Sculptural approach to ceramics

Lynn D. Canterbury

The University of Montana

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A SCULPTURAL APPROACH TO CERAMICS

by

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B. S. University of Illinois, 1965

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Master of Fine Arts

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A SCULPTURAL APPROACH TO CERAMICS

My thesis and my work during the past two years deal mostly with ceramic sculpture. I have also worked considerably in printmaking, and this ties in very closely with my three-dimensional work.

There is no formula for the design and execution of my work. Clay, being quite plastic, lends itself very easily to work done with the slab and the coil, and these have been my basic building materials. Some of my pieces (Fig. 3, 4, and 5) have been deliberately preconceived and then executed in clay, yet most of the others have been spontaneously created directly with the material. I often play with clay. I make segments of a piece. Often that segment inspires me to build another and another. In the end the pieces are all joined and that piece is worked until I feel it is complete.

Often the best pieces have built themselves with my help. That is, I go into the material with a completely open mind and from there, the clay and I conceive the finished product.

My main concern is with form and color, although some of my small pieces are textural and somewhat decorative. Boldness and simplicity are important in my work a
is uniqueness. Although there are structural problems working with clay, many unique forms lend themselves to execution in clay.

Some of my pieces have dealt with the disintegrating or fragmented form. These relate through me to the problems of America today--racial unrest, war in Viet Nam, and general breakdown of society. These pieces are moralistic, as, when a person sees a fragmented or disintegrating form, he tends to want to make order, or, stop disorder. I create a basic stability, but show the beginning of rapid disintegration, and let the viewer put the pieces together.

As this is preconception (creating the piece in the mind), there is little left for me to do but to reproduce it in the material. This leaves little for the material to say. I work in that manner for a certain period, but always go back to the material and ask it, "What would you like to do?"

My work is non-objective and mostly non-function. I like the starkness of ragged against smooth, bright against dull. These things excite me and I use them in many ways. Although my work is not naturalistic, I am often inspired by natural forms around me.

As I have stated, my material is clay. My finishes are many. The clay itself is beautiful and I often let show. Glazes usually look best on the clay. I use
cone 9-10 stoneware glazes. When I want small accents of color I refire to cone 019 or cone 06 using reds, oranges, metallics, etc.

When I want flat, hard edge color on my pieces, paint works best. With paint there is no color that can't be mixed, and it can be applied in a very precise fashion.

I am living in a modern world and read widely. I am sensitive to what is around me. Although the present is sometimes frightening, I would rather be a part of that than to be involved with bygone eras in art. I have been influenced by everyone and yet no one all that I see goes through me, my mind and hand, and is altered by my sensibilities and experience. The end result is a reflection of my environment with me as the mirror.

I have to be aware and at peace with myself to create. For my art to have a soul, I must have a soul.
Fig. 1.—Group No. 1 of Small Ceramic Sculptures
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