

nieuwe ceramic - ceramics now

‘Being a potter is absurd in modern times’ – this phrase you can find on the first page of Introduction chapter by Alison Britton of ‘The new ceramics’ book published in 1986. The link that I’m searching for in this small visual research is retrospective – how old is the ‘new ceramics’? For those who were born in 1980s and 1990s the quote from Hans Coper that has been written in 1969 may sound extreme but still urgent – ‘Practicing a craft with ambiguous reference to purpose and function one has occasion to face absurdity’. Still the great amount of ceramic artists throughout the XX and XXI century have been reverting back to the basic shapes and rough finishing, but using the diversity of crafting technologies and visual references from different ages, cultures and geographies – antique Mediterranean, ancient Chinese and Japanese, European of ‘medium tempus’.

My interested to this topic started a couple of year ago with studying and collecting images of ceramics I could find on web. And these examples of pottery or ceramics for my totally ‘know-nothing’ mind were breathtaking and seemed to be so ‘contemporary’ and sophisticated in their simplicity, untidiness and rough beauty.

1990-2000s



[Akiko Hirai](#)



[Tim Scull](#)



[Jack Doherty](#)



[Shamaï Gibsh](#)



[Daniel Soderstrom](#)

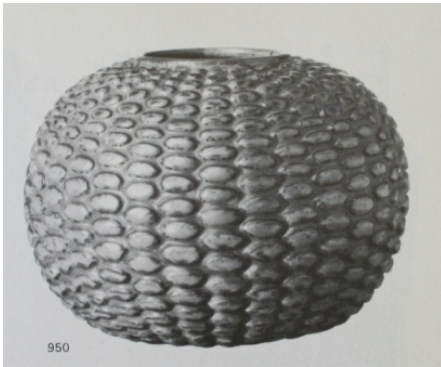


[Vivika and Otto Heino](#)

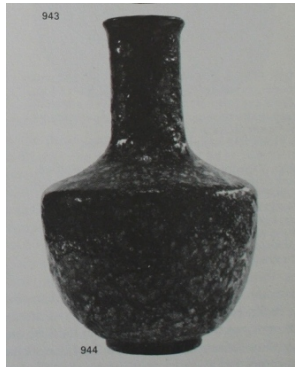
So one can imagine how surprised I felt once discovered in the issue of magazine 'Wendingen' from 1927 a review of contemporary ceramic artists from the 1st quarter of XX and their works so much similar to the ones I admired as the ultimate form of contemporary ceramics development.

Eventually I came to a question – what is the reason of this resemblance? Are these pieces just a sort of prototype simply used nowadays by potters as an inspiration? Or it's an archetypal image which is naturally referred to by artists irrespective of their origin and epoch?

1920-40s



Axel Salto (1937)



Bert Nienhuis (1933)



Bert Nienhuis (1933)



Jean Besnard (c1930)



Paul Dressler (c1930)



Roger Guerin (c1920-1930)



Roger Guerin (c1920-1930)



Emile Decoeur

Let's have a look at the possible clue dating from the beginning of the XX century. In a book 'The meaning of art' (1931) compiled from a number of articles written by Herbert Read in 1920s there's such a paragraph: 'Pottery is at once the simplest and the most difficult of all arts. It is the simplest because it is the most elemental; it is the most difficult because it is the more abstract'. Probably this phrase can describe the unity of the visual images of 'new ceramics' throughout the last century - to be specific its 'elemental difficulty'.

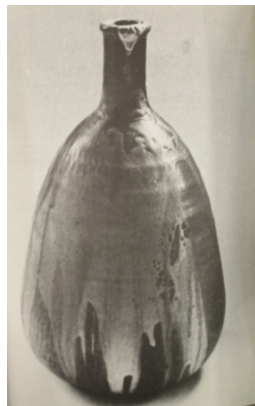
I will leave apart the shapes and techniques of the earliest pottery examples as well as Asian roots and so-called primitive cultures functional objects. As undoubtedly there's a significant historical influence on the

process of pottery & ceramics development in the late Middle Ages, Modern Era and Industrial Revolution period.

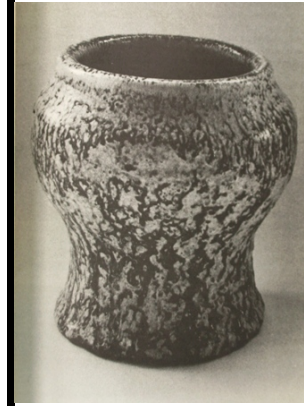
I'm more curious in catching the idea of 'elemental difficulty' in ceramics within the latest period, when all the fields of art were turning abstract. At the same time the abstract form of pottery has been emancipated from the figurative European predominance of Delft and later French traditions firstly in the works of such [French artists](#) as Jean Carries, Ernest Chaplet and Auguste Delaherche **in 1890-1900s.**



Auguste Delaherche (1889)



Jean Carries (1892)

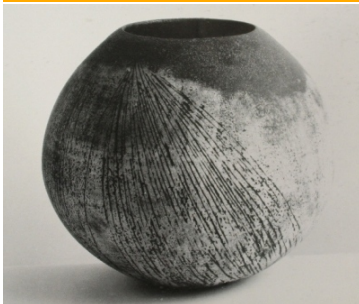


Ernest Chaplet (1900)

And then in **1920-40s** it was followed by the different European artists such as Jean Besnard, Roger Guerin, Bert Nienhuis, Paul Dressler, Emile Decoeur etc.

That's how has started my visual traveling through the last century ceramics and pottery pieces – in order to see the evolution and to understand better the inspirational sources of contemporary ceramic art.

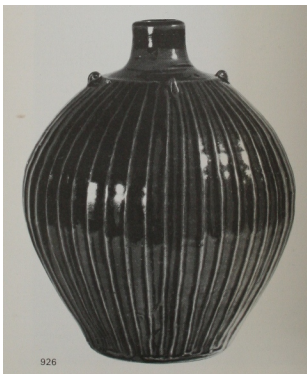
1950s-1960s



Hans Coper (1956)



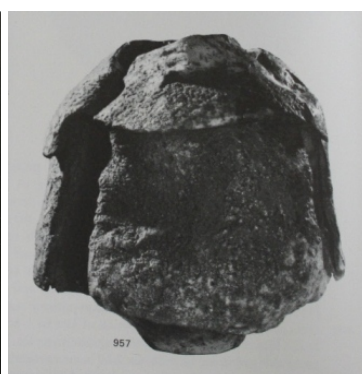
Bernard Leach (1965)



Bernard Leach (1959)



Lucie Rie (1960)



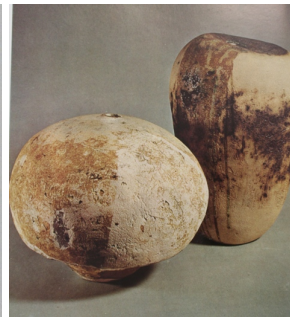
Ruth Duckworth (1966)



Ingeborg & Bruno Asshoff (1961)



Jan Bontjes van Beek (1961-62)

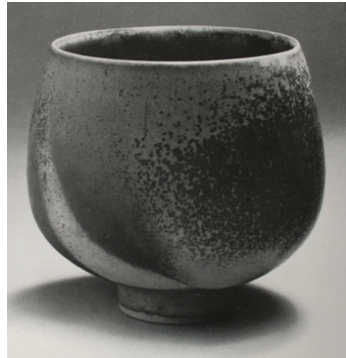


Ruth Duckworth (c 1960s)

1970s-1980s



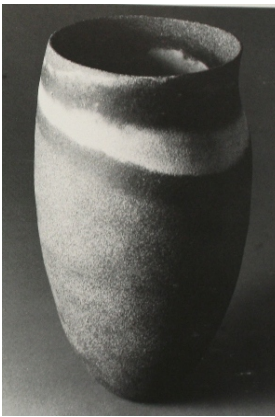
Hans Coper (1975)



Hans & Renate Heckmann (1979)



Hans & Renate Heckmann (1985)



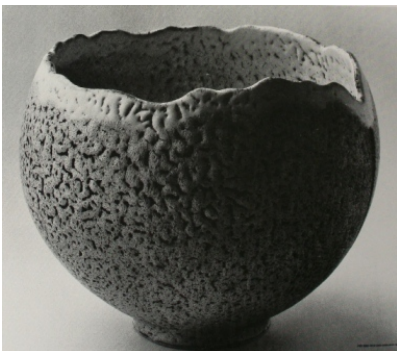
Jennifer Lee (1985)



Lucie Rie (1979)



Mary Rogers (1981)



Mary Rogers (1981)



Horst Kerstan (1985)



Ursula Scheid (1984)

My working process was mostly focused on visual retrospective and search for the links between the latest historical periods. Thus its outcome is very personal and of course can be made more profound over the time. But still there is one comment or a guess that I'd like to share.

On one hand pottery comes back to the initial needs of a human being – eating and cooking rituals which mean pretty functional aspect. But at the same time it is concerned as well with sharing meals, spending time, being together which became quite unapproachable in our highly digital and mobile era. So, has the

pottery art become absolutely absurd nowadays? Or what if the ongoing interest to its basic shapes is still sharp due to another abstract idea? May be it is a symbol of our need for feeling 'the village' again?

1990-2000s



[Yo Thom](#) (2006)



[Martin Lungley](#) (2007)



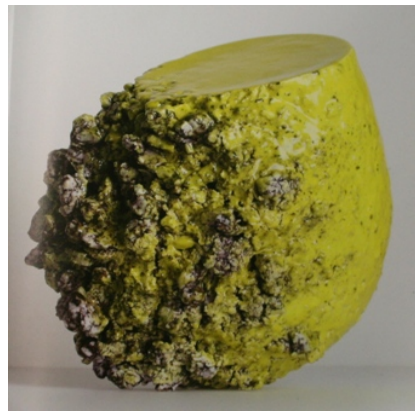
[Martin McWilliam](#) (2003)



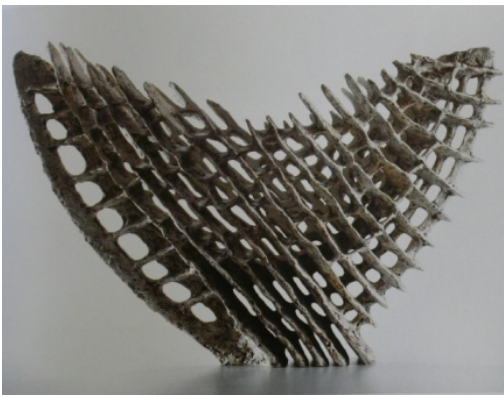
[Anne-Marie Laureys](#) (2006)



[Ruthanne Tudball](#) (2007)



[Aneta Regel Deleu](#) (2008)



[Barbro Aberg](#) (2007)



[Annie Turner](#) (2007)



[Rafa Perezi](#) (2006)