



Issue 43

Autumn 2022

DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



In this issue:

DCPG at COAM

Kingsbury Barn Exhibition

Boxmoor Autumn Fair

The Fitzwilliam Competition

Terrific Tuesdays

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www.dcp.org.uk

and also our facebook account and on instagram at

<https://www.instagram.com/thedcp>

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Cover picture: Pots by Fiona Booy - see our November demonstrator.

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Editorial Autumn 2022



Ros McGuirk

The unusual heat this summer has impacted most of our activities, ceramics related or not. Sheds and workshops everywhere became far too hot to use and the ground dried to concrete everywhere, thus holding up our progress at the new kiln site. This year the seasonal change to autumn has brought the end of the Elizabethan era. A bigger wheel has turned, accompanied by a period of reflection and re-assessment. Other wheels are turning, too. Even so, as the desiccated land has turned green again we gain a sense of renewal and hope. We can crack on with our work for now, continue the journey or take a new course, whatever that may be.

The membership numbers remain at about the same level as normal. Despite the general decline in formal ceramics education, interest in and knowledge of the subject remains high.

The Guild and its members remain well connected within local communities. A few of us are teachers, but our group activities also have an impact. Our annual exhibition has settled in well at Kingsbury becoming part of the heritage week, and at Boxmoor we met parents who remembered the thrill of being taken to meet the potters when they were small. We have become part of the cultural fabric of our communities. May it continue for many years to come.

Peter Warren

I was saddened to learn of the death of Peter Warren. He was a keen potter and a distant member of the Guild, keeping in touch by email and the newsletter. As a fellow editor (of Anglian Potters) he was always willing to respond to my enquiries and one time he donated a fair amount of spare kit to us. He is much missed by colleagues, friends and family.



Notes from the Chair



Jackie Harrop



While the momentous changes of the last few weeks have left many of us wondering what the future holds and how to navigate the challenges we will be facing individually and collectively, members of the guild have shown just how important it is to give and receive support and to feel able to rely on others when times are sad, or tough, or uncertain. It has been humbling to see the way members have supported each other through bereavement, trauma and illness and remained committed and focussed on our programme of events.

The exhibition at Kingsbury Barn in September was an absolute treat, bringing together new members, those taking the brave step of exhibiting for the first time, those whose work is made at their kitchen table or garden studio and others who have exhibited far and wide. The quality and variety of work was amazing and it attracted more than 400 visitors. Sales were good despite heavy rain showers, the distraction of TV coverage of royal events and cost of living concerns. The Fitzwilliam competition attracted a record number of excellent pieces, with a wide range of interpretations

of the Natural Forms theme. The public loved having a chance to vote for their favourite. The result of this and the online member vote will be announced by our demonstrator Rachel Wood at the AGM on 15th October in Kings Langley. I hope to see you there.

We are looking forward to the Boxmoor autumn festival, to more autumn events at COAM and an exciting monthly programme of Friday night demonstrators back at Kings Langley Methodist Church organised by Gay, who is sadly stepping back from this role, leaving an opportunity for others to contact famous potters on our behalf - would you like to have the chance to do this?

We are already organising POD 2023 and can reveal that it will be held on 19th March at the Trestle Theatre in St Albans with Keith Brymer-Jones as one of the demonstrators. Tickets will be limited so watch out for news and buy yours quickly.

Don't forget to check the diary of social events to catch up with other members.

Hope to see many of you soon.



New Members



A warm welcome to all new members with the expectation that we will meet you soon, in person!

Members who have joined this year and have not yet had a mention include Isabel Colomar (Denham), Carlos and Pauline Versluys (Little Gaddesden), Ross Macdonald (Park Street), Fenella Mowbray (Berkhamsted),

Hideki Arichi (Welwyn Garden City) and Hannah Ruddock (Little Chalfont).

We hope you enjoy being part of the group with our meetings in the Methodist church hall in Kings Langley (bring your own mug) where our excellent library is based, and that you are able to benefit from joining in our other activities as and when they occur.



Guild Programme of Meetings



All to be held at Kings Langley Methodist Church Hall,
WD4 8BR on Friday evenings at 7pm unless stated otherwise.

Sat 15th Oct 2022

AGM, Fitzwilliam competition results and Rachel Wood. 9am – 1pm.

Rachel uses handbuilding and the wheel to produce sculptural pieces that are rich in texture and earthen colours and reflect the Australian landscape.

www.rachelwoodceramics.co.uk

Fri 11th Nov Fiona Booy.

Fiona is an active Guild member who is making her mark with thrown, altered and also handbuilt work. Landscape and geology feature in her pieces. Fiona firmly believes that ceramics are fun, she teaches and runs workshops and events. Fiona will give a talk and demo and then go on to cover the topic of single firing. See www.stalbanspottery.co.uk

Fri 9th Dec John Masterton

A late comer to ceramics John has a flourishing second career making pots inspired by ancient Chinese techniques. His reduction glazes are tip top.



www.johnmasterton.co.uk

Fri 13th Jan 2023

Tom Knowles Jackson

Tom came late to ceramics via Throwdown. He makes classic reduction fired stoneware with simple ash, celadon and tenmoku glazes. Beautiful!

Fri 10th Feb Mel Chambers

Mel is a gifted artist, businesswoman and environmentalist based in Cornwall. She runs Alchemy Tiles making encaustic tiles, produced by hand carving and fine inlay work.



www.alchemytiles.com

Fri 14th April Peter Black

Salt glazed pots made mostly on the wheel. Peter is in the early stages of his ceramic career and is based in Kent.

www.peterblack.uk

Fri 12th May Lucy Baxendale

A ceramic artist, illustrator and community artist based in Herefordshire. Her drawings are often surreal, imagined, and feed into her ceramics.

www.lucybaxendale.com



DCPG Socials - October 2022 to February 2023

 Judi Tribe



OCTOBER - Tuesday 18th 10.30 - 12.30
Morning walk in Oxhey Park near Watford.
Please meet in the Oxhey Activity Car Park
WD18 0HS

Afterwards - refreshments at the Tasty Bean
Cafe which is an independent, family owned
business "proud to be serving great quality,
fresh, seasonal food and drink to our local
community." <https://tastybean.co.uk>

NOVEMBER

Wednesday 23rd 10.30 - 12.30

Morning social with refreshments at the
Open Door Cafe 360, High Street,
Berkhamsted. HP4 1HU
<https://www.opendoorberkhamsted.co.uk>

JANUARY 2023 Wednesday 18th

at 10.30am - 12.30pm
Waterstones bookshop,
8, St Peter's Street, St Albans, AL1 3LF
www.waterstones.com

FEBRUARY Thursday 16th

at 10.30am - 12.30pm
The Three Horseshoes, Winkwell,
Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2RZ
www.the3horseshoeswinkwell.co.uk

Check our website for updates.

Other Events

OCTOBER 13th - 16th The Other Art Fair
Affordable art at the Truman Brewery,
91 Brick Lane, E1 6QR

Tickets available online, variable prices.
www.theotherartfair.com

13th Oct - 5th November

Akiko Hirai at Contemporary Ceramics,
63 Great Russell St, WC1B 3 BF.

Open Tues to Sat from 11am – 6 pm.
www.contemporaryceramics.uk

30th - 31st Oct Oxford Ceramic Fair

at St Edmunds School, Woodstock Rd,
Oxford, OX2 7NN.

The CPA autumn show. 10am – 5 pm.
Tickets available online with a few at the
door on the day with card or device.
www.oxfordceramicfair.com

NOVEMBER 19th - 20th

Art in Clay Farnham at The Maltings,
Bridge St, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7QB
Sat 10 – 5 and Sun 10 – 4.30.

New and established, national and
international makers with talks and demos.
Tel: 01428 684111 and
www.artinclayfarnham.co.uk

Adults £5, concs £4.50,
15yrs and under Free.

Guild Wheels on loan.

The Guild has 2 spare wheels that are
available for members to borrow for one
year, a shimpo and a folding wenger, for free.

There are conditions attached - the
borrower has to keep the wheel in good
condition, PAT test it when required, to
ensure that it is delivered to wherever it is

needed and that they will help at whatever
event it is.

In the last 3 years they have not been
called out to have-a-go events and we do
not yet know when we will resume.

If interested, get in touch with me at
ros.mcguirk@gmail.com



DCPG at COAM

Sandie Taylor

Work on the raku site has continued throughout the summer. The site is now level and weed free thanks to David and Jerry.

David, Sandie and Henry, a member of the museum's build-ings team, moved several slabs to the site. These had been kindly donated by the muse-um and will be used as a base for the shed and also to extend the raku and wood firing areas.

Thanks to Judi Tribe and John Aberson there is now an enormous pile of wood stacked up there waiting to be processed (de-nailing required).

Volunteers would be most welcome to help process the wood. COAM have donated a shed for our equipment.

It needs a bit of tlc but will be great for storing the kilns and raku glazes etc. The shed should have been emptied and moved to the site by the time you read this. Meanwhile the kilns and all the kit are in temporary storage at the museum. We also have plans to build a wood store adjacent to the shed.

We are hoping to have a test of equipment and a firing soon. We had planned a raku firing at the end of Aug/Sept but the under-storey in the woods was tinder dry and the fire risk was too high.




The programme of Terrific Tuesdays have kept a number of our members busy throughout the summer holidays and there will be one more before the winter sets in. It will be on Oct 25th and the theme is about the wild animals that live at COAM, 'Owls, Bats, Newts and Cats.'

Please contact juditribe0@gmail.com if you can spare a few hours that day.



DCPG Kingsbury Barn Exhibition

 Fri 9th to Sun 11th September

Kingsbury is the biggest event in our calendar and 29 members showcased an impressive range of work in this spectacular setting. The public access the exhibition for 3 days but a team of members spend weeks preparing posters, artist statements, marketing the event through social media also making, preparing their exhibits and planning their displays of work. It's a nerve wracking experience to expose your work to a wide audience and we were fortunate this year to have first time exhibitors, new members also experienced exhibitors showing new and experimental pieces.



The show takes 2 days to set up and a day to dismantle, with time spent beforehand planning rotas, table layout, risk assessment, gathering equipment and distributing posters throughout the area and via members networks.



The Fitzwilliam table formed an impressive centre piece and talking point along with the Education table which covered information on our many community events at COAM



and with St Albans cathedral. Thanks to Nicole for instigating and preparing both of these activities.

The handbuilding teams ably led by Fiona Booy, Judi Tribe and Margaret Tatton-Brown worked with two excited groups of pupils from St Michaels making an impressive variety of owls which they were able to take away.



It was lovely to be able to reinstate the social evening and private view, which enabled members to catch up and to say thank you to Colin as he steps down as trustee, but we are delighted he will remain as a committee member.

Throughout the weekend, stewarding teams were able to talk about kilns, clays, glazes,



firings and other exhibitions and events. The annual exhibition is an important opportunity for members to swap ideas, to network and buy each other's pots! This year seemed even more friendly than ever, with a delightful lively and pleasant atmosphere both from visitors and exhibitors.





Guild Visit to Les Parrott

 Judi Tribe

On a warm, slightly damp July morning, members had a wonderful opportunity to visit Les Parrott's Studio in Uxbridge. Les showed us around his display area and we were able to admire his beautiful thrown and glazed pots. Some of these were eagerly purchased with his mugs being a particular draw. Les's generous workshop and kiln were self-built. This well-lit and airy studio contains an electric wheel, all his tools, glazes and a gas fired kiln which enables him to achieve his stunning reduction glazes on his tableware. Les was very generous as he explained how he works and how he optimizes his kiln firing space as well as explaining his accurate recording of each clay piece through all the stages of making and firing. The group was also given a master class demonstration as Les threw his signature mug shape using his wheel with such precision and ease. It was a delight to watch. Afterwards Les showed us the pots made by other potters which have inspired



him and important books which have helped him with technical information. We were then treated to refreshments and delicious cakes in his garden and with the sun now shining, we all enjoyed chatting about our

own pot making, exhibitions, top tips and lots of other interesting topics.

Many, many thanks to Les for showing us around your studio and sharing with us your journey of working with clay and how you produce your exquisite pots.





Potters at Boxmoor Autumn Fair on September 25th

 Ros McGuirk



As usual we were invited to take part on the Sunday of this annual weekend event. It is run by the Boxmoor Trust for the benefit of the local people, crafters and traders and occupies part of the water meadows of the old River Gade.

This year, instead of occupying a collection of gazebos we were allocated a quarter of a red and yellow circus tent. It was impossible to miss! It took us some time to sort out how to set up 7 rectangular tables within curved walls but once that was done it all worked very well and we were able to adapt quickly when the crowds thickened up in the afternoon and a wheelchair user came by.

The weather was fine and bright with a steady cool breeze from the north so we were both sheltered and yet well ventilated. Plenty of folk came along, lots of funny faces got made, plenty of pots were sold, pastries consumed, and stories told.



There seems to be a common history growing in that area of being brought along to the Conker Festival and how the potters' workshop was always the best thing. There was also talk of pottery making and classes and a good understanding of ceramics.

One of our volunteers was deeply touched when a little boy arrived and on seeing the workshop area said was "how much is it?" On being told it was free he happily joined in.



We arrived at 10am and were off site by 4pm, with many happy hours of work, chat and laughter in between.

Many thanks to Camilla, Chris, Jackie, Mary Anne and David for taking part on the day, to David for preparing 5 bags of clay and helping gather the equipment, and also to Judi who could not come but brought me her illustrations and figures to use on the day. They were much appreciated.





Nicole Lyster





Chris Bull (1944-2022)

Duncan Bull

Chris was a member of the Guild from the early days through to fairly recent times and for a period was the chair of the committee. She developed a pottery business selling reduction fired table ware including supplying galleries and pubs and the Chiltern Brewery. She also ran classes as her husband Duncan explains below. [Editor]

Like many potters Chris started her pottery life at evening classes. Her daughter Helen was about one year old and a neighbour suggested that they might go to evening classes to get away from the daily chores. As soon as Chris got her hands into clay it was obvious to her that she had found something new and exciting.

After a few lessons she persuaded me to make room in the tool shed for her to work at home. It wasn't long before she took over the whole of the shed and I was persuaded to make a simple kick wheel. Subsequently this was motorised using an old washing machine motor and she acquired a kiln from what was then known as Pilling Pottery (now Northern Kilns)

She started pottery classes at Amersham College and went on to Langley College where she studied with Roger Lyshon and later John Lomas. She also met Bob Packer, the technician there.

In 1982 the family moved to Askett where a studio was built with almost everything a potter needed; two wheels, two 7 kW kilns, a spray booth, a glazing area and office space. A couple of years later a gas fired kiln was added in an outside shed. More equipment has been added since.

Her work was mostly in stoneware and covered a wide range of domestic and decorative wares. She particularly liked to make garden

pieces and water features.

When John Lomas retired from Langley College Chris took on his tutor role and when

Langley closed she moved her teaching activity to an Advanced Studio Potters course with Bucks Adult Learning at Evreham near Iver. Finally when that closed she took the initiative to hire the facilities at Evreham to continue the Studio Potters course there herself.

She also ran annually a week's Summer School at Evreham which was attended by a number of her past students. This she ran jointly with one of her early students, Paul Priest, and she called them her Potty Potters.

In the mean time Bob Packer, now retired, suggested that he would modify a home built wood-fired kiln for salt glazing. This was something new for both of them and they had a number of firings with excellent results before the kiln finally collapsed. Chris loved salt glazed pieces

Over the years she has sold her work widely and two notable commissions were one for the Science Museum in London, who wanted a very large teapot to demonstrate to children how gravity works and another to provide the Perkin Reveller restaurant at Tower Bridge with jugs and beakers to serve their craft beers. She also sold her work at the excellent Fircroft annual sale (alongside John Maltby and John Bedding) near Guildford, The Woburn Festival and nearer to home from a shelf in her local pub the Three Crowns in Askett.

She will be sadly missed by her own family and her wider pottery family.



Studio for hire

Duncan is keen to hire out Chris's excellently equipped studio. If you are Interested please email him at duncan@meadowcroft-pottery.co.uk or phone 01844 343515

For more information see www.meadowcroft-pottery.co.uk

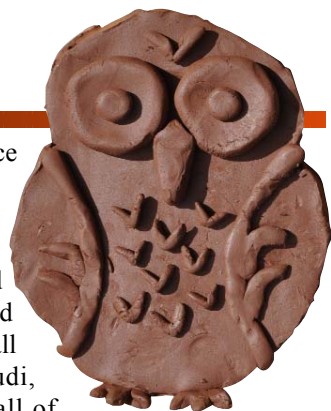
NB Duncan also repairs and installs kilns and wheels.

Under the wonderful organisation and guidance of Sandie Taylor, a merry band of Guild members volunteered to help the Hands on Clay activities every Tuesday throughout the summer holidays at The Chiltern Open Air Museum, Chalfont St Peter, The beautiful C14 Northolt Barn was our weekly place which sheltered us from both sunshine and rain as well as providing us with a perfect space to have a meet and greet table, a clay preparation area and six making tables which was a hive of activity all day long.

A different theme was planned each week with the children and adults encouraged to make their own handbuilt clay pieces based on these ideas.



With guidance from our members, a few visual references and some displayed clay models, all devised by Judi, each small ball of earthenware clay given out was transformed into the most wonderful and imaginative finished pieces. From mini beasts and owls to garden goblins and animal tracks and many more brilliant models were placed on cardboard tiles and at the end of the day, the clay objects were all carefully taken away by their proud makers.



A huge thanks to those who helped make these clay activities so special for everyone. Thanks also to all the COAM staff who helped us, provided the equipment, delivered frequent teas and coffees and who made Terrific Tuesdays so enjoyable.

Looking forward to next time
 it's newts, bats and cats!





Commercial Stains and Glazes - How Safe are they?



Tim Thornton

Most potters probably use commercial stains and glazes to at least some extent - how else can you get those bright reds and yellows with the sale of raw cadmium oxide banned, and the paperwork to buy uranium oxide making selling and shipping a pot to the EU seem trivial in comparison. But how safe are they, both in the studio and for functional pieces, to the end user?

The short answer is we don't really know. If you look at the manufacturer's website and the SDS for the product, they may at best give you an indication of the materials used, but not enough specific information for you to make your own risk assessment.

Safe to Use?

Generally, the main hazard when dealing with glazes is silica dust, and if you have good studio practices to keep dust under control then that will generally sort out everything else. Obviously if you use ready-mixed glazes, or are of the type that you add water to the container the glaze is shipped in, dust management is a lot easier.

The manufacturer may give specific usage instructions, which it makes sense to follow. Also, the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) will give hazard information, but two things must be considered when looking at the SDS: first, the one document covers everything from potters with 500g of a glaze to large scale manufacturer using tons of the stuff, and you need to take your level of exposure into consideration when reading the SDS; and secondly, different manufacturers take different approaches to the SDS - some are very detailed and include every possible hazard, whilst others give next to no information about the product and any possible hazards.

I have seen some US manufactured glazes include some substances (generally

biocides) that are banned in the EU and UK due to their being a health hazard, but although possibly illegal the risk to the potter is small, due to their low concentration in the glaze and the limited time most potters spend with their hands in the glaze bucket. So this is not really a matter of concern to us.

A good thing that comes from the US is ACMI certification. The ACMI is an organisation that certifies a wide range of arts materials for being safe to use, and they currently have two levels of certification: AP says that the product doesn't have enough of any substance to give acute or chronic health problems; and the lower level of CL says that it does contain toxic materials, but the product is safe to use if the instructions are followed. Many ceramic materials manufactured in, or being sold into, the USA will have obtained certification. Of course, you can't tell if the lack of certification means that the product has been submitted for testing and failed, or if it just has not been submitted for testing.

Food Safe?

If you make pots for use with food or drink, then you'll want to avoid any harm to your customers. The requirements here are not the same as in the studio, though.

Some may say that their products are free of lead, and quote the lead and cadmium leaching standard, as if to say that that makes them food safe and legal. But people have had acute toxicity from antimony and copper glazes, and other materials such as cobalt and manganese can cause problems with long term exposure - i.e. over many years. You want your customers to remember many years' usage of your mug because of its beauty, and not because it poisoned them.

Glaze manufacturers also tend to forget

about the generic legislation on food contact materials that makes it illegal to sell anything for use with food and drink that will make it toxic, or change properties such as colour, taste, smell, or texture. So no crumbly matt cobalt glazes that give pretty flecks of blue in the diner's mash, takes out their fillings when they bite on them, and contribute in the longer term to organ failure.

But why won't the glaze and stain manufacturers certify their products as being food safe, you may be asking yourself. For two basic reasons. First, they have no control over how you will use their product, or your making and firing processes, which may be radically different from what they envisaged. Secondly, in any product manufacturing (for that is what your making pottery is), it is a long-established principle that responsibility for the product ultimately lies with the manufacturer, i.e. you, and not the component supplier, i.e. the glaze manufacturer.

If the manufacturer gives the ingredients, either in the SDS or the product description, this can be helpful. Often, they won't give quantities, but you can choose to avoid glazes that contain potentially toxic components.

Of course, the composition of the fired glaze is not the same as the raw materials, so the ACMI certification won't apply to the fired glaze. It is likely that the AP certificate means that the product will be food safe. However, there are a number of potentially toxic substances that are in a non-toxic compound in the unfired glaze, but this transforms to a leachable, toxic form in the fired glaze, such as cobalt oxide or manganese carbonate. Lead is another example of this - lead bisilicate is carefully engineered to be safe to use in the studio, but this safety is not carried through to the fired

glaze, which may leach lead.

Can you send a pot off to be tested? Well yes, but change the glaze, the clay or the firing schedule and you should really send it off to be tested again. Also, test houses doing leaching tests are set up to test for the substances with quantified leaching limits, lead and cadmium in the UK (for which they'll charge you anything from about £20 each). They aren't set up to test for anything else you may be concerned about, and you wouldn't be able to afford their charges to set up a one-off test for you. And even if they could, would you have the knowledge to be able to decide what leaching level is safe?

Practically speaking, there are two options open to you. First, for those glazes and stains that do list their ingredients, you can decide to just use those that don't have anything potentially toxic in them, assuming you know which materials are on that list. Secondly, and this is the most practical route for most potters, you can subject your pots to both the lemon and the vinegar test for glaze stability (as often one will react with the glaze but not the other). If there is no sign of any degradation of the glaze in either test, then it is probably safe to use in food contact areas on your work.

Summing Up

Commercial products are great if you don't want to spend the time, or don't have the knowledge, to mix your own glazes. But, to a greater or lesser extent, you have inadequate information to make a fully informed decision on their safety either in the studio or for use on functional ware. The good thing, though, is that if used sensibly, they are unlikely to cause many problems - the manufacturers realise that if their customers end up in hospital, they are unlikely to place repeat orders!

DCPG Officers for 2022.

President & POD Organiser -
John Higgins -
johnceramics@aol.com

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Nicole Lyster

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dcpggallery@gmail.com

Facebook - Amanda Toms
amandart4@gmail.com

Sandie Taylor -
COAM coordinator
one-earth@ntlworld.com



Committee News

Two long serving members of the committee have recently retired from office. Colin, who in his years as treasurer (2011 - 2020) was always a source of sound advice, enjoyed turning out to all events and guided us to becoming a small charity, has now retired as a trustee. He was formerly thanked at Kingsbury Barn, see photo.

Audrey Hammett was our membership secretary from 2015 – 2022 and did a terrific job, not only in being well organised, but also working on gift aid with the treasurer and turning out at every meeting to welcome members.

We welcome Jill Gleeson who has taken her place.

A big thank you from all of us.

The committee would very much appreciate a minutes secretary to cover committee meetings and the AGM only. Please consider if you can.

The programme organiser role is also up for grabs. Do not delay if you are interested in this one, it is the best job on committee!

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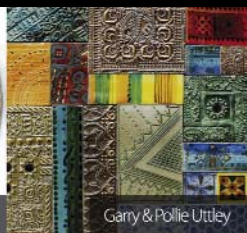
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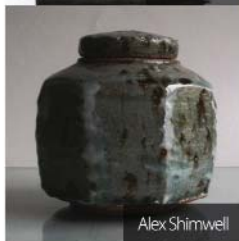
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