
C E R A M I C
S E R I E S •

Peter Lane

Aberystwyth Arts Centre



NOVEMBER 1997 number 86

Peter Lane

As the day unfolds, at Lane's beautiful home and garden in Alresford, the jig-saw puzzle of his life gradually begins to fit into a complex picture which confirms and clarifies my perception of his remarkable career. A modest and multifaceted man, he has juggled a career in full-time teaching (that began in schools, progressed to colleges and culminated with the training of teachers) with world-wide recognition as a professional porcelain potter, who managed, at the same time, to write his celebrated books 'Studio Ceramics' and 'Ceramic Form' as well as two more on porcelain, and raise a successful and happy family of two daughters with his wife Jean.

In his life and in his work, Peter is a person with apparently boundless energy, whose life is his philosophy in action; someone, on his own admission, who doesn't like to waste time. He pursues excellence, fuelled by his extensive knowledge and the desire to create the perfect pot, but realising that to arrive at perfection is to call the journey over.

Peter Lane began his career at Bath Academy of Art, thinking he would paint, but discovered his strength lay in calligraphy and lettering (disciplines which require a meticulous eye for form and line combined with a strong sense of the dynamic tension of the interstices, and which are still evident in his work today). It was during his last term at Bath that he chose to focus on ceramics and became 'lit up by it', spending every minute he could in the pottery studio where James Tower took a keen interest in him. The experience at Bath formed the bed rock of his career as a teacher and a potter. 'We were not taught how to teach as such, but encouraged to search out ideas and a variety of approaches to any given task.'

His first pots were made of earthenware with majolica decoration and were referred to as 'honest pots' in an early exhibition review, but Peter recalls that it was a request from a student who wanted to try porcelain, that began his own long involvement with this demanding material. There can be few people who appreciate pots, and yet are unfamiliar with his pierced and carved porcelain bowls or his command of glazes and decorative effects on precisely thrown forms.

Although he is a person full of energy and purpose, 1987 marked a big change from the hitherto frenetic pace of his life. He took early retirement from his role as Senior Lecturer at the University of East Anglia and moved to the

Lake District with his wife, drawn by a love of the landscape and walking. While there, he completed his third book, 'Ceramic Form', set up a studio with gas and electric kilns, and spent many months renovating their home. But, three years later, propelled southwards to escape the dull, grey drabness that pervades much of the English winter, they moved to Hampshire, where he decided to stop potting in order to concentrate on writing and painting instead. It was a chance meeting with Barbara Ling of the Candover Gallery that led him to change his mind and begin making pots again for a solo exhibition there in 1991. His kilns had been sold and his materials and glazes given away, but this gave him a clean slate, and so began his experiments with brilliant colour in tonal arrangements, using their relative opacity or transparency to create a feeling of layers or depths in the decoration, which has sustained his work to date, though the imagery he uses has passed through many phases.

Peter uses a camera to record his interests in natural objects and landscape and his experiences of travel in other countries. This is not to force a connection or a direct link with his work, but to celebrate the memory and feed the imagination. Some influences are only recognised in hindsight, but others have provided a rich vein of inspiration, especially the effects of light passing through layers: plants and lily leaves in still, clear water, or patterns of glass and steel reflected in a contemporary architectural sky light. The decoration on earlier pieces had been very formal and geometric - a visit to the Vasarely museum in France produced strong resonances by using clearly defined tonal areas to create depth. Later designs became soft and fluid, like reflections on water. The theme underpinning the current series of 'Mountains', 'Skies' and 'Seas' is his preoccupation with the varying qualities of light:, its relationship with colour and its power to evoke atmosphere. Throwing porcelain, especially large or even moderate forms requires a high level of skill and patience to coax it into shape before it rebels and pancakes to the wheel; it can be like dealing with soap that has been in the bath too long! Peter Lane's acuity of vision and dexterity of hand are hard-won over years of experience. The throwing is merely the beginning of a process where the porcelain form is shaped but there follows an intense and meticulous refining of the whole surface to create a vehicle for the decoration. Here is some one who loves the process of making meticulously, step by step, shaping and shaving and smoothing until the 'bones' of the form are revealed. Other potters, Cardew's 'mud and water' people, for example, may make forms with a direct and sensuous reference to the wet, plastic clay, but softness and plasticity are not its sole expression. In Peter's work there are few external references to the fingers travelling up the form as it revolves on the wheel, nor undulations to disturb the profile, and no drips of

glaze or colour on the surface. These are pots caressed by a perfectionist in a different way, at a later stage in the process. His work does not rely on chance or spontaneous expression but on a masterful manipulation and intimate knowledge of materials and tools combined with a clarity of intention and the continual need to refine and rework ideas in his search for perfection. A recent development has been sanding the rims of bowls after firing, revealing the white porcelain which acts as a frame for the colour and defines the form.

Lane uses an airbrush to apply the colour, which he sometimes sprays over a series of carefully cut, intricate masks. The precision and exacting demands of this multi-layered masking are not for the absent minded; they require a single-pointed focus of attention, to analyse and build the sequence of layered colours. He uses commercial stains which, having tested exhaustively, he now mixes by eye to achieve extremely subtle shifts in tone and hue. The softness and merging of the colours, delivered by the airbrush, fools the eye; we are not quite sure where the surface lies.

As experiences shape the man so the man shapes the pot. In Peter Lane's work we have delicacy and precision, but do not be fooled by the familiarity of the forms, for whilst they can be described as bowls and vases, to do so is to miss the point, for he says 'I'm much more interested in form and surface than in function'. He has involved himself, particularly, with bowls throughout his career, 'I am primarily interested in their elegance of form, simplicity of shape, and purity of line, swelling and springing upwards from the base.'

Translucence, the talisman of porcelain qualities, where light passes through the solid walls of a pot fired to maturity, is experienced and expressed by refining the section of the porcelain walls to a point of thinness. Peter Lane has used this quality in previous work, though his current interest is not in light passing through the body, but rather with a fresh aesthetic of porcelain where light appears to be mysteriously transmitted from the pot itself. This is achieved through the sensitive use of tone and colour, uninterrupted by glaze, and aided by the impact and raw brilliance of the stains. His porcelain bowls, receptors for and reflectors of 'light', become metaphors for the spirit and of temporal atmosphere becoming ethereal, whereas the taller vertical forms, somatic and enclosing, seem to be 'light', manifesting as form - becoming the body.

To find our way to an understanding of Peter Lane's work is to engage both senses and intellect; to feel the resonances of our own experiences with the influences which have nourished him. The language of his porcelain is that of sensate intimacy, the memory of light and colours perceived - on fine clear evenings, or by tropical seas. The images suggested by the bands of colour on his 'landscape' series allow the eye to expand perception beyond the contours of the vessels, to a personal conclusion in the infinity of space around the form.

Sometimes, depending on the juxtaposition of the pots, this allows the image from one form to drift into another, incorporating the spaces in between. This suggestion of light and space may resonate with our memories of landscapes and sky-scapes at the end of crystal days, but the pots also invite us to experience further through the sense of touch. The polished porcelain is like skin, silky and smooth; only the sensation of coolness returns us to our thoughts.

The language of ceramics may be polyglot, depending on the interaction and response between the viewer and the viewed. In Lane's work we have modesty and majesty, mastery and mystery; if we can hear these eloquent pots, we can perceive the language of the man. But just as surely as the map is not the territory, the words are not the pot. So it is with these new works from Peter Lane, experiencing them with a sensuous and intelligent eye and hand is much more satisfying than mere words or pictures.

Caroline Whymann 1997



'Blue Lagoon' Series Porcelain Ø 32cm

I November - 10 January 1997-98

Supported by the Arts Council of Wales

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C Y F R E S O

G E R A M E G

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TACHWEDD 1997 rhif 86

Peter Lane

Wrth i'r diwrnod ymagor yng nghartref hardd Peter Lane gyda'i ardd brydferth yn Alresford, bydd jig-sô ei fywyd yn graddol ffurfio darlun cymhleth sy'n cadarnhau ac yn crisiau'r ffordd y bydd a i'n edrych ar ei yrfa ryfeddol. Dyn gwyliaidd, amlochrog ydyw sydd wedi jyglo gyrfa fel athro llawn-amser (a ddechreuodd mewn ysgolion ac a symudodd i golegau lle, yn y diwedd, y bu'n hyfforddi athrawon eraill), gyda chydnaabyddiaeth fyd-eang fel crochenydd porslen proffesiynol, a lwyddodd, ar yr un pryd, i ysgrifennu'i lyfrau adnabyddus "Studio Ceramics" a "Ceramic Form" yn ogystal â dau lyfr arall ar borslen, ynghyd â magu dwy o ferched dedwydd a llwyddiannus, gyda'i wraig, Jean.

Yn ei fywyd ac yn ei waith, fel ei gilydd, mae Lane'n ddyn sydd fel pe bai ganddo egni di-baid. Athroniaeth ar waith yw'i fywyd. Dyma rywun, yn ôl ei gyfaddefiad ei hun, nad yw'n hoffi gwastraffu amser. Rhagoriaeth yw'i nod, ac mae wedi'i danio gan ei wybodaeth helaeth a'i awydd i greu'r pot perffaith ond gan sylweddoli, ar yr un pryd, pe bai'n cyrraedd y fath berffeithrwydd y byddai'r daith ar ben.

Dechreuodd Peter Lane ei yrfa yn Academi Celf Caerfaddon, gan feddwl mai peintio fyddai'r alwedigaeth, ond darganfu mai mewn ceinlythrennu oedd ei gryfder (disgyblaeth sy'n gofyn am lygad eithriadol o graff am ffurf a llinell ynghyd ag ymdeimlad cryf ynglŷn â thensiwn deinamig gwagleoedd, rhywbyth sy'n dal i fod yn amlwg yn ei waith hyd heddiw). Yn ystod ei gyfnod yng Nghaerfaddon, dewisodd ganolbwytio ar gerameg. Roedd o yn ei elfen a byddai'n treulio bob munud awr fel y gallai yn y stiwdio crochenwaith lle y byddai James Tower yn cymryd diddordeb awchus ynddo. Y profiad yng Nghaerfaddon oedd cysail ei yrfa fel athro a chrochenydd. "Ni chawsom ein dysgu sut i ddysgu fel y cyfryw, ond fe'n hanogwyd i chwilio am syniadau a dulliau gwahanol i fynd i'r afael â'r tasgau dan sylw."

Potiau pridd oedd llestri cyntaf Lane, wedi'u haddurno â majolica a dŵr. Cyfeiriwyd at y rhain fel "potiau gonest" mewn adolygiad o arddangosfa gynnari. Ond, mae o'n gallu cofio mai cais gan fyfyrwi, a oedd eisiau rhoi cynnig ar borslen, a ddechreuodd ei ymwnieud yntau â'r deunydd yma. Ni all fod ond ychydig bobol sy'n gwerthfawrogi potiau ac eto sy'n anghyfarwydd â'i borslen drywanedig, gerfiedig a'i allu hefo gwydreddau ac effeithiau addurno ar ffurflau sydd wedi'u taflu'n fanwl gwir.

Er ei fod yn llawn egni a phwrpas, ym 1987 cafwyd newid mawr yn natur ffrenetic blaenorol bywyd Lane. Ymddeolodd yn gynnari o'i swydd fel Uwch ddarllithydd ym Mhrifysgol East Anglia a symudodd i ardal y Llynnoedd gyda'i wraig, wedi'i ddenu gan gariad tuag at y tirlun a'r awydd i gerdded y

mynyddoedd. Tra oedd yno, gorffennodd ei drydydd lyfr, "Ceramic Form", sefydlodd stiwdio gydag odynnau nwya a thrydan a threuliodd fisoeedd lawer yn adnewyddu eu cartref. Ond, tair blynedd yn ddiweddarach, fe ddaeth yn ôl i'r de i ddianc rhag naws lwydaidd y gaeaf yn Lloegr, gan symud i Swydd Gaerwynt, lle y penderfynodd roi'r gorau i'r potio er mwyn canolbwytio ar ysgrifennu a pheintio. Cyfarfyddiad hap a damwain â Barbara Ling o Oriel Candovery a'i harweiniodd at newid ei feddwl a dechrau gwneud potiau unwaith eto ar gyfer arddangosfa unigol yno ym 1991. Roedd ei odynnau wedi'u gwerthu ac roedd wedi rhoi'i wydreddau a deunyddiau i bobl eraill. Felly, roedd ganddo lechen lân a dechreuodd ei arbrofion gyda lliwiau llachar mewn trefniadau tonaidd gan ddefnyddio'r amrywiaeth yn eu pylni a'u tryloywder i greu teimlad o haenau neu ddyfnderoedd yn yr addurn sydd wedi cynnal ei waith hyd heddiw, er bod y delweddu a ddefnyddir ganddo wedi mynd drwy sawl cyfnod.

Bydd Lane'n defnyddio camera i gofnodi'i ddiddordebau mewn gwrthrychau naturiol a'r tirlun a'i brofiadau wrth deithio mewn gwledydd eraill. Nid er mwyn gorfodi cysylltiad na dolen uniongyrchol gyda'i waith yw diben tynnu'r lluniau hyn, ond yn hytrach er mwyn dathlu'r cof a bwydo'r dychymyg. Ni fydd rhai dylanwadau'n cael eu hadnabod ond wrth edrych yn ôl, ond mae eraill wedi cynnig ysbrydoliaeth gyfoethog, yn enwedig effeithiau golau sy'n mynd drwy haenau, planhigion a dail y lili mewn dŵr clir a llonydd, neu batrymau o wydr a dur wedi'u hadlewyrchu mewn ffenest do gyfoes. Bu'r addurno ar ddarnau blaenorol yn hynod ffurfiol a geometrig - ysgogodd ymwelliad ag amgueddfa Vasarely yn Ffrainc adleisiau cryf o ddefnyddio mannau tonaidd amlwg i greu dyfnder. Yn ddiweddarach, roedd y dylunwaith yn fwy meddal a hylifol fel lluniau mewn dŵr. Y thema wrth wraidd y gyfres gyfredol o "Fynyddoedd, Awyr a Moroedd" yw'i ddiddordeb mewn gwahanol ansawdd golau, ei berthynas â lliw a'i bŵer i greu awyrgylch.

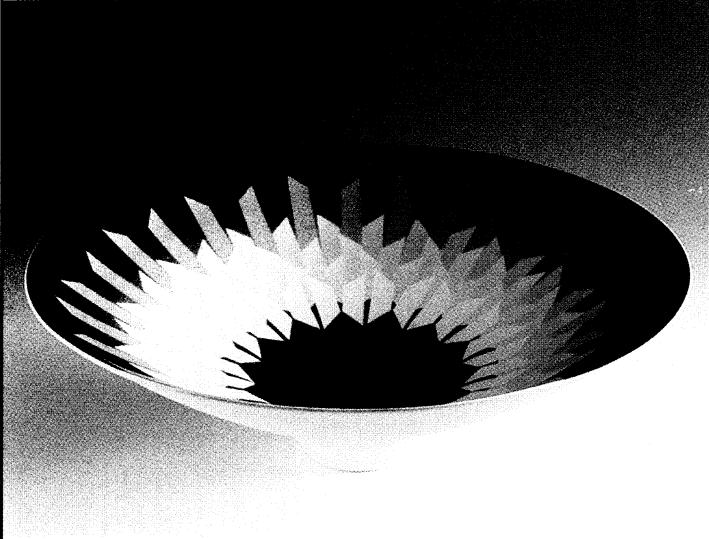
Mae taflu porslen, yn enwedig ffurflau mawr, neu hyd yn oed rhai canolig eu maint, yn gofyn llawer iawn o sgil ac amynedd er mwyn cosi'r deunydd i'r siâp angenrheidiol cyn iddo wrthryfela a gwywo fel crempog yn ôl ar y droell; gall fod fel ymdrin â sebon sydd wedi bod yn y baddon am yn rhy hir! Mae ymdrechion dyfal Lane ar hyd y blynyddoedd wedi perffeithio craftrter ei olwg a medrusrwydd ei law. Man cychwyn yn unig yw'r taflu wrth siapio ffurf y borslen, ond bydd yr arwynebedd cyfan yn cael ei fireinio er mwyn creu cyfrwng ar gyfer yr addurno.

Dyma rywun sydd wrth ei fod hefo'r broses o greu'n ofalus iawn gam wrth gam, gan siapio ac eillio a llyfnu hyd nes y bydd "esgyrn" y ffurf yn cael eu datgelu.. Gall crochenyddion eraill, pobl "dŵr a llaid" Cardew, er engraifft, greu ffurf sy'n cyfeirio'n uniongyrchol ac yn synhwyru at y clai plastig, gwlyb, ond nid meddalwch a phlastigrwydd yw'r unig fynegiant. Yng ngwaith Lane, ni cheir ond ychydig gyfeiriadau allanol at y bysedd sy'n traфaelio ar hyd y ffurf

wrth iddi droi ar y droell, nac unrhyw ymdonni i dorri ar draws y proffil, a fawr o ddiferion gwydredd na lliw ar yr wneb. Dyma botiau sydd wedi'u hanwyo gan berffeithydd mewn ffordd wahanol yn ystod cyfnod diweddarach yn y broses. Ni fydd ei waith yn dibynnu ar hap na mynegiant byrfyfyr, ond ar ddefnydd meistrolgar o'r dwylo a gwybodaeth fanwl am y deunyddiau a'r arfau, ynghyd â bwriad diamwys a'r angen o hyd i fireinio ac ailweithio syniadau wrth anelu at berffeithrwydd. Datblygiad diweddar fu sandio ymlynol powlenni ar ôl eu tanio, gan ddatgelu'r borslen wen sy'n gweithredu fel ffrâm ar gyfer lliw ac sy'n diffinio'r ffurf. Bydd Lane yn defnyddio brwsh awyr i roi'r lliw ar y ffurf. Weithiau, bydd o'n ei chwistrellu dros nifer o fasgiau sydd wedi'u torri'n fanwl ac yn gywrain. Nid gwaith rhywun didoreth mo gywirdeb a gofynion llym y masgio amlhaenog yma. Maent yn gofyn am ganolbwytio a sylw manwl, er mwyn dadansoddi ac adeiladu dilyniant y lliwiau haenog. Bydd yn defnyddio staeniau masnachol y bydd, erbyn hyn, ar ôl iddynt gael eu profi'n ddiben-draw, yn eu cymysgu â llygad er mwyn creu symudiadau cynnil dros ben yn y lliw a'r cywair. Bydd y meddalwch a'r ffordd y bydd y lliwiau'n cymysgu ac yn ymdoddi, effaith a greir gan y brwsh awyr, yn twyllo'r llygad, fel na allwn ni fod yn holol siŵr lle yn union mae'r arwyneb yn gorwedd.

Fel y bydd profiad yn siapio'r dyn felly y bydd y dyn yn siapio'r pot. Yng ngwaith Lane, mae gennym fanylder a chywreindeb, ond peidiwch â chael eich twyllo gan gynefin dra'r ffurfiau, achos er y gellir eu disgrifio fel powlenni a ffolau, mae hynny'n methu'r pwnt. Yr hyn a ddywed Lane yw: "Mae gen i lawer iawn mwy o ddiddordeb mewn ffurf ac arwynebedd nag sydd gen i mewn swyddogaeth. Yn ystod ei yrfa, bu powlenni o ddiddordeb arbennig iddo. "Mae gen i ddiddordeb yn bennaf yng ngosgeiddrwydd eu ffurf, symylrwydd eu siâp a phurdeb eu llinellau, sy'n ymchwyloddo ac yn ymgodi o'r gwaelod." Tryloywder yw'r pennaf o nodweddion porslen, lle y bydd golau'n mynd drwy waliau solet pot sy'n cael ei danio i'w lawn aedd fedrwydd. Profir a mynegir y briodwedd hon drwy fireinio rhan o waliau'r borslen hyd at ryw fan tenau, tenau. Mae Lane wedi defnyddio'r briodwedd hon yn ei waith blaenorol, er nad yw ei ddiddordeb presennol yn ymwnenud â golau yn mynd drwy'r corff, ond, yn hytrch, ag esthetig newydd o borslen, lle y bydd golau fel pe bai'n cael ei drosglwyddo mewn ffordd gyfrin o'r pot ei hun.. Gwneir hyn drwy ddefnydd sensitif o liw a chywair, heb dorri ar ei draws drwy wydro, ac wedi'i helpu gan effaith a disgleirdeb amrwd y staeniau. Daw ei bowlenni porslen, sy'n derbyn ac yn adlewyrchu'r golau, yn fetafforau ar gyfer yr ysbryd ac awyrgylch yr amser, gan droi'n ansylweddol ac yn ysgafn, tra bydd y ffurfiau fertigol, talach, yn somatig ac yn amgaeol, yn ymddangos fel "golau" yn ymrithio fel "ffurf", gan ffurfi'o'r corff.

Mae cael hyd i ffordd i ddeall gwaith Lane yn gofyn am ddefnyddio'r synhwyrau a'r deall er mwyn clywed adleisiau ein profiadau gyda'r dylanwadau sydd wedi'i faethu. Iaith



Celebrations III Porcelain Ø 32cm

synhwyrus, fanwl yw iaith porslen, atgofion am olau a lliw fel y'u gwelir ar nosweithiau braf, clir, neu mewn moroedd trofannol. Mae'r delweddau a awgrymir gan fandiau'r lliw ar ei waith tirluniol, yn gadael i'r llygad ehangu'i chanfyddiad y tu hwnt i amlinelliad y llestri, at ryw linell derfyn personol yn y gofod anfesuradwy o gwmpas y ffurf. Weithiau, gan ddibynnu ar ba botiau a fydd yn sefyll wrth ymhl ei gilydd, bydd hyn yn gadael i'r ddelwedd o'r naill ffurf ddrifftio i'r llall, gan ymgorffori'r gofod rhnggydnt. Gall yr awgrym yma o olau a gofod godi atgofion am dirlun ac awyrlun ar ddiwedd diwrnodau crisiau, ond bydd y potiau hefyd yn ein gwahodd i brofi ymhellach drwy eu cyffwrdd. Mae'r borslen loyw fel croen, yn sidanillyd ac yn llyfn, dim ond ei oerni sy'n adfer ein meddyliau. Gall cerameg fod yn amlieithog, gan ddibynnu ar y rhngweithio a'r ymateb rhwng yr un sy'n edrych a'r hyn yr edrychir arno. Yng ngwaith Lane, gallwn ni gael gwyleidd-dra a mawredd, meistrolaeth a chyfriniaeth, os gallwn glywed y potiau huawdl yma, gallwn ddeall iaith y dyn. Ond fel nad y map yw'r diriogaeth, felly nid y geiriau yw'r pot. Mae hyn yn wir hefyd am yr gweithiau newydd hyn gan Peter Lane. Mae eu profi gyda llygad a llaw synhwyrus a deallus, yn fwy boddhaol na'r geiriau na lluniau'n unig.

Caroline Whyman 1997.