



From the Ismay archive. by Alex McErlain

Patrick Sargent 1956 - 1998

Thrown bowl, stoneware, wood fired in Switzerland, 1991, h. 10.6cm d. 14.2cm
Photograph Phil Sayer.

Patrick Sargent is now regarded as one of the pioneers of European wood firing, but at the time when he made this bowl, anagama fired pots were not universally popular. It is unusual to have the kind of documentation about a specific pot that exists about this bowl. By chance, in February 1991, I was filming Sargent as he took this pot from his kiln. On camera he can be heard to say 'this is one for Bill Ismay' which I took to be a measure of his appreciation of the pot. In the Ismay archive (archive no 1024) is a letter dated 01/04/91 in which he refers again to the pot '*Also a big thank you for visiting my show in Exeter and buying the pots. The brown bowl with slip trailing and chun over glaze is possibly the best pot to come out of the fourth firing of my kiln in Switzerland. I am in pain to see it go, but the healing is knowing where it is going to.*' The relationship between maker and collector is interesting. Sargent reveals his pleasure in having his work represented in an important collection and perhaps feels it will preserve it in a worthy context.

The bowl is in some ways unusual for Sargent in that it has been glazed on the outside by him, rather than by his kiln. This is a pot that has to be 'read' with some knowledge of the implications of its formation. Sargent made pots specifically to fit into different parts of his kiln in order to maximise the potential of the sixty hour wood firing. Some pots were intended to be stacked one inside the other for the firing and took their proportions accordingly. This bowl was fired sitting inside a larger bowl and in turn it too contained a smaller pot. Sargent knew that ash from the fire would not affect the outer surface of these inner stacked bowls, so he glazed them. The pot has a slip trailed design to the outside and has been dipped in a shiny brown glaze with some details highlighted in chun. One of the distinctive characteristics of the pot is the contrast between the outer and inner colours. The inner colours are created by the interplay between clay body, brushed white slip and wood ash from the fire. On the foot ring the evidence of the potter's fingers where he gripped it when dipping in the glaze can be seen. I find this bowl to be a remarkably subtle work for an anagama fired pot which now sits in stark contrast to some of the extremely unsubtle work being produced by many contemporary practitioners.

Born in Northampton, Patrick Sargent studied at West Surrey College of Art and Design, Farnham. His first studios were in Northamptonshire but after a spell of travelling to France and Germany for work, he settled in Switzerland in 1986. Here he continued to live and work until his untimely death.

In a statement written in 1996 he wrote *"Most days I take an early morning walk in the forest. It is just one part of my way of being. I like it when my pots give me the same feeling as that forest walk. I certainly seek to capture qualities of directness, freedom and rhythm that I only find in nature. Neither the pot nor the forest walk is the final statement, merely a small part of a long road."*



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