Vases

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VASES

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Advisors

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Preface

I have been working on rock pots (see color plates, pages, I, II and III) intermittently since the fall quarter. I began experimenting with this process while I was making tea pots. I enjoyed the character of the rock pots and I have combined it in a number of large and small pots.

Pot #a was one of the first large rock pots. I combined the rock form with a slab built base. They work well together and create a powerful form. I used an orange matt glaze to reinforce the form.

Pot #b does not work as well as the larger pot because it lacks contrast between the glaze and the clay.

Pot #c illustrates a strange interaction of forms while freshness, strength and mass movement are combined in the form. On the whole I feel that this vase is complete.

Pot #d is similar to #a but it is fresher and more challenging than the earlier pots. Unfortunately, it suffers from the same glaze problem as pot #b.
Preface

The rock pot shape was also included in some of my tea pots. Pot #e is an example of the rock pot with a lid, spout and handle. These small pots have character which is similar to a small animal. The rock pot is one of the most exciting approaches to Ceramics and I am sure that I will be making more of these in the future.

I have also made a number of small, lidded rock pots and tea pots which I feel are significant indications of my personal development but since they are not a major part of my thesis I will not expound upon them in this presentation. I have had color prints made of these pots for supplementary references (see color plates, pages #II and #III).

The bowl and chalice forms are also included because they have served as a preliminary study of proportions which I later utilized in the final study of vases (see color plates, page #IV).
1. Introduction

I chose vases for my thesis because I enjoy the vast range and possibilities of vase forms. The problem has permitted me to explore the possibilities in my own way, culminating in a personal style and statement.

A Ceramic vase is both a utilitarian and a decorative pot. Today, most of the emphasis is placed on the latter. Contemporary vases are expressive, decorative and generally aesthetically orientated.

Since the development of modern industry, many of the utilitarian vases have been replaced by metal, plastic and other manufactured materials.

On the other hand, the Artist-Potter offers society aesthetically orientated pots which in some way compensate for the impersonal mass produced objects. Thus, I feel that my approach to the aesthetic aspect of vases is valid.

In the following discussion of my pots I will be referring to these parts:

a. Lip
b. Neck
c. Shoulder
d. Body
e. Base
f. Foot

I will use the terms inward and outward to describe the movement and section of a pot. I visualize the
Lip
Neck
Shoulder
Body
Outward moving base
Foot
1. **Introduction**

pot as a vertical line with a cross member or members. All movement is in relationship to these axes. I will read all pots beginning at the foot and ending at the top.

For instance, the pot on the opposite page has an outward moving base. The base grows wider as it gets taller.

In my thesis I have been concerned with these parts and their relationship to each other and their interaction with the form.

Essentially, my goal has been based on the premise that my pots should have the quality of life. Bernard Leach has expressed a similar opinion.

"The quality which appears to me fundamental in all pots is life in one or more of its modes: inner harmony, nobility, purity, strength, breath and generosity, or even exquisiteness and charm. But it is one thing to make a list of virtues in man and pot and another to interpret them in the counterpoint of convex and concave, hard and soft, growth and

*A Potter's Portfolio* Bernard Leach

(London, Lund Humphries & Company Limited, 1951) p. 16
1. **Introduction**

rest, for this is the breathing of the Universal in the particular."

In this school year, I have been trying to bring out this quality of life in my work.

To enhance and facilitate my goal I have used three clay bodies, each of which has a character distinctly different and appropriate for experimentation.

I should also like to add that much of my time has been invested in improving my glaze palette.

1. Cone 8-10 clay bodies that I have used.

   A. Red Stoneware
      2 - Parts Jordan stoneware clay
      1 - Part A.P. Green fire clay
      1 - Part XX Sagger clay
      1 - Part Redart clay

   B. Grey Stoneware
      6 - Parts Kentucky-Tennessee #4 fire clay
      3 - Parts A.P. Green fire clay
      1\(\frac{1}{2}\) - Parts Elbrook feldspar

   C. Porcelain
      7 - Parts kaolin
      7 - Parts ball clay
      7 - Parts Elbrook feldspar
      5 - Parts silica
1. Introduction

2. Glazes

While I was doing my undergraduate work at New Paltz, I found a vein of red clay. I processed the clay, ran a number tests and developed a reliable glaze. Since then, I have been concerned with making slip glazes. I felt that I should develop a slip glaze from commercial clays. I chose Redart clay for a number of reasons:

A. It is an earthenware clay with a complex composition, including iron and other fluxes.

B. It is reasonably priced.

C. It is available in most parts of the country.

Some of the glaze crawled on one of the test pots, so I calcined a batch of Redart to correct the problem. I also used a small amount of Jordan clay to act as a refractory and to lighten the color of the glaze. The following formula has proven to produce a reliable glaze.

50 Grams of Redart clay.

10 Grams of calcined Redart clay.

30 Grams of Jordan clay.

30 Grams of Cliffstone.
1. Introduction

I have used this glaze on the grey stone-ware and porcelain bodies. I found that the high iron content of the red body combines with the glaze to produce a dark green glaze. I have used this glaze on pots #1, 6, 7 and 11. I added 2% rutile to the base glaze and applied three coats of glaze on pot #10. Some streaking is visible on the vertical surfaces. The glaze collected on the flat surfaces and produced a green color. I have also used this glaze on many of my latest pots.

3. Additions to the clay body.

A. I have added iron granuals to the grey stoneware and porcelain bodies.

B. I have added coffee grounds to the grey stoneware body. See chalices on plate page #IV.
2. Procedure

My approach to vases has proceeded from two directions:

A. The ovoid body.
B. The straight cylinder body.

A.

I wanted to explore some of the possible vase forms utilizing an ovoid body.

Pot #16 is a combination of a squat ovoid body and a tall base. The base moves outward from the floor and then reverses its direction at the top. This inward movement at the top of the base creates a sharp transition which accentuates the body. I did not add a neck or lip because I felt that the form was complete. No decoration was needed because of the simplicity of the pot.

Pot #17 has an outward moving base which seems to grow into the ovoid body. The foot and the lip stop the movement at each end.

Pot #18 is similar to #17 but the base moves inward creating a sharp transition and a livelier pot. Both #17 and #18 are altered forms. I felt that the large surfaces needed to be changed so I decorated them in a style which was complimentary to the forms.
2. Procedure

On pot #15 I tried the ovoid body with a straight base. A strange thing happened, rather than movement, the pot gained stability. I used the porcelain body for this small but strong form. Since the pot was strong and stable I used two contrasting glazes to create tension between the body and the base.

I also tried an ovoid pot without a base. Pot #13 has a small foot and a weak lip. If I were to make this vase again I would continue the curve at the base to complete the form.

Pot #19 is a subtle vase in which the shoulder, body, base and foot are closely related. The mere change of the curve indicates the various sections of the pot. I used a green, glossy, slip glaze on the smooth, strong form. I felt that this glaze with its smoothness and continuity would help to capture the simplicity of the vase.

Upon considering my experiences with the ovoid forms I felt that they lacked a certain freshness or excitement. I feel that I have achieved these qualities in pot #20. The curve of the body was increased, the top made flat and then recessed. A strong neck and lip rise out of a pool of glaze in the depression of the body. The base is an altered
2. Procedure

form which is similar to my rock pots.

The dry wood ash glaze forms random crystals in the thin areas and pools in the two depressions.

Pot #21 has an ovoid body and an indentation at the shoulder. The indentation has tooled ridges which are filled with a white matt glaze. The base flares out and it is supported by another base which is white. The body has a red-brown gloss glaze which seems to restate the form. I consider this pot as one of my new vase forms.
2. **Procedure**

B.

The cylinder has proven to be the main core of my thesis. Pots #1, 2, 3, 4 and #5 are significant because each one has influenced my current vases. Pot #1 is a relatively simple form but it utilizes a combination of horizontal finger throwing marks and vertical, impressed wood grain design which produces a rich surface. This texture over a texture produces a form of decoration that was necessary. A green, transparent glaze was applied to accentuate the textural design. Unfortunately, this type of pot is rather common and I wanted to develop a more personal statement.

Pot #3 has a tall base, a squat body and a large lip. This seemed to be more successful than #1 and #2 but I felt that it lacked something.

Pot #4 has a fluted, narrow inward moving base which seems to provide lift and movement for the slender, sharply ribbed body. The ridges at the top and bottom of the body emphasize the transitional points. The strong lip emphasizes the fast, strong statement of the vase. My yellow glaze reinforced the statement and the brown gloss heightened the effect of the ridges.

In pot #5, I eliminated the large base and
2. Procedure

placed the emphasis on the body, shoulder and lip. The pot develops lift from the body while the throwing marks provide rough orchestration. The smooth shoulder bulges out and reaches up with a strong lip. The opposition of rough-ribbed, rough glazed body to the smooth organic shoulder and lip which are smoothly glazed, seems to create living tension. It may be compared to a rough potato with a smooth 'sprouting eye.

I was satisfied with the opposition of forms and surfaces of pot #5 but I felt that I would like to make a vase that was composed of consistent forms. As in pot #5, I placed most of the emphasis on the body and the lip of #6. I used a straight body which moved slightly outward at the top. This provided a growing movement at the neck which was restated in a large lip.

To enhance the vase I used a copper-iron gloss glaze. The finished pot seemed too peaceful and contented. I thought that I should try to develop another vase with a similar but livelier expression.

Pot #7 nears this expectation. An inward moving, curving base, a vertical, ribbed body, a strong neck and lip. The relationship of space
2. Procedure

between these parts has created a lively pot. A dark green, transparent glaze was used.

I decided that I should experiment with the cylinder in another direction in order to understand more of the possibilities of the form.

Pot #9 has a straight base, a body similar to pot #4 and a small lip. The thin slabs of clay were used to emphasize the transitions.

Pot #11 has a small lip, a large body and a crisp base. The base and the small lip emphasize the large body. The ridges at the top and bottom of the body are similar to those of pots #4 and #9.

Pot #14 has two inward moving parts, the base and the body. A ridge similar to those on pots #4, 9, 11 and #12, is at the top of the body. It seems to control the pot while the small lip ends the statement. The simplicity of these latter forms is reflected in my current pots.

Pot #22 (which was on display at the Greater Fall River 10th. Annual Show) is a combination of two cylinders with a tubular handle. The weed vase was made with the grey stoneware body.
2. Procedure

I added iron granules to the body which are visible through the transparent slip glaze. The glaze also collects in the tooled ridges.

The body has a ridge at each end which is similar to those on pots #4, 9, 11 and 12. Since I was using the body in a horizontal position I tooled the convex surfaces at each end.

I placed the body on the base while the base was relatively soft, thus, the base curved to the shape of the body.

I added a tubular handle because I felt that it worked with the ridges and the form. I like the play of space enclosed by the handle and I feel that it emphasizes the subtle movement of the pot.

The foot is indented and this curve is repeated at the base-body joint and in the handle. I feel that this vase is one of my new forms.
Conclusion

I feel that "vases" has been a good thesis project. I took a general approach which was conducive to exploration of the vase forms. I was looking for two things in my work:

A. As I have indicated in the introduction, I have been searching for the quality of life in my work.

B. The development of new forms has also played a significant role in my work. Curiously, many of the new forms have this quality of life.

The three clay bodies have functioned well while they maintained their own character. Some minor changes have been made but each of the bodies is basically the same.

The glazes have also been working well but, unlike the clay bodies, they have been frequently modified. At times these modifications have included simplification.

The firing procedure has been a variable which has had significant effects on the glaze and the body. During the early and mid-part of
Conclusion

the school year I was firing the down draft kiln to cone nine with good results.

One of the kiln firings reached cone ten and I noticed that there was a better interaction between the glaze and the body. The slip glaze developed "hare's fur" streaks on the vertical surfaces where it had been flashed by the heat and small speckles on the cool side of the vase.

Since then I have been firing the kiln with a heavy reduction atmosphere to cone ten. The grey stoneware body turns a sandy brown in the unglazed areas at this temperature. I have been combining the sandy colored body with the slip glaze in varying degrees in my latter vases and I feel that these pots are some of my most successful.

It has been important for me to fire glaze tests and some pots each week. This provided with feedback which has helped me to perceive an idea and see it completed in a short period of time. There is something to be had from a completed pot and it also serves as fuel for further ideas.
Conclusion

My later vases are considerably different from the earlier pots. Simplicity is more apparent and the glaze is utilized to complement the vase. On some of the earlier pots the glaze functions more like a coat of paint which hides the clay body; but, now the glaze is used more sparingly to enhance the form.

I feel that my experience at the School for American Craftsmen has helped to establish a broad plateau of departure and that there is a direction in my work. This may be the end of the school year but I feel that my experiences in Ceramics are just beginning.
Bibliography

A Potter's Portfolio  Bernard Leach

(London, Lund Humphries & Company Limited, 1951) p.16
Color Plates