

Dyma'r tro cyntaf imi weithio gyda chasgliad ac aeth â mi ar daith i ddarganfod a gwerthfawrogi Michael Cardew yn fwy. I mi, y cyfle i drin a thrafod llestri a'u defnyddio yw'r ffordd orau o ddysgu sut i greu â chlai. Mae casgliadau fel hyn yn adlewyrchu stori dyn a'i ddyylanwad ar grochenwaith stiwdio a dylai fod yn agored i'w dehongli gan wneuthurwyr cyfoes. Fel y dywed Michael, trefn creu gwaith da yw gweld yn gyntaf, yna dysgu, yna cyfathrebu profiad yr hyn a welwyd yn eich iaith eich hun. Dyna bwysigrwydd casgliadau wrth hysbysu ac ysbyrdoli gwaith newydd.



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**Not Just for Pretty**  
**Robyn Cove** mewn perthynas â | in relation to **Michael Cardew**

**Oriel Cerameg | Ceramic Gallery** Canolfan y Celfyddydau Aberystwyth Arts Centre  
Gorffennaf 21 July – Hydref 7 October 2018

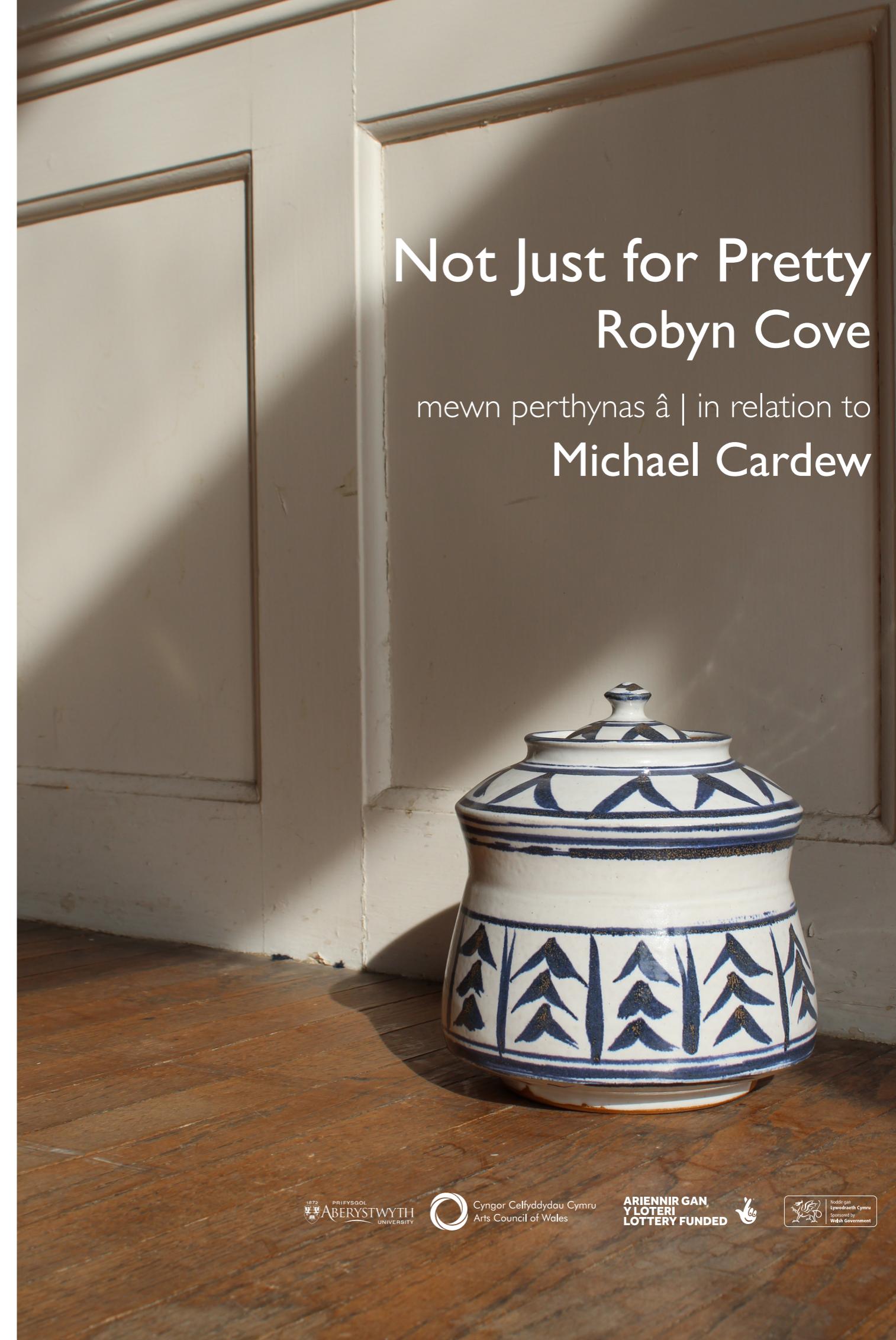
Testun | text, cylchlythyr Shards newsletter: © Robyn Cove 2018



This is the first time I have worked with a collection and it has taken me on a journey of discovery and further appreciation for Michael Cardew. For me the opportunity to handle pots and use them is the best way to learn how to make with clay. Collections like this reflect a story of a man and his influence on studio pottery and should be open to interpretation by current makers. As Michael says, the order of making good work is to first see, then learn, then communicate the experience of what they have seen in their own language. Such is the importance of collections in informing and inspiring new work.



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# Not Just for Pretty Robyn Cove

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**Michael Cardew**



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## Not Just for Pretty

### Robyn Cove

Mae'n ymddangos i mi fod llawer o weithgareddau i ddathlu Michael Cardew wedi'u cynnal yn ystod y blynnyddoedd diwethaf ac rwy'n ei chael hi'n faint i dderbyn y gwahoddiad i lunio gwaith newydd yn seiliedig ar lestri'r dyn ei hun yng Nghasgliad Ann Carr, sy'n rhan o Gasgliad Cerameg Prifysgol Aberystwyth.

Llestri Wenford Bridge a llestri wedi'u stampio yn Abuja yr oedd Ann Carr (ffrind a chymdoges Michael) wedi'u casglu i'w defnyddio yn ei chartref yw'r llestri sydd yn y casgliad yn bennaf. Rwyf wedi treulio amser gyda'r casgliad ac wedi astudio pob llestr; yn cyfrif llinellau bandin a chanfod sut yr ychwanegwyd gwead neu addurn wedi'i baentio. Fe'm cyfareddwyd i ddod o hyd i lestr gan Michael ac arno foti ffyrdd bychan, yna l llinell fertigol endoredig yna hefyd lestri pridd Ladi Kwali ag l llinell fertigol yn union; rhaid mai bwriadol ac nid cyd-ddigwyddiad yw hyn oherwydd mae'r rhif mor benodol.

Mae dehongliad Michael o'r siapiau a'r addurno Africanaidd wedi fy ysbyrydoli erioed. Yn ei waith diweddaraf mae esblygiad ei lestri yn mapio'n eglur ei brofiadau â chlai: o'r hen lestri slip a wnaed gan olrhain gwaelodion wedi'u mewnoli crochenwaith gwledig i'r obsesiwn â chrochenwaith caled Leach; addurn sychu â bys Winchcombe; a dynnyd hefyd o hen lestri slip Lloegr i'w anturiaethau yn Afrika. Ymwyaf adnabyddus yw Caserolau Gwari oherwydd eu honglau cryf a'u haddurn wedi'i fewnoli sy'n adlewyrchu dylanwad uniongyrchol llestri pridd Gwari â chaeadau ceugrwm. Ceir cofnod o Michael yn y ffilm *Mud and Water Man* yn dweud mai "addasu nid efelychu" yw'r nod, wrth iddo geisio creu llestri a oedd yn adlewyrchu'r ardal, nid rhagori ar y llestri traddodiadol ond creu llestri gwydrog a allai fod yn ddiwydiant newydd ar gyfer Gorllewin Afrika.



Michael Cardew, Leach Pottery, St Ives, 1925

## Not Just for Pretty

### Robyn Cove

It seems to me there has been a flurry of activity celebrating Michael Cardew in recent years and I am honoured to have been asked to produce new work based on the great man's pots in the Ann Carr Collection, part of Aberystwyth University's Ceramic Collection.

The pots in the collection are mostly Wenford Bridge and Abuja stamped pots that Ann Carr (friend and neighbour of Michael) had collected for use in her home. I have spent time with the collection and studied each pot; counting banding lines and working out how texture or painted decoration was applied. I was fascinated to find a pot by Michael that had a small motif, then 11 incised vertical lines then also a Ladi Kwali earthenware pot with exactly 11 vertical lines, surely too specific a number to be a fluke.

Michael's interpretation of the African shapes and decoration has always inspired me. In his later work the evolution of his pots clearly maps his experiences with clay: from the old slipware made with traces of country pottery's indented bases to the Leach stoneware obsession. The Winchcombe finger wipe decoration; also taken from old English slipware to his Africa adventures. Most recognisable are the Gwari Casseroles with their strong angular shape and incised decoration reflecting a direct influence from traditional earthenware Gwari pots with concave lids. Michael is recorded in the film *Mud and Water Man* saying it's about "adaptation not imitation" as he endeavoured to produce wares that reflected the area, not to eclipse the traditional pots but to make glazed wares which could be a new industry for West Africa.

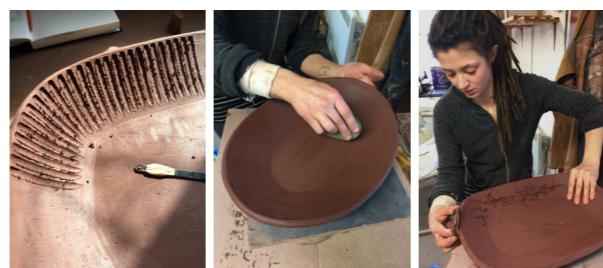


Michael Cardew, Leach Pottery, St Ives, 1950



Ni roddodd Michael y gorau i ddysgu a datblygu ei waith ond eto cadwedd dechnegau dethol a gwybodaeth o'i brofiadau cyntaf. Mae ei resymau dros greu a'i athroniaeth ar gyfer creu "llestri da" wedi'u gwreiddio yn hanes crochenwaith yn ogystal â'i daith bersonol drwy fywyd. Yng ngeiriau Michael, "Rydych yn gweld llestri da, rydych yn dysgu gwneud llestri da, rydych yn cyfathrebu'r profiad o weld llestri da drwy eich gwaith eich hun; dyma yw cyfathrebu ag eraill drwy eich llestri – nid eich personoliaeth eich hun!" Cafodd Bernard Leach feddyliau tebyg ac mae hyn yn amlwg yn null y Dwyrain o greu crochenwaith.

Ceir elfen chwareus a mwynhad yn disgrifiad o holl waith Michael. Deuthum ar draws dau gwpan coffi Abuja ac iddynt ddwy handlen gyda soseri yn y casgliad; mae'r gwaith addurno arnynt yn ymddangos mor llafurddwys i mi, go brin y gallid fod wedi'u creu ar gyfer elw, ond ar gyfer mwynhad ac arbrofi yn unig. Mae ei fwynhad o glai i weld yn ei ddysgu, er bod llawer yn dweud nad oedd yn dysgu dulliau gan ei fod yn dysgu'n bennaf drwy wneud. Ceir dyfyniad gwych o Fywgraffiad Tanya Harrod lle mae e'n dysgu Jane Herold i daflu llestri ac meddai 'Nawr, dos â'r clai am dro'. Er ei fod yn dueddol i gael pyliau o dymer ddrwg a bod yn ddagreuol, rwyf o'r farn fod y rhan hon o'i gymeriad yn adlewyrchu ei sensitifwydd fel bod dynol. Byddwn i'n cwestiynu'r angen i labelu Michael fel arwr mawr ond yn ei ddisgrifio'n hytrach fel cawr o ddyn a oedd yn ymgolli cymaint yn y byd, a'i lawenydd a'i dristwch, nad oedd ofn arno fynegi ei deimladau ym mhaf bynnag ffordd y deuent ohono.



Robyn Cove, studio / studio



There is a playfulness and enjoyment that glows from all of Michael's work. I found a set of Abuja two handled coffee cups with saucers in the collection with decoration that appears to me so labour intensive that they could never have been produced for any profit, just sheer enjoyment and experimentation. His enjoyment of clay is shown in his teaching, although many say he did not teach method as he mostly taught by doing. There is a wonderful quote from Tanya Harrod's Biography where he is teaching Jane Herold to throw pots and he says 'Now, take the clay for a walk'. Although he was prone to temper tantrums and tears I believe this part of his character reflected his sensitivity as a human being. I would question the need to coin Michael as a great hero but rather as a great man who was so absorbed by the world, both its joys and woes, that he was not afraid to express his emotions in whatever way they came out.



Michael never stopped learning and developing his work and yet he kept selected techniques and knowledge from his very first experiences making. His reasons for making and his philosophy of making 'good pots' are rooted in pottery history as well as his own personal journey through life. In Michael's own words "You see good pots, you learn to make good pots, you communicate experience of seeing good pots through your own work; this is communication through your pots to others – not your own personality!". Bernard Leach had similar thoughts and certainly this is evident in the Eastern way of making pottery.