

Gabriele Koch

Why Change?

A Review by Tony Birks



RIGHT AT THE END OF THIS ARTICLE THERE IS A QUOTATION from Picasso that many creative potters will recognise as a driving force behind their own work. It is the spirit of enquiry and curiosity rather than a search for invention for its own sake. A restless genius like Picasso could and would change tack and work with energy in a completely new field,

sometimes attracted by a different medium, such as ceramic. I can not think of an area of the visual arts that he did not explore and stamp with his authority. The same spirit of energy and enquiry seems part of the entire *oeuvre* of some potters and the name of Claudi Casanovas comes to mind – new works are different, but recognisably his.

If your reputation is solid and widespread but closely associated with one field of pottery, it is more difficult to change. It takes courage. As a principal exponent in her field of burnished and smoke-fired vessels, Gabriele Koch has for many years made pots that are instantly identifiable. She has been a leader, not a follower but now, in mid career, she has made a major change. If she is asked why, while at ease with her smoked work it is time for a change, she would not answer, "I had just about come to the end," the exact words of Hans Coper when he stopped making

pots. For unlike Coper, with whom she shares many working methods, Koch's career is not being curtailed by illness. With unabated energy she is making a new start, which visitors to her studio will experience with a gasp of surprise and admiration.

In writing an article on Koch for this magazine in 2007 I said, "...creating exactly the appearance she seeks depends on precise control of two contrasting

Facing page: Deep Bowl with White Porcelain Inlay. 5.5 in/h.

Below: Two Matched Tall Vases.

Black clay with spiral porcelain inlay. 21 in/h ea.

