O Pioneers!

Women Ceramic Artists 1925–1960

Produced on the occasion of the exhibition

O Pioneers! Women Ceramic Artists, 1925–1960
10 September–20 November 2015

Alfred Ceramic Art Museum
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Cover: Maya Deren (1917-1961) ©, Portrait of Carol Janeway *(detail), 1943, gelatin silver print, 12-3/8" x 10-13/16", gift of Judith Young-Mallin in memory of Carol Janeway, The Museum of Modern Art, digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York.*

Back Cover: Kyllikki Salmenhaara, Bowl *(detail), circa 1950, stoneware, h: 3-1/2", gift of David and Ann Shaner, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1997.133*

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Catalog edited by Ezra Shales

Exhibition curated by Ezra Shales
and Susan Kowalczyk

10 September–20 November 2015

Alfred Ceramic Art Museum at Alfred University
Binns-Merrill Hall
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Foreword

The Alfred Ceramic Art Museum in collaboration with scholar Ezra Shales is pleased to present *O Pioneers!* as its threshold exhibition into a new era. Soon the museum will be moving to its magnificent new building designed by Kallmann, McKinnell and Wood and into a new agenda of exhibitions and advocacy for ceramic art. It is fitting that this new era begins with an important, groundbreaking review of artwork by the pioneer women of American ceramic art.

Long neglected in the serious critical narrative of twentieth-century art, these women nevertheless built an unshakable foundation for ceramic art. With fierce conviction and resilience they personified Willa Cather's words from her novel, *O Pioneers!*, that Ezra quotes in his excellent introductory essay: "A pioneer should have imagination, should be able to enjoy the idea of things more than the things themselves." These words give testament to a vision of something larger than one individual, something universal, something for the future, for the generations to come.

These women were artists and they were teachers, often in the studio-classroom and always with their art. They led the lives of great teachers, opening the intellectual and aesthetic world to anyone who had the will to look, see, listen, and learn. We are remiss in waiting this long to account for their gift. In viewing their work we have the opportunity not only to be instructed by the search for invention and skill, but also to be provoked into a deeper contemplation of what it means to be an individual working against the odds, in the margins of a cultural trajectory that ignores many of the complex forces guiding its inevitable future. The lesson is profound. It is a lesson focused here by ceramic art.

Today, the world of art, craft and design is in ferment, providing ground for many of the most compelling adventures in the spectrum of artistic imagination. Limits must by necessity be challenged, and a renewed view of the recent past with all its pronouncements of boundaries is in order.

As the Director of the Alfred Ceramic Art Museum, I am grateful to Ezra Shales for bringing his ideas to us and for sharing his erudition and scholarship. Ezra's collaboration with the Museum's Curator of Collections Susan Kowalczyk has provided us with an opportunity to rethink assumptions and to gain a deeper appreciation for ceramic art. This fits the mission of the museum and its commitment to rigorous educational opportunities of enlightenment for all students of ceramic art. I am also very grateful for the contributions of each of the scholars who helped with their research to secure the exhibition catalog as an excellent resource. Their essays bring depth and detail to the unique legacy of a particular group of women artists without which twentieth-century ceramic art would be a lonely landscape of remote outposts. They were pioneers who cultivated the land, which produced the bounty we enjoy today. We celebrate them.

Wayne Higby
Director and Chief Curator
Alfred Ceramic Art Museum
Professor, Robert C. Turner Chair of Ceramic Art
Alfred University

Acknowledgments

This exhibition has been years in the making. Ezra Shales approached me with a skeleton of a proposal for this exhibition while he was a faculty member here at Alfred in 2011. The exhibition has evolved from those early discussions to include a much wider scope and to include this catalog. In conjunction with the exhibition, Ezra Shales was our honored Fourteenth Dorothy Wilson Perkins Lecturer. His talk, "Pioneers of American Ceramics," was given on Thursday, 10 September 2015 prior to the public reception and opening of the exhibition.

In its final configuration the exhibition included a total of more than one hundred selections from the museum's permanent collection and outside lenders. Some of the objects from the Museum's collection came to us in the mid-twentieth-century. Many of these pieces were donated by the artists themselves during their time here as students more than 60 years ago. Other Museum pieces came from generous donors or were purchased for the Roger D. Corsaw Collection.

Thanks are due to the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, particularly Karen Convertino, registrar; Heath Ceramics; and Don Fletcher at The Takaezu Studio. Additional lenders include Lizi Boyd, Victoria Jenssen, Shelburn B. Murray, Jonathan O'Hea, Peter Russo, and Poey and Gary Wergin.

Former Museum staff members at Alfred, Greta Holzheimer and Grace Tessein, assisted in multiple tasks leading up to the exhibition. Caitlin Brown took on the daunting work of installing the large assembly of pieces. Student assistants Victoria Kue and Bryce Lloyd assisted with preparations.

Generous support for this catalog was provided by the Division of Ceramic Art, School of Art and Design, New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University with financial contributions from The Marcianne Mapel Miller Fund for Ceramic Art. Additionally, funding was from Miller Endowment for Excellence in the Arts and the School of Art and Design. We also thank Peter Russo and Ruth and Gregg Gau for funding specific to the catalog and exhibition.

Ezra Shales's research was generously funded by the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design and the MassArt Foundation. He thanks Jay Stewart for her insights on Heath Ceramics, John Gordon, and Sequoia Miller for inviting him to test run this thesis at the Yale University Art Gallery, Jenni Sorkin for her constructive criticism and enthusiastic support, Jayne Van Alstyne, Herbert Cohen, and Karen Karnes for their oral histories, and the contributing essayists for their camaraderie.

Susan Kowalczyk
Curator of Collections
Alfred Ceramic Art Museum

Pioneering a Platform for American Ceramics: An Introduction

Ezra Shales

When the artist Marion Fosdick (1888–1973) visited the 1939 New York City World's Fair, she found the pair of large white vases that she had successfully submitted outside the men's and women's toilets, filled with sand, ready to be used as ashtrays. That she recounted this anecdote to her favorite students suggests that she maintained a sense of humor and modesty about the way ceramics withstands the journey of being art and then not art, and then being reborn as art yet again (fig. 1).[1] This exhibition places value on her art as well as the work of the scores of other women who have been neglected by historians and museums.

While women artists have been represented at World's Fairs and other major art events, they have often left little trace. When Fosdick is remembered today, it is mainly as a teacher, much like her contemporary Augusta Savage (1892–1962), who ran a ceramics and sculpture school in Harlem.[2] Savage's monumental plaster sculpture *The Harp* was also made for the 1939 fair but exists now only as a photograph; had it been cast in bronze, the multi-figure composition would have been the largest depiction of African-Americans created in the twentieth century, surpassing in scale Augustus St. Gaudens's 1898 monument to Colonel Shaw and the African-American 54th Regiment (fig. 2). Savage faced discrimination because she was a black woman; Fosdick's career as an educator in a rural setting marginalized her almost as much, in canonical histories of modern art. The distinction among "art worlds" can be explained in hindsight in terms of race and ethnicity, gender and geography, or economic patronage and institutional affiliation, but often it is about timing and coincidence, too.

We cannot critically rehabilitate *The Harp* and many other art works because they were destroyed, either intentionally or through steady cycles of urban change, but Fosdick's vases have been preserved in storage in rural Alfred, New York, where real estate is less of a turf war; the ceramics endure, albeit somewhat chipped and abraded. In order to rescue Fosdick's work, it is important to recognize which biases permitted her vases to be seen as no more than "ashtray art," the derisive term used in the 1930s by Josef Albers, painter and educator at Black Mountain College and Yale University, when he dismissed contemporary ceramics. To be made of clay, by a woman, and sit unpretentiously on the floor resembling something useful, is to compound three prejudices that prevent many from looking with care at Fosdick's work—forces that continue to taint much art appreciation. This essay looks at precisely that area of overlapping biases, as if charting a Venn diagram, and declares Fosdick's work potent, beautiful, and, insofar as it evinces the pleasure of its own creation, perhaps just as meaningful as Albers's *Homage to the Square* paintings.

Figure 2: Augusta Savage's The Harp*, featured on the cover of* The Crisis *(April 1939). Courtesy of the New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.*

Facing page, Figure 1: Marion Lawrence Fosdick, Vases*, circa 1930, stoneware, h: 23-7/8" and h: 23-1/4", gift of William L. Pulos, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1992.41 & .42, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

Artworks made by women ceramicists in the second quarter of the twentieth century do not have a high profile and are rarely seen as interconnected. The recent publication, *Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art* (2010), dwells on Eva Zeisel (1906–2011) and briefly mentions Edith Heath (1911–2005) and Maria Martinez (1887–1980), but its overwhelming focus on painting and photography suggests that a more complete reevaluation of ceramics is still necessary. The complete exclusion of sculpture and statuary by the likes of émigrés such as Vally Wieselthier (1895–1945) or native-born artists such as Edris Eckhardt (1905–1998) is common among critics and art historians who follow a critical precedent that selectively and narrowly defines avant-garde fine art. There have always been multiple art worlds, especially when one traces ceramic constellations: birthing trays and plates hung on the wall as if pictures in Renaissance Italy, for example, or garnitures of irrationally exuberant vases alternated with stern phalanxes of morbid urns exemplifying classicism in Enlightenment Europe. Wedgwood's black basalt utility teacup is in the Museum of Modern Art but none of his more representative blue decorated ware.

Celebrations of eminent *Bauhäusler* or other recognized Modernists, such as Zeisel, Lucie Rie (1902–1995), or Beatrice Wood (1893–1998), situate them as outliers, not a constitutive feature of the landscape but more like an archipelago or chain of connected monuments.[3] The time is ripe to re-evaluate overlooked work made by these groundbreaking women artists, factory artisans, and professors of art and claim their fundamental position in the historic narrative. Their biographies cultivate immediate sympathy but remain skeletal. We have a surfeit of images of these women quietly handling clay with downcast eyes, rarely suggesting that they were bold artistically or acted as agents of change. It is their work that we must examine and understand—in their craftsmanship are meanings and intentions both latent and overt. This initial survey takes up the challenge of responsive interpretation. Moreover, to have their work seen is what all of these artists would have wanted, not to be known for their portraits, smart quips, or misadventures as they emerged as professionals in what was a man's world.

Pioneers of Which Art World?

It is impossible to imagine the phenomenon of our many "art worlds" coming into existence without publications, institutional venues, schools, and spectacles such as biennales. These cooperative activities matured in the field of ceramic art in the first half of the twentieth century in the United States. Bold women were important patrons, whether it was Lilly Bliss co-founding the Museum of Modern Art or Isabella Stewart Gardner establishing her own palace on Boston's Fenway. In ceramics, the most obvious twentieth-century pioneers were Adelaide Alsop Robineau (1865–1929), who spearheaded the first periodical, *Keramic Studio* (later renamed *Design* and still focused overwhelmingly on ceramics), and Anna Wetherill Olmsted (1888–1981), who created the *Ceramic National* and turned Syracuse's Museum of Fine Arts into a powerhouse for what had been one of "the lesser arts." The fact that the memory of these women's efforts is imperiled suggests we value too lightly these foundational efforts to assemble cultural capital. The transformation of Syracuse into an artistic focal point was hard-won and accomplished by dint of willpower. To make a city into a major patron and barometer of taste without banking cash seems impossible today—all the more reason to look back and assess the achievement. To turn a competition into a nationally admired, high-profile spectacle through tours and publications was remarkable.

The story of *O Pioneers!* begins in 1925, the year of the *International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Art* in Paris (*L'Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*), an aesthetic era exemplified by the bold black and white late works of Adelaide Robineau. It ends in 1960, the year before Rose Slivka's article "New Ceramic Presence" heralded a new ideal of the "irreverent cowboy." Starting with Robineau's spare, late monochrome pottery, made after her trip to

the Paris fair, we can understand how she was *moderne*. Peter Voulkos, Slivka's hero, propelled individual self-expression to the fore, demoting the importance of utility and almost banishing historicism and the decorative; his rebellious machismo also received approval and was cast in a positive light. Robineau's hard-fought battles to gain access to the wheel, to throw her own pots, and assert the value of styles to specific forms, were suddenly taken for granted; Voulkos's anti-craft became the reigning paradigm after 1965. Voulkos's peer, Toshiko Takaezu (1922–2011), first gained notice for her work on the potter's wheel in 1960, but the overall shift in the pursuit of artistic recognition in ceramics coincided with a surge of men into academic positions who, like Voulkos, emerged onto the art scene with the support of the G.I. Bill (the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944). The phrase "decorative art" became pejorative.[4] The 1960s witnessed a massive shift away from decoration, aesthetic emulation, and industrial education, as well as function and historical emulation. *O Pioneers!* looks again at pottery that acknowledged global and non-Western traditions and statuary scaled for the mantelpiece. Robineau, Fosdick, and Takaezu saw themselves as cultivating seminal Persian, Chinese, and Mexican traditions, not breaking boundaries or setting "new frontiers," as was the fashionable ambition in the 1960s. Moreover, they saw their labor as art.

"We ought to be put on the art map," wrote Anna Wetherill Olmsted in 1933, the year after she founded the *Ceramic National* exhibition series and became the third director of the Syracuse Museum of Fine Art. Sounding very much like Rose Slivka three decades later, she was speaking for all ceramicists, not merely one avant-garde artist.[5] Syracuse reaped what Olmsted sowed until about the time when Howard Becker published his theory of pluralist and multiple "art worlds" in 1982.[6] Works in clay performed well within a singular, autonomous art world between 1925 and 1960, when it was more globally mindful and certainly historically aware than at any time since. In 1960, immediately after the Syracuse Museum had been renamed the Everson Museum, its director William Hull applauded ceramics, writing, "it is reassuring to find one's self involved in the relative calm of an art form disciplined by considerations of craftsmanship."[7]

The calm dissipated in the 1960s as ceramicists began to see their world in opposition to the art scene of New York City and as a field with its own hierarchy of practices and products. Soon, industrial production was considered irreconcilably distinct from avant-garde fine art. As the need to distinguish professional work intensified, academics did not like sharing pedestals with amateurs. A proliferation of art worlds arose, each with its own constituencies, periodicals, collectors, and institutional bodies. The number of ceramic programs and people making ceramics escalated from thousands into hundreds of thousands.

To identify some of the strongest moments in the years between 1925 and 1960, this exhibition reenacts juxtapositions. For instance, in 1941, the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts exhibition *Contemporary Ceramics of the Western Hemisphere* toured the United States, presenting Eva Zeisel, Maria Martinez, and Maija Grotell (1899–1973), presented as North American exemplars. It is difficult to think of any exhibitions from this period or since that brought into proximity mass-produced industrial design, Native American art, and studio pottery, seeing each as "contemporary." Why were women so obviously empowered to make ceramics of the first order when they were much less visible in surveys of painters and sculptors?

Of the three "Americans," the first was born in Budapest and showed work made in factories powered by electricity; the second was born in the San Ildefonso Pueblo far from kilns and pugs mills powered by fossil fuels; the third was born in Helsinki and made unique art pottery while she taught students at Cranbrook Academy of Art, just miles from Detroit's automobile factories. What was American about their ceramics? Their differences

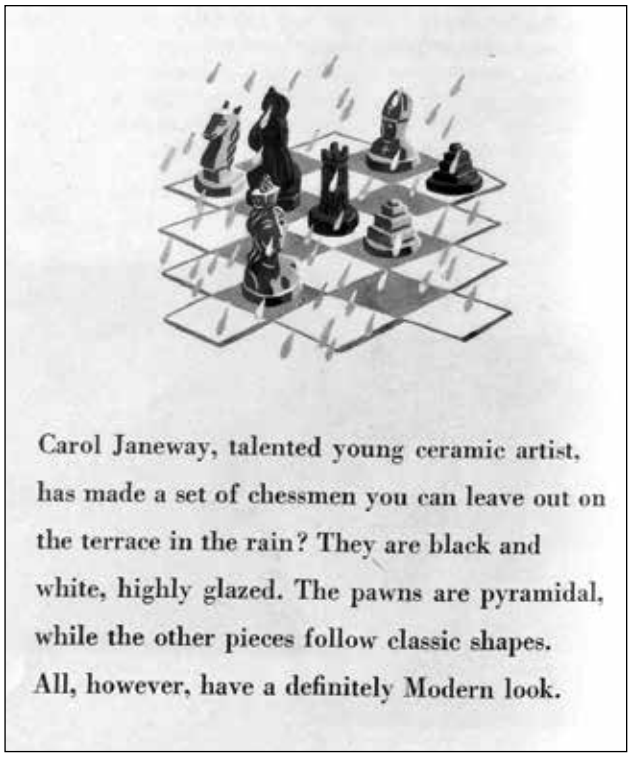
Figure 3: Maya Deren (1917-1961) ©, Portrait of Carol Janeway, *1943, gelatin silver print, 12-3/8" x 10-13/16", gift of Judith Young-Mallin in memory of Carol Janeway, The Museum of Modern Art, digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York.*

map the paradoxes of ceramic art. The juxtaposition of the three, then and perhaps now as well, suggests that ceramics comprised an expansive and heroic field that opened up as many questions about defining American culture as it did about defining the categories of art and gender.

If *O Pioneers!* argues on behalf of identifying women's important contributions to American art history, it does so on several levels—seeing them as artists negotiating Modernism, as educators paving new roles in the academy, and as entrepreneurs and community activists. While it often surprises audiences when they learn that American art schools began to encourage female students to shape their own pottery on the wheel only as recently as the 1920s (and not simply to paint and ornament pots), that watershed decade was when women first gained the right to vote in the United States. Just as hard-won as the vote was women's right to act as "formgivers," an elegant Scandinavian term that describes inventive sculptural designing. Ceramics might not have been considered a field or discipline outside of a few schools in America, but it was a vocation many women embraced as a new way to imagine their lives.

Although several individuals have received attention with monographic studies—such as Beatrice Wood, Eva Zeisel, Maija Grotell, Marguerite Wildenhain (1896–1985), Karen Karnes (born 1925), and Toshiko Takaezu—*O Pioneers!* is surprisingly the first exhibition to appreciate American women ceramic artists as a group and to identify the 1930s through the 1950s as a golden age for women as leaders. The intention of this modestly scaled exhibition is not to be encyclopedic. Moreover, there is no "ism" to point to, no theory, no feminism of any sort that ties together the concerns and pressures lived by Grotell, Martinez, and Zeisel. The catalog and show admire great pots and genuflect before specific things and people. Let us finally marvel at the latent possibilities still vibrant in the work and see if, once women's work has been given a moment to breathe, the ceramics themselves indicate a new constellation or movement that we can name.

Women ceramic artists have been located at the centers of experimental artistic movements in the twentieth century, but maps still chart them as tributaries or as idiosyncratic episodes. The voices weighing in have been too partial to isolated aspects of the art world and less aware of the overlapping complexity of others. The Museum of Modern Art's *Modern Women* celebrates Maya Deren's experimental films, notably using as its dust jacket *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943). This icon of montage evokes a woman's fractured sense of her self, whereas Deren's photograph of ceramicist Carol Janeway (1913–1989) shows a determined face imposed upon twenty-five glaze samples and suggests a woman defined by her work, not her interior location (fig. 3). Janeway used her portrait of audacity to great effect when she transformed it from an illustration in a magazine's human interest story into a page of her



Carol Janeway, talented young ceramic artist, has made a set of chessmen you can leave out on the terrace in the rain? They are black and white, highly glazed. The pawns are pyramidal, while the other pieces follow classic shapes. All, however, have a definitely Modern look.

Figure 4: Carol Janeway's chess set promoted in House & Garden *(June 1944): 72, alongside novel nylon dog leash and Robsjohn Gibbings's "Goodbye, Mr. Chippendale." The chess set was also in the avant-garde Surrealist exhibition* The Imagery of Chess *at the Julien Levy Gallery (12 December 1944 through 31 January 1945).*

textbook, *Ceramics and Pottery Making for Everyone* (1950). The grid of methodical tests and annotations make Janeway empirical whereas Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* depicts a woman veering toward hysteria, trapped in a domestic mise-en-scène. The psychotic montage updates *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novella rebutting the aesthetic era's methods of constraining and limiting women to domestic roles. If Deren's portrait shows Janeway using amateur's underglazes, the irony is that she sold her work at fantastic prices and briefly choreographed her own meteoric career as an artist.

Deren's multiple exposure of Janeway is a cut-away into work as life and life as work, and Janeway used the image in her book because it depicted her as a heroine. In 1945, *Life* described her "fanciful tiles, covered with nonsensical birds and animals." Her chess set with "a definitely Modern look," which was in *The Imagery of Chess* exhibition at Manhattan's Julien Levy gallery alongside works by Isamu Noguchi, Alexander Calder, and Marcel Duchamp, and before that in *House and Garden* (fig. 4). Is she to be remembered as a serious artist or a decorative china painter who made knick-knacks for cocktail parties and skyscraper terrace gardens? Her chess set has received decidedly less scholarly attention than the others.[8] Her book, *Ceramics and Potterymaking for Everyone*, now out of print, is more evidence of the multi-faceted complexity of her public role. She exists archeologically, not a part of any single canon of ceramic artwork, educational texts, or Surrealist art. The same dichotomy between "fine" and "commercial" art can be discerned in the assessment of many ceramicists, e.g., Beatrice Wood, Karen Karnes, Leza McVey (1907–1984), or Eva Zeisel. We can exhibit our own self-assurance and claim that one vein in the oeuvre is commercial and another is the true artistic expression, but such methods are rash and insensitive. Even in the case of Zeisel, scholars such as Martin Eidelberg and Pat Kirkham have recently challenged earlier distinctions made between "serious" Modernism and "frivolous" decoration; Zeisel was both commercial and avant-garde, and so, too, was Janeway.

While the historicist ornament and eclectic vocabularies employed from the 1930s through 1950s have long been regarded as conventional—a predictable calm before the storm of Abstract Expressionist and Pop work in the 1960s—these women and their work can no longer be seen as conservative. They opted for unconventional lives in dedicating themselves to art. Their multilateral engagement with Persian, Chinese, Anglo, and a large variety of "folk" aesthetics defies the reductive and mono-cultural ideal inherent to traditionalism. In hindsight, these women occupied significant positions in the field, and were part of the groundwork for the feminist movement of the late twentieth century that began to redress the imbalance. The eclectic range of styles and diverse genres in *O Pioneers!* matches today's art world but the pieces are also compelling because the "pioneers" were active

Figure 5: Maija Grotell, Vase*, mid-century, stoneware, h: 7-1/4", gift of Winslow Anderson, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1993.57, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

in looking beyond Western traditions and valuing skill and cosmopolitan craftsmanship. Long before the advent of Abstract Expressionist ceramics in the 1960s, there was a fundamental belief in the universal legibility of pottery as pure form.

Interpretive Themes

The works in the exhibition are organized to create chronological and thematic comparisons and reveal how teapots and bowls and modestly proportioned objects were responsive to the large issues and questions of the various decades, whether these were aesthetic crises or broader issues of conscience. One theme in the exhibition is "Avant-garde Decorative Art: Contemporaneity and Antiquity." The idea might be unfamiliar today, but in 1925 a small tabletop accessory such as an ashtray or an urn was regarded as potentially intellectually provocative. To decode the complexity of visual art prevalent in Paris in 1925 and look beyond what we have come to designate since the 1960s as Art Deco, we must face artistic intentions that intertwined primitive myth with modernity. An example is Maija Grotell's 1930s telling of the myth of Leda and the swan.

Zeus's rape of a mortal is streamlined: her robotic and near androgynous body evokes Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927), as the archaic story reconciles contemporaneity and antiquity (fig. 5). The phallic swan is semi-comedic. Simultaneously, Grotell depicts the modern cityscape as a harmonious rhythm of syncopated smokestacks. Grotell was a contemporary woman working in an ancient medium and able to balance innovation and homage to the past. In her later work, she shed figuration but still punctured temporal boundaries. In the 1964 New York City World's Fair, Grotell's 1946 prize-winning pot, non-objective in its sgraffito-inscribed slip, stood beside David Smith's welded steel sculpture *The Letter* (1950); these were equally abstract sculptural expressions (figs. 6 and 7). Together they advertised the spread of abstraction to cultural institutions outside of

Figure 6: New York State Pavilion in New York World's Fair, 1964. The Highway through New York *exhibition celebrated fine art by representing the Everson with a work by Maija Grotell and the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute with one by David Smith. Courtesy of the Everson Museum.*

New York City in Syracuse and Utica, the Everson Museum and the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute respectively.

While ceramic shards are often consulted to build a historical record, the medium is rarely considered futuristic. In 1940, the Metropolitan Museum of Art purchased three works from the *9th Ceramic National*, aiming to build its holdings of "modern ceramic art." A Fosdick charger and Grotell vase, purchased for $35 and $50, remain in the Metropolitan as proof of the esteem in which they were held (figs. 8 and 9). Grotell, like Fosdick, opted to be "married to her work," a dedication that seems to have ruled out marriage or children.[9] Fosdick taught at Alfred University from 1915 to 1953, and Grotell first at the Henry Street Settlement and Rutgers University between 1928 and 1938, and then at Cranbrook Academy of Art from 1938 until 1966; these women inspired generations of students. Grotell also attended Alfred's summer school in the late 1920s and received the Charles Fergus Binns medal in 1961. From 1932 to 1960, both exhibited regularly at the *Ceramic National*.

Figure 7: Maija Grotell, Vase*, 1945, stoneware, h: 17", Collection Everson Museum of Art, Purchase Prize given by* Encyclopedia Britannica*,* 11th Ceramic National*, 1946, PC 47.509, photo by Dave Revette.*

Although teachers such as Dan Rhodes at Alfred University are often touted as the godparents of American raku techniques, Alfred graduate Hal Riegger dedicated his 1972 book on the subject to Fosdick, and often quoted her by saying "One cannot dominate clay, one can only cooperate with it." In the summer of 1953, Fosdick impressed this lesson upon Bill Wyman, a beneficiary of the G.I. Bill, whose fame in the 1960s briefly equaled that of Voulkos. Fosdick asked Wyman and her other students to go into the Canacadea Creek and find a rock that they admired.[10] They were to bring it back to the studio and build onto it, adding clay. This lesson of making a relative to a rock—a barnacle or other organic growth—suggests some of Fosdick's openness to modern pedagogy and her contagious passion for the ancient geological essence of clay itself. Fosdick's primitivism was not concerned with the specific appropriation of African

Figure 8: Marion Lawrence Fosdick ©, Bowl*, 1940, stoneware, h: 3-7/8", Purchase, Edward C. Moore Jr. gift, 1940 (40.153.2), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York, USA, image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, image source: Art Resource, New York.*

or Native American or any other non-Western forms but with the idealism of direct experiential education. It is no surprise that her student Riegger would publish a book titled *Primitive Pottery* (1972) advocating precisely this didactic approach, albeit with a shrill countercultural bias. His 1978 text on techniques cites "Fosdick luster" as one of the few glazes named after a woman; she taught it in her majolica course.

Clair Beatrice Patterson's wraith-like figurine from 1946 also inhabits a liminal space between the antique and modern (fig. 10). The soft forms are suggestive of the human figure but difficult to pin down. The title, *St. Francis*, implies the narrative tradition—Bellini comes to mind, perhaps, but not without verbal prodding. Little was known of Patterson's work until an Alfred graduate, Herbert Cohen, identified the artist and remembered her

Figure 9: Maija Grotell ©, Vase, 1940, stoneware, h: 15-1/2", Purchase, Edward C. Moore Jr. gift, 1940 (40.153.1), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York, USA, image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, image source: Art Resource, New York.

working on a staircase landing. Cohen arrived at Alfred at age 16 in 1948, and he recalls Patterson as an older student, perhaps a local art teacher, who was accepted into the program and given a marginal workspace because of Fosdick's faith in her. Patterson deserves to be contextualized in the immense flood of creativity spawned in the United States amidst post-war affluence. Was she part of the democratization of art education? Is her work powerful even if it comes without a provenance or a pedigree? As Ulysses G. Dietz notes, "A first-rate pot need not be an 'important' pot," and the same can be said for this modest but lyrical figurine.[11] Figurative narratives, such as the story of St. Francis, lingered in the ceramic sculpture of William McVey and Wayland Gregory, too. Patterson reminds us of the power of storytelling. Her ethereal form looks windswept and sandblasted over millennia, and speaks with the authority of an established master. It is not surprising that her fellow Alfred alumnus Winslow Anderson saved the sculpture for five decades and donated it to the university as a treasure worth preserving. Patterson's work treats stories of grappling with metamorphosis.

A second theme of the exhibition is "Imagined Americas." Ceramics have been read as indicative of a national character, sometimes because of their aesthetics and at other times because of materials and methods of production. Ceramic artists were sharply aware of indigenous traditions—but perhaps less cognizant that Native Americans were having their own "studio pottery" revolution simultaneously, a florescence that began in the late nineteenth century with Nampeyo boldly signing her work. Archeological reclamation and reinvention were overt and visible, but lopsided colonial power relations died hard. Maria Martinez had been on view at world's fairs; yet, when her work was shown in *Contemporary Ceramics of the Western Hemisphere* in Syracuse in 1941, it was shown anonymously as "Pueblo Pottery."

Facing page, Figure 10: Clair Patterson, St. Francis*, 1946, stoneware, h: 9-1/4", gift of Winslow Anderson, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1993.64, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

Figure 11: Dorothea Warren O'Hara, Bowl*, circa 1940, earthenware, h: 6-5/8", Collection Everson Museum of Art, gift of anonymous friend of the artist, PC 41.366, photo by Dave Revette.*

Figure 12: Maria Martinez, Black on Black Jar*, circa 1930, earthenware, h: 9-1/4", gift of David and Ann Shaner, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 2000.164, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

The imposition of such second-class citizenship is a painful but important fact, and yet one that seems stranger in light of the emulation of ancient pots by Anglo-American potters. Robineau pursued a matte black surface and carved Haudenosaunee "false faces" directly into her pots in the 1910s and 1920s. New York City socialite potter Dorothea Warren O'Hara also selectively emulated Pueblo and Mayan models of decoration and

Figure 13: Dina Kuhn, Das Wasser*, circa 1927, stoneware, h: 14-1/2", Collection Everson Museum of Art, Museum Purchase with the Dorothy and Robert Riester Ceramic Fund, PC 88.8, photo by Dave Revette.*

archeological findings in the 1930s. O'Hara had studied art in Munich and in London with Lewis F. Day and worked on direct commissions from well-heeled acquaintances, such as a fish set for J. Pierpont Morgan and a garniture for William Randolph Hearst. "There's nothing new under the sun," O'Hara noted. "My enameling is that of the Chinese of past ages. I have simply revived and applied it to our native clays."[12] O'Hara is representative of the 1930s shift away from European courtly models. In her bowls preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and in the Everson Museum, the latter purchased in 1941 from the *10th Ceramic National*, she carved flowers and chickens in low relief on the exteriors that were reminiscent of late nineteenth-century migrations of Spanish motifs into the indigenous vocabulary (fig. 11). In the Everson's piece, she preserves the color of the buff clay on the exterior, while the blackened interior appears to emulate ancient Santa Clara work or 1930s pottery by Maria and Julian Martinez (fig. 12). O'Hara's appropriation of Native American or Mayan aesthetics occurred in a broader context of visual art that sanctioned such selective adaptation; the rise of the Mexican muralists reinforced a primitivism that believed itself to be well-intentioned. O'Hara's pride in using local New Jersey clays was also shared among many ceramicists; such choices were acts of tactile symbolism. Because clay is extracted from the earth, it is seen as embodying national identity; for a potter in the 1940s and 1950s to dig her own clay body was one way to grab hold of an indigenous taproot.

The theme of "Imagined Americas" also is a lens through which to admire several European émigrés represented in American collections, such as Vally Wieselthier, Eva Zeisel, and Maija Grotell. As they were subsumed into the national artistic identity, that identity became more elastic. In 1940, Dorothy Liebes, a weaver soon to be a household name in American interior furnishings for her collaborations with DuPont, was a juror at the *8th Ceramic National* and announced the end of provincialism: "There is less of the European tradition appearing in this field of American art and craftsmanship, and more feeling for the imaginative possibilities of this most ancient of arts."[13] Just what was "American" in ceramics was a constant concern and question, especially when the influences of diverse types of Asian and European ceramics prompted inevitable comparisons. Today, we still debate the intrinsic features of American ceramics—do teabowls with tenmoku glaze, for example, signal multiculturalism or appropriation?

A third visual theme is "Craft and Industrial Production Lines: Manufacturing and Molding Multiples," which attempts to move the interpretation of ceramics beyond the simplistic dichotomies of machine versus hand, or studio versus factory, the binary oppositions that have plagued scholarship in ceramics for too long. Technique does not determine taxonomy in ceramics. Some sculpture is made mechanically, while some bowls made

on the potter's wheel end up labeled "mass production" and others as "art." An immense spectrum exists between one-off and mass production, as was true in ancient civilizations that used molds. For instance, Dina Kuhn, who received a prize at the 1925 Paris Exposition internationale, made *Das Wasser* not as a unique work but as something more akin to what contemporary galleries refer to as a "multiple original" (fig. 13). We do not know how many are in existence but there are at least four, including one in the Cleveland Museum's collection. (Cleveland is the American city that had the most direct ties to the Wiener Werkstätte in terms of students and teachers). Kuhn's *Das Wasser* toured America in the *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*, which stopped at several venues in 1928-1929. It started at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, then traveled to the major museums in the cities of Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Cleveland, Baltimore, Detroit, Newark, and Pittsburgh. Kuhn's edition exhibits minor differences in glazing and modeling that suggest distinct mood swings. The term "handmade" might seem to be misleading as a way to describe *Das Wasser* because it was molded, but all of Eva Zeisel's and Edith Heath's plates and bowls required attentive skilled hands in their casting, press molding, or jiggering. Automated ceramic production was not realized until decades later. Some of Zeisel's work, like the museum service that debuted at the Museum of Modern Art as America's first undecorated all-white porcelain, had a horrendously high waste rate: casting can be difficult and the forms require tender handling.

The discrepancies between these techniques are not as important as a nuanced appreciation of the value of clay work and the peculiarities of its art status in relation to methods and conditions of production. The celebration of wheel-thrown work by the *Syracuse Ceramic National* at its founding in 1932 was a historical moment that reveals the complexity of the terms and artistic aspirations. Potters using the wheel in the 1940s, such as Mary Scheier (1908–2007) and Minnie Negoro (1919–1998), received the Gump Award for "best ceramic design suitable for mass production": there was a hope, perhaps overly optimistic, to put these unique wares into production. Scheier, born Mary Goldsmith in Salem, Virginia, attended the Art Students League and Parsons School of Design in New York City as well as Parsons in Paris before she married Edwin Scheier. They began to make ceramics together when he was appointed director of the Tennessee Valley Authority Art Center. In regard to a later 1947 prize-winning mustard-yellow tea set, the director of the Syracuse Museum wrote, "Several people like the shape but do not care for the color. I do hope that we will be successful in getting the Gump prize award pieces mass produced at long last." Anna Olmsted was probably pleased by the accommodating tone of Scheier's response; the artist was "glad to make the coffee set in other colors" and scribbled below "PS. It would be wonderful to see the coffee set reproduced!"

In 1949, *The New Yorker* praised Negoro's work: "Unlike most such enterprises, which appear to be on the embarrassing verge of breaking into folk dances, this place is one of great elegance. Here one can see the beautiful, modest table ceramics of Minnie Negoro in forms, hues, and textures that are a joy," the urbane periodical snickered in considering shops on Manhattan's Madison Avenue and 57th Street. The article praised Edith Heath's "astonishing feeling of spontaneity and freedom of forms," Eva Zeisel's "weird salt and pepper shaker," Gertrud and Otto Natzler's "rarefied" work, and Marguerite Wildenhain's "imagination, freshness, and invariable honesty in craftsmanship." All of these limited editions were assessed as food for critical thought.

The celebration of the potter's wheel was not merely romantic. Americans skilled in throwing were sent overseas in the 1940s as part of international development efforts. In 1946, the Puerto Rican Development Company hired Mary Scheier along with her husband Ed, to work on "organizing ceramic industry." Glen Lukens went to Haiti in 1945 with the same goal. Even if the Scheiers admitted

Figure 14: Toshiko Takaezu, Teapot*, 1960, stoneware, h: 6", Collection of The Takaezu Studio, Quakertown, New Jersey, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

that they had "learned their craft from the natives of North Carolina," there was a sense that their skill set and outlook remained relevant and central to "Operation Bootstrap" in Puerto Rico. They had studied the wheel while affiliated with a ceramic engineering laboratory connected to the Tennessee Valley Authority.[14] Mary Risley (1926–2000), a Cranbrook graduate of 1951, went to the Philippines for ten months as part of the United Nations Technical Assistance Program in 1952. These efforts had a degree of self-awareness in that they looked back to the Spanish colonial occupation centuries earlier as times when brick and tile began to be made locally. They denounced the importation of sheet metal as a recent degradation of construction materials and techniques. Risley perceived a need to introduce Western artists because the "ancient tool, the potter's wheel, is still unknown to most" in the Philippines. Establishing a school with ten wheels and a wood-fired kiln, and attempting to formulate stoneware and glazes from local materials were intended as humanitarian efforts. The technology of the wheel was far from obsolete educationally.

Among ceramic designers who did excel in industry, Edith Heath kept her wheel nearby to develop new forms. In the 1960s, when her Sausalito factory was well established, Wedgwood invited Heath to collaborate on a line, and she made most of her trials on her wheel. The ware was expected to be placed in production

Figure 15: Karen Karnes, Teapot*, 1952, stoneware, h: 6-3/4", gift of the artist, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1952.8, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

eventually using factory methods such as roller-molding, casting, and jiggering. Heath's forms and glazes remain desirable and in production today. Earlier women had chartered important American factories, most notably Maria Longworth Nichols Storer's Rookwood Pottery (est. 1880) and Mary Chase Perry Stratton's Pewabic Pottery (est. 1903). While these were still active in the 1930s, a more likely exemplar for Edith Heath was Nathalie Krebs's Saxbo pottery and other Scandinavian firms that favored oven-to-table stoneware in vibrant but soothing colors, for informal dining. The aesthetic of these urbane-rustic wares relied on the appearance of suggesting handicraft and emphasizing communal feasting.

O Pioneers! juxtaposes wheel-thrown, jiggered, and molded work by Ruth Gowdy McKinley (1931–1981), Jayne Van Alstyne (born 1923), Joan Jockwig (later Joan Pearson Watkins) (1924–2013), and Gertrud Vasegaard (1913–2007), proving that the field was lively and that the techniques of art, design, and craft are not mutually exclusive. Chronologically, the exhibition concludes with work by Karen Karnes and Toshiko Takaezu, and a comparison of their teapots demonstrates that wheelwork can be brainy and bold (figs. 14 and 15). After throwing vessels vertically, the forms were laid down on their sides. No single tool makes work. Gertrude Vasegaard's work manufactured in a factory, Bing & Grøndahl, illustrates that virtuosic throwing on the wheel was an art in factories, too.

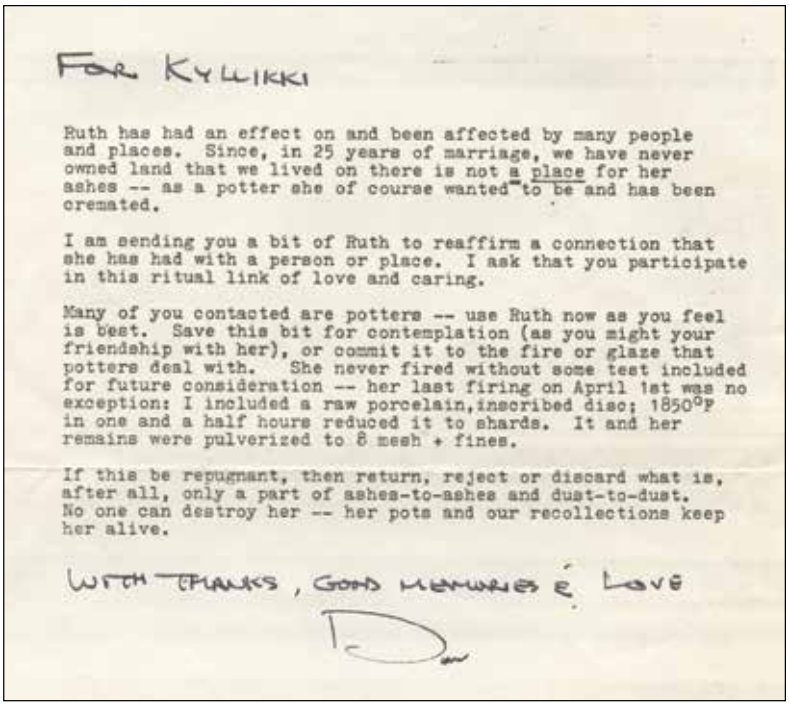
As part of the educational system of Alfred University, women were trained in industrial methods as if they too, like Risley's students in the Philippines, might establish cottage industries. Several Alfred graduates went on to work for Design-Technics, a New York City-based firm, where prototyping on the wheel remained practical as a design method. If the integration of the wheel into the Philippines seems strained, so too was its use at Alfred.

Although Charles Harder has been pigeonholed as an advocate of education who focused on design and industrial production at the expense of art, he fought hard to maintain the wheel in the school's curriculum with the university administrators of his day who wanted mass-production to be the sole goal. Harder had first gained exposure to ceramics at Jane Adams's Hull-House, the settlement school in Chicago where he was taught by another Alfred alumna, Myrtle Meritt French (1886–1973). Harder was not a pure product of any one pedagogical system and appreciated both Beaux-Arts and Bauhaus ideals. Looking backward in 1958, he remembered the struggle "to state the kind of principles and precepts which would make it possible for us at Alfred to teach good hand thrown pottery [*sic*] and the rigmarole and techniques of industrial mold and model making and white ware production without creating conflict and confusion in the students mind".[15] Alfred maintained "kickwheel and 'hand throwing' as teaching media" in addition to industrial design.

Student work made at Alfred by Vivika Heino (1910–1995), Jockwig, Negoro, Van Alstyne, and Gowdy McKinley illustrates the degree of virtuosity that students attained who were pushed to be competent in the complex exercises of fusing molded and wheel-thrown forms. Negoro might be known today as a thrower of unique studio ware, but she "jiggered plates of all sizes" and learned to do so at Alfred. Women were involved in

Figure 16: Kyllikki Salmenhaara, Bottle*, 1955, stoneware, h: 11-1/4", gift of Jenny Floch, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 2002.63, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

the technology of pottery on multiple levels. Van Alstyne collaborated with Susan Harnly Peterson, a classmate, on plans for wheels and also kilns. Their "dandy potter's wheel" shows women active in mechanical issues in a way that has rarely been suggested. Jockwig later had her own weekly half-hour television program on KQED Channel 9 in San Francisco called *Design Workshop* during which she demonstrated ceramic techniques.



FOR KYLLIKKI

Ruth has had an effect on and been affected by many people and places. Since, in 25 years of marriage, we have never owned land that we lived on there is not a place for her ashes -- as a potter she of course wanted to be and has been cremated.

I am sending you a bit of Ruth to reaffirm a connection that she has had with a person or place. I ask that you participate in this ritual link of love and caring.

Many of you contacted are potters -- use Ruth now as you feel is best. Save this bit for contemplation (as you might your friendship with her), or commit it to the fire or glaze that potters deal with. She never fired without some test included for future consideration -- her last firing on April 1st was no exception: I included a raw porcelain, inscribed disc; 1850°F in one and a half hours reduced it to shards. It and her remains were pulverized to 8 mesh + fines.

If this be repugnant, then return, reject or discard what is, after all, only a part of ashes-to-ashes and dust-to-dust. No one can destroy her -- her pots and our recollections keep her alive.

WITH THANKS, GOOD MEMORIES & LOVE

Figure 17: Letter from Donald Lloyd McKinley to Kyllikki Salmenhaara, 1981. Kyllikki Salmenhaara archive of The Aalto University ARTS Archive.

While much has been made of Bernard Leach and Marguerite Wildenhain as educational influences in the United States, the approach of Finland's Kyllikki Salmenhaara (1915–1981), who was in residence in Alfred in 1956, was closely aligned to the athletic breadth in technical mastery fostered by Harder. Salmenhaara wanted a student to be able to throw a teapot body and then cast the lid and spout, or jigger a cup and then pull a handle. The mastery of technique was intended to eliminate confusion about whether ceramicists should aim to live in either a machine age or a primitive one. She maintained a studio at Arabia and taught ceramics at the university level in Helsinki at the invitation of Kaj Franck. Salmenhaara taught utility ware but also threw art vases in heavy grog; she never aspired to any one right way (fig. 16). She befriended Maria Martinez as well as numerous potters who came to Finland on Fulbright fellowships. When potter Ruth Gowdy McKinley died prematurely, her will instructed her survivors to cremate her body and then dispose of her ashes by sending them out to fellow potters—including Salmenhaara in Helsinki—with the expectation that McKinley would live on in an afterlife of sorts as a range of pottery (fig. 17). Metaphors of transcendence and metamorphosis might be right under our lips as we drink tea, proving McKinley's point that "My pots are quiet and simple. They are sometimes lost in the bombastic statements in exhibitions."

If Karnes and Takaezu seem to be two monumental women ceramicists of the last quarter century who embody the binary opposition between functional ware and art, think again. We have yet to realize how such reductive categorization might inhibit our understanding of the ways that they are intertwined. Takaezu's towering *Tamarind* and Karnes's production of sinks, seating, and stoves in the 1960s are easy to label as craft but also merit relabeling as Surreal Craft (figs. 18 and 19). These are uncanny artifacts when they operate in the domestic arena. These are artists who eschewed simple notions of beauty to challenge their times. Avant-garde decorative art remains a worthwhile trajectory—from Robineau's creation of her own crematory urn, now on permanent display in the Everson, to Carol Janeway's chess set and ring, to Takaezu's defamiliarization of organic form into a precarious non-vase—once we begin to think in terms of specific objects and move away from canons and pre-established modes of categorization.

Conclusion: Who Is and Is Not a Pioneer?

While most ceramicists might associate *O Pioneers!* with the titles of Michael Cardew's publications—he began to refer to his work in Abuja as "Pioneer Pottery" in 1956—similarly misguided colonial ventures were undertaken earlier by Mary Scheier and Mary Risley, among others.[16] If the seminal text *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936) by Nikolaus Pevsner informs the way much of art history has been written as a succession of men of genius disrupting traditions and convention, this exhibition's title instead invokes Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* (1913), a psychologically complex narrative where women face a heterogeneous modernity and struggle to cooperate with, not command, the world, much as Fosdick instructed. Cather's heroine thinks to herself that she ought to mind her responsibility to the land and her family's farm, and forgo the delights of Chicago: "A pioneer should have imagination, should be able to enjoy the idea of things more than the things themselves." Most of these women ceramicists deferred other life choices in focused pursuit to be a professional, not yet knowing what futures they might expect. Testing their mettle, often without a safety net, they lived more expansively and freely in their creative work than in the villages and cities where they physically resided.

This exhibition documents a discomforting fact. Although there is a popular misconception that the feminist movement in the late twentieth century transformed opportunities and redressed gender inequity, the number of prominent women exhibiting as artists and employed as ceramic educators in the United States in the twenty-first century is only recapturing stature once held. We ought to recognize this legacy. The Robineau memorial exhibition organized at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1929 was the first time that an American cultural institution so dignified a woman ceramic artist with a solo retrospective, and the second to be honored by the Metropolitan was Betty Woodman in 2006, happily while she was still alive.

Figure 18: Toshiko Takaezu, Tamarind*, circa 1960, stoneware, h: 35", Collection of Peter Russo, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

Women artists have received museum recognition spottily, often due to a persevering curator or radical trustee. Awareness of this fact and of the quality of this work will, perhaps, change the flow of our "art worlds." As Cather wrote in *The Song of the Lark*, presciently, "Every artist makes himself born. It is very much harder than the other time, and longer." She was not thinking of the ways that a cultural institution turns with the grace of an encumbered oil tanker, or of the number of times a curator or art historian sheepishly awakened, re-sensitized by the sudden "discovery" of a woman artist who had been lurking in plain sight for years. This exhibition is intended to be the third or fourth time these women artists and their artistry are reborn, when a student sees them as entirely fresh and inspiring, and the cycle of generation and regeneration begins again, unencumbered by prejudice or amnesia, borne aloft by enthusiasm, conviction, and direct perception.

Figure 19: Karen Karnes hearth in Jack Lenor Larsen's Round House, Long Island, New York, made circa 1964. Courtesy of the Bergsma family, photo by author.

[1] Author's conversations with Martin Chodos, 11 October 2012; Herbert Cohen, 5 January 2015; and Val Cushing, 20 May 2012.

[2] Deirdre L. Bibby, *Augusta Savage and the Art Schools of Harlem,* Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, 1988.

[3] Cheryl Buckley, *Potters and Paintresses: Women Designers in the Pottery Industry 1870-1955*, Women's Press, 1990; Cheryl Buckley, "'Quietly Fine'/Quietly Subversive," *Women Designers in the USA, 1900-2000*, ed. P. Kirkham, Bard Graduate Center, 2000; Moira Vincentelli, *Women and Ceramics*, Manchester University Press, 2000.

[4] Elissa Auther, *String, Felt, Thread and the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art,* University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

[5] Letter from Olmsted to Atherton, 16 February 1933, Everson Museum of Art Ceramic Archive, Syracuse, as cited in Cheryl Buckley, "Subject of History? Anna Wetherill Olmsted and the Ceramic National Exhibitions in 1930s USA," *Art History 514*.

[6] Howard Becker, *Art Worlds,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

[7] William Hull, *21st Ceramic National,* Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, 1961, 5.

[8] See Victoria Jenssen, *The Art of Carol Janeway* (forthcoming). My appreciation to the author for sharing her research and manuscript.

[9] Correspondence from Marion Fosdick to Evelyn Tennyson Openhym, New York State College of Ceramics Archives, Scholes Library.

[10] Author's conversation with William Daley, 15 March 2014.

[11] Ulysses G. Dietz, *Great Pots,* Newark Museum, 2003, 25.

[12] Lida Rose McCabe, "Rise of American China Painting," *The Art World* vol. 2, no. 1 (April 1917): 92-93.

[13] Dorothea Liebes, "Chairman, The Jury," *8th Annual National Ceramic Exhibition*, 1939, Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, 1939, np.

[14] Elaine Levin, "Pioneers of Contemporary American Ceramics: Laura Andreson, Edwin and Mary Sheier," *Ceramics Monthly* 24, (May 1976): 31-36.

[15] Annotations added by Harder in 1958 to a 1942 article. See Charles Harder, "Functional Design," *Bulletin of the American Ceramic Society* vol. 21, no. 8 (August 15, 1942): 174-176, in New York State College of Ceramics Archives, Scholes Library.

[16] Elaine Levin's series in *Ceramics Monthly* in 1975-1976 used the title "Pioneers of Contemporary American Ceramics" too, but the phrase did not stay in circulation.

Facing page: Marion Lawrence Fosdick, Vase, *mid-century, h: 6-1/4", Museum Purchase, Roger D. Corsaw Collection, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1995.212, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

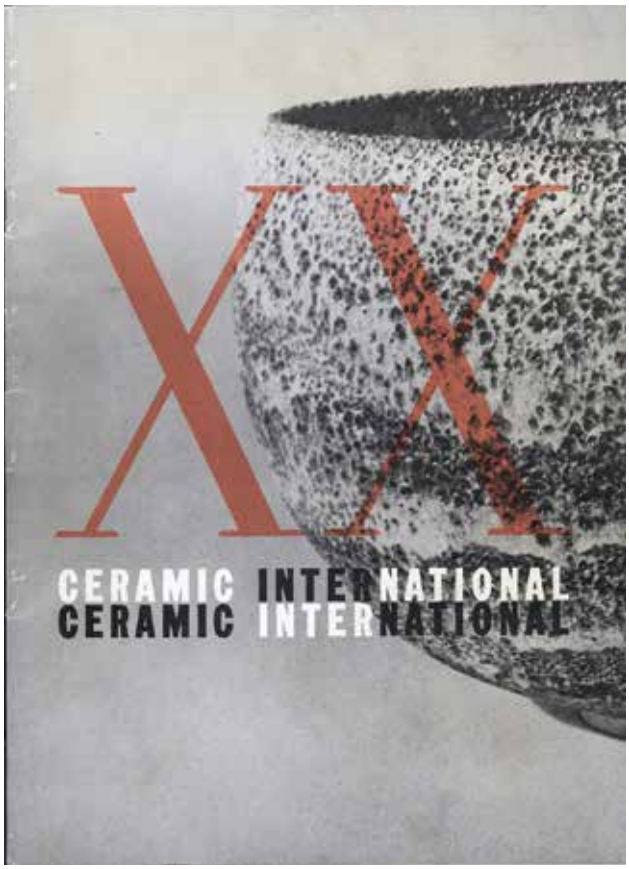
Pushing the Boundaries: Anna Wetherill Olmsted

Cheryl Buckley

Anna Wetherill Olmsted (1888–1981) was an influential figure in U.S. ceramics, but what do we know of her? She wasn't a maker of pots, nor a theorist. Rather, she was a "mover and shaker." A combination of administrator, educator, promoter, and curator, she made things happen in the field that she was passionate about: ceramics. Her key legacies were the influential *Ceramic National* exhibitions between 1932 and 1941, and the Everson Museum in Syracuse. Defining and shaping both with distinction, her contribution to the development of ceramics in the U.S. was exceptional. Her activities in exhibition organization and curation showcased American ceramics to the rest of the world. The *Ceramic National* exhibitions that began in Syracuse, New York, in 1932 were both competition and exhibition. The competition aimed to encourage new work in ceramics (sculpture, craft, and design) and to highlight the activities of new potters, while the exhibition functioned to improve public taste on the one hand and the status of ceramics as a creative activity on the other. The brainchild of Olmsted, Director of the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, the exhibitions were begun initially to continue the legacy of the influential Arts and Crafts ceramicist Adelaide Alsop Robineau (1865–1929) in pioneering new developments in ceramics; however, by the end of the 1930s, they had become the showcase for new work in ceramics in the U.S. Yet, surprisingly, the history of the *Ceramic National* exhibitions and the activities of Olmsted have received little attention. To theorize, this was due to the facts that she was firstly a woman and secondly a curator. She wasn't herself creative, but like patrons, collectors, and curators, she was part of an influential, knowledgeable social and cultural matrix that linked the *Ceramic National* exhibitions, local and regional art, and cultural institutions. Her activities in exhibition promotion and curation contributed to a fundamental florescence in the field of ceramics in the U.S. in the 1930s and 1940s. Olmsted's name might not be lodged in the ceramic field's consciousness in the same manner as Beatrice Wood, Maija Grotell, Eva Zeisel, or Karen Karnes, but her power resides in the vision of the *Ceramic Nationals* as a golden age of patronage.[1]

A characteristic of ceramics in the U.S. in the 1930s was the blurring of boundaries between art/sculpture, industrial design, and craft. Individuals often worked across the range of ceramic practice. This breaking down of rigid boundaries provided the preconditions for creative practice in ceramics, putting the U.S. at the forefront in this medium after the Second World War. The *Ceramic National* exhibitions were the hothouse for this in the 1930s as Olmsted and her collaborators created a context within which diverse approaches to ceramics were encouraged and given institutional support. Exhibitors during the 1930s included those who were increasingly interested in the formal, sculptural qualities of ceramics and keen to explore materials and glazes as much if not more so than the processes of vessel-making, such as Edris Eckhardt (1910–1998) and Waylande Gregory (1905–1971). Olmsted was equally committed to displaying vessels of one sort or another, as well as exhibiting indigenous pottery-making traditions and celebrating developments in both craft and technical processes; hers was a remarkably broad vision.

Olmsted's pivotal role in the world of ceramics in 1930s America included New Deal committee work and her directorship of the museum. Geographically, her activities took her from Syracuse to New York City. Her professional persona was shaped by New Deal thinking about the role



XX Ceramic International*, Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, 26 October - 7 December 1958. Special Collections, Scholes Library, New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University.*

and purpose of museums. In fact, she was a Roosevelt-appointed delegate to the International Exposition in Paris in 1937.

At the same time that Olmsted was closely in touch with many influential figures in the world of ceramics, Charles Harder, Arthur E. Baggs, Carleton Atherton, Gertrude Herdle, Felix Payant, and probably most importantly, Charles Binns, she was also cultivating significant national cultural leaders as jurors, from weaver and entrepreneur Dorothea Liebes to curator Richard F. Bach of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Olmsted also maintained excellent relationships with local industrial concerns, from the Onondaga Pottery to International Business Machines.

Olmsted was a demanding and exacting personality, and it is apparent in reading archival papers at the Everson Museum of Art (formerly Syracuse Museum of Fine Art) that she was single-minded and unflinching in achieving her objectives. She rarely hesitated in attempting to gain support from the "great and the good" for her projects. She was confident and determined in her assessment of quality in ceramics. She was concerned with the "art" status of ceramics and clay as an artistic material, and she contributed to the fundamental reassessment of the medium after the Second World War. Arguably this led to the international preeminence of American ceramics from the 1950s onward as the conventions of ceramics—form, surface, decoration, and practice—were systematically challenged. Her ability to fuse and defuse diverse impulses and pressures—forces as potent as the commitment to design for industry and the burgeoning ideal of the museum as a community art center—as well as her ability to guide a meaningful institution through the years of the Great Depression with a decimated municipal budget remain relevant achievements today.

[1] This essay is an abbreviated version of Cheryl Buckley, "Subject of History? Anna Wetherill Olmsted and the Ceramic National Exhibitions in 1930s USA," *Art History* vol. 28, no. 4 (September 2005): 497-523. See note 3 in the introductory essay for more citations to Professor Buckley's publications, pioneering in their own right.

Adelaide Alsop Robineau and the Birth of Studio Craft Ideals

Elisabeth Agro

In the history of American studio ceramics, Adelaide Alsop Robineau (1865–1929) is a pivotal figure, and rightly so.[1] Her career as an artist spanned several movements in art such as Art Nouveau and Art Deco, but her work is most firmly associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement.[2] This association is due in part to the majority of her recognition being attached to her role as publisher of *Keramic Studio*, a popular magazine that focused on china painting, pottery manufacture, and related topics, and her early output as a potter. Further exploration of her work and actions indicate that she was much more than the ceramic poster child of the Arts and Crafts period. Robineau was an archangel, heralding the American studio craft movement to come.

Adelaide Alsop Robineau, Vase*, 1928, stoneware, h: 7-1/2", Collection Everson Museum of Art, Museum Purchase, PC 30.4.62, photo by Dave Revette.*

The shift in taste for pottery extolled by the judges at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris was the death knell for china painting's inclusion in ceramic exhibitions.[3] Robineau, heeding this, warned her readers in *Keramic Studio* that they would "do well to bear this principle in mind, and remember that their work will never have a foremost place among really artistic ceramic production until they become potters."[4] Do not think for a second that these words were simply a call to arms to her readers from that of a general on the sidelines! Robineau fancied the idea of creating her own forms in porcelain. Putting her porcelain blanks to the side, she ran as far away as possible from her china painting past. By 1901, she sullied her hands with clay under the guidance of potter Charles Volkmar (1841–1914). Fueled by Taxile Doat's circa 1902 treatise *Grand Feu Ceramics*, an explanation of methods for high-fired porcelain, Robineau pledged herself to porcelain as her chosen material. Needing to acquire fundamental ceramic skills, her resolve was bolstered by a summer school class in 1902 under the venerable Charles F. Binns (1857–1934), who had just started the New York School of Clayworking and Ceramics at Alfred University in 1900.[5] With much labor and intensity, she became extremely skilled. By 1911, her famed *Scarab Vase* (1910), also called *The Apotheosis of the Toiler*, won the grand prize at the Turin International Exposition, establishing her place firmly in American ceramics history.

In most scholarship, Robineau's *Scarab Vase* has defined her output, but it is not entirely representative. She was heavily influenced by the forms, ornament, and glazes found in Asian ceramics and, like other potters from this period, Robineau preached the principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement—harmony, simplicity, rhythm, truth to material—all in the service of beauty. Although her ceramic output holds true to the commitment to beauty and harmony, one can see a shift in her later work toward Modernism and abstraction.[6]

Having reported on the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in Paris, which introduced the style known as Art Deco to the world, Robineau, like many artists, was influenced by this highly reductive style of clean lines and geometric spare shapes.[7] *Vase* (1928) and *Unfinished Vase* (1928) are superb examples of Robineau's shift toward Modernism. An outgrowth of Art Nouveau, Art Deco was all about geometric forms and direct expression. *Vase*, an ovoid vessel with elongated shoulders and a short neck, epitomizes a cool austerity. The finely executed incised bands at the neck and base, and the band of stylized incised leaf motifs and Vitruvian scrolls on the foot of the vase demonstrate a resistance to engulfing the entire surface with ornate carving. This vessel has an elongated shape, which is simple in form and has a graceful profile. Her use of a black matte glaze, so straightforward and minimal, completes the effect.

Adelaide Alsop Robineau, Unfinished Vase with Base and Lid*, 1928, porcelain, h: 14-1/8", Collection Everson Museum of Art, Museum Purchase, PC 30.4.87 a-c, photo by Dave Revette.*

Unfinished Vase is a missile-shaped form and is quite unusual among her ceramic output. It is hard to discern what Robineau intended for this vessel's final surface decoration

and glaze. Here we see her further use of incised concentric rings on the lid, and, although seemingly unfinished, the treatment on the rim suggests she intended it to have a flared edge. The thin, stylized, linear arched fronds incised on the surface of this streamlined shape, contrasted with thick, geometric arches and bands at its base, indicate Robineau's firm foothold in the style of Art Deco. There is no doubt that her work was continuously shifting as she moved into her mid-career.

Sadly, Robineau succumbed to cancer and died in 1929 at the tender age of 64. It is imperative that we pull back and consider her journey as a ceramic artist in total. Her late start as a ceramic practitioner, at the age of 37, suggests she found her stride in the early 1920s and that 1928 might have been another turning point. Where would her journey have taken her had she lived a longer life?

[1] Born Adelaide Beers Alsop in Middletown, Connecticut, her family became itinerant between the east coast and the west due to her father's lack of business acumen. Her family life informed her need to take up a trade in order to support the education of her younger siblings. Much of the literature on Adelaide Alsop Robineau covers the story of her childhood and her beginnings as a china painter. For a fuller read on this topic, please consult Peg Weiss, *Adelaide Alsop Robineau: Glory in Porcelain*, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, in association with the Everson Museum of Art, 1981. Refer also to Thomas Piché, Jr., and Julia A. Monti's *Only an Artist: Adelaide Alsop Robineau, American Studio Potter*, Syracuse, New York: Everson Museum of Art, 2006.

[2] Thomas Piché, Jr., "Introduction" in Thomas Piché, Jr., and Julia A. Monti, *Only an Artist: Adelaide Alsop Robineau, American Studio Potter*, Syracuse, New York: Everson Museum of Art, 2006, 1.

[3] The facts that frame this paragraph are taken from Thomas Piché, Jr., "Adelaide Alsop Robineau: A Life," in Thomas Piché, Jr., and Julia A. Monti, *Only an Artist: Adelaide Alsop Robineau, American Studio Potter*, Syracuse, New York: Everson Museum of Art, 2006, 8.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ulysses G. Dietz, "Art Pottery 1880–1920," in Barbara Perry, ed., *American Ceramics: The Collection of Everson Museum of Art*, New York, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1989, 63, 65, and 91. The year of her summer school class is suggested in footnote 18 found in Peg Weiss, *Adelaide Alsop Robineau: Glory in Porcelain*, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, in association with the Everson Museum of Art, 1981, 206.

[6] Piché and Monti, 15.

[7] Ibid, 16.

Edris Eckhardt's *Earth*: Portrait of a Modern Heroine

Elisabeth Agro

Edris Eckhardt (1905–1998), born Edythe Aline Eckhardt, graduated in 1931 with a diploma in sculpture from Cleveland School of Art.[1] As a senior, she worked at Cowan Pottery designing small figurines for knops on jars. At graduation, Eckhardt was a finalist for the Herman N. Matzen award, which sent the prizewinner for a year of study abroad. The committee selected a male student over Eckhardt, since women were regarded as likely to squander opportunity and opt for the role of wife and mother in lieu of artist. Not intending to let sexism deprive her of future opportunities, Eckhardt changed her first name from Edythe Aline to Edris, a name she considered to be androgynous. Later in life, she stated, "It's been a lucky name to have."[2]

Many artists from Cleveland School of Art were directly and indirectly influenced by the Wiener Werkstätte in Austria, which embraced modeling directly with clay in a lively and bold manner, vibrant color, and allegorical figuration.[3] Like other distinguished sculptors of this era such as Russell Barnett Aitken, Viktor Schreckengost, and Edward Winter, Eckhardt's early work shares these characteristics. One of her teachers, Julius Mihalik, had trained in Vienna.[4] While it was easier for men such as Aitken, Schreckengost, and Winter to cross the Atlantic to study in Vienna, Eckhardt made her own opportunity by going to New York City in 1932 to work with Alexander Archipenko, the Ukrainian Modernist who had immigrated

Edris Eckhardt, Earth*, 1939, earthenware, h: 13", Collection Everson Museum of Art, gift of Dr. Paul Nelson, PC 84.30, photo by Dave Revette.*

to the United States after a decade in Paris.[5] This experience taught her about abstraction and reducing the form to principal geometric shapes, and exploring mass and space through concave and perforated forms. The impact of this experience reveals itself in her later ceramic sculptures, which are quite a departure from the work created by her Viennese-influenced colleagues.

Given the economic impact of the Depression and the need to make work that was affordable and desired by the populace, Eckhardt, like many other artists, placed her own artistic ambitions to the side. An important figure during the Depression, she headed the Sculpture and Ceramics Division, Cleveland District, Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project (which became known as the Works Project Administration) from 1936 to 1941, planning architectural murals and sculpture for schools

and libraries.[6] She taught at Cleveland School of Art from 1933 to 1961 and Western Reserve University from 1942 to 1955, published 26 articles for *Ceramics Monthly*, gained fame for her jewelry, and even was the focus of a General Electric television show on sculpture in 1948.[7] With regard to her career in ceramics, she was accomplished. She won prestigious awards at Cleveland's annual *May Show*, exhibited at the Syracuse Museum's Ceramic Nationals, and was widely respected.[8]

Edris Eckhardt at work. Undated. Courtesy of the Everson Museum.

Outside of her work produced as part of the WPA, Eckhardt's most notable contribution to the field can be illustrated in a selection of her sculptures that spans the years 1939 to 1947. *Earth* (1939), an allegorical sculpture in a neo-classical style, places Eckhardt directly amidst her many colleagues, both male and female, who were making similarly styled and themed work.[9] Life-sized in scale, *Earth* was produced for the New York World's Fair, shown in the 1939 *8th Ceramic National*, San Francisco's 1939 Golden Gate Fair, and traveled on exhibit in Scandinavia.[10] Well received as *Earth* was, Eckhardt had yet to come into her own voice in her ceramic work. Barbara Perry states in *The Diversions of Keramos, 1925–1950* that the style of this work and that of her contemporaries was sought out at this time and largely associated with projects attached to the WPA.

By the mid-1940s, she made a distinct break from neo-classical style but the grip of the Wiener Werkstätte style is still evident in her work. Whereas this Viennese-style work of the 1930s, as stated by Perry, is that of "injected humor" and light-heartedness, the demeanor of Eckhardt's work changes to that of strife and melancholy. Through her sculpture, she shares her raw emotions and personal views of life around her. *Exodus* (1945) depicts a mother and children forced from their homeland in Poland by the invading German army.[11] *Painted Mask* (1946), *Introspection* (1947), and *Harlequin Dance* (1949) at first glance seem to evoke gaiety because they depict colorful clowns but in fact are dark and foreboding.[12] In each, she exaggerates and elongates the features of her subject, her husband Arthur Purtill. Insofar as they depict a sad man who was tubercular, alcoholic, and abusive, these are windows into her unhappy life.[13] It is here that Eckhardt evokes the Wiener Werkstätte to inject it with real life—her life—and goes beyond the ordinary decorative object. *Déchet* (1947), French for waste or loss, moves conclusively toward abstraction. Here we see the influence of Archipenko; the female figure depicted as a shell, concave spaces replacing the face, breasts, and abdomen.[14] It is a statement perhaps about her losses as woman, wife, and mother, and what life denied her both personally and professionally. There is beauty in its honesty and rawness in contrast to the saccharine fairy tales that many genres of ceramic figurines inhabit.

Eckhardt created large and serious work and purposefully left behind the "amusing or just decorative."[15] Her approach earned local, national, and international awards,

honors, and placement of her work into important museum collections.[16] She also won acclaim for her glass statuary and use of *pâte de verre*. Created at a turning point in her career, *Earth* (1939) portrays a bold woman with strong features who radiates self-confidence. There is some ambiguity as to whether Eckhardt intended a mythological reference in *Earth* or the coif of a more contemporary woman. One could even say Eckhardt's *Earth* is a self-portrait, for the almond-shaped eyes, position of the eyebrows, broad nose, and style of its hair are strikingly similar to her own features. By 1939, Eckhart was in the prime of her long career as an artist. *Earth*'s self-assurance may reflect Eckhardt's own work ethic and determination, and foretell her importance in the field of mid-century studio ceramics, leaving no doubt that *Earth* is a modern heroine.

[1] The facts that frame this first paragraph are taken from Henry Adams, "Edris Eckhardt: An Artist's Life," *Edris Eckhardt: Visionary and Innovator in American Studio Ceramics and Glass,* Lakewood, Ohio: Cleveland Artists Foundation, 2006, 17.

[2] Ibid., 18.

[3] Barbara Perry, "American Ceramics 1920–1950," Barbara Perry, ed, *American Ceramics: The Collection of Everson Museum of Art,* New York: Rizzoli, 1989, 123.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Adams, 18.

[6] "Edris Eckhardt Chronology" in Adams, 46.

[7] Ibid., 46-47.

[8] Edris Eckhardt's American Craft Council's Research Service Craftsman Questionnaire, received 1 May 1961. Edris Eckhardt artist file, American Craft Council Archive, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

[9] Perry, 123-124.

[10] Adams, 20, and Perry, 135.

[11] Barbara Perry, "Edris Eckhardt (1907 [*sic*]–)." Ross Anderson and Barbara Perry, *The Diversions of Keramos: American Clay Sculpture,1925–1950*, 68.

[12] Ibid, 65-66.

[13] Adams, 28-30.

[14] Ross and Perry, 66-67.

[15] Adams, 31.

[16] "Edris Eckhardt Chronology and Selected Collections" and "Edris Eckhardt: An Artist's Life." in Adams, 46-48.

Gertrud Vasegaard: A Focused Intensity

Bodil Busk Laursen

Perhaps Denmark's greatest ceramic artist of the twentieth century, Gertrud Vasegaard (1913–2007), remained active until a few years prior to her death. Her life's work has left an indelible mark on the development and history of Danish ceramics for designers and studio practitioners alike. Summing up the impact of this artist and the character of her work is an impossible task in a short essay; nothing is easy that concerns such an outstanding and self-critical oeuvre.

A biography might describe the external conditions and aspects of the richness of Gertrud Vasegaard's creative life, but it will fail to capture the artistic and spiritual heights that lift her finest creations into the sphere of the unforgettable that only the greatest masters reach. Vasegaard's true character and importance can be approached only through careful appreciation of her works.

Gertrud Vasegaard was born on the Baltic island of Bornholm into the third generation of the Hjorth family of potters. Her grandfather founded the L. Hjorth Terracotta Manufactory on Bornholm, and she received her first experience with ceramics, decorating at the factory during 1927–1930. Vasegaard was in the first ceramics class to graduate from the School of Decorative Arts in Copenhagen, Denmark. Together with her sister and later in life with her daughter, both being accomplished ceramicists, she worked in her own studio for the main part of her active life, except for the years 1949–1959 when she worked in cooperation with the two major Danish porcelain factories, Bing & Grøndahl and the Royal Porcelain Factory.

Like many Danish ceramicists of the pre-war generation, she found it natural to work with ceramics intended for daily, practical use. Vasegaard's collaboration with the china factories was assumed from the outset of her educational and social context. Together with the highly skilled technicians in these factories, she developed new stoneware glazes that were transparent and shiny, unlike the traditional matte and non-transparent pottery. During this time, Gertrud Vasegaard also revolutionized the look and feel of the ceramic body, rejecting the white, shiny, perfect china clay in favor of warmer tones and a coarser texture.

Gertrud Vasegaard had had practically no experience with stoneware when she came to Bing & Grøndahl, but her employment there prompted an alteration in style. She preferred the clearer and more vitreous glazes through which the true essence of the clay could be perceived. A number of glazes were produced in response to her particular requirements, including a bright blue "clair-de-lune" and a greyish-green celadon. The latter, exemplifying Scandinavian Orientalism, Vasegaard used on a large bowl that was included in the *20th Ceramic International* organized by the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts a few years before it changed its name to the Everson Museum. The exhibition continued the tradition of a national competition, expanded that model to include a range of Western European artists, and successfully toured the country, with venues including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Smithsonian Institution. The Metropolitan's *Bulletin* declared "the studio ceramist is an artist-intellectual … nevertheless recognized by the ceramics industry." Scandinavian work received significant applause. Vasegaard threw her work on the wheel and decorated her bowl with white inlaid ornament carved into the body. The decoration is reminiscent of a seal, a

Gertrud Vasegaard, Teapot with Cup and Saucer*, 1956, manufactured by Bing and Grøndahl, porcelain, h: 8-1/2", gift of William E. Pitney, Collection of Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 2000.81 & .82, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

Japanese *mon* intended as a family cipher. The foot of the bowl bears the signatures of both Vasegaard and Bing & Grøndahl.

Gertrud Vasegaard's exploration of materials at Bing & Grøndahl resulted in her design of a porcelain tea set from 1955–1957. This service has a bright tone of warmth, broken only by the reddish-brown edges that have been painted with a ferrous oxide compound on unglazed body. The set consists of eight individually shaped items: the cups are round, the tea caddy is square, the teapot is hexagonal, and the cake dish octagonal, and yet together they form a harmonious whole. Gertrud Vasegaard threw all of the models herself, and in spite of its mass production, each single piece retained her touch. The tea set was produced in a more reduced scale until the mid-1980s.

The idea of making a blue and white dinnerware set occurred to Gertrud Vasegaard while she was working at the Bing & Grøndahl Manufactory, and in 1956 she showed a number of samples of related pieces with an underglaze blue ornament at the Danish Museum of Decorative Art (Designmuseum Danmark) in Copenhagen. The idea was carried into effect in collaboration with the Royal Porcelain Factory, resulting in the production of two sets, one painted in underglaze blue (Gemina) and one white with a stamped rhomboid ornamentation (Gemma) in 1962. All the models were thrown by Gertrud Vasegaard at her private studio, and she cut the ornament into the models of Gemma herself. At her request, the body was allowed to retain some of its natural impurities so that a slightly greyish and more distinctive characteristic was obtained. A third dinnerware set (Capella) came to light in 1975, produced in a light grey stoneware body mixed with

Gertrud Vasegaard, Bowl*, circa 1958, stoneware, h: 7", Collection Everson Museum of Art, Purchase Prize,* 20th Ceramic National*, circa 1958, PC 60.26, photo by Dave Revette.*

porcelain and without decoration. To compensate for the lack of decoration and to create a textural effect, iron was added to the glaze, appearing as small brown dots.

The 1956 tea set and the three services demonstrate the very best of Gertrud Vasegaard's ceramic characteristics, naturalness, strength, sensitivity, and great simplicity in forms and decoration. In these works, Vasegaard drew on her early inspiration, particularly the monochrome Chinese Sung ceramics, which she turned into her simultaneously timeless, Modernist, and classic sets with the complete unity of form, decoration, body, and glaze. She was well-read and highly interested in Oriental philosophy and culture, and some of her works from this period show inspiration from Korean and Chinese pottery.

In the 1950s, Gertrud Vasegaard was involved in the international breakthrough for "Danish Design." She was by then highly esteemed for her artistic work and skill and was awarded a gold medal at the Milan Triennale in 1957. But from the 1960s onwards, in her own studio, Vasegaard increased the sculptural simplicity and clarity of her unique cylinders, polygonal jars, and bowls, always in stoneware, until she had reached a deeply personal mastery of the perfect interaction of glaze and body as her basic theme. Her focus was on essential forms and geometric rhythm. During this period, Vasegaard also developed her rich repertoire and use of decoration into a personal signature. Her rhomboids, rectangles, and stripes came to influence younger ceramicists to the extent that they have almost become synonymous with Danish ceramics.

Throughout her long life, Gertrud Vasegaard strove with concentration and diligence, determination and clarity, driven by a clear focus and ignoring anything that might disturb her concentration. Through her life's work, this great ceramicist has left a rich legacy of ceramic works that will not cease to endow our world with spirit and beauty.

The Home and Studio of Lucie Rie: Museums and the "Wobble" of Authority

Matthew Partington

Lucie Rie's (1902–1995) small north London home at Albion Mews contained her workshop on the ground floor and her living space upstairs. In 1981, Janet Leach portrayed Rie as an urban potter bound by limited space to use an electric kiln and create raw-glazed, once-fired pots.[1] She describes someone happy to throw pots on the wheel whilst they talked and a cake baked in the oven upstairs. However, Rie's mixture of home and studio was of course not all cake-baking and chatting. The weaver Peter Collingwood was asked by Rie to make fabric to cover seats in the area where visitors waited. Collingwood was surprised to find she chose the most uncomfortable fabric possible: "…I wove something for her showroom downstairs where she didn't like people to linger in so it was specially woven with horsehair, with prickly horsehair so people wouldn't find it very comfortable to sit on for long."[2] The delineation between Rie's home and workshop was complex.

In room 143 of the magnificent ceramics galleries at the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) in London is a reconstruction of a corner of Lucie Rie's workshop (behind a large window-like glass screen). Two large kick-wheels dominate the space, which also features a shelving unit containing several of her finished pots, a radio, a typewriter, numerous tools, and a discarded apron (as if Rie has just nipped out). Part of the "Making Ceramics" gallery, the inclusion of the studio with examples of Rie's work does two things. It gives her prominence in the gallery and, therefore, importance in the minds of the museum visitor, and it places her firmly in the realm of maker and potter.[3] It is worth noting that part of gallery 143 is given over to a "functioning clay workshop, with a practising artist in residence."[4] This is a useful contemporary counterpoint to the Rie workshop, which in its embalmed state stands as emblematic of twentieth-century studio pottery practice.

Lucie Rie, Bowl*, circa 1974, porcelain, h: 3-1/2", Museum Purchase, Roger D. Corsaw Collection, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1992.154, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

The inclusion of a video about Rie on a screen beside the workshop reconstruction helps the visitor to connect with the real person hiding in the shadows of the reconstruction. The label beside the workshop's "window" states, "Following Rie's death in 1995, the contents of her studio were preserved. They have been used here to reconstruct a corner of her workshop." Walter Benjamin discussed the aura of art and how the "authority of the thing" "starts to wobble" in reproduction.[5] I would argue that Rie is not necessarily diminished by discussing her making processes but that to attempt to reconstruct her studio undermines her distinctive contribution as a creative practitioner. The difficulty in reconstructing an artist's studio (and the V&A acknowledge it as partial) is that an artist's studio makes little sense without the artist, but in Rie's case it also makes little sense without the rest of the house.

A retired V&A curator recalled in an interview how moving he found happening upon Rie's living room in the Imperial Furniture Museum in Vienna. Rie had lived in a house in Vienna, the interior of which was designed by the Modernist architect Ernst Plischke. When she fled Vienna in 1938, she had the rooms dismantled and eventually reconstructed in her London home. Upon her death, the interior was acquired by the Imperial Furniture Museum, returned to Vienna, and reconstructed in 1999 as an example of Plischke's work from the early part of the twentieth century. It was described in *The New York Times* as comprising "a compact and unadorned, yet highly refined, living room and bedroom with built-in bookcases and cupboards of walnut, along with coordinated walnut tables, stools, chairs and a bed."[6] The room was profoundly moving for the retired V&A curator in connecting him to the Albion Mews home where he used to sit with Rie and talk. In Vienna, the interior is as an example of Plischke's architecture and fits the context and purpose of the museum. In the V&A, the Rie workshop is unique and therefore may represent potters' studios in general in the mind of the visitor, but it is not clear what its inclusion is intended to tell us about Rie.

Those who were familiar with Rie's home and studio are better placed than I am to judge the efficacy of displaying part of her studio in a gallery about ceramic techniques. I would question how effective a reconstruction can be. I would argue that taking items from Rie's studio and placing them in the corner of a gallery about technique presents her and ceramics as driven by process. In trying to give the museum visitor an "authentic" peek behind the scenes of the potter's practice, Rie's personality, pots, and working environment are somewhat flattened by the all-encompassing focus on making.

[1] Janet Leach in John Houston, ed., *Lucie Rie: A Survey of Her Life and Work*, London: Craft Council, 1981, 30-32.

[2] Recording the Crafts, "Interview with Peter Collingwood," Copyright University of the West of England, Bristol.

[3] In my role as an oral historian interviewing craftspeople on video, I have frequently come across craftspeople who refused to be filmed making, as it would reduce them to a maker, somehow disqualifying them from the designation of "artist."

[4] Victoria & Albert Museum website page for gallery 143: http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/galleries/level-6/room-143-making-ceramics/

[5] Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Penguin Books, 1936, (translated in 2008 by J. A. Underwood), 7.

[6] Michael Wise, "Riches of the Hapsburgs Sent to the Attic," *The New York Times*, 15 October 2000.

Carol Janeway's "Fanciful" Doorknobs

Victoria Jenssen

Carol Janeway (1913–1989) received copious press coverage for her underglaze hand-decorated ceramic tiles starting in 1942, the year when she began to produce tiles and her work was first offered for sale by Georg Jensen, Inc., the prestigious emporium on Fifth Avenue.[2] *Life* magazine's 1945 feature "Carol Janeway Designs Fanciful Tiles" characterized her career as that of a successful tile-painter.[3] In fact, her repertory included chess sets, lidded jars, curtain tie-backs, jewelry, oversized ashtrays, and doorknobs, with few exceptions signed "Janeway" in a conspicuous place. Her commercial success was due largely to her creation of a "brand" that fused her playful motifs on ceramic wares with her charismatic personality and blonde good looks. She was a sophisticated world traveler, a photogenic former fashion model, and charmed interviewers with her New York society drawl. Georg Jensen marketed her and her ceramics through 1949 with in-house shows, a "Janeway Corner," press releases, advertisements, and museum loans.

Janeway slip-cast most items and decorated them using underglaze paints. A glossy clear glaze gave them a porcelain appearance, appropriate for luxury goods offered in the Georg Jensen store. The ceramic doorknobs were available in creamy white or in bright Fiesta Ware-type colors and were decorated with either finely-painted or sgrafitto motifs. As demand for Janeway ceramics grew early in her career, she hired other artists to execute her standard designs on tiles.

Twice in 1945, *The New Yorker* magazine's "On and Off the Avenue" column singled out Janeway's doorknobs for praise.[4] One author confessed, "I like her doorknobs best of all. They are $12 a pair [5] and I wouldn't blame the most confirmed nomad if he bought a set just in case he might someday have a door to put them on."[6] Their popularity extended to celebrities. One year, comedian Henry Morgan ordered many Janeway doorknobs as Christmas gifts for his friends.[7] To date, only two personalized knobs are known: one intended for fashion designer Sally Victor and the other for Hollywood television and film director Herbert Bayard Swope, Jr. Several Janeway knobs adorned the West 12th Street apartment of civil rights lawyer Philip Wittenberg and his wife, urban preservationist Ruth Wittenberg. To her sister, Audubon expert Mary Harwood, Janeway provided a set of oversized doorknobs with matching tile escutcheons for her light grey painted double doors in her Washington, Connecticut, home. The knobs and doorplates are bright cobalt blue with the designs—birds and bees—in gold overglaze.

While one could place custom orders, stock doorknobs bore her customary birds or animal motifs. Sly suggestive decorations included bedroom doorknobs depicting Eve, albeit as a bear, at the Tree of Knowledge. Her bloodshot baggy eye, perhaps indicative of a hangover, might be suitable for a bathroom. Entrance doorknobs might say "Welcome" while depicting a man's hand taking a woman's hand. Janeway's own door bore her favorite spider design.

Janeway's storytelling promoted interest and sales. In 1945, she told an interviewer, "metal doorknobs had been hard to get during the war so I introduced the color-decorated ceramic doorknob. It won't rust and it is not only attractive but pleasing to the touch of the hand."[8] It's a great story, yet they were very expensive, $12 a pair in 1945.

Carol Janeway, Birds and Bees Doorknob*, 1950, ceramics, diam: 3-1/4"*, Welcome Doorknob, Tree of Wisdom*, and* 3 Backgammon Checkers*, 1947, ceramic, Collection of Victoria Jenssen, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

Her doorknob fabrication method is documented in her 1950 book, *Ceramics and Potterymaking for Everyone*. The water-clear quality of the glaze, which gives the appearance of porcelain, is directly attributable to lead glaze. Janeway described it as an "Alfred University formula" that she called AL/101.[10] In order to decrease the number and expense of firings, Janeway had been applying lead glaze by spraying, not dipping, which was the safer method recommended by Bernard Leach.[11] By early 1950, a single notice announced her retirement: Leonard Lyons noted it in his syndicated Manhattan society column, "The Lyons Den," and gave lead-poisoning as the reason.[12]

The meteoric rise of Carol Janeway's ceramic career provides a fascinating case-history of a mid-century woman artist who networked into New York's commercial and artistic environments and whose business benefited from her social connections. She began her career decorating industrial tile "blanks" for the Georg Jensen store and anticipated that moneyed New Yorkers and far-flung recipients of the yearly Jensen mail-order catalogs would want her doorknobs either to adorn their own homes or to give as whimsical gifts. Her personality appealed to news columnists and magazine feature writers. Her youthful beauty magnified her exotic, wry intellectual presence. Her claims to be self-taught were exaggerated but intrigued audiences as much as her stories about living in Moscow and London. Many noted photographers made portraits of her, including Maya Deren working on assignment.[13] Her relationship with sculptor Ossip Zadkine widened her access to the exiled European artists living temporarily in New York during World War II, leading to her inclusion in the Surrealist chess exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1944.[14] She was, arguably, part of the New York City craft revival, regularly exhibiting in the New York Society of Ceramic Arts seasonal shows and once at America House in their 1945 tile exhibition.[15] Yet, she was also maligned by some who saw her as a mere illustrator with no deep attachments to clay.[16]

Now, as in 1945, it is hard to categorize Janeway as solely a commercial artist or as a Modernist, as a professional or an amateur. Her fancy and fanciful doorknobs embody her mastery of slip-casting and her witty visual vocabulary, and they continue to appeal.

[2] For recent discussions of the ceramic career of Carol Janeway, see Larry List, ed., "Carol Janeway: Chess Sets for Everyone," in *The Imagery of Chess Revisited,* New York: The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, 2004, 35, 89-92. This essay is drawn from the author's forthcoming book, *The Art of Carol Janeway*, Molasses Hill Press, 2015. When World War II interrupted the flow of Scandinavian imports to Georg Jensen, Inc., manager Frederik Lunning commissioned North American artists and craftsmen to fill the gap. Carol Janeway was one such artist, receiving her first career commission from Jensen's in February 1942 on the basis of two tiles she had shown their buyer.

[3] "Speaking of Pictures: Carol Janeway's Tiles Have Fanciful Designs," *Life* (23 July 1945), 12-16.

[4] "On and Off the Avenue," *The New Yorker* (11 August 1945), 50, and (1 December 1945), 100.

[5] In this essay I have corrected the price that was mistakenly reported as $21 a pair.

[6] "On and Off the Avenue," *The New Yorker* (11 August 1945), 50.

[7] John R. Walton, "Good Neighbors: The Nine Lives of Svelte Carol Janeway, Ceramist," *The Village Voice*, v. II, n. 7 (12 December 1956) 1,16.

[8] Margaret Mara, "Carol Janeway Tiles Are so Successful as Business the Army Has Asked the Artist for a Book on the Subject," *Brooklyn Eagle* (13 October 1945), 9.

[9] See www.dollartimes.com: "$1.00 in 1945 had the same buying power as $13.19 in 2015."

[10] Cooper Hewitt Museum inventory card for a tile, accession number 1947-68-1, states, "…Maker says glaze was developed at Alfred University and is known as "1O1" Glaze." To date, the formulation of "101 Glaze" is unknown. That glaze name is not recognizable to experts at the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University, including Val Cushing, a 1950s graduate. It is possible that Al 101 refers to the approximate molecular weight of alumina (Al2O3).

[11] Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book,* London: Transatlantic Arts, 1944 edition, 17th printing 1973, 150, n.1.; see also 147-148.

[12] Leonard Lyons, "Lyons Den," *New York Post*, 6 February 1950.

[13] Leo Lerman, then a writer at Condé Nast, commissioned his friend Maya Deren to complete two photographic assignments to accompany his articles on avant garde artists active in New York. The first article was "Before Band Wagons," which appeared in *Vogue* (1 October 1943), while the second assignment in 1944 was intended to document women artists working in Greenwich Village for his *Mademoiselle* magazine article, which never materialized.

[14] Although neither were Surrealists, Janeway and Zadkine were two of 32 chess-playing artists invited to participate in *The Imagery of Chess*, Julien Levy Gallery, 12 December 1944 to 31 January 1945. Janeway had been selling her slip-cast chess sets since 1943.

[15] *Tiles: Their Decorative and Functional Use*, an exhibition sponsored by the American Craftsmen's Educational Council, America House, 485 Madison Avenue, 25 October to 21 November 1945.

[16] "Thoughts on Tiles–An Aftermath," *Craft Horizons*, v. 5, n. 12 (February 1946), 12-15; "Craftsmen's Forum: Tiles Bring about an Interesting Discussion," *Craft Horizons*, v. 5, n. 13 (May 1946), 15; Carol Janeway, "Craftsmen's Forum: Letter to the Editor," *Craft Horizons*, v. 5, n. 13 (May 1946), 16.

Design-Technics

Jonathan O'Hea

Design-Technics was one of the most influential potteries of the post-war period. Never heard of them? You're not alone. The reason for this discrepancy is that for the majority of their 50 plus years in business they were strictly a "to the trade" pottery, meaning their wares were only available through interior decorators and architects. Initially founded as a craft school in the bohemian enclave of Greenwich Village, the humble beginnings of Design-Technics could not foretell its decades-long rise to prominence as a premier trade resource for everything from coffee mugs to curtain walls.

Design-Technics was founded as a craft school in 1940 by the husband and wife team of Lee and Samuel H. Rosen. An advertisement for the school offered "workshop courses for beginners and advanced students in ceramics, jewelry, metalry, sculpture and industrial design (Bauhaus approach)…and an intensive course in sculpture conducted by Ossip Zadkine." Zadkine was an exiled Russian sculptor of some note previously associated with the Cubist movement in Paris. Design-Technics operated as a school for approximately one year. The U.S. entrance into the war in December 1941 and the associated rationing of materials made it next to impossible to continue the school in its present form. Of all the materials the school utilized, just one had not made the restricted list, and that material was clay. A decision was made: to stay in the design and craft business, Design-Technics would become a pottery.

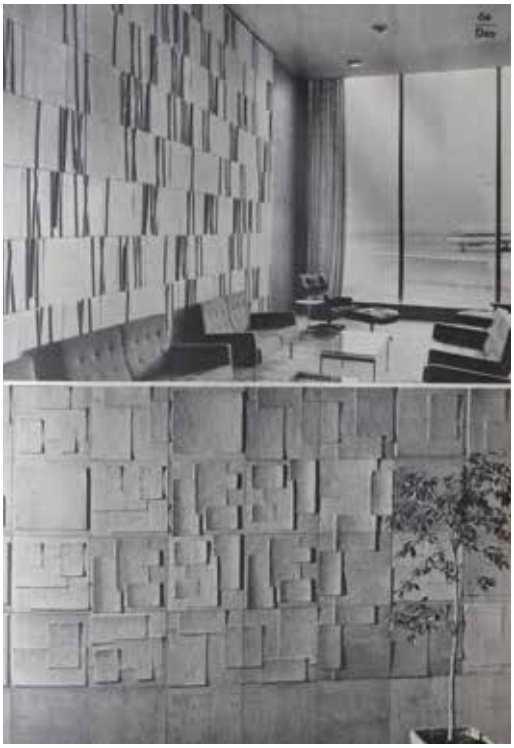
Design-Technics, 1940 to circa 1990, Terra Cotta Tiles*, manufactured in the mid- to late 1950s, h: 12", Collection of Jonathan O'Hea, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

From the very beginning, Samuel was the Director of all Design-Technics operations. In the coming decades, it would be Samuel's keen business acumen and selling skills that enabled Lee, the Chief Designer at DT, to focus freely on the artistic aspects of the pottery. It was in this environment that Lee and her staff designers would innovate and create products that were at the forefront of modern design.

Lee Rosen was born Leah Rae Lubetkin in 1905, the daughter of first-generation Russian émigrés. Lee attended Girls High School in Brooklyn, New York, and earned two degrees, one from Pratt (Fine Arts) and another from Columbia Teachers College. Lee further supplemented her studies with an additional sculpture class from 1943–1944 at the Art Students League, studying with her friend Ossip Zadkine. Zadkine's influence on Lee's early work at DT cannot be denied. From the late 1940s through the early 1950s, Lee was a full-time

ceramics teacher at the High School of Music & Art in New York City.

The earliest years of Design-Technics's output were in the production of both hand-thrown and slip-cast wares that consisted of small dishes, plates, vases, bowls, and lamps. While the slip-cast pieces were made in a mold, many of these early items featured bold hand carving and sgrafitto with motifs that ranged from abstracted figures and florals to geometric designs and grid-like incising. The staff of DT at the time consisted of eight potters, of whom six were female and two male.



Design-Technics catalog circa 1968. Courtesy of Jonathan O'Hea.

Design-Technics moved its production from New York City to Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, in 1946 and formally registered the business in 1947. This move would mark the beginning of its decades-long ascendance to becoming a boundary-pushing production pottery. Over the ensuing decades, new items introduced to the line included hand-thrown "Series 3300" lamps, cast "Series 4300" lamps, floor lamps, ceramic tables and, most importantly, wall tile.

Lee Rosen first introduced wall tile to the DT line in 1954. The faceted, highly sculptural tile installation featured here is labeled as tile design "no. 12" in a mid-1960s catalog. These tiles were removed from the façade of a mid-1950s building in downtown Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, in the late 1980s. The multifaceted face of these unglazed terracotta tiles is evocative of much of their tile work of the period. By the mid-1960s, Design-Technics offered over a hundred distinct tile designs suited for both indoor and outdoor applications. Catalogs prominently feature completed custom designed tile installations spanning locations from Michigan to Puerto Rico. Design-Technics collaborated with architects and designers on banks, department stores, corporate offices, airports, schools, apartments, and churches for custom wall tile and façade installations. No job was too big or too small for Design-Technics.

Some notable employees of Design-Technics include Karen Karnes, Nancy Wickham, Betty Feves, David Weinrib, Sam Haile, Vivika Heino, and Teruo Hara. While there are many additional renowned potters rumored to have worked for DT, only further scholarship will bring the facts to light. The breadth and significant nature of the company's creations coupled with the number of famed alumni surely places it amongst the most important and influential potteries of its day. Until the full history is written, Lee Rosen and Design Technics will continue to stand as one of the most important production potteries of the post-war period that most have never heard of.

Nancy Wickham: From Greenwich Village to Woodstock Village

Mark Shapiro

In a 1948 cover photo in New York's *Sunday News*, Nancy Wickham (1923–1987) decorates pots in her Greenwich Village back garden, looking perhaps like one of the artists whose lives unfold through the peeping lens of James Stewart in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954). But Wickham avoided the impecunious fate of Hitchcock's hapless artists by moving to the postcard-perfect Vermont village of Woodstock. (By strange coincidence, in his next act, Hitchcock also turned to Vermont in the glorious Technicolor fall foliage landscape of his *Trouble with Harry*.) There she established the Vermont Workshop, selling alongside Scandinavian housewares her signature work, with its textured, rough dark clay with matte-glazed and slipped patterns of stylized natural motifs and figures. Over time, Wickham cultivated many customers. As she put it, "Vermont is a magical world, almost everybody in New York dreams ideally of getting to the country." Wickham's work served well that idealized sense of nature, also giving what Willa Cather called "the irregular and intimate quality of things made entirely by the human hand."

Yet, Wickham was not content to be the village potter. She was worldly and trained in glaze chemistry and industrial methods. She lived on her own from an early age and later attended Alfred University as a special student in 1943. In 1946, her breakfast set made in connection with the firm Design-Technics was displayed in the *Ceramic National* exhibition, the competitive arena of the era sponsored by the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts (later renamed the Everson Museum). When she settled in Vermont she maintained that ambition, showing regularly up to 1958. In Woodstock, she moved decisively into production techniques, including casting and jiggering, focusing increasingly on the lamps she had begun in New York. "We were in the building era then, and everyone was furnishing rooms and in need of lamps. No other material with equally lasting qualities can furnish as much natural warmth and humanness. So I decided to turn my pottery making into lamps."

Her approach was squarely that of a designer: she surveyed trending mid-century interior design, measured its austere furniture, and shaped her bases to maximize kiln space. While her forms were generally produced from molds, the work retained a handmade feel and the surface treatments were done freely by hand. She balanced her surface work between simple and more intricate treatments for a workflow that addressed both her creative interest and her bank account, maintaining control over which and how many examples she made. She refused orders for specific motifs or colors. An undated brochure instructs customers, in a frank stance that speaks to her formidable character, "You can only decide on what size you want: then write and ask what is in stock and go from there. Better yet—make some notes when you see what you want and don't wait too long to buy it."

The lamp in this exhibition is one of several basic shapes that Wickham produced; a similar example is shown without a shade in the cover page of her 1952 *Craft Horizon* feature. Her shapes are reductive and Modernist, eschewing complex curves, line breaks within their profile, or separate turned feet or necks. A vertical, tessellating, stylized leaf pattern wraps the form and is infilled with white slip that contrasts with the textured dark brown body. The leaves are carved with an unself-conscious variation within the pattern that expresses the "naturalness

SECTION TWO

SUNDAY NEWS

NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

SECTION TWO

New York 17, Sunday, September 12, 1948

Nancy wedges clay to give even consistency.

Her hands shape vase as it revolves on wheel.

Pitcher is taken from kiln after firing at 2,000 degrees.

Making deadlines means constant checking with schedule.

Her Hands Turn Clay To Career

A few years ago, Nancy Wickham was just a small-town Vermont girl struggling with odd jobs so that she could practice her pottery. Today, at 24, she's a nationally known potter with her own studio in Greenwich Village and unable to keep up with the demand for her original pieces. Here's how she creates artistic works.

Nancy decorates pottery in the doorway to her studio garden.

Customer takes note on pottery as Nancy serves tea.

Nancy Wickham in the Sunday edition of the Daily News *(12 September 1948): cover of section two.*

and freedom" that she sought. These qualities are amplified by the reed-textured shade (produced to her specification by a small factory in Connecticut) that echoes the earthy color of the body and the off-white leaves.

Nancy Wickham Boyd, Sgraffito Lamp with Reed Shade*, 1957, h: 15-3/4", stoneware,* Carved Oval Dish*, 1948, stoneware, h: 4",* Bowl with Brushwork*, 1948, stoneware, h: 4-1/2", Collection of Lizi Boyd, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

Wickham's decorative approach fits with traditions of patterning and abstracting natural phenomena (including animal and human figures) that are central to pottery from paleolithic jars to Mimbres bowls to Michael Simon's altered forms. The challenges of marrying decorative imagery and pattern with three-dimensional surfaces have held a fascination for potters almost since pots were first fired. Rhythmic and geometric decorative motifs have long added complexity, formal interest, and cultural meaning to ceramic objects. The primordial pleasures of objects that embody individual imagination and mastery of material, fulfill their intended purpose, and evoke our connection to nature are alive in Wickham's lamps.

Lamps, unlike pots that move among contexts during quotidian usage, are stationary in their domestic environment. Like a sculpture, Wickham's table lamp stays in a designated place chosen by its owner. Though spatially static, it is transformed—and transforms the space around it—when it is turned on and off. (This act has its own diurnal rhythm, like using a favorite cup.) The texture and relief of the carved pattern are thrown into sharper contrast as the light from above washes across the surface of the cylinder, illuminating the room and the object itself. Interactive and useful like a pot, but not a pot; stationary and presented on the "pedestal" of a side table or night stand like a sculpture, but not a sculpture, Wickham's lamp is a kind of interstitial ceramic object. It is one that enabled Wickham to earn more than the "meager day-to-day existence" her pots provided while offering a vehicle for the fulfillment of her aspiration to embody the ideal of creativity she held throughout her career: to "transpose life into her material."

Betty Feves: Building Community as a Career

Namita Gupta Wiggers

Betty Whiteman Feves is an anomaly. Born in 1918, she was an academically trained artist and happily married mother of four who lived her entire life in the rural farmlands of Oregon and Washington, with only two exceptions. After graduating with a degree in art from Washington State University in 1939, where she studied with Clyfford Still, Feves spent a year in St. Paul continuing her studies, followed by a handful of years during World War II in New York. There, she studied with Alexander Archipenko, earned a master's degree at Columbia College, and worked for several years at Design-Technics, a company that produced ceramic tableware and decorative housewares. From 1945 until her death in 1985, Feves lived in Pendleton, Oregon. This *Wall Panel Relief*, created only four years after she began publicly exhibiting her work, is a transitional piece; it reveals a moment in which this artist began to develop her own voice.

Several elements shifted in Feves's work following this *Wall Panel Relief*. Here, she is still working through what she describes as Archipenko's "hollowed-out thing" in which a sculpture is carved out of clay, and its interior laboriously removed.[1] Rather than employ Archipenko's time-consuming methods that hid the materiality of the clay by creating a surface that mimics marble or stone, Feves leaves areas deliberately unglazed, revealing and embracing clay itself. As her work continued during subsequent decades, the abstracted human-made architectural environments of the *Relief* shift to carefully engineered stacked sculptures inspired by the structural forms of the basalt cliffs along the Columbia River in Oregon. This *Wall Panel Relief* contains elements that remained a visible part of her work throughout her life, such as an interest in the human figure and the use of a clay body comprised of clay dug from local sites. An additional lifelong interest were the glazes that she created first out of necessity by adapting recipes from Bernard Leach's *A Potter's Book* (1940) and further developed for aesthetic reasons even when commercially prepared materials became more readily available to rural Pendleton.

Feves's work garnered national and international awards and exhibitions, including *Recent Sculpture USA* (1959), Museum of Modern Art, and multiple awards during the 1950s and 1960s in the *Annual Exhibitions of Northwest Ceramics*, Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland, Oregon, and *Ceramic Nationals*, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York. Mention of her name in print or exhibition checklists, however, grows sparse in the latter half of the 1960s.[2] Contrary to what this appears to convey, this decrease of mention is not because Feves's work lost currency or relevance. On the contrary, Feves chose to stop sending work to national exhibitions as she was no longer interested in recognition of this kind. "Why not," she asked, "use the region to support your work?"[3] How, then, was Betty Feves able to continue to expand her work when removing herself from national attention? She'd spent decades building community, and that devoted community, in turn, acquired her functional pottery, sculpture, and began to commission Feves to create large-scale architectural installations, which gave her space to experiment and expand the scope of her work.

Privilege freed Betty Feves to focus on her work. Factors that prevent many artists women *and* men from making art were not an issue for her, such as financial support and a dedicated studio space. She and her husband, Dr. Lou Feves, built a modern home with a daylight basement

Betty Feves, Wall Panel Relief*, 1956, stoneware, h: 13-3/4", Collection of Everson Museum of Art, Purchase Prize given by IBM Corporation,* 19th Ceramic National*, 1956, PC 59.23, photo by Dave Revette.*

studio specifically so she could work while her children were in school or after they'd gone to bed at night.[4] Work, however, included connecting with people, and Feves needed a community that understood what she was doing and could support and develop future artists.[5] Hiking with friends and family became adventures in finding clay deposits she'd identified on geological survey maps; by engaging others in harvesting and using the materials, she introduced clay to amateurs and apprentices. Her trajectory differs from that of her peers and colleagues who started academic ceramics programs across the U.S. in the years following World War II. She describes her own path as a "feminine alternative" to "the old boy network" in her choice to balance marriage, family, and work.[6] For Feves, who had choices, success was not measured in print, but in the intangibles of building a community where her feet touched the ground.

[1] Namita Gupta Wiggers, "Betty Feves: Setting the Stage for Clay," in *Generations: Betty Feves*, Namita Gupta Wiggers, ed., Museum of Contemporary Craft in partnership with Pacific Northwest College of Art: Portland, Oregon, 2012, 34.

[2] For a full curriculum vitae, see *Generations: Betty Feves*, 176.

[3] "A Lecture by Betty Feves: Ceramics 80, Oregon State University, Corvallis, June 11-13, 1980," in *Generations: Betty Feves*, 85.

[4] Linda Sussman, "Betty Feves, Artfully in Her World," in Wiggers, ed. 134-153.

[5] Ibid., see James Lavadour, "The Artist as Community Leader: Betty Feves, a Reminscence," 154-157 and "Conversation with Bob Lanman: Total Involvement of Being," 120-131.

[6] Ibid., Wiggers, 52.

Sylvia Leuchovius: Swedish Ashtray with Girl Power

Helena Kåberg

In the early 1960s, when my mother took her first job as a secretary, times were good. She had the means to leave home and move into her first apartment. In lieu of a housewarming gift, her boss gave her twenty Swedish crowns (about U.S. $25 today) to spend on something nice. When she came back to the office with her purchase, her boss was stunned. “An ashtray! Why didn’t you buy something more appropriate like a nice coffee service?” he asked.

My mother grew up in a working class family where money had to be spent with care, and basic needs, not desires, provided the rationale behind most purchases, so she was tempted to spend her bonus on something extraordinary. Today, she has been tobacco-free for almost fifty years, but has saved her ashtray. She claims that Rörstrand artist Sylvia Leuchovius’s (1915–2003) novel and unique design caught her eye—not necessarily the function of the ashtray. She liked the robust square shape of the low dish, the deep dark blue glaze, and the relief decor wherein tiny white dots formed the image of a butterfly. Leuchovius’s was the complete opposite to her father’s monumental ashtray—mass-produced and imported from Eastern Europe—in the shape of a greenish iceberg with a looming polar bear peering into a hole where you were supposed to put out your cigarette.[1]

Although unique works of handicraft, my mother’s ashtray and the one in the collection of the Alfred Museum of Ceramic Art are representative examples of Sylvia Leuchovius’s work. Graduating from the School of Design and Crafts in Gothenburg in 1948, Leuchovius was employed by Rörstrand the following year. She was hired at a time when Swedish manufacturing valued and strove to realize the concept of *Better Things for Everyday Life*—in short, the idea that beauty in the home was an essential way to improve life and should be accessible to all. The Swedish Arts and Crafts Society publicized this ideal in the 1920s and asked industry to realize this vision in order to aid social development while simultaneously improving their own business.[2] Rörstrand adhered to this expectation by hiring trained artists to create beautiful everyday ceramics that could be offered at prices affordable to all.

Leuchovius majored in decorative arts and graphic design, and Rörstrand primarily hired her to draw patterns and surface decoration.[3] She developed her own signature style using rough groggy stoneware decorated with delicate stylized flowers and birds in low relief created with tiny hand rolled ceramic beads tediously applied by hand. She made plates, panels, and wall installations for public spaces like schools, libraries, and hospitals. In the 1960s she branched out, left the flat surfaces, and made sculptural and colorful vases, bird figures, and eggs covered with ceramic beads and buttons. The bold expression of the ashtray included in the exhibition indicates that it was made in the mid-1960s. To save time and money, Rörstrand developed a bead machine. However, Leuchovius rejected the machine-made beads as being too perfect.[4] The ashtray in Alfred’s collection dates from this same period.

Rörstrand’s artists-in-industry included women such as Marianne Westman and Hertha Bengtson as well as Birger Kaipiainen and Carl Harry Stålhane, who created both unique studio pieces and designs for serial production.

Sylvia Leuchovius, Ashtray, *mid-century, porcelain, h: 1-3/8", gift of William E. Pitney, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 2000.74, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

Sylvia Leuchovius is rarely mentioned in Swedish design history. However, looking at her large body of work, and considering that Rörstrand employed her for more than twenty years, we must acknowledge that her art had an enduring market—consumers wanted reasonably priced and skillfully executed unique furnishings that were free of both traditional and modern formal restraints. She left the factory in 1971, when Rörstrand, in an effort to survive and withstand international competition, dismissed all resident artists in order to rationalize production.

This arrangement was seen as beneficial since an artist could explore his or her craft and creativity in the studio, then infuse industrial designs with new artistic inspiration, simultaneously creating goods for different markets. Leuchovius excelled in the studio. However, as she proved to be a poor industrial designer, some questioned why Rörstrand continued to employ her.

Her work was also questioned for other reasons. Since the 1950s, her creations have been described as delicate, poetic, romantic, intimate, and fragile, adjectives that sound like positive judgments but that are euphemisms for the superficial when voiced by Modernist tastemakers. Her work was compared to painting on a ceramic canvas and the contrast between the rough grog and tender decoration was thought to lack artistic clarity.[5] Because she did not live up to the ideals of the modern movement,

Coming back to the ashtray, I think there was more to buying it than my mother now lets on. I also think that her rather conventional boss would have been more forgiving if she had bought a decorative wall panel by Leuchovius. The fact that it was an ashtray made a difference.

Smoking was an activity that signified adulthood and freedom, especially for young women. Even if my grandmother hadn't told her, a code was unavoidably visible in magazines, advertisements, and the cinema: smoking was primarily seen as a male pleasure. So smoking paraphernalia was considered a suitable gift for a man. In popular culture, each type of tobacco had specific social connotations. The solid and reliable family man smoked the pipe. The seductive, clean-shaven pomade-slicked man of adventure or leisure smoked cigarettes. The powerbroker smoked cigars. For women, it was a different story, and more about if, not what, you could

Sylvia Leuchovius and other artists-in residence in the Rörstrand factory, Sweden. From left, Sylvia Leuchovius, director Carl Harry Stålhane, Marianne Westman, Birger Kaipiainen, and Hertha Bengtson. Courtesy of the Rörstrand Museum.

smoke. According to restrictive social rules in Sweden, women could not smoke in the street. As represented in popular culture, housewives never smoked. Cigarette-smoking women were either luxurious, upper-class sophisticates or socially disruptive, erotically provocative femme fatales and vixens such as Anita Ekberg in *La Dolce Vita*. A cigarette-smoking woman could also be an artist, actress, or intellectual, preferably one who was aging and sexually non-threatening. A contemporary etiquette handbook discouraged young women from the "childish behavior of smoking just to tease and provoke."[6] However, in the 1960s, challenging class and gender conventions was no longer just for vixens and intellectuals. Instead, smoking was a sign of women's liberation and emancipation. Philip Morris took advantage of this change in thinking in 1968 when marketing Virginia Slims to young professional women under the slogan "You've Come a Long Way, Baby."

My mother bought her ashtray a year or two before the United States Surgeon General's 1964 alarming report on *Smoking and Health* and the international debate that followed, which gave tobacco a bad reputation as a public menace. Taking all of this into consideration, I think that my mother not only bought a piece of affordable art, she also acquired a bit of girl power: the Sylvia Leuchovius ashtray marked her new status.

[1] In the 1950s and 1960s, imports from Eastern Europe and Japan were an increasing threat to the Swedish ceramic industry, as they were to American and English firms. Price wars and plagiarism jeopardized the position of the artist working in industry. These issues were topics discussed in Swedish newspapers, both by design critics and business reporters.

[2] Helena Kåberg, "An Introduction to Gregor Paulsson's Better Things for Everyday Life," 59-71, and Gregor Paulsson, "Better Things for Everyday Life," 1919, 72-125. In Lucy Creagh, Helena Kåberg, and Barbara Miller Lane, eds., *Modern Swedish Design: Three Founding Texts*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2008.

[3] Anne Marie Herlitz-Gezelius, *Rörstrand*, Lund: Signum, 1989, 170-172, and Petter Eklund, "Sylvia Leuchovius. Ensamvargen som överraskar," *Antik & Auktion* (2009:10), 57.

[4] Eklund, ibid., 58.

[5] See Ulf Hård af Segerstad, *Keramik. Sekelskifte till sjuttiotal*, Stockholm: Granath och Hård af Segerstad, 1976; Bengt Nyström, ed., *Svensk keramik under 1900-talet. En uppslagsbok om keramiker, fabriker och signeringar,* Stockholm: Forum, 2008, 120; Ulf Hård av Segerstad, "Förnyad bruksvara," *Svenska Dagbladet*, 15 April 1956, 7; Susanne Frennberg, "Tre keramikdebuter," *Form* 58 (1962): 44-45.

[6] Ulrika Torell, *Den rökande människan. Bilder av tobaksbruk i Sverige mellan 1950- och 1990-talet*, Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag 2002, 34-71, and Penny Tinkler, *Smoke Signals: Women, Smoking and Visual Culture*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006, 105-131.

An Artist in the Factory: Rut Bryk at Arabia

Love Jönsson

Rut Bryk (1916–1999) joined the Arabia ceramic factory in Helsinki in 1942 after studying graphic art. Her arrival was timely, as Arabia's art department flourished despite the wartime gloom. The factory's artistic leader Kurt Ekholm remarked in a 1943 magazine article that "it is not only goods of absolute necessity for our material needs that now see the light of day in Arabia's huge tunnel kilns, but also objects of purely aesthetic and ideal value."[1]

The art department, established in the early 1930s, aimed at offering the employed artists full artistic freedom. If most other Scandinavian artists in the ceramic industry were expected to split their time between design for mass manufacture and craft-based studio production, Arabia's artists were encouraged to focus solely on the latter. In the wake of World War II, this inclination towards individualism became even more emphasized at the factory, the freedom of the artists symbolically functioning as a sign of resistance against the aggressive totalitarianism that threathened Finland from both Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. In their studios, the artists celebrated the poetic and exquisite in protest against the cruel times. Looking back on this era a quarter of a century later, the Swedish critic Ulf Hård af Segerstad noted that Finnish artists during and after the war not only cultivated individual expressiveness but also seem to have felt "an irresistible cry for beauty for its own sake."[2]

Rut Bryk, Sun Rose*, 1950-1958, earthenware, h: 49-1/2", Collection Everson Museum of Art, Purchase Prize,* 20th Ceramic National*, 1958, PC 60.15, photo by Dave Revette.*

Pastel-colored motifs of women in fancy hats, girls going for a stroll in the park, or a young cavalier courting his consort by playing the violin are typical of Bryk's mid-1940s works. These faiance plates and platters summon up a charming world of fairy tales and childhood imagination. Stylistically, they share many characteristics with the works of Bryk's Arabia colleague Birger Kaipiainen (1915-2008), whose career at the factory had started in 1937.

One of Bryk's bas-relief wall panels from the mid-1960s relates to the fine geometric patterns in her 1950s Sun Rose*. Her development was consistent in delighting in pooling glaze in stamped and cut forms, an innovative use of the ancient cuenca tile technique. Rut Bryk,* Ceramic Wall Relief*, 1960s-1970s; h: 20", w: 23-5/8". Collection Kakkonen.*

Finnish ceramicists were not the only ones in Scandinavia to react against the horrors of war by succumbing to the idyllic. An inclination for pastoral beauty is evident among many of their colleagues in the neighboring countries. We might even speak of a 1940s romantic turn, highlighted by the works of Bryk, Kaipiainen, and Hilkka-Liisa Ahola in Finland, Stig Lindberg in Sweden, Bjørn Wiinblad in Denmark, and Erik Pløen in Norway, just to name a few. For some of these artists, the charming naïveté of their early pieces was soon to be replaced by a searching for emotionally more complex, expressionist-oriented manners. Rut Bryk's extensive body of work from the late 1940s and 1950s is almost exemplary in this respect, as it deliberately leaves the earlier, pastel-toned visions of Arcadia for a richer set of effects and motifs. She starts to mark the contours of the motifs in raised relief and fills the areas inside the raised lines with thick, glass-like colored glaze. Thus, the figures are constructed from an interplay of demarcated color fields and relief details rather than just painted onto a surface. Bryk's new way of working also incorporates a stronger emphasis on contrast, often setting off glazed details against an unglazed and roughly treated background.

Among the visual references in this more mature phase of her oeuvre we find Biblical motifs such as Noah's Ark and Adam and Eve, as well as architectural imagery inspired by Gothic and Renaissance buildings Bryk had encountered on her travels. In some pieces, small fields of colored glaze catch the eye as if they were gemstones. These works expose a haunting mysticism that is far from the sentiments we perhaps routinely associate with mid-century Scandinavian crafts. Even when turning to seemingly simpler motifs, Bryk charges

Rut Bryk, Sun Rose*, 1955-1960, earthenware, h: 39", Collection Everson Museum of Art, Museum Purchase,* 20th Ceramic National*, 1958-1960, PC 62.6, photo by Dave Revette.*

her work with a suggestive and expressive aura. Her still lifes, flowers, and butterflies speak not only about archaic beauty but also of loss and inevitable decay. "Against a backdrop of innocent beauty one can often detect undertones of some harrowing sadness," as the Finnish architect and writer Juhani Pallasmaa once sympathetically noted in an essay on Bryk's work.[3]

Rut Bryk's last bold step in her investigation into clay as an artistic medium took place in the 1960s and 1970s, when she started to construct large-scale ceramic mosaics for public spaces. The accidental historicism and the anecdotal narratives so typical of her previous work were now replaced by a consistently applied geometrical abstraction, totally in tune with the Op art of the time. More than many other artists working with geometry and repetition, however, Bryk made use of variation and contrast. Her mosaic tiles, although largely standardized, were combined into compositions that are strikingly complex in their way of oscillating between the two- and three-dimensional and using light, reflection, and shadow as integrated elements. Some of Bryk's most grandiose mosaics, such as the large walls made for the Finnish Embassy in New Dehli (1984) and the Residence of the President of Finland (1991), are unrivaled among late Modernist architectural ceramics. The distance between the artist's whimsical faience of the 1940s and her majestic, aristocratic works made decades later is vast and fascinating. Still, both bodies of work are unified by a dedication to detail and an embrace of the poetic qualities of the ceramic medium.

[1] Kurt Ekholm, "Arabiakeramik i krigstid," *Form*, 1 (1943): 13.

[2] Ulf Hård af Segerstad, *Modern Finnish Design,* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969, 32.

[3] See Juhani Pallasmaa, *Rut Bryk,* Helsinki: Amos Andersonin taidemuseo and Rovaniemen taidemuseo, 1986, unpaginated.

Jayne Van Alstyne and Clay: Pottery and Design

Leslie S. Edwards

How does an artist reconcile two seemingly disparate aspects of the creative self? During the 1940s and 1950s, M. Jayne Van Alstyne (born 1923) strove to find the balance among form study, function, and craft. The brightly colored free-form ashtray, designed as part of her thesis work at Alfred University, was treated primarily as a sculptural piece that functioned as an ashtray. In contrast, her prize-winning wax-resist stoneware pot (featured in the *18th Ceramic National* at Syracuse University) is very reminiscent of Bernard Leach and traditional pottery studio craft. For over forty years, Van Alstyne had a successful career as an industrial designer and educator, all the while maintaining a pottery studio in her home. She once remarked, "I am a designer by profession and a potter by interest."[1] Van Alstyne incorporated craftsmanship with the industrial phases of ceramic production. She analyzed new production methods, including ceramic engineering, and integrated them in her industrial design work for Gilbert Rohde Associates and for such notable designers as Donald Deskey, Raymond Loewy, and Eva Zeisel. Van Alstyne alternated professional industrial design work with teaching courses in the field at Michigan State University, Montana State University, and Cornell University. In her pottery studio work, she continually experimented with the tension between material and function.

In 1941, when accepted into Cranbrook Academy of Art's Intermediate School at age seventeen, Van Alstyne became one of the youngest resident students on campus. Affectionately known as "Van," she studied under noted resident artists including Maija Grotell, Harry Bertoia, and Walter Baermann. Van Alstyne later wrote, "Cranbrook gave me the best possible start … I have a lot of love and appreciation for Cranbrook and what it did for me. Get a good foundation, and you can do most anything."[2]

Maija Grotell, instructor of ceramics and pottery, emphasized shape and color rather than surface decoration, and instilled in Van Alstyne an appreciation for pure, basic forms, and volumes based on supporting curves. Van Alstyne learned observation and awareness,

Jayne Van Alstyne won the $100.00 prize offered by the O. Hommel Company, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the 18th Ceramic National competition. The prize winning urn, shown above, has reduction iron slip decoration and has genuine spontaneity in its design of light gray swirls on brown, suggesting living folk art at its best.

Jayne Van Alstyne, East Lansing, Michigan, winner of the O. Hommel $100.00 pottery prize. All of her work has been of a specialized nature in the field of architectural and industrial design. Following formal schooling in Michigan and New York, her work has consisted of painting, graphic arts and sculpture.

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Jayne Van Alstyne, Vase*, 1949-50, stoneware, h: 5-1/2", gift of the artist, Alfred Ceramic Art Museum, 1950.7; Ashtray, circa 1949, earthenware, h: 1-1/4", gift of William E. Pitney, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1995.432.*

and the value of ceramics for designers as a "basic tool for form study."[3] She was introduced to the technical study of clays, glazes, and methods of firing. Industrial designer Walter Baermann[4] taught Van Alstyne the fundamental value of combining visual art with technical knowledge that included production methods, materials, and manufacturing processes, as well as the economics of merchandising and marketing one's own art. From metalcraft instructor Harry Bertoia, Van Alstyne "became aware of two dimensional design and working materials, processes and their 'identity' with the balance of function." She later stated that Bertoia's class was a great preface to her later design work with methods and techniques, and "all the nitty gritty one had to learn to be a product designer."[6]

Building upon her Cranbrook foundation, Van Alstyne enrolled in the industrial design program at Pratt Institute (1942–1945). She was heavily influenced by Rowena Reed Kostellow's design courses, where she learned how to problem-solve and analyze the elements of design, particularly the "structure of visual relationships" in three dimensions espoused by Kostellow.[7]

After returning home to East Lansing, Michigan, where she taught design courses at Michigan State University and supervised the home planning department of a local department store chain, Van Alstyne enrolled at Alfred University (1948–1950). There, she studied ceramic design with Charles Harder, chairman of the design department, and merged what she had learned at Cranbrook—observation, form study, and the balance of function—with the industrial design concepts taught by Kostellow. Van Alstyne embarked on an exploration

of “seeing what is involved in the potter becoming a contemporary ceramic designer.”[8] Her personal work in ceramics clearly reflects both the influence of Bernard Leach[9] and her Modernist expressions of the interplay between material and function.

During Van Alstyne’s fourteen years as one of Harley Earl’s “Damsels of Design” at General Motors Technical Center (1955–1969), she was able to apply problem-solving, form study, and ceramic engineering to practical end products. She designed experimental projects for the Frigidaire Production Section of the styling division, innovative appliances for the 1961 “Ideas for Living” Motorama exhibition, and modern advancements for the Safety and Human Performance Group with nine patents to her credit. In this work, she was primarily concerned with the “relationship of man to his machine”[10] and developed creative solutions for living. By contrast, in her pottery studio work, Van Alstyne discarded the practical problem-solving activity of the designer, and instead created organically, working with her hands to mold earth into pots—a delicate balance of active effort and relaxation—and create a unique expression of self. However, in these two seemingly incongruent fields, Van Alstyne believes not only is construction[11] an essential element for the industrial designer, but that “the most important single fact in the make-up of the ceramic designer is the sense of construction.” The free-form ashtray, designed for functional use in the modern home, and the stoneware pot, thrown on the potter’s wheel and decorated with wax-resist iron slip, both illustrate that crucial component. Throughout her career, Jayne Van Alstyne has found the ability to effectively balance the intellectual nature of her professional work with the potter’s art of merging thought and feeling with concrete materials to create pottery and design.

[1] Jayne Van Alstyne, “A Designer’s Pot Collection,” September 1981, Jayne Van Alstyne Papers , Cranbrook Archives.

[2] Jayne Van Alstyne to Mark Coir, 23 May 1990, Cranbrook Archives Donor File, Cranbrook Archives.

[3] Jayne Van Alstyne to Mark Coir, 31 May 1990, Cranbrook Archives Donor File, Cranbrook Archives.

[4] At that time of his appointment as director of the Department of Design, Baermann was a nationally known industrial designer. Under his direction, the department was expanded to specialize in industrial design. Van Alstyne was a part of Baermann’s inaugural design class at Cranbrook.

[5] Jayne Van Alstyne to Mark Coir, 31 May 1990, Cranbrook Archives Donor File, Cranbrook Archives.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Gail Greet Hannah, *Elements of Design: Rowena Reed Kostellow and the Structure of Visual Relationships*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002, 16.

[8] Jayne Van Alstyne, “The Potter as Ceramic Designer,” Master’s thesis, Alfred University, 1950, 2.

[9] Bernard Leach visited Alfred University in March 1950 where he taught a two-week intensive workshop for the students. Van Alstyne remained in contact with Leach and met him again at the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, Montana, in 1952 at which time she also met potter Shoji Hamada.

[10] Jayne Van Alstyne to Zoltan Sepeshy, 22 December 1965, Van Alstyne Application File, Cranbrook Academy of Art Office of the Registrar Records, Cranbrook Archives.

[11] Van Alstyne, Master’s thesis, 26.

Leza McVey's Vital Forms

Caroline Cole

The ceramic forms of Leza McVey (1907–1984) are graceful and engaging, standing proudly, if slightly askew. Building by hand, McVey produced unorthodox and surprisingly animated vessels, fitted with whimsical, cock-eyed stoppers and sometimes feet. Despite the vitality of her works, McVey has only recently figured largely in the history of mid-century studio ceramics. Cited in most surveys as an innovator of abstract shapes, she is often described as a "forgotten potter" whose career was curtailed by her poor health and arguably by the success of her sculptor husband, William McVey (1904–1995), a casualty of the inherent sexism of the period. Martin Eidelberg's *The Ceramic Forms of Leza McVey* (2002) did much to put her work in context.[1] While it is clear that McVey was engaged in finding transcendent forms, the classification of her work as "pottery" remains somewhat ambiguous. Though frequently exhibited alongside artists who defined themselves as potters, McVey insisted on using the term "ceramic form" for her works, numbering each piece in the mode of modern sculptors. Negotiating utility and abstraction, McVey's stoppered vessels continue to complicate traditional interpretations of pottery versus ceramic sculpture.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Leza Marie Sullivan trained at the Cleveland Institute of Art from 1927–1932. She married her husband William McVey (Bill), also a student at Cleveland, and the two moved from cities in Texas to Colorado, in a trail led by Bill's career. In 1947, Bill McVey was offered a position in the sculpture department at Cranbrook Academy, and for the next six years, the couple lived and worked on the campus where Bill gained renown as a teacher. It was during this period that Leza developed her uniquely hybrid "ceramic forms."

Two stoneware vessels from 1951 in the collection of the Everson Museum, illustrated here, are well known examples of this type. Each maintains the anatomy of a traditional bottle—body, neck, and corked stopper—but in this case, they have sprung legs. *Ceramic Form No. 33* is round, squat, and alert, balancing an ovoid body on tripod legs with a distinctive beak-like stopper. Its neighbor, *Ceramic Form No. 34*, is an irregular oval, rising tall into an attenuated neck and an off-center top that tilts upward with an air of ease. Both gleam like the oily undercoat of an aquatic bird, in a gunmetal glaze, with hints of red under the black.

The two forms are frequently shown together, underscoring their personable charm like a pair of nested birds or a couple mid-conversation. They were exhibited together as McVey's initial entry in the *16th Ceramic National* competition in 1951, sponsored by the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts. Awarded the "Purchase Prize," the pair was acquired for the permanent collection and remains in the Everson Museum, a gift of the Harshaw Chemical Company, which was based in McVey's hometown of Cleveland. McVey returned to these designs several times. Eidelberg's book shows related sketches for stoppers that are variations on the pointed face of *No. 33*, unmistakably resembling a chicken's head.[2] Four years later, in the Cleveland Museum of Art's *May Show* from 1954, the form gains a modified neck[3]. In *Everyday Art Quarterly* in 1953, a version of *No. 34* has a slightly different stopper.[4]

Her forms are inarguably anthropomorphic, but as Eidelberg notes, the notoriously reticent artist did not directly address this aspect of her work. In her limited explanations, she focuses on the historicizing influence

Leza McVey, Ceramic Form No. 34 (left) *and* Ceramic Form No. 33, *1951, stoneware, h: 16" and 10-3/8", Collection Everson Museum of Art, Purchase Prize given by Harshaw Chemical Company,* 16th Ceramic National*, 1951, PC 52.635.1 & .2, photo by Dave Revette.*

of traditional ceramics. In *Everyday Art Quarterly* in 1953, McVey explains: “My approach is purely personal—quite frankly I am more than a little weary of the pseudo-Oriental. No vital period in history has been content to express its needs in the quotation marks of a previous period.”[5] Profiled alongside Bernard Leach and Warren and Alixandra MacKenzie—artists guided by the Japanese tradition—one wonders if such a statement amounted to antagonism.

Her articulate aversion to tradition likely fueled her move into hand-built asymmetry, away from the potter’s wheel. She uses very little in the way of surface embellishment. Her applied textures, a repertoire of raised polka dots, incised lines, or geometric patterns, are always in the same muted earthy tones. “Glazes, to me, should do no more than enhance the basic form and lend visual and tactile appeal,” she writes.[6] Her attention to form could also be the effect of a lifetime struggle with her eyesight, which perhaps heightened her attention to the tactile experience.

The language of classification becomes particularly poignant when considering that, from 1952 onward, both Leza and Bill consistently exhibited at the Cleveland Institute of Art’s *May Show* where Bill’s work frequently placed well in the class of “Ceramic Sculpture” while Leza’s was exhibited in the class of “Pottery.” A reviewer described her entry to the pottery field in 1952 as five pieces in which “the artist is consciously endeavoring in her use of free form, to bring her work close to the condition of sculpture.” So, how did the couple consider one another’s artwork? Did they purposefully submit to separate classes to avoid direct competition? One could argue that Leza McVey was in essence always a sculptor as a result of her formal training in Cleveland. Her early interest in animal sculpture (a subject historically deemed appropriate for female sculptors) never fell away. Leza continued to model cats, for instance, well into her late career—stylized, attenuated, and slinking creatures in the same natural tones frequented by the artist.

Contemporary taste has selectively resurrected McVey’s zoomorphic vessels as sculptural forms, whereas her animal statuary is all but ignored. While museums are taking notice of Leza McVey’s work, not one major institution boasts a McVey ceramic cat. What remains clear is that Leza McVey played a transformative role in blurring the boundaries between sculptural and functional ceramics, creating provocative and powerful works that are not going to be forgotten.

[1] Martin Eidelberg, *The Ceramic Forms of Leza McVey,* New York: Philmark Publishers, 2002.

[2] Eidelberg, 54.

[3] Henry S. Francis and William M. Milliken, “Review of the Exhibition,” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 41 (1954): 92.

[4] Leza McVey, “Contemporary Ceramists: Edwin and Mary Scheier, Bernard Leach, Warren and Alixandra MacKenzie, Katherine and Burton Wilson, and Leza S. McVey,” *Everyday Art Quarterly*, 27 (1953): 20-21.

[5] McVey, “Contemporary Ceramists,” 20.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Henry S. Francis and William M. Milliken,“Review of the Exhibition,” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 39 (1952): 86.

Frances Senska on Learning Together

Ellen Paul Denker

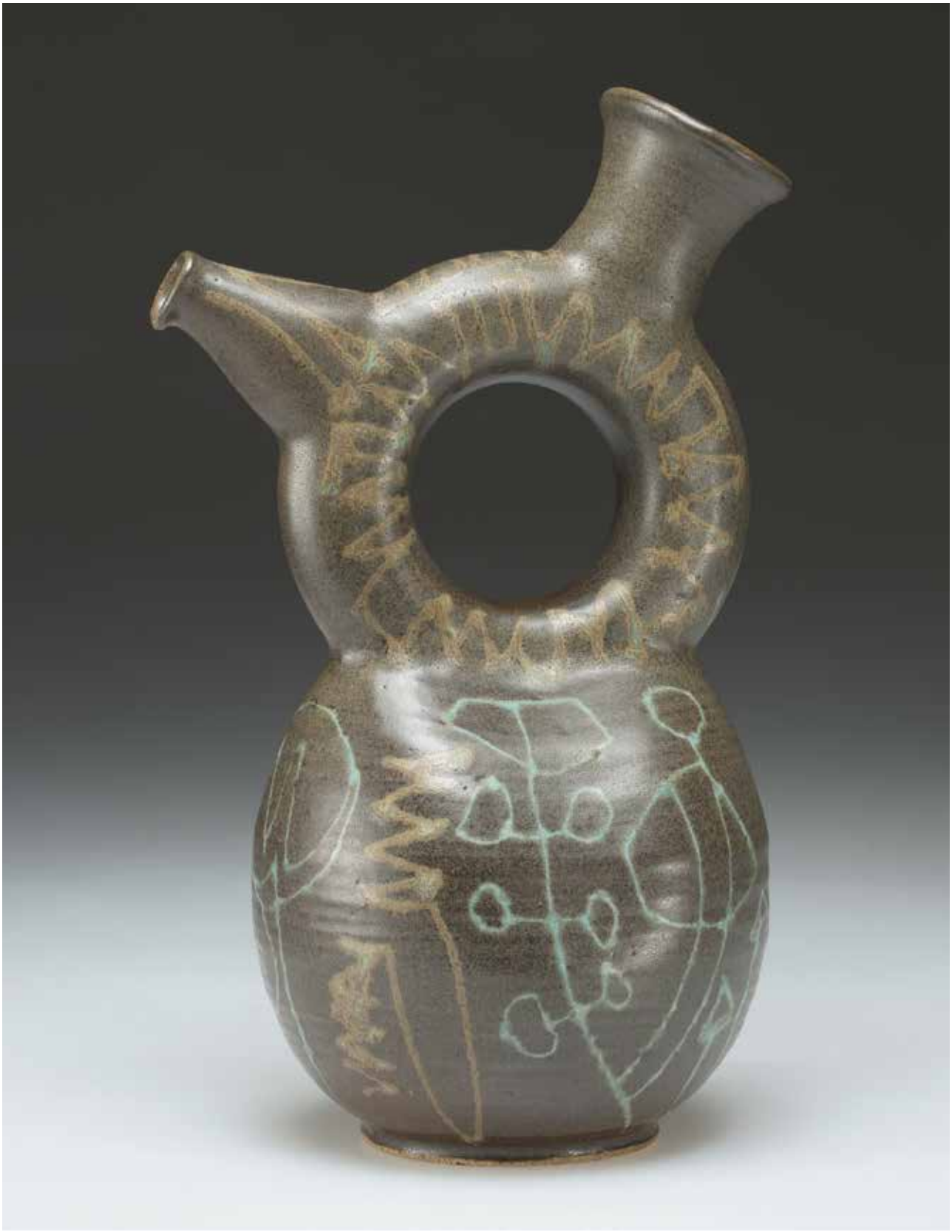
Craft has long looked to the medieval concept of apprenticeship as the basis for its modern pedagogy, whether in workshops, factories, or academies. The master explains through demonstration that there is a "right" way to produce a desired outcome; the apprentice follows the master's lead. The attitudes of some craft educators after World War II, however, laid the groundwork for new expressions in clay that were unprecedented.

Frances Senska (1914–2009), chief among this new breed of craft educators, was born and raised in Cameroon to missionary parents. Once in the States, she experienced both pro- and anti-Bauhaus educational practitioners in Chicago and California. In 1946, as design instructor at Montana State University (MSU), she added ceramics to her repertoire when students requested she teach it. As ceramics instructor, Senska practiced an open-ended, democratic approach to interacting with her students. They all learned together to make art. There was no one "master" in Senska's classroom; instead, everyone studied together how to solve a practical or aesthetic problem. While this seems a simple pedagogical solution for an instructor who knew only the fundamentals of clay, it ultimately led to huge breakthroughs in attitudes toward ceramic art by 1960. Peter Voulkos and Rudy Autio were among Senska's first students.

Senska herself was educated expediently. As a child in Cameroon, she was home-schooled by her mother, a teacher. Her father was a doctor who practiced woodworking as a hobby, instructing Frances on how to use woodworking tools. When asked in a 2001 interview for the Archives of American Art about how her early life had influenced her adult life and work, she cited "my father and his tools, the people [of Cameroon]. Everything that was used there was made by the people for the purposes they were going to use it for." Utility always informed her work. In her *Ring Neck Bottle*, Senska started with the concept of carrying a drink to the fields or on a journey. The collar on the right is for filling and the spout on left is for pouring; the "ring" is used as a handle. The shape and decoration are loosely based on ceramic forms of the Cameroon that Senska would have seen as a child as well as forms from other cultures that she must have seen in museums or books. The "ring" handle is reminiscent of forms made by Peruvian Moché potters of the second and third centuries.

After returning to the U.S. with her parents, Senska attended schools in Iowa where they lived, including University High School in Iowa City, then the University of Iowa for undergraduate and graduate degrees. Her degrees were in art—drawing, painting, a little sculpture—but were not taken in specific practice or media the way they would be granted today.

Her first teaching post after receiving her degree was at Grinnell College, a small liberal arts college in Iowa. For three years, she concentrated on standard art instruction—drawing, painting, design, and so on—the way she had learned. During summers, she augmented her basic studies by taking courses from former Bauhaus professor Lazlo Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946) and Hungarian painter and designer György Kepes (1906–2001) at Chicago's new School of Design. She remembered that Moholy-Nagy's class "was a lot of fun. … And I got a lot of ideas about how to teach from him, because … his attitude was… 'Well, try it and see whether it works.



Frances Senska, Ring Neck Bottle*, 1966, stoneware, h: 11", Collection of Shelburn B. Murray, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

See what you get.' He'd never say, 'Well, you can't do that.' He'd say, 'Well, try it.' And so I thought that's the … technique I used on my students, too."

When World War II broke out, Senska joined the Navy. She was stationed all over the U.S. and ended up in San Francisco where she was attracted to a course taught by Edith Heath (1911–2005) at the California Labor School. Here Senska learned the rudiments of throwing on the wheel. Following her new-found fascination with clay, she continued taking ceramics courses at the San Francisco Art Institute with Hal Rieger, and at Cranbrook Academy in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, with Maija Grotell (1899–1973).

Senska also studied one summer with studio potter Marguerite Wildenhain (1896–1985) at her home and studio Pond Farm in Guerneville, California, north of San Francisco on the Russian River. Wildenhain had come through the first Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany, and, according to Senska, "knew all the Bauhaus people and she was into it, but she did not like the Bauhaus style … because it was so formal, from her point of view. … [H]er work was done with an expert potter [Gerhard Marcks] who didn't have any use for the Bauhaus, but he knew how to use clay [and] taught her how to use clay. … I had a class from her one summer. And that was very good because she was … an expert at handling clay. But it wasn't an apprenticeship; it was a class which she taught. Somehow apprenticeship has never appealed to me, because, as I look at it, … you're doing the master's work rather than your own. … I didn't want to do that. So I have never had an apprenticeship and I have never wanted apprentices around here. I want them to do their own work."

Her enthusiasm for Wildenhain's class led her to embrace the tradition of learning basic skills from a master, without copying the master's creative use of those skills. In a 1997 interview, Senska quoted a man she met at a NCECA event: "You know you hold your hands just the way I do," the man had said to her. He continued, "I learned from Pete Voulkos." She commented on his observation: "It figures. [Voulkos] learned from me and I learned from Marguerite Wildenhain. That's what education in the ceramic arts is all about. You learn from somebody who does it."

During her 2001 Smithsonian interview, Senska was asked about the university's role in ceramic arts education and the role of modernized, up-to-date facilities that are available in many universities today. "They've got a lot of space," Senska replied. "They have beautiful buildings. They have all the equipment you could hope for. You don't have to do a thing. … [W]hat bothered me about the university setups that I saw was they had everything and it looked like a factory. ... The equipment and the space they had for the students to use is terrific. But I wouldn't have liked it myself, and I really didn't like the pedagogy involved either. … As some of my students from [MSU] have said to me, 'We did it all together. We learned together.'"

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An Orthodoxy of Praxis: Janet Leach and the Ethos of Tamba Ceramics

Meghen Jones

American-born Janet Leach (1918–1997) lived and worked in Japan for approximately two years circa 1954–1955, primarily at the workshop of Ichino Tanso in the rural mountains of Tamba.[1] Early in her sojourn, she joined the renowned ceramist Tomimoto Kenkichi in Kyoto for a lunch that those who have seen the film *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* would find familiar. In a small six-seat restaurant, the two dined on raw fish with sweet vinegared rice. As Leach recorded in her diary, the sushi "old father still makes…[but his] son does not have [the] right hand presence to squeeze rice just correctly for flavor, so Father cannot retire."[2] Such an emphasis on "hand presence" underlies Janet Leach's ceramics praxis as demonstrated by a green-glazed stoneware vase she created in 1977. This vessel reflects tendencies that manifest throughout her entire oeuvre, from the time she moved to St. Ives, England, in 1956 until her death in 1997.

At first glance, the vase appears to be a channeling of Tamba, Iga, and Bizen ceramic forms and surfaces. Its asymmetry, visible throwing marks, incised slashes, rugged lugs, and overall rusticity align with the aesthetics of prototypical Japanese tea-related wares of the sixteenth century and after. Leach, like so many potters before her time and since, appropriated elements of Japan's "golden age" of ceramics in a manner akin to a classical musician performing a well-known composition. More than an ode to *wabi sabi*, however, this vase records

Janet Leach, Vase, circa 1977, stoneware, h: 7-1/4", gift of Julia Duncan, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1998.65, photo by Brian Oglesbee.

with clarity what may be regarded as an orthodoxy of Leach's artistic praxis with physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects.

In the creation of this vase at her St. Ives studio, Leach primarily relied on methods of forming that she learned in Japan through repeated practice. She used a Japanese kick-wheel to raise coils of clay in parts, a technique she referred to as "progressive throwing."[3] In Tamba, this method was necessary due to the coarseness of the local clay body, and in St. Ives she used local clay as well.[4] As she had in Tamba, she built up the vessel with a wide foot, straight sides, an angular shoulder, a flared mouth, and attached lugs. She then incised repeating lines on both sides.[5] While the compositional elements derived

Janet Leach at Ichino Pottery, Tamba, circa 1954. Courtesy of Ichino Shigeko.

from historical precedents, her firing process was modern, relying on a reduction atmosphere gas kiln.[6]

Why did Leach follow Japanese practices so closely? One reason is a respect she likely felt for Japanese methods of education. One of the key precepts of East Asian artistic pedagogy, recorded as early as the fourteenth-century in the calligraphy treatise *Jubokusho*, is copying from models. Thus, individual expression is discouraged during one's training.[7] Leach, widely described as the first foreign woman to study ceramics in Japan, likely felt a great deal of pressure to meet the expectations of her hosts by performing well on the wheel. She recorded, "I was a novelty (or freak) wherever I worked because they never thought of a woman using a wheel."[8] A second reason is that she embraced throughout her life the ethos of ceramics practice she witnessed in Japan. At Hamada Shoji's workshop in Mashiko, for example, she observed that potters there "intuitively use the elements and materials supplied by nature around them…Their pots are not *made*, they *flow*…Work is not merely work: it is life… Pots grow, are cut and set off, grow—cut—set off with a rhythm of respiration."[9] As Yanagi Soetsu and others had before her, Leach found in Tamba, one of Japan's so-called six ancient kilns, a pre-lapsarian source of Japanese ceramics. There, as she described it, "life was stripped of all ruffles and icing."[10] Potter Daniel Rhodes, who visited Tamba in 1962–1963, similarly sensed that "Tamba grew directly out of the social fabric; it was the product of farmers who were close to the basic essentials of existence. It had, therefore, a directness, and honesty, a suitability to purpose and lack of self-consciousness."[11]

More broadly, the orthodoxy of praxis recorded in Leach's vase stems from a holistic approach to making. Before going to Japan, she worked at the anthroposophical community Threefold Farm, where the teachings of Rudolf Steiner emphasized the education of children's

heads, hearts, and hands. The triangular mark with which she stamped this vase and others referenced this trinity. Valuing head, heart, and hand clearly resonated with the intuitive, natural approach to ceramics making she observed in Japan. Thus, Leach's vase is best understood not as antiquarian, revisionist, or mimetic. Nor did it directly reflect the teachings of her husband, Bernard Leach. In the most positive sense of the word, Janet Leach's vase is orthodox in its formative practices she acquired over her lifetime, and particularly in Tamba. This vase is the result of a complex series of decisions the artist made to pursue the practice of pottery according to her own terms.

[1] Although Leach's time in Japan is generally recorded as 1954–1955, her diary indicates she was there from as early as December of 1953. Bernard Leach Archive 311, Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts. In 1969, she traveled to work again in Tamba, and that same year Ichino Tanso's son Shigeyoshi came to the Leach Pottery for 3.5 years. For Leach's biography, see Emmanuel Cooper, *Janet Leach: A Potter's Life,* London: Ceramic Review Publishing, 2006, and Joanna Wason, "Janet Leach," *Ceramic Review* 221 (Sep-Oct 2006): 42-45. For a brief autobiography, see Janet Leach, "American Foreigner," *Studio Potter,* 11, no. 2 (June 1983): 76-93.

[2] Bernard Leach Archive 311, Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts.

[3] Janet Leach, "Tamba," *Pottery Quarterly* 4, no. 13 (Spring, 1957): 10.

[4] She used clay from St. Agnes, about twenty miles along the coast from St. Ives. Joanna Wason, email to the author, 7 April 2015.

[5] Vertical slashes on medieval pots may have suggested rice stalks after a harvest. See Louise Cort, *Seto and Mino Ceramics,* Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1992, 136.

[6] Joanna Wason, email to the author, 7 April 2015.

[7] Gary DeCoker, "Seven Characteristics of a Traditional Japanese Approach to Learning," in John Singleton, ed., *Learning in Likely Places: Varieties of Apprenticeship in Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 70.

[8] Janet Leach, "Tamba," 11.

[9] Janet Leach, "With Hamada in Mashiko," *Pottery Quarterly* 3, no. 11 (Autumn 1956): 100-2.

[10] Janet Leach, "Tamba," 10.

[11] Daniel Rhodes, *Tamba Pottery: The Timeless Art of a Japanese Village,* Tokyo and New York: Kodansha, 1982, 14.

A Simple Idea: Beatrice Wood's Teapot

Cindi Strauss

Beatrice Wood's (1893–1998) legend looms large within the fields of modern art and contemporary ceramics. She is celebrated as an important ceramic artist, as a friend and lover of Dada founder Marcel Duchamp, and as a witness to and participant in the most significant artistic events and exhibitions in New York during the late 1910s. As a transplant to Los Angeles in the 1930s, she enrolled in a hobbyist ceramics class in order to make a luster-glazed earthenware tea set to match the dessert plates she had previously purchased in the Netherlands. Her passion for clay ignited, she found herself as the student of the legendary Glen Lukens at the University of Southern California in 1938 and then at the Los Angeles studio of the émigré couple Gertrud and Otto Natzler in 1940–1941. After relocating to Ojai in 1948, Wood became close with Vivika and Otto Heino, equally celebrated California potters of the period. All of these mentors would influence Wood's throwing and glazing skills, with the Natzlers' unification of classical form and expressive glazes having the most significant impact.

From the 1950s through the 1970s, Wood steadily made ceramic vessels and figures in her Ojai studio. As she matured as a ceramist over this period, the shapes of her pots became freer and her luster glazes more experimental and bold. The combination of the richness and textures of her glazes with her interest in non-Western folk traditions and so-called "primitive" art began to define her work. Independently of the West Coast sculptural and figurative ethos of Peter Voulkos, Robert Arneson, and their followers, and not aligned with the function and tradition-based ceramic establishment in other parts of the country, Wood forged her own creative path with objects unlike other American clay from that period.

It is a widely held belief that Wood created her most adventurous and sublime work from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s when she was between the ages of 85 and 100—a feat that is unusual, if not unique, in the history of art. These pieces are revelatory. While Wood continued working within the vocabulary of luster glazes, primitive figuration, and forms influenced by world cultures that she began developing early in her career, the ceramics of her late period increased in scale and complexity with glazes that became more intricately layered and shimmering. Within these parameters, how can her ceramics from the

Beatrice Wood, Teapot*, circa 1970, earthenware, h: 3-1/8", gift of Franklin and Suzi Parrasch, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 2001.118, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

1950s to mid-1970s be assessed, given that she had mastered the glazes and forms for which she became known but had not yet reached her later creative heights?

Wood's teapot (circa 1970) in the Alfred Museum of Ceramic Art's collection offers an interesting case study. Squatting low to the ground, it stretches horizontally with a disproportionately-sized handle and spout. The teapot lacks the articulated foot that provides the visual lightness often associated with Wood's vessels. Its form is more akin to the teapots she made during the 1960s and 1970s as part of functional services rather than individual ornamental ones. Indeed, it may have originally been part of a larger service. Its red earthenware body peeks through the thinly applied matte turquoise glaze, so the surface provides none of the light-effects and depth associated with her luster-glazed ceramics. More interestingly, its body is simply decorated with applied clay orbs whose placement recalls the Indian silver jewelry that Wood collected.

While drawing from the formal stylistic threads that Wood had employed up to this time, this teapot is humble and unassuming in comparison with the majority of her contemporaneous work, much less the ceramics of her late period. Is it simply an example of the wide range of aesthetics found in Wood's oeuvre or does it represent a transition between her past and future? The argument for the former is stronger than the latter. The character of the turquoise glaze sets this work apart from Wood's more complex and expected works of the past or future. Nowhere do we see the spirited, majestic, and ultra-expressive glazes that are to come. From a usage perspective, its form appears eminently functional but as Wood moved away from creating this type of work toward more sculptural, ornamental objects, the teapot looks backward rather than pointing toward her future.

Perhaps it is unfair to put this much aesthetic pressure on one work—the teapot is, after all, not without its charm. And within the context of Alfred's larger holdings of Wood's ceramics, it offers the opportunity to study an important artist's career in-depth, just as museum collections, especially those associated with a teaching institution, aim to do.

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Minnie Negoro: "What could be more practical than pottery making?"

Sequoia Miller

Minnie Negoro's stoneware tea set won the Gump Award for "best ceramic design suitable for mass production" in the Everson Museum's prestigious *Ceramics National* of 1947. The teapot embodies the sensibility of Japanese folk craft, or *mingei*, with its understated, slightly irregular forms, stony grey glaze, and abstracted brushwork. Yet, the two smaller pieces look to be a creamer and sugar bowl, hardly traditional Japanese shapes. Negoro, an American of Japanese ancestry, engaged *mingei* not simply as direct cultural heritage, but rather as part of a complex matrix of agency, identity, and cultural authority.

Minnie Negoro (1919–1998) was born and raised in suburban Los Angeles to parents who had emigrated from Japan. She was in her final semester as a studio art major at the University of California, Los Angeles, when, in the spring of 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, leading to the creation of assembly and detention centers for Japanese-Americans living in western states.[1] The Negoro family reported to a center in Pomona, California, and was soon transferred to the Heart Mountain Relocation Center near Cody, Wyoming. Negoro later described the densely populated and confined center as "a frightening place… a concentration camp" and spoke of "turning inward" and "being in some level of shock and disbelief much of the time."[2]

Negoro, however, learned to make pottery while interned at Heart Mountain. Her teacher was Daniel Rhodes, an early graduate of Alfred University's MFA program, who had applied to work for the War Relocation Authority. Many camps had classes in various crafts for the detainees, but Rhodes's remit was more ambitious: to establish a ceramics factory to manufacture tableware for the U.S. armed forces. As Rhodes later wrote, "The plan was to give something to do to people who had been suddenly uprooted and forced to move, and what could be more practical than pottery making? It is labor intensive, requires relatively little equipment, and could make use of a variety of skills."[3] Perhaps the War Relocation Authority also hoped to capitalize on a perceived affinity of Japanese people with ceramics. Within a year, this project was abandoned,[4] but Rhodes and his students had built a wheel and prospected for clay in nearby Yellowstone National Park. Negoro practiced throwing for months, continually recycling the clay in the absence of a kiln to fire her work. Negoro left Heart Mountain by herself in 1944 to study ceramic design at Alfred University, completing her MFA in 1950. In these years, *mingei* was ascendant and evidently influenced Negoro's approach to her work. Bernard Leach, a potter and one of the founders of the *mingei* movement, had published *A Potter's Book* in 1940.[5] This combination textbook, how-to manual, and statement of aesthetic philosophy advocated a return to idealized notions of medieval Japanese craftsmanship. Rhodes likely introduced Negoro to Leach's *mingei* at Heart Mountain.[6] In 1949, though, Negoro met Leach in person when he led a workshop at Alfred. According to fellow student Susan Peterson, "[Negoro] hated her Japanese heritage … Leach was a big influence on her, and he spent a lot of time with her, telling her about how important Japanese art was." While we may question whether Negoro hated her heritage, her experiences at Heart Mountain were evidently traumatic. Did Rhodes, Leach, and *mingei* offer Negoro a way to renegotiate this aspect of her identity? What do we make of Negoro being punished for her ethnicity, only to have it offered it back to her, essentialized as an aesthetic

Minnie Negoro, Tea Set*, 1947, stoneware, h: 5-1/2", Collection Everson Museum of Art, Purchase Prize given by Richard B. Gump,* 12th Ceramic National*, 1947, PC 48.544.1-3, photo by Dave Revette.*

Minnie Negoro at the Heart Mountain, Wyoming, Relocation Center with Daniel Rhodes, instructor, 12 January 1943. Photographer Tom Parker. War Relocation Authority photograph courtesy of the University of California Berkeley, Bancroft Library.

philosophy? How do we understand the dynamics of Leach, a white English man, mediating this aspect of Japanese culture for Negoro? And what of Negoro's choosing to accept it?

In 1950, Negoro struck out on her own, establishing M. Negoro Ceramics first in Westerly, Rhode Island, and then, from 1952, in Mystic, Connecticut. Her work from this period retains some *mingei* aspects, but also adopts Modernist elements in its attenuated silhouettes, delicate rims and edges, and even-toned, unadorned glaze surfaces. She exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art's *Good Design* show in 1952, and sold work at high-end retail venues in New York City. In the late 1950s, she also exhibited in the more avant-garde context of Nonagon Gallery in New York's East Village, also the site of performances by Yoko Ono, Charles Mingus, and M.C. Richards.[7] Studio work was her primary endeavor until 1965, when she began teaching at the University of Connecticut at Storrs, a position she held until her retirement in 1989.

In the 1990s, Negoro referred to her work as "classical," a term she seems to use to encompass *mingei*, a spare Modernist sensibility, and perhaps Chinese-inflected Alfred aesthetics.[8] For Negoro, the intersection of these approaches, long intertwined, raises themes of identity, recovery, and agency in her development as an artist. Negoro's tea set of 1946–1947 illuminates not only prevailing taste in ceramics, but also many of the underlying cultural values that brought it into being.

[1] Italian- and German-Americans from various parts of the United States were also interned under Executive Order 9066.

[2] John Foley, "Minnie Negoro, Ceramics Artist," *The Day*, New London, Connecticut, 2 May 1998; Minnie Negoro, "Minnie Negoro Nisei Internee," in *Women Recall the War Years: Memories of World War II*, George L. McDermott, ed., Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Professional Press, 1998, 167, 170.

[3] Daniel Rhodes, "The Search for Form," *Studio Potter,* 13, no.1 (December 1984), 11.

[4] Ibid.; Negoro, *Women Recall*, 168.

[5] Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book,* London: Faber & Faber, 1940.

[6] Elaine Levin, *The History of American Ceramics 1607 to the Present*, New York: H.N. Abrams, 1988, 183. Levin writes of the book's influence on Rhodes, although she does not specify whether he had read it by 1942.

[7] "East Coast Craftsmen," *Craft Horizons*,19, no. 6 (November/ December 1959), 42; Randy Kennedy, "Dorothy Podber, 75, Artist and Trickster, Is Dead," *New York Times*, 19 February 2008; Ross Parmenter, "Music: An Anniversary," *New York Times*, 12 May 1958; Jenni Sorkin, "The Pottery Happening: M.C. Richard's Clay Things to Touch… (1958)," *Getty Research Journal,* 5 (2013), 197-202.

[8] Minnie Negoro, unpublished artist statement, Mystic Art Association files, Mystic, Connecticut.

"Always, the *next* pot will be better"[1]

Rachel Gotlieb

I received a call from Harlan House, an eminent Canadian potter, asking why the Gardiner, a museum of CERAMIC ART was hosting an ARCHITECTURAL exhibition? No, he had not seen the show, so I told him there was pottery, too: some Leach, Hamada, John Reeve, and Ed Drahanchuk. The exhibition featured Ron Thom, the mid-century architect and a follower of *mingei* who often commissioned furnishings from potters. House had heard from others that there wasn't any pottery, only ASHTRAYS, a potter's bread and butter, admittedly, but surely not worth exhibiting. This story is relevant to this essay on Ruth Gowdy McKinley because she was a mentor of House's, and today another museum exhibition, this time in the newly renamed Alfred Ceramic Art Museum, features ashtrays.

Ruth Gowdy McKinley graduated from Alfred with a BFA and then an MFA in 1955, and studied under Daniel Rhodes, Charles Harder, and Marion Fosdick. She was part of the new generation of women potters interested not only in decorating but in throwing and firing their own pots.[2] In 1963, she lived in Helsinki when her husband Donald Lloyd McKinley was on a Fulbright scholarship to study furniture design. She visited Arabia and other potteries that led her to a Scandinavian sensibility rather than a Leachian. Her precise forms are glazed thinly —almost skin-like—to accentuate the shape an emphasis that she shared with Finn Kyllikki Salmenhaara. McKinley paid close attention to form and function, how the silhouette of the pot defined the negative space in the room, and how each component—foot, handle, and spout—made up a single fluid form. In other words, she thought like a designer. McKinley made several albeit short-lived efforts to unite craft and industry; for example, running Ossippee Pottery in New Hampshire with her husband and a third potter in the mid-1950s. Twenty years later, she designed a collection of 31 tableware prototypes for the manufacturer Canadiana Ceramics, and she threw the clay models for furniture designer Thomas Lamb's line of stepped aluminum casseroles.[3] Not much came of these schemes. However, McKinley, unlike many of her peers, understood the benefits of plaster molding (solid and slip), which she had learned at Alfred, and employed these techniques for expediency when she made cups and ashtrays.

As well as design, music informed her practice. Noted potter and teacher Robin Hopper once described the rhythm and movement of her pottery as vitrified music. His observation is astute since McKinley had trained at a young age to be a classical pianist and planned to attend the Julliard School.[4] She adapted the rigor of musical training to her work process (long hours and building a repertoire) and believed that a potter is like a conductor who orchestrates disparate living elements to compose a finished piece.[5]

In 1967, the McKinleys moved to Canada where Donald headed the design and furniture program at the new Sheridan College in Mississauga, Ontario. Ruth reigned as resident potter for fourteen years but never taught (her formidable presence was influential enough) until her untimely death at the age of fifty. They lived on campus and she was given a small studio and adjacent showroom allowing her, she said, to be a "kept potter" to focus on quality rather than quantity. She and Donald built a small catenary arch wood-firing kiln, which she was devoted to, inscribing the name, Timshel (taketh). The kiln is legendary in Ontario since it was one of the first of its kind. In the early years, she fired irregularly but later in her career,

Ruth Gowdy McKinley, Ashtray with Two-part Mold*, mid-century, stoneware, plaster, h: 2-1/2" ashtray, gift of Jo Anne McKinley, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1999.64 & .65, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

she fired monthly. Leaving little to chance, she learned to design her pots with shoulders that nest, and stacked them efficiently to fill the kiln to maximum capacity. She mastered where to place them to control the flames and ashes for perfect blushes and flashings.[6]

The McKinleys are Canada's own Ray and Charles Eames or Lucienne and Robin Day. Perhaps they would have achieved greater recognition if they had not immigrated, but for the Canadian craft and design movement in the 1960s and 1970s, they raised the bar and set international standards. Ruth's highly skilled and exacting pottery is the opposite of the current trend of sloppy craft, nor does it resonate with today's ephemeral site-specific installations or ceramics with a "social turn." Creating pottery for the home that was made to last was McKinley's métier, and she relished it.

To return to ashtrays, McKinley made them with heft whether pressed in architectonic molds or thrown round on the wheel, and their smoky-brown and tar-black glazes evoked their purpose. She smoked four cigarettes a day and her husband smoked a pipe. But Harlan House reminds us that no potter wants to be remembered in a museum exhibition by an ashtray, and certainly not Ruth Gowdy McKinley. Everyone who knew McKinley called her the queen of teapots. She nailed a large black-and-white photograph of one of her best teapots outside her studio for all to see. A teapot to live up to, employing the parlance of Oscar Wilde. Teapots are difficult to make, and McKinley was meticulous. It took her thirty minutes to throw a single spout, which she positioned high to hug the belly, leaving a pronounced flare where it attached. She beveled the tip that she had cut on an angle, all this in search of the perfect pour and the dripless spout. For the lid, she preferred a large, turned cap that she fitted with a lug under the rim for a snugger fit. A McKinley pot is hard

Ruth Gowdy McKinley, Ashtray *(detail), mid-century, stoneware, h: 2-1/2", gift of Jo Anne McKinley, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1999.64.*

to come by since her output was small and what little she made she reserved for exhibitions and friends. This is my way of apologizing because I have never poured a McKinley teapot, only gazed at them through a curatorial lens, delighting in the glazed foot ring (and Ruth's eye for detail) and her floral maker's mark (a nod to the popular hobby of china painting that she witnessed her mother and great-aunt do in when she was a child).[7] McKinley mastered the teapot but it was never good enough in her humble view: "always, the *next* pot will be better." These remain words to live up to.

** I would like to thank Harlan House, Paula Murray, Léopold Foulem, Steven Heinemann, Robin Hopper, Bruce Cochrane, Lauren Renzetti, and Keith Campbell who shared their memories of Ruth Gowdy McKinley with me for this essay.*

–Rachel Gotlieb

[1] Judy Ross, *Down to Earth, Canadian Potters at Work*, Toronto: Nelson, 93. See also, Susan Jefferies, Ruth Gowdy McKinley, "A Legacy in Commitment, *Ontario Craft* (Summer) 1987: 19-22; Barry Morrison, "Ruth Gowdy McKinley" http://studioceramicscanada.com/home/about-barry-morrison/consolidation/ruth-gowdy-mckinley/ [Accessed 30 March 2015).

[2] Judy Ross, 93.

[3] Invoice for three days' work on covered casseroles, Ruth Gowdy McKinley to Thomas Lamb, April 1979, Thomas Lamb Archives, Design Exchange, Toronto; Ruth Gowdy McKinley Archives, Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery, Waterloo, Ontario.

[4] Robin Hopper, "Ruth Gowdy McKinley, Obituary," *Artisan* (Spring) 1981, 7.

[5] Ross, 96.

[6] Ruth Gowdy McKinley, "The Mark of This Fire: Catenary Arch, Downdraft Wood Fired Kiln," *Studio Potter* (Winter) 1974-1975, 43.

[7] Hart Massey, *The Craftsman's Way*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981, 46.

The Woman in the Doorway

Mary Barringer

It is January of 1971, and I am a student embarking on a road trip in search of contemporary American ceramics—its academic programs, its exhibitions, and the people who made the work I had seen in books and magazines. In those days you could put together an itinerary for such a trip by going to the old American Crafts Council offices in New York, next door to MoMA, and copying down the addresses and phone numbers of members, filed by medium and state. Arneson, Bacerra, Ferguson, Voulkos—all on 3 x 5 cards.

My journey began in Stony Point, New York. I drove down a long road through winter woods, and at the end found a simple wooden building with a kiln out back. In the doorway stood a woman in her forties, welcoming me, but also, it seemed, guarding her space. Behind her were many shelves of freshly thrown pots, and next to the workspace a showroom was crammed with finished pieces, mainly casseroles and salt-glazed jars ranging from hand-sized to almost half my height.

The potter was Karen Karnes, and I had already seen and handled her work. My teacher, Stanley Rosen, had brought in a casserole and a lidded jar, and instructed us to look carefully at the firm stance, swelling volumes, and perfectly seated lids. He particularly wanted us to notice the weight of the pots. These were not thin-walled vessels; they were hefty, without seeming heavy. They felt balanced in the hand, and their weight was in perfect accord with their confident, voluptuous forms. The clay in their walls was exactly where it needed to be—a feat of skill and intent, we knew, because we were struggling with leaden forms whose walls tapered helplessly to fluttering thinness at the rim. Thinness from bottom to top—thinness as self-mastery and as virtuosity—was what we were all aiming for; it was, we felt, synonymous with rightness. We knew of thick pots, but they were either inexpert, like ours, or made with macho bravado. Karnes's pots, on the other hand, were made with mastery, precision, and a generous amount of material. Their rightness was indisputable, and their strength and quiet self-possession conveyed a radical message—one I didn't immediately absorb, but that I never forgot. It landed in a deep place in me—an idea about femaleness as much as about pots.

The pots Karnes made in the 1940s and 1950s bear a strong family resemblance to other studio ceramics of the time. Their forms and stony surfaces connect them to the Modernist and design ideas then circulating among the new generation of what Leach called artist-potters, and although they are handsome pots, they reflect their historical moment as much as their maker. By the early 1960s, though, she had begun to make work that was unmistakably hers. In these pieces, her handling of the clay is both sensuous and rigorous, and her forms radiate a powerful self-possession. Although the profile of the casserole on exhibit undulates subtly rather than dramatically, the form spirals strongly from base to rim. At the lid, the handle catches that spiraling lift, twists completely around, and glides back onto the curved surface, sending the pot's energy earthward again, while the walls clasp the interior volume's outward pressure. Despite its modest claim of utility, it is an object that pulses with confidence and sculptural presence.

But as much as I admired her pots, it was my encounter with Karnes herself that has stayed with me all these years. The clay world I entered in 1970 was a rowdy, testosterone-heavy place whose converts (myself

Karen Karnes, Pedestal Bowl with Lid*, 1952, stoneware, h: 6", gift of the artist, Collection Alfred Ceramic Art Museum 1952.24, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

included) worshiped at the altar of Leach, Cardew, and Voulkos. Prominent women tended to cluster at the helping end, pouring their energies into teaching or operating as half of an artistic couple. While I had envisioned for myself the life of a potter, I didn't actually know any women living this life. The makers I was to visit on this trip were largely male, and although it was thrilling to meet them and see their studios, it was hard to picture myself in their place. I could not have articulated the gap between their lives and my own young woman's experiences, but when I met this woman standing in her studio, so at home and in possession of her powers, a door opened in my mind, one that until then I hadn't realized was closed. The seed of my life as a potter took root at that moment.

I am sure I'm not the only woman potter whose young dreams were given a decisive jolt by the example of Karen Karnes. Her calm determination to clear her own path was as important to our sense of the possible as the more direct and formal impact of teachers. Karnes has said, simply, "I follow my own impulse. I always have"[1] ... as though the voices surrounding female artists were not counseling otherwise. As though this were not an act—and a life—requiring unswerving focus, stubborn drive, and no small amount of practical skill.

[1] Karen Karnes interview in *Clay Talks: Reflections by American Ceramists*, Emily Galusha, ed., Minneapolis: Northern Clay Center, 2004.

Pioneer Looks: Glenys Barton and Jacqueline Poncelet

Linda Sandino

In the spring of 1973, a poster appeared promoting an exhibition at the British Craft Centre in London of the work of Jacqueline Poncelet and Glenys Barton. The double portrait, taken by their friend Michael Wolchover, is striking. Rejecting the convention of absorbed dusty potters in their studio, this image presents two confident, fashionable young women. Their work, although in the foreground, appears almost incidental. The image provokes several questions about its context, its content, and its afterlife. In Annette Kuhn's terms, the image functions as a site for "memory work" to unravel some of its personal and public meanings.

It is significant that the image was used as a poster two years after the founding of the Crafts Advisory Committee to advise the government "on the needs of the artist craftsman [*sic*] and to promote a nation-wide interest and improvement in their products." Poncelet, and Barton who served as a member of the CAC, represented a new kind of urbane cosmopolitan maker; they were cool! Poncelet's posture is authoritative and relaxed, her cigarette (though she told me she smoked only very briefly) adding to her classy glamour. Conveying her own graceful sophistication, Barton's demeanour indicates her training in dance. Professionals far removed from the prevalent homespun disarray of hippy craftdom, the gallery interior is also emblematic of the new order that the CAC (renamed the Crafts Council in 1979) aimed to promote.

Memory work involving photographs has, as Kuhn pointed out, an anecdotal quality, engendering an infinite constellation of reminiscences.[1] Looking back, the photographer Michael Wolchover felt unsure about whether there had been any "conscious motivation" for the style of the portrait, but nevertheless as a friend and colleague of artists, he told me he had "always been an advocate for removing the perceived boundaries between art, craft and design." The poster photograph was one of several that were displayed throughout the exhibition, emphasizing the CAC's wish to promote the makers, not just their work. The portrait went on to have a further life as a set of limited edition prints by the British artist Norman Taylor, one of which hangs in Barton's home.

Remembering is active and collective, cultivated through material and in discursive settings. So the fact that Barton and Poncelet have remained close friends since they first met as students at the Royal College of Art provided strikingly coherent memories. At the time of the portrait, they shared a studio in London's St. Pancras quarter, as well as a liking for clothes by Biba, the first British designer label, as Barton pointed out, "for everyone." Asking her to comment on who they were in 1973, Barton noticed immediately that she is wearing trousers, while Poncelet wears a skirt: "Nothing's changed!" Clothing is of course a marker of identity, here performing the features of continuity. Although the artist's identity is historically contingent, in Western culture its construction is comparatively stable: creative, other, "free," and expressive, along with other sub-cultural clichés.

Poncelet remembered that in 1973 their ceramics "made people very cross." Slip-casting was seen as an industrial process. Casting clay into plaster molds was not sufficiently hands-on for the craft fundamentalists of the time. Nor was it acceptably handmade that Barton spent hours "grinding shapes into submission" to produce her sharply fine pyramids. Poncelet's preoccupation with pattern was later to be deployed in other media, most recently in architectural cladding. Should one discern this

Glenys Barton and Jacqueline Poncelet, British Crafts Centre, 1973. Barton (right) and Poncelet (left). Photograph © Michael Wolchover.

concern in the early work by arguing that the piercings on the vessels form a pattern? Is it necessary to identify continuity in an artist's work?

The philosopher Paul Ricoeur has argued that identity is made up of a duality of constancy and change, articulated through the medium of narrative, which is able to accommodate both poles.[2] The stories told in recollection encompass the temporal mutability in which encounters with others, and reflections on events and objects challenge the constancy that maintains self-sameness. Photographs offer up the opportunity to confront mutability and sameness within the personal and public realm. As the image of Barton and Poncelet moved to become a poster, it entered the realm of public history in which some of its functions and collective meanings can be discerned. As a new image of professional women craft-artists, it demonstrated the range of possible representations that can now be read for tangible features of its time. As a personal image, however, it can continue to generate a variety of narrative identities that reveal the contingency of selves and the stories we tell about our times and ourselves.

[1] Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*, 2nd edition, New York and London: Verso, 2002.

[2] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, translated by K. Blamey, London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Coda: Toshiko Takaezu, Contemporary Constellation

Ezra Shales

To navigate the towering presences of Toshiko Takaezu's *Star Series* in the Racine Art Museum is to realize that a traditionally trained mid-century potter had transformed her craft into a vehicle of immense power by the 1990s. A small woman, Takaezu morphed her scale over time to daunting proportions that exceeded anything her teachers, especially Maija Grotell, had ever dreamt to attempt, and made her largest works in her seventies. Her use of repetition and modular construction became majestic, and her human-sized pots unarguably became sculpture and yet remained inalienable children of Grotell's practice. Takaezu still also made small, cantaloupe-sized pots, lovingly, as she tended her garden vegetables. Although beyond the scope of this historical exhibition, her late work reveals the enigmatic ways women ceramic artists grow but often thrive even when under-recognized. In Takaezu's case, recognition has come with a monograph, but the world is somehow not yet ready to integrate her as a major sculptor as it has welcomed Sheila Hicks and Ruth Asawa. Takaezu will one day make this leap from potter to sculptor; wait and see.[1]

Where is Takaezu in today's art worlds? Why do we still wait for her to be "discovered" by a Whitney Biennial curator? Should her work stand beside Maija Grotell, her peer Peter Voulkos, or the living, such as Jun Kaneko and Arlene Shechet? Answers depend on whether we see her work as objects or installations. Reception turns on whether we see her gestural layering of glazes as Abstract Expressionism or literal landscapes. Seeing the opportunity in the early 1960s, Takaezu, self-aware, made the leap from potter or craftsman to artist. Her aptitude for conducting formal analysis and seeing form as separate from cultural context can be noted in her own descriptions of those works from the 1950s that she called bottles: "Perhaps these [two-spouted] forms were inspired by pre-Columbian pottery in the Cranbrook Collections. But I certainly did not copy them." "I do not make a tea pot and say 'this is for use.' Form is my first concern." To be free of function suggested ontological differentiation, not merely a change in terminology. Calling her work "ceramic forms" commenced in the mid-1960s as a way to assert status and new aesthetic ideals.

Yet she also was specifically organic in her references, and *Tamarind*, made between 1960 and 1965, exemplifies her complex organicism—as do works she named "trees" and "moons." The contour of the three-foot-tall form evokes the lobed fruit of the eponymous tree but also visibly breaks into wheel-thrown units. It is precarious, the pyroplasticity of the clay articulating an anthropomorphic gesture. The overall form is both wholly abstract and yet also evocative of fruit as well as the lilting human head, a gesture of a listener and stargazer. Reading as a unified form and also a painted skin and canvas, Janus-like, it has a calm side and a more unsettling alternative, two emotional states seething in one body.

The interpretation of Takaezu's work has been hobbled by several factors. The works are probably too much like paintings as well as being too close to recognizable vase forms to be purely abstract. There are too many of them for art collectors' fancy for rarities. She produced with a maniacal intensity. Most of all, the meaning of her work has been crippled by condescension. Her intimate and delicate surfaces were read as feminine or less aggressively gestural than the work of Voulkos and her other male colleagues. She endured a mostly well intentioned but nevertheless patronizing orientalism.

Toshiko Takaezu, Tamarind *(detail), circa 1960, stoneware, h: 35", Collection of Peter Russo, photo by Brian Oglesbee.*

Looking back at the *Objects: USA* catalog from 1969, it seems unbelievable that she is treated as the Other: as Hawaiian-Japanese in her imagery, as Zen in her soulfulness, as feminine. Upon graduating from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1954, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a profile of Takaezu as a "Japanese Potter"–one would never have guessed that her brother served in the U.S. armed forces. In the *Objects: USA* catalog no work by male artists (even Rudy Staffel or Richard Devore) is described as "delicate," whereas the art of both Karen Karnes and Takaezu is characterized in this manner. Where can we generate more nuanced criticism?

Future interpretation might synthesize her organicism with her whole life. In a filmed interview, Takaezu stated that her kitchen, garden, and studio were not merely adjacent but integrated. "Making pots, cooking and the garden" she equated as "all the same," but no criticism or exhibition has communicated this visually.[2] A pilgrimage to her home in Clinton, New Jersey, opens up a sense of what it was like when she immersed her students from Princeton University in horticulture and cookery as adjuncts to claywork. In the contemporary art world, the term "social practice art" describes, for instance, Rirkrit Tiravanija's transformation of an art gallery into a Thai dinner and social event. Takaezu's weaving of her own *flossa*, Scandinavian rugs and hangings, as well as her whole compound, make the 1950s appellation "happening" just as relevant as "studio pottery" to describe her dynamic energy. Domestic yet solo, she was a pioneer in every sense, leaving Hawai'i to build her own home and to make "installations" before the term was coined. Her work still lies ahead of us and we must try to catch up.

[1] Peter Held, ed., *In the Language of Silence: The Art of Toshiko Takaezu*, Raleigh, North Carolina: UNC Press, 2011.

[2] Susan Wallner, producer and director, *Toshiko Takaezu: Portrait of an Artist*, NJN and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, 1993. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWFiDfb-W2M.

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Mary Barringer has been a studio artist since 1973, making both functional and sculptural works. She has exhibited her work internationally and has taught in universities and art centers around the country. In addition to her studio work, she has written and lectured on the history of ceramics, and from 2004 until 2014 was the editor of *The Studio Potter* journal. She lives in western Massachusetts.

Cheryl Buckley, Ph.D., Professor of Fashion and Design History at the University of Brighton, has a special interest in relationships between gender and design and has been committed to research in the field of Design History for over thirty years.

Caroline Cole is Ellyn McColgan Assistant Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She worked as Curatorial Assistant at Rienzi, the house museum and collection of European decorative arts and paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, before joining the Museum of Fine Arts in 2013.

Ellen Paul Denker is a museum consultant, scholar, and writer on American material culture. She holds an M.A. from the University of Delaware where she was a Fellow in the Winterthur Program.

Leslie S. Edwards has been the Head Archivist at Cranbrook Archives in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, for thirteen years. One of her primary interests is in ferreting out the stories and accomplishments of the women artists and designers at Cranbrook, and contextualizing their contributions within the broader sphere of arts, crafts, and design.

Rachel Gotlieb is Adjunct Curator at the Gardiner Museum in Toronto, Canada. She has written extensively on Canadian craft and design, notably co-authoring *Design in Canada* (2001) and co-curating *On the Table: One Hundred Years of Functional Ceramics in Canada* (2007).

Victoria Jenssen is a freelance art historian and retired objects conservator, a graduate of NYU Institute of Fine Arts and the Conservation Center. She collects ceramics by Carol Janeway and her circle, and is at work on her forthcoming book, *The Art of Carol Janeway*.

Meghen Jones, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of Art History at the New York State College of Ceramics of Alfred University. Her research centers on Japanese ceramics, craft, and modern art in transnational perspective, and she is currently completing a book manuscript on the ceramics of Tomimoto Kenkichi.

Love Jönsson is a curator at the Röhsska Museum in Gothenburg, Sweden, and has published widely on modern and contemporary crafts in periodicals, catalogs, and anthologies, including *Craft in Dialogue: Six Views on a Practice in Change* (Stockholm: IASPIS 2005), *NeoCraft: Modernity and the Crafts* (Halifax: NSCAD 2007), *Vrije Vormgeving: Mapping Dutch Conceptual Crafts*.

Helena Kåberg, Ph.D., is Associate Professor in the Art History Department, Uppsala University, and Senior Curator at the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm. She is part of the team renovating the Nationalmuseum and is project leader for the new collection reinstallation opening in 2018.

Bodil Busk Laursen, M.A., has worked in museums for forty years. She played a leading role in the modernization of the National Museum of Denmark, 1982–1995, and subsequently served as Director of Designmuseum Denmark, 1995–2012.

Sequoia Miller is a doctoral student in the History of Art at Yale University specializing in American material culture. He has an M.A. in Decorative Arts, Design History and Material Culture from the Bard Graduate Center. Prior to this, he was a full-time studio potter for several years.

Jonathan O'Hea is an independent art and antiques dealer, collector, and researcher with a particular interest in twentieth-century design and American art and craft of interwar years. He holds a B.A. from University of Mary Washington in Historic Preservation.

Matthew Partington, Ph.D., is program leader for M.A./M.F.A. Curating at the University of the West of England, Bristol. As Visiting Fellow in Twentieth Century Crafts at the Victoria & Albert Museum, his research interests include oral history and research ethics.

Linda Sandino, Ph.D., is CCW/UAL Senior Research Fellow at the Victoria & Albert Museum where she is working on a history of curating in the post-war period. She is co-editor of *Oral History in the Visual Arts* (2013) and *Artists Work in Museums: Histories, Interventions, Subjectivities* (2013).

Ezra Shales, Ph.D., is Professor in the History of Art Department at Massachusetts College of Art and Design. He was the originating curator of *Pathmakers: Women in Art, Craft, and Design, Mid-century and Today* for the Museum of Arts and Design, New York City, which drew on the scholarship of *O Pioneers!*

Mark Shapiro is a potter, workshop leader, writer, and mentor to a half-dozen apprentices who have trained at his Stonepool Pottery, in Worthington, Massachusetts. His work is in many public collections, and he edited *A Chosen Path: The Ceramic Art of Karen Karnes*.

Cindi Strauss is Curator, Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, where she is responsible for the acquisition, research, exhibition, and publication of post-1900 decorative arts, design, and craft.

Namita Gupta Wiggers is a curator, writer, and educator based in Portland, Oregon. She was the Director and Co-founder of Critical Craft Forum, and formerly was the Director and Chief Curator at Museum of Contemporary Craft in partnership with Pacific Northwest College of Art (2004–2014).


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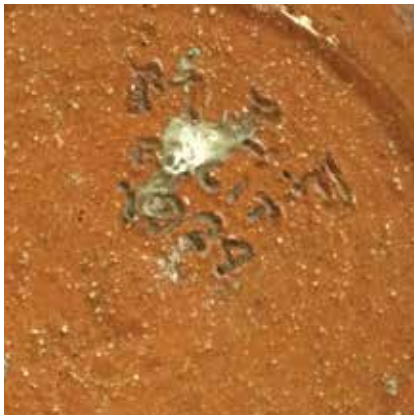

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