2 coffee pots 7" high, 1 bowl 13" x 4", 5 jugs (about 10 oz.) and 5 sugar bowls.

You will need about 900 fire bricks for this size of kiln, and 500 red bricks. For the foundation where red bricks are used, cement plus sand mortar is necessary, but all fire bricks are jointed with fireclay. The fire-clay should be mixed very wet (sloppy) to eliminate wide joints. The best joints are not more than 1/8" wide.

When completed the kiln must be strapped with steel bands to stop expansion. The floor bricks are loose to allow for cleaning underneath. When building a kiln inside a wooden shed, make sure of at least two feet of space all round.

The potting road seems to be without end, but it provides adventures unsurpassed by anything else. The main thing is to keep experimenting, and I think it is very important to depend on materials in your own environment and adjust your potting accordingly. By having your materials on hand all the time you can experiment on a much grander scale and the pots seem to acquire a character which is representative of your own countryside.

SIDE VIEW OF BURNER



PLATES SLOPE  
DOWN SLIGHTLY  
WHICH DELAYS  
THE FLOW OF OIL.

## LETTER FROM A POTTER

Graeme Storm

When in London I made a beeline for the Victoria and Albert Museum where I had been told there was a good collection of pottery. I've been there twice so far and still haven't seen it all properly - it's absolutely fabulous and displayed to perfection, as indeed is everything in that museum. The collection of ceramics ranges from very early Egyptian and Persian, up to the work of present day potters, with everything imaginable in between. Just before I left London there was a special display of 300 years of Swedish pottery in this museum, and some of the contemporary work I thought very fine indeed. The Design Centre in the Haymarket and the Craft Centre at Hay Hill also have a good cross section of British pottery.

Further north I visited a most interesting German woman named Barbara Cass, who has a small studio and shop in York. She has been doing some very good work and amongst her pieces were some of the largest handthrown pots I have ever seen. They stood three feet and over in their finished state so would have been considerably larger when thrown. Barbara Cass introduced me to the Director of the York Art Gallery, Hans Hess, with whom Peter Tomory worked before he went to Auckland. Mr. Hess very kindly allowed me to look at what is reputed to be the finest collection of contemporary pots today. This formerly belonged to the Dean of York, but had just been donated by him to the Gallery, and the collection was to be officially opened to the public the following week by Bernard Leach. There are over 100 pots in the display and all the present day greats were represented - Staite Murray, Leach, Hamada, Harry and May Davis, Bouverie and others. As I was unable to stay in York until the time of the official opening I was most fortunate to have a preview.

While in the Stoke-on-Trent area I paid a visit to the Royal Doulton works at Burslem. An interesting experience in some ways but pretty soul-destroying as most big commercial potteries are bound to be. Before I forget, I also called on Lucie Rie in London. She has her studio in Bayswater not far from where I stay. Hans Coper no longer shares the studio with her - he now has his own - but fortunately for me he was there that morning so I met him also. To have coffee with them both, out of Lucie Rie's own cups, was quite a thrill for me I can tell you!

In Bath I met several local potters but didn't unfortunately have the time to visit Peter Wright (whose work I have seen in several places in England) or Pleydell-Bouverie - but I will in the near future call on them. No one escapes!

One of the highlights of my wanderings so far has been the two days I spent at St. Ives. The first time I climbed the hill to the Leach Pottery it was to find Bernard himself out but the Secretary, Frank Vibert, kindly showed me around the place. It was wonderful to actually see the clay preparing room, throwing and glazing rooms and the kiln shed about which I have heard Len talk so often. A firing had been completed a couple of days prior to my visit so the large three chambered kiln was empty and I was able to see inside it. There are two other kilns in the shed as well - a beehive shaped one built by David Leach and used, I understand, for bisque firings only, and a queer-looking salt glaze kiln crouched in a corner. While there I made an appointment to meet Bernard at 4.30 p.m. the following day and needless to say I was on time for that. I spent a half hour talking to him in his office, surrounded by such a collection of pots as I am never likely to set eyes on again. Leach is a big man in both stature and personality and he carries his seventy odd years very lightly, as one soon discovers.

A most inspiring time that and one which I will remember always.

Since coming to Scandinavia and Finland I have seen some wonderful ceramic work - for instance in a magnificent outdoor display centre in Stockholm. The beauty of the setting of the display was alone enough to make one gasp - a park, trees, ponds, fountains, sculpture and fine architecture. Apart from pottery there were textiles, glassware, woodcarving, metal, stone and ceramic sculptures.

While in Helsinki I have paid two visits to the Arabia ceramics factory, once to the commercial mass production part and the second to the artist and designers' floor. What a great setup they have to work in and what a wonderful atmosphere. The factory is a nine storey building and the top floor is where the artists and designers have their studios. There are about fifteen of them altogether and the chief designer, Kaj Franck, took me to meet most of them and to see their work. The artists have a completely free hand to work as they will because they don't have to worry about selling their own work - that is done for them under the name Arabia. In my travels I've seen so many potters who are producing work they admit is trashy alongside their true form; but they have to make a certain amount of what the public wants in order to live. The Arabia artists are not plagued with this problem as they are paid a good wage regardless of what they produce. The three hours I spent there were among the most exciting I have so far had. I had never before fully realised how much can be done with clay apart from the wheel. Nothing will ever dull my passion for wheel work, but now I am itching to try my hand at ceramic sculpture and wall plaques such as I saw at Arabia. Some plaques were flat pieces with raised designs on them picked out in stains, the whole covered with coloured glazes which ran off the raised portions and pooled on the flat surfaces; others were slender two and three dimensional semi-abstract

figures, some designed to hang on walls and others to stand alone as a piece of sculpture. A man by the name of Birger Karprainen has done some absolutely fascinating work in this line. Another artist, Schultz-Köln, a German, has done some wonderful abstract wall panels using scraping methods to get his designs and texturing them with sand, pebbles and the like. When I met him he was working on a huge wall which he has been commissioned to do for the new Helsinki airport - a magnificent effort. Another very direct method of producing natural designs on slabs of clay for wall plaques, table tops and the like was to press leaves or bundles of straw on to damp clay, then colour the impressions with stain and perhaps overglaze. I am sorry that my descriptions of these things fail so miserably but at least you will realise that I was very excited by what I saw, and with good cause.

The only trouble with all this travelling is that I am so filled with new ideas that I want to get to work immediately before I forget what I have seen. Since I left home in January I have only once had my hands in clay, and only then through the kindness of a very understanding potter who saw the longing look in my eyes. Wandering like this poses its problems.

I must close this letter now and try to get it posted - if I can find a Post Office and stamps. I am now in Turku, second city of Finland and my Father's home town.

Dated Helsinki, June 29, 1959.

## NEWS

Peter and Diane Stichbury, after many vicissitudes en route, finally returned to New Zealand on September 22, and Peter has taken up his old position at Ardmore Teachers' College. New Zealand potters are benefiting from the Stichburys' experiences. Wellington has had an exhibition of Peter's own work and of craft work he collected from Nigeria, at the Willeston Galleries from November 16 - 27. The Exhibition was sponsored by the Association of New Zealand Art Societies, whose Fellowship Peter won two years ago. He has also taken a weekend school for Adult Education in Wellington from November 20 - 22, and will be the Tutor at the Auckland Education Summer School from January 11 - 22, 1960.

Dr. Terry Barrow has recently been awarded a SEATO Research Fellowship which will take him to the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu for three months, followed by a further two months in the Philippine Islands. He intends to sail with his wife Joy on the 'Himalaya' departing Auckland 18th March, 1960. The trip should offer many opportunities in the field of ceramics, as well as field anthropology and museum research on Polynesian material.

Carel Vendelbosch is busy in his new home at Geraldine. He writes: 'I took a thousand fire bricks from my draught kiln with me from Christchurch, but found the house and garden so neglected that my main job has been to fix these up first. Wheel and workshop are ready now, clay too is waiting; but not till the first spring seeds are in will I have the peace to sit down and throw a pot. After all, what is the use of a salad bowl if there is not a fresh lettuce to put in it, and that is the same for a gravy jug and flower vase. So when the garden is on the way I will start on the kiln, a drip feed draught, and life will be in balance again'.



Congratulations to the New Vision Art Centre, now removed from their old premises at Takapuna to a well-designed new shop in His Majesty's Arcade, Queen Street, Auckland. There is a wonderful feeling of warmth and vigour as you walk into the shop, filled as it is with handmade pots, ceramic jewellery, weaving and other craft work. Here is another outlet for those of us with pots to spare.

Our sister journal, the Newsletter of the Craftsmen Potters' Association, Great Britain, is a most interesting publication, growing in size and strength along with its Association. Potters wishing to subscribe to this Journal should contact David Canter, Hon. Sec. Craftsmen Potters' Association, Bossiney, Eaton Park, Cobham, Surrey. Premises in which to set up a permanent Exhibition Centre in London have recently been obtained. The Association can be most helpful to New Zealanders in England, as one of our members has already found out. Why not become an Associate member ?

Through our magazine we are making several interesting contacts with Australian potters; Eileen Keys of Perth, Ivan McMeekin of Mittagong, Mr. Hughan of Melbourne, and Wanda Garnsey of Turramurra are three who have got in touch with us. An exchange of ideas and of pots could be to our mutual benefit.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Madam,

Following the Third New Zealand Potters' Exhibition I wonder if I might make a suggestion to selectors of future Exhibitions.

When Mr. Laird selected the entries for the Wellington Potters' 1959 Show, one of our Committee accompanied him and jotted down on the entry forms any comments that might help the potter to improve his work, especially in regard to rejected pots. Not only was this of great practical value; it also helped I am sure to counteract disappointment over rejections.

Could this procedure be followed in national exhibitions ?

Wellington

RAY ROSE

Madam,

I read with interest the discussion in the last issue on oil versus electric kilns, as I have the use of an oil drip feed kiln at Avondale College and my own kiln is electric.

For what it is worth, my opinion is: oil for beginners, it is cheap and gives you full understanding of heat and atmosphere; but professional potters should advance to the electric kiln for control, reliability and even heating. They are expensive to run but losses are nil.

Auckland

PATRICIA PERRIN

## EARTHENWARE SLIP GLAZES (Part Two)

Hilary Thurston

In my last article (Vol. 2 No. 1 page 20) I gave you two simple low firing red lead slip glazes. These glazes can be coloured by the addition of small amounts of various oxides e. g. to make a blue green transparent glaze, cobalt and copper oxides are added to the basic glaze as follows:

Clear glaze (dry)	100 parts
Cobalt Oxide	1/4 part
Copper Oxide	1/2 part

When weighing out you can use as your basic unit ounces (this makes a large quantity), grammes, lead shot or even split peas. Remember the glazes will be transparent, even though coloured, and if a semi or opaque glaze is wanted tin oxide or a similar matting compound must be added. It is handy to have a stock of your basic glaze well ground and mixed in dry form and then you can start experimenting by adding different colourants. Take careful note of what you do and always try your glazes out on test tiles first. A small bowl or shaped tile is better than a flat one, for then you can test your glaze for flow as well as colour. If the glaze has a tendency to flow freely be warned and do not carry it too near the base of the pot. If your clay is red firing it will need a white slip under a transparent coloured glaze to give the required colour e. g. a blue green transparent glaze over a white body is blue green, but over a red one it is a rich brown. Similarly, it can have a wide range of shades and tones of blue and green when applied over blue and green slips.

Application can be by dipping, pouring or brushing, and with a transparent glaze brushing is quite suitable. The coloured glazes need to be poured

or dipped if there is sufficient glaze, as brushing in this case tends to result in patchiness unless very well done. Slip glazes are applied more thickly than commercially prepared glazes, and the correct degree of thickness for each glaze can be assessed from the tests.

When making slips (for use under the glaze) the easiest way is to make a quantity of white slip as a base and divide it up into pint lots. A pint of slip is usually assessed at about 32 ozs. and here are a few slips with the oxide percentages reduced to ounce measures.

Dark Blue Slip.	1 pint white slip, 3 1/3% (1/2 oz.) cobalt oxide
Pale Green Slip.	1 pint white slip, 7% (1 oz.) copper oxide
Mossy Green Slip.	1 pint white slip, 7% (1 oz.) chromium oxide - but remember that if chromium oxide gets near tin oxide in the kiln it turns pink
Pink Slip.	1 pint white slip, 5% (3/4 oz.) red iron oxide

This will give you an idea of how the oxides are used in slips, but in glazes the colourants are used in much smaller quantities. Too much copper oxide in a glaze will give a gunmetal effect instead of green, and copper also tends to make the glaze flow more freely. Too much iron or manganese will make the glaze uninteresting and dry.

Let me say again that these notes are mainly the results of my own experiments and I hope may be of use to the beginner working as we have done with little or no special equipment, a low firing clay, and the urge to create something a little individual in the way of glazes.

## LOOKING AT THE WORLD WITH A POTTER'S EYE

Elsie Inkersell

Last year this Wellington potter motored from Bombay to London with a party of eight people, passing through fifteen countries on the way. Here are some of her experiences.

Motoring from Agra to Delhi we came to a small village where we were told that an old potter lived. After many inquiries we found him working at his wheel, which was set in the middle of a very narrow path leading to the family mud hut. By this time the whole village was following us, and the old man was very pleased to work while we watched. He inserted a stick in a hole at the edge of the stone wheel, which was about two and a half feet across, and when it was spinning at the speed he wanted he then squatted and threw the clay dead centre. In less than two minutes the finished pot was being lifted from the wheel. There were rows and rows of identical water pots he had made with long necks and two small handles, as well as pots for storing grain. The assembled village was very interested when I asked if I could use the wheel, and after the wheel was set in motion and the clay centred I squatted, and to my great relief completed the pot before the wheel began to wobble as it slowed down.

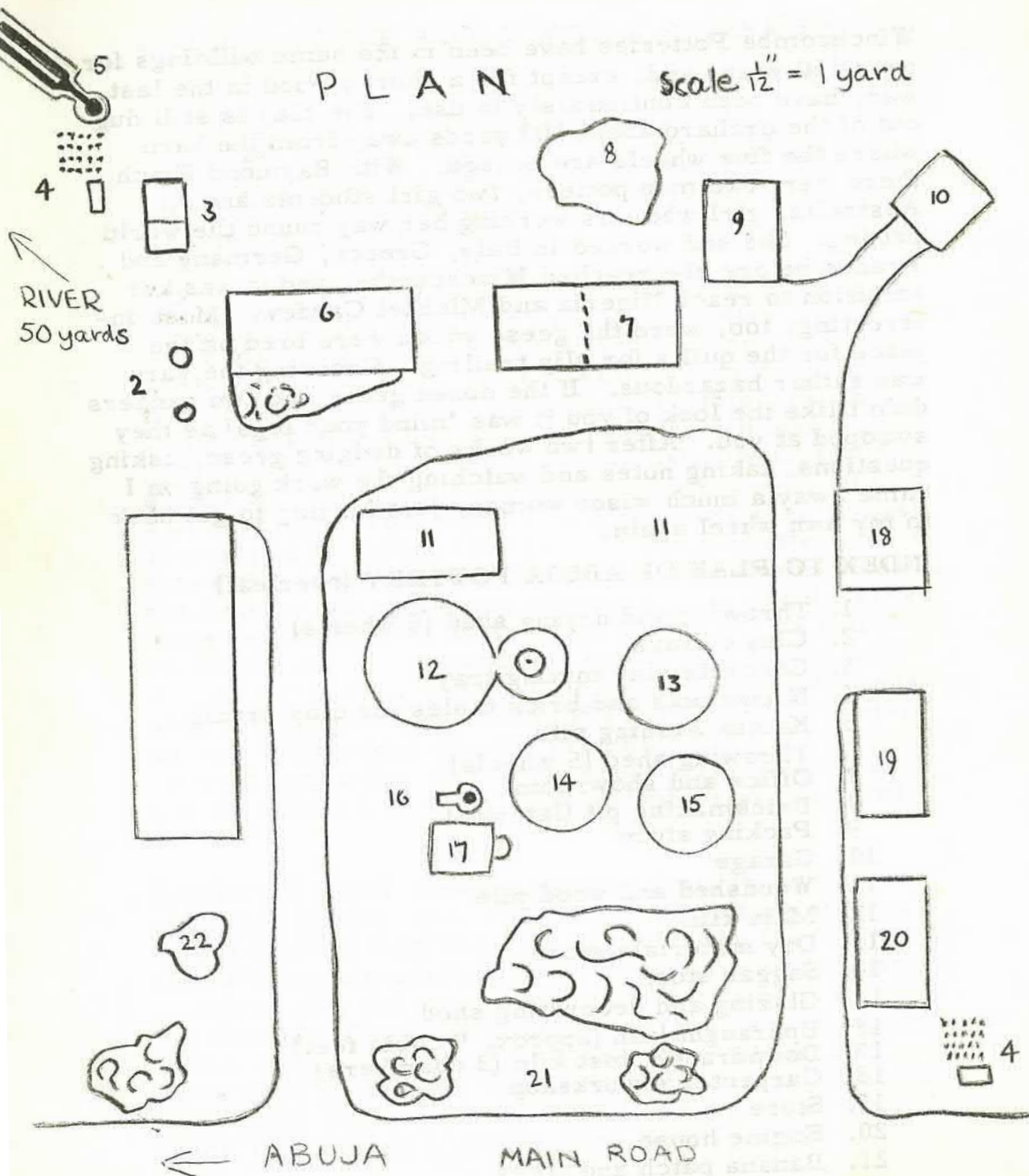
I collected small pieces of pottery from the different countries we visited but saw no more potters at work until I reached England. After contacting the Craftsmen Potters Association of Great Britain as soon as I arrived they put me in touch with Raymond Firth of Winchcombe Potteries, where I worked for two weeks. Winchcombe village itself is most interesting, and dates back to the days of the pilgrims. The potteries were about one mile down a lovely wooded lane through which I walked each morning and evening. The

Winchcombe Potteries have been in the same buildings for over 150 years and, except for a short period in the last war, have been continuously in use. The clay is still dug out of the orchard about 100 yards away from the barn where the five wheels are housed. With Raymond Finch there were two men potters, two girl students and an Australian girl who was working her way round the world potting. She had worked in Italy, Greece, Germany and France before she reached Winchcombe, and it was her ambition to reach Nigeria and Michael Cardew. Most interesting, too, were the geese which were bred on the place for the quills for slip trailing. Crossing the yard was rather hazardous. If the dozen geese and two ganders didn't like the look of you it was 'mind your legs' as they swooped at you. After two weeks of dodging geese, asking questions, taking notes and watching the work going on I came away a much wiser woman, just longing to get back to my own wheel again.

## INDEX TO PLAN OF ABUJA POTTERY (overleaf)

1. Throwing and drying shed (6 wheels)
2. Clay cellars
3. Concrete clay mixing tray
4. Native pots and brick tables for clay drying
5. Kaolin washing pits
6. Throwing shed (5 wheels)
7. Office and showroom
8. Brickmaking pit (laterite)
9. Packing store
10. Garage
11. Woodshed and wood pile
12. Main kiln
13. Dry materials store
14. Saggar store
15. Glazing and decorating shed
16. Updraught kiln (approx. 9 cubic feet)
17. Downdraught test kiln (2 chambers)
18. Carpenter's workshop
19. Store
20. Engine house
21. Banana patch and trees
22. Laterite for clamming

## ABUJA POTTERY TRAINING CENTRE



## THE ABUJA SCENE

Peter Stichbury

Geographically speaking, Abuja is almost exactly in the centre of Nigeria, and is one of the beauty spots of this country. Close to the Jos Plateau, it is about 1400 feet above sea level, and has a good climate for a place so close to the equator. Abuja is surrounded by hills, and by many magnificent, weathered monolithic domes of granite - grey, bare and exciting. One of these, about five miles from Abuja, called Zuma Rock, rises to a height of 1000 feet above the surrounding country, and is regarded as quite unclimbable, so sheer are its sides. The Africans regard it with respect and some superstition. The village of Abuja is seventy miles from the nearest rail centre at Minna, and is therefore relatively unspoilt, though 'pan' (corrugated iron) roofs are on the increase, the roads are widening, and heavy traffic increasing. The inhabitants of the village are mainly Hausa, and number about 7,000. It is the centre of an 'Emirate' of about 2,000 square miles with a population totalling about 70,000 people, including tribes such as the numerically superior pagan Gwari, some nomadic Fulani - who are cattle people, and other small tribes such as the Gade, Ganagana and Koro. The Emirate is well ruled by the Emir of Abuja, Sulaimanu Barau, O.B.E., who is a man devoted to his people and their welfare. He has a council of six, on which some of the other tribes are represented.

Our house - a huge barn of a place with a high thatched roof - is on the 'hill', along with about seven other houses occupied by 'turawa' (white people), including the lovely round thatched house of Michael Cardew, just a few paces from us.

The view from the hill is superb. The hills, the granite domes, the patches of bushland, the village, and the river winding away to the left past the pottery, make a wonderful panorama.

The road to the pottery doesn't pass through the village, but cuts to the left of it. First there is a tree-lined lane about a mile long, from which the village in the early morning, shrouded in soft light and the blue haze of many early cooking fires, is a delight to see. Care is needed on this road, as on all roads here. It is a hazard of sheep, goats, turkeys, fowls, ducks and small children. Then on past a tumbled down house, round the corner and over the bridge, and there is the pottery.

It is difficult to describe the sense of pleasure given by the group of buildings which comprise the pottery. The grouping is delightful - small round houses set in a U-shape of larger, long buildings. (See plan for details). All the buildings are thatched, but soon, unfortunately, the thatch of the long buildings is to be replaced by pan, as the thatch does not withstand the onslaught of the severe storms of the rainy season as well as it should. The people are no longer interested in good thatching, and consequently repairs are expensive and don't last very well - leaking roofs in a pottery are inconvenient to say the least!

The kiln shed, as shown in the photograph, is one of the most delightful of the smaller buildings. The window openings as shown are Nupe (a tribe to the west) in style, and are also on the two long throwing sheds and the saggar store. The other buildings are shuttered or have glass windows.

The kiln is a round draught, with four Bourry-type fire boxes. The first chamber has a capacity of 90 cubic feet, the second chamber 180 cubic feet, and the third chamber approximately 50 cubic feet. Wood fired, it takes an average of 36 hours to reach approximately 1300°C, with very even results. The coolest place is next to the wicket, where the bagwall is non-existent. The kiln was built from lateritic mud bricks

made on the spot, but the inside facing has been rebuilt in the main with small china clay bricks, well bonded with a heavy saggar mix. The bagwall is built of these small china clay bricks. To be in the kiln shed when the kiln is being fired is an absolute joy. To all appearances, until slabs are removed and fires stoked, nothing is happening - the Chinese saying of 'Wu wei' or 'non activity'. There is no noise apart from a gentle hissing and crackling when the firebox slabs are removed. This is a special treat after the blast of oil burners. The kiln burns approximately five cords of wood at each firing. A cord of wood cut to length and stacked measures 8' x 4' x 4' and costs 24/- per cord delivered. It was the availability of wood for firing which ultimately decided that Abuja would be the site for the Pottery Training Centre, and the Senior Pottery Officer, Michael Cardew, has rejoiced ever since.

Materials come from all over the region. Several clays are used, one from a tin mine on the Jos Plateau, 200 miles away. Another clay is brought in from Abuchi about three miles from Abuja, by Gwari women, who carry it in large calabashes on their shoulders. For each load they receive 10d or 1/-. Another clay comes from the hills near Kwali, about thirty miles from Abuja. A group of the pottery labourers usually spend about two weeks at a small village nearby, each day climbing to the hills to dig the clay and cart it back in headpans three miles over bush track to the road where it can be picked up by truck. Recently another clay has been re-discovered at Ashara, 25 miles further on from Kwali, where there is also an excellent deposit of fine sand. Felspar abounds in this country. The pottery source is from a small mine fifteen miles from the village.

Limestone is found on the road to Minna in a large outcrop. Quartz is obtained from the china clay

when washed, as fine gravel. Talc, albite, topaz, zircon - all are found in different parts of the region. Some of the pigments used for decoration, such as chrome and cobalt, are imported, but iron scrap is roasted in the flue to give  $Fe_3O_4$ . Black slip is made from laterite with clay. All materials are ball-milled, including the clay bodies, which are milled for two hours, the clay having been previously broken up by mallet and put through the 'corn mill' for required fineness. Glazes are usually milled for four hours, the hardest materials such as quartz and felspar having been milled previously for eight hours. The mills are run from a diesel motor, the ball mill having a capacity of eighteen gallons. After milling, the clay bodies (high temperature bodies only are milled) are poured into large native pots set in the ground to dry out. Further drying is done on brick tables, after which it is taken to the wedging tables, thoroughly wedged and kneaded, then stored in the two large clay cellars to mature. The clay is beautifully plastic, is red-firing, and matures at approximately  $1250^{\circ}C$ . There is a lighter body for higher temperature work and a single clay with fine grog added is mixed on the concrete trays for cooler making.

There are only two seasons in Nigeria, quite definitely divided - the wet and the dry. It is almost impossible to throw during the dry season - pots crack too easily because of the warm winds and the absolute dryness of the air. All throwing, therefore, is done in the wet season from April until November. Jobs for the dry season include clay making, saggar making, oval dish making, glaze making and experiments, the obtaining of fresh supplies of materials, and, of course, the very important kiln firing. Firing averages once a month, though one or two firings are sometimes left out during the wet season. Glaze dipping, fettling, decorating, and packing and firing the kiln take up a good percentage of the time. New interests have just

been established, such as bead making in both red clay and porcelain, and the making of tesserae for mosaic work. The latter was at the request of Social Welfare in Kaduna.

The students, permanent labourers and office staff make up an interesting and happy crowd. Many tribes are represented and all soon learn Hausa, or a smattering of Hausa, as few of the personnel have English. All the labourers and one of the office staff are Hausa people from Abuja. Okoro Ike, Michael Cardew's right hand man, is not a Northerner, but comes from the Eastern Region. He is a very intelligent man who speaks fluent English and Hausa as well as his own language. His tribe is Ibo. When Michael Cardew is on leave (three months each year in England) or away on tour as he frequently is, Okoro takes charge. We have come to regard his ability and the man himself very highly. Peter Gboko - from the big town of Gboko 250 miles to the South East, is a Tiv. Peter has deep tribal marks cut into his cheeks - placed there in infancy, and intended to make him look fierce as a man. In the past, the Tivs were a tribe to be feared, being known as 'Munshi' (Eating) for they used to raid markets and villages and carry off all the food! A more gentle soul than Peter would be hard to find - he is a very sensitive potter, jugs and teapots being his special delight. One lad of fifteen, Hassan Lapai, from Lapai to the West, is Nupe. He has very fine features and a bearing, grace and manners, which make him of special interest. He is very intelligent and a promising potter. Another from the Kagoro hills near Jos rejoices in the delightful name of Gugong Bong! His sense of humour and amazing agility make him a constant source of amusement. Ibrahim of Zaria, a Hausa, is very sophisticated and worldly - he regards Abuja as very 'bush' - he is very proud of the fact that he comes from the big city of Zaria. Danjuma 'Kilim' is one of the Hausa

labourers from Abuja. His latter name is derived from 'kiln' as he is the head kiln man. He packs and unpacks the kiln the majority of times, and is becoming very efficient. He is regarded very highly. Bawa Ushafa is Gwari and rather 'bush' in a delightful way. He is very likeable and a willing worker, is one of the pottery's old hands, and is a good thrower. These are but a few of the characters who make up the pottery personnel.

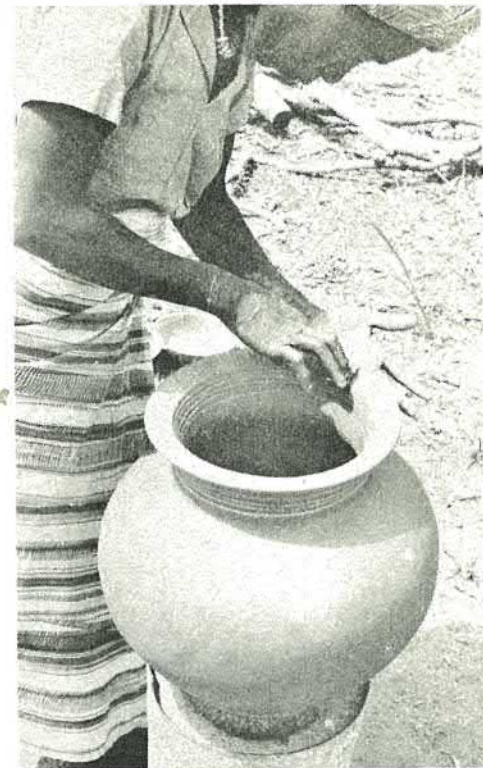
Ladi Kwali deserves a story to herself. She is Gwari, but from one of the finer branch tribes of these people, the main type of Gwari being rather aboriginal in character and custom. She has finer features, a more dignified carriage and lighter skin, which is interestingly tattooed. Ladi has an interesting past which cannot be told here - sufficient to say that she is now a famous person, though fame rests lightly on her shoulders. She is proud, but not overly so, that her pots are sold in London, exhibited in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and bought by Royalty and Governors-General. Ladi is a lady - she has the men mix her clay and shift her pots for her - why not? - sufficient that she makes the pots! Although she is proud to make the traditional shaped pots of Kwali she delights in using the 'ingin' - the potter's wheel - and has attained a high degree of proficiency at throwing. A literal translation of her name is 'Sunday of Kwali', having been born on a Sunday in the village of Kwali. This is a typical method of naming.

Abuja Pottery Training Centre is everything a potter could ask for. It is a tribute to the energy, interest, and singlemindedness of Michael Cardew, who cannot be praised too highly for his work.

(Note: There is a delightful article by Michael Cardew, to be read or re-read, on the Abuja Pottery Centre, in Pottery Quarterly Number 11).

Abuja, May, 1959.

LADI KWALI  
BUILDING A LARGE POT



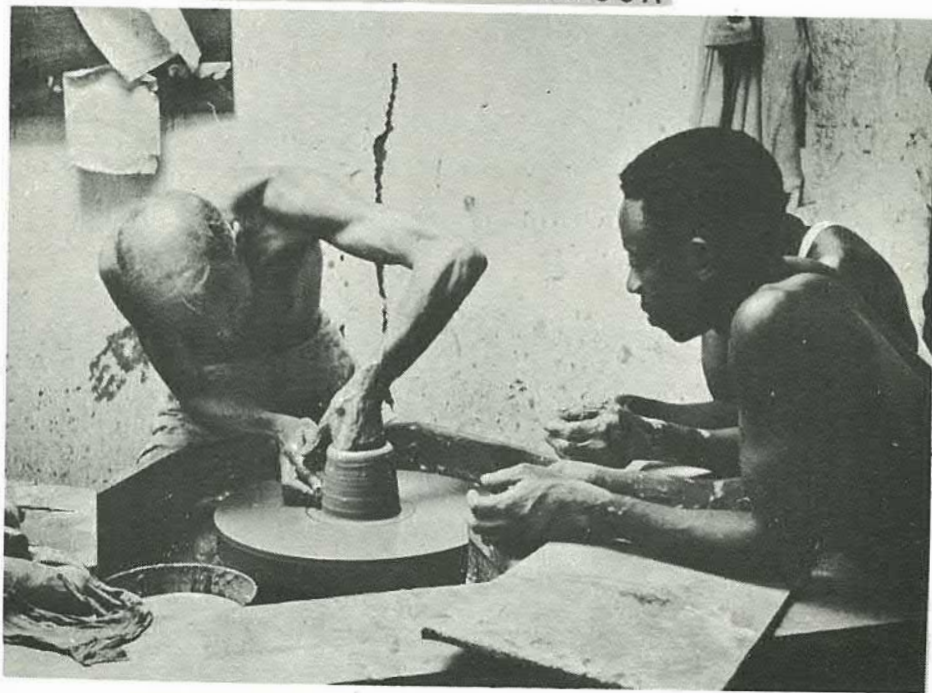
LADI KWALI - ABUJA  
DECORATING ONE OF HER HANDBUILT POTS



CLAY MAKING  
AT ABUJA



KILN SHED - ABUJA

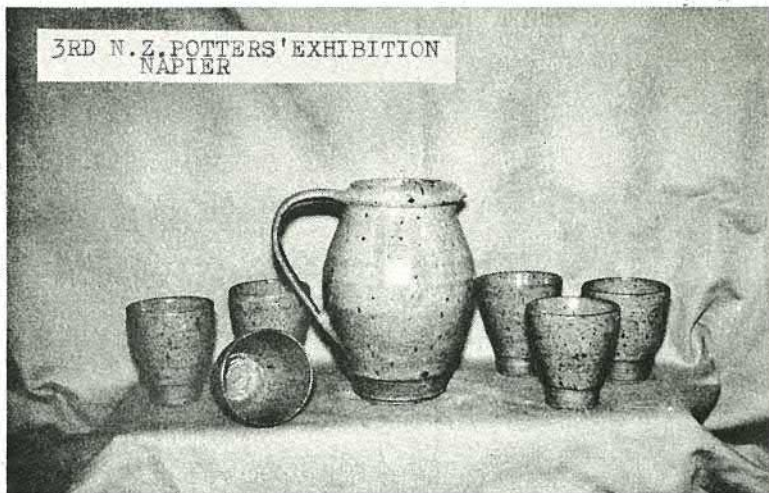


MICHAEL CARDEW AT WHEEL

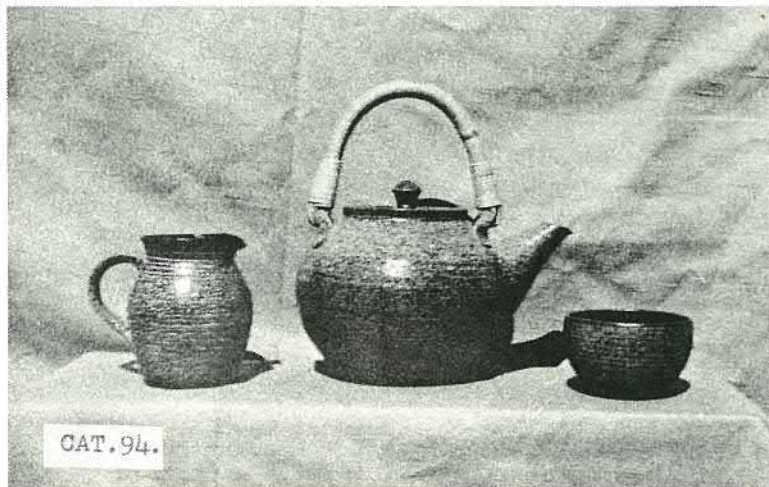


WILLESTON GALLERY





CAT. 23. Jug: 8", beakers: 4"



CAT. 69. 12".

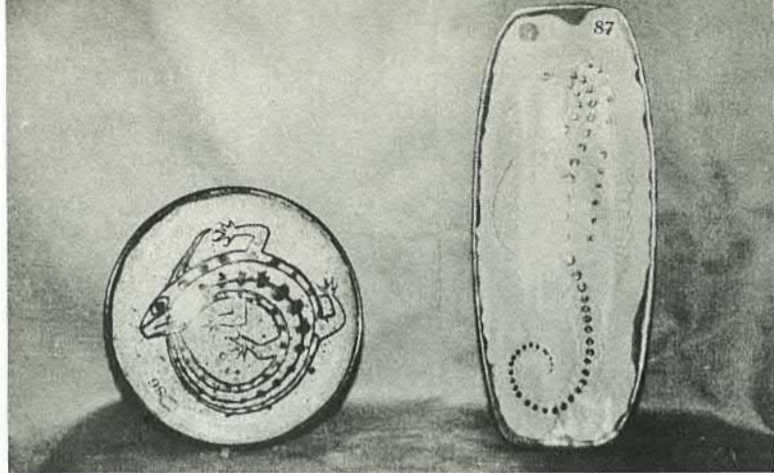
3rd. N. Z. POTTERS'  
EXHIBITION - NAPIER



CAT. 47. 13".

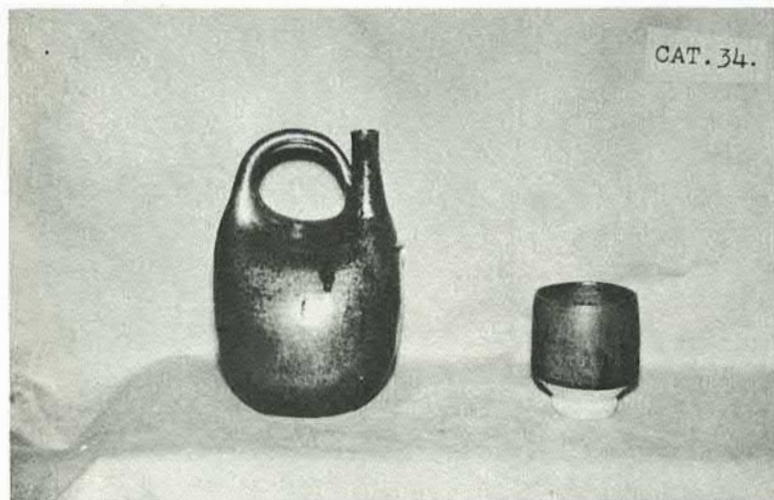


CAT. 96. 16".



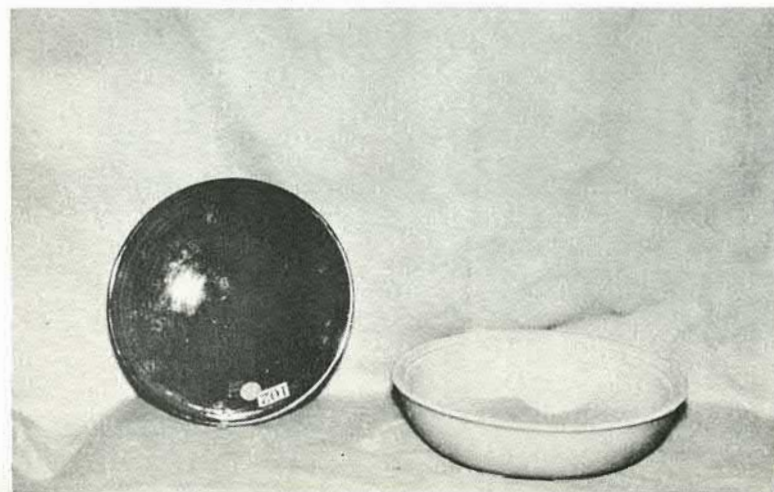
CAT. 86.  
8"x3"

CAT. 87.  
14"x5½"

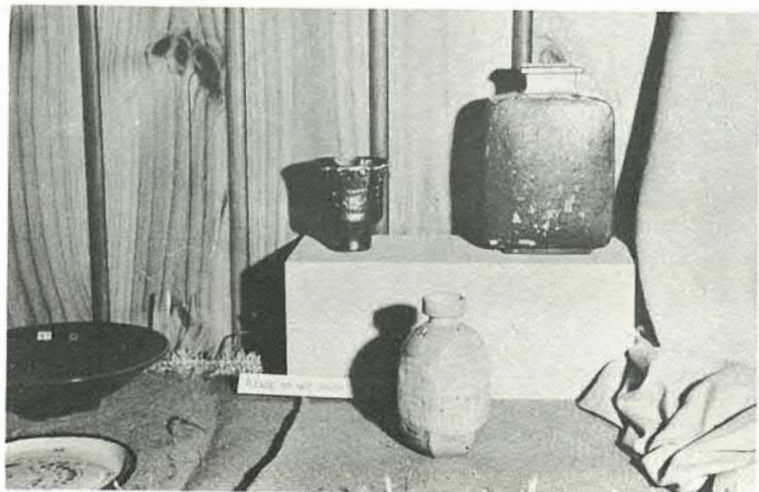
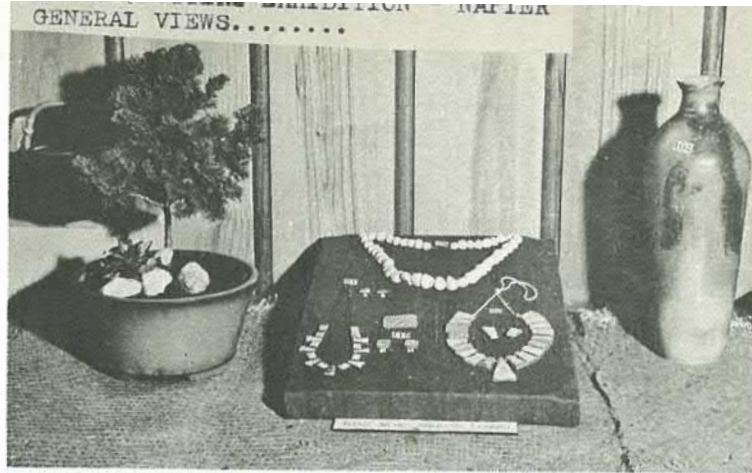


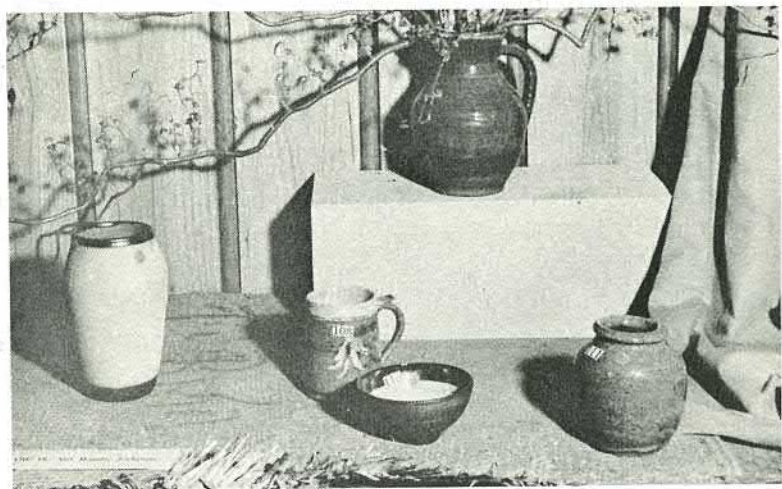
CAT. 34.

CAT. 29.



CAT. 102.  
dia. 8"





### NEW ZEALAND STUDIO POTTERS' THIRD EXHIBITION

McLean Park, Napier, 1 - 10 October, 1959

On entering the new gymnasium in which the Exhibition was displayed it was immediately apparent that the whole of Napier Pottery Group was backing up the show. At the entrance was a potter welcoming and ready with information, to the left on a small platform was a pottery wheel, and on this all afternoon and evening demonstrations were given to visitors. The exhibition itself was well displayed in the traditional manner. Lou Theakstone had been responsible for this. His feeling for grouping the pots was very good and the colours of the drapes were a subtle and suitable background. Thanks must be given to Ray Bone of Hurdley's Ltd., for lending the fabrics, and to the Napier Horticultural Society for the tables, trestles and scrim.

The hall is large, and so that the pottery display would not be overwhelmed by vastness, the indefatigable Director of the Hawkes' Bay Museum and Art Gallery, Jim Munro, had got together an exhibition of wood sculpture and of prints. These were well chosen, and helped to make the whole show interesting.

The Selection Committee, Len Castle, Jim Munro and May Mitchell, did not spare any of us and threw out over fifty per cent of the pots submitted. Salutary for all of us and most helpful for promoting better standards, but it could be even more helpful next year if, as a contributor suggests, the Selection Committee makes a note on the Entry Forms of why the pots were rejected. In all 261 pots were submitted by 41 potters and of these 119 pots were accepted and displayed. It was unfortunate that some entries did not reach Napier until after the Selection Committee had reached its conclusions. This is why the names of several well-known potters are missing from the catalogue. When sending pots by rail it is necessary to pack well and to allow plenty of time for transit.

The Napier Pottery Exhibition Committee was: Lou Theakstone, May Mitchell, Connie Verboeket, Ray Bone, Hilary Thurston, Nan Janett, and Marcia Wilkinson the Secretary. Anyone who has ever assisted at the running of an Exhibition will know just how much work they did, and they were supported by the whole of the Napier Group when it came to the packing and unpacking, demonstrations, sending out entry forms, and door keeping duties.

People came to see the show from as far afield as Auckland and Dunedin, and the welcome and the assistance with billeting helped greatly to foster the traditional friendliness of potters. Altogether there were 2552 visitors.

To be successful, an exhibition of this kind must have one person who has the overall plan in mind and who sees that no detail, large or small, is overlooked. This man was Jim Munro, Director of the Hawkes Bay Museum and Art Gallery, who, with the able co-operation of his staff, had the whole show functioning with the smooth precision of a craftsman.

H. M.

#### Credits:

Hilary Thurston ..... exhibition photographs  
Peter Stichbury ..... Abuja photographs

Pots on cover made by Mirek Smisek

## THE WILLESTON EXHIBITION GALLERIES

Small art galleries such as those of the West End of London are essential to the development of the artistic life of a community. The Art Society type of exhibition, held once or twice annually, tends to be a social rather than an artistic occasion; a place for the massing of what is called 'traditional', but is in reality popular art. 'Serious' (but not necessarily solemn) painting, when acceptable to Art Society juries, is swamped by conformist work. Special types of exhibitions such as those of pottery or craft work, exhibitions devoted to particular themes such as furniture design or town planning, and the travelling exhibitions which are increasing in numbers, do not fit into the Art Society pattern. For all these, the adaptable smaller galleries are needed.

By bringing forward a succession of exhibitions of special character, the smaller galleries provide opportunities for the making of those comparisons of differing art forms or styles which will assist in the formation of a more critical appreciation of the arts, and they wield an influence much greater than that of the larger but essentially static Art Society shows.

Before 1950, Wellington offered little opportunity for the display of small exhibitions. A first step was taken when the French Maid Coffee Shop began exhibiting paintings, and then in 1950 the first true private gallery was opened by Helen Hitchings. Others followed, and of these, the Willeston Exhibition Galleries, of Graeme Dowling and John Anderson, is the latest.

It is a fine gallery, easy of access and carefully planned to show paintings, prints and pottery to advantage. The lighting is artificial but has been balanced to give a very true rendering of colours.

There is a standing display, which is alternated with special exhibitions, amongst which pottery has taken an important place.

At the beginning, Graeme Dowling described the new gallery as something of a venture, 'to be tried for a year'. Now there are plans to extend the space, and to make the gallery still more adaptable, so we may hope the venture has been justified, and that the gallery will continue to be an important element in the artistic life of Wellington.

J. R. C.

FOR SALE Sit down Dutch pottery wheel, worked by foot. £7. Miss Kathleen Caughley, 72 Hurstmere Road, Takapuna, Auckland.

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## COMMENTS FROM THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

Len Castle

The standard of the work submitted to the Third Exhibition was fair, although several pieces could stand with justification among the best of hand-made pots being produced in any country at the present time. But on the whole there were few experimental ideas, little attempt to give new meaning to basic forms, or a re-interpretation of function. In most cases the craftsmanship was good, but too often the ideas behind the pots were safe, dull and static. Some pots leant too heavily on well-known Western and Eastern prototypes.

The Selection Committee expected that each pot should function efficiently, be well made and have aesthetic character (reaching agreement on the last point was not as difficult as we had anticipated).

I am sure that our judgment of pots cannot be other than intuitive and based on sensory experience, although analytical reasoning is an important support when examining the form, texture, glaze and decoration of a pot. A good handmade pot has an organic vitality which is the total of a number of effects. Of these, the form of a pot is of first importance, it should be defined clearly. Many pots are complete within themselves, others make a full statement in a particular setting, or when they act as containers.

Many pots were rejected because of unsatisfactory proportions, or because of their 'amorphous' nature. Most of the potters submitted bowls, and it was interesting to see the different approaches to this basic form. Too often there was a lack of awareness of the subtleties that mark a 'good bowl' from a 'bowl'. Wide, solid feet supported a shape that

suggested lightness and gracefulness; the expected clean sweep inside a bowl was marred by hollows or lumpiness; inside profiles were contradicted by an unrelated outside profile; too many profiles sagged heavily near the foot and climbed unsteadily to the rim; too many feet had been turned when the clay was too hard, resulting in a stiff and harsh effect. However, one earthenware bowl appealed strongly and was considered to be one of the outstanding pots of the show.

It is important to have a sensitive understanding of the materials being used. Finding out what the material wants to say is the only way of saying anything through the material. It is here that the stoneware potters are at their best; though several interesting stoneware pots suffered from the over-rich effect of their glazes, the forms were smothered.

The vitality of the pot is determined by the manner in which form, glaze and decoration are used, for the pot is a projection of the maker.

### THIRD NEW ZEALAND POTTERS' EXHIBITION - A CRITICAL APPRAISAL BY A NEW NEW ZEALANDER

Jack Laird

It is always important to have a clearly understood basis for making any assessment, and in order to appreciate the Third New Zealand Potters' Exhibition it is necessary to examine the achievement represented by the exhibits against a background of the New Zealand cultural pattern, and to keep in mind the comparative youth of the craft. In this respect it is also necessary to be quite clear in one's mind of the precise meanings of terms, as I have found already that sometimes 'Pommies' and 'Kiwis' use the same words but mean different things. Perhaps to examine the achievement of those potters whose work is exhibited, against their own assertions, as expressed in the catalogue introduction by Terry Barrow, may well be a reasonable yardstick.

That there is, and should be, a necessary difference between the handmade and the machinemade article is self-evident, but it must be borne in mind that the potter who uses a wheel and a kiln is in fact using a machine, and a machine mankind invented so that pottery could become fully functional. The essential difference between the studio craftsman potter and the industrial potter is that in the case of the latter, mass-production for a mass market limits the means at his disposal, and his work loses the stamp of individuality. There is no ground at all for the adoption of the attitude that the products of the studio potter should be inferior in any material and technical way, and it is unnecessary to point out the aesthetic advantage he possesses. An examination of the work of the best studio potters of any country today will prove this. To make a virtue of technical imperfections is a dangerous form of preciousness and a direct attack at the essential standards of the honest craftsman. Every potter prays on opening his or her kiln to discover a pot that stands

out by reason of 'happy accident'. But it must be a happy accident, a fortuitous blend of fortunate circumstances that has given an added virtue to the pot beyond intention, and raised it above the level of the rest.

'Warmth and human quality' are essential values of craft pottery, and the 'very irregularities and imperfections of it' are expressions of those values. At no time, however, should they be gross and blatant. A well thrown pot to the conscious vision must look true in shape. This appearance will not stand up to precise measurement, and at a level below consciousness the human spirit can perceive and comprehend these human qualities of 'imperfection' and enjoy their unobtrusive subtlety.

That by far the majority of these potters earn their living by other means does not mean that a standard of craftsmanship below the best is acceptable. After all, a failure in the kiln does not bring financial disaster, as it does to the studio potter living by his work. It is, also, no particular virtue to use equipment that is makeshift and crude, as I am only too aware it often is, as the means of making perfectly satisfactory equipment is available to all. In particular, many wheels are crude and mechanically poor. 'The colonial spirit of self-reliance' is the one quality that should distinguish New Zealand pottery, and in the use of local raw materials an excellent principle is established, but there can be a misplaced loyalty to the local brickyard clay if it will not throw up into an even cylinder without squatting at the base. There is after all an abundance of excellent clays.

It is true that pottery as an art medium is only partly under the control of the artist, as it is of any other visual art, but it is more under the control of the artist in direct proportion to the amount of skill he acquires, and some of the exhibits display

imperfections more indicative of badly designed, unevenly-heated kilns and unhappy combinations of materials, than 'happy accidents'. I have in mind a grogged pot whose surface had bubbled in a pestilence-stricken fashion, and a very warped bowl.

One is struck by the preponderate influence of Bernard Leach in the work displayed. So much so that the derivative nature of much of the form speaks of overmuch dependence. It is here, sadly enough, that the colonial spirit of self-reliance is weakest and thinnest. Any art form that is not evolving is necessarily becoming atrophied, and in this I see a parallel between New Zealand today and England just after the war. Leach's great contribution to pottery is his comprehensive philosophy of the craft. In essence Oriental and humble, it is in accord with his background of life in the East and training in Japan. Because of its strength, and the undeniable quality of his work, Leach then dominated English craft pottery, but his work was never English. He was never the thrower Cardew is, and the best of English craft pottery is epitomised by Cardew's work at Winchcombe. Leach gathered round him a number of very able potters who learnt from him Oriental stoneware forms and techniques, and they in turn produced several generations of students. At each remove the influence weakened, and the spirit became more flaccid until the inevitable reaction set in, and today there is a very different appearance to the English pottery scene. It is essential for New Zealand potters to avoid this state and to become aware that any art must be of its own time and place. As in painting, where the genius of the Renaissance became the dead hand of the Academy, the weakening influence of Oriental stoneware is in danger of becoming the academicism of New Zealand craft pottery. Slavish following has lead some potters into the situation one finds with

regard to the so-called celadon glazes. The origin of these glazes was an effort to find a jade-like quality, and they are characterised by particular qualities of liquid depth and subtle, austere colour, in which the body quality plays an important part. A glaze is not a celadon just because a recipe from 'A Potter's Book' is made up out of unanalysed local materials and fired. Some of the matt, dry, dead, grey glazes called celadons in the exhibition have no relation to those very lovely surfaces which Leach likens to 'sky after rain'.

One of the most direct lessons to be learnt from the Oriental potter is by looking at and feeling his foot rings. The turning is clear and precise and smooth. I suggest that all potters, before selling anything, should take their pots and on their own most precious and highly polished tables rotate them gently. So many of the pots in the exhibition showed slipshod turning and badly proportioned feet. (A note here to the arrangers of the exhibition: it does not show a pot to advantage to have its foot immersed in the folds of material and it does not give the eye a chance to assess the true spring of the shape).

Throwing, generally, is not good. Too many pots of pleasing form with delicate rims belied their appearance with a ponderous weight. A pot must delight the hand as well as the eye, and the shattering disillusionment occasioned by picking up a pot which showed a strong feeling of life and lightness only to find the wall at the foot about  $3/4$ " thick is upsetting. Potters should not despise the prime exercise of throwing a few good straight cylinders each day and cutting them down vertically to check the thickness. It is good for one, like daily prayers. Cane handles on Japanese teapots were also too thin and weak, and rather carelessly fixed at the lugs. The exception here was the teapot by Mirek Smisek, who uses Malacca

cane of adequate diameter for his handle, bends it in a taut, even curve and fixes it with care. This is typical of Smisek's craftsmanship, and from this Exhibition he emerges as New Zealand's premier potter. His throwing is excellent, his pots show a precise form and confident shaping. There is no hesitancy in the movement from the foot to the rim, and there is a nobility of character in the conception that makes his throwing as good as any I have seen. His big jar of salt-glazed stoneware is excellent, embodies all these qualities in a monumental form, and wears a fine glaze. Smisek is a fine craftsman whose unremitting pursuit of high standards marks him as a man to be emulated. All his pots in the Exhibition were a pleasure to handle, the form being harmonious with weight and balance, and the pot coming to life as it is lifted from the table. His bottle and beakers show a well-developed sense of design and material, and always his glazes are of exceptional quality. It is in his things that the real distinction of beauty between the machine-made and the hand-made is apparent. These differences are subtle but distinct, owe nothing to uncertainty or ineptitude; and Smisek underlines the fact that the material qualities of handmade things can, and should be, higher than machinemade things.

Mirek Smisek is not an 'amateur'; his life is bound up with shaping and firing clay. So also is Fulford's in his pottery at Havelock North, and it is his big, unglazed pots which are worthy of study for their honesty and purposefulness. His craftsmanship has a sense of ease and relaxation stemming from competence and many years of application. His shapes are wholly earthenware, and well balanced to the eye and to the touch. The significance of the difference of their work from the rest may point to the means of keeping a healthy development in New Zealand pottery. These two spend their days in making humble things from clay and it is now time for more New Zealand potters to get their feet on the ground and demonstrate



their faith in their own assertions by making everyday pots for everyday use and so earn their living. They will find it will nourish their inspiration, and the exercise of throwing several hundred things to a given size, shape and weight will give them a certainty of craftsmanship attainable by no other means, and will help them realise their dream-shapes.

Two pots by Wailyn Hing gained immensely by being picked up and handled, coming alive to the touch, and evoking a pleasant response. Helen Mason exhibited fine shallow bowls that spring vigorously from sharply turned feet. These are big, well glazed, and one, with a brown glaze on a grey body, simply decorated with angular shapes reminiscent of wheat ears bent over after rain, was particularly good. Her coffee mugs and liqueur tots need re-thinking about their form, but the liqueur bottle is fine. Her big pot, bulbous and long-necked, bursts with vitality and good humour, and contrasts with so much of the stoneware that seemed like so many Orientals grimly determined to avoid loss of gravity. To lift these latter from their places was to discover the unlikelihood of such an eventuality.

Of Len Castle's pots, I enjoyed his wine bottle and a bowl with a wood-ash glaze, although his delicate celadon teapot was marred by an inadequate handle. Doreen Blumhardt's pots, vigorous and strong in form, suffered from having the rims drawn out too fine for the thick walls at the bottom, creating a dead feeling in the balance. Of the tea bowls shown, the most adequate and attractive was Terry Barrow's, although one by Martin Beck, tulip-shaped and scored on the surface, was wholly delightful and outstanding from his other exhibits, which tended to suffer from overmuch turning that did not marry with the throwing.

The few porcelains were brave experiments with a difficult medium, but they were not particularly successful. The bodies were sugary rather than suggestive of frozen moonlight, and the throwing and turning heavy and unsympathetic. The quality of porcelain is as different from stoneware as stoneware from earthenware, and the fine crispness and lightness of porcelain was absent.

I have felt in New Zealand that earthenware is regarded as a poor relation of stoneware, even felt a snobbish superiority on the part of stoneware potters, such as violinists are wont to adopt to violists, and with as little justification. But this Exhibition has provided a possible explanation in that the earthenware is generally far below the stoneware in quality. In many ways earthenware is more difficult to handle than stoneware. Glazes have less latitude, and crazing and porosity are perennial troubles to be overcome, but they are rewarding in their warmth and gaiety. The slower, jollier, lazier and less taut forms natural to easy, plastic, secondary clays suit similar temperaments. The range of colours in glazes is both an opportunity and a challenge, and needs handling with great care. The quality of surface and depth needs subtle and calculated adjustment. Generally, the glazed earthenware did not measure up to this, and very often glazes were unpleasantly glassy, or at the other extreme, imitative stoneware. The opportunity for earthenware to exhibit its own particular quality of gaiety (noticeably absent from the exhibition) has been sadly neglected here.

Of the earthenware potters exhibiting, O.C. Stephens' work shows quality in the glazing, and Juliet Peter's an intelligent and sensitive approach to earthenware design together with adequate and attractive glazing. But in this section I found some things which were quite unpleasant, which is a pity because earthenware has qualities of its own, and much to commend it.

Pottery dress jewellery is an age-old branch of ceramics, and examples of Mexican and Egyptian ornaments, and, more recently, of work by Lucie Rie shows how effective it can be. Much of the Pottery Jewellery at the Exhibition failed to please because in the search for novelty the essential ceramic qualities were lost. Spiky and angular shapes, unpleasant textures, and unenterprising colour rendered it ineffective. There is a need for some down-to-earth re-thinking about pottery dress jewellery and a great opportunity exists for a good designer who must be an able ceramic chemist.

Mrs. Black's attenuated wall-decorations are difficult to classify. The medium is earthenware, the technique sculptural, but they are not sculpture because they do not bear examination from anywhere but immediately in front. The function is decorative, and as such the forms often reveal weaknesses; as earthenware, the glazing over underglaze colours rather poverty-stricken. A number of forms such as these, strung vertically, must have points of emphasis and a strong connecting link which I feel was often lacking. But here is an experimental ceramic form at its beginning, and it will be interesting to see if Mrs. Black can bring a stronger tension and a greater co-ordination to her design and exploit a bolder colour range.

The Third New Zealand Potters' Exhibition shows New Zealand pottery at an interesting stage. At its best - excellent; a great deal mediocre, some quite poor. It is a critical stage because there should be some sign of the emergence of a New Zealand flavour to the design and it is not there. It can obviously benefit from a general sharpening of standards of craftsmanship, better equipment, a more experimental approach to form. I would like to see more potters working for spells in such country potteries as there are here, in brickyards and pipe

works; and then the first generation of studio potters earning their living at their craft, and their students working with them. The time for this to start is now, and instead of 13th Century China, for inspiration the potter might well look to his own native contemporary architects.



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## EXHIBITIONS

An interesting development this year has been the number of shows in which potters have combined with other artists to put on exhibitions. We list them here and would like to be informed of any that are taking place in the future.

June Black - 'Intellectual Fashion Show' at the Architectural Centre Gallery, Wellington, March 8 - 20; and at Gallery 91, Christchurch, November 7 - 20. Paintings, ceramic 'long-bodies', pottery and ceramic jewellery.

Exhibition of New Zealand Craft Work, Auckland City Art Gallery, August 1959. Pottery, weaving, furniture.

Wellington Potters' Association Annual Exhibition at the Willeston Galleries, August 17 - 28. Opened by Mr. F.H. Lockyer.

Roy and Juliet Cowan, paintings, lithographs, ceramic wall decorations and pottery, Willeston Galleries, Wellington, September 13 - 25.

John Middleditch, Naoko Kikkawa and Hubert Struyk (paintings) with Helen Dawson (pottery) at Dunedin Public Library Lecture Hall September 15 - 25.

Susan Skerman and Rachel Miller (paintings), John Kingston (sculpture) and Helen Mason (pottery) at the Auckland City Art Gallery September 21 - October 18.

Keith Lowe (miniature trees(bonsai)), and Terry Barrow (stoneware pots) at the Willeston Galleries October 11 - 16. Opened by Professor C.L. Bailey.

Tim Garrity, Hamish Keith, Graham Percy and Peter Tennant (paintings and drawings) and Barry Brickell (pottery) at the Auckland City Art Gallery October 19 - November 15.

THE FIRST NEW ZEALAND POTTERS' EXHIBITION held under the direction of the Visual Arts Association of Dunedin at the Otago Museum 16 - 30 November, 1957.

O.C. Stephens

It was with some hesitancy that the decision was made to hold the First New Zealand Potters' Exhibition. Would the potters support such an effort? Where did they live, and how best to contact them? I decided to apply to key persons in each main centre requesting them to forward to me a list of potters to whom I might send circulars, asking for interest and support.

I need not have worried. I had wonderful help and support from potters all over the country, and I found their enthusiasm most stimulating.

As the cases started to arrive, and the pots were unpacked, it was wonderful to see the dream become a reality, and I kept wishing I could share my pleasure with all the other potters. Any visitor to my dining-room would recoil from an appalling sight! The carpet was covered with wood-wool, odd pieces of paper, and packing materials; cases and cartons of all sizes lined the walls; and on tables and sideboards was stacked an array of pots all carefully labelled, waiting the cataloguing.

After that task was completed the pots were transported to the Otago Museum. We were fortunate indeed in being able to hold the Exhibition in the Museum. Stands for display purposes were put at our disposal, and Miss Judy Weston and the display staff were untiring in their efforts to set up the Exhibition in the best possible way. All the pots from each potter were grouped together, so that the range of each potter's work could be judged, and the comparison of the work of one potter with another was easy.

Dr. Skinner, well-known for his work in building up the extensive Ceramic section of the Otago Museum, was given the chance to purchase any pots he wished before the exhibition was open to the public. He purchased ten pots, which enabled him to enlarge the collection of the work of contemporary New Zealand potters which the Museum is building up. This was the only sale that was permitted before the opening of the Exhibition. There were 110 pots on show, of which 92 were for sale, and there was almost a complete sweep before the show was finished.

The opening function took the form of a sherry party from 5 to 7.30 p.m. After Dr. Forster, Director of the Museum, had declared the Exhibition open, it was left to me to make a few introductory remarks about the pots on view: the different techniques used, the various types of clay, the differences in materials, firing conditions, glazes and decorations which made the wide variety in the pottery on display.

The public showed tremendous interest and an almost continuous stream of visitors flowed through the Museum during the fortnight the Exhibition was open. It was with wry amusement that the potters listened to many of the remarks from the uninitiated public, who expressed amazed surprise that such pottery was actually 'Made in New Zealand'!

## HOW TO OPEN AN EXHIBITION

Denis Glover

Wellington is a city of many art galleries, many openings, but the most exhilarating of the season was vouchsafed to the group of people who attended the Architectural Centre Gallery last August when Denis Glover opened an exhibition of Geoffrey Fairburn's abstracts. We were fortunate in being given Mr Glover's notes and permission to use them.

During a worried and varied life I've found myself doing many things. I've been over the hoops and under the hoops, and been put through the hoops.

Among my acquaintance I can number numismatists, neurologists, pain-killers and joy-killers, cracksmen and con-men, professional potterers, amateur potters and one or two perfectly seraphic and ceramic baby-sitters.

I have wielded the spade, the shovel - the hearth shovel - the pen, the wooden sword, the pencil - and the brush known as camel's hair; though in my case it must have originated from too near the tail of the camel.

And I've opened all sorts of things - these days you've got to have an eye for an opening. I've opened cuts above the eye, I've opened bottles, I've opened doors that have been slammed in my face. So I have what may be called an open mind - very draughty.

But I've never been invited to open an exhibition nor to do anything more than make an exhibition of myself.

First of all I want you to make an imaginative effort. You are confronted with art. Now we all know artists of good repute, and artists' friends of no repute, and artists' hangers, and artists' hangers-on. So I'll

proceed with the scene. It's a huge gallery, festooned with pictures, with glowing lights, with deadly night-shades. Penguin Island has got loose, and the men nervously twitch their bow ties back from under their left ears while their long-gowned dowagers and damsels deploy their pendulous jewellery like the weights of a grandfather clock.

The whole is presided over by an industrial magnate who has made his pile and taken up art, perhaps because as a child his art chalked on the pile of the carpet was itself taken up and they both were beaten. Those who can't get near the front wrestle at the trestle with crayfish claws and mayonnaise, and gobble at gobbler turkey.

And the pictures - yes, the pictures !

'A View of Wellington Harbour. '  
 'Wellington Harbour from Karori. '  
 'The Harbour, Wellington. '  
 'Eastbourne from the Rocks. '  
 'The Rocks, Eastbourne. '  
 'Eastbourne on the Rocks. '  
 'Wellington Harbour in Thick Fog. '  
 'The Foghorn, Wellington, on a clear day. '

What, you may ask me, have these abstractions to do with the here and now, the visible delineations in graphic form on the walls around us ? I asked you to make an imaginative effort. Now I ask you to make another.

For this is abstract art. That means it's not, for a start, photographic art. Myself, I deny photographic art, or artifice or artfulness. The titles of art photographs alone give them away, confusing poetry with the polychromatic and love of nature with a ground glass lens.

'Dawn over the Dead' for a camera obscura of Bowen Street Cemetery.

'Now came still evening on' for an over-exposed study of High Noon at Hataitai.

But your abstract artist such as Fairburn doesn't give us titles -

(Here unfortunately Mr Glover's notes came to an end and as nobody had had the foresight to set up a tape recorder the rest of the address is lost. However, to round off the talk Mr Glover quoted from the following letter from Mr Fairburn:)

Dear Mr G.

May I congratulate you on your good fortune in being asked to open an art exhibition.

Anyone can christen a battleship, open a mental hospital, or dip a young infant in holy water, but opening an art exhibition such as this is something else again.

May I offer some help ? There are certain words and phrases which can be dropped into any talk about art with the same result as carbide in beer. It not only makes things much more interesting but improves the flavour. The words are (and don't forget them)

Spatial Relationships  
Tactile Values  
Integration  
Luminosity  
Fin de siècle  
Monolithic

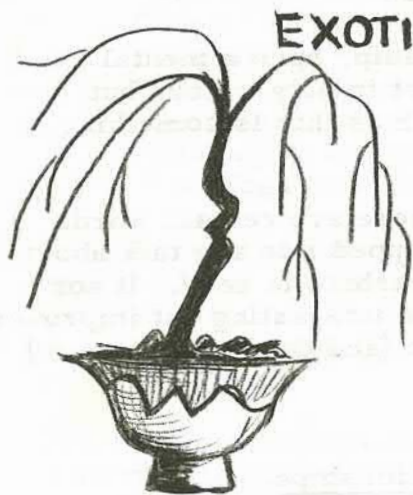
Spray these accurately into your discourse, mention Gurdjieff, Dada and Eric Westbrook and the first hour should pass comfortably. The second hour is more difficult but anyone who can pad his life story into ten chapters in the Listener shouldn't be at a loss.

Regards,

G. Fairburn

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Ceramic Decoration, by Lois Culver Long  
Published in 1958 by the American Art Clay Co.,  
Indiannapolis 24 Indiana.

This 24 page booklet is printed on excellent paper - the general setup and quality of material warrants a more lasting binding. Each page is given to a specific mode of decoration, even the modest crayon has taken a new departure and can be adapted to the use of the potter. The designs are enough to encourage any potter to better decoration - don't miss having a good look at page 11 'porcelain wine set' - and there are many other illustrations worth careful study. Any potter will find this a handy direction booklet and an ideal guide when selecting material and planning ceramic projects.

- Rachel R.

Clay and Glazes for the Potter, by Daniel Rhodes.  
London, Pitman, 1957. 219 pp., illustrated with photographs by the author, N.Z. price 43/3.

The author is an Associate Professor of Design at the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University. His long experience in this field, as potter, sculptor, teacher and lecturer, stands behind this exceptionally well-designed book, packed with information for the practising potter.

There are two sections: Part one - Clay, clearly describes the finding, testing, and use of suitable native clays; methods for blending and mixing; and gives a whole chapter to a discussion of the characteristics of different kinds of clay: Kaolin, Ball, Fire, Saggar, Stoneware, Earthenware, and others.

Another valuable chapter on Clay Bodies, among other things, tells how to formulate a stoneware body; about clay bodies designed for particular methods of making; clay for throwing, modeling, casting, jiggering, pressing, porcelain, and oven-proof bodies.

Part two - Glazes, more than twice as long as the first part, covers every aspect of glazes and glazing, comprehensively and in detail. Some of this material will probably be of use only to inveterate experimenters, but most of it will answer any and every question, whether on composition, type, mixing and application, frits, textures, colour, firing, flaws, underglaze, overglaze, reduction, and special effects, to mention only some of the concisely given information.

The Appendix should not be overlooked, for it includes a Glossary and 32 glaze formulae for four different cone temperatures, as well as a short but well-chosen list of books on pottery and ceramics, and a good Index.

There are a number of excellent photographs illustrating the book, some of the author's own very attractive pots, and the remainder, of individual pieces from the famous Freer Collection in Washington, D.C.

- Freda Anderson

## WORLD DESIGN CONFERENCE IN JAPAN

New Zealand Studio Potters have been invited to send representatives to this Conference, which is being held in Tokyo, May 11 - 16, 1960. From May 18 to 20 delegates will be taken on a tour of the classic cities Kyoto, Nara and Osaka.

Specially reduced hotel rates are being arranged, but the cost of the fares to Japan will be considerable.

Further particulars may be obtained from The Editor, 29 Everest Street, Khandallah, Wellington.

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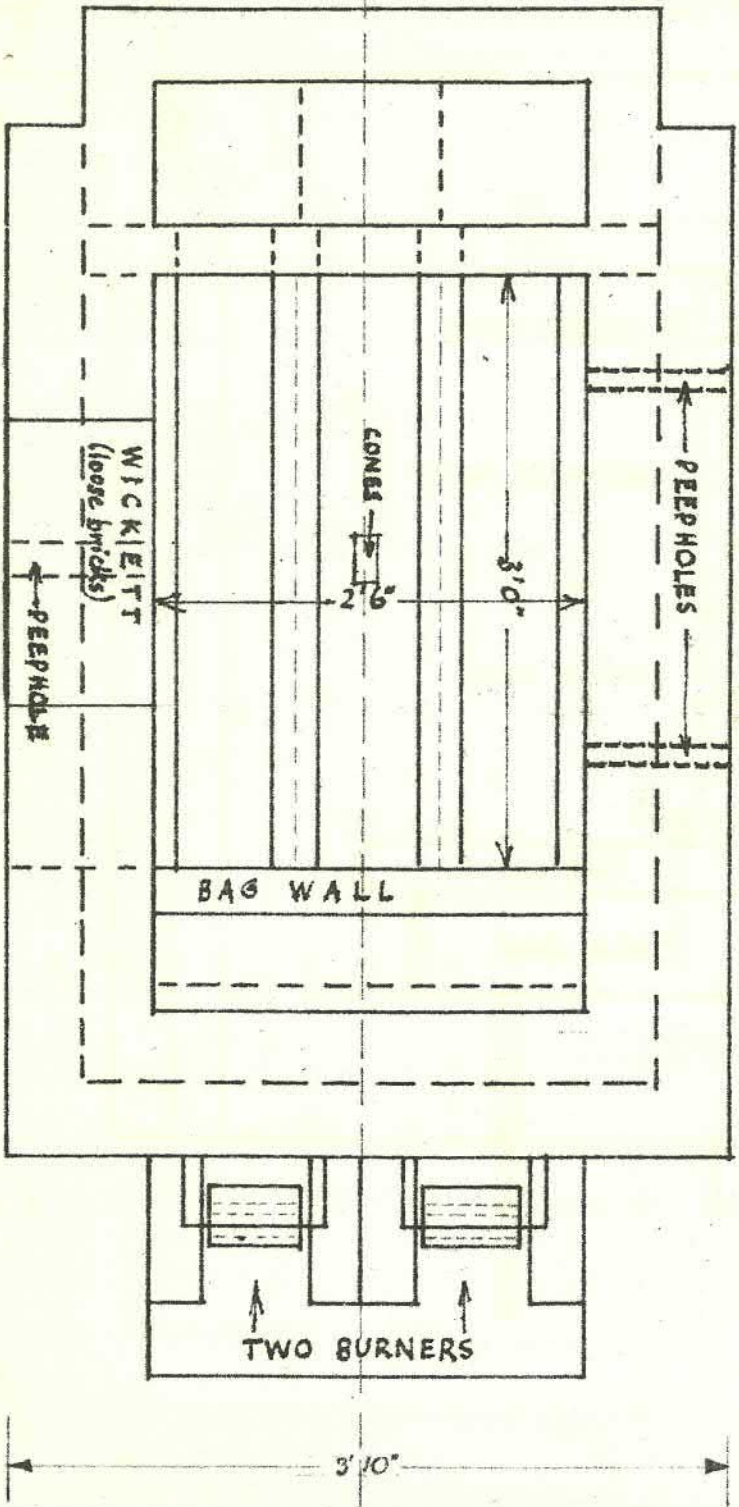
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