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**NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN:  
FACULTY OF DESIGN & CRAFT.**

**POOLE POTTERIES  
SOCIAL, TECHNICAL ADVANCEMENTS  
IN THE 1950's**

**BY**

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## Introduction

``They celebrate confidence in the future, the excitement of the present, the sheer joy of having so much`` ( Hine, 1987, pg64).

`They`, in the above quotation refers to objects created in the `50s. The words `future`, `excitement`, and `present` are key elements in the study of `50s history. And it is these elements that have drawn me to this era. The decade that marked the halfway point for this century brought many new developments and changes in people's lives, both in Europe and America.

There was a sense of freshness that prevailed amongst the people of the `50s. World War Two had just ended. It caused much destruction, but it also caused a change in lifestyle and a new start for its people. There were new incentives and influences felt in every aspect of modern day `50s life. Being a design student, I find it interesting to consider the possibility, that these changes may have had a bearing on the design world. If the `50s brought with it a shift in attitudes related to the main objective of rebuilding nations after the war, then maybe designers' objectives and influences also changed?

What I aim to do in this thesis, is to study the various developments and changes throughout the `50s, in Europe and America, such as science and technology, World War Two, American consumer culture and Modernism. I will discuss the implications these features may have had on the design process employed by `50s designers. To narrow it down, I have chosen an English ceramic company to base my research around. The company I have chosen as the focus of my thesis is Poole Pottery. It was founded in 1873 and still runs successfully today. It has changed hands many times, throughout its time, but its name has remained the same. I am specializing in ceramics, and am particularly interested in surface decoration and form, and its relation to industrial





ceramic ware. I was drawn to Poole's '50s ranges, because of their bright patterns, colours and their modern shapes. The sense of excitement and vigor felt throughout the people of the '50s, shines from the work Poole produced at this time.

I began my research by examining sources in my college library (N.C.A.D) but found it difficult to gather enough information on Poole. My research took me further afield and I contacted David Queensberry (a past designer for Poole and also a successful designer in his own right). He kindly passed on information to me. This information contained listings of books, booklets from Poole Pottery Collectors Club and a name to contact at the V+A. The initial problem I faced when I began my research was the type of information available on Poole. The three most relevant books were The Poole Potteries by Jennifer Hawkins, Poole Pottery; Carter, and company and their successors, by Lesley Hayward and a catalogue from an exhibition held in 1997 entitled Poole in the '50s by Richard Dennis. Unfortunately these books only deal with the general history of Poole. They list designers that have passed through and catalogue the work Poole has produced. But none of the three books suggest the inspiration for the designs. Richard Dennis' catalogue touches on some significant developments in the world during the '50s, but does not discuss the possibility that these developments may have had a bearing on Poole's design process. This is the area that I hope to develop in my thesis.





## **Chapter One:**

### **World War Two**

In the mid- nineteenth century Britain marvelled at the new discoveries of the Industrial Revolution, such as steam engines and the possibilities they brought to industry. The objective of the Great Exhibition in 1851 was to educate the general public on the improvements and new discoveries in industrial England. The focus was on machinery, but not much emphasis was put on how it could enhance the public's quality of life. However in 1951 at the Festival of Britain, both industry and raw materials were again presented, but there was also a new agenda. That was the rebuilding of Britain in the aftermath of World War Two.

Unlike the U.S.A., the British economy and infrastructure was greatly affected by the war. The morale and confidence of the people as a nation had also been badly bruised. Consequently the main objective of the nation after the war was to rebuild England to its former glory. They wanted again (as in 1851) to be celebrating the country's achievements. The country needed to invest time and money into industry, something it had not been able to do for some time. England was affected quite badly during the war, as bombing caused alot of destruction. But thankfully many industries survived. However, destruction was one element, which made its mark. Another was the restriction employed by the government on industry during the war. The name given to this was the "Utility Scheme". It had profound implications on the British design world For example:

"When the Second World War started the government controlled prices and restricted supply of timber to the the furniture and other industries"( Lubbock, 1995, pg324).



This scheme meant that manufacturing industries had to revise and rethink their designs. No longer had they the freedom of choice of materials. The restrictions the government had employed meant industries had to revise their manufacturing process. Creativity had to be directed in other ways, in order to get over this obstacle.

"The idea was simply to make replacement furniture of a utilitarian kind available at the cheapest prices and the least demand upon the supply of raw materials and labour. At this point aesthetics were not a primary concern" (Lubbock, 1995, pg324).

As you can imagine this was quite frustrating for both the manufacturers and, in particular, the creative energies of the designers. This of course did not mean that their skills were no longer valuable, infact it also required skill to design and produce objects of high quality and good design to comply with the Utility Scheme's wishes. Their creative energies were therefore directed in a different direction. Good design was still important. Many designers continued designing work that could not be produced during the duration of the Scheme, but saved them in the hope that they may be used some day (and many were). The scheme lasted from 1942-52. It affected industries such as furniture, fabric, clothing, shoes, pottery, and etc. However, it is the pottery industry which particularly interests me.

Up to the '50s the English ceramic industry had enjoyed a long and successful career. It had established a reputable name for itself throughout the world. Names like Wedgwood, with its Jasperware and highly decorated pieces were seen as significant in the English pottery world. Manufacture of products came to a stand still in 1942 with the introduction of the scheme. "Decorative and inessential wares were prohibited ... only undecorated natural clays were to be produced.





"(Lubbock, 1995, pg324). Poole Potteries were also included in these restrictions. In 1942 John Adams of Poole wrote:

"We now make only cheap, plain utility ware at fixed prices, but I do think we are making some of the best in the country"(Hayward, 1995, pg87).

During the War the two chief designers for Poole were John Adams and Truda Carter. Before the War Poole had a tradition of decorated hand painted wares incorporating images of flowers and animals. These designs were put on hold while the war continued. Another significant designer for Poole in the '40s was Ernest Ballaley. He designed the utility ware Poole produced throughout the '40s and '50s.

"The Utility ware was designed and modelled by Baggaley. He used the existing Streamline saucer but rethought and remodelled the remaining complete domestic range. He ordered 20 tons of frit, made a special glaze and for several years produced quantities of the plain-cream ware for which there is great demand."( Hawkins, 1980, pg147).

The Streamline range mentioned above is important in the development of Poole throughout the '50s. It originated in 1935, designed by John Adams and was restyled throughout the utility age and developed again in the '50s. Fig.1 shows the original John Adams, Streamline range (1936-37). The surface of the ware has been handpainted by Truda Carter and Ruth Pavely. Fortunately for Poole, the Utility Scheme had not been introduced when this range was being designed and decorated. If we look now at Fig.2 we see the restyled version of the streamlined range, now named Sherbourne. This was produced during the Utility Scheme, which meant it could not





Fig.1







Fig.2





be painted in elaborate designs, only two simple colours. But the surface decoration changes again in Fig.3, when the Utility Scheme had ended. Poole, in 1953-55, was again able to freely decorate its wares. Therefore Poole's work during the Scheme stands out as less decorated. (The name Streamline is not only important in relation to a particular tableware range in Poole, but also is the name given to a particular style that was born in the '30s and lead into the '50s. I will discuss this in a later chapter.) The restyled version of John Adams Streamlined range was not seen until the 50's. What did emerge by the end of the 40's were the Twintone and the Cameo range.

The main influence the Utility Scheme had on Poole was that the design team was more eager than ever to produce new and exciting goods. They wanted to draw a new market and recreate the company's image. Rebuilding its sales was an important factor. During the War families would probably have not bought much ceramic ware because they could not afford it, but also because what they had was durable and of high quality. The ceramics industry needed then to entice and stir the public's interest again. The emergence of consumer culture from the States aided this and also the fact that the war had ended and peoples' spirits had risen. Poole seized this opportunity and entered its new products in the Festival of Britain in 1951.

At this point I would like to say that the Utility Scheme was not a major influence in the development of Poole during the '50s, but it did create golden opportunities for Poole to reinvent itself. The Utility Scheme's aftermath coupled with the war ending created opportunities for design and industry in Britain i.e. there was a new agenda, this was rebuilding the British nation. This new agenda created an opening for industries (including Poole) to show with the rest of the nation, how they had survived the War and what they had produced to exemplify this new era. The best example of this was at the Festival of Britain in 1951. The Utility Scheme had not ended until late 1952, but restrictions had been relaxed by



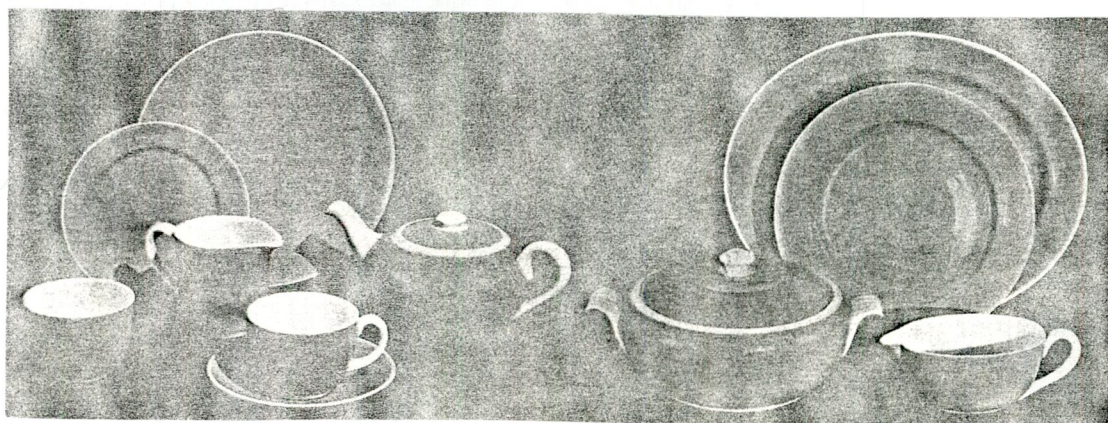


Fig.3



1

1. The first part of the paper is a review of the literature on the topic of the paper. The second part is a description of the methodology used in the study. The third part is a presentation of the results of the study. The fourth part is a discussion of the results and their implications. The fifth part is a conclusion.

2

1951. In the case of Poole, the Festival was used to present products it was capable of producing and products it intended to produce when the scheme ended the following year.

The exhibition catalogue Poole Potteries in the '50s , suggests that the Festival devoted itself to the promotion of Modernism. Indeed the Festival was a celebration of what was new and its objective was to herald a new age. Just as the Great Exhibition in 1851 educated the public on the new discoveries in machinery and industry so did the Festival of Britain. But more importantly it opened people's minds to the possibilities the future held and encouraged them to engage in this new lifestyle. Fig.4 illustrates advertisements and images from the Festival of Britain 1951. The exhibition seemed to consist of huge pavilions, dramatically shaped buildings and vast amounts of lighting. All culminating to produce a theatrical setting, appealing to the curious minds of the public. The Poole Potteries in the '50s catalogue also outlines the issues raised by the festival:

“The increasing impact of science, the determination to build a new future out of the ashes of the past, the widespread acceptance of abstraction in art, design and decoration .The excitement generated by new cultures and new styles emerging from America and from an economically regenerated Europe”( Clark, 1997, pg2)

These are also all elements, which made Poole's wares stand out as fresh and contemporary in the '50s. And these are also elements that feature throughout my research on Poole's distinctive style.

In the case of Poole a new designer was employed specifically for the festival. His name was Claude Smale. His employment was short lived and he left after only six months.





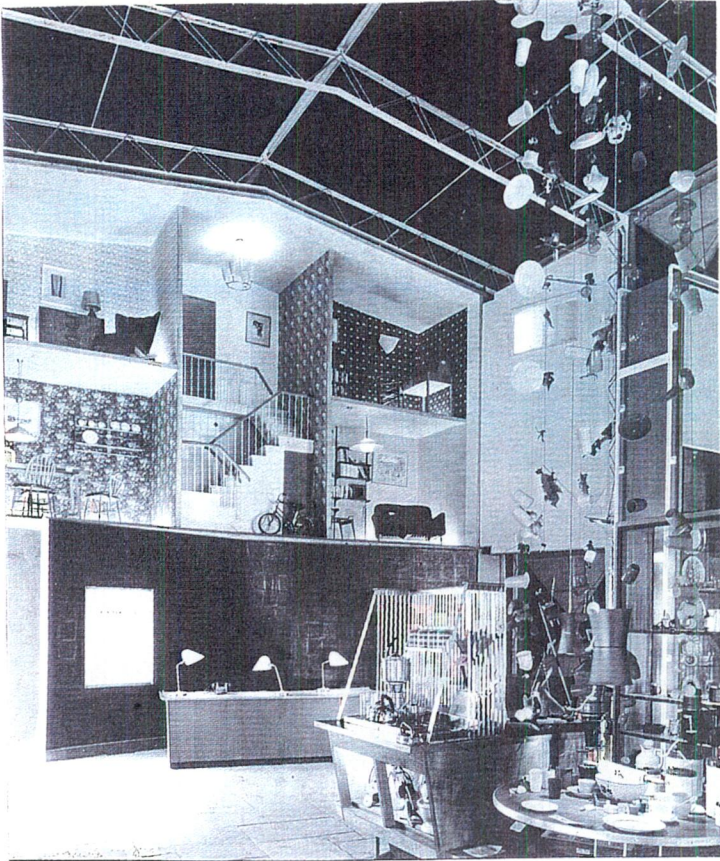


Fig.4







The next new addition at Poole was to have a large impact on the company. The name of this employee was A.B.Read, he was made head of the design team, in the early '50s. Other members included Lucien Myers, Roy Holland, Ruth Pavely, and Guy Sydenham. The input of these designers resulted in products, which reflected the spirit of the age.

“Fluid and organic shapes, designed for hand throwing, matched with Modernist and semi-abstract patterns that showed the influence of both contemporary textiles and Scandinavian design, gave Poole's wares an international flavour”( Clark, 1997, pg7).

This 'international flavour' was seen through ranges such as Ariadne, Ripple, Featherdrift and Constellation (designed by A.B.Read). (Fig.5).

“Vases were made in plain colours, sometimes with contrasting white interiors and interesting surface qualities. This development grew naturally from the long established use of 2-colour eggshell glazes on the twin-tone table ware and the colours used included Black Panther, Magnolia White, Red Indian, Lime yellow, Ice green, and Moonstone Grey”( Clark, 1990, pg7).

A.B.Read's daughter, Ann, was also involved in the designing of later '50s ware.

It is interesting to consider why Poole chose these particular forms, colours, and patterns. In attempting to answer this, I will use points from this chapter (i.e. issues highlighted in the Festival of Britain; how they influenced the design process; and also the social and economic influences in both Europe and elsewhere). I have used brief examples and illustrations to give an impression of the type of products Poole produced



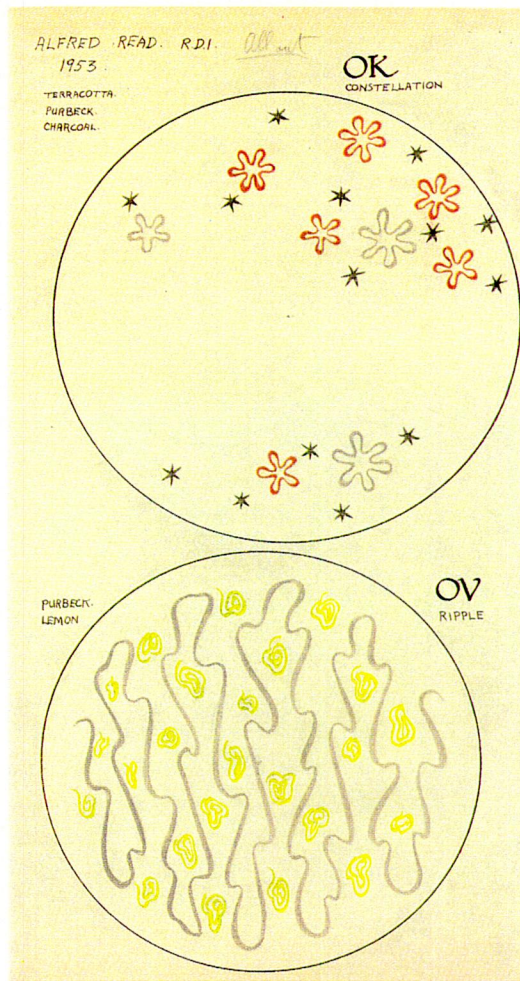
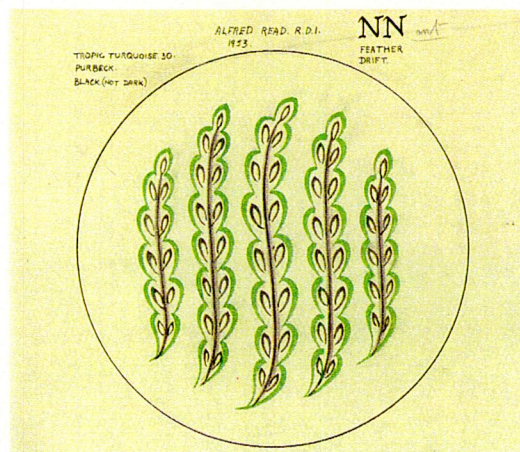
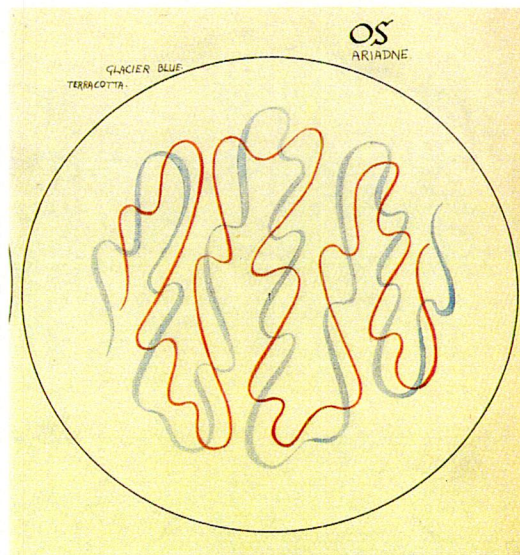


Fig.5







in the '50s and I will explain them in more detail throughout the following chapters.

Finally, returning to the title of this chapter; 'World War Two' the following quote is appropriate:

“The fact that the European states have twice gone to war across each others soil can be seen as holding up the technological and design development”( Dormer, 1990, pg49)

I would argue that these elements might well have led to the creative surge, which spilled from Europe after the war. The restrictions which designers and manufactories had to endure for so long meant they were more eager than ever before to start producing. Creativity had never been lost; it had only been channelled in different directions.





## Chapter Two:

### Science and technology

In the last chapter I outlined some elements which contributed to the unique style Poole displayed in the '50s. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the scientific and technological advances in the '50s and explore the influence these advancements may have had on the design process employed by Poole in the '50s.

Lesley Jackson's book The New Look highlights that in 1959, Marcel Brion noted the three main sources of scientific inspiration during the '50s. These were "Space exploration, chemistry and microbiology (add nuclear physics to the list and it will be almost complete)". ( Jackson, 1991, pg87). These inspirations influenced both artists and designers alike. Achievements in the scientific and technical world were significant in themselves, but they also made large impacts on other non-related industries. These advancements not only enhanced quality of life, but also surprisingly lead to influencing the industrial design world i.e. in the choose of shape, form, and surface decoration. Science and technology were quite useful influences as they also expressed the new age the world was leading into. A sense of excitement and hope prevailed throughout the '50s. People were enchanted by the new discoveries in science and technology: "Science was popular because of its positive nature "(Johnson, 1991, pg74).

In the Festival of Britain in 1951, science and fiction were creatively used. In the last chapter I discussed the aims of the Festival briefly and the significant role the Festival played in rebuilding the nations confidence and sprits. But it is the actual exhibits I would like to discuss now. It is useful at this point to list some of the major scientific achievements that happened during the '50s. Some of the following were noted



at the exhibition, but others were not discovered until later in the decade:

“ In medical science, the Pill was invented in 1952 and Dr Jonas Salk discovered an anti-polio vaccine in 1955. In technology, The De Havillan 110 jet fighter broke the sound barrier in 1952; a transatlantic telephone service was set up in 1956; the radio telescope at Jodrell Bank, UK, 1957...In space exploration, the Russians launched Sputniks 1 and 2 in 1957; the Americans launched their Explorer satellite the following year...(Jackson, 1991, pg91).

The exhibition was designed with a space- age theme. Huge pavilions were erected to house the numerous exhibits, ranging from washing machines to some rather unrealistic visions. For example:

"There was a strong whiff of science fiction in the massive aluminium -covered, flying - saucer- like Dome of Discovery by Ralph Tubbs ". (Jonathan 1987, pg205) (Fig.6)

One feature, which had a huge impact on British designers, was imagery of scientific structures like the double helix of DNA, or images of snowflakes under microscopes (Fig.7) (pg. 96 Crafts Council). These images were used to cover anything and everything such as plastic and laminated surfaces, fabrics, wallpaper, and ceramic ware. In fact these images became a familiar logo for the Festival Pattern Group. (Fig.8) .The Festival Pattern Group was set up, using the exhibits of the festival as its inspiration to create a style and related patterns that could be reproduced throughout the exhibition. The following outlines the many inspirations:

" Crystallography, a field in which Britain was a world leader in the late '40s, provided the basis of designs for textiles and applied surface decoration on glass, packing, pottery and furniture. Boric acid,







Fig.6







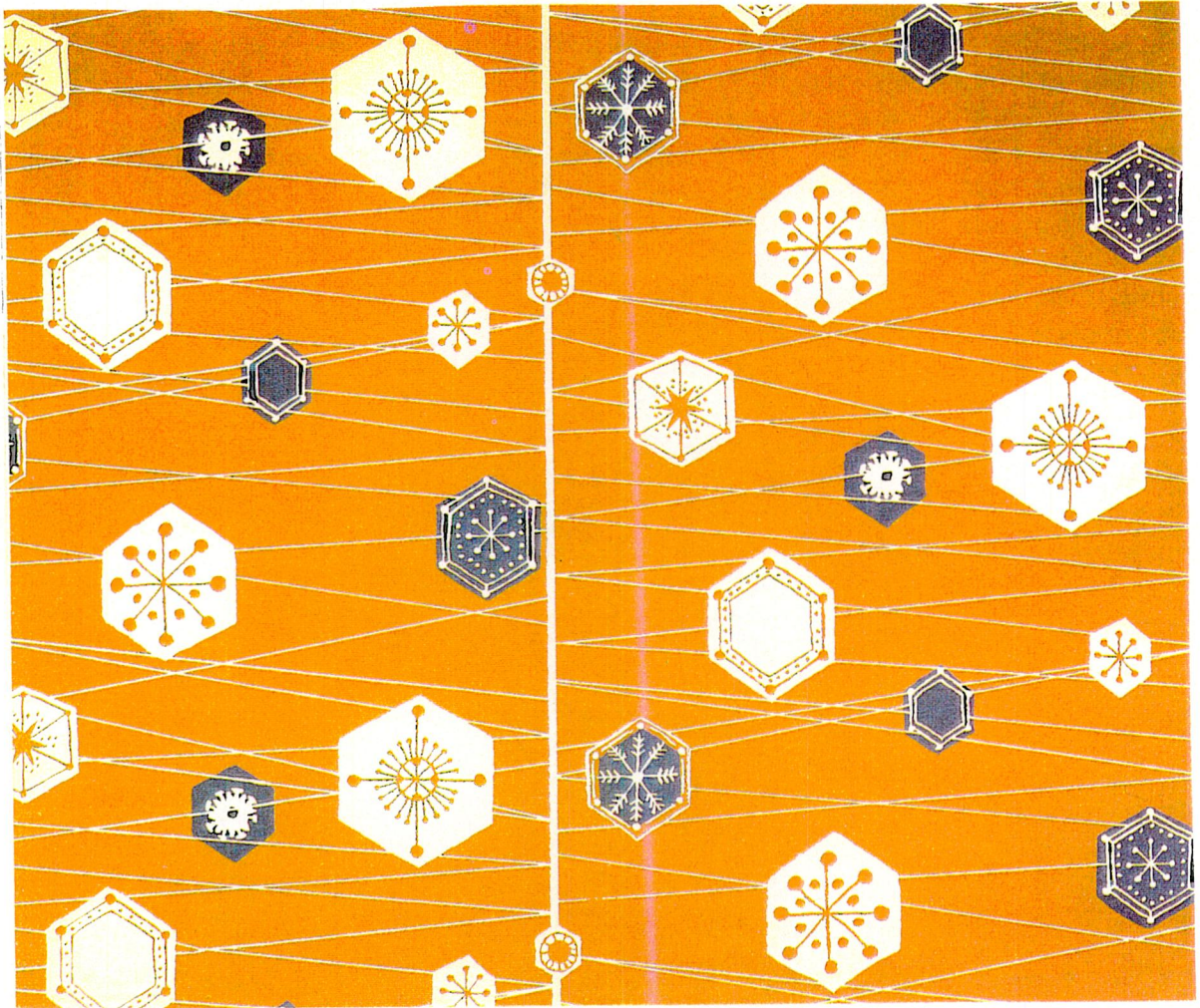


Fig.7





Fig.8





insulin, aluminium hydroxide and haemoglobin were among the substances whose crystallographic structures inspired the designers of the so-called Festival Pattern Group"(Woodham, 1987, pg204)

Fig.9 shows examples of Festival Pattern Group work. Robert Sevant and W.J.Odell designed two wallpaper designs, named 'Insulin' and 'Boric Acid'. The connection between crystallographic structure is quite obvious in the pattern used. The group consisted of a wide range of designers ranging from Wedgwood to Typographical designers.

Unfortunately for the ceramics industry the Utility Scheme had not ended when the festival began. In the case of Poole they were unable to produce many of the wares Claude Smale had designed. But by 1953 the company was in full production again. In January 1953 Poole exhibited its wares at the Tea Centre. The selection of wares they displayed echoed many themes that had been seen in the Festival of Britain two years previous. The influence of science and technology was seen in both form and surface decoration. Poole's chief designer A.B.Read created new forms and surfaces. Poole had once produced symmetrical forms with traditional surface decoration such as busy hand painted flower arrangements, angular, geometric formations from the Art Deco period etc. (Fig.10). But by the early '50s Poole's wares had moved on greatly. They had matured in both form and surface decoration. No longer were they strictly symmetrical; the majority of new lines consisted of irregular shapes. The new curves and fluid forms expressed a new look of freshness, which had been exhibited in the Festival of Britain. Surface decoration such as Ariadne, Ripple and Constellation were suggestive of imagery seen in scientific research and reflected some patterns which had been designed by the Festival Pattern Group e.g. Fig.11 shows a selection of Poole's Ripple pattern and a section of Fig.9 (wallpaper designed by Robert Sevant for the Festival of Britain). The wobbly, curving lines on 'Ripple' are similar to the dotted lines incasing the repeated blobs on the 'Insulin' pattern. 'Ripple' is not as structured and





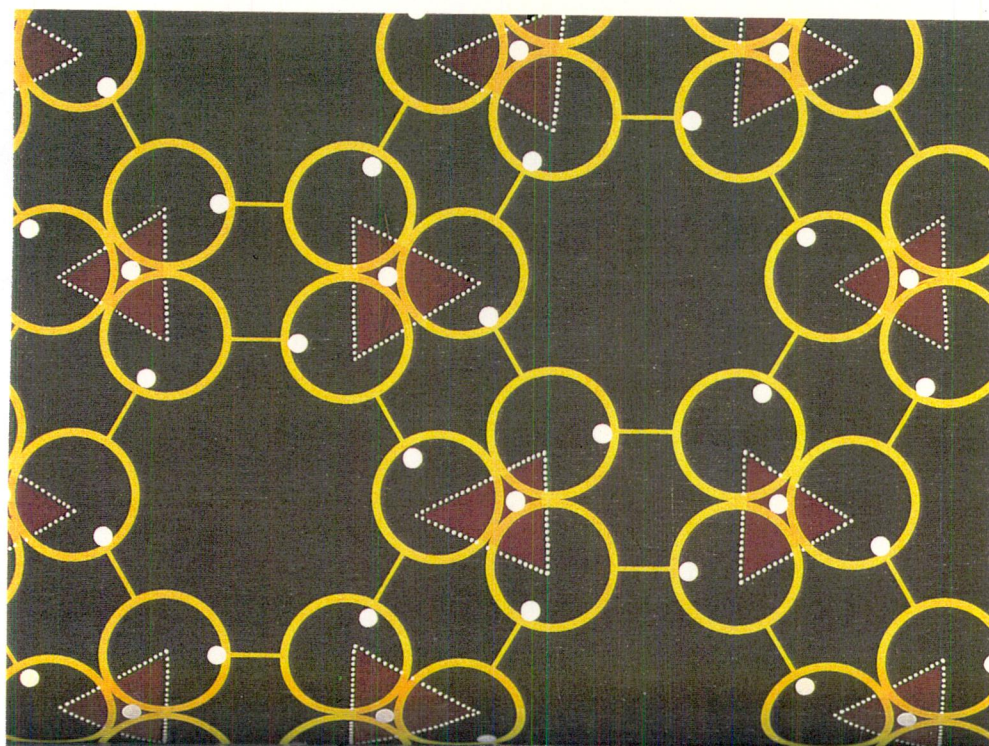
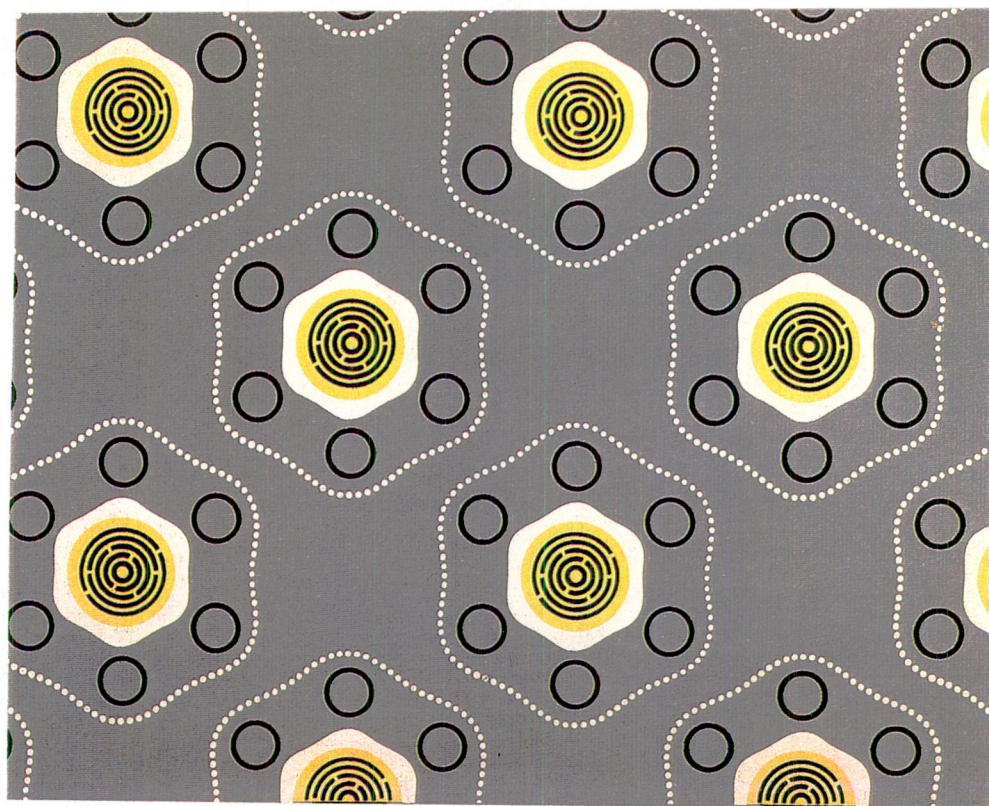


Fig.9







Fig.10





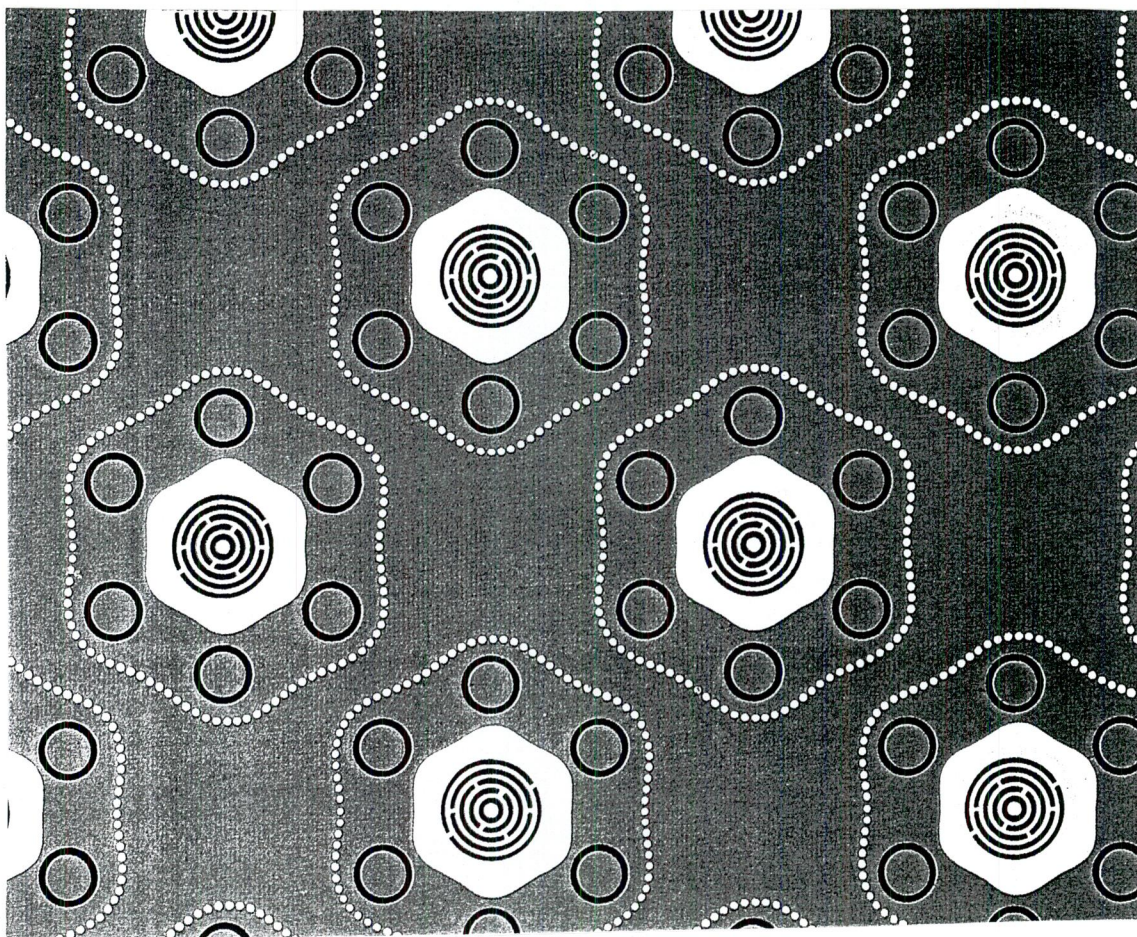
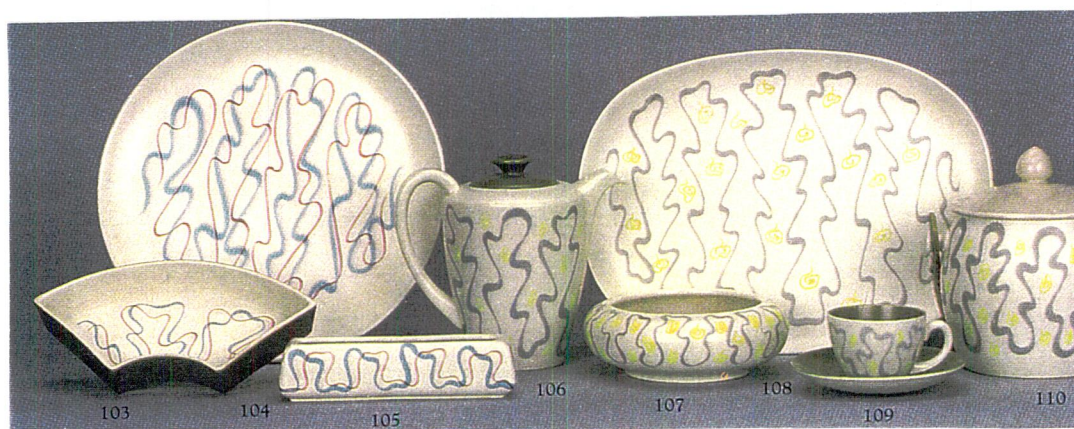


Fig.11







symmetrical as 'Insulin', but it does lend well to the suggestion that it could be a molecular structure.

To the average consumer who knew little about science and only had imagery from the Festival of Britain to relate to, these unusual, exciting images were well received and seen as modern. Constellation another pattern from Poole has also connotations of a scientific background. (Fig.12) Not only in its name, but also in its appearance. It was designed by A.B.Read and consisted of small star and flower- like shapes. I would also interpret this pattern as showing influences from nature (i.e. flower shapes). But I also feel it relates to the scientific theme. The name Constellation suggests to me influences from outer space and the feel of the era .A major theme in the Festival of Britain was science fiction and new discoveries. The exhibition was adorned with images of rockets, flying saucers and space ships, such as that found on the cover of a popular book of the period. (Fig.6). It was based on both fiction and fact. Fiction probably generated more interest, as it suggested possibilities of the unknown and created more excitement. Bearing this in mind Constellation suggested a composition of both the new and the unknown. Using familiar images such as stars (space) and flower or amoeba-like shapes it is a successful and unique way of exploring the above themes. I do not know if A.B.Read was aware of the connotations these images suggested, but I do feel it owes much of its success as a creative composition to the changing and developing world of science at its time of production. I feel the following quote helps to support my argument:

"Objects respond less to needs, than to moods and the environment of which they were a part was seen to be changing everyday "(Hine, 1987, pg65).

This changing style was of course seen as modern to the people of the day. Both Poole's forms and surfaces reflected a modern look, but also a more abstract look. Repeat surface decoration on earlier ceramics ware had generally been either







Fig.12



linear, floral or familiar imagery (e.g. animals, building, people etc.) (Fig.13). In Poole's case most of its surface decoration had been hand painted, using a combination of large and small brush strokes. But through the development of silk screen transfers, surface decoration could now be mass-produced. The same quality of line could be produced on each piece. Many ceramic companies choose to use transfers on their wares throughout the '50s, such as companies like Midwinter and Wedgwood. Also Germany's Rosenthal china company, which produced Raymond Loewy's designs.(Fig.23). But Poole chose to continue with hand painted wares. This process, I feel, aided Pooles development of a modern look. Lesley Jackson describes A.B.Read's hand painted wares as "rhythmic line abstract style"(Jackson, 1991, pg64). The particular pieces this book refers to are illustrated in fig.14. The surface pattern is broken down in more detail on fig.15. The influence of D.N.A. and scientific influence is again seen in this diagram.

These designs were used in conjunction with form to create rounded, freestanding shapes. In some vases the lines on the bottom are widened to suggest a more grounded bulbous shape, which gradually leads into a taller elongated neck. This was made possible by narrowing the vase. Christopher Pearce illustrates a textile pattern (Fig.16), which he describes as the following:

"The ball-and-rod structure were sometimes described as 'atomic swizzle stick' or 'cocktail cherry stick'. The arbitrary placing in this textile design are characteristic of the '50s'" (Pearce, 1991,pg135,).

If we look back again at Fig.15 similarities are again evident. The overlapping wobbly lines incasing either dots of colour or lines suspended in mid-air are typical of many surface decorations throughout the '50s.







Fig.13

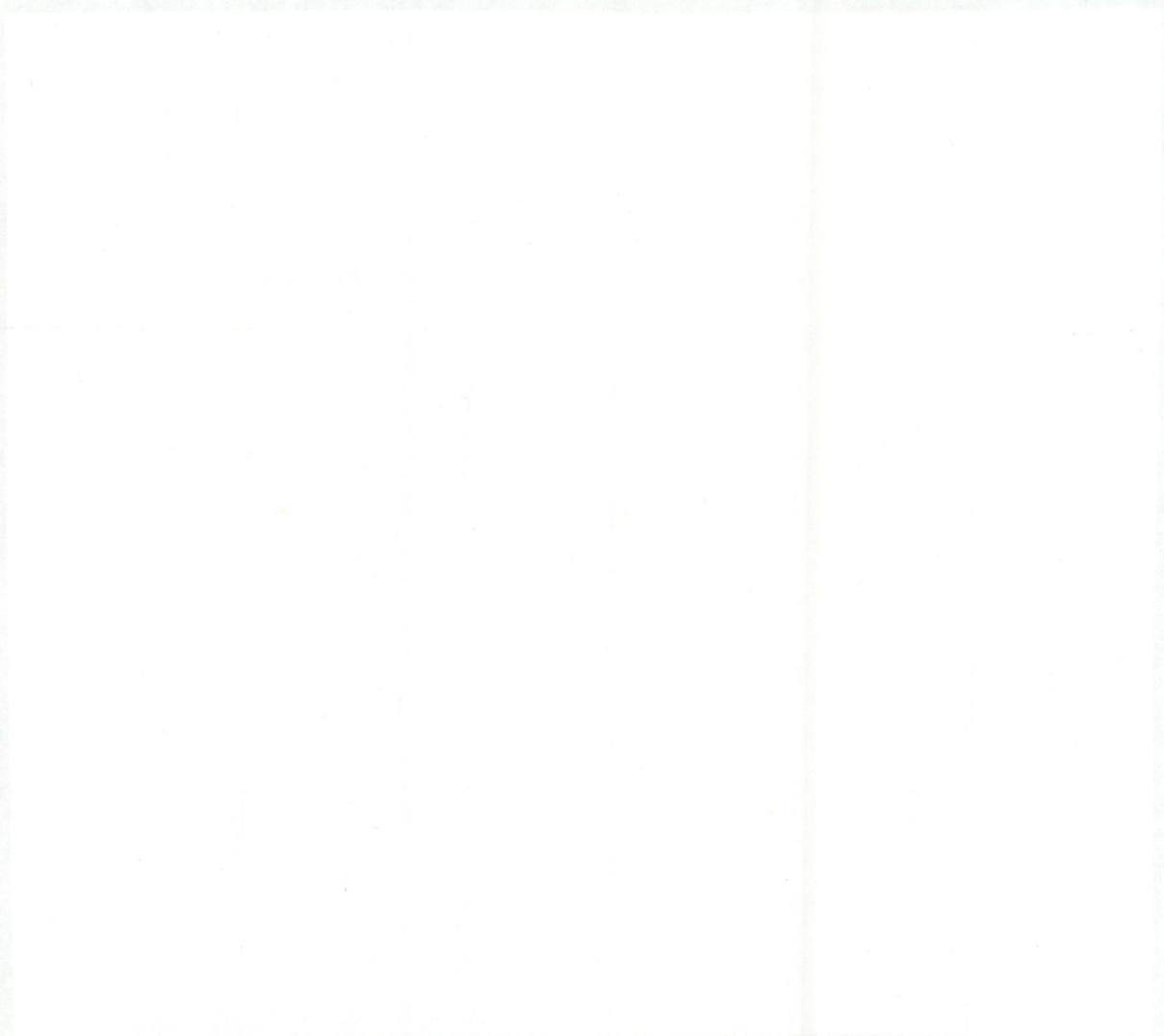






Fig .14







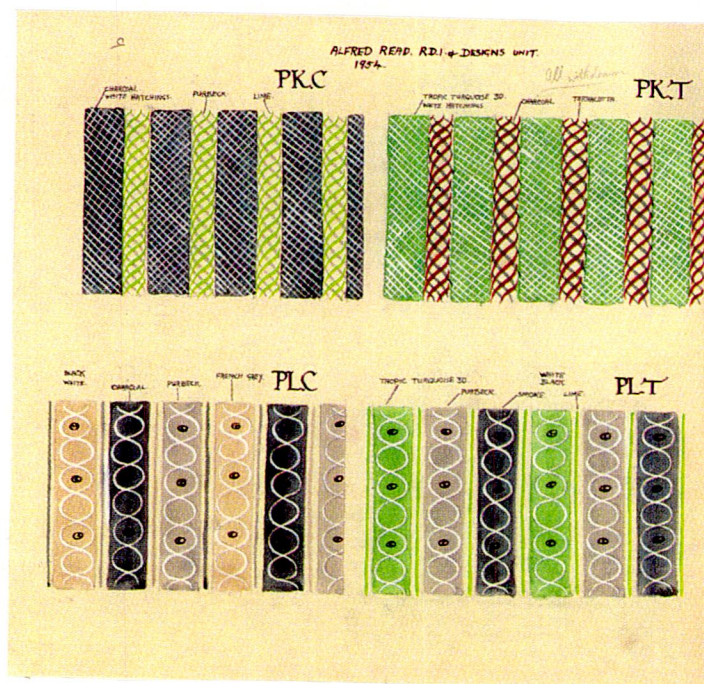


Fig.15



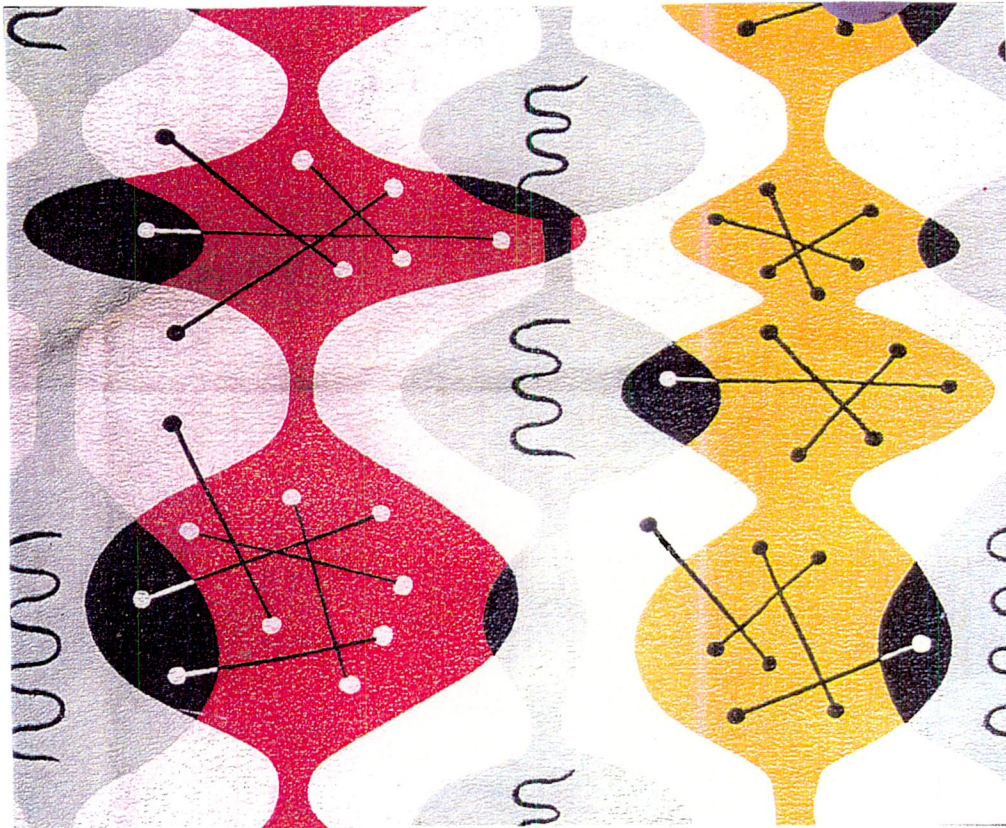


Fig.16





In the beginning of the chapter I outlined some of the major achievements during the '50s, i.e. in science, technology and space exploration. Medical science seemed to play a large part in the consideration of surface decoration during the '50s and in the case of Poole; medical science seems to have left its mark, literally. I want now to move to a different field, that of technology and space exploration. I will explore the possibility that the above factors may also have left their mark on Poole during the '50s.

As I have explained, the Festival of Britain was an exhibition of what was new. It exhibited everything from kitchen equipment to modern vehicles including space ships. Obviously space vehicles were not very assessable to the general public. They were really there to add to the fiction element of the show. Science fiction and science were exciting features, which interested the public greatly. Designers were fully aware of this fact and had been for some time. The first space rocket was launched in 1957. It had been in the making process for many years. Since the beginning of the century scientists had been fascinated by the possibilities of space exploration. The motor vehicle was of course the starting point for their research. The struggle was to make the motor engine run faster and more effectively. This involved the participation of technical engineers, scientists and industrial designers to aid in the search for better vehicles. Around the time of these developments the word Streamline became a familiar term. The concept for Streamlining began with research taken by engineers to find a way to make transport faster. The main problem that faced them was wind. A solution was designed: design the shape of the vehicle in such a way that it resisted or glided easier through wind. Vehicles such as trains and automobiles soon bore the trademarks of Streamlining. (Johnson, 1991, pg72). Industrial designers soon caught on to this concept, and quickly streamlining became a style. It was used throughout the industrial design world. The front of vehicles were bullet-like, leading into a narrowing tapering bodys. This new sleek form appealed particularly to industrial designers. Curves and tapering lines were employed not only



in the designs of vehicles but also building, furniture, interior design etc. (Fig.17).

"Unlike the rationalist version of modern design, whose austerity did not stir a public response, Streamling had the glamour and theatricality to make it a public style. Its ornament conveyed the idea of travel, science, and progress. "(Johnson, 1991, pg74).

This appealed to the masses and became very popular. Popularity meant sales, so obviously designers used it lavishly. It was made popular during the '30s, but was reinvented and used again in the '50s, particularly in ceramics. Although Streamlining had begun in the '30s, as a design solution to travel, it translated well into the '50s as a unique style which expressed the message of the day; that the future was ahead and it was going to be exciting and fruitful for all. Fig.18 shows another example of a streamlined vehicle. Rounded headlights pointing like arrows from the car, smooth sleek lines running from the front to the rear of the vehicle. Banded and narrowing of lines also aided in the appearance that the vehicle glided quicker through wind when it was in motion. The banded, coloured lines used on the vehicle became a familiar sight on ceramic ware during the '50s. Poole displayed many examples of this trend. ( Fig.19 ). The name 'Streamline' was actually given to a range produced by Poole during the '30s. It was designed by John Adams in 1935-36 .A similar range was called 'Sherborne'. Both slightly changed and were reinvented in the '50s. One of the main differences in their design from the '30s - '50s ' was in their decoration. Originally J.Adams 'Streamline' had been hand painted with floral designs, but its surface decoration changed in the '50s. 'Streamline' and 'Sherborne' were now decorated with twin-tone glazes; transfer and hand painted decorations designed by A.B.Read and his daughter Ann. The ' Twintone 'range was most closely connected to streamlining. (Fig.20). As in the case of motor vehicles, Poole's Twintone range was glazed

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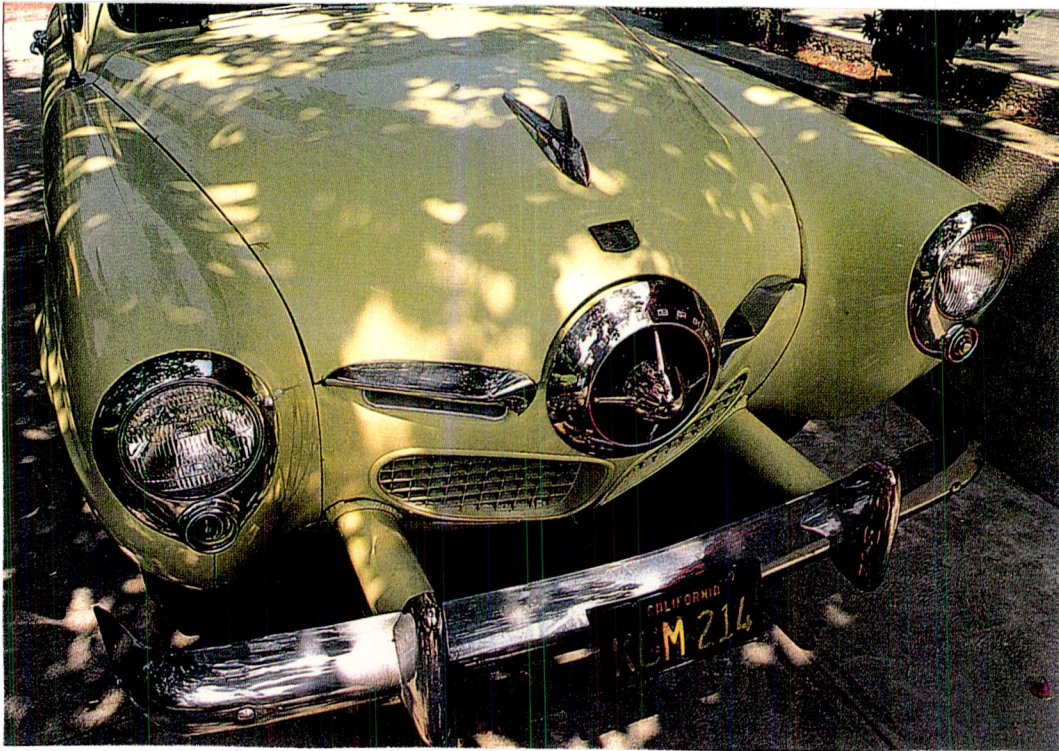


Fig.17



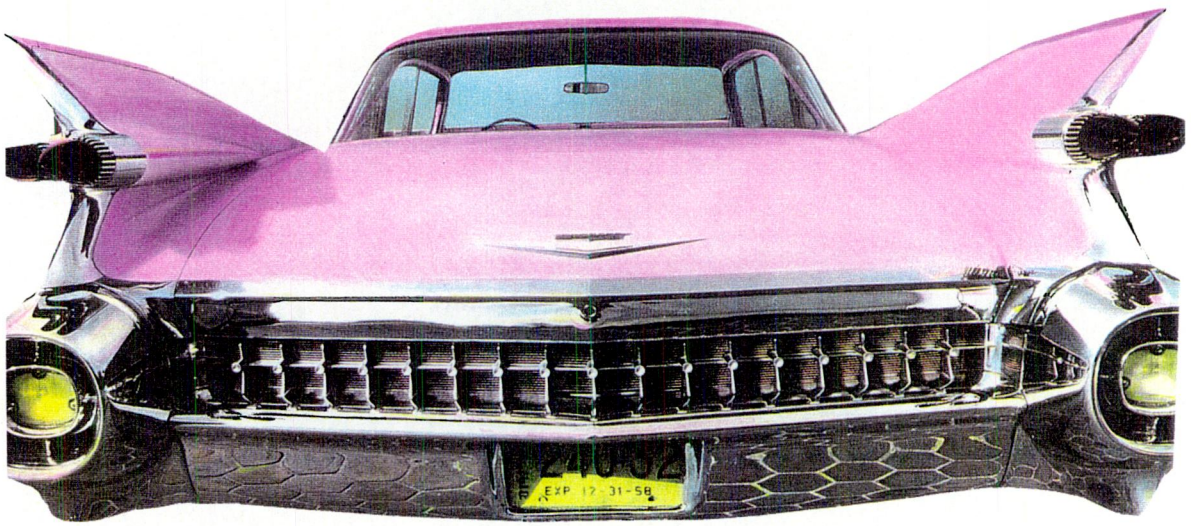


Fig.18





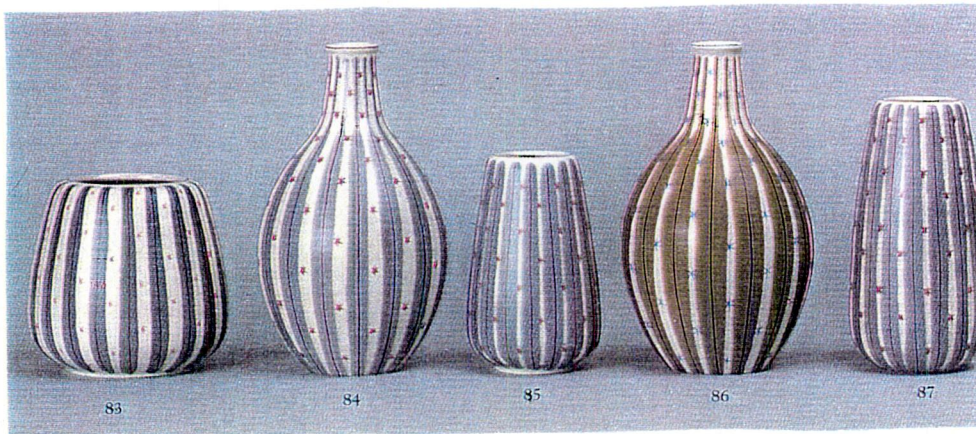


Fig.19





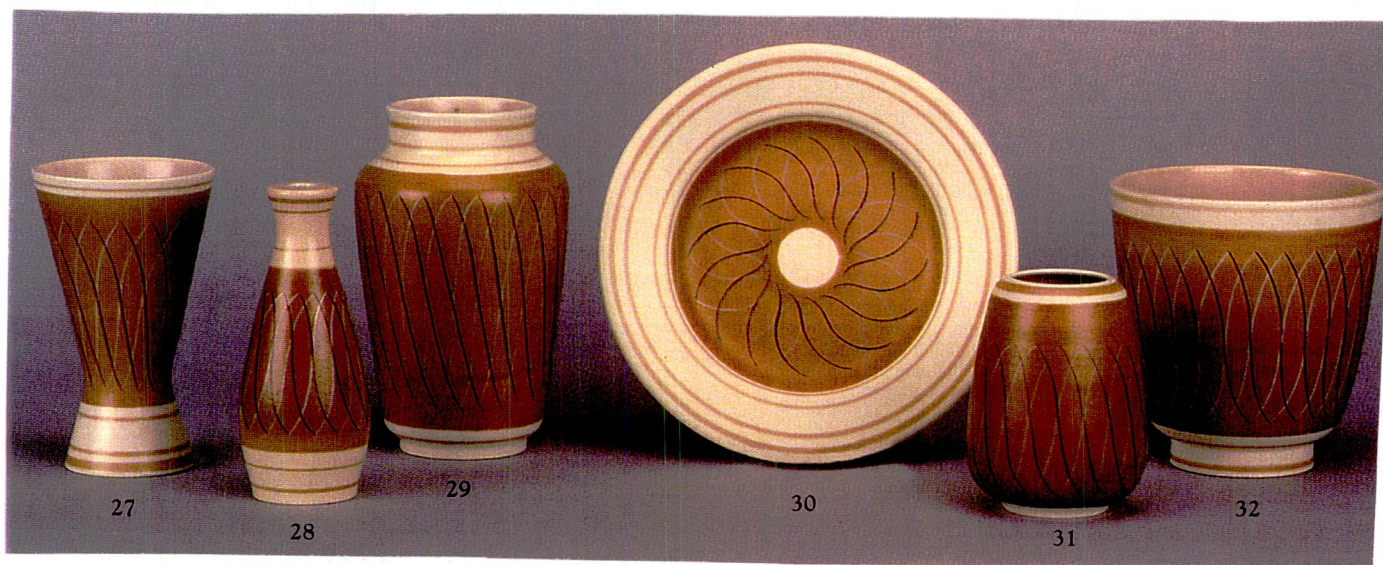
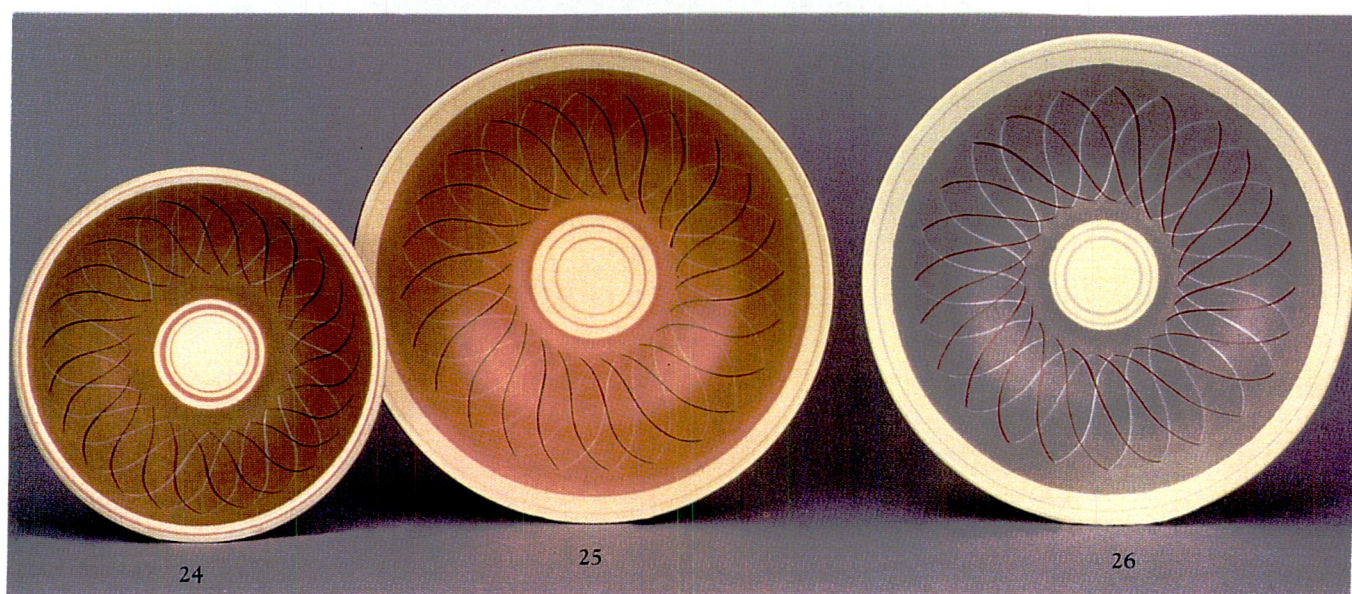


Fig.20





1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year, and the second section deals with the specific results of the work.

2. The second part of the report deals with the specific results of the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the results of the work in the field of research, and the second section deals with the results of the work in the field of education.

3. The third part of the report deals with the conclusions and recommendations. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the conclusions, and the second section deals with the recommendations.

1955

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year, and the second section deals with the specific results of the work.

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3. The third part of the report deals with the conclusions and recommendations. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the conclusions, and the second section deals with the recommendations.



with different gradients of colour or white interiors with coloured exterior (Fig.21). Hine makes a definite connection between the development of streamlining in vehicles and the impact it made on Poole's ranges.

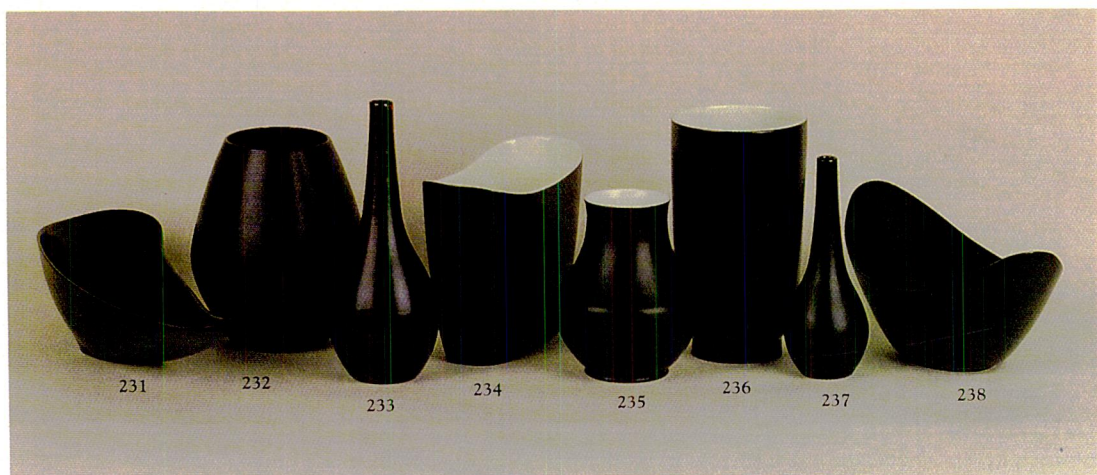
" There was also the car, which by the middle of the decade had 'tailfins' and sharp lines and perhaps even a snazzy two- tone colour scheme. "(Hine, 1987, pg10).

The 'snazzy two- tone colour scheme ' , bears many similarities to Pooles Twintone range. The 'Streamline' and 'Sherborne' range were not only glazed in block colours; they were also adorned with patterns, designs such as Aridane, Ripple, Constellation and FeatherDrift'. (Fig.22). But more interestingly, in relation to technological advancements Poole's range of new vases and bowls reflected the illusion of elongated length and curving forms, a method which had been used in the design of trains and automobiles. In Poole's case, the way they achieved this appearance was by creating a form which was wider at the base and narrowed as it reached the neck or a wide base leading to narrow waist and opening again to create a wide mouth. The illusion of weight and weightlessness was consequently created. Coupled with the composition of form, was the use of banded lines. (Fig.19). The following is a description of how banded lines effected motor vehicles, but it also bears importance to the creative style Poole incorporated in its wares.

"Finally, differentiated sections of colour or the application of doubled and trebled ornamental bands emphasised the length of the body and the horizontal thrust of the vehicle "(Johnson, 1991, pg72).

Streamlining evolved from the world of technology and engineering as an invention to update the performance of motor vehicles. Industrial designers co-operated with





Blank Panther glaze, 1954-57.



Lime Green glaze, 1954-57.



Ice Green and Sky Blue glazes, 1954-57.

Fig.21







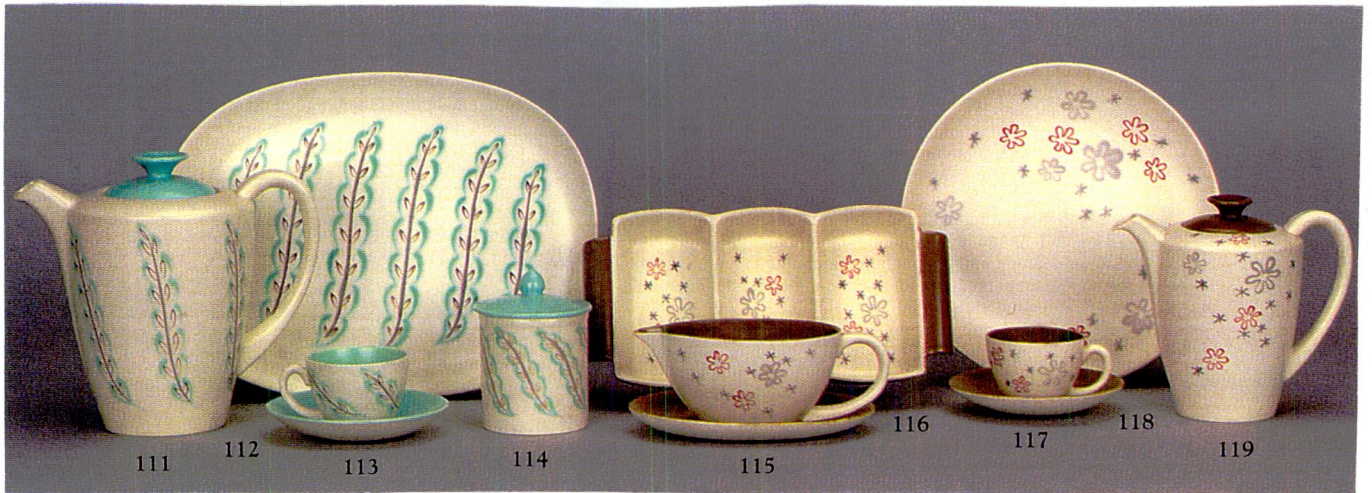


Fig.22





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1954

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engineers, to create a product which may not have actually ran much faster but it did look faster and more importantly, modern. Modern was of course what the 1950s consumer wanted. And like most designs of the '50s it influenced many other are as, namely pottery.

" Even as its distinctive details, such as the banded horizontal lines, gradually disappeared the spirit of the 1930's, streamlining remained strong, contributing to the organic nature of post-war designs not only its emphasis on rounded corners but also, more importantly, its masking of disparate parts beneath a smoothly sculpted other skin "  
(Johnson,1991,pg152).

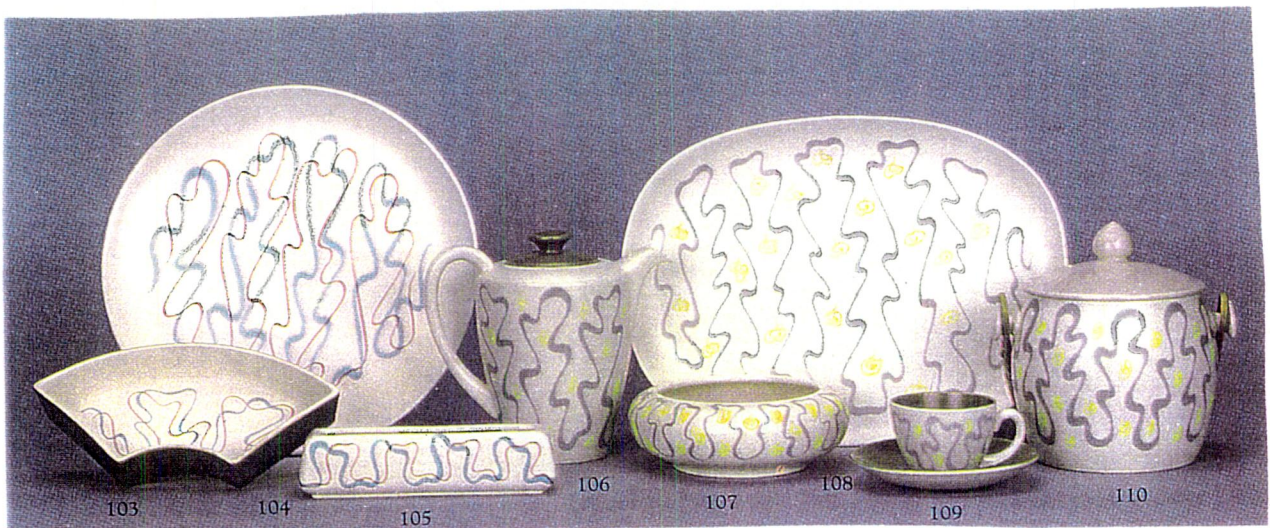
The above quote describes the essence of streamlining, and highlights the distinctive features which Poole incorporated into their wares. The designer Raymond Loewy did many designs for trains and automobiles incorporating the streamlining style. He later went on to design china for a German company: Rosenthal. Evidence of his earlier designs for automobiles can be seen in his ceramic ware. Fig.23, designed by Loewy (1952), named 'mino' . This range displays features of streamlining, which were described in the previous quote as : "rounded corners", "masking of disparate parts beneath a smoothly sculpted other skin". Both the teapot and jug comprise of a body, which grows wider as it gets taller and curves dramatically inwards to level the top of the object. These smooth curves are similar to curves seen on streamlined automobiles seen in Fig.17 and 18. The 'mino' pattern incasing the objects acts in the same way as the banded lines on streamlined automobiles. As with the metal surface on cars, the 'mino' pattern on Loewys ware glides along the surface of the clay to create a sleek finish. Many comparisons can be made between this and Poole's own streamline range. Solid, tall bodied teapots with elegant handles and spouts sitting gracefully on the side of the







Fig.23





body. Fig. 22, Poole's Aridane and Ripple range (1953-54). These pieces must also be seen as bearing influence from streamlining. The teapot in Fig. 22 is almost identical to the teapot by Raymond Loewy in Fig. 23.

Another feature Poole employed in its designs was to narrow vases midway, as if they had a waist or a string had been wrapped around the centre of the body. It gave the piece a human feel. This method was used throughout the ceramic world. Loewy's work also reflects this trend. Loewy was not only influential to Poole; his work was seen all around Europe and the United States during the '50s. He wrote a book about his work and design theories, which became a best seller.

The impact science and technology had on the industrial design world was profound. Not only did new discoveries better the quality of products; science and technology also influenced the choice of shape, form and surface decoration. And one of the most powerful tools science and technology had was that it echoed the message of the '50s. It heralded this new era, the possibility of a better life was ahead and was capable of rebuilding Europe and the States after the war.

Poole noted the positive influence streamlining had on the public:

"However, the main driving force behind streamlining was the desire to create a style, a rhythmic exterior surface that presented a dramatic new silhouette associated with movement, science and technology, in a way that is almost futurist in its ideology. Streamlining conveyed the associations of both actual technology and the science fiction of the future." (Johnson, 1991, pg152)





## **Chapter Three:**

### **American Consumer Culture**

"The United States was the only major power to have survived the war with its manufacturing capacity not only intact, but actually enhanced" (Pearce, 1990, pg22).

Britain on the other hand was in the opposite position. This is one of the reasons why Europe looked to America after the war. The strength of their economy fuelled the emergence of new designs. The US was in the best position to make real the dreams of the '50s designers. Britain also had enthusiastic and creative designers, but the initial aim of the country after the war was to rebuild itself. Because the US had not been physically damaged during the war, their industries and raw materials were intact and had developed during the '40s. Europe consequently had many lessons to learn from the States. These lessons were not only in industry, but also in infrastructure and society. A significant element, which emerged from the States after the war, was the growth of consumer culture. Higher disposable incomes led to greater spending and an increase in new products. These products were not only modern, but they also displayed important messages. The message these products held was that the '50s was a new age; the war had ended and the public was free to spend and enjoy their money.

More leisure time and self-indolence was encouraged and of course, new products were created to accommodate this. Woodham lists some the features of this new lifestyle:

"Growing levels of affluence and higher disposable incomes, interest in home - centred leisure activity increased: watching T.V., listening to hi-fi, working on D.I.Y. improvements and gardening were popular pursuits"(Woodham,1987 ,pg194).



Coupled with these pursuits were new homes and interiors. The dawning of the '50s created a domino effect, which left its mark on every part of home life. In the States 'suburbia' was created.

"The destruction of the war and the shifts of population, either directly or indirectly related to the war, created a massive boom in building and equal demand for furniture and consumer durables "(Pearce, 1990, pg114).

Soon enough, homes in America began to look extremely similar. Because of mass production and new materials such as Formica, it was now inexpensive to furnish one's home. Items such as boomerang shaped tables, Eero Saarinen's 'Womb' chair, George Nelson's 'atomic clock', two-toned fridge freezers, soon became familiar sights in American suburban neighbourhoods. Family life was encouraged, and importance was put on rooms such as the kitchen and the living room. Colour co-ordinated and built-in units were used as selling features to '50s modern women.

You may ask, where does Poole fit into this equation? Well the answer is that ceramic ware, was designed with a larger picture in mind, that it slotted into its new environment and new lifestyle. Abstract linear designs used on Formica topped tables were reflected in the transfer designs on ceramic ware. The advent of Formica and plastic meant that new forms could be created. Materials such as metal, glass, and ceramic tried to copy forms that could now be produced in plastic. Plastic had endless possibilities; it could be moulded into every shape imaginable. This technique lent its self well to 'organic modernism '(to be discussed in the next chapter). Curves and fluid lines, could be easily created such as Eero Saarinen's 'Tulip' chair (Fig.24). This new phenomenon spread quickly throughout America and Europe. Plastic soon began to replace glass, metal, and ceramics. Plastic breakers and cutlery was now produced in an array of fashionable colours. Ceramic, glass, and metal industries fought back. They





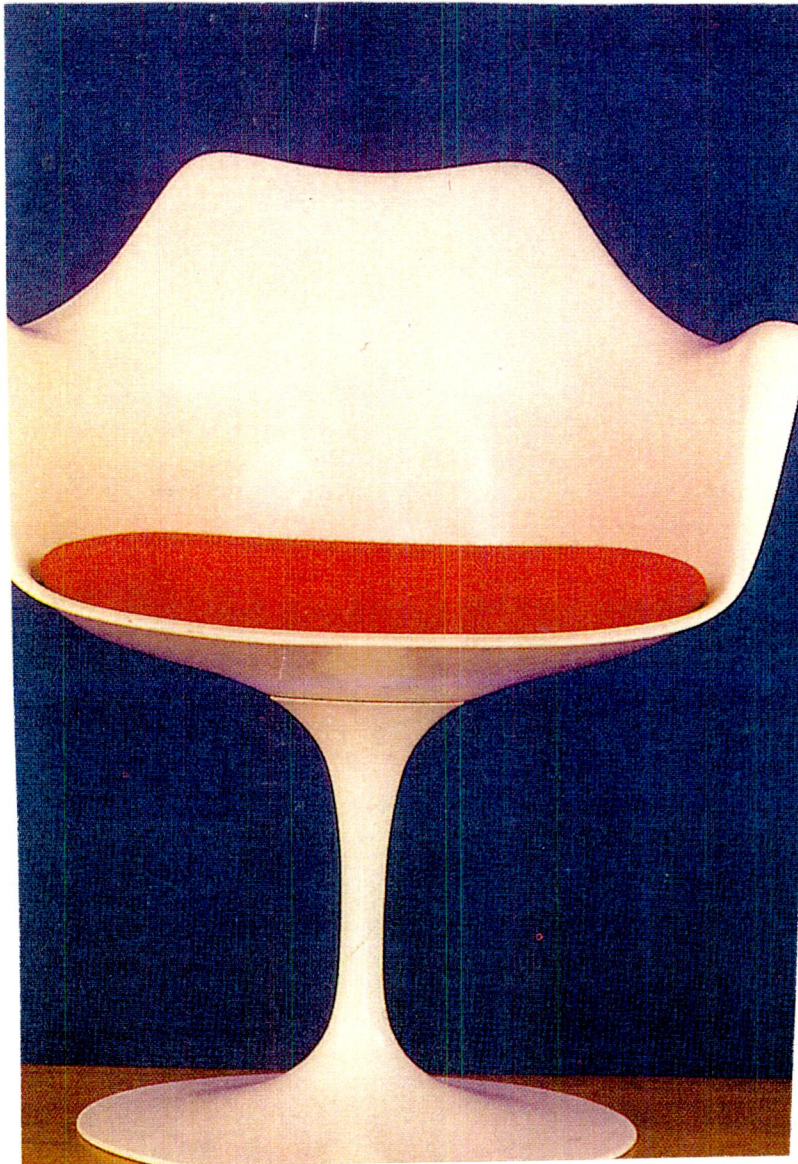


Fig.24



designed their products with the intention of making things appear that they had also been produced using the process of plastic moulding:

“Ceramic, glass, silver, steel and wood were treated as if they had suddenly and miraculously assumed the physical properties of plastic and could be thrown, blown, cast, bent, or moulded into the most extravagant shapes. Furniture legs taper to an incredible slenderness, glass vessels are blown to an unbelievable thinness and the necks of ceramic vessels are tightened almost to the point of suffocation”( Jackson, 1991, pg44).

The narrowing waist of vessels, is an effect I spoke about in the last chapter, but it wasn't until the late '50s that Poole showed evidence of creating shapes that emulated plastic. Fig.25 is an example of ceramic ware imitating the qualities of plastic. If we compare the 'Tulip' chair in Fig.24 to Fig.25, we can see many similarities, such as; the middle vessel (the no.166 is directly under it), is similar to the moulded plastic base of the 'Tulip' chair. The narrow waist is an example of how ceramic tried to copy the qualities plastic was capable of producing.i.e. that it could be moulded into any shape. But as we know ceramic cannot be moulded into any shape. As a result Poole has created, (in this case), forms which were originally not seen in ceramic. This craze started because non-plastic manufacturing companies did not want to be left on the side line .If their products were to sell, it was important that they fit in to the new homes, interiors that had been created to house the new '50s lifestyle.

The next paragraph illustrates a modern kitchen from the '50s:

“The kitchen table had light-coloured Formica top that co-ordinated with the rest of the kitchen. The table had tubular- metal legs, like the chairs,.... And the vinyl covering either matched the tabletop provided a vibrant contrast or, because they were







Fig.25



two-toned, did both. Nearly indestructible plastic dishes were available in a palette as vivid and artificial as that used on the tables and chairs” (Hine, 1987, pg64).

Fig.B illustrates the Twintone range available from Poole during the ‘50s. You can get a feel of the connection between objects and the similarities they displayed from the above quote. Again we see the use of twin-tone in home interiors. Vibrant colours played an important role as well. Colour had been restricted in English ceramics during the time of the Utility Scheme. So of course when these restrictions were lifted, a frenzy of colour was seen through the ceramics world. Colour was another tool used to boost nations moral. Bright, cheerful colours were used to reflect the mood of the era. Vibrant colours reflected a positive spirit, which was of course what ‘50s products expressed or at least strived to achieve. “Things were not only more common and more available then before, they were also invested with greater meaning”( Hine, 1978, pg4). This fact was seen right through the spectrum of design in the ‘50s. Fig.C illustrates some of the more loud, vibrant colours Poole used in the ‘50s. Colours such as yellow, lime green, turquoise, and purples were some of the most common colours used in the ‘50s interiors and ceramics. Fig.26 displays the massive range of colours produced by ‘Westinghouse Refrigerators ‘ in the ‘50s. Many of the colour combinations exhibited are also used on Poole’s ceramics.

The success of Poole’s ranges in the ‘50s can be attributed to many factors, some I have listed in previous chapters. A factor, which I think really contributed to the uniqueness of Poole’s wares, was that their products embodied a modern style, but also a modern lifestyle. Their products stood on their own, but also suggested that they were born from a larger family, that they bore similarities to other interior products, and that the qualities of American consumer culture had played a large part in Poole’s consideration of form and colour.



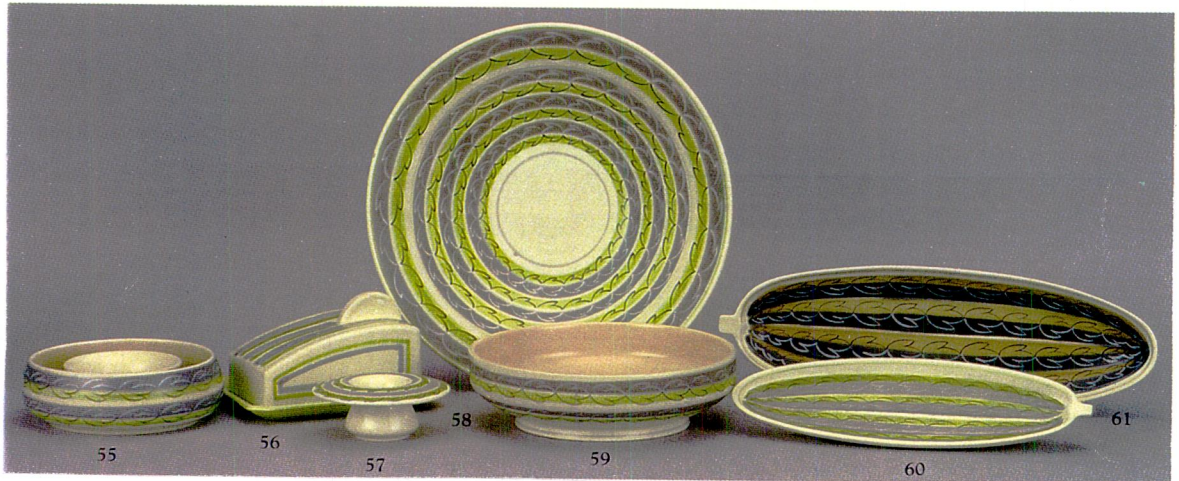




Fig.B.



PK.T pattern designed by Alfred Read, 1953-54.









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## WATCH WESTINGHOUSE! WHERE BIG THINGS ARE HAPPENING FOR YOU

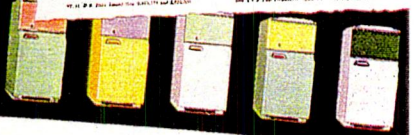


Fig.26





## Chapter Four:

### Modernism and other influences

The '50s created a fresh and new atmosphere amongst the public on both sides of the Atlantic. One exciting and significant development was in the art world. Fine art – pre-World War 2 – had been considered an interest of the educated and upper class communities; this attitude began to change by the late '40s and through the '50s. Because of mass production and multi media advancements, art became more accessible to the average household. Developments in the modern art world were no longer restricted to the walls of galleries. Examples of Modernism could now be found in the unlikely surroundings of American suburban homes. The implications this had was that there was a greater acceptance of Modernism throughout the States. The trend of using Modern art on modern home furnishings and utensils became a popular sight. Cross-over between artists and designers work began to evolve. Artists began to be influenced by designers and vice-a-versa. The Finish glass sculpture Timo Sarpanva , lists some artists which influenced his work. These examples are also relevant to many other designers of the '50s. Throughout my research, numerous books have also listed these artists as inspirational to '50s designs:

“Salvador Dali’s fluid objects, Joan Miro’s flowing rhythmic, ‘Barbara Hepworth’s’ spatially innovative wood sculptures and Jackson Pollock’s abstract expressionism and ‘tachisme’” (Jackson, 1991, pg34).

I think the abstract expressionist movement, particularly Jackson Pollock’s work, was greatly influential to ceramics during the '50s. Pollock’s action paintings described as “rhythmic, swirling and strongly linear”( Pearce, 1990, pg170), translated into soft, fluid, curving, asymmetrical lines and forms used in '50s ceramic s . The spontaneous





splashes of colour in Fig.27 were inspirational for '50s designers. Traces of Miro's linear work are also evident in ceramic forms. These elements were translated into clay (and other materials), to create sculptural pieces, which suggested movement and life. Poole's later '50s work created this look through both slip-cast and throwing techniques. Surface decoration was a tool used to enhance and dress these sculptural pieces.

Names such as 'organic modernism' and 'biomorphism' were given to this type of style. These styles bore influences from the abstract art world, but also from Scandinavia's design traditions. Not only did America grasp onto modern art in the '50s, they also continued to marvel at Scandinavian design, an area which America had followed for some time: "The love affair with Scandinavian –especially Swedish–design, which America had in the '20s, left its mark".( Dormer, 1990, pg58)

In Jackson's book The New Look, a chapter entitled 'The Rise Of Organic Modernism ', suggests with whom or how 'organic modernism ' began. It is interesting that they cite a ceramist as one of the first people to experiment with new forms, such as, softer, rounder, folding lines, etc. The ceramist in question is Wilhalm Kåge, from Sweden. His 'soft forms' range first began in the '30s. The '30s as we know was the Art Deco period and it was characterized by sharp geometric angles. So obviously Kåge's range stood out somewhat. The following is a description of Kåge's 'soft form' range:

"..... Included a bowl, the rim of which folded inwards, as though the walls of the vessel had collapsed during firing". (Jackson, 1990, pg35). ( Fig.28). I don't know if I would agree that Kåge was one of the creators of 'organic modernism ', but I can say that there is a definite resemblance between Kåge's 'soft forms ' and Poole's late '50s work. The Poole piece illustrated in Fig.29 bears some similarities to the 'soft forms' range in Fig.28. The first two Poole Pottery vessels on the left appear to have been sliced across the top or to have slumped in some way, similar to the









Fig.27









Fig.28





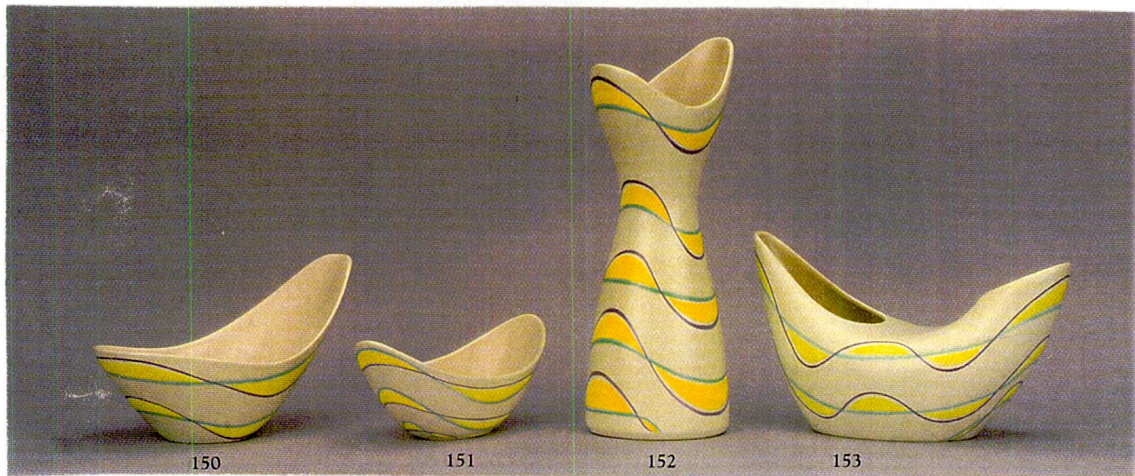


Fig.29.







bowl in the 'soft forms' range. The sides of the bowl in Fig.28 appear to be weighted down, also giving a slumped or pulled feel to the clay. The curved lines on both Fig.28 and Fig.29 have been emphasized through the use of surface decoration. In Fig.28 lines travel around each piece making the curves more noticeable also giving the form a sense of movement. The same is true for Fig.29, the only difference being that the lines have been crossed and exaggerated somewhat more than in Fig.28. The painted lines designed by Ruth Pavely, exaggerate the irregular shape and add a feel of movement throughout the vessels. The feel of weightlessness or reversal of gravity is also suggested in Fig.29.

One of the first indications of the popularity of Scandinavian design and 'organic modernism' was in 1940, when an exhibition entitled 'Organic Design in Home Furnishing', was held in New York. Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen won it, with their design for the 'Tulip' chair.( Fig.30). Plastic 'Tulip' Chair, was molded in plastic. As mentioned before, the qualities plastic displayed were features many other industries tried to reproduce in other materials. It was an effective method in creating biomorphic shapes i.e. soft rounded curves, smooth sleek lines. Charles and Eero Saarinen were two of the most predominate designers of the '40s and '50s. The chair incorporates elements now known as 'organic modernism', but which bear many resemblances to Scandinavian designs such as the work of Kåge, and Timo Sarpanva. The essence of Scandinavian design was purity of line and form and it was also characterized by its connection between craft and industry. It was the handcrafted feel that appealed to many designers. Advancements in technology and new materials, made it become possible to recreate this quality.

Lightweight and powerful forms were typical of '50s ceramics; they illustrated the qualities of both Modernism and organic design. Because many of Poole's wares were slip-cast, it was inevitable that they would be light in weight but design features such as slim delicate handles and narrow vases, leading into wider necks, gave the appearance of a





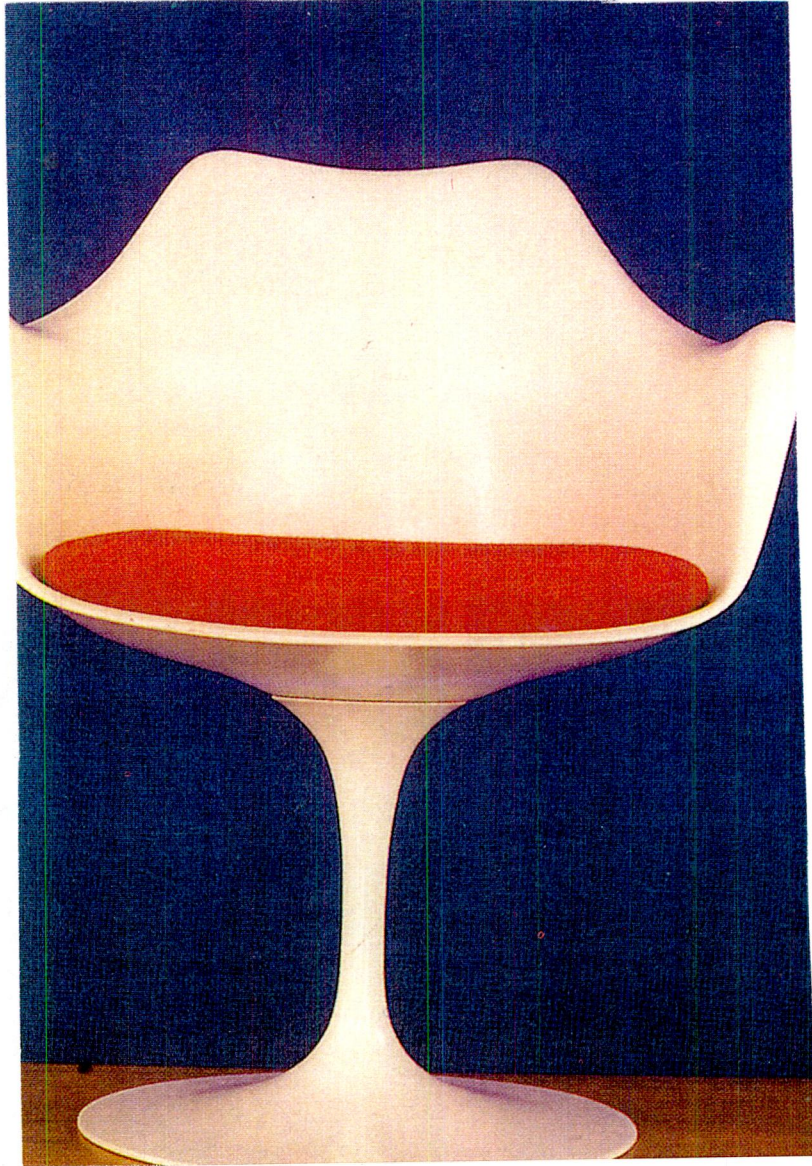


Fig.30



light weight product. One designer who captured the elements of organic modernism and elements of abstract art was Eva Zeisel. Her work was simple in form, but strong in suggestion. Her work takes on an almost human feel. The following is a description of her work:

“The striving for formality is reflected not only in the choice of the clay body but also in the way that it used the walls of the plates are intentionally thick at the bottom, to provide stability, but they rise to thin, elegant edges. In accord with Zeisels theory of the psychology of forms, “the coffee pot has curves into straight lines” and small openings at the spout and lid, to appear a light graceful, cold” (Johnson, 1991,pg.56) (fig.31)

I think Eva Zeisel's work has the closest link with Poole's, not in the treatment of surface deco, but in the consideration of form. Fig.5 illustrates Eva's 'Museum dinnerware' range and two different ranges from Poole. (One known as Constellation and other Burst). The larger photo of Eva's work shows a selection of serving dishes, bowls, teacups, jugs' etc. They are all without surface decoration and comprise of simple shapes. The larger serving dishes are irregular in shape and display the same pulled and slumped sides that we saw earlier in the work of Kåge's 'soft form' ranges (Fig.29). These soft curves are typical of 'organic modernism'. The two small jugs by Eva in the top of the photo are bulbous on their bases and graduate into slender necks. The spout on the jug is very discrete; Eva has pulled a small lip from the thin neck of the clay. The jug in the Constellation range shown in Fig.31 also displays a small lip. The resemblance is more evident in Poole's Burst range. It consists of weighted, rounded bases leading into slender necks, as seen in Eva's work. Irregular shapes and uneven rims are also used on the 'Burst' range, also a strong feature of Eva's work. I would consider Eva Zeisel's work to be one of the forerunners of organic modernism, and therefore because of the obvious similarities Poole designers must also





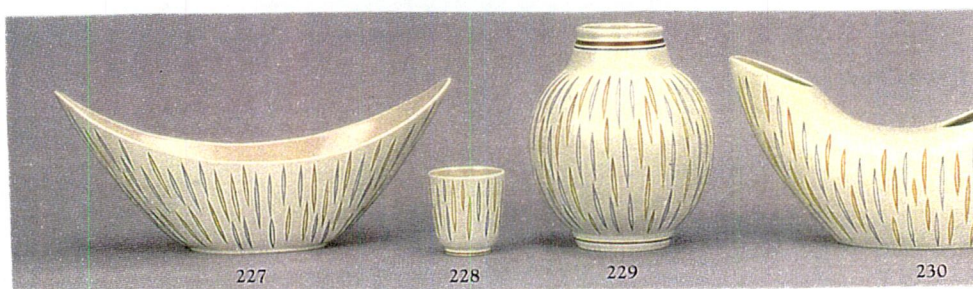


Fig.31

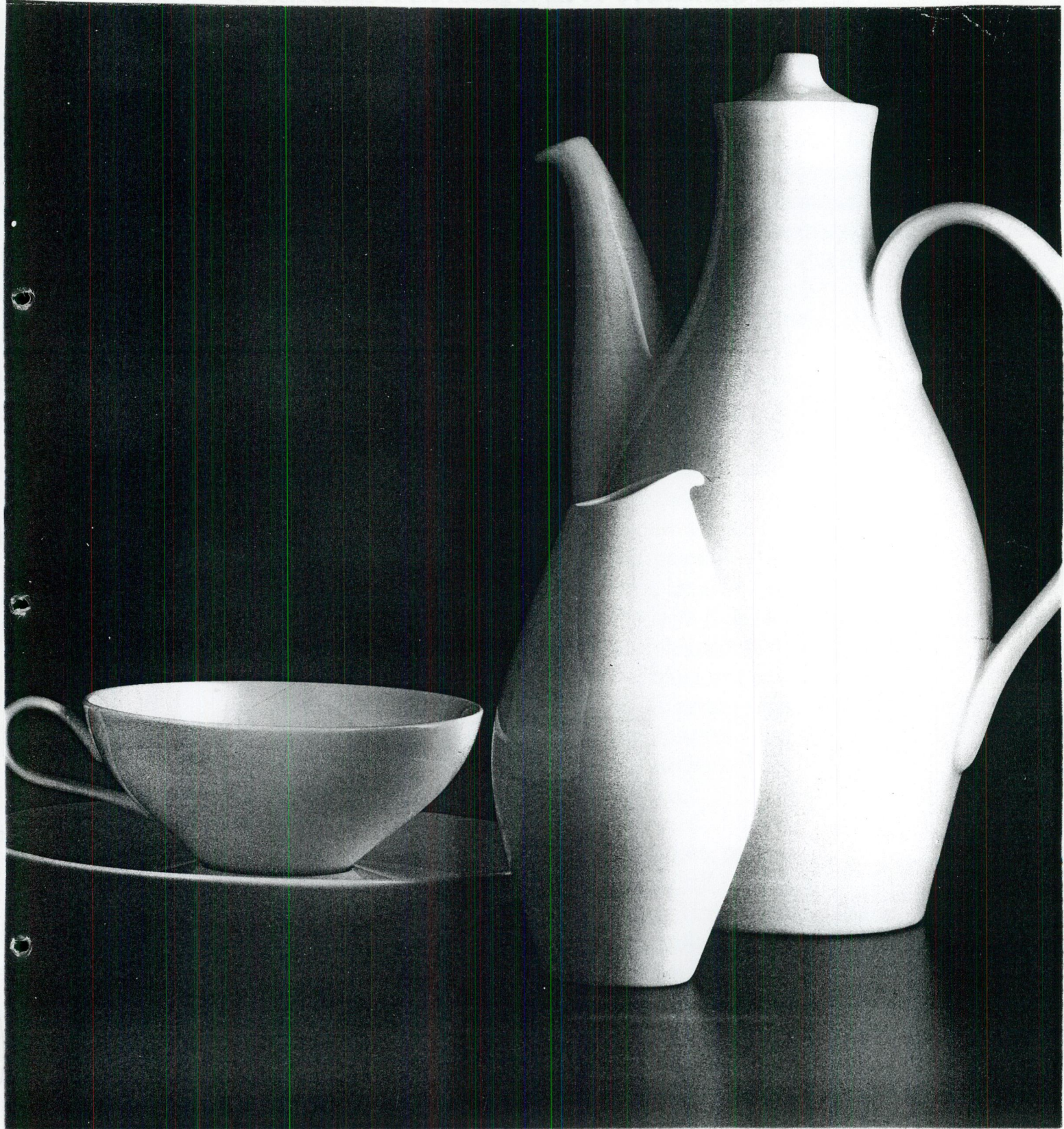














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Fig.32





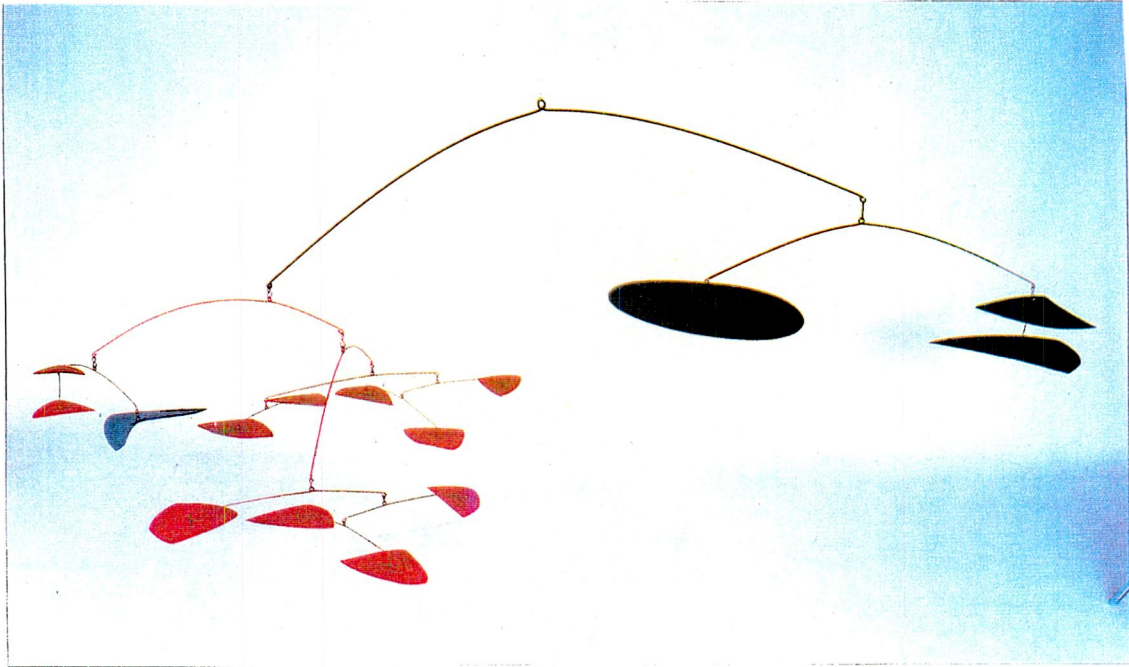


Fig.33



about in the above quote, about Miro's work and the strong influence it had on many '50s designers. The sense of elegance and balance in the pose of the female figure in Fig.32, is suggested in the form and line of Poole's ware in Fig.34.e.g. narrowing waist lines. This is another reference to the designs of Eva Zeisel's and Poole's thrown and slip-cast forms. It has become noticeable to me throughout my research of abstract art and its influences, that it affected strongly both forms and surface decoration of ceramic ware. Many of the other influences I spoke about affected only one aspect of the design. As with other influences in the '50s design, biomorphism appealed to the masses:

“ Generally such organic motifs seemed to reflect something of a spirit contemporaneity and modernity and ware, therefore of interest to the average taste conscious consumer” (Woodham,1987,pg197).

The 'spirit of contemporaneity and modernity' was exhibited in numerous, ways. One sculptor, whose work captured this spirit, was Alexander Calder. One of his most outstanding pieces was the mobile he produced in the '50s. (Fig.33). Not only did his mobiles speak of balance, space, line, colour and composition; they also acted as an inspiration to many designers in the world of textiles, interiors, ceramic surface decoration etc. Calder's mobiles consisted of strips of thin, black, flexible metal, with rounded and angular shapes suspended on the ends of the rods. The rods were connected by a series of metal loops. The over all effect was an array of changing lines and shapes, which balanced elegantly to create an interesting visual effect. Designers using surface decoration, saw the endless possibilities, the changing shapes of the mobile had. Its distinctive black lines, and blobs of color, became inspiration for many surfaces including laminated wood, Formica, fabric, ceramics etc. One of the most innovative pattern designers of the '50s, was Lucienne Day. An example of her work is seen on fig.35. It is a Formica topped table and exhibits a textured surface pattern.





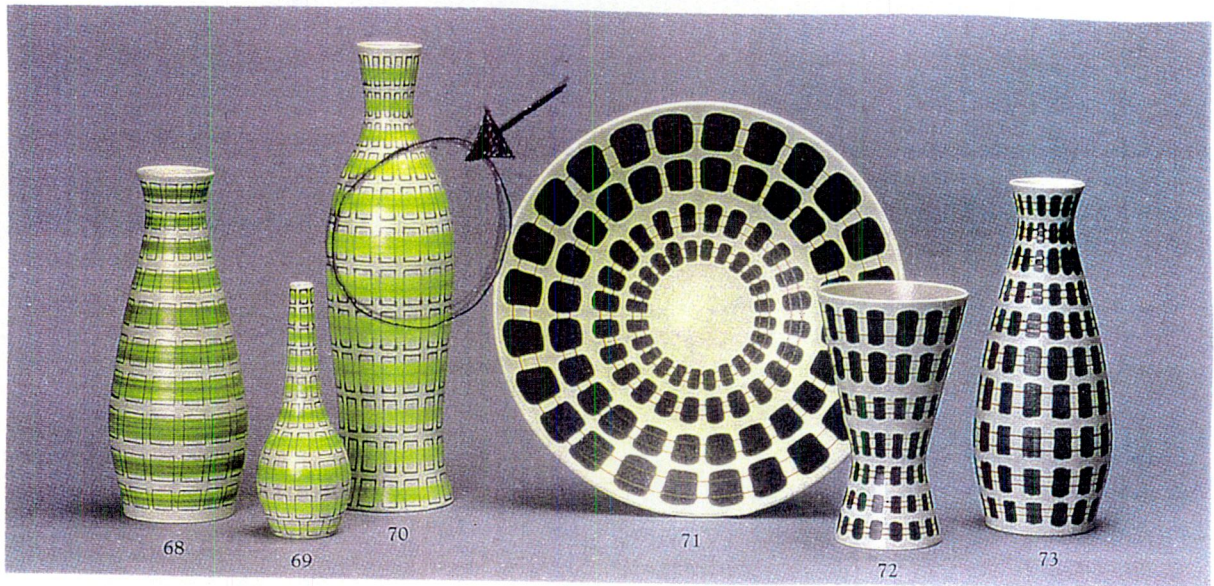


Fig.34





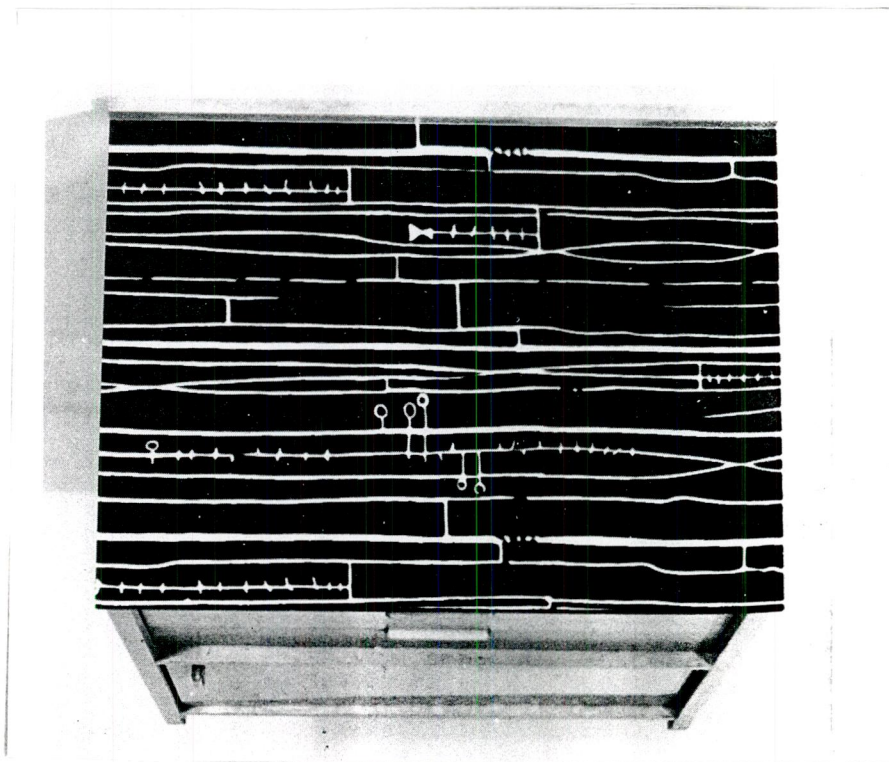


Fig.35

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that the study of the history of the United States is essential for a full understanding of the country and its people. The paper then goes on to discuss the various factors that have shaped the history of the United States, including the role of the government, the economy, and the culture.

2. The second part of the paper discusses the role of the government in the history of the United States. It is argued that the government has played a central role in the development of the country, and that its actions have shaped the course of history. The paper then goes on to discuss the various ways in which the government has influenced the country, including through its policies, its actions, and its institutions.

3. The third part of the paper discusses the role of the economy in the history of the United States. It is argued that the economy has played a central role in the development of the country, and that its actions have shaped the course of history. The paper then goes on to discuss the various ways in which the economy has influenced the country, including through its policies, its actions, and its institutions.

4. The fourth part of the paper discusses the role of the culture in the history of the United States. It is argued that the culture has played a central role in the development of the country, and that its actions have shaped the course of history. The paper then goes on to discuss the various ways in which the culture has influenced the country, including through its policies, its actions, and its institutions.

5. The fifth part of the paper discusses the role of the people in the history of the United States. It is argued that the people have played a central role in the development of the country, and that their actions have shaped the course of history. The paper then goes on to discuss the various ways in which the people have influenced the country, including through their policies, their actions, and their institutions.

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The wiry, long, lines, and small circles, may well have evolved from Calder's mobiles. The use of wiry lines was typical of '50s surface decoration and can be credited to the work of many abstract artists.

Poole was also a supporter of using wiry or woven linear patterns on its wares. A.B.Reads daughter, Ann, designed ranges named 'basket' and 'bamboo'. The 'basket' design, (Fig.36) was a series of lines, giving the impression of woven textiles. This design was similar to designs seen on Formica. Like Lucienne Days work, it took inspiration from abstract art, but there is also another suggestion for its design. As we know, new materials were introduced throughout the '50s and with these arrivals were the question of decoration. Because materials such as Formica and plastic were new, it was not initially known how to decorate them. Suggestions were put forward, most of them tying in with the surface decoration of the time such as bright colours, organic, wiry shapes, boomerang shapes, DNA structures etc. These suggestions were probably a consideration in Poole's choice of surface decoration. So what began as a solution to the problem of decorating Formica and plastic, became a creative inspiration for Poole's wares.

"Laminated patterns often simulated textural effects, such as the loose weave of woven textiles, or the type of textural abstraction seen in contemporary wallpaper" (Jackson, 1991, pg80).

If we take a step back now and look at the evidence compiled in this chapter, we can see that the changing developments of the abstract art and modern design world became closer than ever during the '50s. Artists influenced designers and designers influenced artists. The upshot of this partnership, combined with other influences from Scandinavia, evolved into a style known as 'Organic Modernism'. Objects created from the 'Organic Modernist' movement were characterized by soft, rounded curves, clean lines, a sense of weightlessness and purity in the forms of each object. Poole seems to have enlisted many of these qualities into their wares.





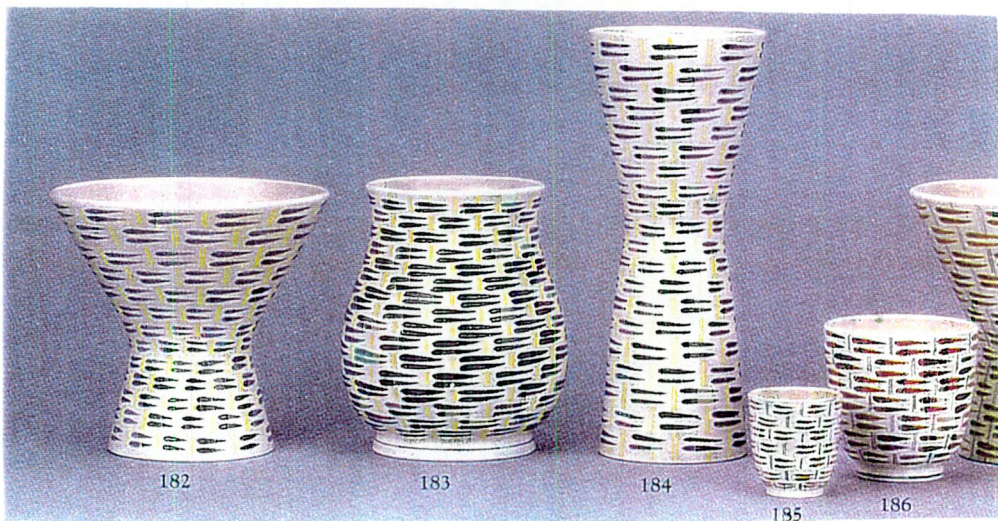
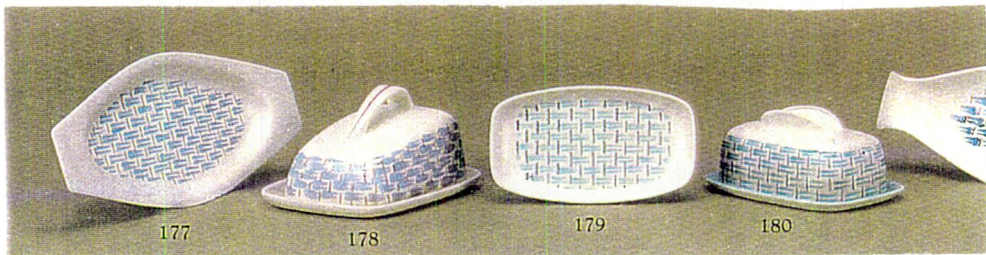
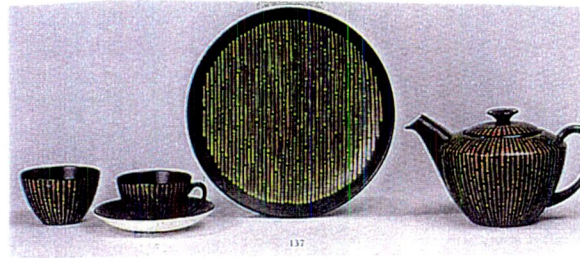


Fig.36





Although Poole displayed many characteristics of 'Organic Modernism', it also manages to with hold its own identity.



## CONCLUSION.

The dawning of the '50s not only marked a new decade, it also carried the message that confidence and hope must be restored in the Nations' spirits. In relation to design, the constraints put upon designers (including ceramics) by the English Government to compile to their guidelines ceased with the ending of The Utility Scheme in 1952. The '50s heralded new opportunities for designers to break from the restrictions of World War Two. The ending of the Scheme meant designers had more incentives to create. Coupled with these new incentives was the delivery of new influences. One significant influence which presented itself was seen in scientific and technological discoveries. The possibilities, industrial and ceramic designers found in science and technology were endless. Evidence of this is seen on ceramic ware in the form of surface decoration. Molecular and D.N.A. structures adorned numerous varieties of Poole's '50s products.

What draws me most to these products is the fact that they reflect the freedom and excitement of this very age. Through the use of bright patterns and interesting forms Pooles' wares evoke an extremely positive spirit. The products Poole produced throughout the '50s, show excellence in both design and function. What aided Poole to create distinctive designs was the fact that they made a decisive break from traditional ceramics. Their products emphasised a new age. The combination of new materials, new found freedom and a new outlook culminated in making the 50s a momentous era for designers. Poole was fully aware of these elements and employed politically aesthetic social aspects of the '50s in it's design process. Today's designers still look to the unique and classic style of the '50s for inspiration. The endurance of the '50s design underlines it's significance. Pooles' wares stand as a symbol for this era, but excellence of their design is timeless.

"This new perception of objects as part of a way of life rather than tools for carrying out a particular task required that design be thought about in a whole new way. The individual object became less important. Design for mass production involved more sociological insight than expertise or aesthetic intention." (Hines, 1987, pg.65).





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