

AUSTRALIAN

POTTERY & CERAMICS

1998 Yearbook

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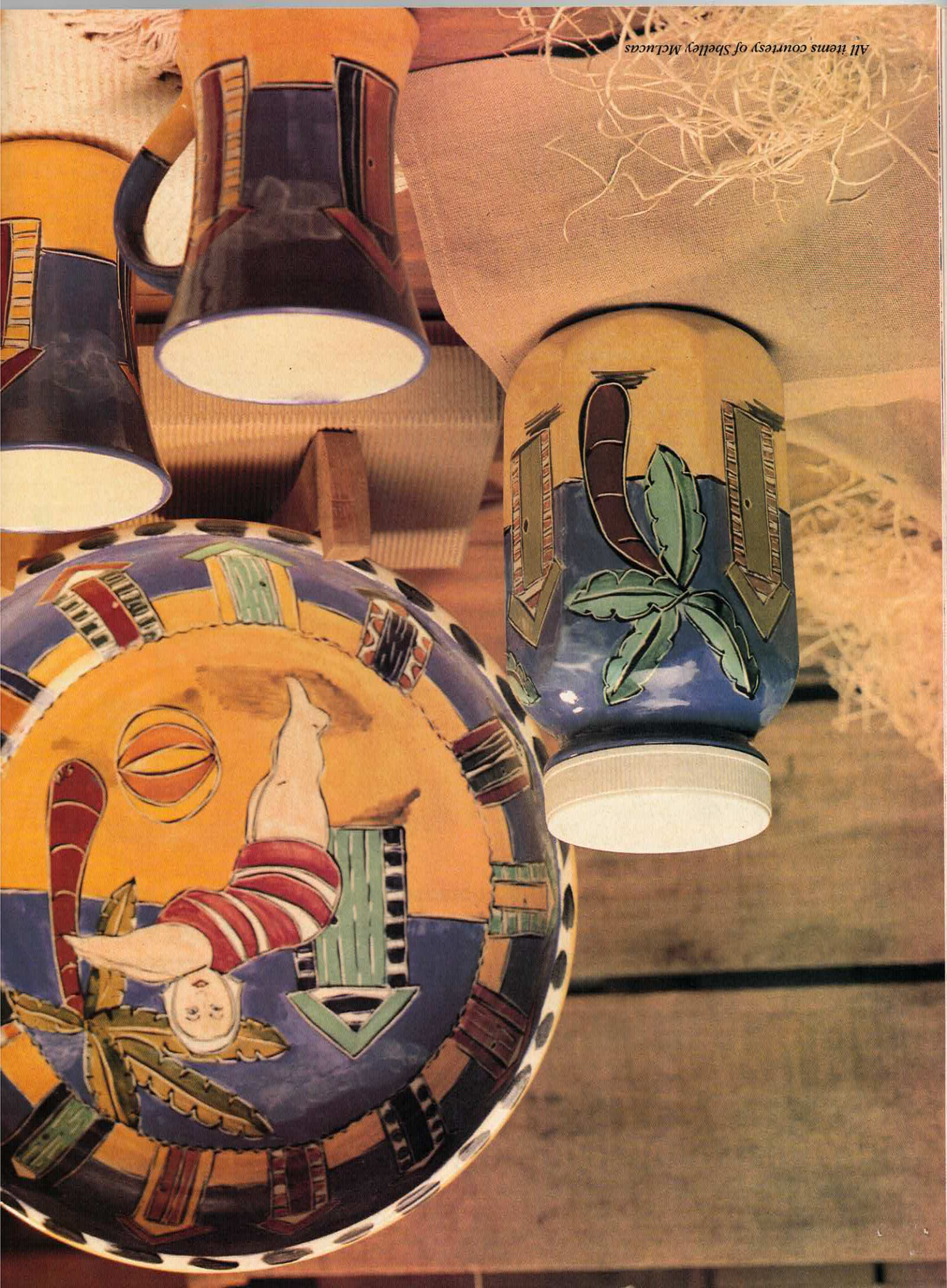
FEATURE ON
EXTRUDERS
WORKING
WITH
LUSTRES

SYDNEY TEAPOT SHOW

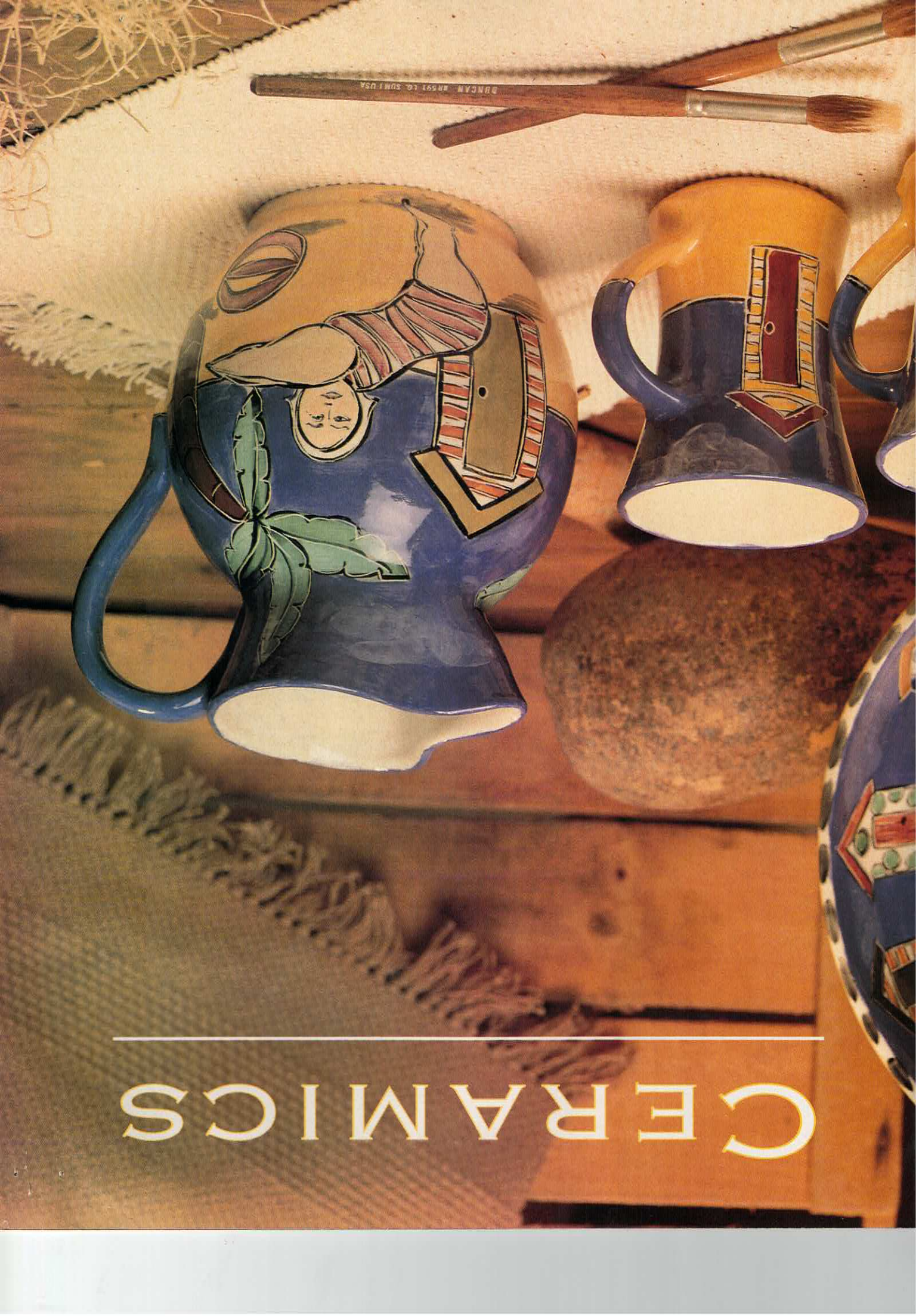


98

All items courtesy of Shelley Melucas



CERAMICS





AROUND THE STUDIOS CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS

TEXT: LEANNE WOOD

For nearly 100 years, customers have been welcomed through the door of what is now Shelley McLucas's ceramic studio. Tucked into a hilly side street in one of Brisbane's inner suburbs, the building started life as a butcher's shop. Over the years, it was reborn as an alternative energy shop, an organic food store and, in its latest reincarnation, as *Creative Expressions*.

The tradition of welcome has obviously continued because the students chatting around the work table in Shelley's peaceful, airy classroom seem to feel right at home. Surrounded as they are by Shelley's work, there's also plenty of inspiration. Shelley's creative instincts work overtime as she constantly tries out and adapts new techniques and products, resulting in pieces that are both functional and striking. "You can never know enough about ceramics," she says. "There are always new things to do. Even people who have been producing ceramics for 30 years or more can still learn because the industry is always evolving."

Shelley's involvement in ceramics



Once you have those basics, there are no limitations on your design work." Nor does age impose any limits. Shelley has seen five and six-year-olds creating uninhibited masterpieces in less time than it takes for adult students to sketch out a design. Her very first pupil, on the other hand, was in her eighties. She was waiting on the footpath for the front door to open on Shelley's first day of business.

The business itself grew out of an inheritance which, appropriately, came from a relative who was also an artist. Shelley is just one of the many 'arty people' in her family who, along with partner Tony, have been very supportive of Shelley's work and her decision to open Creative Expressions.

As well as teaching at the studio, Shelley also works on commission – designing and creating tiles, tableware or decorative pieces that meet individual design needs. She gives in-service seminars to high school art teachers and has recently produced the *Plate Painting Design Book*, a sourcebook of patterns for ceramists to use and adapt.

It isn't surprising that Shelley finds that there's little time left in the week for anything but ceramics. But in the peaceful surroundings of Creative Expressions, standing against a backdrop of her own work, Shelley doesn't seem to mind that at all.

The *Plate Painting Design Book* is available for \$9.95 from Creative Expressions, 37 Bangalla St, Auchenflower QLD 4066. Ph/fax: (07) 3871 3177. ♦

what they've made. Most people who come to classes think in terms of what colour scheme will suit their homes."

Italian ceramics have received a boost in popularity for the same reason. "They're seen as being 'classy' and that's what people want in their homes," says Shelley. "However, with the Australian version of Italian ceramics the colours tend to be much bolder than those used in Italy."

Shelley's vision for Creative Expressions is that of a home decor centre, offering a range of classes that will help people to



personalise their surroundings. Folk artist Elizabeth Burton, already has her own corner of the studio and Shelley has plans to introduce classes in wheel-throwing. She encourages those who claim "not to have a creative bone in their bodies" to join in.

One of Shelley's students, listening in on our discussion, agrees. "If I can do it," she says, "anybody can!"

Shelley points out that ceramics "beginners intimidated by the thought of creating their own designs can use patterns from books, or use graphite paper to transfer a design to the surface of the bisque."

"I'd recommend doing a beginner's course," she says, "so you can find out how many coats of what paint to use. The hardest thing to grasp is the terminology."

POTTERY & CERAMICS

is actually the result of a

happy chance, rather than any planned move into the field. She studied painting at university as part of a fine arts degree and then undertook a Graduate Diploma in Education. However, she soon discovered that teaching secondary school art and history classes wasn't as satisfying as she had hoped, so she sent her résumé off to a range of art-related companies and studios. It just happened that Dianne Ratcliffe, of Brisbane's Ceramic & Craft Centre, were looking for someone with Shelley's qualifications – and that, says Shelley, "is when I got addicted!"

With her background as a painter, she enjoys the simplicity of being able to express herself on a piece of bisque, without needing to clean, fire or shape the piece first. She loves the bright, strong colours that are typical of Australian ceramists though, she says, "every now and then I have to paint pastels because my mother likes them".

Shelley draws from a wide range of influences in developing her designs. Because she's constantly searching for new ideas to teach and display, she doesn't work to a particular theme, although she does confess to a weakness for naive art. Her designs can be as diverse as teddy bears or sophisticated geometric looks and are used to individualise pieces ranging from cutlery handles to tabletops.

"Ceramics is swinging back towards functional items," Shelley says. "People want to be able to use





FROM THE HEART

Ceramic artist, Shelley McLucas, has combined hand-formed clay decorations with bright engobe colours to create a unique teapot which is as fun to use as it is to look at.

MATERIALS

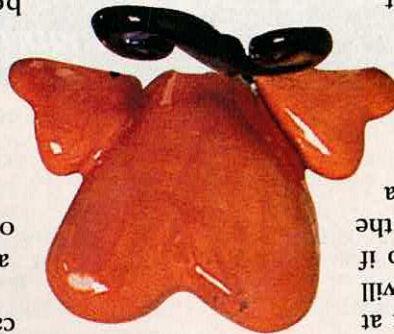
- Wet green teapot
- Hand-building clay compatible with greenware
- Clean-up tool
- Old brush
- Slip
- Small knife or fishing line (for cutting the clay)
- Colorobbia Engobes:
 - Canary Yellow HC0664,
 - Tangerine Red HC0678,
 - Blues Eyes HC0622,
 - Black HC0669
- Colorobbia Transparent Glaze HC200B
- Various brushes

PREPARATION

Here are some important points to remember before starting work on your teapot:

- When combining different clays on the same piece, make sure the clays are compatible. This is because different clays

contract and shrink at different rates and will ultimately crack. So if you are purchasing the greenware from a studio, check what type of slip-casting clay they use and what hand-building clay is compatible with it.



clay, otherwise the glaze can craze.

- Clay shapes can be applied to the surface of the piece at any stage until the piece becomes leather-hard. If the surface decoration is being applied becomes too dry, the

For instance, Shelley's teapot was cast in Duncan Laguna clay and she used Duncan Laguna EM210 hand-building clay for the clay additions.

It is also important that the hobby ceramic glaze used is compatible with the hand-building







addition is likely to crack and fall away. It is therefore best to use greenware that is quite moist. To ensure this, the greenware should be wrapped in plastic as soon as it has been removed from the mould.

- Hand-building clay must be kneaded like dough to soften the clay and to get rid of any air bubbles.

METHOD

Cut the knob off the lid of the teapot. Hand-form a large heart and two smaller hearts – or you may choose another theme such as fruit or a beach scene. Attach the hearts to the lid by scoring both surfaces to be joined and then apply a layer of wet slip with an old brush, to act as glue. Gently attach the hearts, making sure the pressure you apply does not distort the shape of the

sausage of clay, approximately 4mm thick. From this strip of clay, roll another long, thin

applying slip.

Attach by scoring and border around the hearts. equal lengths to form a thick. Cut the strip into approximately 6mm sausage of clay which is

Roll a long, thin used for the lid.

and applying slip as method of scoring side, using the same teapot, one on each the face of the line. Attach these to small knife or fishing a cut it in half using a

another large heart and wet teapot. Hand-form

form 10 curly S-shapes. Attach one either side of the heart knob on the lid and the others on the body of the teapot, approximately 5mm from each side of the border surrounding the large heart

Roll out a small slab of clay and cut out smaller hearts to be

attached to the top edge of the handle and spout.

For the legs on the teapot, roll out a sausage of clay, approximately 2cm thick. Cut the

roll of clay into four even lengths and curl up the bottom of the

strips to form feet. Make sure the legs are all the same length and

then leave them and the teapot to firm for an hour or two. If the

legs are attached at this stage, they will collapse under the

weight of the teapot.

To attach the legs, position them evenly on the base of the

teapot and attach by scoring and applying slip.

Sit the teapot back upright onto the legs. The teapot and legs may

sink into shape a little, but by leaving it to dry in this way it

ensures the teapot will not rock on uneven legs when finished.

Allow to dry before firing to cone 018. A very low temperature

firing at this stage is necessary for





a piece such as this, as it helps toughen the clay, making it easier to handle and with less chance of knocking off the clay additions. The piece is still left soft enough, however, to be cleaned and sanded.

PAINTING AND FIRING

Using a rubber scrubber, clean off the seamlines and smooth the surface. Bisque fire to cone 04. Apply three coats of each of the engobes listed below, to the areas of the teapot as indicated. Allow each coat of paint to dry thoroughly before applying the next.

Canary Yellow: The spout, handle, base, the edge of the pot and the edge of the lid.

Tangerine Red: Hearts and legs.

Blue Eyes: The background.

Black: The Borders and the curly S-strokes.

For added decoration, one coat of black can be used to paint dashes around the rim of the lid and the neck and base of the teapot.

Diluted black can also be used to create the shadowing under the clay additions.

Leave the underglazes to dry thoroughly before using a fan glaze brush to carefully apply two coats of Transparent Glaze.

Leave the base of the legs unglazed, as sifting the teapot can be difficult.

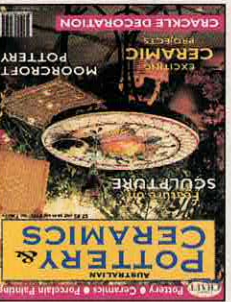
Finally glaze fire to cone 05-06. ♦



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