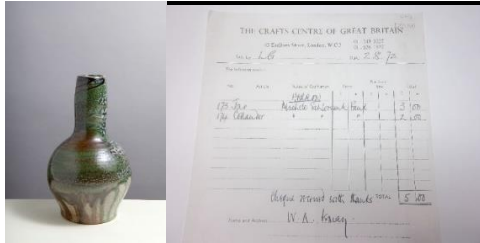


From the Ismay archive. by Alex McErlain

Micki Schloessingk b.1949



Thrown bottle, salt glazed stoneware 1994, h 24cm

Photograph Phil Sayer.

The pots in Bill Ismay's collection were quite often acquired at intervals throughout an individual potter's career. In fact Ismay believed a potter was not properly represented until he had reached double figures with their work. He was also a keen attender of college degree and diploma shows looking out for new talent. In 1972 he purchased two items by Micki Schloessingk from her Harrow diploma exhibition. Twenty years later, after making further purchases, he acquired this magnificent bottle. In the intervening years the potter had established a studio in Bentham, North Yorkshire, before moving in 1987 to the Gower peninsula, South Wales where she still works.

The shape of the bottle is unusual, reminding me of the dual convex curves to be found in English medieval baluster jugs. It is a tricky form to throw as the relationship of the neck to base has to be continuous and harmonious rather than separate or distinct. It has been thrown and finished on the wheel with a pronounced cutting wire mark to the base and no subsequent turning. The surface has been brushed at the leather hard stage with stained slip using bold brush strokes. A shino glaze has been applied to the inside where salt vapour would not penetrate.

Salt glazed pottery has a particular appeal to me. It represents that curious aspect of potting where the kiln has almost as much say in the outcome as the potter. Each item submitted to the fire is dependent on the reaction between the salt vapours impregnating the surface of the pot and the materials that have been used in the making. The potter must orchestrate these materials in anticipation of the kiln's contribution. The pot displays the evidence of where it was in the kiln in relation to the swirling salt vapours. On the side that faced the vapours, green slip has become pitted and marked with the textures we associate with salt, sometimes described as 'orange peel'. On the opposite side the pot is more austere, with spiralling brush marks to animate the surface.

Schloessingk fires her kiln with wood which adds yet another aspect of unpredictability to the entire process. She has written *'I enjoy making a wide range of pots which respond imaginatively to daily needs in the kitchen (a factor Ismay would have held in high regard) I have always used wood as a fuel to fire my kilns. The process is fully engaging. It is something you can never totally control, but experience teaches you to bring together all the elements to create the best possible chance of a good outcome. The flames in a wood kiln are slow and gentle and seem to impart some of these qualities to the pots.'*

After forty years potting Schloessingk has become involved in helping to train a future generation by participating in the 'adopt a potter' scheme, something Ismay would surely have approved of. Her recent apprentice Fleen Doran is now making high quality pots and I am quite sure would have been on Ismay's target list of ones to look out for.

<http://www.fleendoran.com>

Micki Schloessing website: <http://www.mickisaltglaze.co.uk>



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