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AN EXHIBITION OF POTTERY IN SUPPORT
OF THREE PROCESSES IN CERAMICS.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1964
Fine Arts

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AN EXHIBITION OF POTTERY IN SUPPORT OF THREE PROCESSES IN CERAMICS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1964

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PREFACE

It is my fundamental intention in the written section of this dissertation to demonstrate the primary characteristics that distinguish folk pottery from palace ware, i.e., those works of ceramic art that are prized for their decorative and artistic virtues rather than for their functional excellence. It will be pointed out that regardless of geographic location, it is the palace-ware tradition that establishes a national style in pottery and the one which is directly related to all the other arts within any given period. Once this principle is understood, it becomes important to trace the development of the artist-potter in the United States and to delineate the accompanying change in attitude toward craftsmanship that has shaped the contemporary vision in ceramics.

The exhibition section, which constitutes the major portion of the dissertation, demonstrates my own concerns in ceramics within the present artistic scene. These concerns are identified with three processes in working with ceramic materials. This section includes an explanation of these procedures, with accompanying photographs illustrating the actual working processes, and with additional photographs designed to show my experiments with these particular processes.
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Studies in Education. Professors Hullfish and Kircher
CATALOGUE OF PIECES PRESENTED IN THE EXHIBITION

1. BOTTLE

Stoneware. Height 14 in.; diameter 9 in.

PLATE XVI, page 57. One-slab construction with pressed clay decal; corncob texture; Glaze Ib rubbed into corncob pits and remaining body glazed with Glaze Ia; Clay I.

2. BRANCH BOTTLE

Stoneware. Height 19 in.; diameter 8 in.

PLATE XVII, page 58. One-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

3. BOTTLE

Stoneware. Height 7 in.; diameter 22 in.

PLATE XVIII, page 59. One-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

4. BOTTLE

Stoneware. Height 11 in.; diameter 8 in.

PLATE XIX, page 60. One-slab construction; corncob texture; Glaze Ib rubbed into corncob pits and remaining body glazed with Glaze Ia; Clay I.

5. BOTTLE

Stoneware. Height 17 in.; diameter 14 in.

PLATE XX, page 61. One-slab construction; corncob texture; Glaze Ib rubbed into corncob pits and remaining body glazed with Glaze Ia; Clay I.

6. BOTTLE

Stoneware. Height 23 in.; diameter 9 in.

PLATE XXI, page 62. One-slab construction; corncob texture; Glaze Ib rubbed into corncob pits and remaining body glazed with Glaze Ia; Clay I.
7. JAR
Stoneware. Height 18 in.; diameter 9 in.
PLATE XXII, page 63. One-slab construction; corncob texture; Glaze Ibb rubbed into corncob pits and remaining body glazed with Glaze Ia; Clay I.

8. SUN POT
Stoneware. Height 26 in.; diameter 16 in.
PLATE XXIII, page 64. One-slab construction; Glaze III poured over the surface; Clay I.

9. JAR
Stoneware. Height 10 in.; diameter 10 in.
PLATE XXIV, page 65. One-slab construction; Glaze IV poured over the surface; Clay I.

10. BRANCH POT
Stoneware. Height 27 in.; diameter 8 in.
PLATE XXV, page 66. One-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

11. BOTTLE
Stoneware. Height 11 in.; diameter 6 in.
PLATE XXVI, page 67. One-slab construction; Glaze IIa; Clay I.

12. FLAT BOTTLE
Stoneware. Height 8 in.; diameter 13 in.
PLATE XXVII, page 68. One-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

13. BOTTLE
Stoneware. Height 26 in.; diameter 8 in.
PLATE XXVIII, page 69. One-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.
14. BRANCH POT
Stoneware. Height 28 in.; diameter 8 in.

PLATE XXIX, page 70. One-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

15. BOTTLE
Stoneware. Height 7 in.; diameter 7 in.

PLATE XXX, page 71. One-slab construction; Glaze Ib rubbed into corncob pits and remaining body glazed with Glaze Ia; Clay I.

16. BRANCH BOTTLE
Stoneware. Height 12 in.; diameter 8 in.

PLATE XLVIII, page 107. Multi-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

17. PLANTER
Stoneware. Height 12 in.; diameter 18 in.

PLATE XLIX, page 108. Multi-slab construction; corncob texture; Glaze Ib rubbed into corncob pits and remaining body glazed with Glaze Ia; Clay I.

18. BRANCH BOTTLE
Stoneware. Height 12 in.; diameter 17 in.

PLATE L, page 109. Multi-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

19. PLATE
Stoneware. Height 2 in.; diameter 9 in.

PLATE LI, page 110. Multi-slab construction; Glaze Ia and Ib poured over the surface; Clay I.

20. PLANTER
Stoneware. Height 13 in.; diameter 12 in.

PLATE LII, page 111. Multi-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.
21. BOTTLE
Stoneware. Height 15 in.; diameter 8 in.

PLATE LIII, page 112. Multi-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

22. BRANCH POT
Stoneware. Height 7 in.; diameter 15 in.

PLATE LIV, page 113. Multi-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

23. MULTI-SECTIONED PLANTER
Stoneware. Height 8 in.; diameter 18 in.

PLATE LV, page 114. Multi-slab construction; corncob texture; Glaze Ib rubbed into corncob pits and remaining body glazed with Glaze Ia; Clay I.

24. BOTTLE
Stoneware. Height 25 in.; diameter 11 in.

PLATE LVI, page 115. Multi-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

25. PLATE
Stoneware. Height 3 in.; diameter 18 in.

PLATE LVII, page 116. Multi-slab construction; Glaze Ia poured over the surface; Clay I.

26. BRANCH POT
Stoneware. Height 12 in.; diameter 18 in.

PLATE LVIII, page 117. Multi-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

27. BOTTLE
Stoneware. Height 18 in.; diameter 6 in.

PLATE LIX, page 118. Multi-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.
28. MULTI-SECTIONED PLANTER
Stoneware. Height 13 in.; diameter 18 in.
PLATE LX, page 119. Multi-slab construction; corncob texture; Glaze III rubbed into corncob pits and remaining body unglazed; Clay I.

29. BRANCH POT
Stoneware. Height 15 in.; diameter 13 in.
PLATE LXI, page 120. Multi-slab construction; Glaze IIa,b,c poured over the surface; Clay I.

30. JAR
Stoneware and Porcelain. Height 10 in.; diameter 12 in.
PLATE LXXV, page 148. Tear and repair construction; Glaze V poured over the surface; Clay I and II.

31. JAR
Stoneware. Height 18 in.; diameter 12 in.
PLATE LXXVI, page 149. Tear and repair construction; Glaze V and Glaze VI poured over the surface; Clay I.

32. VASE
Stoneware. Height 28 in.; diameter 14 in.
PLATE LXXVII, page 150. Tear and repair construction; corncob texture; Glaze III rubbed into corncob pits and remaining body unglazed; Clay I.

33. BOTTLE
Stoneware. Height 12 in.; diameter 12 in.
PLATE LXXVIII, page 151. Tear and repair construction; Glaze V and Glaze VI poured over the surface; Clay I.

34. JAR
Stoneware. Height 13 in.; diameter 11 in.
PLATE LXXIX, page 152. Tear and repair construction; Glaze V and Glaze IIb poured over the surface; Clay I.
35. JAR
Stoneware and Porcelain. Height 11 in.; diameter 9 in.
PLATE LXXX, page 153. Tear and repair construction; Glaze V poured over the surface; Clay I and II.

36. JAR
Stoneware. Height 14 in.; diameter 9 in.
PLATE LXXXI, page 154. Tear and repair construction; Glaze V poured over top of pot and remaining part left unglazed; clay I.

37. VASE
Stoneware. Height 11 in.; diameter 9 in.
PLATE LXXXII, page 155. Tear and repair construction with decal added; Glaze VI poured over the surface; Clay I.

38. VASE
Stoneware and Porcelain. Height 6 in.; diameter 3 in.
PLATE LXXXIII, page 156. Tear and repair construction; Glaze V poured over the surface; Clay I and II.

39. BOWL
Porcelain. Height 4 in.; diameter 8 in.
PLATE LXXXIV, page 157. Tear and repair construction; Glaze VII; Clay II.

40. VASE
Porcelain. Height 10 in.; diameter 5 in.
PLATE LXXXV, page 158. Tear and repair construction; Glaze VII; Clay II.

41. VASE
Porcelain. Height 8 in.; diameter 3 in.
PLATE LXXXVI, page 159. Tear and repair construction; Glaze VII; Clay II.
42. FOOTED BOWL

Stoneware. Height 11 in.; diameter 9 in.

PLATE LXXXVII, page 160. Tear and repair construction; Glaze III on bowl interior and remaining pot unglazed; Clay I.

43. BOWL

Stoneware and Porcelain. Height 4 in.; diameter 10 in.

PLATE LXXXVIII, page 161. Tear and repair construction; Glaze VIII on bowl interior and remaining pot unglazed; Clay I and II.

44. VASE

Stoneware. Height 31 in.; diameter 14 in.

PLATE LXXXIX, page 162. Tear and repair construction; corncob texture; Glaze III rubbed into corncob pits and remaining parts left unglazed; Clay I.

45. BOTTLE

Stoneware. Height 24 in.; diameter 12 in.

PLATE XC, page 163. Tear and repair construction; corncob texture; Glaze III rubbed into corncob pits and remaining parts left unglazed; Clay I.

46. VASE

Stoneware. Height 34 in.; diameter 18 in.

PLATE XCI, page 164. Tear and repair construction; corncob texture; Glaze III rubbed into corncob pits and remaining parts left unglazed; Clay I.

47. FOOTED BOWL

Stoneware and Porcelain. Height 8 in.; diameter 12 in.

PLATE XCII, page 165. Tear and repair construction; corncob texture; Glaze III rubbed into corncob pits on exterior and Glaze VIII on bowl interior; Clay I and II.

48. VASE

Stoneware. Height 24 in.; diameter 18 in.

PLATE XCIII, page 166. Tear and repair construction; corncob texture; Glaze III rubbed into corncob pits and remaining parts left unglazed; Clay I.
49. VASE

Porcelain. Height 8 in.; diameter 4 in.

PLATE XCIV, page 167. Tear and repair construction; Glaze VIII poured over the surface; Clay II.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Processes in Ceramics</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Slab Construction</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Slab Construction</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tear and Repair construction</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE PAGE

I. The clay is rolled out flat on plaster. 27
II. The corncob is rolled into the clay. 29
III. The clay is dried until it is stiff. 31
IV. One edge of the outside surface is. 33
V. The clay slab is paddled at the seam. 35
VI. The clay cylinder is attached to a. 37
VII. The top of the clay slab is forced. 39
VIII. The paddling continues until the. 41
IX. A lip is formed by joining together. 43
X. The lip is brought to its final. 45
XI. The center of the lip is added. 47
XII. The lip is added to the basic clay. 49
XIII. The primary form is now complete. 51
XIV. A series of lines are deeply incised. 53
XV. The completed bottle prior to bisque. 55
XVI. BOTTLE 57
XVII. BRANCH BOTTLE 58
XVIII. BOTTLE 59
XIX. BOTTLE 60
XX BOTTLE 61
XXI. BOTTLE 62
XXII. JAR 63
XXIII. SUN POT 64

xiii
PLATE

XLVIII. BRANCH BOTTLE

XLIX. PLANTER

L. BRANCH BOTTLE

LI. PLATE

LII. PLANTER

LIII. BOTTLE

LIV. BRANCH POT

LV. MULTI-SECTIONED PLANTER

LVI. BOTTLE

LVII. PLATE

LVIII. BRANCH POT

LIX. BOTTLE

LXI. MULTI-SECTIONED PLANTER

LX. BRANCH POT

LXI. A cylindrical form is thrown on the. . . . . . . . . . 122

LXII. The primary thrown form is cut with. . . . . . . . . . 124

LXIII. The primary form is pulled open in. . . . . . . . . . . 126

LXIV. A total of three cuts are made with. . . . . . . . . . 128

LXV. A thin slab of clay is rolled out on. . . . . . . . . . . 130

LXVI. The repair section is in the process. . . . . . . . . . 132

LXVII. The repair section is added to the. . . . . . . . . . . 134

LXVIII. The repair section is forced against. . . . . . . . . 136

LXIX. The primary form is now complete. . . . . . . . . . . 138

LXX. A clay section is rolled out for. . . . . . . . . . . . . 140

LXXI. The collar is curved in preparation. . . . . . . . . . . 142

LXXII. The collar is added to the primary. . . . . . . . . . . 144
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLATE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LXXIV.</td>
<td>The completed pot with repaired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXV.</td>
<td>JAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXVI.</td>
<td>JAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXVII.</td>
<td>VASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXVIII.</td>
<td>BOTTLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXIX.</td>
<td>JAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXX.</td>
<td>JAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXXI.</td>
<td>JAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXXII.</td>
<td>VASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXXIII.</td>
<td>VASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXXIV.</td>
<td>BOWL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXXV.</td>
<td>VASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXXVI.</td>
<td>VASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXXVII.</td>
<td>FOOTED BOWL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXXVIII.</td>
<td>BOWL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXXXIX.</td>
<td>VASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XC.</td>
<td>BOTTLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XCI.</td>
<td>VASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XCII.</td>
<td>FOOTED BOWL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XCIII.</td>
<td>VASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XCIV.</td>
<td>VASE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Throughout the long history of ceramic art, from the very earliest times until the present day, there have existed two distinct kinds or categories of works exemplary of the potter's art: folk pottery and palace ware. The first of these - folk pottery - has always had a decidedly international flavor that has transcended classifications based on purely national or geographical considerations. This quality has derived from the folk potter's concern for the use to which his wares are put, for the everyday utilitarian purpose that they serve. Since the function of the storage vessels, cooking utensils, pitchers, drinking cups, and plates that are the products of the folk potter's art has been their maker's vital concern, these wares have exhibited a remarkable constancy - a persistent series of similarities, with only a minimal number of differences. In addition, the application of the principle that aesthetic and utilitarian values are inseparable has given to the wares of the folk potter a vitality and charm that seem born of their functional intent, and has produced a steady flow of strong and sturdy functional forms.

Since function is the primary import of his wares, expediency of production is the primary concern of the folk potter. Considerations of time, energy, and economy place very definite restrictions on his production, and, as a result, his technical dexterity has been applied to the production of forms manifesting an absence of self-conscious effects - forms that, at their best, exhibit the fine plastic qualities of clay. Without wasted motion and with seemingly effortless ease, the folk potter has articulated forms quickly and precisely.
Limited as he is by the functions his work must serve, the folk potter is denied a certain amount of freedom. His work does not express great individuality but possesses instead a general air of anonymity. However, the limitation on his wares imposed by their functions need not restrict the inventiveness of the folk potter. If we examine the multitude of pitchers produced throughout history, for example, we see that although each observes certain necessary functional requirements common to all, there is no one pitcher form, but a wide variety of forms. Function accounts for the directional force of the potter's wares, but the forms in which he chooses to embody the functional requirements he serves are limited only by his own creative powers. The folk potter must know his medium well, and must, as a craftsman, know the possibilities and the limitations of his material. There is no place in his art for the cup that does not hold liquid or the pitcher that does not pour; his success depends upon his knowledge of the maximum working potential of the tools of pottery. It is, then, the degree to which he implements function, understands the limitations of his material, and realizes the forms suggested by his ingenuity that determine the value of the folk potter's work.

Clarity of purpose and simplicity of means are the qualities of folk pottery, and they constitute the basis of our understanding and appreciation of it. So simple is the approach of the folk potter that appreciation of it demands concentration on the part of the observer and necessitates his judging the work's importance in a rediscovery of the process by which it was produced. It is our understanding of the superb skill with which his wares are produced and the ingenuity by
which his forms are evolved, combined with an awareness of his deep feeling for the dignity of clay, that enable us to define the folk potter's art and to realize the basic active force in folk pottery: that every movement is vitally controlled and performed with the greatest efficiency and economy of skill and thought. It is this same realization of process as an active tool on the part of the artist-potter that enables him to break with the very conventions that dominate folk pottery and to eschew the false security that these conventions can provide. Instead of reverting to the complacency of working within a folk-pottery tradition, the artist-potter can realize, on a personal level, the full potential and immediacy of process in ceramics.

In the past, the folk potter knew his place in society. His social position was assured by the constant demand for the implements required by daily living. He realized that as a purveyor of necessary goods, he was not expendable, and he enjoyed, from this realization, a sense of having a place in the social structure. Indeed, though he may never have thought of himself as an artist, his self-esteem derived from his awareness that as a fabricator of useful and necessary items, his role in society was constant, and this awareness brought him prestige and gave integrity to his work.

The continuing tradition of folk pottery has been considerably disrupted and changed in our time by the development of machine-made ceramic products. The richness and variety of mass-produced ceramic wares, which permeate all aspects of our daily lives, is impressive, but even in their variety, they offer little that speaks of personality or individuality. Modern manufacturing methods do not permit the
possibility of inspired purpose on the part of factory workers, whose jobs involve the performance of repetitive, routine operations requiring little thought. In a sense, the employees of modern ceramic plants are themselves machines, and in time they will be replaced by other machines, as mechnaization becomes more complex, complete, and efficient.

The industrial designer of pottery for mass production places primary emphasis on a highly calculated and meticulously pre-planned and ordered set of forms. The utilitarian ware produced to his specifications may seem cold and impersonal, but it is technically excellent and attests to the successful realization of the potentialities of clay when used in objects produced by the machine. Although mass-produced ceramic ware shares with folk pottery a concern for the production of large quantities of utilitarian objects at low cost and an interest in solving practical problems in the most economical way possible, the coming of the machine age and the growth of the ceramics industry has literally precluded the folk potter's performing an active or significant role in society. Thus, it can be stated that the folk pottery tradition, handmade or machine produced, is emiently practical, with its primary concern aimed toward the production of utilitarian objects for daily use.

While a general constancy of form, a similarity in technique and an absence of unexpected changes or strong individual traits have characterized folk pottery, palace ware has exhibited the strong sense of personal style that folk pottery has lacked. One characteristic, then, clearly distinguishing palace ware from folk art is the important
stylistic changes that have been evidenced by works in this category.

It may be said, indeed, that palace pottery exemplifies the style - the national character or the artistic direction - of a nation, and that the ware demonstrates

a system of forms with a quality and meaningful expression through which the personality of the artist and the broad outlook of a group are visible. The style is a manifestation of the culture as a whole, the visible sign of its unity. The style reflects or projects the "inner form" of collective thinking and feeling. What is important here is not the style of an individual or a single art, but forms and qualities shared by all the arts of a culture during a significant span of time.¹

It may be said, then, that the differences which exist among the various styles found in ceramic products may be understood on the basis of an evaluation of three factors: the form of the ware, the technical concerns of the potter, and the processes involved in the handling of the medium.

The stylistic singularities found in the palace ware of any given period are similar to those peculiar to other works of art produced at the same time in that area and national setting. Greek pottery of the fifth century B.C., for example, exemplifies the same rational approach to life and art found in other works of the period: forms are meticulously refined and exhibit a well-articulated contour based on a system in which each part has a precise mathematical relationship to the whole, manifest no evidence of manual manipulation, and are utterly devoid of expressionism. At the opposite extreme, pottery of the Rococo has a highly ornamented surface and a complex silhouette, and

reveals the virtuosity in the manipulation of porcelain that was the potter's primary concern. This interest in curvilinear, changing surfaces and highly decorated forms dominated both Rococo architecture and the other arts of the period. These structural or decorative changes express a style consciousness in ceramics and are clearly indicative of the artistic direction of the entire culture.

This approach to ceramics, based on a consideration of its stylistic features, considerably reduces arguments involving degenerate forms in pottery which must conform to a restricted set of criteria for excellence derived from preconceived ideas of "perfect" craftsmanship. The only real values involve the basic criteria for judging any art product: size, shape, position, and color and these elements expressed as a total organization. Thus, the only possible element indicative of degenerate quality in ceramics is a lack of technical facility in the manipulation of clay, since the quality of ceramic forms, their strength or weakness, depends entirely on the harmony of the proportions employed by the artist.

The absence of any regimentation imposed by function, and the shift to individual freedom of expression, accounts for another characteristic distinguishing folk pottery from palace ware. Quite clearly, palace ware is not limited by the considerations of function that figure so prominently in the work of the folk potter. Indeed, works belonging to this second category are frequently far beyond the needs or concerns of practical necessity. The emphasis is rather on the creation of objects of luxury, commissioned cabinet pieces to be admired in and of themselves, or of religious and ceremonial ware. Such works exhibit the joy of accomplishment in producing an object embodying the
wonder and pride of an individual engaged in a conscious search for aesthetic truths and in an effort to produce a work exemplifying originality and uniqueness.

The role of the artist-craftsman in society is considerably different from that of the folk potter. In the past, the artist-potter was intimately associated with the life of the court surrounding a monarch or great noble, or with rich merchants or other men of means. Unlike his predecessors, the modern artist-potter enjoys no such privileged position, for today the majority of artist-craftsmen work as teachers; his aim, however, is the same as the creators of palace ware in other centuries - to produce unique pieces. Thus, the artist-potter must rely upon his own ingenuity in capturing the interest of the public, for unlike the folk potter, he is denied the security provided by service to a practical need. He must experiment in order to give his work the individuality that is the quality most respected in the work of the artist-potter.

Because of the growth in the mass production of ceramic products in the modern world and the consequent elimination of the need for the wares of the folk potter, a type of artist-potter working in the tradition of palace ware has gradually developed in the United States. In the beginning the number of American artist-potters was extremely small, and because of their heavy reliance on European and oriental models, their work gave no evidence of a national style. Indeed, it was not until after the Second World War that a style that could be recognized as distinctly American actually emerged. In order to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to investigate the change that the conception of the potter has undergone from that of the itinerant folk
craftsman serving the practical need for utensils by his fellows, to that of the modern artist-potter seeking an audience for his work through the individuality of his wares. This change in conception has been accompanied by dramatic changes in the attitude toward "perfect" craftsmanship, and represents a break in previously established and rigid rules governing the use of ceramic materials that has forced new ideas on, and a new life into, ceramics that have resulted in the establishment of a definite national style in American pottery.

During the colonial period in American history, itinerant folk potters producing utilitarian ware worked in the tradition of simple functional forms and in a spirit of directness, simplicity, and anonymity that, we have seen, characterizes the work of these craftsmen. Their work represented the noble characteristics of a pioneer people who, without resorting to tricks or clever techniques, made use of clay in bringing their life and their times into harmony.

In the nineteenth century, however, a much larger population brought with it an increased need for ceramic wares - a need that was met by a growth in the number of small ceramic factories, and by increased importation of ceramic products from Europe. The products of the new factories established in the East, the South, and the Midwest were of good quality, but they slavishly imitated the styles of European imports. Generally speaking, during these early years there were very few artist-potters working independently who had complete knowledge of all the processes involved in the production of ceramic wares.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, one group of potters constituted an exception to this prevailing condition. These
were the "china-painters" - a term that will immediately evoke a vision of genteel ladies dedicated to the leisurely application of roses to plates and teacups. Superficial as this activity may seem, it was, curiously enough, in this very group that some conception of the artist-potter began to emerge. Some insight into this development is provided by the magazine *Keramic Studio*, published from 1899 through 1924 under the skillful direction of Adelaide Robineau, herself one of the important studio potters of the early twentieth century. In one of the early issues of the magazine, Mrs. Robineau wrote:

> While we are thinking and planning for the fall exhibitions, it would be well to keep in mind, for the advancement of our standing in art, as well as in keramic manipulation that to make a reputation worthwhile we must do original and individual designing. We must not sing the changes on a motif supplied by other artists or other nations, but find some inspiration near at home in our own times, our own country, our own minds.²

This realization of the need for American potters to design their works entirely and to acquire knowledge of all phases of the processes involved in the production of ceramic wares resulted in part from the decision of the jury responsible for the awarding of the prizes at the Paris Exposition of 1900. Although American artists competing in the Exposition received awards in a number of areas, very little recognition was given to American entries in the field of ceramics. The jury felt that decorative work merely applied to foreign or domestic ware was not eligible for consideration since the ware itself was not the work of the decorator. According to the jury, "to decorate a piece

²(Adelaide Robineau), Editorial, *Keramic Studio*, II, No. 4 (August, 1900), 73.
of ware made by another is almost a crime."\(^3\)

This decision did much to provoke American potters to a re-evaluation of their craft. Their interest in learning more about the actual production of ceramic ware was awakened, and many began to attend classes at Newcomb College and Alfred University where attention was shifted from china-painting to instruction in the basic techniques of production. American potters had finally come to realize that they had been wholly absorbed in decoration, while little attention had been paid to the potter’s craft. In the estimation of an artist-potter, one is not a keramist who has no knowledge of clay bodies and glazes, and who cannot design, mould, and fire his ware as well as decorate it.\(^4\)

*Keramic Studio* continued to devote considerable space to china-painting, but it also introduced a series of articles on ceramic processes by Charles Binns, who was head of the ceramic department at Alfred University. In this series, Binns had as his aim" to endeavor to show how the embryo potter may give expression to the thought that lies dormant within."\(^5\) His articles indicate a concern for clay and offered practical instruction in its manipulation and in the glazing and firing of pieces in the studio. Gradually, this interest in fundamental instruction in the practical craft of the ceramist expanded to other schools, along with an increased interest in form. During these early years of the twentieth century, the number of individual artist-

\(^3\)Ibid., II, No. 8 (December, 1900), 161.

\(^4\)Marshal Fry, "The Value of Exhibitions," *Keramic Studio*, III, No. 4 (August, 1901), 73.

potters in the United States was exceedingly small - but a beginning
had been made toward establishing an artist-potter direction in
America.

During the years that followed, the strong leadership provided by
Charles Binns, Adelaide Robineau, and their students resulted in a
gradual and continual increase in the number of studio potters, and in
an improvement in the quality of their wares, which begin to achieve
new dimensions in forms that were totally conceived and executed by
the individual potter. The ceramist had moved far beyond "the china
decorators of twenty-five years ago, who were nothing but paint daub­
ers, splashing roses or forget-me-nots on a plate or a vase, without
the slightest knowledge of the laws of design." Although during this
period potters tended to be greatly influenced by past styles, particu­
larly the pottery of the Sung Dynasty in China, the artist-craftsman
did show a marked tendency to absorb and assimilate the various stimu­
li furnished by historic ceramic forms. The ceramic wares of the
period evidenced a few strong individual styles, but interest in in­
dividual style was not sufficient enough to produce any definite
national style.

The artist-potter tradition gained considerable impetus during
the period from 1930 to the end of the Second World War, particularly
from the growth in the number of university ceramic departments train­
ing teachers who went on to form new departments at still other uni­
versities. Another important development was the increasing number of

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6(Adelaide Robineau), Editorial, Keramic Studio, XXXIII, No. 1 (May, 1921), 1.
pottery exhibitions, both on a regional and national level. These exhibitions provided a means for potters to show their wares and helped to bring the ceramic arts to the attention of the public. The Fifth National Ceramic Exhibition in 1936, sponsored by the Syracuse Museum, gives a good indication of the direction of the development. At this mid-point in the twentieth-century growth of the potter-artisan tradition, over two hundred and fifty pieces were selected by artists from twenty-six states. The jury statement declared that "American ceramics has come of age. The jury was tremendously impressed by the high level of achievement and by the variety and quality." The pottery from this exhibition does, indeed, demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the ceramic process, which it expresses in a series of simple forms that are appropriately decorated, though the wares are still reminiscent of historical forms. Perhaps one of the reasons for this reference to the past is that the potters producing these pieces seemed most interested in maintaining high standards of refinement, exacting control on the wheel, and functional utility in forms that had clarity and decisiveness but which lacked any serious imaginative probing.

The 1930's and early 1940's was a period of intense experimentation in glaze technology. This interest was centered around serious attempts at reviving the full range of Chinese glazes, and frequently, Chinese forms were adopted to display the "new" glazes. In many cases, the form became only a surface on which to present the glazes, and the examples from this period demonstrate the unfortunate consequences of the potter's becoming overwhelmed by his own technical dex-

terity. However, while technical knowledge can provide the ceramist with solutions to a wide variety of problems occurring within the ceramic process and certainly affords him flexibility, in that it offers choices from among a number of possibilities, this same technical knowledge can become a detriment when the potter becomes too enamoured of his glazes as a source of delight in and of themselves rather than as a means toward a total unity. Much of the fault of the ware produced during this period lies in the short-sightedness of the practicing studio-potters in this respect.

The search for new means of expressing technical facility dominated the concerns of the artist-potter during the years following the Second World War. This period witnessed marked expansion of activity on both the university and the public-school levels, where "pottery became recognized as a valid addition to fine arts, design, and art training curricula." This new group of artist-potters gradually drew close to the other arts in America, and came to share with other artists a desire for a less conventional approach. Throughout the history of ceramics, particularly during its most progressive periods, the craftsmen have always been closely associated with the other arts - painting, sculpture, and architecture - fields that provided them with necessary stimuli and inspiration. Having acquired complete control of the technology of ceramic processes, the artist-potter began his own search to envision pottery exemplifying a contemporary approach to the medium.

The dominating style in American art since the Second World War has been expressionism, and ceramics is no exception. Spurred on by the

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California potter Peter Voulkos, the character of American ceramics has undergone a sharp change in direction since 1955. In the large number of recent pottery exhibitions throughout the United States, it has been evident that the concern with the expressive possibilities of clay has become the major element in experimentation.

There are, of course, numerous potters who continue to work in classical, oriental, or folk-potter traditions, and it is not surprising to find this type of diversity within a culture which has placed so much emphasis on individuality and freedom of choice; but the unity of the group is reflected within the dominating style. One might question the importance and integrity of those potters who rely on the past; particularly those whose wares show sentimental longings for traditional forms, but indicate no vital validity in their eclecticism. This is not to say, certainly, that novelty is to be equated with vigor, or that everyone must be identified with one style. But it is impossible to negate the active forces within a culture, for the living force of a nation is revealed in its style. The alert potter will be able to distil the essentials from his environment and to give his wares a sense of immediacy without resorting to nostalgic references to yesterday’s successes. He must free himself of the heavy undergrowth of the past, until his forms are vibrant and imaginatively alive. The present years invite a reaffirmation of Clive Bell’s cry:

We all agree that any form in which an artist can express himself is legitimate and the more sensitive perceive that there are things worth expressing that could never have been expressed in traditional forms.9

The concern with the expressive possibilities of pottery has become the major determinant of style in American ceramics. Naturally, there have been attempts to show direct relationships between our pottery and that of other countries; but although American pottery may owe certain debts to other styles, it is stylistically unique and exemplifies those qualities of self-consciousness, individuality of expression, non-traditionalism, and material concerns which are so distinctive of present-day America. These are the very same characteristics which numerous critics abhor and eagerly acknowledge as absent in folk pottery.

Many critics have tried to impose traditional criteria on the wares of the American artist-potter. Bernard Leach, for example, has said:

I cannot get away from the impression that much of the work which I saw lacked the virtue of restraint and the support of tradition, and that an over-self-conscious desire to be in vogue and at the same time "different" ruined it. . . . It was still too soon to look for mature American expression through crafts, simply because crafts as we regard them historically are a slow flowering of the sense of fitness and beauty in the normal background of life.10

It is true that tradition in American crafts is of extremely short duration, but this is only natural in a new country lacking the long and continuous history of Europe and the Far East. The process by which the artist-potter learns his craft in America is quite different from that of the folk tradition where processes and procedures are passed from generation to generation within the same family or

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group. Our craftsmen learn technique in universities or art schools; but even without benefit of an historic tradition, they have achieved the same technical proficiency as the folk-potter. Essentially, then, the difference lies in the resultant product, for tradition in itself does not necessarily produce quality products in either folk pottery or palace ware. It is what the artist does with tradition or traditional skills in articulating a personal statement that is significant.

Functional criteria alone cannot be used to judge present trends in ceramics, for in many cases there has been a complete break with function, and many modern pieces may be classified as sculpture rather than pottery. This blurring of the traditional boundary lines between the arts has occurred as well in other media in the twentieth century, and one can find numerous instances of paintings that contain strong sculptural elements, and of architecture which is highly sculpturesque. In pottery, however, when all reference to function ceases the work becomes sculpture; so, the real challenge to the potter is the pursuit of the expressive possibilities of clay within the framework of function.

Contemporary American ceramics represent a break with the past and an increased emphasis on individuality in a search for forms which manifest total involvement in the working processes of ceramics. This concern with process has had its strongest expression in America in abstract-expressionistic painting, where complete freedom in handling the medium has dominated the artist's concern. The impact of the "action" painters since the Second World War has gradually manifested itself in other media, and since the mid-fifties has been the strongest
force in experimental ceramics. The pottery that has resulted has lost its references to the past, and its forms have evidenced little concern with the classic proportions of Greece or the subtlety of Chinese wares, but rather with the manipulation of clay in a statement of the basic fundamental processes of ceramics. In the past, the potter has often lost himself in the unlimited possibilities of surface embellishment or has become embroiled in the performance of dazzling technical feats; the result of such endeavors has been to sacrifice the basic property of clay for a display of virtuosity.

The contemporary American pottery finds its expression in exploring the primacy of form through process in its most concise presentation. It is characterized by a concern for the plasticity of clay - an expression of clay as clay - and the freedom of the act which comes from within the creator. It represents a vital and direct interaction between the medium and the artist who is working toward a realization of the full potential of the inherent qualities of the material in its rawest state.

The forms which result from this interaction quite definitely and naturally depart from tradition as well as from those often banal patterns which we have permitted the machine to force upon us. It is not to be expected that they have been readily comprehended or readily accepted, for they represent a direct, intimate, and immediate concern with giving a new life to one of the oldest arts in history. In 1957, Peter Voulkos made the following observation after serving as a juror for the Fifth Annual Miami National Ceramic Exhibition:

At first, brand new ideas and concepts often appear ugly, and only by thought and conscious effort to
try to understand do they suddenly begin to make sense. From my jurying experiences, I have come to the conclusion that most handicraft objects are made according to narrow sets of rules. There are too many rules. . . .

The growth in numbers of individual studio-potters in America and the elevation of the act of expressive manipulation of clay has been accompanied by an equal concentration on breaking away from preconceived ideas of "perfect" craftsmanship. The academic approach to pottery has centered around an interest in a clearly defined lyrical contour and an emphasis on the refinement or smoothness of the surface finish. Great admiration is accorded the subtle quality of the glaze which appropriately "fits" the clay body without evidence of crazing imperfections, and consideration is given to the weight and wall-thickness as important factors in the total realization of the finished product. Generally speaking, these are values which derive from an idea of "flawlessness" or "perfection" in the use of the ceramic processes. As criteria for judging craftsmanship, they can no longer serve the contemporary expressionistic vision, for they are too narrowly conceived to embrace the conscious concerns for spontaneity in working with ceramic materials that makes the act of creation itself significant, and enables the potter to feel free to make a total commitment to the very act of potting without feeling restrained by tradition. The limitations of working within a narrow set of rules

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are well expressed in the following statement by the California potter-sculptor John Mason:

The currently popular mechanistic concept of craftsmanship is a truly alarming concept that is indicative of the influence of our industrial age. This concept has been furthered by teachers looking for a simple ABC way of teaching crafts. It has been passed on from teacher to student not as a concept but as a set of rules and postulates that make it possible for anyone to be a fine craftsman. But there the line is drawn, fine craftsman - not artist. Craftsmanship separated from art and regulated by rules and postulates can only occur in a crystallized art structure, resulting in the refinement of established form at the expense of vitality and new expression. It should be obvious that craftsmanship and art are part of the same parcel. Craftsmanship is the technical and aesthetic structure of an art form. It follows naturally that craftsmanship must change with each new search for form.¹²

The expressive movement in ceramics seeks a total freedom from a technique-conscious culture, but it does not propose a total rejection of craft. It favors instead an emphasis on technique and materials that allows the materials themselves to become the expressive agent. The craftsman maintains his respect for skill, but he enlarges his concept of craftsmanship by supplying himself with a series of techniques to meet his new conceptual needs, repudiating any technique or mechanical device which might encroach upon his freedom of action. He attempts to maintain a spontaneous purposefulness in working with clay so that his wares represent a continuity between the potter and his work.

This change in attitudes toward craftsmanship has manifested it-

self in all phases of the working processes in ceramics: materials, form, and glazing. Form, as we have seen, has undergone a singular change in expressive pottery, where the potter gives validity to the spontaneous creative event of the working process and emphasizes distorted and asymmetric forms rather than the fineness of the symmetric classic profile. Forms are shaped rapidly on the potter's wheel or through handbuilding procedures, and the potter then distorts the form by means of a series of swift strokes, using either his hand or a tool. Frequently, he will build a continuous series of shapes, piling one form on top of another, then slashing the forms open with a knife and repairing the cut sections with added strips of clay. The result is a multi-planed or layered surface which sets up a series of tension points rather than attempting to achieve the harmony of classical balance. The surface of much contemporary pottery vibrates in a sharp staccato rhythm from the continuous movement of interlocking forms, and lacks the traditional "perfect" craftsmanship so highly prized in an earlier day. To heighten the vitality of the surface, sand, volcanic lava, course manganese, or heavy grog is added to the clay body, and this results in a rough texture and uneven finish that are generally lacking in the refined surfaces of most historic forms. When potters experiment with new possibilities, clay, itself, seems to take on new characteristics as the basic material of this medium. For example, the traditional characteristics of porcelain - translucency and thinness - can be exploited to realize only the unctuous whiteness of the material if it is either thrown or built into thick slab sections or the porcelain sections may be combined with dark stoneware clays to
heighten the dramatic interplay between dark and light bodies.

The same interest in spontaneity is also transferred to the act of glazing the piece of pottery. Many potters have turned to the primitive method of pouring the glaze over the piece so that no mechanical devices intrude in the application of the glaze and the pot. Others drip, pour, or splash the glaze onto the pot to produce a surface similar to the lively ones of abstract-expressionist painting. The potter using these techniques learns to control them with continued practice and retains mastery over his movements; the greater his control, the more capable he becomes of realizing its creative potential. These methods of glazing speak clearly of process in presenting the gesture as an active force in itself.

Similar ideas have also been carried over into the firing process, where effects produced accidentally in the kiln have been made an integral part of the total procedure. The concern underlying these processes is for movements performed in continuous and rapid sequence and as effortlessly as possible. The craftsmanship springs from an interest in enlarging the primary or basic forces and involves the pursuit of the expression of craft. For the contemporary artist-potter, craftsmanship is primarily a tool which provides him with the means to experiment and present his ideas, rather than craftsmanship as an end in itself. Once he has acquired a complete mastery of his craft, the potter is competent to participate in every stage of the forming process and is able to express the full range of possibilities in clay.

So intense has been the interest in the expressive search in ceramics that it has produced the first national style in this medium
in America, and has had an equally strong effect on the world community of craftsmen. Within the context of this concern for expressionism in ceramics, each potter searches for his own individual style - thus exemplifying the same characteristic of personal experimentation which dominates all other areas of the American arts. It is a lonely and solitary search, in which the individual potter divorces himself from the past, breaks with tradition and historically derived forms, and works in an atmosphere of complete freedom from restrictions which impede the working process. This break with the past is necessary for the contemporary potter:

Only the man who is modern really lives in the present; he alone has a present-day consciousness and he alone finds that the ways of life which correspond to earlier levels pall upon him. The values and strivings of those past worlds no longer interest him save from the historical standpoint. Thus, he has become "unhistorical" in the deepest sense and has estranged himself from the mass of men who live entirely within the bounds of tradition. Indeed, he is completely modern only when he has come to the very edge of the world, leaving behind him all that has been disregarded and outgrown, and acknowledging that he stands before a void out of which all things may grow.\(^1\)

The present search in ceramics represents a concern for fundamentals and a complete freedom from historic styles. It constitutes a rediscovery of the basic elements that have always been present but have never been explored to their fullest potential.

The contemporary artist-potter, working within the palace-ware tradition of uniqueness and originality, turns to an expression of his

individual self. His work is deliberately experimental in an attempt to realize personal enlightenment from his work; it is vigorously anti-traditional in mood and seeks complete liberation from conventions in order to find new potentials in the present. With a strong and excellent background in craftsmanship, a complete and thorough knowledge of his medium, and a keen sensitivity to and awareness of his environment, the artist-potter attempts to realize his freedom as an artist by accepting the role of an innovator or experimenter in moving toward a realization of meaningful expressions.
THREE PROCESSES IN CERAMICS

The major part of this dissertation involves an investigation into three processes of working with clay, a discussion of the procedures involved in them, and a presentation, in exhibition form, of the results of this investigation. The primary concern was to discover a series of methods of working with clay that would realize the important relation of process and materials - their intermingling and interdependence - and would constitute a simple and uncomplicated statement of the dynamic quality of plasticity in clay. The essence of the problem was to realize the full potential of process through the control of every movement in a meaningful action. When process is fully comprehended, the potter is able to bring to his work a sense of unconscious effort which comes from working within a strict technical discipline combined with the freedom that results from this same discipline. The essential concern involved the rapid manipulation of clay, and the activist application of glazes in a constant effort to maintain a direct spontaneity in working with clay so that the final product is a visual record of the potter's activities.

Each of the three processes discussed in this dissertation produced different forms. The forms were the result of the process, just as the process suggested the forms. The problem was to penetrate the basic forming processes in ceramics, handbuilding and throwing, in order to arrive at a series of working methods which would express clarity of purpose through simple means. Although function was not the main concern, the ware produced does not negate the possibility of function. Where function is implied in the ware, the objects can per-
form their utilitarian role.

The first task was to acquire sovereign control over the medium without demonstrating this versatility for its own sake, for any aspirations toward possible technical effects only tend to manifest themselves in a complete loss of vitality in the final product: process must be the natural result of procedure. In this investigation of process, the aim was to maintain a constant and continuous flow of smooth, swift, and decisive actions toward an expression of one total unity. The processes are a means of manipulating clay in such a way that the working process is revealed in the final product.
ONE-SLAB CONSTRUCTION

The initial series of forms were made by working with one slab of clay as the essential part of the construction. This particular approach was chosen in order to explore the potential of slab building in forming pottery within the shortest working period. The primary forms which result from this process are either round or oval shapes. One of the possibilities of working with this particular process is presented in Plates I to XV, and the examples of one-slab constructed pots are presented in Plates XVI to XXX.
The clay is rolled out flat on plaster to approximately $1/4$ inch in thickness. Crushed corncob is dispersed across the surface of the clay.
PLATE II

The corncob is rolled into the clay surface with a rolling pin.
The clay is dried until it is stiff enough to pick-up without breaking and yet plastic enough to bend. The length of drying time may vary from one to three hours depending on the moisture of the clay, size of the clay slabs, and atmospheric conditions of the room. The clay slab is lifted from the plaster and slowly turned in a circular motion to form a cylinder shape.
PLATE IV

One edge of the outside surface is crosshatched and moistened with clay slip before an attachment is made.
PLATE V

The clay slab is paddled at the seam for greater adhesion. The paddling continues until the clay is forced flat.
PLATE VI

The clay cylinder is attached to a previously prepared clay slab, and the two pieces are adhered together with clay slip. The excess clay is cut away. A clay coil is added to the interior base to achieve greater adhesion between the base and the wall.
PLATE VII

The top of the clay slab is forced inward by paddling the clay with a series of rapid strokes.
PLATE VIII

The paddling continues until the desired form is achieved. No additional clay has been added in the forming process.
PLATE IX

A lip is formed by joining together two clay pieces. The lip is then cut to the desired shape with a knife.
PLATE X

The lip is brought to its final shape by paddling it to the desired form.
PLATE XI

The center of the lip is cut out with a knife.
PLATE XII

The lip is added to the basic clay cylinder by crosshatching and moistening the top of the cylinder and then paddling the lip to the pot until the desired form is achieved.
PLATE XIII

The primary form is now complete with base, wall, and lip.
PLATE XIV

A series of lines are deeply incised into the wall of the primary form with the edge of a paddle. The lines distort the form into an asymmetric shape.
PLATE XV

The completed bottle prior to bisque firing. The total working time, after the initial drying period for the slab, is approximately twenty minutes. The height of the bottle is 12 inches.
PLATE XVI - BOTTLE
PLATE XVII - BRANCH BOTTLE
PLATE XIX - BOTTLE
PLATE XXV - BRANCH POT
PLATE XXVIII - BOTTLE
MULTI-SLAB CONSTRUCTION

This particular process involves the use of a number of clay slabs to form the piece of pottery. Essentially, the forms which result from this process are square or rectangular shapes. Instead of using the traditional butt-and-joint adhesion, the primary technique used to join the slabs in this series of pots was to allow an excess amount of clay to extend beyond the joining point and then to paddle this excess clay around the side; this procedure permits maximum adhesion with a minimum amount of cracking. Through this process, large pieces of pottery can be constructed in relatively short periods of time. One of the working possibilities of the multi-slab construction is presented in Plates XXXI to XLVII, and the examples of pots formed by this technique are presented in Plates XLVIII to LXI.
PLATE XXXI

The clay is rolled out flat on plaster to approximately 1/4 inch in thickness and then cut into the desired slabs.
The slabs are dried until they are stiff enough to pick-up without breaking and yet plastic enough for a slight amount of bending action. The length of drying time may vary from one to three hours depending on the moisture of the clay, size of the clay slabs, and atmospheric conditions of the room. The clay slabs are then lifted from the plaster.
The clay slabs are joined together at the desired joining point by crosshatching and moistening with clay slip.
PLATE XXXIV

A clay coil is added on the inside of the primary form for close adhesion.
PLATE XXXV

The fourth slab of clay is joined to the primary form. Note that approximately one inch of clay protrudes from the joining point.
The clay slab is crosshatched for better adhesion.
PLATE XXXVII

The protruding clay is paddled around the corner of the primary form. The paddling continues until the protruding section is flush with the slab.
PLATE XXXVIII

The protruding clay sections are paddled flush to the primary form. Note that the excess clay from the base has been cut away.
PLATE XXXIX

A slab of clay is added to form the top of the primary shape.
PLATE XL

The added top is adhered to the primary form by paddling the excess clay over the sides until flush with the primary walls.
PLATE XLI

The primary form complete with the added top.
PLATE XLII

A clay slab is cut for the neck of the primary form and bent into the desired shape.
PLATE XLIII

The neck is added to the primary form with the addition of clay slip.
A lip is formed by joining together two clay pieces of approximately \( \frac{1}{4} \) inch in thickness. The lip is then cut into the desired shape with a knife.
The lip is added to the neck of the primary form by moistening with clay slip.
PLATE XLVI

The lip is paddled to the primary form to secure a better adhesion.
PLATE XLVII

The completed bottle prior to the bisque firing. The bottle is 18 inches in height.
PLATE XLVIII - BRANCH BOTTLE
PLATE LV - MULTI-SECTIONED PLANTER
PLATE LVI - BOTTLE
PLATE LVII - PLATE
PLATE LVIII - BRANCH POT
PLATE LX - MULTI-SECTIONED PLANTER
PLATE LXI - BRANCH POT
TEAR AND REPAIR CONSTRUCTION

This series of forms were made by cutting open the sides of either thrown or one-slab constructed pieces of pottery, and then repairing the cut sections by the addition of a clay section. Experiments were made in the addition of various colored clay bodies for the repair sections in order to achieve color contrasts between the primary form and the added sections. This particular technique was chosen in order to exploit the traditional classic symmetric profile into a series of asymmetric forms. One of the possibilities of working with this particular process using a wheel-thrown form is presented in Plates LXII to LXXIV, and the examples of tear and repair constructed pots are presented in Plates LXXV to XCIV.
PLATE LXII

A cylindrical form is thrown on the potter's wheel.
PLATE LXIII

The primary thrown form is cut with a knife.
PLATE LXIII
PLATE LXIV

The primary form is pulled open in preparation for the addition of the repair section.
PLATE LXV

A total of three cuts are made with a knife into the primary form.
PLATE LXVI

A thin slab of clay is rolled out on plaster with a rolling pin.
PLATE LXVII

The repair section is in the process of being added to the primary form.
PLATE LXVIII

The repair section is added to the primary form by crosshatching and moistening with clay slip.
PLATE LXIX

The repair section is forced against the primary form.
PLATE LXX.

The primary form is now complete with three cut sections which have been repaired with slabs of clay.
PLATE LXXI

A clay section is rolled out for the collar of the primary form.
PLATE LXXII

The collar is curved in preparation for adding it to the primary form.
PLATE LXXIII

The collar is added to the primary form.
PLATE LXXIII
PLATE LXXIV

The completed pot with repaired sections and added collar.
PLATE LXXVIII - BOTTLE
PLATE LXXIX - JAR
PLATE LXXXII - VASE
PLATE LXXXVII - FOOTED BOWL
PLATE LXXXIX - VASE
PLATE XCII - FOOTED BOWL
PLATE XCIV - VASE
APPENDIX

DEFINITION AND IDENTIFICATION OF SYMBOLS FOUND IN THE TEXT

CLAY FORMULAE:

Clay I - Stoneware Body for cone 10
Zanesville Stoneware 50
Tennessee Ball Clay 25
Florida kaolin (EPK) 25
Grog 10

Clay II - Porcelain Body for cone 10
Keystone Spar 25
Florida Kaolin 47
Flint 25
Bentonite 3

GLAZE FORMULAE:

Glaze I
Nepheline syenite 64
Dolomite 21
Tennessee Ball Clay 4
Tin Oxide 9

Glaze Ia
Copper Carbonate 1.5

Glaze Ib
Copper Carbonate 4

Glaze II
Keystone spar 52
Whiting 9
Zinc Oxide 8
Barium Carbonate 21
Tennessee Ball Clay 10

Glaze IIa
Iron Oxide 5

Glaze IIb
Copper Carbonate 6

Glaze IIc
Cobalt Oxide 1
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flint</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper Carbonate</td>
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<table>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Barium Carbonate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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