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Acknowledgements:-

I would like to thank Henry Pim for his help and advice.

INTRODUCTION:-

One problem we all face sooner or later of every stage of line is being slotted into little boxes, in the minds of others as well as our own. At times we have the option of comfortably fitting into that box or the more difficult choice of refusing to. Most of us would be happy to carry on with what we are doing but at some stage or other the dictates of money, the market, tradition and changing views mean we must place our work into some kind of context in the world which it enters.

Perhaps now because of the wide range of expression in ceramics, huge problems have occurred in classifying both markers and their work. In the past, when vessel making was the major objective of the ceramic world people naturally associated it with pots, large, small, fat etc., so it has been set into the so-called box for classification. Has this criterion still got a hold on many today? To well defined in many cultures and over an extremely long period of time.

But it can be said that things have been changing since the late seventies when a new generation emerged from college in Britain and we most certainly owe this change to potter such as Henry Pim, Alison Britton, Angus Suttie, Jacqueline Poncelef and Sara Radstone and many others who have each made a huge contributions to the word of ceramics.

In 20th Century British ceramics, Bernard Leach and Hans Cooper have been huge figures in the pottery world for their new ways of approaching ceramics. It seems only now at the end of this century that ceramics can freely be made and viewed across a wider plane of structures and purposes, where as in places like the US. , Japan, Scandinavia and parts of Europe, ceramics have moved away from functional ware and into vessel making. In Britain, works which were conventional remained very much within the conventions of pottery i.e. thrown work , glazed in dull browns and creams.

In sculpture, clay is used as a material to achieve something of a base rather than as a means to an end - Clay is used for modelling and cast up in bronze rather than just being ceramic on its own, where it can be used in limitless ways. In the 90's it can be said day clay is being used in many interesting ways. Is this due to changing attitudes and a move away from the traditional.

CHAPTER 1.

In England between the two World Wars, the forms and meanings of pottery were defined by two distinctive groups . On one hand there were a number of small country potteries making domestic wares in a context pioneered by Bernard Leach. They were oriental, holistic in a communal search for artistic salvation universal qualities. Then on the other hand there was that of William Stailte Murray who was head of pottery in the Royal College of Art in London at the same time. Murray insisted that his pottery was art; he gave each piece a title and also exhibited alongside the most advanced English painters and sculptors of his time, like More, Hepworth, Nicholson and charged fine art prices as well. He too was influenced by the Orient and he believed that every pot had a spirit of its own.

After the Second World War Leach's influence grew and grew. But Murray's influence although he had stopped working in his studio at leas supplies the prominent model of the modern studio potter.

I believe from reading many books that 1920 is supposed to be the most important date in the history of British Ceramics. That was the time Bernard Leach returned to England from Japan with Shojc Hamada, when they built the famous pottery at St. Ives in Cornwell and changed the way ceramics was viewed and perceived. This change involved a shift in the meaning associated with contemporary work, a shift from juggling with style and technique to steady. Reliable use of natural material and source. I think that Leach was in some ways detrimental as well as very helpful and influential to ceramics. Leach overpowered British pottery for a very long time and is still looked upon as a God of ceramics by many potters today.

I myself am very much in two minds about Leach. I can see that he revived or at least changed the way ceramics are looked at or even made. Leach was really involved in every part from start to finish and he should be admired for that. His work and life showed a wholehearted attempt to make pottery as art. In Leach's book "A Potters Book" (1940) there is a chapter in which he writes of the 'Sung Standard' selecting unity spontaneity and simplicity as the main qualities of Chinese pottery made in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. He admires the three long centuries of training and skill of traditional Japanese aesthetics. For six hundred years oriental art, and pottery in particular, has pretty much been a major source for European work.

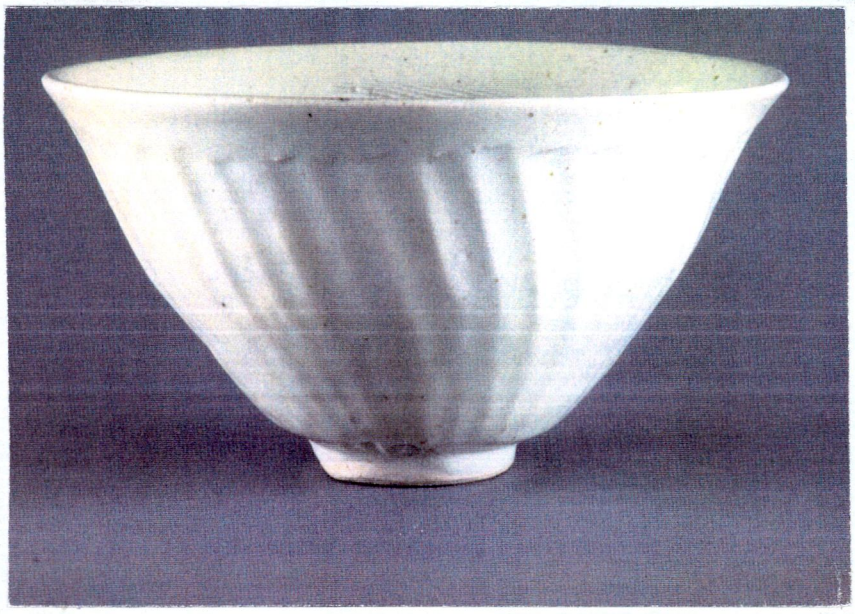

Figure 1: Bernard Leach - Bowl.

Despite the different styles of each artist the effect of the rather pervasive orient was much the same all round. In a way it seemed to brainwash many potters. The major sources outside this powerful field of followers of the Orient must surely be Lucie Rie and Hans Coper. Rie and Leach became friends when she had already a formed way of working, designing etc. Leach tried to modify her methods suggesting the ways of the orient when she arrived in England in 1938. This proved disastrous for her personal development and proved that Leach and Modernism were in face incapable of being mixed.

Figure 2: Lucie Rie - Bowl

Another person who has helped with changing attitudes is Hans Coper, who was also a good friend of Ries. His work is of a different nature from Leach's, he was influenced by the likes of Branchsi and Giacometti. Coper was a pre-war refugee, his work was more along the line of vessel making. He had a deep interest in form, evolved from a whole family of vessel shapes which were refined and peaceful rather than radical change. It is not surprising that the 60's and 70's generation of British Ceramic vessel makers like Ian Godfrey, John Ward, Mo Jupp, Ewen Henderson explored his approach and have gone into replace it in some ways with a more experimental approach of idea whether personal or on a large scale, while experimenting with form and pushing this to its limits.

Hans Coper who taught at Camberwell College in 1961, would get his students to question their motives and would get them to ask themselves why they were going it, Coper was interested in students who developed their own originality and would get really irritated by potters who copies him.

Figure 3: Hans Coper - Disk Form

Alison Britton, Angus Suttie, Sara Radstone and Henry Pim are the Eighties generation of vessel sculptures who all use clay to interpret their own styles and range of ideas .

CHAPTER 2

During the summer I had the opportunity to visit the New Tate Gallery recently opened in St. Ives Cornwall. My first thoughts were how wonderful it was to have ceramics in the famous Tate, an actual Museum dedicated to painting and sculpture and for the first time in this gallery to show ceramics, only to find out that it was the work of Leach and his followers

The Tate is built upon an old gasworks and from there you can see the town, moors, and naturally the sea. These views have crept into the work of many artists who stayed at St. Ives. Ben Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Barbara Hepworth and of course Bernard Leach, who was there for nearly 20 years. This period, in the 1920's with a small fishing town has seen the development of an abstract movement which happened in the furthest point of England. You can see the idea behind the New Tate, a collection of the work of artists connected with St. Ives. Unlike Nicholson and Hepworth, Leach seems very much out on his own, his thoughts on what was happening in the east rather that what was happening around him. He stayed steadfast to ideal untouched by Srancusi and the Bauhaus and the Modern Movement.

Leach's pots are hidden behind glass partitions in the Museum; are they necessary? Because his work is all pots, the gallery is having some difficulty in showing his work. " By putting the pots behind the glass are they to be taken more seriously"?

(Peter Dormer - 1993 page 42)

They are shown behind a huge sweeping glass case, brightly lit and on white plinths, these pots can not be seen in the round as you can not walk around them. Although I realise if may be wonderful that the Tate is recognising ceramics and the role Leach played in British Ceramics, the collection also contains many of the Leach followers, Shoji Hamad, Michael Cardew, David Leach and Janet Leach. Though I am not entirely in admiration of Bernard Leach's work on show there are a few which I would like to have a closer look at, sadly the viewer can not get a feel of the truly vital gift of the Leach tradition which was to combine, clay, glaze, shape, method, and lively firing process. He had a lovely way of referring to the opening of a kiln that had just finished firing which he called hand to heart.

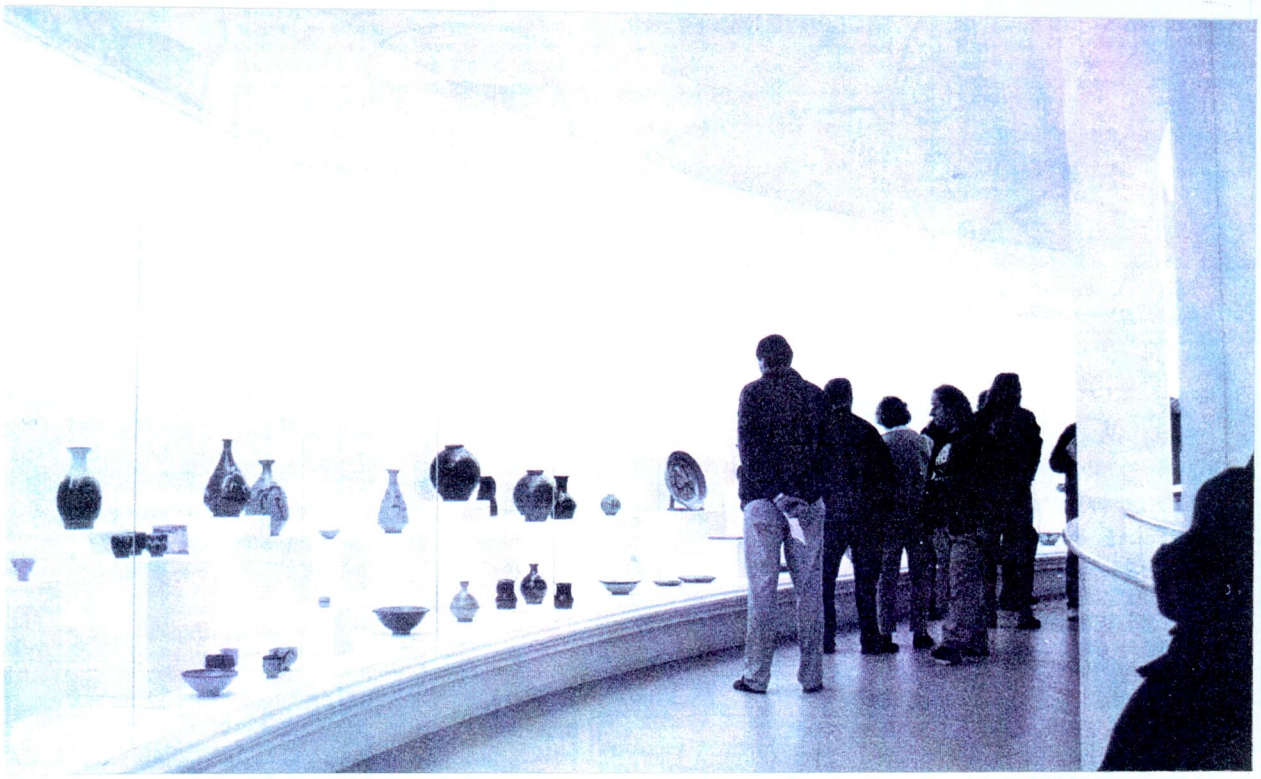

Figure 4: Tate, St. Ives Cornwall,

You just cannot feel or experience this sensation while walking through this exhibition. On the whole I was disappointed. It is however extremely significant that the St. Ives Tate is showing ceramics but may be some day if may show other types of pottery and then expand a little more and give some modern day vessel makers a chance to show their work. Although the Leach exhibition's viewing standards are not the best at least it is there, can be viewed and a lot of thought has gone into it, even if it is not suitable. This is more than the Tate in London has ever done. Like most popular tourist towns, St. Ives is now a bit kitsch.

" I hope very much that this Museum will be a place for debate and clarification and a raising of standards. It has an obligation to help raise standards of design and taste in craft as well as fire art".

(Peter Dormer, ' 93 page 42)

Another exhibition which I think is very challenging is "The Raw and Cooked" which started in the Barbican Art Gallery in London (8th July until 5th September) in 1993. This is an exhibition looking to be accepted by the fine arts and trying to break down the fence between art and craft. It is interesting to note that as well as the well known ceramic sculptors in the exhibition there was Tony Cragg and Anthony Gormley who are known as purely sculptors. The selectors of this exhibition - Alison Britton and Martina Margetts have chose very Anti - Bernard Leach pieces but at the same time very much follow the Japanese tradition which Leach was undoubtedly obsessed with all his life, where there has never been a divide between art and craft.

In one of the two catalogue essays, Margetts talks of rejecting what she sees and "Modernism and Conviction Ceramics, emblematic of the whole way of Life" At the same time both want to maintain Leach's resistance to "the larger sweeps of modernisation standardisation, over production, mechanisation, sanitation, mass-marketing and other aspects of progress that threaten to crush the human spirit

(" Alison Britton '93 page 5 ")

Many of the artists featured, regardless of what they are trying to say remain within the boundaries of vessel making. The vessel makers are Angus Suttie, Martin Smith, Sara Radstone, Jaquie Poncelet, Ewen Henderson, Liz Fritsch, Alison Britton and Gordon Baldwin who are all very different from one another. Suttie's pots for instance are painted in very subdued and mundane colours, this non-functional piece makes exciting contrast to the work of Gwyn Hansson Pigott. This ' Still Life ' is a collection of two bottles and two bowls all in white, casting beautiful shadows on the wall, the piece almost looking like a painting hanging in a gallery.

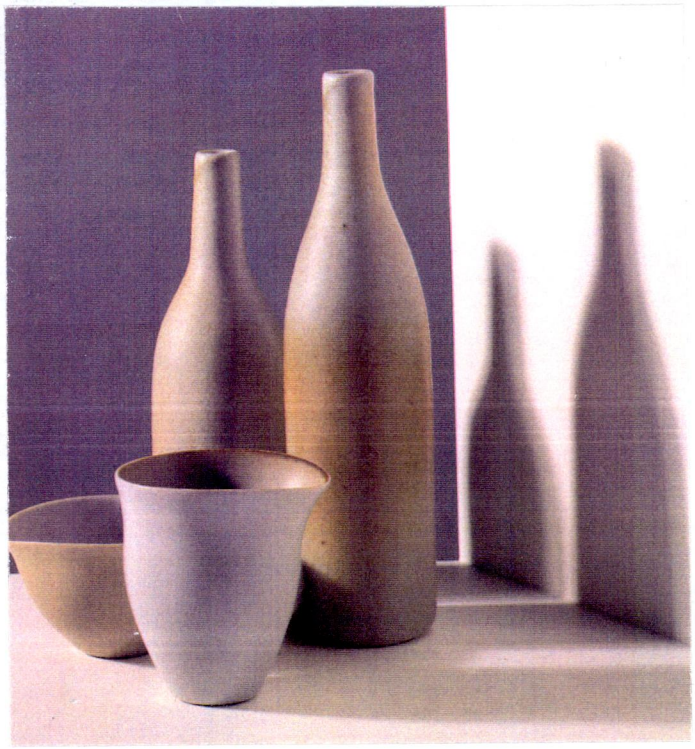

Figure 5: Gwyn Hanssen Pigott - Still Life.

Both Hanssen Pigott and Suttie were influenced by the Post-Modern movements and therefore expect to be taken more seriously as artists rather than as craftsmen. Suttie's pots, maybe large with regards to ceramics, are relatively small in terms of sculpture.

Nowadays we are quite used to walking into sculptures the size of a whole room , few ceramic pieces deal with large scale issues. Anthony Gormley and Tony Cragg, Susan Hall, Paul Astbury and Ruth Dupre all deny the vessel and are making very sculptured work. Both Gormley and Cragg are known as sculptors. Gormley solves the scale problem by placing all his hand-moulded people walking in a line across the gallery floor. It is successful in that you can get a sense of perspective in such a small space as the figures are smaller towards the back of the line. Tony Cragg is doing what Brancusi did for the teacup during the 1920's when he made wooden cups which were solid and denied the issue of functionalism. Cragg's piece is four thrown urn shapes which he has simply cut into sections like a book. Cragg is very interested in using materials and getting to understand that material so he may use it with more meaning.

Jacqueline Poncelet is certainly pushing her work to the boundaries of sculpture. Her work is quite large by her standards and not free standing as some of the other works but is leaning against the wall for support, taking advantage of the space between the wall and the floor.

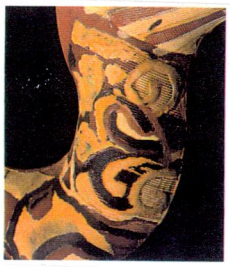

Figure 6: Jacqueline Poncelet - Object ' against the wall '.

Her piece is directly influenced by the human body, which is mutilated and scarred in parts, making it both beautiful and ugly to look at. This is an extremely important exhibition with regards to ceramics. Being held in the Barbican Gallery, the exhibition is taken out of the craft context as this gallery shows mostly painting and sculpture, so it has helped to get it to a wider audience. This exhibition acts as a bridging stone , one step closer for people to accept ceramics into the world of fine art.

"What we need is not only more, but more often."

(M. Varzey, 1993 page 51).

CHAPTER 3

Allison Britton builds vessels and she also writes about a lot of craft-related arts, she writes many of the catalogues for the Contemporary Applies Art Galleries in London and often writes for Craft Magazines. One of the challenges of a potter faces today is boredom. As most hand crafted pots are bought for decoration to sit on the mantelpiece and not for use, the potter then has a challenge for those pieces not to become stale in anyway. Allison Britton has definitely met this challenge head on. She is of a generation of British potters in the 70's to come out of the Royal College of Art in London , Britton graduated in '73. Although they are each very different, Jill Crowley, Jacqui Poncelet, Elizabeth Fritsch and Britton herself. These potters very much rejected the tradition of Bernard Leach and roundness and dominant brown colour.

The Royal College was a major breeding ground the these ceramists and the major influence as a teacher was Hans Coper. Coper taught at the College from 1966 to 1975 and during that time he taught a large number of amazing gifted pupils who I have already named. Although the students acknowledged Coper's towering influence they have all moved far from his work. Coper was a thrower by nature and to functionalism working in black and white and had a relatively small range of forms. By contrast Coper's students rejected throwing and moved well away from that function.

The major commercial boost for these potters came from the formation of the Crafts Council in 1971 in London. They had their own shop at the entrance to the Victoria and Albert Museum , they had Crafts Magazine, the Craft Council gave funding and grants which was made available for setting up studios etc.

Alison Britton does not like round forms; her work is asymmetrical build from slabs of clay not thrown on a wheel and decorated in an abstract expressionist style. She very much wants her vessels to be seen from many different angles so you must move around them, the shapes and forma changing to give views which a functional bowl could not have. Britton wants the viewer to be supposed and to look again. Britton chose jugs which she was making in the late seventies because the spouts and handles break up the roundness of the whole jug.

" At the time those jugs surprised people because most English men and women were used to brown pots of conventional shapes. Britton's pots broke all the rules".

(Peter Dormer, page 42, 1985)

Her jugs were full of animation, each one different from the next; she painted them with coloured slips and oxides of ancient Egypt so like the Egyptian's work, her jugs could be read like a book. Brittan's jugs have all been also built, painted with underglaze and based primarily on vessels which she describes as being on "The outer limits of function".

(Peter Dormer, David Cripps Bellew 1985 page 27)

Britton's early tiles which she made when she first came out of College are decorated in an extremely narrative way, just like her jugs. "Narrative painting in Modern British Ceramics is surprisingly rare and few have done it as well as Alison Britton".

(Tanya Harrod, Bellew page 52 1990)

Her narrative post usually have birds or Egyptian figures on them, Britton used the British Museums as one of her major sources and was very much influenced by early Greek as well as American Indian and Egyptian pots. You can see the characteristics of these in her paintings.

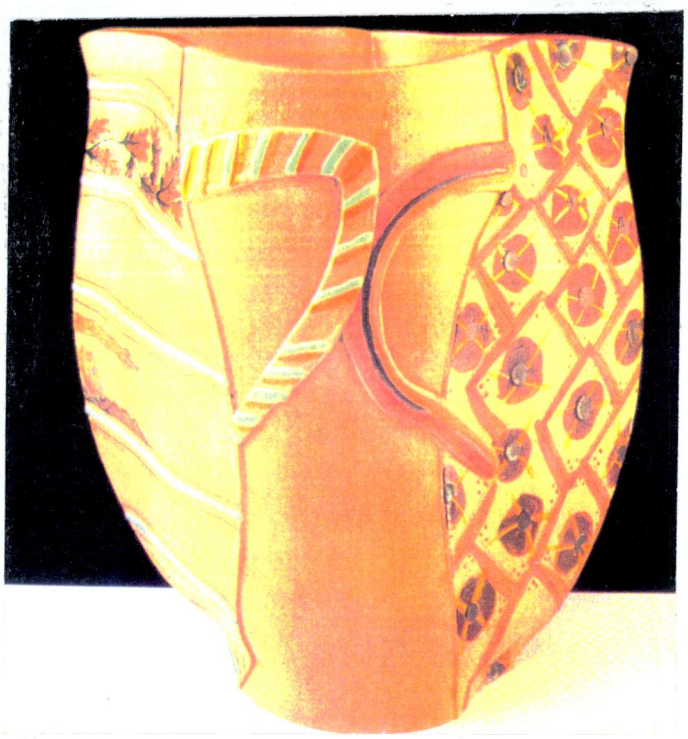

Figure 7: Alison Britton - Pair of Jugs

Apart from her use of colour is the fact that figures - animals, birds were painted in profile and without a sense of perspective. Young children do the same thing. The Egyptians did not paint in a childlike way out of ignorance but out of what the artist thought was important about the figure or object which he was drawing.

If something had four legs in the drawings it did not matter how it looked in real life. These jugs are fairly easily read and quite obvious and straight forward. On one both witty and sophisticated is a pair of jugs.

Which is two jugs placed back to back on the same jugs, standing in low relief from the clay walls and what you see are the two sides, handles with a double being obviously clever. She has taken the jug form and half made it real but turned the other half into fiction.

1979 was the year when the majority of her pots were together for an exhibition in the Craft Council in London. The work would not have presented critics of pottery with any difficulties had they been American as Peter Voulkos along with Paul Soldner, John Mason, Ron Nagle and Jim Melchert were working as ceramic sculptures from the late fifties on and represented the massive sculptural extreme of the group, but there was at first sight hesitation among some of the older English critics because Britton was just another up and coming potter who had broken from the Leach Style and form of pot making. Britton could have continued after this exhibition to make her jugs but she decided to quit while she was ahead as the jugs had become very popular so she naturally moved on and explored a more abstract approach. Although Brittons pots are always traditional in that she took the pot idea further and pushed it to another level than just being a domestic pot. In doing so she has not tried to make it blatantly sculptural but rather taken from Art a certain freedom which allows her to rethink the form and shape which the pots can take.

Britton in the mid-eighties moved in a totally different direction , the form became more architectural and asymmetrical and she no longer used the Egyptian narrative but instead was greatly influenced by the artist Jackson Pollock. She was interested in making marks in the same way Pollock was, he spattered paint on his canvas using his whole body, making lines and shapes on the surface, painted in a way which was moving away from the three dimensional and more towards the decorative, this is what Britton tried to achieve with her clay, but with different principles, and Britton works on many planes and wants her work to be viewed from all angles. In her change from jugs to vessels we can see her inspirational switching from ancient artefacts to a more modern feel, like paintings and buildings

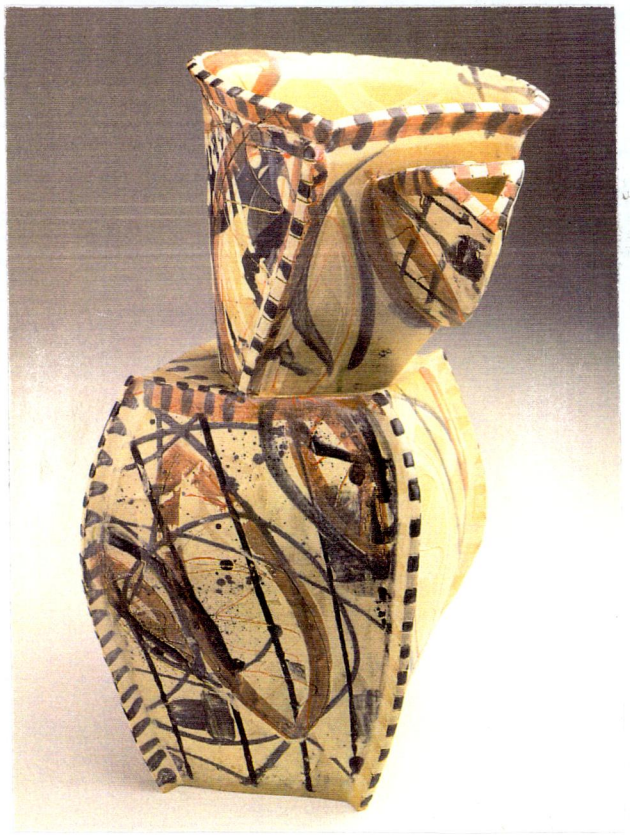

Figure 8: Alison Britton - Vessel

"My Work belongs on the outer limits of function where function or a reference to a possible function is crucial but is just one ingredient in the final presence of the object and not its only motivation".

(Peter Dormer, David Cripps, Bellew 1985 page 62.)

Britton has a retrospective in 1991 which travelled England. The changes in her work from the narrative to the abstract which I have mentioned before she is still very interested in the idea that her pieces should be viewed from many angles. She says that her jugs are easy to understand and many are to do with the human race, environmental issues and civilisation, but her abstract pots are harder to come to terms with.

" They are composed of disparate parts that relate to each other with tension and I hope interest. The constituent parts can be seen as geometric forms and also reminiscent aspect of a variety of other hollow ordinary forms. The pots are about that ordinary experience and they aspire to be worth looking at or beautiful in spite of the difficulties I don't think you can make a simple distinction between form and content anymore !!!

(Alison Britton, 91 page 40).

Henry Pim, Angus Suttie, Sara Radstone all attended Camberwell College at the same time and graduated together in 1979, each having a very sculptured feel to their work. During their time in Camberwell the College was moving away from the whole idea of pottery. Pottery was becoming increasingly less fashionable than it had been during the sixties, when it was quite trendy to be making pottery. The tutors who taught at the College were nearly all making sculptured type vessels. Ewen Henderson, Ian Auld, Scott Chamberlin and Colin Person who even thought he was throwing pots, was making them for decorational purposes, in no way to be usable.

Ewen Henderson, did not develop an interest in ceramics until relatively late. He became attracted to clay and attended Camberwell until 1968, a time when Hans Coper was teaching there. He moved to handbuilding in the 1970's and evolved his own style of handling clay. At a time when precision and prettiness were the strongest factors in British ceramics, Henderson's pots were aggressive, roughly pitted surfaces in muted colours. Unlike most potters who tend to look at clay, glazes and kilns as obstacles to be controlled and overcome , Henderson seems to revel in the difficulties of making ceramics. Clay that shrinks, cracks, wraps and bloats, glazes which run, crawl and bubble were celebrated by him.

Figure 9: Ewen Henderson - Two Megaliths.

Landscape seems to be an obvious inspiration in Henderson's pots. His pots are free, spontaneous and seem to come direct from his hands rather than from his head. Many of the Camberwell graduates have followed Henderson in making asymmetrical handbuilt pots with a great emphasise on a richly textured surface.

Pim, Suttie and Radstone became more friendly after they left College in 1979 and supported each other through the years. I am very lucky to have had the change to meet all three, to have talked to them and to have heard them lecture in our ceramics department. Sara Radstone has at least superficially, been the one who has most closely associated with Ewen Henderson.

Her stoneware vessels with their uneven basis, cracks, ragged broken rims, craggy textures and surfaces are often mistaken for Henderson's. Her method of handbuilding is also not entirely dissimilar to his. Both potters work in a manner that has often been compared to making a collage. Radstone sometimes will cut up and rearrange pieces of a pot or use the pieces in constructing another. Her pots grow through improvisation rather than planning.

Despite the similarities of her work to Henderson, Radstone's work is very different in nature. Having met Sara Radstone in November '93 when she was a guest lecturer to the Ceramics Department, I found she was quiet, shy, and somewhat introverted. This comes across in her vessels, which are very different from Henderson's pots which are bold and aggressive. Radstone's have the quality of being calm and earthen, the vessels appear to have been built up slowly with meticulous and loving care. Her pots look fragile and brittle as if they spontaneously fall apart and yet still appear strong. Radstone's work looks very organic and she even says so herself but like many of the students at Camberwell she lives and works in London and her pots seem to have much more to do with an urban environment . They are more in keeping with eroding walls, rusting metal. Radstone collects old tin cans and pieces of iron etc.; and brings them back to her studio.

Figure 10: Sara Radstone - Vessel

Radstone is constantly improving and pushing her work one step further all the time. She likes dealing with openings in her vessels, although they are quite small, this suggests darkness, mystery and depth. Because the holes are small, the inside of the vessel is therefore vague, and is very much left up to the imagination. If you took the hole away , would it make her work anymore sculptured than it already is? In Radstone's lecture she gave to us in November '93, she talked of not wanting to completely enclose her vessels and that she would lose interest if she did so. She does not seem to be ready to make that step yet and probably will not for a few years to come. Radstone feels that an opening makes it feel almost like a forth dimensional object. When she is constructing her pieces she does not want them to represent anything but to stand on their own.

A concluding thought, Radstone repeats to herself is that,
" there are always more things in a closed box then an open".

(Catalogue by Alison Britton, '90)

Radstone's latest work is dealing with form only she rather prefers it glazes were not in anyway colourful as she thinks people get distracted by a beautiful looking glaze and that they may not look further. Radstone uses only one glaze if at all, or uses oxides, using a small amount of colour as possible ; she can vary the thickness of the glaze but she can vary the thickness of the glaze but she much prefers the colour of raw clay.

"If there were not openings in Radstone's work, it would be quite boring but the hollowness helps retain a sense of volume." Tanya Harrod in her review of Radstone's and Suttie's exhibition in 1990.

(1990 page 60)

Explains Suttie's pots as "living" full of energy and "quirks" and Radstone's most recent work is larger than ever before, and she has changed the position of her openings from being on top of the vessel , which is quite obvious to perhaps a little more concealed. Her shapes have progressed and have become more complex dealing with form and tension but she is still preoccupied with the suggestion of what might he held inside the vessel or what may be trying to get out. They work like caskets or boars, canoes used to send the dead into the next world.

From meeting Radstons in November 1993, I really got to understand her work much better. There is so much of herself conveyed in her work, although she may not mean to do this. One of the finest and most interesting potters in Brittan and is very unlikely that she has made anything like her best work.

During the Summer I heard the sad news that Angus Suttie had passed away in June 1993. He most certainly is a great loss to the ceramics world, I had been looking forward to writing to him about his recent work. But during 1991 Suttie came an stayed a week in our ceramics department, he gave us a lecture (which was video taped) and also made several pieces throughout the week so we got to see his technique of using clay. I must add that he certainly cause a few waves, as he had a very different approach to working in clay from the way we had been taught, we had been told to draw out your idea and then make your piece in clay. He went straight to working with the clay which was a really nice and fresh way to work.

Suttie's method of hand-building also relates to a process of collage. He begins with almost random slab shapes or bit of pot and when he had constructed several of these they were then joined together to form his final shape. This necessarily meant that he had no idea what he would end up with and what might being as the base of his piece might end up at the top or anywhere else for that matter. In working that way he also wanted people to appreciate and enjoy his work without having to be told what it was all about. He believed that if was unnecessary for theories and explanation to back it up.

Decoration is an unimportant aspect of Suttie's work. he applies slips, several glazes and occasionally enamels or lustre's in an exuberant painterly manner. While his work can be functional, the shapes - teapots, cups, spoons, cheese dishes etc.; are used primarily as a starting point for the making process. Part of the humour of his work lies in his distortion of the functional vessel

Figure 11: Angus Suttie - Pot.

It is obvious the distinctive influences in Suttie's work were Folk Art and Surrealism, a rather off combination but the Folk Art influence is easily detected, his pots have the same freshness and humour, the same joyous colouring, the same lack of sophistication and the same desire to please that is found in much Folk Art. The work is obviously not delicate or tasteful.

In the mid 1980's Suttie temporality changed from using red earthenware to using stoneware, resulting in his pots having slightly more muted colours and less delicate shapes. Suttie has always stressed the importance of feeling in his work and no doubt his change in his work was partly due to a great emotional loss in his life. His last pots were influenced by Pre-Columbian ceramics and were more architectural in form.

Suttie made familiar objects which were everyday use into something more thought - provoking.

"A cheese dish brought in Heal's says I am of this world and so I fit into your life of camembert and gouda and reassure you with hints of a solid and comfortable heritage of cows in country meadow and milkmaids, whereas I try to get one of my cheese dishes to say ' yes I am not really of your world. But I am here to suggest that life can be different , could be more varied and interesting and that our figure might be better and still incorporate cows in meadows cheddar and brie".

(Angus Suttie, Ceramics Lecture, Nov. 1991 N.C.A.D Video)

Figure 12: Angus Suttie - Jug.

Suttie's early vessels are very brightly coloured and jolly in shape, they seem as through they could stand up and say hello. His more recent vessels were more compact, composed and concentrate and much more subdued in colour.

The pieces still have an electric feel to them. They are still boldly patterned like the early pots but colours are less adventurous even if he still painted every inch of them. In his exhibition in 1990 at Contemporary Applied Arts with Radstone, Sutties work became much larger than before but his interest in axial symmetry was still a feature. This summitry gives them a certain character and direction so they sometimes look like a car, a boat, or even a train. Often there are two openings to the vessel, front and back, built up from cones, cylinders and anvil shapes all of which he seemed to use with such ease. Just before he died he had been working on several vessels which would connect together and contain a whole room, unlike the single pieces he had worked on before.

Suttie's pots seem to divide those who look at them. Many have an instant rapport with his work and see him as being one of the most inventive and interesting British vessel makers. Others see his pots as being awkward and overdecorated, but for me his unique vision of pottery will win more and more admirers to his work.

Henry Pim also graduated in 1979 and now teaches at our College so I am quite familiar with his methods of working with clay. These are quite mechanical and technical and play a very important part in the whole making process he uses. Having started with a drawing he then builds a full scale paper model of what he intends to make, this is then deconstructed and used as a template for cutting out slabs of clay which are given some kind of texture either from plaster rolling pins or dry clay rolled onto a wet slab. He then applies slips or glaze to the fired piece. Pim's early pots are colourful and decorated but he has changed in recent years to more sculptural work and he has even gone through a black phase in which he coloured his clay black and fired it and constructed the pieces together in a stacking form, a method which enables him to work on a larger scale.

In many of Pim's early vessels it is very hard to tell whether or not they are actually clay. Like Angus Suttie no created pots which were playable and decorative also very thought-provoking. The layers of glaze look so much like dirt and decomposing metal that it was hard to tell if they were not ancient artefacts. Pim's shapes change constantly from him early urns to in the late '80's, boats, tanks of baby prams which were all so far off from traditional pottery vessels. Then Pim went to study for his MA in Amsterdam at the Rietveld Akademie where he took a new fresh start to his approach to ceramics.

Figure 13: Henry Pim - Untitled.

He made a complete break from his old work and went into a stage of experimentation and development. The idea of not producing organised and familiar shapes after an orderly fashion was hard to come to terms with at first and this could be what divides the craftsman from the artist. Certainly Henry Pim now sees his work as purely sculptural, achieved in the medium of ceramics. He had for a long time been involved in the idea of non-functional vessel form. For a ceramics artist this has meant abandoning the idea of inner space and containment and another big step has been abandoning surface texture.

"That surface has always been central to the problem as it can be celebrated and indulged independently to the form".

(Garth Clark, p.55 1985)

Because of this move to sculpture, Pim has more or less abandoned glazes altogether. He uses very thin watery glazes and oxides with water so they can be used like a wash rather than surface texture. He now builds his sculpture in sections, fires them and constructs them together by using wooden dowels which are inserted through each section. His preplanning, everything fits perfectly together overcoming the problems of large scale work. This method he uses opened many doors which had been closed before and the scope for the imagination grew.

Pim's shapes became more complex then they had ever been before. Simplicity may return to his work but I am sure it can only be achieved by the same method of experiment and growing. The imagery he uses became more personal and close to the heart. Pim finds that a statement of his work helps people to understand to a certain extent the imagery itself but he also wants people to being along their own experiences and feeling so they can simply read these into his work. Taking his ambiguous figures beasts, gestures and the different and obscure feelings and suggestions they propose as they find them which is no more than in the case of all good sculpture.

Home is an image which occurs many times in Pim's recent work. It is just one of the forms which suggest the box-like pieces he makes.

Figure 14: Henry Pim - Still in Place.

"Home helps to supply our physical, emotional and spiritual needs to an extent, we are responsible for the way things shape up and to an extent, we have little or no control, Home exists through time".

(Henry Pim, 1993 page 53)

His imagery has become less fussy and seems to be more sure of where he is going, on both senses of the word, he is all the time growing in confidence in himself and his recent work shows this confidence, not only in his control and mastery of his material but in his belief that what he is doing is right for him. Because of this, he has no problem with the old dilemma of craftsmen or artists. Henry Pim is perfectly happy to make work on this large scale and does not mind whether the work is shown in a museum , Art Gallery or Crafts Gallery. He is happy as long as the Gallery and the space in which he is showing is suitable for his work.

Pim is currently working for an exhibition for '94, which will be held in the Galway Arts Centre. This scale will become larger again and he also has the whole gallery to show in, it is a very large space for a single artist of his sculptural nature but Pim finds this challenging and as always works best when challenged. I believe Henry Pim is growing from strength to strength. Who knows what he will be doing in 10 years Time?

CONCLUSION.

In moving from pots to so called Art you have to change some long established ways of seeing and doing things. Although a ceramic artist can now have work shown in Art Galleries and be promoted and priced accordingly, nothing really changes. You still sit in your studio with your clay and you are still dealing with colour and line and sometimes absentmindedly dipping your glaze brush in your coffee.

I think it is very important that people change the way they look at ceramics as I think that it can be seen as both sculpture and painting. When the clay surface can be treated like a canvas to mould ideal with objects within the limitations of ceramics requires constant invention. Potters are still dealing with clay's unique qualities of light, colour and surface which is precisely what a painter also deals with.

Even in our own ceramics department in College, there is a hidden driving force guiding some of the ceramics student towards the work of ceramic sculpture. It is certainly evident in much of the work, many students move sculptured objects and ideas behind the work has become as important as technique, firing, glazing etc.; One factor which separates the ceramics department from the sculpture department is that many of the ceramic project which are set for the students are technically based. What would happen if the ceramics department opened out into sculpture. Would it mean a loss of skill? The technical facilities help our ability to make what we want to ride over the problems ceramics processes present. I know from experience that sculpture students are constantly running up to ceramics to find out how to make moulds etc. and from talking to some of my friends from sculpture, I know that some get extremely frustrated that their course is so conceptually based and there is very little skill evolved in their projects. There is certainly a need to find a happy medium between ceramics and sculpture and this may not happen for many years to come. Basically I believe that what comes first is the urge to make and the choice of medium. what is most interesting to em is not how work is classified but how it occurs, that is , the impetus for the creation of that work, whether pot of sculpture. If the work is articulate it will in time create a place for itself and stand on its own.

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