



BULLETIN
JANUARY
1989

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Friday 13th January at 8 pm Northchurch Social Centre,
Bell Lane, Northchurch, Berkhamsted.

RUSSELL COLLINS will demonstrate the making of large pots.

Friday 10th February An illustrated talk by Emmanuel Cooper

CHRISTMAS MEETING 16th December

JED HOILE

It was unfortunate that our guest arrived rather late in the evening, as he was a very interesting and varied speaker. It is impossible to describe wholly the method of creating the masks from the clay former, as it has to be seen to appreciate the subtle changes in the lines of sorrowful or happy faces.

Therefore I will describe the function of the masks and briefly cover the making and its requirements.

Jed Hoile is an actor and mime artist who needed a mask, so he made one, and so started an interesting study of masks throughout the world.

Masks were recognized as representing characters in Greek drama. The audiences at Delphi could see at a glance the masks and what they represented. Whether comedy or tragedy the actor had greater freedom of expression. He acted through and behind the mask, not as a shield between him and his audience.

Much later they became sophisticated and very precise like the blue mask of Zani used this evening. Zani is or was an out of work, cringing character working for more than one master and without the strength of mind to be his own.

This Venetian mask works well when viewed from the front as a pathetic form, but when turned sidewise, his hollow cheeks and lack of a nose destroyed Zani's credibility until he turned to face the audience again.

Rapitano was quite different. His nose is long, almost phallic and pronounced like Mr Punch. The actor takes on a haughty strutting attitude as the mask is aggressive, almost eagle-like. Jed played this character with his chest puffed out and his head thrown back like a proud Renaissance doge, but when the head is lowered and the voice is softened, this high and mighty personage is humbled but not beaten. The power of the mask is the beak of a nose when held high.

There are 8 characters played by the Comedy del Arte, but there is only one female character and she is without a mask. It seems that this is almost a male preserve in Europe.

In Africa, male and female masks are usual. The negro head represents sickness and the poor sufferer recognises it as such. The mask is spiritual and very powerful upon the mind of the beholder. The purpose was different from its European counterparts.

The Venetians in the 18th century, when times were bad due to the opening of the eastern trade routes to Japan, spread fear and licentious gossip from behind masks in the streets.

The buffoon mask made from sprayed on foam, expressed only one emotion and was unable to do anything else, whereas the simple masks relied on the actor behind them.

Those who did attend the Christmas evening saw Jed make a former from sculptural clay. It is important to take careful measurements of the face, as the mask has to be worn with ease.

Use modelling clay. Do not look at your work from one angle only - pick it up and view it from every side. It is better to carve away and find the character as it emerges. The best way is to work with the fingers and the heels of the hands. Use both hands together so as to maintain symmetry. Work the clay until the mask is finished. To make the shell use the best Plaster of Paris as the cheaper variety chips too easily. Cover the clay with vaseline to stop sticking and build up a shell to about 1/8" thick. Use sacking or scrim as a strengthener, build up a further 1/8". If you use cling film between the clay and shell a smoother finish is possible (no vaseline is required). This adds about an hour to your work.

Butt up small pieces of Celastic and use acetone (brush cleaner) to partly dissolve the material as it is placed

over the shell. Butt the pieces together if you are making a single layer or overlap the first if you are to laminate. It must be remembered that acetone is dangerous and free air is a must. Use gloves to save your skin from damage.

Finish with acrylic paints as this tends to flex without cracking. Nylon hair can be bought in many grades, or as on the African head, use rope.

I cannot do justice to the subject with just a glimpse. It is projected to ask Jed Hoile to make a return visit during the summer as requested by the members. This may be on a Saturday if the committee can arrange it.

BRIAN BICKNELL

JOSIE WALTER

19th November

This is to be a totally biased account of a very appealing demonstration. I find Josie Walter's pots with their comfortingly tubby shapes and vibrant colours very endearing as was her relaxed, personal way of demonstrating.

It was pleasing to hear how much she had been influenced by Andrew and Joanna Young when she first saw them demonstrate at a Chiltern and Dacorum Potters' Open Day. One of their forms is an oval dish and Josie demonstrated how to produce such a dish 'without cutting or fiddling'. She threw a round rim with very soft clay, picked it up and dropped it onto an oval base. There seemed to be no problem with sealing the edges. Newspaper was used on the bats to prevent sticking and to save on cleaning time.

Josie Walter's designs are very like textiles so it was no surprise to learn that this had been her previous occupation. The bright colours and shiny surfaces suit her pictorial, decorative style well and she explained that the reason for making dishes was really to provide a new way of framing her pictures. Each picture tells a tale; the lobster dish was designed for her son, Tom, after he had been threatened by one in a French fish shop, the basket of fruit was Tom's Harvest Festival basket, and the flowers, primulas given to Josie for her birthday. She demonstrated her slip trailing on a dish without a rim so that we could all see clearly what she was doing.

Josie is incredibly well organised and her demonstration a bit like a conjuror's performance - brandishing a small pair of scissors, she snipped away whilst answering questions and sometimes asking them too - she is very clever at involving her audience.

Suddenly, out of all the snipped paper emerged a very convincing cat; she had done no drawing beforehand and so we were all amazed. She continued to cut a series of shapes and used them, as resists, placing one on the pot and slip trailing over it, then another until she had used about four colours. When the paper resists were removed, coloured outlines were left to be fired into a shiny picture. She recommended florists paper, shiny side down and even offered us free paper to try for ourselves.

The pots are all raw fired because Josie hates the feel of the biscuited clay. They begin firing very low for the first day and night, then heat is turned up and halfway through the second day the bung is put in. After this the firing is slowed down very gradually - this slowing down produces the shiny finish to the pots. The magic and life in them is supplied by Josie Walter.

PAULINE O'DELL

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JOSIE WALTER HAS KINDLY SENT US SOME OF HER RECIPES - HERE THEY ARE:

Raw Glaze - Cone 03 (1080°C)

1100°C for higher temps
Crazes at 1080°C

Lead Bisilicate	80
Red Clay	10
Feldspar	10
Bentonite	4

Lead Bisilicate	75
Alkaline Frit	5
Red Clay	10
Feldspar	10
Bentonite	4

Add 1% red iron for a more golden colour

Black Slip

4 pints brown slip
1½oz red iron oxide
1 oz black nickel
1 oz cobalt oxide
1 oz manganese oxide

White Slip

100% TWVD Ball Clay
Watts, Blake, Bearne & Co
Newton Abbott
Devon

Green Slip 100% TWVD plus 3% copper oxide

Other colours are obtained by adding underglaze colours from Blythe to the TWVD Ball Clay:

5% 13L5079 Green/Blue (inside tureens)
15% 13L5079 Gives a much brighter blue
5% 1375053 Brown Grey (Light)
15% 1375053 Brown Grey (Dark)
15% 13H5051 Yellow
15% 13P5037 Strong Red
15% D3104 Rose Pink (for trailing)

Clay

From Valentines Clay Products
Birches Head Road
Hanley (0782 271200) £1.50 a bag

I use standard earthenware but you can also get fine/coarse.
Porcelain is £5.00 a bag

You would probably have to add on for carriage/VAT. These prices are for cash and carry!

Underglaze Colours

From Blyth Colours Ltd
Cresswell
Stoke-on-Trent
ST11 9RD (0782 395959)

(£50 minimum order - you buy in kilo packs)

Do let me know if there is any other information you require. Oh yes - the paper was florist's wrapping paper!

JOSIE WALTER

WEST FOREST POTTERS' NEXT EVENTS

Wednesday 18th January Bring a pot and Social Evening

Wednesday 8th February Lucie de Mauny - slipware, a personal view.

Meetings are held at 7.45 pm at:-

Polehampton Junior School
Kibblewhite Crescent
(from Old London Road,
via Penfields),
Twyford,
Berks.

Some members kindly lent soup-bowls for the Potters Open Day in November. A few were not retrieved. These will be brought to the evening meeting on January 13 by Brian Bicknell. Owners please contact him.