



The art of Collecting

Pottery 101: The Art of Ceramics

By Keith Rice-Jones

Pottery, discovered in the earliest traditions of civilization and culture, provide us insight into some of the most fundamental aspects of human activity. Any piece of pottery, no matter how crude, seems to share in the glory of a craft, which, at its best, has succeeded in filling profound human needs, both practical and spiritual.

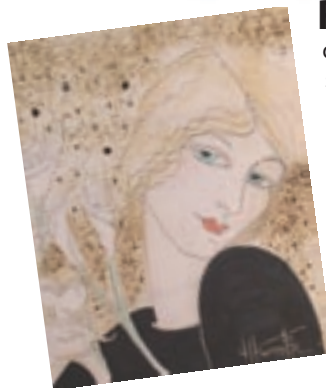
the art

It is the art of the potter that uses blends of these basic earthy materials, uses a variety of forming techniques and skills and finishes the work through a variety of firing techniques. Industrial mechanical processes can stamp out cheap identical ware but with simple tools like the potter's wheel and various hand-building techniques such as slabs and coiling, the potter, through skill and artistry creates subtle and individual pieces that bear the mark of the making and something of the soul of the maker.



the types

Earthenware uses common locally occurring, what are called Secondary Clays, which often have a high iron content that causes them to fire a terracotta colour typical of Mediterranean and Central American pottery. Often a white glaze with bright colours is used in what is called Majolica ware. Because the clay is relatively low fired it remains porous and will not last outside in our climate. The same qualities however allow for carbon colourations from pit firing in sawdust or dung as is used in Arizona for the burnished black ware.



Raku, though fragile and more decorative than practical, can be a seductive process. The piece is taken, red-hot from the kiln with tongs, cooled rapidly, often after a period in a smoking bin.

Unglazed body is blackened with absorbed carbon, glazes are often crackled with the thermal shock and ephemeral copper lustres and other effects are possible.

Stoneware and Porcelain

are fired at white heat where the clay actually softens, close to melting but becomes very dense and strong. At these temperatures materials tend to be much simpler and the colours more muted with whites, browns, blacks (Tenmoku), greens (Celadon) and blues predominating.

