LEN CASTLE DCNZM CBE 1924 - 2011
Tribute by Simon Manchester

Photo: Chris Boult

Len Castle, arguably the greatest ceramist this country has produced, passed away on 29 September this year. I was sad for the loss of a friend and for the loss of one of this country’s great artists.

His career spanned the years 1947-2011, some 64 years of active making and his presence has been ubiquitous in the studio ceramics field in that time, and he is perhaps one of the few potters to become a household name in this country.

I first met Len when he was almost 70, bubbling full of energy and vitality and proudly demonstrating his craft to a packed room at the Dowse Art Gallery in 1994 on the occasion of his retrospective exhibition “Making The Molecules Dance”. On show were works spanning 47 years of making, some of the most recent of which were his most spectacular and masterful to date.

He was a courteous, dignified and charming man with a lilting tone to his voice and a passion and utter commitment to his craft. Always interested in moving forward, in what he could next achieve, he was bemused, when I first met him, at my interest in his early work and as our friendship developed we spent many hours identifying glazes, trying to date works and create a historical perspective to his practice for future reference. I think, in the end, this changed his own perspective on the strength of narrative and evolution of his work over time, and this later helped him form the production of his two major books which created such a great showcase not only for his work but for his other great passion, photography. His slide shows in a pre-digital age of pots and landscape segueing one to the other were atmospheric and masterful and yet used only his two hands and two slide projectors.

Len helped open the door for me to a world of creativity, commitment and expression in fire and clay that was a revelation to me. He was a master of his craft and widely lauded, but that never interfered with an openness to new experiences and people and a humility that was always charming. He was extremely generous with his time and patient with those, like me, who were new to the field and eager to learn.

Over the next years, we loaded and unloaded kilns, set up open days, ate food and talked pots while discussing how successful or not a particular firing had been. Len was also an avid correspondent ready to answer queries and to inform of upcoming events and exhibitions (not always his own) and it was always a pleasure to receive his missives in that fine calligraphic hand. Another aspect of this highly refined and resolved personality.

This was the perfect education for me; his ability to interpret and to explain the essence of ceramic works by all makers, including some of the world’s greats that he had met and worked with like Hamada, Leach, Cardew and so on, provided an amazing ceramic education for me. Len’s mentorship.
in this period, the reductivist forms of the 80s that provided a canvas for his complex and beautiful glaze works and the surprising vigor of the volcanic and geothermal works of the 90s (at a time of life when most people are well retired and sipping their sauvignon), represent a spectacular creative journey in clay and art that had been appreciated worldwide. And these are just some of the highlights—Len has left us with a huge body of work of tremendous variation that is, most importantly, held together by an innate “personality” that is Len’s creative signature.

Len liked to describe himself as an alchemist and he acknowledged that there was a random element in this world of fire and clay he created and was a part of, and it was this awareness that helped him create a body of work that resonates, but doesn’t mimic, the physical and spiritual world we live in.

In 64 years of making work, Len provided a cornerstone and a benchmark for pottery in this country. His total commitment to this field, his ceaseless experimentation and risk-taking, have helped set standards for others to follow and aspire to. What a journey: the salt glazed pots of the 40s & 50s, the free form unglazed work of the 60s (amongst his most inspired), mastering the “colonial” shino glaze in the 70s along with his more organic forms

patience and knowledge has changed my life. I now am an avid collector of New Zealand studio pots, I run auctions in the wider applied arts field, I write, curate and consult. Len inspired me to this, as he has in work and in person, inspired so so many others.

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Simon Manchester is a Wellington based collector of (particularly NZ) ceramics, an auctioneer and consultant.
In 2007 while helping Len to move back to Auckland from Warkworth, I asked him where he was going to work. When he said that he wasn’t sure yet, I offered him some space in my studio. He readily accepted and so began more than four years of our shared pottery journey. I listened to Bob Dylan most of my working day but when I saw Len walking down the path, I would quickly switch to the classical music station. However, one day he arrived without my noticing and I was compelled to explain my preference for Dylan. Within a fairly short time, Len was a convert and we enjoyed many hours of listening and discussing the political merits of the music and lyrics as we worked.

Len was a prolific potter and in the time he worked with me, he made more than 250 pieces; an amazing effort by someone in his 80s with deteriorating health. My relative youth and strength (compared only with Len’s failing health) meant that he increasingly relied on me for the heavy work of potting. However, his intellect remained razor sharp and when he was physically able he continued to create inspired new pots until the last few weeks before his death. I believe Len knew his days were numbered long before I realised it, but he always remained cheerful and optimistic about the future. His gracious and cultured demeanour combined with his great sense of humour will always be remembered by my family. We were very fortunate to have shared a small part of his life. Now, when I play Dylan alone my studio feels empty.

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**Selection of Prizewinners**

**ASP Annual Exhibition 2011 “Fire and Clay”**

left: Premier Award. “Beehives in Paris” earthenware by Jo-Anne Raill
above: Merit Award. “ASP” earthenware by Toby Twiss
above (lower): Merit Award. “Tea For Two” bone china by Julie Collis
right: Merit and People’s Choice. “Pukeko Storage Jar” earthenware by Chuck Joseph

Photos: Howard Williams.
Right: Wood-fired Birthday Cake kiln - 50 candles all alight.
Far right: Suzy’s giant birthday cake (with Peter Stichbury).
Below clockwise:
1. Dinner time at the party.
2. Moyra Elliott, Gill Carruthers, Beverly Luxton and Ruth Court.
5. Chester Nealie, Brendan Adams, Mac Lewis and Renton Murray.
6. Yuko Takahashi entertains.

The Auckland Studio Potters Society Turns 50
photos from the big event
Several ceramic events have flavoured my life in Auckland in the last few weeks. They have been wide ranging and diverse and have been of an international, national and very local nature.

Firstly there was the sad passing of Len Castle - an internationally acclaimed figure in the ceramics world. I have been fortunate to count Len among my personal friends. It was an honour to know him and I know my own life, and the lives of so many others, was enriched by him, by his warmth, his generosity, and his great creative talent and skill as a potter. Len had so many attributes and personal qualities. This issue of CQ pays tribute to him.

Secondly there was the opening of the annual Portage Awards. This is a truly national exhibition of the best in ceramics in this country according to Janet Mansfield, Australian potter for over 40 years and this year’s selector and judge. I put it this way because at least one thing is certain and that is that there will always be bewilderment at how some pieces won selection, or even more how certain pieces won awards. But no matter how surprising some pieces may have been I found the Portage worth a couple of decent visits, and a place to which I “directed” many friends, some of whom have only a passing interest in ceramics. The show certainly conveyed the sense that ceramics is alive and well in this country. Our congratulations go to Bridie Henderson of Nelson (Premier Award) and to Kirsty Gardiner (Wairarapa), Brendan Adams (Auckland), Cheryl Oliver (Cambridge), and Maureen Allison (Whangamata) who all received Merit Awards.

The 48 potters selected for this year’s Portage were truly representative of the national scene, as were those who won awards.

Thirdly there were local events of the most outstanding nature. The Auckland Studio Potters Society celebrated its 50th birthday in great style. Food, fun, fellowship and pyrotechnics were at their best on the 5th of November as a large crowd celebrated this wonderful event. Dinner was served. Peter Stichbury cut Suzy Düñser’s giant birthday cake and all feasted on that as they did on the huge kiln replica of the cake, complete with 50 firing jets, which lit up the night sky - Peter Lange and his pyrotechnical assistants were at their best in creating this masterpiece which is displayed for all to see in this issue of CQ. ASP’s 50th has been diversely celebrated and not the least of their activities has been the publication of a most handsome book entitled Playing with Fire. There are still copies available and I really commend this book to all serious lovers of ceramics in New Zealand.

We have also had a businesswoman in Auckland, owner of 5 restaurants, come to us with a substantial order for locally made plates, bowls, mugs and jugs etc for use in her 5 eating houses - over 5000 pieces in all, and all because she wants to support New Zealand craft artists. The project is being co-ordinated for us by Chris Southern.

So true to say there seems to be a lot on our plate!

And now we can look forward to our national conference and exhibition taking place in the Coromandel in mid March. That is not so far away. Again details about that event are included in CQ, are on our website www.nzpotters.com and on the conference website at www.woodstoke.co.nz (Woodstoke Whangamata 2012)

Your national executive has had to deal with a few substantial issues in the last month or two. We have been confronted with matters of financial support for exhibitions which have seen sponsors fall by the wayside and we are still challenged by issues of continuity on the national executive of our organization. Believe me they are matters of substance. We are working to resolve them.

Meanwhile it remains only for me to wish you all the best over the festive and holiday season.

President’s Report
Wally Hirsh

The NZSP offers members a chance to have their own web page on the web-site for free! Info on the site: www.nzpotters.com

Cate Pates has finally organised her website. You can take a look on www.catepates.net Feedback is welcome!

Mike Perry Mapua Artist

Cars and machines feature a lot in the ceramic work of Mapua artist Mike Perry. “I can’t stop fixing things,” he says. “I bounce backwards and forwards, in the half light, between sheds, looking for my next victim - carburettor, engine or toaster. I find real peace in understanding how things work - it is escapism and a form of meditation.” As Artist in Focus at the Suter Art Gallery last September, Perry describes his works as “a collection of characters that have made their presence known to me. I do believe they might be channelling through me, which leads me to think I could be facilitator rather than their creator. I can’t shake these nuns off, they have so much to say.”
At 07:09hrs on Friday 16th September, the flame was lit and Adam’s firing finally got underway. We took a moment to pause and gain our breath. The previous day had been a real heart-stopper. The three pieces of Adam had had to be carried from the studio and assembled atop the firebox. At over 100kg a pop, it was just as well fellow Unitec students were big fellows.

The torso was first. It was suspended from the 4m high belfry/gallows (depending on your sense of humour) whilst each leg was manoeuvred into place below it. Eventually it was lowered onto the top of the legs, locking all three pieces together. Slings were removed...and he didn’t fall over! A good omen if ever there was one.

Friday morning passed in a bit of a whirl as wood was chopped, fire stoked, cooking fires lit, rain shelters erected and blown over, visiting tutors and guests talked to etc, etc. By lunch time a crowd had gathered and as dusk settled in and the kiln began to glow, a satisfactory soundscape of crackling fire, sizzling sausages, chatter and laughter let us know that things were going well.

By 7:00pm things were getting dangerously hot. Adam had slumped against the back wall of the fibre kiln and the pyrometer at his feet read 1200. It was time to throw on the last piece of wood and pull the front off the kiln to see what was to be seen. As it turned out, it was quite a sight. Adam sparkled and glowed, changing hue with every cooling moment. The response from the crowd was extremely satisfying.

From an academic perspective (this is part of my degree after all), the making of Adam was not just an exercise in ceramic creativity, but also an exploration of the social elements of a firing that people find enjoyable and memorable. This curiosity about the ‘community hearth’ came out of my musings about Teapots.

Making a pot of tea usually means you are going to share some time with others. No bad thing. In a world flooded with email, texts and internet, it’s sometimes good to remember those communication gadgets that gather us together for a bit of good old face-to-face chitchat – the teapot, the picnic blanket, beach umbrella, fireplace, cafe table etc... being a ceramist, I tend to favour the hearth.

Fire holds a special place in the human field of emotional well-being. Potters have known this for a long time, having spent many a congenial session gathered around a wood-fired kiln with fellow potters, family and friends. Communal food was often shared (pot luck meals taking on a literal meaning), along with stories and the ups and downs of unpredictable kiln results.

Chester Nealie put his finger on it when he noted in *Playing with Fire*, that many potters come together ‘... sharing firings, learning from each other ... creating a wonderful community spirit ...’

Certainly the community spirit shone through on this project. It may have been my idea but the event was the result of ‘our’ collaboration and creativity. ASP friends and management, Unitec tutors and technicians, friends and family, joined in wholeheartedly. It took the form of advice, hands-on expertise, loan of equipment, donation of materials, wood and brick gathering, fibre kiln and firebox design and construction, donating wee objects for the torso gallery, cheering at the right moments and, of course, carrying out the actual firing. They say it’s dangerous to start naming names in case someone inadvertently gets left off the list and I’d hate that, so a very big THANK YOU to all of you who contributed in some way to making the firing such a successful event. I hope you found it fun, exciting and memorable too.
Waterless Throwing
with Barry Brickell

Barry Brickell arrived almost unannounced at the ASP on a Thursday morning recently. The regular Thursday class was filled out with several members who came at short notice to watch a demonstration of “Waterless Throwing”. He had been staying in Devonport for a month, on a writing retreat and kindly offered to come over by ferry and train to show us his (almost) water-free throwing technique. In spite of sailing right past our local train station and having to run back up the line, he was in jovial and entertaining mood and we spent an enjoyable hour and a half watching his kick-wheel throwing style.

The technique concentrates on using a paint brush dipped in a jar of water in order to target precisely the area of the pot he wants to put finger or knuckle pressure on, and the aim is that not a drop of water is allowed to make it as far as the the wheel head or the base of the pot.

The advantages of this technique? Keeping the wall of the pot dry makes it stronger for longer and you get bigger pots for your pound of clay. The tooth in the clay is raised and there's no slurry to give what is actually a false surface. It must give you a more sensitive contact with the clay because of this.

Barry has a real dislike of throwing lines and went to a lot of trouble to remove them, concerned that they may interfere with the form of the pot. That is a valid point of view, but it did puzzle some of the audience who enjoy throwing lines and the evidence of the wheel process, especially when the wheel is a slow kick-wheel and the lines tend to be quite strong.

It was a very enjoyable session with Barry in good humour and happy to make a range of pots - cylinders, a dented bowl, a mug - and tell a range of stories ... then he disappeared as suddenly as he arrived.

Dunedin Art Awards

2011 City of Dunedin Art Awards

Prizes included three ceramic artists from Otago:
Second Prize: Madeleine Child’s “Gorse Getting Away” - Ceramic.
Mayor’s Choice: Nicole Kolig’s “Universe”.
Special mention: Jo Howard’s ‘Stripes’ ceramic dish.

The Judge was Natalie Poland, she is currently Curator of Pictorial Collections at the Hocken, University of Otago. She comments:

"In the context of an art award where conventional landscape painting is a dominant feature it is refreshing to see Madeleine Child’s novel interpretation of the landscape. Artists depicting the NZ landscape in their work would ordinarily ignore or ‘paint out’ gorse as it is seen as a pest and consequently not worthy of being painted. The plant is also a potent reference to the colonial heritage of this country as it was introduced by European settlers who used it for hedging."

Mentoring

Your potters need you!

We have potters wanting guidance and advice in all areas of potting.
If you have been potting for a while, there is probably a less experienced potter out there who would love your help.

Mentors are assigned to a potter for a one year term, which would generally mean being in contact 10 times throughout the year.

To help you there is form available which includes a list of questions and suggestions on how to foster the mentor relationship. Potters who want to receive help and advice from this generous service must be members of the NZSP.

If you would like this form or more information about the mentor programme please contact Nicola Dench on: theclaypenguin@hotmail.com or phone 04 938-3356

Oddities

Right: Bricks on Bikes
Below: Test rings from a kiln fired with MSG at the ASP recently
Demystifying the Diploma
photographs & article by Suzy Düner

Above: Duncan Shearer, throwing tutor, assesses the hundreds of pots made for the module. Helen Perrett looking on.

Below: Work by Kim Rochester at the end-of-year Diploma Exhibition

Suzy Dunser has just graduated from the Diploma in Ceramic Art course. She is now a practising potter and Vice-President of the ASP.

I have just completed the Diploma of Ceramic Arts (DCA), after four intense but productive years. Over this time, I’ve occasionally been asked about what it entails, and I’ve realised that people aren’t really sure what we do. Even once you’re in the course, it seems to take some time to understand how everything works. For me, doing the Diploma has been a great experience, and one that has helped me in a number of ways. This article is my attempt to give a picture of the work involved in doing the Diploma, and to discuss some of the questions that arise around it.

The DCA is a qualification in ceramics offered as a distance-learning course by Otago Polytechnic, in conjunction with pottery studios around the country. The twelve studio modules are run by the local studios (students without access to one of these can also work with an individual advisor), and the distance classes are administered online. Full-time the course takes two years, but you can do it over up to eight years part-time. Four years is the most common, as most people doing the course have other significant life commitments (jobs, family, etc.). This also allows you to concentrate on just one studio module each term.

To put the course into a larger context, here is a brief history:

The DCA in its present incarnation got started at Auckland Studio Potters about 10 years ago, in response to a gap in ceramics education. A number of competent potters, some already doing day classes at the ASP, were looking to expand their technical knowledge and develop their work. Most ceramics programmes that had existed in polytechnics around the country in past years had been shut down by then. Others had been integrated with jewellery, glass, etc. to create “Design” diplomas, which gave an introduction to a number of different disciplines, but without the depth that had existed in the earlier, individual-discipline ones. The strongest remaining ceramics programme was at Otago Polytechnic.

The first approach to filling this educational gap, taken by Peter Collis, Peter Lange and Duncan Shearer, was to design an “ASP Diploma” – not an official degree, but a course intended to deepen students’ technical knowledge while exposing them to ideas and instruction from established ceramic artists. The idea was proposed to the ASP committee, who didn’t feel it was appropriate for the society at that time. However, Neil Grant, running the ceramics programme at Otago Polytechnic, picked up the idea, and adapted the course Otago were running to accommodate distance students. The ASP was the first centre to offer the distance Diploma, the Waikato Society of Potters followed a year later, and eventually it became available at centres around the country. Although there is a set curriculum, the course varies from place to place, mostly depending on how the studio modules are structured. If you are in a larger centre, you will likely have a greater variety of tutors than if you’re in a remote location.

Below, I’ll describe my experiences with the studio modules and distance classes, with the caveat that my perspective is specifically that of someone doing the course through the ASP in Auckland, coming into programme with a reasonable amount of experience on the wheel but not much else, and not sure at that time what my “style” was. So here it is, the Auckland-based thrower’s perspective on the Diploma course...

The Studio Modules

One of the more challenging aspects of the studio modules is that all the students, regardless of year, take the studios together, and as well people arrive in the course with different amounts of experience. The tutor has the job of instructing and motivating students across the entire spectrum of experience and ability. As for the curriculum, I’ve heard that in other parts of the country there is an orderly progression through modules to teach people the various clay-handling methods. In Auckland this is not the case – the general topics are covered each year (mainly divided into throwing modules and sculptural modules), but beyond that there is no apparent order. We get whichever amazing artists are available (and haven’t taught a module in the last four years), and they are let loose to teach us pretty much as they see fit. They do get some guidance about this, but there is still a wide variety of approaches.

All of this makes for a pretty intense learning experience: three times each year, you are thrown in the deep end, and have to learn to swim all over again. For me, this was great, and although I did have many frustrating weeks at the beginning of modules that were not my particular forte (read: anything sculptural, or requiring me to have an actual idea before I could get started), I got a huge amount out of all the studios.

My first studio module was with Andrew van der Putten. Because I had experience throwing already, I was in a good position to learn from watching him, and my handles and spouts took a leap – it didn’t matter to me that he didn’t talk so much, but the people without throwing experience were really struggling. As a result of this, in some future throwing modules, we had an assistant tutor to help the people just learning to throw, but I was left with the distinct impression that it’s a big benefit to take at least a couple of day/night classes before starting the Diploma, just to familiarise yourself with the material.

Then the sculptors got their own back – with Toby Twiss we did figurative sculpture, and I discovered I knew nothing about clay, after all. Even my tiny maquettes wouldn’t stand up. Later on, I realised that that getting things to stand up was the easy part of sculptural work – the real challenge was thinking of something worthwhile to make. Tutors including...
Christine Thacker, Carla Ruka, Ann Crane and Bronwynne Cornish all addressed this most critical of questions, while teaching us new techniques to enable us make our ideas reality. With Ann Crane we learned slip-casting, and with Carla Ruka we not only pit-fired our work on site in Pakiri, we had the opportunity to exhibit our work in a gallery there – for many the first time their work had been on display to the public.

Of course, even in the throwing modules there was no chance to get away with not thinking. Merilyn Wiseman, Duncan Shearer, John Dawson, Elena Renker and Peter Collis had us using vessels to explore form and glazes. With Peter we also got some insight into the dreaded topic of marketing – what we were going to do with ourselves and the work we produced once we finished the course.

Two modules we did specifically addressed firing methods. Elena Renker focused on wood-firing, which the class did up at her place in Albany, and Peter Lange spent the term taking us through the different types of kilns and firing options at the ASP – electric, gas, wood-fired, and diesel. We also did pit firing, although anagama was missed out, and possibly also raku. (Or maybe I just avoided that.) One great thing about the firing module was that it was planned in conjunction with Duncan’s throwing module the previous term. Duncan’s theory (and it’s pretty tried and true) is that the only way to improve at throwing is through volume. There was a lot of grumbling, but at the end of the term we each had literally hundreds of pots – mugs, bowls, jugs, bottles, plates, jars and altered vessels – not glazed, but ready for you to use the next term in the firing module.

If all this sounds ambitious and fantastic, it was, but it tended to take all the time we each had available in our lives, and more. Ten weeks is not a long time to come up with a new idea or technique, explore it, practise, and produce finished work you’re happy with. Juggling class schedules around jobs and children doesn’t make it any easier. Usually you do manage to finish your work, but even then, at the end of each term a lot of your ideas have to be put on a mental shelf as you move on to another subject. Ten weeks is not a long time to get your head around a new idea or technique, try it, see how it worked, and adjust for a different firing temperature.

The Distance Classes

Now would probably be a good time to go get a cup of tea, because on top of all this, there are the distance classes. For each full year of the course, you are required to do one year each of Glaze Technology, Art History, and Drawing. Although each of these classes carries the same number of credits, Glaze Technology does tend to take more time, and certainly more forward planning, because of the firings involved. If you do the course half-time, typically you would take Glaze Technology by itself for two of the years, and Art History and Drawing together the other two. Otago will suggest that you do alternating years, but it is also possible to do both years of Glaze Tech first, followed by the other two.

Glaze Technology

This class has the distinction of being both one that motivates many people to do the Diploma, and the one that gets complained about the most by students actually taking it. Developing glazes is arguably the trickiest and most mysterious bit of the ceramic making process, and there are many different approaches to learning about it. Glaze Technology, taught by Lawrence Ewing, gives a very thorough understanding of how glazes work. It involves delving into the chemistry of glazes, memorizing a lot of information about a lot of different materials, and doing a lot of repetitive work to see how variations in recipes affect results. At many points during the year, you may fervently wish you had just stuck with the empirical approach to glaze, but there is no doubt that the understanding you get from this class will stand you in good stead – whether you are trying to understand what’s gone wrong with the pot you’ve just fired, adapt a recipe that uses ingredients not available here, adjust for a different firing temperature,
etc. Although the material may be confusing at times, Lawrence is very helpful, and will respond at length to any questions you e-mail him. Also, he encourages students to work together where applicable, and I recommend this highly as well. If nothing else it helps keep you on track through the year.

**Art History**

I got cross-credit for the first year of Art History, and it’s worth noting that this is something you can do with both Art History and Drawing, if you’ve done degree-level work in these areas in the past. However, I’m very glad I took the second year, because the class puts ceramics into a wider context, both in terms of medium and history. Reading essays and reviews also gives you the background and helps you develop the vocabulary to discuss your own work, which is necessary if you hope to exhibit in the future.

In addition to the biweekly “responses,” which are short written pieces on anything you found relevant or interesting in the assigned readings, there are two longer research essays due each year. Peter Stupples, the Art History tutor, gives feedback after each response, and also writes extensive constructive comments about the essays.

**Drawing**

Of all this distance classes, Drawing was the one I found the most challenging. Trying to learn drawing without a tutor there in the room to give you immediate feedback on how you’re going is very difficult. According to a document that is still available on Otago’s website, the Drawing class is meant to have some locally-taught classes along with the online component. However, by the time I did the class, funding had been reduced, and the ASP was unable to convince Otago to pay for a local tutor. Fortunately for us, the ASP took on the responsibility of organising and subsidising a tutor for 6 weeks each year. His tuition was invaluable in teaching us how to draw, not to mention ensuring that we produced enough work for our evaluations. I would love to be able to say that taking the Drawing classes transformed my visual diaries (which is apparently the goal), but it hasn’t – not yet, anyway.

So there it is – a description of the course, albeit what is of necessity just one person’s perspective. The two questions that remain are whom this course best suits, and what the benefits of doing it are. The whole culture of education in New Zealand (and the world) has shifted in past years so that there is now an assumption that more qualifications are better, but watching a number of people go through this course, and a number of others leave without completing it, has made it clear that people come into the course for a variety of reasons, and hope to get different things out of it.

In my opinion, the ideal student for this course has had some exposure to clay and loves working with it, but is not yet settled on one direction to go with it. If you are more established in your practice, but still want the exposure to different tutors and the knowledge the other classes provide, you may be able to do work across the studios that supports what you already do – but there may also be frustration at times that the coursework takes you away from your own work. Doing the DCA also means being prepared to do some academic work, and having at least a mild interest in the supporting subjects. There is of course a difference between striving for an “A” and passing, and it is not all that often that people fail. If you accept in yourself that it’s okay just to pass, you can remove a lot of the stress. On the other hand, $10,000 is a lot of money to pay for a programme that is not actually giving you what you want, so this is an important point to consider before signing up. The thing is that the knowledge gained from the classes is not the only benefit to consider. There are a few other reasons why it might be worth it to slog through the academics even if they aren’t your favourite part of the course:

- The Diploma is, after all, an academic qualification, and can open doors as far as job and teaching opportunities goes, not to mention further education. Doing Level 7 (an additional year) raises your earning potential again, and also enables you to apply for Masters’ programmes.

- The exposure to experienced and respected ceramic artists you get through your studios and self-directed modules is a very effective form of networking. It offers you a chance to make contact with people you admire, as well as learn about the practical sides of being a ceramic artist.

- The Diploma has become better known over the years since it started, and being a “Diploma graduate” can accord a certain amount of respect. There have also been opportunities offered specifically to Diploma graduates, such as their own exhibition at the NZSP conference in Auckland this year.

The students I have gone through the course with are a very supportive group. We helped each other through the various classes and joined together to put on group exhibitions. This sense of connection has existed for all the years I’ve been in the course, even though people graduate and new ones start each year. Even when you meet DCA students from other parts of the country, there is a certain understanding between people who have all made it through Glaze Technology. The DCA course is undoubtedly a big commitment, both in time and financially, but it can be one of the most rewarding things you do to further your ceramic career.

I chose to write this just from my own perspective, but it would be great to get impressions from other Diploma students (current or ex), either in Auckland or in other places around the country. I hope those of you reading this will take the opportunity to respond to what I’ve written and round out the picture.
Long ago when Trademe was young I began trawling regularly through the Porcelain & Pottery section looking for bargains. Sometimes there was an additional schadenfreudian pleasure at seeing the great brought low by the cruel assessments of the second-hand market. On one of these trawls I spotted a Harry Davis lidded casserole (above) at a Buy Now price of $45. I followed it up and was assured it was in excellent condition with a mark which was definitely Crewenna. The photograph showed it to be almost certainly genuine. At $45 this was clearly a case of Seller Beware. We had nothing from Harry Davis in the collection so I greedily signed up for his lidded casserole. It arrived in a few days in a wee parcel - for inside was a lidded casserole alright but it measured just 12.5 cm in diameter. It was a genuine Crewenna pot and the description in Trademe was spot on - it just didn't mention it was a miniature. Briefly chagrined I soon realised we had a great butter dish and have used it for that ever since; sometimes, on grand occasions it holds a mean chicken liver pate that Jean makes.

Ever since I’ve taken great care on Trademe in reading before I leap. Only a couple of years ago under Len Castle’s name, I found a picture of a very large teapot sitting on a garden wall. Once again it was claimed to be in perfect condition; Measuring 83 cm high and 83 cm in diameter, this was a substantial and unusual piece of work. There was no Buy Now price so I decided to bid. I realised there wasn't much chance of getting it for a price we could afford but it was always possible no other collector had noticed it. Our hopes were raised as no other bids appeared but just before the auction closed one evening another bid appeared. Jean and I sat at the computer and egged each other on as closing time passed and the auction was extended again and again. It became quite exciting as that one other and I topped each other’s bids. It was a miniature. Briefly chagrined I soon realised we had a great butter dish and have used it for that ever since; sometimes, on grand occasions it holds a mean chicken liver pate that Jean makes.

Mind-altering mug. Suzy Dünser

This mug (right) was made for me by the American potter Tom Collins in 1983. He was artist-in-residence at a summer camp I was working at, and the first person to introduce me to the question, “Is round art?” For him it was clearly not, and so I got to see pots loosely thrown, and rather violently altered after they were thrown. The mugs he made for us had our names stamped out on the bottom, and were also personalised for handed-ness: for me, the newly attached handle was grasped with his left hand, and the lip on the side facing him smoothed for drinking. I love this pot for itself, for the memory of a generous and passionate teacher, and because it reminds me that throwing is only one step in the creative process.
Waikato Ceramics is pleased to announce that the original Mac’s Mud pottery clay is back!

Mac’s White: Firing 1150 (Cone 1) – 1280C (Cone 9)
A fine white clay that performs well as an earthenware through to white vitrified stoneware. Good colour response and glaze fit. Suitable for throwing, hand or slab building.

Available from:
Waikato Ceramics
7-11 West St
Hamilton
Ph 07 856 8890, Fax 07 856 9982
Email: sales@potterysupplies.co.nz

Yes - it is our 10th year of presenting Waiclay in conjunction with the Waikato Museum of Art and History. The exhibition team of Maureen Allison, Gail Drake, Jenni Taris and myself have given our time freely over this 10 year period and many times have asked the question “Why are we doing this?” - we would have more time for potting if we did not have this continually on our calendar. But of course, when we see the resulting exhibition it is all worth it.

Our selector this year was Bruce Dehnert of the United States. Bruce came to New Zealand in early November enabling him to review his first selection then prepare work for the exhibition. The work Bruce exhibits in this exhibition has a fresh freedom especially his cups and teapots.

Bruce also exhibited a sculpture – “Saint They” – this combines architectural shapes and different textures with a thought-provoking message – or maybe story. The selected exhibition represents a varied selection of mainly sculptural work, displayed with great care by the experienced team at the museum.

The Premier award went to Kate Burchett for “Hot Rock Café”, a collection of wheel-thrown cones, spirals and discs, forming a whimsical playful carnival of shapes. The Waikato Society of Potters award went to Darryl Frost for “Gone Fishing”, a crusty, gnarly piece, cracked with ash glaze dripping from every part of the work.

Merit awards went to Duncan Shearer for a collection of soda-glazed vase forms, each vase revealing a different flash of the flame that surrounded it in the kiln. The second merit was awarded to Nicola McLaren for “Memento Mori 2”. This work gave everyone the challenge of deciding what Nicola was trying to express in the work. It provoked a robust discussion on Artist Statements in the forum discussion.

The forum was chaired by Royce McGlashen with Simon Manchester, Duncan Shearer, Bruce Dehnert and myself on the panel, and with the contribution from the audience we had a marvellous debate on issues relating to the exhibition. Royce’s contribution as chairman gave everyone a chance to express his or her view.

We also have eight guest potters who have added a body of their work to this exhibition: Cheryl Oliver, Kate Fitzharris, Fran Maguire, Matt Mclean, John Parker, Paul Maseyk, Royce McGlashen - along with Mike O’Donnell and Peter Collis sharing one spot. These installations are on display until the end of February and from March to May respectively.
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### Ceramic Information

See exhibition information page for conditions of entry
Entries pre-selected from digital images or photographs

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### Digital Images / photographs

Up to three images of each entry can be submitted, including a close up.
Digital entries can be on CD or emailed. Image files must have a resolution of 300dpi with a total file size of between 500 KB and 2 MB. All CDs should be labelled with your name and details. Each image file should be named with the entry title. Email entries also need the entry form attached (see website for digital entry forms).

Email entries are to be sent to calendar@ochna.co.nz.
Photographic entries need to be printed to 8" x 10" (20cm x 25cm).
The CDs or photographs will not be returned.

### Selected ?

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### Declaration

Artists/potters please sign below. This is confirmation that the entry work is the sole original work of the artist/potter, was not executed in a class of instruction and was made after January 2011. The selector's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

Artist/potter's signature ____________________________ Date ____________

Entry fee paid Y / N
Total paid
Exhibition Information

Contacts
Janet Smith 07 8271889  info@woodstoke.co.nz
Maureen Allison 07/65010  mae@actrix.co.nz

Eligibility
The exhibition is open to all financial members of the NZ Society of Potters Inc. Non members may join by adding their membership fee to their entry fee.

Entry Fee
Will be $50 full member, $40 for a tertiary student (nonrefundable).
To join as a full member of NZSP including entry fee is $120 or student $75.
To join as a joint membership including entry fee is $155.
Cheques made payable to Woodstoke, send to Woodstoke, c/- Janet Smith, 37 Kairangi Rd, RD3, Cambridge, New Zealand.
Internet banking details: Woodstoke, BNZ, account number 021254 0016322 00. Please include your name and EXCH in the reference fields.

Selection
Artists/potters may submit up to 3 entries of which one may be a group/set or installation. Entries will be pre-selected from digital images or photographs (up to 3 images per submitted work). Selected artists/potters will then be invited to send their work to Whangamata for final selection and judging.
All entries should include an image of the maker and an artist's statement up to 100 words for inclusion in the catalogue.
All work must be the original work of the artist/potter, it must be available for sale and have been made since January 2011.
Post your entries to: Woodstoke Exhibition, c/- Janet Smith, 37 Kairangi Rd, RD3, Cambridge.

Closing Date
Digital entries sent or delivered to arrive by 8th February 2012.
Late entries will not be accepted.

Receiving
Dates for receiving selected work are 7th to 9th March. Please send or drop off to Whangamata Woodworks, 108 Lindsay Road, Whangamata.

Commission
33% commission to be included in the price.

Courier
All unsold and unselected work will be returned by courier at no extra expense.

Packaging
Each piece must have a sticker on the base with Name, Title, Selling Price and a number that corresponds to the entry form. Work must be packaged securely and will be returned in the original packaging.

Insurance
Entrants are responsible for the insurance of their work while in transit and throughout the duration of the exhibition at Whangamata Woodworks, 108 Lindsay Road, Whangamata.

Photography
By entering exhibitors accept that images of their work may be reproduced in the catalogue, magazines, websites or other publicity purposes relating to the exhibition.

Location
The Exhibition will be held at Whangamata Woodworks, 108 Lindsay Road, Whangamata.

Disclaimer
All care will be taken with every aspect of this exhibition, but organisers will not be held responsible for damage, loss, unforeseen mistakes or errors made by them or volunteer helpers.

Awards
Primo Clays Premier Award $2000
4 merit prizes of $500

Sponsors

| PRIMOCLAYS | NZ POTTERS | VISIQUE |
# The NZ National Ceramic Conference

**Whangamata**  
16th to 19th March 2012

## REGISTRATION FORM

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Registration fee includes conference attendance, exhibition opening, lunches and dinners on 17th & 18th, continuous tea, coffee, fruit juice, entertainment on Saturday night, pot in the wood kiln (must be bisque fired and delivered to kiln site by 9th March), pot in the salt or soda kiln (must be bisque fired and ready for loading on Saturday).

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Master Classes

- Robert Sanderson and Coll Minogue (4th to 8th March)  
  Paid before 1st Jan $270
  Paid after 1st Jan $300

- Chester Neale and Mike O'Donnell (9th to 13th March)  
  Paid before 1st Jan $270
  Paid after 1st Jan $300

- Janet Smith and Duncan Shearer (13th to 15th March)  
  Paid before 1st Jan $270
  Paid after 1st Jan $300

- Bus Trip on 19th March (includes lunch and fruit, train extra) $45

- Camping (per person for the weekend) $20

**TOTAL** $ 

Payment details (please tick your preferred payment method)

- Payment by cheque for $ enclosed (payable to Woodstoke)
- Internet banking to Woodstoke, BNZ, account number 021254 0016322 00. Please include your name and COF in the reference fields.

Send completed registration form to: Janet Smith, 37 Kuirangi Rd, RD3, Cambridge 3495.

Office Use

Receipt number Date received
Woodstoke
Whangamata
2012 Conference
16th to 18th March
www.woodstoke.co.nz

The momentum is building—already the international interest in the Woodstoke conference is building and our guest line-up is reflecting that interest. We’re keen for this conference to strike a different note from previous NZ Potters events, a reflection of the passions of the organisers and the rare access to so many resources suitable for a wood firing conference.

The pre-conference workshops are also shaping up to be special with a different flavour for each event, bookings are coming in and with limited numbers it is important to register your interest early.

A number of other wood kilns around the country will be fired, either before or after the Conference. Too many to list here, the best way to keep up to date is with the website. But we encourage all conference or workshop participants to check out these other firings on their way to Whangamata.

Conference:
- Salt and soda kiln firings throughout Saturday, opening on Sunday
- Anagama wood kiln firing up to Friday and opening on Sunday
- Kiln stacking demonstration
- Clay bank kiln building and firing on Saturday, unloading Sunday
- Alternative kiln building and firing on Saturday, unloading Sunday
- Continuous pottery DVDs running in the chill-out zone
- Various making demonstrations by guests throughout the weekend
- Forum on international wood firing perspectives and standards, chaired by Janet Mansfield, keynote talk by Robert Sanderson
- Visit to Mike O’Donnell’s kiln for opening on Sunday

Register now for this exciting 3-day event. Registration fee of $280 for NZ Potters’ members includes: conference attendance, lunches and dinners and entry to opening of the National Exhibition. Earlybird discounts are available until 1st January Member $250, Non Member $290

Bus trip on Monday 19th March to visit potters and wood kilns from Whangamata to Coromandel township, including Driving Creek Pottery.

Our guest line-up includes:

Janet Mansfield - a name well known to all in NZ as founder of Ceramics Art & Perception and Ceramics Technical as well as a host of other publications, a perceptive maker and an engaging promoter of wood firing.

Yuri Wiedenhofer – taught by the best potters in Australia, Yuri has developed an easy making style that comes alive from the firing of his Anagama kiln, he has a dangerous gleam in his eye when building kilns.

Chester Nealie – born on this side of the ditch, Chester now resides near Janet Mansfield in Australia. He has honed his methods of making and firing to produce a synthesis that is truly sensational and his generosity in sharing information during demonstrations is legendary.

Mike O’Donnell – infused with the spirit of the Hauraki and Waikato, Mike is an inspirational teacher, one who conveys the necessity of knowing where you come from as a maker. He can guide your journey and bring out the passion that needs to drive your creative energy.

Darryl Frost – this Tasman based potter is one that can open your eyes to the mesmerising nature of wood firing. Drawing inspiration from nature and the chaotic, Darryl will impart his enthusiasm for the raw material of clay and its infinite potential.

Duncan Shearer – resident in the Waikato, Duncan has been building and firing wood kilns since his studies at UNITEC in the mid nineties. His experiments with kilns and odd firing technologies have built a reputation for spectacle and innovation.

Janet Smith – hailing from Cambridge Janet specialises in salt firing and has built an enviable reputation as a maker and teacher. She engages students with her enthusiasm and can-do attitude, inspiring everyone to tackle kiln building and firing with salt.

Maureen Allison – is inspired by the vast collection of clays that her land sits on. Materials matter and no one conveys the passion for the variety and character of clay like Maureen. This connection with the land and the resources that it provides forms the heart of this conference.

Don Bendel - is a familiar figure to ceramic artists. He hosted NCECA, the most recognized ceramics conference, at Northern Arizona University in the early seventies. “I look back on fifty years of making ceramic art and see a period of intense change. Analytically the diversity of my pieces are an indication of what has been a great adventure. When making ceramic pieces, the process is important to me because that’s when I create and learn, I love the action and reaction. The immediacy, the uncertainty and the accidents inherent in working with clay and the firing are all important aspects of my work. My ideas come from everywhere. I like to sketch and work out a concept. I’m not always certain what it’s saying to others because I make it for myself and can only hope the spirit of my pieces transcend the object and give enjoyment and pleasure to others. My attitude towards my work is best expressed by the 19th century philosopher George Santayana’s statement, “Art is everything”. Not everything is art but an important part of our humanity.”

Marshall Maude - is a ceramic artist and Assistant Professor of Ceramics at the University of Kansas. Before joining the faculty, Marshall was a Lecturer at the University of Kansas. He also headed the Ceramics program at Benedictine College and taught sculpture at Johnson County Community College. Marshall received his MFA in 2003 from the University of Kansas. He did post-baccalaureate studies in wood fire ceramics and kiln construction at Northern Arizona University. He opened Studio 59, a ceramics studio and gallery in 2004, producing and marketing functional and sculptural ceramic work. Marshall has designed, built and fired wood kilns across the United States. He has shown his work in solo, two-person and group exhibitions nationally and in Korea. “I focus on creating work that alludes to motion, chance and time to evoke a sense of mystery, which, while being open to individual interpretation, is grounded by the earth and our relationship to it as humans.”

Pre-Conference Workshops

Kiln Building and Firing Workshop
Tirau. 4th- 8th March.
Fee: $300 (limited to 8 participants) $270 if paid before 1st January
Who: Robert Sanderson and Coll Minogue
Robert Sanderson and Coll Minogue are running a kiln building workshop. On a farm in Putaruru near Tirau, Robert, Coll and the host Julie will be assembling bricks into an 18 cubic foot track type wood kiln. These kilns are easy to build, pack and fire; it is in fact quite feasible to fire this kiln alone or with the assistance of...
one other person. Having completed the workshop it should be possible for participants to build their own versions of this kiln. To date Robert has built six such kilns including at the International Ceramics Festival, Aberystwyth, Wales; the International Ceramics Research Centre in Skælskør (Denmark); the National Ceramics Centre at Rufford (UK), and Red Deer College in Alberta (Canada). The workshop fee is $300. As well there is some accommodation available at Julie’s house (first come, first served) and heaps of room for camping or caravans at the farm. Workshop numbers will be limited so get in quick to secure your spot.

Kiln Loading and Firing Workshop
Paeroa 9th - 13th March.
With Chester Nealie and Mike O’Donnell
Workshop fee: $300 (limited to 10 participants and includes accommodation at Mike O’Donnell’s pottery “Meeting House of the Fish People” in Paeroa, bring your own bedding and food to share). Only $270 if paid before 1st January.
The dream team of Mike O’Donnell and Chester Nealie will guide a lucky few through the art of loading a wood kiln and the nuances of firing. This workshop will give participants a real understanding of the importance of how to stack a kiln. An expert in the tumble stacking method, Chester Nealie will enlighten you to the immense range of possibilities that occur once you realise that pieces in a kiln don’t have to sit flat on their bases. Once the firing is underway participants will be divided up into stoking shifts and then the drama of the firing begins. It is a long workshop, but the time taken in loading and the accumulation of ash in the firing are all processes that require patience.

Salt and Soda Workshop with Janet Smith and Duncan Shearer. 13th - 15th March, Whangamata.
Workshop fee: $300 (includes clay, limited to 12 participants) Only $270 if paid before 1st January
This is a workshop of two halves – Janet will be focusing on salt, while Duncan will be using soda. Both groups will be building small kilns that utilise a simple and elegant kiln design. Fired with a combination of wood and diesel these kilns are utilised a simple and elegant kiln design. Fired with soda. Both groups will be building small kilns that can be moved and fired off, or even converted to wood heating. Duncan will be building a kiln that can be moved to the Waikato and Duncan will be building a kiln that can be moved to the Waikato and utilised in the Waikato. The kilns will be unloaded on the Saturday of the weekend and the work will be exhibited at the Kiln Results forum on Sunday.

Exhibitions are a key feature of the NZ Potters’ conferences and this one will be no exception. The National Exhibition will be hosted in Whangamata, opening on Friday 16th March and continuing for another couple of weeks which coincides with the Whangamata Beach Hop (an event that swells the population to over 70,000). There will be a student exhibition in Whangamata and numerous small shop window exhibitions dotted throughout the retail strip of Whangamata. On your way into the area the prestigious Waiclay exhibition will still be on in Hamilton.

For the latest up to date information see our website www.woodstoke.co.nz.

Why On Earth Do They Call It “Throwing”?

Denis Krueger

When a person changes professions (as most Westerners do several times in their lives) one carries the knowledge and experience of the profession left behind into the new profession. In my case the old profession was German language and literature; the new one, pottery. I knew that language, like any other attribute of man, is in a constant state of flux. Anyone who tries to read Chaucer, or even Shakespeare, in its original form can see the enormous changes that have occurred in English just since the Middle Ages. I knew that language has a history just as political events or personalities do, and I knew that most European languages can be traced back to Indo-European roots that actually predate writing.

When I first began making pots, I was naturally curious about the new words I was learning - words which didn’t seem to make much sense. Until then, I had thought grog was a rum drink, slip was something ‘twixt the cup and the lip, and I wondered why on earth wheel work was called throwing. Since I had the skills in etymology to answer these questions myself, I eventually got around to doing just that.

One of my initial discoveries was of great personal interest. In graduate school, I had been told by one of my professors that Krueger means country innkeeper. Krug (not Stein) is the German word for beer mug and a Krueger is the man who serves beer mugs. This is indeed one definition. The other is that a Krueger is the man who makes beer mugs: Krueger means potter. No wonder I had such an affinity for clay! When I finally explored a larger number of potter’s words, some patterns began to emerge. Within the flux of language some areas change rapidly and some resist change. Much of the specialized vocabulary of pottery has resisted change for the simple reason that the activities and objects described have changed so little over the centuries.

I shall begin with the words that appear in Old English (500-1050 A.D.), although many have even older roots. Clay appears in Old English as ‘clǣg’ (from the Proto-Germanic* klāyan ‘to throw’, the German word ‘werfen’, Old English ‘wérfan’ ‘to throw’ and means exactly the same thing it does today. To find the root for clay, we have to go back to the Indo-European root glei- meaning to glue, paste, stick together.

To throw: Potters at Marshall Pottery in Texas describe their work at the potters wheel as “turning”. They understand only the modern meaning of to throw and do not use it to describe their work. However, the Old English word ‘thrawan’ from which to throw comes, means to twist or turn. Going back even farther, the Indo-European root ter means to rub, rub by twisting, twist, turn. The German word drehen, a direct relative of to throw, means turn and is used in German for throwing. Because the activity of forming pots on the wheel has not changed since Old English times, the word throw has retained its original meaning in the language of pottery but has developed a completely different meaning in everyday usage. Those who say they throw pots are using the historically correct term. Those who say they turn pots are using more current language. Both are saying the same thing.

There will be more from this fascinating essay in later issues of CO.

With the kind permission of: www.studiopotter.org

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Linda Holloway
1.holloway@xtra.co.nz
I love it when a plan comes together. There’s no “I” in team and, like a jigsaw puzzle, all the pieces have to fit together before the whole picture emerges.

Our team of Waiclay girls Janet, Gail, Jenni and Maureen would like to thank the rest of the team that worked on the Waiclay National Ceramic Exhibition for 2011. Although we celebrate the 10 years that the Waiclay Team has been in existence we also celebrate those that have helped the continuation of the dream and the passion the team has for pottery. Without the potter/ceramist’s passion for their craft the exhibition would not take place. Without the co-ordination between the venue, advertisers, sponsors and so on, there would be no platform to showcase what New Zealand has to offer.

So we thank the supporters of our event:

**The Waikato Museum of Art and History.** They provide the timeframe of the event, venue, advertisement, design of the exhibition and this year contributed to the production of the first Waiclay full colour catalogue. An artist-in-residence space which had not been utilised was fitted out by Janet and Gail, and Bruce Dehnert stayed in this accommodation, thoroughly enjoying the ambience.

**The Fulbright NZ Organisation.** It provided funds which allowed us to bring Bruce from America as our selector. Bruce arrived one month before the exhibition and worked alongside our own potters in a residence space in the Waikato Society rooms. Here he produced the work in the exhibition, (Duncan Shearer contributed immensely with his support to Bruce during this time) along with a workshop which produced innovative and provocative work.

**Heritage Gallery** – Sandra Webb. Sandra has been an avid supporter of Waiclay from day one, her arm being twisted each year. This year Sandra provided the premier prize of $2000 for which we are very grateful. Sandra has always provided a platform for ceramic work to be displayed and sold in her Cambridge gallery and at present is hosting an exhibition for Maureen Allison.

**Waikato Society of Potters.** Our local club has never faulted in its support for Waiclay and we have only ever had to ask, to receive. They made our selector welcome and feel at home, and provided the $750 merit prize.

**House.** Pubs and Potters, what better combination could you get. House provided our delicious, delectable, opening night nibbles, a place to lax out for Waiclay meetings and the perfect spot at which to finish our evening. Bruce enjoyed the beer taster, even if it did leave him unable to remember his pick-up plans for the Saturday morning champagne and strawberry breakfast at the David Lloyd gallery.

**Meyer Gouda Cheese.** If you are going to do something, do it well – if you are going to serve cheese get the nation’s best cheese-makers on board.

That takes care of the National exhibition but Waiclay had opportunities to expand to a program of events which included a Waiclay and Master ceramic exhibition in Morrinsville Gallery, emerging artists exhibition in the David Lloyd Gallery and a forum discussion along with the usual sponsors, pre-opening tour and the walk and talk tour of the exhibition on the Saturday.

**Morrinsville Gallery.** Having been offered a fabulous gallery space the Waiclay team decided to showcase Master Potters from throughout New Zealand and the line up included Steve Fulmer, Rick Rudd, Katie Gold, Paul Winspear, Barry Brickell, Ian Webster, Peter Collis and Darryl Frost. The full exhibition can be viewed on the Morrinsville Gallery website www.morrinsvillegallery.co.nz

**Waikato Ceramics** - Macs Mud Mugs. In conjuction with the Masters exhibition, a mug competition was held where mugs made from Macs white were judged and Duncan Shearer won the prize of $200. Waikato ceramics also provided funds for the set up of the exhibition and advertising.

**Tree Town Kitchens.** All these pieces needed to be supported by plinths and hardware and Kevin at Tree Town Kitchens has helped, on many occasions at the last minute to ensure that the work has been displayed in an appropriate manner.

**Waiclay Friends and Family.** Erecting the marquee, serving the food and drink, sorting the lighting, setting up the website, hours spent at the computer collating the entries, setting alight the museum fountain, keeping the home fires burning and working behind the sales desk.

Puzzle complete. What does this exhibition show?
I couldn’t resist the opportunity to attend a workshop with Bruce after ‘checking out’ his webpage - his figurative work (including a personality named Ismael with devil horns and all) involved scrolls and building blocks in a sculpture that wowed me.

Ten hearty ceramic artists and potters gathered at WSP, some of us travelling from as far away as Hawke’s Bay. Bruce presented the brief for the first two days: we would ‘copy’ one of his sculptures which he acknowledged was not the usual practice for a workshop. In doing so, he wanted us to copy his approach to his sculptural work, but put our own ideas into play. His approach used symbolism to represent aspects of his life that were most important to him: architecture (from his father’s influence), journalism (representing his mother as well as his own journey with the written word) and finally the figure.

The first ‘tool’ was a mind map divided into three aspects: nature, figure and architecture. From here we worked to develop a library of words that would lead to symbols that in turn would lead on to a more developed language of three dimensional forms. These three aspects were the foundation of the sculpture and applied in a way that would develop the ‘story’. I guess for most of us it was an opportunity to work outside our usual style of construction as well as learning a different approach to a piece. We also took on board consideration for the plinth, or the way the work would be presented e.g. the base it would sit on, what material would best suit, or the base structure as a continuation of the form.

We were treated not only to Bruce’s knowledge and experience, but also to a slide show of his work (both thrown and hand-built), the environment where he lives, and his exhibitions. Bruce spoke of the fluid glaze; the viewer could get a feel for the amount of heat required to treat the surfaces - hot enough to make a glass coating run. He also spoke about putting some of the environment he was working in at the time, into the ‘story’ of the piece; leaves and flowers, a symbol to represent the type of kiln he was using to fire as well as his favourite - the unexpected. Perhaps a shark, or a bomb - objects that would appear totally out of place on the piece because they could be seen as being ‘bad’. The artist’s signature was also covered; look closely and you can see the “B” or “b” as ideas came to light we were taken away from our work and given another insight into how Bruce applied his skill to the sculpture he was working on. He shared kiln firing programmes, some of his glaze recipes and recounted to us some of his own experiences in different studios.

The two days went amazingly fast, which is typical when you are in a space with 10 other like-minded people and a wonderful, generous tutor. Bruce mentioned that he thoroughly enjoyed the dynamics of the group and thought we all moved very quickly through the processes to present some dynamic work, which we all took as a compliment. During the workshop we were spoiled with lunches and tea break treats provided for us by Jenni Taris and members of the WSP.

Looking back on the weekend I will remember Bruce as being a very humble, generous and thoroughly entertaining man. It was a privilege to share the time with this small group of individuals - putting down beginnings for when our paths cross again.
I recently had the chance to attend a masterclass by the Japanese potter Rizu Takahashi at Lisa Hammond's studio in Devon, England. Rizu has had kilns in both Bizen and Mino areas of Japan and was known there for his distinctive work in both styles. He moved to the South of France in 2004 where he has build an anagama style kiln. He now is making a name for himself in Europe as a potter as well as a tea master. And Lisa is well known for her beautiful Japanese style soda-fired shino pots. But she also makes soda-fired functional ware in traditional English style which are her bread and butter pots, she sells them at pottery markets and galleries. Lisa trains apprentices who help with the production of these pots. I had met Lisa several times in Korea at the Mungyeong Tea Bowl Festival and really liked her work. So when the chance presented itself to visit her studio and at the same time to take part in the workshop with Rizu I did not hesitate. For many years Lisa had her studio right in central London but last year she decided to move to Kigbeare Manor in the very beautiful countryside of Devon in the southwest of England not too far from St Ives and near Dartmoor with it’s wonderfully bleak landscape. Kigbeare Manor is an old farmhouse that has been lovingly restored by Maddy Carragher and her husband Phil. They have converted the farm buildings and stables into workshops some of which are occupied by Lisa. The others are used by a jeweller, a painter and a wood worker. There is also a small gallery with regular exhibitions. I arrived after what felt like an endless day of travel, it seems to take more time to get from Cologne to Devon than from New Zealand to Europe! After flying to London I took the train to Exeter, picked up a rental car there and then drove 45 minutes to Oakhampton. Finding Kigbeare Manor was no easy feat. I nearly gave up after a 10 minutes drive down Dry Lane, a bumpy, narrow road that got narrower and bumpier the further I got and seemed anything but dry, even in the middle of summer! I had to stop and ask to confirm that I was really on the right track.

With one free day before the class started I decided to drive to St. Ives to visit the Leach Pottery and many of the small galleries that are scattered all over town. St Ives is a beautiful little old seaside town that used to be popular with artists and craft people but in the summer it is now totally overrun by tourists. It was hard to move in the streets for all the people and this was on a wet and rainy day! The Leach Pottery on the other hand was blissfully quiet. It is more a museum then a working pottery now. There were some potters working there but their studio spaces were not open to the public. There is also a nice gallery showing the works of local potters. The workshop started in the morning with Rizu showing us one of his techniques for making a tea bowl. He took a lump of clay and shaped the outside first by cutting it with a wire or a knife. When he was happy with the outside shape he left it to firm up and then started to hollow out the centre of the pot. He then shaped the foot of the bowl, left it to dry a bit more and then finished hollowing out the rest of the clay until the wall of the bowl are quite thin. This seemed a very labour- and time-consuming way of making a tea bowl, but it does give a lot of freedom to the shape of the pot. The cut surfaces are very sharp and precise, every mark is highly visible. Rizu leaves these kind of pots unglazed and fires them in an anagama kiln so that the crisp surface will be as visible as possible. He also makes water jars, vases and incense containers using this technique. After the demonstration we all tried to replicate what he did. Of course it is never as easy as it looks and our efforts were clumsy at best. Cutting the clay so that it looks right, loose but balanced is hard to do and requires lots of practice. And hollowing the pots out once leather-hard is time consuming and tedious work. It did however give us plenty of chance to talk and get to know each other. The eight participants were mainly from the London area except for one lady from Wales, a potter from Ireland and myself of course. The next afternoon was the opening of the ‘Potters Tea Party’

Above: Rizu Takahashi working on a teabowl at the masterclass.
In 1973 I was a young maths teacher at Glenfield College in Auckland, moonlighting as a pottery night class teacher at Rangitoto College. My enthusiasm wasn't quite matched by my skills or knowledge, but I was learning as I went.

On a trip north one day I met a young woman from the West Coast called Evelyn Hewlett. She had an aunt who was a potter and lived in Whangarei and she was going to pay her a visit. An older aunt making pots suggested to me fussy earthenware fired in an electric kiln in a genteel suburb like Kensington. I offered to drive her there. How wrong I was. Instead we found Yvonne Rust at Tahunatapu Pt, across the bay from Parua Bay pub.

She was a large, booming woman, immediately welcoming. I couldn't believe what I was seeing - she lived in one of those half-round corrugated iron haysheds, closed in at the ends, with a kitchen at one end and a couple of beds along the side. Right through the middle was a huge trolley-loading two-chamber diesel fired kiln, built by her mate, Coramandel potter Barry Brickell and at the end of the barn, looking over the bay, was a lineup of kick wheels. I found some brochures advertising Yvonne's summer schools, and that's where I finished up the following January.

I didn't necessarily subscribe to all of her ideas - Yvonne often had extreme and pedantic views - but I loved her enthusiasm, so much so that I went back and worked with her in the May and August school holidays of 1974. The following January, I was back for even longer, as I became one of Yvonne's assistants (along with Ian Smail), working for food, helping out with the students, tinkering with some experimental wood kilns (I still have one pot from those firings) and having a great time. It was to be the start of a new life; I became a professional potter.

In the evening Rizu performed a tea ceremony and then gave a slide show presentation about his work and his kilns.

The following days Rizu showed us how to throw a water jar, a vase, plates and platters, a shino tea bowl and an oribe tea bowl which is quite different in shape. He also explained the correct size and weight of a tea bowl, the importance of the inside shape and the well in the bottom of the bowl. He pointed out the importance of the face of the bowl, which determines the areas that are used for drinking. He also showed us the correct way of trimming the tea bowls, this is quite different for a shino bowl compared to other tea bowl because of the type of clay that is used for shino wares. For example a shino tea bowl is always trimmed by hand with a wooden tool, never a metal one and never on the wheel!

The thing that impressed me the most was the way that Rizu worked. He looked at his pot from all sides and very carefully contemplated every move he made - every cut, every mark. But when he had made his decision the mark he made was very fast and direct, there was no hesitation. Then he would look at what he had done and ask himself in his beautiful Japanese/French accent: interesting? Yes! Or, not interesting! And then he would look at the pot again to plan his next move. He never fused with his work. Once a mark was made that was it.

On my last day a few of us explored Dartmoor. It is such a desolate windswept area. It seems to be predominately inhabited by wild ponies and oddly coloured sheep. The local farmers had a problem with stolen animals so they now spray-paint all the sheep in bright colours who looks great dotted all over the moor! We visited Nic Collins who lives in the middle of the moor - he has a beautiful studio that he built out of mud and straw. He was just firing his anagama kiln. His huge vases, dripping in ash, are really beautiful. Then it was time to head back to London for a day and then to Germany. I had a fantastic time with Lisa and Rizu. There is so much to learn and so much to discover, so many ways of making beautiful pots! And then of course there is also the small matter of learning to master all these new techniques we have been taught. That might take some time!
In the middle of 2009 I was asked by my friend Kevin McGee if I wanted to sell my 4cu ft Rexmark gas-fired kiln for use at the Creative Centre in Rarotonga. I had originally bought this kiln as a test kiln when I was using a Cotter 15 cu ft kiln for my primary work. Since that time I had converted to an electric kiln and no longer required the small Rexmark kiln. Kevin and his wife Judy had worked successfully as potters in Rarotonga for several years and when they left they bequeathed their oil drum raku kiln to the Creative Centre along with patterns for making saleable items suitable for tourists. It was intended that the Centre could make and sell pottery in order to boost their limited income. All was well until nature took over in the form of a cyclone, which destroyed this pottery equipment, and my kiln was chosen as a suitable replacement.

The Creative Centre is an educational organisation that works with adults of all ages who are handicapped in various ways to a greater or lesser extent. The Centre is managed by Bob Kimi who originates from the Cook Islands, although he spent many years in New Zealand, mostly in the NZ Army. Bob’s wife Gayle, who is a New Zealander, also works at the Centre together with the other fantastic dedicated staff. As with all such organisations, they are always struggling to keep going due to the need for funding which they currently receive from the government and other organisations, donations and product sales. The members attend the Centre each working day to engage in art and other learning projects. The aim is to increase their life and motor skills where possible. Through the satisfaction derived from creating and selling something, the members not only increase their self-esteem but help fund the Centre. Some members can work with only one hand, yet still work with clay as best they can. It was great to see the excitement generated recently by the first glaze firing. Glaze and colour made even seemingly ordinary pieces come alive.

Back to 2009 where a deal was struck, and with help from Kevin, and Quentin Whitehouse (we could not have done it on time without his generous help), we put together a package of the kiln, a lot of clay and my old slab roller. Off it went in September 2009. At the time Pamela Gardener, a woman with pottery experience, was still in Rarotonga and was able to get them started with the first couple of firings. I had written up copious notes but when Pamela and her husband left after just two bisque firings I was asked to go over and give some further hands-on help.

The original intention for the new kiln was to produce unglazed terracotta pieces with the view to doing more with glazes and colour at a later date. When I arrived the kiln needed a fair bit of tender loving care and over the next 10 days we got it properly set up and moved from a temporary shelter to a purpose build kiln room. Even so, the firings were difficult and not as easy as they had been in New Zealand and getting beyond 950°C was a struggle. This did not bode well for a gloss firing. This was put down to a different methane butane mix in the gas supplied in Rarotonga. This view was supported by several people I talked to there and later in New Zealand. In spite of this, the things they were producing looked fine and they were reasonably happy – I less so. When I left in 2009 the kiln was running well enough for a low temperature firing but I was doubtful about its ability to do a gloss firing.

Fast forward to 2010. Bob phoned me to ask if I would be willing to go back to paradise to get them going with colours under a clear glaze, as well as coming up with designs and producing samples for new products. It took about 10 months for this to happen, mostly due to the delay in getting funding for the air fares etc. In the meanwhile I had asked a lot of people about the kiln issues. The gas mix was still a main contender. It seemed that I needed to get more oxygen into the kiln to balance the hotter burning fuel supposedly used in Rarotonga. However, all the primary and secondary air openings were already fully open. I had a very helpful chat with Jack Burrett of the Electric Furnace Company who also suggested the need for opening up the primary and secondary air openings but he also suggested opening up the flue. That made sense but it would be a reasonable task to open the secondary air openings and the kiln had a fixed size cast flue. I put the kiln issues at the back of my mind and spent a fair bit of time at my studio in New Zealand producing some glazed colour samples as well as some new design ideas. At one point I contacted Paul Pepworth and told him about the project and he generously donated a good supply of underglaze colours as well as Abbots Clear glaze for use at the Creative Centre.

In the beginning of October 2011 I arrived back at the Creative Centre to find a backlog of bisque ware. I examined the kiln, especially looking for ways to get more secondary air into it as well as gas flow through it. The kiln gases exit up the flue after passing under the bottom shelf and, because of Jack’s comment about the flue, I took out the bottom shelf (usually left in place). Well, I found that the entrance to the flue was very small and sloped towards an even smaller gap at one side. I suspected that it had dropped during transit or handling. It was the last place I would have looked before because of the focus on the gas mix being the issue. I assumed that, being cast, the flue had a fixed opening and had never given it a good look. However, the flue could be moved upwards to create a larger and even gap and I fixed it in this position. Well the first bisque was good; with the kiln easily getting to temperature, not struggling as before. However, the flames from the two burners were uneven and this introduced areas of reduction on one side of the kiln (not what was wanted). Although I had checked and cleaned the burner jets last time I was in Rarotonga...
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For more information contact
Susan Flight on 072103000 or 0272716157 or P.O.Box 237, Raglan

Reading the latest Ceramics Quarterly I see there is a request for some info on packaging so send items overseas. Our experience is that it is very difficult to guarantee it will get through but you can improve your chances. When packaging fragile items you are looking for two things from the packaging: cushioning and rigidity. Cushioning is to absorb knocks and rigidity so that the packaging has the strength to take the knocks. The best, and of course the most expensive, way is to use a sprayed urethane foam that moulds to the shape of an item. This can be done by packaging companies such as Pack and Send (they have a number of franchises in NZ). For a little extra they will give you a money back guarantee if the piece arrives damaged. They will also handle all the paperwork.

The next level down involves using air cushion (like bubble wrap) inside a box (which can be inside another box if you wish) combined with paper wool or similar materials. For a simple DIY perspective the first step is to wrap the work in bubble wrap and then put it in a box. If you are sending more than one piece make sure there is plenty of space between the pieces. If complex shapes are involved, then use shredded paper or similar to provide support. This box should be double thickness corrugated cardboard. The inside box should then be put in an outer box that should be at least 2 layers of corrugated cardboard and preferably 4. The outside provides the stiffness and strength. Scrunch-up newspaper can provide the cushioning between the inside and outside box. You should have a 40 - 50mm gap between the boxes. Ideally you want a minimum of 100mm between the outside box and any point on your piece of pottery. You can send some reasonably large pieces by Courier Post. You should avoid using wood and straw as these raise biosecurity risks (particularly in Australia). Use an international carrier - we use Courier Post because it can be organized at your local post office and you know the cost there and then. However other parcel carriers such as DHL or TNT are also OK. They will get you to do the paperwork. Depending on the value you may need an invoice (handwritten is fine as long as it has all the details). When it comes to duties and taxes, this can be the luck of the draw. If going as a gift at low value you shouldn’t get picked up even though technically you may be liable. By the same token if you undervalue the piece you will get less for insurance. You should note that when you do send work and it ends up having some VAT, GST or other duties applied at the destination and the receiver refuses to pay, then you, as the sender, can be liable for them. It pays to check this on the fine print. If something breaks don’t expect compensation. By definition your piece was not properly packed. Insurance really only covers it if it disappears or has been clearly driven over by a steamroller. If the box looks fine but it rattles inside, you are out of luck.

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This information and advice kindly supplied by Kieran Rice of Morris and James Potteries, Matakana - experienced shippers of pots around the globe.
Dear XXXX,

Thanks for the response and I will be needing the below products to be ordered from you:

1) 1548 1/2 mask $800
2) 1394: mask $950
3) 94.6: Figure $980
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Concerning shipment, the likes of UPS, FEDEX and POST OFFICE always don’t take good care of the charges down here. Charges like handling, customs duties, tax etc. I have experienced such situations whereby I spend more than I want to be a victim of such a again. I will be so glad if you contact my freight forwarder Earth Movers Limited for shipping quote. The shipping company will arrange the pick-up of my order from your store, so you don’t have to worry about the shipping processing at all. Here is their contact email address and telephone number (export@earthmoversltd.net, Tel: +44(0)7024 058773).

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At the 2010 NZSP AGM, held at Unitec, Auckland, Wellington potter Anneke Borren was accepted, by those attending, as a Life Member of the Society. Anneke arrived in New Zealand from the Netherlands with her family when she was sixteen. She was already trained in Northern European contemporary ceramics and brought her own style to this country, which was then mainly influenced, certainly in the north, by the Leach/Hamada movement, though earthenware was commonly used in the lower South Island.

She became a very early member of NZSP and has since made a significant contribution to the practice of studio ceramics in New Zealand. In the 1980s she was one of the main drivers of a move to introduce ceramics courses to polytechnics, as she has always been a teacher as well as a highly respected practitioner.

Anneke worked with the Dowse Arts Museum in the Hutt Valley from 1995 to 2000 in their Arts Education Team, teaching clay work to visiting school groups. She has for many years been an exhibiting member (pottery) of the Wellington Academy of Fine Arts. Her work has shown in major exhibitions, including the Fletcher Challenge, as well as in many group and solo shows.

Her work is archived in many public museums and private collections. This year she has been commissioned by the Dutch Embassy to create a very large tile mural celebrating the history of Dutch settlers in this country.

This will depict the first Dutch sailing ship arrivals being greeted by Maori in their waka, the tiles being in traditional “Delft” style blue brushwork on high-fired white earthenware glaze.

Anneke has always been closely involved with the Wellington Potters Association, but notably is a long-standing member of NZSP for which she has served on the national executive as the Wellington area delegate.

She has also served terms having been elected, as vice president and again as president of NZSP.

In 2010 Anneke celebrated her life as a full-time professional potter in New Zealand for 50 years, being actively involved at the top level with NZSP for most of this time. She is a very respected “elder” of our society and a highly professional exhibiting ceramic artist.

She is also a successful stone sculptor, carving in soft Oamaru stone at sympsia in several centres, most notably on Wellington’s Waterfront and Kell Park in Albany on Auckland’s North Shore.

In her studio she has a full historical collection of examples of most of her work, from which a biography of her life is presently being compiled.

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Here’s a typical internet correspondence (abridged) that one or two NZ potters have been very close to acting on and, in the process, transferring their banking details. It was found to be a Nigerian-based operation. It is typically moderately illiterate and offers the usual excuses for not following normal business practice. If any CQ readers have had any experience (good or bad) with these sorts of deals it would be good to hear from you at CQ. Potters can have their fingers burnt even when the kiln is cold.

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Anneke Borren: Newest Life Member

Howard Williams

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Above: Anneke Borren
Above right:
Stoneware vases 2011

Howard Williams is an Auckland-based photographer and writer, and Life Member of the NZSP

NZSP website:
www.nzpotters.com
WEBMASTER
LAWRENCE EWING
1015 Ellis Rd
Five Rivers
R.D.3, Lumsden
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Five Brick Sculptures for Todd Triangle in New Lynn, West Auckland

A tent, a camera, a dodgem, a bell and a “brick” seat (featuring grand-daughter Naomi) by Peter Lange have just been installed for public (and kids’) use in a recently upgraded park in West Auckland. The whole area has seen many new sculptural pieces installed.

40 years ago or more I worked from time to time as a hod-carrier for teams of Indian brickies in London, hard workers and good bricklayers as far as I could see, certainly very quick and always up at least 2 ladders from where the bricks were piled. I can’t recall now, but I imagine they laid hundreds of bricks every day as most bricklayers do. Now 40 years later I work with bricks. I have none of their skills, I struggle to lay a straight line and I am lucky to lay 30 bricks a day. But I am allowed to lay bricks wherever I want, at whatever angle I want, and by using a cheat’s method of sticking them together, without thought for structural stability, except in the event of the whole thing tipping over and killing a bystander. I got into bricks after building several pottery kilns over the years and becoming fascinated by the sprung arch - it is the most simple but most beautiful thing, with basic physics holding it together against lateral forces. In 2002 I launched a 2 tonne brick boat into the Waitemata and, to the disappointment of the large crowd, not only did it float but it was too buoyant, swaying alarmingly, and I had to load in 300kg of ballast to hold it down. This was the first piece in what has become an 8 year preoccupation with making brick sculpture.

I design most of the work now on a 3D computer programme, Sketchup (it’s free - get it) which allows me to build the piece on screen, brick by brick, using images of bricks I have already cut and stockpiled in my workshop using a 13” diamond saw.

My intentions are usually two: 1. make work that I find enjoyable and often evocative of my childhood, and 2. make the bricks go into un-bricklike shapes, fluid and curved - perhaps as a reaction to the rigid style of this country’s brickwork. I suppose the conclusion I have come to after a long period of informal brick observation is that the simple brick is capable of producing a wonderful variety of results, it is the cheap and basic unit of much of the world’s construction, and I’ve found you can fall in love with a good-looking brick. If you do, put it in the microwave for 4 minutes, wrap it with a towel and take it to bed on a winter’s night.

Bricks for New Lynn
Peter Lange
Photos: Suzy Dünser

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IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A POTTER ......

I am not a particularly jealous person, being mainly happy with my lot in life, but if I could choose to come back again as someone else, I wouldn’t mind a stint at being Bridie Henderson. Not only is she young, attractive, talented and ambitious, she also lives in Nelson and has just won the 2011 Portage Ceramics Award, thus making her the youngest ever winner, and still a student to boot!

You may wonder why I mention living in Nelson in the same breath as the other attributes, but there is a connection. She herself said, during her National Radio interview (Lynn Freeman, Arts On Sunday), that she has no plans to leave Nelson for the foreseeable future, as she loves living among the potting community there and receiving their advice, help and wisdom, some at the end of a phoneline, some in person. It can be daunting to suddenly find yourself in the limelight, with people wanting to know what you are going to make next, who you are going to sell it to, and generally what your game plan and price structure is. Bridie is definitely up to the challenge, but understandably doesn’t want her comfort blanket ripped off her just yet.

I met up with her at Craft Potters in Hope, Nelson, where she seemed very much at home, serving chocolate cake with aplomb and chatting with her elders and betters. She had managed to persuade Royce McGlashen, Ross Richards, Alan Ballard and Steve Fullmer to come and be interviewed alongside her. There were others who were unable to attend: for example Sue Newitt (who ran a two week course on porcelain at Craft Potters) and Mike Rogers (who gave practical advice from his South Street Gallery), and others who helped out either in passing or by phone. All in all, there must be at least 20 practising potters in Nelson that Bridie was able to call on, and none of them were too busy to help her in her attempt to become a practising ceramic artist. For this is what she aspires to be, even in these hard times when no-one in the art world seems to be making a decent living, and pottery is the poor relation of art.

In fact much of our conversation that day centered on the art/craft debate. Steve Fullmer is very dubious about the wisdom of potters entering the art market, and all others present seem to mourn the passing of the day when tableware sold well. As Steve said, teapots are just as important, sculptural and glamorous as ‘art ware’. Royce agreed, and said there was an awful lot involved in just making a good mug, then making a mug that would sell, and then making 10 the same! New Zealanders need to be persuaded to buy ceramics made in this country, which would help both the maker and the local economy, as all these things, like a good wheel, come full circle.

Bridie sat quietly during this discussion, but later had a great deal to say for herself on other topics. Alan Ballard told me that her confidence has grown hugely since the day she first turned up for her first evening class at Craft Potters. She went on to enrol for the DCA course through Otago Polytechnic, and has just completed her third year. Alan was responsible for teaching much of the course content during the first two years. Bridie speaks highly of Alan and of the course, but also says that if she could have served a five year apprenticeship with a potter (as Royce did with Jack and Peggy Laird at Waimea Pottery),
then she would also have been happy to do that. Her gaining a Diploma has helped her general level of confidence, but all she ever wanted to do was to make pots, and go on making pots until she got them right!

Ross Richards (who taught her for two workshops) was apparently a stickler for all things technical, plus he also impressed upon her the need for workshop discipline and cleanliness. She learned how to be scrupulous about the state of her kiln shelves, because the loss of even one of her necklace feathers (by being stuck on a kiln shelf) would have been a disaster. The others were telling me how much they admire Ross's throwing talents too, and at the risk of them sounding like a mutual admiration society, they are all very supportive of each other's skills and strengths. Royce pointed out that this win has been good for Nelson, and everyone has been very buoyed up by the Portage win. It reflects well on them all, their craftsmanship, professionalism and general willingness to share their knowledge and in the good fortune of one of their number.

Playing back the tape of the interview afterwards, I was struck by how much laughter was going on (admittedly, some of it nervous on my part at least). There were reminiscences of workshops and general learning situations going back 30 years, at which much amusement was had, among other things, about the use (or non-use) of scoring and slipping before applying handles. These men obviously respect and like each other, and have perhaps always been willing to help young people acquire the same skills.

The year Bridie started her DCA (2009), there were 3 students on the course attending Craft Potters. This year there are 7, and Alan hopes there may be even more next year, partly because of the publicity surrounding Bridie's Portage win. There is advantage in numbers, it was agreed, it being difficult to bounce ideas around on your own. There is also no substitute for just watching other people at work. Royce has always enjoyed being surrounded by people, working in a team as he did at Waimea, and currently employing 3 people and watching them work together, honing their skills to produce work of a high standard.

Steve, on the other hand, prefers to work alone, although he says that may not be good for him! He was therefore flattered and happy when Bridie turned up at his door and asked if he would be her mentor for 2011. She has probably spent half a day a week at his studio over the last year, and is now thoroughly relaxed in his company, although at first he was her idol and she was tremendously nervous. Her parents had been collecting Steve's work for several years (they are both teachers, and her father a keen hobby potter), so Bridie already revered Steve's humorous style, lively decoration, enthusiasm and lifestyle. She, in return, may have altered Steve's opinion about white clays and porcelain, having favoured terracotta for his own work. She also changed his ideas about the art market to a certain extent.

Steve does not trust the art market, thinks it too costly to keep up with, and detests the fact that it needs to be in major cities to succeed. He said he is mainly oblivious nowadays to when and which competitions are being held, and is too old and wise, (and has had his heart broken too many times), to risk his work 'being kicked all the way from Nelson to Auckland by the couriers'. Steve was also dubious about Bridie's ability to find a light source for her necklace that wouldn't burn the display case down, and he warned that it would be too costly and dangerous to send it up to the Portage. He didn't reckon on her partner, Cam the electrician, being able to suggest and source LED lights, and friend Kyle, the joiner, making the cabinet. Then Bridie and Cam drove the entry up to Auckland themselves, leaving them finally with about $2.50 in their joint bank account. The $15,000 came just in time!

So Steve had his world shaken up just a little by Bridie. Two weeks before the entry had to be in, he warned it couldn't be done. Certainly, he himself would never have attempted it, but had not reckoned on her youth, energy and enthusiasm. I think that is what appeals to all of them about Bridie, and it is what keeps them being generous with their time and expertise. She gives back some of what they enjoyed years ago, when times were good, when fortunes could be made from making planters and selling them by the vanload down in Christchurch. Steve himself fell in love with clay circa 1970, and when he came to NZ from the States he couldn't believe the way pottery was 'done' here. It was fun and natural, clay being dug up from the hillsides, woodfiring being the norm and wonky pots likewise. Steve thrives on fun, and perhaps Bridie brought some back.

Bridie herself knows that she needs to build on the recognition she has gained, make sure she is professional in her approach, and beware the pitfalls of dealer galleries wanting the impossible or obvious. She knows she doesn't want to make feathers forever, but in the meantime looks forward to her Portage entry travelling home in December/January to The Suter gallery in Nelson, so that all her family and friends can get a good look at it. The photographs do not do it justice. They glow in the dark! Go and see for yourself.
The Suter collection is a treasure trove of ceramic work. Potters Sue Newitt and Katie Gold jumped at the chance to select their favourites for the cabinet in the foyer outside the McKee Gallery. Both women are represented by work in the collection and play a prominent part in the Nelson Potters Association.

“We have been drawn to major statement pieces made by accomplished New Zealand potters. Each is a master work and stands on its own. There is nothing wishy-washy here.

“Each pot is simple in form, but uses clay to its fullest potential. The glazes are strong but also simple, and enhance the form. Perhaps it is best to say that we have privileged form over decoration.”


Pieces from Nelson’s Suter Gallery Collection

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