

Baked Goods: a ceramics show

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Baked Goods: a ceramics show

Ceramics are used daily, in ceremonial uses and as vehicles for artistic expression. Resisting classification at times, they raise questions about the ways we categorise objects, and where use ends and art begins. This display opens up some of these dichotomies, bringing together works made between c1938 to 2023 held in the State Art Collection.

The earliest works featured here are Australian commercial art pottery pieces from c1938–56, made to the design of in-house artists. These are complemented by works from the 1960s that were a product of the phenomenon of ‘studio pottery.’ This movement flourished in Australia as in other parts of the world, emphasising functional pieces made in small batches that incorporated local materials and environmental references. This tradition was based in part on the philosophy of Bernard Leach, an English potter who looked to the utilitarian aesthetic of Chinese, Japanese and pre-industrial European ceramics. The wave of studio pottery initiated by Leach relocated the site of capitalistic production from the factory to the home studio. The object’s retention of the influence of its maker was essential to this movement’s success, as artists produced works in the face of overwhelming industrial manufacturing. Artists communicated the ways in which the narrative of an object’s creation is intertwined with that of its function, built upon an understanding of material and process.

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In the 1970s, Australian ceramicists began to question the functional movement, looking to international sources for new models of sculptural, and conceptual, expression. Many engaged with the vessel tradition through postmodern aesthetics, while others looked further to the past. Australian ceramicists today keenly engage with contemporary culture, the Australian landscape and plant and animal life. All assert the independence of handmade ceramics in the context of what is often seen as the alienating nature of mass-production and its destruction of socially enhancing small-scale networks of making.

In today's Instagram era of performed casualness and filtered reality, ceramics are made in a space of tension between little platforms, local networks of making and consumption, and big platforms of technological production, distribution and brand-making. In relation to this, the vessels displayed demonstrate a continual exchange between the macro and the micro and exhibit a tension between their exterior facades and the withheld interior, between aesthetics and utility. These vessels are conduits, communicating between the maker and the viewer, and expressing a unity of materials, process and ideas. Reimagining the potential of clay, artists position ceramics as metaphysical objects: three-dimensional experiences that play with time and space. They create a sense of intimacy and wonder, questioning and illuminating how we relate our interior selves with the exterior world, and the material culture around us.

Rose Interior

Rainer Maria Rilke

Where is there for this inside
an outside? On what kind of ache
do we lay such linen?
What heaven's reflected in this,
in the inland lake
of these open roses,
so insouciant: see
how at liberty and loose they are,
as if no trembling hand
could ever spill them.
They can hardly contain
themselves; many of them
are gorged and overflow
from their interior
into the days that ever more
fully close over till the whole summer
becomes a room, a room within a dream.

TRACY RYAN

Tracy Ryan

Rose Interior

Rose Interior (2022), Giramondo Publishing, Sydney

Courtesy of Giramondo Publishing

Tracy Ryan was born in Middle Swan on the edge of Perth, grew up in the outer suburbs, and now lives in the WA wheatbelt. She has published five novels. Her latest book is *Rose Interior* (2022), her tenth full-length collection of poetry. Earlier collections include *The Willing Eye* (2000) and *The Argument* (2011), which were awarded the WA Premier's Prize for poetry. Ryan has also been awarded the Mattara (Newcastle) and the ABR/Peter Porter poetry prizes. In 2023, she was awarded the Western Australian Writer's Fellowship, the richest of the WA Premier's Book Awards. She has worked in libraries, bookselling, editing, journalism, and in tertiary teaching in the UK, USA and Australia. She is interested in foreign languages and translation.

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran

born 1988 Colombo, Sri Lanka (Ceylon)

arrived Australia 1989

lives and works Gadigal/Sydney, New South Wales

Orange hairy head

2017

earthenware, glaze and lustre

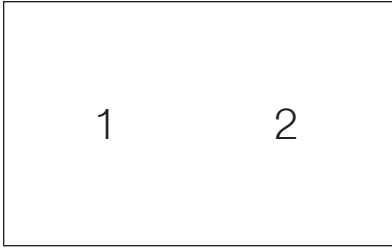
Purchased through the Sir Claude Hotchin Art Foundation, The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2018
2018/0021

Glazed over

These works feature shino, tenmoku, copper and jun (or chun) glaze, which, depending on the chemical composition of the clay underneath, result in grey, red, blue or black finished ceramics. Developed from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries in China and Japan, these glazes have been adapted into an Australian context by the makers in this section. They have combined these techniques with locally sourced materials including clay from Hovea and the Blue Mountains, feldspar from Broken Hill, shale from Hawksbury and Bombo latite from the Dunmore Quarry, just to name a few.

‘I like its [jun] opalescence and blue is a mysterious colour; it is peaceful and tranquil too. I like the way it contrasts with the red glazes—it is vibrant. The variables in woodfiring can produce many nuances of colour. It also evokes a feeling of the landscape ... but at the same time I don’t want to go beyond what comes out of the materials and processes by superimposing a decoration that isn’t relevant. It must be integrated and come out of the materials and processes themselves.’

PETER RUSHFORTH AM, 1996



1

Greg Crowe

born 1953 England

works Mundaring, Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Plate

1985

ceramic; stoneware with brushed 'shino' glaze, wood-fired.

Purchased for the
Guy Grey-Smith Memorial Collection, 1986

1986/0211

2

Anne Mercer

born 1945 Tarntanya/Adelaide, South Australia

works Tarntanya/Adelaide, South Australia

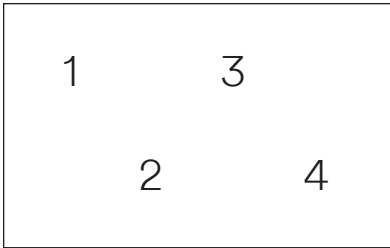
Shino Bowl

1981

stoneware with "Shino" glaze wheel thrown form

Purchased 1981

1981/0C14



1

Ian MacRae

born 1942 Scotland

worked Boorloo/Perth; Walyalup/Fremantle; and

Kwoorabup/Denmark, Western Australia

died 2024 Kwoorabup/Denmark, Western Australia

Pot

1982

stoneware, with "Temmoku" glaze; Gas fired to 1800 degrees C in downdraft reduction kiln

Purchased 1982

1982/00C7

2

Les Blakebrough

born 1930 Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, England

worked Mittagong, New South Wales; Hobart, Tasmania;

and Coledale, New South Wales

died 2022 Coledale, New South Wales

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Pot with lid

1966

ceramic

Purchased 1966

1966/00C6.a-b

3

Ivan Englund

born 1915 Liverpool, New South Wales

worked Warrang/Sydney, New South Wales; Kamberri/
Canberra, Australian Capital Territory; and Mount Kembla,
New South Wales

died 2007 Bawley Point, New South Wales

Patricia Englund

born 1922 Sans Souci, Warrang/Sydney, New South
Wales

worked Warrang/Sydney, Mount Kembla and Leura, New
South Wales

died 2004 Leura, New South Wales, Australia

Pitcher

c1960

ceramic

Purchased 1960

1960/0C10

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Col Levy

born 1933 Warrang/Sydney, New South Wales
works Bowen Mountain, New South Wales

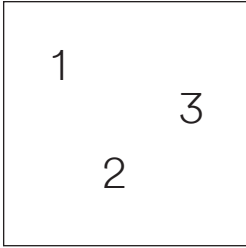
Bottle vase

1986

porcelain with copper-red glaze

Purchased 1986

1986/0191



1

Peter Rushforth

born 1920 Manly, Warrang/Sydney, New South Wales
worked Warrang/Sydney and Blackheath, Blue Mountains,
New South Wales

died 2015 Blackheath, Blue Mountains, New South Wales

Blossom Jar

c1980

stoneware; ash glazed

Purchased with assistance from the Crafts Board of the Australia Council, 1983

1983/C111

2

Minature vase (cream and ochre drip glaze)

c1938–c1956

porcelain

Gift of the descendents of Jean Darbyshire, 2004

2004/0024

Darbyshire Pottery

established c1946 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

closed 1956 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Vase (drip glaze cream and crimson)

c1938–c1956

porcelain

Gift of the descendants of Jean Darbyshire, 2004

2004/0020

You're fired

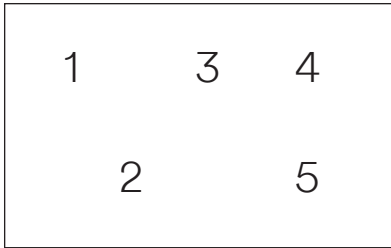
Variability in firing techniques, from wood to gas to oil-firing, influence the final form and texture of ceramic works. For example, Col Levy's works are made using techniques from the tradition of Japanese Bizen woodfired pottery. No glazes are used on the work's exterior and they are fired slowly at high temperatures. This results in their red-brown colouring. Joan Campbell's Raku ware was created by removing the pieces from a hot kiln, smothering them in combustible local materials (such as seaweed, wood and gum leaves) and then allowing them to cool in the open air. For many years Campbell had an important studio at Bathers Beach in Fremantle. Also seen here is the salt-glazed and woodfired stoneware of ceramicist and writer Janet Mansfield, which she described as a response to 'the salt drama...the dynamic reincarnation of nature.' (Janet Mansfield, 1988)

'The best pots seem to be derived from a mixture of intent and accident ... the clay and the process of throwing dictates the form—a coarse clay will produce a rugged eccentric form and a fine clay calls for delicacy of detail ... I look for qualities that have fluidity and naturalness, a simplicity of shape that will accept a complexity of surface. The form is also dictated by the processes of the

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stacking in the kiln and the searing temperatures that melt stone into glass or encrust with ash from a fire that is fierce enough to destroy most man-made things beyond recognition.'

OWEN RYE, 1993



1

Janet Mansfield

born 1934 Warrang/Sydney, New South Wales

worked Warrang/Sydney and Gulgong, New South Wales

died 2013 Gulgong, New South Wales

Salt glazed jar with lid

1979

salt glazed stoneware

Purchased with assistance from the Crafts Board of
the Australia Council, 1979

1979/OC32.A-B

2

Bela Kotai

born 1947 West Germany

works Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Enclosed ceramic form

1980

stoneware, salt glazed

Purchased 1980

1980/OC12

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3

Eileen Keys

born 1903 Ōtautahi/Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand
worked London, England and Boorloo/Perth, Western
Australia

died 1992 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Vase

c1962

stoneware, rock and ash glaze over incised decoration

Gift of Mrs Evelyn Humphreys, 1986

1986/0158

4

Flat dish

1960

Stoneware body of Coolgardie lithium and Darling Range
gravel dust. Metallic glaze of blue metal, iron, lithium.
Fired in oil kiln at 1350 degrees C with reduction

Purchased 1960

1960/0C12

5

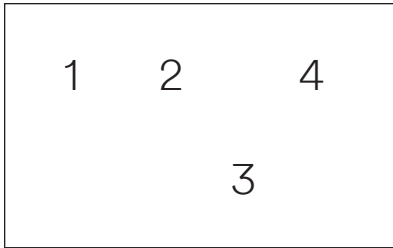
Vase

c1966

stoneware, partially glazed over incised decoration

Gift of Mrs Evelyn Humphreys, 1986

1986/0164



1

Owen Rye

born 1944 Cooma, New South Wales
works Boolarra, Gippsland, Victoria

Jar

1992

wood-fired stoneware, glazed

Purchased 1993

1993/0334

2

Col Levy

born 1933 Warrang/Sydney, New South Wales
works Bowen Mountain, New South Wales

Wine Bottle

c1980

stoneware; Bizen-style, wood fired

Purchased with assistance from the Crafts Board of the Australia Council, 1983

1983/0C69

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3

Eileen Keys

born 1903 Ōtautahi/Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand
worked London, England and Boorloo/Perth, Western
Australia
died 1992 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Raku vase

1973
earthenware, nickel ore in clay, clay slip under borax frit
glaze, fired in raku technique

Gift of Eileen Keys, 1979

1979/0C28

4

Joan Campbell

born 1925 Geelong, Victoria
worked Walyalup/Fremantle and Boorloo/Perth, Western
Australia
died 1997 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Raku

1971
ceramic - earthenware

Purchased 1971

1971/00C3

Bernard Leach

born 1887 Hong Kong, Peoples' Republic of China

worked London, England; Kyoto, Japan; and St. Ives, Cornwall, England

died 1979 St. Ives, Cornwall, England

Vase

c1959–60

stoneware, glazed over incised decoration

Purchased 1984

1984/0C39

Alan Watt

born 1941 Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria
works Tanja, New South Wales

Bladed pinnacle

1998

earthenware, black-fired over terra sigillata surface

Purchased 1998

1998/0114

Still lives

Gwyn Hanssen Pigott OAM (1935–2013) is one of the most prominent Australian ceramicists of the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Bridging functional and conceptual approaches, Piggott's work was profoundly influential on ceramic practice in Australia, and was acclaimed internationally for demonstrating the contemplative power of vessels grouped in still-life arrangements. The repetition of forms draws on a sense of classical order imbued with quiet yet powerful feeling as the space around and between the individual forms is an active component of the work.

'My reference points are the traditions of still life painting in England and Italy (Nicholson, Morandi), and those artists concerned with stillness of emotions; pairing, simplifying, grasping at the essential. Giacometti, Brancusi, Meckseper.'

GWYN HANSSEN PIGGOTT, 1988

1	3	4	5
2			
		6–11	

1

Ivan Englund

born 1915 Liverpool, New South Wales

worked Warrang/Sydney, New South Wales; Kamberri/
Canberra, Australian Capital Territory; and Mount Kembla,
New South Wales

died 2007 Bawley Point, New South Wales

Tall decorated jug

1966

ceramic

Purchased 1966

1966/00C4

2

Eileen Keys

born 1903 Ōtautahi/Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand

worked London, England and Boorloo/Perth, Western
Australia

died 1992 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Vase

1959

stoneware

Purchased 1959

1959/00C2

...continued on next page

3

Col Levy

born 1933 Warrang/Sydney, New South Wales
works Bowen Mountain, New South Wales

Tall bottle

c1965
stoneware

Purchased 1965

1965/00C2

4

Francis Kotai

born 1908 Budapest, Austria-Hungary
worked Budapest, Hungary and Boorloo/Perth, Western
Australia
died 1970 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Vessel

c1964
glazed earthenware

Gift of Anne and Noel Ryan, 2013

2013/0101

5

Stewart Scambler

born 1949 Stirling, Scotland
works Boorloo/Perth and York, Western Australia

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Conical bottle 4

2009

wood-fired ceramic

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia
Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2009

2009/0118

6-11

Jacob Ogden Smith

born 1985 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

works Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Hovea Pottery Ale Bottle 24, 26, 38, 41, 43, 46

2012

fired stoneware, ash glaze, beeswax, cork and copper
wire

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia
Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2012

2012/0094–99

Gwyn Hanssen Pigott

born 1935 Ballarat, Victoria

worked Mittagong, New South Wales; London, England;
Achères, France; Kingston, Tasmania; Tarntanya/Adelaide,
South Australia; Meanjin/Brisbane and Netherdale,
Queensland

died 2013 London, England

Still life with blue cup

1997

limoges porcelain

Gift of John McBride under the
Cultural Gifts Program in honour of Dr Stefano Carboni
(Gallery Director: 2008–2019), 2019

2019/0037.1-7

Heather Mcswain

born 1921 Mildura, Victoria

worked Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria and Boorloo / Perth,
Western Australia

died 1996 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Mother and Child

c1957–1982

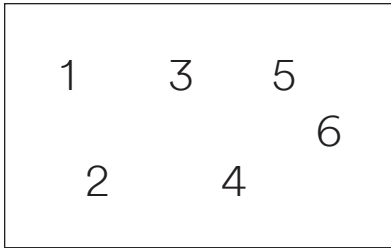
glazed earthenware

Purchased 1996

1996/0348

Stain of nostalgia

These works demonstrate the potential of ceramics to evoke nostalgic contemplation. Kirsten Coelho's application of glaze evinces the passing of time in the rusting and wear and tear of enamel objects. In these works, Coelho creates cycles of emulation, re-interpreting nineteenth and early twentieth-century enamelware produced for the domestic market, which were, in turn, emulating the smooth surfaces of porcelain for working class households. Interested in the patterns, textures and objects left behind by the ebbing of tides on the shore, Ulrica Trullson's pieces capture sensory experiences of sand and water, imbuing the objects' surfaces with a temporal quality that channels the colours and textures of her home in South Australia.



1

Kirsten Coelho

born 1966 Copenhagen, Denmark

works Tarantanya/Adelaide, South Australia

Vase (Prospect #17)

2011

porcelain, matt glaze white, banded iron oxide

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia
Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2012

2012/0027

2

Oil and tea can

2009

matt white glaze, banded iron oxide

Purchased through the Peter Fogarty Design Fund, The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2009
2009/0082.a-b

3

Ginger jar

2010

porcelain, matt glaze white, banded iron oxide

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2012

2012/0026.a-b

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4

Found and Lost IV

2022

stoneware, porcelain, porcelain slip and glaze

Purchased through the Peter Fogarty Design Fund, The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2022

2022/0061.1-2.a-b

5

Ulrica Trulsson

born 1978, Sweden

works Meanjin/Brisbane, Queensland

Surface Stills – Canister

2021

stoneware, glaze on glaze

Purchased through the Peter Fogarty Design Fund, The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2022

2022/0059.a-b

6

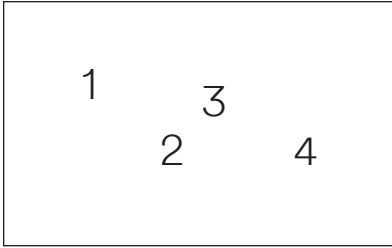
Surface Stills – Textured Canister

2021

textured slip, stoneware, glaze on glaze

Purchased through the Peter Fogarty Design Fund, The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2022

2022/0060.a-b



1

Prue Venables

born 1954 Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England
works Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria

Funnel with two handles

2006

porcelain

Purchased through the Peter Fogarty Design Fund,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2006

2006/0048

2

Turned edge bowl

2006

porcelain

Purchased through the Peter Fogarty Design Fund,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2006

2006/0049

3

Jug

2006

porcelain

Purchased through the Peter Fogarty Design Fund,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2006

2006/0050

4

Flare rimmed vase and strainer

2006

porcelain

Purchased through the Peter Fogarty Design Fund, The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2006

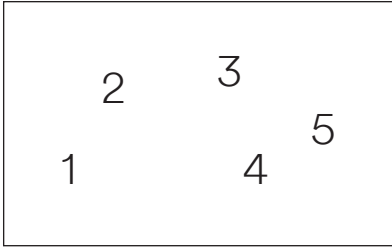
2006/0051.a-b

Earth, sea and sky

These works demonstrate the capacity that ceramics have to conjure conceptual imagery and sculptural expression whilst remaining within the vessel tradition. They offer layers of meaning, implied by textural strata, and orient the viewer's physical and imaginary engagement with them as they approach them in the round. They utilise both abstract and representational strategies to depict the Australian landscape, question how we see ourselves and our material relationship with the world, defining time and place in an arrangement of raw materials from this country.

'Although pottery is made to be used ... there can be no fullness or complete realisation of utility without beauty.'

BERNARD LEACH, 1940



1

Sam Gold

born 1987 Kalkadoon Country, Mt Isa, Queensland
works on Kurna Yerta, Tarndanya/Adelaide, South
Australia

The rocks that touch

2022

porcelain

Purchased through the Peter Fogarty Design Fund,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2022

2022/0055

2

Eileen Keys

born 1903 Ōtautahi/Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand
worked London, England and Boorloo/Perth, Western
Australia
died 1992 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Pot

c1978

stoneware, mixed coloured clays

Gift of Dr Rose Toussaint, 1994

1994/0271

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3

Desert

1966

stoneware, partially glazed

Purchased 1966

1966/00C3

4

Catherine Opie

born 1961 Sandusky, Ohio, The United States of America
works Los Angeles, The United States of America

Stump #9

2018

porcelain

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia
Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2019

2019/0007

5

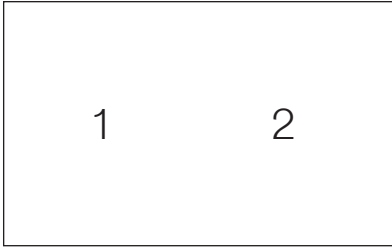
Stump #10

2015

Black Mountain clay

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia
Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2019

2019/0008



1

Mitsuo Shoji

born 1946 Osaka, Japan

works Warrang/Sydney, New South Wales

Great Australian Human and the Earth

1981

ceramic - stoneware glazed and incised surface

Purchased 1981

1981/0C21

2

Judith Halliday

born 1913 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

worked Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

died 2001 Boorlo/Perth, Western Australia

Desert flower

1981

ceramic (stoneware) coiled and pressed moulded oxides
on surface

Purchased 1981

1981/0Z19-C

Warrick Palmateer

born 1969 Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria
works Yanchep, Western Australia

Meridian Shoal

2023

glazed earthenware

Purchased through the Peter Fogarty Design Fund,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2023

2023/0012

Feeling ruffled

These artists explore the application of ornamentation and decoration, playing with traditional styles in quirky, and sometimes knowingly kitsch ways. Alex Leckie and Heather McSwain demonstrate mid-century anthropomorphised modernist ceramics, inspired by ancient forms, after which saw a rapid increase in sculptural ceramics in Australia.

Peter Cooley turned from painting to making ceramic sculptures in 2003. Cooley is fascinated with ornamentation, drawing on German Rococo and Expressionist ceramic traditions, inspired by Australia's wildlife and landscape.

'Clay offers freedom to play with space and time ... I can extend my painting into the third dimension on forms that could be shaped, reshaped and reconstructed. Winding its way around the forms and through space, the surface offers infinite possibilities.'

PETER COOLEY, 2019

Peter Cooley

born 1956 Murwillumbah, New South Wales
works Leura, New South Wales

Black swan with Cygnet

2012

earthenware

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia
Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2013

2013/0006

1

2

1

Bela Kotai

born 1947 West Germany

works Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Bowl

1977

stoneware, glazed

Purchased with assistance from the Crafts Board of the
Australia Council, 1978

1978/00C3

2

Boulton & Mills

established 1861 Worcestershire, England

closed 1926 Worcestershire, England

Bowl with handles

1880s

opaline glass

Gift of Mr & Mrs H K Hall, 1994

1994/0043



1

Heather Mcswain

born 1921 Mildura, Victoria

worked Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria and Boorloo/Perth,
Western Australia

died 1996 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Pot with lid (bull decoration)

1959

glazed earthenware

Purchased 1996

1996/0362.a-b

2

Alex Leckie

born 1932 Glasgow, Scotland

worked Glasgow, Scotland and Tarntanya/Adelaide, South
Australia

died 2010 Paisley, Scotland

...continued on next page

Bird form

c1960

earthenware, glazed over underglaze slips and stains

Head is detachable

Purchased 1962

1962/0C21

3

Heather Mcswain

born 1921 Mildura, Victoria

worked Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria and Boorloo/Perth,
Western Australia

died 1996 Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia

Small cow

1959

glazed stoneware

Purchased 1996

1996/0351