

Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild

Autumn
Newsletter 1984



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NEWSLETTER &
BULLETIN Jean Sedgley
26 Mildred Avenue
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November 1984

The Third Members' Exhibition, held at the Watermill, St. Albans in July was a success. Many members exhibited their work and it was pleasing to see so much variety and more handbuilt pottery.

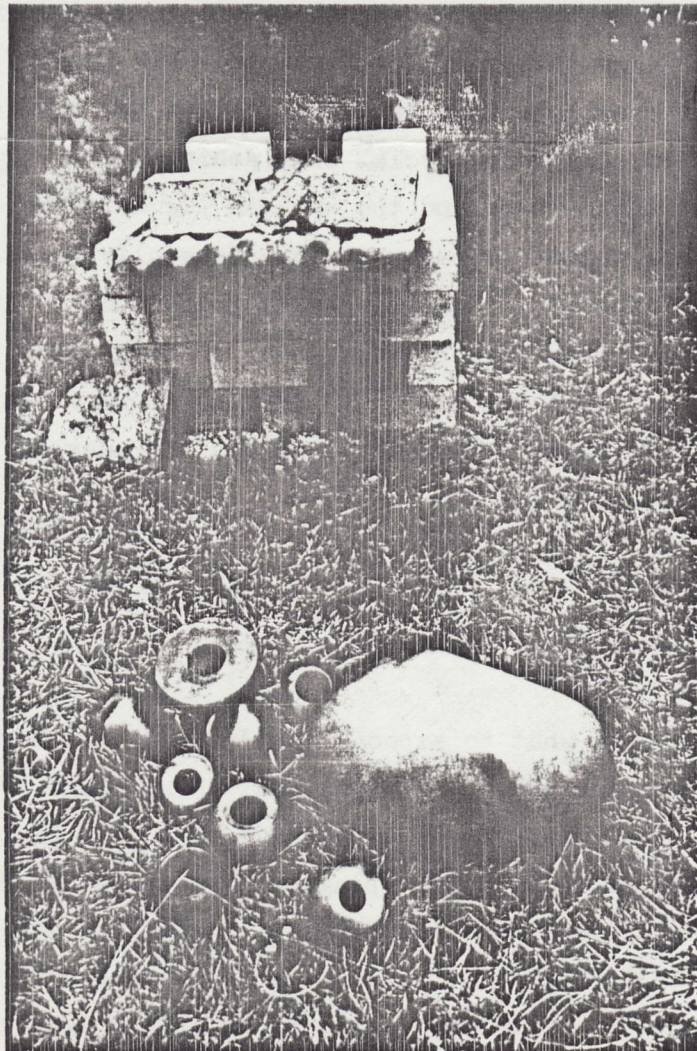
The annual Potters' Day was another success, approx. 160 people attended, the largest audience at any of the Potters' Days. The demonstrations were very interesting and informative and there was great rapport between the audience and the demonstrators. I hope to receive some of the write ups so that I can include them in the next bulletin or newsletter.

I particularly enjoyed the sawdust firing by Nigel Boarder at Northfield Studio in June. The meeting was poorly attended, maybe the date was inconvenient.

Nigel demonstrated his constructed press moulded pots, showed slides of his and other students' work and fired a saw dust kiln, as well as exhibiting some of his beautiful sculptural pots.

We would appreciate sharing the views of members or reading write ups of any of the meetings, or details of exhibitions.

Jean Sedgley



Are they pots? are they pictures? are they pictures on pots or ceramic pictures? These were the questions that came to mind when looking at Trish's work and I suppose they were any or all of these things.

Trish is an enthusiastic and energetic person and these qualities go into all aspects of her life, the home, the garden, cooking and of course her work.

After a years exhausting but interesting teaching in a difficult secondary school, she is back to making ceramics in her workshop, furthering ideas she was pursuing before teaching.

When making in Somerset salt glaze domestic ware her love of the landscape around her, especially the relationship between sky and earth, found its way into her work . as pot pictures.

On moving to Bucks. these pictures developed still further even though she found the landscape less dramatic. Clay landscape is cut in a direct way from a thin slab and applied to a thicker slab, the whole is draped over a block of wood, landscape down. Decisive pressure applied with a rolling pin decides the contour of the pot over the block.

These pictures have been salt glazed, blacked in a sawdust firing, made in porcelain, decorated with coloured slips and even painted with paint. The liveliness of the colour has become more important to Trish and she has developed a palette of twenty colour slips, using commercial body stains.

The slabs are cut with a harp and the natural edges formed in knocking up the block of clay, from which they are cut, are carefully maintained.

These dishes have evolved into rocking slab pots covered with decoration. They also , from time to time, acquire feet ready to walk away.

Trish is anxious not to stand still and pushing forward searching for a direction is her own emotional response to the materials she uses.

Joyce Playle

Janice Tchalenko

We were not quite sure what to expect from Janice's programme and there was disappointment all round when we learnt that there would be no practical demonstration and she was less than happy at the appearance of a half pint screen in place of the Guild screen which at the time was playing hard to get. However the realization that a magnificent screen was literally waiting in the wings, enabled us all to see Janice's work greatly magnified in all its brilliance of colour.

Janice studied pottery at Putney School of Art, then went to Harrow from 1969-1971 and studied the methods of sound domestic pots in the Mick Casson temmoku tradition. From there she set up her own pottery and continued through the 70's producing mostly kitchen ware. We were shown examples of large jugs and a precision set of

Janice Tchalenko continued

seven nesting bowls, her interest being in form rather than colour. Towards the end of the 70's she started experimenting with slip trailing and painted glazes. Using St. Thomas reduced body, working on a 14 hour firing cycle, reducing at 850 and maturing at 1260 she uses one base glaze of nepheline syenite and copper red, gold, blue and yellow glazes.

Janice then set about throwing large bowls and making large press moulded platters and decorating them in these vibrant colours and found that she was selling them as fast as she was making them. She obviously has a flair for design and the combining of colours in a very satisfying way.

I think many of us could well take a leaf out of her book and not be afraid of experimentation and any idea that comes along, she is prepared to give it a whirl just to see what happens. Stripes, squiggles, spots, flower stencils, hand cut sponge painting, tassle sprigs, prawns and fishes attached to pots, the moulds taken from real creatures (she cannot make models) the possibilities are endless. Her patterns became much denser and we saw an extraordinary selection of her work on the screen and the amazing thing was that they were all different and the colours seemed to work too. I would have been pleased to own any one of them. Thank you Janice for a very entertaining experience.

John Hoy

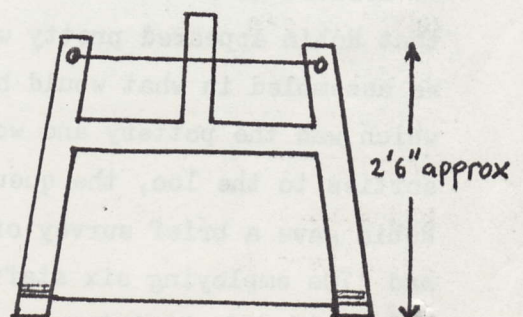
Sebastian Blackie

The meeting was held at the Manor House Sports and Social Centre, Abbots Langley on 24th February, 1984. Sebastian is head of ceramics at Farnham School of Art. His work has been influenced by Canadian potter John Reeves.

He brought with him several large plaster round dish shaped moulds approximately 3 feet in diameter. His work is primarily hand building, clay carpentry as he termed it with the intention of capturing the quality of thrown clay.

He wedges his clay, quite often kneeling on the floor, its less tiring that way.

He considers kneading is just as important for slabs as for throwing, seventy times is his yardstick. He works from a roughly shaped lump of clay then slices it into the hump shape for the basic mould using a large wired frame



Sebastian Blackie continued

Then wiring a thin slab, covering with cheese cloth to go between slab and mould gently lays over the mould firming down with hands, then a flatwooden batten, wiring off surplus at edges.

He demonstrated a further technique using the large round plaster dish mould, sliced (wired off) a further slab, textured on hessian, squared it up then placed it in the mould using it as a base for a coiled pot.

He flattens one edge of coil to give a wedged shaped section and finds this gives a stronger even join.

Recipe for body

10% Talc to improve thermal shock

30% TWBD for plasticity

15% China clay

15% ?

15% Malachite dust

15% BDV Ball clay.

He also demonstrated slab work using the large plaster dish mould.

After hand working the rough slab, covering with hessian then pressing and hammering it in with his fists he wire cut thin slices off the surface, leaving this partially hammered textured surface. It was then lifted into the dish mould to take up the shape, the edges having first been cut to the required shape.

He introduced us to an unusual impressed glaze decoration. Using a glaze consisting of Woolastonite with 60% clay making it plastic enough to shape and press into the slab body. He fires from 1260 - 1300.

There was a rugged immediacy to his work which gave us an entertaining evening with, for me, another new slant.

John Hoy

Pot Crawl Saturday 12th May, 1984

A full coach, fifty eight keen enthusiasts all present and correct, departing the second pick up point at St. Albans dead on time at 8.30 am. bright sunshine from dawn to dusk, although a little cool, a good start therefore for what turned out to be a very interesting outing.

We arrived at Robin Welch's pottery a trifle coach weary and I got the impression that Robin appeared pretty weary himself.

We assembled in what would have been the original farmyard in front of the outbuildings which was the pottery and workshops, with the house opposite. After innumerable sorties to the loo, the queue seemed unending, the proceedings began.

Robin gave a brief survey of his past working, the halcyon days of the late 1960s and '70s employing six staff with full order books, the remoteness of the place and difficulty of obtaining good throwers resulting in his reliance on jigger and

jollying equipment, although on his own admission he does not like repetition throwing. He split us into two groups, one to look around the showroom and kiln rooms with also a collection of large thrown organic pots in the loft, which he was getting together for a special exhibition, these he prefers to work on which hopefully will bring a greater return for his efforts.

He now works alone, relying on the occasional bulk order for commemorative mugs for colleges which helps to keep the wolf from the door.

The other group he took into the pottery and described the jigger and jollying process involving the use of many mug and handle plaster moulds. He acquired an obsolete set of printers' type faces which he uses to impress work.

This mechanical side of potting I found very disappointing, interesting perhaps if you are visiting Stoke.

Robin's wife had a small selection of her thrown porcelain work in the showroom, her workshop being sited at the far end of the outbuildings in a sunny open position. Picnic lunches were somehow slotted in between the proceedings, then we were off to our next port of call.

Incidentally I thought the driver did a brilliant job negotiating all those narrow winding country lanes.

A coach load of swarming potters entered Glynn Hugo's pottery which was limited for space, must have been a daunting experience, but Glynn didn't turn a hair. With a quiet and welcoming smile he suggested, under the circumstances, that part of the group might like to go upstairs to the showroom. They didn't need much encouragement, it was like a stampede, I thought the floor would give way. To the others he was only too pleased to explain anything they would like to know.

He was standing beside a group of large thrown leather hard pots with slightly torn ragged edges, some with a couple of discrete white slip trailed circles midway up the inside of the body being well grogged T Material. They looked superb. They were to be part of an exhibition. It soon became obvious that this was to be the high spot of the day.

When I finally managed to get upstairs to the showroom it was like an Aladin's cave. It was laden with the most incredible range of porcelain and stoneware, thrown tableware and slab built decorative pieces in a great variety of style, design and some exquisite glazes. What a talent! One had to handle everything. He even incorporates fine bird modelling on some of his small porcelain pieces. There seems no end to his invention.

Glynn's wife was kept extremely busy wrapping up purchases, it was a very successful visit all round.

Aldringham Craft Market conjures up all sorts of preconceived ideas as to its appearance. I first imagined rows of tressle tables with individual stall holders. However, it turned out to be, I believe, a converted barn, one side of which was plate glass to give maximum light with a mezzanine floor above.

Pot Crawl continued

It was packed with all manner of fancy goods with several tastefully done displays of pottery, one immediately recognisable as that of Glynn Hugo.

After we had had the opportunity to browse and make purchases, Muriel Wright opened up her own private collection of pots housed in a hut in her garden. I didn't manage to get inside, but through the window was able to see many fine pieces, in particular a very striking symbolic tree by Tessa Fuchs, a Rosemary Wren bird and many other well known British Potters' work.

The outing was rounded off by Muriel opening up a little kiosk and treating all to a mug of coffee or tea.

John Hoy

Diamonds

Like crystal tears

Glisten.

The memory of your goodness

Still lingers

Still has not

quite - yet

settled

still,

That thing which has

no end -

Infinite

Everlasting

Peace,

Falls now

in myriad - time,

Uniting

Bringing together

All mankind.

Its strength

cannot be known

Its, ours yours and mine -

Diamonds in a clear

white

sky.

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Chris. Buras

BOOK REVIEWS

A Retailer's Guide to Glass and Pottery By Kenneth Blakemore, Butterworths, 194pp. Hardback, £17.50.

Most publications on pottery and glass deal specifically with individual studio ware or mass production of domestic wares or industrial ceramics. This book, however, although written mainly for the retailers of pottery and glassware, should have considerable interest to many associated with this industry in general, including, quite naturally, those part time home potters who are knowledgeable about avoiding production pitfalls but who may know little about the vast manufacturing industry, the historical aspects or the interests shown by modern collectors.

This well printed and well illustrated book traverses through all facets of these two associated crafts. The first third of the book describes glassware manufacture through the ages but the rest of the book explains the science and artistry of pottery. In a book of this size only a general outline can be given, so the reader must not look for detailed descriptions. The resultant information is most useful since it touches on all points to give an overall picture in a most interesting manner. A small but selective bibliography, useful glossaries and a comprehensive index all help to increase the value of this work.

S. Romer

Henry Moore's Sheep Sketchbook 116pp. Thames and Hudson, Hardback £5.00

This is not a book to be read; that is except for the few pages at the end by Henry Moore describing why he drew these sheep.

Here in a direct print of his sketchbook is a theme running through the book, starting with the four legged balls of wool, to the completely individual character of each animal, mothers and lambs and finally the more revealing but less attractive this shorn shapes.

These ball point and felt tip shadings will give an insight into the artistic mind of the artist and sculptor who lives amongst us in the local Herts. countryside and show how ordinary country life can be expressed in such a revealing manner.

Artists, sculptors, potters, collectors and all those who aspire to value this form of expression should find this a book to study and cherish.

S. R. Romer

Hans Coper by Tony Birks 208pp Hardback £25.00 and now in Paperback £9.95 Collins.

In September, 1983, the hardback edition was published to coincide with the exhibition at the Sainsbury Centre at Norwich. Now the paperback has been published to coincide with the London exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery. This is the story of a determined, mainly self taught, potter, who as a lad experienced difficulties during the Nazi regime in Germany but who managed to reach safety in England in 1939. On being interned, however, and transferred to Canada he met artists and thenceforth decided he wanted to be a sculptor. His experiences have been interestingly related by the author, who describes the change from essential sculpture to pottery - but still with a sculptural bias. This pottery style was formulated by his association with Lucie Rie in her Paddington workshop and his instruction by Heber Matthews at the local Polytechnic. But he was very quick to learn all the necessary techniques and was soon showing those around him new methods and ideas.

No words can fully describe Coper's pots. So here the book shows many fine photographs, several in colour, of his work over his all too short lifetime. The pictures complement the descriptive text and make this commemorative book one to be prized - and read over and over again.

S. R. Romer

The Maya by Michael D. Coe, Paperback 190pp. @4.95 Thames and Hudson.

This third edition, now in paperback, shows the interest taken in this wonderful civilization of Central America. In the last four years, since the second edition, much more information on the Maya has been ascertained; including theories proposed earlier about the Calendar. Now over three quarters of the Maya script can be understood and read.

The earliest Maya were mainly seed and vegetable eaters and thus good use was made of domestic pottery. This was generally decorated with cord stamping and painting from about 2000 BC. Small clay figurines were made, possibly as grave furniture, and the houses constructed with poles daubed with mud were whitewashed. Later, from c. 400 - 55 BC, red slipped bowls and a highly decorative red and white, kaolin type clayware have been found. The even later styles are too numerous and varied to mention here but do show an intrinsic flair for natural decoration. Maya pottery has always been connected with religious ritual, whether for domestic ware or for interment with the dead.

With many maps, photographs and drawings of scenes, clayware, stoneware and phonetic syllabic signs, this book by probably the most erudite of all Mayanists, will be very interesting to the traveller, archaeologist, and above all to the potter- and only to be surpassed by actual visits to the many Mayan sites.

S. R. Romer

Chalcatzingo by David C. Grove, Hardback 184pp £18. Thames and Hudson

One of the several volumes in the 'New Aspects of Antiquity' series this is written By an American Professor who has travelled and worked considerably for many years in various sites in Mexico.

He brings new light on the Olmec peoples, the most ancient known of all the prehistoric 'Mexicans', and shows how the settlement at Chalcatzingo (near Cuautla, some 15 miles from the famous Volcano Popocatepetl, in Moreles state) was an important site 1500 BC.

The name of the site itself is interesting, possibly coming from the Aztec Nahuatl language, zingo a tributary area, and conquered and ruled by 'Chalco', making 'Little place of the people of Chalco,' although 'zingo' also refers to 'sacredness' and 'Chalco,' coming from the Nahuatl for 'jade' (a revered stone) suggests the site might have been a holy centre.

When one sees the many clear drawings and photographs of the archaeological finds including several pottery vessels and figures, these made with considerable skill and with expert decoration, it is conducive to believe that this indeed was a specially revered site.

Three named phases, formulated on the pottery styles; the Amate (c.1500 - 1100BC), the Barranca (1100-700 BC), and the Cantera (700 - 500 BC), have been determined. The Amate ceramics include the Early Formative "pretty ladies" and "babyface" figurines as well as brown vessels with painted red linear designs. These gave way in the Barranca period to white vessels with incised decorations and black-and-white, reduced and oxydised alternately, requiring a considerable knowledge of 'kiln' firing. But the height of artistry, which made Chalcatzingo an important centre, came in the Cantera phase with improved and elaborate ceramic designs and considerable rock carvings. This was a unique site and probably became then the chief centre in Central Mexico well to the west of the other Olmec sites around the Gulf coast. For archaeologists, potters and others interested in primitive styles this is a book to be studied, read or looked at carefully; it makes easy reading, and the illustrations, several in colour, are most illuminating.

S.R. Romer

Coiled Pottery - Traditional and Contemporary Ways - Betty Blandino. Adam & Charles Black. Large paperback, 112pp. £7.95

This book is a very clearly and concisely written text accompanied by some excellent photographs. It is different from others in that it does not contain long series of the stages of coiling but nevertheless contrives to show precisely how potters of various cultures do make their pots.

Several living potters are described (I would have liked a little more detail) as we are led through the different processes of construction. The pictures have been chosen with great care and all are very clear and showing expertise.

Coiled Pottery continued.

As would be expected there are several pages allotted to the late Maria Martinez, the 'Pueblo' potter, and to Ladi Kwali from Nigeria, as well as to many coil potters working on modern themes.

The book, quite candidly, is one which is difficult to put down until it has been studied considerably. It is one which every 'Hand build' potter should read and I feel sure that it will inspire everyone who does read it.

S.R. Romer

OPEN HOUSE 1984/85

Friday, 7th December, 1984 from 7.30pm, Ruth Karnac, 35 Kingsend, Ruislip, Middx. (Ruislip 31738) Slides of Middle Eastern Pots and Social Evening.

Friday, 18th January, 1985 from 7.30pm. John Hoy, 41 Burwood Avenue, Eastcote, Middx. (01 866 4658) Social Evening.

Saturday, 9th February, 1985 from 7pm. Jean Sedgley, 26 Mildred Avenue, Watford, Herts. (Watford 39750) Slides of Spanish Pots and Social Evening.

Saturday, 16th March, 1985 from 2pm. to 6pm. Dorothy and Digby Stott, 'Broomfield' 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. (Hemel Hempstead 50540)

Friday, 12th April, 1985 evening. Marigold Austin, 17 Talbot Street, Hertford, Herts (Hertford 50395)

Saturday 18th May, 1985 from 11am. Mildred Slatter, The White Cottage, Framwood Road, Stoke Poges, Bucks. (Fulmer 3249) Please bring a picnic.

Please telephone beforehand.

We still need a few more members to entertain guild members, the open house can be social, most guild members have a few interesting pots or photographs even if they do not have a workshop or a kiln. If you feel that you could offer to be host to members please telephone Ruth Karnac (Ruislip 31738)

PS. Some members, for instance if they missed the AGM, may not know that the subscription (now somewhat overdue) stays at £6 single and £8 family membership.

Tony.

Treasurer and (rotten) Printer.