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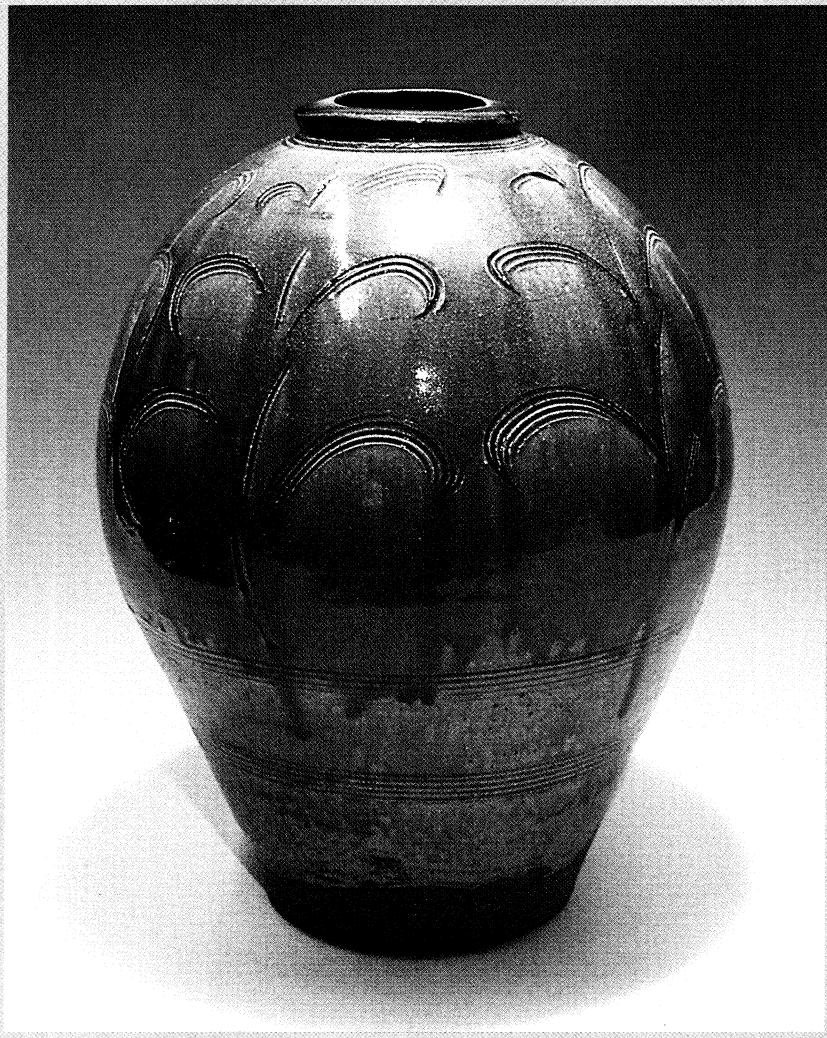
CANOLFAN Y CELFYDDYDAU ABERYSTWYTH ARTS CENTRE

phil rogers

potters from wales
crochenyddion o gymru

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Phil Rogers is a potter of conviction, a traditionalist who holds certain values and beliefs about the role of pottery in the modern world. He has no interest in ceramic fashion or the more fickle aspects of the contemporary crafts scene. It is for this reason that I find his location - at Rhayader, in Wales, significant. It is more than a place to live and work. It speaks also of his affinity with, and independence on that part of the Welsh landscape and the necessity of a rural base for the kind of work he does. Potters like Phil Rogers are sustained and informed by their respective parts of the more secluded British map. Look too at Batterham in Dorset, Malone in Cumbria and Dodd in Somerset - these craftsmen are affected by the inherent properties of local materials and the cycle of the changing seasons. The context of their work is clearly set out.

Rogers was intuitively drawn to what is usually termed the Anglo- Oriental style but for him this is more than a purely visual approach. It is about your method of working; an attitude that sees each stage of the creative process, from wedging the clay to mixing the glazes, as equally significant. Truth to material is essential to this. For Rogers, the joy of working with clay is being able to explore its natural plastic qualities. When walking round a recent ceramic exhibition together, Phil lamented the 'anti - clay' nature of the pieces we were examining - pots which had effectively suppressed their material because of their technical dexterity. Pots in his own collection speak volumes about his preferred aesthetic;

Mae Phil Rogers yn grochenydd o arddeliad, yn draddodiadur sy'n arddel gwerthoedd a chredoau arbennig ynglŷn â swyddogaeth crochenwaith yn y byd modern. Nid oes ganddo ddiddordeb mewn ffasiwn ceramig neu'r agwedduau mwyn oriog ar y sîn greftau gyfoes. Dyma'r rhewm yr wyf yn ystyried ei leoliad - Rhaeadr, Cymru, yn arwyddocaol. Mae'n fwyl na lle i fwyl a gweithio ynddo. Mae'n sôn hefyd am ei hoffter a'i ddibyniaeth ar y rhan honno o'r tirlun Cymreig a'r angen am sylfaen wledig ar gyfer y math o waith y mae'n ei wneud. Mae crochenyddion fel Phil Rogers yn cael eu cynnal a'u cyfarwyddo gan eu rhannau priodol o'r map Prydeinig mwyn diarfodd. Edrychwrw hefyd ar Batterham yn Dorset, Malone yn Cumbria a Dodd yng Ngwlad yr Haf - mae'r crefftawyr rhain yn cael eu heffeithio gan briodoleddau cynhenid defnyddiau lleol a chylchred y tymhorau cyfnewidiol. Mae cyd-destun eu gwaith wedi cael ei osod allan yn glir.

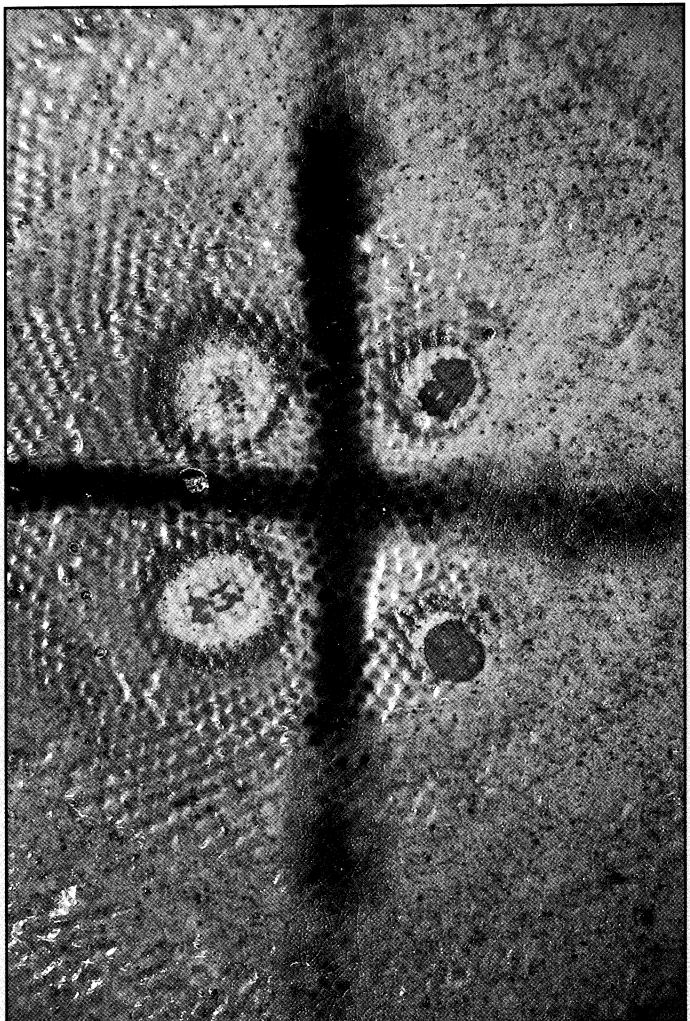
Cafodd Rogers ei ddenu'n reddfol at yr hyn a elwir fel arfer yn arddull Eingl-Ddwyreiniol, ond iddo ef mae hyn yn fwyl na modd gweledol yn unig. Mae'n ymwned â'ch dull o weithio; agwedd sy'n gweld pob rhan o'r broses greadigol, o letemu'r clai i gymysgu'r gwydreddau, mor arwyddocaol â'i gilydd. Mae teyrnagrwr i ddefnydd yn angenrheidiol i hyn. I Rogers, y pleser o weithio â chlai yw gallu archwilio ei nodweddion plastig naturiol. Tra'n cerdded o gwmpas arddangosfa geramig gyda'n gilydd yn ddiweddar, gresynai Rogers natur "wrth-glai" y darnau yr oeddym yn edrych arnynt - potiau a oedd wedi mygu eu defnydd yn effeithiol oherwydd eu deheurwydd technegol. Mae'r potiau yn ei gasgliad ef ei hun yn siarad cyfrolau am ei hoff estheteg; symbrwydd ffurf ac addurn, gwydreddau dwfn cyoethog, a'r angen i fod yn ffwythiannol. Hwyrrach fod hyn i gyd yn swnio'n rhamantus ond yr ydym yn delio â mwyn na gonestrwydd iwtapaidd. Mae'r rhain yn eitemau i gael eu defnyddio o gwmpas y tŷ bob dydd, gwaith wedi'i daflu ar yr olwyn er mwyn defnydd cyffredin, yn cynnig gwirthwenwyn i ddiflasrwydd y masgynhyrchu gwaethaf.

simplicity of form and decoration, deep rich glazes, and the need to be functional. Romantic it may all sound but we are dealing with more than utopian honesty. These are items to be used about the house in an everyday sense, wheel thrown work for ordinary use, offering an antidote to the anonymity of the worst mass production.

Born in Newport in 1951, Rogers studied at Swansea College of Art in the early seventies. After a period of teaching in East Anglia, he set up his first pottery in Rhayader in 1978. In 1984 he was able to find the space he always wanted - at Cefn Faes Farm, on a hillside outside the town. Here was a remote and unspoiled place, with the river Wye down below and a dramatic mountainous backdrop, that gave him all he needed. There were ample farm buildings for alteration and he was able to convert the stone cowhouse into a pottery and an adjacent stable into a

Ganed Rogers yng Nghasnewydd ym 1951. Bu'n ffyriwr yng Ngoleg Celf Abertawe yn y saithdegau cynnar. Ar ôl cyfnod yn dysgu yn Nwyrain Anglia, sefydlodd ei grochenfa gyntaf yn Rhaeadr ym 1978. Ym 1984 fe llwyddodd i ddod o hyd i'r gofod y bu'n deisfu amdano erioed - ar Fferm Cefn Faes, ar fryn y tu allan i'r dref. Roedd hwn yn lle anghysbell ac heb ei ddifetha, gydag Afon Gwy oddi tano a mynydd-dir dramatig y tu ôl iddo, a roddai bopeth yr oedd arno'i angen iddo. Roedd yna ddigonedd o adeiladau fferm i'w hadnewyddu, a llwyddodd i droi beudy carreg yn grochenfa a stabl gyfagos yn sied odyn. Adeiladodd odyn ddrafft-i-lawr fawr wedi'i thanio ag olew ar gyfer crochenwaith caled rhad ac yna odyn catenery lai wedi'i thanio gan goed ac olew ar gyfer ei wydredd-halen nodweddiadol.

Fel cymaint o rai eraill sy'n gweithio yn nhraddodiad Rogers, cafodd droedigaeth effeithiol i lyfr Bernard Leach,



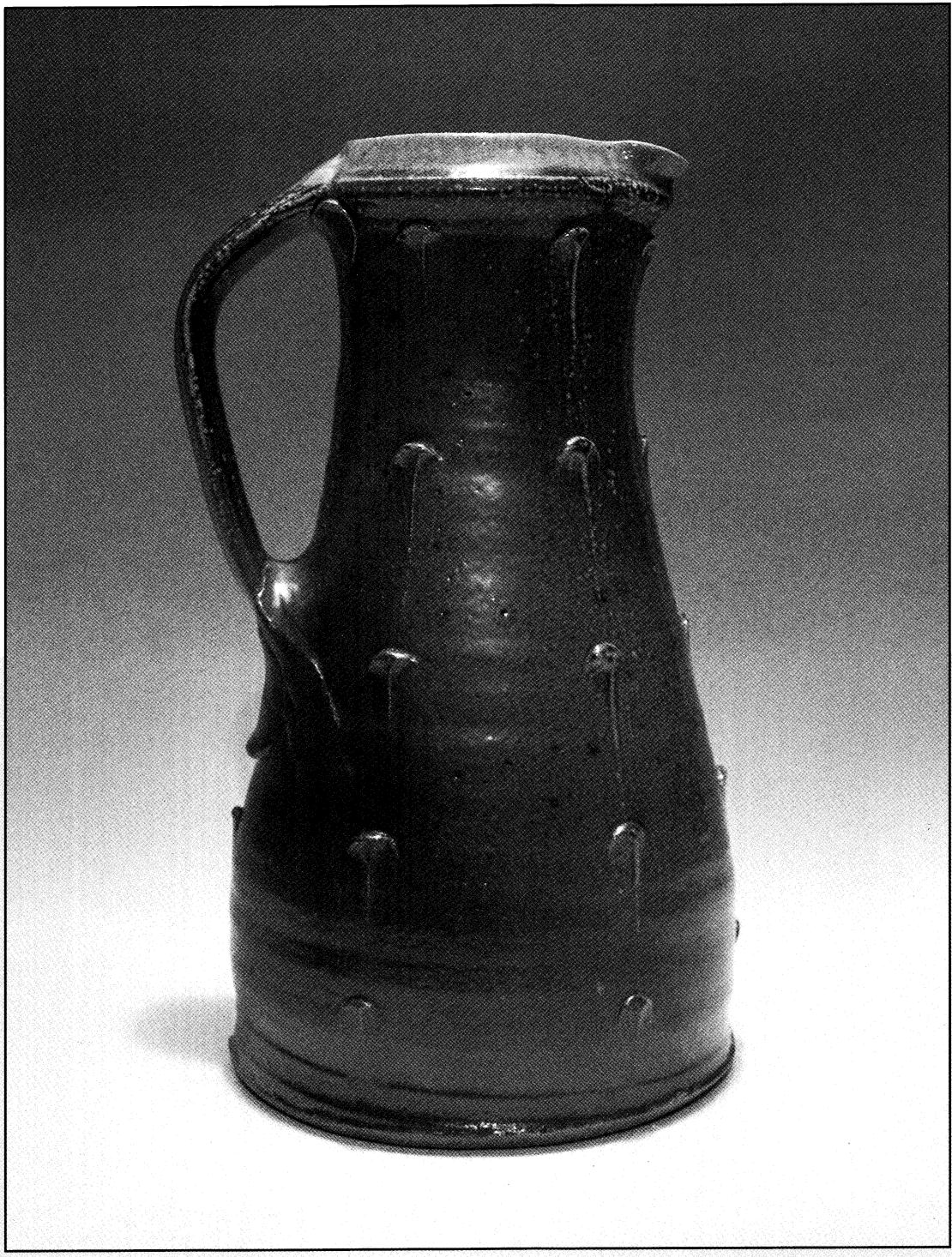
kiln shed. He built a large oil fired down-draught kiln for reduction stoneware and then a smaller wood and oil fired catenary kiln for his characteristic saltglaze.

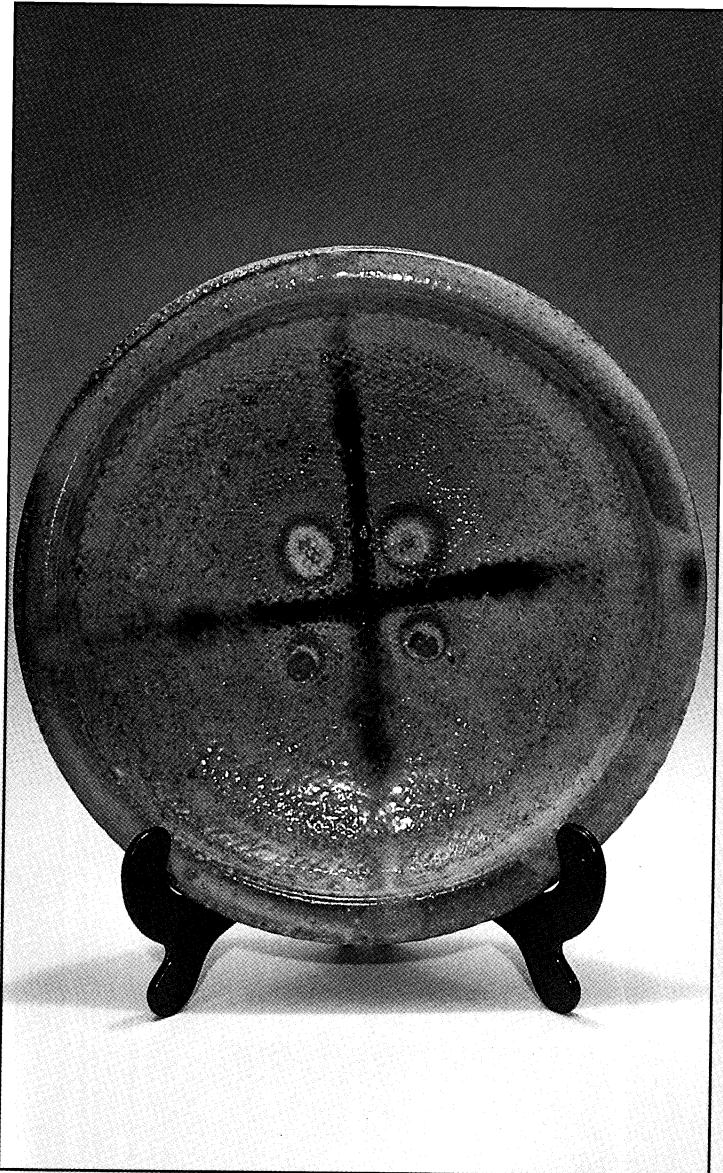
Like so many others who work in Rogers' tradition, he was effectively converted by Bernard Leach's *A Potters Book*. Although taught to throw and work in series at art college, it was this extraordinarily persuasive text which provided the ethos. Leach proposed pottery not only as a worthwhile craft and art, but as a whole way of life, using 'both the heart and the hands'. As Leach stated in his preface, he tried to bring forth his own experiences 'simply and openly, and to relate them to our western need, primarily for the sake of other potters who suffer inevitably from the almost entire loss of our own birthright of traditional craft lore.' In other words he wanted to counter the negative effect, as he saw it, of our modern world on the pre-industrial traditions of pottery. He said 'This book is also intended.... for those to whom the cultural meeting of the East and West is the prelude to a human society'. In Phil Rogers's work we see his debt both to the traditions of the Far East and Europe, to the best of Chinese Song, Early Korean and Japanese pottery, as well as to the native traditions of England and Wales.

Such art was a revelation to Rogers in his early years of making and when living and teaching near Cambridge, he made repeated visits to the Fitzwilliam Museum, where he saw early ash glazed Chinese pots, pieces from Korea and Thailand, and sturdy medieval English jugs. What attracted Rogers to this work was its integrity and apparent simplicity and the way in which glaze revealed form and heightened decoration, clear characteristics of his own work. Jugs are an important part of his production, partly because of their innate Englishness; Leach talks about the 'severe dignity of form' of the best 14th century pitchers in his first chapter and, like Leach, Phil Rogers also admires the English and Welsh slipware

A Potter's Book. Er iddo gael ei ddysgu i dafn a gweithio mewn cyfres yn y coleg celf, y testun hynod o ddylanwadol hwn a roddodd yr ethos iddo. Cyflwynai Leach grochenwaith nid yn unig fel crefft a chelfyddyd guerth chweil, ond fel ffordd gysan gwbl o fyw, gan ddefnyddio "y galon a'r dwylo fel ei gilydd". Fel y datganodd Leach yn ei ragair, ceisiodd ddod â'i brofiadau ei hun i'r fei "yn sym ac yn agored, a'u cysylltu a'n hangen gorllewinol ni, yn anad dim er mwyn crochenyddion eraill sy'n dioddef yn anochel yn sgil y golled lwyd bron o'n genedigaeth-fraint o lén crefft traddodiadol". Mewn geiriau eraill roedd arno eisiau gwrthwynebu effaith negyddol, fel y gwelai ef hi, ein byd modern ni ar draddodiadau cyn-ddiwidiannol crochenwaith. Dywedodd "Buriedir y llyfr yma hefyd...i'r rheini sy'n ystyried cyffryddiad diwylliannol y Dwyrain a'r Gorllewin yn rhagarweiniad i gymdeithas ddynol". Yng ngwaith Phil Rogers fe welwn ei ddyled i





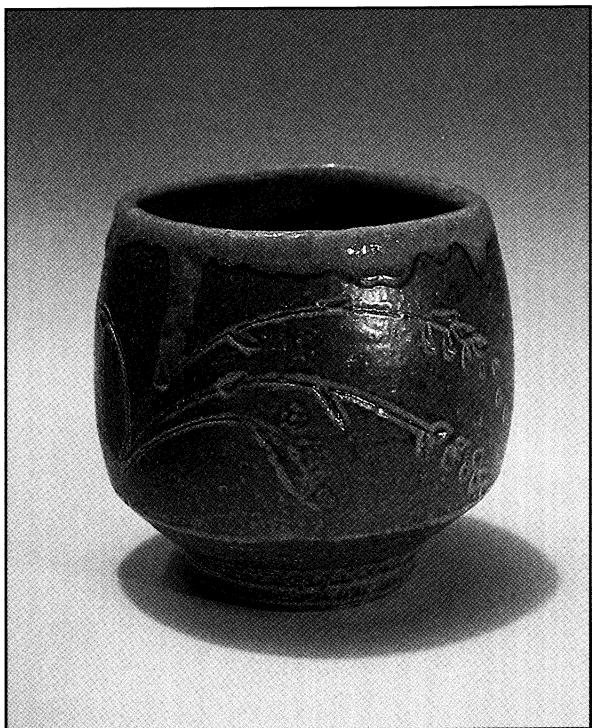


traditions for their hands-on directness and warmth. He owns pieces produced in Buckley in North Wales in the 18th and 19th centuries and by Michael Cardew from Winchcombe in the 1920's all with that indescribable richness and mystery you find in the best earthenware.

While Leach, Cardew and Hamada were obviously early influences, it was Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie who has particularly effected his interest in ash glazes. Like Pleydell-Bouverie, Rogers has largely discarded painting and engraving his forms in favour of glaze decoration alone. He has written an authoritative book on ash glazes and has also become absorbed by the riches of salt firing. What good pottery demands is that complete integration between form, glaze and surface pattern and in Rogers's work, there is that clear element of 'less is more' - he has long realised that only in limiting his materials and refining the same basic

draddodiadau'r Gorllewin Pell ac Ewrop fel ei gilydd, i'r crochenwaith Cân Tseiniaidd, Koreaidd Cynnar a Siapaneaidd gorau, yn ogystal ag i draddodiadau brodorol Cymru a Lloegr.

Roedd y fath gelfyddyd yn agoriad llygad i Rogers yn ei flynyddoedd cynnar o greu a, thra bu'n byw ac yn dysgu ger Caergrawnt, ymwebdd yn gyson ag Amgueddfa Fitzwilliam, lle y gwelodd botiau Tseiniaidd cynnar wedi gwydro â lludw, darnau o Korea a Thailand, a jygiau Seisnig canoloesol cedyrn. Yr hyn a ddenodd Rogers i'r gwaith yma oedd ei integredd a'i symbrwydd amlwg a'r fforda yr oedd gwydredd yn datgelu ffurf ac yn dwysáu addurn, nodweddion clir yn ei waith ei hun. Mae jygiau yn rhan bwysig o'i gynnyrch, yn rhannol oherwydd eu Seisnigrwydd cynhenid; mae Leach yn sôn am "urddas llym ffurf" y piseri 14eg ganrif gorau yn ei bennod gyntaf ac, fel Leach, mae Phil Rogers hefyd yn edmygu'r



shapes over a number of years, will he realise the working intimacy he needs.

Rogers makes a full range of domestic ware - jugs, storage jars, tea and coffee sets, plates and mugs - as well as individual items - bowls, stately tall bottles and exquisite small teabowls and unomis. Some of his forms are covered in a thick white slip, such as hakeme, which helps to give depth and variation of colour. Saltglaze has offered him much because of its warmth and defining textures. It animates surface in a way which ideally suits the freedom of his best work. Pots are often altered in some way after throwing (bowls may be squared off and bottles faceted), while decoration is brushed, incised or impressed - though he tends to keep such embellishment to a simple and abstract minimum.

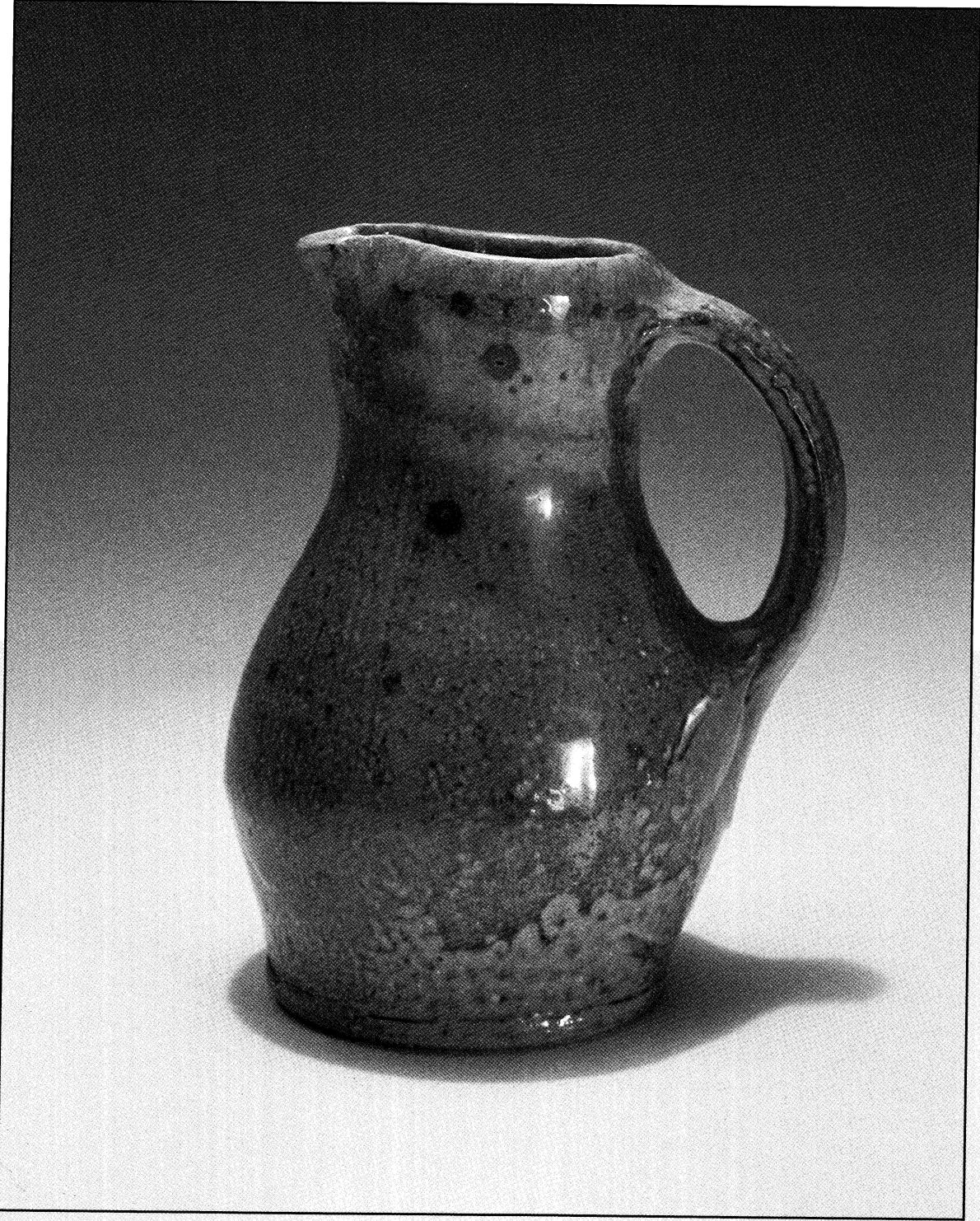
At their best, Rogers's coffee pots or lidded jars have an affirming directness which shows how the most utilitarian pots can add to our lives and experience. They are also, for

traddodiadau crochenwaith-slip Cymreig a Seisnig oherwydd eu huniongyrchedd a'u cynhesrwydd di-lol. Mae'n berchen ar ddarnau wedi'u cynhyrchu ym Mwcle yng Nogledd Cymru yn y 18fed a'r 19eg ganrif a chan Michael Cardew o Winchcombe yn y 1920au - i gyd yn meddru ar y cyfoeth a'r dirgelwch annisgrifiadwy rheini a geir yn y llestri pridd gorau.

Tra bod Leach, Cardew a Hamada yn amlyg yn ddylanwadau cynnar arno, Katharine Pleydell-Bouverie sydd wedi procio ei ddiddordeb mewn gwydreddau lludw yn arbennig. Fel Pleydell-Bouverie, mae Rogers wedi hepgor peintio ac engrafu eu ffurfiau i raddau helaeth er mwyn addurn gwydredd yn unig. Mae wedi ysgrifennu llyfr awdurdodol am wydreddau lludw ac hefyd wedi cael ei hudo gan gyfoeth tanio â halen. Yr hyn y mae crochenwaith dda yn ei fynnu yw'r cysaniad cyflawn rhwng ffurf, gwydredd a phatrwm arwynebedd ac yng ngwaith Rogers ceir yr elfen glir honno o "mae llai yn fwy" - mae wedi sylweddoli ers tro mae dim ond trwy gyfyngu ei ddefnyddiau a choethi'r un siapiau sylfaenol dros nifer o flynyddoedd, y gwnaiff gyflawni'r agosatrwydd gweithiol sydd ei angen arno.

Mae Rogers yn gwneud amrediad llawn o grochenwaith ar gyfer y cartref - jygiau, jariau cadw, setiau te a choffi, platiau a modrwyau - yn ogystal ag eitemau unigol - powlenni, poteli tal urddasol a phowlenni te bychain ac unomiau o diaeth. Mae rhai o'i ffurfiau wedi'u gorchuddio â slip gwyn trwchus, megis hakeme, sy'n cynorthwyo i roi dyfnder ac amrywiaeth lliw. Mae gwydredd halen wedi cynnig llawer iddo oherwydd ei gynhesrwydd a'i weaddeddau diffiniedig. Mae'n animeiddio arwynebedd mewn rhyw ffordd ar ôl taflu (gellir sgwario powlenni a ffasedu poteli), tra bod addurn yn cael ei frwsio, ei endorri a'i argraffu - er ei fod yn tueddu i gadw'r fath addurniad i leiafswm syml a haniaethol.

Ar eu gorau, mae gan botiau coffi a jariau cloriog Rogers uniongyrchedd cadarnhaol sy'n dangos sut y gall y potiau mwyaf



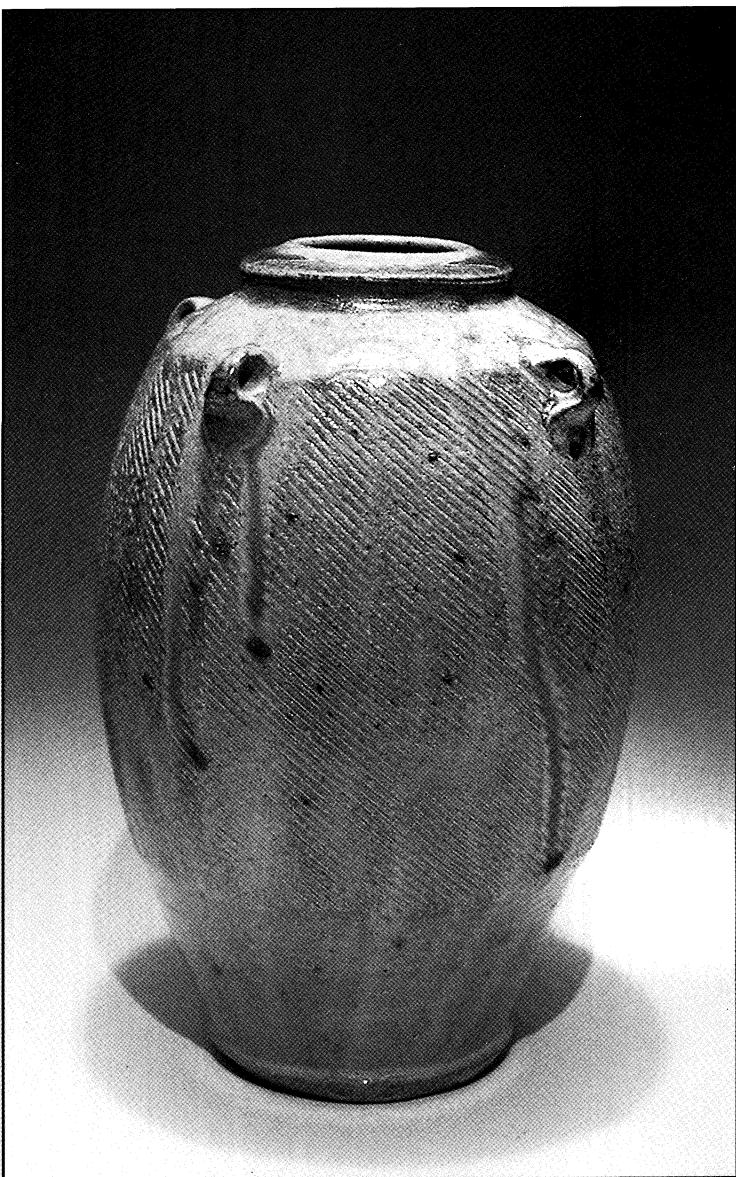
all their debt to the ceramic traditions of the past, perfectly modern. The abstract vertical sweep of his resist spongework on a squared saltglaze bottle or the minimal fluting on a large ashglaze storage jar help to define 20th century pots.

In the chapter 'Towards a Standard' of 'A Potter's Book', Bernard Leach defined the Song ideals that modern pottery can aspire to;

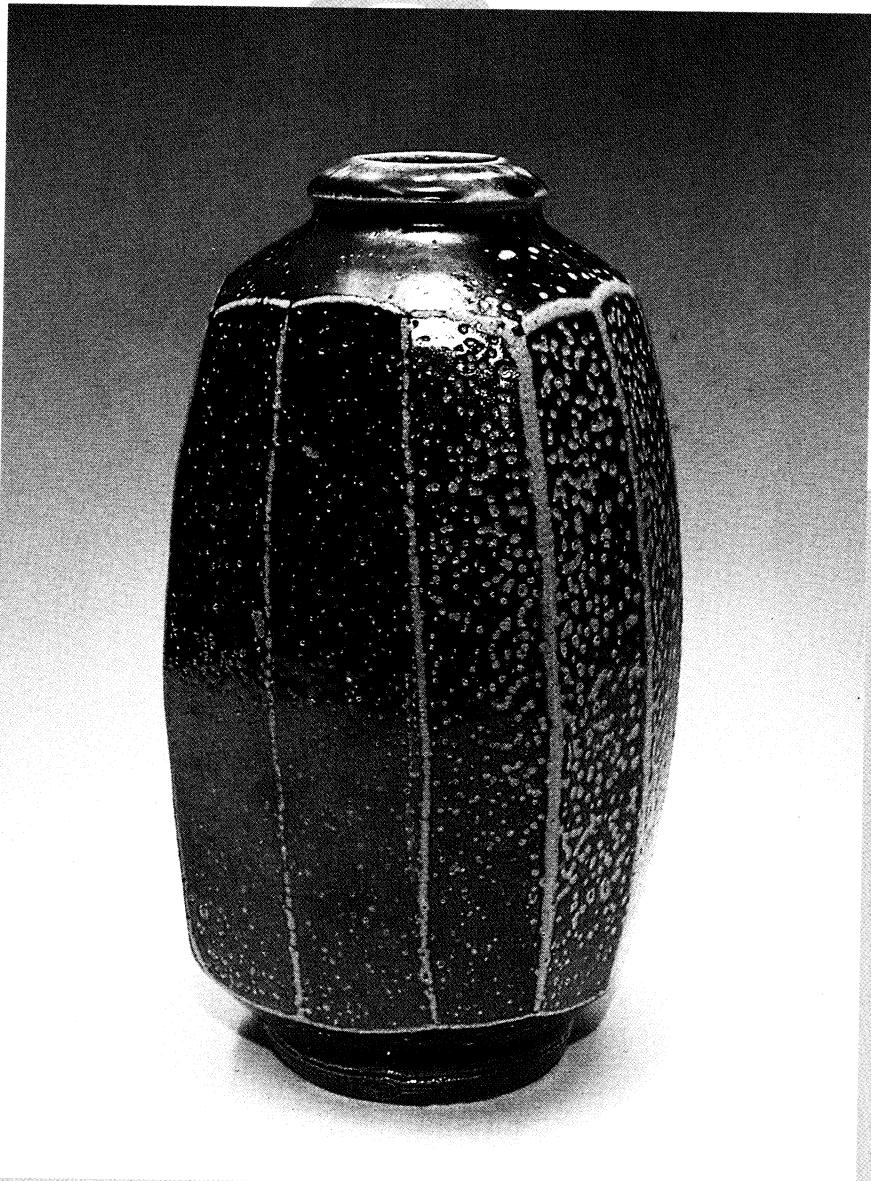
'The use so far as possible of natural materials in the endeavour to obtain the best quality of body and glaze; in throwing and in a striving towards unity, spontaneity and simplicity of form and , in general, the subordination of all attempts and technical cleverness to straightforward and unselfconscious workmanship.' At its finest, Phil Rogers's work shows how relevant and vital such a standard can be in the closing years of the 20th century.

defnyddiol ychwanegu i'n bywydau a'n profiad. Maent hefyd, er gwaethaf eu holl ddyled i dradoddiadau ceramig y gorffennol, yn berffaith fodern. Mae cumpas fertigol haniaethol ei wrthsefyll gwaith-sbwng ar botel wydredd-halen wedi'i sgwario neu'r ffliwtaith minimal ar jar gadw gwydredd-halen fawr yn cynorthwyo i ddiffinio potiau'r 20fed ganrif.

Yn y bennod "Tuag at Safon" yn A Potter's Book, diffiniodd Bernard Leach y delfrydau Cân y gall crochenwaith fodern ymgeisio amdanynt: "y defnydd cyn belled a phosibl ô ddefnyddiau naturiol yn yr ymgais i gael yr ansawdd gorau o gorff a gwydredd; wrth daflu ac wrth ddygnu tuag at undod, digymhellrwydd ffurf ac, yn gyffredinol, darostyngiad pob ymdrech a chlyfrwch technegol i saerniaeth uniongyrchol ac anhunanimwybodol. Ar ei goethaf, mae gwaith Phil Rogers yn dangos pa mor berthnasol a hanfodol y gall y fath safon fod ym mlynnyddoedd olaf yr 20fed ganrif.



Rogers



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