

Interpreting Ceramics



Interpreting Ceramics, Selected Essays, Wunderkammer Press in association with ICRC, Bath, 2013.

The publication is edited by Dr Jo Dahn and Dr Jeffrey Jones, both PhD students of Aberystwyth University in the 1990s. The essays, originally published in the on-line journal of the

same name, were written by a range of international writers, both practitioners and academics. They demonstrate the vibrant and diverse approaches to the field of ceramics as an expanding area of exploration in academia and beyond.

Research

Moira Vincentelli retired from full-time teaching in 2011 but continues her work as Curator of Ceramics and part-time teacher. She currently supervises two postgraduate students in Aberystwyth and is second supervisor for two students in Cardiff and one in Bath Spa. She gave invited lectures at Florida Atlantic University and the University of New Mexico in 2012, and at the *Subversive Ceramics* conference, Holbourne Museum, Bath 2012 and the keynote address at Women Working with Clay Symposium at Roanoke University, Virginia in 2013.

Coll Minogue editor of *The Log Book* and currently studying at Aberystwyth for a PhD on women woodfirers, gave lectures at NCECA, Seattle (2012) and at Clay Push Gulgong, Australia in 2013.

In October 2012 Jack Snow recently graduated in art history began a one year MPhil funded by a Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarship (KESS). The aim is to research digitisation in relation to the Ceramic Archive and in particular to use the International Ceramics Festival of 2011 as a case study. Working in collaboration with the National Library of Wales he has had a work placement with the digitisation and metadata units and the People's Collection of Wales. It is hoped that the research will contribute to the digital economy of Wales and increase access and interest to the Ceramic Archive, the International Ceramics Festival and the arts in Wales.



Ponimin M Hum just before his performance at the International Ceramics Festival 2011. A similar mask was kindly donated to the collection.

The Archive Team

Moira Vincentelli is Emeritus Professor in Art History & Curator of Ceramics. Louise Chennell and Dr Kathy Talbot are archive assistants; Dr Kathy Talbot is also the honorary curator at Tenby Museum. Louise Chennell received an MA in Art History in 2012 and developed *Parallel Lives* exhibition from her research. Neil Holland is Curator of Collections.

Grants

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Arts Council of Wales £14,000 (2012-13)

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Contact

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Ceramic Archive: Tel: (+0044) 01970 622192

Gallery opening hours: Open: Monday-Saturday 10am-8pm (Sundays 12-5pm) please check before visiting to avoid changeover or maintenance closures.

Aberystwyth Arts Centre: Tel (+0044) 01970 623232 (for exhibition details)

School of Art: Tel (+0044) 01970 622460 (for general information, enquires and queries).

Please follow us on Twitter  and Facebook 

Acknowledgements

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CyMAL Museums Archive and Libraries Wales

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CERAMIC ARCHIVE

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Bulletin



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News

After a lot of hard work checking details, form filling and writing forward plans we successfully applied for our continued status as an Accredited Museum. We are grateful to Louise Chennell who worked on this on behalf of the Ceramic Collection and Archive.

Our acquisitions list is particularly long for this publication as the ceramic collection expands with new work in relation to the International Ceramics Festival, exhibitions that we have generated and other opportunities as they arrive. We have had grants for some of the major pieces from the Arts Fund and V&A Purchase Grant Fund. The digital archive also expands apace with all the lectures and demonstrations from ICF 2011 well recorded. Digitisation has been an important part of our research activity in this last year through our KESS grant for a postgraduate student to work on the project. Also especially exciting has been the publication of the book *Interpreting Ceramics, Selected Essays* which marks a milestone for the Interpreting Ceramics Research Collaboration between Aberystwyth, Cardiff, Bath Spa and Bristol. The electronic journal has been published annually since 2001. More information on some of these items can be found below.

Exhibitions and Events

Keramic Conversations - from Vallauris to Fat Lava Popular Post-War Ceramics from Germany and France - Summer 2013

Curated by Gérard Mermoz, Keramic Conversations presents a selection of popular ceramics made in France and Germany in workshops and small factories in the post war period (1945 -1975). The producers adopted an experimental approach to form and decoration through the use of bright new glazes often bubbling over the surface to create the lava-like effect. Combining art, design and craft skills the works were produced in series and designed to retail at affordable prices. They were intended for domestic display on shelves and sideboards and signalled a playful modernity for the home.

In Germany this democratic trend was inspired in part by the Bauhaus, the influential design school of the interwar period. In France one of the leading centres was Vallauris in Provence which had been famous for its simple glazed cooking pots. As this market declined the potters reinvented themselves as 'art' potters catering for the massive tourist trade around Nice and Cannes and hugely boosted by the presence of Picasso and other artists who were associated with the workshops.

The exhibition presents 'conversations' between pieces with occasional examples from the permanent collection. In the back gallery Mermoz has placed 'invaders' into the permanent collection display to surprise, delight or horrify.

<http://keramicconversations.blogspot.co.uk/>



Philip Eglin, *The Bear Hunt*, 2011
An earthenware platter based on a 19th century Spode design, especially commissioned for the 2011 British Ceramics Biennial at Stoke-on-Trent.

Parallel Lives - Spring 2013

An exhibition about couples who have worked together or alongside each other on ceramics: Beverley and Terry Bell Hughes; Frank and Janet Hamer; David and Margaret Frith; Alan and Ruth Barrett-Danes, Harry and May Davis; Alfred and Louise Powell; James and Tilla Waters. This exhibition was based on the MA dissertation of Louise Chennell who works for the Archive. Reviewing for *Ceramic Review* Jenny Williamson wrote:

This exhibition brings together the work of fourteen potters: seven married couples. The works are hugely varied from intricately decorated, functional 1920s Wedgwood porcelain to abstracted organic pod pots (1990s) and contemporary cylindrical pot groups. The linking fact - that all the potters live and work with their spouses - begs

analysis. How well can spouses work together? Can they work jointly on individual pieces? Is one partner dominant? Will we, the audience, see the joy and tensions at work? Do the potters fall into stereotypical roles? How much do social attitudes affect the working relationship, and the work produced?

The simple, contemporary and functional work of James and Tilla Waters extol the virtues of sharing the design decisions. Exquisite high gloss, dark bowls with contrasted rims, and grouped cylinders in pale greys, are each a truly joint enterprise. Adjacent are the finely painted "Chinese lidded jar" (1923) of Alfred Powell, and three plates (1928) by Louise Powell. Both artists decorated Wedgwood blanks working alongside each other, producing similar work reflecting the values of their time.

A large dish with warm brown ash glaze and Japanese influenced brush decoration is typical of the functional studio pottery of Harry and May Davis. Each piece bears the workshop mark, with no independent authorship. (They set up potteries in South America, Cornwall and New Zealand, driven by Harry's restless nature who was the dominant partner). In contrast, Terry and Beverley Bell Hughes, Harrow students of the sixties, worked independently. His three honey glazed jugs are typical of the Leach studio pottery tradition, whilst her handbuilt expressive organic pod pots, with volcanic glaze, show no co-influence and assert separate creative spirits. A delicate pale green Chinese-style bowl by Margaret Frith is displayed with her husband David's decorated brown and grey square dish and a co-authored lidded pot and ginger jar. The pieces show the shared aesthetic and positive collaboration.

Chunky sculptures of birds by Janet Hamer and press moulded dishes with fish decorations by Frank Hamer are exuberant, dynamic and refreshing. They are obviously related by their inspiration from wildlife and colour palette, but the Hamers could not work together, her work feels more weighty and there is a sense of her power. "Cabbage Kingdom", a globular piece surmounted by a cabbage leaf and two clinging elfin creatures, is an early collaboration slip-cast by Alan and hand-built by Ruth Barrett Danes. They also worked separately expressing very different talents and visions – Ruth making fantastical pigs dancing and Alan a perfect coffee set. Lively hares on a thrown cup show them collaborating again.

So does this exhibition present any conclusions about the work of potter-spouses? It does reveal that each collaboration is as unique as any partnership - some partners work together on each piece, some work independently and some change their working relationship through their lives; but it also shows, through the diverse range of styles and techniques included in the exhibition, that the work of the spouses has a distinct affinity irrespective of the level of physical collaboration.

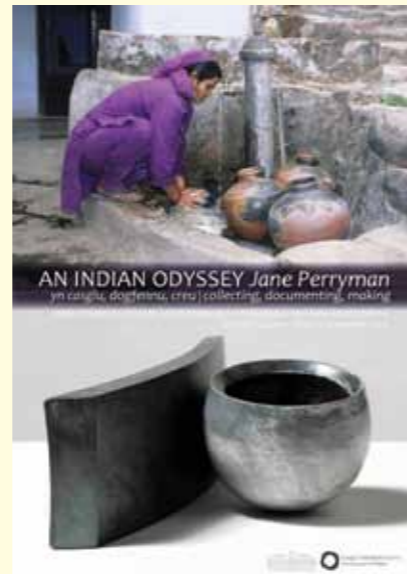
Michael Cardew: A Potter and His Followers (Winter 2012)

The exhibition was arranged to mark the publication of Tanya Harrod's new biography of Michael Cardew, *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew: Modern Pots, Colonialism, and Counterculture*. In 2001 Aberystwyth marked the centenary of his birth with a symposium which brought together scholars and potters and proved to be one of the starting points for the new biography.

A paradoxical but inspirational figure, as an upper class Oxford graduate Cardew chose the simple life training with Bernard Leach at St Ives and then settling in rural Gloucestershire. He re-established the country pottery at Winchcombe and produced the magnificent slipware that is so noted in the Aberystwyth Collection. In the late 1930s he moved to Wenford Bridge in Devon which remained his main pottery in Britain however his restless spirit took him first to Ghana in the 1940s and eventually to Nigeria where he founded the Abuja Pottery (now Ladi Kwali Pottery) and where he continued to live for much of the time until 1965. Here he developed a stoneware body using local materials with designs much inspired by the traditional pottery made by Nigerian women. Cardew had many pupils and followers who admired his work and his alternative values. The exhibition showed the Cardew slipware from the collection alongside other people who had worked with him, all important potters in their own right: Ladi Kwali, Ray Finch, Seth Cardew, Svend Bayer, Danlami Aliyu and Gwyn Hanssen Piggot, John Leach, Magdalene Odundo, Mark Hewitt, Joe Finch and Clive Bowen.

Jane Perryman – an Indian Odyssey (June – October 2012)

Since the 1990s Jane Perryman has travelled extensively in India documenting, filming and collecting everyday pottery from different regions. Alongside the artist's own work the exhibition featured Indian pottery, documentary photographs and four short films recently created from earlier video material. These were shown on a continuous loop in the gallery.



Delicate Features (February to June 2012)

Based on the theme of heads and hands, the exhibition featured the work of three ceramic artists, Pea Restall, Patricia Kelly and Terry Davies shown alongside ceramics and other media from the University Collections.

We Spirited Creatures (October 2011 – January 2012)

In this exhibition based on the theme of animals, artist and curator, Stuart Evans worked with poet, Elin ap Hywel and sound artist Anna Evans. The exhibition offered a creative collision of the senses and different museum spheres – popular culture and high culture; stuffed animals and studio pottery; contemporary ceramics and old

Julian Meredith, Roadkill print of barn owl (2011)
Running Hare by Emma Rogers (2011)



'stuff'. Taking viewers beyond the common expectations of why works might be seen in the Ceramic Gallery, the show played with assumptions about ceramics as aesthetic or collectable objects and created new meanings from intriguing juxtapositions.

Out of Bath – Summer 2011

Showing ceramics by alumni from Bath Academy of Art and Bath School of Art & Design, this exhibition reflected the high standard and success of Bath's long running specialist ceramics degree which sadly ended in 2009. It included work by Felicity Aylieff, Matt Chambers, Jo Davies, Hannah Dipper, Aimee Lax, Chun Liao, Babette Martini, Heidi Parsons, Louisa Taylor, Jonathan Wade, and Sasha Wardell.

There is more information about current and past exhibitions at <http://www.ceramics-aberystwyth.com> including archived exhibition catalogues that you can download as PDF files, essays on the exhibitions, web links and sound recordings.

Aber Touring Series

We have had a lively period of touring exhibitions in the past eighteen months. In late 2011 *Animal Fantasies* and *Sensational Ceramics* were shown at Prescott Museum, Lancashire. *Animal Fantasies* toured to 'Nature and Art', Gloucester in summer 2012. Early in 2012 *Taking Tea* went to Gwyneth Museum Bangor, North Wales, then to Howden Park, Livingston in Scotland, and at the end of the year to Tenby Museum and Gallery in Pembrokeshire. We continue to make these available through the Touring Exhibitions Group.

Education & Outreach

Undergraduate and Postgraduate: We continue to provide a stimulating research environment in which undergraduate and postgraduate students and researchers work closely with staff to expand the historical study, curation and interpretation of the ceramic collection. Under the aegis of the National Centre for Ceramics in Wales there have been three events: the first in December 2011 was the one-day symposium with 8 speakers based on the exhibition *We Spirited Creatures*. In July 2012 a major conference on *Sculpture and Ceramics* was held at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff and in October we held a postgraduate symposium at the School of Art to discuss new projects in the field with presentations from students in Aberystwyth and Cardiff.

Primary Schools workshops: This work is lead by Jill Piercy and is undertaken in collaboration with Cath Sherrell, the Education Officer in Aberystwyth Arts Centre and her staff. The projects are



adapted to the exhibitions in the gallery. Each group has a half-day session working with the ceramic collection in

the gallery and a half-day session in the pottery studio for a hands-on session. These are themed workshops based around the current exhibition or subjects proposed by teachers and are bilingual depending on the needs of the children.

Family Community Groups: These monthly Saturday events have continued to prove very successful and run during the autumn and winter months.



Acquisitions

Collection

From the 2011 International Ceramics Festival we acquired work by Emma Rogers (UK), Mark Hewitt (USA), Elke Sada (Germany), Ruthanne Tudball (UK), Kate Malone (UK/France), Ingrid Murphy (UK), and we received gifts from Shigemasa Higashida (Japan) and Ponimmin M Hum (Indonesia). Acquisitions from contemporary makers in the UK include work by Felicity Aylieff (V&A Purchase Grant Fund), Claire Loder, Chun Liao and Karen Atherley. Works by Sun Ae Kim and Philip Eglin (V&A Purchase Grant Fund), were acquired through the British Ceramics Biennial in 2011. A new piece from Jane Perryman was acquired from her 2012 solo exhibition *An Indian Odyssey*. Moira Vincentelli purchased items from her research trip to New Mexico in 2012 from Martha Arquero (USA) and Edmundo Lopez (Mexico, Mata Ortiz).



Felicity Aylieff, Ink Blue series 2 (2011)

The collection continues to support Welsh makers and has purchased contemporary pieces from Natalia Dias, Joe Finch, Pea Restall, Frank Hamer and James and Tilla Waters. We were also able to add historical studio pots to the collection including work from Deborah Harding, Harry and May Davis (Crown Pottery), James Tower and Danlami Aliyu. We are grateful to Ruth Barrett-Danes who donated a 6 piece coffee set made by her husband, Alan Barrett-Danes when he worked as a designer for Crown Clarence at Stoke, circa 1955-1959 and to the Contemporary Art Society for Wales who donated work by Lowri Davies; *Six Piece Llanelli Set* in 2011.

Archive Acquisitions

The archive of Betty Blandino (1927-2011) was deposited in the archive by Mrs. Gaynor Leggate in 2012. Betty Blandino was born in London she studied painting and pottery at Goldsmith's College, London. Between 1973 and 1988 she lived in Wales before moving to Oxford. She used the hand building techniques of coiling and pinching to create thin walled sculptural vessels. She wrote a number of books including *Coiled Pottery, Traditional and Contemporary Ways*, A&C Black (1985, 2003), and *The Figure in Fired Clay* (2001).

We also acquired a portfolio of sketches and drawings by Norah Braden.