

1974

## Eight Teacher-Potters

Bob Daugherty

*Eastern Illinois University*

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**Eight Teacher-Potters**

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(TITLE)

BY

**Bob Daugherty**

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

**Master of Arts**

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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

**July, 1974**

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING  
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Bob Daugherty



## **DEDICATION**

**To Sharon, Tim, and Chad**

## INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a survey of statements and the works of eight teacher-potters in Illinois. The works range from simple functional ware to funk art objects. The firing temperatures range from low fire white ware to high fire salt. The styles of the work are many; the philosophies of the work varied; and techniques of the work are diversified; but common to each work is its creation from idea to actuality by the teacher-potter. Beyond depicting the work, the paper attempts to establish the teacher-potter who created the work by showing photographs of him and by presenting his ideas and thinking on a variety of subjects relating to ceramics, art and teaching.

The following is a list of questions used in interviewing each teacher-potter. The questions were necessary in order to establish a structure to work from. The questions are simple and at the same time complex. This was done intentionally so that the teacher-potter could pick and choose the questions and go in whatever direction he was concerned with.

The main issues of concern were the teacher-potters' opinions about ceramics, art, and teaching. Each teacher-potter, during the course of the interview and in many cases after the taped conversation, spoke of things that he was personally concerned with.

The questions provided a structure to work from, as was stated in paragraph two. However, during the interview many more questions of a specific nature came to mind. For example, questions dealing with techniques of working or stories of personal experiences of the teacher-potter. For this reason I believe the general open questions were successful.

#### The Questionnaire

1. Why do you work in clay?
2. Was there any one person who got you started in clay?
3. What is the technical range of your work?
4. What is the aesthetic range of your work?
5. Which is the most important, technical knowledge or aesthetic knowledge?
6. What is art?
7. What is craft?
8. Do you have a favorite potter or potters? Who? Why?
9. What is the best way to teach ceramics?
10. What techniques and methods do you use to teach ceramics?
11. State your personal aesthetic philosophy.
12. What makes a successful potter?
13. What makes a successful pot?

## CHAPTER I

### John Cannon

Teaching: Southern Illinois University

Education: University of North Carolina  
Alfred University

I think at first the manipulative skills of clay challenge you. It is therapeutic. If you get on the wheel and spin up clay, just the feel of the material, the tactile experience is nice. Then you start thinking in forms and all the various objects that can be made and it allows you to make a diverse amount of objects without a lot of preparatory work, sort of an intermediate type thing, like drawing. I think its appeal is just about as basic as drawing is.

I've always liked the people that worked in clay. I have not had a lot of people really turn me off that worked in clay. I think maybe that people of a certain temperament migrate to clay.

When I make a mug or a bowl that's really pleasurable and that's what I like to do. When I make a pitcher I'll make something that I think is a pitcher, or a teapot or a bowl. There are a lot of decisions that enter into making something very simple and these are the things that I like to engage myself with and they are the challenging things for me.

I think it's a legitimate medium to make anything.

This is what Arneson's doing with his heads and faces and so forth. He is exploring it sculpturally. I'm glad he's not making a pot. It's like he's doing what clay can do for him.

As a teacher and for my own experience I've explored a number of areas including firing with dung, wood firing, salt glazing, a little low temperature luster, stoneware and porcelain, and I've done some earthenware with lead glazes and slips.

The most essential thing is not technical knowledge but how you apply and utilize the knowledge.

I really don't make a distinction between art and craft. I'd rather leave it for somebody else to decide, because when you work with something it doesn't matter if it's a craft or whether it's an art. If somebody wants to make of it art or think of it exclusively as a craft, that's okay.

If a piece of pottery has a message it is successful. I think pottery is capable of transmitting, whether it's thought of as an art or craft, human feelings, of expression, even if it's nothing more than pure geometric forms or pure abstract forms, which it is not. If it was, it would still carry something of the personality of the maker.

Probably the most impressive piece I've ever held was a coiled Indian pot. Some how or another there was a communication that was transmitted through time. I could feel a kinship with the man who made that, the person who made that pot, it was a woman probably, way back. A simple coil pot

could do that . . . !

There is a basic appeal to pottery now more so than ever, because being in the age of plastics and of disposable dishes and cans. Clay kind of represents something that will be around a while. Somehow it reflects an approach to living.

I think the aesthetic that I work around has to do with usefulness and utilitarian purpose. Also, simplicity. I've tried innumerable experiments but I usually kind of circle back and get down to making something that I've always made; so that for me a mug is still a challenging thing to make, because it's not solved once and for all if you make one, you always get different ideas as to the usefulness it might be put to . . .

I had a chance to see Gilhooly work and I was really impressed. I could see that he was using clay for storytelling. He did something very personal with it. To me that made quite a point. Gilhooly is a good artist and is using clay. I like his work.



**Figure 1. John Cannon**





Figure 2. Watergate Pot  
Porcelain with cobalt wash  
drawing.





Figure 3. Watergate Pot  
Porcelain with cobalt wash  
drawing.



Figure 4. Jar  
Stoneware



Figure 5. Whistle  
Stoneware



Figure 6. Whistle  
Stoneware



**Figure 7. John Cannon**

## CHAPTER II

### Verne Funk

Teaching: Bradley University

Education: Wisconsin State College  
University of Hawaii  
University of Wisconsin

I work in clay I suppose because I happen to like to. The directness of the materials, there's a certain spontaneity, the direct contact, the easy manipulation of the material. Plus, you can do anything and be anything. That's what is so really nice about it. You can paint with clay, sculpt, or make pots. You can create any kind of imagery with it. Make it look like metal or wood. And that's what's exciting about clay. Or you can make it look like clay if you want.

When I teach I really feel like the student should get a pretty broad background. You can teach mechanics but you can't teach somebody art. You can encourage these students to go out and to find out what the hell it is they are all about and include that and incorporate that into their work. It's like writing your name. When you write your name you usually write it the same way every time or if you're changing words, it still has the same kind of character and quality as your signature does. Well, that's what the potter does, just keeps doing it no matter what he makes, a bowl, object, or sculpture. That's his signature and there's no way this



can be taught but you know what makes that unique.

One of the things I feel distinguishes a craft from an art is the way in which the artist works. It's true whether you are making a pot or doing a painting. No matter what it may be I think if you have to get down to the nitty-gritty definition, my definition would be that when you are dealing with any kind of built in limitation you end up with craft rather than art. The whole idea of the artist offers free expression totally unincumbered by any technical situation. I even argue the point that all art would be craft, because a painter is limited by canvas size. You get into that kind of distinction but that's not what I mean. If you are confined to making a functional piece of pottery, and once you make that decision then that becomes your limitation in what you can create and you are confined to that limitation. That doesn't mean that a functional pot can't become a work of art. What it gets down to is the person either makes the craft or art. They do this by either being totally loose and free and having the ability and sensibility and sensitivity to completely express their own particular attitudes. In fact, that's what makes the distinction between a good pot and a really super superior pot. It's the guy that does that . . . finds something unique, that personal expression, that individuality.

To me the aesthetic and mechanics go hand-in-hand as far as the piece goes, but that element that goes into making a piece distinctive, the thing that separates it from other

works is invisible. Whether a pot is mechanically well done or not has very little to do with whether or not it's going to be a good piece . . . Who gives a shit, if a piece works, that's what counts. Sometimes it has to work because of the technical and mechanical approach. Sometimes because it lacks the mechanical and technical perfection.

A successful ceramist is a guy who knows what the hell he is doing, very simply . . . Knowing exactly where the hell you are and what you are doing.

You can't be free and loose until you've had a sense of discipline and you can't express until you know your materials or your techniques to use the materials.

A specific philosophy is very hard to state. You get it from different things. I think the other thing about it is that you learn a hell of a lot from being involved with other people. You also have to be broad minded and receptive to other ideas that come around and not reject them. Even though I have some very strong opinions I don't think that I am narrow-minded. I don't think I refuse to look at things. I learn a hell of a lot that way.

I dig a Don Rietz. The guy's got an expertise there, an individuality that you just have to react to.

I think Bob Arneson is one of the most significant ceramists around today. I really admire this guy.





**Figure 8. Verne Funk**



Figure 9. Mouth Pot  
Low fire white ware.

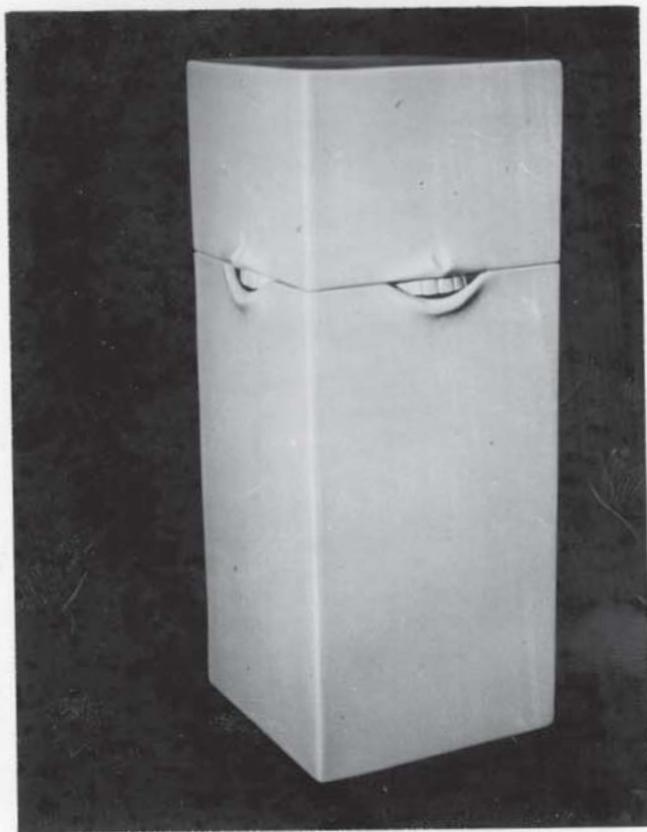


Figure 10. Mouth Pot  
Low fire white ware.

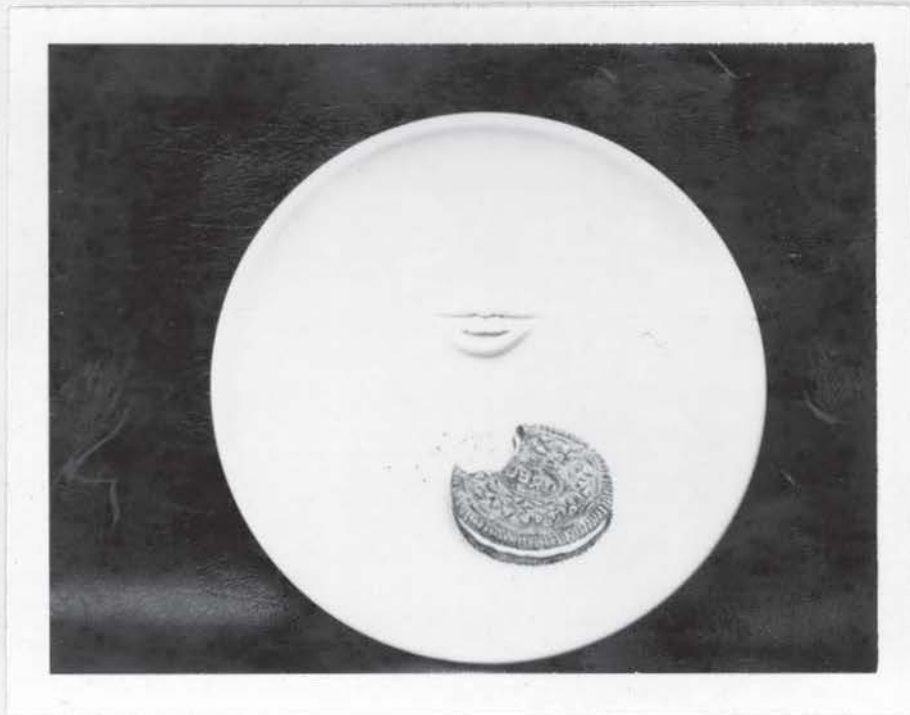


Figure 11. Cookie Plate  
Low fire white ware with glaze  
pencil drawing.

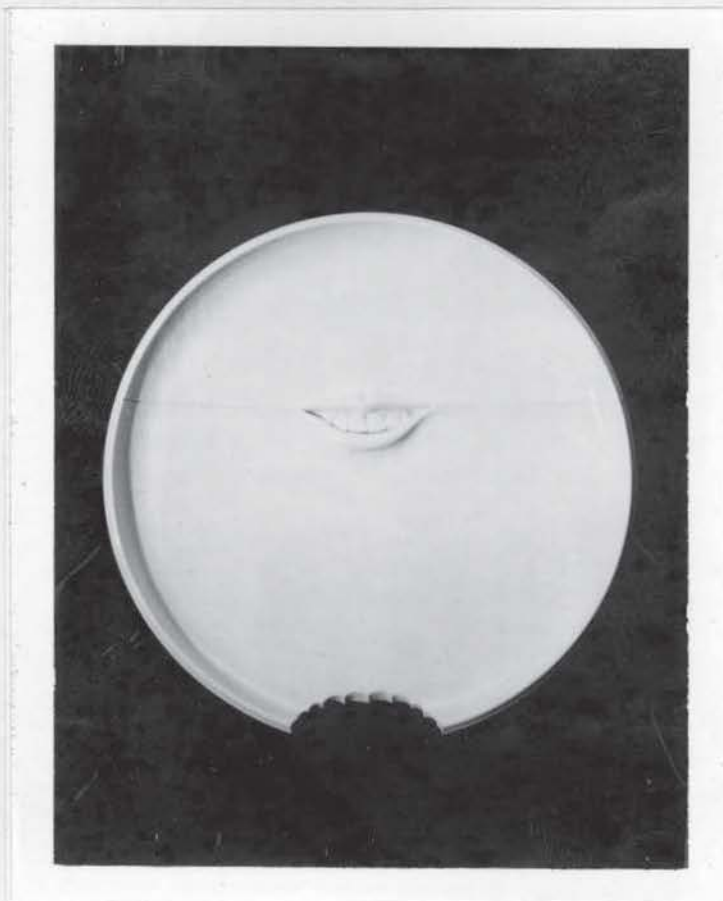


Figure 12. Mouth Plate  
Low fire white ware.





**Figure 13. Mouth Plate**  
Low fire white ware with glaze  
pencil drawing.



**Figure 14. Verne Funk**

### CHAPTER III

#### June Krutza

Teaching: Eastern Illinois University

Education: Manchester College  
Indiana University  
Ohio State University

When I started out, in fact, when I was working on my Masters at Indiana, all they had was earthenware, so I worked in earthenware quite a while before I got to stoneware. I did not get to stoneware until I got to Ohio State. I've worked now, at every temperature there is really, cone .05 on up to cone 9.

Just forming it you can do most anything with clay, but it's also kind of a weakness. You tend to do too much.

I tend to stress form pretty much. Every pot has something in the way of decoration. I used to do a lot with engobe and incised decoration and lately I've worked a lot more with just the clay. Most of my things start out as useful objects. I tend to be somewhat object oriented at least to get started. I started out to make a lamp and it turned out to be a sculpture. I start out with some kind of idea, with an object in mind and maybe it turns out to be something different or leads to a more sculptural idea.

If a person finds this (Funk art) compatible then this is the way to go. It just doesn't seem quite as natural to me to do some of these things. I'm just not that far out,



I guess, but I have no objection to this type of work. I think there's room for both types of work.

Form makes a successful piece but you've got to go beyond that. It has to have some personal imprint of the artist there. Even in machine made ware the designer comes through if he is doing a good piece.

It's very easy to teach techniques in a certain sense. You just say okay you do it this way. The aesthetic part is much more difficult . . . Part of it is just allowing the student to mature on his own . . . Getting students to discuss their work and to look at their works and try to decide what is good about them and what is not. I don't think you can just lay down a set of rules and say here are all the rules for forming a good pot. You have to take each pot. Each pot has its own proportions, its own values . . . You have to look at each one and try to decide what's good and what's bad. What could be improved, if it doesn't look so good, why, and if it does, why does it. I had a teacher do this to me and it drove me insane. He just said, 'No,' when he came in there, 'No'! And I had to start all over again and try to figure it out myself. I think this is devastating to students but sometimes it's the only thing that works. You have to force them to think what it is that they are really trying to do and what they are all about. It may take several classes. It may take several years.

I do have a sense of form. I think form is important. The structure of the pot is important. The structure is the

backbone of the whole thing and you kind of go out from there . . . I don't think it's possible to deny form and still make some kind of statement . . . I think the human imprint has to be on this object some way. No matter how formally conceived it is, it's still the invention of man.

I like things in other peoples' work. I'm not too successful in doing it myself, the very direct and sort of impressionistic approach. I always want to tidy things up to much.

The successful potter is someone who can bring to the form a real personal statement. He has some kind of conviction of what he's trying to say and do and he does it without worrying too much about what other people think or say. He's not working primarily for an audience. He expresses some idea, some part of his personality comes through in his work.

I think art is important in life. I feel I can teach people something about art through ceramics. I like it. I can feel and live comfortably with it. If I did not think art was important I could not teach.

I tend to teach a little more structured fashion because it's more comfortable for me to do it that way. Sometimes I don't make clear enough that students have a lot more freedom than they think they have. On other occasions I try to give students freedom and it seems to me that they don't make very much progress. Maybe I expect too much of them. I think the main thing is to try to emphasize the aesthetic qualities of what they are making . . .



**Figure 15. June Krutza**



Figure 16. Bottle  
Stoneware



Figure 17. Bottle  
Stoneware



Figure 18. Bottle with Figures  
Stoneware





Figure 19. Bottle  
Stoneware



**Figure 20. Planter  
Stoneware**





**Figure 21. June Krutza**

## CHAPTER IV

### Tom Malone

Teaching: Illinois State University

Education: University of Wisconsin

Clay is the only thing interesting enough to work that hard at. There's always something to do. There's always something to figure out.

I've been doing salt over a period of ten to twelve years. I've been doing some reduction at the same time. I've done a little bit of raku but not in the last five years. Raku is a fine thing to do and I teach raku but there are just too many other things to do in salt. I don't have time for everything. I believe that the kiln is a creative tool and that salt adds to that creativity.

The aesthetics will get along all right until you get a more ambitious idea that your lack of skill won't handle, then you have to go back and learn some basic skills. People who learn only basic skills in the first years tend to avoid any aesthetic problem.

Form makes a successful pot. If it doesn't have form, the rest of it doesn't matter. The shape of the thing, no amount of glaze changes the form. Form relates to the goal of the piece, if its main goal is aesthetic and not to pour or hold beans, then that's the test of the form. If the form is related to function then that's the test of the form.

A pitcher doesn't have to be used to pour from but it's fulfilling a visual function related to pouring even though there is no liquid in it.

There's a lot of people with talent who don't do a damn thing. The person who succeeds is the person who wants to succeed the most and has the little bit necessary to do it with.

I'm a teacher at this point. Potting is a full-time job. I'm producing pots from time to time. Since New Year's I've been actively laying bricks up in wisconsin. This summer I'll be making a lot of pots. When school is on then I'm a teacher.

I use a different method every semester, every month. The only thing that I've found that carries through year after year is that somehow you have to create an atmosphere that's conducive to working in clay and if you don't have that you don't have anything. You have to have kilns, clay, and room to do it in. You have to encourage people to get involved, to get excited and do something. That's the job. You can come at that from one hundred different angles . . . The crucial test is between the student and the material. What their hands can do with it and what kind of visual results they can see. The best way is to keep all the different processes going at the same time. You make some pieces, glaze some pieces, and make some more and evaluate them as often as possible. There are some places where people make pots for the whole semester and glaze them on the last day. That doesn't really provide an opportunity to look at a finished piece . . . Students have a tendency to do that anyway. They get hypnotized by the wheel and they don't want to confront glazing

or firing because they don't know that much about it. Glazing and firing have to be done enough so that you can visualize the finished piece as you are building it.

You get a different point of view of form from a workshop. Just a different outlook.

I'm not as interested in liking a potter's work as I am in liking a pot, in other words, you can't label people and say they make this pot all the time. Some interesting pots that I've seen lately were Robert Turner's. They were very dark blue-black, simple cylinders with flared bottoms and a rounded top. I liked them because they had sort of a mystical presence about them. The pots were really there, you couldn't just walk by them and say that's just another pot.

If you want to make pots for a living then you find a way to get the money and get the time . . . The people who become potters don't say I don't have the money to build a kiln therefore I'll wait five years and maybe get the money. They go out and build the kiln on what they can get and then they fire the kiln and they take the money from these pots and they build a better kiln. It boils down to a desire to do something and not accepting no for an answer.



**Figure 22. Tom Malone**





Figure 23. Goblet  
Cone Ten Salt



Figure 24. Lidded Jar  
Cone Ten Salt



Figure 25. Lidded Jar  
Cone Ten Salt



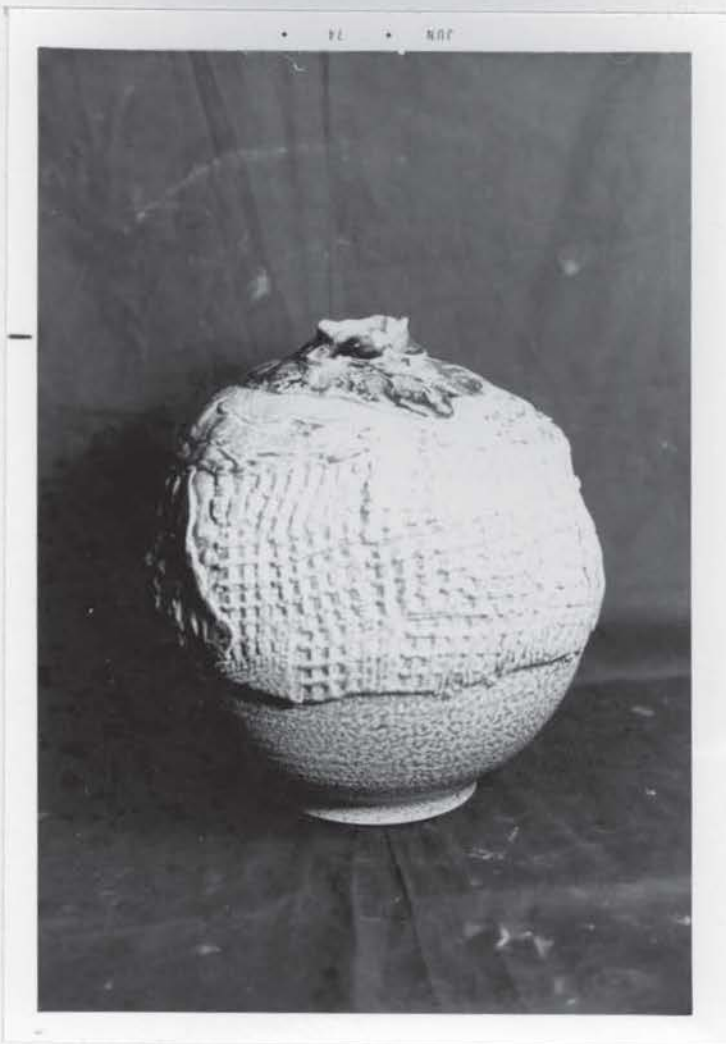


Figure 26. Bottle  
Cone Ten Salt



Figure 27. Bottle  
Cone Ten Salt



**Figure 28. Tom Malone**

## CHAPTER V

### Bill Heyduck

Teaching: Eastern Illinois University

Education: Millikin University  
Mexico City College  
University of Illinois  
Pennsylvania State University

I have more easily been able to express myself in clay. Drawing and painting always left me a little disappointed in my results. With clay there is more satisfaction with the finished product.

Dave Shanner was probably the original source of my interest in clay. It is only after I had him in class (years later) that I really understood all he said to me. (His gut feelings and not the technical information).

I work in all modes of forming and with different clay bodies from low fire to porcelain. Stoneware, however, is where I do most of my work. It gives me the results I am after in the body and the glazes.

Aesthetic quality comes first. Of course a general technical knowledge is needed to achieve an aesthetic form but really technical things can be found in reference books when needed. One doesn't remember technical data until it has a place in their work, then it is remembered.

Craft is a concern for structure and finish. Art is the idea successfully carried out in the chosen media.

First what is success? Pleasing the public, pleasing the galleries, or pleasing yourself. A successful pot or success of the potter depends on where he is aiming. If you are selling pots you are successful if that is what you set out to do. If you are winning shows you are successful. If you are satisfied with your work (product) and what you are able to express in your pots then you are the most successful of all.

There is no best way to teach ceramics. A teacher starts bouncing things off students and watches for a reaction in some form. The material to be presented and the method of presentation is dependent upon the reactions received.

Make pots, make pots, make pots. If you have a question ask it. Share the questions and answers with others. Make it easy to ask questions and give straight answers or say I don't know. Let's find out.

Having someone else understand what I have made and enjoy it as much as I do. This is especially true if it is a pot you made just for your own satisfaction. It is also very satisfying to watch a lump of clay grow and change with your manipulation and the heat of fire. It all has such a permanence.

I don't have a favorite (potter). I have many. It depends on what clay object I have last seen. Last week it was Arneson. The week before it was Hamada. And this week it is Cornwall Kirkpatrick, an early Illinois potter from Anna, Illinois. It isn't an individual potter. It is clay

and what potters have and are doing. That I see and am  
inspired by.





**Figure 29. Bill Heyduck**



Figure 30. Baby Bag  
Stoneware

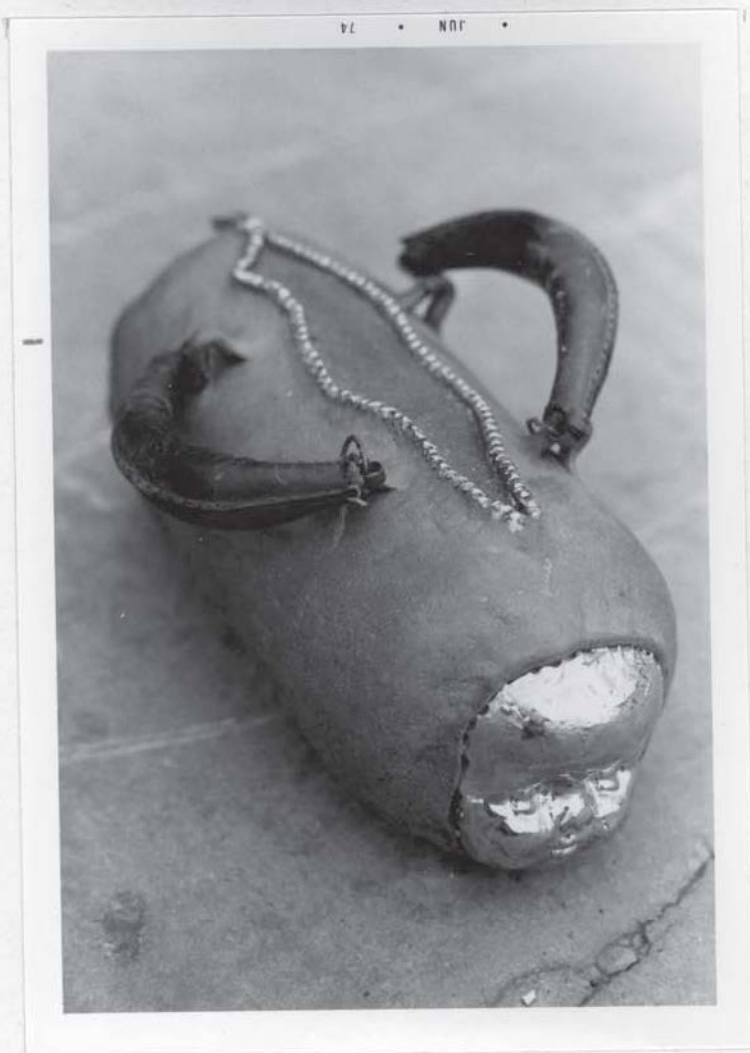


Figure 31. Baby Bag  
Stoneware with luster.



Figure 32. Casserole  
Stoneware



Figure 33. The President's Advisers  
Stoneware with luster.





Figure 34. Fallen Ace  
Stoneware and leather.





**Figure 35. Bill Heyduck**

## CHAPTER VI

### Tim Mather

Teaching: Rockford College

Education: Ohio University

Essentially because I like clay. I like the kinds of things you can do with it, the plasticity. I like the process, the whole process. I like the things that can be made out of it, especially the things I make.

I had to take a course in pottery, because I got interested in doing an art degree . . . the pot shop had a really nice group of people . . . who were really pleasant people. It became just a nice place to hang out. Really, I think there was some negative reinforcement, a teacher I had was a real hard-nosed guy. I think I worked as hard as I did in beginning ceramics as much to show him I could get an "A" as any other reason. He had a reputation for not giving any "A's" and I got one.

I've done just about all areas; red earthenware, white earthenware, raku, stoneware, lusters, and decals. I've done practically everything. For about seven years practically all the finished pieces have been salt, with the exception of some raku. I like salt. However, one of the things I want to do is to build a reduction kiln and maybe an electric kiln and investigate some of the other techniques . . . I'm not getting bored with salt but I'm

interested in cutting down the loss rate. I'm interested in trying some other textures.

I make a lot of straight pottery for two reasons. One, to sell, to support the habit, so to speak, and the other is that I really enjoy it. I make some sculpture pieces, they fulfill some different kind of need, I suppose.

The more skillful you get with any of the processes and the more you know about what you can do, the range of colors, textures, etc. . . over the years I've gotten more proficient with salt so that technically I can do a lot more things now.

I think technical knowledge can be a trap, because there are a lot of books now. There are just dozens of them. I think people are filling themselves up with technical information which is not technical knowledge. They quote you chapter and verse how to convert a feldspar into an empirical formula and atomic weights of every thing that was ever used in ceramics . . . You build up so much semi-important information.

The stuff in "ceramics monthly" is bullshit. The people who are writing in there complaining don't want a magazine. They want a stagnant, constant referral back to the kinds of problems that they want to deal with.

I'd rather not say what is art and craft. I think there is a difference but it becomes self-evident. You can have a frame maker, who is a terrific craftsman or a cement contractor who is a fantastic craftsman but nobody would ever think that a beautiful sidewalk or driveway is a work of art, but the same guy may take that same information and make it

art. It depends entirely on the application. I think art has a lot to do with intent.

If a pot does what it is intended to do and that intent is clear then it's probably successful.

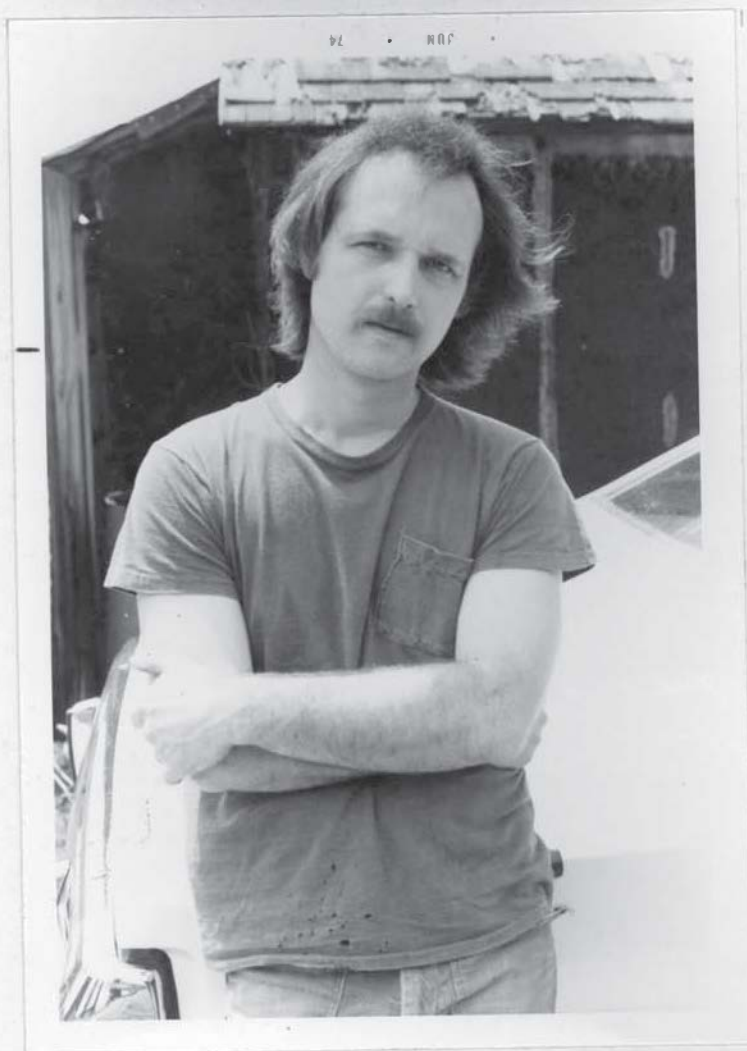
I think anyone who works in clay and does good work is successful. I think they have to build their own criteria for success. The people for me who are successful are the people who do work that I like and that's an awful lot of people.

I'm not sure that I can state an aesthetic philosophy in the sense that it would make any sense at all. My aesthetic is a flexible one and it's growing. It changes frequently. I'm sure if I could sit down and see all the work I've done in the last ten years that I'd find a common thread that would come back on itself time and again.

No, there's not a best way to teach ceramics. It depends on the situation you find yourself in. When I first started teaching there was a comradery. The beginners learned a great deal from the advance students, and it worked quite well and smoothly and operated, I would guess like an apprentice program would have worked in a Renaissance work-shop. There would be advanced people and less advanced people; the teacher was there to make sure that the transfer of information took place, not necessarily sitting down with a lesson plan book and making sure everybody did the same thing at the same time in their careers. The problem developed later on. The thing got bigger and bigger and moved into two shops

that were separated from each other physically and there were more and more beginners with wider and wider backgrounds. It became necessary to structure the classes more and more especially the beginning classes. We had to institute a technology class, because it became necessary for self-protection to get as much information out in an orderly way just to keep the equipment from being destroyed just from ignorance. I don't think there is a way. I think the physical situation, the size of the program, the general nature of the students, and the specific nature of a student determines how you can teach or not teach that student. I find there are a lot of students that I can't teach any more. If a student isn't willing to meet me half way, if a student isn't willing to make a kind of commitment, whether it's forty-eight hours a week or ten or two hours a week. I'm not sure I have time for that student. I still spend the time but I'm not sure how successful it is from my standpoint or the student's. It's complicated the longer I stay in teaching the less sure I become which is the right way. Good teaching . . . beats the hell out of me!





**Figure 36. Tim Mather**





Figure 37. Lidded Jar  
Salt



Figure 38. Lidded Jar  
Salt



Figure 39. Lidded Jar  
Salt

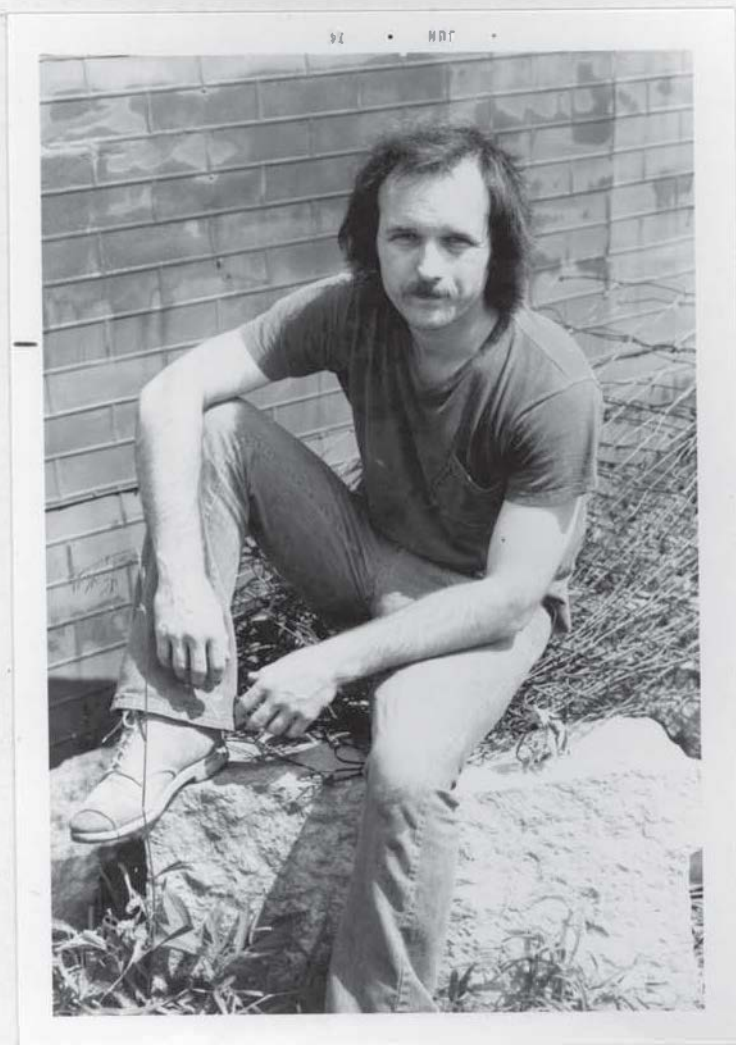


Figure 40. Teapot  
Salt





Figure 41. Ceramic Sculpture  
Salt



**Figure 42. Tim Mather**



## CHAPTER VII

### Gib Strawn

Teaching: Northern Illinois University

Education: University of Nebraska  
California School of Arts and Crafts  
University of Wisconsin  
Southern Illinois University

Once you get your hands into clay it pulls you on. I felt I had quicker success, which feeds the ego. When you get recognition for what you are doing. However, I really don't feel at this point, that that's the real thing.

I feel since I'm earning my living teaching that my first responsibility is to teaching. However, I feel a need to go ahead and do a certain amount of creative work. The creative work you do feeds something within you that's necessary. . . so you have to compromise. At this time I'm doing simple functional and traditional kinds of shapes without surface embellishment, using multi-colored cone nine glazes.

One of the best ways of learning is by teaching. For instance, I used a red clay, that was kind of nice at cone .04. I thought I would try it at cone .03 and I thought it was a little bit nicer, so I thought I'd try it at cone .02 and naturally when I opened the kiln door there was a little chocolate cookie lying on the kiln shelf where I had had a red clay bowl. Those are the kinds of things you learn. If it happens to you, somebody can tell you if it happens to

them but if it happens to you then you are going to remember it.

My teaching philosophy would include learning good traditional techniques and learning good traditional form, in a sound way. So that you have the ground work from which you can extend yourself in any direction. And if you lose yourself in any direction you can come back and regroup on some solid ground and start out again in any direction you might want to go.

I'm of the school, that I feel there should be some degree of craftsmanship evident. Too many people want to start at the end without getting sound basic training. I think a good example of someone who is a sound craftsman and yet able to work in a very free manner or a more meticulous manner is Bob Arneson. He really is a top notch person aesthetically.

In criticizing the work of my students I want them to have some unified concept whether it looks unified technically, aesthetically . . . I don't care if the work is tight or loose, it shouldn't be sloppy. It should be unified in freedom or in a more meticulous kind of concept.

I just try to improve on the work I'm doing perhaps in the same direction it's going. It's not that I feel I have to flit from flower to flower, you know, from one technique to another just to keep up with what everybody else is doing, because I'm not everybody else. I don't have that many different brains or interests. I think that's one of the

confusing things that happens to a lot of people particularly in the beginning. They think they have to work like everybody else is working, or like whoever is the popular person at the moment. Therefore, they are trying to be somebody they are not to begin with and that's a confusing thing. You have to be honest with yourself. I think basic honesty is very essential in your own philosophy, a lot of people lose sight of that.



**Figure 43. Gib Strawn**



**Figure 44. Lidded Jar  
Stoneware**



Figure 45. Pitcher  
Stoneware





Figure 46. **Bowl**  
**Stoneware**



Figure 47. Plate  
Stoneware



Figure 48. Plate  
Stoneware



**Figure 49. G1b Strawn**

## CHAPTER VIII

### Pete Slavish

Teaching: Blackburn College

Education: Pennsylvania State University

To me a craft is a production, a utilitarian piece of artwork whether it be a ceramic bowl or a weaving. That's not to say that a weaving or a piece of clay can not be fine art also.

Art deals with specific intent on the artist's part, an emotional statement. It's an expression that the artist makes.

I'm more of a haptic person. I feel I have become involved up to my elbows in clay. Clay is very flexible. I like the three-dimensional aspect of art. Clay seems to be very spontaneous, and flexible.

The one person that I particularly like who works in clay is John Mason. I like the dynamic use of the clay in terms of making a piece ten or fifteen feet high. The size is very dramatic. The depth that's involved in his work, in terms of using the human figure and having it evolve out of a slab of clay.

I give the student the basic technical knowledge, throwing, glazing, and firing kilns and just let him experiment and work out the problems, a natural development rather than me saying, this pot is no good. I would like him to come back



and make a self-discovery. If I have twenty people in a class, I relish the idea of twenty different approaches to clay.

My own work gives satisfaction to me, which I don't think I could gain from any other material in any other occupation. I'm grateful that I'm able to teach ceramics and have the time to do it. It's a personal satisfaction. How it fits, into the world outside is up to the world outside. If they like it, fine; if they don't, I think I'd probably continue in whatever I was doing.

Presently I'm dealing with lusters on unblemished glazed surface by no means do I plan to stay there. But I plan to exploit that area as much as possible and then move on to the next, possibly wood firing, to reveal a totally different medium of expression.

The ceramist must know and accept the limitations and possibilities inherent in clay. He must be technically sound.

A successful ceramist must be flexible in terms of glazing and construction. (General use of clay). He must also have some knowledge of historical and contemporary forms of expression in general and ceramics specifically.





**Figure 50. Pete Slavish**



Figure 51. Bottle  
Stoneware with lusters.



**Figure 52.** Segment of the Black Forest  
Stoneware with luster.



Figure 53. Segment of the Black Forest  
Stoneware with luster.



Figure 54. Segment of the Black Forest  
Stoneware with Luster.





**Figure 55.** Ceramic Forest  
Stoneware with lusters.





**Figure 56. Pete Slavish**

## CONCLUSION

A potter needs to ask many questions of the teacher-potters, about potting. Many of the teacher-potters gave advice about potting. For example, Tom Malone's emphatic statement, "If you want to make pots for a living, then you find a way to get the money and the time . . . the people who become potters don't say, 'I don't have the money to build a kiln therefore I'll wait five years and maybe get the money.' They go out and build the kiln on what they can get and then they fire the kiln and they take the money from these pots and they build a better kiln." A potter who needs advice in general also needs advice about how much technical knowledge to learn. Gib Strawn said it best, "I'm of the school, that I feel there should be some degree of craftsmanship evident. Too many people want to start at the end without getting sound basic training." So did Tom Malone, "The aesthetics will get along all right until you get a more ambitious idea that your lack of skill won't handle, then you have to go back and learn some basic skills."

An interest for clay and its possibilities demands questions from the interviewer about it. The teacher-potters said in a variety of ways essentially the same thing and would, in the writer's opinion, agree with the words of John Cannon, "I think it's a legitimate medium to make

anything. This is what Arneson's doing with his heads and faces . . . he is exploring it sculpturally. I'm glad he's not making a pot. It's like he's doing what clay can do for him."

The question of is it art or is it craft provoked numerous answers. However, all the teacher-potters seemed to struggle with the question and eventually ended up saying in essence what Tim Mather said, "I'd rather not say what is art and craft. I think there is a difference but it becomes self-evident. . . It depends entirely on the application. I think art has a lot to do with intent."

A person concerned with being a successful potter asks questions about successful potters. The teacher-potters said many things about being successful as a potter. However, a good example of what success means to everyone of them may be summed up in the words of Tim Mather, "I think anyone who works in clay and does good work is successful. I think they have to build their own criteria for success. The people for me who are successful are the people who do work that I like and that's an awful lot of people." Or as Bill Heyduck said, "First what is success? Pleasing the public, pleasing the galleries, or pleasing yourself. A successful pot or success of the potter depends on where he is aiming. If you are selling pots you are successful, if that is what you set out to do. If you are winning shows you are successful. If you are satisfied with your work (products) and what you are able to express in your pots, then you are the most successful of all."

A teacher of ceramics needs to ask many questions of the teacher-potters about teaching. This survey was filled with a variety of informative answers which will aid the teacher of ceramics. Even though each teacher-potter had a different approach to teaching, they were all trying to reveal to the students the abstract, unteachable, and human things called art. For example, June Krutza's statement, "It's very easy to teach techniques . . . the aesthetic part is much more difficult . . . part of it is allowing the student to mature on his own." And Verne Funk's statement, "You can teach mechanics but you can't teach somebody art. You can encourage these students to go out and to find what the hell it is they are all about and include that and incorporate that into their work."

The most important thing to be gained is something that was felt inside, something undefinable, that makes one have more confidence in what one is trying to do in life through ceramics and teaching. It was not the words of one teacher-potter but the collective revelation through their statements, actions, openness, humanity and their own concern for ceramics, art, and teaching. Such statements lead to a desire to search for and find ways of gaining a greater share of this elusive, fantastic feeling of fulfillment.