



**DACORUM AND
CHILTERN
POTTERS GUILD**



www.thedcpg.org.uk

CoCA in York
Int Ceramics Festival Aberystwyth
Kingsbury Barn Exhibition
Potters Open Day - POD 2018
Paul Rowbottom - Japan Experience

Sculpture with Jenny birch,
Jackie Harrop, Laurie Keck,
Jo Lewy, Lynne McGeachie and
Vivienne Rodwell-Davies

Issue 26 Autumn 2017

£2



Jo Lewy

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Potters Open Day 2018

Saturday 24 February
9:30-17:00

Duncan Hooson
Ester Beck
Takeshi Yasuda

The Sandpit Theatre
Sandringham School Academy Trust
The Ridgeway, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 9NX

DCPG members £20, Non-members £30
Full time students (with ID) £15

www.sandpiththeatre.co.uk
Tel: 01727 799565

Notes from Ground Control to all members

Ros McGuirk



The long summer break between meetings seems to have gone by in a flash and I am left wondering why the years seem to speed up. The new season of potters' meetings, are now booked, bar one. We have a varied collection of demonstrators, starting with an excellent talk by Richard Miller whom you will have seen on Throwdown.

We will have Paul Rowbottom with news and views from his recent sojourn in Japan (expect wood firings and anagama kilns) and followed by Jim Newbould, an old friend of the Guild who can identify a pot from a shard and then, using an historically accurate wheel, reproduce it. Stuart Smith, one of the finest ceramic sculptors, is also making a return visit. All will have their own story to tell and their work will be quite different. We have much to look forward to.

Looking back on the summer I can see why it has passed so quickly, for we have been busy with our two biggest selling exhibitions plus have-a-go events.

Several members attended the International Ceramics Festival at Aberystwyth, most of you will have enjoyed the wonderful Art in Clay at Hatfield House and some will have taken part in Herts Open Studios.

In addition the committee has held an away day and the wood kiln at Boxmoor has just been fired and I cannot wait to see the results.

In July the committee took a day out to consider our aims and objectives as a pottery group and to explore what we actually do and how we do it. Jackie Harrop kindly hosted the day and provided the agenda. It became very clear how committed your

committee members really are with all of them helping out in a multitude of ways.

In addition there are officers of the guild who are not on the committee, such as Sue our librarian. There are members who turn up regularly to help at meetings who supply our very much needed tea and coffee as well as others who form the support groups for our annual exhibition, POD and all the have-a-go events.

There are also occasional workshops set up to learn new skills or follow our own particular interests. Of course we hope that all members will be able to join in something beyond the meetings and thus gain further benefits from their membership.

However it remains self evident that we can only do as much as we, the whole group, can manage between ourselves. When things do not happen it is usually because we have run out of time and cannot fit it all in. Thus it has been with the hoped for raku firings and the soda kiln. Next year has much potential!

As you will now be aware our website has been updated. It was set up some time ago by John Powell who ran it in parallel with his own. This was a big project for one person and we have gained much benefit from it. It has been invaluable and until recently was our only online presence. John has now retired and so has his website. The handover to a new domain has given us the opportunity to update and Fiona took on the task of managing this project on the eve of

Thoughts from the chair **Continued**

her leaving the committee for her two year diploma course in ceramics.

Like many other potters' groups, we have employed the services of a web designer. Emily Good somehow managed to find the time to help too. The aim has been to set up a website that is straight forward for us to maintain without professional help.

By the time you read this it will be up and running and I hope that you like it and agree that we all owe a huge thank you to John, Fiona and Emily.

Bipin has decided to continue newsletter production and Judi is leaving her role as exhibition organiser to continue as editor. Many thanks to you both. There will be other

changes on the committee with opportunities open to all members to come and help keep the Guild doing what it does best.

With Fiona and Emily gone we will need help with the website. Other IT skills would be useful, such as designing our flyers and posters.

An advertising officer could pull together all the bits of promotional work we do, and it would be really great to have an apprentice programme secretary. I would also like to see the creation of the post of outdoor events manager to take over from me in organising our have-a-go events.

Then I might have a little time for myself in the potting shed.

Committee 'Away Day'

Mary Anne Bonney, Secretary

Jackie's dining room became our workspace for the committee's 'Awayday' on 17th July, a copious bring and share lunch was enjoyed in brilliant sunshine in her garden and we were further sustained in our deliberations by delicious cake.

And yes, we did fit in some wide ranging (but always well steered- thank you Jackie) deliberations about the Guild, what our members want from it and how best to meet our aims of bringing ceramics to the community at large.

We came away with a to do list, some of which we have already ticked off, such as the slightly more formal AGM agenda - setting out which trustees were due to stand down,

who was available for re-election and who was a candidate for election to the committee and the appeal Ros sent out for volunteer(s) to look after our speakers at Friday meetings.

We are busy clarifying protocols for our various activities so that our teams of volunteers can use their energies most effectively. We are hugely appreciative of all the person power members contribute, and we would encourage everyone who can to join in and share the work and the fun.



Editor's Note

Judi Tribe



The Guild has been involved with a host of different activities throughout the late summer and autumn this year and the articles in this issue show the enormous energy and enthusiasm from its members. Sculpture is this issue's special subject focus and a huge thanks to all the Guild members who have written such personal reflections about their journeys into the making of their sculptural pieces. Members pottery top tips has been reintroduced into the newsletter and the use of a rounders bat is definitely a very interesting one, please let's have some more as this is a great way to share useful ideas to help with tricky ceramic situations! Once again thank you to Bipin, Jackie, Georgina and Ros, the hardworking newsletter team.

Stop Press - New Guild Website

Dacorum And Chiltern Potters Guild has a new website with lots of information, wonderful images and future Guild events. Here is the link for you to have a look: www.dcp.org.uk
All current members have the opportunity to put photographs of your work up onto

the website Gallery, please contact Emily Good for further details - emilyhbgood@googlemail.com
Don't forget you are able to see DCPG events and activities also on Facebook and Instagram.

Members' Daytime Socials

After the first successful morning at The Rose and Crown, Kings Langley in August, more dates are now set for the next few months. Please come and join a relaxed morning coffee time where you will be able to get to know other members from the Guild. The venues, with good parking, are spread around Hertfordshire to make it easier for people to attend. Reminders will be sent by email each month but if you would like any further information please contact Judi Tribe. 01494 762477

Thursday 14th December 2017.
11.00am - 1.00pm
at The Rose and Crown,
60 High Street, Kings Langley,
Herts WD4 9HT

Tuesday 23rd January 2018.
11.00.am - 1.00pm
at Burston Garden Centre, North Orbital,
Chiswell Green,
St Albans,
Herts AL2 2DS

The committee now comprises

Trustees: John Higgins (president and POD organiser), Ros McGuirk (Chair and programme organiser), Colin Hazelwood (Treasurer), Jackie Harrop (Vice Chair and exhibitions organiser), Mary Anne Bonney (Secretary), Judi Tribe (Newsletter), Emily Good (website).

Non-trustees: Audrey Hammett (Membership) and Tony Baxter (property).



Kingsbury Barn Exhibition

September 2017



Once again the guild achieved a fantastic success with another great exhibition at the beautiful 14th century Kingsbury Barn in St Albans. There is no doubt that being there during the Heritage Open Days weekend presents a fantastic opportunity for guild members to show their work and the steady sales confirm publicity and pricing found their target audience.

Guild members' willingness, commitment, generosity of spirit and sheer hard work resulted in a wonderful event over four days in September. A growing team of willing members and all the 27 exhibitors including some of their family members, shared the responsibility to prepare, publicise, set up, dismantle, steward and staff the event, many of whom now have the skills and experience to take prominent roles in 'Have a go', sales, catering and stewarding.

A steady stream of visitors braved cold and windy weather conditions to visit the barn

and a high proportion were purchasers too. Sales outstripped last year's totals with some sellers experiencing exceptionally brisk business. This year we had several first time exhibitors whose nervousness turned to joy in making sales and seeing their work appreciated by others. This demonstrates the inclusive nature of the guild, where potters with international experience can all rub shoulders with hobby potters and enthusiasts, and novices can learn from and be inspired by experts. The quality and variety of work was the subject of compliments from many of the visitors, several of whom had also been to our previous exhibitions.

This year's Have a go sessions seemed to attract more adults trying their hand, and we even had guild members being coached by more experienced throwers on the wheels. In addition, 68 St Michael's school pupils enjoyed the opportunity to have a hands on experience and to marvel at the skill of demonstrators transforming clay into pottery forms. Their excitement, exuberance and enthusiasm were a delight and their teachers keen to capitalise on the experience with follow up work at school. Our potter demonstrators clearly loved it too!

The Friday evening social was very well attended and the beautiful atmosphere provided a rare opportunity for members to mingle and chat. It was evident throughout the whole event that members were not only sharing their interest in pottery, but lots of other interests too.

Planning and organising an exhibition takes huge amounts of logistics, perseverance, diplomacy, patience and ingenuity. Exhibiting in a known venue means we can streamline planning, are familiar with the procedures

Jackie Harrop

and can refine and develop clearer 'Guild' systems e.g. for setting up exhibits, for recording sales and setting up 'have-a-go' experiences. We can build on past experience, and work more confidently to set up a more professional event. When the organisers are also planning and preparing their own work to a series of deadlines, this adds a certain spice to stress levels, ensuring firings, pricing, packing and cataloguing are on time.

The Kingsbury event is quite complex, combining not only an exhibition, but have-a-go and a guild social in the one weekend. But the benefits for the guild and its members are enormous, fulfilling all of our charitable objectives at the same time. We have a fantastic team of people, able to support and complement each other and each event provides a rich learning experience for those who take part.

The response of members and the visiting public showed that the event was well worth the effort. We have already been invited back!



DCPG Programme 2018 - Meetings and Venue

Sat 13 Jan Paul Rowbottom

Our own wood firing kiln builder will talk about his recent stay Japan and demonstrate some making techniques.

Fri 9 Feb Jim Newbould

Ceramics from the iron age to the 18th century. Jim is part of a husband and wife team who work with museums, archeologists and tv, and make replica pots.

See www.trinitycourtpotteries.co.uk

Sat 24 Feb POD 2018

Lecture by **Duncan Hooson**, demonstrations by **Ester Beck** and **Takeshi Yasuda**.

Note: This will be at **The Sandpit Theatre, St Albans, AL4 9NX** 9:30am-5pm.

See our feature on pages 10 and 11.

Fri 13 April tba

Fri 11 May Stuart Smith Fine ceramic sculptor inspired by the realities of India and elsewhere. He will follow up with a workshop tba. See www.smithsculptor.co.uk

Monthly Talks and Demonstrations from October through to May 8.00pm - 10.00pm held at:

**Kings Langley Methodist Church
Hempstead Road
Kings Langley WD4 8BR**

Tea/Coffee and biscuits from 7.30pm. The DCPG borrowing library is also available throughout the evening.

Members Free, Guests £5.



Potters Reps meet in York at CoCA Ros McGuirk



Photograph by Giles Rocholl



A recent gift of ceramics to York art gallery was so large that they had to redesign the building to accommodate what is probably now the biggest collection in the country. In addition the gallery is currently holding an exhibition of works by Picasso, much of which is on loan from the Attenborough collection in Leicester. To manage and develop this greatly enlarged collection the Centre of Ceramic Art came into being. The current director of this innovative department is Fiona Green.

To celebrate all this the curators are exploring different ways of developing broader links to the community. Aided by local volunteers they have held demonstrations and performances in the gallery. They also invited representatives from all the pottery groups and

guilds in the UK to a general meeting to discuss what they do and find out all the issues they have in common. Intrigued, John Higgins and I caught a train to York to find out more.

The gallery is a ten minute walk from the station and the trains ran to time so we just arrived in time for the guided tour. The first impression is of a lot of pots! The rooms are crammed with pots. On one side of the main room is a glass cabinet 75 metres long so full you can barely see the shelves. There are a number of touch screens which work intuitively and it is very easy to locate an labelled image of whichever pot you choose. That was fun. The pots are often changed around and regrouped. Opposite is an area laid out as a room interior with a variety of modern abstract sculptural works on table

tops, shelves, and on the walls. It was dazzling.

Afterwards we strolled through the museum gardens to a meeting room in the museum. In the group were 16 reps in total from the CPA, London Potters, Scottish Potters, Northern Potters, Midland Potters, Anglian Potters, Wirral Potters, as well as yours truly, the DCPG. This spread, largely determined by the rail network, presented us with lots of new faces as well as a chance to meet up with one or two old friends. There were none from areas farther afield, such as Wales, the South West, South, or Kent.

The discussion was led by Alex McErlain, the recently retired Head of Ceramics at Manchester, and it covered most of the topics of concern to your own committee, including location and spread of membership, organisation, activities, publicity including newsletters and websites, finance, insurance, and health and safety. There was not time to

discuss everything in detail but there was a lot of interest in taking on charitable status. Only three of the groups present had done this. London Potters did it in 2010/2 in order to gain the gift aid, according to their chairman. Anglian Potters tried last year and failed and are looking to take another approach. We did it in 2015, though we went down a new route, that of CIO (charitable incorporated organisation).

I felt that it was a useful meeting and could easily lead to another. Finances and publicity would be valuable topics to compare notes on.

After the meeting we joined the others in the Picasso exhibition and then John and I said our goodbyes and went off to find a cup of tea before catching our train. Our route took a diversion via the Minster where we found ourselves joining the congregation for evensong.

What a treat the day turned out to be!

DCPG at Childwickbury Arts Fair 2017



Photographs by Bipin

POD 2018 Saturday February 24th 9:30-17:00 is on the horizon and the POD team are really pleased to announce the speaker and demonstrators as well as new additions to the day. There may be further additions as we move closer to the date.

Duncan Hooson (UK)

The lecture will be given by Duncan Hooson who is in charge of ceramics at Morley College and also teaches on the degree course at Central St Martins.

He is also the director of 'Clayground'. They work with clay out in the community and with all ages.



Ester Beck (Israel)

Ester Beck will be demonstrating her very vigorous method of making vessels which have geological formation and colour as her inspiration.

"I am concerned with Movement, Flow and Texture in my ceramic abstract objects: I search for the illusion of the pieces being in motion, evoking phenomena we observe in riverbeds or tectonic layers. The way I achieve this is by a technique involving a very physical dialogue with a block of clay, beating, scratching, stretching, smoothing the clay, till I achieve the wanted result."



Takeshi Yasuda (Japan/UK/China)

Takeshi Yasuda has a world renowned reputation for his work and he will be demonstrating his throwing techniques in porcelain and stoneware clays. Yasuda settled in Britain in 1973. He has taught at various art schools and universities across the United Kingdom and was Professor of Applied Arts at the University of Ulster. Currently, Yasuda is Director of the Pottery Workshop in Jingdezhen, China.

Blue Matchbox will be there again, be prepared to get your orders in, prior to the event, to avoid carriage charges and collect at the venue.



Ceramic Review will be represented again by Chiara Della Cava. If anyone/new members want's to subscribe to the UK's best magazine on ceramics this will be the time to do it.

Contemporary Ceramics Centre will be taking their bookshop for you to stock up your book shelves.

Homemade refreshments available, as before, to see you through the day.

All this is happening at:

The Sandpit Theatre
Sandringham School Academy Trust
The Ridgeway, St Albans,
Hertfordshire AL4 9NX

DCPG members £20, Non-members £30
 Full time students (with ID) £15

As with POD 2017, we need your help with the various teams that enabled POD to run so smoothly, and this year, the teams are as follows:

- **Display team**, to organise and oversee display/exhibition (yet to be decided), and signage around the site
- **Membership and entry team**, to help Audrey with entry tickets and direct the audience to the auditorium etc.
- **Raffle team**, to sell tickets, organise the draw.
- **Sales team**, to help and support the demonstrators with sales of their work.
- **Setting up team**, (Friday late afternoon) and **taking down team**, (Saturday evening)

If you are interested in helping please get in touch with John Higgins:
johnceramics@aol.com



Figurative Sculptures and Teaching Workshops



My passion for drawing and 'playing' with clay has led me to experiment with a series of figurative sculptures, maquettes and clay 'sketches'.

Inspiration

I draw on many artists for inspiration and frequently visit galleries and museums, where I manage to fill a sketchbook in a few hours. Drawings and sculptures by artists such as Rodin, Giacometti, Moore, Schielle, etc are so informative. A visit to a ballet rehearsal, where the dancers go through a warm-up routine, can produce some very lively mark making. A large sketch pad and some soft pencils or charcoal are essential for capturing their flowing movements. Unfortunately, wet materials are not allowed in galleries these days. Have fun and let go and you end up with a riot of informative marks – to be referred to later.

The Henry Moore Foundation at Much Haddam is well worth a visit once a year, as they regularly change their exhibitions. Workshops are frequently run for student groups and families.

The Courtauld Institute in London is another Gallery that has small changing exhibitions of artists showing drawings and paintings which you can get close to!

Look out for the free 'Galleries' magazine which shows hundreds of galleries in London and the South East you can visit free of charge.

Medium

For taller figures I use paper clay, porcelain or stoneware. Sometimes stiff wire using a continuous piece like drawing without taking your pencil away from the paper. Plaster and mod-roc bandage are fun to try as well.

Making Method

Start with a few quick lines drawn on paper or with slip – a wire rod is pushed into a block of clay or wooden block, then clay is squeezed over and manipulated into elongated figures, some with truncated arms and some headless. When leather hard, the wire rod is removed and they are dried slowly.

Small clay 'sketches' are made solid by adding and pinching and pierced with holes to make them less likely to blow up in the kiln.

Firing

All figures are fired very slowly to bisque 1000°C, then Raku glazed and fired again to a 1000. Sometimes a white engobe is applied and fired to 1260°C.



Vivienne Rodwell-Davies

Assemblage

I make a thick clay plinth with a hole through the middle and fire the same way as the figures. A rigid steel rod is pushed into the hole at the bottom, and the hollow figurine is slipped on to it and glued to the plinth. The small clay sketches and torsos

sit on their own or on a solid block made with black clay. I use Araldite (not Rapid) as adhesive.

I run regular workshops in life drawing and sculpture for all abilities, from beginners to the advanced. These classes are fun and informative, with a relaxed atmosphere.



My Sculpture Discoveries



Jackie Harrop

I am a novice, both as a potter and a sculptor but find myself increasingly enjoying making small figures particularly focussing on the sensuous flow of backs and entwined limbs and arms. After a number of spectacular explosions in the kiln and through trial and error, I have learned the importance of hollowing out, creating air holes and the fragility of limbs and necks as well as any areas where joints expand on firing.

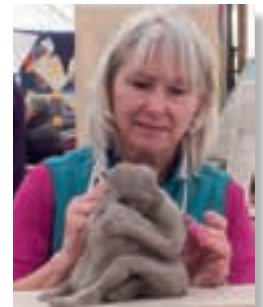
My initial forays followed a very helpful life class in Barnet run by Vivienne Rodwell-Davies and this inspired me to create my clay figures sitting by the pool in France. The local briqueterie (brick factory) biscuit fired my first attempts which cause some curious glances when I brought them back for glazing in my hand luggage.

The local studio potter was the next to help and who gave me helpful advice on using vinegar to reconnect broken limbs when my crouching man, fell over in the footwell of my car, breaking the arm of my crouching woman, and knocking his head off in the process! Useful lessons there too about the need for bubble wrap on greenware when

driving over speed humps on rustic French lanes.

Another lesson I have learnt is when using cardboard tubing to support inside a torso, it is best to leave it in to burn away rather than attempting to remove before biscuit firing and so decapitation again occurred in the process!

So far I have used earthenware clay and fired to 1000°C then a fool's gold glaze to 1040°C to give a metallic looking finish.





Clay... A fantastic medium for sculpture

Jenny Birch



Light, delineating, form, mass, scale, balance, surface, texture, edge, movement, memory, emotion and colour... All these sum up the delight of sculpture for me. Their function, to produce vessels for contemplation.

My own desire is for a line of energy, reaching up and out, expressing the hope and wonder of life, and a layered, unfinished, broken edge to acknowledge the process of accumulated memory and the pains of being human. With the Japanese I too embrace the texture and cracking, which reveals the beauty of imperfection. If the sculpture can be viewed from all sides and even maybe upside down, and therefore the viewer cannot finish the object by strength of memory, for me that is good!

It is hard to say how I developed my style, eclectic as it is. I grew up during the flowering

of British sculpture; Henry Moore, Anthony Gormley, Elizabeth Frink, Andy Goldsworthy and on and on...

This with my art degree training under the inspirational teaching of Ed Smye, plus various weekend courses with many other enthusiastic and talented practitioners has fed into my present practice. Slab building, modelling, a bit of extrusion, coiling or press-moulding form most of my current practice.

Most of my planning and imagining I do in bed and usually reach West Herts college with a clearish idea of what I may want to achieve. I sketch and photograph, play with possibilities and experiment. I love the people around me at college sharing ideas and comments.

Wall pieces figure largely in my output, the largest of which were the Stations of the Cross, part of my degree piece which was 12 feet by 8. The church has always offered me a place to explore and express my faith.



My Sculpture



Jo Lewy

When the youngest of my four sons started school fifteen years ago I found myself in a pottery class in the fortunate position of having John Higgins as my teacher and from the first time I held a piece of clay in my hand I never looked back! I felt like a door had been opened in my life that I didn't realise was there!

I love the way that clay seems to take on the maker's personality and, as I usually find humour in most things that I do, it quickly became apparent that my work reflected this and it took on an almost cartoon like quality.

While much of my work can be used in a functional way it usually has sculptural aesthetic whether it be mermaids or dogs or indeed people. I usually work in high-fired stoneware so that the pieces can be equally at home in the house or the garden. I never plan my pots, they just seem to evolve as I am making them.

I tend to work in very large scale and frequently make what I call 'story' pots. These are usually coiled or slab built and I incorporate a theme into the pot to reflect a moment in time, maybe a holiday, a wedding or maybe a city. My pot 'Experiencing the City' was made for an Oxford College where it is on permanent display in their 16th century library.

Although my work is very varied as I love to try different techniques my favourite pots are usually those that have been decorated with slips, underglazes, lustres and photographic decals, the more embellished the better! I have also recently started to experiment with screen printing, and I am looking forward to finding ways in which I can incorporate this into my work.

I am lucky to have a wonderful group of 'pottery friends' who I work alongside whether at a friend's beautiful studio in Barnet or from my studio in my garden. I love working



together with other people, I always find it fascinating how the same lump of clay given to a number of different people will result in such a variety of different pots, like magic!

It is always a joy to me when friends who identify themselves as 'not creative' come over to make something with me and realise that they are actually full of creativity but just need to be given a bit of confidence to express it.

I love to show other people the magic of working with clay and to show them that pottery is not just about throwing perfect and beautiful forms, that unconventional results can be fabulous in their own way. Pottery for me has become a way of life and I feel fortunate to have such a wonderful way to meet so many like-minded people and to have the ability to express myself in such a rewarding and fun way.



as much to explore form as much as slab building, if I am honest. You look at one of his pieces and are forced to consider how he creates them. That first course has led to an annual return for more.

James is a great teacher and on that first course explained and demonstrated how he starts with a cut slab upon which he cuts an outline shape. The form essentially is built from that beginning, up and around. Looking back, I developed a clear understanding of how to convert an idea into a reality, how to make strong joints, how to manipulate slabs and how to troubleshoot my way through the build. I was used to troubleshooting when coiling, as others do when throwing, but this was an introduction to making bigger and more complex pieces.

Back home in my small 'studio' I realised that practising new techniques when guided by a good teacher is a huge departure from doing them without support and that critical eye. I also realised that slab building needs a lot of ready clay, but, having no slab roller nor an endless supply of clay, it put limits on my use of the techniques. I knew that I could coil a piece instead of slabbing so what I had learned about form could be easily translated.

Move on a couple of years and James radically altered his approach from, at its simplest level, pieces were having a spherical



I was recently reminded that in primary school I liked to make small penguins, probably in plasticine. So there was a builder in me back then. Clay was an interest beyond that although the reasons why are less clear.

Ceramics for me began about 16 years ago during a period where work offered no stimulation. It could have easily led to metalwork or woodwork but pottery came first. Though I equated pottery with throwing, I learnt very quickly that my back and elbows were not suited. Luckily there was this method called coiling and I have not looked back. I have never failed to find a coiling solution to any making problem.

My early inspiration came from garden sculpture and related items and generally that persists to this day. Pieces must justify themselves in visual terms not functional ones, even if they are functional, such as a birdbath.

About five years ago my wife and I made our annual visit to Art in Action and, whilst there, reacquainted ourselves with the work of James Oughtibridge, a brilliant user of slab building techniques, as we well know at The DCPG. James happened to be starting to run courses and I decided to book onto one,



base rather than a flat base. Moulds were suddenly hemispherical rather than simply curved. Techniques were now about cutting back the clay rather than always adding.

There were great new opportunities and now the confidence to remove slabs of clay and replace them with other slabs. Concave became convex and vice versa. When looking at even later pieces of James' work I had the sobering realisation that despite his fine tuition I could not work out, or even attempt, similar forms. This year's course addressed that and perhaps the big clue was how to 'build up' a piece. A hemispherical piece does not have to retain that basic form it can be added to, and therefore to become a complete form. I have never really been a maker of the vessel form as an objective and with my new insights I am now imagining and making sculptural pieces that satisfy my creative and building motivations.

If I have learned anything in my brief potting experience it is that you can only ever scratch the surface of possible forms and techniques. Given that restriction I am very happy that I now have skills and techniques that can be developed for a very long time to come. But there is so much more to learn within even a narrow field.

James, when is your next course?



I fell in love with clay around fifteen years ago when I started a Saturday morning class at Harrow Weald College. I didn't know how lucky I was, having attended several other colleges since, it proved to be the best equipped I have experienced and we had a skilled and supportive tutor.

Since that time I have developed my skills in both handbuilding and throwing, but over time find myself drawn to non-symmetric forms and a sculptural approach. Influenced by makers and artists such as Claudio Cassanovas, Ken Mihara, Mo Jupp, Juan Miro's sculptures, Saloua Raouda Choucair, Alan Foxley, Rafa Perez and James Oughtibridge. I have explored form, surface pattern and texture. I also like the idea of working big, which means, as I have a small kiln making pieces that stack together.

My work is quite eclectic and has changed over time, as for most of us, it is a never ending journey...



International Ceramics Festival 2017

Excited to visit this well-established festival in Aberystwyth Arts Centre we planned to attend the three day event from 30th June to 2nd July. We researched the full programme carefully, as there was so much to choose from especially for newbie ceramicists.

The event was well planned and brilliantly executed, starting with the packed opening ceremony – entertaining and informative with all demonstrators and kiln builders introducing themselves and with a slideshow of a taste of their demonstrations to follow. The hugely accomplished Master of Ceremonies was Jim Robison.

The PotteryCrafts Lifetime Achievement Award was bestowed to David and Margaret Frith, to much acclaim. We enjoyed the David Frith demo, coming away with a lesson from this modest man, that after a lifetime of professional work he is still evolving his creativity.

The demonstrations in the Great Hall, a massive lecture and stage theatre, were inspiring and stimulating and often very funny. Each session of 45 mins, strictly enforced, showcased two potters, both filmed on a huge screen, simultaneously demonstrating. This worked surprisingly well, talking or interrupting each other, with questions from the audience, all expertly compared by Ingrid Murphy, Director of Ceramics at Cardiff School of Art and Design.

Occasionally this was a little confusing as we tended to become fixated on one demonstrator and missed something equally interesting from the other. The pairings were clever, very different personalities and styles, we felt as if we had been to seven dinner parties and we didn't get to attend all the rest.

In addition to the demonstrations in the Great Hall, there were timed programme events throughout the day in the smaller lecture theatre and cinema space as well as kiln building and firings in the Piazza, Raku firings and kiln openings, a large marquee with open work spaces for the demonstrators, and another for suppliers, tools, etc with a coffee bar, plus three different exhibition spaces.

We chased about a good deal, our wristbands were our entry tickets to all these venues and it was acceptable to drop in or leave any venue, with much interaction between those showcasing and 'the public'.

There was a high level of enthusiasm sparking around the whole event. There was a 'throwing clinic' and hands on participation with many of the demonstrators. There was a student demonstration area, lectures and films of high calibre.

We participated in the 'cup sale' anyone attending could donate a cup, with a wide definition of a cup, all beautifully displayed in the foyer and sold on the last morning to help fund next year's event.

Here are some of the demonstrators we managed to enjoy seeing and learning from:

Eddie Curtis (UK); His most recent work 'The Blast Series' has echoes of strata and movement, showing me yet more possibilities for creativity, and he demonstrated skilful techniques, yet with free forms.

Anabeli Diaz (Mexico/Sweden); Large scale coil built figurative sculpture based in Mexican mythology. Beautiful.

Antonella Cimatti (Italy); Delicate lacy forms with Parian, slip casting and trailing, a very successful artist.

Janice Esterman

Gerit Grimm (USA); Narrative figurative pieces, watching her construct her figures, particularly hands, inspiring original works.

Ostinelli & Priest (UK); Fascinating unconventional techniques with no attention to 'elth and safety'. I can't wait to try his method of sculpture as I cannot throw right now with a thumb injury. Fabulous attention to detail, and an entertaining demonstrator.

Harm van der Zeeuw (Netherlands); Hand built, often press moulded from 'found machines' fantasy sculptures that make you smile, but often with a following thought. Another entertaining demonstration.

Sabine Classen (Germany); Sculptural spherical forms, mainly following a trefoil knot, uses partial clear glazes which enhance the clay. Very tactile pieces.

Chisato Kuroki (Spain); A paper kiln – Fire Mandala with audience participation – very different. As was Alexandra Engelfriet (Netherlands); performance art using her body in the landscape as well as to manipulate huge amounts of clay.

Fred Olsen (USA) built a kiln and fired it, although we did not see the final result as we left before it was opened.

With such a full on programme of events we did need to take rest. There were various venues to eat and refresh, lovely food and reasonably priced and another opportunity to chat, share views and learn. Music on Saturday night, although we retired early!

We purchased some Chinese hand tools, not able to try them yet, were tempted to book a Chinese study tour, and also bought the pottery split aprons to benefit us and the 'Adopt a Potter' charitable trust.

The Festival runs every other year. We will be there!



Pottery Tips Janice and Melvyn Esterman

A Rounders Bat

Melvyn and I are 'newbie' potters, enjoying exploring the fathomless amount of information and interest in all things clay until we each find our niche. Mel's hobby is wood turning and DIY and he has been busy making tools for our new shared hobby.

When I injured my hand I couldn't practise throwing. Eventually I managed to try some sculpting, which I will explore more. However I am determined to master throwing, one skill at a time!

So, Mel to the rescue, I still cannot exert any pressure on my right thumb and firming the base of a pot is proving very difficult. We have a little wooden tool thumb shaped, but getting pressure was difficult, so Mel came up with a 'rounder bat'. Each end is rounded, different sizes, he has made two, one heavy, rests over my shoulder whilst resting in the opened clay, and now a slightly shorter model which I can lean into. Simple, but very effective, so now I'm back practising throwing.





Sky Arts Landscape of the Year



Janice Esterman



We had planned our last minute visit to ICF in Wales, for the same week I received an invitation to take part in Landscape Artist of the Year – after a very late entry was asked if I would take part as a ‘Wild Card’ – my preference really. The setting was simply breathtaking, situated on the top of the cliff at Rossilli, Wales’ Best Beach 2017, and one of the top beaches in Europe.

I set about practising daily four hour landscapes (paintings usually take me weeks not hours), set up in the garden with a picture of the beach and wonderful rocks. (Learning to avoid using my badly injured right thumb.) Melvyn got busy with a golf umbrella fixed in a drainpipe and secured to the easel; for protection from the sun. Ha ha. Thankfully I threw wet weather gear in the car, even a warm winter mac and wellies.

We arrived the day before the competition to suss out the area and to watch the earlier first heat. The weather was glorious, we watched some of the painting from the main contributors and the judges and film crew.

I sketched sitting on the grass near the cliff edge. We later spent time on the famous beach and dunes close to our B&B, the tide was out- a truly amazing place to spend some time.

With a 6.00 am start, we woke to a different country. A storm had come in, grey skies, poor visibility, wind and torrential rain – all day. Thank goodness for the sun umbrella. Mel sat in a deck chair in a puddle of water, holding the easel to stop it blowing away and to keep it still enough to paint, despite weights and guy lines. The wind was ferocious, the board and palate were wet in a minute, the rain came up the cliff and under the umbrella! It was cold too, despite winter wets and a fleece.

Worse of all, the paint (oil) would not stick to the wet canvas. Other artists suggested upping the medium to make it more tacky. Sort of worked. Some strategies were hilarious, all had problems with the paint/canvas and water-colourists despaired. One lady had a table and sat under it with a polythene sheet over her! It was relentless, the time spent was cut from four to three hours but I hardly moved, had eight brushes and paint knives in my left hand as there was nowhere dry to put them down, there was a puddle in the easel drawer and the bottom of the trolley and everything was wet. Somehow all kept our sense of humour and camaraderie amongst the artists (and wet under dressed judges).

The lovely lady next to me won the heat. We were thanked profusely for madly staying the course and told it will make great TV!

On Sky Arts sometime late October, look for the crazy looking woman in black patent wellington boots and a Blue Tilley hat, wearing sunglasses in the rain to improve visibility! I will be entering again – but if I get a place will take a variety of mediums to suit any weather!



Art In Clay - Hatfield House



Judi Tribe



Art in Clay at Hatfield House was held in August this year and a number of Guild members were exhibiting their beautiful ceramic work over this three day event.

Valentine Clays, a UK based Clay manufacturing company, now own this prestigious ceramic event with Hannah Ault leading the organising team. Hannah also had some guiding help this year from Andy & Di McInnes, who have just retired as the show's organisers for more than 20 years. Andy will continue to select for Art In Clay for a couple of years.

The weather was a lot more settled this year and the whole event encouraged visitors to appreciate the extraordinary diverse ceramic pieces being displayed in the marquees as well as having the opportunity to attend lectures and demonstrations by selected exhibiting potters which included Marshall Colman and our president and POD organiser, John Higgins.



*Photographs by
Bipin*



the tea ceremony, keeping in mind, also, the logistics of works that could be carried in hand luggage.

The focus of this artist residency programme at the Shiro Oni Studio was the anagama wood-firing. The first three weeks were spent making works exploring the principal pottery forms associated with the tea ceremony; tea bowl - thrown and carved, water container, flower vase.

The kiln was located in the middle of a cedar forest, across the river from Onishi, on a nearby mountain in Kamiizumi town, Saitama Prefecture. The residency culminated with a group exhibition at the former Fujisaki Brewery (a 2 acre complex of buildings in the middle of town).

shirooni.com/archives/exhibitions
 shirooni.com/portfolio/exhibition-06-2017
 vimeo.com/224024422
 vimeo.com/226101563

Shiro Oni Studio, Gunma, Japan
 website: shirooni.com



This year I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to travel to Japan, to take part in a group exhibition at the Be-Kyoto gallery in Kyoto and to participate in residency & exhibition at the Shiro Oni Studios, in the town of Onishi, Gunma Prefecture.

For the Be-Kyoto gallery I worked on a series of slipware pieces; single flower vases and saki cups. My starting point for this series was imagining the experience of Japan in springtime: Sakura. I wanted to make work which could form a component of



Membership of the Guild is open to anyone having an interest in pottery and sculpture and offers members many opportunities each year to see top potters and sculptors demonstrating their skills. In addition, an annual Open Day is held with demonstrations. Exhibitions, visits and workshops are also organised at various times.

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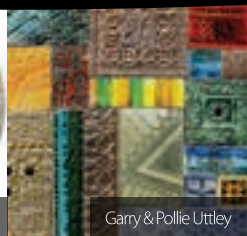
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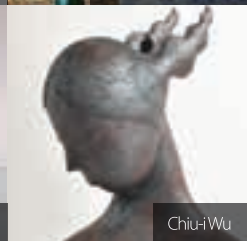
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