

Iconic Japanese potter and designated Living National Treasure Shoji Hamada, said there were two kinds of pots. The first he compared to hot house plants, the second to the tree growing on the mountainside. In his own work he aspired towards the latter and I, in so much as I am able, have endeavored to do likewise.

This has involved a particular approach to both work and lifestyle in general. I knew from the start that what Michael Cardew referred to as a deliberately willed injection of personality would not do. This was not the way to make worthy pots.

I had looked at those historical examples I admired and loved so much, be they sixteenth century Korean, thirteenth century Chinese, or medieval English, and realized that their essential beauty and vitality was a direct product of the working environment in which they were made. I knew that if I was to have any hope of achieving even a hint of such breadth and character in my own work I would have to create for myself (in so far as was possible in the late twentieth century) a similar living and working situation.

I left the hot house of London, where I had been a student in the late nineteen seventies, and set up a workshop, initially in North Wales and later in Cumbria working, as I do now, within sight of the Cumbrian Fells. This involves a necessary slower pace of life, in touch with essential values, from which pots can grow, naturally and unforced and free from the superficiality of urban demands. This work is a reflection of my life and my concerns to understand and communicate beauty, as I see it, through pottery form.

This exhibition is the very best work from the last two firings of my kiln. The first, just before Christmas, was a little cooler in the first chamber and the lower parts of the second chamber, suiting perfectly the needs of those pots with brushed slip and iron or cobalt painting. The resulting softness to the glaze surface (even dryness in some cases) allows the slip and pigment to speak with a strong voice. Too hard or shiny a glaze and the effect is lost.

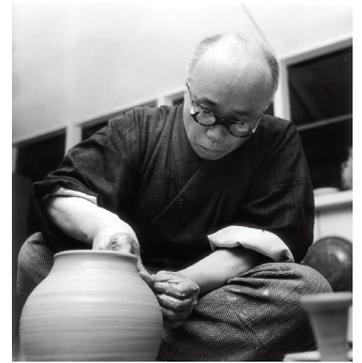
The second firing, in late April, was an altogether hotter affair. The searing white flame, in places in excess of 1350°C, produced rich, black tenmokus, breaking to rust red on rims and edges, together with that rich surface texture and depth so essential to the character of good tenmoku and yet so difficult to achieve.

In an article I once wrote;

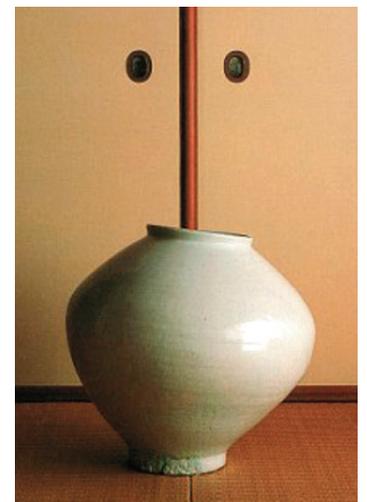
A potter's life is not easy. The hours are long and often lonely. But when he has played his part well, and the kiln has been kind, the good pot is a thing of lasting beauty and, as Bernard Leach once said... worth any sacrifice, including life itself.

This holds true for me still for this is not what I do; this is what I am.

Jim Malone 2008



Shoji Hamada demonstrating at the Honolulu University in 1953



Korean Yi Dynasty, Large White Porcelain Tsubo Jar (Moon Jar)