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## Notes for a Young Potter

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NOTES FOR A YOUNG POTTER

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By BILL HEARST

A Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
Requirement for a Master of Arts Degree  
in Pottery.

January 20, 1983

F.S. Linda Mosley

F.A. Richard Rickert

Thesis  
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The main purpose of this paper is to present what I believe to be important thoughts concerning my activity as a serious artist-potter. It deals with the particular emotions that I have experienced and the philosophies, ideas, and technical aspects that I have investigated while in the Master of Arts program at the Lindenwood Colleges, 1981 - 1983. I dedicate and direct this paper to those interested in seeking a Master of Arts Degree in Pottery because of my interest in teaching and sharing information.

## INTRODUCTION

I can imagine the great frustration I would be having right now if I had not sought help in investigating the world of clay. I realize now that I will never know or experience all the information that exists in the clay world. However, studying under a professional clay artist in an institution of higher learning has made me aware of the many opportunities and concepts that are available. Answers to many questions have become not only accessible but very, very clear. The program at Lindenwood has made professionals available who are aware of important steps that must be taken by the student. With them I have found advise and constructive criticism. We have had discussions that led to a better understanding of myself, contemporary and historical ceramics, and new techniques. They have shown encouragement and helped me to define my own direction.

Without the program, I would not have motivated myself to explore my art systematically, nor forced myself to construct my own program of artistic development. In the past two years I have learned many things. I have learned that failures can be a learning experience. My appreciation of the Arts in general has increased. My accomplishments have given me confidence in myself when showing my work to professionals and laypersons. My skills have increased tremendously. I have become more familiar with different kinds of studio procedures and with help, have ironed out many technical problems.

At the beginning of the Masters program, I had questions about what makes an individual a "real" artist. For example: How does one answer when asked about his "intention" and "direction". In the following pages I will relay my own thoughts along these lines.

When reading over my notes kept during my two year program, I found that my thoughts could be organized into the following categories:

1. Search for self - sources for philosophy, road blocks and honesty.
2. Craft vs. Art.
3. Emotions felt in the studio.
4. Ideas explored.
5. The studio, equipment, techniques, and materials.

I will use this outline to present my progress in more detail and will conclude with the benefits received from this period of study.



THE SEARCH FOR SELF-

SOURCES OF PHILOSOPHY, ROAD BLOCKS, HONESTY

Writing can be a tool for clarifying one's thoughts. I have written some of my thoughts about who I am in order to be able to express it more clearly in clay. As Hiram Williams said:

Shape and pattern, like air, are necessary to life. To give sense to affairs is compulsive with men. Out of such compulsion were born religion and the sciences. Art is found in every culture performing essentially the same function. It happens that the life of a culture is the sum of individual experience in that culture, and so it is that art originating from the hands and mind of an individual can have emotional meaning to other members of culture. It follows, then, that work that does not touch the lodestone of personal life experience cannot survive as a penetrating expression of the experience of that culture.<sup>1</sup>

I am a modern man. I cannot repeat exactly what others have done in the past, nor can I possess all the knowledge that is available today. I am a man of this planet, deriving nourishment from near and far away places, the past, present, and the future. It is astonishing how many layers of civilization live in each of us and in how many cultures we partake.

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<sup>1</sup>Hiram Williams, Notes for a Young Painter  
(New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 19.

I am also an American, and I think we see things differently than Can Hoe, an Easterner who said, "The world and all good things of the world are one." In my opinion, what he is saying is that the existence of all things in this world have their place and not only belong but exist in harmony with nature. I think that Americans see things more in terms of duality, either good or bad, and as Man being somewhat separate from Nature, able to control it to his advantage. In America, "progress" has become a tradition. "Every man for himself" has been the guiding motto of our energetic growth as a nation. We have always been affected by the many people of different cultures who settled in America: we see many possibilities, and often end up not knowing what we want to be.

I believe the reason few artists find themselves is because there are problems that create "road blocks" to discovery. I think the road blocks that inhibit an artist potter are similar to those of a painter, as Hiram Williams described. Following is an excerpt from his book, Notes for a Young Painter (p.21-22), that I have numbered.

1. (There are) influences suggested by the styles of others. Typically, the painter finds that information of which he has no consciousness will have filtered into his lower mind to take up residence and dictate the performance of his brush. Practically speaking, a painter hopes that insight gained through examination of paintings by another may indicate to him a train of reflection, which in turn may culminate in a deviation suggestive of a personal approach.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Michael Novak, A Book of Elements  
(New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972), p. 57.



2. No criteria exist to assure the artist that his choice of direction, of style, has been a right one. Artists are always keenly aware that he who is nearest the future is the most important. It is not enough to be abreast of the time; the artist must be ahead of the times.
3. Artists are forever issuing manifestoes and declarations of intent, primarily to convince themselves that their purposes are valid. I hasten to assure you I speak of well intentioned painters who happen to be compelled by inner necessity to feel certain that they are right, and the only evident assurance is to paint in a current and critically popular vein.
4. Some painters, less well intentioned as you will see, create the impression that they have acquired a much variegated vision and, after recognizing the jurist's preference, pull out the most suitable painting for a given show. What is more, these men are quite likely to win prizes; but, of course, they no longer count, for they have given up insecurity and appeased their egos by giving up art. Such men may win awards by the carload, but it is not surprising that their fellow artists find them out and hold them in contempt.
5. A career in painting can be honestly or dishonestly directed. The stakes are high and the top cannot be reached by shortcuts. You have no business in art unless you are in competition with the best creative talents from the Renaissance to the present. Art is concerned only with ideas of the order of genius. Art is aristocratic; and in the long run, time and criticism do not play at democracy.

I believe, if one is to "find himself" in art he must approach artistic expression honestly. One cannot become honest, direct, and natural unless he loves himself. Love of self is the first and greatest gift of all. It is important for one to move, escape, and find some ecstasy. When I feel good about myself I possess a sense of truth, restfulness, and have no need to justify or be justified. I am even content not to be of interest to anyone else, simply to be me.

In art, it is important to decide what one wants to say. One must ask himself, "Who am I?" For example, I recognize that I become angry at times. It is not the anger that disturbs me because I believe that only those who truly love grow angry. Anger springs from love as rage does from repression, or resentment from self-depreciation.

It is the rage from resentment in myself that troubles me. I used to become angry with things in pottery such as my lack of skill, results that were different than what I had intended, or chance defects in the materials or equipment. I feel that at times I hate myself when I feel this rage.

I think that love of self is harder than love of spouse or neighbor. I sometimes care more about what others expect of me than what I feel that I need. With this attitude about myself, I think that I went through the motions of an undergraduate education in order to please others. I produced works in clay to impress others or gain their approval. I created pottery in a traditional way to gain acceptance.

In the last two years of graduate study I have recognized that I was producing pottery for others to fulfill their needs instead of my own. I have learned to be selfish in a positive way. Once I began to develop my own working language and concepts, my excitement and progress began to "snow-ball". Even more, I began to find out more about myself through working with clay.

Once I had this personal understanding of my direction, I began thinking about the development of my own techniques,



personal style, attitudes, philosophy, etc. I began to analyze form, made sketches and drawings, worked from models. I eventually viewed everything in this world in terms of a vessel. I found myself dreaming about different forms and even looked at human beings as being the most sophisticated containers. What I am basically saying is that once I started living the life of clay I realized that there is more to pottery than the medium itself. Not just history, or skill, or mechanics, or tradition, or concept, but life itself. The clay is no longer separate from me; it influences how I see, feel, and live.

Once I reached this point (which has been very recently), my creative approach changed. I now create in a totally spontaneous way. I no longer try to conceptualize while producing. I believe the fastest way to destroy an art form in progress is to analyze it. What is done is done. If it is good for me, then it is; if it is not good for me, then it is not. Now my happiness and honesty comes from the forms produced when I thrust myself towards whatever moves me and just take them as far as I can without overworking them. This process is a totally intuitive fanatic creative process. This process, thus far has not been boring and I work with the simple notion of making it "right".

The final message is that I am a creator of form in a particular medium to which I am attracted with great emotion. There is very little theory involved. When I became aware of this philosophy I, for the first time, understood the true meaning of the word "artist".

CRAFTS VS. ART

Clay crafts are clay forms made by potters who are usually concerned with making utilitarian pots and selling them to the local market. In my opinion, these potters are not to be confused with individuals who mass produce slip cast wares from production lines. They are individuals who make functional forms by hand and add their own personal touch to the form. Usually these potters are extremely skilled in the many processes of clay building and glazing. John Reeves states,

"A true craftsman is one who makes objects with a real concern for the qualities which exist beyond their simple utility. Some one who makes pots with love."<sup>3</sup>

Today's craft potter is interested in making objects which have some individual uniqueness - and are good objects to use. I think when one is using the crafts approach his intentions are that his work functions in people's lives.

In contrast to clay craft, clay art is made by artist - potters who are concerned with making personal statements with clay. The utilitarian function becomes unimportant and quite often non-existent. I think when one is creating clay art his intentions are to construct from his emotions and make statements about the clay itself, which has little or nothing to do with making clay pieces that function in people's lives.

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<sup>3</sup>John Reeve, Ceramics Monthly  
(Ohio: Professional Publications, Inc., Vol. 30, Number 8,  
October, 1982), p. 50.



There are many times when I feel a need to make ordinary functional pottery forms. Making these "crafty" wares is a way for me to supplement my regular income. Sometimes I am uplifted by the results, such as when I discover a new throwing technique or surface treatment, but the real feeling of success, honesty, and courage comes rather from those moments of pure creation, when function and sales are not the goal. At such moments I feel that life is sweet. My pottery gives me a sense of something innovative, and the influence of the best work of our ancestors flows through me like the juices of a ripened fruit. These feelings are good.

I have asked myself if it is more important to work as a potter making "crafts" or as an artist-potter. Personally, I want to be both. When I am working in a "crafty" direction, making functional wares, my views, intuitions, statements, and personal style become less apparent. In the first place, I develop functional wares to be sold to others who will use them. Therefore, the people who purchase my work become the final critics and judges. I have developed this attitude from my past experiences in craft sales from statements made by the layperson buyer. The man on the street all too often does not accept an art form because he does not understand what it is. Many of the people I have faced at craft fairs are interested in works that are traditional, decorative, match the color of their wall at home, and can become heirlooms. It seems that many are only

interested in that which fits neatly into ceramic history. We are surrounded by people of great ignorance concerning the arts. Usually, these persons are of good intention, but they can cut cruelly into the spiritual core of the artist. Lay people are often unthinkingly brutal, but the amateur art-potter can be even worse with his half-baked notions on what clay-art is all about. He may fail to understand the dedication that possesses the artist. Creating pottery for these individuals brings me little joy, but it is a good way for me to earn some money. It also serves another purpose: that any positive attitude the layperson may have about clay is better than a negative one. I feel that people who purchase clay items will someday learn to appreciate the medium simply by looking and feeling, which in turn may lead them into more investigation of the clay world.

By stating my attitude toward functional pottery, I don't mean to sound snobbish, as if I'm some important figure in clay and all those that are not appreciative of art-clay forms are small-minded. I am simply stating that my own personal expressions in clay are not entirely accepted or at least purchased by the craft buyer in the same quantity that are traditional forms which have subtle glazes, and easily recognizable purposes. On the following three pages I have entered examples 1 through 6 which illustrate the visual differences between functional vessels usually accepted by the layperson in contrast to art pottery vessels that may require a deeper understanding of ceramic art to be appreciated.



Example I, craft cup:

"figure 737. Brown salt-glazed bowl....Diam. 12 in. Victoria and Albert Museum, London."

Robert J. Charleston (ed.),  
World Ceramics (Secaucus, New  
Jersey: Chartwell Books Inc., 1977),  
p.260 & 261.



Example II, art cup:

"Ceremonial Cup No. 9 (1981),  
12½" high. Photo: Bob Aude."

Susan Wechsler, "The Tripod  
Vessels of Rick Hirsch,"  
American Ceramics, I, No. 2,  
(Spring 1982), 9.

Example III, craft teapot:

"Teapot by James Crumrine."

Thomas Sellers, Throwing on the Potter's Wheel (Columbus, Ohio: Professional Publications, Inc., 1960), p. 57.



Example IV, art teapot:

"Teapot by Curt Hoard,  
Minnesota. 18"x16", 1976.  
Photo: Linda Passon."

Jack Troy, Salt Glazed  
Ceramics (New York:  
Watson-Guptill Publications,  
1977), p. 129.



Example V, factory plate:

"fig. 650. Hard-paste  
porcelain plate....  
Doccia factory...Diam. 9½ in.  
National Museum of Wales,  
Cardiff."

Charleston, p. 230.



Example VI, art plate:

"64. Plate, 1976. Made in  
Berkeley; wheel-thrown,  
slashes, holes, and porcelain  
pass-throughs; 21 inches in  
diameter. (Collection of  
Peter Voulkos. Photographer:  
J.P. Oren)"

Rose Slivka, Peter Voulkos:  
A Dialogue with Clay (New York:  
New York Graphic Society in  
association with American  
Crafts Council, 1978), p. 97.



The observations made about the layperson craft buyer, has forced me to think about how society plays a role in the life of the struggling potter or any artist. There is another group of people in our society who are more knowledgeable about the history and value of ceramics as an art. These people are the art-critics, gallery owners, and judges. Although this knowledgeable group may be well intentioned, many of these people insist that experiencing art is a matter of breaking the code and this can alienate most potential viewers of art by making them feel inadequate to the task of meeting it face to face. For example, when one walks into a museum or gallery and there are many vessels exhibited, he will find that if he tries to touch or lift one of those vessels, a guard will stop him. These same people and others may believe that expressing your views about a piece, in the gallery, is out of place. Consequently, the viewer may not experience the art in the way the artist experiences it and may not be able to experience the art on his own level by sense of touch or verbal expression. So he leaves the exhibition unsatisfied in his experiences and if he chooses to investigate the work more extensively, he is forced to discover objects through the critics and mediators. For the above reasons, it is no surprise that many artists feel they must play pretender to these elite in order to survive. Michael McTwigan sums these thoughts up rather nicely by his statements,



"This is the situation today. We stand in hushed silence before these untouchable icons, but we may not probe them for their meanings. We accept their sovereignty 'on faith', and may not ask our hows, whys, wheres, or whens. Nor may we discover these provocative objects for ourselves; the interpretations of mediators and tastemakers must suffice. Is it any wonder that the ceramist must play pretender to the throne, or artless and humble self, to gain our approval?"<sup>4</sup>

Having to deal with both the crafts buyer and the art mediators, I am still hesitant about exposing myself through my work, but these feelings are subsiding. I think this is because I now know that there are some people who do have an understanding of the world of clay and the individual. I also feel that I have disciplined myself towards accepting criticisms and have hardened my shell to layperson's critical analysis of my personality.

So, as an artist, I am faced with an economic need for the crafts approach and at the same time a strong inner need for the art-potter approach. The latter approach is different than making tea pots and flower pots. It is the approach that requires emphasis on individuality and personality embedded deep inside me.

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<sup>4</sup>Michael McTwigan, American Ceramics  
(New York: American Ceramics, Winter 1982), p. 17

### EMOTIONS FELT IN THE STUDIO

As I drive to the studio my mind shifts from its normal calm to a state of alertness. It is caused by the expectation of a range of emotions including joy, anger, yearning, fear, disgust, grief, and so forth, that occur as I experiment with the clay.

My day in the studio begins with the performing of daily tasks. I do many jobs such as preparing clay and glazes, cleaning up the mess left from yesterday, repairing equipment, or maintaining the inventory of materials. Then I view completed work and contemplate unfinished work by studying drawings or models or reviewing ideas about techniques. Finally, I begin to work on new forms and ideas.

My first response to the clay is one of sensual enjoyment. I sit on the chair at the wheel and pour clean water on the mound of wedged clay. Then placing my hands on the wobbling substance, the pleasure of a perfect swish and tension centers the clay and arouses a sense of calm movement. Then my mind shifts to the logical process of deciding what direction to take when working with the clay; from these "data banks" art-forms flow out of myself in spontaneous and unconceptualized ways. Therefore, I have found it unnecessary to conceptualize or formulate a verbal intention at the time of production. I start with a general idea of the types of form I wish to produce but during the creative process the actual form is influenced by my body, intuition, and subconscious. This influence appears in the form only at the time of creation, (not consciously sooner or later).



IDEAS EXPLORED

An idea is the most important thing an artist needs on which to build. I think that an idea is a plan or mental tool used to express one's intentions. As quoted by Hiram Williams:

Words are like bricks building up to an architect's idea of a building--, the variety, color, size, and placement of the bricks can determine the final appeal of the building. Variety, color, size, and placement of brush strokes can determine the final appeal of the picture; but even so; idea really makes the building, idea makes the story, and idea makes the picture. The choice of words must seem right for the idea of the story, and the choice of a proper handling of paint must appear to agree with the nature of a picture. Form and content must be inseparable. The danger for the student is that he may think that laying bricks will make the building; but a building is an idea concerning form and function and the idea<sup>5</sup> must dictate the fashion and arrangement of its bricks.

After deciding what idea to express, I think that the artist needs to develop skill in his medium. I first must explain the steps I experience in gaining skill and the emotional and progressive stages I go through in the process of creating from the idea.

If I work on a particular skill long enough I can master a specific form. When reproducing this form over and over it begins to look mechanical. There is a machine-like symmetry. Walls, lips, and shoulders of the form became very rigid and stiff looking. Dealing with these parts of the vessel took me through many progressive technical and emotional stages. The first was the happiness of finally producing a particular form

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<sup>5</sup>Hiram Williams, Notes for a Young Painter (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 22-23.

and making it almost perfect in symmetry. The second stage was the joy in producing the form in less time which aids in the economics of sales. The third stage was boredom in which the challenge of developing skill was lost. And finally, the last stage was frustration when I decided to alter the form in order to break it away from the impersonal.

For years I tried to reach a certain level of skill and mechanics, and once achieved I found that it was just the beginning of a world in which skill is a prerequisite.

At this point it became apparent to me that in order to become personal and joyous with my work, I must find techniques that correspond to my own feelings. I live along the Mississippi river and quite often walk along the banks through weeds, trees, mud, grass, leaves, etc. While on my journeys, I am in constant search of natural biomorphic and geometric shapes. I look very closely at the minute forms that exist in great numbers. When I find a form I am attracted to, I carefully pick it up and keep it for a future reference. Many times I come back to the house with two trash bags full of sticks, vines, bones, rocks, driftwood, etc.

After collecting reference materials, I begin a process of choosing the items that appeal to my emotions. I analyze the rhythmic movements, color, balance, texture, and contours that each form possesses. When pleased with the above criteria, I then turn it in all directions to see if it offers any additional mystique or illusion. Then I either mount the item on a base to use as a model and/or sketch part or all of the form on paper.



The next process is to utilize the item or drawing as an idea. With the item in front of me I begin to construct from clay its original shape, scale, balance, etc. But as I become emotionally involved, the shapes and other elements become altered as I respond to the clay. This means that as I try different ways of handling form, surface, and image, I accept or reject what I am doing through my emotional reaction to it. As I experiment, I eventually find that I have formed a mental image which will govern the future of the object. I can foresee in what manner to go about reaching that mental image. In fact, I have formed several such mental images and several concrete manners in which to present the objectification of the idea. After considerable play with the medium, I will choose the one acceptable to myself on an emotional level.

I don't feel I create clay art from the influences of other clay artists. I do feel the forms I create have characteristics and qualities similar to the wood sculptures by James Surls. My vessels have an organic quality that in comparison to conventional clay forms may seem strange or abstract. To me there is a fascination with the idea of creating anatomical features in relation to the vessel. These features stem from my imagination and when built into a vessel at times display an abstract kind of clay being.

Surls supernatural figures seem to sprout from rough timber as if they were wood spirits and possess a spiritual quality, while mine have a clay-to-organ transformation. His work embodies unexpected proportions and fearsome dream-like elements.

He has a high charged attitude about human, natural, and cosmic forces. My work embodies unusual proportions and mystical elements. I am most motivated by biomorphic natural, and what would commonly be called alien forces. While Surls takes his subjects from his personal experiences and his materials from native woods of Splendora, Texas, I take my subjects from my personal experiences and gather my ideas from the elements of earth found in my native Missouri.

Surls sculptures have become more organic with polished woods but they retain a conscious rudeness with surface articulations of burned spots and spikes, selective grains and textures, hatchet marks, splits and joints. His pieces have no craft context. As explained later in this paper about my own surface treatment, my techniques in applying glaze are similar to the types of surface treatment found in Surls' sculptures: rough, burnt, cracked, etc. In my work, like Surls', one will find outlandish jumps in scale, context and materials not to be confused with a craft context.

I find Surls' work quite interesting, awesome, and provocative. In summation his sculptures deal with personal experiences, they are self-determined, his work is open to broader interpretation, and he places his personal feelings into three-dimensional messages.

I choose to possess these same attributes and a direction of imaginative curiosity in my own forms; this may keep my work from becoming stereotyped.



THE STUDIO, EQUIPMENT, TECHNIQUES, AND MATERIALS

There are many different technical decisions a potter must make in the creative process. In order to express ones ideas to fit his needs, he must decide where to do his work and what technical aspects of clay, glazes, and firings will best relay his personal message.

In relation to my art work, I think that the process of working with clay completes a cycle in nature. In the beginning, particles of rock formed by heat and pressure are broken down, carried away and then deposited by water. The sun stiffens and cakes the mud. After thousands of years this process yields enough for the potter to dig from deposits of the finest grains, mix it with water again, form it on the wheel, and let it stiffen in the air. Finally he imitates the heat of the earth by firing the clay to a state similar to that of the original rock.

Large forms are my motivation. I may throw a large base on which two or more forms may be added. Doing this by wheel speeds up the process. The wheel also enables me to create hollow biomorphic shapes. I may alter the shapes later but the biomorphic shape is the one to which I am most drawn.

The potter's wheel has many other attributes that could be mentioned. For example: One wheel is better than the next for various reasons of speed, body fit, noise factors, amount of weight it can handle, etc. Therefore, when selecting a wheel to fit one's needs, the potter must make a personal choice.

Clay Bodies: In my experience of working with clays, I find the whole range of potter's earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain to be useful. Each has its significantly different properties that I have discovered through experimentation or research. I find stoneware best suited to my intentions. It can be fired at high temperatures and becomes very vitreous. It can be fired at low temperatures and still be used for decorative pieces. It enables me to use high fire glazes. But the primary reason for building with stoneware is because I have found that it can be very plastic and at the same time be extremely strong. This is very important to me when throwing two and three piece forms. Good, aged, plastic stoneware clay is a pleasure to throw. Fighting clay that is not moist or plastic enough has never benefited me in production.

Surface Treatment: The type of surface treatment one uses is an important choice that must be made to express one's intent. The choice of color, texture, light reflection, etc., expresses the attitude of the visual artist and the final sense of the form, just as the choice of the key and individual notes are used by a musical composer.

Criteria from which to work: First I highlight the areas of the form that seem to bulge or come forward. Second, I apply a low key oxide or dark glaze to the receding surface areas of the form. Third, I use translucent glazes to display the form's surface contours, finger marks, and clay body.

The above criteria is important to me because of my love for nature. More specifically, I try to keep the pot "alive" as long



possible because no matter how beautiful the form, the glaze can kill it. Therefore, I ask myself, what kinds of color suggest the character of longevity? Do rich and pure primary colors work? No!! For me, at this stage in my life and maybe forever, the types of color found in nature have never failed to excite me. I love earthy colors that suggest purity but exist with beautiful flaws; color with cracks, burnt edges, spots of dirt, stains of minerals, and oxides and the color values that come with age and growth. To me there is nothing more beautiful than nature itself. That is the reason I utilize the kind of glazes that when blended together reflect colors in nature. The placement of these glazes on the bulges and receding surface areas are intended to represent how light interplays with the natural materials that exist on this earth. The procedure for arriving at a natural look cannot be achieved by application only.

The Firing Process: I have looked a little closer at the natural sculptures of plants and animals and have been struck by the colors that exist on those ever changing sculptures. Furthermore, I have felt the pleasures and pains of the particular textures that exist when getting involved with it all. And finally I have wondered how all of those experiences could be real. When consuming this wonderful part of our world with all my available senses, I realize how close the potter is to understanding the existence of form and color. I know life takes nourishment from the sun and grows from the earth, the same way life of the pot consumes fire from the kiln.



Kiln: The intensity of a hot fire is the true and final stage in development that gives the clay and its glaze its maturity. In the blazing kiln the pot vitrifies into what has been in store for it. The glaze adheres to the clay and becomes one with it, a sometimes beautiful protector.

How is the richness of beautiful color manifest? It is true that different elements combined with one another at a certain melting temperature give off a certain consistent color. But how does one arrive at the beautiful flaws that exist in earthy color? My method of doing so is that of many other potters - a reduction fire. This type of firing is accessible to me with a gas kiln.

There are many different procedures used by potters when reducing the amount of oxygen in a kiln. I use an updraft kiln and reduction is created by closing the updraft port at the top. Once again, each person must experiment with the different variable methods of reduction in order to achieve a method which is right for his own product. But through a reduction firing the mystical flaws in natural color can come forth.

The Studio: The above mentioned technical aspects could never be used if there were not a place to work. Being in the position of not having my own studio at home, I have been using studios in art departments at colleges and the high school where I teach. These places are nice and I am grateful for the opportunities of having a place to work. They are large and have plenty of room in which to move. The equipment needed is accessible to a given area. Even though my work gets finished, I

can easily foresee how important and exciting it would be to work in my own studio at home. For various reasons, I believe better work could be finished because there would be less worry about punching the clock (not having to quit working on a piece that is working emotionally). The atmosphere at home is a peaceful place for me - fewer interruptions in a more controlled environment. I can well imagine what kind of natural expression I could create if I had a mobile studio. I can imagine driving to a scenic spot and setting up my wheel, absorbing the surrounding stimulus and creating spontaneously. I am certain the influential surroundings would dictate a different emotional expression and response to my work.

### SUMMARY

If one is serious about earning a degree in ceramic art, it is important to investigate many things about himself and the clay world. I have written about how important emotions, philosophies, ideas, self, and technical aspects of clay are to me. Studying these concepts will take a person a long way in art. I know at times it is extremely hard to understand what others have written. But trying to grow intellectually without help is very frustrating and consequently many choose to settle for something less.

The first step is challenging oneself to a commitment and being very serious, dedicated, and aggressive. A student must be prepared for receiving time limits for gathering his thoughts. He must be prepared to analyze techniques, history, philosophy, and himself.

To actually begin study one must begin paperwork in order to be accepted to a college program. Once accepted, one must chart his own course overview and each trimester complete a number of other required papers.

The third step is to begin instruction with faculty sponsors. In pottery, I recommend Linda Mosley, a potter and teacher who is very generous in teaching the student as much as he can consume in the period of time available.

The fourth step is where one's application of skill and expression come forth. I would like to express to the student some words of wisdom that may benefit him. When creating with



the clay medium the artist must be as honest as he can. He must be direct and natural, and attempt projects that are experimental. He must fill his mind with as much knowledge about clay as he can (it will open some doors). The artist should not be afraid to attempt forms that he has never built before. He must be himself and stay loose. And finally, he should not be afraid of lacking all the known skills. He must utilize the skills that he possesses and make them stronger than ever. Eventually the clay will teach a person how to treat it. He must respect it for what it is and someday it will respect him and later become him.

The fifth is the part of the program in which all the knowledge and qualified finished work culminates in an exhibit. A paper is written and the student may realize that his life as a potter has just begun.

The most important benefit of this study has been finding out more about myself while discovering and developing my own artistic philosophy. I have achieved a sense of self pride and growth in starting with this program and finishing what I set forth to accomplish.

A Final Message: From the beginning is the idea. From the hands its creation. From the glazes its security. From the fire its life.

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CLAY WORKS

- #1 "Heart Vessel," white stoneware, cone 9 reduction.
- #2 "Asian Satire," stoneware, cone 7 reduction.
- #3 "Altered Classic," stoneware, cone 6 reduction.
- #4 "Alien Vessel," white stoneware, cone 9 reduction.
- #5 "The Settler," white stoneware, cone 9 reduction.
- #6 "Snake Jug," stoneware, cone 7 reduction.
- #7 "Columbian Lady-Bug," stoneware, cone 7 reduction.
- #8 "Tad Bowl," stoneware, cone 6 reduction.
- #9 "Ring-Around the Alter," stoneware, cone 9 reduction,  
refired to cone 8 oxidation.
- #10 "Sea Urn," stoneware, cone 7 reduction.
- #11 Stoneware cylinder, cone 10 salt-fire.
- #12 Stoneware cylinder, cone 10 salt-fire.
- #13 Stoneware cylinder, cone 10 salt-fire.
- #14 "Missouri Sand Bowl," stoneware, cone 9 reduction.
- #15 "Heavy Lips," stoneware, cone 8 reduction.
- #16 "The Man and His Plant," white stoneware, cone 9 reduction.
- #17 "Grid Iron Vessel," stoneware, cone 9 reduction.
- #18 "Red-Necked Woman," stoneware, cone 8 reduction.
- #19 "Joan's Teapot," stoneware & cane, cone 6 oxidation.
- #20 "Altered Opening," stoneware, cone 6 reduction.
- #21 "Stoneware Jug," cone 8 reduction.
- #22 "Tailed Dish," stoneware, cone 9 reduction.
- #23 "Taffy Quarry," white stoneware, cone 8 reduction.
- #24 "Ringed Rip," stoneware, cone 9 reduction.
- #25 "Without A Shell," stoneware, cone 8 reduction.
- #26 "The Thorned Greek," stoneware, cone 7 reduction.