

Empty Vessels

Selections from the

Margaret Lawrence Ceramics Collection

Margaret Lawrence Gallery

Victorian College of the Arts

University of Melbourne Southbank Campus

The Collector

I first met Margaret Lawrence in 2004 whilst undertaking a Master of Fine Arts in Ceramic Research at the University of Melbourne, Victorian College of the Arts. I had the privilege of spending time in her company, discussing her life, her art and her ceramic collection. By this time, Margaret had moved into a nursing home, leaving the ceramics collection packed in boxes in her flat. I subsequently spent many months cataloguing her collection in her modest South Yarra residence — a process which provided an invaluable insight into her life and collection. Every spare inch of wall space in every room (except the toilet) was covered in shelves that accommodated the collection. There was little room for anything else. The atmosphere in Margaret's flat was overwhelming — a pre-1960s humble interior containing few items other than ceramics — a threadbare 1930's club lounge and a single original hair and cotton mattress in the bedroom. A nostalgic and perhaps slightly eccentric backdrop to Margaret's life, the only sign of the more modern 20th century was the remaining TV.

Margaret was artistic herself but having tried her hand at painting with 'little success' (in her words), she completed a short course in ceramics and developed an interest in collecting because she felt her attempts to master the craft inadequate. She had a general interest in history and art and visited art galleries frequently. Margaret was passionate about mosaics and in addition to creating her own designs for personal pleasure, she was commissioned to produce a mosaic for the St Kilda Library.

Compiling a ceramics collection gave her an artistic outlet for a field about which she was passionate, enthusiastic and excited. Armed with an appreciation for studio ceramics she began purchasing what she could afford. She started her ceramic collection with the purchase of a ceramic vase decorated with grapes and vine leaves by William Merric Boyd from an exhibition held in the basement of the Melbourne Town Hall in 1945. Although Margaret had purchased 43 ceramic pieces between 1945-1997, the bulk of her collection was formed after this period. By the time of her death in 2005, she had acquired over 600 studio ceramic pieces. Clearly Margaret had a desire to leave a legacy that would exist beyond her passing, an idea that evolved as she aged.

Margaret could be described as a bargain collector — symptomatic perhaps of a generation that lived through The Great Depression. Her notes were filled with quotes like '*incredible price*' and '*beautiful work*', relating to a set of five pieces purchased for '*ONLY*' \$245.00. Margaret was an exceedingly private person — only a handful of artists had the opportunity of meeting her when she occasionally visited them in their studios. It was not uncommon for her to barter with the artist in order to drive the price down! She was known by gallery owners to collect small works from exhibitions that could be accommodated in her flat, choosing pieces she could fit into her handbag and carry home on public transport.

Margaret's collection recreated the traditional base of the artistic sensibilities of her period, and covers primarily functional pieces including jugs, urns, cylinders, amphorae, cups, ovoids, platters, vases, cups, teapots, bowls, etc. There are only a handful of sculptural works by artists such as Stanislaw Halpern,

Alan Watt, Victoria Howlett, Deborah Halpern, Jenny Orchard, Stefan Szonyi and Julie Bartholomew. There are however, artists such as David Ray, Gerry Wedd, Vipoo Srivilasa and Janet Kourakis who are represented in the collection and although their works are vessel based, they contains refreshing sculptural qualities.

Margaret's creative side had also given her an appreciation of the individual development of particular artists and in many instances she went on buying pieces by both students and artists as their studio practice evolved over time. The collection contains multiple works by by Sony Manning, Les Blakebrough, Barbara Swarbrick, Klytie Pate, Reg Preston, Alistair Whyte, Sandra Black and Milton Moon.

Although many of the artists in Margaret's collection were from interstate, the collection was primarily composed from within Victoria. For example, a Melbourne exhibition of pots and sculptures by the Hermannsburg Potters from the Northern Territory gave her the opportunity to add works to which she would not ordinarily be exposed to her collection. The acquisition of the Hermannsburg Potters, has added an important dimension to the collection in the representation of indigenous Australian ceramics.

Her spirited sense of humour is reflected in the acquisition of whimsical works by David Ray, Robyn Lees, Stephan Szonyi, Debra Halpern, Vipoo Srivilasa and Janet Kourakis. Her complete devotion to the Carlton Football Club and her love of the colour blue are best portrayed in the teapot titled '*Carlton Blue*'. Commissioned by Margaret and produced by Gerry Wedd, this personalized work is included in the current display. Many other artists whose works form the Margaret Lawrence Ceramic Collection were unaware of her, or her collection. The foundation set up to manage her affairs continues to maintain both this fine collection and the Margaret Lawrence Gallery.

As a collector, Margaret was discerning — her acquisitions reflect her interest in the diverse styles and tastes of Australian studio ceramics. Her collection, gifted to the Victorian College of the Arts in 2006, is one of the largest private collections of studio ceramics in Australia. Many of Margaret's personal favourites are exhibited here for the first time along with the initial piece that started this comprehensive collection.

Tina Lee Artist and Guest Curator

Gallery One — List of works (from left to right)

1. David Stuchbery, *Lidded Vessel*, 2004, stoneware vessel, celadon glaze
2. Jane Sawyer, *Pourer and Saucer*, c.2004, terracotta, slip, glaze
3. Klytie Pate, *Tulip Vase*, 1997, stoneware, gloss glaze
4. Steven Williams, *Bowl*, date unknown, wood-fired stoneware
5. Janet Kourakis, *Cup and Saucer*, 2002, stoneware, mother of pearl, gold lustre
6. Pippin Drysdale, *Untitled*, c.1995, porcelain
7. Chris Pittard, *Journey*, 2001, stoneware, underglaze, glaze
8. Judith Inkamala, *Budgerigars*, 2000, terracotta
9. Bruce Nuske, *Teapot*, 2004, earthenware
10. Jane Barrow, *Bottle*, 2004, glazed slipware
11. Shane Kent, *Pair of Pourers-Epithany*, 2000, porcelain, stains, clear glaze
12. Clare Barton, *Untitled*, 1999, stoneware
13. John Kent, *Window Series*, 1999, stoneware, glaze
14. Anne Fleming, *Untitled*, 2003, pit fired earthenware
15. David Stuchbery, *Vase*, 2003, porcelain vase, celadon glaze
16. Mary-Lou Pittard, *Porcelain Set*, 2004, stoneware, underglaze, glaze
17. Reg Preston, *Untitled*, c.1990, stoneware, iron and copper glazes
18. Penny Smith, *Untitled*, c.2004, stoneware
19. Garry Bish, *Vessel Can Form*, 2002, stoneware, glaze, decals
20. Vipoo Srivilasa, *Octopus Basket*, 2001, earthenware
21. Peter Petruccelli, *Bottle*, 1990, smoke fired earthenware
22. Sandra Black, *Leaf and Growth Series 1*, 2003, porcelain bowl
23. Ian Jones, *Untitled*, c.1998, wood fired stoneware, ash glaze
24. Arthur Merric Boyd, *Untitled*, 1941, earthenware, tin glaze
25. Robyn Latham, *Vessel II*, c.1998, pit fired earthenware
26. Peter Pilven, *Untitled*, date unknown, glazed porcelain
27. Sharon Muir, *Vase*, 2002, earthenware
28. Alistair Whyte, *Untitled*, c.1990s, porcelain
29. Arthur Merric Boyd, *Vase*, 1921, glazed earthenware

30. Marguerite Mahood, *Vase*, c.1938, stoneware
31. Alistair Whyte, *Untitled*, c.1999, porcelain, cobalt
32. Robyn Latham, *Untitled*, c.2000, burnished & pit fired earthenware
33. Peter Minko, *Untitled*, 2004, porcelain, tenmoku / iron glaze, lustre
34. Peter Pilven, *Tall Bottle*, c.2004, stoneware
35. Les Dickson, *Covered Pot*, c.2004, porcelain
36. Duncan Humme, *Untitled*, c.1999, stoneware, glaze
37. Rolf Bartz, *Untitled*, c.2003, porcelain
38. Gail Nichols, *Bowl*, c.2001, soda glazed earthenware
39. Fleur Schell, *Untitled*, 2004, stoneware, oxide, glaze
40. Judith Roberts, *Untitled*, date unknown, raku-fired earthenware
41. Sony Manning, *Untitled*, c.2007, porcelain, slip
42. Chris Myers, *Untitled*, date unknown, stoneware, lustres
43. Kirk Winter, *Bottle*, 2002, wood fired stoneware, rice hull & ash glazes
44. Artur Halpern, *Untitled*, c.1965, terracotta, bamboo, under-glaze & glaze
45. Lynda Draper, *Vessel*, 2002, stoneware, glaze
46. Rick Price, *Untitled*, 1998, earthenware, marble, lustre, glaze
47. Janet Deboos, *Beaker*, c.2003, porcelain
48. Judith Inkamala, *Tjilpa*, 2000, terracotta, under-glaze
49. Robert Barron, *Lidded Container*, c.2004, stoneware, grogged clay
50. Greg Daly, *Untitled*, c.1989, porcelain, glaze, lustre
51. John Castle Harris, *Untitled*, date unknown, glazed earthenware
52. David Ray, *Untitled*, c.2000, porcelain, decals, glazes, lustre
53. Greg Daly, *Black on Black*, c.1999, porcelain
54. Chester Nealie, *Untitled*, date unknown, stoneware
55. Gary Healey, *Untitled*, 2003, glazed porcelain
56. Ralph Eberlein, *Series 7.2*, 2001, glazed earthenware
57. Elliot David Golightly, *Untitled*, 2000, glazed earthenware
58. Joe Szierer, *Untitled*, 1998, glazed stoneware
59. Penny Smith, *Lidded Vessel*, c.2004, porcelain
60. Greg Crowe, *Untitled*, date unknown, wood-fired stoneware, shino glaze

61. Christopher Sanders, *Untitled*, c.1996, glazed stoneware
62. Britte Stolle Jacob, *Vessel*, c.2004, earthenware, grogged clay
63. Stephen Bowers, *Teapot*, 1998, earthenware, under-glaze, lustre
64. Amy Cohen, *Form*, 2004, mid-fired clay
65. Heja Chong, *Eggplant Container*, c1994, wood-fired stoneware
66. Julie Shaw, *Tea set*, 2002, glazed terracotta
67. Joe Szirer, *Vase*, 1980, glazed earthenware
68. Dianne Kirk, *Untitled*, 2003, porcelain, glaze
69. Biggi Spiro, *Daphne*, c.2003, glazed earthenware
70. Jeff Mincham, *Vessel*, date unknown, glazed stoneware
71. Gus McLaren, *Untitled*, c.1970, glazed stoneware
72. Guy Boyd, *Untitled*, c.1960, slip cast earthenware
73. Angela Valamanesh, *Pinstripe Group A*, 2002, sandblasted earthenware
74. Harold Hughan, *Vase*, c.1975, stoneware
75. Lynda Draper, *Still Life No.4*, 2002, stoneware
76. Victor Greenaway, *Spiral Lipped Cylinder*, 2000, earthenware
77. Melissa Scheele, *Vessel*, 2003, glazed stoneware
78. Melissa Scheele, *Vessel*, 2003, glazed stoneware
78. Peter Ries, *Untitled*, date unknown, stoneware, lustre
79. Ivan Gluch, *Bowl*, c.2003, cast porcelain
80. Lindy Rontji, *Ramiya*, 2001, terracotta
81. Harold Hughan, *Untitled*, c.1965, stoneware, feldspathic glaze
82. David & Hermia Boyd, *Untitled*, 1961, slip cast earthenware
83. William Merric Boyd, *Untitled*, 1947, glazed earthenware
84. Sophie Thomas, *Untitled*, 1999, glazed stoneware
85. Peter Travis, *Bold Cosmic Blossom Jar*, 1973 raku fired earthenware, oxides
86. Gerry Wedd, *Carlton Blue*, 1999, glazed stoneware
87. Sony Manning, *Untitled*, c.1996, slip cast porcelain vase
88. Les Blakebrough, *Untitled*, c.1970, glazed porcelain
89. Les Blakebrough, *Untitled*, c.1999, glazed porcelain, lustre
90. Yvonne Boyd, *Untitled*, c.1949, glazed earthenware

91. Milton Moon, *Untitled*, 2000, glazed stoneware vessel
92. Ivan Gluch, *Untitled*, date unknown, cast porcelain
94. Prue Venables, *Black and Yellow Jug*, 2001, glazed porcelain
95. Martin Beaver, *Untitled*, 1997, wood-fired stoneware, shino & ash glaze
96. Irwin Lewis, *Ceramic Vase*, c.1998, glazed terracotta
97. Sandra Black, *Leaf Fall II*, 2003, porcelain
98. Alexandra Sutherland, *Untitled*, 1953, glazed earthenware
99. Simon Lloyd, *Travelers Samples*, c.2001, glazed earthenware
100. Reg Preston, *Untitled*, c.1990, glazed stoneware, lustre
101. Darey, Art Deco jug, 1935, glazed earthenware

Gallery Two — List of works (from left to right)

102. Stephen Bowers, *Cup & Saucer*, 1998, glazed earthenware
103. Pippin Drysdale, *Untitled*, c.2001, porcelain
104. Brian Keyte, *Oblate Form*, 2003, glazed earthenware
105. Judith Inkamala, *Wrens*, 1998, terracotta
106. Jan Moran, *Bird Jug*, c.2000, glazed earthenware
107. Anne-Maria Plevier, *Untitled*, 2003, glazed stoneware
108. Marita Knutsen, *Untitled*, 2002, glazed porcelain
109. David Pottinger, *Elliptical Vessel IV*, date unknown, laminated agateware, stained porcelain
110. Chris Myers, *Tankard*, c.2002, sandblasted stoneware, lustre
111. Barbara Swarbrick, *Pink Cockatoo Cup*, 2003, earthenware, underglaze
112. Rick & Judy Pierce, *Untitled*, date unknown, glazed porcelain
113. Isobel, *Lidded Canister*, c.1960, glazed earthenware
114. Milton Moon, *Untitled*, 2001, ash fired glaze stoneware
115. Gary Healey, *Vessel*, date unknown, glazed porcelain
116. Stephen Benwell, *Untitled*, 1997, stoneware, glazes
117. Rolf Bartz, *Vessel*, 2004, porcelain
118. Gladys Reynell, *Untitled*, 1922, glazed earthenware

119. Jeff Mincham, *Geomorphic Vessel*, 2003, stoneware
120. Kiyoshi Ino, *Untitled*, c.1983, glazed stoneware
121. Lene Kuhl Jacobsen, *Lines Vase*, c.1999, glazed stoneware
122. Guy Boyd, *Untitled*, 1965, glazed earthenware
123. Neil Douglas & Arthur Merric Boyd, *Untitled*, c.1950, glazed earthenware
124. Andrew Cope, *Untitled*, 2002, stoneware, shino glaze
125. Jane Barrow, *Bottle*, 2004, slip, glaze
126. Victoria Howlett, *Untitled*, c.1989, stoneware, grogged clay, iron & blue glaze
127. Ian Dowling, *Footed Bowl*, c.2004, porcelain
128. Klytie Pate, *Untitled*, 1996, glazed terracotta
129. Sylvia Halpern, *Untitled*, c.1960, glazed earthenware
130. Eric Juckert, *Untitled*, c.1950, glazed earthenware
131. Vipoo SRIVILASA, *Untitled*, 2004, porcelain
132. Alistair Whyte, *Bowl*, c.2004, porcelain, cobalt
133. Chris Myers, *Lidded Container*, date unknown, stoneware
134. David & Hermia Boyd, *Water Jug*, c.1960, glazed earthenware
135. Victor Greenaway, *Spiral Lipped Bowl*, 1991, porcelain
136. Peter Ries, *Vase*, 2004, earthenware, lustre
137. Margaret Holloway, *Untitled*, c.1986, smoke-fired earthenware
138. David Ray, *Jug*, c.2000, glazed earthenware, decals, gold lustre
139. Duncan Hume, *Untitled*, c.1998, stoneware, glaze, lustre
140. David Potter, *Untitled*, 1980, glazed earthenware
141. Pat Phillips, *Untitled*, c.1945, earthenware, glaze
142. John Eagle, *Vessel – Porcelain*, c.2003, porcelain, celadon & copper glaze
143. Peter Pilven, *Untitled*, date unknown, wood-fired stoneware
144. Sandra Black, *Untitled*, 1998, small stoneware, glaze
145. Sue McFarland, *Untitled*, date unknown, earthenware
146. Alan Peascod, *Untitled*, 1994, stoneware, gold lustre
147. Petrus Spronk, *Untitled*, c.1997, burnished, broken & reassembled smoke fired bowl
148. Judith Inkamala, *Possum*, 1998, terracotta, underglazes
149. Shunichi Inoue, *Untitled*, c.1994, stoneware

150. Liz Low, *Untitled (two beakers)*, 2003, porcelain, celadon glaze
151. Peggy Whiting, *Untitled*, c.1950s, earthenware
152. John Perceval & Arthur Merric Boyd, *Untitled*, c.1960s, terracotta, tin glaze, cobalt
153. David Pottinger, *Vessel*, c.2004, stoneware neriage
154. Pippin Drysdale, *Untitled*, c.1995, stoneware, glazes & lustre
155. Steven Harrison, *Untitled*, c.1999, wood fired earthenware, ash glazes
156. Klytie Pate, *Untitled*, 1991, glazed earthenware
157. Frederick Ernest Cox, *Jollif cup and saucer*, c.1950s, glazed earthenware
158. Kevin White, *Untitled*, 2002, porcelain, decals
159. John Dermer, *Untitled*, c.1998, stoneware, glaze
160. Les Blakebrough, *Vase*, c.1996, southern ice porcelain
161. Jane Sawyer, *Pillow Series-Bowl*, 2001, terracotta, slip and glaze
162. Peter Dahl, *Untitled*, c.1998, stoneware, glazes
163. Christine Smith, *Vessel*, c.2002, stoneware, lustre
164. Ted Secombe, *Vase*, 2003, glazed porcelain
165. David & Hermia Boyd, *Untitled*, 1949, glazed earthenware
166. Shigeo Shiga, *Untitled*, 1999, porcelain bottle, copper glaze
167. Dianne Kirk, *Untitled*, 2003, porcelain
168. Arthur Merric Boyd, *Jug*, c.1947, glazed earthenware
169. Jill Symes, *Fungous*, c.1995, glazed earthenware
170. Gerry Wedd, *Pair of Jugs*, c.2003, porcelain
171. Arthur Merric Boyd, *Cup*, c.1947, glazed earthenware
172. Sony Manning, *Untitled*, c.1994, glazed porcelain
173. Elise Kerr, *Vases 1*, 1996, glazed earthenware
174. William Merric Boyd, *Untitled*, c.1947, earthenware
175. Greg Daly, *Bowl*, c.2004, glazed porcelain, lustre
176. William Merric Boyd, *Untitled*, 1945, glazed earthenware
177. David Ray, *Untitled*, c.2000, porcelain
178. Barry Singleton, *Untitled*, c.2003, glazed stoneware