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*National College of Art and Design
Design Craft Ceramics*

*Thesis on
Cormac Boydell
'A True Natural Ceramist'*

by

Vivien Alexander

*Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and
Design and Complementary Studies in Candidacy
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Mrs Mary Boydell
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Mr.Michael Robinson
Ms Hilary O'Kelly.
Ms Madeline O'Rourke

Their help was greatly appreciated.

1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the subject of the study. It discusses the importance of the study and the objectives of the research.

- 2. The second part of the report is a detailed description of the methodology used in the study. It includes a description of the sample, the data collection methods, and the statistical analysis.
- 3. The third part of the report is a discussion of the results of the study. It compares the findings with the previous research and discusses the implications of the study.
- 4. The fourth part of the report is a conclusion and a list of references.

The report is written in a clear and concise style, and it is well organized and easy to read.

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Cormac Boydell a true natural Ceramist.

Introduction

It is written '*that man cannot live by bread alone*' and that the spiritual side of life is of equal importance to the pursuit of the material . This study is both an effort to understand the human emotions that drive the individual to forsake worldly goods in the pursuit of the artistic and development of the spiritual or inner man, as well as a look at the process in relation to the individual career of Cormac Boydell. Cormac Boydell's career is a classic example of the struggle that faces man in deciding between the materialistic and the artistic. I have chosen him as a subject primarily because of his struggle with this issue, but also because I was attracted to the challenge of writing about a heretofore unwritten about genius in his field. This challenge has proved to be as daunting as anticipated, due to the huge number of areas of great interest that needed a fuller exploration than time and energy allowed.

Prioritising issues was of utmost importance and for this thesis I have concentrated on giving the broad picture of his developing years. The influences during his formative years, to which I intend referring to were art, music, natural sciences, the functional art of Grattan Freyer, the ceramic art of John Ffrench, the study of geology, the very early pottery of the Minoans, the colours of Australia and of course Aboriginal art, but most importantly his philosophy of work and life. Also, I consider his place in the world of Irish ceramics and give my analysis of his contribution to Irish art. Assembling a progression of his work alone was a daunting but very rewarding task as it may have contributed to the build up of knowledge about this interesting artist.

Surrounded by the artefacts of art and culture from his earliest years he chose the profession of a geologist but something within the inner man, a force, existed which rejected the commercial aspects of this life, and forced a return to the artistic. From Ovid we read that :

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“the first men by all traditional accounts lived in perfect harmony with nature and the gods, the earth gave all things spontaneously and men were content with its uncultivated produce”¹.

There appears to be a parallel between the life of man in the beginning and that of the artist, as no artist can properly fulfil the development of the inner man necessary for true greatness without the establishment of a true relationship between man and the natural world.

While Cormac Boydell did not train as an artist, his artistic skills being largely self taught, this study will examine how this has affected the development of his career as well as its influence on his distinctively individualistic art style. The relationship between his art forms and his use of natural materials is significant for the understanding of his work and this is an obvious area that requires investigation and explanation. His techniques are also most unusual, almost approaching the primitive, and one is reminded of the protest by the native American Indian prophet Smohalla against the proposal to turn his people into cultivators, as described by John Michell in ‘The Earth Spirits’, which will be referred to later in the study of his development as a professional ceramic artist.

Formative years and education.

The background of Cormac Boydell is the key to understanding why he is a truly *natural* ceramist. He was born in 1946 in Dublin into an upper middle class family, the first of three sons, *“a placid, good humoured and loving child”²*. His father entered the professions as a geologist but rejected this calling to become a musical composer and conductor, reaching a highly respected position and being appointed Professor of Music at Trinity College in 1962. Initially it was a part time position but by 1971 the Department of Music had so flourished under his guidance that the position warranted a full time Professor and he occupied that position until he retired in 1982. The music of Sibelius would have been all pervasive during Cormac’s earliest years. Sibelius had a passion for the countryside which is reflected in his music; he was most innovative and creative as a composer and it appears that this was the factor that made his music attractive to the Boydell family. He was inspired by nature and his symphonies exuded a tremendous release

The first of these is the fact that the
 system is not a simple one, but a
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of energy; they start with the inorganic, the granite rock of his homeland and build up to catch the sound of the wind in the forest and other elemental forces working on nature.

His mother, Mary Boydell was also artistically driven, specialising in glass work, and is considered an expert in eighteenth and nineteenth century glass. She had the same attraction to the feel and texture of glass as Cormac has with clay, "*I always liked glass just like Cormac and clay*"³. In 1994 she was honoured by Trinity College, Dublin when she was conferred with an honorary M.A. degree for her work and research with glass. It is interesting to note that his parents collected folk pottery from travelling in Ireland and abroad, and this was in everyday use in the home. Pottery by Grattan Freyer, a contemporary potter who specialised in slipware was a particular favourite of Cormac's parents and may have been a sub-conscious influence on his development as a artist. Grattan and Madeleine Freyer were the first studio potters in Ireland and established their studio at Terrybaun, Pontoon, Co. Mayo on the shores of Lough Conn in the early 1950's. Madeleine was a Breton and studied under Michael Cardew, the English potter; Grattan, who came from Connemara, worked in the Leach Studio at St Ives in England. They specialised in tableware which was decorated with slip-trail or with sgraffito. They were the original exponents of the art of slip-trailing and sgraffito in Ireland. Sgraffito is a precise form of decoration which allows no mistakes, and involves scratching through a wet slip, requiring a sense of rhythm and balance. It is interesting to note that each Christmas, the Boydells visited the Freyers annual exhibition in South Anne Street, Dublin. Accordingly, Cormac was surrounded from the time he was born by works of glass and ceramics which were valued equally with other objects of art such as paintings. The artistic background surrounding Cormac from his earliest days surely had a pronounced impact on his development as an artist. He also had the advantage of an excellent education, attending preparatory school at Brook House, Bray and, from the age of 13, St Columba's College in Rathfarnham, Co.Dublin, a secondary school based on English public school principles. At St Columba's College he was most fortunate to come under the influence of Oisín Kelly who taught art and languages at the

The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the general principles of the theory of the structure of the atom. It is shown that the structure of the atom is determined by the laws of quantum mechanics, which are based on the principle of the uncertainty of the position and the momentum of the particles.

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College. Kelly is an interesting character, born in the Liberties the son of a schoolmaster he went to Trinity College where he took a moderatorship in French and Irish. He won a travelling scholarship to Germany at the height of Nazi power and spent time there lecturing at Frankfurt-am-Main University. While in Germany he also attended Art School in Frankfurt. In 1942 he married Ruth Gwynn, daughter of the Provost of Trinity College, a member of a famous academic family. Kelly was in the process of developing his sculptural skills and style and was later in his life to become a successful and well known sculptor. The example of Kelly's artistic development must have been a major influence and encouragement to Cormac in his own development as an artist later in life, for few have the opportunity to witness the development of another's artistic talents. Kelly would have been a witty and amusing teacher; his more recent sculpture is modern but in earlier times had been abstract. He was concerned essentially with ideas indigenous to the Irish Gaelic tradition. It is interesting that Kelly and Boydell were exploring the qualities of clay at the same time. Kelly was also a contemporary of the Freyers to the extent that he was involved in the decoration of some of their tableware. The proof of the influence of the Freyers and Kelly on Boydell's early work can clearly be seen by comparing the work of Freyer shown on plate 7 with the work of Boydell shown on plate 3 Fig i & ii and plates 10 & 11.. The similarity is in the slightly traditional slip trailing, geometric design and sgraffitto on those early plates.

Another major influence was John Ffrench, an artistic potter living in Ahascragh, in Galway. Ffrench, who studied ceramics in Florence, concentrated on earthenware; Boydell was especially influenced by the shape and form of Ffrench's bottles which his parents collected. Plate 8 Fig i shows an asymmetrical bottle by Ffrench with large spots and bold lines. Plate 8 Fig ii shows some of Boydell's bowls, also with large spots, brave lines and asymmetrical forms. Another example of Ffrench's influence is shown in Plate 5, an early bottle vessel by Boydell, which again exhibits large spots but also includes a hint of Picasso and the emergence of the human face in Boydell's work.

His development as an artist, in the wider sense, was also ably influenced by the music teacher at St Columba's College, Joseph Grocock whose organ recitals he

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regularly attended and always enjoyed. The attention given by the College to the full development of the individual and the excellent qualities of the teaching, not only prepared him for the professional world but also contributed to building the foundation which later resulted in the emergence of his unique talents as an artist.

Development of Professional career

In 1964 Boydell went to Trinity College, Dublin and entered the faculty of Natural Sciences, specialising in geology and in particular the area of petrology, the study of rocks and their structures. He graduated with honours in 1968. His interest in geology was especially stimulated by Dr. Adrian Phillips, Dr. George Sevastopulo and Dr Chris Stillman who were primarily responsible for his decision to study geology. Dr. Stillman specialised in the study of volcanoes and during his years in the geology department Boydell also developed a particular interest in the effects of volcanic action on rocks and the formation of glazes. His expertise in this subject became such that Boydell lectured to the Art Society in Trinity on this topic. While his interest in rocks and clays was to become important in later years as a ceramist, at this time his attention was mainly focused on the development of his career as a geologist. (See plates 15,16 & 23)

However it is intriguing to note that at no time was his development as a potential artist dimmed, indeed on his curriculum vitae prepared in the year 1968 he listed as part of his skill base an '*on-going study into the relationship between geological and ceramic process*'. Even during his College days his interest in art was not overlooked and he participated actively in the College Art society. Dr.N.Gordon-Bowe remembers his interest in early Minoan pottery, in particular his interest in the period before the great palaces. During this period Minoan pottery was rough, spontaneous, simple, functional and often decorated with incised marks or simple spiral and wave patterns. It was less contrived than later Minoan pottery and more attuned with man's natural needs. This Minoan period represented a time when man was discovering his intellect but had not forgotten his roots. Boydell's interest in heads seems to stem from his interest in this period of man's development.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present and for the development of a sound policy for the future.

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Following his graduation from Trinity he emigrated to Australia where his fascination with the processes that formed the earth developed into a passion while he practised as an exploration geologist. He mainly worked in Central and Western Australia and by 1970 had co-founded and was managing a successful geological Consultancy business. All the indication however, suggested that his interest in business was not his primary interest in life, despite his success in this profession, but was more of a tool to finance his future development and career as an artist.

Philosophical Development.

The wide open spaces of Australia are also believed to have had a major influence on his religious attitudes for, while he was born into a Protestant family, the seeds were sown for the abandonment of the family religion and conversion to the philosophy of Buddhism. It was in this period of his life he came to believe that civilisation had taken a wrong turn and in the words of Daisaku Ikeda in his book 'Buddhism: The Living Philosophy' 1976 :

*"that the world overlooked the dignity of life and that industrial development had so polluted the environment that the rosy prospects once held out for civilisation have vanished, and man now is having grave doubts concerning the very nature of technological civilisation"*⁵.

The Buddhist awareness of the persuasiveness of essential life in all things, both sentient and insentient, leads to the awareness of the eternity of life, the living of today will become the dead of tomorrow in the same way the creations of today will become the dust of tomorrow and so become the materials for future creation.

In Boydell's own words :

*"the Buddhist noble thought to recognise the rights of all living beings, (plants, animals and humans) being equal"*⁶.

It is probable that his conversion to Buddhism was the foundation upon which his personal artistic style was developed in the direction of the asymmetrical as opposed to the symmetrical. He began to follow the principles of this philosophy so ably put by Thomas Hoover in his book Zen Culture 1977 when he wrote :

*"It is all a deception. Master potters spend literally decades perfecting the Zen art of the controlled haphazard. One of the first principles they honour is Wabi which deplores non-functional decorative objects, polished surfaces, artificiality in shape or colour and anything unnatural to the material used. Works of art without 'Wabi' may have superficial external beauty, but they forfeit inner warmth. Bowls out of shape with cracks blobs and ashes in the glaze, invite us to partake of the process of creation through their asymmetry and imperfection. They lead us past the surface by virtue of its being deliberately marred"*⁷ - (See Plates 26 & 27).

It is not clear exactly when these philosophies were formed in his mind but what is clear is that this was a critical time in his life and his later development as an artist was much influenced by his life at this time. To understand the artistic aims and achievements of Cormac Boydell, it seems to me that one needs to appreciate his philosophical development and rapprochement with Buddhism and the influence of Zen ideals. Boydell admires Zen philosophy because it demonstrates the best principles for living and also qualities which can be admired in works of art. In all, there are seven characteristics which influence Zen aesthetics, all of which are of equal importance: asymmetry, simplicity, austere sublimity or lofty dryness, naturalness, subtle profundity or profound subtlety, freedom of attachment, and tranquillity.

*"Since, in Zen, "the Mind itself is Buddha," and "outside of the Mind there is no Buddha," the Buddha is nothing more than a human who has attained Awakening"*⁸.

Early Artistic Career 1972-1980.

In 1972 he returned to Ireland, probably a much changed and more mature man from the one that emigrated to work in Australia in 1968. However it is clear that art and Ireland were never far from his thoughts and at no time had he abandoned his vision of an artistic future. Back in Ireland he bought an old farmhouse near Allihies in West Cork, a wild and most remote part of Ireland where dramatic rock formations are very much part of the visual landscape. He converted the existing stable of the farmhouse into a studio, and initially it was in the area of drawings, prints and paintings that he first concentrated his efforts; as yet he had not

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10. The tenth part of the report deals with the foreign relations situation of the country. It gives a detailed account of the various foreign relations activities and the work done to improve them. It also gives a summary of the foreign relations results and the prospects for the future.

completed the moulding of his interest and ideas in ceramics. This appeared to be an exploratory period in his artistic career where he investigated each avenue of the artistic world open to him including sculptural works, functional works, artistic commercialism and art for art's sake. He appears to be aware of the need for a certain amount of commercialism in order to be a financially independent artist, not commercialism in the form of economics and mass production but the need to produce work that *stimulates* the interest of people in the *beauty of nature*. This being exemplified by his use of natural materials in his exhibition in Temple Bar in 1992. His challenge was to remain true to his own belief in the unique nature of his creativity, the internal issues of the spiritual, mental, visual and physical, while at the same time not ignoring the external issues which would allow him to provide a living for himself and his family.

Shortly after settling in Allihies he had an unexpected and profound mystical experience which had a strong impact on the following years. He began experimenting with different techniques to strengthen what he calls a '*mystical sense of connectedness*'⁹. He exhibited in 1973 and 1974 at the 'Irish Exhibition of Living Art' prints and drawings which were inspired by Anton Tapies, a Catalonian artist who was renowned for his understanding of how a working medium such as paint or print can be used to enhance its own natural qualities. Anton Tapies believed that a painting does not have to represent anything but rather it is a thing in its own right, a kind of talisman that even through touch can exert its own influence on us. He was also interested in the work of Asger Jorn, a Danish artist who is now considered to be one of the great expressionist painters of the second half of the twentieth century and the most important Scandinavian artist of his time. Another artist who was admired by Boydell and who inspired him was David Nash, an English sculptor who specialises in an art form that brings activity to geometric forms while at the same time mimics a *natural* balance with humour. In 1974 he returned to work as a geologist and spent some time in Libya prospecting for oil; the work that he undertook at this time appears to have been with the objective of financing his permanent move into an artistic career. However his spiritual needs and development were still not yet completed and in

1975 he changed direction, suspended his art activities and spent a year in France and Switzerland on a course of meditation. It is interesting to note that at this time he appeared uncertain about dedicating his life to art and spent two years lecturing in Dublin and Cork on meditation. He had an aptitude for communicating with people and assisting them to discover themselves and in so doing developing an inner strength. In 1977 he married the vivacious artist Rachel Parry whose interest is in the area of fine art. This action appears to have been the final preparation for the dedication of his life to art. His experiences to date resulted in his move to become a ceramist. He was attracted to clay for its simplicity, its lack of hype or status and its use as a common medium in every day life. He considered it important to dedicate his artistic life to working on everyday objects such as plates and other utensils. Indeed, the very fact that his artistic work was of practical use was in itself a motivation for what he was doing as it would advance the dignity of life. His work as a geologist provided a firm base for understanding clay as a medium and he considered working with clay as being as close as one could get to creating one's own rocks, which was a primary fascination for him. In the words of Anthony Caro, a sculptor with whom Boydell empathises :

*"I don't think it is possible to divorce sculpture from the making of objects, I needed to use a material that you could identify that it was there. I do not believe that the 'otherness' of a sculpture and by that I mean what differentiates a sculpture from an object should reside just within the material itself"*¹⁰.

Development as professional ceramic artist

In 1982 he finally dedicated his life to working as a ceramist. Initially he believed in using only material found in *nature*. Many of these materials were available locally: yellow ochre he obtained from the ground at a location near Allihes which, when burnt, produced a red ochre. He delighted in making his own colours, considering the purchase of chemicals to be cheating. Indeed, in order to provide variety, he never relied on even his own glaze recipes, preferring the random colour varieties obtained from ad hoc mixtures. In his own words "*natural colours work well with each other, they harmonise and strike a balance*"¹¹. The way he has developed and used colours

is consistent with the Buddhist principle of asymmetry, and this is also demonstrated by the fact that he never completely covered a form with glaze. , in the words of Thomas Hoover:

*"a bowl whose glaze only partially covers its clay provides a link with the natural world from which it came. Its texture springs out like a piece of natural drift wood"*¹² (See Plate 15 Fig i).

His work activity expanded, requiring the development of his studio and the construction of a gallery at his farm house at Allihes. This was necessary to facilitate the development of his art of making distinctive, colourful, chunky yet decorative and functional handmade ceramics. Initially he concentrated on small pieces such as butter dishes, entree bowls, lamps and tiles which he decorated with slip trailing, frequently in geometric patterns which evolved into faces and writing as his slip trailing became more fluent. His work however during this period was not entirely functional; artistically he created a form of pictorial ceramics which involved painting using ceramic materials on a ceramic background. He adopted a policy of creating and mixing his own colours based on a scientific understanding of how colours are derived; in the distant past all artists, including the Old Masters, would have evolved similar techniques. His colours evolved over the years to such an extent that by the 1990's they comprised a unique character. The effect was achieved by using a combination of matt and gloss with colours ranging over the complete colour spectrum. In Plate No 27 Fig i, the background colours range from pale yellows to almost orange in matt, spotted with a deep blue/green gloss glaze. In the main figure the shoulders are pale matt green with the colour undulating as only glaze can when fired, while the face has been slip-trailed with the same deep blue/green gloss as used for the background dots. He uses his skill of hand and eye co-ordination to vary the thickness of the lines to great effect and it is this technique which gives character and interest to his work. The generation of non-uniform lines is a technique used to stimulate the imagination of the observer. The facial surface is depicted in an orange yellow in a matt finish. The image is created on a roughened surface, bowl-like form, with raised flange on the outside of the bowl. The outer perimeter is also rough in form and effectively handles the transition from the circular centre to an approximate rectangular outer

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edge. The whole effect is enhanced by a pure gold boarder on the outer edge which brings a certain vibrancy to the colours. The works created are unique and individualistic, close to primitive art but the use of sophisticated skills including clever colour co-ordinating, application and *natural* materials transforms them from the primitive to the modern; true to his principles, there is no attempt to mimic others. The individuality of his work was quickly recognised and was soon followed by invitations to exhibit in 1983, first at 'The Irish Ceramics' exhibition in Dublin and Belfast, followed by the 'Cibéal Arts Festival' in Kenmare and the 'Art Objet' in Paris. The appreciation of his work was not solely due to his undoubted ability as a ceramist but was also due to his unique ability to paint with ceramic materials which transformed his work from the mundane to the unusual. At this time he specialised in using Kiltra clay which has a distinctive warm red colour and is sourced in Carlow and Wexford: his interest in this material was eloquently summarised by Hilary O'Kelly when she wrote :

*"For Cormac Boydell experimentation and involvement with different treatments of clay and metal oxides, to achieve varied textures and colours, is integral to working in this medium"*²⁰ (See Plates

20 & 23).

He works solely with his hands and avoids the use of tools such as a potter's wheel and even the use of a simple cutting wire. His assimilation of the basic attributes of *nature* determined that his work should be handmade. He is not afraid to leave his own unique imprint on his work as this adds to the character and individuality of each piece in the same way that volcanic rocks are indelibly marked by the action of their birth. As a sophisticated society we are apt to think that only primitive or naïve minds take tradition seriously, however Boydell fully understands that the pottery cycle is a microcosm of man-nature-culture. From digging clay, to forming it into wares, to glazing it is akin to that ordered by the seasons for the farmer (sowing, growing and harvesting), there is a *natural* pattern to everything. In acknowledging tradition, he recognises that we pass from naïve to knowledgeable understanding. His rejection of the use of tools is based on his belief in the need to preserve the inner life of the clay, in the same way that the traditional baker kneads yeast bread entrapping air within the dough and sealing it externally; so the clay

can be worked in like manner. The use of a knife or wire would destroy the seal worked into the clay with the hands and, by using his hands only, each piece of clay is given its own unique properties. The effect that this achieves is a completely handmade form which borders on the primitive but also produces a work of interest and curiosity which stimulates the mind. In the words of Smohalla, the native American Indian prophet, protesting against the proposal to turn his people into cultivators:

“My young men shall never work. Men who work can not dream, and wisdom comes to us in dreams. You ask me to plough the land. Shall I take a knife and tear my mother’s breast? Then when I die she will not take me to her bosom to rest. You ask me to dig for stone. Shall I dig under her skin for bones? Then when I die I can not enter her body to be born again. You ask me to cut grass and make hay and sell it and be rich like white men. But how dare I cut off my mother’s hair”¹⁴.

The great spontaneity of his work is sourced from his familiarity with and understanding of the materials that he uses. He tends to work with one base colour, perfecting it to his own satisfaction before moving on to the use of another base colour. Within the base colour he would use other colours, both harmonising and contrasting. To some, the effects of his colours could be considered startling; they are so vibrant and contradict in many ways the traditional understanding of colour harmonisation. The overall effect is distinctive and unique and his work continues to be admired for its innovation and creativity. He has been described by Aidan Dunne, art critic of The Sunday Tribune as :

“ a ceramicist of consistent brilliance and rare imaginative scope, with an unrivalled feeling for the earthy, gritty, tactile qualities of his materials”¹⁵.

Use of *Nature* in Artistic development.

Boydell has long been interested, nay fascinated, by *nature*. From his earliest childhood he can remember the warm feeling of fondling clay and his chosen professional career as a geologist was a further development of that interest. The inspiration for the art works created by him is derived from observations of *nature*.

The sharp outline of rock formations he mimics in his works, the edges of his plates and bowls reflect his observation of the surrounding hills as they impose themselves upon the skyline, the colours used are a reflection of the contrasting and harmonising colours he visually stores in his mind. The importance of *nature* is critical to understanding the shapes and forms he creates and is reflected in the lengthy hours spent observing the natural world and changing seasons. His whole effort is to represent the striking balances and rhythms created by *nature* both in shape, colour and form. However he believes in not only using shape, colour and form but also in the use of texture in his creations which again he derives from his observations. The manner in which he blends these elements results in a unique and individual art form which is both sculptural, pictorial and can be functional. His art work is so sensitive that it can reflect his image of a river bed as seen through water, the foam on water as seen against the background of a dark sea or the jagged sulphurous edges of a volcano. To achieve this rapport with *nature* he spends vast amounts of time in observation of every facet of *nature*; in this way he develops his understanding and hopes to impart a similar understanding and appreciation of *nature* to those who view his work. The underlying beauty within the wild and terrifying natural world is brought into focus in his work and can be appreciated for its magnificence. He delights in the extremes of *nature* for it is in its extremes that for him its beauty is most pronounced. His capability to spend so much time in this way can be attributed to his years studying meditation. He is so sensitive to the changing patterns of *nature* that he limits his creativity to specific times of year when he believes the medium of clay is most flexible and the images of *nature* most vivid in his mind. Living so closely with the elements in one of the most rugged and unspoilt areas of Europe has moulded not only his artistic mannerisms but also his way of life.

It is worth noting that, despite being surrounded by the artistic during his formative years, this artist had no formal artistic education and in the words of Eduardo Lanteri the sculptor:

"We ought from the beginning of our studies to understand what is before us, to find the reason for each depression and each projection, regardless of the time it takes us to analyse them. When

The first of these is the fact that the system is not a simple one. It is a complex system, and the complexity is not only in the number of components, but also in the way they are connected. The second is the fact that the system is not a static one. It is a dynamic system, and the dynamics are not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The third is the fact that the system is not a linear one. It is a non-linear system, and the non-linearity is not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The fourth is the fact that the system is not a deterministic one. It is a stochastic system, and the stochasticity is not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The fifth is the fact that the system is not a simple one. It is a complex system, and the complexity is not only in the number of components, but also in the way they are connected. The sixth is the fact that the system is not a static one. It is a dynamic system, and the dynamics are not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The seventh is the fact that the system is not a linear one. It is a non-linear system, and the non-linearity is not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The eighth is the fact that the system is not a deterministic one. It is a stochastic system, and the stochasticity is not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The ninth is the fact that the system is not a simple one. It is a complex system, and the complexity is not only in the number of components, but also in the way they are connected. The tenth is the fact that the system is not a static one. It is a dynamic system, and the dynamics are not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The eleventh is the fact that the system is not a linear one. It is a non-linear system, and the non-linearity is not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The twelfth is the fact that the system is not a deterministic one. It is a stochastic system, and the stochasticity is not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The thirteenth is the fact that the system is not a simple one. It is a complex system, and the complexity is not only in the number of components, but also in the way they are connected. The fourteenth is the fact that the system is not a static one. It is a dynamic system, and the dynamics are not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The fifteenth is the fact that the system is not a linear one. It is a non-linear system, and the non-linearity is not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The sixteenth is the fact that the system is not a deterministic one. It is a stochastic system, and the stochasticity is not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The seventeenth is the fact that the system is not a simple one. It is a complex system, and the complexity is not only in the number of components, but also in the way they are connected. The eighteenth is the fact that the system is not a static one. It is a dynamic system, and the dynamics are not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The nineteenth is the fact that the system is not a linear one. It is a non-linear system, and the non-linearity is not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other. The twentieth is the fact that the system is not a deterministic one. It is a stochastic system, and the stochasticity is not only in the way the components change, but also in the way they interact with each other.

we have learnt the reason our studies will proceed fast enough; and when we have mastered the principles and laws of nature, we can give free scope to our personal sentiment. Then there will be no more need of a teacher; for to impose a style on a student, without knowing whither his bent, his temperament, tends, is a crime. For is it not killing in him the artistic germ by imposing on him one's own way of looking at nature?"¹⁶.

Figurative ceramic sculptures.

An important stage in Boydell's work started in 1985 when he developed an interest in the arena of figurative sculptures. He made his first large scale figurative ceramic sculptures as a result of commissions from the Kenmare Cibeal Festival in 1983 and Cork Art Now in 1985. He does not object to working to a brief, provided that the brief is loose enough to allow him sufficient artistic and creative licence to generate the artistic desire that comes from within himself. Boydell has a great interest in and curiosity for the head form. In his own words:

"I like heads, I like the Celtic heads on high crosses and the small votive heads which were cast into wells. I also love the panache of quickly made things. I love the roughness of those Celtic heads they are almost not heads, they are almost boulders"¹⁷.

In his exhibition at the Temple Bar Gallery in 1992, one of his exhibits was 100 heads on sticks, based on an Irish mythological story where the Tain at the Ford of Cet Chuille slew 100 people. While Cet Chuille represents a gristly episode from the Tain, he is less interested in the myth than in the inherent magic of the materials he uses. More recently, his sculptures have developed a greater intimacy with nature, moving from the studio to the open air. It was wonderful to observe him, when I was in Cork during the summer of 1996, working on a piece for the International Celtic Festival in Lorient, France. He had chosen the theme of heads, which are prevalent in traditional Celtic designs, so the piece consisted of a group of heads, human and animal. In order to create his impression of the animal heads, he chose to work in their environment so as to absorb their ambience. He reflected that it was easier to work with cows and sheep because their natural curiosity allowed him to get close but horses were not as amenable. On the day in question he drove into a field where there were a number of wild horses; the first

reaction of the horses was to move to the far end of the field. However, by maintaining himself upwind of the horses and mimicking some of their movements he attracted their attention and their curiosity brought them closer to him. He set up his board and clay on the bonnet of his car to start his sculpture, he began with the nostrils when one of the mares laid her head on the roof of the car and maintained this pose for some time. As the horses continued to shuffle and push around us, Boydell adjusted his position to get the head at the angle he required and as he worked towards the cheeks and eyes he needed a support for the clay, solving this problem using chicken wire and paper. I moved away to observe the horse's reaction to Boydell; they seemed to accept him, with curiosity but without any fear. As the paper blew and rattled about in the wind, the horses jostled for position to see what was going on and resisted the temptation to flight, as horses would normally do. As the frame was covered with clay, the horses grew less interested but one of the mares had made up her mind that she was going to be his model and maintained the position of her head across the windscreen of his car, a convenient position for Boydell to observe the head. She kept this position despite occasional interference from the other horses, shunting them away when necessary. Eventually she remained alone in a position with her head across the windscreen and Boydell worked on. He pulled pieces of clay off the block and pressed them onto the head, the pulled and stretched effect of the clay giving the impression of rough textured hair (See Plate 28). He worked on the horse's head until the two minds were as one; first, the horse accepted the sculptor's wishes by maintaining the pose and later, the mare found that she was being accepted for her own qualities and acknowledged this with a display of complete trust by nuzzling his hair just as she would have a foal or as two horses would do when supporting one another. At his point he terminated his work, having decided that it was complete.

Method used to develop art forms

The ancient Celtic world had a fascination with the head form as the seat of understanding. Boydell has similarly appreciated and used this most ancient form to decorate and enhance his work. The image of the head, whether exaggerated or alone, possesses very specific properties. In his use and representation of the head, Boydell mimics the Ancients' method of honouring both Spirit and man.

Additionally, some of Boydell's sculptures appear also to incorporate local culture, e.g. the Australian aboriginal 'toas' and masks which he interprets in his own way. Toas have shapes similar to those found on totem poles and were used as location finders, for an example of a Boydell garden toa see Plate 19 a,b & c. The toa indicated the characteristics of a locality according to its unique topographical features, and in particular were a map of where water could be found in that area.

Boydell, has similarly used native materials to identify his work and sources of inspiration which demonstrate his respect for the natural world. Aidan Dunne, writing on his exhibition in the Temple Bar Gallery in August 1992, stated:

*"He works with ceramics and other natural materials – turf, plants, water - and his sculpture has an extraordinary, umbilical connection with the natural world"*¹⁸.

His use of natural materials like turf and grasses and their associated smells brings an extra dimension to his work, stimulating both the visual and sensual instincts of the observer.

Use of Folk Art and mythology in work.

I believe Folk art can be defined as the limitation of the artistic form to a narrow band of objectives. It would normally be born out of necessity and be both functional and well crafted. It is also normally distinctive, simplistic and hand crafted. In relation to ceramics it is the production of everyday objects for use by the immediate local community; however it can also be non-functional and even humorous where it performs the role of commentator in the community. The primary interest of these objects is that they are individualistic, with both the maker

and the locality influencing the design. The special quality of crafted ceramics is the beauty of intimacy, the articles are to be lived with every day, when compatibility with nature is an essential requirement for harmony. The beauty of such objects is not that of the noble, the lofty or huge but of the warm and familiar. The artistic craftsman on the other hand produces objects which places utility second and concentrates on the pursuit of beauty for beauty's sake.

Boydell grew up in a home where ceramics, glass and works of art had the same status as contemporary paintings. He was exposed to the influences of such artists as John Ffrench, Pat Scott and Louis Le Brocquy, and the ceramics of Grattan Freyer were highly valued in the Boydell home. Annually at Christmas time the Boydell family would visit the workshop of Grattan Freyer in Terrybaun, Co. Mayo and spend some time among his tables of slipware. It is clear that later on the works of Grattan Freyer and his form of craft art became a major subconscious influence on the artistic development of Boydell. Plate 7 Fig i clearly shows the influence of Grattan Freyer on the early art work of Boydell (see Plate 11) where his work is intricate and detailed and follows a geometric pattern. In Boydell's early years the influence of the craft artists such as Grattan Freyer and Ffrench is strongly evident in his work; the butter dishes and plates produced are clearly a functional design (see Plates 10 & 11) and the slipwear patterns are simple and folksy. In later years, after 1990, his art forms have developed from the craft-orientated designs of Grattan Freyer to a more minimalistic art form, where there is less geometry and more spontaneity (See plate 18). It was during this period that his own individualistic style emerged, and he moved from the strictly limited objectives of the folk artist to incorporate all his considerable experiences gathered during his time in Australia, Africa and other parts of the world, as well as his study of meditation and affinity with the laws of Buddhism. It is not sensible to compare the beauty of the strictly crafted art form with that of the beauty of the artistic but it is noticeable in Boydell's works that he has clearly striven to achieve a balance between the functionality of an object and the artistic as can be seen in his bowls produced in recent years. In this he has avoided the eccentricities of the egotistic and maintained a perspective that accords with the laws of nature and the

understanding of the common man. However there is another side of Boydell's work which is purely artistic and this is in the area of ceramic sculpture and painting.

Shapes and forms

I will consider shapes, and forms in two parts, first considering the development of the craft art forms and shapes employed by Boydell, followed by a review of his ceramic sculptural work.

As previously explained, Boydell's art forms were initially based on the regular geometric patterns and shapes traditional to the craft ceramist, plates were circular, butter dishes were of a rectangular or regular form, bowls were dished in standard cylindrical pattern and jars were easily identified as such. As he developed as an artist and the influences of Buddhist principles emerged in his work, the shapes and forms became more asymmetrical and organic. Plates changed from tending towards the symmetrical and circular to the asymmetrical and rugged, in particular while the functional centre of a plate continued to be circular, as befits its purpose, the outer shape tended to the rectangular or square with a rough indented finish, the smooth circular symmetry of the centre being identified with the calm reflection of the landscape as against the mountainous nature of the outer perimeter. This is evident in his work after 1978. The exceptional thickness of the clay used in his plates resembles the rock stratus at Allahies. The whole effect was to reflect the ruggedness and beauty that he observed in *nature* and felt bound to recreate. It is interesting to observe that the reverse side of a plate was treated in a similarly sympathetic way. A similar type change can be seen in his garden urns (See Plate 16) which changed from the accepted regular form with symmetrical opening to a less regular or formal body with a distinctively jagged nay ragged, top or opening. The changes in his use of colours were equally dramatic as he moved away from the traditional to a more generous form of self expression. This can be best demonstrated in the development of his work on garden urns where, during the eighties, each urn reflected his interest in volcanic activity and are so

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decorated, the body being jet black and the jagged top a sulphurous yellow. The changes in shape and form blended with his move away from the use of tools and reliance on the use of his hands solely as the means of creating his art forms.

At the same time as he developed his craft art forms he moved into the area of ceramic sculpture. In this area his work is very dramatic, the shapes and forms are influenced by *nature* and tradition, in *nature* by the harshness and ruggedness of the mountainous landscape surrounding him, in tradition by mythology or by native art for example the toas in Australia, which were considered to be a tribal badge or emblem. The main shapes that formed his ceramic sculptures are inspired by the volcano, the toas and heads. I have discussed his interest in heads before as they form an interesting aspect of his sculptural work where he uses the forms of both animals and humans. He consistently uses heads as a form of motive or decoration in both his functional and non-functional plates.

Methods of working.

Boydell works with *nature*, not to change it but to enjoy and complement it as it is. He finds that clay is more malleable in the warmer months and when very cold it can freeze. Very cold wet clay in cold winter weather is not as pleasant to work with as cool wet clay on a hot day. Accordingly, his sense of timing when working with clay is very attuned to the seasons and weather conditions, indeed his sense of timing is a reflection of his punctuality in his everyday activities. In periods of wet or very dry weather the drying process of the clay can be difficult, he believes therefore that it better to work with *nature* and take advantage of the most auspicious times for working with clay. For someone like Boydell who enjoys working out of doors, directly with clay and his subject, it is not possible to plan ahead without being in tune with *nature*. An understanding of the days weather can be forecasted by observation of the clouds and wind direction, thus allowing the day's work to be planned in the most productive way. It is very easy to lose track of time when working on a piece, especially when one gets into the flow and the right side of the brain takes over. Boydell firmly believes that to do his best work it is necessary to switch off the left side of the brain and give free rein to the right

side, as discussed in Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain by Betty Edwards 1979. It is now an established fact that the left hemisphere works in a verbal and analytical manner while the right hemisphere is non-verbal and 'global'.

Accordingly, working with the right hemisphere of the brain improves the mode of processing, being more rapid, complex, whole-pattern, spatial and perceptual. The fact that using the right hemisphere allows working with the whole-pattern as opposed to the localised detail has the effect of reducing anxiety and results in uninhibited work which subconsciously appeals to the outside observer.

Colour is very important to Boydell, he uses colour combinations that appeal to him at a particular time. In July 1996 he had a special fascination for matt yellow, from very pale yellow ochre to brilliant yellows to vanadium. Flowing through these yellows he used thin lines of dark green gloss. For me these colours seemed to give a flow of energy and stimulated creative thought which assisted in pulling me out of a rut in my own studio work. Another colour combination he uses is a matt pink-orange clay combined with turquoise and blue gloss glazes with specks of off-white with gold trim. This blending of colours evokes in me thought of home and family. There is no doubt that his colour combinations are special and form a major part of his work.

The hand-made aspect of his work, typified by finger prints in the clay, demonstrates a man at one with himself, exuding a joy with working with his hands and avoiding the use of tools to form the clay. His practice of constructing kilns and firing in the open air, on the side of a mountain, can be very exciting due to the varied and unpredictable nature of the firing and the effect that this produces on the glazes. He describes this practice as low tech firing and the use of a standard kiln as high-tech. He is not averse to using the standard kiln, as at times he requires the more predictable effects that this produces.

He has a respect for both nature and people and it is this sincerity that shows through in his work and is the magnet that attracts the interest of his admiring public.

The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country. It is a very interesting and informative study of the country's development. The second part of the report deals with the specific details of the country's development. It is a very detailed and thorough study of the country's development.

The third part of the report deals with the specific details of the country's development. It is a very detailed and thorough study of the country's development. The fourth part of the report deals with the specific details of the country's development. It is a very detailed and thorough study of the country's development.

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Unlike England, there is no established Irish tradition in ceramics. In England great studio potters like Bernard Leach and Michael Cardew are in the 20th century to the forefront of the establishment of English tradition. Indeed it was normal for early Irish potters to have had an English training and consequently they did not develop or evolve a distinctive Irish style. Accordingly, while we have always had fine potters, the local folk styles that traditionally existed have succumbed to outside influences. If we had had a strong tradition in ceramics, outside influences would have been absorbed in an expansive way and would have become a beneficial influence and not all smothering as actually occurred. Cross pollination of ideas for potters is important in the development of a strong tradition, exchange of ideas is essential for a live and vibrant industry. On the other hand isolation appears to be a real advantage for the ceramic sculptor and artistic potter. In isolation they remain oblivious to fashionable trends, and are forced to search for that most precious of artistic goals, the individual artistic statement exemplified by the unique. It is only since the 1950's that sufficient talented Irish potters have had the competence and capacity to blend business and artistic skills and in so doing develop an distinctive Irish entity. Two of the Irish potters involved in this development have been previously mentioned namely Grattan Freyer and John Ffrench. Today Irish ceramics are enjoying a boom at home and abroad; perhaps those benefitting most are production potters producing tableware like Nicholas Mosse, a good business man who produces sponge ware. Stephen Pierce, who brought out a line of functional bowls in red Irish earthenware simply glazed in white on the inside and with single white dash on the outside, has also been successful. Many others have also achieved success working in both stoneware and earthenware.

Boydell is a relatively new figure in Irish ceramics, and is best described as a ceramic artist. His medium of slip-trailing to produce decorative earthenware is not new but his approach has been fresh and unique. He is probably the most creative and innovative of ceramic artists in Ireland today. His feeling and respect for the materials he uses has been a major factor in his artistic development and follows in

the tradition of Oisín Kelly, referred to earlier, who nurtured his introduction into the world of ceramics. Michael Robinson during a lecture in NCAD in 1995 stated that:

'the abstract paintings on Boydell's plates were as great as any you could find in the world in any medium'.¹⁹

It is interesting to note that neither Kelly or Boydell chose the artistic world as their first choice of career and accordingly are not professionally trained; rather it was their basic creativity that thrust them into the artistic world of the artist. In the case of Boydell, this has produced an artist that lacks any inhibitions in the pursuit of the creative and beautiful. There is no doubt that when history is written the work of Boydell will be seen as an important factor in the development of the ceramics in Ireland today. In my interview with Michael Robinson he concluded that:

"Cormac Boydell is one of the most important and influential figures in Irish ceramics today".²⁰

Assessment of Artist and his art work

Who is to place limits on the imagination and creativity of an artist?. Is there such a concept as right or wrong when one is making an assessment on an individual's work?. Surely we fail in our understanding of art by endeavouring to place limitations. The purpose of the artist is not primarily one of function but one of creativity, and success can be conferred on the artist if he succeeds in opening and expanding the minds of those who observe his work or indeed if he provokes them to re-examine their understanding of the basic concepts of life. It assists if the work of the artist is of a format that brings it into daily contact with his public and if a balance is achieved between the decorative and the functional. Boydell's work is always decorative and frequently functional as well, his use of basic colours and ability to paint using ceramic materials is exceptional in Ireland and perhaps the most striking aspect of his art form. He derives his inspiration from *nature*, and to achieve simplicity of design, uses what he observes in *nature* to form in his mind the art forms that he then creates. Viewing his work, one can get lost in one's own imaginary world of colour, line and form. There is a primitive aspect to his work

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that inspires a belief that man and *nature* are indivisible and cannot be separated. Despite modern attitudes and the moves that man has made to reduce his dependence on the natural world, Boydell's work remind us of the simplicity of life and basic needs of man. He has sacrificed much in this materialistic world to demonstrate his belief in man; his work may lack the symmetry of the machine-made object but, being created with his own hands, demonstrates the beauty of the handmade. Indeed the irregularities and the lack of conformity add to the attractiveness of his work. His use of basic materials re-emphasises our belief in simple and unsophisticated forms and demonstrates his basic humility. In the words of Bernard Leach:

"There are two parts to each of us the surface man who is concerned with poise and position, who thinks what he has been taught to think; and the real man who responds to nature and seeks life in his work".²¹

Boydell's work helps us to reawaken the *real person* in each of us. His attraction to the Buddhist philosophy has developed his perception that man, art and *nature* form a harmonious and inseparable part of life and this is demonstrated in both the way he lives and the art works he creates. Boydell has the skills necessary to be a great artist. However, it is his understanding of Zen culture which provides the vision necessary for true greatness. In the words of Shinichi Hisamatsu in his book Zen and the Fine Arts 1992 :

"When in the West, the 'culture of form' changes to one in which the Self Without Form expresses itself, then something will emerge that has not been seen before outside the Orient".²²

His work encompasses the best aspects of the craftsman and the artist and in so doing is unique, individualistic and of true character. Boydell's niche in the market place includes the area of functional bowls and plates in a wide variety of sizes - petite to very large - serving bowls in various shapes, large urns standing two feet or more with unique thick splashes and dripped glaze. He also produces table top and garden sculptures and paints with glazes on his ceramic surfaces. Painting with slips and oxide colours, covering with clear glaze as Nicholas Mosse and Geoffrey Healy do, is the usual but Boydell's knowledge of colour, glazes and the chemistry behind his materials allows him the freedom to paint using glazes. This

is Boydell's uniqueness and has resulted in him becoming one of the most important and influential figures in Irish ceramics today.

Conclusion.

Boydell has achieved a huge amount during the last 15 years. He has developed a unique art style which has been recognised and acclaimed. His work exhibits a degree of spirituality that can only come from a belief in one's abilities and an inner strength. He brings a breath of fresh air to the world of Irish ceramics and it is my opinion that his work will continue to develop and evolve, provoking thought and admiration from the viewer. His rejection of modern materialism sheds light on how mankind might adapt and move to a more basic and rewarding lifestyle, in closer harmony with *nature* and the environment. I judge his career in ceramics to be successful and rewarding and look forward to witnessing the continued evolution and recognition of his work.

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Foot Notes to Quotes

1. John Michell - The Earth Spirit 1989- page 3
2. Quote from Mary Boydell 18/11/96
3. Mary Boydell 18/11/96
4. From Mary Boydell 18/11/96
5. Daisaku Ikeda 1976- page 8
6. Interview with Cormac Boydell 2/7/96
7. Hoover - Zen Culture 1977- page 197
8. Hisamatsu - Zen and the Fine Arts 1982 - page 18
9. From Mary Boydell 18/11/96
10. Art Bulletin Vol 10 April/May 1996 - page 29
11. Interview with Temple Bar Gallery for exhibition 16 July/22 August 1992.
Earth - Stone - Plant
12. Hoover - Zen Culture 1977 - page 198
13. Hilary O'Kelly for Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Cork. Cormac Boydell
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14. Mitchell - The Earth Spirit 1989 - page 4.
15. Aiden Dunne - The Sunday Tribune 4th. Sept 1994
16. Eduardo Lanteri - Modelling and Sculpting the Human Figure 1985 - page 47.
17. Press Release - Temple Bar Gallery Interview for Exhibition "Earth-Stone-
Plant" 16 July / 22 August 1992.
18. Aiden Dunne - Sunday Tribune 2nd. August 1992.
19. Michael Robinson - Lecture N.C.A.D. 1995
20. Michael Robinson - Interview with V. Alexander 12th. November 1996.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

RESEARCH REPORT

NO. 101

BY

DR. J. H. HARRIS

AND

DR. R. M. HARRIS

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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Foot Notes to Quotes (Cont)

21. Bernard Leach “ A Potter’s Challenge 1976 - page 17
22. Hisamatsu - Zen and the Fine Arts 1982 - page 60.

COLOUR PLATES

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Note: All photographs taken by Author from private collections unless otherwise stated.

1.	10.10.19
2.	11.10.19
3.	12.10.19
4.	13.10.19
5.	14.10.19
6.	15.10.19
7.	16.10.19
8.	17.10.19
9.	18.10.19

... ..



Fig i: Rock Formation , Coomeen



Fig ii: Mine Shaft at Allihies



Fig i: Idyllic laneway leading to the studio of Boydell.



Fig ii: Gateway to
his home and
studio

EARLY PLATES

PLATE 3

Fig i & Fig ii - Early plates of the 1960's

Almost round 7"-9" in diameter approx.

Shows influence of Grattan Freyer.

All plates depict Boydell's interest in natural sciences. He has used his red or white earthenware, brushed on white or black slip and has used the sgraffito method to enhance detail.

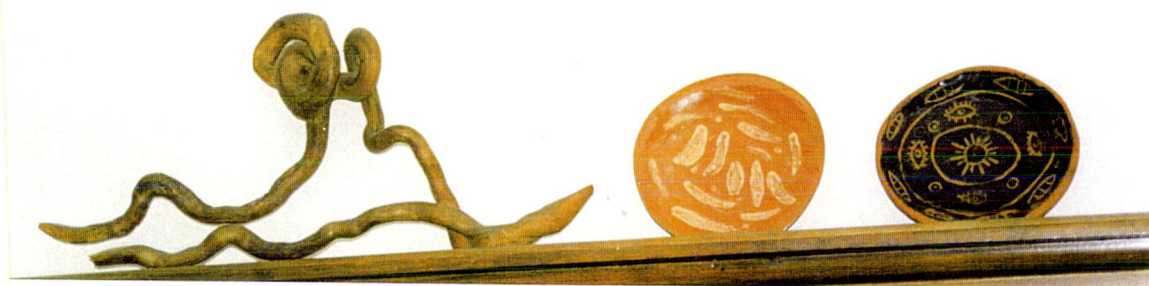


Fig i



Fig ii



Fig i: Earthenware vessel using coloured slip with sgraffitto detailing on white earthenware.



Fig ii:
Hand made wool rug using design created for vessel in fig i.



Fig i: Red earthenware vessel with black slip and sgraffito detailing



Fig ii: White earthenware vessel showing influence of Picasso. First evidence of the human face emerging in Boydell's work.



Fig I: Red earthenware hexagonal box with white slip trail. White spots may have been influenced by the family pet - a dalmation.

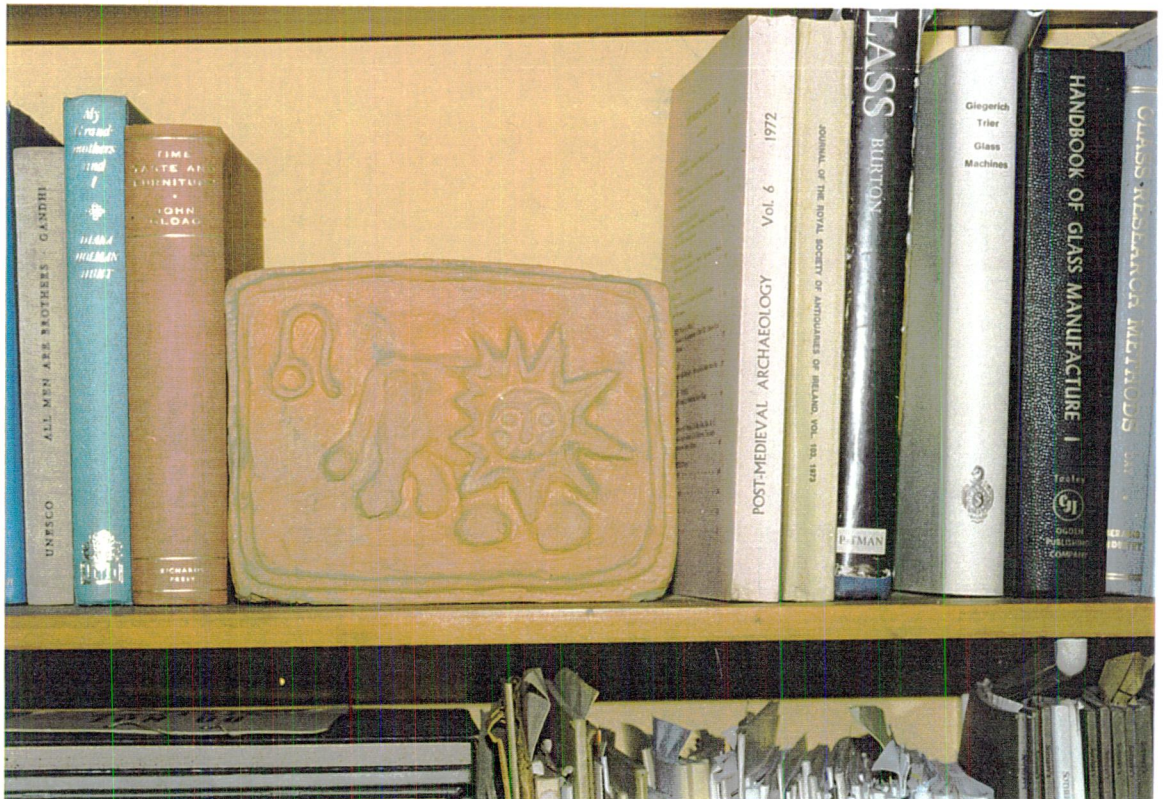


Fig ii: Red earthenware box with relief design of Leo - put to practical use at home.



Fig i: Detail of dresser - showing Grattan Freyer plates in everyday use.



Fig ii: A treasure trove of pottery - Grattan Freyer mugs & plates together with Boydell's plates



Fig i: John Ffrench bottle which forms part of the collection of Mr & Mrs B. Boydell.



Fig ii: 1960's & early 1970's -
Small collection of Boydell's
dishes obviously influenced by
John Ffrench. (Referred
to by his mother as
his "oxo" period.)

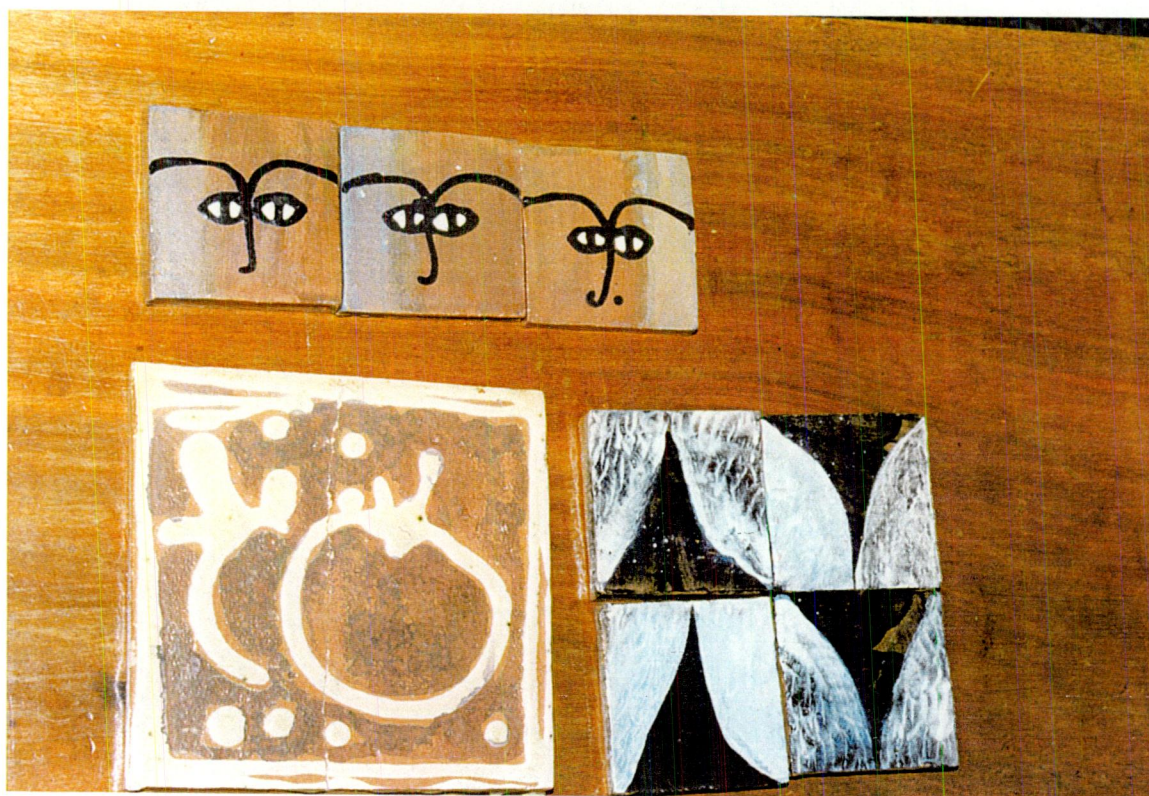


Fig i: A selection of tiles. Re-emergence of the face.
Boydell tried many forms of ceramic pieces during the late 1970's,
like tiles, butter dishes and lamps

Fig i & Fig ii: Earthenware butter dishes with white slip trailing covered with thin glaze.



Fig i



Fig ii



Fig i: A progression of Boydell's work

a. Late 1950's 3 fish bowl - 6" diameter

b. 1964 sliptrailed plate - 9" diameter

c. 1984 blue/turquoise

d. 1990's white/turquoise

(c & d shows move to the asymmetrical and emergence of rugged edges)

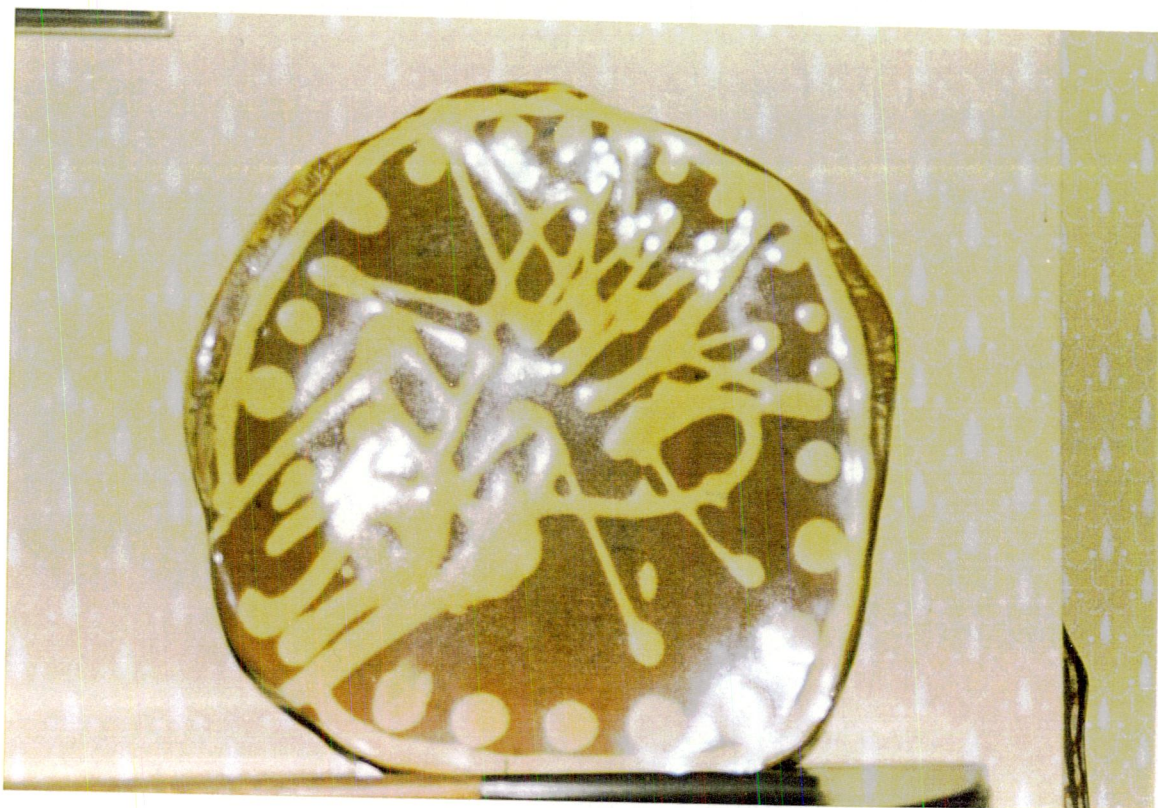


Fig i: "Him Morning Star" 1981
Plate showing change in style - introduction of square corner
and outline. More confident slip trail



Fig ii: Dish showing progression of work.

Fig i & Fig ii: Plates continuing on a similar design trend.
Introduction of his interest in and love of music.



Fig i: J. S. Bach



Fig ii: Shows an excellent likeness of his father - Brian Boydell



Fig i: 1983 - Clay has been rolled out between Hessian and folded at corners to obtain shape. Lavish gold rim enhances the colours. Imprint of hessian can be seen on underside - Note wonderful warm orange/pink colour of clay. Size 8"



Fig ii: 1984 - This bowl is of similar type - see underside in Fig i. Size 10"w x 4"h.



Fig i: 1984 - Partial glaze in vibrant turquoise allows the natural colour of the clay (the natural colour of Australian earth) to have significance. Vague lines excite the imagination. A return to the "spots".



Fig ii: Mid 1980's. Shows Boydell's volcanic glaze with evidence of unique dripping.



Fig i: Early 1980's & 1990's

Earthenware pots show move from early 1980's on left to 1990's on right.

Red earthenware pot with white slip trailing allowed to drip over form in haphazard control to raku fired vessel, showing round based rising to square top.

This vessel is like a live volcano.



Fig i: 1986 Open
Small prototypes for landscape bottle on right. Larger version on left.



Fig ii: 1990's
Later bottle



Fig i

Fig i & Fig ii: 1980's-1990's
Detail from dresser all in constant use in the home
Note small entree dishes and evidence of fingerprints (blue dish - fig i).



Fig ii

Toas are Aboriginal direction posts. The ones shown in plates 19a, 19b, 19c are all life size. They were exhibited in The Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Cork.



Fig i: Showing the South face



Fig ii: Showing the North face



Fig iii: Showing some detail



Fig i

Fig i & Fig ii

Sculptural pieces from Temple Bar. Increased use of volcanic impression. Raku fired
 Could have been fired in his open air kiln, a feature of his exhibition at
 Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Cork, October 5-29, 1990.

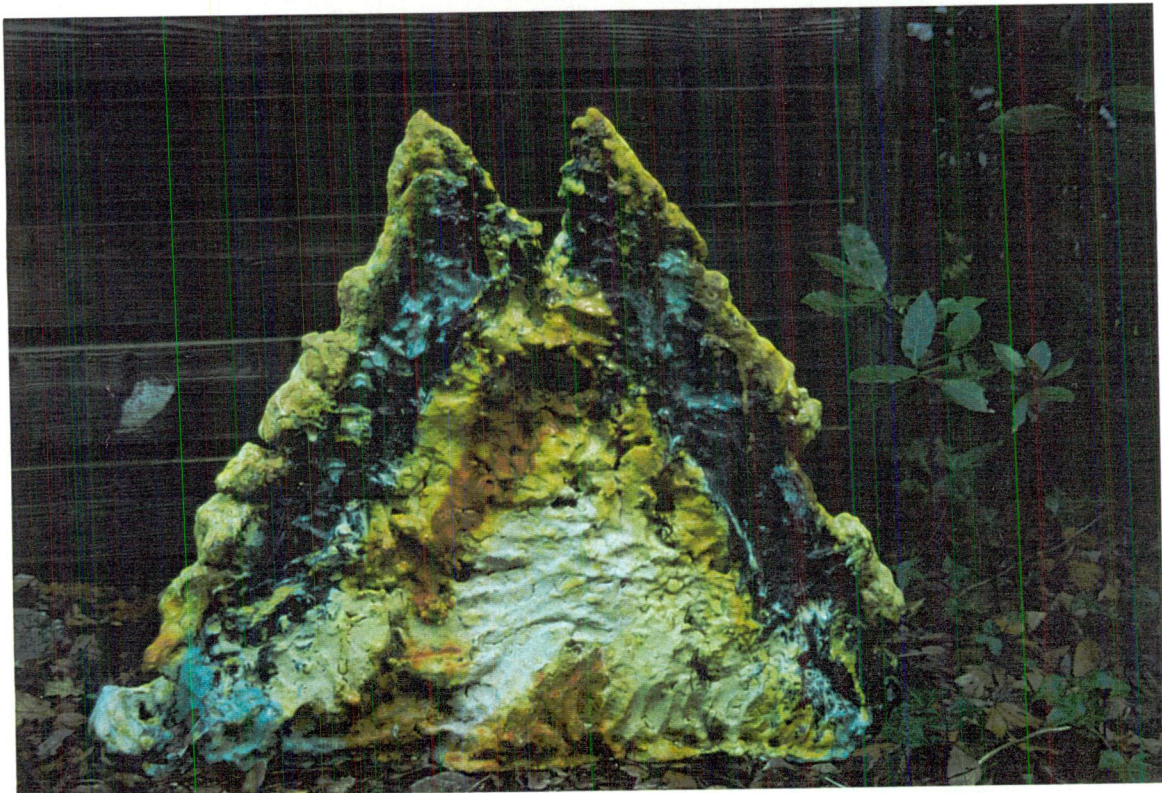


Fig ii

Fig i: Cormac Boydell buidling an open air kiln - a feature of his work at this time.
(See over)

Cormac Boydell

A L L I H I E S W O R K



Design: John O'Regan / Photography: Niall Moore / Printing: Orchard Press, Dublin

CRAWFORD MUNICIPAL ART GALLERY, CORK
October 5th-29th, 1990



Fig i & Fig ii: 1996
Selection of plates,
vessels, a mural
and a painting
in Boydell's
studio.



Fig i: 1990's
Landscape vessel (see plate 17 for prototype)
showing spiral design and definite fingerprints under the glaze.



Fig ii: 1990's
Landscape vessel showing the emergence of his combination of matt and gloss glazes.
The vibrant stripe of gloss showing as dark blue/green
which can also be seen in plates of mid 1990's.



Fig i: Detail of Boydell's unique glazes.



Fig i: 1991

Vase showing round base rising to square rugged top.
Very interesting deep dark sea green underglaze covered in white frothy
matt satin glaze giving an overall rough textured finish.
A hint of warm salmon pink veins down the right hand side
- it reminds me of the froth and foam on an ebbing tide
warmed by the glow of a red sky at evening sunset.



Fig i: Plates of the 1990's (left to right)

- a) 1992 - yellow glaze with orange vanadium and dark gloss glaze. Real emergence of hand made plates with fingerprints on them - shape is much more square.
- b) 1992 - shows spiral design without fingerprints.
- c) Raku plate with rough edges.



Fig ii: 1995 Boydell's answer to Riverdance - "Rinca" - shows a sense of humour.



Fig i: 1996

Shows a resemblance to the picture of his father in plate 13 - fig i
and also to his "Ri na Reann" series - shown in
The Design Yard, Temple Bar in 1995.

Boydell is now using bought in oxides for freedom of palette colours.
"Hand made" very much in evidence. The piece shows great confidence and maturity.

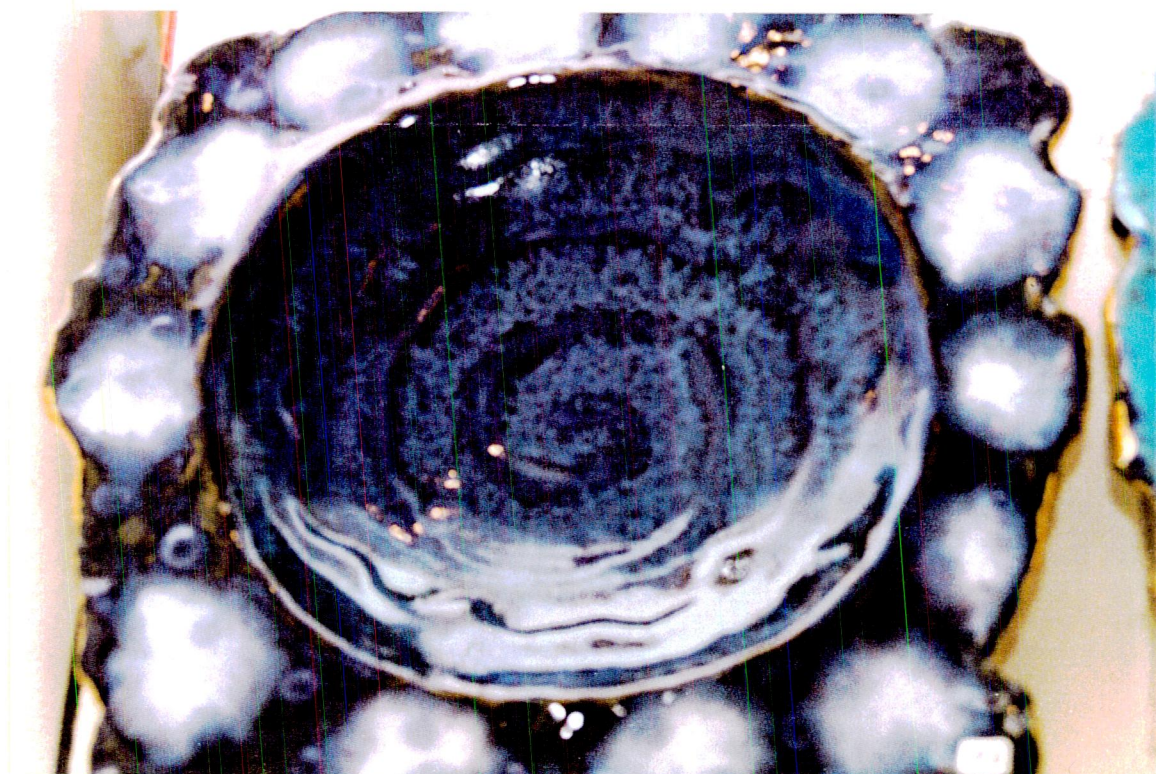


Fig ii: This rugged edged dish is finished with a rich 22 carat gold band.
The central bowl with the spiral design is bounded by pale blue fluffy blobs
which for me resembles a cloudy sky reflected around a ripple in a pool.
Size 12" diagonally.



Fig i & Fig ii: Horses Head
Boydell works directly with the clay - while the horse stretched out her head and neck across the roof of his car - he worked in silence using the right hand side of his brain as described in Betty Edwards's book - "Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain", using his eyes to look and his hands to form the clay.





Appendix 1.

CORMAC BOYDELL - GALLERY EXHIBITIONS

-
- 1955: Royal Dublin Society Children's Art (Prize Winner)
- 1956: Caltex Children's Art (Prize Winner)
- 1973: Irish Exhibition of Living Art
- 1974: Irish Exhibition of Living Art
- 1983: New Irish Ceramics, Dublin and Belfast
Cibéal Arts Festival, Kenmare
 Art Objet, Grand Palais, Paris
- 1984: Neuvième Biennale Internationale de Ceramique d'Art
 Vallauris, France
 Cork Potters
- 1985: "Man of Ecstasy" sculpture commission, Cibéal Arts Festival,
 Kenmare.
Cork Art Now, Crawford Gallery, Cork.
 EVA, Limerick: Eye and Heart, Bandon Gallery.
 Killarney Arts Week
Collectors Choice, Butler Gallery, Kilkenny.
Cork 800 Ceramics, Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork.
- 1986: The Chantry Gallery, Bunclody.
Ob Art, Paris.
 Tom Caldwell Gallery, Dublin.
 GPA Emerging Artists Awards Exhibition, Dublin.
Cork and San Francisco Potters, Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork.
 Ulster Museum Ceramic Collection Travelling Exhibition, Belfast,
 Kilkenny and Cork.
- 1987: Four Irish Ceramists, Fenderesky Gallery, Belfast.
 Four Directions, West Cork Arts Centre.
 Skip Obs, West Cork Arts Centre.
 S.A.D.E. Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork.
 Summer Ceramics, Belltable Arts Centre, Limerick.
 Craft Ireland, Irish Cultural Relations Travelling Exhibition, Dublin
 Britain and Europe.

- West Cork Artists and Craftworkers, Kilmainham, Dublin.
 Living Landscape '87', West Cork Arts Centre and Municipal Gallery, Cork.
 A Critical Sense of Contemporary Art, Limerick City Art Gallery.
 International Potters Camp, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Wales.
 Frank Lewis Gallery, Killarney.
 Craft Potters of Ireland, Bank of Ireland, Dublin.
 Society of Cork Potters, Cork.
 Recent Acquisitions, Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork.
 Landesgewerbeamt Gallery, Karlsruhe, Germany.
- 1988: Hanwerkskammer Gallery, Hamburg.
 Inaugural Exhibition, HQ Gallery, Crafts Council of Ireland, Dublin.
 Sculpture Exhibition, Muckross Gardens, Killarney.
 Irish Ceramics - the New Tradition, HQ Gallery, Dublin.
 O'Riada Gallery, Bantry.
Celebration, HQ Gallery, Dublin.
- 1989: Crafts Council of Ireland, Dublin.
 Frank Lewis Gallery, Killarney.
 Cork Arts Society, Dublin.
 Society of Cork Potters, Crawford Gallery, Cork.
 Open Ceramics, Harmony Hill Arts Centre, Lisburn, N. Ireland.
 Narrow Water Gallery, Hollywood, Co. Down.
- 1990: 14th. Irish Crafts Trade Fair, Dublin.
 Crafts Council of Ireland
 Open Ceramics, Lisburn.
 "Allihies Work", Crawford Gallery, Cork.
 Society of Cork Potters, Crawford Gallery, Cork.
- 1991: Contemporary Crafts, West Cork Arts Centre.
 Summer Show, Crafts Council, Dublin.
 Cork Potters, Crawford Gallery, Cork.
 "Vessels", Triskel Arts Centre, Cork.
 "Lands", Artworks Gallery, Cork.
- 1992: Ireland - Japan Connection, Crawford Gallery, Cork.
 Otter Fine Arts, Co. Armagh.
 Keane on Ceramics, Kinsale.
 Fletcher Challenge (selected), Auckland, New Zealand.
 Sols Exhibition, Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin.
- 1993: Cork Arts Society, Anniversary Touring Exhibition.
 The Boathouse, Castletownsend.
 Beara Artists, Castletownbere.
 Cork - Cracow Exchange, Krakow.
 Art Presence, Crawford Gallery, Cork.

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- 1994: Grainstore Gallery, Galway Arts Festival.
- 1995: A Renaissance of Irish Craft, Philadelphia.
A Potters Choice, Crafts Council, Dublin.
Iontas, Sligo, Dublin and Belfast.
Siamise Tire, Arts Centre, Tralee.

Appendix 2

REPRESENTATION IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The Ulster Museum
The Crafts Council of Ireland
The Crawford Municipal Gallery of Art, Cork
Allied Irish Bank Headquarters, London
The National Museum of Ireland
Department of the Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, Dublin

PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

1994 : Cothu Awards.
1995 : Boyle Arts Festival Presentation.
1996 : Cork International Choral Festival.

INSTALLATIONS AND LANDSCAPE ART INCLUDE

- 1985 : "Man of Ecstasy", Cibeal Cube, Cibeal Arts Festival, Kenmare.
- 1987 : "The Four Directions", West Cork Arts Centre and the Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork.
"Angel and Four Element Altars", International Potters Camp, Aberystwth, Wales.
- 1988 : "108 Nature Images", Muckcross Gardens, Killarney.
- 1990 : "Allihies Work" (sculptures and natural materials), Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork.
- 1992 : "Irish-Japanese Meditation Garden", Crawford Gallery, Cork.
"Rock and Stones" (Nature Installation), Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin.
- 1993 : Cork-Cracow Exchange, Galeria Pryzmat, Krakow.
- 1994 : Grainstore Gallery, Galway Arts Festival.

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Appendix 4

CORMAC BOYDELL'S CERAMICS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE FOLLOWING
LOCATIONS:

Keane on Ceramics, Kinsale, Co. Cork.

Design Yard, 12 East Essex Street, Temple Bar, Dublin 2.

The Craft Council, Powerscourt Centre, Dublin
The Craft Shop, Bantry, Co. Cork.

Stone Circle Crafts, Kenmare, Co. Kerry.

The Guinness Gallery, Foxrock, Co. Dublin.

Frank Lewis Gallery, Killarney, Co. Kerry.

Quinlans Ceramics, Macroom, Co. Cork.

and by commission.

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The first of these is the fact that the
 system is not a simple one, but a
 complex one, involving many factors
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