



**MIDLANDS  
POTTERS  
ASSOCIATION**

# NEWSLETTER

Issue 254

Spring 2021



Stephanie Wright  
Embraced change,  
and the legacy she  
left behind

Geoffrey Whiting  
First and foremost a  
Midlands potter

**President: Joe Finch**  
**Hon. Member: Henry Sandon**

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Eighth-page £9 per issue—£54 for six



The Valentine Clay's 2020 annual calendar is  
now on sale!

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Artists top left to bottom right: Wendy Houghton, Laura Crosland,  
Daniel Boyle, Hannah Townsend, Amy Cooper, Wendy Lawrence,  
Neil Brownsword, Amberlea McNaught, John Mathieson, Anna  
Lambert, Ian Harris, Lindy Martin.

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# The Aims of the Midlands Potters Association are:

To promote the sharing and communication of ideas, techniques and experiences among those interested in ceramics.

## WELCOME



Spring is here. Daffodils, spring grass, new born lambs and goat kids. David Whiting has confirmed his mother would have approved of my goats! There is new hope of some form of 'normality' returning to our lives very soon.

Last Spring I was due to start a 5 day hand building Sculpture Course with Brendan Hesmondhalgh. New dates have now been released and by Autumn I hope to resume this next stage in my ceramics journey. As more and more courses resume, along with virtual, window and physical exhibitions, I hope we can all embrace a new found enthusiasm for current and new projects and more physical interaction. This issue also contains some wonderful opportunities for potters with grants from Making Waves Ceramics Trust, set up by Stephanie Wright's family and friends to embraced change, and the legacy she left behind. The Trust is looking to find ceramicists who are pushing the boundaries of their craft and moving into uncharted territory, in order to help them fully realise their potential.

Midlands Potters Members also have two exhibitions to present their work at the Midlands Potters Open Exhibition 'Floor One Gallery' Rugby Art Gallery and Museum Friday 9th - Friday 23rd July 2021 and MPA Birmingham Group Exhibition Lightwoods House, Lightwoods Park, Adkins Lane, Bearwood, Smethwick B67 5DP. Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June to Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

Plus the opportunity to win a copy of the newly published book *Ceramic, Art and Civilisation* by Paul Greenhalgh. Please share your own tips, shelfies, car boot & charity shop finds, along with your own first pots or ceramic work to remind yourself of how far your work has evolved, or any other interesting articles or experiences 'ceramic', to:

[mpanewsletter19@gmail.com](mailto:mpanewsletter19@gmail.com)

Gwenda Jones

Gwenda Jones

Editor, MPA Newsletter

## Copy Dates

Submissions to the newsletter are very welcome. Please note the copy-date deadlines.

May 12th 2021 for Summer issue

August 12th 2021 for Autumn issue

Please if possible send a copy electronically to the new email address: [mpanewsletter19@gmail.com](mailto:mpanewsletter19@gmail.com)

The acceptable format for text is Microsoft Word (.docx), or preferably Rich Text Format (.rtf).

All photographs should be sent separately, and not inserted into word document please, by email in .jpeg format.

Alternatively you can send information on a memory stick via the postal services.

Please send stamped address envelope for return of memory stick.

Send to:

Gwenda Jones

The Granary

2 Williams Court

Edial Farm Mews

Lichfield Road

Burntwood

WS7 0HZ

Submissions will be reviewed and may appear in later newsletters depending on content and space.

## Membership Rates

April –October 2021

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Half yearly rate April –

October 2021 of £13

Oct. 20201 -Oct. 2022

Subs. are due in October

Ordinary members - £26

Workshop members - £44

(for workshops of two designer makers).

Student membership - £20

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## Geoffrey Whiting First and foremost a Midlands potter. 1919-1988



Though born in Northumberland, it was Birmingham where Geoffrey Whiting was brought up, in Selly Oak, and where he received his earliest education, and indeed where as a boy he made his first pots, with an improvised kiln in his parents' back-garden.

However he initially decided to follow his brother to Birmingham School of Architecture, his training then curtailed by World War Two and his seven years' army service in Burma and India.

Geoffrey Whiting Selly Oak Birmingham c 1931

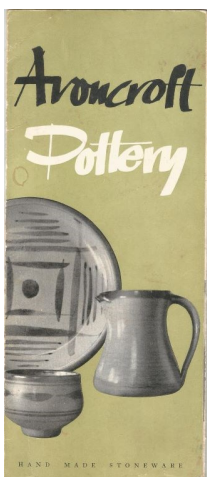
By the time he returned home to his parents, now living in Stoke Prior, just outside Bromsgrove, he had decided he wanted to make pots as a living. He set up his first pottery at Avoncroft College in 1949, and then he and his wife Anne moved to Hampton Lovett (near Droitwich) in 1955, which is where they set up a larger workshop, also called Avoncroft, and brought up three children.



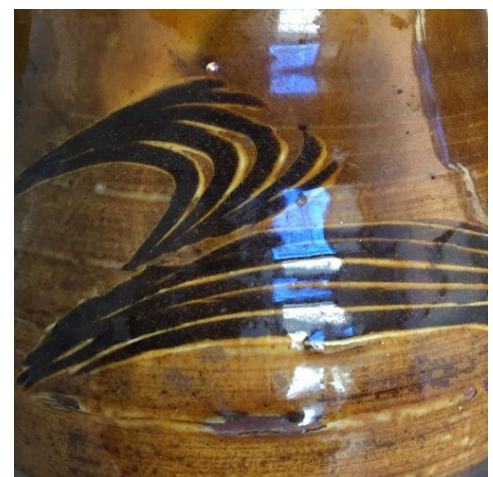
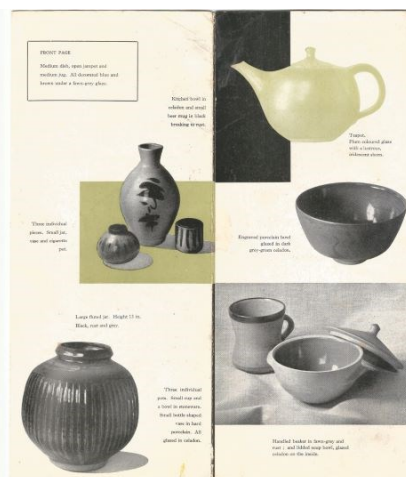
Geoffrey Whiting's kiln at Avoncroft Pottery early 1960s



Geoffrey Whiting at the wheel c 1953



Avoncroft Pottery brochure c 1958



Slipware jug detail c1953 Ken Stradling Collection



“It was quite an adventure for me, and as a small boy I was fascinated by the drama of the great coal and wood kiln, and enjoyed the company of the many students who came to study with my father. I loved all the visitors who came to Avoncroft, and this of course included countless potters. Dad was very amused when on his first visit Bernard Leach gave the kiln a deep bow as he got out of his car, and Michael Cardew memorably said (with an accusing finger) “*you are a fire potter!*”, when he first set eyes on it. Dad would have liked that, always adamant that he was essentially a ‘pyromantic’ at heart.

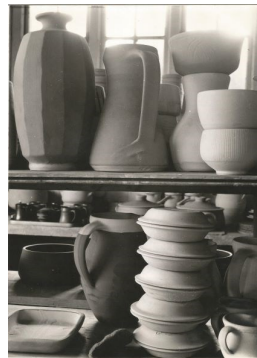


Slipware jug is c1953

Big tenmoku jug c1970,

Bowl 1987

Ken Stradling Collection



Geoffrey Whiting with his kiln at his pottery in Bromsgrove, 1954.  
Pots waiting to be fired C 1968 Avoncroft Pottery, Hampton Lovett .

Geoffrey Whiting's hands, 1987

Stoneware teapot c 1980 Courtesy of Ken Stradling Collection

Geoffrey Whiting - stoneware teapot c 1980 Collection of Dan Kelly



Although I never followed my father into pottery, his influence on me was profound. It was from him, and from my mother, that I inherited my love of art and the natural world, and I know how hopeful he was that I should continue to write on visual matters, though I only began to concentrate on studio ceramics after he had died. I think this was because I wanted to continue his tradition in my own particular way, and I am only too aware of how in expressing some of my views, I am more than indebted to his! “

David Whiting

## Geoffrey Whiting First and foremost a Midlands potter. 1919-1988

- 1919 Geoffrey Strickland Whiting born on the 20 September in Stocksfield, Northumberland, the second son of Arnold and Margaret Whiting and younger brother of Basil. Educated at Westhill College kindergarten (where at the age of four he made his first pot), The Downs School, Colwall and Sebright School, Wolverley. Recurring illness resulted in periods of private tuition at home in Birmingham.
- 1933 Buys *Pottery Fingerbuilt Methods and Handcraft Pottery* by Henry and Denise Wren, and builds his first kiln in his parents' backgarden.
- 1937 Enters Birmingham School of Architecture.
- 1940-41 Curtails training to join the Welsh Guards. Transfers to the Royal Signals, where he is given a commission and is posted overseas to India Command.
- 1943 After a period in the jungle on the Indo-Burmese border he joins the General Staff in Delhi and works in Signals Intelligence. "Major" Whiting begins to work with a family of traditional potters at Nurgaou, a village near Delhi, in his spare hours. Also much exploring and watercolour painting around Delhi.
- 1946-48 Resolving to remain in the army at the end of the war, Whiting is put in charge of communications security for India Command and is made acting Colonel. Army duties now leave little time to make pots. Having witnessed and been deeply affected by the Partition Riots he eventually returns to England and leaves the army.
- 1949 Buys Bernard Leach's *A Potter's Book*. Starts a pottery and teaching workshop for Avoncroft College near Bromsgrove. Here he produces slipware and stoneware in a woodfired two-firemouth up-draught kiln. First visits to St. Ives and Winchcombe Potteries. Receives advice and encouragement from his cousin, Herbert Read.
- 1950 Goes to teach pottery for the Stoke House Residential Craft Centre near Bletchley, where he holds his first exhibition.
- 1952 Returns to Avoncroft College and takes over the pottery for his own production. Founder-member of the Worcestershire Guild of Craftsmen, and elected full member of the Red Rose Guild.
- 1953 Marries Anne Heath (three children; Angela, Jennifer and David). Starts part-time teaching at Worcester School of Art, which continues intermittently until 1970.
- 1954 Participates in "Pottery and Furniture" at the British Crafts Centre.
- 1955 Moves Avoncroft Pottery to Hampton Lovett near Droitwich, where he builds a large two chamber down-draught kiln, fired with coal and wood. Here a production of domestic stoneware with more individual pieces in stoneware and hard porcelain. Teaches many students here from home and abroad. Visitors will include Bernard Leach and Michael Cardew. Exhibits in "Teapots of Today" at the Tea Centre, London, and writes his influential article "Making Teapots" for *Pottery Quarterly*.
- 1956 His teapots are now exhibited at the newly opened Design Centre in Haymarket.
- 1959 Elected full member of the recently formed Craftsman Potters Association. Exhibition at the Hopkins Gallery, Bury St. Edmunds in June.
- 1960 Major exhibition at Worcester City Art Gallery in August. Represented in "Engelse Pottenbakkers", Rotterdam and "English Artist Potters", Sydney. At this time, Whiting becomes one of seven English potters whose work is regularly exhibited all over the world by the British Council. Intermittent teaching through the 1960s for Chesterfield and Stoke-on-Trent Colleges of Art.
- 1963 Exhibition in Malvern, Worcestershire.
- 1966 Exhibition at the Craftsman Potters Association, London in September. Lecture and demonstration in Manchester Free Trade Hall in December.
- 1969 Exhibition at Peter Dingley Gallery, Stratford-upon-Avon in March.
- 1971 Completion of the film "Geoffrey Whiting" made by John Adams and John Anderson. Invited to Lesotho to start a pottery for the National Development Corporation. Returns to England later in the year because of ill health.
- 1972 Becomes potter-in-residence at St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, while still keeping his main home at Hampton Lovett. Sets up St. Augustine's Pottery where his own production is supplemented by teaching for periods at Medway College of Design and Sittingbourne College of Art.
- 1974 Exhibition at St. Augustine's College. Participates in "Teapots" at the British Crafts Centre.
- 1976 Establishes a teaching workshop for the King's School, Canterbury. In October he shares an exhibition with the painter Duncan Grant at the Southover Gallery, Lewes.
- 1977 Exhibition with David Harvey at Ombersley Gallery, Worcestershire in November. Participates in "Domestic Pottery" toured by the Crafts Advisory Committee.
- 1979 Second major exhibition at the Craftsman Potters Association, London in July.
- 1980 Exhibition at Ombersley Gallery, Worcestershire in September.
- 1983 Represented in "Studio Ceramics Today" at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
- 1986 Exhibition at Peter Dingley Gallery, Stratford-upon-Avon, in March.
- 1987 Featured in "The Vessel" at the Chestnut Gallery, Bourton-on-the-Water in October, and "The Leach Tradition" at the Craftsman Potters Association, London in November.
- 1988 Dies on New Year's Day after a brief illness. Memorial Services are held in Canterbury Cathedral and Hampton Lovett Parish Church. Represented in "The Leach Tradition" summer exhibition at the Galerie Besson, London.
- 1989-90 Major retrospective exhibition is organised and toured by Aberystwyth Arts Centre.

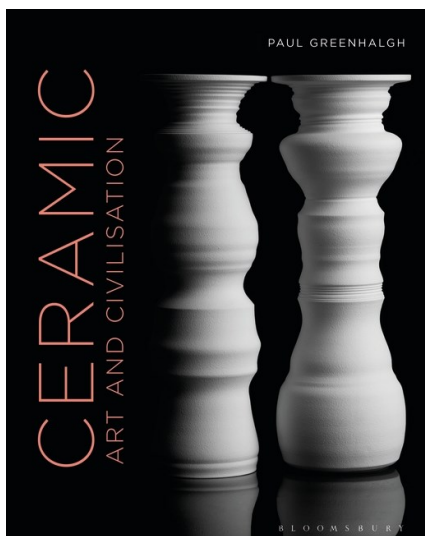
All photos courtesy of Whiting family collection, and except the teapot belonging to Dan Kelly, are of pots that were featured in the recent Bristol exhibition:

### Making Useful Simple – Geoffrey Whiting at the Ken Stradling Collection

1st October-14th December 2020. The exhibition was totally Covid-19 friendly. The display was designed to be seen from outside by passers by and visitors, using the façade as the gallery.

**MPA members COMPETITION TIME!**  
**Win a copy of Ceramic, Art and Civilisation**  
**by Paul Greenhalgh**

**See details of how to enter below: Closing date 31st May.**



*Ceramic, Art and Civilisation*  
by Paul Greenhalgh,

This fascinating and very human history traces the story of ceramic art and industry from the Ancient Greeks right through to the contemporary explosion of ceramic making and the postmodern potter. As a core craft technology, pottery has underpinned domesticity, business, religion, recreation, architecture, and art for millennia. Indeed, the history of ceramics parallels the development of human society, hence this is not just a story of ceramic art - it's an extraordinary story of human life itself.

The author Paul is, of course, internationally renowned as an historian of art, design and the decorative arts and has been the Director of the Sainsbury Centre at the University of East Anglia for the last decade.

*Ceramic, Art and Civilisation*

Published 11th March 2021. Bloomsbury Visual Arts

For a chance to win a free copy of *Ceramic, Art and Civilisation*, express in under 500 words what your own personal ceramic journey has been, or what it has meant to you, please email the editor and  
Subject: **Competition**  
Email : [mpanewsletter19@gmail.com](mailto:mpanewsletter19@gmail.com)

**The esteemed Author Paul Greenhalgh will decide on the winning entry, so a fantastic opportunity to express your very own personal views of your journey with Paul.**  
**Remember to keep the submissions below 500 words. Closing date 31st May.**

**TOP TIPS: Ceramic Crayons** By David Jones

When at Bath Spa University I wanted to do some fairly delicate drawings on pots. I came across a recipe for making ceramic crayons that could be used to draw onto raw or bisque fired pots (stoneware and earthenware).

RECIPE:

China clay 50%

Silica 30%

Whiting 20%

Your chosen oxide 10%

While they are all in the powder state mix them well, making sure you have a mask on of course, or alternatively, put them in a plastic bag and shake vigorously!

Then add small amounts of water and mix until you have the correct consistency to roll the mix.

In my case I then fired the crayons in a kiln to 400 C to give them a little stiffness but there's no need to do this. You could wrap masking tape around the crayon to give it added strength. Once fired and glazed the colour will show as an underglaze on the final pot.

## TOP TIPS: Crystalline glazing by Steve Adams

During the enforced coronavirus lockdown I decided to pursue an interest in crystalline glazing several members had chatted with me in the past about their interest and I thought people may like to know a little of the work that I have been pursuing during this enforced quarantine.

I have always had an interest in the technical aspects of ceramics, building kilns, salt glazing, Raku firings et cetera and the 'inner alchemist' in me became very interested in crystalline glazes.

I had seen some of the work of Peter Ilsley one of our former MPA presidents and Elsie Bloomer, and Peter Cosentino and was intrigued with their glazes.

So where do you start?

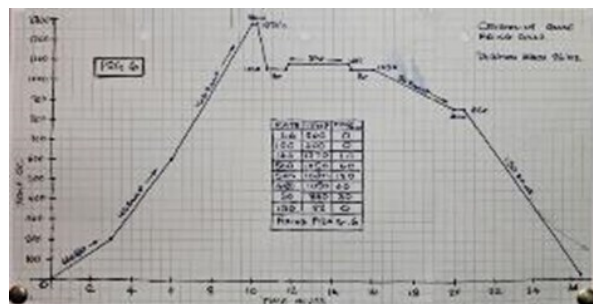
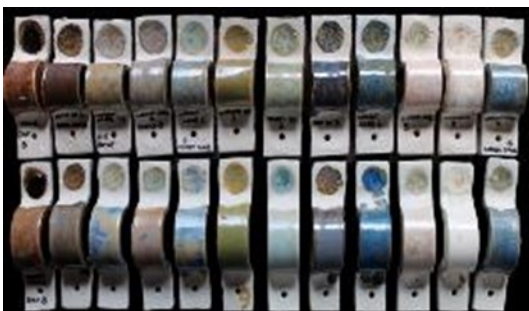
Firstly what clay body? Porcelain? White stoneware? White bodies seemed more appropriate so I experimented with several, finally settling with Potclays JB porcelain, recommended to me by Andrew Matheson, and for larger pieces a 50-50 mix of JB porcelain and T material.

Next glaze formulation; now this was quite a challenge just going online and googling crystalline glazes and you could find thousands, so the question is which one?

As I intended to fire oxidation to 1270°C I needed a suitable glaze for cone 9

I've plumped for Potclays Crystal frit 2266 (Ferro 3110) in combination with flint, zinc oxide, china clay, titanium dioxide and bentonite as a base.

Finally the firing cycle; I decided to fire to 1270°C to allow the porcelain to mature and used a firing cycle shown below which I found quite reliable. Again there are hundreds of variations on this cycle but the critical point is where the crystals start to develop between 1010°C - 1187°C and by rising and dropping the temperature within this range allows the crystals to form.



I threw some small test pieces that could be inverted to catch the run-off glaze, the glaze is applied thickly and is extremely fluid at 1270°C and rushes down the side of the pot and needs to be caught in some form of drip tray/dish to preserve kiln shelves.



Pots fired upside down to allow glaze runoff to be caught in the rim.



I initially mixed around 20 small samples of the base glaze with different combinations and percentages of oxides. First results were interesting; glazes matured and managed to run off the pots quite substantially, often with very small and very few crystals.



Is it the clay body? is it the glaze composition? or is it the firing cycle? Three variables, lots of experiments with different glaze compositions and different firing cycles finally gave me about five or six reasonably reliable glazes that I could now perhaps begin to use on larger pieces.

I have tried to restrict the number of glazes that I use, so that I can mix larger batches.

For colours, I have used:

Cobalt carbonate 0.5 - 5% Blues

Copper carbonate 2% - 5% Greens

Red Iron Oxide 1 - 2% Browns

Nickel oxide 0.5-2% Pale blues

Manganese dioxide 1-3% Tans

The list of oxides is extensive and offers endless combinations. Cobalt carbonate is very 'dominant' when used in combination. Rutile is volatile and unpredictable and varies from batch to batch.

Industrial ceramics has relied upon the scientist to predict consistent results in pottery output, from glaze composition to manufacturing process, so if its consistency and predictability you want then Wedgewood and Denby are the way to go.

\*On the other hand if its high quality, unique, unpredictable and unrepeatable, look no further.



I have recently been experimenting with rutile which has varying levels of iron which can give very unexpected and unpredictable results, 'a seemingly magical process of transformation, creation and combination' (alchemy).

I feel that I have only just scratched the surface and begun this journey, but it is fascinating, and I intend to continue developing the glazes, experimenting with the firing cycles and applying it to new pottery forms. I will keep you updated on the progress; the successes and of course the failures which are often the most enlightening, but unfortunately too frequent.

I must offer my thanks to the very generous Mandy Cosentino, partner of the late and much respected MPA member Peter Cosentino, who not only loaned me some of Peters books on Crystalline glazing, but also his personal glaze recipe and note book which proved invaluable.

Further reading:

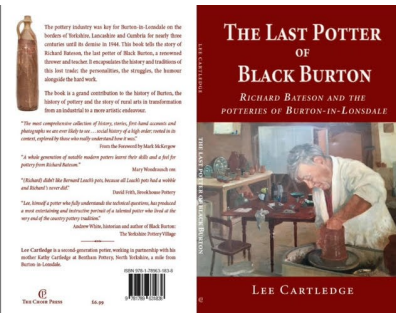
Peter Ilesley. Macro Crystalline glazes,

Diane Creber. Crystalline glazes, and of course the ubiquitous Google

Book reviews by Roger Bell :

## THE LAST POTTER OF BURTON by Lee Cartledge

Pub: The Choir House £6.99



Richard Bateson, the 'Last Potter of Black Burton', taught Kathy new throwing techniques when in his 80's, returning to the area of his birth.

Lee has been in the Observer newspaper recently for producing Covid 19 vases, raising money to support charities helping people affected.

The pottery industry of Burton-in-Lonsdale on the Yorkshire,

Lancashire, Cumbria borders operated

for 300 years until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. For many years household terracotta pots were produced for local use but when the railway came to High Bentham stoneware bottles and jars were added for distribution more widely. There were 5 potteries in 1900 with about 80 workers. Richard worked at Waterside Pottery from the age of 13 as had generations back to at least his great grandfather.

It was 'Black' Burton because the local terracotta clay was black when dug because of trapped oil, though it fired a pale terracotta colour. Stoneware clay and coal were also available locally. Lee describes the processes from digging the clay through to delivery to the railway at Bentham. The horse drawn carts brought back coal to fire the kilns. There are plenty of anecdotes about activities around the area, people and conditions making it a very interesting easy read. Potteries might employ over 20 people with a hierarchy of jobs from jam jar maker up to thrower and specialists such as kiln loader, fireman, carter and miner. An unexpected job to me was the 'wand weaver' who made woven cane baskets to protect bottles in transport. The potteries changed products, making methods and owners over the years. Some of the best throwers succeeded for many years but eventually failed when changes were needed. Skill was not always matched by business acumen.

Bateson could have been just one of the many country potters who spent their lives making standard pots for use, at speed and in quantities that seem incredible. Yet his story went from being removed from grammar school by his father to produce jam jars at 13 to becoming an expert thrower, owning a pottery and then teaching the likes of Alan Caiger-Smith, David Frith and Gordon Baldwin.

How your progress in life can depend on chance! Richard had left Burton to sign up to fight in the first world war, to get away from the limitations of a village and to see more of the world. He returned to be a thrower again but the work steadily declined with the Great Depression and by 1939 he ran the only pottery in the area employing just 2 others. In spite of backing from a local rich business man Stockbridge Pottery closed in 1944 – the last pottery in Burton.

Chance had brought the Royal College of Art to the Lake District in the war and needing a kiln to fire ceramics Richard was approached for use of his kiln

and once his throwing skills were seen he taught the students. In 1946 Helen Pinchcombe needed a throwing teacher at the RCA and called on Richard, who subsequently taught at the Central, Wimbledon and other art schools until the 1960's when bureaucracy insisted that a teaching qualification was needed!

An interesting and valuable book for anybody who makes, studies or collects ceramics.

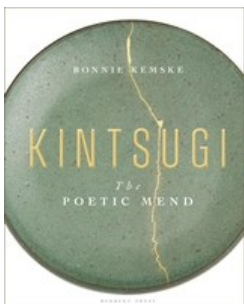


## BOOK REVIEWS

### KINTSUGI Bonnie Kemske

Publ. Herbert Press (Bloomsbury)

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Publ. Herbert Press (Bloomsbury)

£30.00

Published: 18-02-2021

Format: Hardback

Edition: 1st Extent: 176

ISBN: 9781912217991 Imprint: Herbert Press

Dimensions: 284 x 226 mm

RRP: £30.0 **Members Online price £27.00 Save £3.00 (10%)**

Probably 'Kintsugi' is a new word to you as it was to me. By chance, waiting for my review copy, I noticed it used in a book on building a gas fired kiln by Chris Barnes, which I was reviewing for the NPA. It is the Japanese art of repairing broken ceramic pieces with lacquer and precious metals, making them more beautiful and valuable than before the damage in many cases. The subtitle 'The Poetic Mend' is so appropriate. Metaphorically it represents recovery, strength, and individuality. In contrast European repair aimed to make the piece 'as good as new', though the modern approach in archaeology is to keep the damage obvious. You probably know of the author, Bonnie Kemske, an artist and researcher, from her time as editor of *Ceramic Review*, which she revitalised after a rather dull few years. The clarity of her writing, chapter organisation, page layout and selection of illustrations all combine to make a somewhat specialised subject fascinating. Hiroko Roberts-Taira did much of the research for the book and is acknowledged as largely responsible for the chapter on the history of the technique.

The Japanese procedure is to use lacquer as an adhesive and filler, then apply gold dust, and allow to dry before polishing. Modern variations use other precious metals or just colour to finish. Sounds simple but there are multiple stages. The basic material is the sap of a tree growing widely in east Asia. It requires a multi-stage refining system involving heating, adding cotton wadding, processing in a centrifuge, then in some cases colouring. It is not a completely safe process as most people are allergic to 'urushi' which contains the same substance as poison ivy. The basic material is painted on all edges as an adhesive.. The broken object is assembled, excess is wiped off, and rubber bands or adhesive tape used to hold until fixed. As a filler starch glue and sawdust is added. Any further gaps are filled and left to dry before urushi is used for the gold dust to stick to. Finally the object is cleaned and polished. Kintsugi pieces can be as expensive and often more so than the unbroken original would have been. A number of companies now produce faux Kintsugi pieces to attempt to cash in!

The traditional Japanese method is practiced outside Japan in the UK and elsewhere. There are also simpler methods which can be used. These are outlined in the book. One interesting example is the use of photoluminescent glue. The methodology is clear but this is not a 'how to' book. While the major emphasis of the book is the variety of techniques in Japan and its practitioners, there are plenty of examples of work from other parts of the world and pieces using the technique as a means of producing original work without waiting for the accidental breakage. A maker you are probably familiar with is Paul Scott who has used it on his Cumbrian Blues pieces, sometimes on deliberately broken items, sometimes where refiring old ceramics has cracked them. There is a short chapter on the lovely original pieces produced by Suzuki Goro.

There are photos of pieces 'repaired' after breakage and a range of work where more and more work has gone into making an art object. Interestingly Kemske extends consideration to related work. Bouke de Vries has a kintsugi repaired lidded porcelain jar alongside an identically shaped glass jar filled with the shards of a lidded porcelain jar. Reiko Kaneko has two bone china plates on plate setters, warped and cracked through over-firing, and with kintsugi repair. There are silk and rayon thread repaired bowls by Zoe Hillyard. A life size figure sculpture by Paige Bradley reproduces the gold repair effect by using interior lighting. Doris Salcedo's crack in the Tate Modern Turbine Hall is also illustrated.

In the final chapter Bonnie links to cracks/breaks and their repair/recovery in other parts of our existence, be it illness, religion, disability or sustainability. She has found direct and indirect links to the principles of kintsugi including a faith community using a repaired bowl on a poster advertising 'Kintsugi Worship'! She notes that this goes much further than its Japanese originators would consider.

Overall a fascinating book, deeply rooted in its Japanese origins.

Roger Bell

## Making Waves

How Stephanie Wright embraced change, and the legacy she left behind  
*by Nick and Amanda Wright*



Stephanie was a self-taught potter, having learnt the basics from her mother as a young teenager. During the 1980s her husband's work took her to North America and Norway, and finding herself unable to work, Stephanie bought a pottery wheel. This is where her journey with ceramics began. She developed her craft from a studio in her garage, producing mainly traditional tableware and becoming integrated with the local ceramics and arts scene. Each move – to Canada, and to Norway – entailed a change in the easily available clay bodies, and her style evolved in response, but was always built around the mastery and control of a piece of clay on the wheel. Returning to the UK in the mid 90's, now with three young children in tow, she continued with this practice but began to expand and experiment with creative glazes, larger thrown pieces, carving and decoration. After 20 years of creating smaller scale utility ware, she yearned to spread her wings and expand into the world of ceramic sculpture.



*Stephanie at the start of her ceramics journey, producing and selling tableware in Oklahoma, USA*



*Stephanie displaying her traditional tableware in Stavanger, Norway. Returning to England, Stephanie brought the techniques*

## Making a change

After her youngest child had finally flown the nest, in 2008 Stephanie went back to college and began an Art Foundation course at City Lit in London, moving on to a Ceramics Diploma completed in 2011. She regarded this as the most exciting period of her life in ceramics – the opportunity to explore ideas in art and design, develop a new understanding of clay and glaze technology, and take her ceramic practice in new directions, all in the company of the talented and knowledgeable tutors and a highly supportive and creative group of fellow students. “This equipped me with new ways of adapting traditional techniques to share my view of the world”. She had an inherent curiosity and saw the artistic potential in everything – her experiments ranged from incorporation of ‘found’ metallic and organic objects into re-imagined ceramic pieces, to “interchangeable” sculptural elements.

But it was her exploration of the use of the wheel as a sculptural tool and the possibilities of deformation that eventually became her trademark technique.

*Following her City Lit course, Stephanie established her studio in Dorking, Surrey, alongside two other friends and artists.*

*Photo credit: Andrew Shaylor*



Re-imagining traditional, functional objects by incorporating ceramics with found materials



## Making Waves

The intention of Stephanie's pieces, with their strong curves and thick throwing lines, was to convey movement – waves swirling, spirals spinning, dancers swinging, shells forming or the earth turning. To intensify the effect, she developed a palette of radiant matt glazes containing barium and lithium, variously coloured with copper, chromium, vanadium and stains. These were sprayed on the surface throwing lines, emphasising the natural sense of flow in the piece.

Stephanie's innovative technique of sculpting on the wheel emerged in response to three main influences. Firstly, she was very taken by the 20<sup>th</sup> century Futurists' attempts to convey movement in paintings, such as Giacomo Balla's *Abstract Speed*, and in the stop-motion photography of Eadweard Muybridge. She wondered – could I extend these ideas to 3D sculpture?

A second formative influence was a visit to a Ryoji Koie exhibition, where she discovered the freedom this

Japanese potter found in splitting open bottomless vessels to create new forms. Thirdly, she was very impressed with Wouter Dam's ribbon-like sculptures built from deconstructed vessels. His thrown components all had even walls, but it occurred to Stephanie that she could manipulate the wall thickness and make that a new dimension in the sculptural form." After years of playing on the wheel, I discovered I could sculpt the walls of a doughnut-shaped piece of clay with the resulting cross-section in mind.

This process uses my imagination and tactile sense only, as I can't see the shape I am forming until it is eventually revealed in cross-section"

Many of her designs depict moving or dancing figures when sliced and deformed to reveal the cross-section of the thrown piece.

"To say I have discovered a fourth dimension is unlikely to convince a geometrician or philosopher. However, when I slice through one of my hand-thrown 3D forms and twist the walls to reveal a previously unseen dancing figure, deep-sea creature or tree, it seems to unfold a further hidden world in the form".



Other forms include waves and vortices, un-deformed cut rings, sliced and re-fused designs, generally glazed in bright, vibrant colours.

"The spray glaze formula is 'dry', with low silica content, and will not melt into a gloss, but forms a pointillistic texture which contributes to the vibrancy of colour. Most pieces are sprayed in layers to highlight the parallel throwing ridges and enhance the impression of flow".

What drove Stephanie's work? "Rewards for the commitment of time, space and energy that can perhaps best be described as a way of life, which is a positive and mindful choice.

Engaging physically with the fundamental elements of earth, fire, water and air continuously affirms and intensifies my experience of living in the material world."

*Stephanie's radiant, matt glazes brought colour and depth to every piece.*



Stephanie continued to create more traditional tableware throughout her career,.  
Her style evolving with time

*Experimentation and fun were at the heart of Stephanie's quirky pieces.*  
*Photo credit: Sylvain Deleu*



*"Leaving my quirky pieces of art behind when I die ensures an afterlife. It will enable me to convey my vibrant experience of life to others. Ceramics for me is a matter of life and death....and fun."*

**Stephanie Wright**

*The Making Waves Ceramics Trust, founded in 2020 by Stephanie's family*

In 2014, Stephanie was told that she had a life-limiting disease, but rather than down tools she became more productive than ever, pushing herself to achieve her artistic and ceramic ambitions. She continued to develop her distinctive body of ceramics work whilst enrolling in a year-long course at the St Ives School of Painting which she had dreamed of attending for many years. She continued working in her studio until it became physically impossible, just 8 weeks before her death at the end of 2019.

“Leaving my quirky pieces of art behind when I die ensures an afterlife. It will enable me to convey my vibrant experience of life to others. Ceramics for me is a matter of life and death....and fun.”

### **Making Waves Ceramic Trust**

Stephanie wanted to find a way to continue her love and support of the ceramic world after her death, and to use proceeds from her studio for that purpose. She was very conscious of, and grateful for, the opportunity she had to re-invent her ceramic practice with the Ceramic Diploma – following over 20 years as a tableware potter – and wanted to support other ceramicists in creating the space they need to make bold and imaginative new sculptural works.

The Making Waves Ceramic Trust was set up in 2020 by Stephanie’s family, supported by a talented advisory board of ceramicists and artists all of whom knew Stephanie personally. The intention is to provide financial support for established makers who show an innovative creativity in the world of ceramic sculpture and specifically to help them move into a new area of practice. We’re looking to find ceramicists who are pushing the boundaries of their craft and moving into uncharted territory, in order to help them fully realise their potential.

Grants will be awarded on a case-by-case basis for various purposes:

Whether that’s to cover equipment needed to fully realise a burgeoning idea,

Take part in further training to develop specific skills,

Fund studio space or

Support ceramicists with living costs whilst a portfolio of new work is established.



Applications are now open for the first grant, with a deadline of 29<sup>th</sup> May 2021. For more information and to apply, go to [makingwavetrust.org](https://makingwavetrust.org).

### Midlands Potters Open Exhibition 'Floor One Gallery' Rugby Art Gallery and Museum Friday 9th - Friday 23rd July 2021

Before lockdown the MPA was in the process of organising two exhibitions, both of which were cancelled. With the easing of restrictions connected with COVID, Rugby Floor One Gallery has now been in touch and allocated the MPA the **9th - 23rd July 2021** for the postponed MPA **Open** Exhibition.

If you would like to exhibit in this exhibition please let me know - submission instructions below. Please note that there will be a £15 fee to exhibit and you will be expected to assist by contributing to the stewarding of the event.

The MPA has been successful in securing the 'Floor One Gallery' at Rugby Art Gallery and Museum for an **'open'** exhibition during July 2021.

**The exhibition is open to all paid-up members of the Midlands Potters Association** (there is no selection process). The space is quite small but the gallery is modern, light and airy and will probably accommodate up to 70 pieces of work. The MPA will make every effort to include examples of the work of all members who indicate they would like to take part in the exhibition although, if we are inundated by interested, it may be necessary to work on a first come, first served, basis. A limit on the number of pieces exhibited by each member will apply (to be confirmed).

An exhibition fee of £15 will be charged to cover costs associated with setting up the event.

Please email David Jones (MPA Exhibitions Coordinator) [jiseys@me.com](mailto:jiseys@me.com) with **your name, a written description of your work** (no more than 100 words) and a **single representative photograph** of your work by **Friday 16th April** (sooner if possible). The single photograph needs only to be representative of the work you wish to exhibit. Please note that photographs may be used in promotional material.

**Important dates:** Please note that you will be expected to deliver your work for setting up on **Friday 9th July** and collect any unsold work on **Friday 23rd July**.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the initial submission process.  
David Jones  
MPA Exhibitions Coordinator  
Chair MPA



MPA Birmingham Group Exhibition Lightwoods House, Lightwoods Park, Adkins Lane, Bearwood, Smethwick B67 5DP. Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June to Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

If you are interested to exhibit please contact Graham Taylor by email [gjtaylor007@btinternet.com](mailto:gjtaylor007@btinternet.com)  
Opening times to be confirmed nearer the dates.

## MPA Committee

### MPA Committee

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## Committee Notes

MPA New website has now been commissioned with many new member features. The new website will be up and running before the start of the next membership year in October 2021.

## Committee Meeting Dates

The next meeting will be on Thursday 10 June at 7 pm by Zoom

## MPA Member Demonstrations and Exhibitions 2021

Steve Woodhead – 2021 tbc

Harriet Coleridge – November 2021  
dates tbc

Zoom demos 2021 -tbc

### EXHIBITIONS

#### Worcester Cathedral

On hold until further notice

#### Midlands Potters Open Exhibition

*'Floor One Gallery' Rugby Art Gallery and Museum*

Friday 9th - Friday 23rd July 2021

#### MPA Birmingham Group Exhibition

Lightwoods House, Lightwoods Park, Adkins Lane, Bearwood, Smethwick B67 5DP. Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June to Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

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**Altered States Open Air Sculpture Exhibition  
May 29 - June 27 2021**

**Shaw House, Church Rd, Newburt RG14 2 DR**

Shaw house is hosting this exhibition that will transform its stunning site into a sculpture park, with artworks by acclaimed sculptors from all over the UK. This exhibition will provide the visitor with the chance to see and purchase a creative mixture of traditional, modern and cutting-edge contemporary work, and will be open from 11am – 4pm 7 days a week.

Entry is free.

Our catalogue and price list will be viewed online in April. Last September we had 3000 visitors enjoying the works in the sunshine and happy to be released from the confines of lockdown.

You can see a panoramic view of the exhibition on youtube or visit diem photography to view some stunning infra-red black and white photographs of the exhibition by Newbury celebrated photographer David Hatful.