

argilos

June 2010

Ceramic Newsletter

- Jeff Oestreich October workshop
- John Shirley talks china
- East Cape potters re-launch
- Glaze mishaps diagnosed
- Lydia Holmes: Behind the brew
- New Books, Reviews & more

ceramics southern africa
eastern cape



Hello and welcome to the first issue of our newsletter of the brand new branch of Ceramics Southern Africa. The Eastern Cape has become the fourth regional branch of this ceramic collective. I hope you will utilise the benefits of your membership to the fullest and enjoy the interaction with like-minded people.

The National exhibition (entry forms included) will be in October and it's never too early to start working on your entries. Selection will be on the 25th September in P.E. straight after the John Shirley workshop.

Jeff Oestreich, the Award Judge for the Nationals will be in P.E. on Monday 4th October for a full day workshop. These are opportunities to see two incredible craftsmen at work. It is unfortunate the dates are so close, but plan ahead and make sure you attend both workshops.

The Regional Exhibitions in November will be the next chance for you to exhibit your work. This will be a selected exhibition with a number of merit awards.

This newsletter 'Argilos' will be our main communication with you, informing you of events organized by the committee but it is also a platform for you to share your own news of exhibitions and other relevant events. For those of you who are wondering the meaning of the word 'Argilos'- it is the ancient classical Greek work for clay. Please let us know your opinions, requests and we shall do our best to give you an association that delivers the goods!

Here's to many great potting events for our region!

Margie Higgs, chairperson

Note from the treasurer

If anyone has info on a "Walter Sispay" please contact Janice Rautenbach by email at janicerautenbach@gmail.com



***Beyond Objects* exhibition: Clay, but not as you know it.**

Eastern Cape - that "little" part of South Africa with a landscape, accent and pace of life which defines a cultural group particularly unique unto their own. Now, though some people believe nothing much happens on the cultural front in this neck of the woods- the only way to have more things happen within the Eastern Cape is to be proactive and intentional in this quest... and so just, was the Ceramics Southern Africa Eastern Cape re-established.

Eastern Cape ceramists as a collective group, but separate entity in Ceramics Southern Africa, was re-launched in March and introduced themselves through an exhibition entitled *Beyond Objects*. The exhibition took place at the Red Earth Gallery in Port Elizabeth, between the 17th and 29th of May 2010. It showcased works from students, young ceramic artists, potters as well as well-known ceramists like Donvé Branch and Charmaine Haines. Each exhibitor showed between one to five pieces which allowed for a varied display of contemporary work.

The show was opened by Margie Higgs, the Chairperson of Ceramics Southern Africa-Eastern Cape. Thereafter guest speaker and adjudicator Peter Swartz, a man well known in Port Elizabeth cultural circles, commented on the quality of Eastern Cape ceramics and announced Lydia Holmes as the winner of the Ceramic Southern Africa - Award of Excellence. Holmes' organic forms entitled 'Eyjafjallajökull and friends' made use of a technique called *obavaru* which makes use of a yeast brew to create interesting textured pieces after their firing. (Read more about Lydia in our profile article elsewhere in the magazine).



*The Red Earth Gallery
at the Ceramic Department of the
Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth*



*Left to right : Lee Hensberg vase, Delphine Niez vessel,
Janice Rautenbach vase, Afrobot segment bowl.*

David Moss, who works and gives lessons from his Port Elizabeth studio, revealed his latest work- rounded porcelain containers which carry detailed African landscape on their lids. Their textural, marble like surface draws the viewer close and I had to restrain myself from wanting to touch the work and try out the Baobab tree handle.

Lee Hensberg showed two

pieces which pay homage to Frida Kahlo whereby she uses clay as a 'canvas' for her intricate and decorative paint work.

Janice Rautenbach proposes very delicate and intriguing work. The extreme thinness of her pieces is astonishing and the way she refers and appropriates herself to the traditional cobalt décor is very interesting.

Delphine Niez is a French

ceramist who has been living in Port Elizabeth for the past seven years. She works with the 'memory' of the clay, traces of presence and disappearance. She combines the clay with different natural elements such as flowers and seed pods that burn away during the firing process leaving a delicate imprint.

Bianca Whitehead's decorative large vases were also part of the

exhibition. Her use of leaf, thorn, and branch-like sculptural decorative additions show her very personal interest in the organic world.

Nicholas Hauser (Afbrot)- recently relocated to Port Elizabeth from Kampala via Joburg - uses bowls to illustrate his thoughts. He has always revered the great masks, totems and fetish sculptures of Africa and

is inordinately fond of old cartoon and tin robots. His naively handled pieces show beneath the childlike result, a rich and ironic universe.

So, beyond this moment may ceramics become more than just objects, rather attributes and a display of the unique talent to be found in this wonderful part of South Africa- the Eastern Cape.

Delphine Niez & Janice Rautenbach

John Shirley and the art of China comes to Port Elizabeth.

South African contemporary ceramist John Shirley is the travelling judge for the Ceramics Southern Africa National Exhibition this year. On the occasion of his visit to Port Elizabeth, he has kindly accepted to hold a workshop.

Artist's statement:

"I have been working with clay since 1970. Having always been drawn to its translucent and ethereal qualities I worked mainly in porcelain for a number of years. My current work is in Bone China which due to its exceptional translucency seems to be the perfect material for the expression of my ideas. The work is decorated with a combination of wax resist and soluble metallic salts, which permeate the body and create a 'watercolor' effect."

The workshop will take place at the Ceramic Department of the NMMU on Saturday 25th of September 2010, from 9am -12am. Cost: R100 for members and R150 for non-members. (Price includes tea and refreshments). Call Delphine on 072 020-9589 to make bookings.



*John Shirley
Bone china vessels with soluble salts*

Well-known American ceramist Jeff Oestreich, is the Award Judge for the Ceramics Southern Africa National Exhibition of this year.

After graduating in ceramics at the University of Minnesota, Jeff Oestreich moved to England and apprenticed for two years with Bernard Leach. Jeff conducts workshops and exhibits nationally and internationally. He has won

numerous International awards such as 2001 Career Opportunity Grant, Minnesota States Art Board, Honorable Mention at the first International World Ceramic Biennial Competition held in Korea. Of his work, Jeff says:

"The subject matter of my work is function. Of concern to me is how my pottery operates in a domestic setting, both physically and aesthetically. Initially all my

work is thrown, later to be altered using a variety of techniques, often traditional ones modified to suit my ideas. My current firing method is soda firing, a contemporary version of a 16th century German process where a sodium compound is introduced into the kiln as it reaches 2300 degrees fahrenheit. The sodium interacts with the glaze and produces a varied surface, which is often unpre-

dictable. It is this element of risk that drives my work.

For several decades my central source of inspiration came from historical pottery of the Far East, England and Europe. A trip to New Zealand ten years ago introduced me to Art Deco architecture with its abundance of geometric and playful detail. This has become a dominant theme in my work."

This workshop is a unique chance

for you to meet and learn from Jeff Oestreich. Don't miss it. In the meantime you can learn more about his work by visiting

www.oestreichpottery.com

The workshop will take place at the Ceramic Dept of the NMMU on Monday the 4th of October 2010, from 9am until 4pm. Cost R200 for members and R250 for non-members (price includes tea and a light lunch).

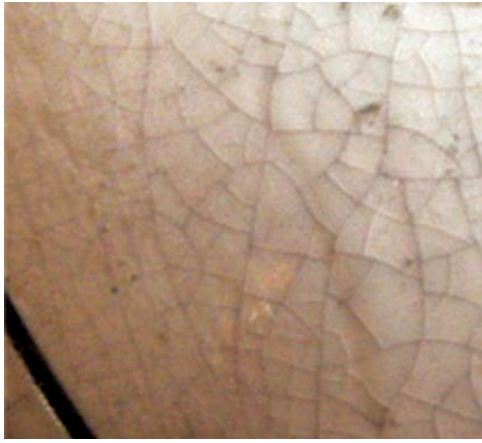
Jeff Oestreich. Soda (without the pop).



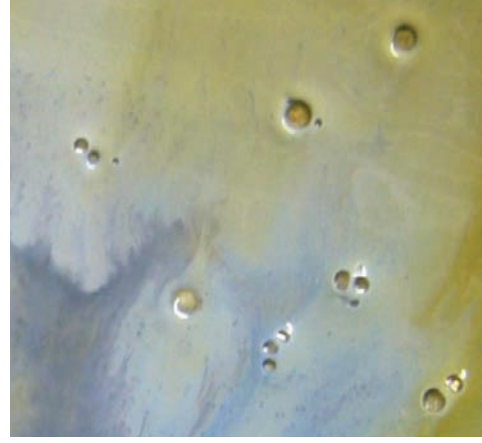
Left to right : Soda fired pitcher, selection of tea bowls, Jeff Oestreich in his studio/ showroom.

"My consuming interest over the past dozen years has been the beaked pitcher.

Each series provides an opportunity to refine older ideas as well as introduce new information."



Crazing



Blistering



Blistering



Pinholing

Potter's Spot:

Hints on the causes and solutions of some common errors found with ceramic glazing.

Crazing

This error is characterized by a roadmap of fine cracks in the glaze. When deliberate it can give a glaze effect called crackle, but is more often an error due to a mismatch between the clay and glaze body. The solution is found in matching the thermal expansion characteristics of the clay body and the glaze e.g. increasing the silica content in the clay or glaze, decreasing the feldspar content in the clay or glaze to enhance the glaze fit. Increasing alumina, lead oxide or boron content may also

aid in achieving harmony between the two bodies, as does reducing sodium or potassium containing materials.

Blistering

Blistering usually occurs due to excessively thick application of glaze. It can also however, result from incomplete clay preparation e.g. during wedging, or even over-firing of the kiln. Some fluxes may result in blister formation e.g. borax, boric acid, potassium carbonate, sodium carbonate and magnesium sulphate. Replacing

these with other fluxing chemicals or a compatible frit may reduce the problem.

Pin holing or pitting

These are small smooth-edged pits or holes in the glaze surface resulting from a small bubble bursting leaving a tiny crater-like gap in the glazed surface. These are usually caused by the makeup or chemical composition of the glaze, poorly controlled firing procedures, or if very grogged clay is used. Pin holing sometimes occurs in the re-firing of glazes especially when the

new temperature is lower than the original one.

The solution might lie with the kiln and firing cycle. Lengthening the cycle, soaking at maturation temperature of the glaze; or even increasing this maturation temperature or cooling the kiln slower, may make an impact. Other factors like thinner application of the glaze, increasing the flux in the glaze to aid fluidity or reducing content of rutile or zinc in glaze may also reduce the appearance of pits on the surface.

Read our second issue for 'Hints on the causes and solutions for 'Shivering and Peeling, Crawling and "Milky" transparent glazes'.

Sources: *Five Common Ceramic Faults and How to fix them* by Robin Hopper, *The Potter's Dictionary of Materials and Techniques* by Frank and Janet Hamer and the *Potter's Bible* by Marilyn Scott.

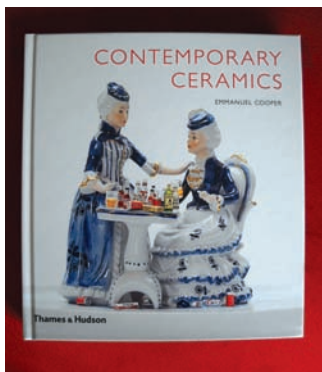
Researched by East Cape Clay and Plaster

Contemporary Ceramics by Emmanuel Cooper.

Ceramics have changed a lot in the last decade or so. This hardcover book from Thames & Hudson encapsulates the post-modern approach to the art of clay regardless of where you stand.

Over 600 objects are shown in colour and the text is a very readable, authoritative examination of ceramics under five major headings. Chapter one discusses the "Useful Pot" under the title BEYOND UTILITY. Chapter Two defines the vessel as container and as metaphor. "Mind the Gap" deals with sculptural form in clay. Chapter Four gets to grips with that bane of the conservative potter: namely installation and site-specific ceramic practice. Finally, "The Line of Beauty" is a discourse on recent events in studio, design and industrial ceramics.

Without a doubt, the globe has indeed shrunk and the book takes this into account. European, Asian, American and African ceramics are equally represented. From the greats to the unknowns. Interestingly, former Port Elizabeth resident, artist-potter Hylton Nel's work appears on pages 19 and 49, firmly cementing his importance in the world of ceramics. "Contemporary Ceramics is a good buy at R489.95 from Fogarty's Bookshop.



Lydia Holmes.

Homebrew makes its mark.

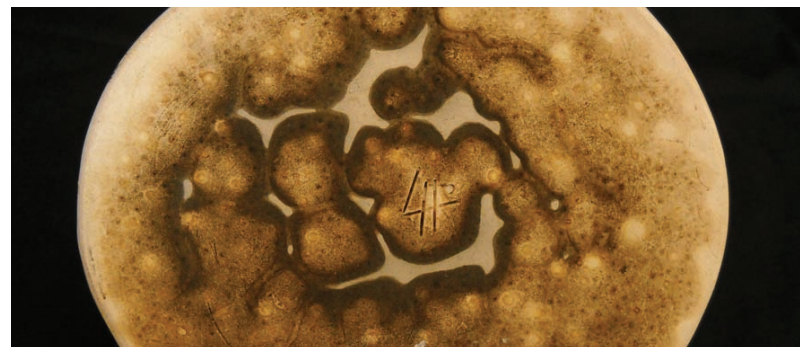
Lydia Holmes wears her skills lightly for such an accomplished ceramist. She makes no apology for working across a wide range of styles and techniques. There are the *obavaru* fired vessels - which enjoyed honours at the *Beyond Objects* exhibition earlier this year - to figurative sculptures lurking in cupboards. Her curiosity is also reflected in the rich collection of ceramics that cover most of the surfaces in bosveld/ Scandanavian influenced home.

In discussion it emerges that for Holmes, functionality also means the ability to tell a story with a work of clay. Foremost for her at present, is a need to illustrate some aspect of the human folly of pitting ourselves

against nature with our wasteful, ignorant ways. A series of metaphorical ceramic sculptures is promised for an exhibition in October this year.

The vessels shown on these pages were so sublimely scarred by removing them red-hot from an earthenware kiln and dipping them into a brew of flour, yeast and water. As the pot is submerged, it is just as quickly withdrawn and plunged into a bucket of water.

The reaction is organically etched into the pot's surface. Holmes mentions that earlier attempts using sorghum beer, accompanied with authentic Sangoma ritual blessings sadly came to nought. These vessels however, make nature's pleasure clear.



Left above: a trio of vessels fired using the Obavaru method. *Left below:* marks made by reaction of the red-hot clay body being submerged in the flour, yeast and water mixture.

Above: Organism-under-a-microscope-like textures surround Lydia Holmes' signature mark.

Calendar of events

June - December 2010

August

"Wildly Colour" exhibition @ the Cube - Cape Town
10th August - 30th September
Delivery of works by 7th August
Late entries, contact susan.graham@iburst.co.za

September

Ceramics Southern Africa National Exhibition - selection
Saturday 25th September
Exhibition: 10 - 24 October
(Entry form attached to Newsletter)

Workshop by John Shirley

Saturday 25th September (see previous feature article).

October

Workshop by Jeff Oestreich
Monday 4th October (see previous feature article).

November

Ceramics Southern Africa - Regional Exhibition @ the Ron Belling Gallery
2nd November > end of November
Delivery of works between 15th September and 1st October

Annual Potter's fair

Over a week-end of November. Date to be specified later

CERAMICS SOUTHERN AFRICA - EASTERN CAPE

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MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

- The newsletter of the Eastern Cape region.
- Access to visiting international and national artist's workshops & subsidized workshop fees.
- Entrance in Regional Exhibitions and Competitions.
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- Subsidized participation in the Gauteng Clay Festival.
- The opportunity to showcase and sell your work at various fairs and exhibitions countrywide.
- A free profile on the website: <http://www.ceramicssa.org/Home.html>
- 4 issues of National Ceramics magazine per annum.
- Networking opportunities.
- Annual Events Calendar.
- Invitations to Ceramic Exhibitions
- Information on Grants, Subsidies, Residencies and International Competitions.
- Technical advice.

*Country membership applies to persons living more than 150 km. from a regional office.
Bona Fida students of recognized Tertiary Institutions and Pensioners are required to
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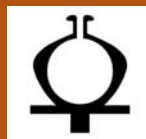
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