



BULLETIN

MAY

1989

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Friday 12th May at 8 pm at Northchurch Social Centre, Bell Lane, Northchurch, Berkhamsted.

ROD PEIRSON will give an illustrated talk on his travels in China with the recent guided CPA Tour.

Saturday/Sunday 10th/11th June POT CRAWL -
See separate leaflet.

CONGRATULATIONS

To Marigold Austin on being elected a member of the Society of Designer Craftsmen.

RAY WALKER

SLIDE SHOW & DEMONSTRATION OF EARTHENWARE RELIEF TILES
14th April 1989

This evening was a progression of skill and experience of a potter from his first attempts to find his self-expression in his student days up to today.

With clay he has tried to reflect the colour and movement witnessed every day. However, it is not easy to portray this in clay and slips as we all know that it is up to chance. The blue of a sky or the gold of the sun is more in line with the egg tempera painting that accompanied the sculpted clay tiles. One of his early pieces of work was a pot within a pot. The outer surface showed a small door that lead into a secret world of painted mountains and scenes within and between the circular walls.

This developed into architectural pieces, again featuring doors, Romanesque and Venetian with carved tympanum which formed the lintel over the doorways. These were simply constructed from slabs of earthenware clay; finger marks were not removed in a few areas, offsetting the clean edges

of the architectural forms. It is not a great step to his next development; that is the carving of birds and animals similar to the forms above the doors. The theme runs on, always an exploration of life forces as exemplified by the recurring motifs of trees, birds and snakes. In the Indian tradition each of these has a meaning that affects man and his spiritual needs. The final set of slides showed Ray's most recent work that will be displayed at Michaelson and Orient in the Portobello Road, London.

The second part of the evening was a demonstration of tile sculpting. It has to be remembered that the medium used is red earthenware clay without the addition of slips or oxides. The total effect relies on daylight and shadow falling on different planes. The subject was an eagle (a symbol of power in Imperial Rome and Nazi Germany) set within a frame of the same material. An outline is drawn on the clay from previous drawings or reference books. Clay is hooked from a block that is about 2½" thick. At this stage the removal of material is rough, without any detail. When the clay has hardened a little, further work is done, refining the basic shapes and possibly replacing any material that has been removed too zealously. With the use of a variety of tools and scribes the finer details are cut when the clay is almost leather hard. This is oversimplifying the process. So as to give the depth to the various planes and life to the subject, they are undercut in the same way a mason undercut the naturalistic foliage found on columns in Mediaeval churches.

The tiles are designed to stand on a shelf or to be suspended on bolts on a wall. This requires a regular frame that relates to the subject.

The materials used are: 12 kilos Red earthenware
3½ kilos fine grog
320 grams barium carbonate

Firing: Orton 01 and 1 with the cones down to 1/2 to 2/3rds This gives a toasted look. The reason for using barium carbonate is so as to avoid the salts leaching out of the clay and whitening the surface. This can be attractive but it blobs in unwanted places and cannot be controlled.

Finally I must mention the small egg tempera painting. Ray coated a tile in gesso to consolidate a white surface. The finish is softer than oils. Egg yolk is used as a binding medium in the same manner as the Icon painters used in Greece and Italy.

I should like to thank Ray Walker for a most interesting demonstration on behalf of the Guild and wish him success with his exhibition in the near future.

BRIAN BICKNELL