



**DACORUM AND  
CHILTERN  
POTTERS GUILD**



[www.dcp.org.uk](http://www.dcp.org.uk)

Fitzwilliam Competition  
Harpden WI  
Kimpton Art Fair  
Living crafts, Hatfield House  
Potters Open Day 2018  
Raku in Milton Keynes  
Stuart Smith  
Jo Taylor  
Mori Yamauchi

Issue 28 2018

£2

## **The Amazing Possibilities of Clay**



Ester Beck, Takeshi Yasuda, Duncan Hooson

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# Pots at Kingsbury Barn

**Exhibition & Sale of Ceramics**

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

**FREE ENTRY 10am to 5pm every day**

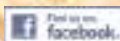
**Kingsbury Barn, Branch Road,  
 St Albans, Herts AL3 4SE**



**Demonstrations  
 and Have a Go  
 sessions Sat & Sun  
 1pm till 4pm**

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# Notes from the Chair



**Ros McGuirk**



As you will see from Mary Anne's notes on the committee, we have continued beavering away at data protection and safeguarding policies in addition to running our activities. These necessary distractions will soon be done and our policies will be up on the website for all to read.

In the meantime we have been busy with running various outreach events; Kimpton Art Fair and Living Crafts at Hatfield House, with a pottery session for the WI crafters group in Harpenden later this week and as yet an unspecified event with Sandringham School in July.

We will be missing the big workshop at Childwickbury this year as the cow yard is awaiting repairs. We have fitted in well here. It gives us a useful connection to the area and

specifically the four local primary schools for whom we run workshops. It has also been an excellent sales opportunity for members who take part in running the 'have a go' sessions. We hope to return next year.

By the time you read this it will be very close to the annual exhibition at Kingsbury Barn. To judge from the increasing popularity of this show, both among Guild members and the public, it will be the best ever!

So look out for the emails and put the dates 13 – 16th September in your diary. Invite your friends and family to come and enjoy it.

I am also looking forward to viewing the Fitzwilliam competition entries. How will all those totem poles fit in the hall?

For newcomers, this is the members annual competition (so make sure you have paid your subs!). Entries should be made after the theme was chosen, should be largely ceramic and that ceramic should be made by one person.

This year we are opening the new season of meetings on Saturday 13 October, starting at 10am. This is to allow for a little more time for the AGM and the competition. You may look forward to meeting Robert Cooper as our guest. There will be emails with further details nearer the time.

There will also be exciting news about next year's activities and something about POD (Potters Open Day) you were not expecting. Meanwhile the programme secretary will be organising a great season of meetings.

Enjoy the rest of the summer, the shows and exhibitions, and generally potting about. Happy potting, too!

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## Notes from the Committee



**Mary Anne Bonney**

The new data protection requirements have prompted the committee not only to review the data we hold, but to clarify who has what and where it is, which we hope will work to the advantage of members and committee alike. If you have any queries about your data and how we use it, they should come to me as Data Controller ([mabonney@btinternet.com](mailto:mabonney@btinternet.com)). Part of the new streamlined system will be Guild email addresses which we will share as soon as they are up and running.

With the increasing number of outreach events in mind, we have been finalising the Guild's safeguarding policy and procedure, under the guidance of our safeguarding officer,

Gay Crommelin.

Administrative matters aside, the committee has also reviewed past activities and planned for future events – POD, exhibitions, have-a go, firings – and said thank you and goodbye to Jerry Seabourn who leaves the committee after his stint as wood firing organiser (though not, we hope, the firing team).

We may not have produced the best pots but many lessons were learnt and much fun had.



## Kingsbury Barn Exhibition September 2018



The annual members' exhibition will again be held at Kingsbury Barn from Thursday September 13th to Sunday 15th September. This will again coincide with the St Albans Heritage Weekend, and although the heritage sites will be open for the preceding weekend, Kingsbury Barn has agreed we will only exhibit for the second of the Heritage weekends. Set up day will be Wednesday 12th September when exhibitors will be given a time slot to bring and set up their exhibits, and similarly take down will have times slots on Monday 17th September. We are pleased to say that the exhibition is now fully booked and our exhibiting members are now busy making!

We plan to hold the Members' Social and Private View on the evening of Friday 14th September, so reserve the date even if you don't plan to exhibit, so you can come and enjoy the work of your colleagues in the



beautiful barn surroundings. Even if you are not planning to exhibit, or join one of the have-a-go teams, you are welcome to come to assist on set up and dismantling days, or in organising the social, or any other involvement before or throughout the event. Come and join the fun. **Jackie Harrop**





## Editor's Note



**Judi Tribe**



I hope that you will enjoy this issue of our newsletter as there are some wonderful pieces of writing describing how clay is being used both by practitioners as well as within community projects. Workshops and kiln firing bring potters together and these special events create a chance to share an experience, get to know one another and enhance individual knowledge while working with clay in its many different processes.

Again the Guild held its annual Potters Open Day earlier this year and brought three international potters together, who all captivated their audience with a mixture of fascinating talks and demonstrations. The monthly Friday meetings have also been a source of inspiration as all the visiting potters generously shared their personal journeys and their own individual and skilful ways of working with clay.

Thanks to all those who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter with a special mention to Jackie for keeping me on track with her proofreading and to Bipin who beautifully designs and produces this publication for the Guild.

### **Members' Daytime Socials**

Please come and join a relaxed coffee/tea 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.

Please contact Judi Tribe to confirm that you will be coming along.  
juditribe0@gmail.com (0 is a zero)

Thursday 23rd August 2018, 11am - 1.00pm  
Little Heath Tea Room, Little Heath Lane,  
Potten End, Berkhamsted, HP4 2RY

Monday 24th Sept 2018, 11am - 1.00pm at  
The Cafe in the Park, The Aquadrome,  
Frogmoor Lane, Rickmansworth, WD3 1NB  
[thecafeinthepark.com](http://thecafeinthepark.com)

Wednesday 24th Oct 2018, 11am - 1.00pm  
at Burston Garden Centre, North Orbital,  
Chiswell Green, St Albans, Herts AL2 2DS  
[burston.co.uk](http://burston.co.uk)

### **DCPG Friday Meetings**

Monthly Talks and Demonstrations  
from October through to May, 8pm -  
10pm 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.  
All welcome.  
Members free. Guests £5.00

### **Errata Issue 27 - First Aid**

Guild members attending and gaining First Aid certificates in November 2017 were Jackie Harrop, Audrey Hammett, Tracy Ford, Amanda Toms, Gill Blanch, Helen Whitbread & Judi Tribe.



## A Pottery Class for the WI A cautionary tale



**Ros McGuirk**

Last year at Kimpton Art Fair a fellow crafter in the school hall, having watched our 'have-a-go' session on the wheels, where we work mostly with children, asked if we would do the same for her group of WI craft workers. It seemed a good idea and so we agreed.



It was to be on a Wednesday morning, at the Harpenden Guide Hall, with 16 keen crafty ladies as our students. Amanda and I planned to run a hand building project and take two wheels to give everyone a go at throwing. Janice and Melvyn, Julie Leaming and Ian Jones stepped up to help. It seemed that we had it all in hand, although there were certain unknowns; we had not worked with a group of adults before, we did not know how competent they would be, nor if any had been to pottery classes in the past. We had a plan and we had options we could add on if required. The plan all looked good.

However we had forgotten to factor in the WI tea and cake break, the well known fact that introductory talks and demonstrations generally take a lot more time than expected and that if you take a wheel which has just started to show it has an intermittent problem, it will let you down when you most need it. The Shippo Whisperer which we use in the hall came with us to Living Crafts where it worked perfectly every day except on the Friday. It was fine on Wednesday, Thursday,

Saturday and Sunday. On Friday it sulked for a long while until it finally clicked into action.

So, while Amanda held the ladies' rapt attention with her meticulous demonstration of making an impressed slab vase, out of their sight at the back of the hall, Melvyn had the errant wheel on its side. With the aid of a screwdriver on his pocket knife he had the base off and was delving into its innards. After 10 minutes he put it all back together looking very glum. The wiring and connections were all fine, but he could not find the fault. We were to carry on with one wheel and - quick calculation - each person would have 5 minutes on the wheel. The demonstration went on - four minutes each.

Then, amazingly well timed, Janice found her magic touch - for no apparent reason the wheel was working! And it behaved perfectly for the rest of the morning.

The ladies all professed to having enjoyed it all, even though there had not been time for all on the wheel. Those that had were much better at throwing than I had expected, stronger and with a clear idea of what they wanted to make. My best pupil had been Maureen, almost ninety and built like a bird, she reminded me of my own grandmother. She was determined to make a bowl and despite stiff arthritic fingers, she did. It was for her husband and it was their sixty fifth wedding anniversary that very day!

PS. The wheel is booked in with Duncan Bull. It looks as though the switch is on its way out. It should be fixed by the time you read this.



# Living Crafts at Hatfield House



10 – 13 May

Ros McGuirk



This was our second time in the Art in Herts tent, demonstrating and exhibiting our work. We shared the space with other groups from the area. There were painters, spinners, weavers, lace makers, quilters, wood turners, glass makers, and no other potters. All had been invited in for free in order to promote local art and craft groups.

Working in public view can be daunting but most of those who took part enjoyed it much more than they had expected to. Also for many, it was being in the company of other potters while they worked that was so congenial and they reported having a great time. The only negative reviews came from the Friday group who had the bad luck to choose a day when there were very few visitors. For them the effort we made was just not worth it.

It is not easy to balance inputs and outputs at an event like this. There were no financial transactions involved, which at least would

have given us a clear marker. The public took away lots of flyers for the Kingsbury Barn exhibition, so perhaps that will improve the footfall there? They also took about 50 lists of pottery classes and a number of our own flyers and old newsletters. Perhaps the Guild might gain another member or two as a result of our efforts? Those who study statistics would not expect many. However, I like to think that we are as much about sowing seeds as gaining a quick crop and being there gives us a useful place to gain some exposure to public view.

Whether we continue at this show depends on whether we get invited again and whether the membership has an appetite for it.

Meantime I would like to say a big thank you to all 18 of you who gave up a whole a day to be there. You brought lovely examples of your work and all the displays were stunning and there were plenty of admirable comments from the craft-loving public.



# Fitzwilliam Competition at the Guild AGM, October 2018

by Ros McGuirk

The result of the vote for this year's theme is Totem Pole', which beat 'Pot with Lid' by a narrow margin.

As some members were a bit flummoxed after the announcement at the Potters Open Day in March, I have started a spot of research into the topic. The term 'totem' appears to have come from early anthropologists studying the native population of the NW of America. A totem is a hereditary mark, emblem or badge of a tribe, clan or group of Indians, consisting of figure or representation of an animal, plant or other natural object. This is most often an animal and is sometimes considered to be ancestrally related to the tribe.

The poles were carved from wood, then painted and placed at the entrance to homes. They were often erected at times of celebration and feasting - the potlatch was a great party involving extravagant



hospitality that went on for days.

Korea also has a long tradition of carving wooden poles to stand at the entrance to the home.

These are to ward off evil spirits - a task at which they were seemingly most successful!

Of course we work in a different medium with entirely different properties to that of wood.

Also we do not live out in the forests and mountains... so I am really looking forward to the many different interpretations that will emerge from this interesting and challenging project.

Good luck and good potting!!

NB - the rules state that you must be a paid up member to enter the competition, that the item should be mainly of ceramic, made in the year of the competition and that the applicant should be the sole designer and ceramic maker.

## Have a go at Kimpton Art Fair, Sunday April 30th

We have been going to Kimpton ever since they developed the crafts day. Right from the start we decided to run 'have a go' on the wheel rather than simply demonstrate which the other crafters do. This turned out well and we have become a popular turn.

It is held in the village school hall and most of our custom is from the primary aged children who attend. We take two wheels

and all the paraphernalia required and also any work that we wish to sell.

This year the weather was unusually fine and warm for April and our customers were a little distracted by the activities out on the field. Normally we get up to 50 customers. This year it was around 40.

Thanks to Jackie, Pat Joyce, Colin and Sharon who joined me there for the fun.



Jo's sculptural work is inspired by decorative architectural features such as stone/wooden carving on buildings, ornate ceilings and elaborate wrought ironwork. Using a combination of hand built and thrown shapes, Jo likes to explore the interplay of light and shadow in her sculptures. She uses plain or coloured porcelain for her indoor pieces, and grogged and coloured clays for installations and outdoor sculptures.

### From potter to ceramicist

Jo learned to throw at evening classes in her early twenties, and she continued to pot at home, as a hobby, whilst pursuing her career as a police officer. Eventually she reached the point of wanting to gain more knowledge of clay work. After taking a degree in pottery, she was offered a job teaching pottery to prisoners. She left the police and took up this post, teaching for around 5 years.

She then enrolled for a Masters degree at Bath Spa University. It was during this time she developed her current style, and moved away from functional pottery to sculptural work. During her Masters a combination of factors allowed her to explore ideas and find her style: she had a wonderful space to work in, time to experiment, the company of retired sculptor Prof Michael Pennie and other students, plus an injured shoulder which temporarily prevented

her from throwing and forced her to explore hand building for a while.

Since her graduation in 2012 Jo has continued to teach as well as work in her studio.

She has undertaken commissions for larger installations as well as completing her smaller indoor pieces. Her work has been exhibited many times.

### A gesture in clay

During her demonstration Jo was generous in sharing some of her techniques and ideas. She passed round samples of her work and we could feel the delicacy, and see the smooth joins of the various elements. Thrown elements form the base of her work.

On a hand built element she demonstrated how she makes what she calls a 'gesture in clay', using her fingers or tools to create curves and marks in the clay. She showed us the bisque fired tray she works on to help with drying. She recommended using best dry cleaners wrapping plastic for controlling this crucial drying stage. The various elements of her pieces - thrown and hand built are monitored and dried very carefully until they are leather hard. Jo uses scoring and slipping to join the elements, working instinctively on the sculpture, stopping when she feels the piece is finished.

Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild members would like to thank Jo for an extremely interesting evening.





# Potters Open Day 2018 (POD)

## and The Amazing Possibilities of Clay



The Potters Open Day is the culmination of a year's planning. It took a dedicated and enthusiastic team that included Jackie Harrop, Mary Anne Bonney, Judi Tribe and Fiona Booy. And many meetings that involved tea and cake at various venues around St Albans.

**Duncan Hooson** Stoke-on-Trent & London  
**Takeshi Yasuda** UK, China, and Japan  
**Ester Beck** Israel

It is difficult to hide the fact that I enjoy choosing, finding, and getting agreement from speakers and demonstrators for POD. Apart from that clear, sometimes nail-biting, pleasure it appeals to my mission to make clay available to as many as possible.

In choosing potters and speakers for POD it is an important consideration that we introduce clay in all its manifestations, strands, and possibilities. This has, and will result, in moments that are surprising, contentious, troubling, and exciting – but hopefully insightful and rewarding.

Museums around the world contain clay objects from the most basic and domestic to the most ambitious and spiritual. Clay's reach extend from disposable containers for fast food to prosthetics and the myriad of technical applications. Clay is used for making fired objects – as well as in its unfired state in many ways. This is the world in which

POD positions itself.


Clay has undoubted discursive and social possibilities, and it was with this in mind that I invited Duncan Hooson to POD 2018. In his work he uses clay as a means for social interaction and discussion, and during his talk and slide show it became clear that his is a tireless and long-standing endeavour, and that his love of performance goes back generations.

On the day we were introduced to his new book 'Clay in Common', a project book intended for schools, libraries, artists, and clay activists everywhere.

Takeshi Yasuda demonstrated his masterly skills with porcelain and regaled us with his stories from life, and his philosophy on life. His calm and gentle way of working had the audience breathless and on the edge of their seats.

Esther Beck brought something completely different, dramatic, exhilarating, and challenging to POD. It was exciting to witness her manipulating large blocks of different clays sandwiched together, cut, and then hammered from the inside with a rubber mallet.

POD 2018 saw three completely contrasting approaches to clay, and it was a privilege to see these makers and speakers explore the practical and intellectual margins of clay on stage.

But the Potters Open Day would not and could not be a success without the help of the Sandringham Theatre staff on the Friday and on the day of the event. Thank you, too, to the members who help set the whole event up, all the 'on the day' activities and finally the task of taking it down at the end on the Saturday. 

👉 Appreciation goes to Bipin and his amazing camera work, to Ben Boswell for his wonderful photographs and finally to Jonny for his skilful projection of the activities onto the large screen.

It was wonderful and heart-warming to see so many members getting involved along with the Caterers providing the delicious cakes for the morning break and the light lunches, Blue matchbox providing for all the materials and equipment needs of the visitors.



## Hooson's Alfresco Troupe 🍲🍲🍲 – Then and Now

**The public & private work of Duncan Hooson, by Andre Hess**

The world of studio pottery is conventionally represented by the individual potter making pots, and offering these finished and fired objects to those who would have them, for use and/or contemplation. The Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild Potters Open Day 2018 opened with a lecture by Duncan Hooson, whose work with clay showed its wider reach and manifold potential in a discursive socio-political practice that often involves many people, tons of clay, and where sometimes nothing is fired.

It became clear as he walked onto the stage that 'his practice', as he put it, included his life itself and how he wished the world to see him. There was immediately much to be wondered at, and admired.

Duncan Hooson started off by telling us about the poignant discovery that what he does today might have been there waiting

Contemporary Ceramics Centre with their fantastic display of books, and of course Potclays who sponsored all the clay the demonstrators used to such effect.

To all, we are profoundly grateful for your support and helping to make POD 2018 the success it was. Thank you. **John Higgins**

**Please keep 2nd March 2019 free as the speaker and demonstrators are already booked.**



for him before he realized it: on the screen flickered an old sepia photograph of a group of men and women dressed up in the tall pointy hats and polka dots of the Pierrot characters to perform on the streets of Stoke-on-Trent. They were the 'Hooson's Alfresco Troupe', and included family working in the potteries as fettlers, turners, decorators, and so on. Performance and Clay was already in his blood.

He spoke of how he discovered a few years ago that he and John Higgins, President of the DCPG, grew up in the same street in the Potteries and played amongst the bottle kilns, sherd heaps, and marl holes. That story was clearly the subject of a separate and lengthy lecture.



## Duncan Hooson, by Andre Hess

### Continued



Like many, Duncan Hooson started his contact with clay with evening classes, and he used the opportunity to underline the importance of this British institution. On the way to where he finds himself now, he was taught by Walter Keeler and Mo Jupp, who were both crucial to his story, a Masters degree from Cardiff University where Mick Casson and Paul Greenhalgh (an unsung master of the story of clay, he said quietly) were important to him, as was two years at Bristol University, where Simon Carroll was a friend. Then came a teaching position at Morley College, where he followed in Angus Suttie's footsteps.

Duncan is currently the Head of Ceramics at Morley College and Leader Stage 1 BA Honours Ceramic Design at Central Saint Martins. His own work is made of loosely thrown elements stacked to make multiple totemic forms that demand space, and is usually monochrome and quiet in its finish. By contrast, he pointed out, his community work is colourful and noisy.

He spoke of the Royal Festival Hall and the South Bank Centre where his work blossomed in the form of extensive wall pieces and public performance, and the then Faulty Optic Theatre Company. It involved clay, polystyrene, digging holes, hanging things, and whatever material came to mind. Defying gravity was a big thing, and it was the idea that mattered. It was people that mattered. It was life that mattered. The buzz of live performance and theatre was everything. The Greater London Council was active then, and created the opportunities for such things to happen.

It is that spirit that Duncan brings to his current work. He is a jobbing artist, he says, a maker, and a facilitator of community work. It is important to him that people participate (they don't need much encouragement, in his experience) and get to touch clay. Many love the idea of taking the 'finished' raw piece home with them, and many are happy to simply make the work and leave it. They do not need the finished object. It is all about the action, the engagement, and the moment.

Then Duncan showed startling slides of clay work being made by people inside a barge, and along the canals on which it sailed, involving community groups along the way. The project, called Clay Cargo, ran in the years 2013 - 2015, and was devised by the Clayground Collective in partnership with the British Ceramics Biennale and the Canal and River Trust. It was supported by the National Lottery and the Arts Council England. The barge travelled through three cities, Stoke, Birmingham, and London, along the canals that were the dream of Josiah Wedgwood, and the working partners included Central St Martins, the Fordham



Gallery, Camden Libraries, the Kings Cross authority, Global Generation, the London Sculpture Workshop, Ikons Black Country Voyages, Potclays, and the Middleport Pottery. This list, and the distances travelled, both physically and socially, attest to the ambition and reach of such work.

The next set of images concerned Duncan's more current work. He has an ongoing leadership role with Clayground Collective which focuses on public art, community participation, and research. He and Julia Rowntree are the directors, and in 2013 were awarded the National Craft Skills award for sustaining and promoting hand skills. Their continuing research area is called 'Thinking Hands?' and explores the importance of hand skills in the face of the deskilling tendencies

afoot today. They work with all kinds of people, including surgeons, and advocate the maintenance of hand skills through the use of clay and other 3D media. Learn more about this work at [www.claygroundcollective.org](http://www.claygroundcollective.org)

Duncan Hooson and his associates have for many years been concerned with the decline in the teaching of ceramics in schools and elsewhere. For him the 'product' (the fired object) can exist apart from the 'process' (the raw clay, place, and people). This concept of 'process' is the site of performance, collaboration, and community. We saw images of clay being used in teaching in a small school for deaf children. These children use clay in communication in all their subjects. It was moving and heart-warming to see.

For him the word 'collective' is the key, he said, as he continued to describe projects that included working with other clay practitioners (both professional and emerging makers), the 2012 London Olympics, 'A New Direction London', with the Crafts Council on the national project called 'Firing Up' (which was intended to reignite the use of kilns in schools), and with Mike Webber and his finds from the archaeology of the Thames.

It is possible to argue that the work of Duncan Hooson's Clayground Collective exists on the same continuum as flash mobbing, guerrilla architecture, citizen science, extreme knitting, guerrilla gardening, and other socio-political and interventionary community projects and events.

That our humble clay can be part of it must be welcomed.

*'Be generalists', he concluded, 'and be open to new ideas with clay'.*

Dr Andre Hess is a Fellow of the Craft Potters Association.





## Takeshi Yasuda **POD 2018** by Jackie Harrop



Takeshi Yasuda throwing porcelain is like watching a startling murmuration. A unique phenomenon, with beautiful shapes emerging, in a mesmerising, peaceful and totally absorbing whirling, almost silent dance.

His composure and quiet seemingly effortless delivery, punctuated by philosophical challenges, spoken in a quiet unassuming manner which belies the controversial reversal of convention and traditional approaches. His subtle understated style produced visually dramatic forms, exquisite in their simplicity, and very unconventional in his approach to the process.

It wasn't just his throwing skill but his philosophical approach and sense of humour which quietly challenged and inspired the audience. He urged us to use the wheel as a tool, and questioned the virtue of making pottery which is purely controlled by convention and habit, and affirming that the creative process is the ability to make something new, which has meaning and

gives pleasure to the maker, either due to the material, or the process or the intention.

Watching Takeshi throwing off the hump, using half packs to lift and cone before beginning to create his exquisite pots was spell binding. He talked insight fully and with sharp wit and wisdom as he worked making profound comments, motivational messages which prompted reflection and inspiration.

*"Porcelain has a beauty of itself, I cannot make it ugly, give yourself permission – don't try to make something beautiful".*

*"Sometimes the material inspires you, sometimes the process changes your process and something new can happen".*

He spoke of the pleasure of technical challenge, which prompts innovation and creative solutions and also of permitting himself to defy convention and surrendering control.

*"Do it – if you like it, you don't need another reason".*

Takeshi's presentation was a contradiction of subtlety and showmanship, with a quiet methodical reversal of orthodox process,



## Illustrations by Vivienne Rodwell-Davies

of throwing the bases of pots before the main body, or the neck and challenging us to throw the handle before the mug, to reverse our conventional approach to making. His demonstration did just that, starting saki cup sized vessels working first on the base, then making a separate rim, and then a tall bottle shape working from the base upside down, then creating a separate neck. He also threw thicker bowls using a twisted wire to slice patterned faceted external surface and a jagged raw edged rim.

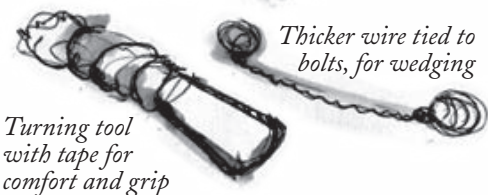
His final form, a large flat bottomed bowl with sloping sides, was impressively transformed in a dramatic flourish, as when standing up and removing the batt, he swung the bowl in a Tai Chi motion, splattering the top section onto the floor, fracturing an asymmetric top edge, and squeezing a pinched ridge to the base, before squaring off to create its final shape.

Watching Takeshi was not just about throwing porcelain, but a philosophical challenge to convention and creativity.

A truly wonderful experience.

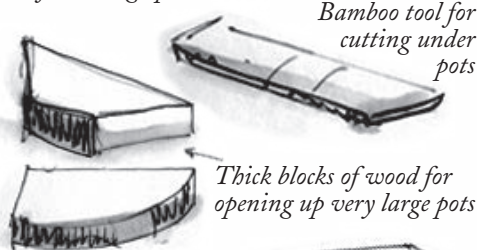


*Soldered 'blobs' on wire gives an uneven finish when cutting facets*



*Turning tool with tape for comfort and grip*

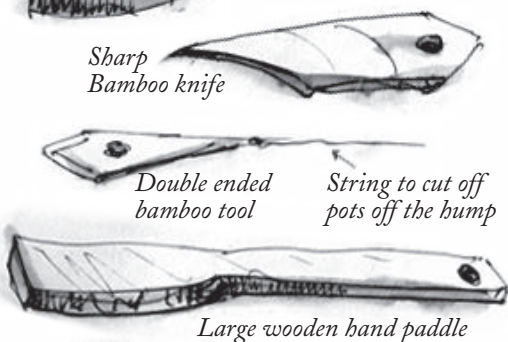
*Thicker wire tied to bolts, for wedging*



*Bamboo tool for cutting under pots*

*Thick blocks of wood for opening up very large pots*

*Sharp Bamboo knife*



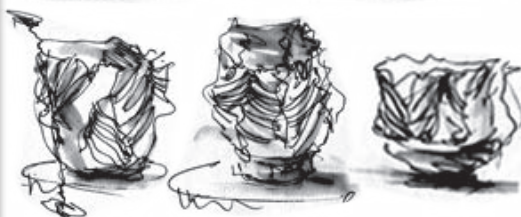
*Double ended bamboo tool*

*String to cut off pots off the hump*

*Large wooden hand paddle*



*Throw 'off the hump' a series of tops and join to bottoms*



*Facet outside with wire, re-throw from the inside*





Ester's freestyle method evolved when she freed herself from her attachment to working on the wheel. She approaches working with the clay as the core aspect of her work emphasising that for her, *"process is as important as the aesthetic result of a final piece"*.

**H**er freestyle approach explores movement, flow and texture through the dynamic act of making which she compares to 'action painting' and Japanese calligraphy.

Ester demonstrated her use of hammers, wires, spatula's, scrapping tools, fingers, knuckles and hands to open, move and stretch the clay. She spent great energy and effort preparing the clay. Blocks of grey, black and red clay were sliced open, layered and wedged so that thin layers of red and black were combined into the grey base and wedged to retain the block clay form.

The wedging process itself is impressive and demands physical fitness, balance, body awareness and strength. She works with really large blocks of clay, patting down with her hands and fists, climbing up to lift and wedge the block and then using wires to reveal the emerging layering.

As she worked, Ester talked about her work with really vast blocks of wedged clay, 5 kilos were used at a pottery slam demo and 200 Kilos on another occasion. She reported an attempt to work with 5 tons of clay didn't really work out!

Ester commissioned a stunning video showing her working in this super sized format which was shown on the back wall of the auditorium. In the video Ester was shown working with her legs and feet inside the clay walls to manoeuvre the clay body: body met body as she rose to the challenge, and as she fought with the clay and expending enormous kinetic energy. Of course firing was not possible, the emphasis was on the creative process, the tenacious engagement of the maker and the experience of the observing viewers.

During Ester's demonstration, the wedged clay block was initially tackled with a large rubber hammer to develop an open topped internal cavity; then she followed up with a wire scooper to remove sections and develop a complex internal space with an appearance of weathered valley walls. Wooden pebble



ribs further smoothed and worked the internal formation. At times the external walls were supported by foam rubber to avoid loss of the integrity of the form. Further hammering lead to some fissures in the walls which were welcomed and carefully supported and sustained.

Attention then shifted to the lifting and revealing the base, using wire to cut away and reveal an attenuated pedestal providing a sense of the capacious form floating above. The external walls were sliced back to reveal the flowing movement of the inserted layers. The internal form of the vessel required more attention to overcome the smudges resulting from the hammering action, Ester's precise skilful actions enabled the surprise of the inner drama to materialise.

Geological formations offer a reference point for these extraordinary creations: sedimentation, the layering of millennia, elemental erosion and eruption. Ester spoke about the links between her creative inspiration to rock formations in the Negev desert in South Israel. She had not been conscious of this seminal inspiration but had made many visits to the desert and made the connection after executing the massive work.

Both the physical process and the language used by Ester emphasised challenge: risk, over-limit, drama, surprise, collapse, stress, crazy, strength. An anecdote about a woman who walked out of one of Esther's demonstration commenting it was too aggressive and that she felt appalled got me thinking about the importance of witnessing a woman working in this vigorous fashion.

In many parts of the world women do demanding physical work related to agriculture and the of carrying water, and of course

women give birth which is the most demanding physical process humankind encounters on a daily basis. My experience of Ester's creative process remind me of birth, and in the video we saw her cocooned inside the clay, kicking and pushing her way forward.

Ester's presentation was inspiring and humbling. She explained that her pieces are slowly fired, without any addition of glaze, in an electric kiln but the finished work does not sell well. For Ester there is an upside of this: she doesn't have to please anyone and can do what she wants.

She had brought some small versions of her vessels to the meeting and they did not fly off the shelf, so it seems that there is something about them that feels difficult to embrace. But I did buy one and I feel really delighted to have the work in my home, it's warm sandy colours evoke the desert and its irregular unexpected outlines surprise me whenever I look at it.





# Potters Open Day 2018



Photographs by Bipin,  
Ben Boswell and Vivienne Rodwell-Davies





# Mori Yamauchi



by Janice Esterman

Mori is a member of the DCPG and kindly agreed to demonstrate his preferred method of working, hand building. He is a professional potter and teacher at Harrow Weald College, living in the UK for many years.

Born in Okinawa, Japan, Mori began his talk with a slide show and short history of Okinawa, post WW2 American occupation, which became a Prefecture of Japan again in 1972. There is still a large American presence on bases in Okinawa. The island is subtropical with beautiful beaches, rainforest and interesting geological features.

Mori spoke eloquently of the islands' influences on his work, showing us traditional huge ornate funerary urns and interesting geometric designed crypts. The nobori-gama kilns originally built on a slope in 1682 were moved out of the town because of environmental reasons but remains of the kiln can still be seen in the original locations.

Tsuboya pottery is still produced today. Mori explained the concept of the Japanese Garden and how this Zen simplicity has also greatly influenced his work, the combination of organic material with man made craftsmanship.

Mori throws and hand builds, often using red clay or black clay which he fires to stoneware temperatures. He uses simple glaze layering, matt white and shiny glaze, relying on the interaction with different clays to achieve the colours he wants. Oxides can be mixed into the clay.

He often textures the clay with simple designs, influenced by Kimono fabric motifs, to achieve elaborate effects, sometimes using

polystyrene sheets (the type from packaging of frozen pizza!) to carve a pattern to be overlaid on the soft clay. (Plaster moulds for textured rolling pins can be made this way.)

During the evening demonstration, a slab was rolled out before using a hand cut template for his work, then he enhanced the slab with a floor-mat like an edge texture, which defines the pots. He favours small boxes, or jars, sometimes 'saki pots' all usually with lids, to achieve an enclosed 'emptiness' rather than an open 'space'. Sometimes he achieves the effects of Kimono fabric by using black clay, with wax resists before glazing, also taking motifs from the rake effects of Japanese gardens.

Mori works deftly and quickly, with much skill obviously enjoying the process which he makes looks simple. The boxes are folded from the template design, patterns match, seams are smooth and sometimes supported with a tiny roll of clay smoothed on the inside.

Lids are cut within the template and a ledge cut and inserted where required if a 45 degree cut is not made. Two boxes were made identically, and joined to make a larger box with a lid cut in the top box. A little rolled handle was attached to the lid.

Simply beautiful.







# Stuart Smith

 by Maria Alba Hogg

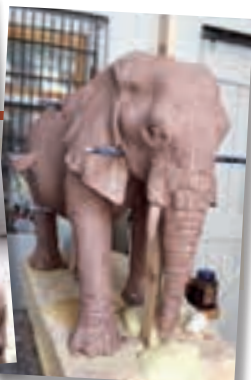
I was quite looking forward to this demonstration, as I am fascinated by sculpture. And Stuart Smith, this evening's guest, did not disappoint.

Stuart went to the Royal Academy Schools to study Sculpture and Life Drawing. As well as being extremely talented, he has a very engaging personality, and the evening was a great success.

Stuart started with a slide show, taking us through his career highlights since leaving College by using the images and his commentary, often humorous, always interesting and informative. Many of the pieces we saw were large, life size ones of incredible detail and refinement. Most were commissions and included angels, crabs, fauns, crucifixes, horses, even a Shakespearean Juliette he made as a gift for his niece! His production is incredibly varied, and the slides a good showcase for his talent and skill.

A trip to India with Jan, his wife, in 2001 has had a great impact on him: the poverty, of course, but also the resilience and good nature of the people were a revelation and an inspiration.

All this was captured on camera and later reflected in his work. His raku fired pieces of Indian inspiration, besides being



beautiful and wonderfully executed, resist the facile exoticism of a foreign culture, and instead present the wonder of individual personalities, of lives lived in poverty but great dignity. Truly awe-inspiring.

After the slide show the demonstration started. Stuart was using simple school buff clay for the seated figure of a man waiting for a bus. He had taken a picture of a group of 4 people, and eventually the finished product will be of all four.

He used thick wall insulating boards as props, as they are light, cheap and ideal for inserting wooden sticks as armature.

He carried on talking as he applied more clay to the emerging figure, so that the whole process appeared effortless, almost organic. His wife Jan added small, but insightful and interesting anecdotes from the back of the room. Though not a potter, she is an artist in her own right.

Watching Stuart I was somehow put in mind of Giacometti's process of building up his figures, though of course the two artists and their artwork are completely different.

By the end, though the figure was unfinished, we had all been treated to a very entertaining, inspiring and instructive evening. The sitting man was already recognisable, and it would be really fascinating to see the finished product in all its glory.







# Raku Workshop



Sharon Goodman

I have just spent a most engaging day out at a raku workshop run by present and past Guild members, Kirsteen Holuj and Mark Compton. The workshop took place in the garden of a beautiful old building that has been converted into an Arts Centre out in the Bedfordshire countryside. Kirsteen and Mark have pottery studios there, as do other artists working in various different media.

We were told to bring along several bisque fired pots preferably made from stoneware with a grog content. Pots had to be no taller than 30 cms and not too wide, in this way they could fit more pots into the kiln. This gave me problems as I was attempting to work on a series of 'Modigliani' influenced heads. I love the way the painter expressed a face with simple flat black lines, rich colours and long exaggerated shapes.

I solved this by making the faces with a flat back and therefore they were able to stand up independently, which became a kind of relief sculpting.

I was excited by the result after the bisque firing. Although I was nowhere near as excited as I was when I started to see the results of the raku fired pieces.

Kirsteen and Mark fired their 2 gas kilns throughout the day. They set out a number of glazes, oxides, stains, wax and masking tape and gave a good clear demonstration of the results that could be achieved by using them. They also had a supply of bisque fired pots that could be purchased at a small price for those who hadn't made their own.

The workshop ran at a lovely leisurely pace and when each kiln reached firing point we all stood around our designated sawdust filled metal bins and shouted out when our



own pot emerged from the kiln. The pots took on the appearance of shimmering glass and were then carried over on long tongs and deposited into our bin. Flames ensued and we added more sawdust and bungled the lid on to let the chemistry continue to work its magic. It wasn't an exact science, in fact there was little control but Kirsteen and Mark gave good clear advice to our millions of questions. They ran the workshop in a relaxed and confident manner and encouraged us to experiment and enjoy the results and we certainly did.

For details about Kirsteen and Mark's Raku Days visit [kirsteenholuj.co.uk/workshops](http://kirsteenholuj.co.uk/workshops)



## Obituary **Rosemary de Rossi (April 1931 - April 2018)** by Helen Whitbread

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Rosemary de Rossi, a long term member of the Guild, passed away on 27th April after a short illness, aged 87.

Rosemary joined the National Institute For Medical Research just after the war, where she rose to become a prominent, most highly respected scientific researcher. She

worked for several years alongside some of the most eminent scientists in the country.

She attended many of the meetings at Kings Langley and Potters Open Days and liked to collect small pots made by the demonstrators.

These were proudly on display in her home.

Rosemary began potting over 20 years ago, attending evening classes at Oaklands College, taught by Asa Miller. In her late 70s, she started studying for her City & Guilds qualification. She particularly liked throwing and took great care in turning beautifully centred foot rings on the base of her pots.

She decorated her pots sparsely with brush strokes of colour. Rosemary also enjoyed taking part in raku and smoke-firings, always prepared to get involved hands-on.

Rosemary's enthusiasm and energy were legendary – she could outlast others decades younger than her. A genuine character and keen potter, she will be much missed.

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### **Boxmoor Kiln Update by Jerry Seaborn**

The report for the 28th April Boxmoor Kiln Firing is on the Guild website under this link [dcp.org.uk/workshops-and-firings/](http://dcp.org.uk/workshops-and-firings/)

In an analysis of the kiln design, we need to gain some insight into why the kiln struggles to get to temperature. It appears to show that the current chimney height is too low, and that the quality of the wood we are using is not good enough. The Guild Committee are currently deciding the future course of action, but there are some actions that need to be carried out anyway.

To complete the adobe outer protection layer we were unable to do earlier this year, we would like to set a date during this Autumn to carry out this work. Does any member have a small portable cement mixer for the Guild to use? Please let us know suitable dates we could borrow it. We would also need volunteers to help over, probably, one complete weekend.

Also, does anyone know of a suitable source of softwood off-cuts? A factory or sawmill that we could get suitable wood from?

Thank you, any ideas gratefully received.



## About the Guild & the Newsletter

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.

### Membership Rates

**Single £30, Family (one address) £42, Student (full time) £22.**

**Green\* Single £25, Green\* Family (one address) £37.** \*Green members will receive the newsletter by email rather than a paper copy.

Please make your cheque payable to DCPG and send to **Audrey Hammett** to the address indicated in the application form which can be downloaded from our website **thedcp.org.uk**

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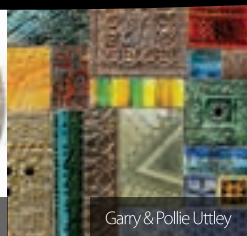
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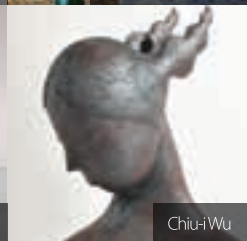
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