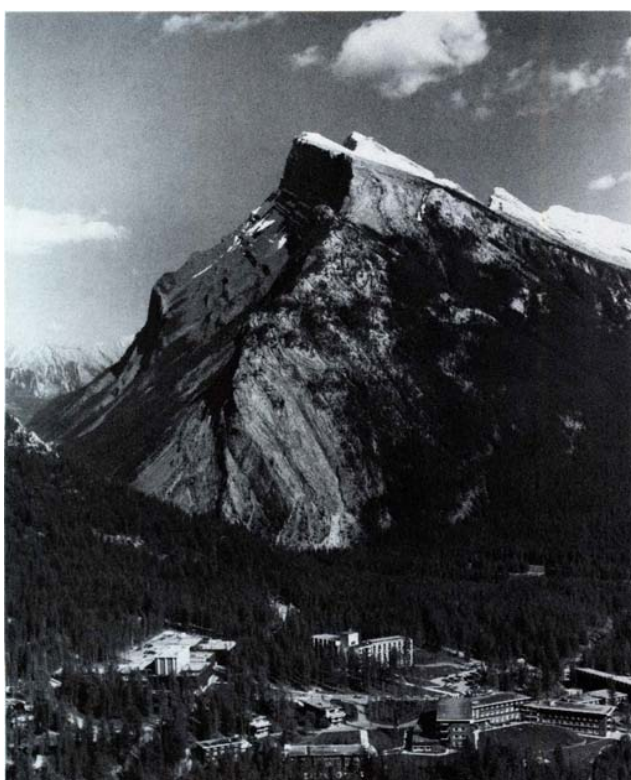


Les Manning at Banff

by VICTOR BROSZ



Photos: Rick Beaton, Grant Ponton Kathleen Watt



"I REMEMBER, as a young boy, being aware of finding shelter from the wind. I believe this influenced me to spend a lifetime beside a warm kiln," observed Les Manning, artist-in-residence and head of the ceramics department at Banff Centre School of Fine Arts in the Canadian Rockies of Alberta. "As a person's experience

grows, it's important to be more direct, minimizing indecision and questioning and to be confident, united with the material—not disciplining it, but sharing the clay's expression. I feel all things are related, even the conflict between the formal and the informal which I attempt to bring together in my work."

Les's recent vessels can be described as "Clayscapes," vase or bottle forms "with textures of clay related to

Top Les Manning (above) teaches in Glyde Hall, which houses the ceramics facilities at Banff.

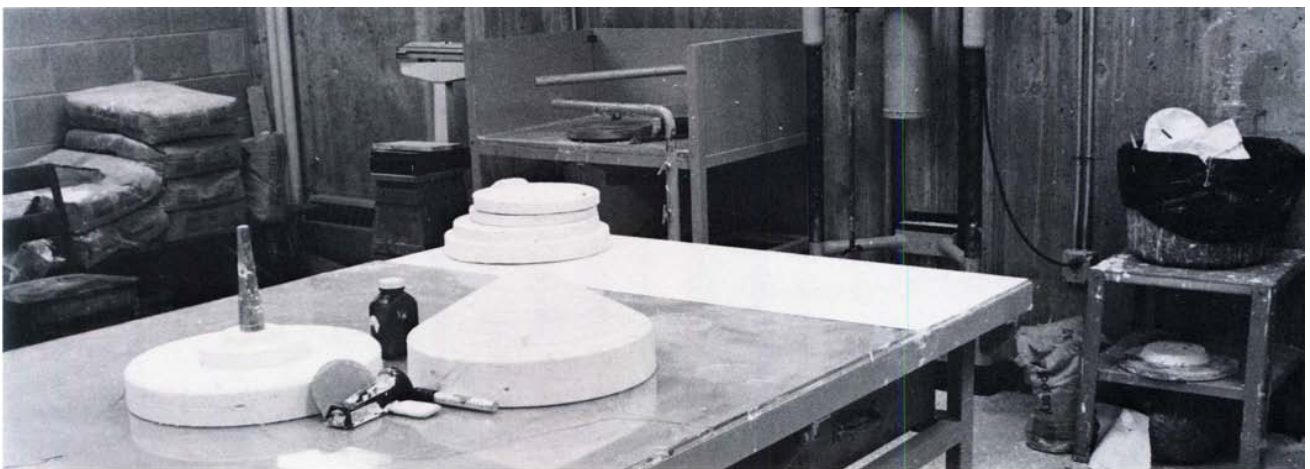
Left The Banff Centre School of Fine Arts is located in the Canadian Rockies of Alberta.



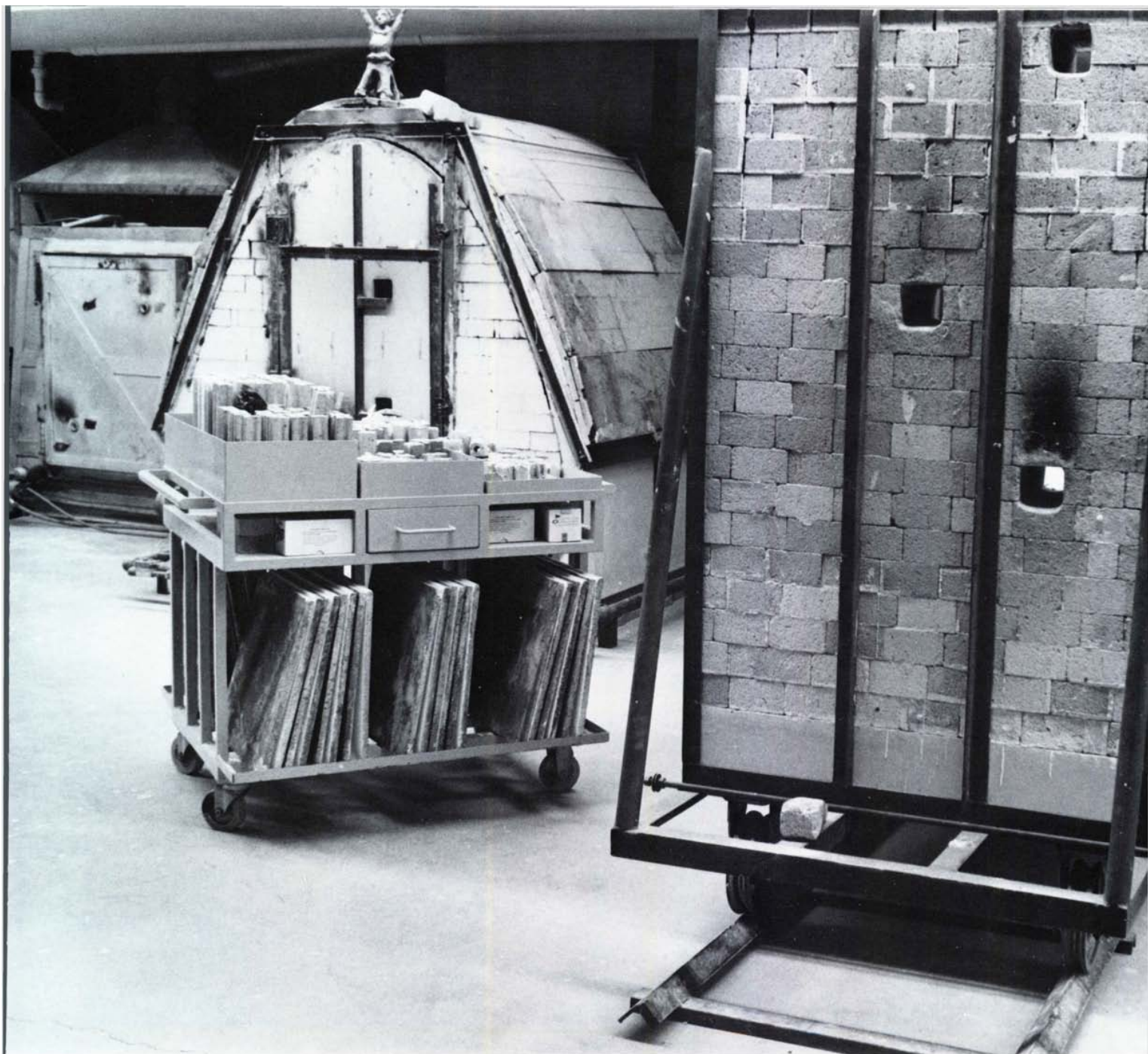
The main work area at Banff features work/storage tables and ware racks. Ten students share the space during the winter session.



In addition to pull-out bins for storage of more frequently used chemicals, the glaze lab is equipped with a pulley-hung mixer and a ball mill (right).



For students wishing to jigger or cast, Banff facilities include a plaster turning wheel, mixer and related equipment.



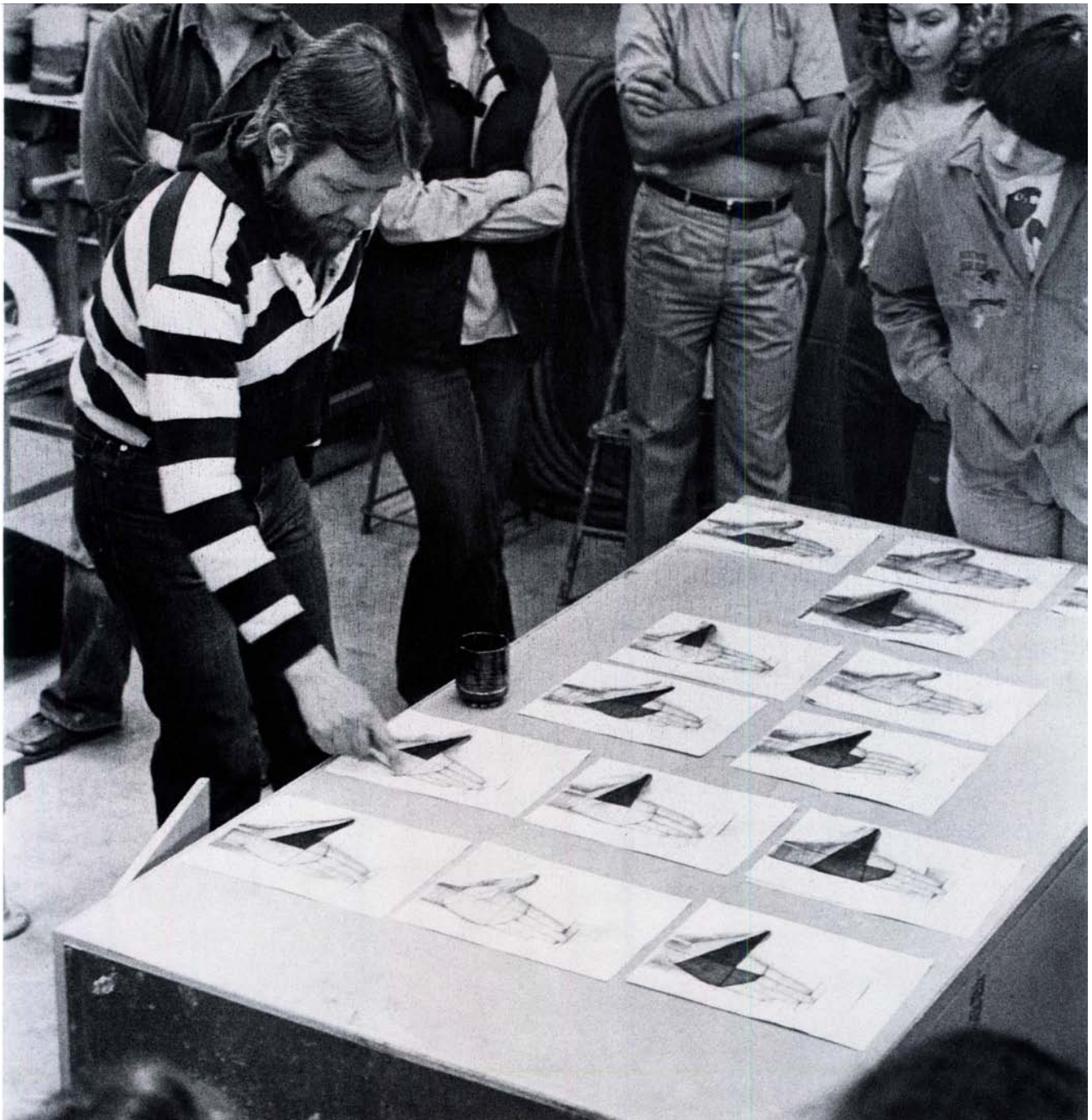
my life experience as well as the natural environment." Each form is thrown from a variety of bodies and trimmed overall to take advantage of particular colors and surface qualities: "heavily grogged stoneware for the now and immediate surroundings; smooth medium stoneware for the near future and background; porcelain for the distant and more refined statement."

Educated in western Canada, surrounded by prairie and mountains, Les graduated from the Alberta College of Art in 1966. Then for three years he gained experience working at a local production studio. But a teaching position opened at the Calgary Allied Arts Centre, and

Above Loading and unloading an indoor kiln are easier with a movable furniture cart.

Right Outdoors is the wood-burning kiln.





With a class in wheel work, Les discusses his theory that hand shape and size greatly affect throwing ability and the forms that will be produced.



The winter program is a two-year course of study designed to offer a professional atmosphere to students who have completed training elsewhere. Each summer a six-week symposium is offered for 10–12 advanced level participants.

for the next five years, Les was their resident potter and ceramics instructor.

An invitation to assist in a Banff Centre summer course led to his participation in reorganizing the ceramic studio facility and program. After three years, the operation was turned over to Les. In these past five years he has worked to develop the school's summer and winter programs.

A major difference between the approach at Banff and art colleges or universities is that the winter program (two 13-week sessions) is limited to ten participants. Applicants must submit portfolios and have completed training at another institution. Of the students who normally apply, some have earned a B.F.A., but have not decided whether to go on to a master's degree or to set up a studio. At the center, they are offered one or two years to put together a portfolio for application toward an M.F.A., or to decide about branching out on their own. Other applicants have



Preparing to throw a multicolored object, Les paddles wedged lumps of porcelain and stoneware into a uniform shape.



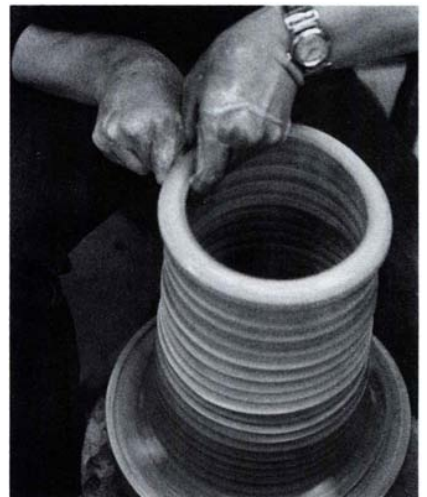
The forms are thrown with as little water as possible.



On opening, the porcelain is pushed down inside for an all-white liner.



Additional laminations of porcelain may be added in thin outside layers.



Above Working swiftly, the form is thinned, then shaped to capture some essence of mountain landscape.

Left Wet trimming the surface exposes clay color and pattern.





Far left *Neriage form, 8 inches in height, thrown, altered, by Les Manning.*

Left Wheel-thrown, altered form, 14 inches in height, of porcelain, heavily grogged and smooth stoneware.

Below Altered wheel-thrown forms, 12 and 14 inches in height.



finished studio training at an art college and apply to learn how to set up their own working situation. In the school's studio, they learn what is essential to their personal expression and development. The Banff program even includes seminars by accountants on bookkeeping and by lawyers regarding copyright, royalties and other legalities encountered in the business world. A third kind of student is the professional potter, who after several years might want a studio sabbatical to try new directions without financial worry.

All the winter program students receive scholarships to cover a large percentage of their costs, including the \$1600 tuition per session, plus most room-and-board expenses. Students have to pay for some materials; however, sales are possible and may help cover additional expenses. Since the Province of Alberta funds the School of Fine Arts, first choice regarding faculty or students is given to Albertans, with second choice going to Canadians, then to North Americans and finally to those from other nations.

The winter program simulates the lifestyle of a successful professional who would work throughout the year with a month off for vacation. When the student arrives,

a self-designed course of study or a contract is devised, which on acceptance becomes a measurement for assessing development. Little direct teaching takes place, but critiques are held regularly and a visiting artist works with students on a one-to-one basis once a month—thus allowing them to work uninterrupted for a period of two or three weeks between critiques.

Each summer a six-week symposium for 10 to 12 participants is offered. (The word participant rather than student is preferred at Banff because those selected are aesthetically advanced and skilled.) They come to the center to test themselves; not to complete assignments per se. Instead, they first mount an exhibition and shortly thereafter, a recognized artist is brought in to evaluate, question and discuss individual ideas. Emphasis is placed on the participant learning to articulately justify the work. At the end of the symposium, participants again have the opportunity to exhibit and a public forum is held at which they speak about their work; one object is selected from each for the center's permanent collection.

The author *Victor Brosz* is a professor of art at the University of Calgary, Alberta.