



Mark Hewitt

FOUNDATIONS GALLERY
VISUAL ARTS CENTER
NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

Charles Millard, Guest Curator

with a preface by Sherman Lee and essays by Louise Allison Cort, Mark Hewitt and Charles Zug

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Front Cover: *Planter*, detail. See catalogue number 98.

Page ii: Planter. See catalogue number 98.

Page 3: Left: Covered Jar. See catalogue number 61. Right: Bottle. See catalogue number 1.

Page 25: *Iced Tea Ceremony Tumbler*, detail. See catalogue number 35.

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EXHIBITION CONTRIBUTORS

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Acknowledgments

Charlotte V. Brown, Director Visual Arts Center

Every exhibition is the consequence of many different and sometimes divergent interests and *Mark Hewitt: Potter* is no exception. I have been very conscious, however, that a community has been created through the process. Beginning with my cousins, who introduced me to Hewitt in 1986, this exhibition has been made possible by a widening group that includes not only the people who helped conceptualize the exhibition and have written for the catalogue, but folks at kiln openings, many collectors and lenders to the exhibition and, of course, Mark and Carol Hewitt themselves. A web of enthusiasm and energy that extends from all these people has supported the Visual Arts Center staff and me in countless ways. To this growing community we all say thank you. We especially want to thank the following:

Mark and Carol Hewitt;

Charles Millard, the tireless, traveling guest curator;

Sherman Lee, who with Gill Ravenel introduced the Visual Arts Center to Louise Cort;

Louise Allison Cort, whose essay gives this community a much wider context;

Terry Zug, whose interest in Hewitt's work takes a new turn with this essay;

and all the lenders who were very flexible and helpful and who are listed individually.

The staff would also like to acknowledge the support and assistance of Gordon Anson, Chief Lighting Designer, and Mark Leithauser, Chief of Design at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Gordon designed and helped execute the exhibition lighting.

I would like to personally acknowledge the late Gaillard F. Ravenel who was Chief of Design at the National Gallery of Art until his death September 13, 1996. Gill was a good friend from graduate school. He was a wonderful influence in my life and was a constant source of encouragement and assistance. Gill collected North Carolina pottery and loved Mark's work. He helped involve Louise Cort and he eagerly looked forward to this exhibition. In a very real sense this exhibition is for Gill and his wife, Frances Smyth.

Finally, I would like to share my pride in and gratitude for the extraordinary people I work with here: Michael Giaquinto, Roger Manley, Michele McCrillis, Ann Roth and Gregory Tyler and the interns, Kelly Brannon, Robert Bryan, Fran Eargle, Yuko Matsuyama and Shannon Scarlett.

Preface

Sherman E. Lee

Director of the Cleveland Museum of Art (retired), and author of several books, including A History of Far Eastern Art, Harry N. Abrams, fifth edition, 1994.

By the spring of 1984 we were sufficiently well along in our efforts to complete our garden after moving to Chapel Hill in the summer of 1983 to take advantage of the local Saturday Farmer's Market in Carrboro with its abundant supply of vegetables. My wife, Ruth, came back with a few packages of produce and a pot. She said that she had met a potter who was selling some fine pots from a pick-up truck, and that she had invited him to dinner that evening. From that chance meeting with Mark Hewitt, there grew a relationship based on our interest in potting and in the Japanese tradition of ceramics.

We learned that Hewitt was born into the industrial ceramic tradition, being the grandson of the managing director of Spode Ltd. and the son of the sales director. His training was, however, in the tradition of folk ceramics, the craft so ably carried on by Bernard Leach in Cornwall from the 1920s and begun in Japan by such heros of the renewed folk tradition as Soetsu Yanagi, Shoji Hamada and Kenjiro Kawai.

Hamada worked with Leach in Cornwall in 1921 providing impetus to the new folk tradition. Leach's first pupil was Michael Cardew, Mark Hewitt's master. Leach and then Cardew were instrumental in the early training of numerous students who took up the traditional European and Asian country ways of making pots. Large pots made by another Cardew student, Svend Bayer, a Danish potter living in England, have also influenced Mark's work. Hewitt and Bayer remain close friends.

After concluding his apprenticeship with Cardew in 1979, Mark came to America to work with Todd Piker, also a Cardew student, in Connecticut. In 1981 Mark made a two month visit to Japan to see the kilns he had read about. The concentrated time spent in studying various folk pottery centers and museums paid off. Visits to the island of Kyushu where he visited Naeshiragawa, Onda and Koishiwara, and also to Shikoku at the kilns of Naruto, gave him varied experience in making and firing practices. The Ohara Museum in Kurashiki on the main island of Honshu and the Folk Art Museum in Tokyo, founded by Soetsu Yanagi, provided him with the classic examples of 19th and 20th century folk production in varied media. He also visited Shigeraki, Tamba and Mashiko, the home of Hamada, co-founder of the Mingei movement. Then he made a brief visit to South Korea to study kimchi jar production and firing at several sites.

Hewitt returned to New England, married Carol Peppe and took up residence in Pittsboro, North Carolina in 1983 where he built a kiln and commenced a now successful and flourishing career.

Mark's work is utilitarian and of two basic categories: mugs, bowls, pitchers and the like; and planters, steadily increasing in size and developing into very grand covered pieces decorated with long striations that flow vertically down the sides and emphasize the full blown shape of the pot. At his kiln opening in April 1997, the largest members of the new family were testaments to Mark's technical virtuosity combined with a superb artistry that has allowed him to reach new heights, an ascent that we all expect to continue.

Introduction

Charlotte V. Brown

Director of the Visual Arts Center (now Gallery of Art & Design), North Carolina State University

The useful, functional, and ostensibly ordinary things of everyday life silently shape our experiences. The clothes we wear, the mugs we drink from, the chairs we sit in, the cars, cell phones, and myriad other things that we use daily all have their origins in tradition—the way things have been done—and invention—the new ideas, needs, and materials that reshape what has been. Mark Hewitt's growth as an artist models the process by which, through research and development, the ordinary can evolve into something beautiful, well-made, and aesthetically appreciated. His values as a maker of pots are not new to North Carolina, but they are values that have been put at risk in this rapidly changing state.

Ever since it was founded, North Carolina State University has been engaged in research and development to improve, enhance, and enrich the lives of the citizens of the state and region. It is therefore appropriate and fitting that here, as both state and university approach the millennium, the work of Mark Hewitt, a traditional potter, should be the subject of a major exhibition, catalogue, symposium, and related events.

North Carolina, although it has recently transformed itself from a rural, agricultural state into an urbanized one, is in many ways still intensely rooted in its agrarian past, and many reminders of that earlier life persist in the land-scape. One of these is the successful production of excellent and beautiful utilitarian pottery by a small number of artisans who still practice the labor-intensive creation of objects by hand. This custom of producing useful

ceramic ware has survived since the early nineteenth century, to emerge in this state as a powerful example of the resourcefulness with which traditional design and production aesthetics can assimilate change, accept challenges, and embody a wide spectrum of human values. There is general agreement among observers that the production of functional pottery is a thriving art form whose roots in the nineteenth century partially explain its variety, complexity, and power today. The values of the people who create it—integrity, honesty, unselfishness, devotion, and a sense of community—are by some alchemy embodied in the object itself, enhancing its obvious physical characteristics of beauty, durability, and function. Mark Hewitt chose to settle in North Carolina in part because of these traditions and this climate.

Hewitt produces functional stoneware for daily use in the home and garden: plates, mugs, pitchers, bowls, storage jars, and planters. Descended from an English family long associated with the production of ceramics, he has now been taken into the heart of this clay-loving state. His salt-glazed stoneware decorated with salamanders is sometimes confused with works by earlier North Carolina potters. His pieces are eagerly sought, collected, and celebrated. Each of the essays in this catalogue emphasizes these facts. Nevertheless, as director of the Visual Arts Center, I believe it is important to say why we have chosen to exhibit Hewitt's work at North Carolina State University at this particular time.

Mark Hewitt is a profoundly significant artist who works within a tradition while bringing to it a richness of experience, knowledge, and courage that transforms and enriches the tradition. The same could be said of Ben Owen I (1904-1983) and of Vernon and Pam Owens, Jugtown's master potters. It could also be said of the venerable Burlon Craig, whose work has also been exhibited here. So why single out Mark Hewitt? He did not begin his career here, but he is now of the state through his skill and unselfconscious artfulness. Hewitt, like all great innovators, seems to know instinctively what to keep and what to discard, what to alter and how much to alter it. And to this process he brings the experience of other great ceramics traditions described by Louise Cort in her essay. These experiences have enabled Hewitt to celebrate the accomplishments of our traditional potters in new ways and at the same time to enrich North Carolina's great tradition with his work.

As Mark Hewitt has built relationships with his peers and colleagues here in North Carolina, they and he have rendered this important community of potters even more visible. Personal values of honesty, unselfishness, esteem, and mutual support have been built on the shared command and use of an artistic vocabulary and language that lends itself to the making of beautiful, economical, and pleasing things for daily life. Hewitt's work, like that of the Owenses, embodies a reverence for the seasonal, the quotidian, the personal, and the communal that seems missing from so much of our experience today. Although these potters make objects that may instill a romantic

longing for past times, their work meets the present head on with grace and goodwill. That is why the university collects and exhibits the work of minds and hands such as these. Progress must be measured not only by grand adventures like space exploration but also by the richness of daily lives. Hewitt and the colleagues he has both learned from and taught, will add immeasurable levels of meaning and value to the lives of the people of North Carolina and the region.