

San Fernando Valley State College

DISTORTED CERAMIC BOWL FORMS
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WITH AN EXPLANATION OF PAINTED CERAMIC SCULPTURE

An abstract submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in

Art

by

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ABSTRACT

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For some 4,000 years, potters have formed clay ware on the potter's wheel. Until 1950, pottery had been catagorized as conservative utilitarian forms. However, during the last 15 years an innovation has developed: forming shapes on the wheel then distorting or manipulating the forms. This radical change was due mainly to the experimentation initiated by Peter Voulkos. He felt clay could be used as a more plastic media of expression by expanding clay to its limitations.

My first impression of these distorted flat bowl forms, imitating the Voulkos method, were that they were torn and haphazerdly jammed or stuck together. In the case of the beginner, this may be true for due to a lack of skill he could not anticipate a final product and would accept accidents. This mode of expression facilitates an inexperienced individual's mistakes and mutilated clay can be rationalized into a said original means of expression. I disagree with this means of expression. So called works of art from this procedure are just products of misplaced energy which could be better utilized into study, careful planning, and execution. Consequently, during my

investigations I found complete control, planning, experimenting was needed to achieve the goal.

Although my works appear to be spontaneous or accidental, the thoughts and actions were carefully calculated in advance. The result is in no way related to the original forming techniques; it has lost its traditional forms, and as such, has become a new direction of expression.

I used the pottery wheel as a tool, as this was the most effective method to make the desired forms, then the pieces were distorted. I found it more stimulating to experiment with a simple bowl form, to deform it and cut it in various ways, to progress from the simple form as it comes off the pottery wheel.

The project which I attempted to solve was to break away from the traditional bowl form and experiment with the distorted circular form. The works which I have presented are characteristic of this. The basic form was distorted in various ways to investigate the effects of manipulating and working surfaces and surface textures together and to contrast them, yet still maintain the circular form. I have found that changing more than forty per cent of an edge leads to technical and aesthetic problems. The edges crack and lose support from cutting and subsequent drying. Then circular composition loses the aesthetic effect of the circular form if you try to go beyond the forty per cent limitation.

Contrast was achieved by two means:

1. The glazing techniques, which were employed, were used to contrast accentuated parts of a form

against the whole. Super-imposed glazes tend to magnify the depth of the texture. This effect was brought about with the pouring technique.

2. Application of coloring oxides was used to emphasize the distorted edges. Iron oxide, cobalt oxide, and Rutile were found to be most successful. A brush application of these materials proved most effective. The brush was dipped in oxide or Rutile and then shaken dry. In this way a dry-brushlike effect is attained.

CONCLUSION:

The seven manipulated bowls were selected from forty to fifty pieces which dealt with my stated problem. I have attempted to experiment with expansion of clay as a planned and studied project. Manipulation and distortion from the basic circular form created certain problems which require different techniques in manipulating the clay, in glazing, and brush technique. I feel results, effects, and knowledge gained through projected planning is not achieved from the haphazard extreme expansion of clay in the hands of the inexperienced. Far beyond these mere seven bowls is the sense of accomplishment gained from creating ceramic forms climaxed from training, experimentation, and diligent work.

PAINTED CERAMIC SCULPTURES:

Painted clay sculptures are not new, artifacts dated before Christ have been discovered in Afghanistan. As a strict rule, clay sculptures are not created for paint. My works are. In fact, I chose the colors and procured the paint even before wedging the clay. Patterns and color designs to emphasize the form were pre-planned before I made the sculpture. However, these works are intended for the painting presented and, I feel, could not express my intentions effectively. These border the realm of humor and novelty. Pure, bright colors were one of my goals and painting was my sole avenue of attaining this.

One example, the eight ball sculpture might be considered the epitome of my idea, painted sculpture. It seems to me that an eight ball has an aura all its own. Perhaps it personifies a break from conformity. A clay eight ball can only approach the pool table reality through the media of paint.

Furthermore, as some sculpture should be left in the natural fired state of glazed, some should be painted. Ideas, expressions, effects tempered by the individual should determine the presented choice of finish. The various painted clay sculptures are products of planned experimentation.