

CERAMICS

IRELAND



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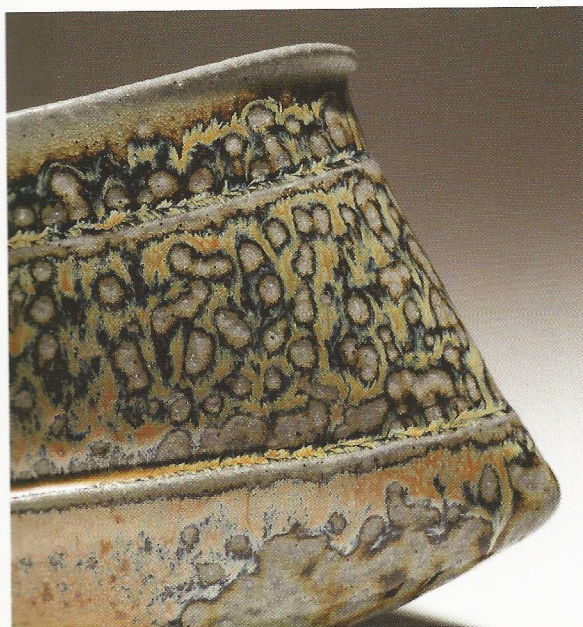
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The potter's wheel is what first attracted me to working with clay. The immediacy of the process caught my attention. Even as a total beginner, you can go from having a lump of clay to having something resembling a pot in a matter of minutes. It became an obsession, making time everyday to get to the cold and damp basement pottery room— bliss! I set myself goals and challenges, determined that the next pot would be better. These personal challenges still motivate me, over twenty years later. The wheel became central to the way I work. It is not only a production tool; it is also my sketchbook where ideas are worked out through time spent experimenting with form and surface. I find myself increasingly using the wheel as the starting point for shapes, throwing sections and altering them when the clay is still soft. It is that softness and malleability of material that I have continually enjoyed and which you cannot escape if you work on the wheel.

I have constantly made functional ware. I enjoy the idea of people using, in whatever way they choose, what I have made. It completes the circle for me. However, my approach to function has changed over the years. When I set up my first studio in 1994, I produced a full range of domestic stoneware, selling through the numerous craft outlets and shows which were dealing with individual makers. I began working with wood fired salt glaze when I moved to my current studio in Tipperary in 1999. Up to this point, the glazing was a process of necessity. I was always mildly dissatisfied with the results, no matter how many glaze tests I did. Salt glazing and wood-fired salt glazing in particular has extended that tactile physical experience from the wheel right through to the finished object. I enjoy the physicality of this process; the chopping and stacking of wood months or even years before it is going to be used; and the long making cycle it imposes. A substantial wood stack has a great way of grounding you to a place. This change in the making cycle gave me



the impetus to take a closer look at what I was making. If you decide to make functional ceramics by hand, it will not be cheap, so we must be innovative with design and offer something distinguishable from the mass produced imports. I continue to be committed to function, it is just the use is more open to interpretation than it once was.

I believe the best functional ware extends the tactile making experience right through to the eventual owner's dinner table, enhancing this experience and bringing it beyond the mundane. In the words of Garth Clark

'The gift that we receive from the best functional potters of our time is that they provide a bridge to a total, multisensory appreciation of art through use' Quite a challenge...

All pieces are handthrown and altered and fired in a hard wood fuelled salt glaze kiln to 1300 degrees centigrade over 24 hours. Photography: Roland Paschhoff, except footed platters, photography, Mandy Parslow
www.parslowpottery.com