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THE USE OF CLAY FORMS TO SYMBOLIZE THE QUALITY OF
THE SOUTHERN UTAH LANDSCAPE

by

Ban Kajitani

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

Art

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1976

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Ban Kajitani

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ABSTRACT

The Use of Clay Forms to Symbolize the Quality of
the Southern Utah Landscape

by

Ban Kajitani, Master of Fine Arts

Utah State University, 1976

Major Professor: Larry E. Elsner
Department: Art

This project was concerned with study of Neriage, Zougan, and Raku techniques in search of a creative, individual expression of the Southern Utah landscape. To find ceramic forms which would reflect its history, and show appreciation for its aesthetic characteristics of color, vastness and endless variety of form.

In the development of this artist's philosophy, a potter artist has to acquire certain qualities of form and concepts which are of basic importance in the execution of his work.

These concepts which are a part of his philosophy are first; truth to material. Since clay is a very versatile material it can tempt the artist to go beyond its normal character. It can be made to look like almost any other material. In spite of these other possibilities, however valid, there are to this artist only certain qualities that are truly characteristic of the earthy, geological character of clay. Second; the search of form-knowledge. An

understanding of the internal as well as external structure or form and application of that knowledge to his own work. Third; the development of a personal direction. The concepts involved in the artist's work provide the necessary order in his experiments with form. The primary concerns to this artist were a feeling of monumentality in each piece of work and the development of a personal form by forced searching into a specific direction.

A variety of stoneware forms were created utilizing wheel throwing, hand building, plaster press mold methods and a combination of methods. The Neriage ware was made from specially formulated clay bodies. The colored clays were mixed intentionally with red sand, grey sand, and metallic oxides into the special formulated clay body.¹

The choice of Neriage and Raku ware were a satisfactory solution in the attempt to symbolize the quality of Southern Utah landscape.

Although indicating influences from traditional Neriage ceramic works of Japan and marble ware from England, the Neriage ceramics of this potter are his own spiritual expressions inspired by the natural rock formations of Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands National Park, Arches National Monument and Lake Powell.

¹ Missouri fired clay 100 percent.
Missouri ball clay 50 percent.
Silica sand 30 percent.

Addition: a. 30 percent red sand; light brown or orange.

b. 30 percent Fe_2O_3 ; yellow brown.

c. 50 percent Fe_2O_3 ; brown.

d. 30 percent Fe_2O_3 + 20 percent Mn_3O_3 + 10 percent CO_2O_3 ; black.

e. 50 percent grey sand; light blue.

f. 20 percent CO_2O_3 ; blue.

(60 pages)

INTRODUCTION

Preface

The fascination of clay for man is older than recorded history.

Pottery making is an ancient art, practiced even before the time of the ancient Egyptians. Made from clay, pottery involves the very substance of the earth. Geologically, there are two types of clay: residual, which has stayed in the same spot since its formation and sedimentary, which is the product of displacement caused by wind and water. It is important that the potter, who selects to express his philosophy in clay, understand the basic nature of clay.

Nowadays our culture is confronted with a continuous exposure to the forces of technology, of mass production, and of conformity. This is seen in many areas of the arts including that of ceramics. The influence of these forces is evidenced by the variety of directions in which the ceramic arts are moving, with work all the way from traditional and sculptural to the technologically influenced directions.

In order to express the geological qualities of the Southern Utah landscape, the Neriage,¹ Zougan,² and Raku³ techniques seemed most suitable.

¹"Neriage" is a kind of marble ware or mosaic ware.

²"Zougan" is an inlaying of clay or glaze.

³"Raku" involves a very rapid firing of pieces (unglazed or coated with low-fire glazes) which are removed hot from the kiln.

Then, in order to unite technique and concept, the artist must begin the exploration of his medium by working with his hands with a formless lump of clay. To really understand his medium, he must discover it; and in order to discover it, he must involve himself in the physical act of working it with his hands and reacting mentally to its plastic potential.

Background of Japanese Culture with its Concern for Nature

This artist's own experience concerns with clay are rooted in the early Japanese spiritual philosophy, which states that natural objects have souls which may exist apart from their material bodies. This type of thinking is rooted in two forms of Japanese religion, Shintoism, Buddhism, and their combination. Shintoism contains an animistic conception of reality, whereby spirits may also take temporary abode in certain inanimate objects. The Eskimos, for instance, embracers of Shamanism that is like Shintoism, believed that all animate and inanimate objects have a soul. In Shintoism, elements of animism can be seen in its polytheistic system, whereby natural phenomena, such as trees, waterfalls, and rocks in the mountain range, etc., were worshipped and all of nature was viewed as beneficial.

According to the book, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*,⁴ by D. T. Suzuki, "in spite of all that we know about the essence of Zen, here to there is

⁴D. T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964), p. 15.

the question of a central perception of unsurpassed singularity. This strange perception is called Satori, and may be translated as "Enlightenment."

When one examines the Zen text attentively, one cannot escape the impression that, with all this is bizarre in it, Satori is, in fact, a matter of natural occurrence, of something so very simple. Before a man studies Zen, mountains are mountains as well as clay is clay to him and water is water. But when he obtains a glimpse into the truth of Zen through the instruction of a good way, clays are no longer clays, nor mountains; later, however, when he has really reached the place of rest (has attained Satori) clays are again clays, and water is water. Enlightenment includes an insight into the nature of self. It is a liberation of the mind from deception regarding self.

According to The Way of Life⁵ by Kiang Kang-hu, the way to do is to be. Long ago the land was ruled with a wisdom too fine, too deep, to be fully understood. And, since it was beyond man's full understanding only some of it has come down to us, as in these words.

People through finding something beautiful
 Think something else unbeautiful,
 Through finding one man fit
 Judge another unfit.
 Life and death, though stemming
 From each other, seem to conflict
 As stages of change,
 Difficult and long as phases of achievement,
 Long and short as measures of contrast,
 High and low as degrees of relation;

⁵Kiang Kang-hu, The Way of Life (New York: Capricorn Books, 1944), pp. 25, 33.

But, since the varying of tones gives music to a voice
And what is is the was of what shall be,
The sanest man
Step up no deed,
Lays down no law
Takes everything that happens as it comes,
As something to animate, not to appropriate,
To accept naturally without self-importance:
If you never assume importance
You never lose it.

An artist is a poet in his or her own medium. And when an artist produces a good piece, that work has mystery, an unsaid quality, it is alive.

The Southern Utah Landscape

Piles of sedimentary rock have been built up in sequence, and occur as flat horizontal sheets. The layers can be seen distinctly, and the flat top of the mountains are a feature of Canyonlands National Park, Arches National Park, Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park, Capital Reef National Park and Lake Powell of Utah. Weathering and erosion have also played their part in sculpting out the landscape.

Sedimentary rock, as the name implies, has formed from layers of an accumulated sediment. Some consist of the consolidated accumulation of material derived from the debris of already existing rocks as a result of various breakdown processes. Others may result from an accumulation of debris derived from organic material--the remains of plant and animal life.

There are three basic processes by which debris of different types can be accumulated. In the first, pre-existing rocks of any group--igneous,

metamorphic or sedimentary--are broken down by the continuous process of weathering to form debris known as sediment. This process has been continuous over many millions of years and the early sediments were gradually buried as more and more sediment accumulated. The accumulated sediment is finally compacted through the weight of the sediment layers one above the other and the cementing action of minerals taken into the sediment in the solution in water.

In the second process, the sediment is an accumulation of plant and animal remains. The burial and compacting processes are similar to those yielding rocks belonging to the first group.

A third group of sedimentary rocks is formed by a process of mineral accumulation by precipitation from water which is saturated with a particular mineral.

The study of minerals and rocks forms one small part of the science of geology--the science concerned with the study of the earth as a whole.

The ceramic artist then, reacts to the landscape in one way, makes and wedges his clay of contrasting color, and throws it to form a unit to capture the essence of natural rock formations.

Description of the Other Landscape Ceramic Artists

Stephen De Staebler

Stephen De Staebler has a brief statement about his work. He said

"A life without making things that tell you who you are and what you feel is not enough. So I make things."

Philosophically, De Staebler finds an affinity to the landscape in an inner life; he considers himself essentially a landscape sculptor, despite the recurring figurative imagery that sometimes dominates his concepts of the terrain. Although the tradition of landscape painting is centuries old, there have been few representations of the subject rendered in adequate sculptural terms.

His "landscapes" in fired clay are an innovative approach that is part of no movement or style, nor has he yet generated a following among other contemporary sculptors. His concept of landscape sculpture lies about midway between traditional pictorial landscapes, with their specific references to scale or topography and subsequent developments such as earth works, which when viewed from a proper perspective, tend to be more graphic than sculptural. He recognizes in himself a certain urge to shape the environment while at the same time acknowledges that the great earth works of man are probably not artistic but technological. He is content to bring some sense of nature into an urban or interior setting rather than to risk ecological violation in the manipulation of a natural area.

He has developed a vocabulary of earth forces: gravity and pressure, eruption and erosion, shearing and breaking. By yielding to the clay and discovering what it wants to do, he has evolved a unique art form.

While artists throughout history have sought ways of overcoming the limitations of clay, they have most often worked toward its unnatural extremes. In the hands of a skilled craftsman the workability of clay allows for an almost infinite variety of possible forms with potential for as many different refinements in the finish treatment.

De Staebler's works have a direct, almost primitive appeal that parallels universal human experience and in turn reveals new insights into the subtle complexities of our environment. One almost has to be reminded that the near perfect appearance of natural earth forms in his sculpture are in fact not limitations of nature. His concept, in both the figurative and the landscape contexts, is a

distillation and fusion of essential life forms recreated by the fertile imagination and the consummate skill of a true modern artist.⁶

Wayne Higby

Wayne Higby's deftness in clay and drawing has produced an enraging, sensitizing body of work. The use of perspective in the landscape drawing on the surfaces of the Raku forms create pictorial space greater than their physical size. This illusion adds to the subtle mystery of the works. Several of the forms are composed of multiple units that can be arranged in a variety of configurations, such as yellow rock falls, an assemblage of four containers, which brings to mind the folding-screen landscape of China.⁷

Finding the True Nature of Neriage

Description of Neriage ware

Neriage means a clay mosaic or marble ware. In many respects it resembles mosaic: the pattern usually covers the entire surface of the main body of the piece and is the same on the outside as on the inside. One of the Japanese potters describes the process as one of layers of different-colored slices of clay pressed firmly together. The stack is cut vertically, placed on a cloth, and the surface of the variously colored slices firmly rubbed together with the palm of the hand. The clay is then turned over and rubbed as vigorously on the reverse side. The slab of different-colored

⁶Harvey C. Jones, Stephen De Staebler (San Francisco, California: Stephen De Staebler's Pamphlet, 1974), p.

⁷Tim Mather, Craft Horizons: Wayne Higby (New York: The American Crafts Council, 1975), p. 32.

clays thus produced is finally pressed in a mold. The resulting piece is a Neriage product.

A traditional Neriage technique. Tunezo Arao (potter) speaks of his process as alternate-colored clay coils pressed together and cut in sections. The sections are then pressed in a mold.

The different-colored clays used must have the same shrinkage and firing characteristics in order to avoid their cracking apart during drying and firing. The process combines a low fire, white earthenware with a portion of the same clay stained to provide a brown body.

The two colored clays are cut into thin slices, the slices of white clay being two-thirds the width of the brown slices. A white slice is placed between two brown ones, and they are pressed and paddled firmly together. The layered slices are next alternately folded and pressed firmly together. The folded slabs are then placed on end and sliced. Finally, the small slices are pressed into a mold to form a bowl. Neriage techniques makes use of the geological phenomenon in a unique manner.⁸

Description of Neriage potters. Tuneji Weda, a Japanese potter, describes as the use of layers by different-colored slices of clay pressed firmly together and glazed with a clear glaze.

Alternate-colored clay coils are pressed together, cut into sections, and then pressed in a mold.

⁸Herbert H. Sanders and Kenkichi Tomimoto, The World of Japanese Ceramics (New York: Kodansha International Ltd., 1974), p. 136.

Personal study of Neriage technique. Designing clay patterns before throwing. Neriage pieces as shown in catalogue, employ a technique in which sliced coils of colored clays are pressed into a lump of clay or are wedged in any form in colored clays into the base clay body. For instance, combination of five different colored clays will make fifty different patterns which appear on surface on the ceramic work.



Figure 1. Making preparations for different kinds of clay.



Figure 2. Demonstration of clay wedging for Neriage.



Figure 3. One of Neriage pattern A.

Designing clay patterns after throwing. The sliced coils of colored clay are pressed into the surface of a partly thrown form, after which the final shaping is completed on the wheel.

When the form is leather hard, the entire surface is scraped to remove any spots of undesired color and to insure a smooth, even surface. Sometimes the coils may provide more than one color, in Figure . This is accomplished by rolling the coils in powdered clay of a still different color, which adheres to the coils' surface. After the slices are imbedded in the plastic form, three contrasting colors result.

Zougan method: Clay inlay for handbuilt. Molds, throwing and their combination. The process requires great skill and patience and it is particularly suited to landscape clay work.

The procedure for Zougan is first to carve the pattern into the leather-hard clay. The depth of the carving should be about one-third of the wall thickness of the piece. For linear patterns, an umbrella stay filed into a sharp-edged V or U shape is used. The groove is scratched and roughened to an irregular surface so that the different-colored clay can stick. Large areas of different-colored clay set in a piece are not considered inlay technically.

According to Kenkichi Tominoto⁹ where large areas of inset clay are desired, the areas are roughened with a needle point to the desired depth for

⁹Ibid.



Figure 4. Neriage--Inlay pattern before throwing 1.



Figure 5. Neriage--Inlay pattern before throwing 2.



Figure 6. Neriage--Inlay pattern before throwing 3.

the inset. Next a thin slice of clay of a contrasting color that has the same shrinkage as the body of the piece is put to the size and shape of the scratch-roughened area. The slice should be slightly thicker than the prepared scratch-roughened area. The prepared area is coated with slip, or colored clay, and the cut-out slice is placed in position.

Starting at the center, the inset slice is pressed and rubbed into position until it is firmly joined with the piece. When the piece is leather-hard, the inset portion is rubbed vigorously with a bamboo tool particularly on the edges, where the additional thickness will cause it to spread beyond the cut-out boundaries.

When the pot is about two-thirds dry, the surface is scraped until it is level and the outline of the inset is sharp and clear. Where lines or small carved areas are inlaid, the carved areas are filled with contrasting-colored clay that has the consistency of thick mud. The carved-out areas are filled until a bead or ridge extends well above the surface of the piece. The piece is then set aside until the wet clay inlay does not stick to the hands. The surface is then worked over with a bamboo tool, using considerable pressure.

The procedure is to rub the clay ridge until it flattens and any possible air pockets are forced out of the decoration. After the decorated piece has set and is thoroughly leather-hard, the surface is scraped with a sharp knife blade until the contrasting-colored clay is flush with the surface.

If two colors of inlay are desired, they may be applied in successive operations. If the two colors are separated by space, they may be applied at the same time.

Some of the fine old Korean inlays were done by first inlaying with white clay and then inlaying the black clay in the white. The black clay was colored by additions of cobalt or a combination of nickel and iron.

The inlaid pieces of the Koryo dynasty have the pleasant soft gray or gray-green color that many Westerners associate with celadon glaze. Tomimoto says that the Koryo pieces were made of earthenware clay that contained iron. During firing they were strongly reduced up to the point where the glaze melted. Reduction was then stopped, and firing was completed with an oxidizing fire.

Raku

History

Raku is one of the low fired ceramic wares. It originated from the Tea Ceremony which was made by Chojiro Tanaka in Momoyama period (1566-1600) of Japan.

Joukei, a son of Chojiro Tanaka, was awarded a gold stamp for his Raku work by Hideyoshi Shogun. The family has since been called Raku.

Among Japanese, especially the first generation, Chojiro, and the third generation, Dounyu, are well known.¹⁰

The first generation of Raku family: Tanaka Chojiro, son of Chinese potter, founded the celebrated line of the Raku masters in Kyoto between 1570 and 1590. His 10 bowls, favored and established by the Zen master Senno Rikyu, represent the Japanese form par excellence. They are handmade, with thick vertical walls, simple rim, hand smoothed and slightly irregular; the foot rim is about one-third of the width of the mouth; the black lead-glazed surface is slightly dimpled, of a leathery appearance, gleaming but not glassy, called Raku Guro. The porosity of the ware makes it a non-conductor of heat, as befits 10 bowls. The forms are balanced without being geometrically exact. The main surviving work of Chojiro consists of seven bowls certified (as was practiced) by inscriptions on their boxes by Rikyu himself. Chojiro's only extant signed piece is a lively lion intended for a ridge tile. After his death in 1592 Chojiro was succeeded by his son, Joukei, who had the name Raku bestowed on him by Hideyoshi Shogun.¹¹

¹⁰ Yougyo Kyokai, The Ceramics Dictionary (Tokyo, Japan: Maruzen Book Co., Ltd., 1963), p. 308. Translated by Ban Kajitani.

¹¹ Encyclopedia of World Art, III (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960), pp. 301-306.

Raku procedure

Raku is a low temperature technique involving a very rapid glaze firing cycle, the pots being placed into and removed from a red hot kiln. The ware may or may not be reduced.

Eastern Raku was usually oxidized, often painted, and air cooled. Modern Western techniques have developed along the lines of sawdust reduction and quenched in water. The often remarkable richness of color and surface obtained from plain or painted glazes, and the contrast with the grey or black of the body in reduction, can be weakened rather than enhanced by excessive texturing of the clay.

The reduction is achieved by covering the pot when it is still red-hot with sawdust, straw, leaves or peat. Variation will result from partial immersion. Almost any Raku glazes which will melt below 900 C is suitable for Raku.

Raku comes from a background of universal human experience and offers the potter spiritual insight into himself as well as his craft. As potters, we can only hope to widen our consciousness so that our work can have a deeper meaning.

Raku pottery has its roots in the philosophy and tradition of Zen Buddhism. Developing as it did as a part of the Japanese tea ceremony--an important aspect of Zen--its creation became not merely a utilitarian craft, but a deep spiritual experience, an inquiry into the essence of life.¹²

¹²Robert Piepenberg, Raku Pottery (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), p. 8.

CATALOGUE

Inspired by Bryce Canyon and other sedimentary formations, as well as geological study, the potter works contrasting colors into his clay and attempts to capture the essence of the natural rock formations.

Figure 7. Neriage construction of coil method.

Figure 8. Coil-throwing method 1.

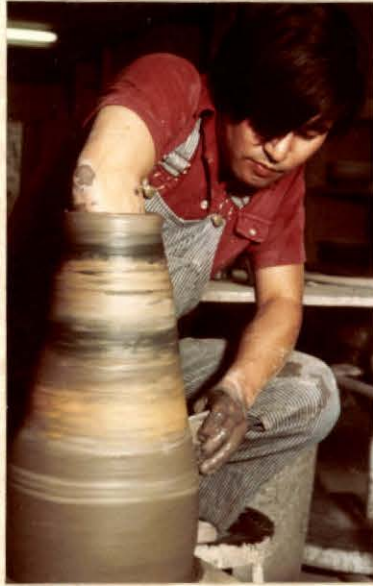


Figure 9. Coil-throwing method 2.



Figure 10. Coil-throwing method 3.



Figure 11. Neriage construction process.



Figure 12. Neriage pattern B.

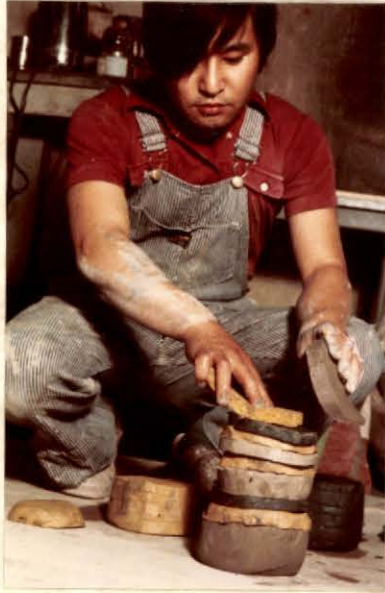


Figure 13. Neriage construction process.



Figure 14. Neriage pattern C.



Figure 15. Neriage pattern making process--pressure.



Figure 16. Neriage pattern D.



Figure 18. Neriage construction.



Figure 20. Ceramic sculpture process--scraping.



Figure 21. Neraige--Bryce Canyon No. 11.

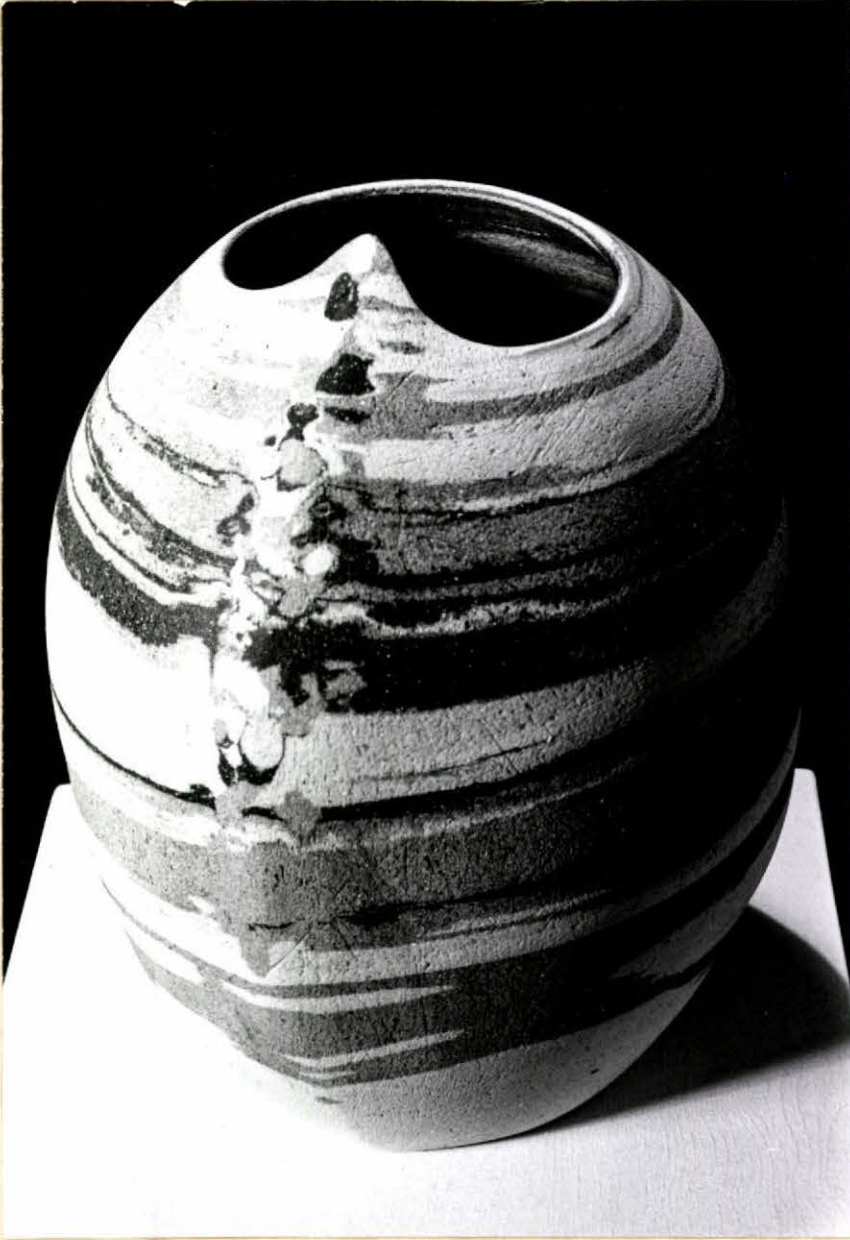


Figure 22. Neriage--Bryce Canyon No. 10.

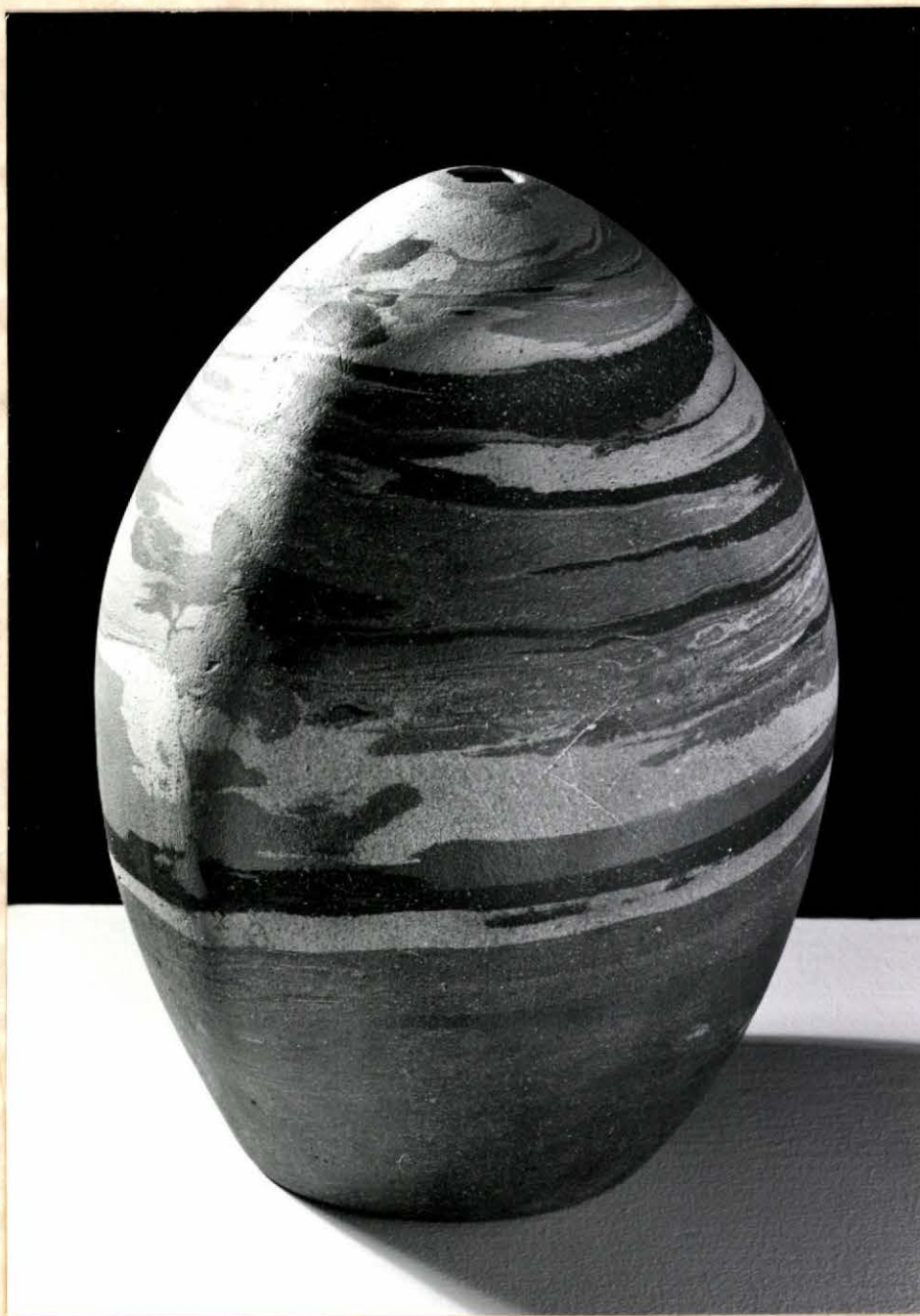


Figure 23. Neriage--Dark Canyon.

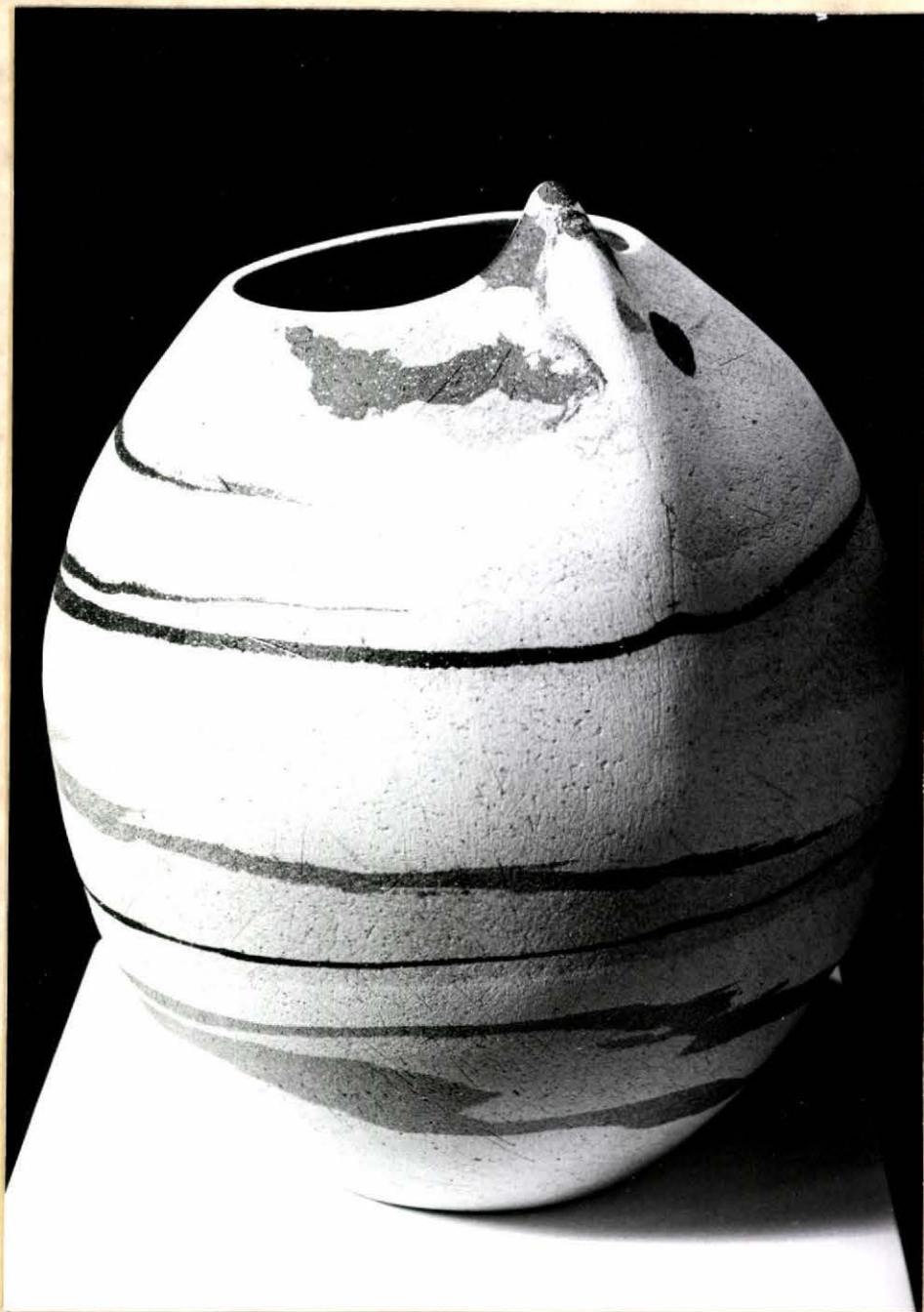


Figure 24. Neriage--White Canyon trail.



Figure 25. Neriage--Canyon basin.

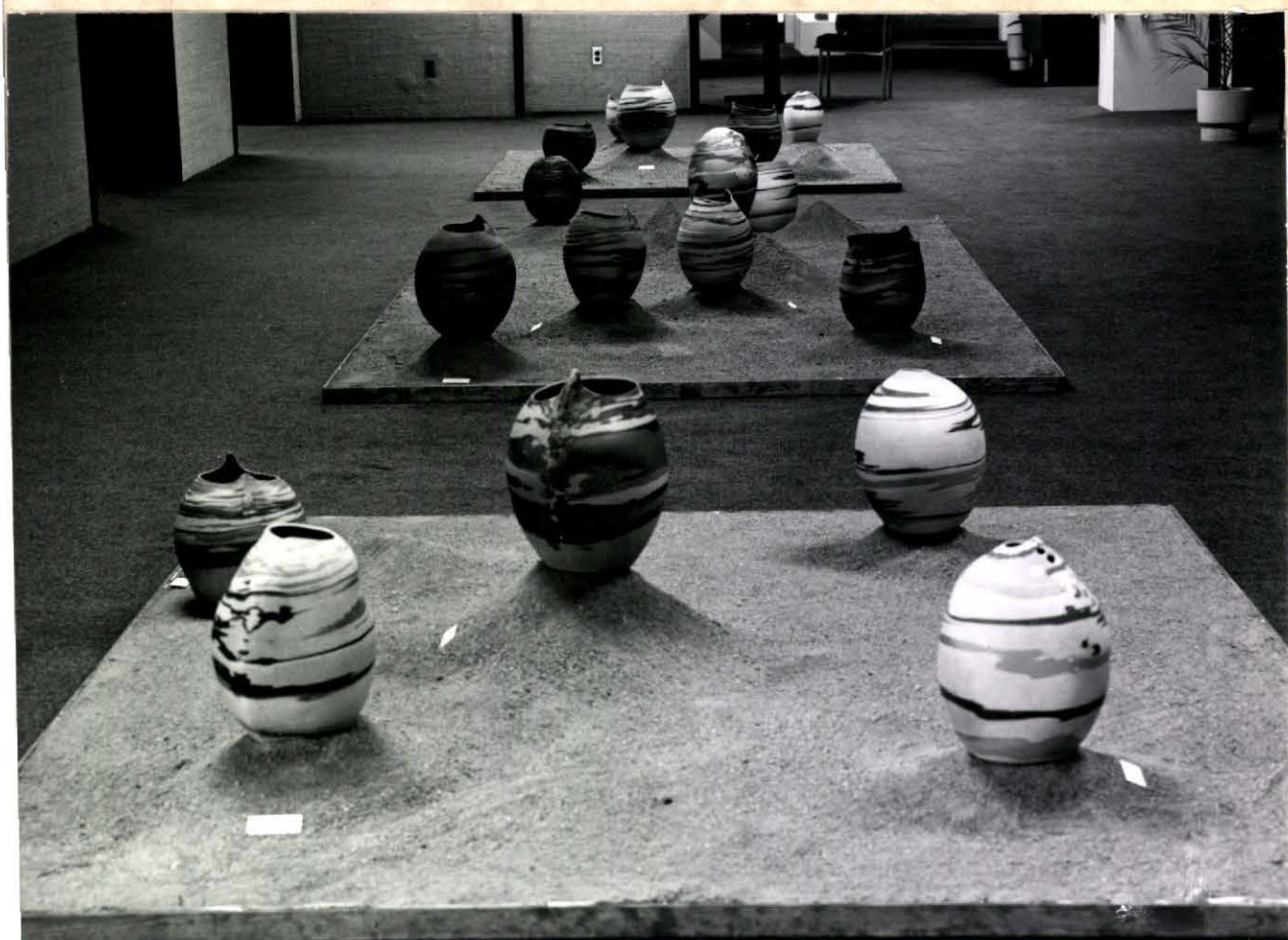


Figure 26. Neriage--Black Canyon trail.

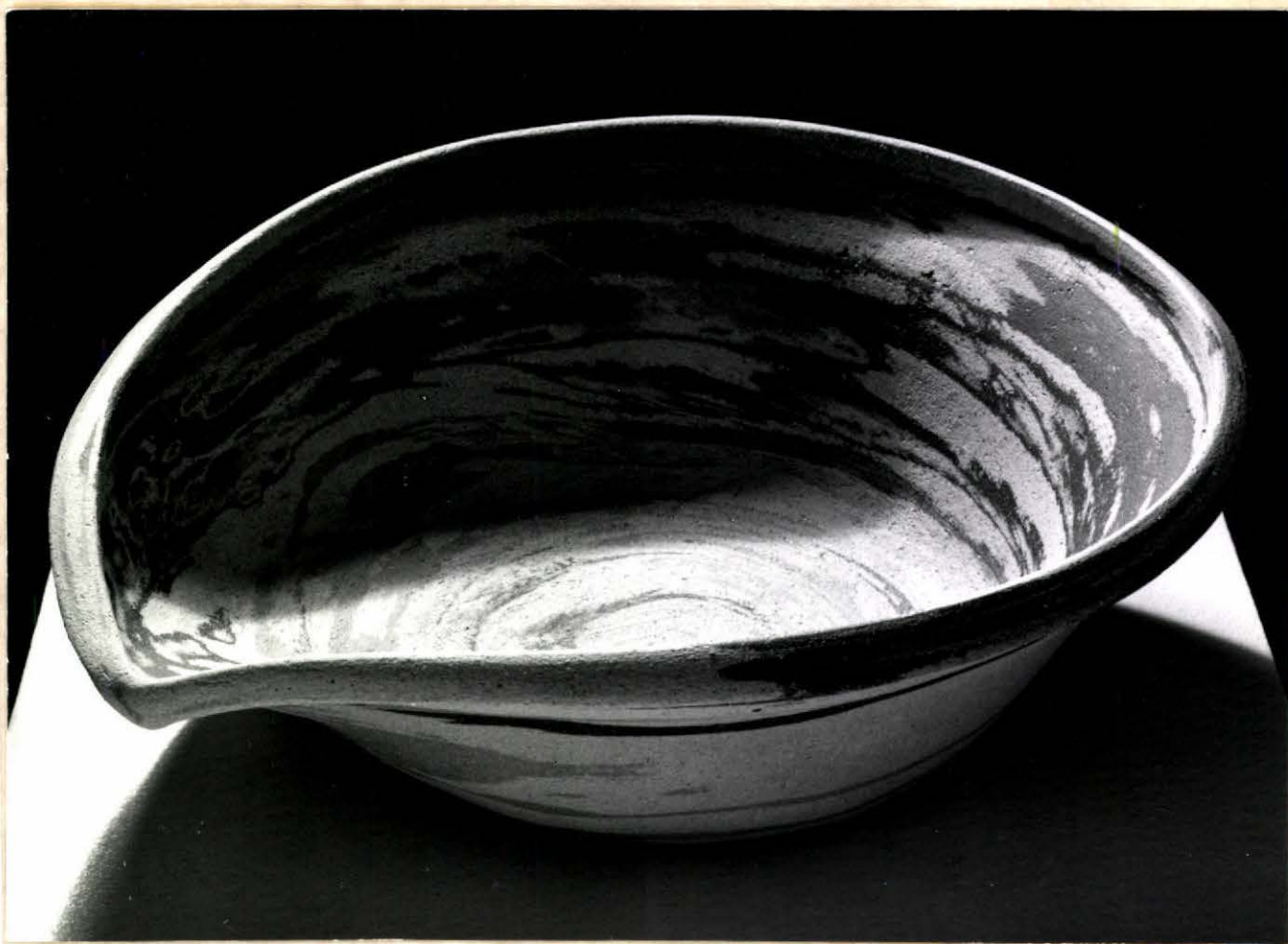


Figure 27. CO₂--Canyon trail No. 1.

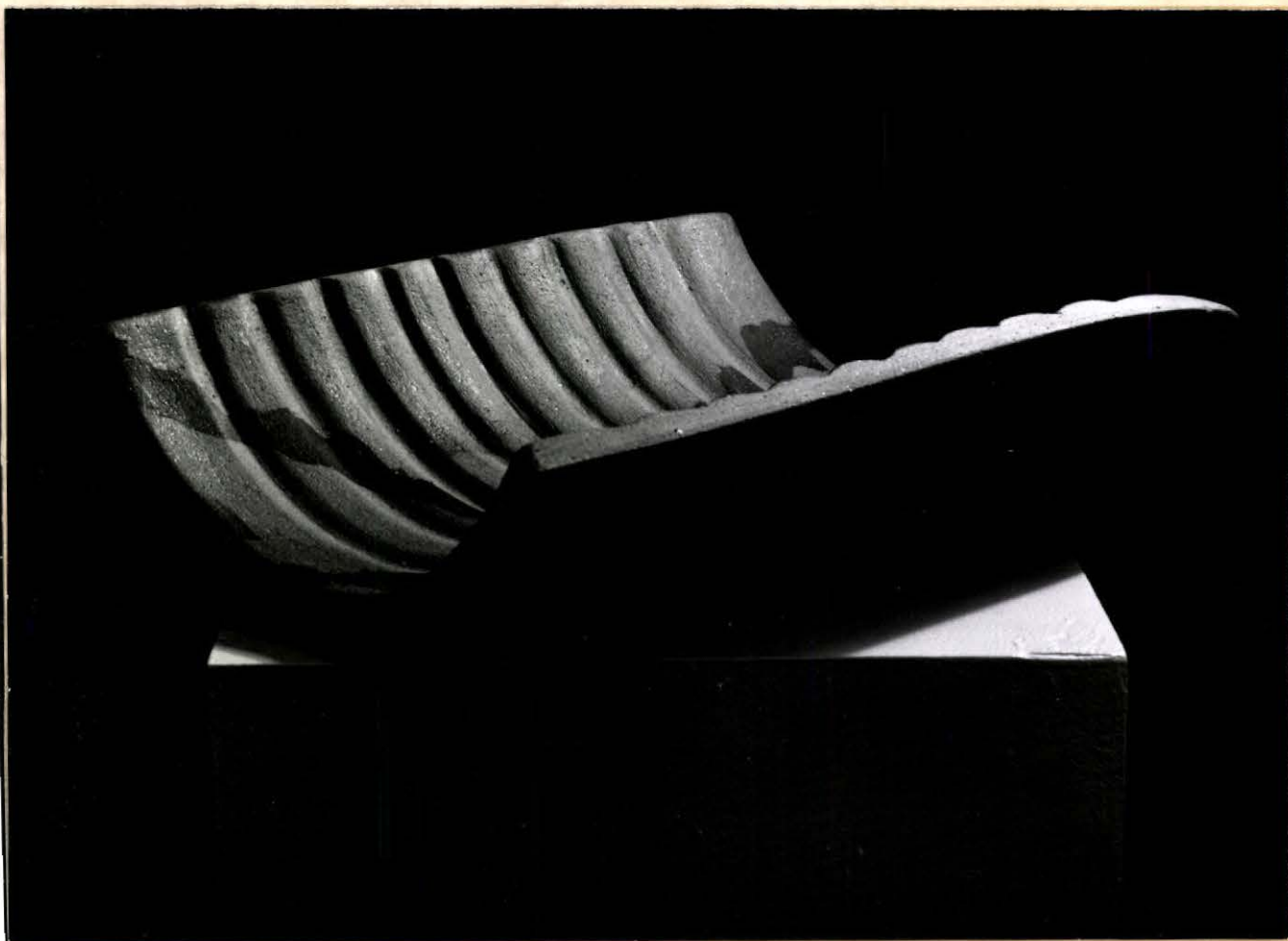


Figure 28. Manganese Canyon.



Figure 29. CO₂--Canyon trail No. 2.



Figure 30. CO₂--Canyon trail No. 3.

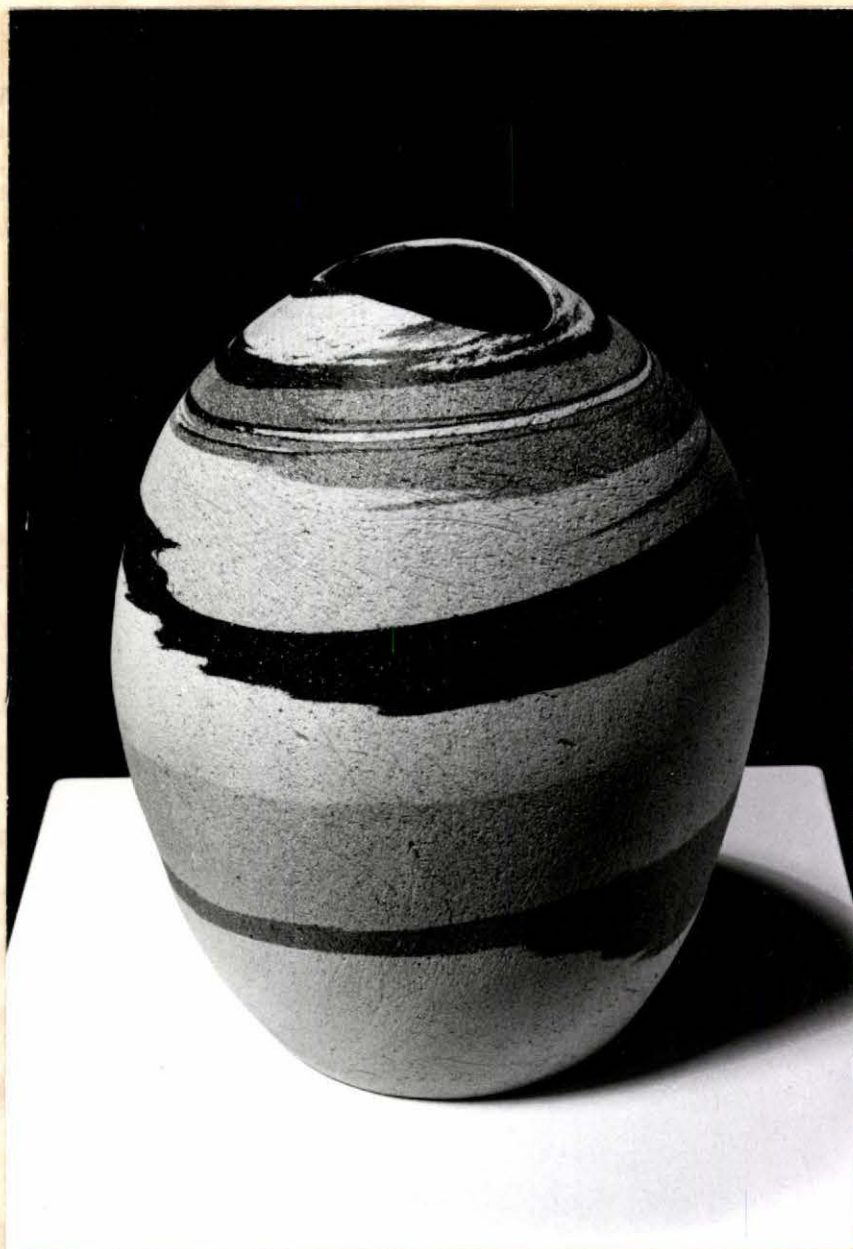


Figure 31. Co_2 --Bryce Canyon.

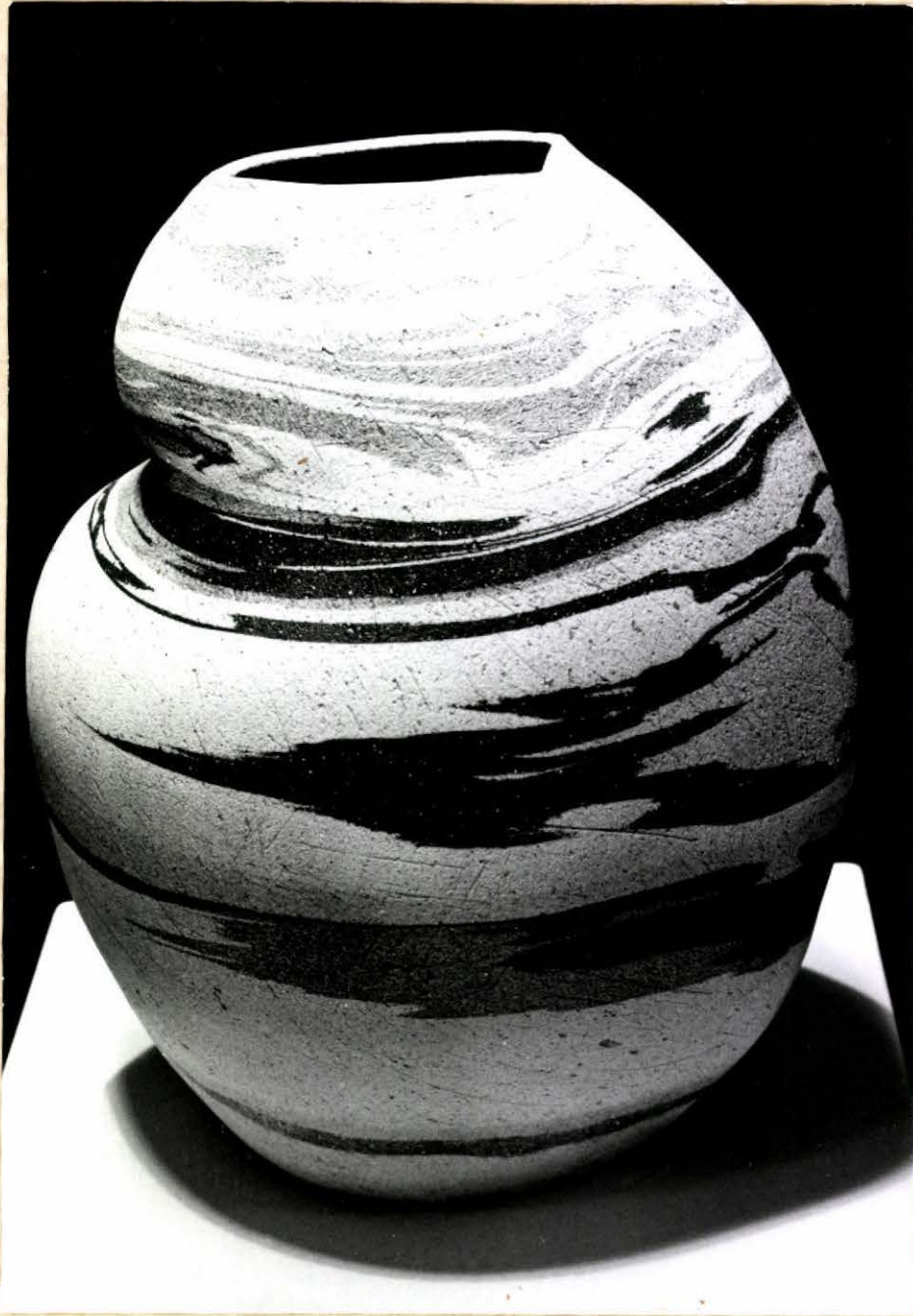


Figure 30. White Canyon trail.

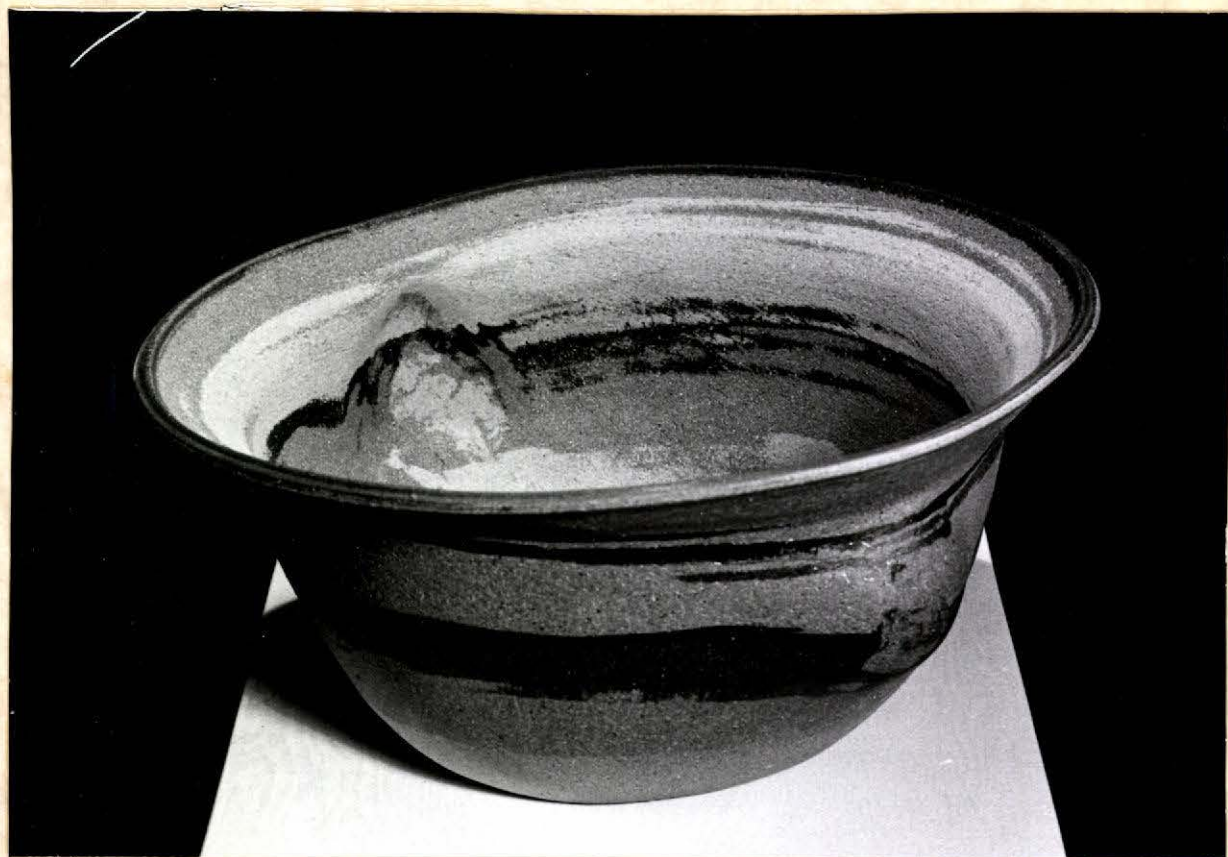


Figure 33. Canyon basin trail.

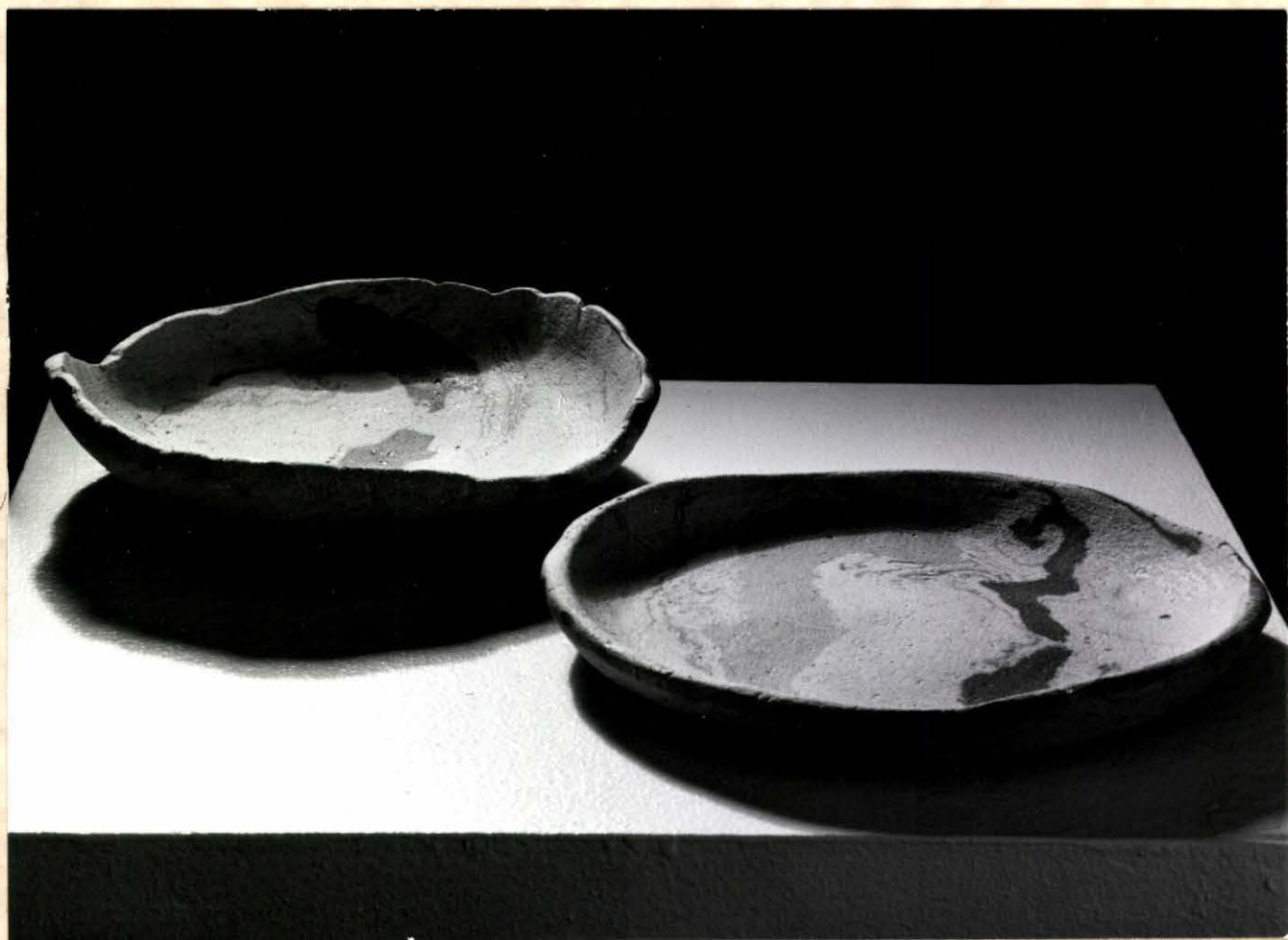


Figure 34. Neriage--Organic bowl and plate.



Figure 35. Zougan--Clay sculptural form.

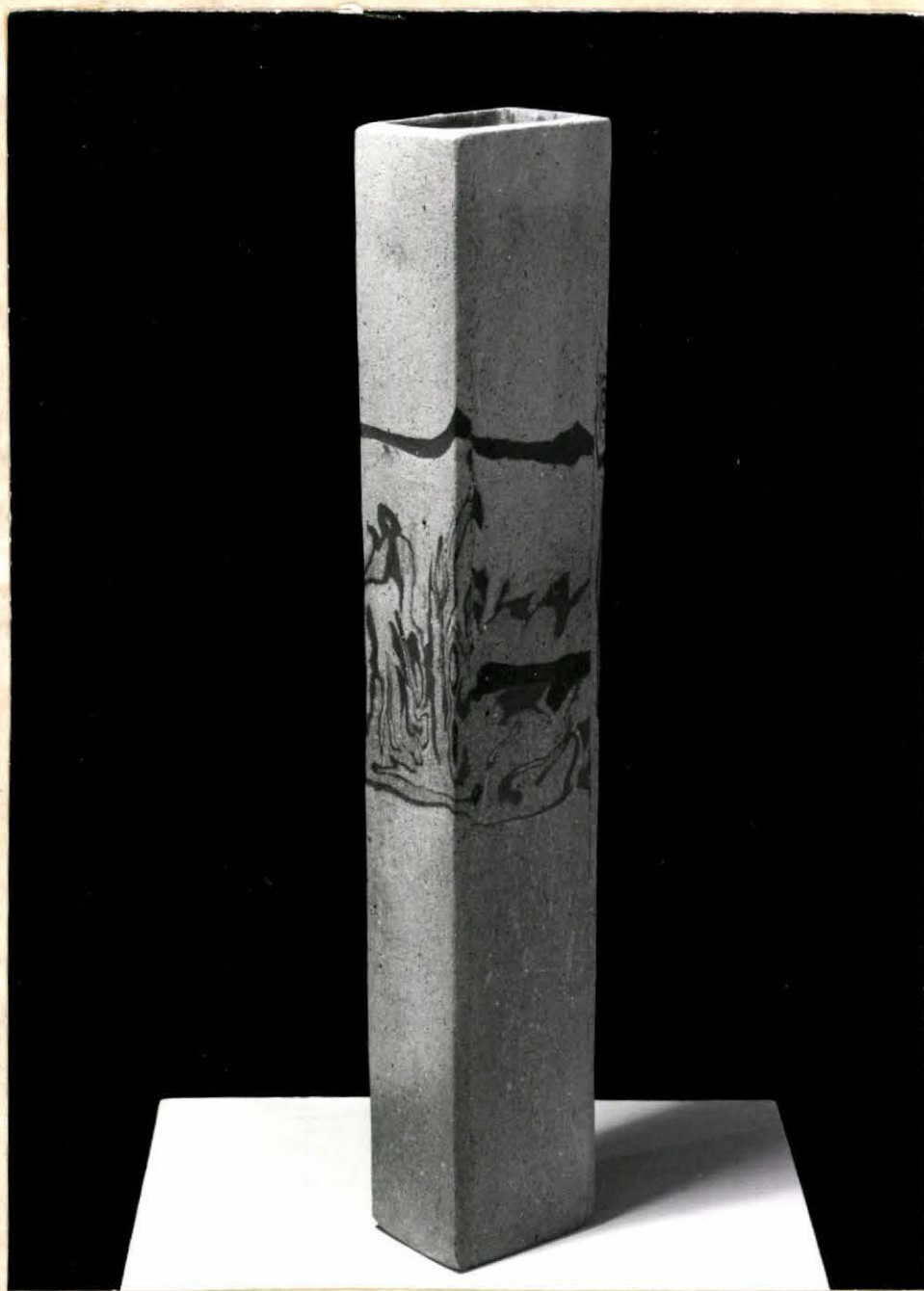


Figure 36. Zougan--Clay form.

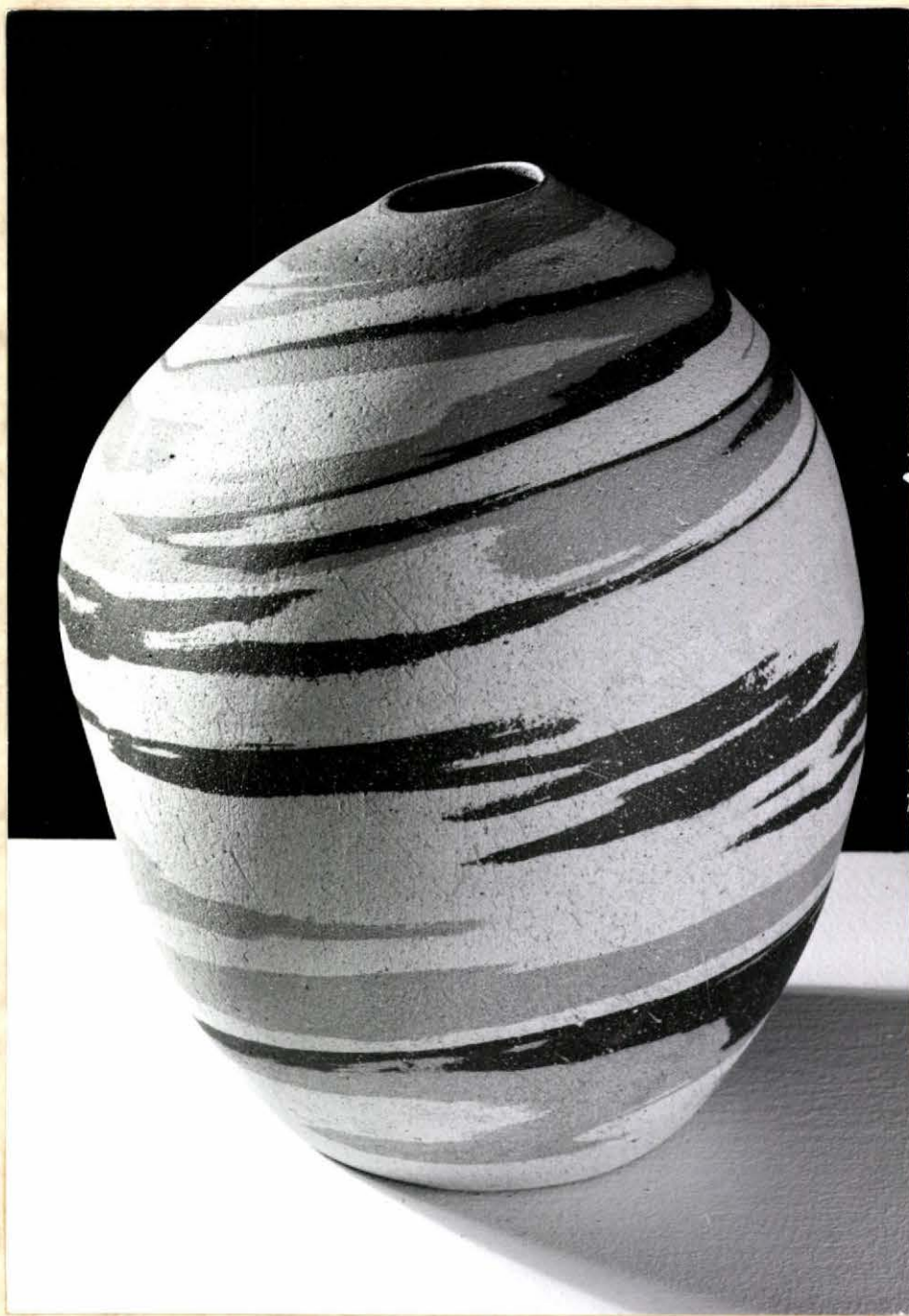


Figure 37. Neriage--Geometric form.

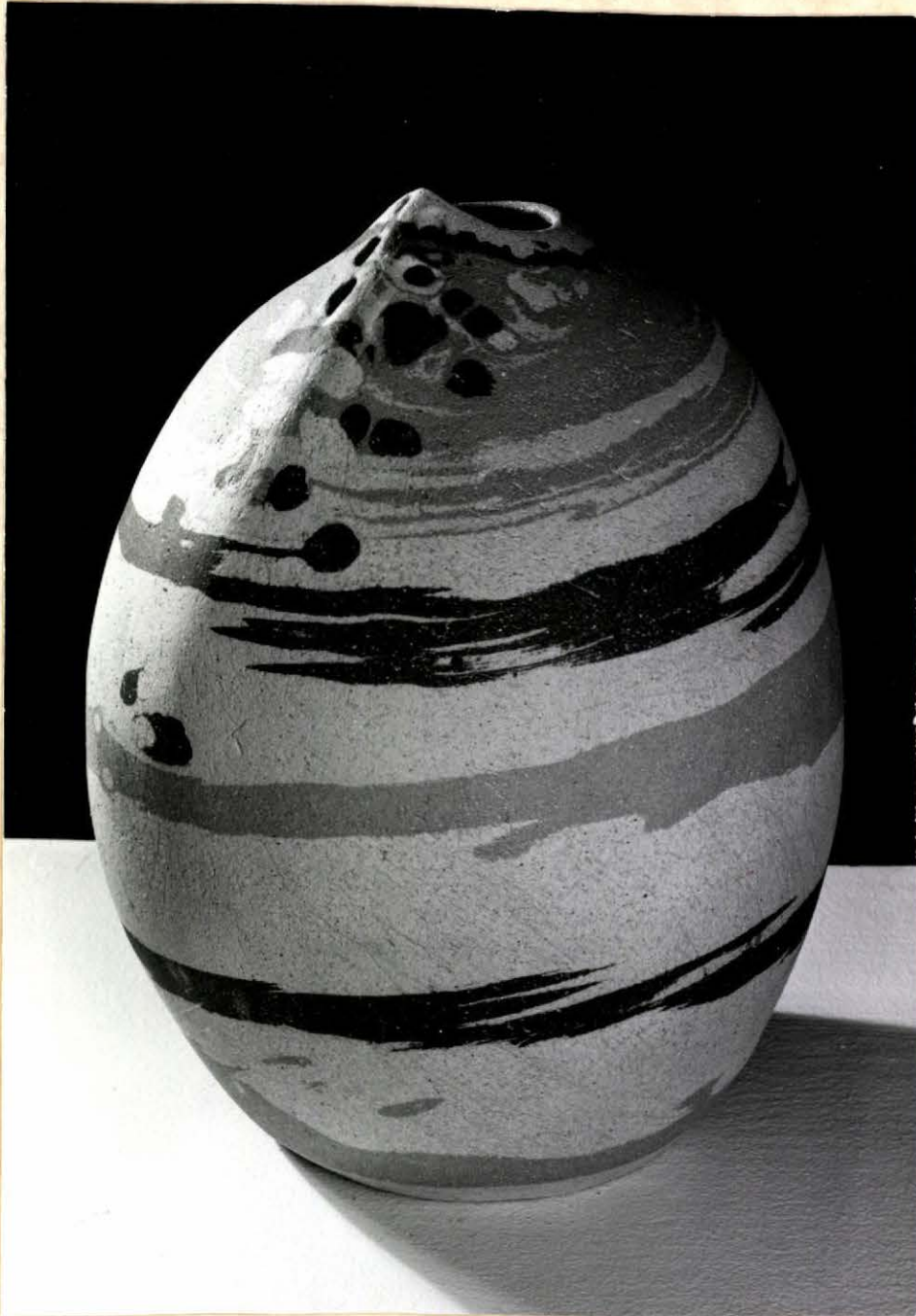


Figure 38. Neriage--geometric form.

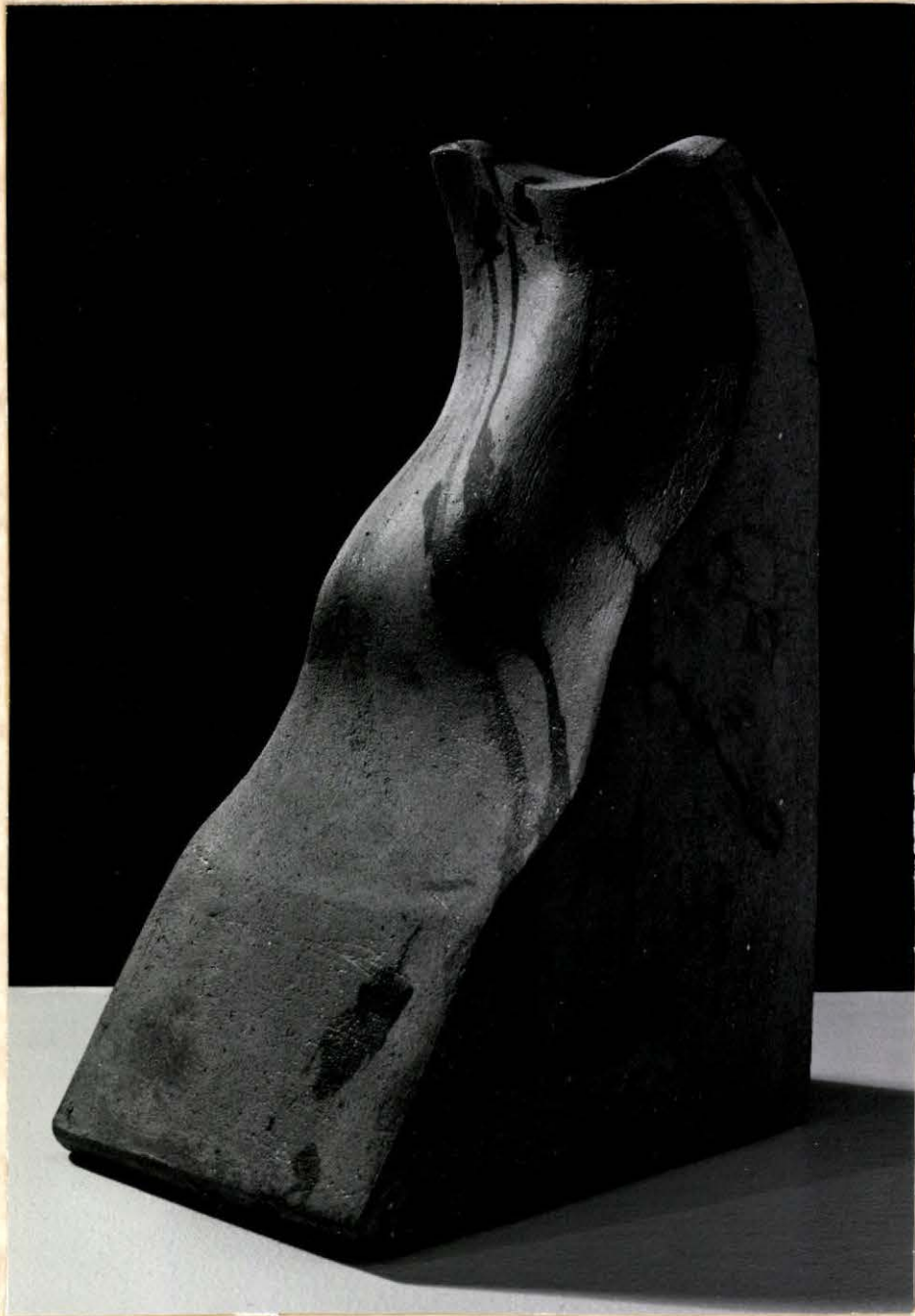


Figure 39. Zougan--Clay sculptural form.

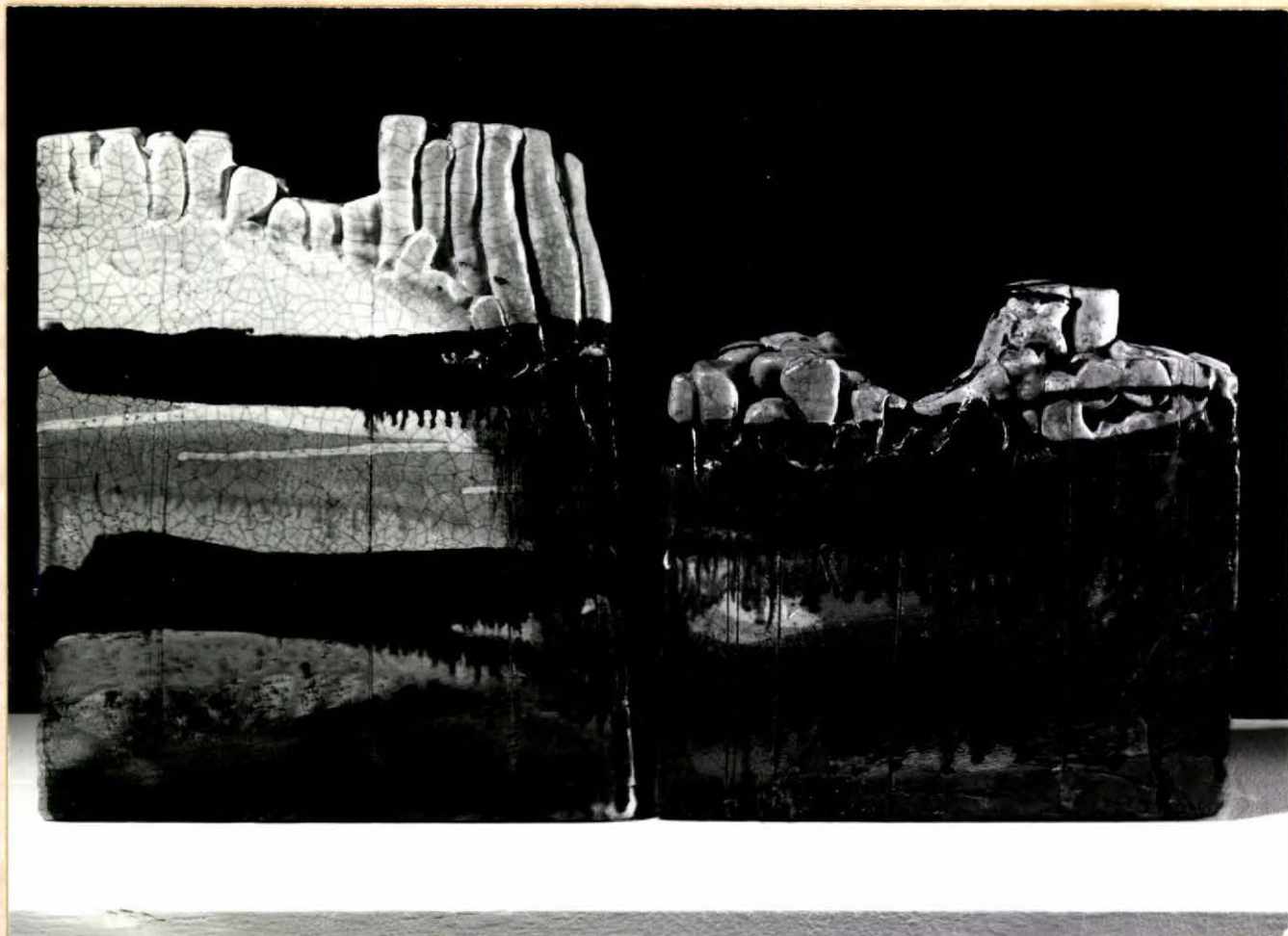


Figure 40. Raku--Southern Range No. 1.

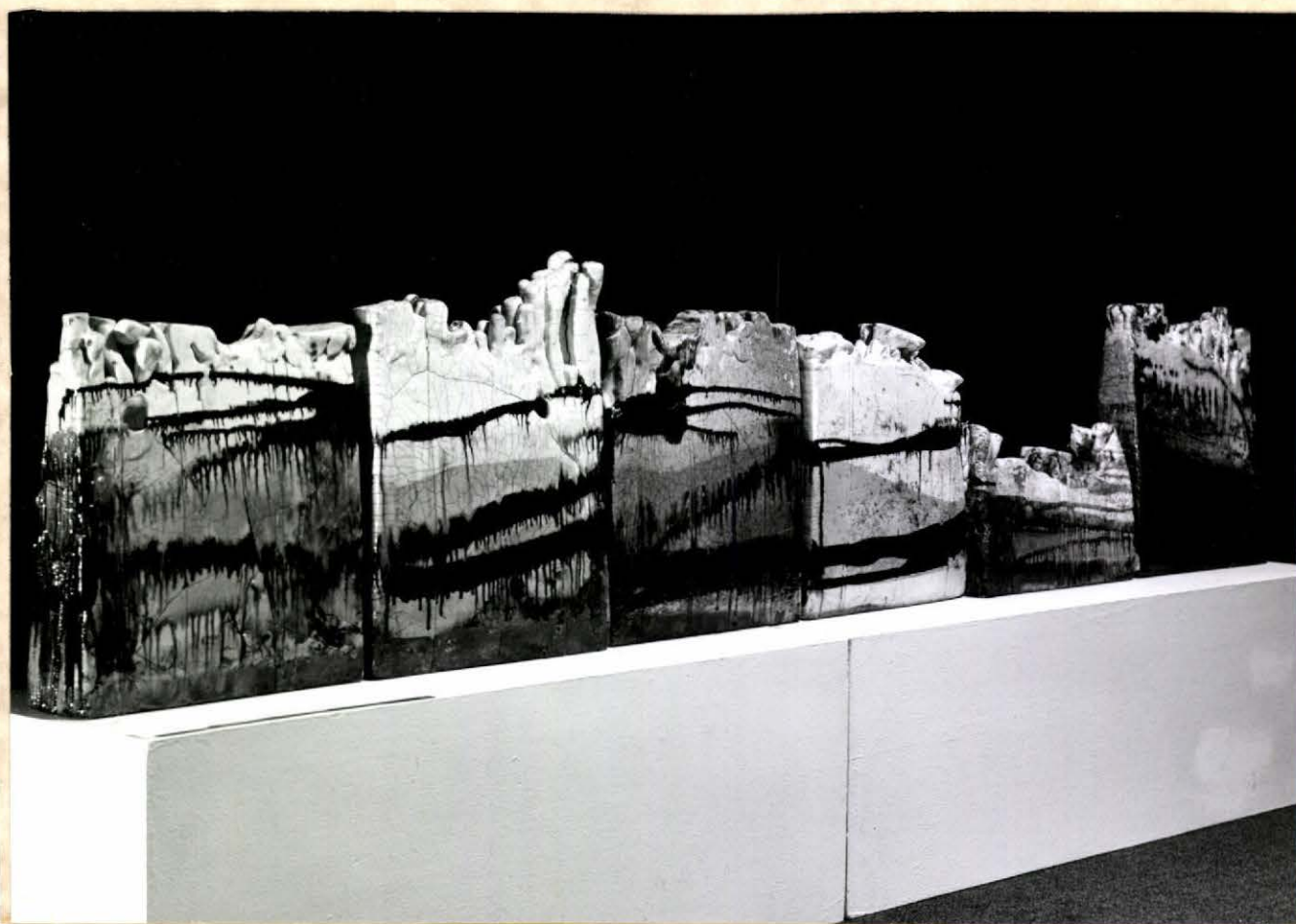


Figure 41. Raku--Southern Utah Range No. 2.



Figure 42. M.F.A. thesis show 1976, ceramics.

CONCLUSIONS

There are no rules for a three-dimensional creation, nor any simple definition of the term three-dimensional ceramic art itself. But there are certain characteristics which can be found in an effective three-dimensional work.

This potter took courses in three-dimensional design and environmental planning in Japan and has considered the relationship between ceramics and these other three-dimensional experiences. The principles of design in the floor plan of a good building incorporate similar design principles found in great Renaissance paintings.

The linear ground plan which shows variety in the layout of space, harmonious arrangement of sizes and shapes representing rooms, and a pleasing rhythm in the flow of traffic from area to area will, when built, result in a structure that is satisfying and functional in its three-dimensional form.

In a similar sense a potter realizes that a ceramic work is a plan for order, an expression of its materials, is related to basic laws of nature and its own purpose while at the same time is a unique statement.

It is important to this potter to continue studying the history and background of Western art, the significance of ceramics in art and the development of ceramic philosophy. His intention is to continue to develop

his craftsmanship, a style of his own and to further explore the creative potentials of clay.

In conclusion, a ceramic work is considered a manmade expression, but its materials reach back to the beginning of the earth. Understanding the forms and process in nature is of great value to the ceramic artist because they help him to see beyond the harsh impersonality of the world to the eternal values and forms which outlast man's efforts. One of the most basic functions of the ceramic artist and any other artist is the necessity to see life whole and to assign to it a sense of purpose.

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