ON THE USE OF SOME FOLK ART MOTIFS
IN CONTEMPORARY ART FORMS

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by
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INTRODUCTION

My present experiments in salt glazed porcelain functional pottery led me into the study of early American salt glazed ware and the folk traditions in American art.

Two artifacts of traditional folk art I have become most interested in using as a visual theme are pioneer enamel ware coffee pots and pieced quilts. These have evolved into what I title "dude pots" which use typical enamel ware forms, clothed in western garb—shirts, overalls, chaps, and good guy and bad guy hats.

I have also been making functional items in salt glazed porcelain that have the appearance of block patterned quilts. I am intrigued with the softness of porcelain clay in its natural state and the way it can be manipulated into simulating some of the qualities of fabric. I like the way the soft forms contrast to the usually formal symmetrical elements of functional pottery. These same contrasting elements are also seen in block patterned quilts with random color movement and patterns organized within the square format. I am fascinated by the unlimited number of design possibilities within the confines of this formal structure, and the similarities between these designs of the folk artist with twentieth century art.

The first section of this thesis concerns an historical perspective of pieced quilts and the similarities of their designs to some segments of contemporary art. The following
section utilizes an interview to express my interest in certain aesthetic aspects of folk art and the techniques developed in carrying out my ideas.
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PIECED QUILTS
AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO CONTEMPORARY ART FORMS

The pieced quilt, unlike its European relatives, is uniquely a product of American folk art. The first quilts of this type were born of necessity. Because time and fabric were too scarce to make new ones, the treasured quilts the pilgrims brought with them were continually patched with cloth scraps. In the same spirit of frugality, new quilts were also made from scraps cut into the most efficient geometric shapes to save time and work space in the cramped living quarters of the early settlers. In this relation, the block format was an efficient shape to use because it was easily handled and could be lap worked.

The early quilts were needed in great quantity for warm bedding and it was necessary that they be made quickly. The square, with no bias-cut edges as found in more complex shapes, required the least amount of fitting and exact cutting. It is only later on, when pioneer women found more time for quiltmaking that the progressive shapes of hexagons and traditional applique are found. Throughout, however, the block format remained, not only out of necessity, but also because of the unlimited number of its design possibilities. Many of the later block style quilts, in fact, became more complex than the other styles, like the hexagonal which might at first appear to have been liberating in terms of new possibilities.
To understand the quilters' use of the square it is helpful to realize that geometry has been implicit in the tradition of quilt design. First of all, rectilinear forms are simple forms to use as an organizing principle and surround us in our environment from the day we are born. Plato talks of the cube and rectangle as being shapes beautiful in an absolute rather than a relative way. It is not surprising to find a relationship between quilts and the strong influence geometry has had on contemporary design as a theoretical necessity.¹

In contrast to the utilitarian function of a square for the quilter, the contemporary artist has made minimal and pure forms an intellectual choice to communicate ideas. Artists such as Sol Lewitt and Carl Andre have chosen to use a geometric vocabulary. They have rejected all forms that might be associative or evocative. A square, rectangle, or cube are nothing but a square, rectangle, or cube--which exist in a situation created by the artist. By creating works based on the cube which denies emotional interpretation, they have altered space in such a way that the viewer actually bumps into pure ideas.²

The infinite design possibilities offered by quiltering provided women a welcomed creative and aesthetic outlet. Quilts based on the block pattern could be made in two styles, ones with squares that could stand alone in their design and ones whose blocks when joined were an integral
part of an overall pattern. Furthermore, the blocks could be separated with stripes or borders adding a grid pattern to the design. The blocks themselves could be designed symmetrically or asymmetrically. Sometimes they were split into two equal triangles with each half composed of smaller pieces of geometric shapes. Usually one triangle would be of a light tone and the other a darker value. These tonal variations were skillfully manipulated and the darker values could create the subtle effect of smoked glass over the entire pattern. It is easy to see how different sensibilities could create a multitude of various effects from these options, even though the format of the block for each design might appear at first to be very limiting. Perhaps the block pattern was used more often because it gave more freedom to explore line, color, and form than the forms of more complex traditional styles of quilts from Europe.

This long period of freedom and experimenting with the geometry of designs resulted in quilts with obvious formal comparisons to some modern painters: the Rainbow quilts show the chromatic possibilities of a Kenneth Noland, the optical effects of Log Cabin, Attic Windows, and Baby Block patterns of a Vasarely, and the repetition of common place objects like Coffee Cups and Flower Baskets of an Andy Warhol.

It might be noted that until the late nineteenth century, the fine arts valued by society were closed to women and
they consequently filled most of their creative needs for self expression through needlework. Quiltmaking served this need for the pioneer woman as well as providing warm bedding for her family. This became a major outlet to express her feeling for line, color, and form. It provided an interval of rest and creativity from the harshness of her daily life. Because our female ancestors were not considered artists, they were free from the stereotypes and traditions of high art. They could freely express their feelings and convictions on a variety of subjects from politics, religion, and personal life. Their quilts reflected all the various aspects of their lives and recorded their memories and history. Consequently, women became involved in a great fury of quiltmaking.

In some locations quilts reflected particular characteristics identifiable with the people living there. In Pennsylvania, there were a number of Protestant sects (Mennonites, Moravians, and Lutherans) who maintained self-sufficient communities in which a predominant style in their folk arts emerged. The Amish, for example, produced unique variations on traditional quilt patterns and some designs are distinctively their own. They loved strong color and the combinations of hot magentas, blues, greens and reds produce an intense glowing spectrum unlike what might be expected from their subdued life style. 5

A large central diamond within a single square, a single
large square, or bars within a square are formats notably similar to the contemporary series of paintings, "Homage to the Square" by Joseph Albers. Albers' geometric abstractions, identical in format with only color variations have had a strong influence on recent "op art" and systemic painting. There are many visual similarities between these modern movements and most of Pennsylvania Dutch quilts.

It is through the names and titles of the individual blocks that we see further dimension of the expressive quality of the quilts that were made. Sometimes the quilters designated a traditional name, other quilts which held a personal significance or sentimental meaning had more expressive titles. Sometimes the source for a title occurred after completion, from the feeling evoked by the design. Titles are frequently inspired in the same way in recent modern movements in painting such as abstract expressionism. Many of the quilters' abstract forms expressed ideas and responses to events, as seen in the patterns called Drunkard's Path, Rocky Road to Kansas, and Yankee Pride. Often the same designs had different titles in various places according to the relevance the image had for them at that time. For instance, Job's Tears became known as the Slave Chain in the 1800's when slavery was a paramount subject, and later it was called Texas Tears when Texas was a topic of national interest. The significance of the names to the quilter indicates the strong expressions of the feelings and
lifestyle of our ancestors. In time quiltmaking became a communal effort and quilting bees were a means for serious discussions. The names of the quilts also tell us of the feelings and interest women took in the changing social and political scene--ie. White House Steps, Democratic Rose, Slave Chain and Lincoln's Platform.

Today the art of quiltmaking is being revived. Finally the similarities between the block designs of pieced quilts and contemporary art are being noticed and explored and our female ancestors are receiving the respect for their art that they deserve. Through a continued study of this heritage and how quilters have come to the same visual results as those obtained by contemporary artists a century later, I hope to find new solutions and inspiration for my own creative efforts.
FOOTNOTES


3. Holstein, p. 54.

4. Ibid., p. 113.


6. Ibid., p. 71.
CERAMIC SHOP TALK INTERVIEW: A DISCUSSION
OF IDEAS AND TECHNIQUES WITH CLAY MAN

CM: How about these dude pots, what are they, how are they glazed, etc.

JO: They are porcelain or stoneware thrown cylinders with handbuilding added on; they've been salt glazed with a glaze liner on the inside.

CM: And you mentioned that some aren't salt glazed, some are oxidation fired.

JO: A few oxidation fired with no glaze on the outside to simulate a softer quality, one of fabric so that it is not at all glossy. But really... there aren't any dude pots that are oxidized without glaze; it is the quilted pots that are oxidation fired.

CM: Oh, so you have two series going on here: you have quilted works and that's more than pots, right?

JO: Yes.

CM: And then you have dude pots. Can you talk about your decorative methods, because that seems like a significant part of what you're doing.

JO: Well, I start out with a basic thrown cylinder--sometimes it will be thrown in two sections out of two different colors of porcelain.

CM: What would those times be?

JO: When I want to have a different color base at bottom to represent the pants of the dude in contrast to his
shirt so I contrast colors here. But most things are basically thrown, even the hats are thrown...

CM: But then they are altered aren't they?

JO: They're thrown out into a plate-like shape with a closed up bottle form in the middle, once they are cut off the bat I alter them to look like a hat. Then the rest of the decoration is done by adding slabs of clay onto the pot--the handle is done with a slab, the spout; sometimes I roll the clay out on top of fabric, or...

CM: Can we back up to the handle? You say it's made out of a slab; can you explain that a little more. Are you cutting them with a wire cutter like say John Glick does or are you...

JO: No, I just start out with slabs of clay and run my fingers across it to put grooves in it trying to approximate the kind of handle seen on antique enameled coffee pots.

CM: How about attaching them?

JO: I do not pull them off the form because I am trying to give the effect of the metal enamel ware.

CM: Stuck on.

JO: Stuck on in the manner of the antique pots. As we start talking here about the metal enameled pots, when I started getting into dude pots I was doing them as tea pots and it didn't seem to come off quite well and so I started looking for other shapes that were more
traditional. I became intrigued with the old antique enameled coffee pots and began to pick up the details on these sturdy old pieces.

CM: When you say traditional, you are talking about traditional American forms, but not traditional ceramic forms.

JO: No, traditional enameled forms, and as I got to working in this idiom I decided that porcelain would be the best choice because it could approximate the enameled surface best.

CM: Would you say that one of the major themes of your work is the imitation of traditional American forms—all kinds.

JO: Yes, all kinds of folk art. But I would say that "imitation" might not be the correct word. I used the traditional motifs as visual cues. I use the language of traditional folk art to create an image that is my own.

CM: You selected two forms—the coffee pot and the quilt.

JO: Right.

CM: Are you looking to other kinds of forms for ideas and bits and pieces in addition to the coffee pot and the quilt?

JO: Not presently.

CM: You are using a technique the Japanese call Neriage for decorating forms. Can you go into that and mention
the problems that you have run across applying the
neriage to your work?

JO: Well, the block of Neriage is made up of different
colored clays and comprise the quilt designs or any
pattern that looks like fabric design that I want to
repeat. This block is made up so that when you take a
slice of it it has the pattern on it and several slices
will make repetitions of that motif—that one geometric
motif.

CM: So in a sense, if you were talking about wood for
instance, you would be taking an end grain slice of
the Neriage block of clay.

JO: Right. I make the designs about half the size that I
want them within the block and proceed to slice and
then roll and expand them with the rolling pin on both
sides several times to compress the clay. This seems
to align the particles at about the same compression
as the particles of the thrown pot, so that when the
slabs, after being rolled out, are applied, there is a
similar shrinkage rate and I don't have any cracking.
It seems to be totally necessary to do that; if I just
slice it off and apply it I have a lot of cracking.

CM: Is the cracking then between the various colors or is
it general cracking?

JO: It is just general cracking. The colored stains do
affect the shrinkage rate; there is a difference in
shrinkage rate, it varies between 1% and 2%. But after compressing the particles about the same it seems to eliminate the problems of cracking no matter what the variations of the shrinkage rates are for the different clays.

CM: Are you using the same clay body and coloring it for the Neriage decoration as you do for the thrown form?

JO: Yes, sometimes the thrown form is out of plain white porcelain, and sometimes it is out of colored porcelain.

CM: And you'll be applying this quilt-like Neriage decoration to both?

JO: Yes.

CM: You are using some other methods for decorating your work: one of them is casting. What kind of casting are you doing?

JO: One of the nice things about using porcelain is that it has nice fine particles and it can pick up textures really well off just about anything. I've used a number of things that I find are Western and decorative—a typical metal belt buckle, and the sheriff's star. I've made plaster casts from them and just press-molded the porcelain. With the tooled leather I find I can press the clay directly on it. If there is something that is soft such as a leather glove I've used dental molding plaster which stays soft and pliable for about a half hour or so eliminating the problem of undercuts.
A small can of it is very handy for things like a leather glove. I've made casts of guns, and buttons, just about anything that fits into my work. I either press the clay directly on to it or take a mold of it and just press-mold. I don't find it necessary to do slip casting, the porcelain press-molds so well.

CM: You are using some other methods that aren't casting yet they come off looking like imitations of forms. Can you talk about those things like your fake stitch stuff and the fringe.

JO: A lot of the fringe and ties, and the buttons are done with a clay gun which is like a cake frosting decorator. You can also use a "play dough" toy extruder that extrudes different forms. The stitching is done with a pizza pie cutter and also a dress maker's tracing tool. Another handy tool that I use is a wall paper seam roller. It's a very narrow rolling pin and it's very handy for flattening out small areas, pressing them on, getting areas to adhere well to each other--small spots. Like when I press on the spout on a coffee pot, I use the seam roller to go around it and it looks very much like metal after it has been pressed in that way. I just use whatever method that works to get the results that I want.

CM: When you say "works" do you mean works physically or works aesthetically, visually?
JO: Visually. I'll take anything: I've used wrinkled up paper toweling, scraps of denim fabric or muslin fabric and roll these kinds of things into the clay with pressure from a rolling pin or a wallpaper seam roller to pick up the textures that I want.

CM: Besides the fine particle size, why have you chosen porcelain as a material?

JO: I started out using it because I felt that its whiteness and its smoothness related well to the enameled ware, but as I continued to work with it I found that the small particle size of this clay picks up the textures, and the salt glazing process brings out any texture that is put onto the clay, whereas if it were a heavily grogged stoneware clay I wouldn't be able to pick up that kind of fine detail.

CM: Many of the art potters in the post 1900's tradition would quarrel with you about imitating other kinds of material with clay. What would you say to that kind of criticism? Do you feel clay can do anything? Why have you chosen this route: the imitation of other materials?

JO: My first and just sort of basic response to clay is that I have been fascinated by the softness of the material, and wanted to maintain that quality in my work and I liked what happened with being able to take this soft quality and fire it and have it still look
soft and yet be hard. And I've always been fascinated with the very spontaneous and soft quality of porcelain, which I think has led me to forms and ideas that are soft. The fabric is something I have always been comfortable working with and I have done a lot of stitchery and that kind of thing. I enjoy working with fabrics and consequently, I can see it would just creep into my work. I have also been very strongly involved with color and with the techniques I am using now I have been able to work with color in a very painterly way, as I did several years ago in painting. So rather adhering to what may seem to be a traditional use of clay I use the capabilities of the material to serve my ideas.

CM: Are you working towards a trompe d'oeil kind of approach with clay; do you want to go as far as, say, Merilyn Levine has gone?

JO: No, I think Marilyn Levine has a particular purpose in her realistic pieces. I want to say something different than that, and I think it's there in the forms that I'm doing. I'm not making a cowboy shirt, I'm making a coffee pot that suggests a cowboy shirt and a character, but it is quite different from a super realistic piece such as Levine's.

CM: You have mentioned the importance of Western things as a theme for the dude pots, but I'm not sure how the
Western thing relates to the quilts. Do you think of the quilts as Western or are they something that came out of the process?

JO: The quilts evolved after I had been making dude pots a while and as my interest in folk art evolved. It is something that has gradually evolved with an interest in antiques as well. It seems that when you think about it, the interest in fabrics, the interest in antiques, in antique pots, my interest in folk art, in folk lore, it is easy to see how my work moved in this direction. As for the dude pots, I had made some tea pots that were fairly abstract looking and did not have any particular purpose to them, but they did look soft, and one of my colleagues came in and said, "you know that looks like a dude shirt." It was so soft looking and it had some silver decoration on it that looked like studs and as I sat and looked at it I thought why not make it look more like a cowboy shirt, and that's how it began.

CM: Salt glazing has been a problem for beginning and advanced and professional potters everywhere. Can you talk about some of the things you have discovered about salt glazing?

JO: The salt glazing was something I did not start out with originally on these dude pots. I started out using clear glaze over the porcelain.

CM: That was in oxidation...
JO: Yes, oxidation in a gas kiln. But I also had been doing a lot of functional salt glazed ware, and discovered that this salting texture added to and brought out the colors I was using and the textures were much nicer than in the oxidation process. When I salt, I do not do any body reduction. I get enough reduction in the salting process to give the body the little bit of reduction that it needs to fuse properly and to cool off the color a little bit. Which is something that you don't get in electric oxidation atmosphere.

CM: So it loses some of that pasty quality.

JO: Yes, and in the process of salt firing I start out slowly, and use bisque ware not green ware.

CM: Why is that?

JO: Just because the porcelain is so fragile that I have better luck in bisquing it first. If they make it through the bisque then I figure they'll make it through the salt. When cone 9 is down I start salting. I have found I have to use more salt for a porcelain body than for a stoneware body. I usually use between thirty and thirty-five pounds of salt in a 40 cubic foot kiln that's been well used.

CM: What about the introduction of salt. How are you introducing it?

JO: I am using just regular rock salt and I am putting it in the kiln by sliding in angle iron in the salt port
in the front of the kiln and the salt drops in the fire box in front of the burners. It drops evenly and directly in front of those burners. The angle iron is a terrific method because you get it right over the burner ports and you don't risk having salt flying around and accumulating in bowls and other open pieces.

CM: You can also introduce an awful lot of salt at one time can't you?

JO: Yes, I think we get from between 3-5 pounds of salt in at once.

CM: And how many saltings do you do?

JO: Seven to ten.

CM: Do you wait between your saltings?

JO: I have found that I don't have to wait a long time; we were very careful about clearing the atmosphere and waiting 5 to 10 minutes until a few times when we wanted to get the salt in there fast before the kiln had climbed too high, and found that there wasn't any difference between the amount of time that you have to wait. I clear the air for maybe a minute or two and then I keep introducing the salt, and if it gets too murky or too heavy I'll wait every now and then.

CM: Do you use draw tiles?

JO: Yes, I use porcelain draw rings and usually check them after about 30 pounds of salt.

CM: Did the salt glaze lead you to the use of stains or did
the stains come first?

JO: I had been salt glazing the porcelain functional ware. The use of stains came I guess because I was intrigued with trying to get away from the whiteness of the pots. I started to experiment with colorants, in the form of oxides and carbonates.

CM: For the novice would you mention the differences between stains, carbonates, colorants, and oxides.

JO: Well, the difference is that the oxides and carbonates have not been fired before, stains are like a glaze that has been mixed up and calcined and ground and sometimes refired again, so that it is very stable and remains stable every time you use it. You can count on it being almost the same color each time. With oxides there is a risk of bloating in the body and it is more difficult to control the results. I've found that even a stain will bloat the body if it is not mixed in well. A hunk of stain that hasn't been stirred in well will bloat. It is very important to get the stain well mixed into the dry-mixed clay body before wetting it down.

CM: What led you to use stains instead of slip?

JO: I had been using underglazes and overglazes and found the process very frustrating because it was like exact painting. I lost the spontaneity of working directly with the clay. It solved two problems: not having to
put on tedious coats of underglazes and also not having to lose the direct spontaneous quality of working with the clay. I can pick up the textures and so forth and not have to paint over all of that. Also another thing that helped a great deal is that I could see as I was working what the color value contrast might be, instead of making the forms and having to color them afterwards. I could see directly what was happening with color, even though I did have to memorize the changes the colors would make after the firing.

CM: So this gave you more control?

JO: Much more control and also more spontaneity. The color is part of the form and is not something that is added on at the end.

CM: I know you have thought about being a production potter. Do you think that body stains are viable for making forms like you do in a production situation?

JO: The type of things that I am making are more unique items that people don't buy everyday. They do sell, but I am not turning out any great quantity of them as a production person would. So in that respect I find it works for what I am doing.

CM: What I would like to know is the cost of stains compared to the costs of slips as a production technique.

JO: They are expensive, they run anywhere from $2.00 to $4.00 a pound. But you do not need very much, anywhere
from 2% to 3%. The highest would be about 8%.

CM: Are the colors more varied with stains?

JO: It is easier to get a more varied palette of colors with the stains than with carbonates and oxides. For instance, I have found that there are some pinks on the market—they're not chrome-tin pinks; these are chrome-alumina or manganese base stains—that will fire to cone 10. There are also quite a few yellows. These colors are very difficult to get with oxides and carbonates at cone 10.

CM: Can you tell us more about how you obtained the specific colors you have with the stains?

JO: The stains that I have used have come from several sources. Some were very old samples that had been sitting around the glaze lab for ten years or more. Others were ordered from Mason Stain Company in East Liverpool, Ohio and Standard Ceramics in Pennsylvania. There are many companies from which you can purchase them. As far as the specific colors are concerned, I feel that is an individual thing; the stains must be tested and then the artist potter chooses the palette she wants to use according to her own color sensibility.

CM: Can you comment about the surfaces that you get in salt with your stains.

JO: One of the advantages of using the stains is that you get a uniform salting surface over the whole pot where
if I applied different salt slips or glazes before firing the result might be that I would get some orange peel in some spots and a smooth glossy surface in others. I have found that I can take my clay body, use it as a slip, put the stained colorant in it, apply that, brush it on, and use it in the same way in small areas if I need to and still get the same texture. There are other slips that I have used that have a very high clay content that will pick up a nice orange peel, particularly a black slip that I got from Bill Farrell of the Chicago Art Institute, that picks up a terrific orange peel, that almost looks like the speckled blue and white enamel ware after firing. So there are some without stains that work well and work nicely on stoneware or porcelain. But most of the time they have to be tested out, and normally they have to have a very high clay content to have the orange peel texture show.

CM: When you do use slips, do you use the same clay body you throw with or have you used other clay bodies mixed with the oxides or stains?

JO: I use the same clay body and add the coloring, except with Bill Farrell’s black one and one from Bill Hunt of Ceramic Monthly magazine that’s a brown. They both pick up a nice orange peel texture.

CM: Have you used any slips without stains but with oxides
and carbonates or have all of your slips had stains in them?

JO: All the slips I use have stains in them except the two I mentioned.

CM: You are also involved with fuming. Can you explain what fuming is and tell us how it fits in with your work?

JO: I fume with tin chloride which produces an iridescent quality; it adds little rainbows all over the piece. I think it works with some of the pieces to pick up on this sort of very decorative type fantasy, fancy feeling for some of the elaborate cowboy dress.

CM: So you are using the fuming as an effect that fits with your thing. How do you go about actually fuming the salk kiln?

JO: When I finish salting I take 3 or 4 rows of bricks down from the door and open up the kiln and then fume the kiln anywhere from an hour to three hours after shutting off the kiln, depending on the temperature outside.

CM: What are ideal fuming conditions?

JO: You have to have dull red heat--just a faint glow in the kiln.

CM: What about weather?

JO: Weather doesn't seem to have any affect. It just has to be the right temperature and you have to be very careful and introduce a little tin chloride at a time. If you introduce a lot at once it will cause a whitish
scum on the ware and even spatter the ware and discolor it quite badly. If I were to build another salt kiln, I would put a port down low at the level of the burners and introduce the tin chloride on a rod at that level.

CM: From the fire box or the channel?

JO: It would be into the fire box below the salt port so that the fumes would move up and circulate. Instead, what I am doing presently is introducing it at the top of the kiln and it is difficult sometimes to get the fuming down to the bottom.

CM: So there is no draft during fuming?

JO: There is very little.

CM: If your damper is closed...

JO: The damper is halfway open.

CM: Halfway open...does that serve any purpose?

JO: I think it helps to have a little draft. But there isn't that much in a shut down kiln.

CM: But a little draft does help circulate the tin chloride fumes?

JO: Right.

CM: You are also using low fire lusters over glazes after these salt firings.

JO: I'm picking up the typical metal effects like the snaps on cowboy shirts and gold and silver buckles—anything that is metal on the cowboy outfit I will luster.

CM: What are the things you have learned about throwing
porcelain?

JO: Well, I am able to throw some fairly tall cylinders with about 9 pounds of clay. I can pull up a 15" cylinder. This is something I have been working at because when I first started working I found that I had to section them to get the height I wanted so I have been looking for a body that would stand up, and I have found several things that are necessary. One is that the porcelain has to be thrown very stiff; you should use as little water as possible, and it has to be done quickly. Get it up in 3 pulls and then finish it off. If I play with it at all--leave it on the wheel too long--it starts to slump. I've found some things that help in the clay body. Macaloid is fantastic as a plastacizer, 1% in the clay body does a terrific job in making it plastic and then I can use other materials in the body to make it stronger, like English Grolleg Kaolin. It has a larger particle size and is more of a primary clay than some of the American Kaolins.

CM: You also used Avery kaolin didn't you?

JO: Yes, I found that Avery kaolin worked almost as well but it didn't help as much with the cracking.

CM: So you have found a significant difference between kaolins?

JO: Definitely a significant difference. I've found this
very important in terms of throwing strength and cracking.

CM: When does this cracking take place?

JO: Cracking takes place in the drying. And then I've found that when putting these things together in the building process, the more uniform the wetness of the clay, the better the results. Scoring well, the use of thick slip, and of a lot of pressure are all very important in getting the handbuilt elements to adhere to the thrown form.

CM: How do you go about drying your pieces?

JO: I have found that it is very helpful to do extremely slow drying—taking several days initially to let the piece dry. What I do is put an old sheet over the piece and expose it to the air for a couple of hours and then cover plastic over the sheet. The sheet seems to prevent air currents that might quickly dry out areas that stick out more than others, like handles, decorative stuff. It takes time to learn to handle porcelain. I find it difficult now to work with stoneware because I'm so used to porcelain.

CM: Have you experienced any problems in getting flat forms through the drying stage?

JO: You need slow careful drying and frequent changing of the surfaces that they are resting on. When I work on a wooden table I slide them around so that the surface
they are on is constantly changed so that they don't start to stick. With Grolleg kaolin I've found that all I need is a dry absorbant material under them. I dry them on wood, particle board bats.

CM: Can you talk about your philosophy of work; what are the elements of your work, what are you trying to say. You mentioned that your purpose is different than Marilyn Levine's for instance.

JO: I guess I like to see humor in one's work. It is part of me and I enjoy it. I feel that humor is an important element.

CM: To put that in perspective, are there contemporary potters whose work you relate to?

JO: I've always enjoyed a lot of the funky stuff; I enjoy statements of any kind whether it's a statement that's very abstract or whether it's a direct social comment. I'm not really trying to tell anybody anything in particular though.

CM: Is the product important to you or is what happens to you more important than what happens to the product?

JO: What do you mean, what happens to me in terms of my life... The work is something I enjoy doing. I get a bang out of it. I enjoy people and different characters. I think that there is such a variety of people and characters that surround us, from childhood in story-book characters to movie characters, and I think we
should enjoy the various stereotypes of people that are around us, and appreciate them for their differences and their own individual characteristics. And I guess that is sort of what I'm doing with my work. I keep finding new characters that I can incorporate into these dude pots. Some are very fancy and elegant, some are real rugged looking. They all reflect in a way certain stereotyped personalities that we see in the various media that surround us.

CM: Humor seems to be a central part of your work.

JO: That's what I enjoy about it. With the quilts though, I am now moving in a direction of strong interest in geometric pattern and there is less humor there. It is fun to have something hard like porcelain to eat off of that looks like fabric because we don't think of eating out of fabric plates or drinking out of fabric coffee cups; somehow the idea of a functional piece that imitates something else and becomes disguised thereby is humorous in itself. We have a lot in the dime stores and discount stores that are like that--you see Mickey Mouse cookie jars made in ceramics that are fun for kids but are kind of awful... and I like the idea of picking up on that and doing it well.

CM: Is there any second level of meaning in your work? Is there anything Freudian beneath the level of the dude?

JO: If it's there, it's unintentional. No matter what an
artist produces, a lot of his personality and philosophy and life-style comes out in the objects. In very straight functional ware that has no outwardly direct comment, its style may say a lot about that person. It can be very rigid; it can be spontaneous, etc...

CM: Is style more important than function to you?

JO: Yes, I think so. But if I am going to make something functional I want it to work, and I worked at making these dude pots functional, I could have done otherwise, but I've tried to make handles that work, spouts that will pour, lids that will have flanges so that they will stay on when they are used.

CM: Would you prefer that people actually use them?

JO: I would like to see them used, yes. I would like to eat off of my quilt plates, drink out of my quilted cups... on a quilt bedspread used as a table cloth. I have a lot of ideas on how to involve the quilt idiom that have just gotten started. There is a piece in the show of a plate that represents an applique type quilt. Some of the old quilts showed and reflected the woman's environment. One in particular I saw had each square represent a house or a garden in her town and so I started doing plates that looked like this. I did one of my house, of my dog; I enjoyed doing that.

CM: Where does your work go from here; now that you are ready to move on?
JO: I'll continue to explore the Neriage technique and the quilt patterns and geometric patterns. There is something that brings out the painter in me in the quilt patterns. I used to do a lot of painting, became very interested in geometric, flat, hard-edged painting, and the quilt patterns fascinate me in the same way that those paintings did. I think I'll get more into a design type direction and away from the kind of humor found in the dude pot.
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<tr>
<td>I. &quot;Back Home Again Dude Coffeepot&quot;--Height 19&quot;.</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salt-glazed, thrown colored porcelain with applied decoration. #1 salt liner inside with colored porcelain, gold luster and black decal letters for added decoration.</td>
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<td>II. &quot;Incredible Dude Coffeepot with Coffee Cups&quot;--Height 15&quot;.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salt-glazed, thrown colored porcelain with applied decoration. #1 salt liner inside with silver and mother-of-pearl lusters for added decoration.</td>
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<td>III. &quot;Ranch Hand Dude Coffeepot with Coffee Cups&quot;--Height 15&quot;.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salt-glazed, thrown colored porcelain with applied decoration. #1 salt liner inside with silver and orange lusters and acrylic painted lettering for added decoration.</td>
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<td>IV. &quot;Spanish Dude Coffeepot&quot;--Height 18&quot;.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salt-glazed, thrown stoneware with applied decoration. #2 liner inside with salt slips #1 and #2 and blue, grey and silver lusters for added decoration.</td>
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<td>V. &quot;Dandy Dude Coffeepot&quot;--Height 19&quot;.</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salt-glazed, thrown porcelain with applied decoration in colored porcelain added. #1 salt</td>
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liner inside and gold and silver lusters used for added decoration.

VI. "Parade Marshall Dude Coffeepot"--Height 18". Salt-glazed with fuming, thrown porcelain with applied decoration in colored porcelain added. #1 salt liner inside and gold and silver lusters and decals and rhinestones for added decoration.

VII. "Bandit Dude Coffeepot"--Height 17". Salt-glazed, thrown stoneware with applied decoration. #2 salt liner inside, and #3 salt slip used outside with gold and silver lusters for added decoration.

VIII. "Sheriff Dude Coffeepot with Coffee Cups #1"--Height 17". Thrown, oxidation-fired porcelain with applied decoration. #1 salt glaze liner used inside and outside with gold and silver lusters for added decoration.

IX. "Sheriff Dude Coffeepot with Coffee Cups #2"--Height 17". Salt-glazed thrown stoneware with colored stoneware hand building techniques added. #2 salt glaze liner used inside with gold and silver lusters for added decoration.

X. "Capering Cowboy Dude Coffeepot"--Height 17". Thrown, gas-fired oxidation porcelain with
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applied decoration. #1 salt glaze liner inside and outside with black underglaze, decals, and gold and silver lusters for added decoration.

XI. "Fancy Dude Coffeepot"--Height 19". Thrown, gas-fired oxidation porcelain with applied decoration. #1 salt glaze liner used inside and outside with gold, silver, yellow and mother-of-pearl lusters for added decoration.

XII. "Buckskin Dude Coffeepot"--Height 18". Salt-glazed and fumed, thrown stoneware with applied decoration. #2 salt liner used inside with gold and silver lusters for added decoration.

XIII. "Fancy Dude Coffeepot #2"--Height 19". Salt-glazed thrown colored porcelain with applied decoration. #2 salt liner used inside with gold and silver lusters for added decoration.

XIV. "Teapot with Two Cups"--Height 12". Salt-glazed, thrown porcelain with #1 slip for decoration.

XV. "Casserole"--Height 6". Salt-glazed, thrown porcelain with #1 slip for decoration.

XVI. Coffeepot with Four Cups--Height 8". Salt-
Plate Number

glazed and fumed, thrown porcelain with #1 slip for decoration.

XVII. "Musical Necklace for Someone with Her Head in the Clouds". Hand formed silver with cloissoine, plete du jour, and enameled beads, with musicbox that plays "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head".

XVIII. "Log Cabin Quilted Platter"--15" square. Salt-glazed, inlaid colored porcelain.

XIX. "My House and My Dog Quilt Plate"--12" square. Salt-glazed, inlaid colored porcelain.

XX. "Around the World Quilted Coffeepot"--Height 14". Oxidation fired, colored inlaid porcelain on a thrown form with hand building techniques added. #1 salt glaze liner used inside, no glaze outside.

XXI. "Place Setting for Grandmother's Quilt". Antique Quilt with 4 Plates, 6 Cups and Coffeepot. All salt-glazed, Plates: hand-built of colored, inlaid porcelain, 12". Cups: thrown with handbuilding techniques added, #1 liner inside, 5". Coffeepot: thrown with colored porcelain design added along with hand building techniques. #1 salt glaze liner used inside, 15".
PLATE VI
APPENDIX

Cone 9-10 Clay Bodies

#1 Porcelain Body

Grolleg Kaolin 45
#7 Tenn. Ball Clay 15
Flint 15
Kona F-4 Feldspar 15
Nepheline Syenite 10
Macaloid 1

#2 Light Salt Stoneware (Barbara Tipton)

Fireclay 40
Gold Art Clay 40
Kingman Feldspar 10
Flint 10

Cone 9-10 Glazes Used as Salt Liners

#1 Clear Porcelain (Dixie Worchester)

Gerstley Borate 6.12
Cornwall Stone 45.2
Dolomite 9.64
Georgia Kaolin 19.65
Flint 9.64
Whiting 9.82

#2 3-D Bird Matt

Nepheline Syenite 63.60
Dolomite 21.20
#7 Tenn. Ball Clay 4.24
Bentonite 2.54
Opax-S 8.43

Cone 9-10 Salt Glaze Slips

#1 Farrell Black Salt Slip

Albany Slip 65
Chrome Oxide 8
Cobalt Oxide 4
Tennessee Ball Clay 23
#2 Bringle White Salt Slip

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#3 Brown Slip for Salt (Bill Hunt)

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


