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DACORUM AND
CHILTERN
POTTERS GUILD



NEWSLETTER

JAN. / FEBRUARY

1997

£1.50

ABOUT THE GUILD & THE NEWSLETTER

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

Membership Rates: Family - £16.50
Single - £14.00
Student - £7.50

Send your cheque, made payable to D.C.P.G., to Victor Earl, Treasurer (if joining after March, please phone our treasurer for a reduced introductory rate; address & phone number on p.12)

The Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild Newsletter is published bi-monthly in January, March, May, July, September & November, being distributed free to all members of the Guild, other craft groups & organisations. Contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome. (s.a.e. please with any items to be returned). Opinions expressed in items published do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Committee or Guild members as a whole.

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All types of insurance for artists and crafts- people, including cover for studios, public liability, exhibitions. Personal cover, i.e. sickness, accident, life and pensions, household, etc. Please call 0171-790 1963. Fax 0171-790 4100.

Phillippa Levy, 19 Louisa St., London, E1 4NF

OPEN DAY WITH DOUG JONES

SUNDAY 23rd. MARCH

11 a.m. start at 114 Norfolk Road,
Rickmansworth, Herts. WD3 1LA.
Further information: 01923 770913

The ceramics
magazine for
the 1990s

Studio
Pottery
magazine

Subscription (6 issues inc p&p): £25
Studio Pottery: 15 Magdalen Road,
Exeter, Devon EX2 4TA
Phone: 01392 430082

Copy dates

(latest receipt of
material for typing)

12th December
15th February
14th April
16th June
16th August
14th October

Publication dates

5th January
6th March
3rd May
6th July
4th September
6th November

We can book space ahead of the copy date but, in general, need the final Artwork not later than **THREE** days after the copy date.

ADVERTISING RATES:

1/4 page £12.90
1/2 page £21.00
whole page (depending on availability) £33.00

small ads 20p. per word (20 words free to members)

semi display: 1/12 page 3.5 cm.high x 8cm.wide

from your artwork £6.50

or typesetting - maximum 50 words £8.50

Covers: Back + 20%; Inside + 15%

Distribution of leaflets: A5 - £21.00; A4 - £26.00

(Additional postage, if more than 1 page, or if paper weight is over 80 g.s.m.)

All advertising enquiries should be sent to Digby Stott (address on p. 8), phone 01442 250540

Advertisements

The Guild is not responsible for the content of individual advertisements printed in the Newsletter.

Jonathan

Ceramic Services

Proprietor Jonathan Switzman BA PGCE
Tutor at KIAD, the City Lit & South Thames College

Creative, technical and consultancy

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Covering London, the Home Counties and the South.

For the fourth year one of the original Goldsmiths' courses 'Understanding and Developing Ceramic Glaze' now at the City Lit Institute E4 (Fleet Street)
Enquiries and enrolment for January 1997 on 0171 405 2949

Tel/Fax/Answer machine 0181 579 7468

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Ceramic Colonade at Millbank Primary School.

This work was produced through Co-operation between staff, Children, Charles Carter & Paul Rowbottom, at the invitation of Head Teacher Alison Russel.

Children aged 9-10 yrs. produced the embellished capitals & dado tiles, from drawn studies of Greek architectural details at the British Museum.

The tile panels were also created by the children, after studies of Tessellated shapes derived from traditional Islamic design.

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EDITORIAL

With the thermometer showing minus 8 degrees today, many of us are looking forward to the better weather to come.

I will take this opportunity to wish all of you A very happy & prosperous 1997.

MERVYN FITZWILLIAM

FUTURE GUILD EVENTS

IMPORTANT

CHANGE OF VENUE FOR FEBRUARY 14TH ONLY to

The Methodist Church Hall,
Kings Langley, Herts.

at the usual time of 8 p.m. Extra parking at the restaurant next door. This change is due to the unavailability of the Northchurch Social Centre for that date.

Our speaker on this occasion will be **TESSA WOLFE MURRAY**, who makes slab-built vessels from red earthenware clay which are decorated by sawdust firing.

She will be telling us how her work has evolved over the years and will explain her method of sawdust firing which takes 10 minutes instead of up to 24 hours.

Tessa will demonstrate how she builds her pots, using short cuts and tips she has learned over the years to enable her to slab-build at speed.

See separate map for location details

Notice to those members wishing to join the Pitstone Raku group

There will be a meeting on Thursday 6th February '97 at 7.30 p.m. at the home of Barbara Meeking who has very kindly agreed to host it. The aim of the meeting will be to discuss how to organise the project and to work out ways and means of carrying out an ongoing programme. Please ring Barbara on 01442 822 277 to say you are coming. The address is 43 Chiltern Way, Tring.

OTHER EVENTS

Buckinghamshire Pottery and Sculpture Society

10th February 1997 - **MITCH THOMPSON**

At Little Kingshill Village Hall,

near Great Missenden, 8 p.m.

MOVEABLE FEAST is a training/information seminar for visual artists with an interest in pursuing a professional career.

For more details phone Paula Geere at Community Arts on 01442 232627

Feb 11th 7-10pm Boxmoor Arts Centre, St Johns Rd. Hemel Hempstead.

Feb 12th 7-10pm Victoria Hall, Akeman St. ,Tring

Feb 20th 7-10pm Berkhamsted Civic Centre

Feb 21st 7-10pm Flamstead Village Hall

CORRESPONDENCE

It was both fascinating and humbling to read Mildred Slatter's brief biography in the November Newsletter.

Upstarts like myself, in both pottery and Guild membership terms, owe much to the likes of Mildred who were not only laying the foundations but working on the first floor, while some of us were still in nappies!

Thank you Mildred, I applaude you And your endeavours.

DOUG JONES

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Apparently one of our recent new members, **Carolyn Bennion** who joined at the Hatfield House event, has decided to opt for warmer climes and is now in Greece - what a sensible person. With a bit of luck, we'll receive reports about Greek pottery from her!

We welcome the following new members to the Guild:-

Graham Williams from Kings Langley, **Hannah Harris** from Edgware, **Ella & Gerry Plumb** from Chorley Wood.

We also welcome back **Christine Griffin** from High Wycombe, who tells us she is interested in all ceramics, including paperclay and slipcasting.

We look forward to seeing you at future events. Do make yourselves known to members of the committee and we will happily introduce you to other Guild members.

Linda Bryant

OBITUARY

We have been informed of the recent & untimely death of Frances Levy.

Frances was instrumental in the initial setting up of the "Making Place" with Freda Earl, being her partner in this venture.

TONY STEVENS ON PHOTOGRAPHING POTS

Tony talked to us at the December event about a highly technical subject - photographing pots. His obvious technical knowledge and enthusiasm for his subject was most apparent. His talk can be broken into a number of themes.

1). Why photograph pots ?

Tony pointed out that, before even thinking about taking a photograph, you need to be sure of the reason why you are taking it. Brian Dickenson, as a member of the audience, supported Tony by pointing out that to enter pots into a competition or to be selected for an exhibition you often need some documentary photos; for a magazine or other publication, the photo needs to be contextualised to make it suitable for the publication and subject matter (e.g. dinner party setting for a Home-type magazine, garden setting for a Gardening magazine, etc.). Apparently, the Arts Council look for clear documentary photos without context or 'dressing' in any way - its the line of the pot, the colour, design etc. that matters.

2). Photos v Transparencies

Each has its own benefits and drawbacks.

Prints: any number of prints can be made from a single negative. They can be produced in a variety of sizes, relatively cheaply. Slight errors in colour can be adjusted during printing and a number of special effects created by copying and enlarging. Impact can be gained by filling the frame with pot and having a large size print made. No special equipment needed to show the photographs.

Transparencies: the colour of a transparency can be far superior to a print - the blacks strong and dark with brilliant coloured highlights. The image is likely to be sharper as the transparency is the film from the camera without transferring into another medium. With a good projector and screen the result can be excellent. Colour prints can be produced from transparencies giving the best of both worlds - a process known as "Cibachrome" produces a light-stable, non-fading print which is far superior to normal prints.

3). Equipment

Tony stressed the need to have some basic equipment to enable you to take good photographs of pots, viz. a reflex camera, preferably manual, with a separate flash, a zoom lens and a very sturdy tripod, a light meter and flash meter, simple backdrop (a roll of plain paper or coloured cloth), a few filters and diffusers. The separate flash seems essential to ensure that the light on the pot is not reflected, spoiling the picture or bleaching out the colour or pattern. Tony spoke of 'slave' units that are free standing with a light sensitive cell that triggers the flash when it senses another flash going off. He also persuaded us that a flash on an extension lead was a good idea to ensure the light source could be directed as needed.

Simple diffusers (tissues or loo roll) also help to create the right sort of intensity.

He showed us that you don't need a fancy studio set-up or lots of very expensive and space-using lights - although for those with the space, money, time and technical expertise, of course these would help. For the rest of us, nothing too fancy is really needed. (Brian Dickenson has promised to follow up with some easy-to-follow steps to taking photos on a shoestring).

Tony demonstrated an intriguing approach to photographing a ceramic torso on green cloth with a white paper backdrop. The camera was set up and focussed on the torso, the lights switched off, the shutter held down (open) and one flash set off in different places within a 30 second period. Flash one: close to the right side of the torso; flash two: further away to the left; flash three: close to the backdrop with a green filter over the bulb which produces a green tinge to the backdrop, but not too strong. He warned us not to use a variety of light sources as they all give a different colour, although daylight and flash are as close as can be.

4). Film

(You must excuse my lack of technicality-its not my forté) Tony explained that we should use the slowest film possible - the pot isn't going anywhere, so why use a fast film which is more grainy and with a lower resolution. Film manufacturers are fiercely competitive and frequently bring out new films. The production of the 'older' products is often confined and sold to chain stores which allows customers the benefit of good quality films at a relatively inexpensive price - look at the country of manufacture to see who produced it e.g. Germany = Agfa, Japan = Fuji.

5). Timing, Exposure and f-Stops

This is really testing my understanding, but here goes ... The lower the f-stop number, the more light reaches the film surface and the shutter speed is faster - the higher the f-stop number, the less light reaches the film and the slower the shutter speed. In this way f-stops are like taps - they can be turned on fully or partially, depending on what effect you're after. For a stationary pot, a long exposure time can be used allowing you to use flash in the way already described, to gain a suitable effect.

Tony was asked how he would approach photographing a white pot on a white backing. He suggested a long exposure, colour filter flash on the background so the pot stands out, (colour background even better), illuminate the setting at an angle so that the reflection is not fierce, use diffused illumination and, where possible, move the background 2 metres away from the pot so that the backing doesn't reflect too much light onto the pot.

Tony has promised to bring along the photographs he took to the next meeting in January to show us the different effects of flash and ordinary light bulbs, coloured

filter, long exposures and different types of pots (some matt, some glossy).

A very technical subject and at the end of the week, late in to the evening, made Tony's job all the more difficult. However, as you see here, he got his message over very well. I'm sure a number of us will give it a go! I must admit to being a user of the happy-snappy type cameras that you simply point and shoot, so I'm afraid most of my pots will therefore not be photographed very well. Maybe I can persuade Tony to take any photographs I need Tony?

Linda Bryant

OBITUARY: SIDDIG EL NIGOUMI
(Jan.1st 1931 - Oct.10th 1996)

Fine art made the hard way.



The style of ceramicist Siddig El Nigoumi, who has died aged 65, was a unique blend of Arab, Islamic and African put together with British Craftsmanship.

Arabic calligraphy was often built into the shapes he created. He was also a crucial figure in the popularisation of burnished ware in Britain.

Siddig was a descendant of one of the most talented leaders of the Mahdist revolution, which culminated in the fall of Khartoum in 1885 and the killing of General Gordon. It was, however, his artistic, rather than military, talent which was recognised by Sudanese and British teachers at Khartoum's Fine Arts College and in 1957 he arrived in Britain to take up a scholarship to study ceramics at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London. Having graduated with distinction in 1960, he returned enthusiastically to Khartoum and joined his old college's teaching staff. But Siddig felt marginalised. Khartoum was too stultifying. There was minimal interest in ceramics and he missed the critics, galleries, exhibitions and people - apart from his students and members of the diplomatic corps - who appreciated his work.

After a great deal of soul-searching, he returned with his young family to London in 1967 and his career took off. His works are now shown in the Victoria and Albert

Museum and the Manchester Art Gallery and are in many British and American private collections. His art has been analysed in the western and Arabic press in *The Potter's Handbook* and Jane Perryman's *Burnished and Carbonised Pottery*.

In 1962, Siddig married Ellen Vickery, a painter and textile designer. She joined him in Sudan, taught with him at the college and gave him much-needed support. The couple had three daughters, now adults.

Siddig's artistic legacy and his British children symbolise a reconciliation between his family and Britain. In 1994, the Sudanese community here honoured Siddig El Nigoumi for the way he used his art to promote cross-religious tolerance and understanding.

Khalid Al Mubarak

(Reprinted from The Guardian, with the kind permission of the publishers. The photograph was kindly supplied by the family of Siddig El Nigoumi).

NOTEBOOK

The Data Protection Act 1984

This act is intended to protect personal data. Any person or organisation holding personal data on a computer must consider whether or not they should register. Registration presently costs £75.00 and is renewable every three years. This is not quite as simple as it sounds since, if registered, the conditions of registration must be strictly observed.

In the old days we kept our Membership records on paper and typed or hand-addressed our labels. With the advent of computers, keeping club membership lists became easier, but restrictions do apply.

Recent publicity in the press has highlighted the need to consider the position of the Guild. (In addition, each Guild member is advised to consider their own position if they use a computer with any lists of personal data).

The status of the Guild is an unincorporated body, not a limited company, with members who jointly own the assets. Such a body does not have to register, but must comply strictly with various conditions, the most relevant being:

- 1) Each member must be made aware that their details are held on a computer list. Anyone can apply to have their name removed from the list.
- 2) The name, address and phone number of each member may be held, together with any other information supplied by or relating to that member, needed for Guild purposes.
- 3) The details of non-members or prospective members may not be held on the computer list. This means that if your membership lapses, your name and address **MUST** be removed from the list.
- 4) The list may be used by the Guild for any purpose relating to Guild activities, providing the members know

what those purposes are. The uses currently are: distribution of the Newsletter, information and reminders about Guild activities or membership.

Whilst studying the above subject, I discovered a note in the Guidelines to the Data Protection Act (section A.6.6.), which may be relevant for some members: An unincorporated club or group will NOT be exempt if it is a "Proprietors Club". In other words, this would apply if someone was running an Art class, Workshops, or any other group where the property and funds do not belong to the members of the group and where the proprietor is holding the activity for profit. However, if the records are not on a computer then registration is not required.

The Data Protection Act has many facets and if you think you should register, then you must take relevant advice. The above notes are certainly not definitive, being an outline interpretation only.

For further information contact the Data Protection Registrar, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.
Phone (information) 01625 524510.
Facsimile 01625 545745

References

The Guidelines to the Data Protection Act third series November 1994.

A guide for clubs, Societies and Associations compiled by Sharon Rowland, April 1996.

My thanks to Sharon Rowland for reviewing the above notes.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

Membership information and the Data Protection Act

This statement is to remind those members who have been with us for some time and to inform members who have joined us in recent years.

The guild keeps membership information in a computer data-base including details such as names, addresses, telephone numbers, type of membership and subscription information. This information is used only for the proper running of the guild.

Disclosure of the above information is restricted to:

1. Officers of the guild on request.
2. Committee members to enable them to undertake specific tasks on behalf of the guild.
3. The guild's printers to enable them to mail the newsletter direct to the members.

To meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act we must have your permission to keep your details in a computer data-base and for using that information as indicated.

Important Note!

The foregoing arrangements provide you with *legal protection* which otherwise you would not have! There are *no legal restrictions* on the guild keeping such information in written form and no restriction in what the guild may do with it. *With your details in the*

computer data-base the Data Protection Act prohibits the guild from disclosing your personal information to third parties unless you have given specific permission. Following publication of this statement in the newsletter the guild will assume that you have given permission, i.e. that you do not object to the guild holding your personal details in a computer data-base as described above.

If you are not interested in the legal protection aspects and *if you do object* to having your details in a computer data-base, please let us know and we will make some alternative arrangements.

Digby Stott

Book Competition

There was a very good response to the free books offer from A. & C. Black and Charlotte Burrows has written to me thanking the Guild. All competitors will receive the latest book listing from the publisher. The winners were:

Paul Tierney, London, W.13.
Peggy Fancett, Harpenden, Herts.
Anne Kari Marshall, Chesham, Bucks.
Marilyn Adreetti, Cheshunt, Herts.
Ian Cliffe, Stockwell.

All have now received their free copy of *Throwing Pots* by Phil Rogers. We will have another competition in the Spring, for one of the new books on the horizon, either *Large Scale Ceramics* or *Slipcasting* so be sure to read your Newsletter.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

BRIAN DICKENSON AT THE MAKING PLACE

This workshop, the first to be held in **The Making Place**, was an unqualified success; everyone present had fun and each one took this excellent opportunity to improve their throwing and decorating skills. So I am delighted that Brian has agreed to come back to do at least two more weekend courses. If you are lucky enough to be booked onto one of these weekends, here is a taster of what you can expect.

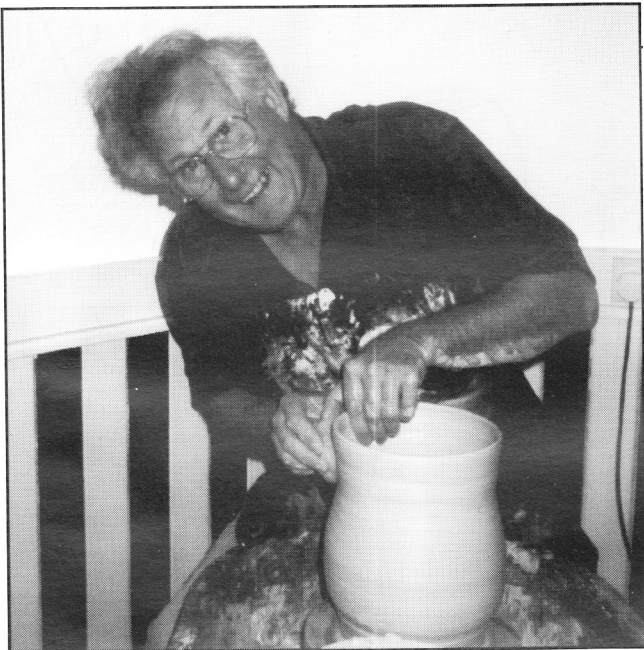
Saturday....throwing

Brian, as demonstrated by his own work, is a perfectionist - this means high standards right through the making process. Brian had supplied his own white clay which is lovely to work with. Left to my own devices I would have thrown with the clay straight from the bag, but Brian emphasised the importance of preparing the clay and so introduced us to spiral (chrysanthemum) wedging. Watching Brian, this was obviously a very easy process requiring little effort - an hour later, after much hilarity and perspiration, we decided it wasn't so easy after all; Brian took pity on us and wedged our clay for us.

The point had been made though, you could feel the difference in the clay before and after wedging and, once

you have the knack, spiral wedging is an easy and efficient technique - it just takes practice.

Next, throwing: again Brian's demonstration made it look simple. This time, though, we weren't fooled and so concentrated hard on watching and listening to Brian's clear descriptions. Soon, all twelve of us were sat at our wheels with alternating looks of fierce concentration and beaming smiles as we achieved lifetime bests. Geoff in particular deserves a mention for the huge pot he produced, and Ruby for making a huge bowl only to have it collapse at the last minute. Throughout the day Brian was kept busy giving advice and a helping hand when needed, as well as finding time to demonstrate making a plate, jug, bowl and casserole. I learnt many things as I watched and then practised, especially about finishing techniques and the importance of paying attention to the base. From the buzz of conversation other people were also learning a lot - I overheard one of the ladies exclaiming "Oh wouldn't you just love to take him home!". This obviously wasn't practical so, instead, Mervyn promised to try and make copies of some of the home-made throwing ribs Brian uses, especially the rib he uses for beading his bases.



Geoffrey Parr achieves a "Personal Best"

Time flew by, lunch came and went, though few stopped to eat and it was soon time to clear away. I was impressed to see the variety and quality of pots which had been produced by a group of such mixed ability. We left the studio tired and happy, and ready for the next day.

Sunday Decorating

I have to admit that when I realised there was to be a whole day on decorating I was a little disappointed. I wanted to spend longer throwing, but I am glad we didn't; to my surprise, I gained more from the glazing and decorating than from the throwing. Brian had ordered a set of brushes for each of us to use and we were set to practising the effect each brush could achieve on sheets of paper, using iron oxide and water.

From there we progressed to designs inspired by a variety of sources, including natural history books. Now we were ready for the pots.

Brian had kindly brought down a selection of his own bisque ware and a large bin of glaze for us to use and we spent a little time discussing glazes and glazing. Arthur had also brought along some pots, all of which presented difficulties in glazing, and which therefore illustrated nicely why we should consider how we are to glaze our pots right back at the design stage. Aided by Arthur, lively banter accompanied the glazing. Some aspects of glazing bore little resemblance to my own experience, for example, to prepare the glaze Brian 'wound it up' using his hand and a stick. The glaze has a smooth even texture; my mind went back to the situation we all must have met at some time of wishing for a pneumatic drill to get the concrete off the bottom of a bin, or of struggling to glaze a pot using the left over dregs, so it was a treat to have a large bin of glaze to work with.

Once all the pots were glazed, we learned how to band on colours and then we decorated. There were some lovely results as flowers, grasses, cockerels and hares sprang to life on the pots, filling the spaces as we had been shown. Working with just one colour was a useful discipline and will allow us to move on with confidence to using a variety of colours.

Sunday's workshop was soon over, we left gingerly clutching unfired but decorated trophies and with a lot of new ideas buzzing around our minds. When this course took place, the official opening for The Making Place was still a few weeks away, but seeing so many pots being made at once stands out in my mind and as the time when The Making Place was christened.

Thanks

This workshop could not have taken place without help and hard work from a variety of people; thanks are due firstly to Brian's girl friend Tessa who selflessly gave up the keys to her brand-new car only minutes after delivery, when Brian's own car failed to start and threatened to cancel the weekend.

Thanks also to Mervyn and Sylvia for working hard to provide the wheels we needed, for their organisation and for providing good food, hospitality and accommodation for Brian (*I can vouch for the food and hospitality and the Fitzwilliams kindly asked me to join them for dinner, too*).

Thanks too to Freda for the vision, hard work and commitment behind The Making Place which has proved itself to be such an excellent venue. Rumour has it that there will be other workshops led by a variety of people in the future - I look forward to them, too. Finally, last but by no means least, many thanks to Brian Dickenson who put in a generous helping of time, effort and enthusiasm to make the weekend go so well.

Sue Taylor

OPEN DAY - 1996

PHIL ROGERS

We were very lucky to have Phil Rogers back on a return visit to our Annual Potters Guild Day at the Rudolf Steiner School in Kings Langley. He has an affinity with his clay which makes one realise how easy it is to throw a pot! (I recommend his book if you were unfortunate enough to miss his demonstration!). His talk, accompanied by slides, was most interesting, full of information and tips - so much to absorb.

The Slides - His farmhouse and pottery are set in the beautiful countryside of mid-Wales. From the slides it soon became apparent he likes to keep technology to a minimum and so he is most proud of the large bath in which he recycles all his clay, the dough mixer he uses to mix his clay and the hand-built kilns he uses. His salt-glaze kiln is now disintegrating after a decade of hard use; he emphasised that salt-glazed kilns should be made of high alumina bricks as salt destroys normal silica bricks.

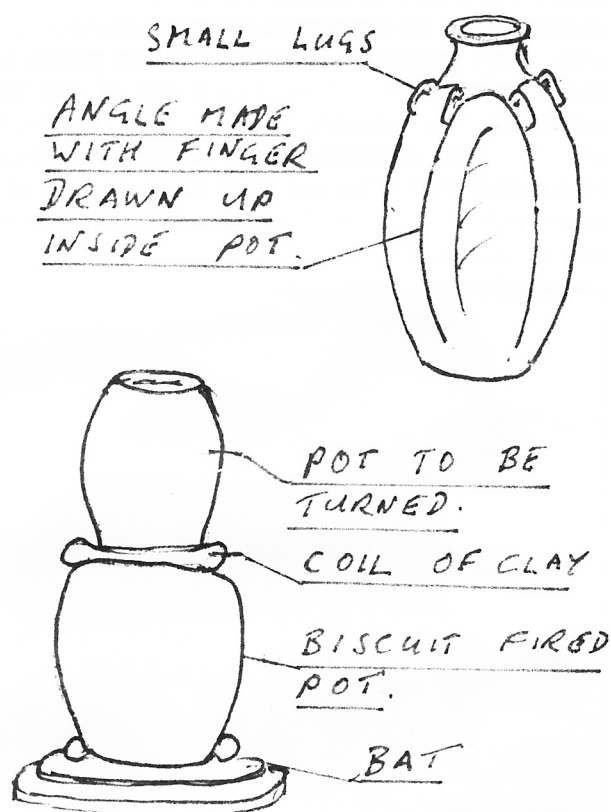
Phil also showed us slides of his pots, all unique in themselves. One thing that makes his pots unique is that he is very keen on utilising local materials and found clays and makes all his own glazes, throwing in various ingredients to give texture and different effects. He uses Ball clay, plus high-plasticity clay, the proportions he uses depending on the type of firing. His **Basic Wood Ash glaze** is made up as follows:-

- 1/3 wood ash
- 1/3 flint/quartz/rice husk
- 1/3 Cornish stone
- all fired to 1300°C.

and he applies the glaze over an iron rich slip and combs through to reveal a pattern. He favours a simple decoration, also using stamps or scratching off the pattern, and often squares off his pots to give distinct faces on which to decorate.

His recipe for his **salt glaze** varies with the different materials he chooses. One recipe uses gravel from a local river bed, strained through a 20 mesh sieve with a handful of the same coarse grit thrown in, the secret being in the gravel which contains quartz, mica and feldspar. The quartz remains unchanged, the mica disappears and the feldspar fluxes with the clay to produce a white bloom on the surface. The salt glaze is uneven which produces pink and orange colours where the salt does not penetrate. Pots are supported in the kiln on shells (calcite) and are used in a pattern as the sea shells then mask an area of the pot from salt. The shells are not destroyed by the temperature of the kiln but lose all their water and, if allowed to rehydrate, turn into a mush. This mush is pure calcite and can be used as a source of the mineral. A high silica clay is used for salt glazing as, in contrast with the high alumina bricks of the kiln, it reacts well with the salt. To improve plasticity he leaves the clay, sometimes for six weeks, also adding an organic mixture such as undrinkable apple wine (!) or yoghurt to sour it.

The Throwing - Phil's demonstration of throwing was excellent and his explanations clear; he is a natural teacher. He throws pots in one action avoiding turning the pot wherever possible. He uses a sponge on the outside - easier on the finger joints - and a rib for the finished surface. Throughout the throwing he emphasises the importance of the finished shape especially when this shape is going to be altered at the next stage. When throwing a four-sided jar he uses a finger inside the pot to carefully put in the four corners before collaring the neck. With the jug, he makes a wide base before pulling up to a narrow neck with a simple small lip, which he feels should be unobtrusive. He prefers to throw onto bats and does not wire off until the next day.



Phil likes to turn the base of his pots when still soft and uses chucks for this purpose so as not to damage the rims. He demonstrated turning one of his big bottles, using an old biscuit-fired pot to support it, with a thick cord of leather-hard clay round its rim to hold it in place. He uses a looped head tool to scoop out the base leaving a button in the middle as an insurance against sagging in the firing. When pulling handles, he uses stiffer clay that he has reclaimed from turning, rather than softer throwing clay; emphasising the importance of the relationship of the space formed by the handle to the jug, making sure that the shape of the handle is in tension with the jug. He finished off his bottle with small lugs, giving the pot its character, but once again keeping his decoration to the minimum.

During firing, pots can be supported in the kiln on wads (small balls) of **fire-clay** which will not stick to the pot because the clay is of a different nature to the pot body. Phil's fire clay is made up as follows:-

2lbs. Aluminium Hydrate
8 oz. China clay
8 oz. Ball clay
4 oz. grog

This solves a lot of problems, provided sufficient wads are used to prevent warping.

So, much better informed and inspired by his excellent demonstration, we retired to lunch, hoping we might achieve better results, but wondering whether a visit to his workshop might first be in order!

Sue Bull

SUSAN HALLS

I found Susan Halls' attitude to her work very refreshing and inspiring because she was so concerned with the thoughts and ideas behind what she wanted to achieve. She worked in a way that I would love to emulate if able, by widening the scope of her remit to beyond the ceramic.

Susan is fundamentally an observer and maker of animals (of which she is inordinately fond) using pinching, coiling and throwing to achieve her shapes. She began her training at Medway College of Art where she did an HND. There she started to make giant animals often concentrating on the head alone so that there were fewer support problems. Most of the pieces were decorative but function was there too - in the full-sized ceramic toilet!

In 1988 she went to the Royal College where she found the environment stark, clinical and 'anti-making'. Her work was research based and drawing played a major part. The RCA was where she produced some inspired 2D and 3D pieces. In her talk she told us how she carved apples into the shapes of babies' heads and then crammed them into liquid in a preserving jar - the result was quite bizarre. She also worked with apple pulp animal designs on plaster of paris and incorporated squashed frog skins. It made one want to rush home and make a start!

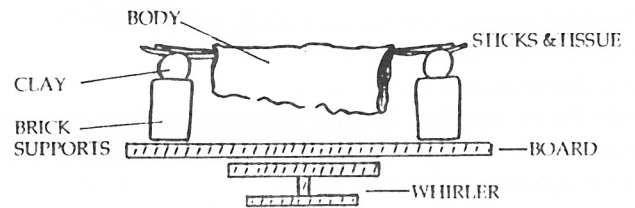
On working a residency in Banff, Canada for six months, she continued to explore animals and at one stage used cooked pastry as a medium for a wall installation. She began to observe and work on monkeys and apes because they are so similar to humans. This is where she was introduced to paper clay which she used to overcome the support problems associated with making animals with thin legs. She also began to incorporate metal (which survived the raku firings) into the mouths of her animals.

Demonstration

Susan discussed the way she makes her paper clay. She soaks down egg boxes and liquidises them. She then adds between 15-20% of the paper pulp to ordinary clay slaps. It is done by volume and is rather inaccurate. Polyester fibre is then added at approximately 1.5 gms. per kilo of the mix. The fibres give good making strength. Susan also mentioned that Coca cola and indeed urine can be added to significantly increase the plasticity. She then uses the ordinary clay/paper mix 50:50 with T material to produce a workable clay which she fires in raku to

about 980°C. Whilst paper clay is good for modelling and throwing, it is difficult to turn or sgraffito.

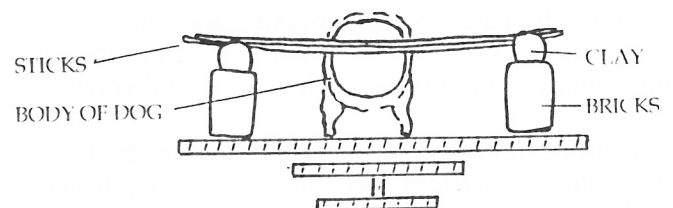
In her demonstration of how she makes a dog, she started by pushing a dowel rod through a large sausage of clay. This was then rolled on the bench to open up the body and make it wider at one end. The size of the dowel was gradually increased to the width of a rolling pin to achieve this. The piece was then stood upright and the shape of the body pushed into it, followed by stiffening with the electric heat gun. The whole was supported as shown below on a rod made from several bamboo sticks wrapped around with lots of paper tissue. Enough height was left below the body so that when the legs were attached they would not bear weight.



The legs were made in one of two ways. One way was similar to how the body had been made by using dowels to roll from the inside. Part of the wider top was cut away and with a few simple persuasive movements, which revealed Susan's deep understanding of dog structure, it really started to look like a dog's leg. The other way involved rolling a carrot-shaped piece of clay into a slab, then cutting it into a leg shape and then pinching the bottom half to make a tube for the lower leg. She abandoned this method when it lost its excitement and became too predictable. The legs were attached using the usual 'score and slip' technique. Susan stressed that the pieces must not be over touched during attaching and finishing. The top of each leg was blended into the body using a rubber kidney. A few small cuts were made for the toes.

When it came to making the head the sticks were removed and replaced by sticking them straight through the body from one side to the other as shown below. I think ordinary clay would not take this treatment!

Front view



The head was made using the same technique as the body but using a tapered stick. The neck was made using a clay collar. All the other bits, ears, eyes, nostrils, tail and even

teeth were thrown. The eyes, for example, were circles cut from the top of a spout shape. The aim is to achieve harmony between the elements, not producing a likeness of any known dog species but giving an animal with strong doggy character. The holes from the support sticks are retained and somehow add to the distinctive character of her work.

Once assembled and stiffened, the whole is painted with coloured colloidal slips (terra sigillata). Iron chromate gives a grey colour. The pieces are raku fired when dry. Since Susan prefers a matt finish, she sometimes uses a sulphuric acid (screen printing) paste to remove any shine which develops.

Elaine Hudson

BENNETT COOPER

The third demonstrator at the P.O.D. was Bennett Cooper from Mistley Quay Workshops, Mistley, Manningtree, who demonstrated his particular brand of decoration. His main theme was fish - brightly coloured shoals of not too realistic fish passing across the surface of his plates and dishes against a strong blue background. He assured us he could draw them swimming in both directions.

Trained at the Hornsey College of Art and the Royal College of Art, he started his career making commemorative plates in the style of Thomas Toft for the silver jubilee display at the Design Centre - a far cry from the tableware he had made up to that point. The influence of Toft lingers on.

Bennett provided us with masses of detail about his work - I was so interested in what he was saying, I missed writing it all down. He uses Potclays red school clay, adding high silica fireclay and sand. This ensures that the finished item is suitable for cooking in. The pots are thrown and press-moulded. When leather hard, he coats them in a white slip, then decorates using some 19 separate processes.

The decoration is wonderfully colourful with great depth created by layer upon layer of colour, using coloured pigment on top of coloured slip and topped off with a transparent soft lead glaze, which despite being lead is safe for food. (His recipes can be found in *Ceramic Review* from about three years ago).

Bennett told us about his method of working - he'll make half-dozen large bowls and several dozen smaller soup bowls before beginning to decorate. Rather than sitting to decorate, he tends to walk around - apparently this is better for the back than sitting down. He props the pots up, raising them to the right height ready to decorate.

Demonstrating decoration to a large audience could be as interesting as watching paint dry! However, Bennett showed us (as did Brian Dickenson last year) that this is not the case. He supported his demonstration with hints, tips, explanations and even audience participation. Three of our members on the front row volunteered to paint in the background to allow Bennett to continue (brave folk!).

This was a fascinating and truly enjoyable end to a fabulous day. Yet another successful P.O.D. chalked up. We all owe a vote of thanks and congratulations to Elaine Hudson who has, almost single-handedly, organised these successful events - you've hit a winning formula, Elaine.

Linda Bryant

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STOP PRESS

There will be no further Guild Workshops at the "Making Place" The February Brian Dickenson Workshop is postponed until we can book another suitable venue.

John Humby is unable to continue as Workshop Co-Ordinator. We need someone who is willing to take over from John as soon as possible.

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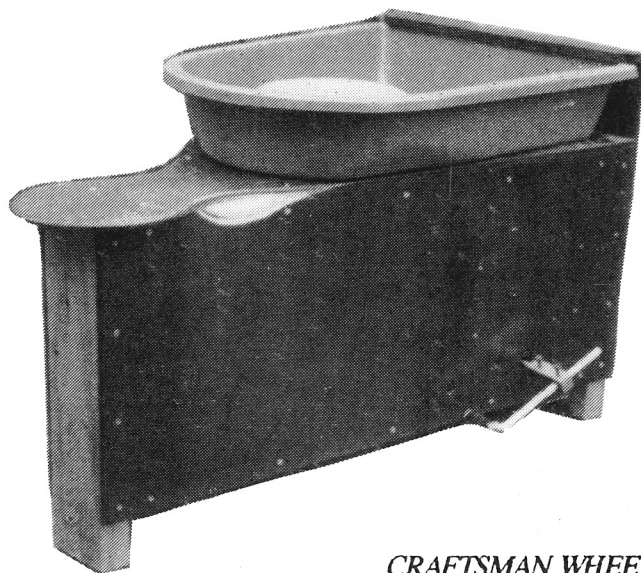
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