



Who or what have been the most significant influences in your work?

A: The opening stanza of a poem by the Japanese potter Kawai Kanjiro: "Nothing is, look and it is".

Simple enough but consider it carefully.

Natural Forms: The growth of natural forms. Witnessing this growth we see form expanding from a centre point, the development of a three dimensional form pushing outwards. Natural forms are generally asymmetric and give a feeling of softness and I feel a capacity to draw the attention of a viewer and elicit the desire to touch, to hold.

Over the years my interest in surface and the importance of surface become a more pressing issue. The question arose "if you touch an object or hold an object what do you expect to gain from the experience emotionally"? Of our five senses, sight and touch are two available to the potter and of late surface and touch are becoming a greater priority for me.

Following the growth of form, the decay or erosion of that form necessarily follows. When this occurs the surface of that form starts to alter. Natural elements come to bear upon the objects when they deteriorate and each action of erosion leaves its particular signature. We can consider the surfaces of stone, wood or bone for example. Each material responds in a different way. We look at the surfaces when they have been subjected to say wind and/or water. Such surfaces intrigue me and I have tried to incorporate textures and the movement of one textural area to another across the surface of my forms – as narrative if you like for the blind. I am sure this approach to form and surface will spill over into my other forms of ceramic expression.

The other influences have been the vigour, freedom and beautiful flow of expression in Japanese ceramics and the power of the great pots of the Song period.

Which part of the making process do you enjoy the most?

A: Probably forming the piece and working on the surface, but the end result does rely on all the necessary processes and each process is stitched into the next. If each process isn't given due care the end result is endangered. So I have learnt to enjoy them all.

What is the most difficult thing you have personally encountered in your work?

A: Failure and I imagine all potters have this in common. I have also learnt failure is the hand maiden to success, provided the lessons are learnt and remembered. Risks must be taken to learn.

The maintenance of personal integrity in approach to the work and the end result.

The discipline to complete the necessary tasks required to make the finished object. I do admire the wood firers for their discipline.

What are the biggest challenges facing the ceramic artist?

A: A book could be written in answer to this question. It applies not only to clay workers but to all makers, be they users of wood, glass, fibre, stone or metal. It applies to those who use their creative skills in an attempt to enhance the quality of our lives and heighten our appreciation of the handmade object. It applies to the makers of objects which have the capacity to plumb the depths of our communicative awareness and enrich our understanding of life. It applies to the makers who have the capacity to confront us, shake us and make us question our values. It applies to the makers who have the capacity to dare to step outside their comfort zone, beyond the trite, the quirky, the transient, the object that make the quick dollar; to those who are prepared to work in a disciplined fashion to discover their true worth and have the courage to follow their own path and be their own judge.

Who do you admire and why?

A: The craftspeople whose product is the result of dedicated and disciplined approach. Whose product shows and understanding of process and a sound knowledge of the materials qualities.

Have there been major learning points / or changes in direction in your career?

A: Apart from a good all round grounding in education at the Art School of the School of Mines in Ballarat, I would say that my journey in ceramics was the journey of an auto didactic that is up until I went to Japan to study.

This was a period of major learning. From clay preparation, forming, glazing, stacking and firing the five chamber noborigama, my experience in ceramics had been to say the least sketchy. The period in Japan gave me an introduction into the practical and material knowledge I required to develop a career in ceramics.

On my return to Castlemaine, teaching subsidised my ceramic habit and allowed me to explore the basics I had experienced in Japan. Through trial and error I developed a work routine/ethic which I found 'comfortable. Changes and development in 'style' came about through experimentation and exploration of materials and methods.

It is only recently I have found my approach to work more relaxed. I am at ease now with the various disciplines of forming and glazing.

Do you have a personal philosophy that you follow?

A: Enjoy your work and be your own judge.

Has the manner in which you work and the way you look at things changed from 10 years ago?

There has been a change. I feel I am more assured and comfortable in my practice.

I am confident that the 'tools in my kit' will give me the necessary skills to achieve the work I wish to create.

What is your working environment like?

A: My studio is based on the Japanese style. It has an inbuilt wheel, a long bench, a wedging slab, clay preparation area and so on. I look out on the bush and I listen to music from Bach to Herbie Hancock while I work. It is warm, clean and compact.

I enjoy.