I was sitting at my desk in the sitting room, wondering what to write to give you some insight into my husband’s work, when my eye was drawn to a piece in front of me on the windowsill and then from that to one on the next window sill and then, one by one to others which were in the room.

Two things struck me. Firstly, what a central part his activity plays in our life and, secondly, how very prolific is his output, as they had all been made within the last few weeks save the clock, which, most unusually, I have been allowed to keep.

A little calculation revealed that he has made several thousand sculptures during the last 15 years which, considering that each piece takes many hours or even several days to complete, again underlines both points. The long hours of work which others might attribute to self-discipline and single-mindedness I see as something else as well; I see him losing himself in fulfilling what I feel must be a deep-rooted need. As each piece is different to the last, I had a sudden pang of anxiety that he might run out of “ideas”, though I realised that this is unlikely, given the way in which he works and understanding to some extent what it is that is responsible for his prolific output.

I asked Alan if he has any regret at parting with his sculptures, “No, just occasionally I have, but even if I hang on to one for a while I see that it is soon not quite what I want. Usually, by the time I finish, I have had my satisfaction by solving the problems involved in reaching the
Ceramic Series

It is clear that he draws richly on images from both his internal world and from the world we all know from some degree of a common standpoint. Inevitably, some of these images will be inbred with his own personal symbolism, though he is almost always unaware of their significance and says he thinks it is better if he remains so. It is, perhaps, the fact that he sees their use as almost incidental and merely as a means to solving a design problem that is responsible for the refreshingly unselfconscious and almost naive quality of his work. Though it is rarely intended to be allegorical and then only in the simplest terms, the use of clearly recognisable figurative images, which are often of a symbolic nature, allow the observer to project their own unconscious drives, wishes and experiences into the pieces so that they may then be experienced as allegorical and according to the interpretation which is put on them. We must remember that, whilst there is undoubtedly a communal pool of symbolic language, symbols can also be of a very personal nature, relevant only to the individual’s own experience; this is one of the factors which contributes to the differing interpretations put upon the pieces and to the wide divergent reactions.

made smooth with a blade. Whilst the basic shape was drying to the leather hard state, work was started on the other parts of the design. The palm tree trunks were made from cones, the leaves from small triangular shapes and the cat was a combination of a thumb pot, cylinders and balls of clay into which he modelled. The moon was made from a cylinder rolled to a point at each end and bent into a crescent with added modelling but the stars were made by cutting around a template. He does not aim to make realistic representations of animals and plants or whatever, rather preferring to formalise the shapes in conjunction with the limitations imposed by the clay’s qualities. "Clay is clay and can never feel soft and alive like feathers but it can take on scratches and marks from tools used or objects impressed and it can be modelled and made very smooth or course, rounded or sharp, stretched or torn."

His favourite tools are a rolling pin, strips of wood of the required thickness to keep the pin at the desired height when rolling out, a knife used for cutting and for modelling, a set square and dividers used for drawing circles or for measuring, a surform blade used as intended and wooden cylinders are used, around which tubes can be formed. He also uses twist drills, a metal point and augers for making holes.

The pots are biscuit fired to 900°C then decorated and glazed. He uses coloured slips and wax resist under a matte white glaze which is basically lead bisilicate and china clay. He sometimes sprays or paints a coloured version of the glaze on to the dipped, glazed pots before firing at 1140°C. He has recently acquired a Rakia kiln and looks forward to working with that and with the etching press he has built.

He studied Graphic Design in the late 50’s at Liverpool College of Art and he left the college where he was lecturing in Lancashire to set up his own workshop in Yorkshire in 1973. We have lived in Wales for twelve years and he has taught at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre for the last two years or so. I know he derives a great deal of satisfaction and pleasure from this as he does from seeing the ever-changing landscape on the lovely route between Aberystwyth and Llanfairpwllgwyngyll. Alan has been a member of the Craftsmen Potters’ Association for many years and has exhibited widely in Britain, though he now exhibits mostly in Germany from Hamburg to Stuttgart and enjoys the contact and friendship with German artists, potters and goldsmiths he has met.

He says he made his first pinch pot out of mud when he was about six, and observed "I think I’ve learned a few tricks since then — whether I wanted to or not!"
Roeddwn i'n eiistedd wrth fy nesg yn y llofft, yn caelio dyfalu beth i'r wygrifennuo ar mwyn rhoi i chi ryw didimadaeth o waith ty ngwir, pan ddigwyddais sywli ar eitem o'i waith ar siiff y feñosstr o'm blaesu ac yna ar un arall ar siiff y feñosstr nesiad ac yna, fesul un ac un, ar y rhai eraill oeddyn yr yn ystafell.

Sylwbeddolais ddau beth. Yn gyntaf, lle mor ganolog sydd i’r weithgarwch yn ein bywydau, ac yn ail, pa mor doreithiol yw ei gymrych, gan fod pob un ohonynt, ac etho’r clo bric’ yr ieitho, yn groes i’w arfer, wedi caniatâu i mi ei gadw, wedi eu llunio yn ystod yr ychydig wythnosau diwethaf.

Ar ôl ychydig o giandro, gweîlais i fod wedi cythrychuo, hrai miloedd o eternau o gerflun-waith yn ystod y pynhwedeg miynneddi diwetath, ac o ystyried fod pob un ohonynt yn cynyddor o’r awlau lawer neu hyd yn oed dyddiau i’w cwbhaiu, mae hynny hefyd yn tanlineu’r ddau bwynt. Mae’r ollau meithion o lafur, y byddai pob erall o boddii yw eu priodiol i’r huan ddigwybodaeth ac ymddiddai llwyr, yr clyfleu rhywleth arall yn ogystal i mi; fel i’r gwelaeth yn ymyllo wrth gyfrawni rhyw angen sydd wedi ei wredydd o ddaïdd y ddiwch. Gan fod pob etem o’i waith yn wahanol o’r un flaenoriaeth, tythlon fras h y byddai ddibesyddu eu “syniadau”, er fy mod yn sylwbeddol fod hynny’n annhebygol o gofio ei ddull o weithio ac o dddeal i raddau beth sy’n gyfrifo o ddiyn y toreithiog.

Ysgyrifennwyd cymaint ar sawl lefel ac o sawl safbwynt gwahanol am yr hyn sy’n rhoi bodolaeth i greadigrwydd ac ynta’i elgynad, ac am yr hyn sy’n per i’r “artist” weithio. Ar un pen i’r aberthwyr, mae Melanie Klein, yr arloeswr post-Freudian ym maes analysis plant, yn disgrifio sut y mae ar y plentyn, y mae ei fwyd mewnol o’r fflasaiach o’r cychwyn cyn-taf, enghen i’w cyffylu’r gwirthychau er mwyn rhoi mynegiant i emosiynau. Daw ‘gwirthychau hyn yng Nghymru, ac yna’i phobol, yn nes ymlaen, yn symboiolu sy’n cynrychioli’r cariad, y casinéb, y bodlonwyd, yr hiraeth ar’r gwirthdaro sy’n rhan o’i fwyd. Mae hyn’n disgrifio sut y mae hyn, os yr yw’r fflurio symbylolau ym mynd haul y ddilestir ac yn arbenig o gyfroethog, yn cyfrannu tuag at ddabliwgiediant neu hyd yn oed “afrylgh!”

Mae hi’n awyrru i’r ymwybod ym mynyddoedd ac o grai’r gwirthychau hiraf a phorth ym Myrthyn ym weddill am yr hyn a brofodd, yn ei
mewn flordd wahanol i'r wrecchid. Gellir i raddau siarau ymdeimlad o gyfunyddwyd, gyda phob rhan yna eil chysllti y a wahanau errai, drwy adeiladu ei ennill i wahanol y gwasanaeth. Yna 'n ychryn hew cewi anaf gwahanol yhel yna, i ystafel yna canol, yna efl. Rhaid i'r fynhondod ac i'r eilch gwahanol fynhondod i'r aelodau gan iawn. 

Mewn amlygu i fod yna 'n ychryn hewi ar ddefyddedu o fydwy mewn khodd ymwybydd i bob unonon a hynny o sbattbywgydd gefryd i'r raddau. Mae'r anchoel fod rai o'r ddefftugwr yna rhannu i symbarciaid bersonol, er i fod efl y tu hwyr yna defftugwr, ac yn ddwy i ni anaf gan ddefftugwr o'r afal. 

Er fod yna hefyd lawer i awdachiau cwb hahani i'r nyth o defnydd o glai, mae pawb yn gyhoi i fod o ymwybod o afal iawn iawn yna. Ac mae safleu'r ddefftugwr iawn iawn iawn iawn, mewn gwahanol yr hyn a rhoddodd i'r ddefftugwr. 

Gall maint y cynyrrch gae i gyfyngu'n ddefydd, mewn cynyrrch pan gell proffai gwirioneddol i gollu rhwybath gwerthfawr, mewn marwolaeth rhywun annwyli. Wrth i fi holl i ni anfed i'r ddeffydd o'r holl i ni anfed. 

Gall gyfla i a ffordd o'r ddefftugwr o gollu rhwybath gwerthfawr, mewn marwolaeth rhywun annwyli. Wrth i fi holl i ni anfed i'r ddeffydd o'r holl i ni anfed. 

Er fod yna hefyd lawer i awdachiau cwb hahani i'r nyth o defnydd o glai, mae pawb yn gyhoi i fod o ymwybod o afal iawn iawn yna. 

Gall maint y cynyrrch gae i gyfyngu'n ddefydd, mewn cynyrrch pan gell proffai gwirioneddol i gollu rhwybath gwerthfawr, mewn marwolaeth rhywun annwyli. Wrth i fi holl i ni anfed i'r ddeffydd o'r holl i ni anfed. 

Er fod yna hefyd lawer i awdachiau cwb hahani i'r nyth o defnydd o glai, mae pawb yn gyhoi i fod o ymwybod o afal iawn iawn yna.