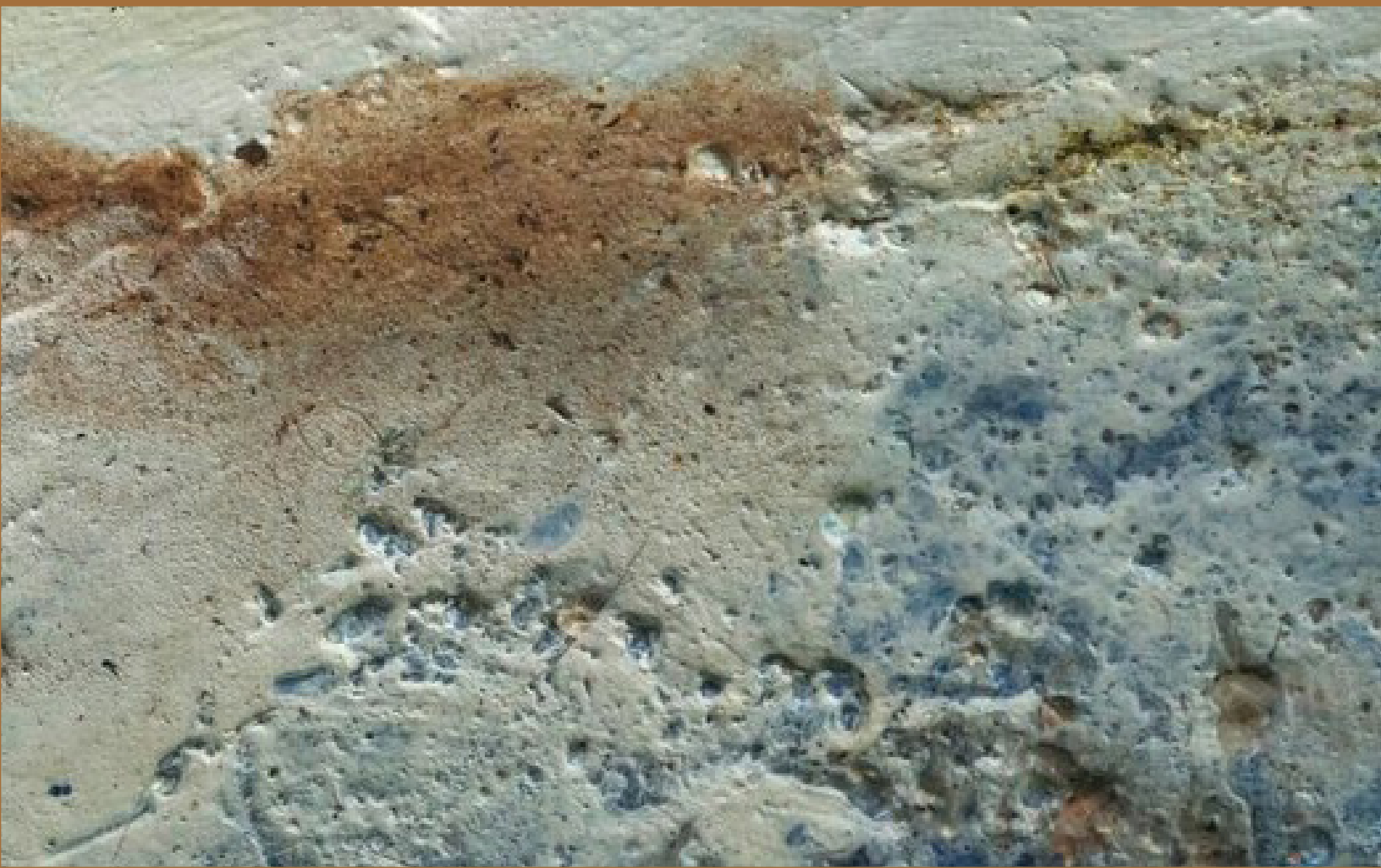


University for the Creative Arts
Research Project Portfolios

Crafts Study Centre: Ceramics Curation

By Simon Olding



Project Details

Name of Researcher:	Professor Simon Olding
Name of Output:	Crafts Study Centre: Ceramics Curation
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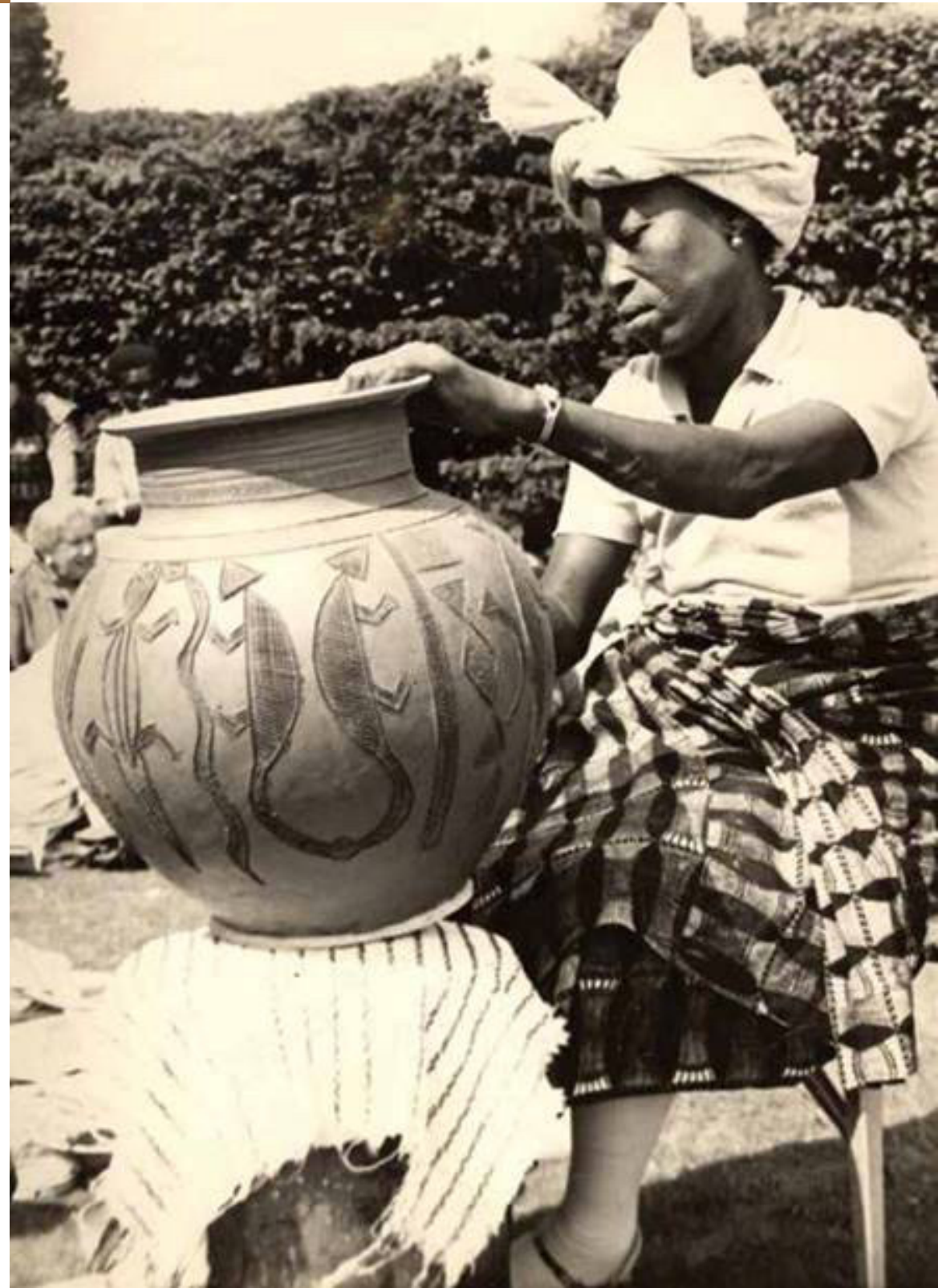


Image from Ladi Kwali exhibition



Image from Ladi Kwali exhibition

Synopsis

Ceramics Curation describes a series of connected exhibitions presented between 2015 and 2019 at the Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts. The Crafts Study Centre (CSC) has strongly featured ceramic exhibitions in its programme since relocating to Farnham in 2000, with the opening of a new purpose-built museum on the Farnham campus in 2004. Indeed, the first year (2004-2005) of its temporary exhibition programme featured solo shows by leading contemporary studio potters: Magdalene Odundo; Takeshi Yasuda; Emmanuel Cooper; David Leach; Gwyn Hanssen Pigott. This announced the CSC as a key public exhibition venue for ceramics, adding strongly to the national infrastructure.

Ceramics Curation looks at a selected series of these exhibitions, building on their thematic contexts. Ladi Kwali 1925-1984 and Michael O'Brien: in Nigeria were co-curated by Professor Simon Olding, Director of the Crafts Study Centre and Professor Dame Magdalene Odundo, Chancellor of the University for the Creative Arts, and sometime Professor

Ceramics at UCA. Angus Suttie was curated by Greg Parsons working for the Ruthin Craft Centre in partnership with Jeffery Weeks and the Crafts Study Centre, and was presented at both venues. Nao Matsunaga: Raw Faces and Richard Slee: Framed were presented in collaboration with the Marsden Woo Gallery.

As Curator and Co-Curator, Simon Olding is the 'artistic director' of the Crafts Study Centre's temporary exhibition programme and has overseen some 100 exhibitions held there from 2004-2020. The focus on studio ceramics relates to the very strong holdings in the permanent collections, and enables these to be seen in the context of contemporary practice. Simon Olding also curates events associated with the exhibitions, so that the makers and curators can debate their curatorial and artistic research as well as their making methodologies in a public environment. He also supports related exhibition publications with short essays and writes all exhibition texts.



*Piece from Nao Matsunaga
exhibition*



*Pieces from Nao Matsunaga
exhibition*

Context

Ceramics Curation establishes a critical space, a test bed for new work and a shared environment for collaborative curatorship. The programme of ceramic exhibitions at the Crafts Study Centre enables the deep enquiry into a new body of work, testing the experienced as well as the emerging maker with the creative challenge to make, install and shape a coherent, questioning, narrative. Furthermore, it allows for a curatorial approach that specifically links the CSC collections to works by named makers, thereby enabling contrasting perspectives across the field of modernist and contemporary studio ceramics.

Co-curating has featured in two exhibitions, linking the academic insights of Olding (a writer and curator specialising in 20th century studio ceramics) and the artistic insights of Odundo, one of the world's great ceramic makers: a sometime student at Farnham, and, in her role as Professor of Ceramics at UCA, a sometime member of the CSC staff. The exhibition of work by the major potter, Ladi Kwali (who taught Odundo during a brief period in Nigeria at Michael Cardew's pottery training centre in Abuja) was the first solo show of her work in the UK, and brought together loans from public and private collections as well as demonstration pots she had made at the Farnham School of Art in the 1960s. The exhibition Michael O'Brien: in Nigeria was the first public exhibition of African ceramics and textiles drawn from his remarkable personal

collection, and although he is in his 90s, the first ever museum exhibition of his own ceramics. These exhibitions specifically considered the connections between African and UK studio ceramics.

The exhibition of Angus Suttie's work was a major retrospective, and linked the CSC with the highly significant craft venue in North Wales, the Ruthin Craft Centre. The show was held in both venues, greatly extending its public impact. Olding contributed a foreword to the catalogue and acted as the organising curator, supporting the independent curator, Greg Parsons. The exhibition enabled a detailed discussion with Jeffery Weeks who inherited Suttie's collection and archive, and as a consequence, a major work by Suttie and his entire archive of drawings, sketchbooks and photographs was donated by Weeks to the CSC, which thereby became the major museum home of Suttie's reference materials. The exhibitions of new work by Nao Matsunaga and Richard Slee enabled a fruitful partnership with the renowned commercial gallery Marsden Woo in London. Both makers presented a new body of work for the show, and both held discussion evenings to debate their work for a public audience. Nao Matsunaga held an 'In Conversation' with CSC Trustee Sarah Griffin and Olding commissioned Dr Glenn Adamson, the acclaimed craft historian and theorist, to write a new essay about Matsunaga's work.



Piece from Angus Suttie exhibition



Teapot, 1984
230 x 190mm

Piece from Angus Suttie exhibition

Research Aims and Insights

Research aims:

To present new work by studio potters through the commission of a solo exhibition

To place the CSC collections with related works by potters to understand their relationships by creative juxtaposition and to see historical connectivities

To review a body of work and come to new understanding by a contemporary exhibition, developing their practice by so doing

To develop the practice of co curatorship through live field work

Research insights:

A new understanding of ceramics through reflection on the creative contribution of major ceramic artists, in some cases through their first museum exhibitions

A new understanding of how the creative ceramic artist 'reads' the room and creates a gallery specific exhibition, thus advancing maker-led curatorship



Piece from Richard Slee exhibition



Piece from Richard Slee exhibition

Research Methods and Process

The shaping of the CSC exhibition programme allows for independent curatorial actions, and it allows for opportunities presented by other exhibition providers and independent curators who may put proposals to the CSC. The opportunity to develop strategic partnerships within the family of craft organisations is also a factor. Clusters of show with a broad subject or thematic content can also be placed in adjointment.

In the case of the exhibitions in *Ceramics Curation* these factors came into play: to build on a relationship established with Nao Matsunaga and Richard Slee during Olding's work on the exhibition *Things of Beauty Growing* and to collaborate with their London gallery, Marsden Woo. This connection

helped bring the exhibitions into the purview of Marsden Woo's extensive network of visitors and collectors. In the case of the shows on Ladi Kwali and Michael OBrien, these were conceived as a pair, addressing a similar theme (of modern studio practice in Nigeria, and its relationship to British studio pottery) and enabling the display of works from the CSC collections.

The Anguis Suttie exhibition concept grew out of a meeting with Greg Parsons, the independent curator for the Ruthin Craft Centre, and as the CSC held no works by Suttie, it helped to fill an important gap in its own collections through a partnership approach.

*Piece from Michael OBrien
exhibition*





*Image from Michael OBrien
exhibition*

Research Contribution and Recognition

Dissemination:

The exhibitions were seen by 8115 visitors at the Crafts Study Centre.

The exhibitions were promoted in the CSC published programme (distributed to a mailing list of 2000) and over the website www.csc.uca.ac.uk, and the essay by Glenn Adamson was also presented on line as well as through physical copies.

The Angus Suttie catalogue was sold and distributed by the Ruthin Craft Centre.

Artist talks were given by Nao Matsunaga and Richard Slee. A total of 137 visitors came to artists talks relating to the shows.

Follow-on-activities:

A sculptural work and a full paper archive relating to Angus Suttie was offered as a gift to the CSC.

£2000.00 worth of ceramics by Nigerian potters from the reserve collection of Michael OBrien was sold from the CSC shop.



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Studio Mothership





MAJOR PROGRESSION:
NAO MATSUNAGA IN THE STUDIO

Dr Glenn Adamson

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There is a story Nao Matsunaga likes, which comes from the great jazz pianist Herbie Hancock. He was playing one night with Miles Davis, and the band was really swinging. "It was building and building, and Miles gets to his solo." Then... oops. "I play this chord and it is 100 percent, completely, entirely wrong. The wrong chord. It was so, so wrong. I believed I had utterly destroyed the evening, like a house of cards." You probably can guess what happened next. Davis paused, just momentarily, then brilliantly pivoted from the unexpected chord into a new flight of improvisation. He made Hancock's blunder sound like genius.

The point of the story, at least from Matsunaga's perspective, is that there are no wrong notes. It's all part of a larger unfolding. He has been getting more and more in touch with this idea as he works in the studio, working instinctively, reactively. You might say he's trying to be Herbie and Miles at once. Each mark he makes is an implicit question: can you top this?

Matsunaga is aware that this attitude has a venerable history. Not only in jazz, but also Abstract Expressionism and its correlated developments in ceramics – Peter Voulkos and his circle – and of course in many branches of Japanese art. All are lineages which emphasize spontaneous creativity, freshness, the unplanned. These currents interweave, too. He was interested to read the liner notes for Miles Davis's album *Kind of Blue*, written by another pianist, Bill Evans. Drawing a direct comparison between

Japanese ink painting and Davis' music, Evans wrote: "These artists must practice a particular discipline, that of allowing the idea to express itself in communication with their hands in such a direct way that deliberation cannot interfere."

It's interesting to be thinking this way in the 21st century, when we are all so aware all the time. On the one hand, we desire immediacy; on the other, we know so much, and can find out more any time we want. Matsunaga has responded to this condition, the mindset of the digital era, by deconstructing his own technical expertise, which is extensive. "So much of what I want is already there in the material," he says, "and if I touch it, it gets lost." So he has undertaken a constant cycle of deskilling and reskilling. For example, he has developed a process called "slap building," which uses components

roughly formed by smacking them in his palms. Unlike the evenness of rolled slabs, these slapped-together wads of clay are varied in thickness, and so move a great deal in the firing, an opportunity for happy accidents to occur.

He has also invented a new type of embellishment that he calls "blanket glazing," in which a thick chunk of glaze material is laid on a ceramic surface and then fired. It melts and moves without losing its original solidity, creating an effect somewhat like an impasto brushstroke. Matsunaga compares this unusual process to painting the wood elements in his sculptures – he jokes that paint is "just a room-temperature glaze," and sometimes concocts his own with PVA glue and raw pigment – and reflects on his own increasing comfort with color. Early in his career Matsunaga was primarily interested in structure, drawing much of his inspiration from architecture and engineering. As a result, his work tended to

out of fired bits of clay that are glued or screwed together, more a woodworker's vocabulary than a potter's. He often bores random holes into the parts when making them, so that he'll have a means to join them later on; in other cases he just binds them together with plastic zip-ties. Matsunaga has also been making tall columns, in both ceramic and wood. He tries to build these as quickly as he does the smaller works, in an effort to preserve a sense of intuitive movement. When he shapes the timber, he likes to chop with an axe rather than using a saw or chisel, yet another way to create an unforced and unexpected shape.

Perhaps the most characteristic works of this moment in Matsunaga's career are a series of wall-mounted mask forms. He began these in odd moments while waiting for larger pieces to dry, and they perfectly capture the offhand brilliance of his current direction. They are marvelously suggestive. One could read



be entirely unglazed, or rendered in monochrome white. He's had to completely commit to his current, broad palette: "When you're scared of color you either don't use it or use too much."

As one might have expected given his exploratory method, the forms that have evolved in Matsunaga's studio of late have been extremely varied. There are objects that could be identified as "pots," but they are fragmentary and impromptu in character, held up on stilts. A piece is hardly ever finished when it comes out of the kiln; that is just a jumping-off point for further improvisation. Rather than throwing or coiling a volume, he often builds it

them as faces, but only in the sense that one might find a face in a mountainside or a cloud. Matsunaga likes this quality in abstraction – "our human eye's ability to see anything in it" – and has a deep appreciation for its pervasiveness. From ancient Chinese bronzes to pre-Columbian pots to African woodcarvings, the mask often teeters just at the edge of mimesis.

It is worth noting here Matsunaga's unconventional biography: he came to England at the age of 12, sent by his parents (organic bakers in Japan) to enroll at Summerhill, a progressive school in Suffolk. The Summerhill ethos is radically democratic. Students

and faculty have an equal voice in running the school, and learning operates on a completely self-elected basis. At the tender age of 16, he left the school and went to Brighton, where he eventually joined the BA course in design and craft (noted artists Maisie Broadhead and Phoebe Cummings were in his cohort there). Eventually he got a Master's Degree in ceramics at the Royal College of Art, not a bad pedigree for one in his line of work. But the idiosyncrasy of his upbringing and education stayed with him. Given his background, Matsunaga says, "diversity is the norm for me." It has left him seeking connection.

The universal relevance that he finds in the mask, in the mark, in the material, all speak to this creative impulse. So too does his interest in gravity as a compositional force. My colleagues Simon Olding and Martina Droth and I invited him recently to make a set of "moon jars" for an exhibition we were preparing (Things of Beauty Growing, organized by the Yale Center for British Art, and on view at the Fitzwilliam Museum through June 18), based on the historic Korean porcelain forms. The black-and-white sculptures he made in response spoke to the moon in all its phases – as if the whole lunar cycle had collided into one image. Gravity, the force that keeps the moon in orbit, is the subject of the works. Propped up against their own slumping, lurching weight, articulated by rivulets of paint, they are poignant anti-monuments, which still seem to be coming into being.

During my last visit to Matsunaga's studio, in January, we spoke about how he makes choices. He embraces chance, and yet constantly makes decisions. It is a purposefully non-rational, ineffable, yet wholly absorbing way to work. He feels that he is getting ever better at it, partly because he has been on so many residencies – in Norway, Indonesia, the USA, Scotland, and elsewhere (even at the V&A in London, where he embarked on a "mythical beast hunt," collecting images from across the collections – another search for universals). In each residency, he is dropped into unfamiliar surroundings and must immediately concentrate, immediately perform. It's not unlike being a jazz musician on the road. And notice how it is the same dynamic as the one he cultivates in the studio, writ large: he puts himself into a situation and responds. Then he does it again. And again.

At the end of the day, Matsunaga realizes that the serendipity he seeks is just a breath away from arbitrariness. His recent output looks like his, and no one else's. Yet every work could have turned out quite differently. Random? Maybe. But still so meaningful. He reflects that it's not that different from walking along the beach, looking for the stone you like best, "for reasons deeper than thinking," and putting it in your pocket, Months or years later, when you see it on the shelf at home, it will bring you back to that moment, that perfect day by the sea. Perhaps you'll ask yourself: "why did I choose that one?" There won't be a reason, but you'll still know it was right.



Essay written by Dr Glenn Adamson to accompany the exhibition: Nao Matsunaga : Raw Faces on at the Crafts Study Centre from 3 April to 26 May 2018.

Photography by Nao Matsunaga.

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Angus Suttie



Angus Suttie



Jug, 1984
210 x 220mm

Piece no.52 Tall Form, 1991
1130 x 760 x 430mm

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'Tropical ****' Teapot, 1992
630 x 280 x 270mm

Bottle, 1988
580 x 420 x 280mm

Foreword

Angus Suttie's allusive, energetic, hand-built ceramics were powerful contributors to the postmodern art of the 1980s. Although his work sometimes has an ironic and even playful edge, he was deeply thoughtful about its humanist intentions, and the references are present not just for play, but for critical, sometimes political provocation. Suttie could use the conventional form of the teapot, transform it through innovative, complex and entirely unexpected shapes, and reflect on deeper themes of death or sexual expression. He said that he wanted to make pots 'that shock us, console us, that are life-affirming or that haunt us'. He was a visionary for ceramic art.

This complexity and independence of vision may be why his work stands the test of repeated viewing, and this exhibition enables a considered re-evaluation of his distinctive and significant contribution to the development of studio ceramics, both in the quixotic functional work and in the compelling final pieces infused with what Emmanuel Cooper called 'powerful architectural strength'. Suttie drew both pragmatically and poetically on the source material of world ceramics, and he talked about the revelation of his reading of ancient South American pots in a fine essay for *Ceramic Review* in 1989. He concluded the essay with this reflective analysis: 'perhaps in fact we do not choose our influences but in some paradoxical way they choose us. What I am suggesting is that history is not passive, but demands an active relationship with the present'.

The exhibition is influenced by Suttie's personal collection and significant archive; the selection, by collection trustee Jeffrey Weeks and curator Gregory Parsons, has been both profoundly personal and critically objective. It is presented in a partnership between Ruthin Craft Centre (who originated the exhibition) and the Crafts Study Centre. Both institutions share the commitment to presenting work of the recent past as counterpoints in their programmes of contemporary craft. As a mark of the importance of Suttie's contribution to the field, the catalogue presents commissioning writing from major ceramic figures who knew him, and held him in the highest regard.

Philip Hughes & Simon Olding





'Tabu' Jug Form, 1991
560 x 480 x 320mm

Ring, 1987
40 x 120 x 70mm

Introduction

I first met Angus at a gay liberation meeting in London in November 1970. For both of us, queer working-class boys from the Celtic fringes, affirmation of our identities and sexualities that we found in the new movement marked a new beginning, the gateway to new life possibilities. We were partners for the next ten years, then life-long friends, and I was with him when he died.

All that was a long way in the future in 1970. Angus had recently been kicked out of drama school in Glasgow, largely because his residual stammer proved a barrier to effective performances, and like many of our generation had come to London seeking a new start and alternative ways to express his creativity. But he was a bit adrift. He had had a long series of casual and unfulfilling jobs, and when we met he was working at the Menzies newspaper stall in Paddington station. Later he worked in a clothing warehouse, and with the help of a second-hand sewing machine we bought he made curtains for our rented house from the cloth remnants he got there. He took up painting in acrylic, started weaving rugs, and went to a local college to do O and A levels part time. Eventually, miraculously, ceramics found him and he found ceramics.

Camberwell School of Art, where he trained from 1976 was going through a period of exceptional innovation and excitement. There he learned from inspirational teachers and made life-long friendships with fellow students. Ceramics became for Angus more than a craft: it was a way of life. Through clay he found he could explore his identity, his sexuality, his loves, his sense of joy, his grief and loss when his partner died of AIDS, and eventually his own battle with illness and impending death. Starting with conventional forms, most frequently the teapot, he wrought mysterious and vivid objects, using brilliant colours and often written messages on the pots to challenge conventional meanings. As well as teapots he played with the shapes of boxes, cups and saucers, altar pieces, spoons and rings. Later, as the epidemic entered directly into his life, Angus's work became increasingly monumental and serious, the colours more muted, often evoking pre-Columbian mourning statuary.

By the early 1990s he had a growing international reputation, exhibiting in Europe, the Americas, and Asia. He also became an inspirational teacher, and a fine writer. His was an engaged and committed life. But whatever he was doing, his courage, adventurousness and commitment to the possibilities of his craft persisted. Through clay Angus had found his voice, and he made it sing.

The pots in this collection reflect the full range of Angus's journey in ceramics: a life of creativity that, all too brief, was fully lived.

Jeffrey Weeks





The sumptuous appeal of the tactile

Angus Suttie was at the centre of what became known as the 'New Ceramics', a postmodern flourish in the ceramic world that was first described in Peter Dormer's book of that title published in 1986. He was an exuberant, prolific, and experimental artist who died in his forties, of Aids, in 1993. I can't think of any other clay artist who made such an impact in little more than a decade. By the time he died he had been included in major international shows and publications, and seventeen significant museum collections in the UK, Japan, Australia and Holland.

He was already 30 when he went to Camberwell School of Art in 1976 to do ceramics, after setting out to be an actor in his native Scotland. He survived some years of unrewarding interim jobs in London before he found another creative channel. And 'creative channel' turns out to be the best description for the wonderful pieces made in the last year of his life. His posthumous exhibition at Contemporary Applied Arts in 1994 was simply called Angus Suttie 1946–1993. The final group of works, many of them not yet titled, were powerful elongated pots reaching into Pre-Columbian architecture or monument, with fluid zigzagging forms and conduits. Some linked horizontally and some stacked like vertical towers or exotic trees. One on the cover of the catalogue is like a gilded monolith. They are far simpler than his earlier work. I had first seen him as an agglomerator – adding and piling up quite elaborate forms from small organic parts, and then painting over them with slips and glazes and onglaze enamel patterns. Sometimes gold lustre too on the smaller pieces, spoons and cups, a teapot, a knuckleduster ring.

One of the pleasures of writing about other artists is that you get to talk to them while they work. In 1990 I wrote a CAA leaflet for his exhibition with Sara Radstone. By then some of the early joie-de-vivre, (often with red glaze such as Doodle Plate of 1982, now in the Crafts Council Collection,) had saddened to a more earthy palette. I spent a good while talking to Angus in his studio in 1990 as he assembled a clutch of simple parts, 'cones and cylinders and cusps', to combine into a speculative, see-how-it-goes, hollow pot. The elements were made in pairs, to form an axially symmetrical whole.

But I did get to borrow that exhilarating Doodle Plate twice – first for the touring exhibition *The Raw and the Cooked* in 1993. Then I borrowed it again for *Three by One*, bringing together pieces from the three major public craft collections in the UK, curated for the Crafts Study Centre in 2012. I am delighted to see that this Ruthin exhibition will also be shown in Farnham at the CSC.

The current exhibition shows his creative energy from early to late work, largely made between 1982 and 1992, drawn from his own collection. It has been looked after since his death by his great friends. One earlier piece is the life-like head of a woman, made in 1979 – perhaps when he was still a student at Camberwell? The cups, spoons, teapots and large plates from the early eighties, with rippling coiled and painted surfaces, have a joyful brilliance.

Doodle Plate, 1982
52cm diameter



Extended Teapot Form no.55, 1991
260 x 560 x 60mm



Teapot, 1984
180 x 260 x 90mm

His work explores the thrill of colour and the plastic freedom of clay. Over the years the work became larger, more vitreous, less shiny, and quieter in colour. His later pieces touch on the poetic content of both contemporary and ancient pots; the body and the building. In this intense decade he strengthened his formal language – expressive at every stage – as his understanding of life and expectations altered.

Angus knew what he was doing, how to organise, and yet keep the underlying spontaneity. He knew where precision was needed in the structures of living – always doing his accounts at the end of every month, not in a scramble at the end of the year like most of us – and more importantly he knew how to play, through work. He stated clearly, in an interview with himself via a pretend interlocutor called Aeschylus Orton, in a Dutch catalogue of 1985, that his work combined threads of folk art and surrealism, and that it aspired to be both awkward and beautiful. This could have been the motto for most of the group that looked into ‘the conditions of pottery’ in the eighties – including Angus, Sarah Radstone, Jacqui Poncelet, Richard Sleet, Carol McNicoll, Henry Pim, Jill Crowley, Martin Smith, and me. That was the potent time for ‘New Ceramics’, and Angus’s brilliant final decade was at its core.

He was a gentle and generous friend and colleague. He wrote well, clear-headed, articulate, and polemic. In teaching, writing, and making he showed his awareness of the outside world, and of the importance of art and expressive production within a deeply imperfect situation. He looked eclectically and far afield for stimulus. Angus was especially interested in South American pottery, seeing it as the crucial manifestation of what is known about their culture and history.

During his life few of Angus’s exhibitions were solo, so this new reflection is important. His largest solo show in 1985, of 96 pieces, was Angus Suttie: The Whole Works, with Anatol Orient gallery, in a year of intense production after his partner Geoffrey Horton had died. Angus thought a lot about his work in the wider social and political context and wrote critically about what is expected of an artist in the context of capitalism’s demands for new products and new markets. ‘The importance, however, is that “forward” is not the only direction. By keeping the opportunity open of referring backwards (or sideways) in creative time, the idea of progress or perpetual revolution is not inexorable.’

And Pablo Neruda wrote in *Towards an Impure Poetry*:

‘It is good, at certain hours of the day and night, to look closely at the world of objects at rest... In them one sees the confused impurity of the human condition, the massing of things, the use and disuse of substance, footprints and fingerprints, the abiding presence of the human engulfing all artefacts, inside and out. Let that be the poetry we search for...’

I think Angus’s work encourages us to do that.

Alison Britton



Teapot, 1982
340 x 280 x 260mm



Teapot, 1984
220 x 190 x 110mm



Jug, 1982
390 x 300 x 160mm



Teapot, 1984
230 x 190mm



Jug, 1982
230 x 170 x 110mm



Plate, 1985
70 x 420mm



Cup, 1985
120 x 110mm

Cup, 1986
180 x 180 x 110mm

Cup & Saucer, 1984
140 x 170mm



Teapot, 1986
300 x 330 x 160mm



Small Open Box, 1985
60 x 90 x 60mm

Theatre Container, 1986
350 x 240 x 130mm



Upright Dish, 1986
330 x 420 x 180mm



Piece no.65 Form, 1990
600 x 550 x 210mm



Piece no.67 Form, 1990
530 x 300 x 210mm



Jug, 1987
310 x 500 x 180mm

Legacy

When the Crafts Council asked makers, curators, designers, and creative practitioners to select their favourite object from the Crafts Council Collection and to tell us why, Andrew Renton, at National Museum of Wales, chose Budgie Teapot by Angus Suttie, now on long term loan to the Cardiff museum. He explained why “Transforming a functional object into a quirky living creature is fun. In doing so, Suttie joined a distinguished tradition of ceramic humour running back through Picasso’s zoomorphic pottery to early 18th-century teapots from Meissen or Staffordshire shaped like crouching men or camels. There is a darker side to Budgie Teapot, however. It’s not only that AIDS killed Suttie at a tragically young age. The pot also embodies his anger at the politics of the day. ‘My work is saying, I don’t believe in what is happening. The government is stripping everything down to function but life is richer than that’.”

Distinguished maker and lecturer at Cardiff School of Art, Claire Curneen writes “As a student in the late 80’s I discovered Angus Suttie and found his work utterly brilliant. His pots are full of potential and they seem to suggest that they are as much about painting, as they are about pottery. As a tutor, he is the artist I point to, when my students need direction, that is why he is always contemporary and relevant. The National Museum of Wales houses one of Suttie’s pots, titled ‘budgie teapot’ and it has been crafted with wonderful intelligence. Budgie Teapot sits in a case alongside some other contemporary ceramics of the 80’s and 90’s and although you sense the new movement in ceramics within this collection, Suttie stands out as being different, you could call him a ‘boarder dweller’, but then I’ve always loved an outsider.”



Sharon Blakey, now senior lecturer at Manchester School of Art, recalls her first encounter with Angus’s work. “Irreverent. That’s the word that first came to mind when I was trying to work Suttie out as a student in the mid 80’s. And yet, as quickly voiced, as quickly dismissed as incongruent. For yes, he was irreverent, but he didn’t appear disrespectful. Suttie’s vessels, paid homage to the materiality of clay and ceramics as both subject and discipline. He wasn’t averse to tradition either, choosing to work with archetypal and domestic forms – the teapot, the toast rack, the ladle – as a vehicle for his riotous imagination.

He confounded and intrigued in equal measure – whichever word I chose was swiftly counteracted. Abstract, but figurative: pottery, yet painting; witty, but serious. Ugly? Perhaps, but in an utterly beguiling way. In form, his objects were of the moment, yet his surfaces evinced the muted palette of ancient civilisations. His vessels had the ability to transport. And dangerously provocative too – handles suggestively phallic, postures gender fluid. Was that a wry smile scratched there? His work was both risky and risqué.

In trying to place a finger, a thought emerged; Suttie’s objects could not be contained by mere words. They spoke to the viscera. Oh wow, he left me breathless! Hairs rising, heart pumping – the tingle factor. Contemplating his work began a lifelong excitement for clay and a passion for the rich narrative and meaning that could be brought to object making. That’s why I loved him then – and why I still do now.”



Budgie Teapot, 1985
Crafts Council Collection,
on loan to National Museum Wales
Photo: Robin Maggs

Drawing of Budgie Teapot, 2018
by Claire Curneen
(on display at National Museum Wales)

Reflections

I met Angus in 1983 when I shared a house in Brixton with Sara Radstone. Sara and Angus worked at 4016 Workshops where I set up studio. Angus and I had an immediate connection – we were both Scots living in London. His complex work was a revelation to me, reminding me of ceramics I’d seen in California – Frimkess, Baccera, Nagle, – rich surfaces, exuberant marks, bright colours. Layers of slips, glaze, enamel, lustre and sometimes messages of love. On our commissioned mug he incised “I love your lovely smile”. He had amazing energy, wisdom, generosity and sensitivity. Angus was like no one else I’ll ever know.

Jennifer Lee

Angus’s work embodied his dream of a better world, one of inclusiveness, equality and opportunities for joy. Who knows what he would have made of the times we find ourselves in now? But make something he surely would. His vibrant explorations of form, rooted in reverence for the origins and language of pottery, were, in his later work, moving towards a more solemn expression; the colours, still rich and layered, more muted, the journey of interconnected volumes increasingly questioning. Sharing a studio and exhibiting together provided an inspirational lesson in how to be an artist - his dedication, his cheerful spirit, his generosity: holistic, warm, totally committed, and still so dearly missed.

Sara Radstone

Angus was an inventive craftsman with a keen eye for detail, surface treatment, and for overall form. However, he didn’t rely on predictable motifs to establish a trademark ‘look’ for his work. He mastered his ideas and techniques too quickly to stay put, but although his work changed rapidly, it was always recognisably his.

His eclectic store of reference ideas extended far beyond the range of traditional pottery. His hand-building collage technique was, evolved in order to surprise both himself and his audience. He was transgressive, but with a subtle understanding of the rules that he was challenging.

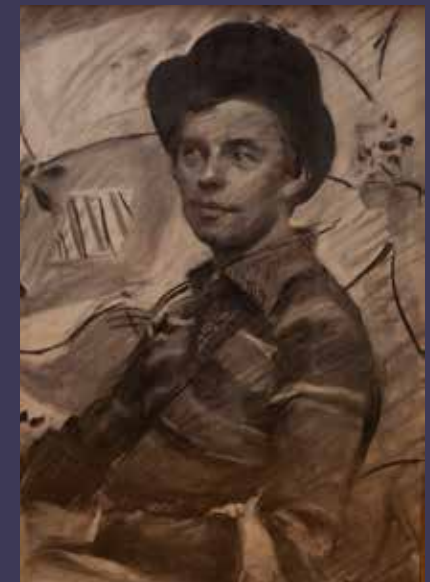
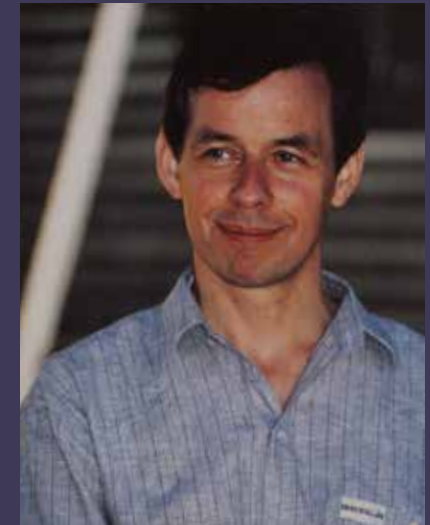
Henry Pim

left: Angus Suttie in his studio, c. late 1980s
Photographer unknown

above: Angus Suttie, 1988
Photographer unknown

Drawing of Angus Suttie by Howard J. Morgan, 1982
Drawing part of the Angus Suttie estate

Spoon, 1983 (detail)
200 x 80 x 40mm



Biography

1946 Born Tealing, Scotland, 26 November
 1975–1979 Trained at Camberwell School of Art, London
 1979–1980 Teacher Training, Whitelands College, Putney, London
 1981 Awarded Crafts Council Setting-Up Grant
 1981–1992 Teaching at Morley College and Camberwell School of Art
 1981–1992 Studio artist
 1993 Died, London, 17 June

Solo Exhibitions

1983 'Cups', ICA Sideshow
 'Plates, Sculptures, Teapots and Cups', Craft Shop at the V & A Museum, London
 1985 'The Whole Works', Anatol Orient Gallery, London
 1896 Craft Centre, Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester
 1987 'Jugs', Craft Council Shop at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London
 1994 'Angus Suttie 1946-1993', Contemporary Applied Arts, London
 1995 'Angus Suttie 1946-1993', The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
 1995 'Angus Suttie: A Retrospective', Museum Het Kruithuis, 's-Hertogenbosch
 2000 'Angus Suttie (1946-1993)', Aberdeen Art Gallery

Selected Group Exhibitions

1981 Cale Art, London
 Lamport Hall, Oxfordshire
 1982 'The Maker's Eye', Crafts Council Gallery, London
 '401½: Past and Present', British Crafts Centre, London
 1983 'Rings', Aspects, London; Spektrum, Munich; Wilhelm Mattar Gallery, Cologne
 'Designer's Choice', Westminster Gallery, Boston, USA
 1984 'New Spirit of Omega', Craft Shop at the V&A, London
 'Cross Currents', The Power House Museum, Sydney, Australia
 'British Ceramics', Bratislava, Prague and Brno, Czechoslovakia
 1985 'British Ceramics', 's-Hertogenbosch, Holland
 'New Tradition', British Crafts centre and tour
 'Boxes', Galerie de Sluis, Leidschendam, Holland and tour
 1986 'British Ceramics', Dorothy Weiss Gallery, San Francisco, USA
 'British Ceramics', Marianne Heller Gallery, Heidelberg, Germany
 'Rituals of Tea', Garth Clark Gallery, London
 1987 'Camberwell Ceramics', Paul Rice Gallery, London
 'Cloth Clay and Wood', British Council Touring Exhibition to South America
 'Jugs, Pitchers and Ewers', Martha Schneider Gallery, Illinois, USA
 1988 'London / Amsterdam: New Art Objects', Crafts Council Gallery, London and
 Galerie de Witte Voet and Galerie Ra, Amsterdam
 'Sotheby's Decorative Arts Award Exhibition', London and Tokyo, Japan
 'East-West Contemporary Ceramics Exhibition', Seoul, Korea and Hong Kong
 1989 'Tea Party', Oxford Gallery, Oxford
 'Change and Metaphor', Marianne Heller Gallery, Heidelberg, Germany
 Guest Exhibition, International Ceramics Festival, Mino Japan
 1990 'Sara Radstone and Angus Suttie', Contemporary Applied Arts
 'British Design Exhibition', Mitsukoshi, Tokyo, Japan
 'British Ceramics in Norway', Bergen, Trondheim and Oslo
 1991 'The Abstract Vessel', Oriol Cardiff and tour
 'Colours of Earth', British Council Touring Exhibition, India
 'Metamorphosis of Contemporary Ceramics', Shigaraki, Japan
 'The Banqueting Table', Galerie Ra, Amsterdam
 1993 'The Raw and Cooked', MOMA, Oxford and tour
 2007–18 'Deviants', Crafts Council Touring Exhibition
 2017 'Making Out 67-17', Solent Showcase Gallery, Southampton
 2017–18 'Things of Beauty Growing. British Studio Pottery', Yale Centre for British Art,
 New Haven, and Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Public Collections

Crafts Council, London; Ulster Museum, Belfast; Hertford County Collection; Australia Crafts Board, Sydney; 's-Hertogenbosch Museum, Netherlands; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Aberystwyth University, School of Art Gallery; Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery; Bolton Museum and Art Gallery; Paisley Museum; Bedford County Council; Museum Boymans-Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands; National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan; Public Collection, Royston, Hertfordshire; Essex County Council; Cleveland Crafts Centre, Middlesbrough; The British Council Collection; Museum of Contemporary Ceramic Art, Shigaraki, Japan.

Publications

In addition to books and catalogues published to accompany the above exhibitions, the other selected publications include:

Angus Suttie 'New Ceramicists' Crafts, No 59 November/ December 1982
 Emmanuel Cooper 'Teasing the Imagination', Ceramic Review No 94 July / August 1985
 Peter Dormer 'Made in Britain', Kunsthandwerk, Berlin, 1986
 Peter Dormer 'Structural Logic', Crafts No 88 September/ October 1987
 Rafael Salinas Calado 'International Ceramics Symposium, Alcobaca', AR CO Lisbon 1987
 Peter Dormer 'The New Ceramics', Thames and Hudson, London 1987
 Paul Rice & Christopher Gowing 'British Studio Ceramics in the 20th Century',
 Barrie & Jenkins 1989
 Tanya Harrod 'Sara Radstone and Angus Suttie', Crafts No 104 May/June 1990
 David Jones 'Tea and Its Vessels', Ceramic Review No 140 March/ April 1993
 Emmanuel Cooper Angus Suttie 1946 – 1993', Ceramic Review No 143 September/ October 1993
 Sara Radstone 'Obituary: Angus Suttie', Crafts No 124 September/ October 1993
 Deborah Norton 'In Memoriam: Angus Suttie 1946 -1993', Studio Pottery No 5, October/
 November 1993
 Essays by Jeffrey Weeks, Emmanuel Cooper, Alison Britton, Anatol Orient, Sara Radstone,
 Scott Chamberlin, in Angus Suttie 1946-1993, Contemporary Applied Arts 1994
 Gregor White 'Angus Suttie 1946-1993' Ceramic Review no. 187, January/February 2001

Selected Writing By Angus Suttie

'From Latent to Blatant: A Personal Account', Gay Left issue 2, Spring 1976
 'Gillian Lowndes; The Dangerous Edge of Things', Crafts No 75 July/ August 1985
 'Gamma City', Crafts No 79 March/ April 1986
 'Sara Radstone', Ceramic Review No 81 July/ August 1986
 'Raku Then and Now', Crafts No 83 November/ December 1986
 'Steven Forster' and 'Rosa Quy' in 'New Spirit' catalogue, Crafts Council, London 1987
 'George Walker and Steven Forster; Inner Visions', Crafts No 85 March/ April 1987
 'Functional Pottery', Crafts No 86 May/ June 1987
 'Alison Britton', Ceramic Review No 107 September/ ?October 1987
 The Preliminary Papers for 'The Vessel Forum', Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, London 1987
 'Radstone and Henderson', 'Six Ways' catalogue, Anatol Orient Gallery, London 1988
 'Colin Person', Crafts No 91 March/ April 1988
 'Change and Metaphor', Kunst und Handwerk May/ June 1989
 'Traditions', Ceramic Review No 117 May/ June 1989
 'Ian Godfrey', Crafts No 102 January/ February 1990

Selected Websites

<http://visualarts.britishcouncil.org/collection/artists/suttie-angus-1946>
<http://onviewonline.craftscouncil.org.uk/4040/object/P372>
https://asuartmuseum.asu.edu/sites/default/files/suttie_angus_biography.pdf
<http://www.oxfordceramics.com/angus-suttie>
<http://www.ceramics-aberystwyth.com/taking-tea-angus-suttie.php> Aberystwyth University;
 "Taking Tea" exhibit
<http://www.bmagic.org.uk/objects/1997L24> Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery "Funerary
 Vase" by Angus Suttie
<http://www.gayleft1970s.org/issues/issue02.asp> Angus Suttie. "From Latent to Blatant: A Personal
 Account." Gay Left issue 2 (Spring 1976):5-7



Vase, 1988
 530 x 230mm



Acknowledgements

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Simon Olding, Director, Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts.

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front & back cover
Loving Cup, 1985
160 x 200mm

inside front cover
Vase, 1984 (detail)
260 x 200mm

Piece no.52 Tall Form, 1991 (detail)





MICHAEL OBRIEN: IN NIGERIA

2 JANUARY - 27 APRIL 2019

HANDLIST

MICHAEL OBRIEN: IN NIGERIA

This exhibition, curated by Professor Simon Olding and Professor Magdalene Odundo, is comprised of ceramics (with some textiles) from the important collection drawn together by Michael OBrien.

The ceramics explore his deep and resourceful fascination with pots made in Africa, and most especially in Nigeria. In addition, the exhibition is used to encourage a critical reflection on OBrien's own ceramics, which are less well known. We can see Africa in them, too.



RWANDA

Rwanda's pot from Tribal Gathering
H 9½" x W 5"



GIRI MARKET NEAR ABUJA, NIGERIA

Earthenware unglazed teapot
H 5"
Decorated geometric patterns.



MURTALA @ MARABA

Vase
H 7" x W 3"
Jun glaze blue pigment painting of birds & grasses.



HAMZA AND STEPHEN MHYA

Cereal bowl
2" x 6½"
Made in Bwari, jun glaze, nuka glaze and iron painting.



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Small covered bowl
Glaze test. White slip over 'African clay' glaze not recorded.



DANLAMI ALIYU

Lidded straight sided jug
Plant pattern in iron and yellow pigments.



ASIBI IDO

Flat lidded bowl
H 3" x Dia. 6½"
Made in Abuja about 1970 lid damaged and repaired White slip sgraffito, Abuja clear porcelain glaze.



BAWA USHAFA

Large teapot
7" x 7"
Black slip over dark body with Jun glaze over. Made at the Pottery Training Centre Abuja, before 1962. BUA and Abuja stamps. Exhibited at the Berkeley Gallery, 1961.



DANLAMI ALIYU

Teapot
Dia. 8"
White slip, Wenford 'standard' slip-glaze, iron painting, cane handle and two loops for cane. Wenford and DA stamps.



DANLAMI ALIYU

White conical teapot
H 8"
White high silica glaze. Decorated abstract pattern.



WILLIAM STAITE-MURRAY

Vase
Iron painting on clay with iron pyrites. (Bloating on the bottom.)



NORA BRADEN

Jar
H 6½" x W 8"
Turned, hollowed out foot. Ash glaze painted decoration.



KATHARINE PLEYDELL-BOUVERIE

Bowl
H 6"
Matt lime (?) glaze with crackle inside. Notable throwing rings.



KATHARINE PLEYDELL-BOUVERIE

Small fluted bowl
H 3" x W 2½"
Spiral fluting under a nearly matt green glaze.



URSULA MOMMENS

Small coffee mug



SHOJI HAMADA

Tea bowl
H 4¼" x W 4¼"
Nuka glaze, white and shiny where fly ash has hit. 'A very interesting example of a nuka glaze. The glaze became the yardstick of nuka glazes when I eventually discovered how to make them.' Michael OBrien



HENRY HAMMOND

Two small bowls

'These bowls were bought from the Amalgam Gallery, Barnes in 1979. Painted with iron and a blue pigment, then waxed, given a wash of iron and then glazed. I would think both come from the same firing but one oxidised the other in reduction and

perhaps a little hotter. Henry gave me a lot of help with no obligation to do so as I was not his student. I thought it would be a nice to acknowledge this with these two very nice bowls.'

Michael OBrien



BERNARD LEACH

Large lidded bowl

Dia. 12¼" x H 11½"
With pale glaze semi-matt over iron slip.



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Dinner plate (coupe)

'Standard glaze' over white slip Cardew pattern has been modified to suggest rain on Bodmin Moor.



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Dinner plate (coupe)

Standard glaze over white slip with Cardew pattern. No slip on the back just thin standard glaze on body. Stamped Wenford and MOB.

'One plate here, part of a set of dinner plates, is a nice example of Cardew's slip glaze, as good on the back as the front – but it took me a long time to learn to use it properly, i.e., add a little more water to make it thinner than anything I had used before. The pattern on three of the plates is Cardew's. It was suggestive of landscape. The fourth I turned on its side and added vertical lines – Rain on Bodmin Moor. Looking at the pattern again it is basically the same as the one Bernard Leach used on his big lidded bowl [in this same case], an oriental symbol of friendship: the origin of Cardew's pattern, maybe.'

Michael OBrien



MICHAEL CARDEW

Plate

Dia. 8"
Iron brushwork of a bird on oatmeal glaze (Wenford stamp only).



MICHAEL CARDEW

Covered dish

The lid may be used as a bowl. Smooth body made at Vume, Ghana. Dark body smooth glaze.



MICHAEL CARDEW

Storage jar

H 15½" x W 12"



MICHAEL CARDEW

Large plate

Dia. 16½" x H 3"
White slip combed with 'river' pattern/basket pattern. Wenford 'standard' slip-glaze, about 1972.



'Made in Ushafa from a rather non-plastic, fairly fine-grained clay. The pots have to be made quite thickly, but as they are used for carrying water (as well as storing it) they are scraped and burnished inside to reduce their weight. They are decorated traditionally with grass 'combs' (four short lengths of stiff thatching grass held between the fingers) and a knotted bone 'comb', but this pot more recently made was decorated almost entirely with a pointed

tool imitating the characteristic slight curve of the bone comb and the slight emphasis made at the beginning of its mark. The careful burnishing of the shapes between the motifs is still evident giving this pot the same character as older pots even though new more varied patterns have replaced some of the traditional patterns.'

Michael OBrien



'A small pot from Kwali, made around 1970, given by Ladi Kwali to my mother when she visited Kwali. It probably came from a house belonging to one of Ladi's relatives because it has been used for some time, as there are only a few traces left of the rice starch painted onto the pot when it was new, and may be the work of a young woman, this being a scaled-down version of the traditional water pot. In a few places one can see where the roulette infilling

between the outlines of the pattern has been missed when the negative shapes were burnished. The straight panels were probably drawn first then tapering ones added between them, a very simple pattern showing how the young woman was taught. Interesting speculation, but nothing compared with the effect of the whole.'

Michael OBrien



'I bought this pot in London. It is well burnished and decorated around the neck with horizontal bands of impressed diagonal marks finished with a more open pattern at the bottom which show more clearly that the marks were impressed with a small tool not a roulette.'

Michael OBrien



Bida beer pot

'The pot was probably made in Tatiko or Beji by Gbari women potters and sold in Bida. The 'cup' acts as a funnel in making beer. The pot after making has been decorated with a millet cob roulette to make an overall pattern over which horizontal lines have been made by the potter walking backwards round the pot, the some of the spaces between the bands of lines have been filled with fairly narrowly-spaced cross hatching lines, leaving occasional spaces originally painted with

laterite slip and then burnished. The addition of bands of small coils which have been notched is still done today in Tatiko (but not Beji) which suggests it was made in Tatiko.'

Michael OBrien

Another reading of the pot is that it is a pitcher derived from a gourd made by the Nupe people whose crafts centered on Bida. See a similar example in Sylvia Leith-Ross, *Nigerian Pottery* (Ibadan University Press, 1970), cat. 144.



Beji pot

'A large pot from Beji, very like this one formed the display in the window of the last of the three well known and important exhibitions of pottery 'Michael Cardew and Pupils' in London in 1961. Probably put there at Cardew's suggestion, as a tribute to the local village and to acknowledge the skill and refinement of achievement. Cardew visited Beji and gave the impression that he was particularly impressed by the pottery made there. The shape and style of Beji pottery is very similar to that of Tatiko. I have not been there so I do not know if there are just a few potters there, firing their pots individually like Zuyari in Gwi, or as many as in Tatiko who have communal firings of several hundred pots

fired in clamps which take hours to build but take only 30 to 40 minutes to fire, each woman (and her children) bringing pots on their heads or fuel to add to the heaps of grass and sticks.

One may wonder that an object as simple and utilitarian as a water pot, so beautifully made, is given such an austere form and sophisticated surface, but in the traditional villages in this area, mud huts and the texture of grass roofs and swept mud paths provide a focus and answer peoples' aesthetic instincts which in other places is satisfied by colour and variety.'

Michael OBrien



Water pot, Gwi

'This water pot has an unusually conical short neck which emphasises the rounded shape of the body of the pot. The neck is entirely covered by deeply drawn horizontal lines with a line of surprisingly deep indentations in the middle, and where the neck joins to form the main body of the pot there is a wide band of rouletted texture outlined and with groups of three lines drawn into it.

made by a seed roulette and a pattern of parallel lines drawn over it. The pot was made in Gwi by a potter called Zuyari. She may use the same motif and technique on several pots, including the partner pot displayed here, and the result can be as vivid as a series of pots made by Michael Cardew, both using small differences in proportion to create very different effects. The use of a seed roulette gives an entirely different effect from a string roulette or the cross-hatching used by Ladi Kwali.'

Michael OBrien

The main body of the pot is decorated with a formalised geometric pattern derived from a lizard. The outlines have been filled in with the texture



Water pot

'A water pot with a short conical neck made by Zuyari. Two deep grooves of horizontal lines around the neck with one band of notched indentations over roulette and a wider band of texture where the pot joins the neck. The texture with groups of three lines drawn onto it.'

Michael OBrien



Cooking pot, Tatiko

'A globular pot with a characteristic strongly shaped rim, flattened at an angle and with horizontal lines and a narrow burnished line of red clay. The entire body has been covered with a millet-husk roulette texture. On the top half there are two thin notched coils with a series of bands drawn on the clay between them: a band with a pattern of diagonal hatching above it, and above that a wide band

of individually drawn horizontal lines, then the series repeated. The bands with diagonal hatching have small prominences or areas of burnished slip to break the circular character of the design all together making a complex sophisticated surface'.

Michael OBrien

A similar Nupe example is illustrated in Leith-Ross, Nigerian Pottery, cat 554.



MICHAEL CARDEW

Set of four stem cups

Each H 5" x Dia. 5"
Zircon glaze Iron brushwork. Made at Wenford about 1973, all have Wenford and Michael Cardew stamps.



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Coffee jug

H 7½" x Dia. 4½"
With trough spout white slip standard glaze Made at Wenford 1973, Wenford and MOB stamps.



MICHAEL CARDEW

Pair of hot milk jugs (with lids)

Slip glazed with 'Guinness Brown' sgraffito. Exhibited at Abuja exhibition 1961.



MICHAEL CARDEW

Medium jug

Made at Winchcombe, Galena glaze over white slip. Leaf motif drawn into the slip.



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Small square dish

6½" x 6½" x 2"
Pattern taken from Kuba cloth. 'The design inspired by a piece of Kuba cloth [shown in the exhibition on the far left side] very difficult and complicated to make – an example of looking too much at the original and being dominated by it: imitating it instead of making something new'.
Michael OBrien



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Butter dish

Black slip then roulette Jun glaze with sgraffito. Iron painting.



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Small square dish
126 glaze and Healy's 'red' (black on black).



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Small square dish
B30 glaze + 148/9 + oak bard (matt).



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Butter dish
Jun glaze + iron.



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Medium size square dish
12" x 12"



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Medium size square dish
12" x 12"
Jun glaze + iron painting (loan of Philip Wood).



**LADI KWALI
MADE IN ABUJA**

Large 'floating bowl'

Dia. 13" x H 3¼"

Black slip under Jun glaze.

'This bowl was thrown on a kick wheel by Ladi Kwali. It is a good one. Ladi's position in Nigeria is important enough that it is worthwhile reflecting on the circumstances of making it. Ladi Kwali is a traditional potter taught to make pottery most likely by her aunt because according to traditional wisdom it is better for a girl to be taught by an aunt rather than by her own mother. By the time Cardew first visited Abuja in 1951 she was already well-known locally as a potter, for there, in the Emir's palace was a group of her pots. How locally known? Well beyond the local villages as she had become known to the Emir (ruler of an area bigger than Yorkshire). At the start of Abuja Pottery, only men were employed because involving machinery (a potter's wheel) was considered traditionally "men's work". But Cardew was anxious to establish links with the pottery in the villages (where being a potter was "women's work") and having seen Ladi's work in the palace he discussed with the Emir the possibility of her working in the pottery. Against her inclinations she agreed to do so, but left after a short time and Cardew had to ask the Emir to persuade her to

return. The Emir did so. With her experience in handling clay she soon mastered the kickwheel and threw pots. For a number of reasons, but mainly because he was so enthusiastic about the village pots, Cardew asked Ladi to make a few pots in the traditional Kwali manner but using stoneware clay so they could be glazed. As they were to be fired higher their walls would need to be made thicker, so that the traditional way of decorating, cutting quite deeply into the clay, did not cause cracks to open up and split the pot. These pots when finished were far too heavy to function as water pots and too expensive for any one but an expatriate to buy and use as decoration, but in the galleries of London and Paris they caused a sensation and Ladi Kwali became known world wide.

This bowl, unlike the glazed "water pots" where Ladi had to go against her instincts as a maker of functional ware was made free from any functional consideration, free to explore shape and decoration as she wished. Some generous impulse prompted her to make it bigger and grander than any made before.'

Michael OBrien



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Earthenware vase

H 8" x W 7"

Made after seeing Ladi Kwali demonstrate at Farnham, at Humphrey Perkins School, Leicestershire.



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Vase

H 8¼" x Dia. 7½"

Pikes number 6 ball clay... sgraffiato decoration, earthenware alkaline frit glaze, made at Humphrey Perkins school. Michael OBrien made these vases after seeing Ladi Kwali demonstrate at the Farnham Art School in 1963.



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Large dish with two handles

White slip and zircon glaze, decorated blue pigment and iron, made at Wenford Bridge about 1976.



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Small bowl

Dobles clay, white slip zircon glaze decorated with iron and blue pigment.



DANLAMI ALIYU

Storage jar

H 8¼" x W 6"
Decorated pale blue/iron and dots of yellow pigment.



DANLAMI ALIYU

Casserole

'A white silica glaze that Danlami particularly enjoyed using'.
Michael OBrien



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Glaze tests

Nine small glaze test bowls made from the test tiles numbers 7, 15, 32 and 55. The two larger bowls show the next stage of glaze development before being put onto larger pots. The square dish had an unsatisfactory glaze which led to Obrien's glaze test series 149. He is still working on this glaze.



DANLAMI ALIYU
(AT ADDLESTEAD FARM)

Set of three plates

D 8½"
Black shiny glaze with white Nuka brushed on.



DANLAMI ALIYU

Plate

Dia. 15"

126.14 glaze with white and yellow Nuka, iron and yellow pigments (made at Addlestead Farm, 2010. 'Danlami Aliyu made this plate on a visit to England around 2005. The character of the black glaze is given to it by the use of Selborne clay as one of its ingredients but the colour of the 'petals' around the rim come from two 'nuka' glazes. They are made

with rice-husk ash brought from Nigeria. One of them has reacted strongly with the underlying Selborne black glaze producing broken white to blue colours; the other with more clay in it is more stable and the brushstrokes a yellower colour. Both nuka glazes take their inspiration from Hamada's tea bowl also on show in the exhibition.'

Michael OBrien



MICHAEL OBRIEN

Photograph Album from Nigeria.



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