

**Wendy Walgate: Thesis Paper**

Excess and Restraint, Impulse and Reason  
Submitted for M.F.A. Degree at Cranbrook Academy  
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## **Introduction**

This thesis was respectfully submitted to Tony Hepburn, Head of the Ceramics Department, Cranbrook Academy of Art as partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts, dated May 6, 1994.

It took me a long time to come to Cranbrook. Before I did come here, an abundance of clay had already moved through my fingers in schools and workshops, in basement studios and finally in a full-time production studio in an industrial building in my hometown, Toronto. Wedged between all that clay, came two children, a job at IBM (a nightmare) and an on-off relationship with a career as a camera assistant in feature films.

Again and again, my work in clay would run into the same brick wall of the unknown. After reaching a certain point in the development of a form or a series of work, the direction of my next step would be unclear and I would become lost and disillusioned. That was the main reason for my need to attend a graduate program in clay. To be able to find a way around the brick wall. To learn how to question my work, find the historical precedents, have dialogue with other artists in different media and to do the research and locate the information that would help me develop my ideas further.

Cranbrook has given me this most precious of opportunities and I have divided this thesis into the different areas that have been part of my investigation over the past two years: historical, ritual, colour, surface and content, form, technical and personal. In between the pages of my own writing, there are quotes from books that have inspired and informed. They allowed me to realize that there are parallels to be found in other lives and cultures - a constant recognition of continuity and similarity.

## **Historical**

In September 1993, one of the first exercises that Tony Hepburn gave me was to go to the library and look through the section on Ceramics and identify what I spontaneously liked in those books. It didn't matter what period, what artist or what material. Just a gut reaction to forms, colours and sensibilities that were similar to my own. I taped all the photocopies of this work up on my studio wall and worked for a while under their multi-faceted eyes. That was the way in which I started to identify my particular likes and dislikes in historical work and in my own work.

The classical vase form found in Greek vases attracted my innate sense of symmetry and theatre. Their format consisted of presenting a scene from Greek life to illustrate a time, place and event. I began to construct marriage vases based on the Greek vase called a "lutrophorus", which was given to a young woman on the eve of her marriage or her death. The ambiguity of the purpose of the vase was intriguing. My marriage vases portrayed my hands with wedding rings placed in a central focal point and were surrounded by press-moulded images from my daily life.

A book on English majolica opened up the world of the Victorian notion of ceremony, their exuberant style and presentation. The flowing luxury of their low fire glazes and the animation of forms struck a similar chord in my work. I began to build elaborately decorated plates, cups and bowls that definitely could be used in a functional way, but also possessed their own original style and narrative content.

Bernard Palissy had always been a popular artist for me with his plates purposefully filled with writhing amphibious visitors. He demonstrated a playfulness in his modelling and an outrageous premise in completing the interior of a plate with objects of his choosing. If Palissy could fill his plates, so could I. With press-moulds of toy fly wings, bicycle tires, lego blocks and plasticine stamps from my childhood, I arranged patterns in the hidden forms of animals - only to be discovered by the viewer after some investigation.

George Ohr inspired me with his wobbly forms, glazes with minds of their own and a philosophy that included a profound reverence for the spirit of each piece he created. He referred to them as his children and was very concerned as to where and with whom they went to live. After a fire in his studio, he kept a pile of blackened pots aside and gave one away to each customer who showed an interest in them. In this way, he guaranteed that their spirit was respected.

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*Dignity and Decadence, Richard Jenkyns (pgs. 32 & 33):*

*Christianity and heathenism, in a sense, needed each other. One cannot read much Victorian literature without discovering their sense of the high drama of the spiritual life. Sin and evil are felt as immensely powerful forces ... there is a feeling of struggle, of thrilling danger, it is as though religion, like sex, was more exciting in those days. And if we find in Victorian art a tension between unabashed eroticism and monumental high-mindedness - sometimes between one man and another, sometimes within a single mind - we may perhaps see it as reflecting a battle within Victorian society itself.*

*The Victorians appeal to our time by being grand and glorious, yet also vulnerable and accessible to our imaginations: they mingle nostalgia and self-confidence, inhibition and extravagance, ordinariness and the consciousness of belonging to a heroic age - a complex of attitudes to which they gave expression by their various means of exploiting the ancient world.*

*In the nineteenth century the taste of the elite and the taste of the people began to diverge as never before; yet with the embourgeoisement of culture came also the growth of a middlebrow art and architecture which happily played to the*

*gallery. Paintings and buildings are among the means by which the Victorians expressed the change and continuity in their society, the conservative tendency and the radical impulse.*

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Victorian culture with its ambiguous suggestion of sex versus religion in their art and domestic furnishings, holds great interest for me. I believe that some of those contrasts appear, in particular, in the large vases that I made during my final term at Cranbrook. Built with a separate base, central vase section and a tall lid, they reached the height of five feet when assembled - which, incidentally was my own height.

These vases reference Baroque and Rococo styling with compound classical forms covered with heavy layers of glaze. They have the monumental stature of a totem or symbol of religious or historical power and yet their surfaces are over-abundantly covered to excess. They do not possess the purity or piety of a religious icon, but tend toward an effusiveness and a well-endowed femininity. The height, the fullness, the pouring of the glazes suggest a flush, sexual exuberance - the surface quality might even come close to lust. The recognizable structure of a classical vase or fountain cloaked in a historic air of respectability, can also hold the symbols of hedonism, extravagance and exhibitionism.

Other influences in my work are the heavily ornate, but splendidly functional work of the Sevres and Meissen factories. The extremely high level of craftsmanship in their intricate forms, brilliant glazes and detailed painting echoes a similar work ethic to mine. The decorative content of this 19th century work reflected more than just a pictorial surface. For example, a set of garniture (a five piece set of vessels specifically meant for the mantle) was designed by Sevres as a gift for Madame Pompadour by Louis the XIV. The surface scenes that were chosen show a pair of lovers meeting illicitly behind a hedge wall and it echoed the real life relationship between the giver and receiver.

I thoroughly enjoy this double standard of piousness mingled with underlying prurience in historic culture. Another intent with my large vase forms was to entertain and provide humour for the viewer. The qualities of playfulness, intrigue and an element of intimidation certainly are part of the personalities of the later vases.

## **Ritual**

*Death in the Dining Room, Kenneth L. Ames (pgs. 76 & 87):*

*Rituals are deliberately repeated acts or events that order and control. Rituals reaffirm cosmology, assure people of the way things ought to be. Many human activities, however seemingly ordinary or bizarre, can be ritualized. The ritualization of eating, however, is commonplace. Eating is a core component of the rituals of many societies. Across the anthropological and*

*historical record, people have created eating rituals to initiate and maintain human relationships. Eating the same foods from matching dishes with matching silverware bound diners to one another...*

*In recognizing the link between Thanksgiving and domestic religion, we also recognize Victorian gender politics at work. Thanksgiving provided a formal, institutionalized context for the assertion of stereotypical feminine values and experiences. The emphases on nurture, on communion and community, on family, on togetherness, connectedness were congruent with genteel female values. In nineteenth-century America, as now, women were responsible for making Thanksgiving happen. Males played cameo roles as carvers of the ceremonial turkey, but women prepared the meal, women served the meal, women cleaned up after the meal. And women pressed to make Thanksgiving a national holiday. Thanksgiving became a feminized event, a celebration of connectedness and intimacy within a setting of abundance and nurture.*

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My mother was a homemaker and I was one also for a while. Cleaning, cooking and picking up all the tossed clothes of two children. A home, or nest or place to put all your "stuff", has always been important to me. The furnishings, cooking utensils and dinnerware are all part of that arena of domesticity and are the tools for the ritual of the home.

In my first semester at Cranbrook, I made decorative functional pieces which consisted of serving bowls and plates. At the same time, I experimented with sculptural work that used a 12 inch model of a woman's body. These models became a woman rattle for the wall, a standing statue with cups on the arms and I also made women supports to hold up a large fountain-like bowl. Although strictly sculptural work interested me, I felt that to maximize my own graduate school experience, it was important for me to choose clearly and whole-heartedly, what path to follow - function or sculpture.

It is now obvious to me that those first experimental months at Cranbrook were the preparation time needed to establish my instinctive interest in the home and I decided to produce a fully ceremonial version of domestic ware. The results were a curious hybrid of sculptural yet functional pieces.

The reason for inclusion of the previous quote was that along with its cultural insight into the ritual of dining, it cites a strong emphasis on the feminine or woman's territorial claim to the home. Domestic patterns are changing in the 90's with many more men cooking and maybe even cleaning, but I believe there is still a strong genetic predisposition in the soul and mind of many women to the home. Instead of protesting and trying to rearrange my rather antiquated view of feminism, I decided to "lean" into my natural area of

interest and just enjoy what I enjoy. Cooking, serving food on lavish platters, filling large overbearing vases with even larger overbearing flowers - creating a welcoming, beckoning spectacle in this place I call home: this half-reality and half-fantasy of cohesiveness, of familial bliss and quiet security. Domestic objects are intuitively and historically part of my psyche, and for me to make clay work that embodies the ritual of domestic use, is a natural and honest pursuit.

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*The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir:*

*A reception involves something more than merely welcoming others into a woman's own home; it changes this dwelling into a domain of enchantment; the social function is at once a party and a ceremony. The hostess displays her treasures: silver, linen, glassware; she arranges cut flowers. Ephemeral and useless, flowers typify the needless extravagance of parties marked by expense and luxury; open in their vases, doomed to early death, they take the place of bonfires, incense and myrrh, libations and offerings. The table is laden with fine food and precious wines. The idea is to devise gracious gifts, which, while supplying the needs of the guests, anticipate their desires; the repast is changed into a mysterious ceremony. Virginia Woolf emphasizes this aspect in a passage from "Mrs. Dalloway": And so there began a soundless and exquisite passing to and fro through swing doors of aproned white-capped maids, handmaidens not of necessity, but adept in a mystery or grand deception practised by hostesses in Mayfair from one-thirty to two, when with a wave of the hand, the traffic ceases, and there rises instead this profound illusion in the first place about the food - how it is not paid for; and then that the table spreads itself voluntarily with glass and silver, little mats, saucers of red fruit; films of brown cream mask turbot; in casseroles severed chickens swim; coloured, undomestic, the fire burns; and with the wine and the coffee (not paid for) rise jocund visions before musing eyes; gently speculative eyes; eyes to whom life appears, musical, mysterious.*

*The woman who presides over these mysteries is proud to feel herself the creator of a perfect moment, the bestower of happiness and gaiety. It is through her that the guests have been brought together, an event has taken place; she is the gratuitous source of joy and harmony.*

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During the normal daytime meals of my childhood, our family would eat from Melmac dishware; a plastic set of plates, bowls and cups that would sometimes come inside laundry soap boxes as incentive gifts. These dishes could take the heavy use of children

and of being constantly washed and bumped around the cast iron kitchen sink.

However, in my mother's china cabinet, were a number of mis-matched and gaudy (but beautiful to my eye) bone china tea cups. They were used only when her four sisters and their families came over for afternoon tea. The cups were very inexpensive in reality; my mother would never pay more than \$5.00 for a cup and saucer and she collected many of them from various promotional offers at downtown department stores. After they were dusted and lined up on the dining room table, I was allowed to examine them more closely. What I saw were cups with interiors of pure turquoise and deep ruby and saucer rims lined with gold and filigree - a far cry from Melmac.

The presentation of these cups and saucers elevated the visiting sisters to a level of honour in our house. When we drank from the bright, thin and shiny cups, our families celebrated our existence and good health together. The gossiping, Ukrainian phrases accompanied by bread, cake and cookies completed the scene. Usually these events happened in the restful stretch of a Sunday afternoon around the dining room table in a very cramped and noisy room. The women sipped tea, the men sipped tea and drank whiskey, and there was laughter and sometimes arguments.

The scene was not one of pretence, and the china was not used simply as a status symbol. This moment of respect, the coming together of families was framed and symbolized by this different set of dishes. And it was with some relief that we put back the fragile china behind the glass and went back to pastel Melmac on Monday morning. Life picked up its pace again, and the memory of the ritual of the sisters' visit was illustrated in my mind by yesterday's china.

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*Salt and Braided Bread, Ukrainian Life in Canada, Jars Balan*  
(pg. 2):

*The offering of salt and bread - symbols of the essentials of life - is a ritual greeting that Ukrainians extend to guests as a formal invitation to share in their hospitality. The salt and bread, symbolizing the essentials of life, express the deep attachment of the peasant to the soil, a connection reflected in the name Ukrainians often use for themselves: khiboroby - literally, makers of bread. Stemming from their ancestral lifestyle as grain farmers, the term helps to explain the reverent attitude towards bread that figures in many other ancient customs (old-timers can still be found who regard it a sin to throw bread away, and will instinctively kiss a piece that has fallen to the ground). And although modern Ukrainians, like all other peoples, have been profoundly affected by industrialization and urbanization, the creative well-springs of their culture are still closely bound to the rhythms and values of agricultural society.*

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My grandparents were born in the Ukraine somewhere around Kiev. Details are scarce: there is sometimes a tendency in Ukrainians to be secretive and often they carefully guard personal information. I know because I have that tendency.

Both born in Canada, on farms, my parents made their separate ways to Toronto during the depression to look for work. Discrimination was extreme against anyone who possessed an "accent" or foreign name, and along with changing our surname, my parents never taught me their Ukrainian language. It was odd that the only words I could communicate to my grandmother were dobra (good), melinky (small) and, of course, all the names of the delicious Ukrainian foods that my mother thankfully still continues to cook.

My best friend in high school was a girl with the last name of Kotyk which meant "cat" in Ukrainian. Her family had kept up many traditions and my friend was part of a dance group. I envied her dance costume complete with red leather boots, a heavily embroidered blouse and a headdress with multi-coloured ribbons flowing down her back. One Ukrainian Christmas (January 7), I was visiting their house and they did the ritual of the pashka. It was a sticky bread that was thrown up on to the dining room ceiling. If it stuck there, the year would be a lucky one, if it fell off, trouble. That year, it stuck.

There is an extravagance of passion that is closely bound up with the extremely practical nature of a Ukrainian. On one hand, materials, handicraft and quantities are worried over. On the other hand, excess is frequently wasted in celebration. It is this contradiction that I see ever present in the consideration of how I make my work. It must possess many hours of intense labour and yet convey the outward message of joy and life.

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*Ceramics, Philip Rawson:*

*We must never allow ourselves to forget that pottery, like all art indeed, was meant to occupy a place in an actual world of life and activity. When we see it inert in a showcase it lacks dimension of reality very much as, say, a motor car in a museum does. It is also unfortunately true that many modern potters, studio and artist, have been led to believe - and work accordingly - that pots should be made for exactly that kind of distant, untouchable appreciation - an air of perfect, complete-in-itself visual self-sufficiency ...associating ceramics with "noble treasure" that many modern patrons look for.*

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The mornings are my best time for working especially if the sun is pouring in through the studio windows. It is such an optimistic span of hours and I usually start by rolling out clay slabs with a large and heavy rolling pin. Although there is a slab roller available, I find the repetitive, muscular motion of rolling clay, picking it up and flipping, rolling it again - very soothing and interactive.

With my apron on and my rolling pin in hand, I sometimes feel like a cook about to concoct a meal for a waiting group of friends. Family, friends, home, once again. And as I work, I believe I visualize the clay pieces in that very location and atmosphere - included in the fabric of life, not isolated in a gallery, alone. Although the work is easier to examine in the starkness of a white gallery on a white pedestal, the best scenario for it in my mind is to be lived with, to have a continual conversation with it and to learn about all its peculiarities.

Through rituals, ceremonies and through the work we produce day after day, we help to mark our time here on earth. It seems that these past two years at Cranbrook have whirled around so quickly - as fast as a storm that comes and goes, but is remembered. In my life, I'm coming close to that half-way mark in age, and the anticipation of each future day seems to be measured. So the marking of a moment in time, a realization that we are here now, seeing and talking to each other, hearing and learning from each other, is one of the most important duties we have.

As clay artists we are so unique in our ability to reproduce moments of time in our work. Work in clay speaks of its formation by touch and of the process of firing which translates hope and idea to reality. We only have to glance back at an older piece and the memory of its making is there. Our work in the presence of others in their homes, serves to give them their own moments of recollection. They remember our faces, the story that went along with the piece, the location and time that it entered their lives. Associations and memories from others' lives are brought to our work. Our meaning and their interpretation layer together to create a record, a marking.

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*Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multi Cultural America, Lucy R. Lippard (pg. 82):*

*The Bay Area Chicana artist, writer and educator Amalia Mesa-Bains observes that:*

*... in an increasingly technological society the division between experience and ritual grows more vast. When rockets reach the moon, the mysteries of the lunar religion lose their power. Where death can be delayed by injections... the liturgy of mourning declines... The everyday life experiences upon which rituals are built finally diminish as a shared observance... Yet within this failing of popular ritual we have seen the growth of offertory expressions in the institutions of the art community... If we look further we discern that the practitioners of such "ritual art" are most often women.*

*Mesa-Bains traces two strands of women artists' involvement in ritual: that which has been "art of a continuous tradition of*

*domestic folk-ritual" within minority art communities and the "reclamationist" phase instigated by the latest wave of feminism, which has "pursued the secret history of women." They share roots in "a decorative tradition and the restricted mode of women's relegation to production in the home." Thus altars "become the most political of statements. They were the outgrowth of the individualized oppression in the most private places of the domestic chamber, the bedroom and the kitchen."*

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Often I imagine that people think they're doing me a favour by suggesting that I make my work with a totally white surface. Maybe they feel there's some profound but temporary lapse in my judgement and those brazen colours that I am slapping all over those surfaces, are just a terrible mistake.

So during my second year at Cranbrook, I finally took their advice (no one can call me stubborn) and made some smaller porcelain pieces that had plates with domed lids on them. Actually they also ended up being maquettes for the domed place settings I made later on, but I did leave them white.

I also made a larger vase shape that held candles in the corners and the whole collection of white pieces took on a very sacrificial tone. I placed dime-store wedding rings under three of the domes of the plates and bought a wall-mounted vitrine to place another one in. The light in the morning in my studio produced the most beautiful shadows on the small piece in the vitrine. The textured surfaces were perfectly delineated and serene in the bath of light. I learned that as a study of form, the whiteness helped me see it clearly and the pieces had a preciousness about them that was hard to duplicate in my glazed work.

As a tribute to whiteness, purity and all those assumptions in life that we hold as being unshakeable and constant, I did a short performance piece for one of my critiques. A classmate lit the candles in the larger form and ritually lifted the lids and removed the wedding rings from the plates. At the end of my reading, she tossed them into the centre of the candles and blew them out.

That day, classmates interacted with two of my other pieces as I read poems that I had written about the work. It was a type of short, fleeting theatre and it gave me a way of discovering other meanings in my work by writing about it after completion. It may have deterred the later discussion from the technical issues of my work, but the atmosphere of investigation at Cranbrook allowed me to experiment with another format and I appreciated the freedom.

The following poem was written in my response to the white pieces.

---

### **The Braid**

humid  
dark  
vestibule  
black  
smell  
of  
blackened  
incense  
used  
here and  
there  
to tell of  
to banish  
sins  
to comfort  
and welcome  
death  
its penance

along  
the wall  
to my  
left  
is a  
row  
of  
wooden pegs  
and in  
a row  
along  
the pegs  
are  
ten  
black  
braids  
still  
glistening  
from  
their  
absent  
source

and for  
whatever  
short time  
they own  
it  
each  
morning  
they sit  
before  
a  
stern face

cut off  
and  
tied  
with  
short  
white  
ribbons  
it was  
explained  
to me  
with difficulty  
in English  
why a  
young  
girl's  
life  
would move  
unerringly  
with such  
single  
purpose  
to the cutting  
of the braid

to grow  
to will  
their hair  
as long as  
rope  
as they  
pull  
coax it  
from its  
roots  
caring  
brushing  
coveting  
cherishing  
its gloss  
its movement  
its weight

to a  
peg  
in the  
church  
vestibule  
to have  
on view  
as a  
testimony  
of her  
devotedness

who pulls very  
hard  
on  
hair  
to form  
the braid  
down  
the back  
almost  
touching  
her thigh

the longer  
this hair  
the more grace  
forgiveness  
brilliance  
of  
white light  
that will  
shine  
down  
on them  
when at  
the moment  
of betrothal  
to an  
older  
preselected  
gentleman  
they  
cut off  
and  
offer  
the braid

her  
irrevocable  
the change  
from  
maiden child  
to woman  
betrothed  
spoken for  
promised  
chosen  
given away  
taken away  
become another  
one's daughter  
wife  
taken  
in hand  
wedded  
as long  
as she  
shall live  
as long  
as her  
hair  
shall  
grow

## Colour

*Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art, edited by Kenneth C. Lindsay (pg. 159):*

*Even in very early youth I sensed the unparalleled expressive power of colour. I envied musicians, who could create art without "narrating" anything "realistic". Colour, however, seemed to me just as expressive and powerful as sound.*

*Anyone who has heard of colour therapy knows that coloured light can have a particular effect upon the entire body. Various attempts*

*to exploit this power of colour and apply it to different nervous disorders have again noted that red light has an enlivening and stimulating effect upon the heart, while blue, can lead to temporary paralysis. These facts prove that colour contains within itself a little-studied but enormous power, which can influence the entire human body as a physical organism.*

*In general colour is a means of exerting a direct influence upon the soul. Colour is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer. The soul is the piano, with its many strings. The artist is the hand that purposefully sets the soul vibrating by means of this or that key.*

*Thus it is clear that the harmony of colours can only be based upon the principle of purposefully touching the human soul. This basic tenet we shall call the principle of internal necessity.*

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The most vivid and colourful images that I can remember in a book were inside the front and back covers of a Grimms' Fairy Tales in my house as a child. Not only were the colours rivetting to the eye but the illustrations of small children with serpents wrapped around their feet conveyed definite moral overtones. That book with its excessive content and colour is still one of my favourites and I am ready to admit that I am a confirmed colour "junkie". In fact, if I could not use colour on my work, there would not be much point in my working in clay.

In the past, the glaze temperatures I've worked in were Cone 10 (muted and classic), Cone 6 (getting a bit brighter) and then I used a tin-based majolica on a production line for a number of years. Mason stains became trusted and expensive friends and I used the whole range from Shell Pink, Pansy Purple to Delphinium Blue and Chartreuse.

For a time I became tired of the limited layering possibilities of majolica, and actually painted with acrylics on fired earthenware. The surface was not functional at all and that disturbed me. But I did learn to manipulate colours on top of colours as well as the technique of rubbing black underglaze into the carvings on the surface. The acrylic stage lead to the technique which I now use which is a multi-fired surface of Cone 04 glazes in a range of 22 colours.

I believe my love of colour comes from many sources: my large collection of Ukrainian Easter eggs, memories of smocked dresses my mother made, and years of quilting tiny pieces of coloured cloth during my children's nap time. Also living through many bleak, Canadian winters discourages the love of anything white. Possibly even my severe case of near-sightedness might have contributed to this preference by forcing me to identify things by their colours instead of their outline.

Whatever the source of that love, there is a very strong need for passionate colour in my work; to coerce, convince, lull, shock, seduce, repel, heat up, cool down, emphasize and

make disappear. I've spent this time at Cranbrook finding out what glazes work with other glazes, colour combinations that pop out, and flow together. Along with constant glaze testing, I have tried to observe how colour influences form. Through a non-chalant and fearless approach in the application of colour, I now have a hefty palette of colours to continue to work with.

Glaze testing cannot really ever stop; there is always room for changes, whether it's more matte surfaces or a different range of hues. The application of colour and the self-education of how it all works together, can only be learned by doing it. Just jump in and put on that colour. Take it out of the kiln and look at it for a while, throw some more colour on it and fire it again and again.

When I am preparing to glaze, I use a permanent felt pen to write on the different areas of the piece as I visualize what colours to put where. This method helps me remember where I've placed the different colours, since they all look the same in the application stage. You can also write on top of dry glazes with a permanent pen, to keep things straight.

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*Betty Woodman, American Ceramics 7/3, 1989 (pg. 23):*

*I am interested in how colour changes our reading of an image and changes as we move around an image. I use colour to enrich, to counteract, to get the viewer to examine the form.*

*Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art, edited by Kenneth C. Lindsay (pg. 377):*

*Art in many respects resembles religion. Its development consists not of new discoveries that obliterate old truths and stamp them as false (as is apparently the case in science). Its development consists in moments of sudden illumination, resembling a flash of lightning, of explosions that burst in the sky like fireworks, scattering a whole "bouquet" of different - coloured stars around them. This illumination reveals with blinding clarity new perspectives, new truths that are in essence nothing other than the organic development, the continuing organic growth of earlier wisdom, which is not cancelled out by the latter, but remains living and productive as truth and as wisdom. The new branch does not render the tree trunk superfluous: the trunk determines the possibility of the branch.*

*Hundertwasser, Harry Rand (pg. 130):*

*Colours mean nothing in themselves. Colours can mean something when they are well put together in certain quantities surrounded by other colours. When juxtaposed they can effectively form a kind of visual music.*

*A colourful world is always a synonym for paradise. A grey or monocoloured world is always a synonym for purgatory or hell. Hell is only red: everything is red, fire, faces, blood - it is horrible. Just as horrible is a world which is only blue. If you live in a hell of vegetation, in the middle of the jungle where everything is green all the time, you go mad. You have the green hell, the blue hell, the red hell, the black hell, the grey hell. In cities you have it grey. It is strange that architects continue to build more grey. The diversity of colour brings betterment, brings paradise.*

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One day during my final term at Cranbrook, Tony asked me exactly how I decide to apply colour to my pieces. My first reaction was to say that intuition led me through it, but the more I talked about the different areas of textures and their sources, I realized there were more factors in this decision.

The surfaces of my pieces are covered with layers of clay that have been press-moulded into objects that I have gathered over the past two years. These objects include my children's toys, odd mechanical parts from around the studio and a few pieces of memorabilia from my childhood. More items were found during a particularly fruitful day at the Salvation Army in Pontiac and other sundry garage and church sales. All of this stuff lies mounded up on the far corner of my table as I work and try out different textures to see what fits where.

The colour I choose for each texture definitely relates to my memory of where the object came from and if it has any past associations for me. For example, there is my old bicycle chain that I use on the stems of goblets and the edges of trays, that reminds me of leisure, heat and freedom. I always tend to do that texture in a light orange reminiscent of those days of riding bikes. On the other hand, there are textures I use, sometimes new ones that I'm not used to yet, that have a strange industrial quality to them. Usually they are covered with a matte, opaque purplish glaze to mask my indecision about their origins and their effect on my piece.

Recently, I bought some East Indian fabric printing blocks from a third world handcraft store in Toronto, and my work is currently covered with Moroccan-like illustrated surfaces. There are paisley designs, suns, dots, wavy lines all carved into these beautiful wooden blocks. They exude history, handwork and crowded bazaars and I therefore use my very brightest glazes and a number of them on one area together.

The application of colour still must come from intuition if it is to appear fresh and uncontrived. I look at the area and I feel, for whatever connective reason, what colour to

put there. And sometimes, I make mistakes. Too dark a blue that conceals a curvaceous area of scroll work. Too heavy an application that completely obscures a delicate impression. With luck and a good memory, the combinations of colour can be orchestrated along with form, line, volume and content to produce a work that is provocatively whole.

## Surface and Content

*Andy Nasisse, Ceramics Monthly, January 1989 (pg. 41):*

*Fear of the void, or the need to fill space with obsessive detail and overall patterning, is a common feature in religious art of many cultures, ranging from Gothic architecture to Islamic ceramics, to the temples of ancient Mayans, the painting of Tibetan Buddhists, to the motifs of tribal Africa and the peoples of the Upper Amazon. The visionary experience itself is characterized by reports of the visual field being filled with intricate geometric patterns, colours and textures. Perhaps pattern itself could be looked at as archetypal in nature and capable of resonating perceptions aligned with ecstatic states.*

*Horror vacui is used to define a tendency to fill all the space, the nature of the visionary experience. I just like to articulate all the different levels of space so that there's nothing that's less or more. Everything is equally filled.*

*A visionary image is one that results from a direct religious experience. When an individual experiences elevated states of consciousness through some unknown facility, awareness is opened to all stimuli at once. Visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory sensation are heightened and an ecstatic state is reached. It's a sort of blowing of fuses.*

---

For the final review of my first year at Cranbrook, I produced four place settings for the table. The bowl, smaller plate and larger plate fit together and the overall effect was one completely covered with textures and colours. In a black and white photograph of these place settings, very little delineation of colour hues or forms would be seen. The work from my first year was based on thrown forms and covered front and back, top and bottom with press-moulded clay pieces.

Because I was so familiar with my stable of press-mould objects, it was easy for me to understand the flow and relationship between the different patterns and surfaces. But to the viewer, it was much more difficult to single out certain objects, to recognize an overall structure in the decoration or to find a restful spot for the eye to gather strength. In

fact, one instructor had the comment that when he sat down before my place settings, that he already felt full!

Another aspect of my first year's work, was that it had a more obvious narrative quality about it. I used impressions of my own hands, fingers, keys from my house, plasticine stamps of elephants, rabbits and cats, leaves and arrows. With this myriad of symbols I literally covered all the surfaces of the pieces I had built. In second year, I began to concentrate on form as a backbone for my decoration and that will be covered in the following section on form.

Also in my second year, the objects that were reflected in the clay, became more ambiguous in their ability to be recognized and therefore more interesting in their content. The spire of a lid was the transformation of the pattern made by a metal spring into an eel-like growth winding upward through the air. This piece used an industrial part to create an organic form, that mimicked some of the movement of the original spring.

The "additive" or "effusive" aesthetic (two comments given during my 2nd year review) is still strongly represented on the surface of my work. I try to suggest forms and larger areas of pattern without using elements that have obvious content such as animals or flower patterns. Sometimes I find also that an eerily comfortable repetition sets in, and I have to completely abandon a favourite object that has been overused in impressions. The surfaces celebrate expressiveness, a tactile compulsion to touch and be touched - for the maker and the user to reach out and run their hand over the impressions of a spring or floor mat to feel its translation into clay under glaze.

---

*The Devil, Delfina Varela and the Used Chevy, Louie Garcia  
Robinson (pg. 10):*

*Manioc tubers, jicama, orange and green mangoes; orange papayas, tomatoes, avocados with the skins of alligators; hanging clusters of yellow bananas and small brown plantains are displayed in La Michon vegetable and fruit stands.*

*Little girls' pink, white and blue organza dresses are sold in shops where multicolored minatas shaped like donkeys or stars or lizards hang from the ceiling and where shelves are lined with orange, blue and purple wigs.*

*A crucifix that glows in the dark is displayed in a store window next to a gigantic rosary with strands of inch-wide beads coiled around the base of a plaster Irish setter.*

*Dizzying patterns, busy designs and bright colours predominate in La Michon as an overwhelmed tourist appears bedazzled and frightened. He hails a cab to rescue him from this bewildering*

*excess to return him to the relative safety of a Union Square hotel  
and the comfort of a Scotch on the rocks.*

---

The previous quote is a good description of the "gestalt" of my work during a first glance. The dizzying combination of brilliant colour, heavily laden surfaces, extravagant and precarious forms and a disturbing reference to some era other than the year 2000.

The latest work has tried to soar, defy gravity more and to use surface as content in a more cohesive way. In the vase forms, the references to fountains and water are reinforced by the pouring, flowing glazes right down to the feet of the pot and on to the glaze shelf. I've learned to appreciate those puddles of glaze at the bottoms - I just round them off with a Dremel tool and let them stay there as part of the process.

The upward movement of the work is counteracted by the gravity-pulled glaze. There is more conflict and visual interest in the work as the eye follows the movement up and down the surface. Particular colours such as a new explosive orange glaze and a red glaze with a visceral interior message, call for attention when placed strategically on the inside of goblet cups and the mouths of fountain-like attachments.

The work demands constant scrutiny. There is always something more to learn from the surface. A glaze moment tucked behind a handle, an interior that is bathed with turquoise-jewelled glaze turned glass. The lip of a cup that curls back in a grin, two handles that impersonate ears. My work may confuse in the initial stage of introduction, but there is so much to be gained by having a conversation with it. They are complex, rich characters possessing very definite attitudes.

---

*Massimo Carboni, "Infinite Ornament" Art Forum, September  
1991 (pg. 106)*

*Ornament is primarily for humans, almost a genetic impulse. It is not in the least optional. The desire to decorate, to create nonrepresentational forms, recalls luxury, waste and a gratuitous, nonuseful expenditure of energy. Ornament is inscribed within an economy of donation. It is a practice in which the subject loses its rationality, its self-legitimizing tendency, and falls into a dimension that recalls the etymological meaning of the Greek term "ek-stasis": to stand outside oneself.*

*In tribal cultures, more care and skill go into the decoration of an object than into its efficiency as a tool. A fundamental property of ornament is that it is offered as a form of waste, luxury, excess, expenditure without compensation.*

---

In the industrial world of ceramics, the form usually follows function. Domestic objects are supposed to be ergonomically correct and products are designed for the optimum use of an optimum population. Few idiosyncracies are tolerated because they inhibit mass production techniques and narrow the appeal of the available audiences. At least, this is a current perception in the manufacturing of ceramic objects. Modernism and minimalism made it extremely easy for the makers of mass-produced objects and extremely boring for the consumer.

When it comes to using the pieces I make, the user has to give up some of their pre-conceived ideas about how a thing should work. For example, the domed place settings were accompanied by plates that were completely covered with texture. Eating spaghetti from these plates would not be pleasurable. An arrangement of finger foods or something that didn't burrow into all the crevices of the surface would be perfect.

The goblets are another ceremonial but functional set of pieces that would be appropriate in a moment of high exaltation or utter defeat. Raising one of the goblets high, full of champagne and then drinking deeply, letting it pour down over your chin and chest - that would be a remarkable event.

The work has a personality and has demands of its own. The user must respect it and adapt in the appropriate way. Functional work should not have to be subservient or boring. We as users, simply have to be open to more creative options when faced with an unusual but intriguing functional piece.

As far as the observation that a multi-coloured surface competes unfavourably with other objects (such as food or flowers) that are placed with it - I can only say that "more is more" and if the user is responsive and courageous, the outcome will be successful.

---

*The Visionary Eye, Jacob Bronowski (pg. 42):*

*Why do we take pleasure in the decoration of things, which adds nothing to their use? The engraved glass, the silver candlestick, the painted cart have already solved all their functional problems before they are engraved, chased or painted. If the maker does not stop at the formal solution, it is because his very handling of the materials fills him with a desire for more. He is conquered by a sense of pleasure and of exuberance. The freedom which the materials give him makes him boldly stretch and reach, and his ease with them makes him, as it made the baroque architect, gay and extravagant. Each of us can picture this feeling best in his own profession. For example, in mathematics, the study of pure mathematics grows from what began as an application, just as good decoration may grow as a poetic projection of the object.*

---

My large vases are built with common disposable objects such as cardboard florists' containers, but the results are forms that resemble classical periods such as the Baroque or Rococo. This causes a curious comparison to happen between old values and new.

The content that can be read into the different impressions and building forms I use are the time periods of the past, present and future. The present can be read in the disposable found objects of today, the past can be felt in the personal objects from my childhood and the future can be interpreted from the industrial, machine-like forms comprised of many composite impressions. Content can also go beyond the simple original reading of a jelly mould, into a structural architectural element referencing a fluted column.

Another example is a square green Lego platform from my son's collection that makes small raised dots in the clay. When this impression is changed into a form on the surface of a pot, it takes on a different significance from its toy background. Now it indicates industry, repetition and the mechanized age and I can see both meanings in its appearance. I found the top of an old egg poacher that I bought from a table of tired household objects at a church sale. The clay impression results in a rounded breast shape which I exploit usually in a symmetrical pairing on the base of vases. The domestic connotation of the household object and the physical aspects of the woman who uses it, are both present in this one impression.

---

*Death in the Dining Room, Kenneth L. Ames (pg. 114):*

*In a literary context, a motto can be a few words at the beginning of a text summarizing or indicating contents, theme, or conclusion. A motto is necessarily brief. It is a compression, a condensation. As a form, it reveals the workings of human cognition and memory. A few words stand for, evoke, or initiate a longer text. Little stands for much, "Multum in Parvo". Mottoes may be reductionist and simplistic - clear, concise texts positing order and reason in a chaotic and irrational world. Or they may be associational or synecdochic - small parts standing for larger wholes. However they function, they are conventionally concise, compressed expressions of larger ideas, principles, ideologies, or values.*

---

One last area I explored on the surface of my work was that of words. The above quote on mottoes tells of their power to speak out in a very short and succinct way. Here is the list of "homilies" I used on the bases of the goblet series:

And He said "Heal Yourself"  
It Doesn't Matter  
When to Walk on Water  
Mystery of Day, Mystery of Night

Big, Bigger, Biggest  
Build Castles in the Air  
Follow Me

Although the words were a visual "hook" to the viewing audience, I felt that in the end they limited the full interpretation of the individuality of each goblet. In the future, I will continue to hide mottoes inside containers, under lids and on the bottom of plates so that a discovery can still be made; but not at first glance. In that way, words are mixed with textures and glazes to produce a even greater layering of content and surface.

## **Form**

*The Shape of Content, Ben Shahn (pg. 70):*

*Forms in art arise from the impact of idea upon material, or the impinging of mind upon material. They stem out of the human wish to formulate ideas, to recreate them into entities, so that meanings will not depart fitfully as they do from the mind, so that thinking and belief and attitudes may endure as actual things.*

*For form is not just the intention of content; it is the embodiment of content. Form is based, first, upon a supposition, a theme. Form is, second, a marshalling of materials, the inert matter in which the theme is to be cast. Form is, third, a setting of boundaries, of limits, the whole extent of idea, but no more, an outer shape of idea. Form is, next, the relating of inner shapes to the outer limits, the initial establishing of harmonies. Form is, further, the abolishing of excessive content, of content that falls outside the true limits of the theme. It is the abolishing of excessive materials, whatever material is extraneous to inner harmony, to the order of shapes now established. Form is thus a discipline, an ordering, according to the needs of content.*

---

During one of my critiques, the word "excess" was mentioned, and a classmate voiced the opinion that I was holding back in the "excess" category. That if let loose, my abilities to accumulate images and objects on the surface of clay could be even more bountiful. In reality, that would be much too easy, too comfortable for me to do.

The accumulation of "more" is a basic necessity or given in the personality of an artist who works with an additive aesthetic. Previous quotes in this thesis describe the almost hallucinogenic state of the maker in this infinitely decorative state. I can identify heartily with that and it is a tendency that must be tempered with other considerations, such as form, in my work.

In my final year, sources other than ceramic history became important to me.

Architectural drawings of classical Greek temples, Baroque and Rococo cathedrals held clues to building systems that could be used to support my work. Another exquisite source was the 18th century architect, Piranesi, who etched and drew architectural fantasies and settings that my work would fit into perfectly. On my studio wall is a photocopy of a particularly classic Piranesi scene with columns, statues and stairways and I look on it as my window to a world that I can enter.

Other origins of form included the Cranbrook landscape and building design that I have been immersed in for two years. Being fortunate enough to be able to walk through the Cranbrook gardens on my way to the studio, I know that the fountains, statues, decorative brickwork and Cranbrook sense of grandeur have all made a strong impression on my work.

Silverwork of the 18th century consists of ornate, but inventive structural forms. In particular, the extremely tall, covered altar cups gave me inspiration for my domed place settings. Although metalwork doesn't have to contend with gravity as in claywork, and the soaring forms are more realistically achieved.

---

*Piranesi, Early Architectural Fantasies, Andrew Robison (Pg. 15):*

*In general, Piranesi has refined the ...busy complexity of architecture and interior ornamentation to focus attention instead on the grand masses of architectural structures. He has eliminated elaborate baroque shellwork, strapwork and curls and replaced them with more consistently classical statues and ornaments. While Piranesi does continue the tradition of rich surface decoration, he reduces ... the profuse ornamentation, which interrupts the lines of a building, retaining only ornaments adapted to rather than obscuring the basic lines and divisions of the architectural forms. This focus on structure also enables Piranesi to portray the massiveness of individual forms more convincingly, to enlarge the number and scale of forms while maintaining structural clarity, and to create an even more palpable and enormous space . . .*

---

Structure and form were explored in a number of ways in my work this year. I used the interiors of found containers, the shapes achieved from pressing into a piece of wood corner moulding and plastic jelly moulds to produce clay forms. All sorts of objects can be lined with dry cleaning plastic or dusted with cornstarch to help release the clay. Then I stack these three-dimensional forms in different ways; cut them into sections, join parts together and take them apart, until the arrangement becomes visually exciting and basically stable.

Just a note on precariousness. When I started building separate bases and tall lids, for my

vase forms, I was trying to fully utilize the 26" interior height of our electric kilns rather than using the taller gas fired kilns. Oxidation firing is imperative for the glaze colours I use and I also feel strongly about being able to carry around the parts of my work on my own. So individual sections were piled on top of each other to form the 5 foot tall vases. They are relatively stable, but not in earthquake country. To ensure a bond between the parts, the adhesive PC7 could be used for a permanent joint. Although I have used a heat gun on PC7 and managed to reverse its magnificent adhering qualities.

Inherent in the use of gravity-bound clay to make the soaring forms in my goblets and vases, is the uncertainty of whether the work will survive. First through the firing process and next during the balancing act of one section on top of each other. An interlocking system of clay parts at the bottom of the vase and the top of the base, can help to stabilize the structure. Truthfully, I enjoy the visual tension of seeing a large vase shape, perched on a smaller column section. It speaks of extravagance, and is an almost perverse and satirical comment on classical form and its doctrines.

Restraint and excess, reason and impulse; contrasting currents that run continually through my life and my work.

---

*Vienna 1900: Art, Architecture and Design, Kirk Varnedoe (pgs. 18 & 98):*

*Not only the proto-psychedelic sweetness of (Klimt's) "The Kiss", but the whole romance of Vienna - heated sensuality amid swollen materialism, flowered idealism under looming guns - suited the temper of the time.*

*From its beginnings, Werkstatte design had been linked ... with the championing of material pleasure and the gratification of the senses as necessary parts of the fulfilment of life's potential. In opposition to the other-worldliness of Symbolism and the ascetic severity of German classicism, this was originally a progressive and liberating impulse; the imposition of flat pattern over spatial illusion and tectonic reason, had an important affirmative aspect.*

*But unchecked by a countervailing distaste for slack indulgence, it risked degenerating into picturesque and shallow amusement. This balancing of extravagance and restraint was the challenge with which Matisse continually confronted himself, and the one that was gradually abandoned in Vienna.*

---

The intricate construction of a Renaissance cathedral spire and how it joins to the roof; Russian thatched wood roofs comprised of multiple forms repeated over and over; five-stage pagoda roofs that delineate levels of space and encourage light to penetrate the

interior; elements of form and colour that become the eavestroughing that runs around the perimeter of a Gaudi roof - and so I discovered roofs and how they could influence the building of my pots.

The future holds the further investigation of three-dimensional space around the pieces I construct. For example, within the design of the arms, lids and bases of the linear vases, there is a possibility of moving outward from the axis line. Free-standing forms can interact or connect in some way with the central vase shape. I am even tempted to refer to the flying buttresses of one of Gaudi's interior roof supports to produce a base system that holds a vase in its raised centre.

My natural tendency is towards a symmetrical form, especially in the larger vases which depend on an equally balanced weight to remain erect. But through the flow of surface design and glaze I have tried to impose a contrasting movement that the eye can follow around the form. Symmetry in the vase forms indicates to me, a completed and monumental appearance and is part of the work's visual strength and content.

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*Articulation of Inner and Outer Space, Philip Rawson, Ceramics Monthly, December 1986 (pg. 27):*

*Like architecture, ceramics uses physical codes to mark out shapes of linear flow - stepwise interval and transition from volume to volume. They can consist of lines and linear surfaces, angular breaks in the surface in or out - shoulder, flanges, flutings, cuts or steps. They can be ripples, finger striations, irregular undulations, humps or hollows, appliques, lumps or actual holes. They can be structural components of various sizes: added features such as handles or knobs: relative proportions of height to widths. They can be differentiated volumes. And they can be glazed or painted ornamental features. From these we read the vessel's implicit energies.*

---

Volume is one word that Tony is always urging me to consider.

My fingers tend to work in a very compressive way. Press-moulding, pushing clay into the insides of forms, I am defining the exterior limits, not the interior ones. Occasionally I use thrown forms in the centre of my vase shapes and a sense of volume is achieved by pushing out on the interior walls with my fingers.

Another method I am using is to cut into blank clay slab walls on pots to reveal interior spaces, frame sections with open scroll work or use perforated sheets of clay as a screen to look through. I try to allow the work to breath and have a corresponding interior and exterior that are responsive and sensual.

The clearer my understanding is of the creation and embodiment of a separate, almost spiritual entity in my work, the easier it is to provide all the elements that are necessary for it to exist and survive as a successful work of art.

## Technical

I purchase a white earthenware clay body that fires up to Cone 2 from Rovin Ceramics. It helps to have some grog in the body, especially when building the larger vase shapes. I bisque to Cone 04 and then glaze fire to Cone 03.

To help release the clay from the press-moulds, I use cornstarch which I brush on the clay slab before pushing into the impression. It was the safest dust I could find to inhale on a regular basis.

Many thanks to Lisa Orr for developing and sharing this base glaze which I use with a number of different stains:

### *Orr Glaze - Cone 04/03*

<i>Frit 3110</i>	70	<i>Green: 7% Copper Carbonate</i>
<i>Gerstley</i>	12	<i>Blue: 1/4% Cobalt Carbonate</i>
<i>Borate</i>		
<i>Red Art</i>	14	<i>Amber: 10% Red Iron Oxide</i>
<i>Flint</i>	4	<i>Yellow: 4% Praseodymium Yellow</i>
<i>Bentonite</i>	2	<i>Intense Blue: 6% Copper Carbonate, 1/3% Cobalt Carbonate</i>
		<i>Pansy Purple: 10% Pansy Purple</i>
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Many thanks to John Roling for developing and sharing these base glazes which I use with a number of different stains:

### *Matte Roling A - Cone 04/03*

<i>Gerstley</i>	38	<i>Blue: 5% Delphinium Blue (Mason)</i>
<i>Borate</i>		
<i>Lithium</i>	10	<i>Light Orange: 8% 14P8 Orange (Johnson Matthey)</i>
<i>Nepheline</i>	5	<i>Purple: 15% Mazerine (Mason)</i>
<i>Syenite</i>		
<i>EPK</i>	5	
<i>Flint</i>	42	
<i>Tin Oxide</i>	5	
	<hr/> 105	

*Matte Rol fing B - Cone 04/03*

For glazes using pink and green stains add to the above recipe:

<i>Whiting</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Turquoise: 1% Copper Carb.</i>
		<i>Deep</i>
		<i>Turquoise (Mason)</i>
		<i>Wine: 10% Blackberry Wine (Mason)</i>
		<i>Dark Teal: 5% Dark Teal (Mason)</i>
		<i>Rose: 12% Rose Pink (Mason)</i>

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*Satin Rol fing Matte - Cone 04/03*

<i>Nepheline</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Green: 10% Victoria Green (Mason)</i>
<i>Syenite</i>		
<i>Flint</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Red: 15% 14P7 Red (Johnson</i>
		<i>Matthey)</i>
<i>Talc</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>Grey: 15% Pearl Grey (Mason)</i>
<i>Gerstley</i>		
<i>Borate</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>Orange : 15% 14P8 Orange (Johnson</i>
		<i>Matthey)</i>
<i>Dolomite</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Blue: 3% Cobalt Carbonate, 1%</i>
		<i>Ilmenite</i>
<i>EPK</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Light Yellow: 10% Buttercup Yellow (Mason)</i>
<i>Frit 3576-2</i>	<i>35</i>	

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*John Gill Glaze - 04/03*

<i>Frit 3110</i>	<i>76.3</i>	<i>Turquoise: 3% Copper Carb.</i>
<i>Gerstley</i>		
<i>Borate</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>Dk. Turquoise 6% Copper Carb.</i>
<i>EPK</i>	<i>7.1</i>	<i>Blue: 4% Copper Carb.</i>
<i>Flint</i>	<i>10.0</i>	<i>Lime: 1/2% Cobalt Carb.</i>
<i>CMC Gum</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>2% Copper Carb.</i>
		<i>1/8% Chrome Oxide</i>

99.1

This glaze can be used in thick applications to cause running over other glazes.

I also purchase two Duncan Cone 04 glazes called Ruby Red and Purple Iris and they are

very good for small punches of colour on the second or third firing.

Johnson Matthey  
Color and Print Division  
1397 King Road  
West Chester, PA 19380  
(215) 648-8100  
FAX (215) 648-8055

(orange, yellow and red stains)

### **Personal**

Somewhere in this final acknowledgement, I want to talk about what has happened to my work and my life in the past two years from the point of view of understanding, that what I make, is an integral part of my personality. It is honest and eccentric, effusive and humorous, a serious investigation of form and colour, along with an almost perverse combining of disparate elements.

I've learned, changed, seen the light, been lost, pushed forward, stalled in the water, understood art words, searched for my own voice. I want to talk about the enveloping sense of fulfilment I feel about the place I have come to in my work. I actually treasure and honour its existence. Whenever I finish a piece, and sit back and let it speak back to me, I can now begin to trace the combination of its journey through me and through history that has created its singular strength.

So much of the time, it seems to be hindsight that allows the understanding of the parts, surface and spirit of the piece. When I work, it's an intuitive process, putting my hands on certain objects to press clay into - trying out an impression in one way and then tearing it off and substituting another one. Stacking one form on top of another, standing back to see if it soars, or stagnates and then reversing the order of the parts to see what else can be read into a different configuration.

Also a tribute should be given to the winding path that lead me to Cranbrook later in life, rather than sooner. Through secretarial work, film work, having children work and production claywork, I saved up knowledge and disappointment, confusion and hope, to end up at Cranbrook at 40. It is very ironic to me that this thesis will be handed into Tony on the exact date of my 42nd birthday. It's just never too late.

The long wait for the experience of Cranbrook has been good. The accumulation of life shows in my work, in the complicated face it offers to the world. For the first time, I truly feel that my work in clay is interpreting my experience in a way that translates it into a readable, detectable form.

## Dedication

Duncan, my husband, Mackenzie, my son, and Hayley, my daughter: I want to thank you for wrapping me around so tightly with your ever constant support during my two years at Cranbrook. You never once doubted that it was the right place for me to be, and your honest love of my work is the most important part in the making of it.

Tony, my teacher: I want to thank you for your intuitive guidance, your determined perseverance, your enduring faith in my abilities and the true kindness that you have shown me over the past two years. It was truly a gift to be at Cranbrook with you as my teacher and it has changed the course of my life.

Thanks by Yevgeny Yevtushenko

Say thanks to your tears.  
Don't hurry to wipe them.  
Better to weep and to be.  
Not to be is to die.

To be alive - bent and beaten.  
Not to vanish in the dark of the plasm.  
To catch the lizard-green minute from creation's cart.

Bite into joy like you bite  
a radish  
Laugh as you catch the knife's blade.  
Not to be born, that's what's  
frightening  
even if it's frightening that you  
live.

He who is - is already lucky.  
Life is a risky card.  
To be drawn - that's a cocky occasion.  
It's to draw a straight flush.  
In the sway of wild cherry blossoms,  
drunk on all, drunk on nothing,  
don't shake off the large wonder  
of your entrance upon the scene.

Don't count on pie in the sky.  
Don't offend the earth by bitching.  
For a second life cannot be  
as the first did not have to be.

Don't trust decay. Trust the flare-up.  
Sink into milkwood and feathery grass.  
Pile the universe on your back  
without cajoling too much.  
Don't be a show-off in grief.  
Even on the ruins of your soul,  
dirty and tethered, like Zorba,  
celebrate shame. And dance!

Thanks to the blackest cats  
whom you hated askance.  
Thanks to all the melon peels  
on which you slipped.

Thanks to the fiercest of pains  
for it kept giving.  
And thanks to the shabbiest fate.  
After all, it has come.