

International Ceramics 1972



Victoria and Albert Museum

International Ceramics 1972

Exhibition June-July

London 1972

Photographs of the British and some overseas exhibits
by Jeremy Butler and Roger Hart

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Foreword

We are very glad to have this opportunity of showing an exhibition of contemporary ceramics in conjunction with the International Academy of Ceramics. Distinguished exhibitions of this nature have been held previously in such centres as Prague, Geneva and Istanbul; we hope that this exhibition in the Victoria and Albert Museum will prove a worthy successor. With the rapid widening of international publicity it becomes increasingly important to evaluate from time to time the relative strength of international and national styles in this sensitive medium.

We owe thanks above all to the President of the Academy in Geneva, M. Edgar Pelichet, who is presiding at a conference of the Academy to be held during the course of the exhibition, and to Miss Rosemary Wren, a British member of the Academy, who was the original advocate for the holding of the exhibition and conference in London. The exhibition has been produced by an organizing committee under the chairmanship of Mr James Noel White, the Vice-President for Europe of the World Crafts Council, comprising Mr Victor Margrie, also of the World Crafts Council, Mrs Eileen Lewenstein and Miss Marianne de Trey, both of the Craftsmen Potters Association of Great Britain, Mr Hugh Wakefield, the Keeper of the Museum's Department of Circulation, and Mr David Coachworth of the same Department. The detailed work of inviting and organizing the contributions from the various countries, and of compiling the catalogue, has been carried out under the charge of Mr Hugh Wakefield by Mr David Coachworth and Mrs Naomi Gornick. The exhibition has been designed by Stefan Buzas and Alan Irvine.

John Pope-Hennessy
Director

Introduction

'International Ceramics 1972' is one of a series of exhibitions which are mounted at intervals at the instance of the International Academy of Ceramics. Such exhibitions, however, are by no means repetitious, since the subject can be approached in many different ways.

In this instance the organizing committee felt that an attempt should be made to get the widest possible coverage, and exploratory invitations were in consequence sent to some ninety different countries. It was decided moreover that the emphasis should be placed firmly on the side of individual artist pottery rather than pottery of an industrial or folk nature, since, if the latter were admitted, it would be impossible to attain within one exhibition the wide compass desired. A more difficult decision was to exclude entries coming directly from individuals. The organizers felt that they could not judge from previous knowledge or from photographs the relative merit of potters in other countries, and they were unwilling that a premium should be put on the work of those who could individually afford to send their work to London. Accordingly, arrangements were made to seek contributions exclusively from either craft organizations or governmental agencies, with the intention that the necessary filtering of contributions would be done locally and that wherever possible the individual artists would be shielded from themselves meeting the expenses involved. The invitations specified that diplomas of merit would be awarded and that, to encourage younger potters, a special diploma would be awarded for the work of those under thirty years of age. The invitations also specified that not more than three works could be accepted from any one potter, that no item should be taller than 150 cm. or broader than 90 cm., and that special consideration would be given to smaller works.

Inevitably some balance had to be struck between the relative weight of craft activities in different countries, and so a numerical scale was worked out, varying from thirty items asked for from the largest countries down to three asked for from some of the smaller ones. The exception was Great Britain, which, as the host country, was thought to be entitled to a relatively

greater representation, and in the exhibition the British contribution of eighty items will be found in a separate room, arranged in effect as a separate display. This contribution was organized by the Craftsmen Potters Association on behalf of all potters in Britain and was selected by an independent jury. One other special display, asked for by the International Academy, commemorates the tragic deaths in 1970 of Kurt Ohnsorg and Anders Liljefors.

The response to the committee's invitation was remarkably good, and in the upshot some thirty-eight overseas countries are represented in the exhibition. Unfortunately these do not include two of the largest countries, the USSR and China. The number does, however, include otherwise the great majority of countries whose modern potters are known to have produced internationally significant work. Although the organizing committee in London reserved the right to make a selection from the work submitted, it has not in fact felt justified in interfering with any of the national contributions which have been received; but for a number of physical and organizational reasons the representation from some countries is not so wide as was originally envisaged (the slight, although significant, contribution from Japan is an extreme case in point).

In spite of uncertainty about the representation of some countries, an overall picture emerges of the interaction of international styles at the present time. On the one hand, a strong element of respect for classical Oriental forms and glazes is clearly apparent, having been filtered in many cases through the Anglo-Japanese approach of Bernard Leach, Shoji Hamada and their associates. On the other hand, artists who have perhaps more claim to be called sculptors than potters are experimenting with the use of hollow ceramics or tile panels as media of equivalent value to those of abstract sculpture or painting. A third element, exemplified particularly in the United States of America but frequently apparent elsewhere, is a 'pop art' style which pays little attention to the traditional proprieties of the ceramic art and which seeks to make immediate contact with the viewer through the use of popular symbols.

But perhaps the most surprising feature of the present exhibition is the manner in which national ceramic history, and perhaps national temperament, shines through the repetition of international styles. A clearly discernible West African quality appears in the work from Nigeria, a solemnity in some of the shapes from Eastern Europe, or a sense of fantasy in those from Northern Europe. The art of pottery is revealed as an art of great flexibility which can express at once the complexities of style, tradition and personal feeling.

Hugh Wakefield
Keeper of the Department of Circulation

Israel

Edith Ady (b. 1934)
Jerusalem

1
Sculpture, 1971
Earthenware body with purple,
white, blue and brown glaze
Height 72.5 cm. (28½ in.)



1

Pnina Amir (b. 1929)
Tel-Aviv

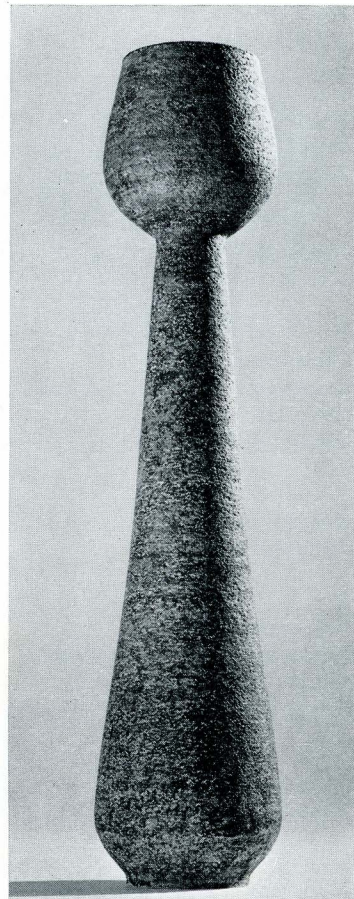
2
'The Guardians', 1970
Stoneware body with black
and green glaze
Height 48.25 cm. (19 in.)



2

Hanna Charag-Zuntz (b. 1915)
Haifa

3
Ceremonial candleholder, 1970
Stoneware body with brown and
black surface
Height 68 cm. (26¾ in.)



3

Israel contd.

Maud Friedland (b. 1927)
Tel Aviv

4
Torso on a cube, 1972
Stoneware body with brown glaze
Height 83.75 cm. (33 in.)

Jean Mayer (b. 1924)
Kibbutz Ein Hashofet

5
Garden sculpture, 1971
Stoneware body with brown and grey glaze
Height 110.5 cm. (43½ in.)

Gdula Ogen (b. 1929)
Jerusalem

6
Relief panel, 1970
Earthenware body with buff and grey impressed surface
Height 87.5 cm. (34½ in.)

Lydia Zavadsky (b. 1937)
Jerusalem

7
Black cube and white cube, 1971
Stoneware body with black, white and gold glaze
Maximum Height 41 cm. (16⅛ in.)

