

DELHI BLUE POTTERY TRUST *PRESENTS*

INDIAN CERAMICS

MAGAZINE

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NAKED RAKU

EDITOR'S NOTE

Hi Folks

Summer months are meant for holidays. In the plains the intense heat keeps most people indoors and most of the art world takes a break. However before slowing down for the summer the Trust had some very interesting workshops.

Francoise Dufayard from France shared her knowledge of slipped earthenware, with us.

Simcha Evan Chen from Israel, taught her special technique of naked raku to the participants.

A summer workshop for children aged 6 to 12 was organized at the Gandharva Mahavidyala.

Adil Writer's show in Sri Lanka was very well received and Usha Garodia's solo show at Visual Arts Gallery at India Habitat Centre, was an eye opener.

Many activities in our field of interest happen throughout the year, Please do keep updating us with your news. Since it is difficult to reach all parts of the country, we request you to spread the word to your potter friends. We would be happy to feature all interesting events in ceramics.

The CeramicsFest will be held from the 1st to the 3rd of December, (Invites will be going out shortly). Artists planning to come to Delhi for this are requested to get in touch with us, if they would like to conduct a demonstration on Sunday 3rd December, between 11.00 am and 1.00 pm.

We are also starting a column on readers' views, on subjects relating to ceramics, in the next issue. This is purely an informative and thought provoking column and would be very helpful in broadening the knowledge of our ceramic community.

The topic for the next issue is:

"THE CLASSICAL FORM IN POTTERY OR THE SCULPTURAL FORM".

Do write in....

Regards
Team Delhi Blue

SILENT SENTINELS

An exhibition by Adil Writer



Sentinel and treasure box, Soda fired stoneware

In most human societies, save a very few, the boundary is a critical aspect of structuring societies and thereby bringing the order that allowed for civilization to progress. They have also of late been the point of critical dispute with the crossing of national boundaries by thousands of displaced and misplaced people, not just been the great shame of today's civilization, but has also marked a change in attitude towards each other amongst populations. The points of crossing these boundaries have also become the sites of critical contestation.

In more bucolic times when space was not so critically contested a boundary was often marked by nothing more than an imaginary line connecting mutually recognized landmarks, often a couple of trees, and in later times with the advent of precise surveying and taxing, perhaps carefully marked boundary stones. The crossing points however were clearly expressed to represent the authority that allowed that crossing. Often in the grander estates in the countryside, the only presence in the landscape of any civility was pairs of posts that marked these crossing points.

In the suburban environments where wealthy families gathered around cities, but with still large extends of land, the gatepost came to represent the power and prestige of the occupants within. With the actual houses themselves often hidden amidst extensive gardens and tree cover, the gatepost appeared to represent the personalities of the houses within and thus that of the occupants.



Sentinal



Sentinal



Sentinal



Sentinal boxes, detail

Looking at Adil Writer's work it appears to be a gathering of such personalities in a conclave. Placed together as I first encountered them, they seemed to be jostling for positions within the groups, perhaps comparing notes or even being silently snooty about those who stood around them. Each of the gateposts captures a personality with all the merits and flaws of individuals. Adil has been able to capture individual personalities in each of the works but they become most effective in groups as they may have been down the streets of Goa, Colombo or Bombay, standing sentinel at the points of transition representing the values, virtues and indulgences of those within. Through the work, Adil begins to recognize, identify and celebrate the diversity of the human condition as did those now disappearing silent sentinels in the fast growing and often faceless expanses of urbanity now being thrust upon us.

By Channa Daswatte
Colombo, Dec 2016

FROM TRADITIONAL TO CONTEMPORARY SLIPWARE ON EARTHENWARE

Workshop conducted by Francoise Dufayard



Every city has its character and certain aspects are essential to its being. In Delhi, come winter and the art world perks up with exhibitions, sculptures, flower shows and various dance and music concerts. Ceramics are becoming an increasingly important part of these expositions. Studio pottery, though a new art form in our country has picked up very fast in the last two decades. Tableware, decorative creations and sculptures in ceramic are seen all over the country in prestigious galleries. Understanding of ceramics as an art form is also growing among viewers of such exhibitions as well as critics and one can find meaningful write-ups in newspapers.

Pottery Bazaars are regularly happening in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Delhi, Bhopal, Kolkata and Puducherry to name a few. Along with these bazaars pottery workshops are also being conducted in different cities.

Delhi Blue Pottery Trust regularly organizes workshops with potters of international standing. We eagerly await the announcement of dates of such workshops each year from November onwards. I have been fortunate enough to attend quite a few of them. In addition to learning varied techniques of slabwork, throwing, slipware, glazing etc, from these masters, what fascinates me most is their generosity and openness as reflected in their willingness to share their 'secrets' developed through decades of hard work. I sincerely believe that any kind of knowledge is for sharing.

I recently had the opportunity to attend a workshop titled 'From Traditional to Contemporary Slipware on Earthenware', by renowned French potter Francoise Dufayard. The workshop was held at Sanskriti Delhi Blue Ceramic Centre. Francoise had experience with clay during her childhood, which led to a lifelong relationship with this fascinating medium. Her rigorous training happened at Brittany, France, where she learnt among other techniques the process of wheel throwing. Her studio is in Rennes (Brittany). It is really interesting to know that she uses Spanish earthenware clay. She is well known for her huge platters which are done with the slab technique. She sells her work in England, where her buyers are fascinated by her colour pallet and the sheer size of her work. Though she is not very sure of what is going to happen to her sales in England after Brexit!

Her work is known for the black slip which she mixes with other slips that leads to creation of grey, turquoise, blue and deep yellow among other shades. On top of these beautiful slips is a covering of an amazing clear glaze. Her brush work is so very free flowing and spontaneous that it cannot be repeated! At times platters or big bowls emerge like a painting, each work is one of its kind. The way she uses her slip trailer, paper resist, brush, wax or a sharp tool for sgraffito with a broad smile on her face is wonderful to watch! Her forty years of experience has made her a store house of information of the materials she uses. An amazing teacher, she keeps on telling her students about the nuances, aesthetics and delicacies of the colours which will appear after the overlapping of this or that slip.

The five day workshop was well planned, material readily available and space organized. On day one we prepared slips as per the recipes given by Francoise. All of us were asked in advance to make terracotta tiles of specific size and get them on day one in leather hard state. Lo and behold! most of the participants came on day one and started rolling their tiles. A lot of such work blasted in the kiln in the two firings. This was an easily avoidable mishap. In spite of this disaster we could get sufficient work to analyse the results. I must say it was an interesting experience. However, we have learnt the techniques of her slipware and in years to come will keep on trying to assimilate what we learnt from Francoise.

On our constant requests that we want to see her work, she put up a small exhibition in her room. Within fifteen minutes everything was sold! We lucky participants in the workshop are also proud owners of her work now.

By Shehla Hashmi Grewal



Francoise demonstrates the dipping process



Participants closely observe the dipping process



Participants tiles drying



Loading the kiln



Francoise with her work



Group photo of happy participants

JOURNEY OF A WANNABE POTTER

So well, I have been a closet potter for close to three years. Not many know my love affair with clay and it is only now that I have been feeling a bit more confident of shaping it. Like I have confessed many a time, I love to dabble in various things. My father has always been confused as to my most recent shenanigans and wonders why I can't focus. However, my husband and mother are ever encouraging. To let you in on a secret, before I started my journey with clay I hadn't had any experience with clay, nor did I have a friend doing pottery. My reference point was the movie *Ghost* and that very romantic scene by Demi Moore and Patrick Swayze, the teenage me's heartthrob. So with stars in my eyes I walked into Delhi Blue Pottery studio at Safdarjung and enrolled.

Thankfully between my enrolling and joining they had switched to electric wheels else my romance would have ended before it began. Specially since I was recovering from that dreadful *chikungunya*. My first session was about wedging the clay and well it didn't look anywhere close to what I had imagined. Post this came centering a 500 gm lump of clay and if I say it was a struggle I would be an understatement. The studio full of veteran potters at the time centering 5 kgs of clay made me feel pottery challenged. On the flip side the elation that came with a perfect centering was no less than having done *fateh* on Mars. Just when I used to think now the toughest part of the process is over, and would be beaming at tea break, came another challenge. From centering to pulling a cylinder 7 inches high from 700 grams of clay, was back breaking and took me more than 6 months.

I felt I was a slow learner where pottery was concerned and the frustration levels would mount with each disappointment. The teachers kept my morale going with their wit and encouragement. My first piece was still a *tedha medha* vase but what the heck *tedha hai par mera hai*. I kept at it and slowly learnt how to throw a fairly well centred piece.

Sometimes even I am surprised at myself, no hobby has kept me captivated this long. The passion and thrill grows with each well crafted piece. Putting your hand in a sack of clay, wedging, pulling, trimming and decorating each piece has a story to tell and is born out of love. Heart rates increase with each bisque and glaze firing. Prayers are fervently offered to kiln Gods that the piece comes out unscathed and unbroken. The joy at the end of it all is unmatched. The piece is then proudly displayed at home with lengthy instructions to the maid to not touch it. An interesting anecdote, when I proudly showed off my first piece to the maid at home, she was astounded *acha bhabhi aap mitti ka kaam karte ho, chalo iss baar mere liye karwa chauth ke liye karwa aap banana...* I faint.

So now when I participate in a fair and someone buys my piece, there is elation of selling and a lot of satisfaction, accompanied by an inexplicable sadness coming from parting with your work.

However, the best part of selling is that it gives you an opportunity to create more and still yet more. I leave you with this.

By Anubha Belani

BLACK AND WHITE NAKED RAKU

Workshop conducted by Simcha Evan Chen



The black and white ceramic creations, emphasizing the positive and negative, as well as tension and balance, are a trademark of Simcha Evan Chen's art. The simple and stark designs of Simcha's pieces are striking in their glossy black and waxy white contrast. It is difficult to imagine that these wonderful creations were inspired by pipes of different diameters that were stored in her father's workshop.

The winner of several prestigious International awards in Ceramics, Simcha was awarded her PhD in the field of Biology in 1990 and worked in a post-doctoral position between 1994-1996 in the Biochemistry department of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Alongside her regular job, she took ceramic courses, and in 1996 established her own studio. She continued her foray into ceramics while working as a senior scientist. In 2011 she became a member of the International Academy of Ceramics (IAC)

At the end of 2013 she left her job at the university and turned her focus solely towards ceramics. After experimenting with various forms and types of firing, she now concentrates on uncovered or naked surfaces and hand built forms.

The workshop that she held at Sanskriti Delhi Blue Ceramic Centre, started with a small but powerful power point presentation, focusing on her work. This gave us an insight into her ideas and inspiration behind her work. Her explanation about tension and balance as well as fragmentation and integration made us view her pieces with new eyes.



In the kiln



Placing the pots, to be covered by the drum, for reduction

For the workshop, we were instructed to make four experimental pieces, that were not to be more than 8 inches tall. On the first day, Simcha, encouraged us to give free reign to our creativity and demonstrated how to use resist tape as a decorating technique. She demonstrated how she readies her pieces and gave us extremely helpful tips on how to bring about the best in our pots. She explained how a complicated design could lead to complications at a later stage. As we continued with our efforts, it was amazing to see how simple masking tape could be used by each one of us, to create a variety of new designs.

While we were busy with our pots, Simcha prepared the separating slip and glaze using all ingredients found locally. She explained that as the materials she used for her glaze were different from ours, the results we got might differ, but we would have to play with our local ingredients to get the best results.

On the second day, everyone arrived excited to start the glazing process. The glazes and slip to be used were set out and kept ready for us, but before we could begin we were given precise instructions on how we should proceed along with complete recipes for the slip and glaze.

We were encouraged to dip, pour and paint both the slip and glaze onto our pieces, to discover how each would give rise to different patterns and effects. The precise time to remove the resist tape was also shown. Simcha patiently helped each participant to achieve the best results. Everyone was so engrossed in the various activities of the day, that we became oblivious to the blistering heat. Tired and happy we left our pieces to dry, at the end of the day, to be ready for firing the next day.

The third day was for firing. We started early, as there were many pieces to be fired and we could only fire a few pieces at a time. Simcha explained in great detail how the firing worked, in regard to smoking with sawdust, how the kiln should be loaded and how the reduction chamber should be laid out with sawdust to get optimum results. After every firing, we could hear loud exclamations heralding the unveiling of each piece. After tapping away the outer glaze, what the black and white



Placing the pots, to be covered by the drum, for reduction



Successful workshop

pieces revealed, really caught the eye. Our simple forms seemed elevated to another level. No one was disappointed with their pieces, not even the one who had her piece come out black and grey (She had forgotten to pour glaze over the slip!) Helped by the participants, Simcha continued to fire the kiln, the firing carrying on till late in the evening. Her patience and endurance were really commendable.

The last and final day was set aside for waxing and polishing our fired pieces, and also for discussions on improving the end result.

The workshop was a real eye opener, and many of us were inspired to order our personal raku kilns, so that we could continue with our experiments.

Finally, we would all like to say a big "Thank You Simcha" for one of the most fascinating workshops we've attended.

By Srirupa Sen

STUDENT'S EXHIBITION 2017



Sardar Mansimran Singh lighting the lamp



Ravi Batra launching the book



The gallery



Art works by students



Art works by students



Art works by students

To celebrate the birth anniversary of its founder Sardar Gurcharan Singh, the Delhi Blue Pottery Trust organizes its Students Exhibition every year, at the prestigious Shridharani Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.

Sardar Gurcharan Singh started Delhi Blue Art Pottery in 1952. Apart from producing tiles and jaalis to embellish buildings, and bringing handmade glazed tableware to Indian homes, the pottery was the only centre in India for learning this art form. Numerous students have trained here and gone on to become accomplished potters. Proud of his student's achievements, Sardar Gurcharan Singh promoted their work at any given opportunity, and in 1995, at the age of 99 years, initiated the first student's exhibition in Delhi.

This year the exhibition was held from the 28th of March to the 5th of April. It featured the works of the current students of Delhi Blue, who form an eclectic and harmonious group from diverse backgrounds. On view were works displaying varied techniques and methods of decoration expressed in many creative ways.

The added attraction this year was the launch of Mary Singh's book, 'Delhi Blue - A Memoir'. Sardar Mansimran Singh inaugurated the event by lighting the lamp. Mr. Ravi Batra launched the book. Mary Singh read excerpts from her book as the audience listened with keen interest. She later autographed books for all those present. The show, that was on for nine days, saw many happy customers.

By Soni Dave

PHOTO ESSAY - 'TIMELESS'- CERAMIC SCULPTURES

an exhibition of ceramic sculpture by Usha Garodia



Sardar Mansimran Singh lighting the lamp



Beautiful slab work



Figures



Figures



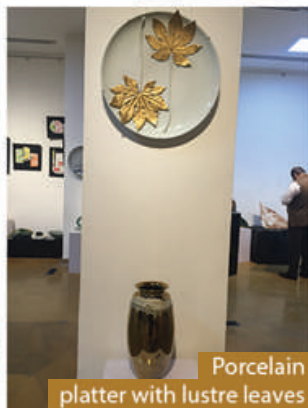
Tea pots



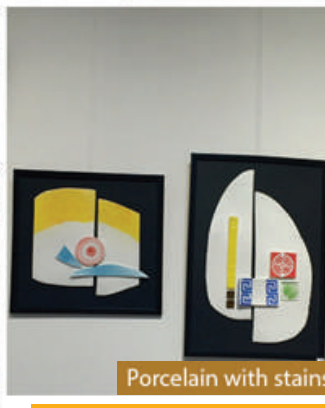
Vases with a difference



Porcelain



Porcelain platter with lustre leaves



Porcelain with stains



Lustre glaze with decals



Platter



Usha with some of her exhibits

POTTERY AT THE GANDHARVA MAHAVIDYALAYA



Workshop begins



Now everyone has clay



Hands-on at the wheel with Monica

Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, New Delhi, was established in 1939 by its Founder Principal, Shri Vinay Chandra Maudgalya, to popularize Indian classical music and dance. Today it is the oldest music school in Delhi and is headed by his son and a noted Hindustani classical singer, Pandit Madhup Mudgal.

One can imagine the surprise we got when Pandit Madhup Mudgal's daughter and eminent odissi Dancer, Arushi Mudgal contacted us, to conduct a pottery workshop at the Vidyalaya. She informed me that, for the first time, the Vidyalaya was introducing summer workshops in many other disciplines, apart from dance and music. This was wonderful news, and we promptly went about planning the workshop.

Monica and Ambar Agnihotri, well known ceramists who teach children and conduct workshops regularly at their own studio, readily agreed to our request, of conducting a workshop at the Vidyalaya. Seventeen children were enrolled for the pottery workshop. There was much excitement at the Vidyalaya revolving around this event. Arushi told us the children will be between the ages of six to twelve.

Finally on the day of the workshop, chatais were laid out, the wheel was set up, clay prepared and distributed, aprons put on, and the experience of putting your hands into that wonderful medium called clay, begun.

Children take to working in clay like a duck takes to water. It is the most natural activity for them, and one that can be undertaken even at a very young age. They got to experience, basic hand forming techniques, like pinching and rolling a slab. Monica demonstrated throwing on the wheel, and then the children had their turn. Ambar taught them how to make a mask. All the masks were taken back to our studios to be bisqued. These were then returned to the participants. The success of the workshop was written across the smiling faces of the participants.

By Anuradha Ravindranath



Hands-on at the wheel



Hands-on at the wheel-very small hands



Hands-on at the wheel



I made a pot!



I made one too!



Ambar demonstrated how to make a mask



Young hands shape a mask

OBITUARY



GINA GUPTA

Contrary to the general perception conveyed to me by several potters, Gina was not 'stuck-up' or even "slightly arrogant". She was shy, self-effacing, may be a little reserved. I should know because my acquaintance with her stretches over a period of three decades.

I met her first in Garhi studio and it took some time to get to know her well. Thereafter I began working in my own studio but we kept in touch, often going together to see ceramic exhibitions.

It was fascinating watching her work, how she would take a lump of clay and as if by magic transform it into the shape of any animal she wished. Her work was unusual and I feel ahead of her time. It would have been better appreciated now that the general public is more discerning.

Gina was witty with a wry sense of humour and quite willing to laugh at herself. She did hand building and was not proficient on the wheel. So I was quite surprised when she told me that she had bought a second hand kick wheel. When I asked her why she had done so, she said that it was going really cheap and she could not resist it. After all "I am a Jew"!!

RIP, my friend.

Leena



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