

Opening reception: Wed March 28th 2001, 6pm onwards
Illustrated slide presentation of artist's work at
Cymroza Art Gallery, Wed April 4th 2001, 6pm

FLESH MADE CLAY

.....

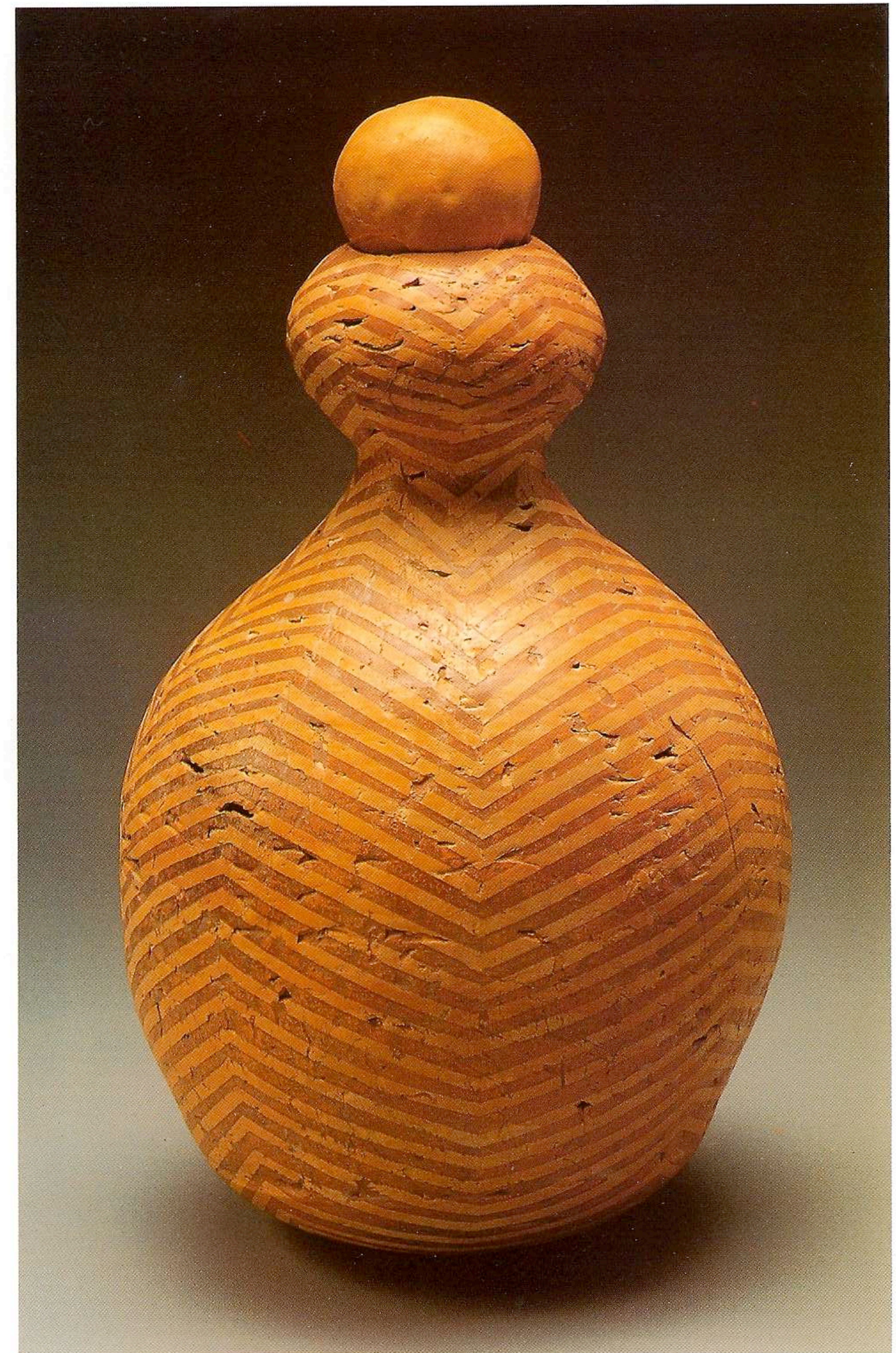
Suno sunoji katha anokhi
Kabirdas ki ulti bani
Barse kambal bhije pani.

(Listener! Listen to my marvellous tale, told in Kabir's upside-down way: It rains blankets, and the rain gets wet.)

When I look at Madhvi Subrahmanian's ceramic objects, I realise how important it is *not* to make a perfect pot. A clay-footed logic? Not at all. Unlike most studio potters in India, Madhvi does not confine the vocabulary of her ceramics to table-top functionality, on the one hand; nor does she limit herself to the archetypal symbolism of organic forms, on the other. In the present series of works, the functional impulse, which was her mainstay earlier, has been overtaken by sculptural possibilities.

Like Kabir, Madhvi subjects the conventional understanding of function to irony: she morphs a lid into a child's rattle, or lends a house a set of four legs that make it mobile. But Madhvi does not merely stand function on its head: she also experiments with form, intelligently probing the glaze and gloss that characterise well-finished, pottery. To exemplify, Madhvi allows a thick coat of glaze to crawl, on a vegetal form, making the object look like a piece of wrinkled skin. Even such accidents of process as random bubbles are left on the surface, to harden there into a fruit-sweat or crystallise into a brick-red landscape wrapped around the pot. And as the glaze crawls, outside the walls of the pot, inside it, Madhvi sets off a spray of golden sparkle.

This juxtaposition of an abstract, almost phlegmatic natural landscape on the exterior of the container with an unabashedly kitschy interior suggests a hybrid statement in clay, a cross between the studio's mandates and the signs of the street. The artist's teeming work environment, the road bursting with people and knick-knacks outside her studio at



20" H