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Ceramic Sculpture: Past and Present

Carol G. Ekman

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CERAMIC SCULPTURE: PAST AND PRESENT

(TITLE)

BY

Miss Carol G. Ekman

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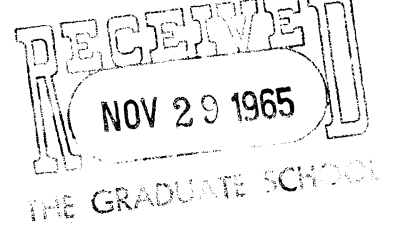
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There have probably been three motivating forces behind the choice of ceramic sculpture as a topic for this paper. First of all there has not been much written about ceramic sculpture as a separate field. Besides a few elementary "how to" books, there have been virtually no books written that are completely devoted to ceramic sculpture past or present. One reason for this may be due to the fact that ceramic sculpture is so closely connected to ceramics and to sculpture that it is difficult to make a separation. Another reason for this lack is related to the interest in ceramic sculpture. Since the industrial revolution, interest has been primarily in mass-produced, small, decorative knick-knack types of figurines. It has only been within the last twenty-five years that a revival of the creative spirit in ceramic sculpture has taken place. It is this revival that has spurred an interest in ceramic sculpture. The accomplished potter was the innovator in this new direction of ceramic sculpture. He broke the bonds of the geometrically shaped pot by pushing and pulling it out of shape; he piled geometric shapes on top of one another; he added slabs and bits of clay to the thrown forms; and he left the clay partially or completely unglazed and gave it a variety of rough textures. The clay form was no longer functional as a container, but it possessed an aesthetically appealing sculptural form. The change has been dynamic enough to create a great deal of interest.

It has been mentioned that there were three reasons for writing about ceramic sculpture. The third reason--a personal interest in manipulating the clay--is possibly the strongest and most important. Clay is a challenging material; the pliable maneuverability of the earthy substance has an exciting

quality that cannot be overlooked. The limitless possibilities of clay contribute to individual spontaneity. The feeling is probably best expressed by Waylande Gregory, ceramic sculptor of the late 1940's, who has this to say about working in clay:

Clay is the impressionable and responsive art medium; the most lasting when fired into vitreous ceramics; the most brilliant and finely textured when glazed with the colors of the mineral oxides; the most direct and colorful sculptural voice and most exciting.¹

This paper is an attempt to point out the influences of past ceramic sculpture on contemporary work. In so doing the intent is to separate ceramic sculpture to some degree; so that it can be viewed as an area of art in itself. The first part will be devoted to prominent ceramic sculpture of the past; the second part will present the rise of contemporary ceramic sculpture together with its relation to the past.

¹Ernest W. Watson, "Waylande Gregory's Ceramic Art," American Artist, VIII (September, 1944), p. 39.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Central, South, and North America, Egypt, Greece, China, and Japan all contributed ceramic work which was closely related in design and structure in the early periods of each civilization. Probably these similarities--structure and design--were due to three factors:

- (1) the use of crude earthenware clays (clay was available almost everywhere except the South Sea Coral Islands and frozen regions);
- (2) low-fire hardening due to bonfire or primitive kilns;
- (3) lack of elaborate tools.²

Magic to the primitive mind is the connecting link between the observed events in the actual world and their believed causes in the spirit world. Art assumed an important analogous to that of myths and legends; art and myth were related in origin and served to fulfill ritual and spiritual functions. Art forms were confined to the simplest arrangement of geometric lines and circles and represented the stylized forms of animate objects or non-objective forms. The meaning of art in the Indian culture is expressed in terms of individual as well as tribal experiences.³ All glory was given to the gods, who were believed to be forces of nature; thus, they were represented as terrible and destructive instead of representing the beautiful. The goal of the artist

²Ruth H. Randall, Ceramic Sculpture (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, Inc., 1948), p. 58.

³H. B. Chipp, "Art Styles of Primitive Cultures: The Plains Indians of North America," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XIX, No. 2 (Winter, 1960), pp. 161-163.

of primitive cultures was to represent the world "as it is"--as it was according to his conceptions.⁴

Primitive Cultures of the Americas

Similarities of art forms of the Americas were imbodyed in the symbolism of their culture--its myths, rituals, and beliefs--through simplified forms created by building basic geometric shapes. Paul Westheim in his book, Sculpture of Ancient Mexico, asserts that the ancient American cultures lacked an understanding of the materials and technological aspects of the media.⁵

It is true that the techniques and materials of the ancient cultures were simple and shapes were basic, but this does not indicate that the clay figures were accomplished without knowledge and skill. Paul Rivet in his book, Mexique Precolombien, states that in the provinces of ancient Mexico, such as Oaxaca and Monte Alban, archaeologist, Alfonso Caso, "uncovered pyramids, temples, the ball-game enclosure, and the tombs whose contents are equal to or surpass in variety and beauty, the famous treasure of Tut-Anhh-Amon."⁶ In a culture where pyramids and elaborate tombs and temples were constructed, the people must have been advanced enough to make possible the skilled construction of clay figures.

The Indian art of Mexico and Central America may be divided into several periods, beginning with the "Formative" or "Pre-Classic" period. This period

⁴Paul Westheim, The Sculpture of Ancient Mexico (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963), pp. 1-3.

⁵Ibid., p. 3.

⁶Paul Rivet, "Precolumbian Mexican Art," Mexique Precolombien, (Paris: Ides et Calendes, 1954).

dates from 1500 B.C. to A.D. 300, and it includes a collection of interesting ceramic figures from Tlatilco Valley of Mexico. These free hand-made models are executed in a characteristic "ginger-bread" style.⁷ The figures are almost flat and are colored with earth tones; they have large hips, short arms, nude bodies, squinted eyes, and often a dual head (fig. 1). There are many types of Pre-Classic figurines; the chart (page 6) shows a simplification of figure interrelations.⁸ Some figures represent people with thick bodies, short extremities, and "frog faces, prognathous like monkeys." They are also characterized by their "bovine" expressions, beads hanging from the septum of the nose, ear plugs, turbans, and heavy necklaces; the figure was modeled in a "mud-pie" technique (indicated by C₃, C₅, and derivatives of B and F). Variations on type D and C₁, C₇, C₉, which were found mainly in Tlatilco, show delicately featured people--"large, slanting eyes, small, turned-up noses, and fine mouths. The most outstanding example is type D₁, known to Mexican archaeologists as the 'Pretty Girl Type.'"⁹ They all show skill and refinement.

Teotihuacan, a religious and civic center, flourished in the "Classic" Period, which ran through the next six centuries. The figurines found at Teotihuacan were elaborately and realistically modeled and were often of a "portrait" type. Their heads were shaped like triangles; they had slender bodies, ear-plugs, and only a loincloth covering. The figures were becoming more and more ornamentally detailed. The female form functioned as a religious

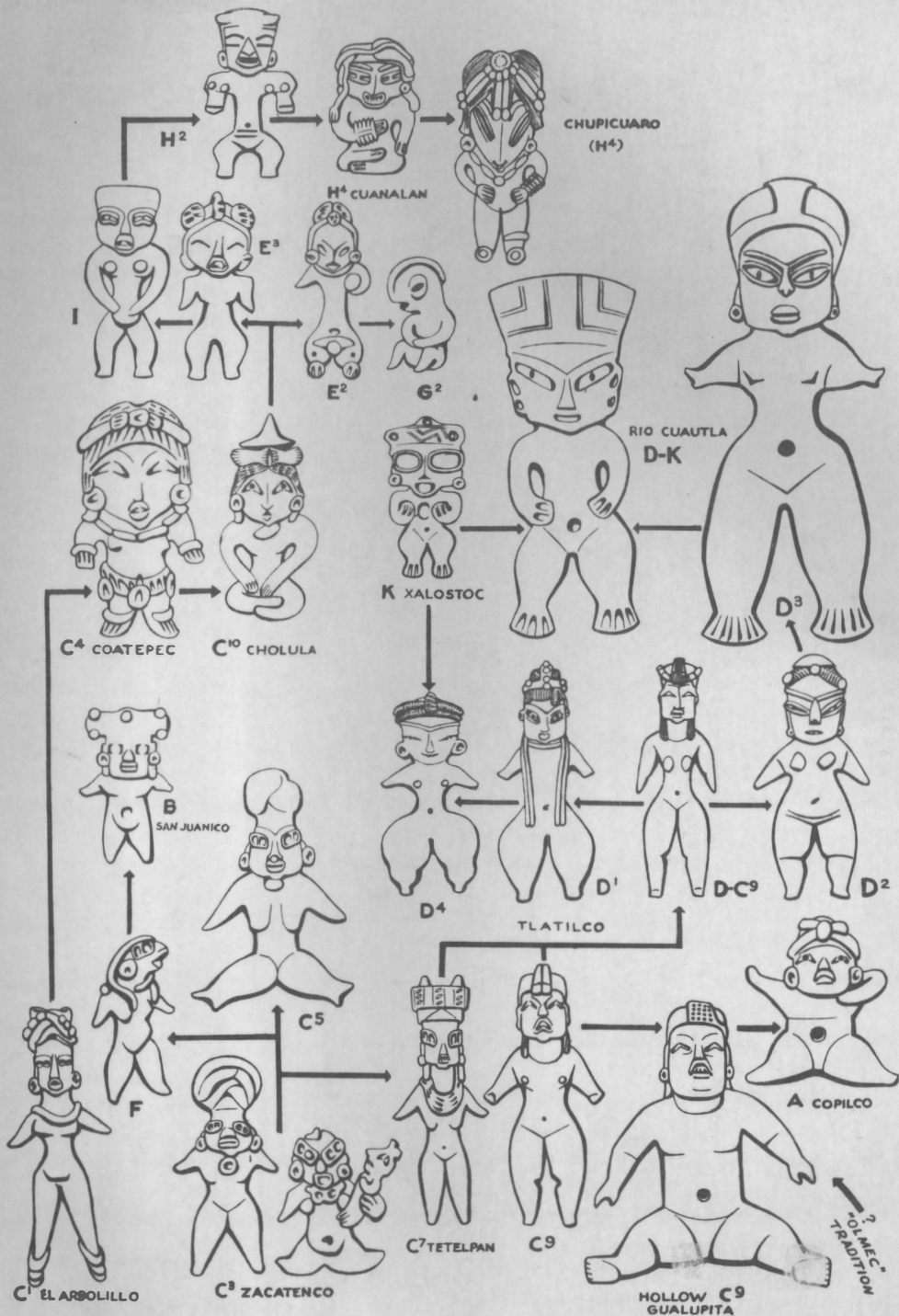
⁷Miguel Covarrubias, Indian Art of Mexico and Central America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1957), pp. 14, 17.

⁸Covarrubias, p. 28, ftn. 8: "This chart is the result of a study by Eduardo Noguera and Luis Covarrubias presented at a symposium on Tlatilco held at the Mexican society of Anthropology (October, 1954)."

⁹Covarrubias, pp. 27-28.



Fig. 1.--Pre-Classic clay figures from Tlatilco, Valley of Mexico. Covarrubias, opposite p. 14.



"Chart of interrelations among Pre-Classic clay figure types." Covarrubias, p. 29.

symbol and was often used as the base for hollow reliquaries. At their torsos they were closed by a small square lid; they contained minute figurines.

From the Valley of Oaxaca came the Monte Alban clay figures generally sculptured as a part of funerary urns that represented deities or animals. They are characterized by their richly ornamented headdresses and ear-plugs; they possessed sensitive, detailed features and open mouths with teeth showing (fig. 2).¹⁰

In Veracruz the Olmec ceramic sculpture was similar to the Monte Alban; they are vigorously expressive and powerful in their elaborate head-gear constructed by adding clay pieces. Heads were large in comparison to the bodies. Mouths were open, smiling, and in relief showing their filed teeth.¹¹

Frequently the Ancient Mexican sculpture was constructed by beginning with a block or closed form resulting in a shape that is basically simple. All the clay work has been produced with a "deep understanding of the peculiarities and particular expressive possibilities which are inherent within the clay itself."¹²

This understanding of the media is particularly noticeable in the province of Oaxaca where large effigy urns representing Zapotec gods were created. These figures were large and majestic in their religious symbolism. The bat god (fig. 3) and the rain god (fig. 4), Cocijochar, were represented by figures wearing large fierce looking masks symbolic of their character.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 140-154.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 191-193.

¹²G. H. S. Bushnell and Adrian Digby, Ancient American Pottery (London: Faber and Faber, L.T.D., n.d.), p. 18.



Fig. 2.--Funerary urns from Monte Alban period of the Valley of Oaxaca in Mexico. Covarrubias, XXXV.



Fig. 3.--Funerary urn representing the Zapotec bat
god. Mexico Monte Alban period. Bushnell, Ancient American
Pottery, plate 24.



Fig. 4.--Funerary urn representing the Zapotec rain god Cocijocar. Mexico Monte Alban period. Bushnell, Ancient American Pottery, plate 25.

The work of Ancient Peru, as all of the rest of South and Central America, follows along the same general pattern chronologically. Ancient Peru encompasses what archaeologists might call the Central Andes region. The earliest stages, beginning sometime after 1200 B.C., were periods devoid of pottery. The first clay work to appear was pottery with human form found in coastal cemeteries. Ceramic work as well as any ancient ruin or object from the graves was given the term "Huaca."¹³

In the Classical Period, dating around 100-500 A.D., the ceramic work takes on a more sculptural nature.¹⁴ The ceremonial pottery of the south coast, particularly in the Nazca region, was distinguished by naturalistic modeling of figures and animals; they were more decorative than functional and were probably used for ceremonial purposes. The figures are elaborate in color and detail to the point of clearly becoming portraits of the inhabitants (fig. 5). On the north coast, the Mochica region was typified by more realism in the modeling of facial features; the face with its large nose, high cheek-bones, and wide mouth shows strength and determination in expression (fig. 6). During this same period in the northern highland regions there appears the remarkable Recuay pottery style (fig. 7). Here again occurs the modeling of figures, animals, and gods on the clay vessels. The detail is less elaborate and shows less skill than the Mochica, but the decoration is interestingly done in a "black negative design over white and red."¹⁵

The Tiahuanaco culture had its greatest impetus during the "Post-Classical Expansionist Period" (500-1000 A.D.). This was a productive period for pottery

¹³G.H.S. Bushnell, Peru (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1957), pp. 13, 25.

¹⁴Ibid., Periods and dates acquired from the map called "Figure 2-Chronological Chart of Peruvian Cultures," pp. 24-25.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 92-93.

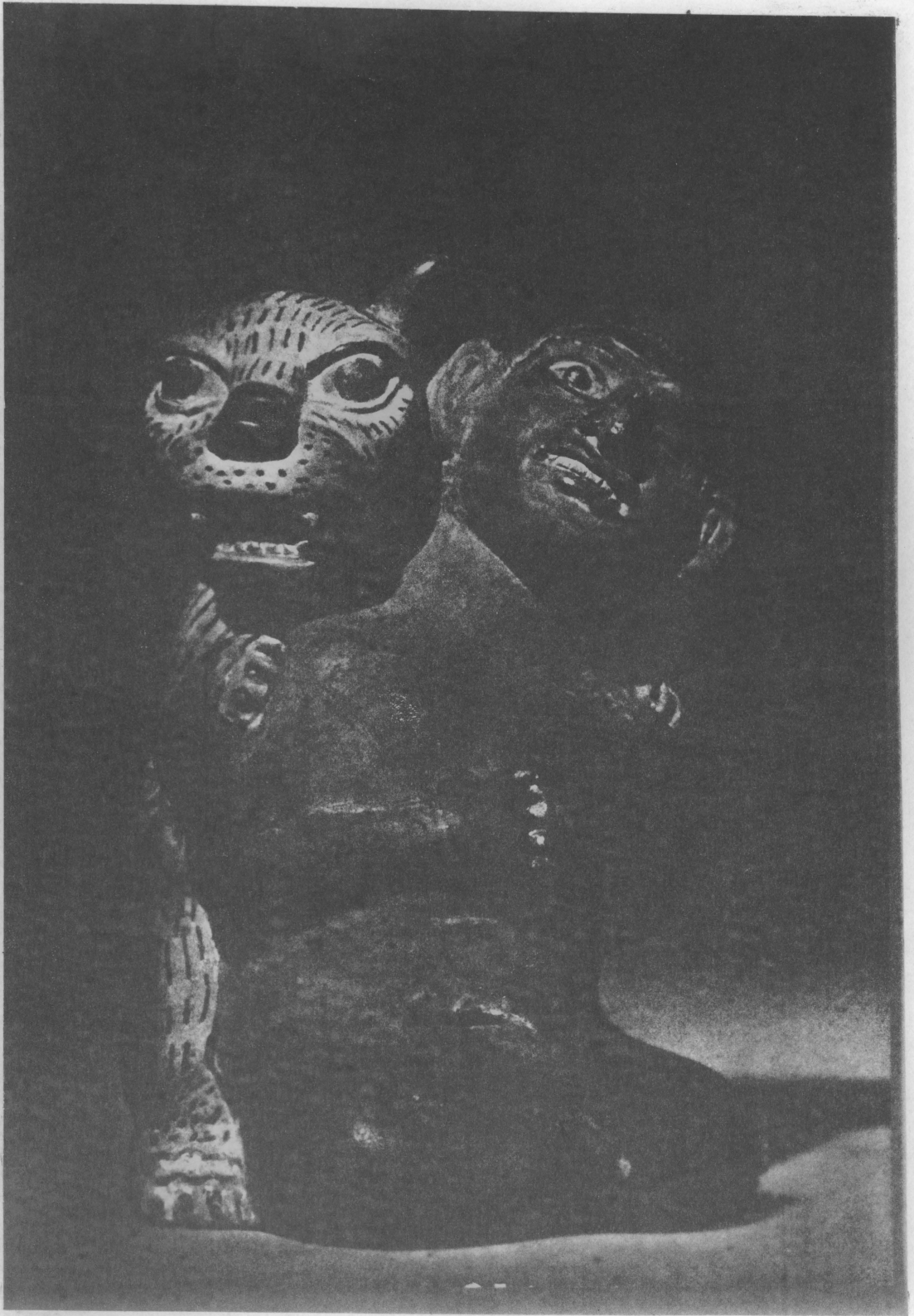


Fig. 5.--Ceremonial pottery from the south coast Nazca region of Peru. Classical period. Bushnell, Peru, plate 23.



Fig. 6.--Ceremonial pottery from the northcoast Mochica region of Peru. Classical period. Bushnell, Peru, plate 193.

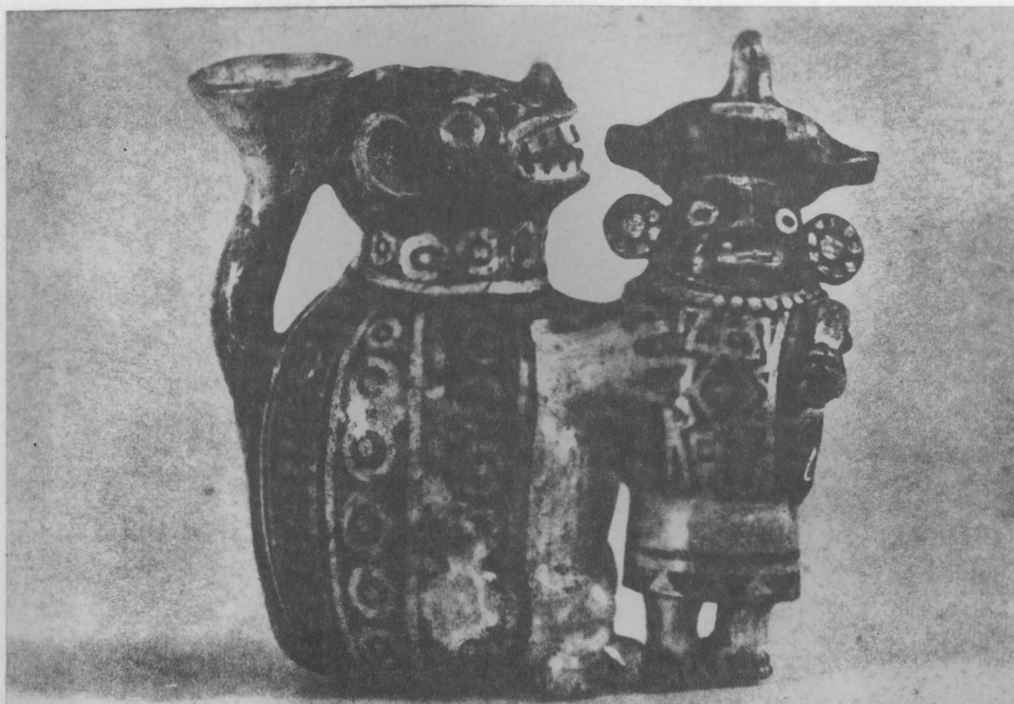


Fig. 7.--Recuay pottery from the northern highlands of Peru. Classical period. Bushnell, Peru, plates 26-28.

and all clay work; it inculcates different characteristics depending upon the locality in which it was found. Both coastal and highland work showed a skilled, polished look. The ground was usually red and an array of colors became a part of the design. The colors were more vivid on coastal ceramics than in highland ceramic work.

The funerary work of this period, often human or animal shapes in vessel form, were decorative as well as functional. The llama, which had great functional and ceremonial value to the people of Ancient Peru, is continually the subject of clay sculpture and pottery for the tomb. In this particular illustration (fig. 8) the llama is painted in white with red dots and is composed of high-fired stoneware. The hind portions are broken off in a manner characteristic of many of the tomb figures and animals of this period. It has been speculated that the hind area was broken in order to "open a way for the 'soul' of the vessel so that it might serve the dead."¹⁶

Images portrayed in the primitive art of the Plains Indians of North America had religious functions parallel to those of the South and Central American groups. In North America, however, a great deal of this religious symbolism was derived from dreams. Dreams were not of a personal nature, but fell into the pattern of tribal culture; hence, dreams took their form from Indian myths and religion. The dream was interpreted by the Shaman and in this way insured conformity to the cultural norms. The clay work is symbolic, simple, and representative of the character of the gods they worship.¹⁷

¹⁶Ubbelohde-Doering, The Art of Ancient Peru (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1952), p. 34.

¹⁷Chipp, op. cit., pp. 161-163.

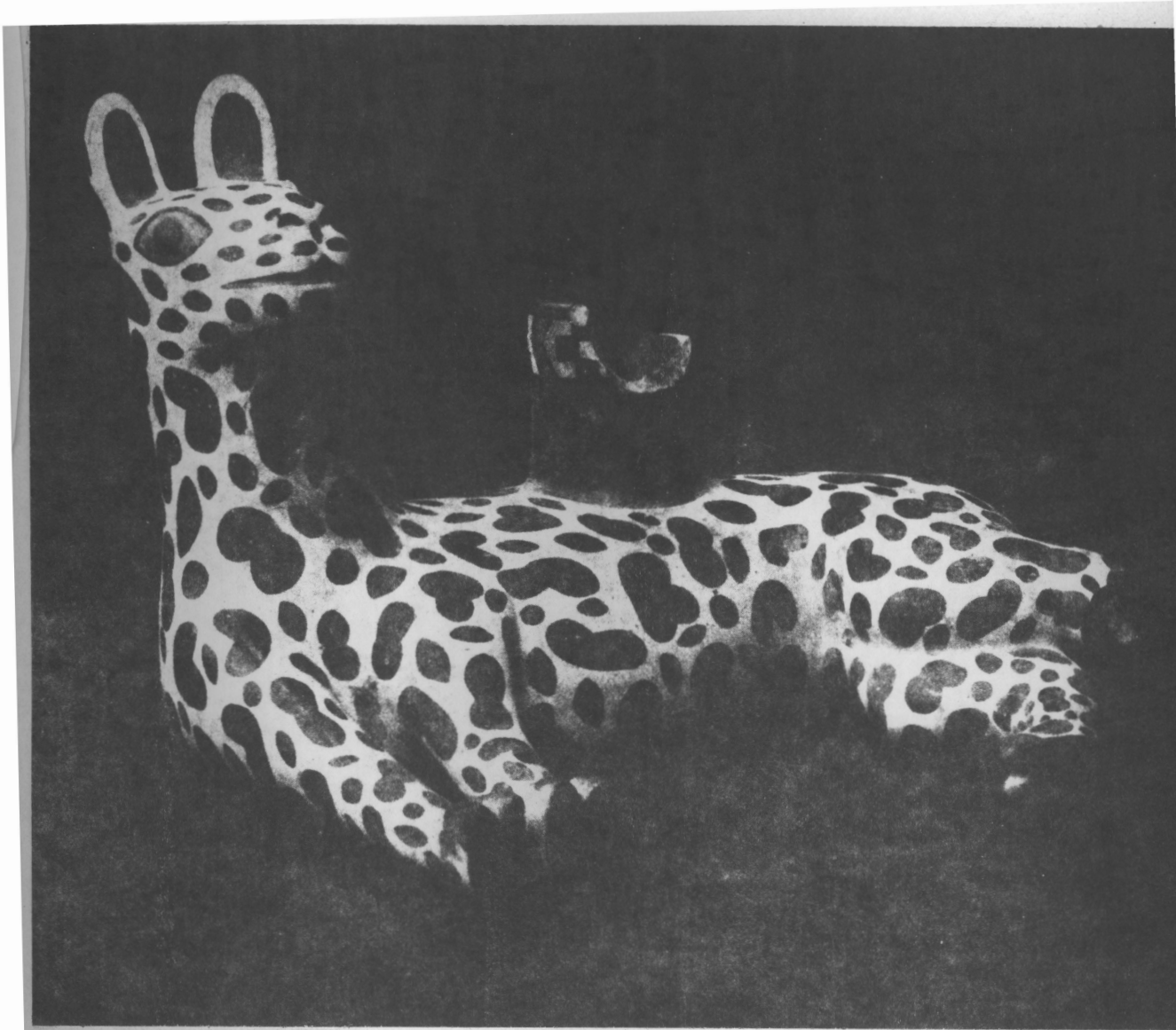


Fig. 8.--Funerary vessel from the Post-Classical Expansionist period of Peru. Ubbelohde-Doering, plate 114.

Predynastic Egypt

The ceramic sculptural form most important in predynastic Egypt was probably the hippopotamus. At all times the hippopotamus had been hunted in Egypt, because it yielded meat and fat, hide, and especially tusks--all useful to man. In historic times the nobles hunted the hippo as a sport; as far back as the first dynasty defeating the hippopotamus had some religious importance. The Nile River was held sacred because of the fertility of the lands it flooded; the hippo, an animal of the Nile, assumed its sacred significance.

The predynastic clay figures of the hippopotamus were constructed by cutting away from the block, leaving a bulky mass which is characteristic of the animal portrayed. Figure 9 shows one of the early predynastic hippos created in a rough manner, leaving finger marks and all other marks made in modeling. The legs are barrel-shaped with only a slight indication of feet to accent the curved, simple inverted "u" shaped body. The head is square and flat; the eyes and nostrils are just like rises made from air bubbles with no detail, just suggestion. The hippopotamus has a massive form and gives the general impression of primitive force. In figure 10, believed to have originated in the vicinity of Tukh, the hippopotamus is more stylized in the unnatural elongation of the body and head. The features in this figure are also slight but enough to give character.¹⁸

As the hippopotamus sculptures advanced into the Middle Kingdom, they gained color, decoration, and more detail. The color was often Egyptian blue; the decoration consisted of black line drawings of birds and flowers (fig. 11)

¹⁸B.V. Bothmer, "Predynastic Egyptian Hippopotamus," Boston Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin, XLVI (October, 1948), pp. 64, 68.

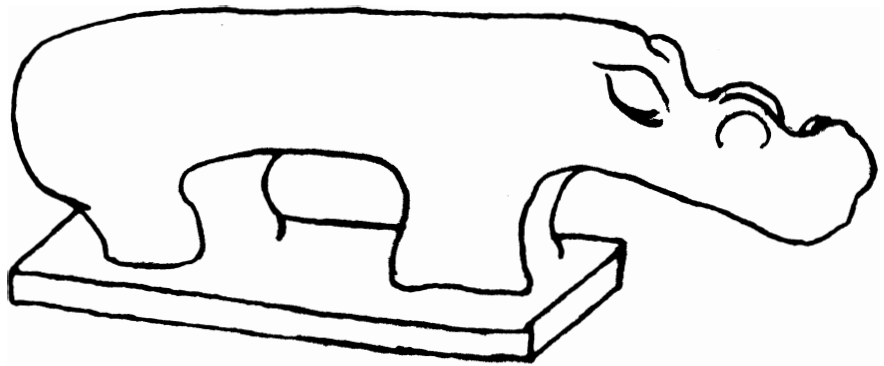


Fig. 9-10.--Early predynastic hippotamus pottery, .
Egypt. Bothmer, pp. 64-68.

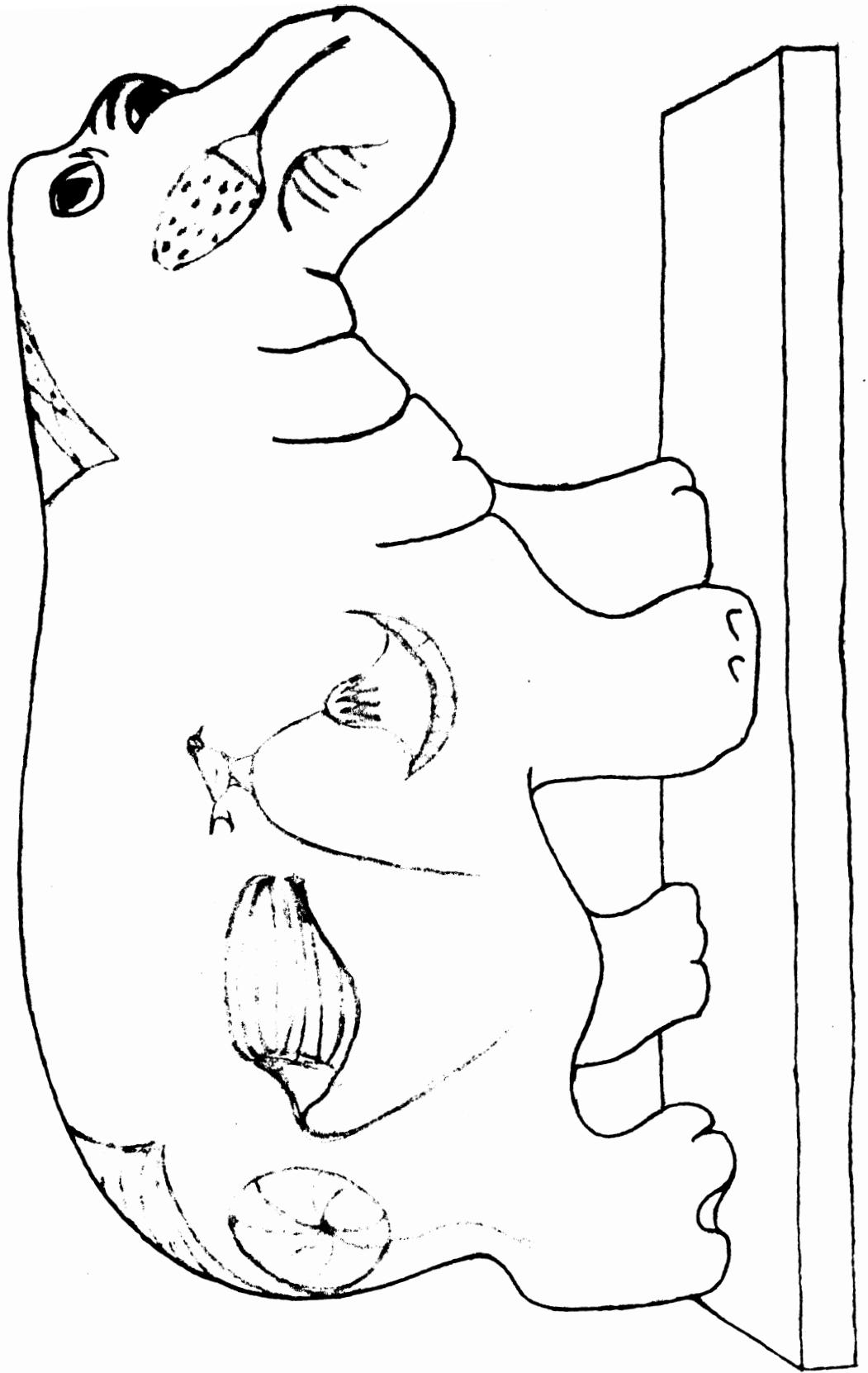


Fig. 11.--Predynastic hippotamus faience. Egypt.
Drawing. Forman, plate 42.

The head and the feet are more realistically detailed. The body has a more natural shape--shown in the folding of the skin. The animal is still, however, primarily simple.¹⁹

The Egyptian predynastic and middle kingdom hippopotamus has the same primitive simplicity of form that the clay work of the early American cultures possessed; however, in the case of the hippopotamus there was a forceful expressive quality in its massiveness and lack of detail.

Ancient Greece

Ancient Greece produced many ceramic works in sculptural form; among these forms were the groups of jugs and perfume-vases in the shape of female busts and seated sphinxes. These sculptured decorative shapes were freely modeled and painted in natural colors. Most of the ceramic jugs were created in the form of early Greek gods and goddesses such as Aphrodite and Adonis; these have since been grouped together to form some of the greatest treasures of the museums where they are located--Louvre, Hermitage, British Museum, Berlin (fig. 12).²⁰

Greek Tanagra work was mostly "genre" subjects from the life of children and young women instead of the earlier work portraying the gods. The child and female forms were graceful and noble looking--often having a touch of coquetry in their refined manner. Their clothing or draperies were smooth flowing and served to reveal more than veil the forms (fig. 13).

The Myrina figures followed the "genre" figures but drew instead from mythology such characters as the winged figure, "Eros." Some of the Myrina

¹⁹Werner and Bedrich Forman, Egyptian Art, (London: Peter Nevill, 1962), p. 42.

²⁰Emil Hanover (trans.), Pottery and Porcelain: A Handbook for Collectors, II, (London: Earnest Benn, Limited, 1925), p. 33.



Fig. 12.--Vase from Canosa. Ancient Greek mythological pottery. Hannover, Vol. II, p. 35.



Fig. 13.--Early Greek Tanagra dancing figure. Ceramic.
Hannover, Vol. II, p. 44.

work displayed graceful dancing figures. The terra-cotta modeling at Myrina was of a higher caliber than Tanagra, probably because Myrina figures showed a greater influence from great Greek sculptors--Lysippus and Praxiteles. Myrina figures were often nudes produced on a larger scale and in groups (fig. 14). Many of the figures had unnaturally small heads and slender bodies.²¹

Ancient Orient

Ancient Japanese art before and during the Buddhist period consisted mainly of funerary pottery and ceramic sculpture for the dead.²² Clay remains uncovered from places of habitation and from burial grounds of this ancient civilization can be placed in these general categories: (1) Jōmon, (2) Earthenware, (3) Dogū, (4) Yayoi Earthenwares, and (5) Haniwa. They appear in this order roughly between 6000 and 5000 B.C. to 6 and 7 A.D. or between what is called the Neolithic Age and the combined Mineral-Rock Age of Japan.²³

Rope-stamped or Jōmon has been credited as being the oldest earthenware found in Japan. The rope marking gives this earthenware its name. It was found mainly in Northern Japan. All of the ware is unglazed, low-fired, brownish-yellow in color, and coil built (fig. 15).

In later periods the earthenware shows a smoother, colored surface on high-fired ware; texture is eliminated to make way for more ornamentation.

²¹Ibid., II, p. 43.

²²Staff members of The Tokyo National Museum (ed.), Pageant of Japanese Art: Sculpture, (Tokyo, Japan: Tōto Shuppan Company, L.T.D., 1958), pp. 4-5.

²³Noma Seiroku, The Art of Clay: Primitive Japanese Clay Figures, Earthenwares and the Haniwa, (Tokyo, Japan: Bijutsu Shuppan-Sha, 1954), p. 1.



Fig. 14.--"Eros." Early Greek Myrina mythological figure. Ceramic. Hannover, Vol. II, p. 45.



Fig. 15.--Jōmon funerary earthenware from the Buddhist period of northern Japan. Seiroku, plate 3.

The Dogu clay figurines represented anthropomorphic beings thought to have religious significance. These small figures were found in the same area as Jōmon wares and were made during the later parts of the Jōmon periods. The figures never were any bigger than 9½ inches high. They showed the uncovered body with emphasized breasts and large rears; they were mystical representations of the female figure. An analogy may be drawn between these and the primitive figures of Continental Europe which also represented the figure with large breasts and abdomens. The European figures were believed to be a representation of their goddess of productivity.

The characteristic Dogū figures had rings around the eyes and designs on the body. This type of figure showed a zeal for free creative expression perhaps motivated by their magical faith. In the exaggerated slitted eyes, large shoulders and hips, and small arms and hands, the Dogū figure departed from the human form (figs. 16 and 17).²⁴

The Yayoi Earthenwares were found in Central and Western Japan; they lost their ornamentation and became functional in nature. They were stronger in form than previous earthenware, because they lacked superficial decoration (fig. 18).²⁵

Beginning with the first century A.D. and on into the period of the Ancient Burial Mounds (around the fourth century A.D.), the people of Ancient Japan placed statues around the tombs. The clay statues were mounted on top of hollow cylinders of clay.²⁶ The "Haniwa" figures, as they were called, were divided into two groups: (1) those that were placed around the tomb mounds

²⁴Ibid., pp. 3-4.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 6-7.

²⁶"Statues That Seem to Talk; 'Haniwa,'" Science Digest, LIII (June, 1963), p. 53.



Fig. 16.--Dogū ceramic figure from the Buddhist period of Japan. Seiroku, plate 15.



Fig. 17.--Dogū ceramic figure from the Buddhist period of Japan. Seiroku, plate 14.



March, 1941), p. 27.
Fig. 18.--Yayoi earthenware from Ancient Japan.
Seiroku, plate 29.

either to hold the earth from sliding or as sacred bounds to protect the dead; (2) those that were inconsistently placed around the tomb as representations of attendants to the dead. The second group of figures were found in fewer numbers; they were, however, more individualistic in style, because they symbolized characteristics of the living. Since the Haniwa figures were made in vast numbers of 100's or 1000's for one tomb, it meant that they had to be constructed rapidly. For this reason they displayed a spontaneity and brightness. They have been described as having a "robust and unsophisticated expression" which contributes to a feeling of intimacy. These figures cannot truly be termed primitive, because they were developed in an area of advanced culture. They show, instead, an underlying skill in handling of the material. The Haniwa sculpture portrayed the human being in the simplest form and at the same time was somehow able to capture the essence of the traits of human nature. The animal and human forms were captivating and often humorous in expression (figs. 19 and 20). The formation of the Haniwa figures ended after the seventh century when Buddhist practices of cremation took over the need for mound burials.²⁷

In Ancient China there also appeared funerary ceramics. A western writer once had this to say about the Chinese: The 100's of millions of living Chinese are under the most galling subjection to the countless 1000's of millions of dead."²⁸

The Han dynasty (206 B.C. to A.D. 221) was particularly devoted to funerary art. The most interesting and artistic of the objects found in tombs were the grave figures which were to accompany the dead to the realm of spirits.

²⁷Seiroku, pp. 8-10; Staff members of the Tokyo National Museum (ed.), pp. 5-6, "Statues That Seem to Talk; 'Haniwa'", p. 54.

²⁸Hugo Munsterberg, "Han: High Art for the Dead," Art News, LX, No. 1, (March, 1961), p. 27.

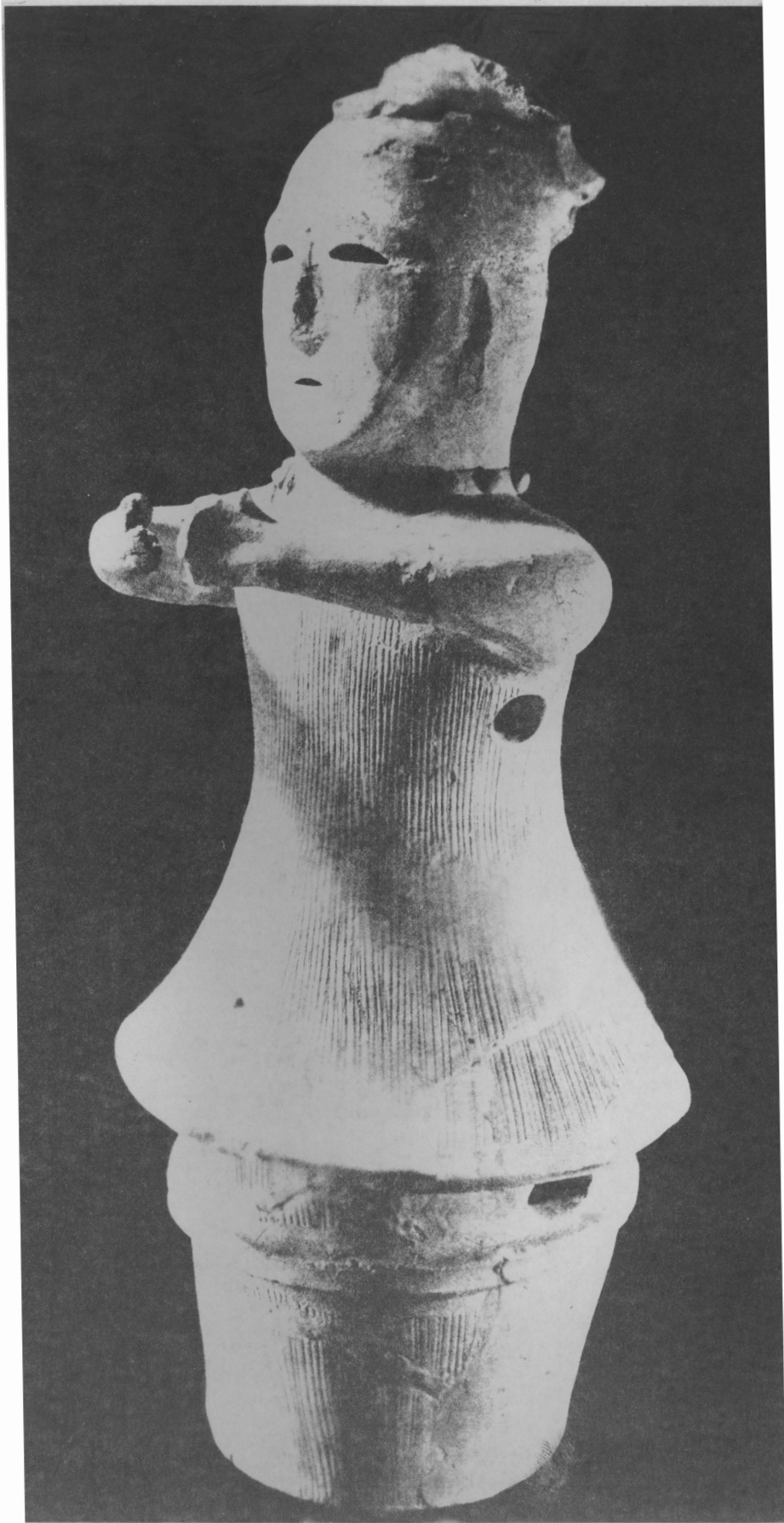


Fig. 19.--The Haniwa ceramic sculpture. The Period of the Ancient Burial Mounds in Japan. Seiroku, plate 40.

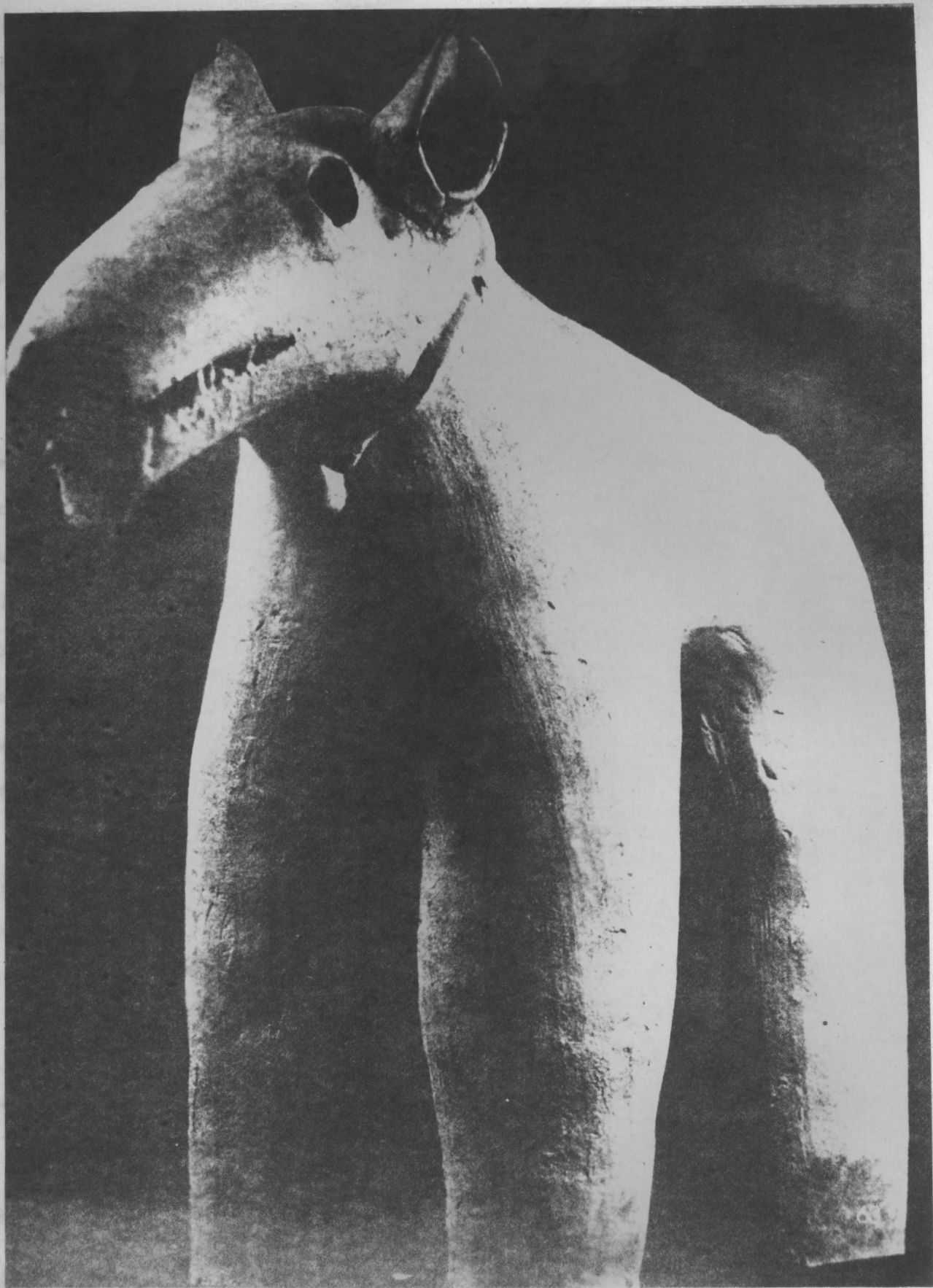


Fig. 20.--The Haniwa ceramic sculpture. The Period of the Ancient Burial Mounds in Japan. Seiroku, plate 63.

The small clay figures were to suggest to the dead the pleasures and privileges they had on earth. The figures were rendered in the essence of natural form and reduced to simple semi-abstractions; the forms were human, animal, or imagery creatures, such as the dragon symbol for clouds, rain, and fertility. Some tomb sculpture was a part of the architecture. Representative of this group were the baked clay demons mounted on top of grave pillars or the ornamental watch towers with human figures peering out of one place or another.²⁹

Clay tomb figures were prevalent in the T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618-909). In the beginning of the seventh century, funerary work was constructed of soft earthenware, white, pink, or a light grey with a white slip wash. The finer T'ang ware was covered with a lead glaze of pale yellow or indeterminate colors; others were grey streaked, spotted, or marbled with green, yellow-brown, or blue.³⁰ The "three-color" ware is exemplified in figure 21; this humorously portrayed lion is shown scratching his chin with his hind leg. There is line detail in the feet and in the face--particularly expressive features.³¹

According to W.B. Honey, horses and camels were the most famous T'ang figurines. The camel (fig. 22) is a "rhythmical complex of curved and angular surfaces." It is a life-like rendering of the sturdy animal. The dark streaming glaze serves to accentuate the strong form.

The horse in figure 23 shows a cylindrical elongation of the body and neck. The taut bulging quality of the surface lends stylized character to the animal.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 28-29.

³⁰William Bowyer Honey, The Ceramic Art of China and Other Countries of the Far East, (New York: The Beechhurst Press, Inc., 1954), p. 43.

³¹Basil Gray, Early Chinese Pottery and Porcelain, (New York: Pitman Publishing Corporation, n.d.), plate 35.



Fig. 21.--Three-coloured ware from the T'ang dynasty
of China. Gray, plate 35.

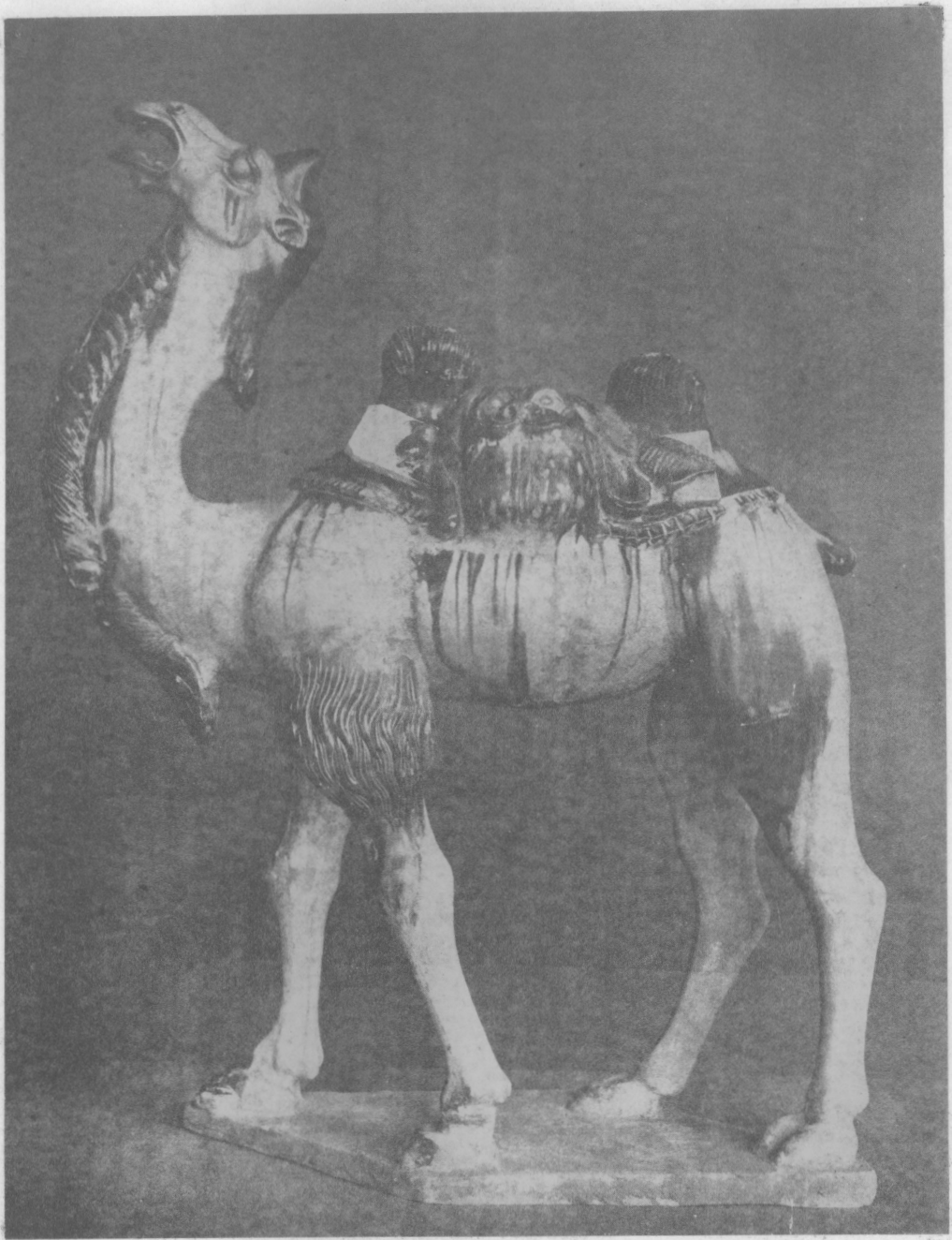


Fig. 22.--Glazed earthenware camel from the T'ang dynasty of China. Honey, plate 15.

The other two horse figures (figs. 24 and 25) have solved an interesting balance problem. They have a graceful movement characterized by their curved flowing line. All three figures possess "creative simplification, distortion, and the imposing or eliciting of a rhythm."³²

The fine work of the Ancient Orient has been strongly influenced by religion. The major religious philosophies of China and Japan have engulfed their whole life and prescribe a way of life. As a part of living, art serves as a means of expressing these ideas.

The great unifying aim, Tao, the Way, was postulated in remote times in China from the observation of nature and the heavens in an attempt to provide some kind of harmony. Tao cannot be expressed by words or silence. Tao does, however, become the basis for a set of rules of ceremony called li. These rules and rituals of tradition form the guidelines for Oriental painting as well as other forms of art.

Tao as "path" or "way" is both fixed and moving, "for a path lies on the ground and is still, yet it leads somewhere and so it has movement." Wu wei, which means "actionless activity" or "outer passivity, inner activity," is a concept that was emphasized by the Taoists.³³ In Tao, space and emptiness (hsu and K'ung) are filled with meaning; therefore, in pottery it is the inner space and not the pottery itself that is the essential part. In emptiness, action and thought are stopped to allow freedom of inner activity of the spirit. When in meditation the self eliminates distracting thoughts and emotions leaving an emptiness that opens the way to the ideal state for reflecting the Tao.

³²Honey, op. cit., p. 44.

³³Mai-Mai Sze, The Tao of Painting, I, (New York: Bollingen Foundation, Inc.), pp. 3-17.

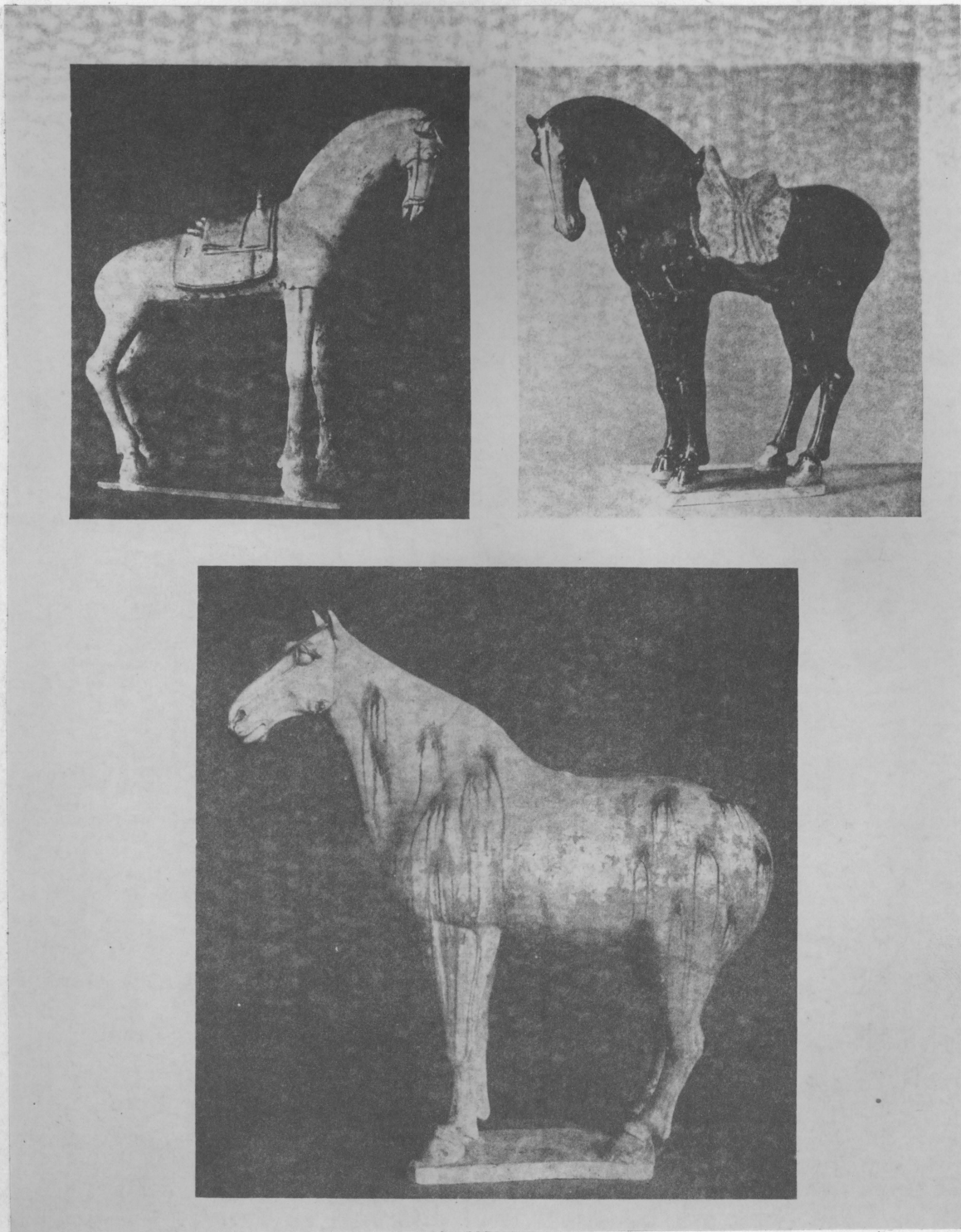


Fig. 23, 24, & 25.--Glazed earthenware horses from the T'ang dynasty of China. Honey, plate 16.

Buddhism came to Japan, through China, from India about 400-500 A.D.

Perhaps never in all history were people so conscious of what they lacked, materially and spiritually, so avid to receive it, as were the Japanese in the middle of the sixth century when Buddhism came to them out of China by way of Korea.³⁴

Out of a combination of Taoism and Buddhism, Zen developed in China in 1000 A.D. and spread to Japan in the twelfth century. Although Zen is primarily a form of Buddhism, it emphasizes the intuitive ideas that were prominent in Taoism.³⁵ What was this Zen Buddhist philosophy that permeated the Japanese culture during the later centuries?

Zen has been described as a mystical pantheism, a system of metaphysics taught with riddles and blows, a sort of existentialist cult, a blandly not-to-be explained higher way of daily life.³⁶

William Barrett, the editor of D.T. Suzuki's Zen Buddhism, explains in the introduction that Zen is really neither mystical nor pantheistic. Mysticism implies a division of knowledge into higher and lower worlds of thought, thus, making it a dualistic theory. Zen is not dualistic. Zen is pantheistic in the belief that the Buddha-nature is to be found everywhere. But pantheism also makes a division between "the God who penetrates nature and nature itself as the phenomenal garment of God."³⁷ Again, Zen does not make this division.

³⁴Langdon Warner, The Enduring Art of Japan, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1952), p. 5.

³⁵Sze, op. cit., pp. 18-22.

³⁶"An Introduction to Zen," Zen Buddhism, (Mount Vernon, New York: Peter Pauper Press, 1959), pp. 3, 5.

³⁷William Barrett, ed., Zen Buddhism, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 17-18.

Dr. Suzuki explains Zen as "the art of seeing into the nature of ones own being." "Zen wants us to open a 'third eye,' as Buddhists call it; to the hither to undreamed-of region shut away from us through our own experience."³⁸ Like Taoism, Zen also finds meaning in emptiness. Sūnyatā, or emptiness, is a positive term which makes the existence of everything possible. To experience means to become aware of Sūnyatā which remains in itself and yet makes itself an object of experience to itself. Thus, Sūnyatā is experienced only when it is both the object and the subject. Another major doctrine of Zen is Tathatā or viewing of things as they are." This principle seems to be in opposition to Sunyata, but actually they are equal. Things are Tathatā because of their being Sūnyatā. The Buddhist philosopher declares: "A mountain is a mountain and water is water before a Sūnyatā experience takes place; but after it a mountain is not a mountain and water is not water; but again when the experience deepens, a mountain is a mountain and water is water."³⁹

In this way Zen reduces nature to a skeleton in an attempt to penetrate beneath the surface to the essential core. It is apparent that Zen cannot be learned through books and scriptures but through something more intuitive, prompted by hints and indications.⁴⁰

In its application to art, Zen emphasizes the importance of the meaning of space and emptiness. It becomes important to view things as they are until they are not and until they are again but with deeper meaning. It is this greater meaning that painting and ceramic work attempts to convey.

³⁸D.T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 3-4.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 261-264.

⁴⁰Warner, op. cit., p. 99.

The tea ceremony is a practical application of Zen; its aim is to present a refined rustic atmosphere for contemplation of the more eternal aspects of life. Although many of the tea bowls used in this ceremony were highly refined pieces of art work, the bowls that were more crudely made with apparent flaws and irregularities had a more vigorous, rustic appearance that was appealing to the tea masters.⁴¹ Tea-cultists usually preferred tea-bowls that were pleasant to the touch; thus, they used bowls that had a coarse, porous texture (fig. 26). They rejected superficial elaborateness and respected simplicity.⁴² The ritual of the tea ceremony is performed in such a way that every detail down to explaining the history of the tea pot and the simple arrangement of the room is significant and follows a prescribed order. It is the meaning within the emptiness of the tea bowl; it is the simplicity of a single flower; it is the bare unpretentiousness of the straw-thatched hut; it is the irregular flagstone path leading through an unostentatious flower garden; it is this natural simplicity that eliminates all conventional thought. The mind is in a state of unhampered emptiness finds meaning within the void. The power of Zen and the Zen rituals is an inculcation of "simplicity, directness, and self-restraint--in short, discriminating taste."

It is this flavor and taste of Zen in the mouths of the Japanese which for 500 years has fostered an art of simple things without glitter and embellishment, a decorous attitude toward other persons and a keen appreciation of all that is suggested rather than stated. Zen habits of mind ran through the warp of Japan to subdue and harmonize the whole fabric.⁴³

⁴¹Peter C. Swann, An Introduction to the Arts of Japan, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1958), p. 132.

⁴²Sekai Toji Zenshu, Catalogue of World's Ceramics: Tea-Ceremony Implements, VII, (Japan: The Zautlo Press & The Kawade Shobo, 1955), p. 2.

⁴³Warner, op. cit., pp. 100, 104.

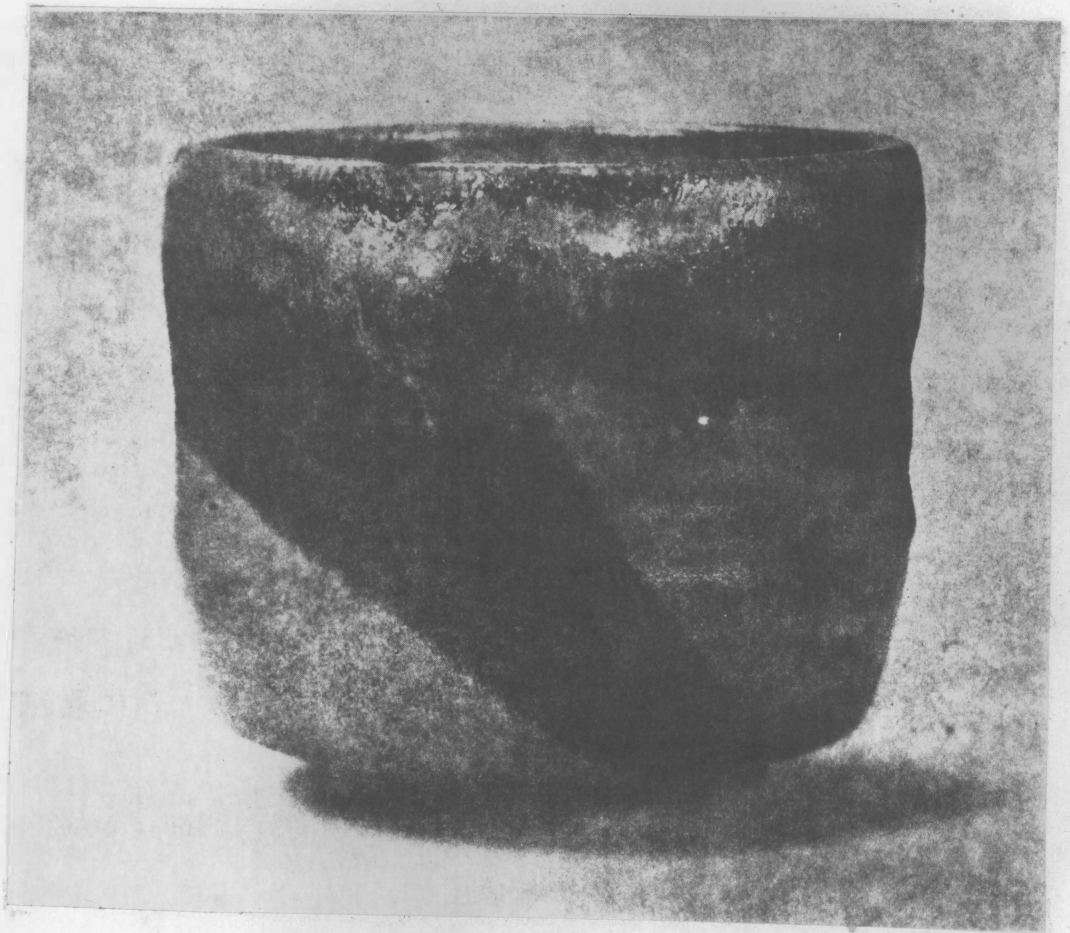


Fig. 26.--Satsuma ware tea-bowl. Japanese Early Edo period. Zenshu, VII, figure 70.

Early European Ceramic Sculpture

In England the most popular ceramic sculpture work made during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the porcelain figurines. Early in the seventeenth century large quantities of Chinese porcelain were brought to Europe by the Dutch East Indian Company and other trading companies. It was not, however, until the very end of the century that the French potters learned how to make artificial porcelain which was called "soft-paste" porcelain. And it was not until 1710 that the German factory at Meissen rediscovered the ingredients in Chinese porcelain. In 1748 Thomas Frye took out a patent for porcelain and set up the Bow factory near London, England. Porcelain figures were produced at Bow in large quantities. The best known of the early soft-paste porcelain ware was a pair of white glazed figures depicting the actress Kitty Olive as the "Fine Lady" (fig. 27) and actor Henry Woodward as the "Fine Gentleman" (fig. 28) both in Garrick's farce "Lethe." Both figures have a soft effect with rich texture in the hair and clothing; they are elegant in stature and human in their expression.⁴⁴

Early Chelsea work had a great deal in common with soft-paste porcelain; it had a very glassy translucent appearance. Meissen was the chief source of ideas for Chelsea work; however, there was a fine group of figures portraying an Oriental theme. Out of the later group there were a few finished in pure white; one of these is shown in figure 29.⁴⁵ The movement in the figure's body and clothing is exciting. There is a feeling of anticipation of more

⁴⁴John P. Cushion, "Ceramics for Collector and Potter: Bow Porcelain," Studio, CLXI, No. 814, (February, 1961), pp. 68-69.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 94.



Fig. 27.--"Kitty Olive as 'The Fine Lady.'" English Bow porcelain, 1750. Lane, figure 37.



Fig. 28.--"Henry Woodward as 'The Fine Gentleman.'" English Bow porcelain, 1750. Lane, figure 36.



Fig. 29.--"Chinese Group." English Chelsea porcelain, about 1751. Lane, figure 7.

action when the clay ripples and folds in a simple unornamented way. The light and dark areas created by these ripples fall into an interesting pattern. The round, bouncy figure of the child gives him the quality of being able to belong to any culture past or present.⁴⁶

The quality of English Plymouth and Bristol ware varied; some of it lacked skill in construction and taste in decoration while others had strong form and simple decoration. One of the later is a piece of Bristol ware in the form of a "Milkmaid" (fig. 30) that has a charm and familiarity embodied in the action and character of the sprightly young girl.⁴⁷

Some of the early English work in stoneware was made by men such as John Dewight of Fulham near London. Dewight was famous for a number of statuettes and busts which were covered with a salt glaze over a white stoneware body. The most individual and expressionistic piece was the half-length figure of Dewight's daughter, who passed away at an early age. The figure shows the child with her head resting on a cushion and a few flowers in her hands. This particular effigy in stoneware dates back to 1673 (fig. 31).

In the Mortlake factory close to London there were several works produced in a brown stoneware and decorated with sporting scenes which were applied in low relief. They belonged to a group of English peasant pottery. This pottery was rather crude in technique but spirited, charming, and almost jovial in character.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Arthur Lane, English Porcelain Figures of the Eighteenth Century, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1961), Plates 7, 36, 37.

⁴⁷ John P. Cushion, "Ceramics for Collector and Potter: Plymouth and Bristol Porcelain," Studio, CLXI, No. 814, (February, 1961), 221; and Arthur Lane, Plate 94.

⁴⁸ Hanover (trans.), op. cit., II, pp. 543, 519.



Fig. 30.--"Milkmaid." English Bristol porcelain,
about 1775.



Fig. 31.--John Dwight. Effigy in stoneware of his
dead daughter. England; Fulham, 1673. Hannover. Vol II

English ceramic figures have made contributions of charm and lively, whimsical, and expressive character, as well as an excellent portrayal of a savory genre style.

Outstanding early French ceramic sculpture came primarily from the hands of Charles Sauvage Lemire, who executed a series of mythological and allegorical groups--Venus, Apollo, Hebe, and the Four Seasons.⁴⁹ His ceramic work was not only skillfully accomplished but also flowing and aesthetically attractive. The draperies on his figures, together with their active poses gave them movement and life.

When the factory at Meissen came under the supervision of Johann Gregor Meissner and Johann Joachim Kändler around 1720, it advanced rapidly. Herold was a skilled technician who utilized rich colors--brilliant iron-red, purple, and various kinds of green, yellow, and a light and a darker blue.

A capable modeler appeared at the factory in 1727--the sculptor, Gottlob Kirchner. "He belonged to the Baroque movement peculiar to Dresden." During his short stay at Meissen, Kirchner began a fine series of animal sculptures. The "Rhinoceros" (fig. 32) was a particularly good example of his series. This bulky animal is realistic in form; the design is achieved through overlapping the clay pieces in an armored fashion and an incised scale pattern.

When Kirchner left Meissen, Kändler completed the animal collection. His white glazed "Padua Cock" (fig. 33) typifies Kändler's work; the ruffled feathers, open mouth, and poised body indicate an active living quality.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 313.

⁵⁰Ibid., III, pp. 64-66, 71.

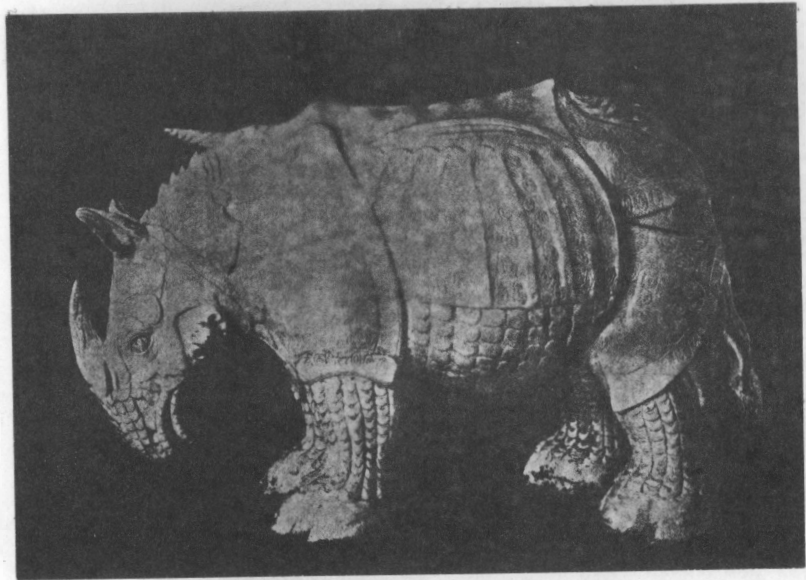


Fig. 32.--Gottlob Kirchner. Porcelain rhinoceros.
German; Meissen, 1732. Hannover, Vol. III, figure 102, page 71.



Fig. 33.--Johann Kandler: Padua cock. German; Meissen, 1733-1734. Hannover, Vol III, figure 103, page 71.

German work has been mentioned in connection with its influence on the styles of English and other early ceramic sculpture. The products of German factories, particularly at Meissen, set the pattern for many of the European ceramics. Often this copying of style caused the sculpture to become stiff and unnatural.

Summary

The Ancient Oriental and American Indian cultures practiced human sacrifice for many years as a part of their religious belief. They felt that the honorable deceased should have his servants accompany him into the spirit world. Clay figures such as the Haniwa figures in Japan took the place of the individuals that were to guide the dead; thus, human sacrifice was eliminated. Each ceramic figure had some of the characteristics of the individual he was to replace.

A great deal of the European ceramic figurines were examples of superficial ornamentation; they had no relation to life as it was and served no useful purpose. However, the illustrations shown in this part of the paper are examples of some of the better work; they are expressive, moving, and portray a particular phase of European life. The primitive work and the work from earlier cultures has the common underlying element of simple, unsophisticated form--a simplicity which recognizes the characteristics of the clay in its form. Art has played a major role in the life of these people; it has been a type of sincere religious and cultural expression. With the advance in technical skills came the desire to display technique which in many cases became the dominant goal of the artist; thus, there was a loss in creativity.⁵¹

⁵¹Randall, op. cit., p. 59.

CHAPTER III

SOME CONTEMPORARY WORK WITH CHARACTERISTICS

AND INFLUENCES FROM THE PAST

Introduction

The ceramic sculpture of the ancient cultures depicted a way of life-- its religion, customs, and philosophy. The emphasis was on simple form with decoration acting purely as a religious or cultural symbol. Texture arose from handling of the material. The materials were rough and the tools were few, yet their artistic expression was as sincere, strong, and deeply imbedded in their lives as their religion. Art was a part of their religion and a part of their life. When technical advancements were made, the materials were refined; the tools became more elaborate and greater in number. Clay sculpture along with all the arts--architecture, interior design, painting--and all of life in general became more complex and involved. What this meant was a pre-occupation with technical aspects, and an involvement in superficial ornamentation which caused the underlying basic form to be ignored and suffer from neglect. The arts became more and more involved with decoration until form sank under the weight of the superficial. Some of the figurines created in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Europe show this superabundance of the decorative element. Fortunately, the creative spark could not be snuffed out; during the Baroque and Classical periods sculpture was illuminated with a new philosophy. It emphasized the importance of space around and within the sculpture; it became an attempt to bring space to life as an emotional stimulus. The new sculpture was symbolic but not narrative. J. J. Bachofen defines the new ideas in sculpture as:

"touching all chords of human spirit at once, suggestive of emotional awareness where rational language is merely explanatory."⁵²

Exemplary figures in the new sculptural movement were Honore Daumier and Auguste Rodin. Daumier fashioned thirty-six clay busts of French deputies--all outstanding examples of his work. They contained the "fleeting quality of their pose, freedom in contour, radiating intense life-like quality." Clay almost seems to liquify under the intense emotional pressure. His quick caricatures are representative of "the great human comedy."⁵³ In his "Portrait Bust of Senator Fruchard" he showed the quick modeling of a face with expression, but eliminated unnecessary detail. This figure had a pear-shaped head, huge nose and beady eyes. The eye brows slanted up toward a wrinkled brow and the lips curled downward in a frown to meet his massive many-layered chin; all of these features united to capture the sinister character.

Auguste Rodin broke from academic rigidity by utilizing light and space within and around large masses. "Le Jouleur" (fig. 34) created by Rodin in 1909 is a sculpture composed of two glazed clay figures.⁵⁴ Both figures--integrated in this pose to form one--have only a faint suggestion of facial features. The design quality of the shape, the interesting play of light and dark areas together with the relationship of positive and negative space is particularly important here.

⁵²Carola Giedion-Welcker, Contemporary Sculpture: An Evolution in Volume and Space, (New York: George Wittenborn, Inc., 1955), pp. 14-15.

⁵³Ibid., p. 2.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 8.



Fig. 34.--Auguste Rodin. "Le Joueur." Ceramic sculpture. Giedion-Welcker, figure 34, 1909.

Early Contemporary Work

The word "contemporary" in this case refers to the period from 1935 to the present day. The earliest work of this period is primarily composed of wheel-thrown shapes to which pieces of clay were added or subtracted to form a figure or animal. The early shapes were more realistic in detail, more gaudy in color, and more noticeably reminiscent of the past.

Margrit Linck, who began working in ceramics in 1932, utilizes wheel-thrown shapes as the basis of her ceramic sculpture. Her animal and human forms are whimsical (fig. 35). The bodies are large and geometrically simple in their lack of detail. Margrit often applies her glazes in a "negative style" of black line decoration over a light background in a manner similar to the Northern Highland funerary ceramics of the Classical period in Ancient Peru (fig. 7). The geometric shape and bold design will also be seen in figure 46 showing Picasso's ceramic sculpture.⁵⁵

Marion Morris also incorporates thrown shapes, particularly the bell-shape, in her ceramic figurines. Her decoration consists mainly of slip trailing to create color and texture. "Meta," exhibited in 1955, is the portrayal of a slender coil-made female figure with slip trail decoration over a buff and white body (fig. 36). This figure has less detail and more appeal than most of her work. "Meta" has an elongated, curved neck and long, smooth arms and legs that add to her stream-lined appearance. "Meta" as well as all of Marion Morris' sculpture has the same realistic appearance as the eighteenth and nineteenth century English figurines such as the Bristol ware "Milkmaid" (fig. 30); both "Meta" and the "Milkmaid" have pleasant flowing lines.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Ruth Buol, "A Swiss Ceramist," Craft Horizons, XIV, No. 3, (May/June, 1954), p. 20.

⁵⁶Noel Heath, "Pottery Figures of Marion Morris," Studio, CL (October, 1955), pp. 120-122.

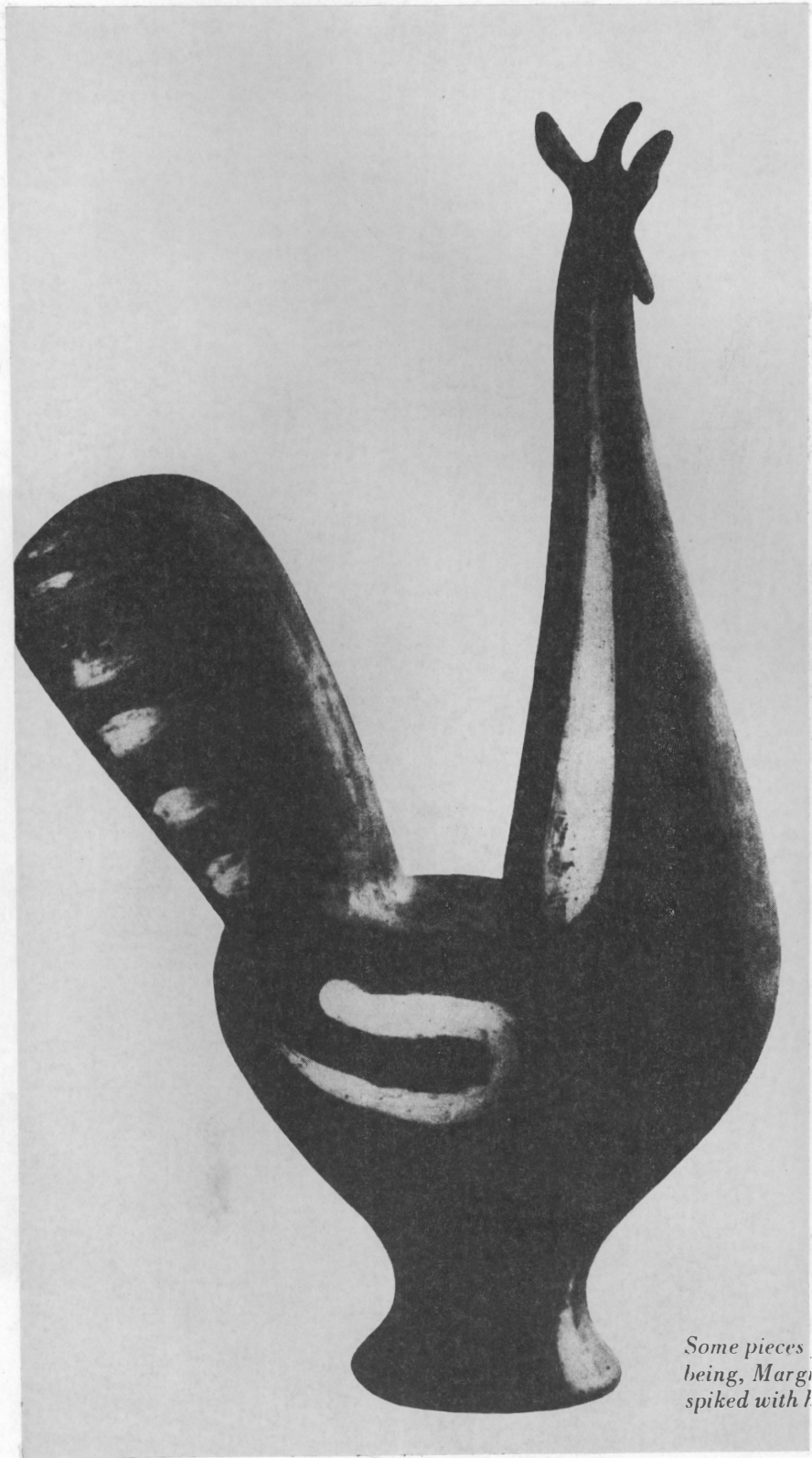


Fig. 35.--Margrit Linck. Ceramic sculpture. Boul, 20.

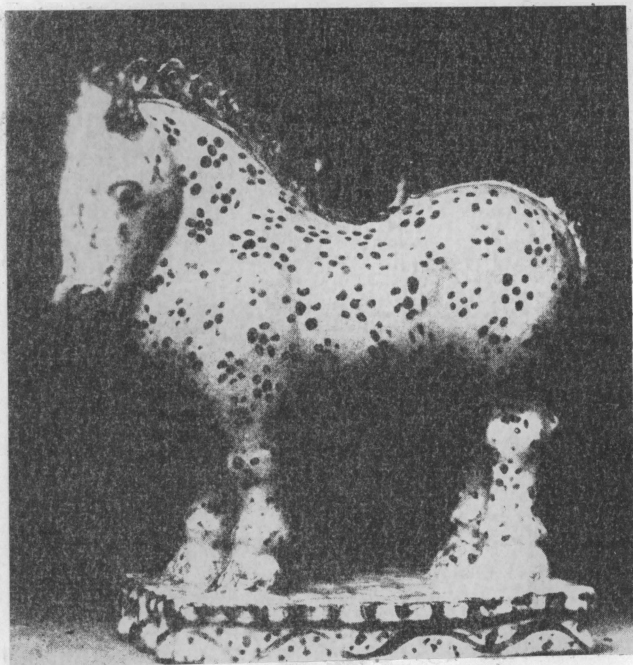


Fig. 36.--Marion Morris. "Meta." Stoneware figure.
Heath, 120.

Carl Walters (1883-1955) was perhaps one of the forefathers in the development of contemporary sculpture in clay. Mr. Walters worked with cheerful animal forms. With an initial conception of his subject matter, he shapes, fires, and decorates all of his pieces with technical skill and sensitivity. The result is a complete harmony of form, color, and texture. Observation is also important to Mr. Walters, because it is his "means for grasping the essential characteristics of each living organism" and allows him to "endow his interpretation of these characteristics with expression, action, humor, and decorative charm."⁵⁷

Carl Walters derives his inspiration, not only from observations of nature, but also from the ancient cultures of Egypt and China. His work has been compared with the tomb figures of the Han and T'ang dynasties; this is particularly noticeable in figure 37 of the "Stallion." Walters uses the horse as his subject; he also decorates the stallion in a speckled glaze pattern. In the T'ang dynasty the horse frequently became the subject of the ceramic sculptor; the speckled glaze effect was also popular during this period. The sculpture in figure 38 constructed by Mr. Walters, possesses the same wide eyes, simple almost humorous expression, and dark and light decorative contrast as the other tiger (fig. 5) belonging to the Tiahuanaco culture of Ancient Peru. Carl Walters' last work entitled the "Lion" (fig. 39) incorporates his portrait into a rather comically expressive head of this sleeping beast. Figure 21 shows another lion with the same whimsical character and the realistic detail. Figure 21 is an example of the three-colored pottery ware of the T'ang dynasty. The portraiture of Carl Walters in the face of his "Lion" has origins in the Mochica culture of Ancient Peru (fig. 6). Egyptian influences are revealed in Mr. Walters' use of color. He studied the blue

⁵⁷M. Hegarty, "Caterpillar by Carl Walters," Detroit Institute of Arts Bulletin, XXVII, No. 3, (1948), p. 72.



1924. Fig. 37.--Carl Walters. "Stallion." Ceramic sculpture, Homer, 44.

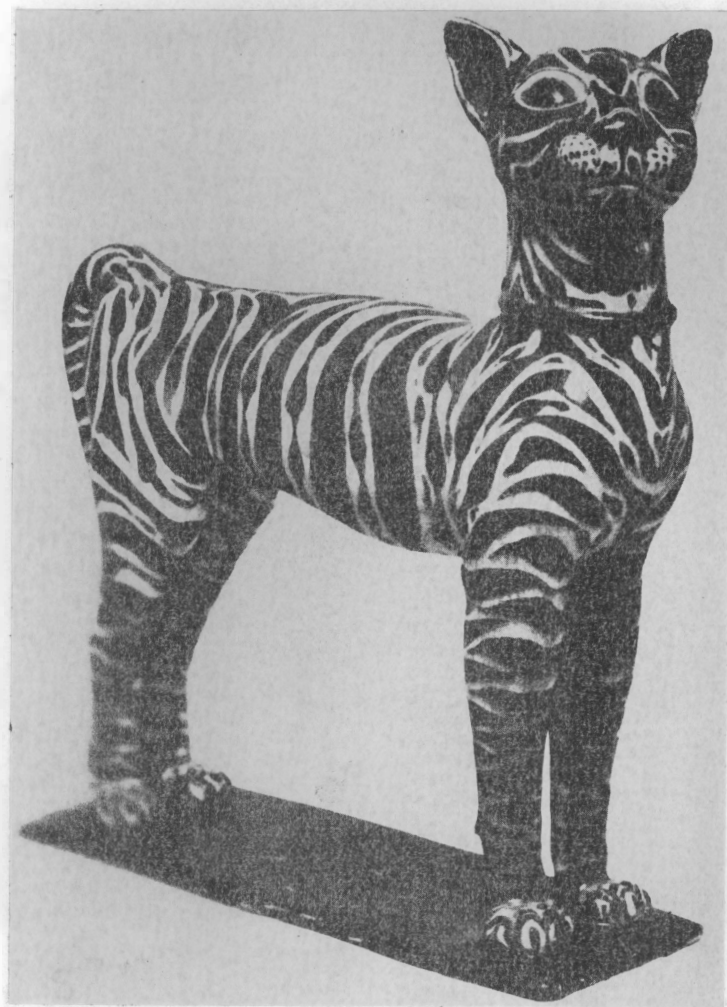


Fig. 38.--Carl Walters. Glazed pottery, 1940.
Homer, 44.

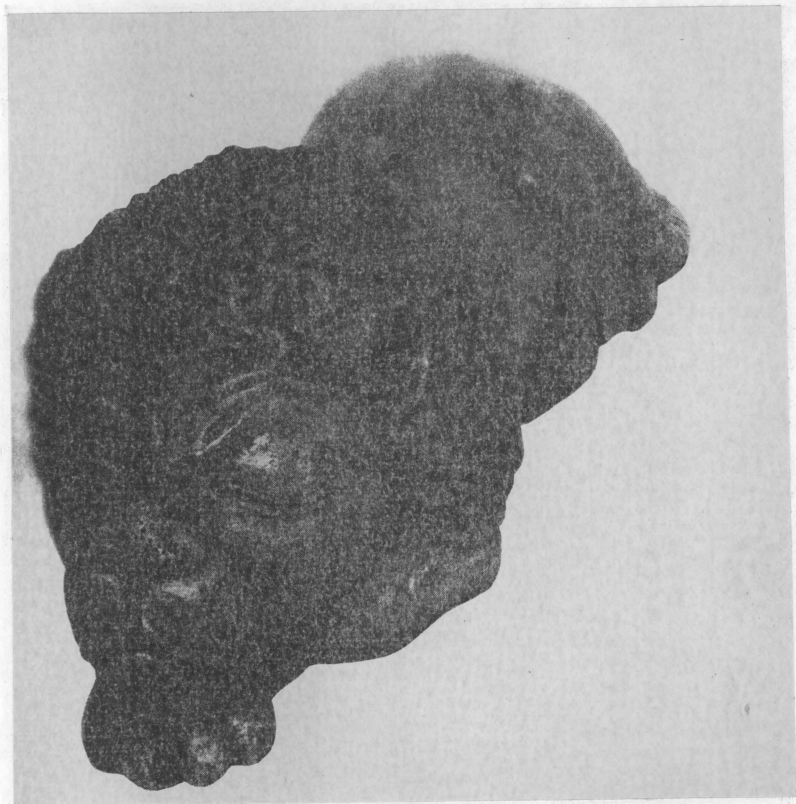


Fig. 39.--Carl Walters. "Lion," Terra-cotta, 1955.
Homer, 44.

glaze found on Egyptian faience beads, and developed a glaze similar to this called the "Walters' Blue."⁵⁸ Through these influences--Ancient China, South America, and Egypt--Carl Walters creates an animal form that breaks away from binding realism; this is accomplished through the elimination of complex detail and the use of unrealistic color and design.

Waylande Gregory's ceramic sculpture is colossal and often symbolic. In 1938 he constructed twelve giant clay sculpture for the "Fountain of Atoms" at the New York World's Fair; two of these large human forms representing fire and water are shown in figure 40. The gigantic figures are formed from a cellular clay skeleton; the cells are then filled in with clay. Gregory finishes the structure by endowing it with smooth flowing lines and elaborate textures. The eye and mouth cavities are left open for drying purposes; this also creates a mystical, austere expression. Representations of Ancient Mexican gods, such as the Zapotec bat (fig. 3) and rain gods (fig. 4), often have the same open cavities creating the same mystical expression. The mysticism is not, however, fiercely portrayed in Mr. Gregory's figures, but is instead more like the Greek mythological Myrina figures (fig. 14). Waylande Gregory's sculptural forms are not only large and mystical but also very active; their sweeping, flowing movement gives the same feeling of anticipation found in figure 29 of the early Chelsea Chinese group.

Part of the reason why Mr. Gregory's ceramic sculpture creates a dynamic impression is due to his attitude; he says: "Clay is the impressionable and responsive art medium; the most lasting when fired into vitreous ceramics; the most brilliant and finely textured when glazed with the colors of the mineral oxides; the most direct and colorful sculptural voice and the most exciting."⁵⁹

⁵⁸William I. Homer, "Carl Walters-Ceramic Sculptor," Art in America, XLIV, (Fall, 1956), pp. 42-47.

⁵⁹Ernest W. Watson, "Waylande Gregory's Ceramic Art," American Artist, VIII, (September, 1944), pp. 14, 39.



Fig. 40.--Waylande Gregory. "Fountain of Atoms."
Ceramic sculpture, 1938. Watson, 12.

Viktor Schreckengost came from a family of German potters, but it was not until after he had studied sculpture and industrial designing that he turned to ceramics. Shortly after World War II he began working with clay; at first he worked with bronze in view, then, he explains: "I realized how much spontaneity was lost between the two. As a sculptor I wanted a material that could be worked directly in permanent form."⁶⁰

In the early 1950's Mr. Schreckengost worked directly with the material; he created a group of clay reliefs for the Cleveland Zoological Park. He made five large panels all five feet by eight feet each mounted on a tower-like chimney. He also constructed a group consisting of four sets of six; these were smaller panels that were to be placed around the interior of the building. The entire group of reliefs represented the North American birds that have recently become extinct. The birds are ornithologically correct but are not elaborately detailed.⁶¹ In these panels Viktor Schreckengost works toward maximum solidity by cutting shapes from a clay mass.

Perhaps more aesthetically interesting are Mr. Schreckengost's clay animal sculptures. Figure 41 called "Smoked Ham" humorously portrays the simple bulky form of the pig. The same light expression of a mass is clear in figure 11 depicting the blue glazed hippopotamus from the Egyptian Middle Kingdom.

Mr. Schreckengost began his experiments in ceramic sculpture when all of the work created in this country was completely glazed. In his attempt to get more variety, Schreckengost poured water over the original clay piece to spot

⁶⁰Dorothy Grafly, "Viktor Schreckengost, Sculptor of Form in Space," American Artist, XIII, (May, 1949), pp. 48-50.

⁶¹"An Impressive Ceramic Work by Schreckengost," American Artist, XV, No. 6., (June, 1951), p. 53.

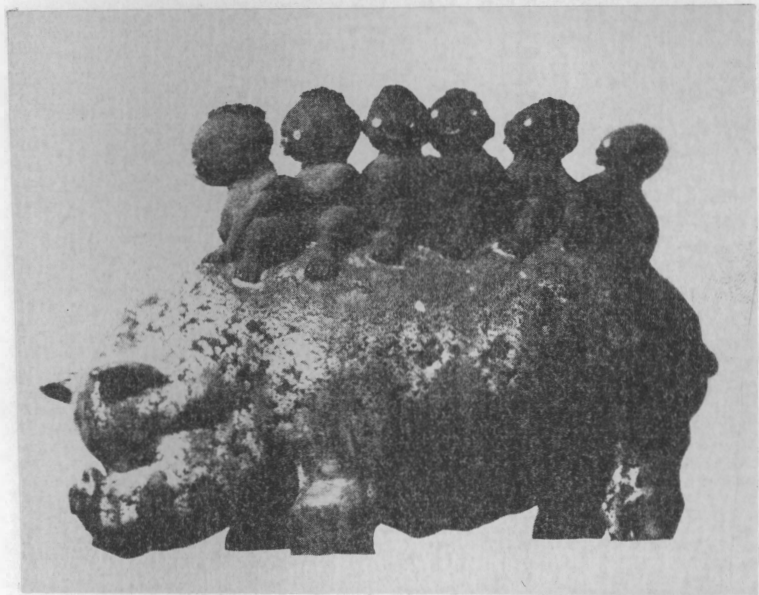


Fig. 41.--Viktor Schreckengost. "Smoked Ham."
Ceramic sculpture. Grafly, 49.

where the highlights would fall. In this way he found that the underlying forms gained in importance when subjected to a high glaze. The advantage here is that incidental details can be obliterated. The semi-abstract shape becomes the prominent feature of his work. He explains his intentions: "My hope is to create abstract sculpture complete in itself, yet usable as pottery."⁶²

In Betty Davenport Ford's ceramic sculpture the overall form is rhythmic and displays a simplification of large general patterns. She works successfully with space relationships and freely utilizes exaggeration for the sake of improving composition and design. She creates animal forms that are large and richly textured. "Armadillo" (fig. 42, 1952) possesses a rough pebble-like texture together with an overlapping of clay slabs to create the horny appearance of the animal portrayed. Gottlob Kirchner's "Rhinoceros" (fig. 32 from German, Meissen) shows the same type of texture in a plated effect. The compact form of the "Armadillo" also appears in the animal figure of the T'ang dynasty of Ancient China (fig. 21).

Betty Ford sketches and studies the animal first in an attempt to capture his habits and characteristics. Then she "condenses and distills" her knowledge by simplifying and reducing it in terms of a design without losing the outstanding characteristics of the real animal. She constructs her animals by a hollow coil method beginning at the base and advancing upward. She uses a glaze stain mixed with clay or muted natural colors. In this way her animal forms have a more organic basis than some of the previously mentioned work; they seem to lead the way to more recent ceramic sculpture.⁶³

⁶²Grafly, op. cit., pp. 50-55.

⁶³Janice Lovoos, "Betty Davenport Ford, Ceramic Sculptor," American Artist, XXII, (November, 1958), p. 37.

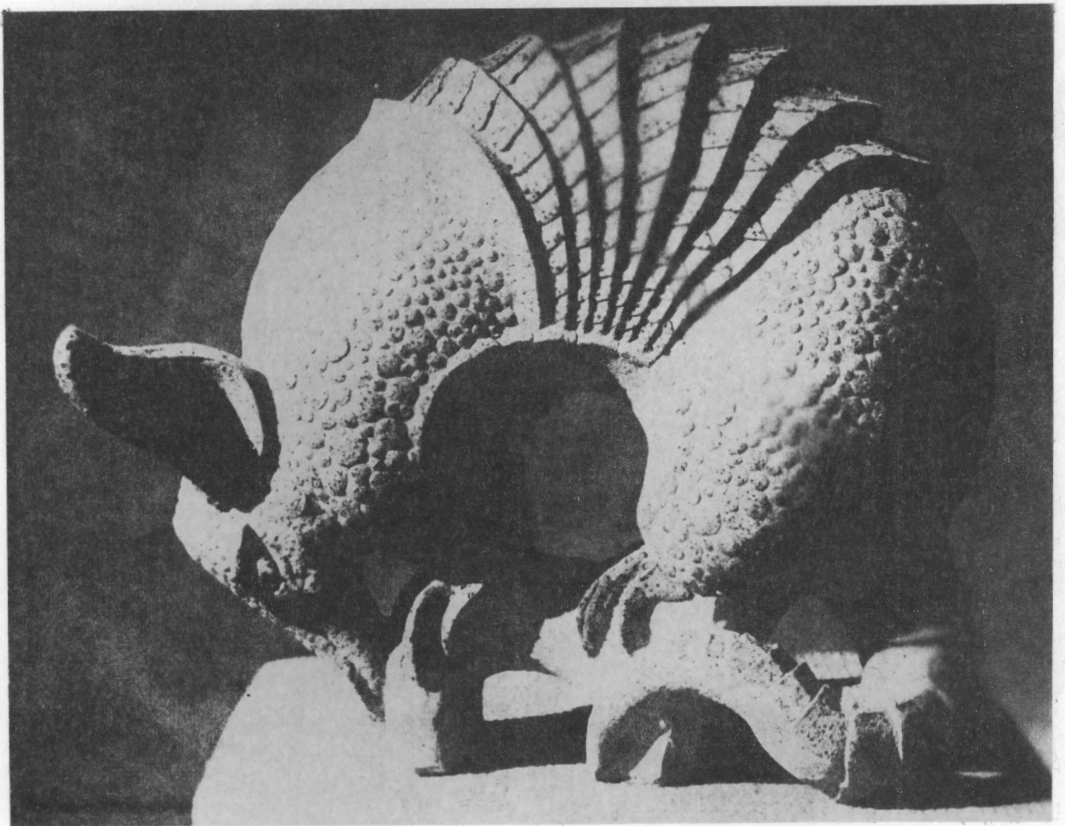


Fig. 42.--Betty Davenport Ford. "Armadillo,"
Ceramic sculpture, 1952. Lovoos, 37.

Contemporary Painters Working in Clay

There have been primarily two influences contributing to the new expression in American ceramics: (1) the bold thrust of modern painters-- Picasso, Miro, Leger; (2) the Zen pottery of Japan with its precepts of asymmetry, imperfection, crude material simplicity, incompleteness.⁶⁴

Several modern painters have attempted to express their ideas in clay. The painter who has been most active in ceramic sculpture for the past twenty years is Joan Miro. Miro and the ceramist, Joseph Llorens Artigas, formed a partnership that began in 1945 with a series of stoneware vases and plaques and reached its peak in a group of clay sculptures made between 1953 and 1957 at Artigas' farm, El Reco.⁶⁵ Artigas built a kiln in a beehive shape used by Japanese potters; the kiln can fire pieces up to 11 inches high. Artigas and Miro worked together to develop a clay that is porous and has the elemental quality of stone as well as a smoother, more plastic surface necessary in forming organic shapes. Together, they developed a technique of enamel glazes which gives earth colors a complexity and depth that no painter could achieve on canvas. Oxblood reds and copper greens are subtly mixed with over 1000 tints of the earth itself. The surfaces have a crusty variation "as though exposed to fire and buried for centuries."⁶⁶ This would indicate that Miro, the ceramic sculptor, is as much a colorist as Miro, the painter.

The child-like quality apparent in Miro's paintings also appears in his ceramic sculpture. Primitive animistic forms such as the "Whimsical Penguin" (fig. 43) and the head in figure 44 show characteristics reminiscent of the past. The Pre-Classical figures of Ancient Mexico display the same spontaneity, simplicity of shape, and symbolic imagery as Miro's "Whimsical Penguin."

⁶⁴R. Slivka, "New Ceramic Presence," *Craft Horizons*, XXI, (July, 1961), pp. 32-36.

⁶⁵Dore Ashton, "Miro, Artigas--Their New Ceramics," *Craft Horizons*, XXIV, (January, 1964), p. 25.

⁶⁶Ashton, *op. cit.*, XVII, No. 1, (February, 1957), p. 16.



Fig. 43.--Joan Miro. "Whimsical Penguin." (7½" high)
Ceramic Sculpture. Ashton, "Miro-Artigas," 16.

The head in figure 44 has hollowed eyes, a slit mouth, and a comically mysterious expression that directly resembles the Haniwa figures and animals dating back to the first century in Ancient Japan (figs. 19 and 20).

Miro takes a particular interest in natural organic forms; this is evidenced by the geometrically simple shapes and the rough weather-worn surface texture of his sculpture. Miro explains how he creates spontaneous natural forms from clay:

Sometimes accidents in baking would suggest a new idea to me. What had started out to be a vegetable form would be distorted in a way that made me think of a face; I would add a nose and a bit here and there. . . (chance is important but). . . never purely gratuitous chance. Chance disciplined, controlled by our authority.⁶⁷

Miro is trying to capture reality, not through elaborate detail, but through representation of austere rock formations and other natural forms. Very often he molds forms directly from the rock and then alters the form by adding bits of clay and color.

Embodied in the work of Joan Miro is a craving to be rid of conventional logic of Western thought. He expresses this feeling in the recurrent themes of fertility rites, sexual felicity, natural growth, and most of all in "rootedness"--an expression of sculptural forms beneath the surface. He also makes allusions to "mother, goddesses, specific fetishes, and temple-like edifices." Woman and goddess are made equal in his search to find a "mythos." "He has a piquant way of fabricating the unlikely into an immensely articulate unit."⁶⁸

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁸Ibid., XXIV, pp. 54-55.



Fig. 44.--Joan Miro. Clay head ($10\frac{1}{2}$ " high, $11\frac{1}{2}$ " wide). Ashton, "Miro-Artigas," 17.

Another painter working in ceramic sculpture is the Frenchman, Fernand Leger. His reliefs are simple, direct, and original. In his ceramic work Leger emphasizes a contrast of dark and light areas; dark lines are developed into abstract or semi-abstract designs. He utilizes bright red, yellow, or blue against a pure white background. The white together with the bright colored glazes will resist effects of time and "unchangingly proclaim his joy in the physical world and his unquenchable optimism."⁶⁹

In "La Margueritte" (fig. 45, 1952) the emphasis is completely on design; here the curved shapes are more active and less mechanical than in his paintings. In the use of dark lines on a white background, Leger creates a decorative pattern that has some similarity to the negative design on the Recuay vessels of Ancient Peru (fig. 7). In figure 45, as in all of his clay reliefs, Leger collaborates the three major art forms--architecture, painting, and sculpture--into a unified composition.

Most of Pablo Picasso's clay work has been along the lines of functional ceramic ware. After mastering the rudiments of ceramics in 1946, he began by painting on the surface of clay plates; his only interest in clay was in its use as a new kind of canvas for painting. Picasso's decorative themes, originating in his painting and lithographs, include mythological subjects, the bullfight, and heads, as well as a variety of still lifes.⁷⁰

Recently Picasso has been creating sculptural forms in clay. Pablo Picasso's clay work often suggests the black-negative designed ware from Ancient Peru (fig. 7) and at other times displays the rich color characteristic of present Mexican design. Figure 46 depicts a double-imaged vessel with rooster

⁶⁹Otis Gage, "Fernand Leger: Ceramist," Craft Horizons, XV, No. 1, (January/February, 1961), pp. 11-14.

⁷⁰J. Reichardt, "Picasso Ceramics at Grosvenor Gallery," Apollo, LXXIII, (February, 1961), pp. 33-36.

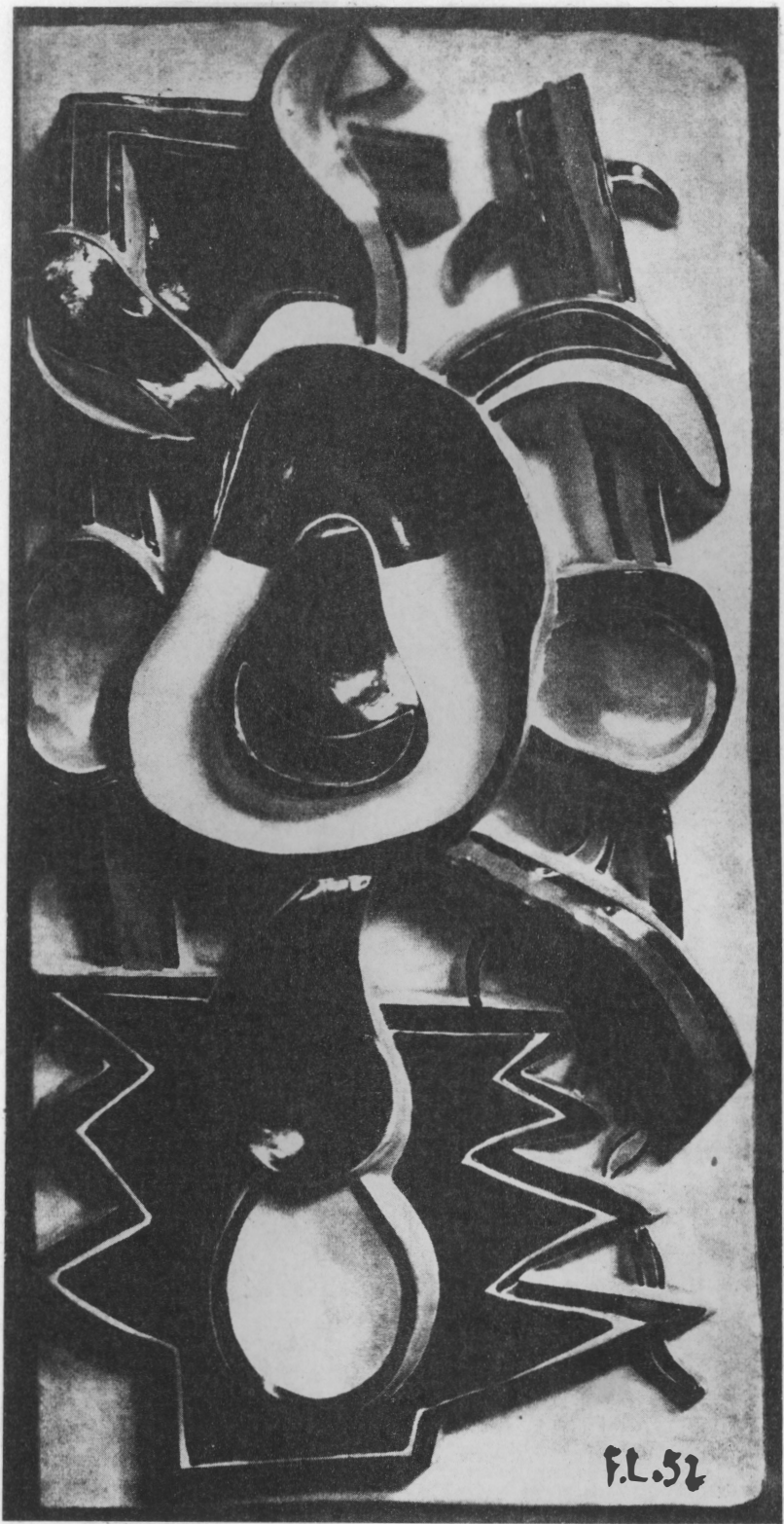


Fig. 45.--Fernand Leger. "La Magueritte." Ceramic relief. Gage, 13.

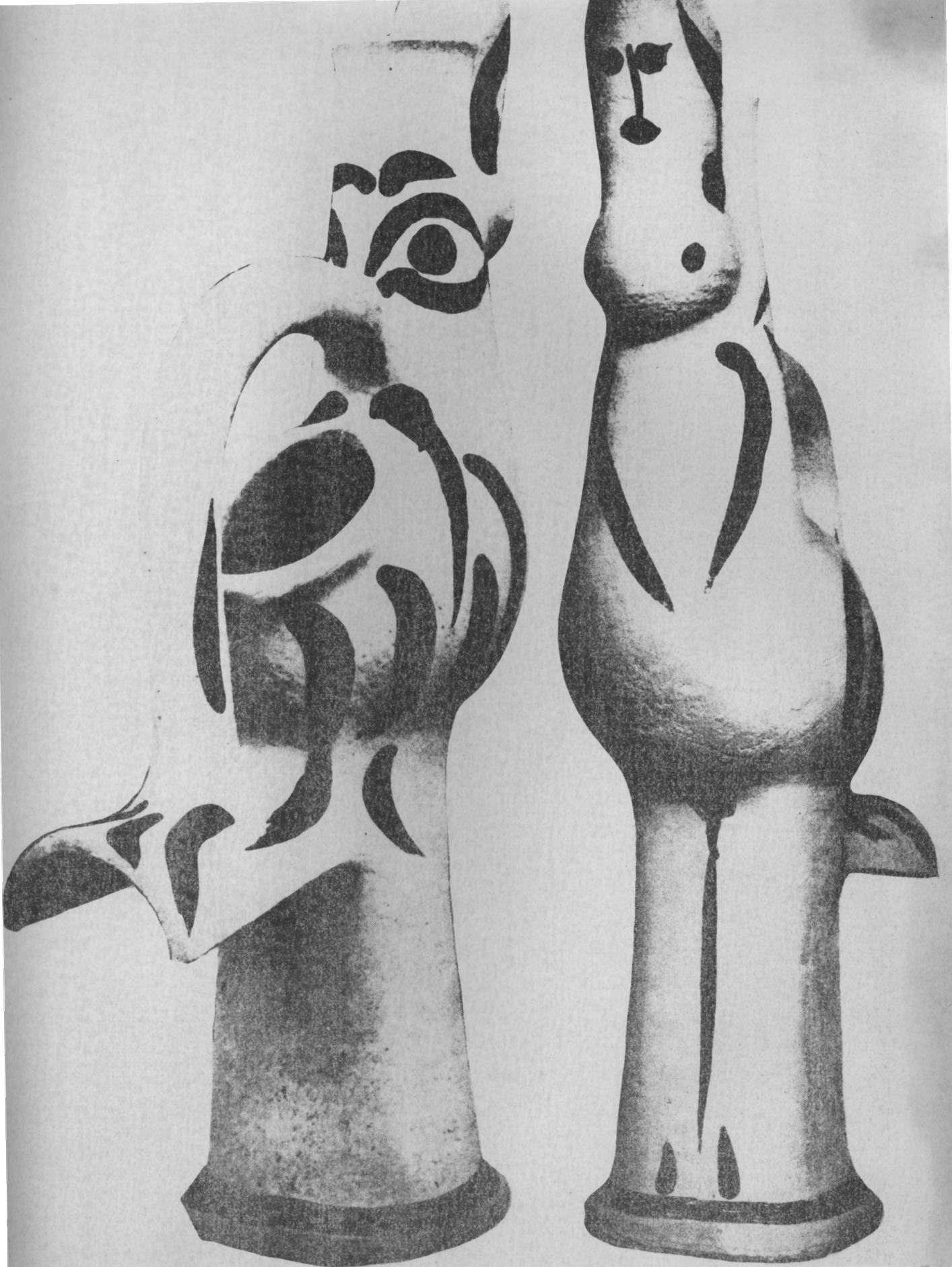


Fig. 46.--Pablo Picasso. Double-imaged vase in the shape of a rooster (left) and woman (right). "Pablo's Pixilated Picosseroles," 18.

and female features. The dual image is typical of the Pre-Classic figurines from Tlatilco during the Middle Zacatenco period in Ancient Mexico (fig. 1).⁷¹

Matisse is another painter who works in clay. In creating his ceramic wall tiles, Matisse fashions a simple design that is well thought out and completely planned before execution. His work is flat and decorative like his painting. The design he has made for the stained-glass window (fig. 47), is practically the same one appearing in his wall tiles. The curved flower-like pattern is basically abstract; the emphasis is on composition and tonal variations. Matisse's work involves contrasting tones, floral patterns, and emphasis on design which parallel some of the characteristics in Leger's work.⁷²

There appears to be two extensions of clay as paint in contemporary ceramics. First of all, the pot form is utilized as a canvas much as Picasso uses the clay surface as a new base for his paintings. Secondly, the clay itself can be used as three-dimensional paint with tactility, color, and actual form. Miro has been successful in his attempts to transfer his simple child-like painting style into clay forms. These two innovations have led the potter into pushing the limits of painting on pots into new areas of plastic expression. Clay can be manipulated like paint by forming a basic hollow core; thus, creating a continuum of surface planes on which to paint. This is the creation of a sculptural entity whose form the painter obliterates and sets up new tensions between forms and paint. The reversal of three-dimensional form painted in two dimensions is an expression in three-dimension on a multi-

⁷¹"Pablo's Pixilated Picasseroles," Craft Horizons, XVIII, No. 13, (May/June, 1958), p. 15.

⁷²Robert Sower, "Matisse and Chagall as Craftsmen," Craft Horizons, XXII, No. 1, (January/February, 1962), p. 28.

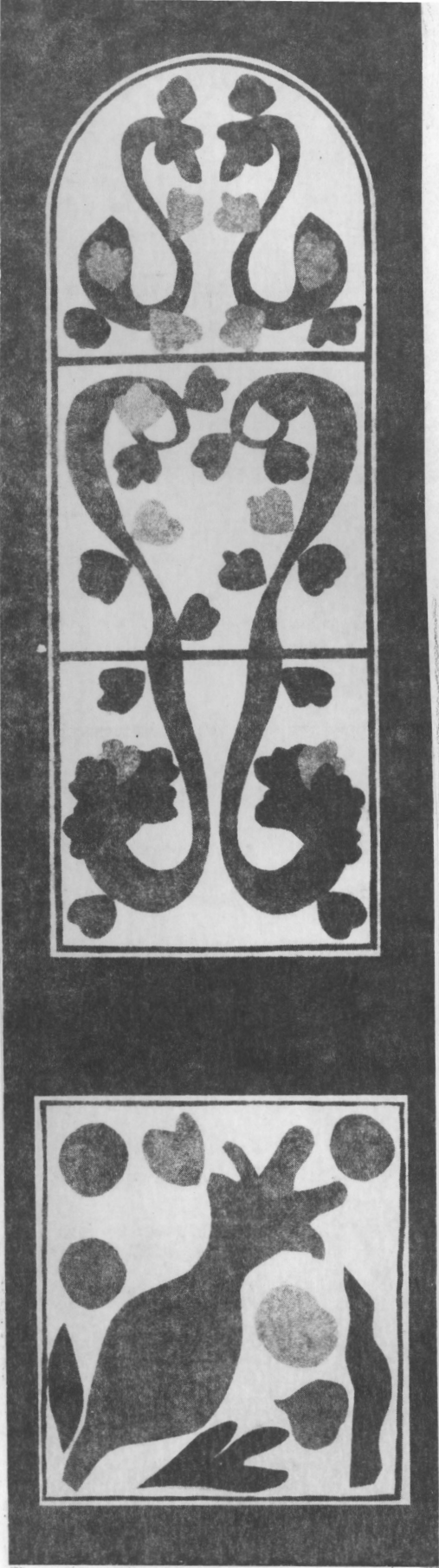


Fig. 47.--Henri Matisse. Stained-glass window design.
Sower, 29.

planed sculptured canvas. The result is modern ceramic expression ranging in variety from painted pottery to potted painting, from sculptured painting to painted sculpture, from potted sculpture to sculptured pottery. "Distinctions have become very thin and often even non-existent."⁷³

Ceramic Sculpture in Architecture

Clay in architectural sculpture affords freedom in manipulation and strength in fired durability. Lily Saarinen has been working with architectural sculpture in several different media. Around 1955 she created an interesting fountain in the form of Noah and his ark for the Northland Regional Shopping Center in the Detroit area. She also has been experimenting with smaller clay sculpture. She uses damp sheets of clay and bends whole pieces into sculpturally rigid forms. She says that she works the clay just, "as if holding molten sheets of metal which will suddenly cool and set." In her process of pushing, pulling, and squeezing she explains her feelings:

You watch textures stretch and shrink as forms curve in and out--fluid and springy--like a rising, moving animal. You are capturing and holding the will of clay--or the glitter of changeable taffeta; like catching the soaring of a bird in your hands. For clay is of the earth--of the essence--whatever that means. I can only, feel the meaning.⁷⁴

Lily has created an effective mental image of the manipulation and control of clay; figure 48 of the "Weasel" provides the concrete visual meaning for her words. The Chinese figure 28 from the early Chelsea group is the only work that seems to come close to giving the clay as much movement as Lily Saarinen

⁷³Slivka, op. cit., pp. 32-36.

⁷⁴"Clay Sculpture by Lily Saarinen: Animal Series and Portrait Head," Arts and Architecture, LXII, (September, 1945), p. 25.

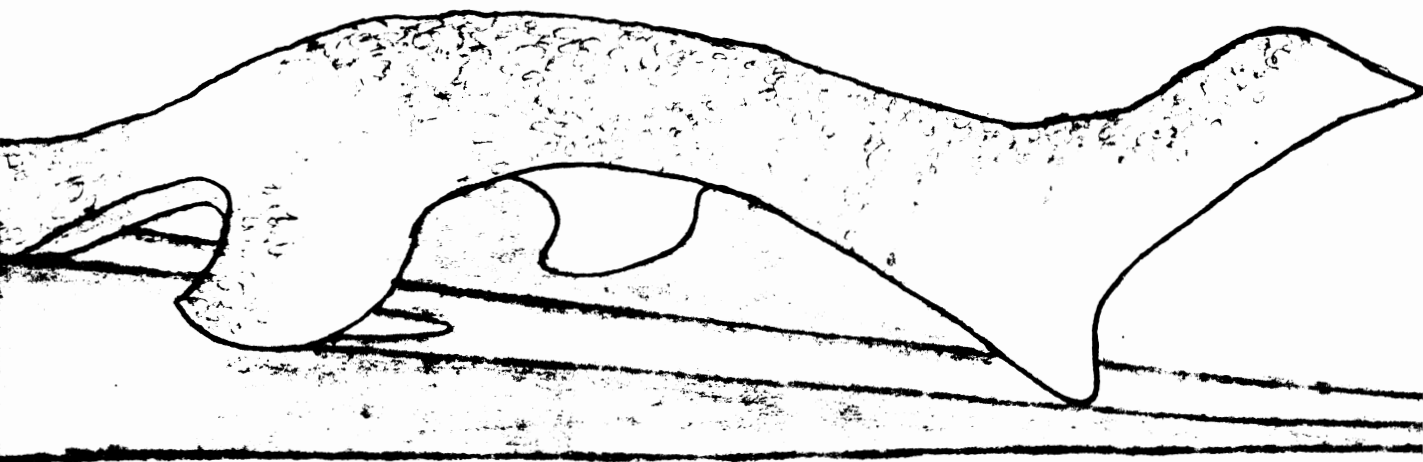


Fig. 48.--Lily Saarinen. Tracing of "Weasel."
"Clay Sculpture by Lily Saarinen: Animal Series," 24.

does. Lily Saarinen's animal sculptures have no detail but are suggestive of the animal portrayed. The overall texture must have been accomplished in rolling out the clay. The simplicity and incompleteness of her forms has roots in Zen philosophy.

Architectural murals, wall reliefs, and panels have been successfully produced in clay. John Mason creates a variety of large and vigorous wall reliefs (fig. 49) constructed in natural clay with areas of colored glaze for purposes of emphasis and contrast. The forms which contain the elements of ceramic sculpture have grown out of Mason's pottery when he combined wheel-thrown shapes to structure multi-shaped monoliths. In his reliefs, Mason combines these thrown forms with slabs and coils; he unifies the surface areas by pulling, pushing, twisting, and cutting.⁷⁵ His shapes, slabs, and added pieces of clay are geometrically basic; they are simple and organic looking. They may be compared to the Haniwa (fig. 20) in their elemental form. Although different in purpose and construction, both eliminate all unnecessary detail which serves to emphasize the strength of their simplicity.

The interesting ceramic frieze at the National Library of Medicine in Washington, D.C. is the work of the painter and sculptor Frans Wildenhain. The frieze which was constructed just recently is primarily a test-tube beaker design. He combines bright colors and semi-abstract forms to give stature with an inner dimension that is fully alive. Wildenhain believes that in many ways man stands in opposition to nature; therefore, and irritation or "gnawing awareness" is set up and serves as a basic impulse for man's aesthetic creations.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Gerald Nordland, "John Mason," Craft Horizons, XX, No. 3, (May/June, 1960), p. 29.

⁷⁶M.C. Richards, "The Architectural Mural Ceramics--Frans Wildenhain," Craft Horizons, XXII, (July, 1962), pp. 23-24.



Fig. 49.--John Mason. Ceramic wall relief. Norland,

Frans Wildenhain's ceramic murals are composed of slabs, strips, and shapes cut from clay. Areas of design, texture, and color are unified by rectangular strip enclosures. His glazes are thick and translucent in appearance. In contrast to the spontaneity of John Mason's work, Wildenhain creates a more formally organized design. A comparison may be made with figure 4 of the Zapotec rain god of Ancient Peru which suggests, through added pieces of clay and designed rectangular planes, a motif similar to Wildenhain's wall hangings (fig. 50).⁷⁷

Ceramic sculpture as garden architecture is becoming more prevalent. Clay garden sculpture calls for an essential quality of boldness; the work must have enough contrast with the plants to draw attention to the shape while, at the same time, it must be organic in form. It must be constructed in a material that is sturdy yet pliable enough to shape; this is why high-fired stoneware is often used. In searching for landscape designs, the original, non-representational, and pleasant shapes are sought. Garden ceramic sculpture may be functional such as a birdhouse, feeder, or ceramic lamp that serves as a beautiful decoration during the day and gives visible radiance to the garden at night. Garden sculpture is, however, primarily decorative in function.⁷⁸

Three people who have created particularly interesting garden sculpture made of clay are Sperry, Feves, and Weinrib. The spiny textured surface of Robert Sperry's multi-spouted ceramic fountain is characteristic of all of his work. The form is similar to a mushroom, and the color is in subtle

⁷⁷Hedy Backlin, "Collaboration: Artist and Architect," Craft Horizons, XXII, No. 3, (May/June, 1962), p. 41.

⁷⁸Dido Smith, "The Garden," Craft Horizons, XXII, No. 3, (May/June, 1962), pp. 46-50; "Crafts for the Garden," XX, No. 3, (May/June, 1960), pp. 11-13.

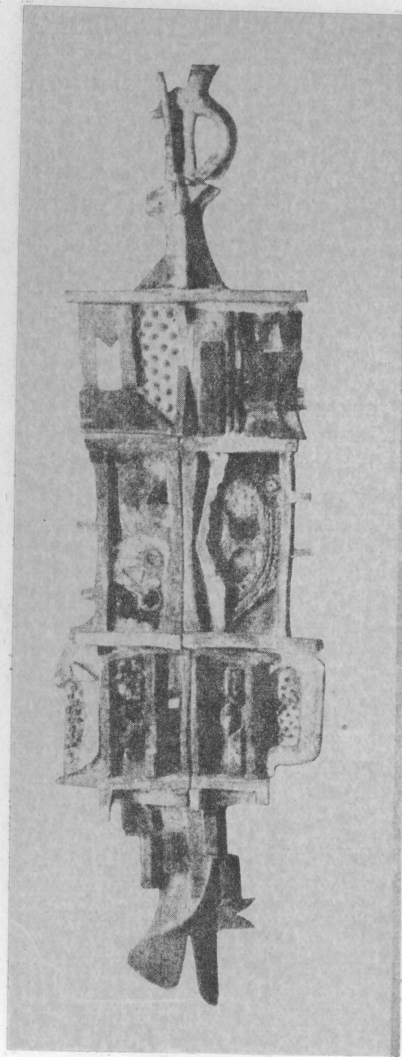


Fig. 50.--Frans Wildenhain. Ceramic wall panel.
Blacklin, 41.

earth-brown tones (fig. 51). This sculpture (fig. 52) is a composite of irregular geometric shapes; this simple, organic form was created in 1959 by Betty Feves.⁷⁹ David Weinrib's purely decorative shapes display a strict control of mass and space. He uses slabs of wet clay to suggest walls and walls imply a rigid structure. This rigid structure (fig. 53) was made in 1956. It shows how irregular slab pieces can be compiled to form a unified, yet spontaneous upright structure.⁸⁰ All three pieces of garden sculpture have underlying similarities of simplicity through nature-inspired shapes. Zen and the tea ceremony of the Orient "inculcate simplicity, directness, and self-restraint--in short, discriminating taste."⁸¹ Certainly, these same principles apply to a varying degree in contemporary garden sculpture and particularly to the three works mentioned.

Ceramic sculpture is not only moving into the garden but into the pool as well. Recently, Antonia Tomasini created a clay sculpture to be placed at the bottom of a swimming pool in Italy. The shape somewhat resembles an octopus with holes large enough to swim through (fig. 54). The texture is bubble-like; the form has flowing lines. This ceramic sculpture may only be the beginning piece for an entire playground of clay forms under water.⁸²

Clay sculpture has been extended far and beyond the limits of household decorative figurines; murals, panels, and wall reliefs enhance the walls of homes, stores, and buildings of all kinds. Rigid, massive, organic forms of

⁷⁹Ibid., XX, pp. 11-12.

⁸⁰Oppi Untracht, "Architectonics in Clay," Craft Horizons, XVI, No. 1, (January/February, 1956), pp. 14-15.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 21.

⁸²Ladislav Rado, "The Time Is Ripe," Craft Horizons, XVI, No. 3, (May/June, 1956), p. 16.

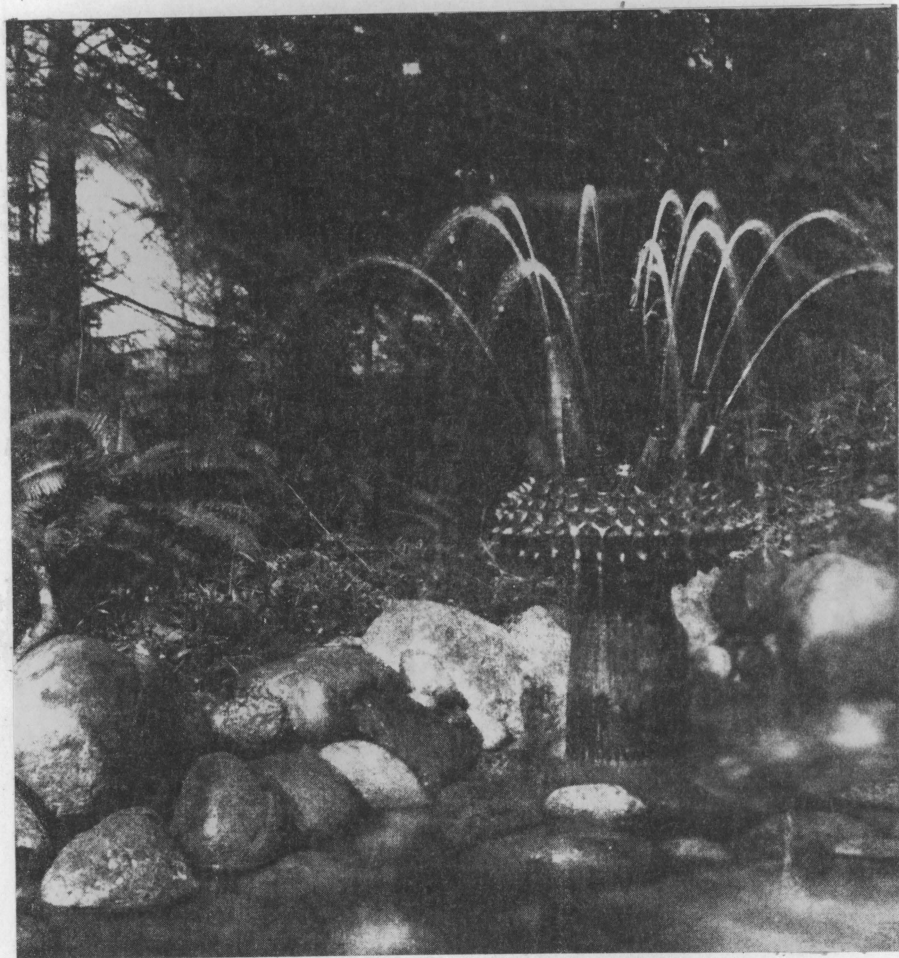


Fig. 51.--Robert Sperry. Multi-spouted ceramic fountain (36" high). Smith, "Crafts for the Garden," 11.

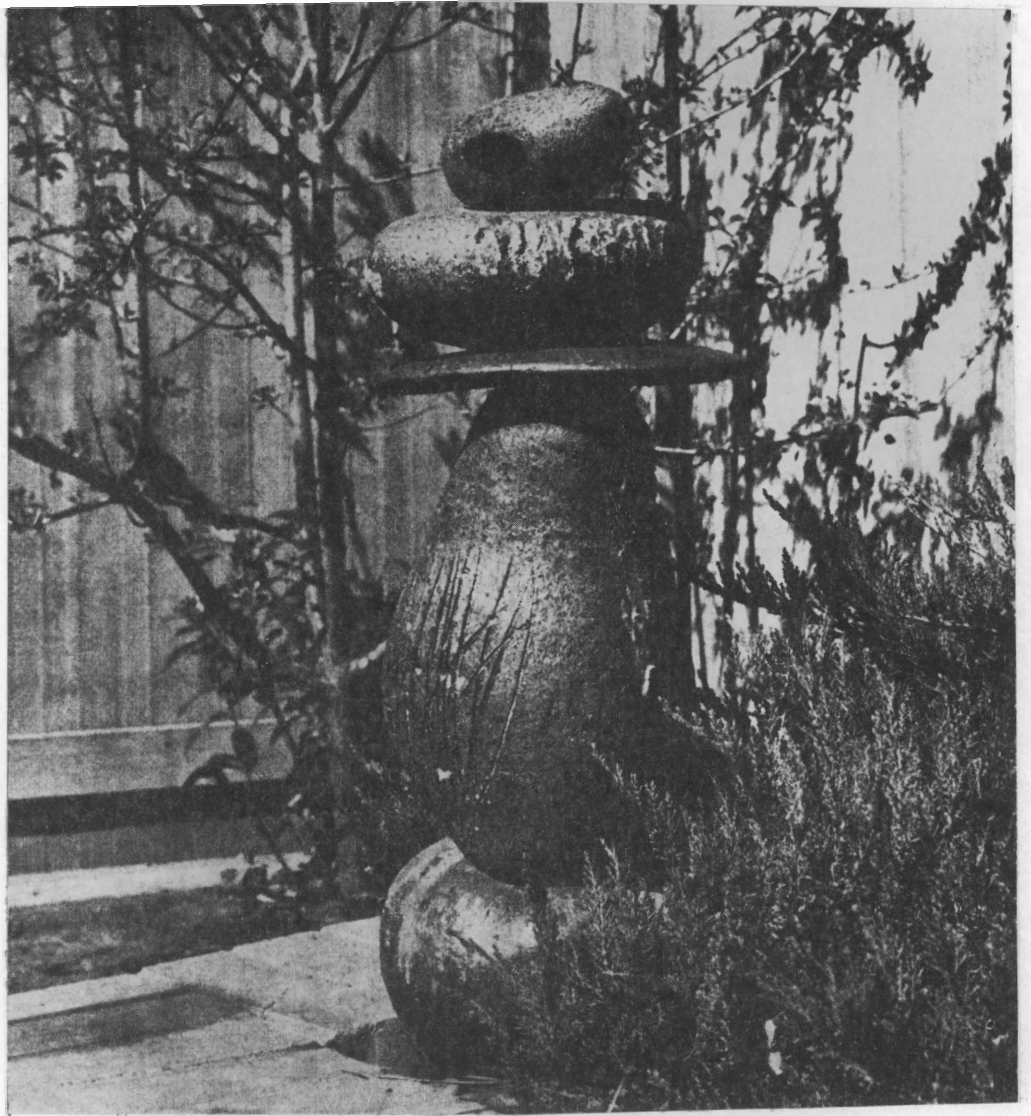


Fig. 52.--Betty Feves. "Cairn." Coil-built stoneware (30" high). Smith. "Crafts for the Garden," 12.

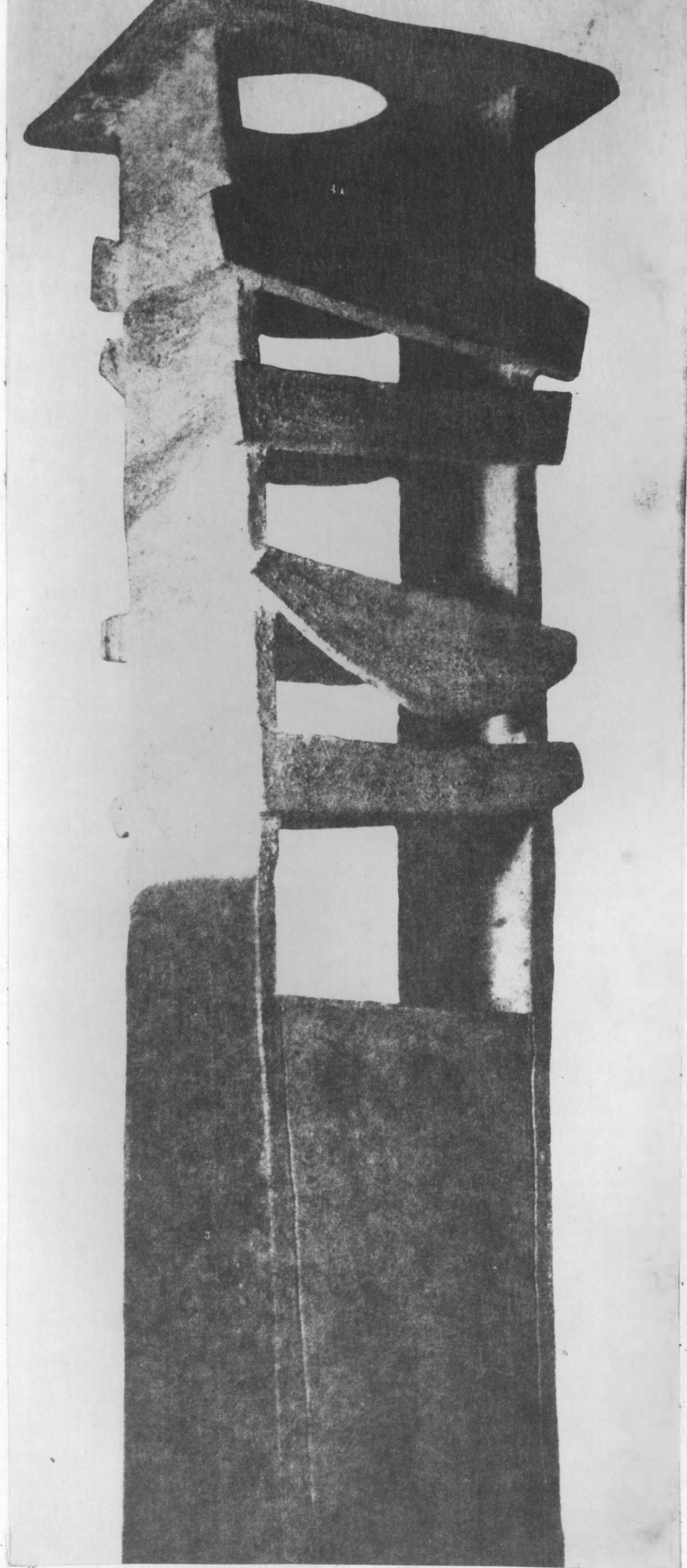


Fig. 53.--David Weinrib. Garden sculpture. Untracht, .

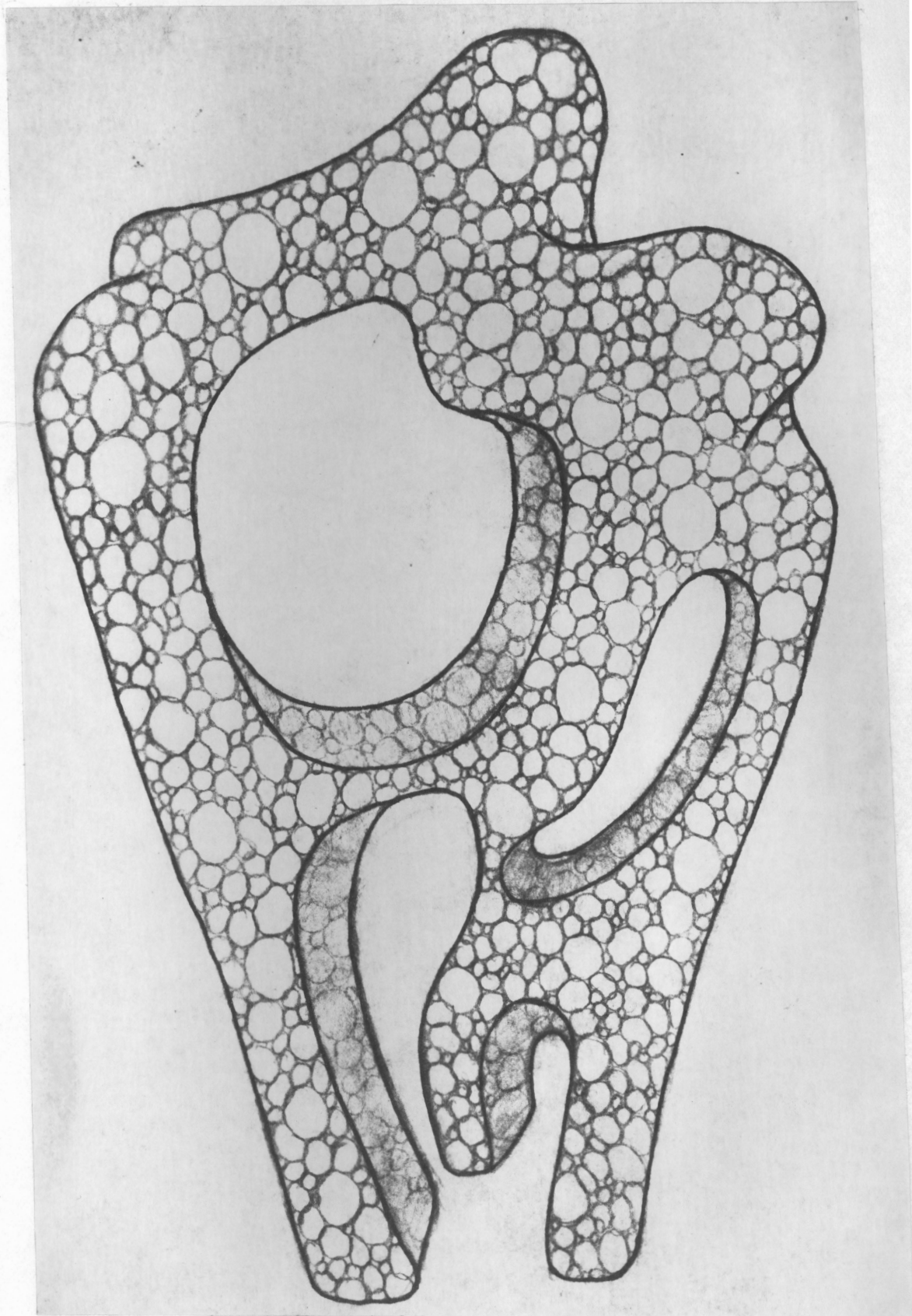


Fig. 54.--Pierre Zuffi. Underwater clay sculpture.
Drawing. Rado, 16.

ceramic sculpture have moved into the garden. Art is again becoming more of a part of daily life as it was in the civilizations of the past. In the ancient civilizations, art work was an essential part of living. Art served the past as a means of expressing ideas as completely as the written word serves us today. As ceramic sculpture and other art forms come into wider use as a part of our daily surroundings, maybe art will again be restored to its former position of prominence.

The West Coast Movement

Some of the most interesting and experimental work in ceramic sculpture comes from a movement on the West Coast.

In contradiction to the carving of a block, the modeling of a mass, of the brazing of forged components, sculpture in hollow, fired earths has rarely engaged Occidental artists. If terra cotta ever appeared it was generally in bas-reliefs or partial figures--in short a variety of modeling. The West Coast approach to pottery-sculpture involves modeling least. Hollow shaped components are assembled and subjected to adjustments.⁸³

The new trends of abstract expression of Pollock, Kline, de Kooning, Gorky, Newman, and Hofmann, unleashed the spirit in other areas. The West Coast movement has been the spearhead in this type of expression. Highly skilled potters, such as Peter Voulkos, John Mason, Kenneth Price, and Daniel Rhodes (Price and Rhodes studied at New York's Alfred University), pioneered an attack using fired and glazed clay forms in an unacademic way. They worked away from any set style and created an entirely new environment for future generations.

⁸³"New Talent in America, 1959: Sculpture," Art in America, XLVII, No. 1, (Spring, 1959), p. 44.

The roots of this movement are embodied in the art of the ancient cultures. The Zen Buddhist ideas of simplicity, directness, and suggestion are apparent in this new expression. The look is organic like the clay itself; it is a statement of unified truth.⁸⁴ After mastering ceramic skills, the artist found a new freedom of expression in accomplished distortion. The student of Zen could not find truth until he had completed years of contemplation; the Oriental painter could not paint until he had practiced and studied traditions and rules at great length; the ceramic sculptor cannot be free to express his ideas skillfully in any manner he chooses until he has subjected himself to the discipline of mastering his media.

Peter Voulkos emerges as the most influential teacher in the new movement. He has been an innovator in this movement toward spontaneous, free, organic forms. He came to Los Angeles from Montana in 1954 with a background of strong influence from abstract-expressionistic painters.⁸⁵ Peter Voulkos has gained acclaim as a talented potter, and it is from this basic strength that he creates unusual and interesting sculptural forms. He uses piles of hollow clay cylinders as an armature for massive sculpture. He creates a multi-planed structure in a cubistic fashion, in this way, Voulkos sets up within his sculpture an interesting play of dark and light areas.

In figure 55, "Sitting Bull," portrays a massive multi-planed form finished in blue, white, and black glazes.⁸⁶ The massive strength of the

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 18.

⁸⁵John Coplans, "Out of Clay," Art in America, LI, (December, 1963), p. 40.

⁸⁶Dore Ashton, "New Talent Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art," Craft Horizons, XX, (March, 1960), p. 42.



Fig. 55.--Peter Voulkos. "Sitting Bull" (65" high).
Ashton, "New Talent Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art,"
42.

Mochica figures of Ancient Peru correlate with Peter Voulkos' work. The Peruvian figure of a seated Indian is naturalistically modeled, but at the same time retains its simple form of large planes and contrasts of dark shadows and light unglazed clay (fig. 6). Voulkos' work is an abstraction embodying the same strong qualities that the Indian sculpture possesses. Peter Voulkos has recently been working in metal sculpture; consequently, he has switched his emphasis from large masses to space relationships. The new media requires the mastery of new skills.

John Mason is moving in the Voulkos direction of spontaneous, organic forms; however, his approach is from a different angle. He does not use cylinders or any form of mechanical throwing as a basis for his ceramic sculpture; he starts instead by punching and shaping forms. Mason has developed a method of laminating an overlay of clay forms to build large monumental structures.⁸⁷ Actually, Mason has a wide range of ceramic forms running from six feet and seven feet high monolithic and monochromatic forms to "polychromed tangles of shapes suggesting organic growth."⁸⁸

John Mason's painted "Cross" (fig. 56) shows the primitive rough surface found in his wall reliefs. Like Peter Voulkos, Mason uses cubistic planes emerging from a simple massive form.⁸⁹

Don Goodall, head of the department of Art at the University of Texas has summed up Mason's contributions to contemporary ceramics in this way: "Mason treats clay with the craft disciplines of sculpture, pottery, and

⁸⁷Coplans, op. cit., p. 40.

⁸⁸Jules Langsner, "Exhibition at Ferus Gallery: Los Angeles," Art News, LVIII, (September, 1959), p. 50.

⁸⁹Coplans, op. cit., p. 41.



Fig. 56.--John Mason. "Cross form, painted ceramic, 1962." Coplans, 41.

painting, seeking to exploit the peculiar visual possibilities suggested by the materials themselves. The content of the work is therefore subjective, and yet it is his intensity of feeling that drives Mason from piece to piece to varying solutions within one work."⁹⁰

Kenneth Price is third of the pioneers in the contemporary movement of ceramic sculpture on the West Coast. Price studied at Alfred University, the oldest ceramic school in the United States, where the emphasis usually has been on compact form. He has developed a pod-like form with several fingers either enclosed or thrusting outward. He also creates a simple distorted egg shape such as the one in figure 57. The egg form has a couple of irregularly shaped holes with a wrinkled mass of clay showing from within. The work of Kenneth Price is saturated with a "dramatic range of the most intense and expressive colors" glazed or painted on with coat after coat of automobile lacquers.⁹¹ An example of this brilliant color is figure 57--the orange painted egg shape. This elementary form expresses the Zen philosophy--"the reduction of nature to a skeleton."⁹² What could be more elemental than the simple egg form.

Daniel Rhodes, a potter since 1941 and also a former student and teacher at Alfred University, is now the author of many books and articles on ceramics; he is also an accomplished ceramic sculptor. In his sculpture he combines clay with wood, metal, and bone. His sculptures are ". . . totemic figures of folded and textured and modeled clay, cut and fused with superimposed images, revealing another world."⁹³ His figures are slender with

⁹⁰Smith, op. cit., "Crafts for the Garden," p. 33.

⁹¹Coplans, op. cit., p. 40.

⁹²Ibid., p. 20.

⁹³M.C. Richards, "Dan Rhodes," Craft Horizons, XVII, No. 5, (September/October, 1958), p. 16.



Fig. 57.--Kenneth Price. "Orange, painted clay, 1962." Coplans, 43.

small heads and rich textures portraying a majestic look of the past. His world is one of austere mysticism; perhaps it is one similar to the ancient world of the North and South Americas. Jōmon ware of Ancient Japan (fig. 15) possesses the natural texture of the rope; the clay figures of Daniel Rhodes possess the natural texture of the earth's surface (figs. 58 and 59).

Mr. Rhodes says:

The impact of my various ceramic activities on me is somehow connected to what I find interesting in the world about us: the elemental surfaces of mountains, valleys, eroded rocks, sands, and beaches, river beds and glacial dumps, the muted colors of the rocks and minerals, the fire-memory which seems inherent in them, the ever changing colors of the landscape and the sky, the infinitely varied and sensitive face of the earth.⁹⁴

Another talented ceramic sculptor well worth mentioning is Robert Sperry. After beginning work as a painter, Mr. Sperry went to the Bray Foundation to work with Peter Voukos and Rudy Autio. Now, Mr. Normark says in his article on Sperry, he is able to take the first prize in both ceramics and painting in an art show. Sperry is very experimental; he searches for new possibilities within all media with which he works. His work, he says, should not be described as "functional," because the term "presupposes that everything has a function, whether it serves to drink from or to look at." Sperry emphasizes the idea that "any painting, sculpture, or pot that does not present an idea that adds to the total of human experience is not art."⁹⁵

Mr. Sperry generally sketches his ideas but rarely follows his drawings; he follows the demands made by the vitality of the clay. Using a coarse clay

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

⁹⁵ Don Normark, "Ceramics and Robert Sperry," Craft Horizons, XXII, No. 1, (January/February, 1962), pp. 33-34.



Figs. 58-59.--Daniel Rhodes. "Princess" (left), 10" high: "Seated Figure" (right), 16" high. Richards, 17.

that fires to cone seven or eight, Sperry creates large sculptures composed of wheel-thrown shapes which he cuts and joins together. He is not interested in glaze research and uses only five or six glazes. Sperry is primarily interested in form; he works in a series of related forms by letting one piece be a further exploration of ideas discovered in working out previous ideas.

Peter Voulkos has probably been one of the biggest influences on Sperry's work. He is also fascinated by Jōmon and the Haniwa periods of Japanese pottery, by Bizen ware, by magic signs and symbols through the ages, and by most of Picasso's work.

The Haniwa figures and Jōmon ware of early Japan embody simplicity and directness similar to the work of Robert Sperry. In figure 60, a recent work of Sperry's, the form is reminiscent of thorns; the crucifixion is a recurrent theme in Sperry's work. The Haniwa figures symbolize the servants of the dead, and the thorns in Sperry's sculpture symbolize the crucifixion.⁹⁶

In California an outstanding young ceramic sculptor--Win Ng--creates clay forms that are fresh spirited statements. Win Ng is concerned primarily with relations between the space inside and outside of the forms. He says: "There is something in the space within a pot that is mysterious and alive. I want to explore this inner space, this enclosed intensity, and draw it to the surface of the pot."⁹⁷ In Taoism and Zen Buddhism it is the inner space or void that is filled with meaning.⁹⁸ Win Ng has been greatly influenced by the Oriental religious philosophies.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 35.

⁹⁷Yoshiko Uchida, "Win Ng," Craft Horizons, XX, (January/February, 1960), p. 33.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 18.

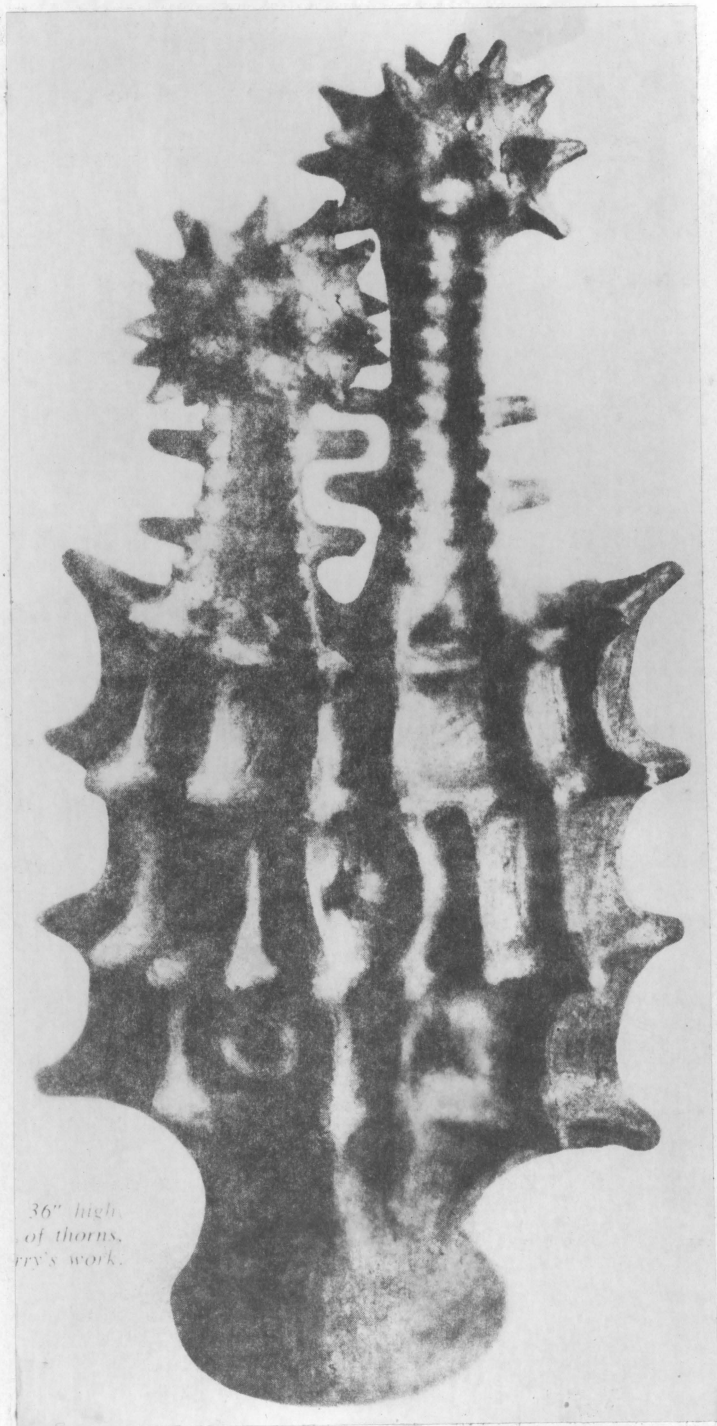


Fig. 60.--Robert Sperry. Reduction fired stoneware sculpture, 36" high. Normark, 32.

Mr. Ng often experiments with textures. His glazes, derived primarily from bone ash, perform the function of revealing the form. Mr. Ng would explain it in this way: "To me, form has a definite color implication, and I try to bring out the color inherent in each form Color and glaze are not imposed from the surface, but grow from the form itself."⁹⁹

Recently Win Ng has been experimenting with slab construction from hollow block forms. He is again trying to bring out the deeper meaning of the space within the form. His slab construction (fig. 61) also displays a weathered look; a contrast between darks and lights accented by the brown, blue, and white glazes; and a successful demonstration of relationships between positive and negative space. The multi-planed surfaces of the Mochica figure of Ancient Peru (fig. 6) are similar to the large planes found in Win Ng's constructions. Also the streaking contrast of light and dark glazes on a strong form (fig. 22 of T'ang dynasty) have similar effects in Ng's slab construction (fig. 61). Figure 62 of a rough wheel-thrown pot has the marks of construction left on it. The texture and simple, rough shape are reminiscent of the Zen tea-bowls (fig. 26).

Another young artist also from the California coast is James Melchert. Mr. Melchert's stoneware sculpture ranges from less than a foot to over six feet high; the larger ones are built from an assemblage of single elemental forms--cones, mounds, or raised masses. These simple, unaffected forms have become monumental sculptural structures.¹⁰⁰ Some of Melchert's small sculptures are interestingly adorned with metallic brown glazes; this gives them a "sober remoteness."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹Uchida, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁰⁰"Exhibitions," Craft Horizons, XXI, No. 3, (May/June, 1961), pp. 38, 41.

¹⁰¹Joseph Pugliese, "Exhibitions," Craft Horizons, XX, (July, 1962), p. 46.

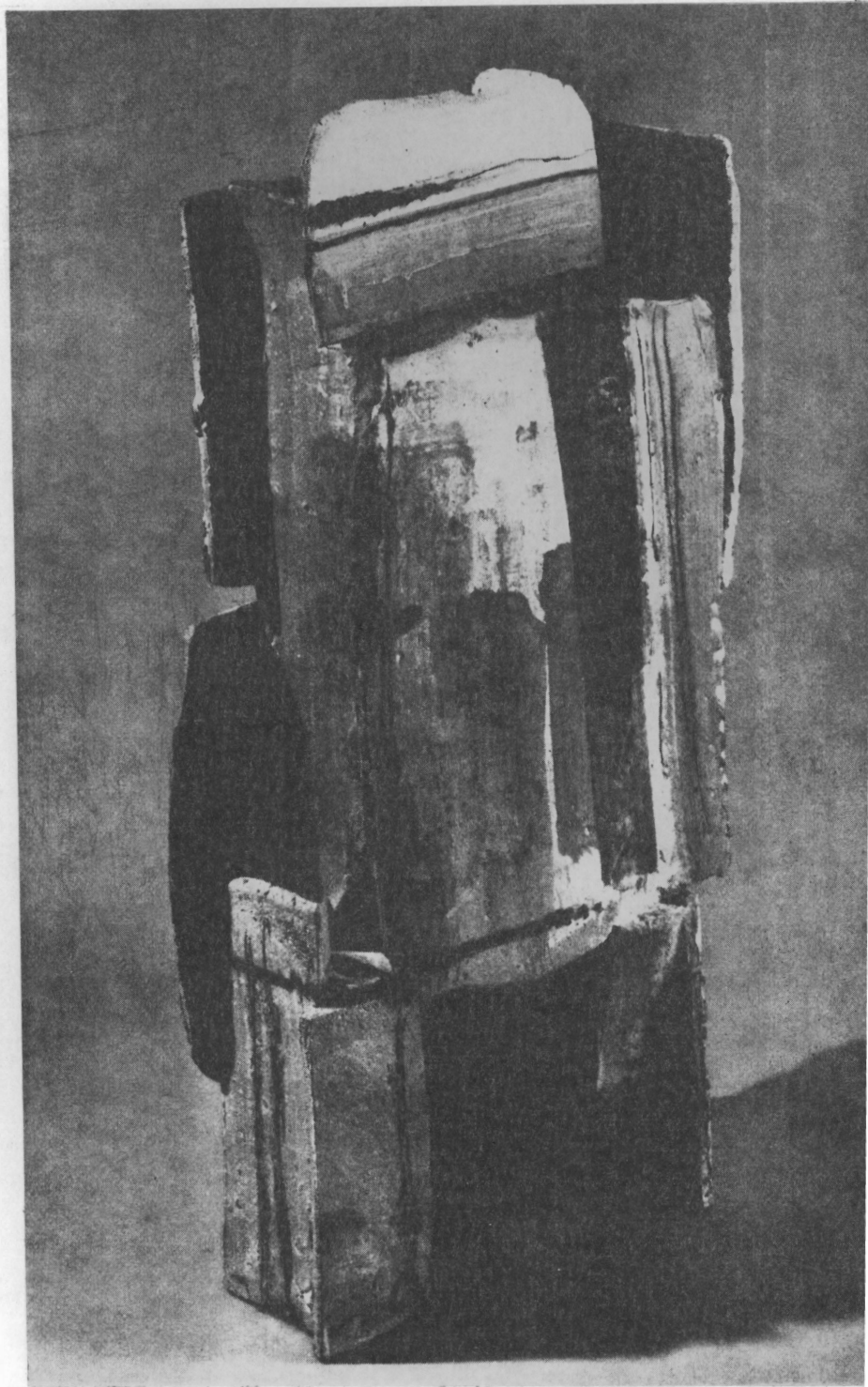


Fig. 61-62.---Win Ng. Slab construction, 33" high,
(left): Wheel-thrown rough cylinder, 9" high, (right).
Uchida, 35.

The finger marks on figure 63 are left to give the tool-like form primitive, spontaneous character. Creators of Ancient Japanese Haniwa figures (figs. 19 and 20) also left the marks of construction on their simple clay forms.

Hal Riegger, a potter and sculptor working in Oregon, shows an interest in shapes found by the sea and desert. Starting with round hollow forms, he creates natural forms with the texture of water-washed stones and pebbles. He often uses combinations of wood, metal, and brilliantly enameled clay units to form amusing groups of "people" (fig. 64). Vivid glaze, incising, and thin coils are applied to provide the face and figure delineation.¹⁰²

Mr. Riegger's work has the same geometrically basic shape as the unornamented hippopotamus figurines of predynastic Egypt (figs. 9 and 10). The Haniwa figure 20 also has the same cylindrical form and humorous appeal as Hal Riegger's work.

"Oriental 'raku' represents an extraordinary combination of control and accident which has carried into contemporary pottery some of the dominant themes of modern American painting; outstanding among its exponents are the atavistic shapes and primeval textures created by Jean Griffith."¹⁰³ Jean Griffith, a Washington artist, gives the surface of her work a weathered look. The many nooks and crannies in her ceramic sculpture (fig. 65) are similar to those found in a rock formation. The natural colors aid in creating an interesting play of light and dark areas. In this way, Jean Griffith develops a type of sculpture that is true to the nature of the material.

¹⁰²"Exhibitions," Craft Horizons, XXI, No. 6, (November/December, 1961), p. 42.

¹⁰³Henry J. Seldis, "Exhibition: Letters from Los Angeles," Craft Horizons, XXIII, No. 3, (May/June, 1963), p. 42.



Fig. 63.--James Melchert. Fired ceramic sculpture, 18" high. Pugliese, 41.

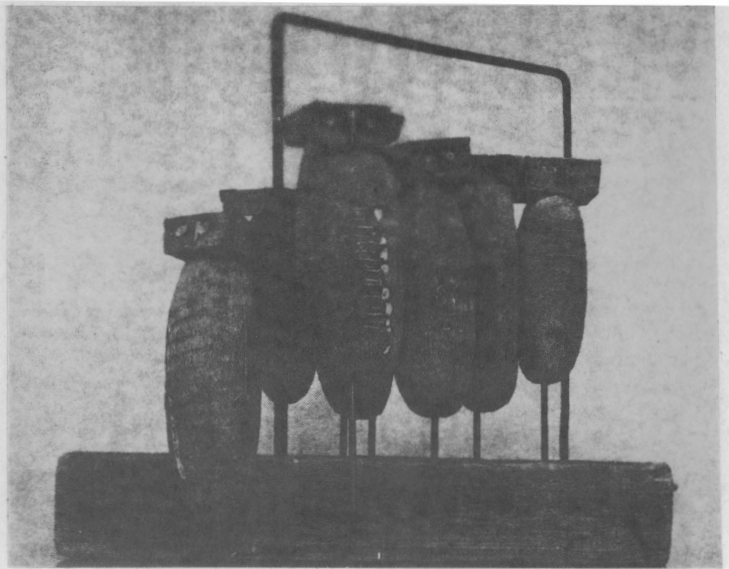


Fig. 64.--Hal Riegger. Ceramic sculpture, "Exhibition,"
Craft Horizons, XXI, 42,



Fig. 65.--Jean Griffith. White Raku ceramic sculpture.
Seldis, 42.

Contemporary Ceramic Sculpture From Other Countries

The work of Shugen Inouye, a Japanese Buddhist priest now living in Hawaii, portrays natural and free flowing form, line, and texture. Inouye was trained on the island but is working in the Japanese tradition. His work suggests simplicity. His ceramic sculpture (fig. 66) is not to be looked at as a "carefully constructed flower arrangement," but as a form embodying the elemental characteristics of nature. One of the outstanding nature-inspired features of his work is the pitted and pebbled earth-like surface.¹⁰⁴

Italy has produced some "stimulating" and "flamboyant" ceramic sculpture. There is color everywhere; the Italians use a majolica glaze technique but rarely use the raw color. The work seems to show a Scadinavian folk influence. Most of the work has been done in earthenware using lead, clay, and tin as basic ingredients in his glazes. More attention has been given to design than to technical perfection of glazes and clays. "The decorative motifs have been of a mythical, medieval, religious, or Baroque themes." The shapes have been abstract experimental interpretations of these themes.¹⁰⁵

The highly expressionistic works of Agenore Fabbri "depict the savage realism" of war. "Mother and Child" (fig. 67) is "rubbed with oxides, engobes, and glazes giving rich color."¹⁰⁶ The feeling of pain permeates the multi-planed semi-abstract form; in every way it bleeds emotion. Similar intense expressive qualities are found in the work of Ancient Peru (fig. 4),

¹⁰⁴Joanna Shaw Eagle, "Exhibitions," Craft Horizons, XXII, No. 6, (November/December, 1962), p. 42.

¹⁰⁵Ellen Key-Oberg, "Ceramic Sculpture," Craft Horizons, XIII, (July/August, 1956), p. 38.

¹⁰⁶Joan Pearson, "Italy," Craft Horizons, XVI, No. 4, (July/August, 1956), p. 38.

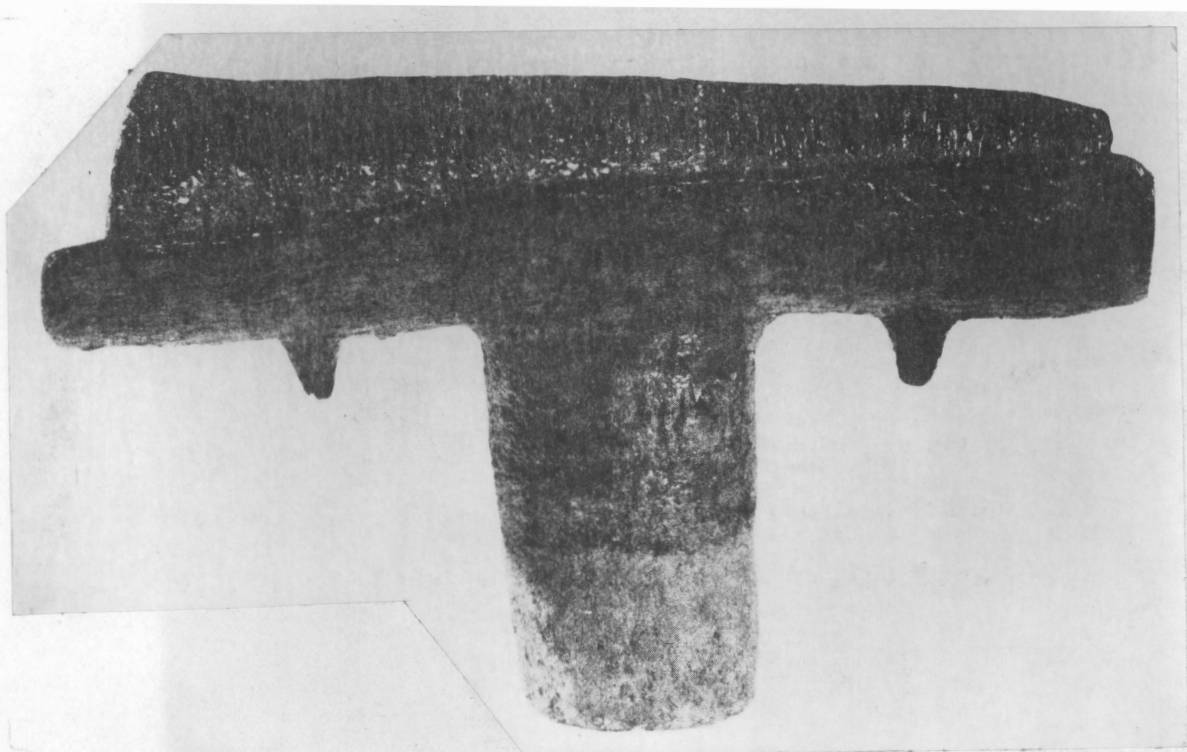


Fig. 66.--Shugen Inouye. Slab construction stoneware, 8" high. Eagle, 42.



Fig. 67.--Agenore Fabbri. "Mother and Child."
Pearson, 38.

the T'ang dynasty of China (fig. 22), and the early English stoneware of John Dewight (fig. 31).

Another Italian, Salvatore Meli, studied sculpture in Florence around 1946 and later turned to ceramic work. He produces large bird-shaped vessels with huge handles (fig. 68). The dark line decoration on a light background draws a parallel with the Recuay pottery of Ancient Peru (fig. 7). Meli says that he is working toward a synthesis of form and decoration by using intricate moving line designs in a vivid assortment of colors. However, sometimes the design is so complex that the simple underlying form is lost.¹⁰⁷

Mr. Stalhane, art director and chief designer at Rörstrand porcelain factory in Lidköping, Sweden, says that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Rörstrand's production was imitative of Rococo German and English styles. It was not until about 1917 that the influences of younger members of Sweden's Society of Industrial Design caused Rörstrand's porcelain to "reflect a truly national character."¹⁰⁸ Today in his studio, Stalhane produces many interesting pieces of pottery and a few ceramic sculpture constructions. His ceramic sculpture has the look of large enclosed geometric shapes. He adds a wide brush stroke in a Japanese style design that serves to compliment the simple form.

Raty of France created a ceramic sculpture that portrays the stylized figure of a boar (fig. 69). The massive bulk of the animal is accented by comparatively small ear, nose, and foot detail. The predynastic Egyptian

¹⁰⁷Joseph A. Pugliese, "Meli," Craft Horizons, XVII, No. 6, (November/December, 1958), pp. 30-31.

¹⁰⁸Glenn Nelson, "Stalhane of Sweden," Craft Horizons, XXII, No. 2, (March/April, 1962), pp. 11-12.

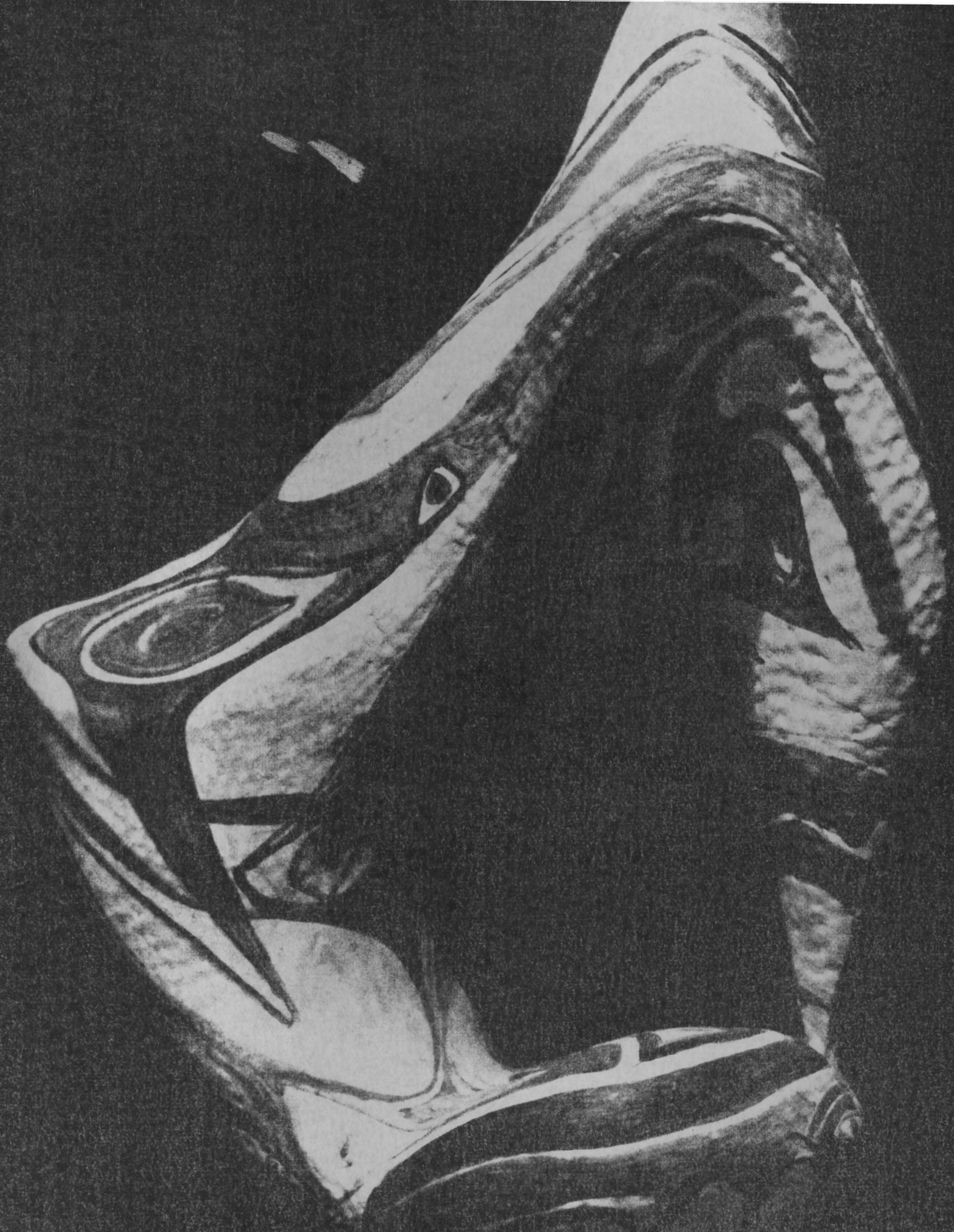


Fig. 68.--Salvatore Meli. Clay sculpture. Pugliese, 30.

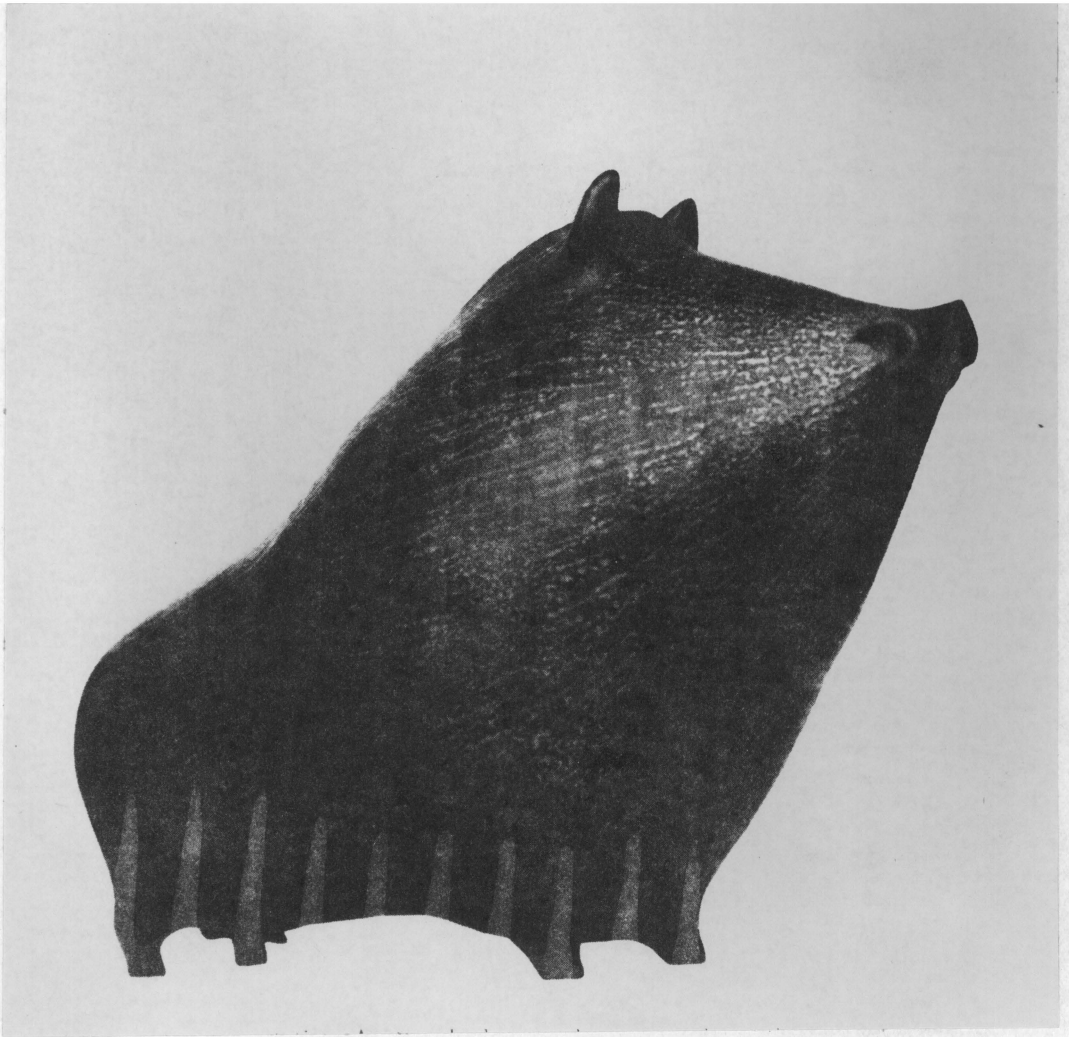


Fig. 69.--Raty. "The Boar." Mailliard, 14.

hippo pottery (figs. 9 and 10) possesses similar qualities. The dark color of "The Boar" discloses light dotted streaks from the nostril down to the exaggerated thick neck.¹⁰⁹

Chapter Summary

The rise and advance in technology had encouraged a preoccupation with technique. When technique dominated, the essential stability of the form was shaken. To regain the basic form, the superficial had to be eliminated; there had to be more emphasis on the elemental structure of the whole.

The contemporary trend is toward a sincere statement portrayed in the underlying forms reminiscent of nature. A review of some of the particularly interesting work in contemporary ceramic sculpture serves to explain the influential strength of the past upon the present. The outstanding ceramic sculpture of Ancient Mexico, Peru, and the Orient possesses elements that have counterparts in contemporary art; some of the elements are the unyielding simplicity, strength of form, and complete unification of the whole. The past and present portray life--the life of the culture and the life of the individual embodied in the creative works of the artist.

¹⁰⁹Dominique Mailliard, "The International Exposition of Ceramics at Cannes," Craft Horizons, XXIII, No. 4, (July/August, 1963), p. 14.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This paper has been divided into two parts: historical and contemporary. The first portion provided a glimpse of ceramic sculpture of the past. The purpose was to present the essential characteristics of ceramic art work and the fundamental attitudes and atmosphere of the culture in which this creative work has been produced. The ancient civilizations of the Orient and of South and Central Americas are of primary concern, because ceramic sculpture from these areas embodied characteristics of simplicity and spontaneity that are also inherent in the creative endeavors of today's art world. Also, some of the outstanding eighteenth and nineteenth century European figurines have contributed qualities of movement and expression to contemporary ceramic sculpture. The reason for the historical sketch was to provide a mode of comparison between the past and present; thus, we discover the possible influences from the ancient world that have had a marked effect on contemporary ceramic sculpture.

The second part of this paper was concerned with contemporary ceramic sculpture and included representative work produced during the last thirty years. It began with a new philosophical trend apparent in the work of Daumier and Rodin. The direction strays away from preoccupation with the ornamental as exemplified by some of the eighteenth and nineteenth century European figurines; the direction is, instead, toward a strong emphasis on the essential form. The pioneers in this transitional movement create recognizable human and animal forms; however, these forms have unrealistic

color, exaggerated proportion, and humorous expression revealing an inclination toward abstraction. The movement toward abstraction on the part of the painter has contributed to the style of the contemporary ceramic sculptor. At the same time several painters--Miro, Picasso, Leger--have worked with clay as a new medium of expression.

Another major influence comes from the Zen Buddhist religion and philosophy that permeates the Oriental culture. The tea garden with its traditionally prescribed ceremony is a part of the honest, direct simplicity of Zen. The sturdy stoneware forms of contemporary garden architecture correlates with the Japanese garden setting. In a sincere attempt to compliment natural surroundings, the contemporary sculptor makes a direct statement in his clay structures.

The Zen concept of sūnyatā implies deep meaning that can be found in emptiness and space. Zen reduces nature to a skeleton in an attempt to penetrate beneath the surface to the more meaningful inner core.¹¹⁰ The tea ceremony is an expression of these ideas in ritual form. The contemporary artist also tries to capture the inner essence of nature, and he relates this inner essence through simple sculptural forms.

Through the efforts of Voulkos, Mason, and Price, the West Coast experimental movement in contemporary ceramic sculpture leans toward organic form. The emphasis is on underlying forms. The color and texture are suggestive of the earth's surface. The total effect implies a portrayal of nature through clay.

The work of the contemporary artist has been compared to the work of the ancient civilizations by means of specific characteristics of specific examples. These correlations emphasize the parallel nature of past and

¹¹⁰ Supra, p. 40.

present trends in ceramic sculpture. In 1923 Pablo Picasso expressed his view on the close relationship between the art of the past and present when he said:

To me there is no past or future in art. If a work of art cannot live always in the present, it must not be considered at all. The art of the Greeks, of the Egyptians, of the great painters who lived in other times, it not an art of the past; perhaps it is more alive today than it ever was.¹¹¹

Both the contemporary and ancient artists portray within their ceramic sculpture a philosophy and a way of life peculiar to each. The artist of Ancient Peru created figures representing his gods; most of his work was a part of his religion. His purpose was to create forms that served a practical purpose in the ceremonies of his society. His life, although complex in tradition and pattern, had a kind of simplicity in its order. Most of the clay figures were representations of the gods; thus, they had to portray characteristics peculiar to the god represented. However, each of the artists incorporated his own individual style into his work. He did not create ceramic sculpture for a living but as a part of his living.

The contemporary ceramic sculptor creates sculpture that is an expression of his beliefs--not just religious beliefs but his view of life in all of its aspects. His clay sculpture embodies his philosophy of life which may or may not coincide with the philosophy of his society. He depicts life as he sees it. He may, through his work, portray his religious philosophy, but not necessarily any particular established religious doctrine. Although he is not bound by a rigid pattern of tradition; he is regulated to some extent by conforming laws of a complex society. The contemporary artist often utilizes the creative process, not as an aid to tradition, but as a

¹¹¹Sze, op. cit., n.p., Frontispiece.

form of rebellion against these trends and complexities. Frequently the contemporary artist creates ceramic sculpture for a living and as a part of his living.

Perhaps the greatest contrast between the past and present ceramic sculpture lies, not within the work itself, but in its place of importance within the community. In the early periods, art was a part of everyday life, because it was functional as a religious symbol and as an object of utility. All items were handmade; this gave much of the work a human quality that was aesthetically appealing. Tombs, temples, and pyramids were architectural wonders abounding with artistic creation. The stone and clay sculpture filled the inside and outside of the architecture with an atmosphere of austere splendor. The ceramic sculptor of today is attempting to bring art back into its former role of importance in daily life. He is not trying to build temples or pyramids; however, he is trying to incorporate artistic work into the architecture and into the surroundings of the architecture and into the surroundings of the mechanically complex modern world. He is giving man a relief from confusion by presenting the simplicity of the beautiful.

As in the Zen philosophy, the goal of contemporary and primitive work is to suggest an entire concept in as few words as possible; the artist seeks to make a unified statement in a single unembellished sentence. In terms of ceramic sculpture, past and present, this means a simple expression of truth embodied in unified natural forms.

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