

Nora & Naomi:

Impressions
from Sinai

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Introduction

Clay, the medium used for ceramic art, is one of the most common earth materials. It is produced by the weathering and crumbling of rocks whose particles are washed away by water or carried by the wind from mountains into valleys, where they are deposited layer upon layer and impacted by heat and cold. These forces gouge and cut hollows and projections in the stone, polish it smooth again, then return to drill and hollow out spaces, orifices, furrows, and folds.

Baked clay, the most fragile and at the same time the most durable material, was used from neolithic times to the present to create containers for bringing water from the spring, for storing a variety of fluids and seeds, and for cooking. The malleability of clay created a wealth of forms, and a spur for artistic impulse and skill. It is therefore not unusual for ceramics to have become the most indigenous art form of Israel.

The country is studded with mounds and sites of archaeological excavations which produce a rich yield of pottery and potsherds. Archaeologists digging deep into the mounds have uncovered layers of past settlements stretching back in time as far as the fifth millennium B.C.

Pottery was burned into the texture of the landscape and into the ancient Hebrew language. For example, ancient Israelite prophets used the images of the modeling skill of the potter in their poetic language to describe and magnify the creative power of God, who can mold, destroy and remold his objects.

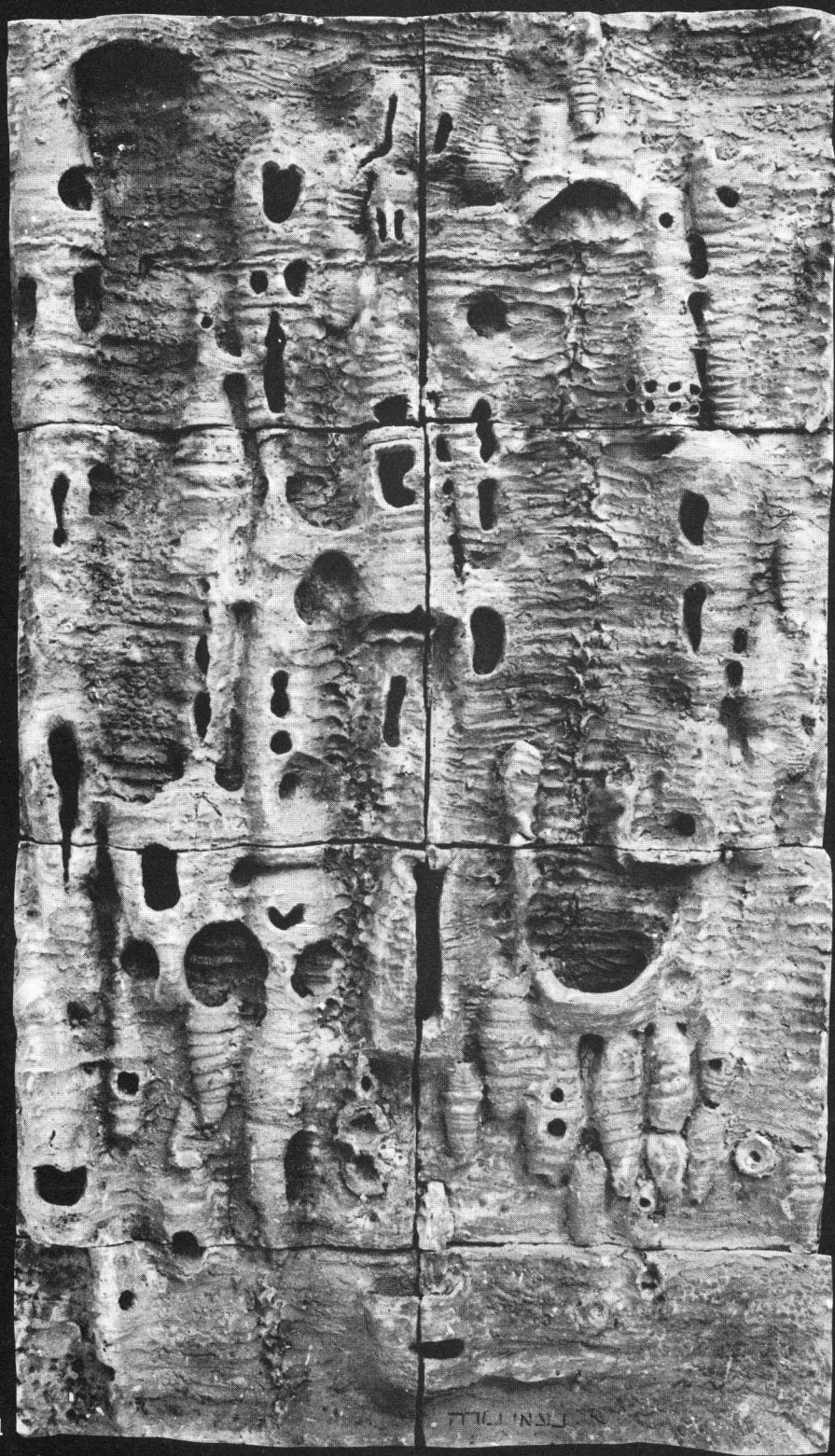
For them God was the potter and Israel the clay to be modelled. "And can the clay tell the potter what to do?" In fact, one of the names of God in Hebrew is "Hayozer," a name the Bible uses for the potter.

There are a thousand threads which link the potter in contemporary Israel to the prebiblical and biblical past. Naomi and Nora are contemporary potters and ceramists who have created rich textures which demonstrate the infinite plastic possibilities of the primal material of clay. They bring out the play of light and shade and the wide spectrum of colors that are in evidence in the original desert forms.

The dazzling, ever-changing light, the solitude and the silence of the Sinai desert recalled to the artists the biblical stories of the wanderings of the Children of Israel in the desert. For Naomi and Nora the vision of the violet hills of the wilderness merged with the figures of the wandering tribes, with the fragments of the ancient pottery and tablets, and with the tracks of tanks which have left more recent marks in the sand.

Their experience of a trip through this desert country induced the artists to pass from pottery-making to ceramic sculpture, a more primary and symbolic activity that fixes impressions from the shifting world. For Nora and Naomi, the creation of sculpture was heightened and illumined by their Sinai experience which they have embodied in the clay with which they work.

Avram Kampf



Artists' Statement

The idea of holding an exhibition on the subject of Sinai came in the wake of an extended trip through this desert of the Exodus. The prolonged stay amid the wild and majestic desertscape intensified the powers of contemplation and thought and induced feelings seeking to be expressed in some creative form.

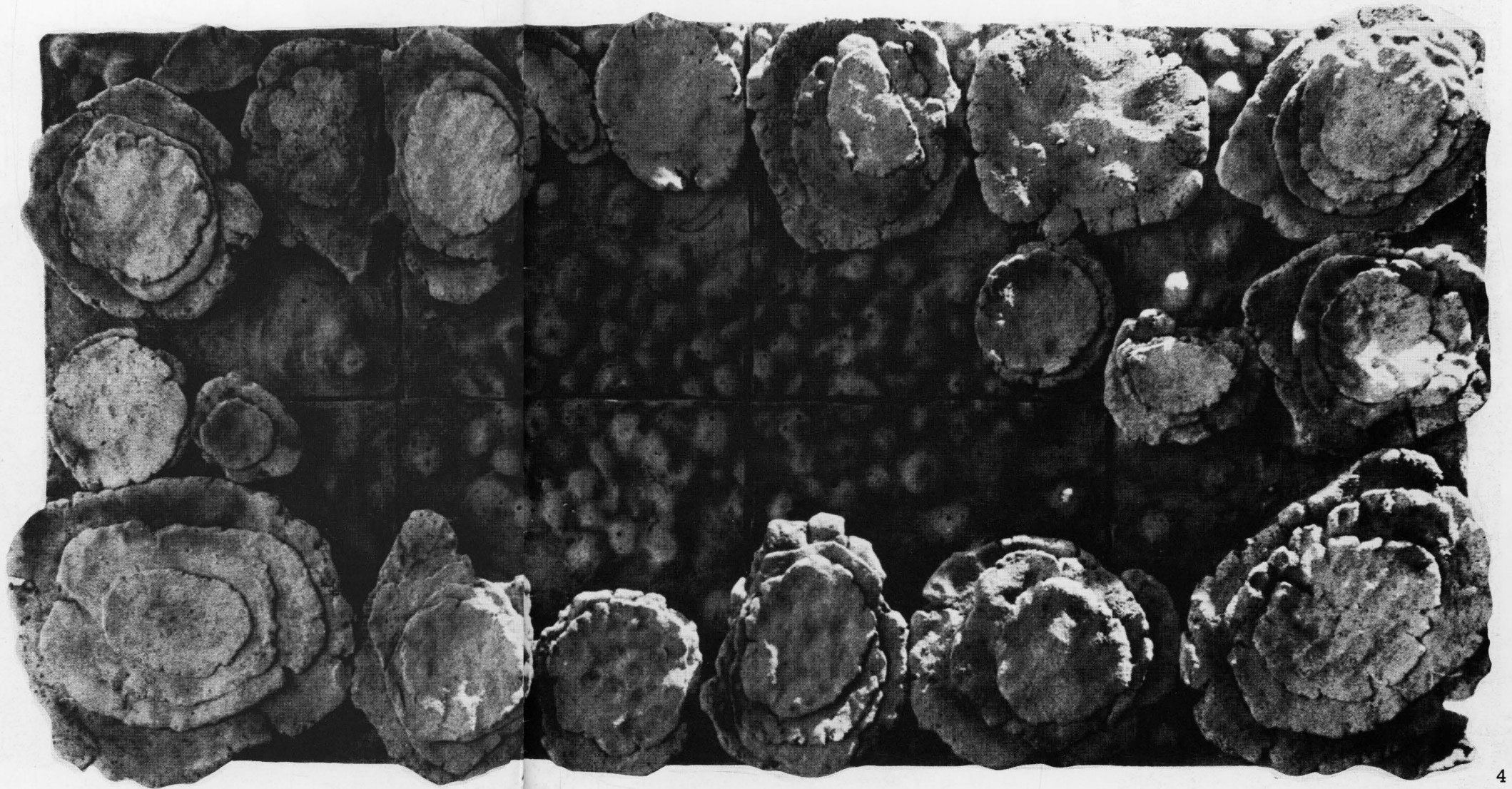
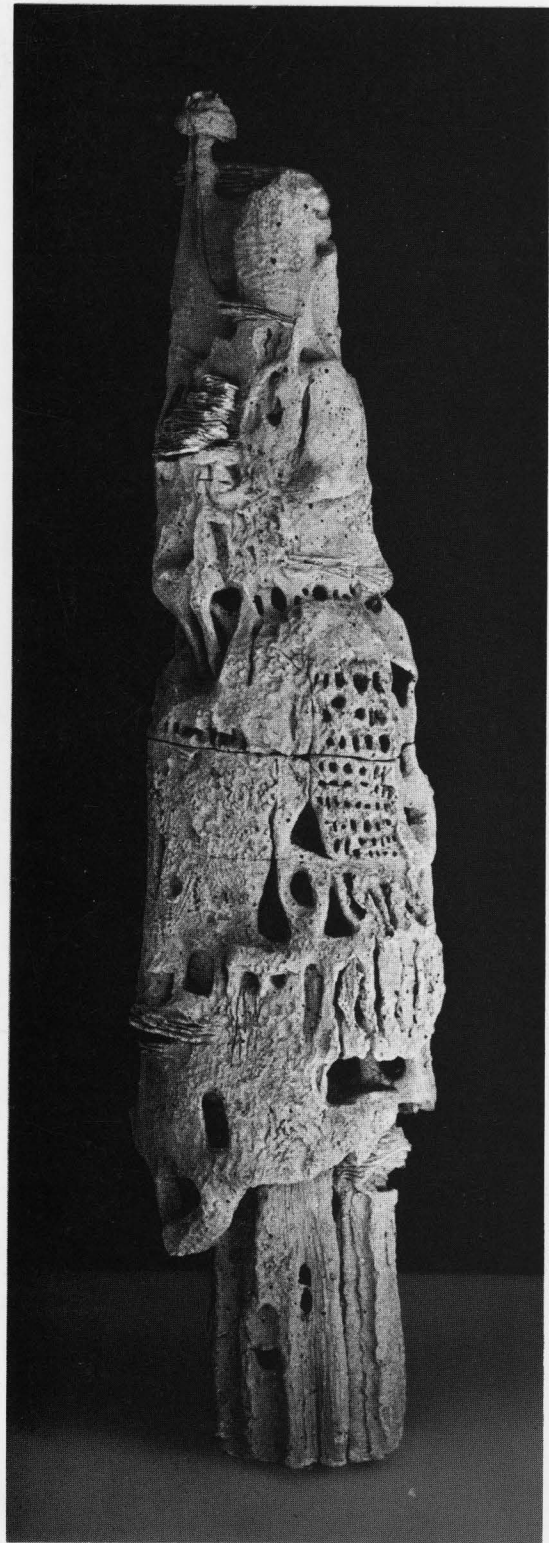
One of the striking and wonderful things about the Sinai desert is the contrast between the feeling of eternity and immanent power suggested by its landscape and the way its rocks have weathered and crumbled. The shapes and forms sculpted in the Nubian sandstone by thousands of years of erosion, as also the intense colors of the granite, made a profound impression on the imagination and memory. The almost unlimited plastic possibilities of clay, and the diversity of colors that can be obtained from it, made it the ideal material for translating our impressions into concrete form.

Nature cannot be re-created, and it was never our idea or intention to bring the desert to the town. All we desire is to convey something of the ambience of the desert and of the feelings it aroused in us. If we have succeeded in this, however slightly—we shall be pleased.

Naomi and Nora





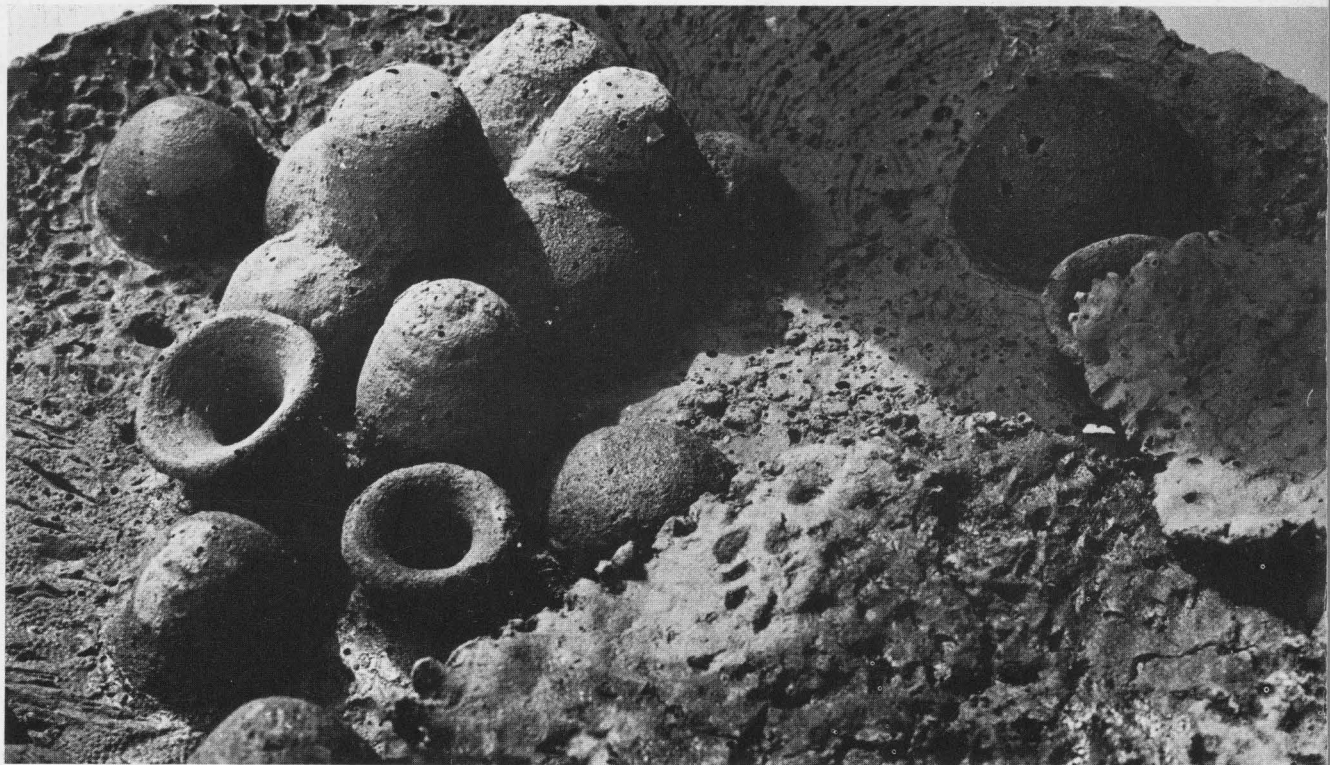






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Biography

Naomi Bitter
Born Jerusalem, 1936.
Nora Kochavi
Born Berlin, 1934.

Both grew up and were educated in Israel, and graduated Bezalel Academy of Art, Jerusalem, 1962. They hold degrees in Art History from Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1968, and have worked together since 1961 in their studio at Talpioth, Jerusalem.

Catalogue of the Exhibition

Height precedes width

1. **Mirage.** 1972
21 x 43 in.
2. **Mirage.** 1972
32 x 42 in.
3. **"The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs"** (Psalms CXIV:4). 1972
32 x 42 in.
4. **"And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water"** (Isaiah: XXXV:7). 1972
21 x 42 in.
5. **Desert Landscapes.** 1971-72
(9 discs 18" each)
6. **"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad"** (Isaiah XXXV:1). 1971
96 x 12 x 23 in.
7. **Solomon's Pillars.** 1971
24 x 40 x 111 in.
8. **Exodus.** 1971
(Polyptych)
40 x 12 x 43 in.
 - a. Above: "He took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night." (Exodus: XIII:22).
 - Below: "And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells, and three score and then palm trees." (Exodus: XVI:27).
 - b. "And made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." (Exodus XIV:21).
 - c. "And Moses brought forth the people of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the nether part of the mount." (Exodus XX:17).

Ch 12

d. "The Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them." (Deut. XXXIII:2).

9. **Rocky Waste.** 1972
48 x 12 in.
10. **Rocky Waste.** 1973
52 x 12 in.
11. **Desert Blossom.** 1971
33 x 13 in.
12. **Desert Blossom.** 1971
30 x 13 in.
13. **"The wilderness hath shut them in."** (Exodus XIV:3). 1972
26 x 49 x 16 in.
14. **"And thou shalt smite the rock, and water shall come out of it."** (Exodus XVII:6). 1973
Three pieces, 11 x 18 x 15 in. each
15. **"And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up..."** (Numbers XVI:32). 1972
18 x 11 x 14 in.
16. **In front of cave.** 1971
16 x 23 x 16 in.
17. **Primeval Beast.** 1971
16 x 23 x 12 in.
18. **Inside Cave.** 1972
16 x 17 x 11 in.
19. **Pond.** 1971
7 x 36 x 20 in.
20. **Black garden pot.** 1971
7 x 20 x 10 in.
21. **Red garden pot.** 1971
16 x 21 in.
22. **Black garden pot.** 1972
30 x 16 x 16 in.
23. **Red garden pot.** 1972
26 x 12 x 25 in.
24. **Conversation.** 1972
45 x 13 x 18 in.
25. **Caravan.** 1973
17 x 25 x 15 in.

Acknowledgment

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A.K.

