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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I intend to examine the use of 'Words' and 'Printed imagery' in contemporary British Ceramics. Many ceramic makers cross boundaries in their work. Many makers experiment with forms of communication using clay as a medium. Industry has exploited print processes on ceramics for hundreds of years. In the past, Industry aimed to bring inexpensive decorated wares which were easily accessible to the masses.

> "Hand-made or thrown ware meant that those working in the ceramic field who were not throwers or hand builders of 'forms' and who had dipped into industrial processes were in the past viewed as mavericks, sometimes with downright hostility. At the same time, they were seen by others as working in some strange little backwater, irrelevant both to the fine arts and industry."[1]

Contemporary ceramics presents an abundance of makers whose work does not fit comfortably into traditional, firmly defined areas. Makers move in and out of the application of ceramic printing techniques, depending on which particular surface effect they want to achieve. Words juxtaposed with images are increasingly being applied to contemporary ceramic surfaces. Words and images enable ceramists to express a direct and informative meaning. The use of words on ceramic surface has gained momentum in British ceramics over the last decade.

In order to explore this vast growing area in ceramics, I have intentionally chosen three very different artist-makers-Glenys Barton, Paul Scott and Philip Eglin. These diverse practitioners have one primary element in common: print. They have all incorporated printing techniques onto their ceramic works at various stages in their artistic careers. They use clay as their expressive medium.

[1] Scott Paul, Bennett Terry: Hot off the Press-Ceramics and Print, Bellew Publishing, London, 1996, p9.

Glenys Barton is a graduate from the Royal College of Art in London. She studied ceramics there from 1968 to 1971. The influence of Bernard Leach, a pioneer of studio ceramics, was still strong in the 1970's. At this time Barton made a serious challenge to traditional 'craft' ceramics. Barton is a sculptor using clay as her medium. In 1976 she accepted a year's residency to work as an artist on the factory floor at Wedgwood. Barton used industrial casting processes and developed lithographic and screen-printed transfers to a high standard. She used bone china to produce her sculptural work. These industrial procedures did not follow the traditional craft ethos. On completing her year at Wedgwood, and producing an impressive body of work, Barton decided that it amounted to a 'dead' end. Her work has been very different to date. Barton now hand-builds life-size heads and portraits with earthenware clay. She has completely abandoned the use of printed imagery in her ceramic work.

Paul Scott trained to be an art teacher at St. Martin's College in Lancaster in the 1970's. While studying, he fell out with the painting tutor, and vowed to paint in the ceramics department. Scott was strongly influenced by ceramic tutor, Barry Gregson, who said that "anything was possible with clay."[2] Scott is a painter or printmaker using ceramic as his main medium. This approach has in the past been viewed with some distaste by the Craft Pottery movement. Scott is not interested in conforming to preconceptions of what ceramics should be about. Paul Scott is the author of 'Ceramics and Print',(1994) the first book to be written on printing techniques used in contemporary ceramics. He was the Editor and curator of 'Hot off the Press' Ceramics and Print, (1996) and co-curator of

[2] Scott Paul, email interview 1999

'Glazed Expressions', an exhibition of contemporary ceramics and the written word in 1998. He is currently writing a new book, which examines the area of printed and painted ceramics in some depth. His written and ceramic work is catalytic. Scott proposes an alternative version of ceramic history, one where form and function are not dominant, but where the development of the ceramic surface is the prime concern. Scott uses ceramic surfaces to voice intelligently political and environmental concerns.

Philip Eglin completed a post-graduate course in ceramics at the Royal College of Art in 1983. His work is mainly figurative. Eglin considers himself as an artist-potter and he refers to his figures as 'vessels'. Eglin employs printed imagery and word depending on the particular surface he wants to achieve. Eglin has a vast range of influences, old and new. He makes connections between fine art and the decorative. He layers printed imagery on the surface of his ceramic plates, figures and buckets. Eglin's application of ceramic oxides is executed like that of a modern painter. His use of daubed words call to mind the graffiti and vandalism which surround us in contemporary society.

I will outline the use of printed imagery in their work. Scott and Eglin apply words and printed imagery to the surface of their work. Barton chose to work with printed images solely in her early work. She now has abandoned the use of printed imagery. An insight into their influences, techniques and artistic endeavours expressed through their chosen medium of clay will be explored. I hope to reveal that, by crossing boundaries into other artistic disciplines, the relevance of ceramic art can be increased.

Chapter 1
Words and Images

Chapter 1 - Word and Printed Image

Words have occupied the fields of modern art with common ease. The use of words in art is not a new phenomenon. There have been relatively few periods in the history of art when texts were out of place with images of words. Twentieth-century art has granted the written word "free entry into images once again[3]. The written word is clearly evident in Byzantine, Medieval and even Renaissance art[4]. The illuminated capitals of Medieval manuscripts provide a rich example of the combination of image and text. However, the use of words as a narrative in painting became much less frequent after the Renaissance.

The twentieth century has seen a strong re-appearance of the use of the word and image and its useful ambiguity, where many meanings can be drawn. Around 1912, Picasso and Braque included words or portions of words in their paintings and collages. In their early work, words acted as abstract symbols and referents to the real world. It is evident that even for the Cubists the use of words with images was already packed with paradox. Which was more "real"-the word or image?

The Dadaists built on the Cubists use of words with specific political intent. They used the juxtaposition of the visual and verbal to heighten the potential of meaning.

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[3] Gombrich, E.H, 'Image and Word in 20th Century Art' Word Aand Image, Vol, No.3 September 1985 These include the inscribed mosaics of S.Vitale, Ravenna, the text-rich Bayeux Tapestry, and Jan Van Eyck's famous 'Giovanni Arnolfini and His Bride' (where the words 'Johannes de Eyck fuit hic' are written above the mirror in the background.)

[4] These include the inscribed mosaics of S.Vitale, Ravenna, the text-rich Bayeux Tapestry, and Jan Van Eyck's famous 'Giovanni Arnolfini and His Bride' (where the words 'Johannes de Eyck fuit hic' are written above the mirror in the background.)

However it was not until Surrealist movement of the 1920's and 1930's that the multiple implications of word and imagery were fully exploited

In the 1950's Picasso's use of print on clay as another creative medium was important in giving validity to the medium in the eyes of the art establishment. Picasso produced hundreds of ceramic works. He printed from lino-cuts and carved plaster. He further developed the fine artist's exploration of print onto a new medium.

In the Sixties, 'Pop Art' used words from popular printed material and mass produced commodities. In America, craft and fine art practices have been more integrated, the use of words in ceramics being common from the Pop era on. In the late Sixties, Robert Arneson began to develop his ceramic work away from standard utilitarian forms. Arneson consistently explored word and image in his sculptural ceramics from the early sixties to the early Nineties. Arneson pioneered many of the approaches which now preoccupy contemporary ceramics. These approaches include the use of imprinted and graffitied words. In these investigations of ambiguity and paradox in materials, a running commentary on political campaigning and subversive texts was explored. Arneson's work began to take on an autobiographical flavour.

In the 1970's, feminist and political art used controversial words and rebellious imagery to convey their ideas. Words continued to be used in art throughout the 1980's and 1990's. It is not surprising that the extensive use of words in fine art has had an impact on ceramics.

It may be considered that ceramics has responded too late to the phenomenal use of the juxtaposition of word and image, a technique which has been incorporated into fine art over the last four decades. Arguably the earliest piece of the written word on clay was a small clay tablet found in Sumeria dating from c.2000BC. It is covered with cuneiform

writing relating to copper, silver, cloth and tools. This clay tablet was used as a means to record documentary or narrative texts. From this example alone, it is evident that words inscribed or printed onto ceramics have played an important role in history.

The effect of the Bernard Leach tradition which has had such a strict hold on post First World War ceramics in Europe is now being constantly challenged. Leach put strict emphasis on the importance of the harmony of form and function. In A Potter's Book, Bernard Leach wrote "well painted pots have a beauty of expression greater than pottery decorated with engraved transfers, stencils or rubber stamps."[5] Leach refers to stamp printing as "vulgar patterns" and the effects they achieve he thought "deplorable". It is evident that the development of print on ceramics was seen as a negative thing. Leach emphasised the importance of the handmade ethos and dismissed industrial processes.

Print processes have been exploited by industry for hundreds of years. With the aim of making decorative wares available to the masses. Throughout the latter part of nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, much ceramic sanitaryware – lavatory bowls, sinks etc, were highly decorated with copperplate engraved transfers. Most utilitarian containers were made from ceramics; these containers stored anything from beer, toothpaste, to fish-paste. The lids of the containers were often elaborately decorated with printed transfers displaying the properties of their contents. Monochromatic and polychromatic prints were used, whose quality and depth of colour is still astounding today. These were produced mainly by the Staffordshire firm of F.R Pratt in the 1850's, the technique of multi-colour underglaze printing having been pioneered by the firm.

Ii is evident that throughout ceramic history there has been an insistence on the

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[5] Scott Paul, Ceramics and Print, A&C Publishing, London, p9

application of form and function. In her essay 'Words and the Ceramic Surface' for the catalogue to the Glazed Expressions exhibition in 1998, Dr.Stephanie Brown writes about past beliefs and the use of words and printed imagery on ceramic surface.

> "Words and printed imagery are seemingly at odds with the refined aesthetics, specialised technical skills and forging of personal visual vocabularies expected of the serious ceramist."[6]

It is evident that traditionalists viewed the inclusion of words and printed imagery in studio ceramics as a corruption of their ideologies. This inclusion opposed the importance of the harmony of form and function. As a result, ceramic surface has been a secondary consideration. The importance placed on form and function has demoted painting or printing on ceramic surface to be considered merely as decoration.

Priority was given to the harmony of form and function; the expressive touch, rather than the expressive thought, has long controlled the language of studio ceramics[7]. Words were an irrelevant part of the potter's language. This is because in the past words were only used on mass-produced souvenirs and commemorative wares such as Puzzle Jugs[8], teapots, ceramic beakers, and plates. Important historical events, royal family scandals, and political events were advertised on ceramics in the early nineteenth century. At that time ceramic wares were used to sway public opinions.

Ceramists today have realised that good surface decoration can amplify the aesthetic range and depth of a piece of art whether ceramic, china or glass. Surface decoration can

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[6] Brown Stephanie, Glazed Expressions : Contemporary Ceramics and the Written Word, Catalogue published by the Orleans House Gallery, Twickenham, London 1998

[7] ibid

[8] This includes a Puzzle Jug made by Issac Trotter in Sommerset, dated 1816. The inscription follows: "When this you see pray think on mee and bear it in your mind for I am fill times at your house speak By mee as you find except this geft my dear from mee. (Jean Rose 1816

display the inner meaning of a piece of work. Over the last decade in Britain, ceramists have combined word and printed imagery on ceramic surfaces in order to express ideas which depend on the precise combination of word and image. Decorative ceramic surfaces are no longer purely commemorative. Ceramists now paint and print freely written words and images to explore their ideas. Words and printed images are expressively used on contemporary ceramics to give ceramics more meaning. It is important that something new and interesting is asserted. In the past, moral issues and politics were expressed on the ceramic surface. Strong examples from English history would be the Staffordshire figures of 'Popery' and 'Protestantism'. The message:

> "He that committieth his conscience to the keeping of another is no longer a free man. Freedom of conscience and freedom of thought are essential to the freedom of man. Therefore a nation of Catholics is a nation of slaves."[9]

Today this message is obscure. Moral issues have ceased to be a fashion in ceramics, although politics are still a popular subject. The use of print enables ceramists to respond quickly to news events. The application of text rather than visuals alone allows ceramics to have a more literal voice, to convey opinions about contemporary society. Most makers of ceramics do not fit comfortably into the tightly defined areas of craft tradition. There are a sizeable number of people moving in and out of using printing techniques as a process to suit work of a particular time or purpose.

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[9] Popery, earthenware clay, decoration printed underglaze and painted overglaze, made in Staffordshire, 1851.

Chapter 2
Glenys Barton

CHAPTER 2 : GLENYS BARTON.

Glenys Barton was born in 1935 in Stoke-on-Trent. She began her career by training to be a teacher in Bristol, and treated this training as an art school. Barton concentrated on developing throwing skills. Barton taught at Risinghill, a tough London comprehensive school for eighteen months, but abandoned it and took up a post as a potter's assistant at the Institute of Education at London University. A visiting tutor from the Royal College of Art accidentally saw Barton's drawings and encouraged her to apply. Barton was accepted at the Royal College of Art, where she began her studies in ceramics in 1968.

As a student, Barton wanted to pursue a career in industrial ceramic design. She designed a range of domestic wares for Habitat. This range was accepted and put into production. At that time Habitat was pioneering new attitudes towards the British domestic environment. Half way through college, Barton decided that she could not accept the compromises which a career in industrial design would entail, with the importance of profit and the restriction on imagination which seemed characteristic of some of the commercial manufacturers she came in contact with. At that time, her tutors Eduardo Paolozzi and the late Hans Coper influenced her decision to return to individual work. However, she found it impossible to return to her earlier method of working: "After making precise models, I couldn't go back to using clay as I had used it before." [9] Barton was strongly influenced by American Minimal art. In 1973 an exhibition 'The Art of the Real' held at the Tate

[9] Flowers Adrian, Gibson Robin, Lucie-Smith Edward, Glenys Barton, Great Britain, Momentum, 1997 p14,15

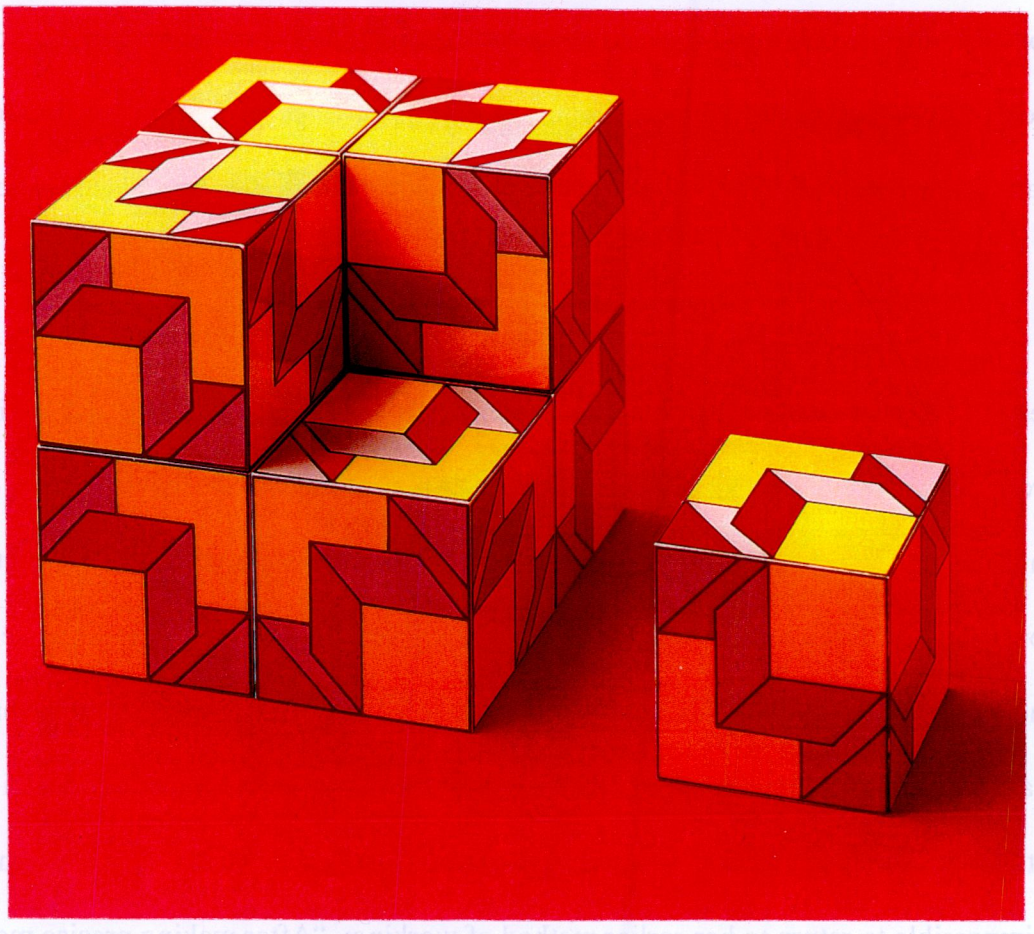

Fig.1 Glenys Barton, .Graphic Permutations 1 No.1 1972, bone china, 10.5x10.5x10.5cms.

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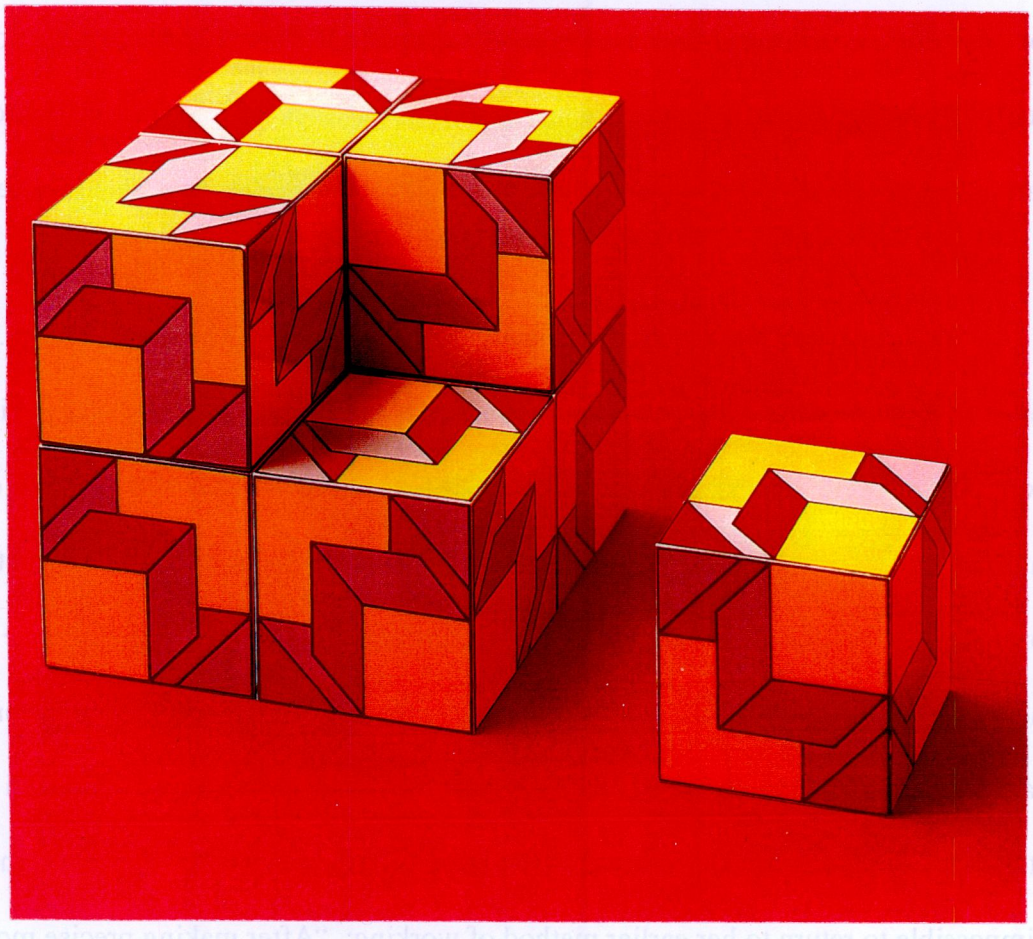

Fig.1 Glenys Barton, .Graphic Permutations 1 No.1 1972, bone china, 10.5x10.5x10.5cms.

Gallery, which explored this new trend, had an impact on her. She identified with the "direct, powerful simplicity of the sculptural objects,"[10] Architecture also influenced her work at this time, such as the IBM headquarters in Portsmouth, which is like "a black glass slab, solid yet elusive." She was also influenced by the solid mass of Arne Jacobsen's Bank of Denmark in Copenhagen. Barton compared these buildings to contemporary projects of the French neo-classical architects Boulee and Ledoux. She felt that "The Neo-classicists, longed for extreme purity and simplicity, yet wanted to arouse emotion through the use of expressive forms." Barton wanted to achieve similar purity and simplicity in her forms. She also wanted to stimulate emotion. Barton did dance training while she was at college in Bristol. She recalls:

> "Dance was for a long time my most vivid artistic experience. It can be so spontaneously creative: the image and the feeling so close and so controlled, one's own body diminutive, moving in a void."[11]

Barton completed her studies at the Royal College of Art in 1971. She moved to St. Pancras studio which was small and cramped, which she shared with life-long friend Jacqueline Poncelet. Barton's sculptures were extremely precise. Her work was geometrical in shape and pattern. The use of geometric surface pattern is displayed in her piece entitled 'Graphic Permutations 1' No.1(fig.1) made in 1972, this piece is cast from

bone china. The cramped studio provided most unpromising surroundings for this precise work. Around 1973 a craft revival was taking place in British ceramics. Barton became identified at this time, and in 1973 was included in a major survey show-

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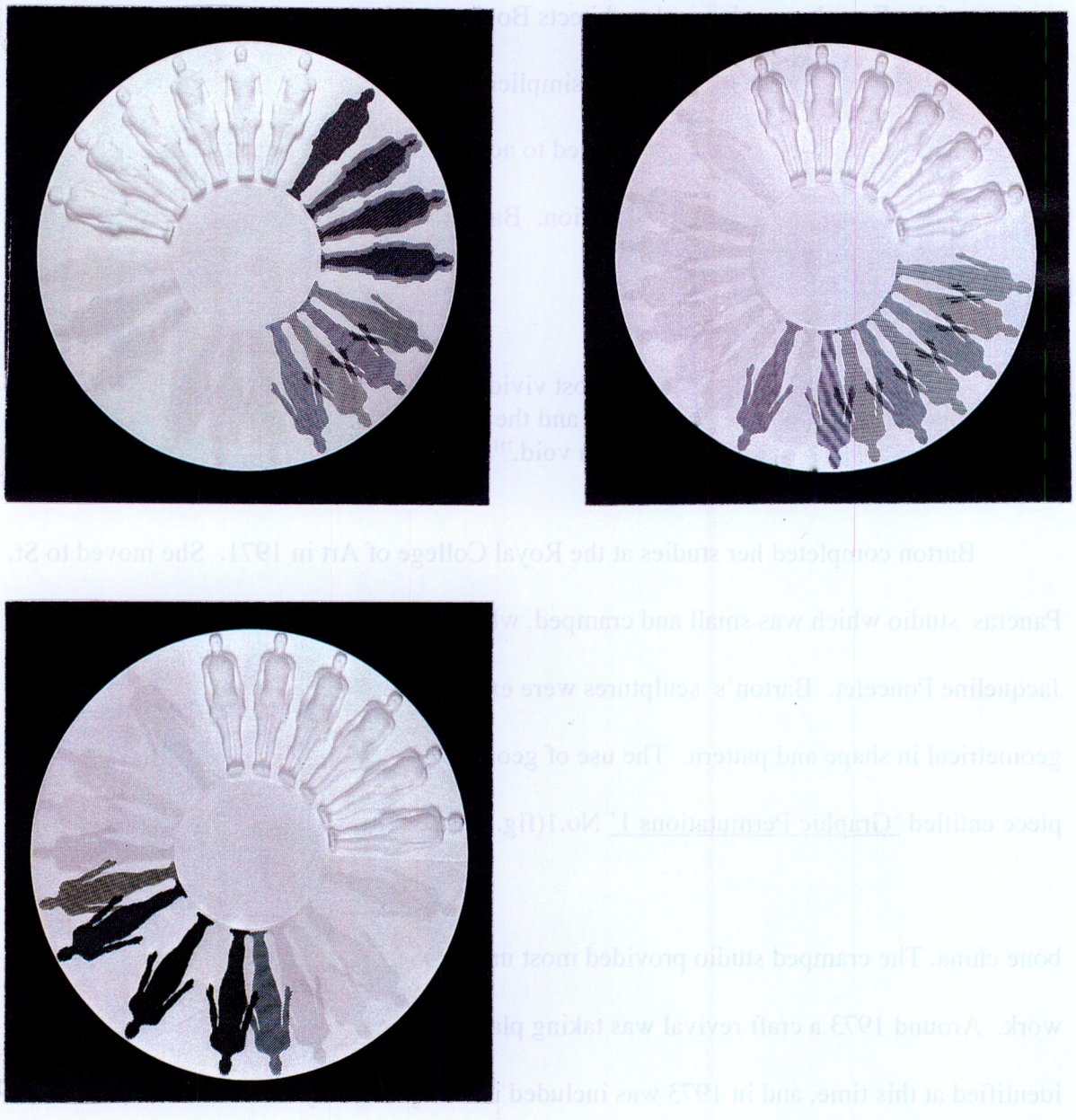
[10] ibid p15.
[11] Glenys Barton, 'A Search for Order', Ceramic Review, No34, 1975.



Fig,2. Glenys Barton, Life Diagram I/II/III 1977, bone china,24.2cms diameter.

'The Craftsman's Art',' held at the Victoria and Albert Museum and in 'Aspects of British Crafts,' held at the Royal Scottish Museum in the same year. Although Barton participated in these exhibitions, she always resisted the identification with craft. Although, clay is primarily a medium for her sculpture work, her sculpture forms embodied abstract ideas: about isolation, about loneliness, about man's relationship to his environment.

Barton often feels that she has been "disadvantaged, and ignored by critics"[13] because her chosen medium is clay, which is directly associated with the world of craft. Barton's fanatical concern for precision in her work distinguishes her from the craft potter who happily accepts 'accidental' effects. As a student, Barton reacted against British pottery traditions. Rivalry between ceramic students about the integration of industrial techniques was common. Regardless of this, Barton carried on using bone china.

Barton's small-scale work in bone china, which she made in St. Pancras studio, led directly to her next phrase. In 1977 Barton was invited to spend a year's residency at Wedgwood. She made a serious challenge to English 'craft traditions' when she accepted the residency at Wedgwood. Barton's work had already ridiculed many of the fundamental laws of the British craft pottery tradition that Bernard Leach had done so much to initiate. Leach's influence was still strong in the1970's. Unlike his, her work was extreme in precision. Her aims at that time coincided almost exactly with those pursued by the firm of Wedgwood. These aims included a concept so thoroughly worked out, that the result was predictable before the piece was ever formed. Barton's work divided into three groups: wall pieces, phrenologists heads and the male nude. The wall pieces were flat discs with relief and transfer-printed imagery, an example being' Life Diagram I/II/III'(fig.2) 24.2cms diameter. The Phrenologists heads were sectioned or divided to reveal relief patterns or

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[13] Flowers Adrian, Gibson Robin, Lucie-Smith Edward, Glenys Barton, Great Britain, Momentum, 1997 p17

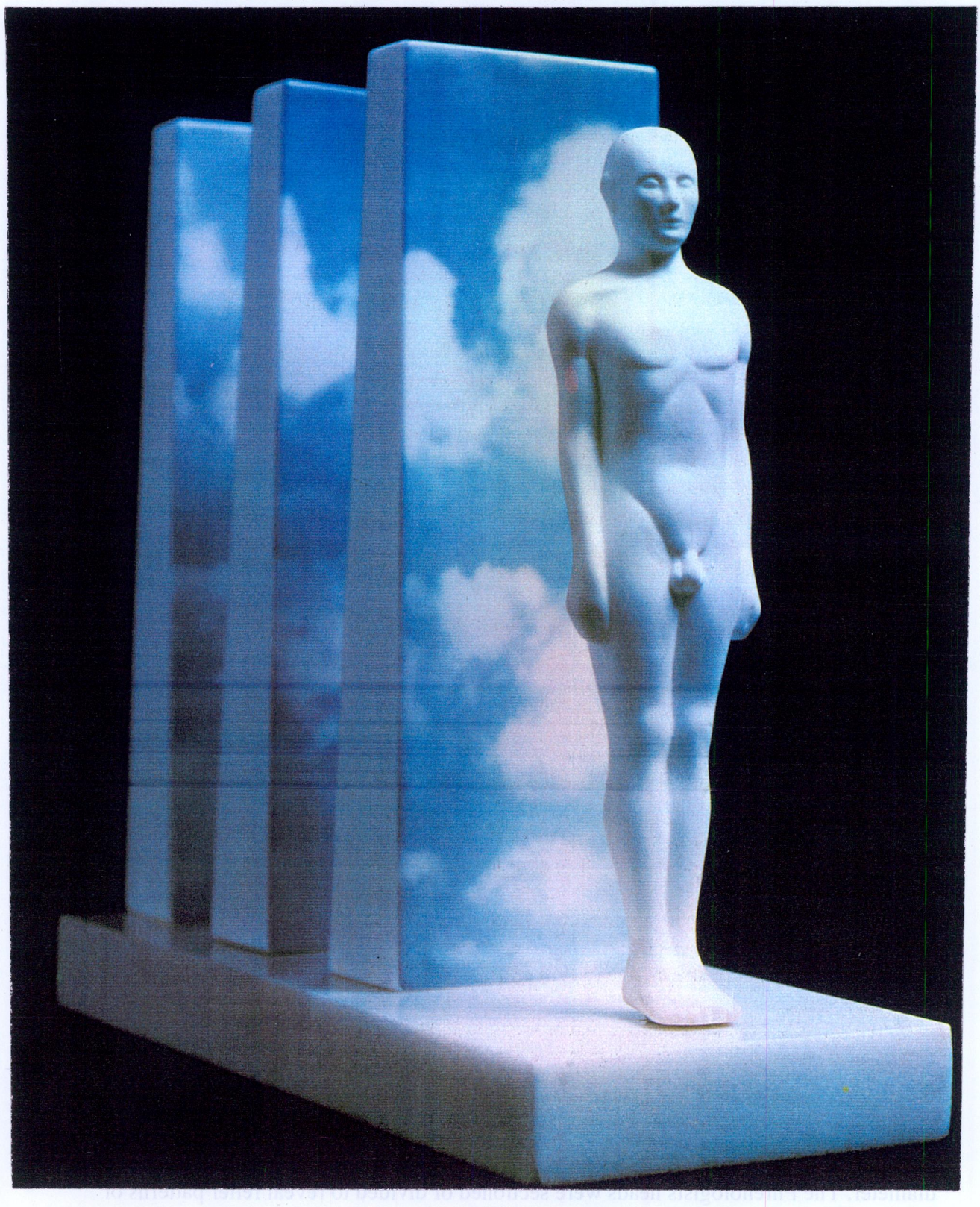

Fig.3.Glenys Barton, Time at Yagul, 1977, bone china, height 17.4cms.

transfer printed imagery. Circular discs supported the freestanding figure of the male nude. Barton's main subject was the male nude on a small scale. Space and spatial relationships are essentially what her work at this time was about. Barton places her figure within an arena. There is a constant awareness of space. Barton writes:

> "For the dancer, territory is the area within which he or she dances- the distance which can be covered by so many steps or leaps, the centre to which the dancer must return before starting to elaborate another pattern."[14]

Barton placed her figures on bases or plaques. This directly expresses an arena of space. She applied commercial transfers to the surface of her work at this time. In the piece entitled 'Time at Yagul,'(fig.3)_1977,which is 17.4cm high Barton placed a cast figure of the male nude in front of three monoliths cast and pressed with photolithographic transfers of clouds. The material she used at Wedgwood was bone china. In 'A Potter's Book' Leach writes:

> "Western potters from the early days of industry, and especially in making porcelain, have travelled further and further away from the natural conception of clay towards an ideal of over-refined mixtures which are aptly called pastes."[15]

Leach dismissed industrial process used in the making of craft. In regard to this, Barton had no hesitations in exploiting the extreme whiteness and translucency of bone china. This collaboration of an individual artist and an industrial firm was not new. Wedgwood produced a limited edition of plates with silk-screened decoration based on the graphic work of Eduardo Paolozzi in 1972. Paolozzi's plates presented images of the machine age. He used bright colours reflecting the urban environment, the age of space travel and high technology.

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[14] Lucie-Smith Edward and John Mallet, 'Glenys Barton at Wegwood', Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 1977.

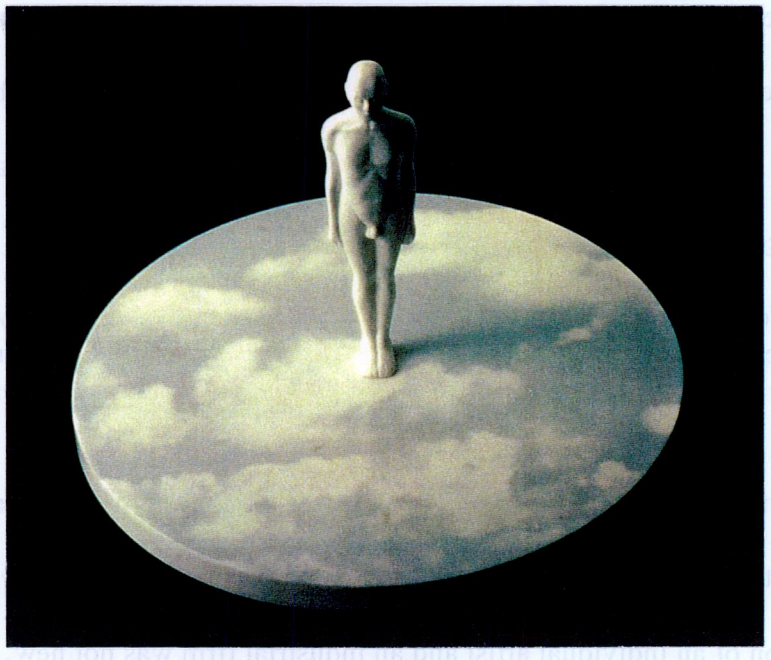

Fig.4.Glenys Barton, Sky Plateau 2, 1976/77, bone china 25cms diameter.

Not all makers belong to a definable area at any point in their artistic career. This is evident in Barton's ceramic work, although her work at Wedgwood marks a significant point in the use of print and industrial processes in ceramics.

Barton had to establish a working relationship at the large established factory. With the help of the skilled workers, she revived the craft of cast-pressing which was needed to produce an absolutely flat disk of bone china, 37.5 cm in diameter and 1.5cm thick, when fired. She pushed the technique of screen-printing to its limits. Each piece consisted of components, which were cast-pressed in bone china. Most of the large bases were solid slabs of bone china. Some pieces were unglazed, some only partially glazed where necessary, where silk-screen or photolithographic ceramic transfers have been applied.

A piece entitled 'Sky Plateau 2' (fig.4) (1976), 25cms in diameter, is cast from bone china; the piece consists of a flat disc, which is twenty-five centimetres in diameter, a small bone china cast figure is placed on the centre of the disc. The entire area of the disc is decorated with a blue and white cloud-like, photolithographic transfer. This printed image creates an instant feeling of space. Barton has created an arena for the dancer. By placing the figure in the centre of the disc, Barton has created an area for the figure to dance.

Barton produced a body of work, which was unlike that seen in the work of any of her contemporaries. She developed and employed lithographic and screen-printed transfers to achieve strong surface decoration. Her use of printing techniques on ceramic surface marks a significant point in the use of print and industrial processes by a maker in Britain. Although Barton has now completely abandoned the use of printed imagery on her work,

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[15] ibid p9

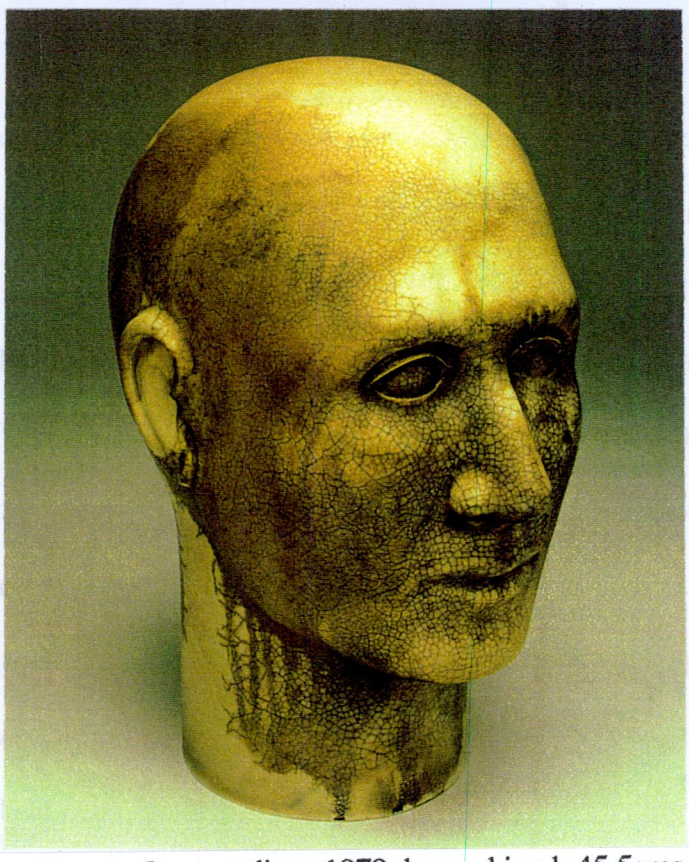

Fig.5.Glenys Barton, Ozymandias,, 1979, bone china,h.45.5cms.

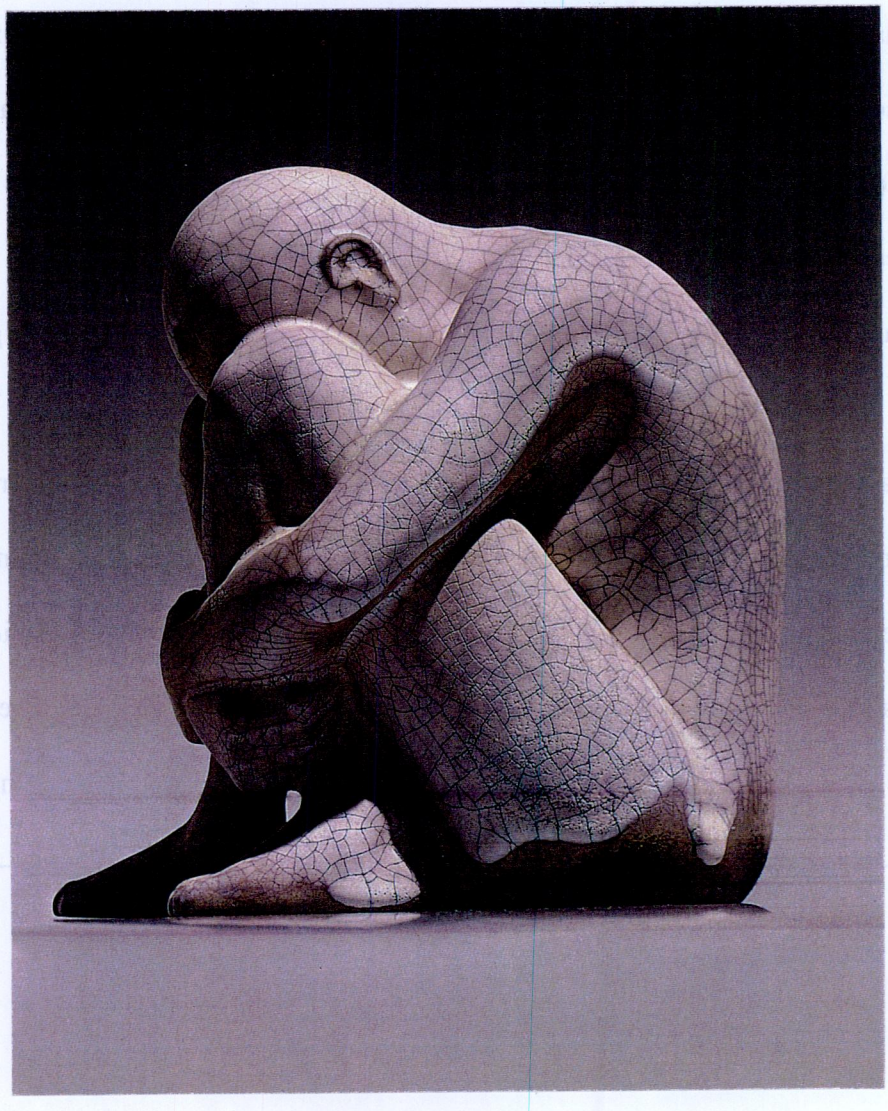

Fig.6.Glenys Barton, Inside , 1983 bon china, 9.5x15x18cms

the process and materials suited her work at the time. The commercial application of her work was never fully exploited. She discovered on return to her own independent work in London that her work at Wedgwood amounted to a 'dead end'[16]

From 1979 onwards Barton had a very different approach in her way of working. Her studio at this time was –'large, ramshackle, and not very clean.'[17] The condition of the studio made it difficult to achieve the precision of her previous work, although she still applied casting techniques of her earlier work. Many of the pieces were still made in moulds. The form was still firmly controlled. However, this controlling of the form was contradicted by her new firing and glaze techniques. Barton smoke-fired her new work, which produced random effects emphasised by heavily crackled glazes.

An example of her new developments in surface techniques is the piece (fig.5) entitled 'Ozymandias',(H.45.5cm) which dates from 1979. The human figure has made previous appearances in her sculpture work since 1974, but tended to be small in scale and linked directly related to a setting. 'Ozymandias' is life-size and independent of any base: one can make the connection with 'reserve heads' found in certain Ancient Egyptian tombs of the old Kingdom.[18]

From 1980 to 1984 Barton occupied a studio at Barmouth Road in Wandsworth. She continued experimenting with smoked surfaces and crackled glazes. Her range of imagery continued to expand. Barton's piece entitled 'Inside'(fig.6) made in 1983 was one of a series of twelve,(9.5x15x18cms) in scale and gained particular written attention. The art critic and potter Emanuel Cooper wrote extensively on this piece:

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[16] Flowers Adrian, Gibson Robin, Lucie-Smith Edward, Glenys Barton, Great Britain, Momentum, 1997 p22

[17] ibid p22

[18] Egyptian 'reserve heads' still satisfy our western notion of beauty in their clear and ideal expressions

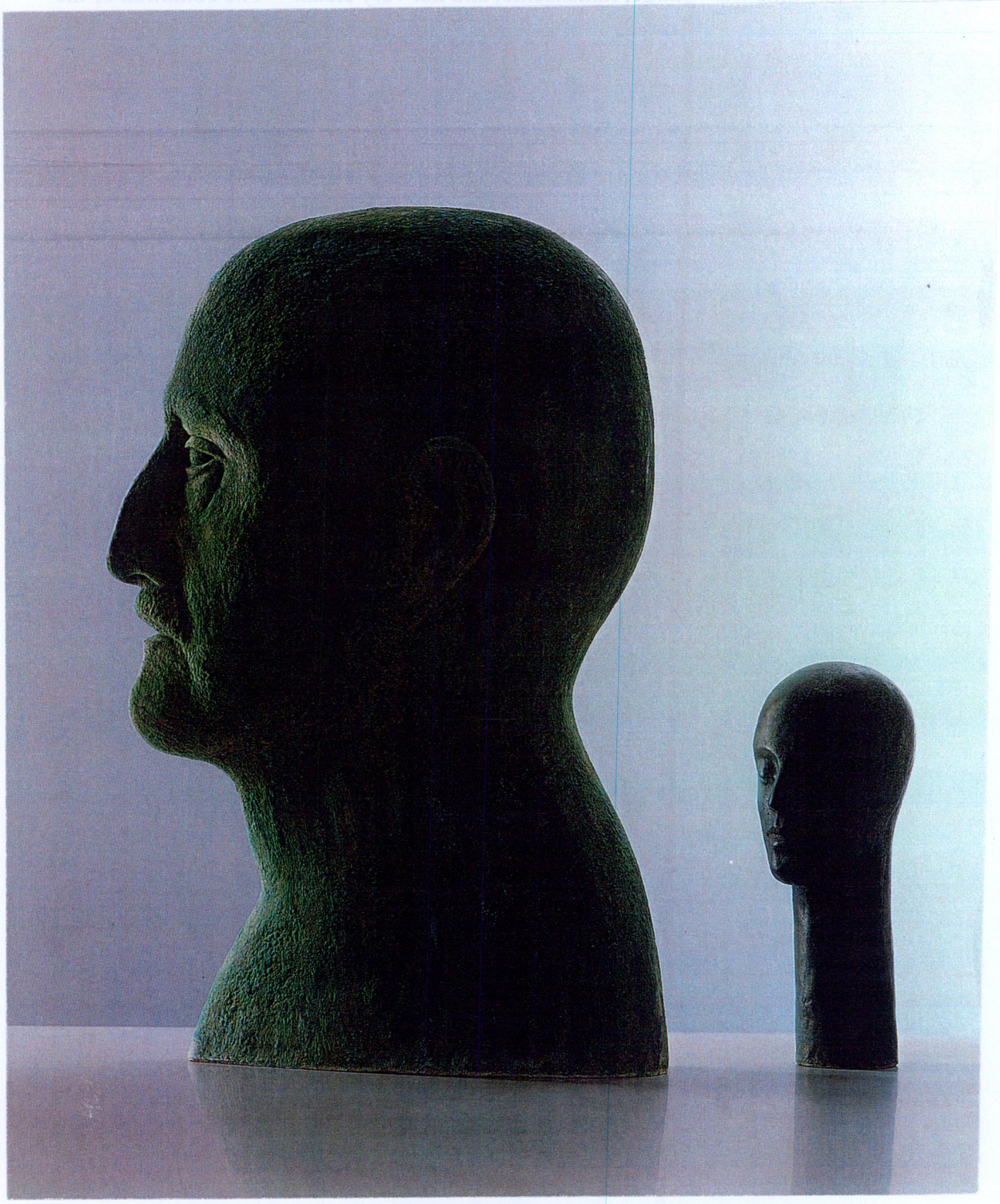

Fig.7.Glenys Barton, Peter Moores, 1985, earthenware clay, life-size, h.58cms.

> "A figure which, though based on the female body is posed in such a way that the sex is unimportant, in which the mood is one of self-containment, perhaps, introspection.".[19]

This sculpture conveys a 'crouching' female with bowed head and arms locked around her legs. Features have been smoothed away. The figure is cast from bone china. A creamy white raku glaze is heavily applied. The glaze has been sandblasted to reveal a fine network of crazing. The head is smoothly modelled without hair. Barton's work at this time dealt with self-examination and the idea of a choice of different identities.

In 1984 Barton moved to a new studio in Essex. Barton returned to making heads; up to now her head sculptures had been less than life-size. She never developed the full likeness of the model. For the 'Into the Eighties' exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, Edward Lucie-Smith selected Barton to execute a portrait of Peter Moores. Barton decided to undertake the challenge of making a life-size head, which was an exact replica of the art patron. Moores' compact profile and balding head were not unlike Barton's previous head sculptures. Barton carried out rigorous large profile drawings of him. The Peter Moores(fig.7) piece was monumental in its size and a green, bronze-like colour and made a complete break from her mould-making techniques. She made the portrait of Moores using a hand-building technique. Her technical methods have been mixed from here on, combining hand-building and mould-making techniques.

Barton is strongly influenced by Renaissance art, particularly the famous Madonna's head in the "Madonna del Parto' painted by Piero della Francesca. Barton's reached an important decision concerning the actual scale of her work in 1987. She carried out many experiments, making large ceramic heads covered with mosaic decoration. Her

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[19] Emmanuel Cooper, 'Glenys Barton ~ Sculptures and Reliefs', Ceramic Review, No.85,1984 p.10

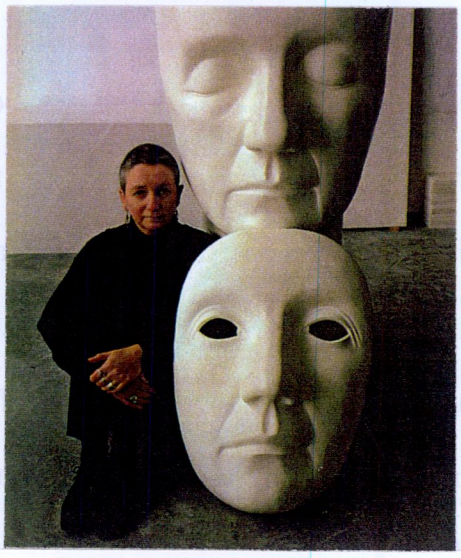

Fig.8. Glenys Barton, Self Portrait with Mask ,1987, 155cms.

Fig.9. Glenys Barton, Facing ,1995, earthenware clay,33x52x33cms

largest piece was made in 1987. This piece, entitled 'Self-Portrait with Mask'(fig.8), (1987) was 155cms high. The material used was fibreglass, although this medium was difficult to work with so she abandoned this work. Barton felt "that these larger pieces in some mysterious way became 'invisible'."[20] Barton writes in her notebook:

> "A question of scale. When does one recognise that the scale of the work is right? At what point can this become a challenge? Rightness or complacency? I think I have found the right material and scale in which to express myself. Now I have to expand or consolidate my ideas to reach the ideal expression of the human spirit"[21]

Barton's influences at this time were the early 20th century artists Cezanne, Matisse, Picasso, Modigliani and Giacometti. Between 1990 and 1995 Barton made two major trips abroad. In Thailand, Hindu sculpture reinforced her interest in multi-faced imagery. In India she looked to Jain sculpture. Hindu and Jain sculpture had a significant impact on her work. Barton made a series of multi-faced pieces. Barton made the form first and the added the faces. These were organic in form. Barton modelled the faces using a combination of full relief and shallow relief. Barton also drew directly on the clay surface in sgraffito. The combination of techniques are so subtle that it is difficult to distinguish between them. In the piece entitled 'Facing'(fig.9) of 1995, (33x52x33 cms), the viewer must move round it to gain the full impact of the work. This piece incorporates two separate curved forms. This is a fluid piece. Faces are partly modelled and drawn. A dry matt glaze has been applied, colour ranges from soft –yellow to a blurred outline of green moving towards a dark grey-blue.

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[20] Flowers Adrian, Gibson Robin, Lucie-Smith Edward, 'Glenys Barton', Great Britain, Momentum, 1997,p36.
[21] ibid p36

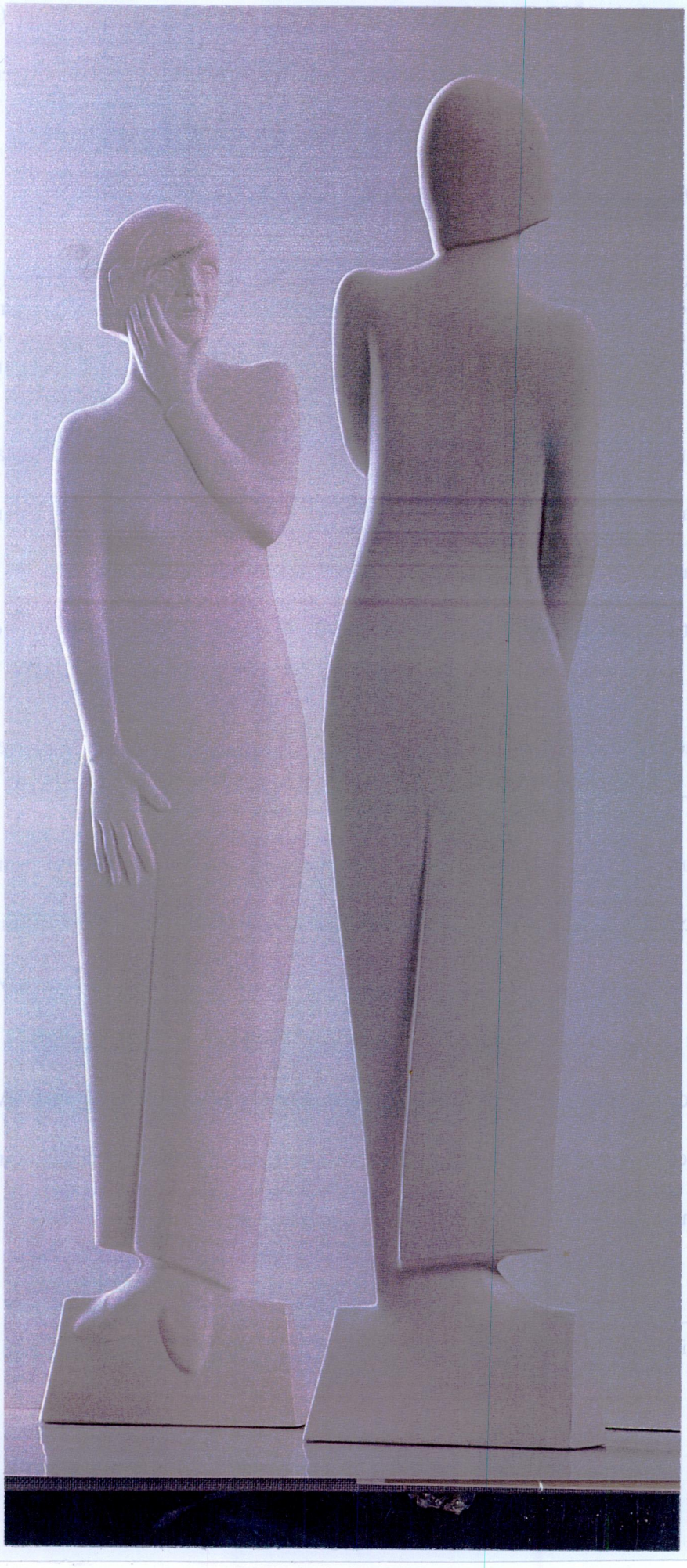

Fig.10.Glenys Barton, Jean Muir , 1992, bone china 67x13x3cms .

Recently there has been a strong revival of the figure in ceramic sculpture, which reflects the collapse of the artificial barrier between art and craft. However there is still a prejudice that clay is a spontaneous material. Barton contradicts this. Barton carries out rigorous experiments with her chosen medium of clay. She exploits clay so that her pieces are carefully worked out and nothing is left to chance. She refines and defines her work.

Barton's most successful work as a sculptor is as a portraitist. At a time when three-dimensional portraiture is rare, Barton has made a strong impression in this difficult field. The portrait of Peter Moores of 1985 was similar to her other work at that time. However, her portraits from 1991 were somewhat different. Many represent women. Barton had to invent a new way of achieving a likeness. In order to achieve a likeness, Barton looked to the past for guidance. Influences include Tudor portraits, Etruscan figures and early Iberian art.

The first of Barton's portraits was of the late Jean Muir, an emblem of elegance in British fashion. Barton gathers photographs of the sitter before she starts. Photographs help her to construct the form. Barton captures her subject in a freeze frame. Barton met with Muir and took photographs of the poses she was interested in. Even though Barton's portraits are flattened, she uses photographs to give her an all-round view. Barton works on different levels of relief. Jean Muir suited Barton's work because she was always very still with a very static face. Barton captures Muir's characteristic stance and gestures, including Muir's hands to define her gestures.

The first of these portrait series is entitled 'Jean Muir'(fig.10) 1992 (67x13x3cms); this is a small, cast, full-length figure. Barton captures Muir's distinctive stance and gestures. It makes the most of Muir's slenderness and her raised shoulder pose. Muir's

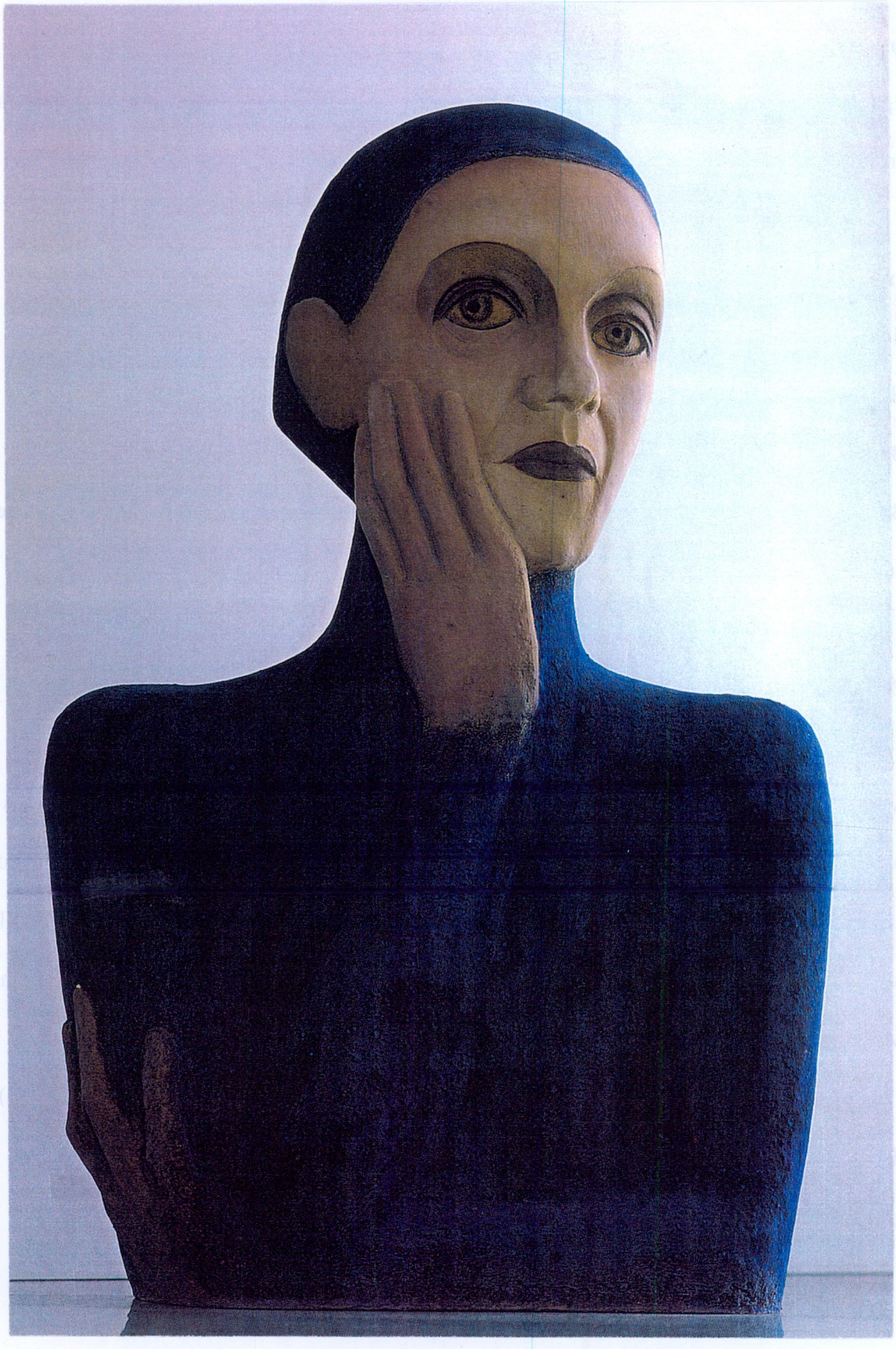

Fig.11. Glenys Barton, Jean Muir 1, 1991, earthenware clay, 52.5x33x16cms.

features are simplified yet expressive. This figure was left uncoloured. Writer and art critic Robin Gibson from the London National portrait Gallery wrote

> "The figure exploits Muir's distinctive features, the hairstyle, the characteristic gesture of the hand raised to the face and the supremely elegant cut of the simple long dress"[22]

Barton made a number of Jean Muir portraits. The exact development from statuette to portrait bust is unclear.

In 'Jean Muir 1' (fig.11) 1991, (52.5x33x16cms), the figure has been cut off at the waist. This is a compact pose. Barton incorporates the arms in order to express a gesture. A dark blue glaze has been applied, covering the entire piece apart from the face and hands.

Barton came into contact with the London National Portrait Gallery through her portraits of Jean Muir. In 1993 Barton was commissioned by curator Robin Gibson to do a portrait of the Member of Parliament and former actress Glenda Jackson. Barton writes "Glenda Jackson has a phenomenal voice and personality, and a face that's highly mobile."[23] Barton took a series of photographs of Jackson, her tools to create form, rhythm and movement of the shoulder diagonal. Barton wrote about Jackson; "The lift of the eyebrows gives such a strong, elegant rhythm; she has such powerful eyes." In the portrait of Jackson Barton combined two heads in one graceful form. She exploited her sitters dual role as actress and politician. Barton worked from photographs and film stills of Jackson as 'Gundrum,' her oscar winning role in Ken Russell's 1970 film, 'Women in Love'. Barton produced two versions of Glenda and Gundrum(figs.12&13). Both pieces are to be viewed from the front. In these portraits Barton had to challenge the problem of representing hair.

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[22] Flowers Adrian, Gibson Robin, Lucie-Smith Edward, 'Glenys Barton', Great Britain, Momentum, 1997,p79.
[23] Barton Glenys' Idols and Images,' Arts Review, February 1994,p20.

Fig,12&13, Glenys Barton,.Glenda jackson& Gundrum

In her previous work, Barton had avoided representing hair. She developed graphically detailed hair in her portraits of Jackson.

There is a strong connection with Renaissance frescos, for example Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence, evident in Barton's glaze techniques. The dry chalky tones of fresco also have an affinity with the matt ceramic surface. Barton expresses volume through the use of colour and line on a flat surface. Edward-Lucie Smith has written extensively about Barton's portraits: "They have all the freshness of a completely spontaneous response"[24]. This freshness and spontaneity is connected to the material Barton uses. Often sculptors only use 'nobler' materials, such as bronze or stone. Barton is aware of the wide diversity of clay as a medium. Clay can be moulded or slip-cast to give a crisp result. It can be hand modelled, which gives complete freedom to the maker. The surface can be incised with lines, which Barton uses to create facial features. The application of glazes, colour and textural qualities are almost limitless. Barton applies colour to evoke a certain mood in her pieces. She uses the human image to encompass many meanings she finds within herself.

Portraiture has become the dominating force behind Barton's work. Her subjects are mainly family and friends, chosen for their familiarity and the freedom which these subjects allow. Barton's intrigue and participation with her sitters is an inspiring force behind her portraits. Barton has always strived for technical precision throughout her artistic career. Technical experimentation is crucial part of Barton's artistic development. Barton works on several versions of a particular piece at one time.. She works towards a solution, she creates a series rather than creating individual pieces. This process of working provides a link between most of her portraits and the rest of her work. Barton applies

carefully worked out glazes to the surfaces to compliment the form. She uses colour to create shadow. Colour and surface remain an important aspect of her work. The naturalism of Barton's ceramic work is heightened by the application of colour. Colour brings about an unexpected sensuality to her pieces.

[24] Flowers Adrian, Gibson Robin, Lucie-Smith Edward, 'Glenys Barton', Great Britain, Momentum,

Chapter 3
Paul Scott

Chapter 3 PAUL SCOTT

Paul Scott was born in 1953. At an early age he knew he wanted to study art. In 1973 he began to train as an art teacher at St.Martins College in Lancaster, but fell out with the painting tutor and decided to paint in the ceramics department. Scott was more interested in 'images' rather than 'form'. Influenced by tutor Barry Gregson "that anything was possible with clay"[25] Scott recalls a lecture given by Gregson on 'Clay and Ceramic material':

> "He came into the theatre wearing a deerstalker hat, and carrying a briefcase. He took the hat off and it clunked , the briefcase did the same, the hanky was rigid when he removed it from his pocket.... they were all ceramic....finally he took out his clay pipe and lit it....." [26]

Scott's work in the ceramics department tended towards two-dimensional form. Scott's first encounter with print and ceramics came in his final year at college. During his final year, he visited Johnstones tile factory in Stoke-on-Trent, there he saw industrially produced screen-printed tiles. Scott began to experiment with blank biscuit tiles and reactive glazes. His first experimental piece entitled Teas No.7(fig.14), 1977, the image was screen printed with reactive glazes onto biscuit fired dry pressed tiles. Scott painted an image in varnish onto a silk screen, he printed through the screen with ceramic oxides mixed with an oil-based medium onto the tiles. The varnish acted to block the screen so ink appeared in the areas that had not been painted. However in this experiment the medium began to dissolve the varnish and the image degraded. The image printed on the large tile panel unintentionally conveys a derelict building. Scott's fascination with print on ceramics

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1997,p61.

[25] Mason Paul, The Scott Collection. Ceramics Art and Perception (Due to be published 1999) Letter correspondence with Paul Scott

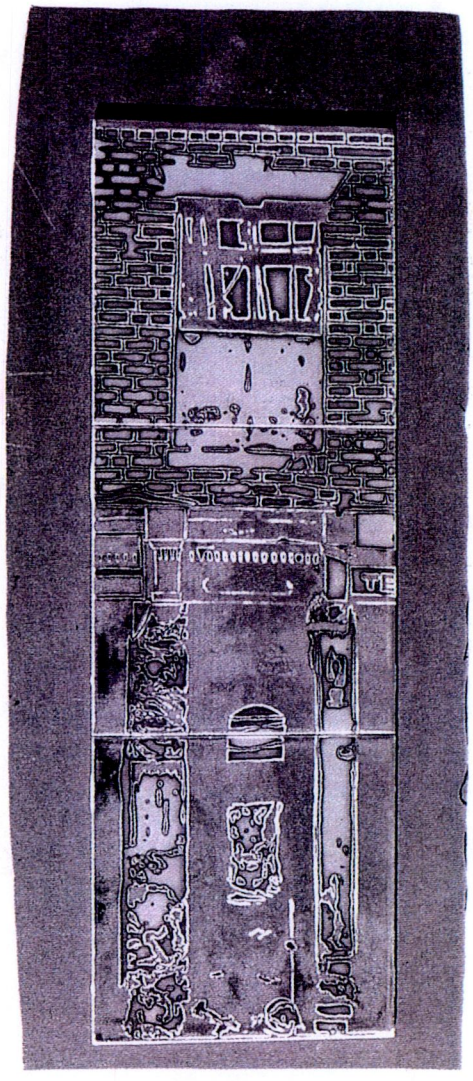

Fig.14 Paul Scott, Teas No.7 1977

developed further. This fascination was heightened with additional process of firing to the subject.

Scott experimented by painting, printing onto ceramic surface. These experiments were mainly architectural. He explored the possibilities of pots, treating them as three-dimensional canvases. Scott was not content with working three-dimensionally. He claims he was "three dimensionally challenged"[27] In the 1970's studio ceramics in Britain were still obsessed with form and function. He felt he was only conforming to preconceptions of studio ceramics, which emphasised the importance of form and function. Scott considers himself a painter or printmaker, using ceramics as his main medium.

Paul Scott was a consistent student activist in the 1970's. Social, political and environmental concerns have been the primary theme in Scott's ceramic work. He began to express his political concerns through the medium of clay. Images were his main interest rather than form. Scott's work gravitated towards the two-dimensional.
Scott's first pieces were inspired by his wanderings through industrial Birmingham, the city which he grew up in. Scott's main themes deal with inner city dereliction and decay. Themes of inner city dereliction and dilapidation were a common sight in many towns and cities in Northern England during the Thatcher years.

In 1986 Scott was an artist in residence at Whitehaven School in post-industrial West Cumbria. He made constant recordings of the poster hoardings and billboards which surrounded him in West Cumbria. Their was nothing extraordinary about these posters, but Scott made an important connection between them and an exhibition at the Abbot Hall in Kendal, which showed the work of Dada artist, Kurt Schwitters. Dadaists used words

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[26] Scott Paul, email interview, 1999.

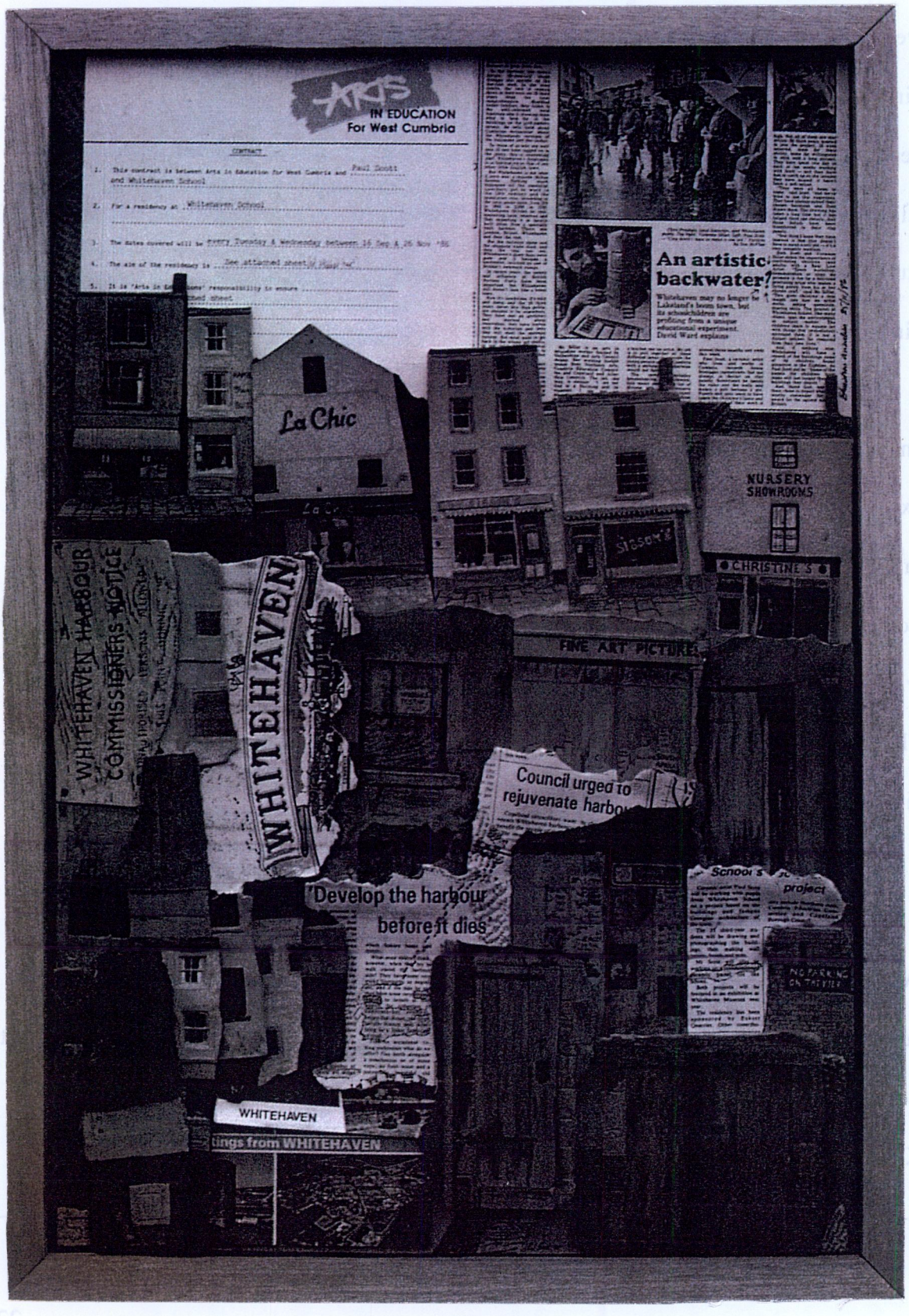

Fig.15.Paul Scott 'A Residency at Whitehaven', 1986, 59x42cms

juxtaposed with images with specific political intent. The powerful images and poetic impact of Schwitters' collages influenced Scott's work dramatically. The collages were catalytic in Scott's decision to change from purely representational drawings and paintings to a progression of the development of his own ceramic collaging process. This resulted in a more accurate representation of his drawings and paintings on the ceramic surface. This development is shown in Scott's ceramic panel entitled 'A Residency at Whitehaven School',(fig.15) made in 1986. The relief panel painted in underglazes with printed photocopied newspaper text and postcards displays Scott's new collaging techniques. Scott became increasingly dissatisfied with the mixed media he was forced to adopt, so he developed his own range of printed imagery and developed a method of applying printed images to a surface that was not necessarily flat. Information on the application of printed images was not available, so Scott began to experiment by trial and error.

Later, in 1986, Scott went to Knossos in Crete to research Minoan and Mycenaean pottery. Mesmerised by the graphic quality of painting and drawing on these pots, boxes and clay coffins, this influenced his work further. Scott meticulously did drawings and collages in his Cretan notebooks. The contents of these notebooks took form in two-dimensional collages on clay slabs and simple bowl-like vessels. Scott's work bears little reference to form or utility. He created relief surfaces filled with texts and images, drawn, painted and printed in a 'ceramic scrapbook' influenced by his visit to Crete.

Scott continued to develop his collaging techniques which gave him greater freedom to compose and express his political concerns. In 1988 media attention began to focus on the plight of jailed South African activist Nelson Mandela. At that time, only two or three youthful images of him existed in public circulation. Scott made a series of works

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[27] Scott Paul, email interview,1999.

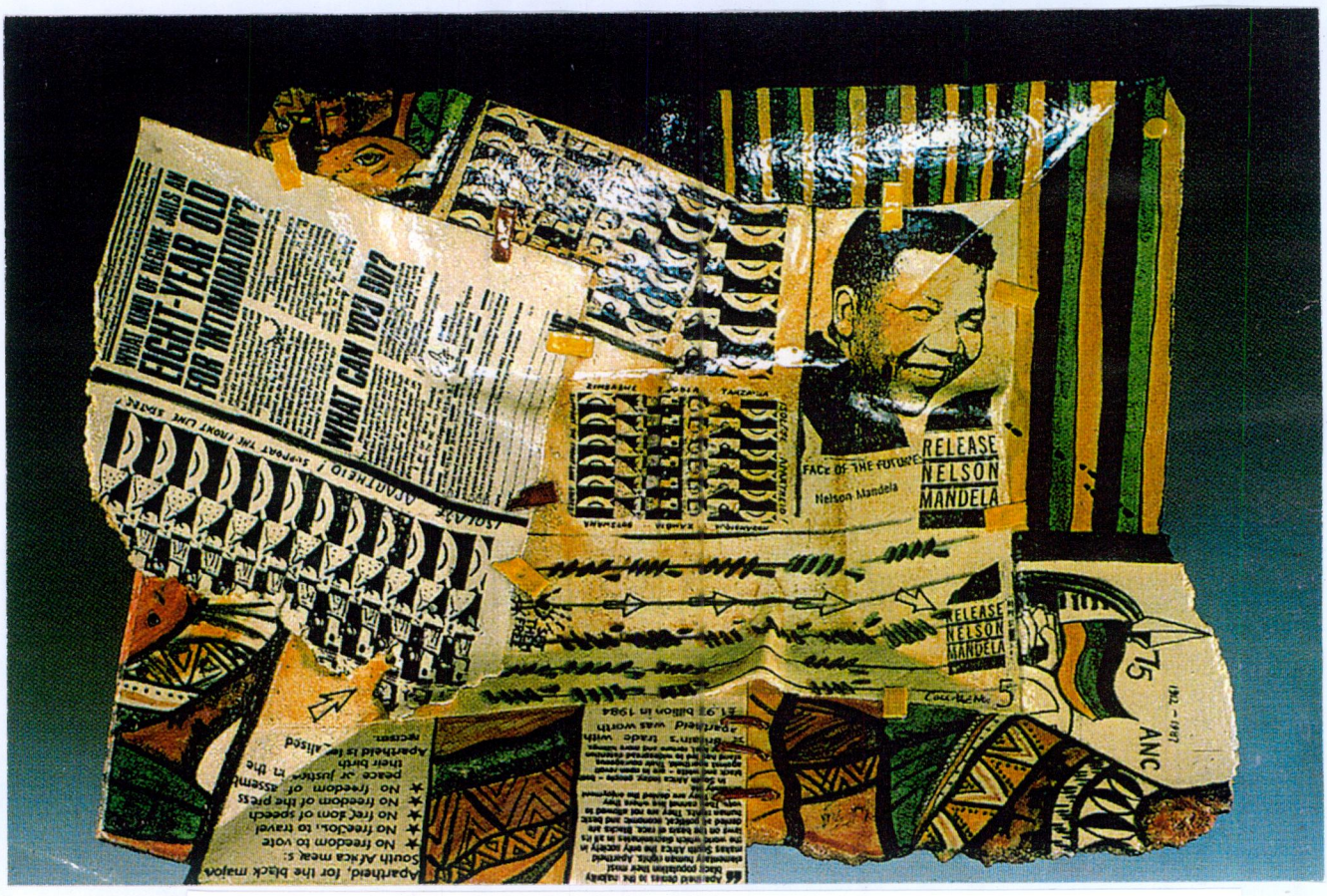

Fig.16 Paul Scott.. 'Free Mandela' 1988, porcelain.

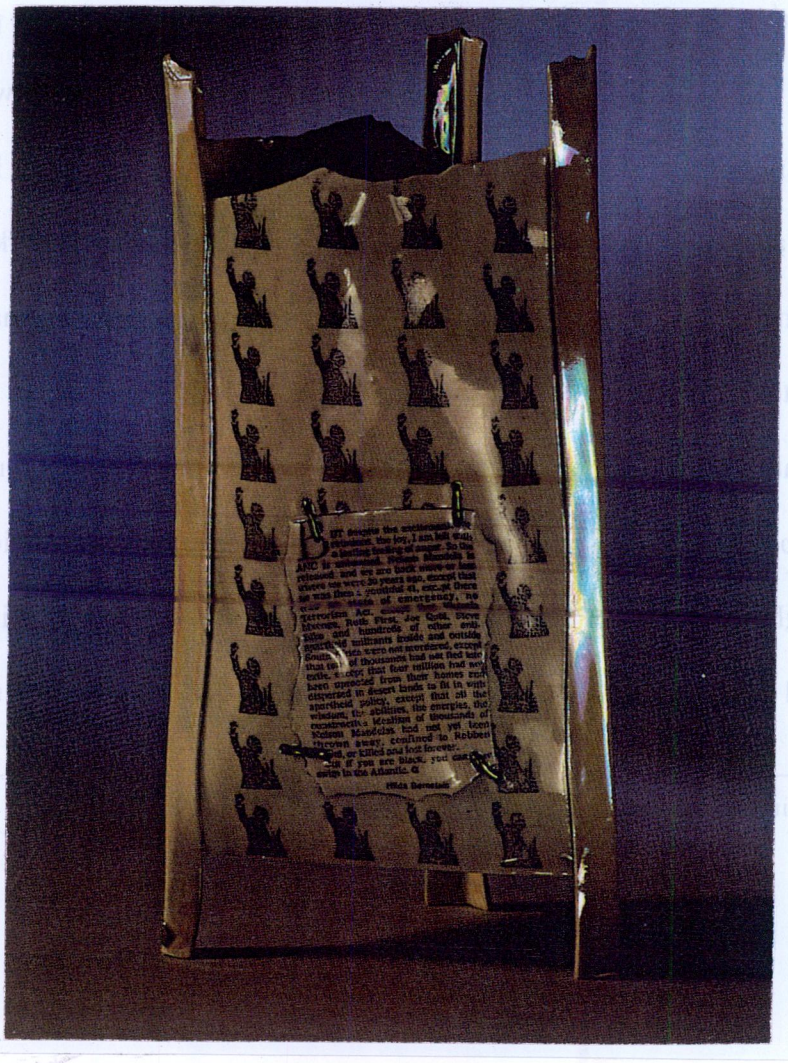

Fig.17. Paul Scott, 'Free at Last' 1990, porcelain, h. 25cm.

entitled "Free Mandela"(fig.16). As a student activist Scott had participated in this campaign. This series of works is a contemporary commentary on the event. In the piece entitled 'Free Mandela' (1988), the porcelain clay slabs of are so slender that they resemble crumpled newspaper. Scott places screen-printed text taken directly from Anti-Apartheid literature alongside photograph of Mandela's youthful image. Scott paints bright colours-yellows, green and brown, based on contemporary South African painting and patterns. Scott ingeniously combines paint, print, photography and mass media onto the ceramic surface. The images are held together with the allusion of ceramic 'tape' and 'tacks'. The clay slabs are so slender they almost resemble crumpled newspaper. Scott writes:

> "I collage image and text to set in motion a sequence of thoughts in the Viewer's mind. I use text to inform, and sometimes qualify, the images that they refer to Ceramic surfaces have long had a function of commemoration, and political comment. I see my work firmly within this context."[28]

Scott's intentions are to set in motion a sequence of thoughts in the viewer's mind. He uses text to inform and qualify the images. Many contemporary artists replicate or use actual newspaper text in their work. In fine art, Picasso's Papiers Collees of 1912-13 display the clever incorporation of actual newspapers to exploit the potential for paradox in questioning painting's traditional illusionistic role. The visual impact of using actual newsprint words is not only an effective, expressive art form but also provides a specific written comment. This is a feature of Scott's piece entitled "Free at Last'(fig.17), (1990), a porcelain form, 25cm in height. In this piece Scott repeats the newspaper photograph of Mandela's freedom salute. The ceramic form alludes to the torn edges of paper and the stapled note. One side of the piece includes a paragraph from a Guardian article. The imagery employed taken directly from newspaper has been made into screen-printed underglaze decals and

"Free at Last" (fig.17) 1990.

lustres. The article is collaged over parts of the repeated silhouette images of Mandela. This article draws attention to the reality of events in South Africa between Mandela's imprisonment and release. This piece confronts complex and harsh political reality. The imagery used has a direct impact. Ceramics have not been in the forefront of political art; it may be said that they have been slow to react. However print provides a means to address complex issues.

From 1990 onwards, politics and protest receded from Scott's work. Scott began to refocus his concerns on the darker side of North West England's industrial tradition. This series of work is entitled the Cumbrian Blue(s) (figs.18&19),. Scott's plates blatantly refer to industrial Staffordshire's Blue and White, the fantasy landscapes of Spode's Italian Blue, The Willow Pattern, and Wedgwood's Woodland Series. Scott's blue and white plates are strongly connected to England's industrial ceramic heritage. Scott's plates display sinister smoking chimneys, replacing antique ruin, just across the river from which peasants and animals are going to drink. This combination of traditional pottery imagery and modern images are displayed on Scott's plates. Cooling towers appear between trees in a blue and white transfer-printed scene. Scott's plates are individually collaged with his own range of imagery. The landscapes he produced were based on his own interpretation of contemporary life and our environment. His imagery includes trees, cottages, rolling hillsides, animals, low flying jets, factories, nuclear power stations, cars, motorways and other elements of contemporary life. Issues of the environment are evident in his plates.

The ceramic plate which has featured regularly in the industrial tradition of the past three centuries provides ongoing references for Scott. Blue and White china provide a well-known background for Scott's quirky images. Plates are widely used in contemporary

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[28] Scott Paul, Co-curator 'Glazed Expressions: Contemporary Ceramics and the Written Word, Catalogue

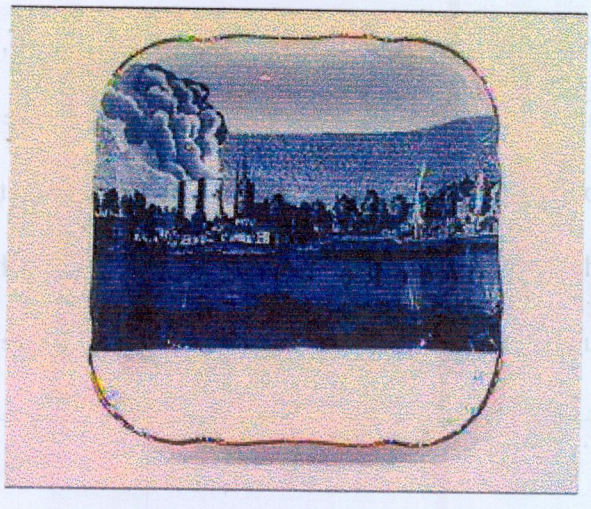

Fig. 18 &19 Paul Scott, Cumbrian Blue(s) 1997

ceramics to confront political and cultural issues. The word/image unification, which decorates contemporary plates, is used to redirect attention to the plate's functional role in a consumer society. Scott uses allusive imagery and judicious printed words to remind the viewer of pollution, of self-indulgent consumers.

Scott uses industrial pottery as a picture plane. The plate is the most common object on which he conveys his ideas. He has developed his own individual decals, which he collages on plates. He manipulates original pottery tissue prints, engravings, etchings and photographs using a photocopier. These images are combined with his own drawings and then made into screen-printed underglaze decals.

In 1998 Scott worked alongside Czech ceramist Jindra Vikova, at the international Ceramics Studio in Hungary. Scott began to apply his images onto three-dimensional work. Scott created high relief, layered slabs of porcelain, with which he made small theatrical stage sets. In this piece Scott juxtaposed a picturesque background with images of cityscapes, factory chimneys, statues and low flying jets. The reverse side of the sculpture is coloured with abstracted gestural brushmarks. This is in complete contrast to the intricate printed images of the front stage.

Scott applies printed decals in conjunction with underglaze painting on commercial tiles, or hand made porcelain tiles which make up large tiled panels and screens. In these slightly abstracted glazed paintings, print, paint design and craft collide with startling effects.

Scott was captivated with the effect of painted ceramic oxides and glazes on porcelain. His tiles incorporate text and image, print and paint. His application of these different techniques are part of his ongoing exploration of the ceramic surface. Working in a

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published by the Orleans House Gallery , Twickenham, London,1998,p15.

Fig.20, Paul Scott, Royal Victoria Infirmary, 1998 (detail)

narrative tradition, Scott describes his handmade porcelain tile panels as 'glazed paintings'. Scott sees no justification for his work to be described as 'decorative' for simple reason that they happen to be tiles. Each tile is hand made. He cuts his tiles into the desired shapes, this handmaking process liberates tiles from the need to be square. In Scott's tile panel, which was a commission for 'Royal Victoria Infirmary,(fig.20), Newcastle in 1998, through the shape of the tiles he has created a fluid and organic collage of imagery which are appropriate to the land and cityscapes. Scott finds the process of selling through gallery exhibitions too speculative. He secures commissioned work.

For Scott printing and painting on the surface of clay is more interesting than considerations of form. His ingenuity in developing methods and adapting techniques and processes largely used by the ceramic industry and adapting them to work for the benefit of the ceramist is remarkable. He dissolves the notion that print and words on the ceramic surface is merely decoration. His work displays the diversity of print.

Chapter 4
Philip Eglin

Chapter 4 - PHILIP EGLIN

Philip Eglin was born in 1959 in Gibraltar but grew up in Harlow New Town in Essex. Between 1977 and 1979 he did a Foundation Course at Harlow Technical College. His studies in art had begun: he was taught throwing, handbuilding and life drawing. He made his first visit to an art gallery. Eglin was introduced to the richness of Christian and pagan iconography through a course in the art of the Italian Rennaissance. At this stage, he was not completely convinced of his career ceramics. An exhibition of Alison Britton's work at Harlow Museum, which consisted of her early pieces decorated figuratively, was a breakthrough for Eglin. Between 1979 and 1983, Eglin did a B.A course in ceramics at North Staffordshire Polytechnic at Stoke-on-Trent. The museum at Stoke provided many examples of English vernacular and early industrial pottery, which were to have an astounding influence on him. Eglin was accepted to do a post–graduate course at the Royal College of Art. Working for his tutor Eduardo Paolozzi, Eglin experimented in various different mediums ranging from bronze casting to prop-making for films. In his final year at the Royal College of Art, Eglin realised that his main interest lay in figurative and narrative ceramics.

On completing college, Eglin's first major project was inspired by prints and drawings by Picasso. He made terracotta maquettes to work out technical problems. The actual figures were built using soft slabs of white earthenware clay. The hollow cylinders of clay were modelled into figures by gently pushing the soft clay from the inside. He used this method of handbuilding to form the arms, legs and high waists of his torsos.

The work of the sixteenth century mannerist Bernard Palissy inspired Eglin to create a series of plates with reclining nudes in relief. Three of these plates included exploration of Manet's Olympia the sensitive painting of a nude in probable surroundings. One version of

Fig. 21 Philip Eglin, 'Olympia in Blue after Manet' 1986, white earthenware, width 61cm.

the three plates is entitled 'Olympia in Blue after Manet'(fig.21), 1986, white earthenware width 61cms. In this, Eglin recreated the famous painting in clay relief on the large oval plate. Cobalt blue dominates the scratched drawings picked up in slip on flat clay slab and the pure oxide monoprint of the figure 'Olympia' transferred on pottery tissue onto the glazed surface. Fragments of printed traditional border patterns surround the rim of the plate. Eglin has recreated the famous painting in clay relief in a witty and revering way.

In 1987 Eglin moved back to Stoke-on-Trent, where he taught part time at Staffordshire Polytechnic. This being the home of the famous 'Staffordshire Blue' pottery and Staffordshire flatback figurines, popular in the nineteenth century. Detailing on Staffordshire figures was often 'unrefined' and, although the figure may be a representation of an important public person, the representation was generalised. Popular subjects of the eighteenth century included the goddess Venus, the Virgin and Child, and the Madonna. The bodies of these figures are light in colour, a cream-coloured earthenware. The figures were made by a combination of hand modelling and press moulding. After the first firing, the figures were coloured with metal oxides applied in streaks of manganese brown, copper green, iron yellow and cobalt blue. Eglin takes the tradition of Staffordshire figurines as his starting point, although his own ceramic figures are larger in scale. His glazes allude to both Staffordshire blue and white and to the soft greens and browns inspired by the Thomas Whieldon wares made in the mid-eighteenth century. Whieldon ware itself is a fine cream coloured earthenware with brown, blue ,yellow and green mottled glazes. . .

Eglin obtains references from an array of influences. He looks to the great European painters of the nude, Manet's 'Olympia', Botticelli's 'Venus' and Cranach's unveiling of the nude. Eglin recreates the senuous line, and shallow internal moulding inspired by these paintings of the sensual nude in his figures. His clever borrowing of

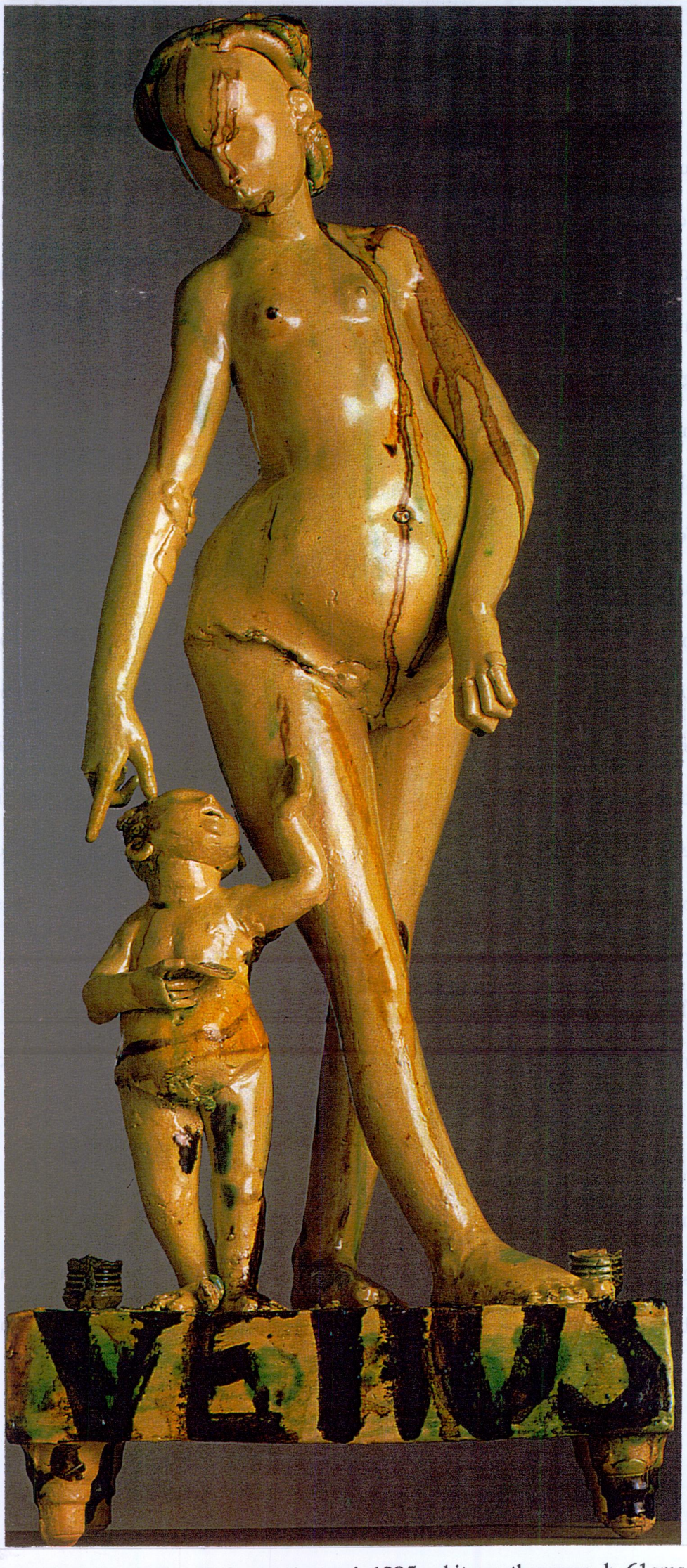

Fig 22 Philip Eglin 'Venus et Amour' 1995, white earthenware, h. 61cms

Renaissance paintings allows him to recreate an imaginative 'repertoire' of physical beauty in his ceramic figures. Features of the female figure in these paintings include narrow shoulders, prominent stomachs, long slender legs and gentle undulating outlines. These features are expressed in Eglin's ceramic figures.

In 1989 Eglin was invited the Contemporary Applied Arts, to contribute to the figurative ceramics show 'Clay Bodies'. According to the critic Tanya Harrod, "his contribution to Clay Bodies was a revelation"[29]

This exhibition marks the beginning of the clear development of Eglin's figurines. His Venuses and Cupids display his clever integration of an extraordinary range of influences. Eglin's nudes with gently swelling bellies call to mind the northern early Renaissance tradition of fecund high breasted nudes. Recurring figures in his work include Venus et Amour , Cupid, and the Madonna.

In 'Venus et Amour (fig.22)' 1995, approximately 61cms high, portrayed in a honey-coloured earthenware glaze a walking female is depicted; gently touching the forehead of a naked toddler. The female is characterised by small breasts, a small stomach and prominent hips. Eglin pays particular attention to the modelling of the features. The toddler's expression is true to life and creates immediate affection. The figure was slab-built with earthenware clay. Yellow, red and green oxides were poured under and over the glaze. The glaze used in this piece was influenced by the quirky honey-coloured glaze innovated in Stoke-on-Trent in the eighteenth century by Thomas Whieldon, giving a smooth, worn look.

Art critic Jane Noirrie wrote "There is no trace of coyness about the work: rather it tends to be bold and exuberant."[30] The piece 'Venus et Amour' displays one style of surface

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[29] Harrod Tanya, 'Clay Bodies', Ceramic Review, No.131, 1991.

"Seated nude" (fig.23) Detail of printed imagery, printed decals), 1996.

technique which Eglin applies to his ceramic work. Tanya Harrod writes about Eglin's development of surface decoration " artists are committed to change and with Eglin the metamorphosis to a harsher style of decoration was inevitable"[3] Eglin carries out vigorous drawings from life. Drawing is the essence of his work. His observation and note-taking of the female form are fundamental for the success of his figures. Eglin makes endless drawings of his wife and child, although he does not work directly from life drawings.

Eglin's work is often described as "a modern re-evaluation of ceramic figurines"[31], his figures achieving a new sophistication and clarity. They are certainly ceramic, they are also figurative but they are larger in scale and intent in contrast to eighteenth century figurines. His figures are hollow in form, adhering to the conventions of describing a pot, neck, belly and foot. Eglin himself is very clear that his work "belongs to the field of ceramics, they are vessel forms.[32]

Eglin's ceramic surfaces are both visually and intellectually interesting. His use of imagery constructs narratives about craft traditions and post-modernism. He applies intricate printed decals to communicate a vast range of ideas. The imagery he applies is both borrowed and his own. Subject matter ranges from the Manet's 'Olympia', The Willow Pattern, the Lottery Logo, Lego Indians, and drawings by his three year old son. These images old and new create an allegorical surface in informed reference to the past and present. Artist and art critic Alison Britton writes of Eglin's painting technique on his figures:

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[30] Norrie Jane, Philip Eglin and Kevin Sinnott, 'Oxford Gallery' Arts Review, Vol43, March 1991, p121
[31] Exhibition Press Release, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, Studio Pottery, Vol 10, August\September 1994,p40

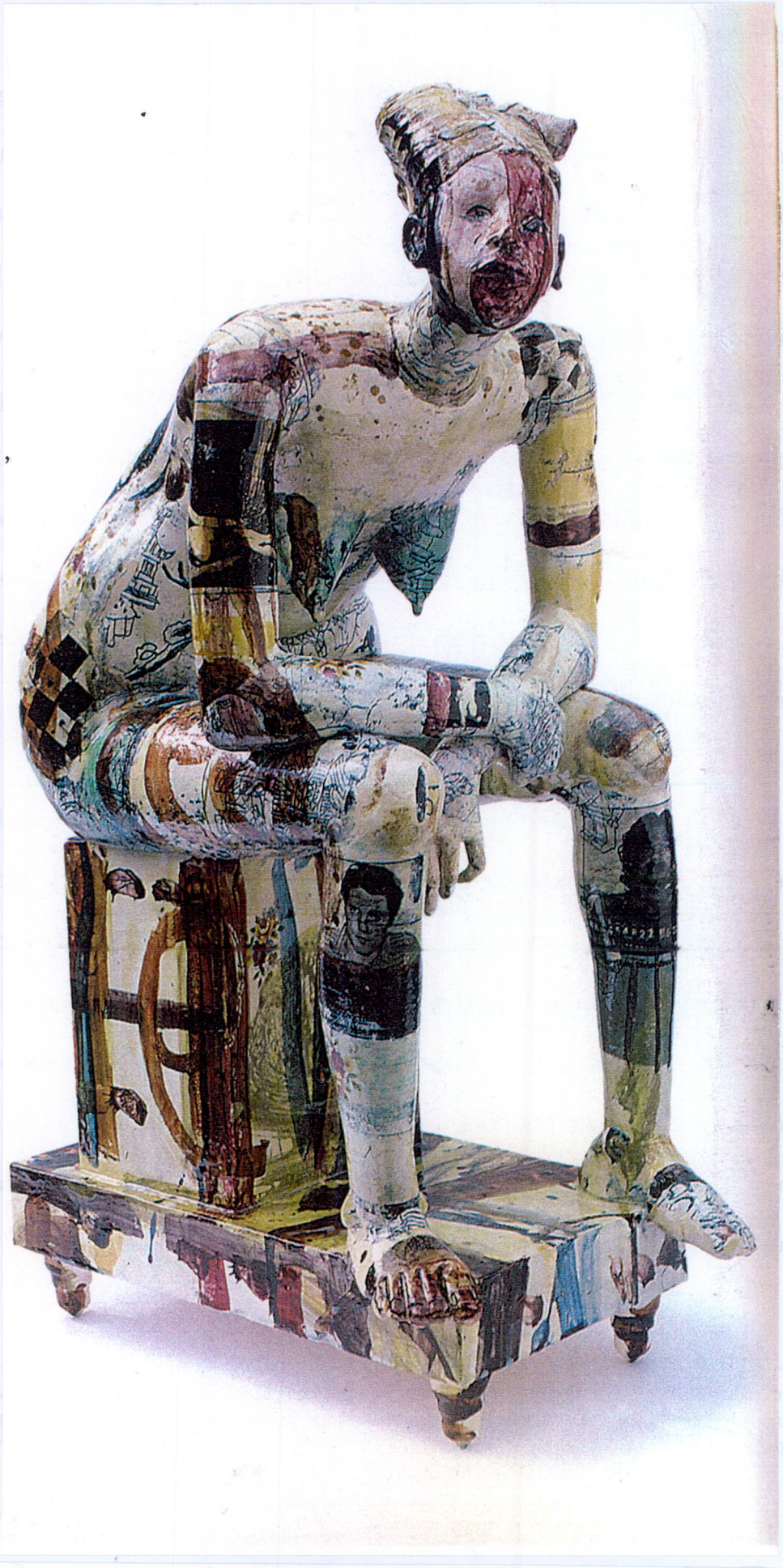

Fig. 23 Philip Eglin, Seated Nude 1996,69x43x26cms white earthenware, and (detail)

'Not just painted, he has slapped and sloshed fierce coloured metal oxides pigments over their bodies in great strokes and dribbles and scrawls of words. Why is this necessary? Unpainted they would seem like attempts at reproduction, too daunted by the past. As they are they link the characteristic palette of ceramics, traditions of Staffordshire popular figures, with homage to Cranach and the aggressive deconstructive dash of a modern urban upbrining". [33]

After bisque firing, Eglin's figures emerge from the kiln as terrifying blanks, acting as a canvas for thin, delicate, diagrammatic, ceramic transfers and drippy oxides.

Eglin employs printed images and painted words depending on the ceramic surface he wants to achieve on his plates, figures and 'buckets' forms. He crosses the strict boundaries of traditional ceramics by applying a printing technique to ceramic figures which are not functional objects. Alison Britton writes that 'Their skin is rich with pigment. He layers patterns and images, collaging diverse drawings: printed, painted, bleeding or controlled.'[34] Eglin combines a extraordinary range of influences in his ceramic work.

Oliver Watson writes:

> "In his way of making, subject matter, object types and decoration, he makes links between fine art and decorative; between Cranach, Manet and Picasso on one side and Staffordshire Flatbacks and Willow pattern wares on the other"[35]

The link between fine art and decorative is evident on the surface of the piece entitled "Seated Nude"(fig.23) 1996, 69x43x26cms, white earthenware, Eglin captures a resigned pose, the awareness of acceptance, the slump of overwork, and yet the exception of "making do," of waiting for tomorrow to be better than today. Intricate printed images are employed on the graceful curves of an ungainly coloured surface. Eglin's abundant use of

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[32] ibid
[33] Britton Alison, Extract from article in Beyond the Dovetail catalogue, Crafts Council, 1991,p34.
[34] Britton Alison, Eglin Philip, Watson Oliver, Philip Eglin: Comfort and Surprises, catalogue published by Philip Eglin and the Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh 1997 p3

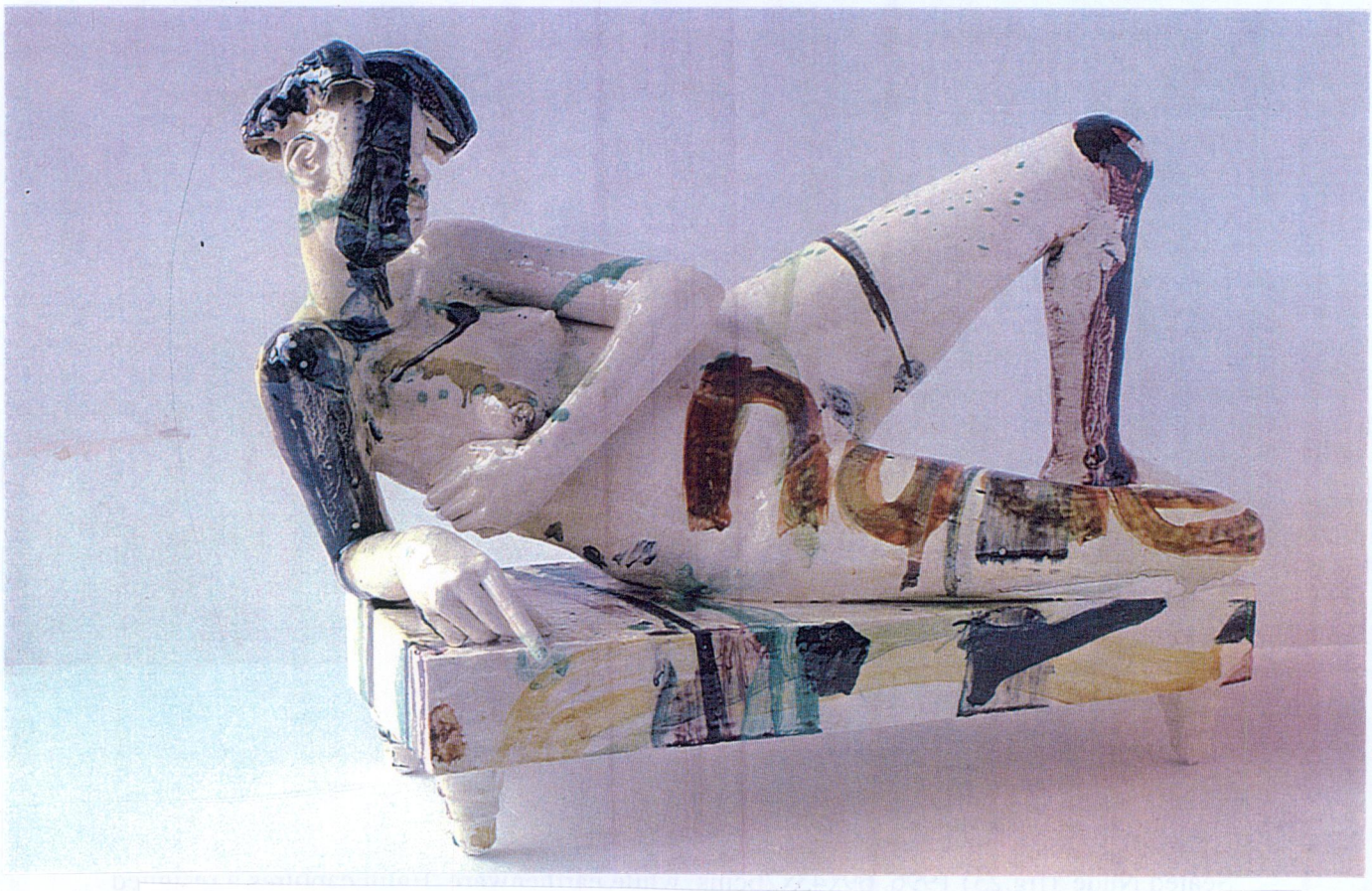

Fig. 24 Philip Eglin, Reclining Nude 1996 , white earthenware, 15''x9''x21''

printed transfers blend amicably into the surface of the figure. Printed transfers range from The Willow Pattern, Manet's Olympia, Lego indians and Pirates. The images flow and blend into the form of the figure. Eglin painted the surface with bands of yellow, red, green and black oxides. This figure is beautifully modelled and the attractive surface has been intelligently executed.

Eglin paints large, child-like, free hand words with red, blue and black oxides. His words are related directly to the title of the actual piece of work. In the entitled 'Reclining Nude' (fig.24) of 1996 (15"x9"x21") In the relaxed, beautifully, proportioned figure, Eglin achieves detailed and precise moulding of the head, hands and feet. The figure's head being tilted to one side in a relaxed position. With a gash of an overloaded paintbrush of black oxide, Eglin attacks the beautifully modelled face of the figure. He carries this gash down the right arm and chest. He painted the word 'Nude' with an overloaded brush in large child-like writing in black oxide across the stomach and along the right leg of the figure. This states what we are looking at and it forces us to attempt reconciliation between the nude in art, clothed in symbolism and challenges preconceived assumptions. This figure calls to mind vandalised monuments and statues of our inner cities,.

Dr. Stephaine Brown writes: " Freehand words have a different resonance to typographical forms and are not unfamiliar as an attractive decoration in studio ceramics."[36] Past examples of this use of words are evident in the calligraphic arabesques of Hispano-Moresque pottery. The words used in this case were often only decoration which carried no direct meaning. Eglin's use of daubed words has a direct connection with contemporary subculture-the unofficial writings and defacing of public places. His scrawled-on and

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[35] ibid p1

[36] Brown Stephanie, Glazed Expressions : Contemporary Ceramics and the Written Word, Catalogue published by the Orleans House Gallery, Twickenham, London 1998

graffiti-splattered use of ceramic oxides displays the harsh reality of vandalised inner cities, especially the defacement of statues such as in Harlow New Town in Essex where he grew up. To disregard the presence of graffiti is problematic. It suggests a place unsupervised. Graffiti is the handwriting of the culture of violence juxtaposed with the culture of art. This concern for the defacement of our heritage places his work in a contemporary context.

Eglin's application of printed imagery demonstrates how effectively the introduction of a printing technique can introduce new meanings to the ceramic surface. In this respect, ceramics using print can be equated with figurative ceramics which similarly communicate meanings beyond the functional and the decorative. Eglin has applied a complex range of printed imagery in order to extend the meaning of his ceramic figures, buckets and plates.

Eglin argues that his work lies in the category of craft rather than sculpture. He does not try to conceal his chosen material, instead he demonstrates the strong possibilities of clay. Philip Eglin chooses to be an artist-potter. He describes his hollow figures as vessels. The abstract vessel is a theme as complex and unavoidable as the human is for sculptors.

In contrast to utilitarian pots, Eglin's ceramic figures are slowly and thoughtfully constructed. His surfaces are rich in metaphors, they draw the viewer to look closely at them. Eglin draws great strength from pottery past. His vessels are not functional in a household sense, their function is to provide diverse explanations of their own nature. His vessels are closed, they speak about the inside space through outside surfaces. Eglin gets part of his effect from the scale of his pieces. Art critic Rosemary Hill wrote the following about the scale of Eglin's figures: "It is not so much that they are big, as they are at once bigger.".[37] Eglin's concerns are artfully performed, his use of spontaneous dribbles mark a

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[37] Hill Rosemary, 'The Venus of Harlow New Town', Crafts 102 1990 p41

deliberate haste after his slowly made figures. His clever use of printed images, words and gestures gives clarity and ambiguity to his work.

. Eglin constructs his figures from the feet up. He hand builds in a series of stages. His figures are hollow forms, using soft wrap-around slabs of white earthenware clay. He models the cylinders from the inside out, fashioning the arms, legs, and torsos. Rosemary Hill comments on his clever borrowing and its practical application:

> "The borrowing from Cranach has its practical side, the sway backward, high bosomed nudes lend themselves to be built in sections. They have an upthrust and exaggerated gracefulness that counterbalances the tendency of ceramic figures to be dumpy and poorly articulated."[38]

Eglin pays particular attention to the modelling of face, hands and feet while capturing the gestures of his figures beautifully. The sway backwards in his standing figures supports the generous amounts of clay used. The joins are loosely built- he does not try to conceal these. Eglin's handbuilding technique with its spontaneous, rough finish has an intimacy which no mould could achieve. Eglin is deeply concerned with technical achievements. His work is fired up to seven or eight times.

Along with his figure work Eglin also made a series of 'bucket' forms in 1996. Alison Britton compares his new 'bucket' forms with his figurative work: " In making the figures he can have command of brave representational structure, which is tough in clay if working hollow like a potter. With the buckets he can have unforeseen shape, the perk of the inside and the outside."[39] These are relaxed cylinder forms. Alison Britton writes:

> "An 'ordinary' form freed him form serious playing with the surface. In this casual setting , delightful ambiguity sways the understanding of the crowded iconography."[40]

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[38] ibid p 41
[39] Britton Alison, Eglin Philip, Watson Oliver, Philip Eglin: Comfort and Surprises, catalogue published by Philip Eglin and the Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh 1997 p3
[40] ibid

Fig .25 Philip Eglin, Bucket, 1995 h.45cms

Fig 26. Philip Eglin, 'Where's Mrs Andrews?' 1996, white earthenware, h. 44cm

. Eglin uses snippets of what's happening in life. Eglin applies printed imagery to his 'bucket' pots. Cobalt monoprints are transferred onto the buckets using pottery tissue. In 'bucket'(fig.25), 1995, Eglin applies imagery ranging from line drawings of Venus et Amour which are placed along side a detail of the Willow Pattern. Lines of brash red glaze disturb the blue-and-white transfers. The bucket forms which are roughly 45cms in height are loosely built with white earthenware. Eglin paints watery oxides yellow, purple and cobalt blue freely over the surface of the buckets.

The majority of critics praise Eglin's work. However the critic Roger Berthoud, writing on an exhibition of Philip Eglin and Claire Curneen at the Contemporary Applied Arts gallery held in London in 1996, writes: "The longer I spent scrutinising these objects, the more irritating I began to find many of them."[41] Berthoud remained unimpressed by Eglin's series of six buckets. He commented that Eglin's third bucket entitled "Where's Mrs Andrews"(fig.26), 1996 (44cm in height), was equally unimpressive. This bucket features a transfer of Gainsborough's portrait Mr and Mrs Andrews. Berthoud writes: "the title of the third bucket, mercifully not scrawled around it,'Where's Mrs Andrews? When Mr Andrews seems to be equally absent." Instead there is a transfer of two turbaned Indian figures, and the recurrence of two decorative themes- a sort of deconstructed Lego figure of a pirate and various bits of chinoiserie-which he found slightly reminiscent of Delft porcelain mixed with modern toy trends.

For him 'Reclining Nude" were disfigured by the labelling of their titles. This series of nudes, he said have a 'rather mooney, vapid expression." They might be decorated with affection by Eglin but Berthoud found little sympathy in their portrayal. Berthoud then turned to four large nude figures which dominated the display. He writes

"one of these has its title, 'Reclining Nude' Scrawled along its base in red; another has 'Recumbent Nude' across the base and body. The other figures were 'all the better' for being 'spared this irritating disfiguration." Berthoud agrees that the figures are modelled beautifully. At first glance he found the surface attractive and witty. The most successful pieces for Berthoud in this exhibition were seven small blue and white figures, these had fewer 'irritants'. It is obvious that Berthoud did not agree with Eglin's use of paint or printed imagery. Berthoud refers to them as "women as decorated objects".

However, Eglin's ceramic figures have found a genuinely individual voice through their surface. He develops the medium-clay to its full potential. He cleverly draws on past traditions and combines these beautifully within his work. Eglin writes:

> " There's a wonderful naïve sophistication to early Italian majolica or early English delftware. I very much see myself working in the ceramic tradition. I use clay in a soft slabbed way, and although my figures are often carriers for the surface decoration, I would call myself a potter rather than a ceramic sculptor."[42] '

Eglin brings a fresh new vibrancy to what might be considered traditional, banal forms. This vibrancy is expressed through his use of printed imagery and his application of strokes of oxides. The unique versatility of clay enables Eglin to interpret a great range of styles and ideas whilst retaining a craft identity.

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[41] Berthoud Roger, 'Philip Eglin and Claire Curneen' Contemporary Applied Arts Exhibition review, October/November 1996/1997.
[42] Eglin Philip, The Makers Eye, Crafts, 145 March ,April 1997.

Conclusion

Conclusion

One of the conventions of ceramics is that clay is covered with a surface layer. In the past the application of words and printed imagery was purely on functional grounds. In the eighteenth century the decorative function of mass-produced ware was purely an aesthetic intention of adding desirability to the object. In studio pottery, less importance was placed upon decoration, the form was paramount.. The obsession with clay's ability to be three-dimensional, the exploration of form above surface has meant a neglect of the graphic possibilities of ceramic materials. The blurring of boundaries between different areas of the decorative, applied and visual arts has resulted in new generations of makers and artists. Their attitudes towards the ceramic surface have fundamentally differed to some of their predecessors. Contemporary ceramists choose to paint, print and write on the surface for different reasons. Ceramists apply printed imagery and words to develop the dialogue of their forms.

Barton's work at Wedgwood in 1977 was a turning point regarding the use of print and also industrial processes. Her influence has encouraged other makers to use industrial processes which had formerly been shunned by studio pottery. Paul Scott is a motivating and catalytic force behind the development of print and words on the ceramic surface. Paul Scott has recognised the ceramic surface as a means of communicating his political and environmental concerns. Philip Eglin's printed imagery compliments his figures and other forms. His use of daubed words reflect the graffitti and vandalism which is almost ubiquitous in society today

Visual artists come from backgrounds with different practises and traditions and see new opportunities in the ceramic surface. Ceramic surfaces can be graphic, they can

contain words and convey complex visual imagery. These are makers for whom surface qualities are of equal or greater importance than concerns of form and function. The juxtaposition of word and image has brought a myriad of possibilities to Ceramics. Their exploration and experimentation with the surface has acted as a source of inspiration and has presented new possibilities for future makers

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