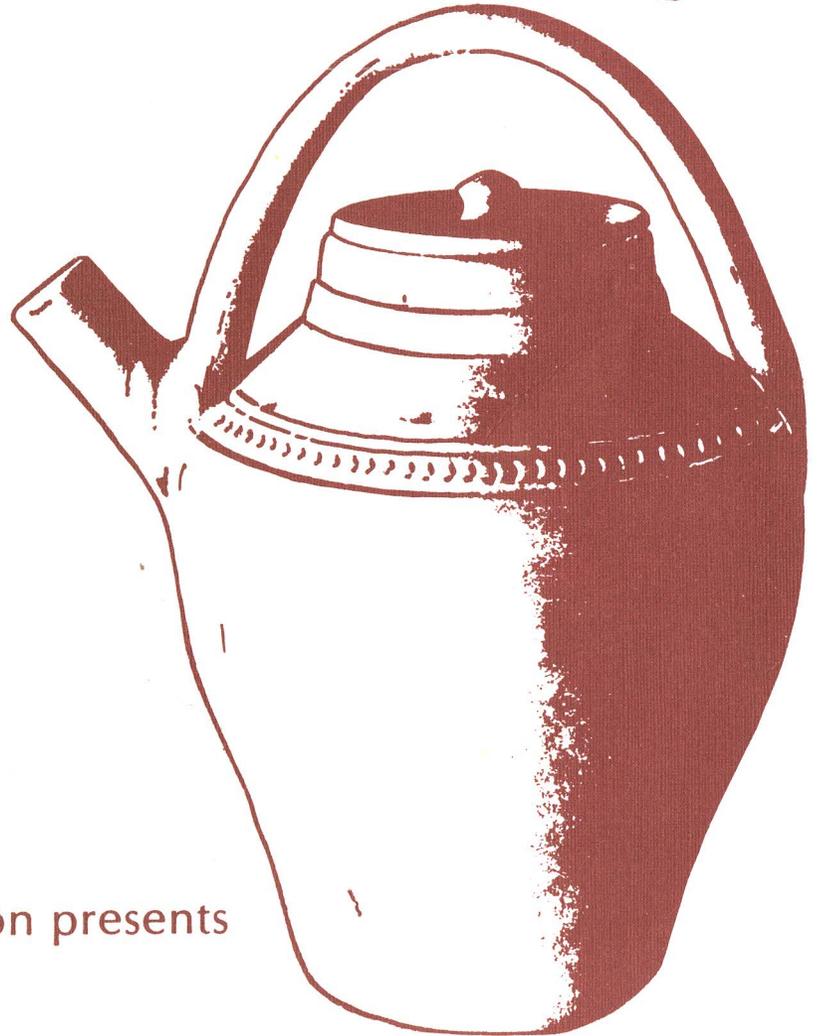


# clay



WI

738.972981

NA

The  
National Cultural Foundation presents  
The Potters of Barbados



0UB

W.J.

738 0972981

NA

# clay

---

Queen's Park Gallery, Barbados

24th February — 19th March, 1986

---

There has been renewed interest in locally produced ceramics. This is due partly to the encouragement and assistance of the Industrial Development Corporation and the Christian Action for Development in the Eastern Caribbean, and partly to the amount of work done by a number of trained potters now practicing in Barbados.

The National Cultural Foundation took the decision to mount the exhibition "CLAY", in recognition of the historical, cultural importance of the indigenous ceramics.

The following pages give a brief history of Clay work done in Barbados and include biographical notes of participating Ceramists.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Lois Redman-Simmons". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small dash at the end.

**Lois Redman-Simmons**  
Curator — Queen's Park Gallery

## THE POTTERY AND CERAMICS HERITAGE OF BARBADOS

The art of fashioning utensils and adornments from the earth is as old as mankind. In Barbados this practice has had a long and proud heritage, dating from the pre-Colombian era when first the Igneri and then Garifuna peoples settled in various parts of the island. These people are now known by the names the Spaniards gave to them: "Arawak" or "Cassava-eaters" and CARIBS or "Eaters of Human Flesh".

From the period of the Amerindians, the development of a ceramic culture has centered around the use of Clay as a material combining strength and beauty. Although the "Arawaks" and "Caribs" in Barbados used items made of bone, coral, sea-shells and wood, there is evidence that these first inhabitants of the island utilized the clay which was located in considerable quantity in the northern and eastern parts of the island, where the Amerindians had their main settlements.

### THE AMERINDIANS

The evidence suggested that both "Arawaks" and "Caribs" used clay to make domestic utensils for storing food and water, and also to fashion pipes for smoking the dried leaves of the tobacco.

These two groups lived on the fertile highlands and also on the coastal flatlands of Barbados. Here they developed a civilisation and a culture which is interesting and worthy of restoration, at least in part. Traces of their community life exist in caves and gullies in various parts of the island, and it is obvious that they settled mainly where streams ran. The Igneri — Arawaks had a strong agricultural tradition owing to the fertile soil and the equable climate of Barbados. Here they developed a political organisation and fashioned useful tools out of the stone, wood and clay around them. They made graters, juice squeezers and ovens of clay in which they baked the cassava cakes that formed a main item of their diet.

The Igneri-Arawaks fashioned a large variety of utensils and tools out of clay because of the fact that there was no hard stone in the island from which they could make these tools which they needed.

The plentiful supply of clay on the island appealed to them and from what we can gather, they made extensive use of this material, not only for tools and utensils but also for ornaments. In terms of useful items the Igneri — Arawaks made vessels of



various sizes and shapes, and the way these vessels were decorated gives us information about the animals, birds and fish they found on the island.

The artifactual heritage of the Igneri — Arawaks on this island has been reconstructed mainly by enthusiastic amateur archeologists as well as professional cultural anthropologists in this century. The work of excavating Amerindian settlement sites still needs to be conducted on a steady and systematic basis, because although digging among the ancient remains over a period of years has taught us much about these our earliest ancestors, further efforts in this field are certain to reveal yet more of the manifold and fascinating messages from the era.

Certainly we know that the Igneri-Arawak population in Barbados numbered in the thousands, but the artifactual vestiges and ceramic evidence which we have about them does not measure up to that which has been discovered in islands nearby. Undoubtedly we must continue to dig in certain sites around the island for relics of their ceramic and general implemental culture, and, by a careful study of the findings, we shall surely increase our knowledge of not only that ceramic heritage, but of their lives generally.

This lack, or paucity of information about the Igneri-Arawaks ceramics culture also attends our examination of the Garifuna (or Caribs) who apparently drove out the Igneri-Arawaks approximately four hundred years before the English colonists settled the island. Garifuna-Carib Ceramics culture, it would appear, is of a cruder type than that of the Igneri-Arawaks who apparently produced pottery of a fine quality and handsomely decorated.

These people differed from the Arawaks, to a marked degree in several respects, chief of which was their orientation to warfare, and their essentially martial culture. Although their material and ornamental culture was considerably influenced by that of the Igneri-Arawaks, they apparently did not acquire the skilled craftsmanship of the latter and produced pottery which was more utilitarian than ornamental.

The Garifuna-“Caribs” were hunter-gatherers, and for many generations the scope of their migrations was dictated by the necessity to follow game and exploit new sources of edible plants. They were skilled stalkers of game and excellent sailors, navigating the waters of the Caribbean in canoes fashioned out of entire trunks of trees, and dug out with stone implements, aided by controlled burning of the wood.

Despite being constantly on the move, the Garifuna-“Caribs” took time to make pottery, which, although simple in design and workmanship, was strong and durable. As in the case of the Igneri-Arawaks, we do not know enough about the ceramic culture of these people, although what little evidence there is tells a fascinating story about them and their approximately four hundred years sojourn on this island. We know that they lived mainly on the upland areas of the island, in an arc from Turners Hall in St. Andrew to Chalky Mount in the same parish, but including Apes Hill, St. James, Mount Misery, St. Thomas, Chimborazo, St. Joseph, and Newcastle, St. John. These areas were either heavily wooded or contained fresh water streams. They had a more loose political organisation than the Igneri-Arawaks and it is believed that their population on this island was much smaller although some authors suggest that Barbados may have been the headquarters of the Garifuna-“Caribs” in the years before Europeans entered the Caribbean. Future archeological excavations will aid us considerably in establishing more accurately their heritage.

### THE AFRICANS

By 1627 when the English arrived to settle the island bringing with them some Africans who became the first set of slaves, the Amerindians were all gone from Barbados. Both English settlers and Africans bondsmen may have discovered vestiges of Amerindians pottery craft, but it is clear that both sets of 17th century settlers brought with them their own traditions of fashioning useful items for the home from natural soil deposits.

The Africans who came to Barbados were captured from many culture groups (“tribes”) and nations, each with its own dis-

tinctive traditions of making pottery. Like other "Old World" peoples, these Western Africans had a long and noble tradition of clay manufacture, and this tradition goes back to the Late Stone Age period of approximately 50,000 years ago. The discovery of fire enabled Africans to bake the clay and to fashion an entire range of useful items, including tools, implements for War, and household utensils from this very durable and inexpensive material.

Available sources indicate that continuous manufacture of earthenware by Africans began in Barbados between 1630 and the 1650's. Male African slaves were involved in this manufacture from the earlier times as they were expected to produce their own building materials for their homes, as well as items for household use. The male slave potters made earthen vessels of different sizes and of globular shapes for various purposes, for holding water, for storing food, as bowls and cups, and by the end of the century slave musicians were using earthen jars as a substitute for drums made out of wood. But the late 18th century slaves' pots and dishes were mainly of earthen manufacture, and hawkers were selling "gurglets" for holding water, and other pottery items in Bridgetown's main market.

Slaves utilized both a non-kiln, non-wheel technology (that is, they fashioned the products with their bare hands) as well as a wheel-and-kiln-technology which is still the dominant form of pottery found in the island today.

Historical sources also indicate that male slaves utilized this European-derived technology to manufacture conical sugar pots which were used for draining the molasses from the raw sugar which was being manufactured from the mid 1640's. Earthenware sugar pots were made by a number of Barbadian plantations for their own use, and for sale to other plantations.

Undoubtedly therefore, there was a cottage industry in earthenware established in Barbados by the middle of the 17th century.

By the time of European penetration along the West African coast, Africans had extensive experience in the use of pottery.

They fashioned items such as bowls, gourds, vases and jars, urns, bottles, beakers, pots and plates from red, brown and white clays as artifacts in several museums all over the world will attest. It is perhaps not extravagant a claim that Africans invented the art of ceramic manufacture. Certainly all over Africa there is evidence that the earliest known homo sapiens species practised earthenware manufacture. With the growth of Kingdoms and Empires in the Sudan (Sub-Saharan) region, many thousands of pieces of durable and aesthetically pleasing pottery were fashioned for households of royalty as well as for the humble food gatherer. With an elaborate social organisation headed by the kings "Chiefs", the peoples of Mali, Ghana, Songhai, Oyo, Benin, Sokoto, Asante and Dahomey specialized in spectacular work of gold, silver, copper and earthenware as a way of reflecting the splendour of their political power.

This concentration on brightly coloured pottery, goldwork and silverwork was carried over to the Caribbean by those unfortunate Africans who were captured between the 16th and the 19th centuries, although, obviously, there was less gold, silver, or copper to work on. Africans were forced, rather, to dispense with the rich mythological images and elaborate patterns on the jars, vessels and bowls.

Africans were now forced to produce simple utensils which, although retaining their strength and durability, were less ornate or brightly coloured. However, they continued to work with loving care on household items particularly the covered water-jar which came to be known in Barbados as the Monkey, mainly because it is shaped like the West African mammal in a characteristic 'crouched' sitting position. The other African utensil which was produced in large numbers by the slaves was the "Cornaree" jar for storing meat and fish/at a relatively cool temperature. Of course bowls and dishes were also produced in great quantity, but it is fair to say that their manufacture was not given as much stylistic significance by the remainder of the population, as the "Monkey" and the "Cornaree" jars.

## THE EUROPEANS

At first, European colonists were not making pottery, although they were aware of the island clays, and had attempted, without much success, to make bricks. Later they did learn how to fashion domestic items from the clay, and the Red Leg section, in particular, effected a marriage of their own approach and that of the Africans to produce a "vernacular pottery" some of which can still be seen in the Scotland district, area of Barbados. This English had a tradition of pottery manufacture going back over thousands of years, but from the early days of colonisation they began to import ceramic utensils and adornments from their motherland. This was the period of the European Renaissance and of the flowering of English art. Quite naturally the English colonists initially preferred the ceramic heritage of their homeland, but some of them came to appreciate the sturdy pottery of the Africans who came as slaves, and who made pottery for their own domestic uses. There was obviously considerable cross-fertilization of cultures in the development of Barbadian pottery in the 17th century, and as is the case with the Amerindians we need to delve further into the cultural heritage of the Anglo-Barbadians in this area.

## FROM SLAVE TIMES TO THE PRESENT

The major production of pottery in Barbados took place in the Scotland District which contains abundant clay deposits and today supports the only group of cottage potters in the island. In 1830 it was reported that the clay which is plentifully distributed throughout the hilly district, answers sufficiently well for the manufacture of coarse ware and bricks and accordingly there are several pot kilns in the parishes of St. John, St. Joseph and St. Andrew. Though some of these pot kilns were undoubtedly plantation kilns, many belonged to cottage potters, who were free blacks. These free blacks took over from the slaves in the early 18th century as the main group of potters. The three parishes remained important to the island's pottery industry throughout the slave period to 1838, and well into the early 20th century. Today this cottage industry is concentrated almost solely in St. Andrew, in the Chalky Mount region, although pottery was also being made in some bordering parishes up to fifty years ago.

Although Barbados had an unheralded tradition of ceramic manufacture, due to the tendency among the plantation elite to import Chinaware, Porcelain, Creamware and Buckley ware from England, there is evidence that a creditable ceramic folk tradition emerged slowly during the slave period and reached its apex during the late slave period when slaves were manufacturing ornamental items for the middle and upper classes. Several of these items from the 1820's and 1830's remain either as still functional utensils, e.g. 'cornaree jar', the 'monkey' and mugs for drinking, or as artifacts from another age and technological system — the large sugar jars or vats called 'Muscovado Jars'.

The ceramic folk tradition in this country has not suffered 'submergence', largely because potter-making has always been a useful art — one which produced artifacts which had undeniable utility, and the worth of which could be assessed in a tangible sense.

The pottery tradition has remained the almost exclusive cultural property of the Afro-Barbadians throughout the past 60 years. An examination of the situation reveals that many of the locally developed earthenware exhibited a number of ceramic

traits showing a moderate African element and influence, and some European traits as well. Thus we have in Barbados a pottery tradition which is neither purely African nor purely European, but is rather a creolized system of craft manufacture.

Because of this historical heritage, the Barbadian ceramic tradition is a vibrant one and is worthy of the title, "the oldest cottage industry in the island". Undoubtedly this tradition will continue to grow and flourish well into the 21st century.



## HARDING, WILBERT

Born in Chalky Mount, St. Andrew, early in the 20th century, a potter by birthright. Trained in craft from his early childhood, worked in the huts of noted traditional potters; John Devonish, Lawrence Moore, Edward Springer.

A potter all his life, Harding reminisces of the days when to sell his wares, he travelled by foot from St. Andrew to St. Philip, St. Lucy and Bridgetown. Until the train line was set up from "Twenty Two and a Half", the junction near Belleplaine.

Harding still uses a wood fire kiln, and continues to produce mainly traditional forms: The Monkey, Cornere and Coal Pot. Among his contemporary designs are vases, plant pots and casseroles.



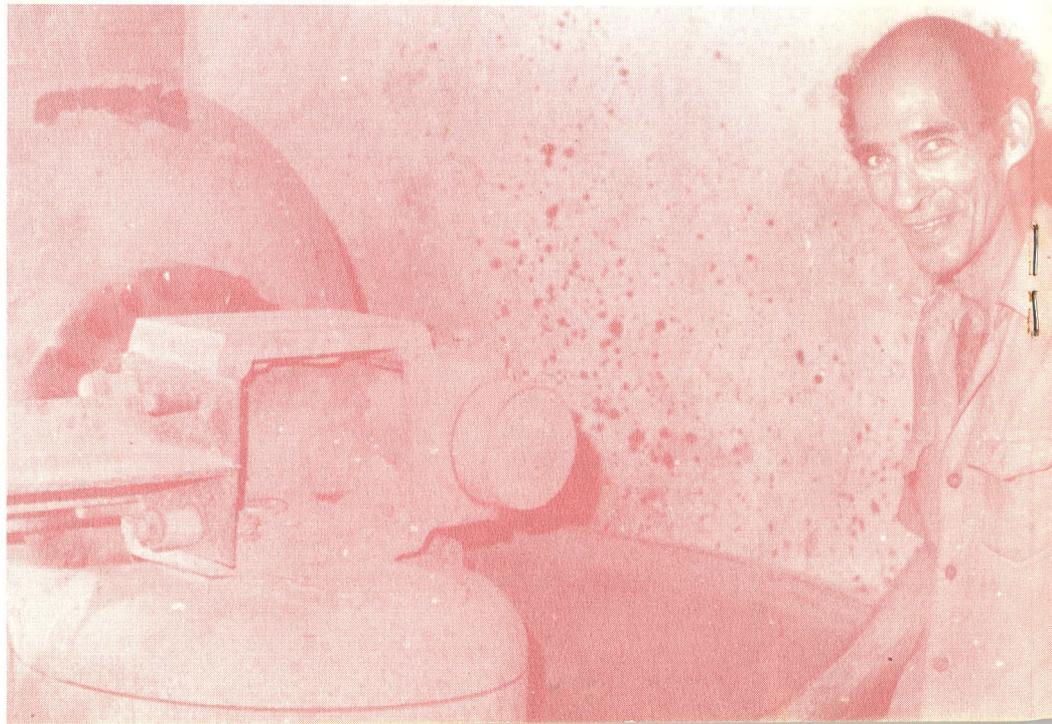
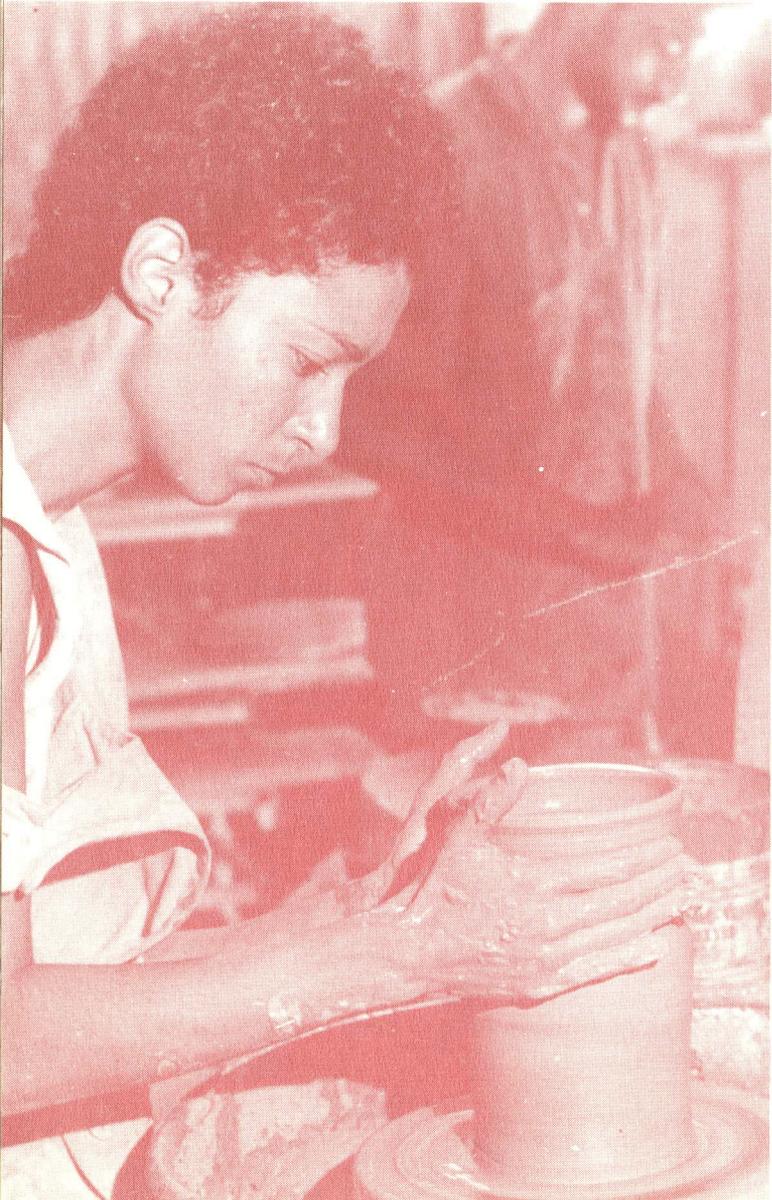
## SPRINGER, JOHN

- 1956 Born in St. Andrew. Formal education, St. Andrew, Bridgetown. Raised in the Chalky Mount Village, a descendant of a family of Potters. Worked in the studio of Wilbert Harding.
- 1976—79 Trained at the pottery centre in Chalky Mount set up by the Christian Action for Development in the Eastern Caribbean (CADEC)
- 1981 Founded the Coral Island Potters, Chalky Mount.

‘Coral Island Potteries’, a group of potters trained by the CADEC scheme, produces mainly domestic ware: mugs, vases, dishes.

Although involved in the new developments in the local ceramic industry, Springer says, “It is my intention to keep the traditional aspect alive, and continue to keep the pottery, of a very high commercial standard”.

THE FAIRFIELD POTTERIES



## UN BY A FAMILY OF POTTERS; DENIS, MAGGIE and PETER BELL

### BELL, DENIS — FATHER

Educated in Jamaica and England

1952 North Staffordshire Polytechnic, Central School of Art, London

1958 Set up a small pottery in Jamaica, Barbados Potters Ltd.

1961 Christopher Russel Pottery, Barbados

1979 Set up the Pottery and Clay processing plant at Fairfield House, St. Michael

BELL — “I feel satisfied that I have a second generation in the field. . . .”

### BELL, MAGGIE — DAUGHTER

Educated in Jamaica and England

1982 North Staffordshire Polytechnic

1983 Worked in a pottery in Cornwall England

1984 Cornwall College of Art

1985 Returned to Barbados to work with Fairfield Potters

Greatly influenced and encouraged by her father, in the field of Art and Technology, Maggie now pursues the more creative aspects of the craft.

### BELL, PETER — SON

Educated in Jamaica and Barbados.

At present pursuing a course in Engineering.

As apprentice to his father, Peter is a skilled potter, assists his father on the clay processing plant.

Apart from supplying prepared clay for the use of many local potters and schools, Fairfield Potteries produces large scale art forms:- jars and plant pots for use in both architectural and land scape designs.



### **C.O.D. Potteries**

Owned and supervised by the well known Barbadian Potter Mr. Courtney Devonish, himself, a descendant of the Chalky Mount Village.

### **The C.O.D. Potters**

Cedric and Joseph Kellman — Throwing  
Pauline D'Hayle — Glazing  
Harriette Gibson — Assistants Decoration  
Elmer Kellman

This group of young men and women has been trained by Mr. Devonish.



**CHUNG, GLORIA — AOCA Design**

1975 — 79 Studied at the Ontario College of Art, Toronto, Canada

1979 — 80 Teacher's Assistant in pottery and ceramics, in the Design Department of the Ontario College of Art. Has exhibited in Canada and Barbados

**AWARDS:**

1978 Dora Wechsler Memorial prize

1979 George A. Reid Award — Honourable Mention

CHUNG — “Whenever I work with clay, I become completely immersed in the challenges of making interesting work; pieces that express inner feelings and show the wonderful properties of clay. My work is dominated by form and I try to balance function and aesthetics carefully”.

## HUEY, LIZ MARIA

Born in Norway, Educated in Norway, Barbados and Venezuela.

Entered the Art School of the Society of Arts Craft in Michigan, U.S.A. continued studies at the Royal Melbourne Technical College, Australia.



AWARDS: Honours in drawing — London

1979 NIFCA Honours — Distinction — 2 merits

1980 NIFCA Honours — 2 distinctions

HUEY — “I gain great satisfaction through creativity. . . .”

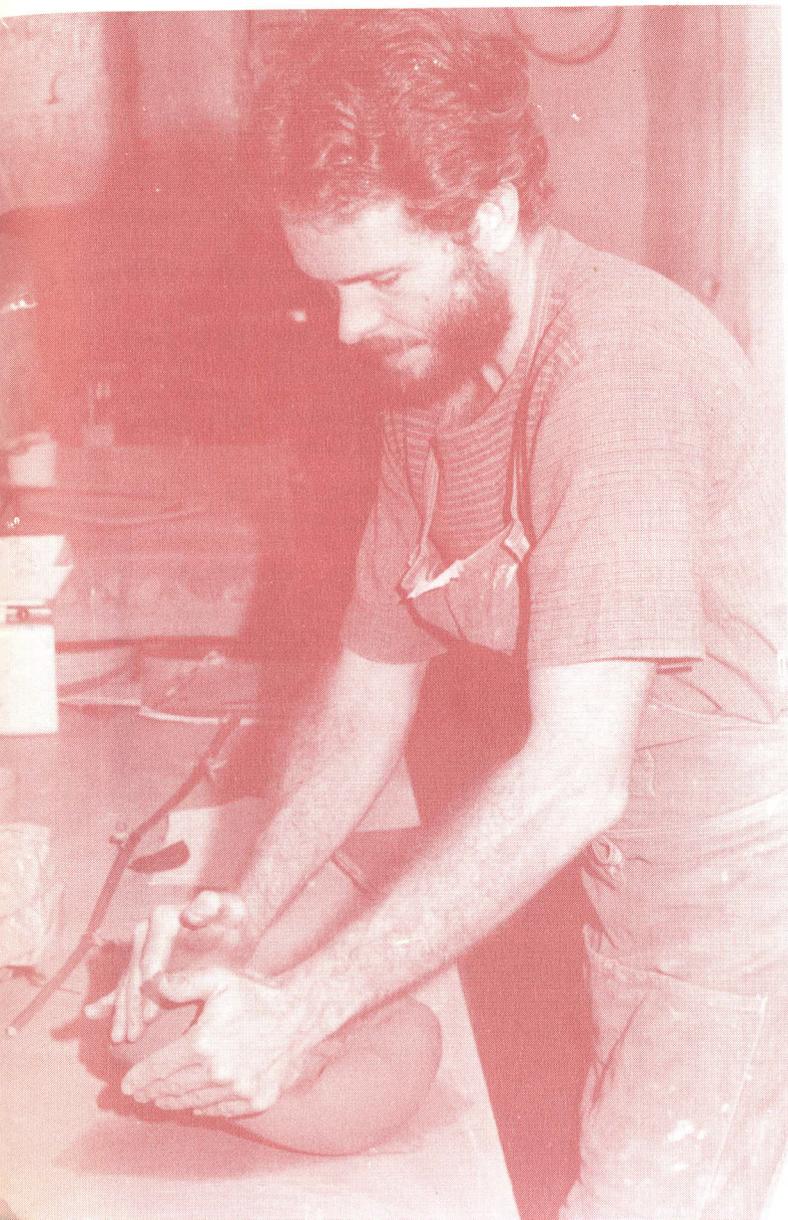


**COLLINS, ANDREW**

- 1966 Farnham School of Art, England — Pottery  
1969 Hammersmith College of Art and Building —  
England Mural Decorating  
1970 Manchester — Guitar making  
1972 Milton Keynes Buckinghamshire,  
Ran a community workshop  
Self taught Silversmith

Has exhibited in Britain and the Caribbean. Inspired by the Impressionists, Egon Schiele, Gustav Klimp Hieronymous Bosch and Salvador Dali

COLLINS — “My work is the result of spontaneous creativity”.



## GRACE, BILL

- 1970—75 Acadia University  
Sociology of Architecture  
Spanish
- 1973—74 LA Universidad de Valencia
- 1978—79 The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
- 1979—81 Studied with John Reeve — Canadian Master Potter
- 1980—83 Founder Double Happiness Pottery — California  
Tutor Barbados Community College
- EXHIBITS:** Exhibits regularly in Barbados, Canada and U.S.A.  
Gold and other awards at NIFCA

Grace has travelled widely, has worked as a teacher, photographer, consultant, designer, visual artist and carpenter.

GRACE — “The pottery industry as a local resources based activity, has great potential for increasing foreign exchange and earnings”.



## SPIELER, GOLDIE

- 1949—54 Studied design and weaving at the Ontario College of Art, Toronto
- 1956—59 Graphics with James Boyd, Ottawa
- 1958—64 Painting, with Henri Masson, Ottawa

Taught art at Queen's College and St. Winifred's School, Barbados. In 1976 began to work with clay and is mainly self-taught as a hand builder.

Has exhibited in Ottawa, Israel, Brazil, Barbados —winning many awards.

SPIELER — “I get a lot of fun and enjoyment out of my work”.

**CAVE, PETER DES. R.C.A.**

- 1946 — 48 Wimbledon School of Art England  
1948 — 51 Royal College of Art England  
1951 — 59 Designer for Industry — Bone China and white  
Earthenware  
1958 — 61 Lecturer in Ceramics — England  
Wimbledon School of Art  
1961 — 66 Chief designer and tutor at Worchester Porcelain,  
Jamaica  
1967 — 80 Designer and Supervisor at Things Jamaican Ltd.  
Examiner and Assessor at Jamaica School of Art

1980 — 83  
Commonwealth Secretariat Assignment —  
I.D.C., Barbados

1984  
C.W.S.A. Things Jamaican Ltd.

1985  
Part time consultancy — I.D.C. Handicrafts,  
Barbados

Designs selected for presentation to Queen  
Elizabeth II and to Princess Margaret.

CAVE — “It is my desire to reach perfection  
in shape and design”.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

The National Cultural Foundation is deeply appreciative to the Industrial Development Corporation for making a potters wheel available to the gallery for use by the potters during the course of the "CLAY" exhibition. This has enable us to run a series of demonstrations, mainly for the benefit of the schools.

We also wish to thank the potters for their co-operation and willingness to give of their knowledge and experience.

Catalogue designed by Ronnie Cumberbatch  
Photograph by Douglas Newton  
Printed by Cole's Printery



The Queen's Park Gallery  
is partially funded by the



BRITISH AMERICAN TOBACCO CO.