

IT IS THE ELEMENTAL NATURE OF CERAMICS which excites me, and the clay itself, the making process and, finally, the firing. My work is in the realm of the applied arts and indeed I began as a functionalist. I have good throwing and hand-building skills and I enjoy making in this way but, gradually, as I have begun to explore clay and its possibilities further, I have moved away from function completely. Skill and process are still of importance to my way of

Group of 5 Standing Forms. 51 to 134 cm. Wet-fired in gas kiln. Meeth clay/hay mix built over wooden supports. Porcelain slip, quartz pebble and china clay additions.



Top: Standing Disk Form. 75cm/h. Wet-fired on woven former in gas kiln. Meeth clay/hay mix with porcelain slip, scallop shell and quartz pebble additions. Above: Defragmented Disk. 65 x 53 cm. Wet-fired in satellite dish in gas kiln. Meeth clay/hay mix with porcelain slip, quartz pebble, scallop shell and copper fragment additions.

working, though these are now directed primarily towards aesthetic ends, rather than those of utility and function.

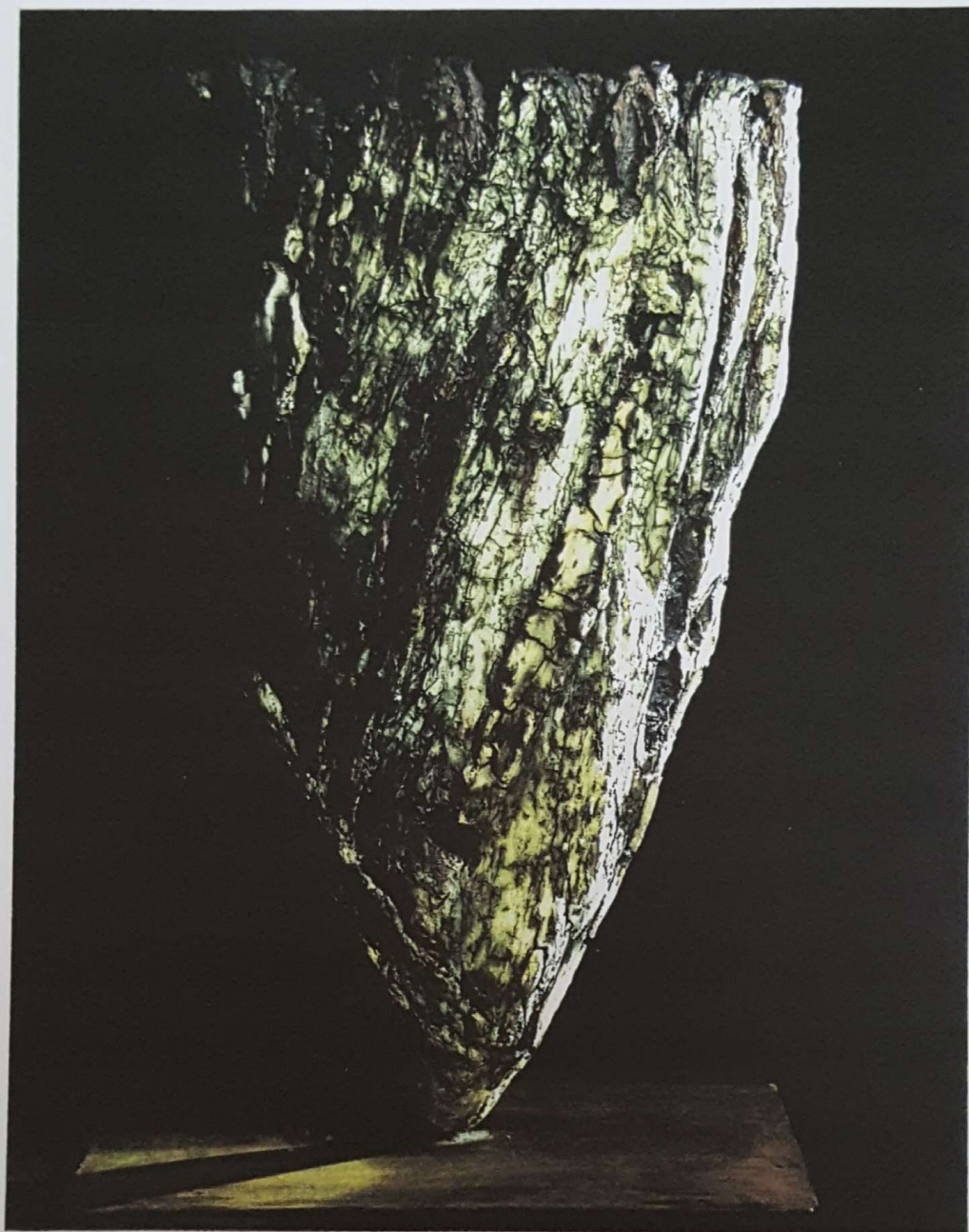
My inspiration comes from the natural world and geological formations, strata and textures – I want to suggest the 'essence' of nature, rather than merely to imitate it. I see my work as a celebration of nature through clay and fire or a basic material transformed by an elemental force into objects of beauty. I do not plan work except in the broadest sense. Previous work leads to new ideas or surface finishes with a systematic development through the evaluation of each process.

I work intuitively, rather than to an obvious intellectual concept and enjoy the spontaneity involved in working in this way. The outcome can be controlled only so far and the final result is up to the firing and a certain amount of 'serendipity'. It is since developing the method I now use, that I feel that I am finally finding my own 'voice'.

I work with unrefined indigenous clays, one heavily laden with natural iron oxides, the other with salt. These are then mixed with hay to form an adobe-like substance; this is then formed over woven supports and fired immediately, still soaking wet. These willow or hazel formers hark back to a suggested form of the earliest pottery, when baskets lined with clay and then fired were, perhaps, the basis of the first vessels.

I use additions of quartz pebbles, pieces of copper, cuttle-fish, shells and muslin dipped in porcelain slip, among other objects, to highlight areas and break up the surface. A thick porcelain slip is frequently used on top of the unrefined clays; this contrasts dramatically with the dark clays underneath. The resulting fissures, formed during the firing process, are an integral part of the piece, emphasised by the application of copper carbonate before the second firing. I am never totally sure how the pieces will emerge from the kiln; everything depends on the firings. I have discovered that by re-firing and soaking for a long period (up to 24 hours), in an oxidised atmosphere, some wonderful colours emerge in the clay. I enjoy the thought that my work is reminiscent in method to some of the earliest forms of pottery, while the innovative use of this ancient method combined with modern technology allows me to explore a new dimension in ceramic art.

Jane Jermyn is a ceramist living in Wales. She was born in Cork, Ireland. Photographs by Michèle Wright.



WET-FIRING: A PROPOSAL FOR A CERAMIC EVENT BY JANE JERMYN

I have been successfully wet-firing forms and believe this would be a worthwhile project during a ceramic festival. Formers are built/woven from natural materials. I cover these forms with an adobe-like mix of clay and hay. The work is then fired immediately and quickly from 0° – 1260°C in approximately six hours. This fast firing and the organic matter prevent the work from blowing up. I would build a simple tube kiln to be fired with two gas burners. The clay/hay forms are built on their formers directly on the kiln shelves and the kiln is placed over the work, the burners put in place and the work fired immediately. Day 1 – Put down base of kiln and kiln shelves into position, build work in situ and cover with plastic. Day 2 – Early morning add porcelain slip etc; lower kiln into place over work. Fire quickly until 1200° – 1250°C is reached. I can remove the kiln as soon as the work reaches temperature and allow the forms to cool. Day 3 – Rub oxides into the fissures and re-fire to 1000°C. If I then remove the kiln as soon as 1000°C is reached, I can have the work completely finished and standing on their bases by the third evening. For further details contact: The Old Mill, Heol Salem, Johnstown, Carmarthen, SA31 3HJ Wales, UK.

Conical Form. 70

x 43 cm. Wet-fired over woven former in gas kiln. Meeth clay/hay mix with porcelain slip, cuttle fish, quartz pebble and copper disk additions.