

**BIRD-MAN IN THE POT SHOP OR
CAN CLAY PIGEONS FLY?**

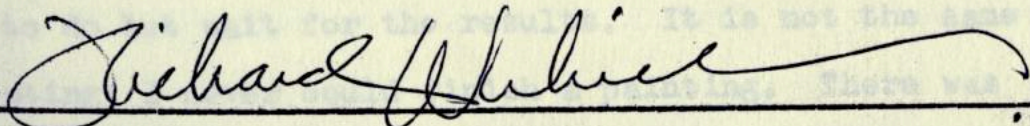
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In this paper I will attempt to explore my motivations for making pottery. In order to make some verbal sense out of my work, many different aspects of environment, including direct and indirect stimulations, must be discussed. This can be very dangerous for I have found that if I verbalize an idea or a plan for a certain work, the project will never be completed. This has become such an obsession with me; I'm afraid that if I open my mouth about my plans for any work I may as well smash the piece because the idea has been exposed and there is no reason to overstate the fact. The danger in writing about my own work is that I am afraid that if my ideas are exposed in writing they will not deserve the time and energy it takes to convert them into a three-dimensional object. Already the environmental factors are making themselves felt in the writing of this paper. My experiences have been placed in clay for so long that I find that I hesitate to write down an idea because my conditioned response is to the act of forming clay. When the clay is twisted, pushed, or pulled, glazed and fired, it is finished. This is one of the major factors that originally drew me to the media of clay. I knew that after a certain process, the work was finished. When the kiln is turned off there is nothing to do but wait for the results. It is not the same as painting; I never could finish a painting. There was always something more that had to be added and this could

go on and on. But with ceramics, once the kiln is turned off, this is the completion of a cycle. This paper could go on indefinitely like the painting. Maybe when I reach the last page I will wish I could fire it to cone 9 and forget it.

Most of my formal education has been involved with learning how to communicate. This is a two way street. Not only did I have to learn how to say but also how to hear. Ever since it has been an expansion of these two processes. The "how to say" process became more and more sophisticated. From learning to write, it became a more visual and tactile form of expression. The "how to hear" process grew from learning to read, to an awareness that my senses were under a constant state of bombardment. So now I know, to a certain extent, where to look for a specific kind of sense experience. This could range from choosing the correct television program to make me laugh or the proper magazine to inform me of world affairs. With some limitations, we all have the ability to manipulate our environment in order that this sense bombardment can be controlled. No doubt there are many things which we can not control and even those things which we can usually count as being under our control sometimes illude us. But in order to survive in an orderly fashion, one must assume that a certain form must be established. This form is an attempt to control the sense bombardment.

The "how to say" process is then clouded by another

variable. This is "what to say". So now I have succeeded in communicating the seemingly simple process of molding clay into some kind of form by the limitations which I have placed on myself. First of all, before I can make a statement, I must have the ability to say. Then I must have something to say. In order to have something to say I must have the type of stimulation or sense bombardment that would motivate me to say.

Everyone that I have met has something to say. Only some can say better than others. Maybe those that can say best are those that have learned the vocabulary. Or maybe it is a combination of the three previous factors which I have discussed. This can be called a presentation. This presentation must have some attraction or it will go unnoticed. As in nature, the flower is colorful to attract the bee who needs it to make honey. But the flower also needs the bee to pollenate the other flowers so that the plant can continue to propagate. What would happen if the flower would lose this certain attraction? Imagine, for instance, that all the unnecessary parts other than those for maintaining its growth were removed. The plant would grow until winter; then it would die. When spring came, this gross pollination would not have taken place because the petals which normally attracted the bee have been eliminated. The bee would not have performed his function because the attraction of the flower was not there. The plant lived but it did not survive. So the beauty of the flower does perform a necessary function; it serves the flower and it provides the bee

a beacon for its food supply. Without it, both would perish. The petals of the flower acted as the plant's presentation. The pollen was the meat of the presentation. But without the attraction of the flower's petals the pollen went unnoticed and unused.

This is the basic problem in saying. How do you make your comment attractive enough to gain the attention that you feel it deserves? The obvious way is to put rose petals around it, but that has been overdone and man is much more discriminating than a bee. He gets bored very easily. The first problem is to find some form of presentation. In my case, the form happens to be clay. Clay can be made to assume many different shapes. The clay can be made to have a function so that its beauty or its attraction comes from its ability to be used. The material can be formed into massive proportions so that the attraction is in its monumental size. It can be glazed or painted so that the surface draws the attention. There are many other methods or combinations of these techniques which could serve as an attractive format for a presentation; but before choosing a certain approach I must question myself as to exactly what I want my work to do. What functions will it perform in my vocabulary? How will it affect others? Will the attraction overpower the message? These questions can not be answered, or even considered, unless I realize the purpose of my production. Basically, my work is done so that I can achieve some interaction with my environment. It is my attempt at

a counterattack in a sense bombardment.

In my work I want to touch someone (or everyone for that matter). This does not necessarily mean physical contact but rather a mental joining of the minds. Maybe to some this would sound preposterous. Nevertheless, from my observations of others and reflections on my own past actions this would be the highest form of being; to be able to observe through the senses of others. This would not be empathy but complete realization of another being's desires, obsessions, fears, loves, etc..

Now the question probably arises how can one man, by making a little clay cookie jar, accomplish something that all the great mystics, holy men, magicians, gurus, and medicine men since the beginning of time have tried to accomplish with nothing to show for their efforts except ridicule. My answer is simple: I do not think I can do it. But sometimes, for some unknown reason, I will be sitting in a room with someone and know what he is thinking. Other people have expressed that they too have experienced this sensation. This phenomenon has no scientific explanation, nor do I hope to give one. I know it happens; therefore, it happens. This I accept for its face value.

The problem is how to make it happen more often. Ideas are very intangible objects, but pottery, as well as any other forms of graphic or three-dimensional art, are not. Therefore, can a pot be an idea or can an idea be a pot? Can an idea be art? If I manage to incorporate a statement into a piece of pottery and someone takes this object home

and sets it on the living room coffee table, then if a pot can be an idea, it follows that I have placed my idea in that house. Therefore, I am in that house in spirit. In a sense, the people who handle this object touch me. You can argue that anyone who manufactures something does the same thing. If people touch his product, they touch him. But this is not really true because his product does not necessarily have to be his alone; that is, from conception to end result. In most cases, many other hands and many other minds are involved. In order to achieve my desire for this feeling of presence, I must create the object from start to finish. Others can be involved to some extent but it must be me and only me who breathes life into the object. My control, as much as humanly possible, must be maintained over the object. Otherwise, my purpose is foiled.

This same idea can be applied to other forms of art. Perhaps to clarify a few things my definition of art should be stated. To be blunt, art is entertainment. It is an escape for the individual. No normal person has the desire to be self-contained. From his first cry as a baby until his last gasp for breath, man wants to get out of himself. Art gives him this opportunity. Even the current breed of transcendental meditators can not meditate forever. At some point, everyone must touch down to gain some sort of perspective. Art offers this whether it is in the form of a movie, sculpture, play, painting, pottery, or any other media. Art stimulates people to think. In this way an individual can be taken out of his current state of mind and placed in

another atmosphere. This may not be the best type of change for the individual, but then, anything would be better than no change at all. For without change, people are damned to stagnation. A person must live in a world of stimulation and external motivation. Art provides this motivation because it is a learning process.

How does one learn from art? If we establish the fact that learning is a change in behavior through experience, then we must accept the fact that art is learning. Take, for instance, the way in which a good piece of music and lights can make a seemingly dull cellar turn into an exciting place where the vibration of sounds and the pulsating colors of light have created a new atmosphere. When the music stops and the lights go out you are in the same bland room. Nevertheless, you have had the experience and this experience changed your environment for a brief time. The sense bombardment caused you to learn because your behavior and feeling toward the room had to change as a result of the visual and auditory happening which occurred there. The degree of change can not be measured because we deal with individual personalities and no one has yet established a satisfactory norm to measure the degree of influence a given stimulation has on an individual. True, they can measure brainwaves, heartbeat, skin temperature, etc., but the entire sensation can not be accurately understood. Nevertheless, if we accept that a change did occur then the subject did learn from his experience.

This same learning process can take place with other

forms of art. It could occur when an individual looks at a piece of pottery. The degree of learning which does occur is a very relative thing. Two main factors are involved. The first is the disposition of the beholder. If his concepts are open and he has enough perception to understand and empathize with the artist then the problem is easy. The second factor has to do with the work itself. If it has a universal appeal I expect there will be quite an interaction between the viewer and the work. There are so many other variables involved that any other predictions would be foolish. The artist has no control over the first factor unless the viewer happens to be a friend or acquaintance. So the only problem is to make his work appeal to everyone. Of course this is impossible, because no matter how appealing an object is someone will object to it. Nothing can appeal to everyone. The artist must be satisfied to produce a work that has wide acceptance without compromising his statement. This is the basic problem which I face in my work. Any competent artist can produce a work that is acceptable. A handsome piece of pottery is welcome almost anywhere. But is this enough? Is the act the statement? Maybe making the work appealing is half the problem. This can be the common denominator. As stated before, the function, size, or color can be your "in", but once you are "in" what do you say? Nevertheless, my work must gain some form of acceptance. If it does not have this then no one will care to look at my work and more than likely it will be discarded. This would

then be the end of my ability to speak. He would be like a composer who has no symphony to play his music; if no one performs his music then no one gets to hear it; and if no one hears it then for all practical purposes the music was never written. No artist creates for himself. If one did, he would be so jealous of his work that he would never let anyone see it. Such a person would be like the composer without an orchestra or audience. His art was never seen, therefore it did not exist. My pottery was made to be seen, to be handled, to be enjoyed, sometimes even to be laughēd at. I want a response from the public. Not the applause one would expect at the end of a good performance but rather a quiet contemplation of my work. Knowing that a person is looking at my work and that it has something which holds his attention is enough for my personal satisfaction. I have become the teacher and caused another being to change his behavior. No matter how slight the change may be, it has occurred.

Throughout history this same idea has probably prevailed. The art historians made a great fuss over how the caveman included all those symbols of hunting and capturing game. These drawings were given mystic or religious meanings by the scholars; in other words, they were not just up there because some caveman liked to draw. Their purpose, so the art historians say, was to kill the spirit of the animals themselves. From the first time I heard this generally accepted theory I never believed it. Who knows;

maybe the cave was a forerunner to our modern rod and gun clubs and the painting was nothing more than bar decorations. The art historians would naturally discount this theory because of the theory that primitive man was so busy trying to procure food that he would never take the time to make these drawings for such a mundane purpose. If this was true then why would man, even today, turn to art? Surely everyone in my graduating class could make more money in some other line of endeavor. Art promises monetary awards only for a few. The rest have to hang on, and while very few literally starve, few go on to make enough money to put them on an economic level with most of their contemporaries possessing an equal amount of intelligence.

My point is that the man who did these cave paintings was a special kind of man. He realized that hunting was not enough. I could make up an elaborate story about a mythical caveman. Say he was born with a club foot, for instance; and, as you know, babies born at that time with any defects were an unwanted liability to the tribe. So, as it came to pass, he was left in the wilderness to perish. His mother, sensitive woman that she was, could not bear to part with her own flesh and blood, club foot and all, so she sneaked away that night and found her baby still alive and unharmed. She nursed him through the night and when morning came she hid him in a tall tree for safety's sake. Every evening she did the same thing. Months passed; eventually the baby became strong in spite of his handicap. The mother's mate became aware of her stealing away at night and naturally

became suspicious. He followed her and discovered the healthy baby. She pleaded with him not to reveal her secret so that the child would not be destroyed. After many tears the soft-hearted, hairy husband finally consented. He even decided to take the baby back to the tribe and present his case to the tribal elders. The next day, before a joint session of the village elders, their plea was presented. After many hours of deliberation the decision was handed down. The child was permitted to stay as long as the parents could put him to a useful task so that he would not become a parasite on the tribe.

Years passed and the baby grew into a young boy. He was put to work weaving baskets, making arrowheads, cleaning fish and other menial tasks. When the other boys played their childish games like stick the spear in the donkey, they never included him because he was crippled. The poor thing just sat with big tears in his eyes weaving his baskets. Occasionally, as he sat weaving, he would pick up a reed and sketch in the sand. Little did anyone know this was the beginning of his career as the world's first fine artist.

One day one of the older boys wandered by and noticed his sand drawings. It was an exceptionally fine rendering of a mastadon. The older boy was enthralled by the drawing; he called his friends over and they became just as enchanted with the image. A tribal elder noticed the commotion so he walked over to investigate. What he saw amazed him. There in the sand, surrounded by all the boys in the tribe, was the cripple making beautiful drawings of all the animals of the

forest. The elder called others and the whole tribe spent the afternoon sitting spellbound watching the boy draw.

Things were different in the village after that day. The boy was supplied with materials to make crude paints and he busied himself decorating the caves of all the tribal elite. His big moment came when the village bow and spear club commissioned him to decorate the walls of the club cave. For this assignment he worked long and hard for almost three years in the dim light of a campfire, drawing a picture of the club members on a grand hunting trip. All his experience was summed up in this work. There were antelopes, dinosaurs, buffalo, mastadons, and spears and arrows flying in every direction.

This was the high point of his career. Afterwards he did a few minor paintings and he also wove a few baskets. "For the sake of personal therapy", he claimed.

As he grew older the tribal leaders grew worried of losing this great talent. So they encouraged him to start a school to train young artists. This he did. He offered courses in cave painting and sand drawing. Students could also minor in basketry.

This story sounds preposterous but it is not really any more far-fetched than some of the supposedly true-to-life stories I have read about other artists. Regardless of how these paintings came into being, the fact remains that they exist. Someone had to have the ability and the sensitivity to create them. Such a man, or group of men, must somehow have gained enough inspiration, motivation, or

whatever else it takes to undertake and complete a work of art.

What motivates a man to create? I could list some reasons and evaluate each one of them. First of all, being in America and after listening to the speeches of the Republican Convention last night about free enterprise and rugged individualism, I would have to say one of the prime motivational factors would have to be money. How many of us (especially those involved in pottery) will sit down before a show or sale and crank out fifty to a hundred pots using all our most commercial forms and our best blue (match an old lady's drapes) glazes just to make a few hundred dollars? Is this wrong? Well, to me, the answer is yes and no. Yes, it is wrong if you do what I described above. That is, if you sit down and crank out pots that you know will sell. Many people do this; myself included. What have you gained by it? Maybe a downpayment on a new television set or some other capitalistic article that no one seems to be able to live without; myself included again. It would be much too idealistic for me to say that an artist should experiment at all times so that he can move ahead and better himself at his line of endeavor. But who wants to experiment when there is easy cash to be made? Certainly no one is going to sit down and try a variety of new forms using experimental glazes and take the chance of ending up with nothing to show for his efforts but a garbage can full of broken pot shards. For these reasons, then, it is generally accepted that people who

make pottery strictly for money generally turn out unexciting work. This, as those of us who are familiar with the world of ceramic art know, is not always true. There are many artists that I could name who sell much of their work, command high prices and still consistently turn out work of high quality that contains a great deal of excitement. How can they do this? Evidently, another factor must be involved.

Does boredom play any part in the creative process? How many people are motivated by the fact that they do not have anything better to do? I could easily name two or three highly creative people off-hand who work mainly because it is a way to keep busy. If you would make a list of things you would most like to do I doubt if anyone would list making art at the top. But becoming involved in those subjects listed above art are either out of reach forever, not attainable at the present time, or do not seem to be worth the consequences that they offer for the effort spent. So, naturally, most of the time is spent making art; those other things are done when the time and place is right.

The last sentence has put me on a course which can not be denied when considering any of man's motivational forces.. sexual desires. Much has been written about sex and its relationship to art. Paul Horning said in his book, Sex and the Single Football Player, that he would rather score a touchdown than make love to the most beautiful girl in the world. How many men involved in ceramic art would rather make a pot than make love to the most beautiful girl in the world? I could probably name a few, but, believe me, my name

would not be among them.

Sexual intercourse is about the closest most people ever come to that feeling which I described previously in this paper; that is when your mind becomes part of another's. You could say that I am confusing physical contact with a higher form of communication. When two people, a man and a woman, are on the same wave length, that is, their minds are tuned to one another, they can achieve a communication or a sense of being together that no other form of human understanding can ever aspire to become. This does not happen always. Maybe for some it has never happened at all. Going through the motions does not necessarily guarantee the same results. You could equate it to showing a bad piece of pottery to an insensitive person. One has nothing to offer, the other has no means to perceive, even if something was offered.

It is the same while engaged in the actual process of producing a work of art. The physical aspect of it can not be divorced from the intellectual process which takes place as the elements of the work are placed in meaningful relationships to one another. This process of creativity, like the function of love-making, involves many factors and the deletion of one of these can cause the process to become void of any real meaning. An engagement with clay makes a person bring to bear a great deal of his innate and intellectual abilities. A man must have the muscular co-ordination to manipulate the materials. This requires that the

artist possess a great deal of dexterity in order to provide a vehicle for his intellectual pursuits. This ability is one of the most frustrating hurdles for the ceramic specialist to overcome. He must be able to handle large amounts of clay with such skill that the process itself does not overcome the purpose. That is, he must not be so overcome by the media itself that the intellectual and intuitive process of creativity is left to find its purpose in the manual labor involved in the action itself.

Sometimes when I am working on a large piece I find myself so overwhelmed by the fact that I can handle such a large amount of material I forget what my purpose is and I proceed on a course of self-indulgence. I am building to satisfy my ego. Too often I fall into this pattern and as I look around I notice that other people have also been captured by this syndrome. When you are working, trying to master a skill, such as learning to throw, everyone at some point has a tendency to treat the process as a game. The clay becomes an animate object. Its purpose is to beat you by showing that no matter how much pressure you apply, it will still not conform to your preconceived idea as to what its form should be. There are many ways to solve this problem. The most obvious solution is to co-operate with the clay and take advantage of this strange living property which it does possess. If it tends to slump, let it slump and incorporate it into your final design. If it twists, use these twisted shapes to your best advantage. To work this way, the potter must learn to compromise with the clay. You must know its

limitations and work within this framework. The clay almost has a mind of its own, constantly in conflict with yours. The solution is a constant exchange between you and the clay. The clay, by defying your will, may change itself into a form that you had no intention of creating. At this point the artist's sensitivity must be brought into sharp focus. Has this accidental happening caused you to have new insight into the process itself or has it only interrupted your original purpose which may have seemed quite worthwhile in the beginning? Owing to the spontaneity of the media, this judgement must be made very rapidly. For as the wheel is spinning, time has become quite valuable. A slight hesitation could cause you to lose all. If your decision is to keep the form or even to go on working within the limitations of it, you have made a compromise. Many alterations can be made to it and, in some instances, you can even seem to resume control of the clay itself. But the final result nevertheless is a kind of collaboration between you and the clay.

With a degree of sensitivity on the part of the artist, this method of working can be quite successful. Many potters rely on these accidental happenings and use them to their advantage.

William Farrell is a good example of this type. When making a plate, for instance, he will purposely throw off center. If his wheel moves too fast and some of the clay is pulled off in his hand, instead of discarding it, he usually just presses it back into the form and allows it to find its place without forcing it into any preconceived position.

Sometimes the edge of the plate will be torn or maybe it will be overextended so that it warps or becomes distorted. If the final form is not suitable then he will add more clay or trim some off. With various slips he will decorate in the same spontaneous manner. He can control the clay or allow it to pursue its own course depending on his disposition. He once said to me, "If you first make a perfect form and then deliberately destroy it, you have only created a cripple". His idea of pottery is an interaction between himself and the clay. Each has its own will. The end result is obtained by a spontaneous approach tempered with the careful discretion of the artist. He has allowed the clay to follow its own plastic course but the final decision whether to save or discard is reserved to him and him alone.

Some potters, such as Toshiko Takeezu, advocate this same method when applying glaze. If you have ever seen one of her pots emerge from a kiln you might call it a lucky accident. For the colors are a result of pouring, splashing and painting experience. Over the years, she has developed a high degree of control over the splash. Of course, she could not draw a pattern and splash in that exact area, but rather, she knows what effect she is trying to achieve and she goes about her glazing procedures with this notion in mind. Her pottery is distinctive because she does have this high degree of control but she uses it in a manner that allows for this apparently happy accident to occur; and both of these potters are very skillful. They have developed methods of working

in which they compromise with the medium. By knowing the limitations and the capabilities of the clay, their work is enhanced by the very thing that frustrates many artists today. They can live with an accidental happening. In fact, they search for ways to cause what most people would consider misfortune. Another approach is the method which my first pottery teacher, George Ferguson, uses. His work is very methodical. Every molecule of clay should be in its proper place. The accident, as I described it in the case of the two previous potters, has a place in his work only if he can really control where and when it happens. The accident then must be balanced or even contrasted by a high degree of control. This precise method of working gives his pottery a certain dignity. His forms are very true and honest in their intent and execution. Many potters shy away from this method of working because there always is a tendency to turn out work which has a contrived appearance. Somehow, he has avoided this in his work. Maybe it is because he has remained true to his personality.

The reason that I have described these three methods of working is because these particular potters have had an influence on my work. Or should I say that, at times, I have tried to emulate their styles. To some extent they are still felt in my work today. The last part of this paper is an attempt to describe the evolution of my work and I think that an explanation of my influences is in order.

At this time the accident has no place in my work. The piece usually changes from conception to finished piece

only because somewhere in that wild, weird space between the idea and the completion of the idea something usually happens. Or to be more specific, most of my ideas are only grains and, since I must produce a product to realize the vision, I have to fill in the empty spaces. The reason I work in clay is because it is the only media that I have ever used that fights back. Sometimes it resists my manipulation and it must be wrestled with until it conforms to my concept. At other times, it goes limp like a drunk friend that I am trying to carry home. Of course, it can do both at once. In other words, it offers a vehicle for direct confrontation. Clay seems to be such a plastic and direct media for the impatient person. Here is a substance that you can mark and scratch and it retains that mark forever. That fluid quality it has on the wheel is beautiful for the person who wants to make things happen now. But clay fooled me. It taught me patience. Push me, it says, but do not push too hard. Throw water on me, but not too much. The clay invites you to come try, but it quickly establishes its limitations.

My first approach to clay, like that of so many other people, was to try to master the wheel. To me a master of ceramics was one who could sit down and throw a fourteen inch cylinder any time, night or day. This beginning in ceramics can be the most rewarding, yet frustrating, period in any potter's evolution. That first sensation of being able to center a lump of clay can cause such a feeling of well-being. Here, for the first time in the art educational system, a student can really feel some tangible accomplishment.

For me, at this time, it was either all good or all bad. Some days I could really click. Throwing and cutting cylinders; but on the rainy days nothing would work. Eventually the wheel began to pose less of a problem as far as the mechanics of raising a cylinder was concerned. Then a new problem set in. What do I do with it? This tendency that I have acquired to learn technique and then put it to use seemed to backfire on me and I know now that I should have been more sensitive to the more aesthetic aspects of the process. However, this speculation can not help me now. Yet the experience can perhaps be a basis for advice given to neophyte potters.

My work has now evolved to a point where I demand some type of contrast. The contrast is usually that of balancing a very fine, almost overworked area against some type of a massive area. This idea for working began as a joke. One night I was working on a covered jar which looked like every other covered jar that I had made for the last month. At the time the radio was playing, as it usually does in my studio. This crazy camp radio show called "Chickenman" came on. It really gave me a laugh and I thought--why not? So I fashioned this crude, chicken-like bird out of clay and plomped it on top of my covered jar. It was funny. In fact, this was probably the first time I had ever laughed at my work. Ceramics had been such a serious business to me that my approach tended to be deadly serious. Maybe the fact that I knew that I could make another covered jar any time, without any problem, allowed me to joke with the one as I did.

Anyhow, I like the idea. I like the idea of fun in pottery and I even saw some aesthetic value in the contrast between the floppy raggedness of the bird and the concise, controlled lines of the pot itself.

Next I tried using this "Chickenman" idea with larger forms. I threw twenty-five inch covered jars with a very bulbous shape. Then perched on top of this almost classic form was this dumpy chicken. Then I started to concentrate more on the bird form. The wings were made with small coils of clay. Some of the coils were as small in diameter as I could possibly make them. The bird took on new character. At first glance it could be mistaken for a grand American Eagle but upon closer study it became a kind of half-chicken, half-hawk-like bird with a beer-belly. Then I started concentrating on the facial expression of the bird, making it laugh or scowl depending on my mood at the time. I found that one of the best forms on which to present the bird was a covered chalice. The many angles of my chalice form provide a good contrast for the now jagged-shaped bird. Then the bird began to appear in all my work. It worked fairly well on the inside of plates which I formed almost like a giant medallion. I used the bird on top of a four and half foot sculpture. These uses did not always work but nevertheless they provided a challenge. About this time I discovered gold lustre glaze and started using it on the birds. This gave them a very precious, or rather gaudy, trophy-like effect. The bird in the plate idea began to take a new direction. The form was abstracted and I started using "in" symbols (or

maybe I should say hidden dual meanings) in these plates. The plates seemed alright by themselves, but I thought they could do more with other elements so I tried to use them as modular units in sculpture. They served as focal points in massive, heavy forms of clay. The way the round, smoothness of the plate's rim worked with the ponderous crude form of the sculpture pleased me. Working with large amounts of clay had always had some attraction. But the idea of this fine detail combined with mass held a very special appeal.

This attraction had an abrupt ending when a five hundred-pound sculpture that I had just completed fell on me. Luckily, I was not hurt, but being a great believer in signs I figured it was time to quit. Someone told me, not too gently, that the idea was overworked.

By this time I had explored most of the possibilities using the bird form. No doubt I will use it again or, more than likely, it will crop up unconsciously in my work somewhere. The form was a lesson as clay itself is a lesson; it teaches about itself but at the same time it teaches the individual about himself. My latest work is involved mainly with plaster body casts and life masks combined with thrown and hand-built forms. So far the direction in this method of working can not be traced or described. This is the way it should be because if I know what awaits me at the end of this exploration then the trip is not worth it.

These various tangents that one discovers while indulging in the creative process is the real nitty-gritty of living. For with these unanswered questions and unseen destin-

ations available I will always be inclined to explore and look for the answers.

The only danger which I can see is in the time when all the answers are pat and the solutions are at my fingertips. My method now should not be my method next year. Maybe looking for answers is not the problem but, instead, looking for questions.