

## The inspiration of Marianne de Trey – necessity and decoration from cloth to clay by Sophie Heath

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### On ceramics and bravery

Marianne de Trey successfully ran a small pottery at Dartington in Devon for over three decades from the late 1940s, crafting repeat lines of domestic wares. Throughout this era de Trey prepared individual work in parallel to the production side and in 1980 she retired to concentrate on personal, one-off work (**Fig.1: Agateware bottle**). In the 1940s and 50s de Trey was closely involved with some major figures and events of British studio pottery: she was married to Sam Haile, an energetic and respected graduate of the Royal College of Art ceramics department. They came to Shinners Bridge Pottery on the Dartington Estate together in 1947.[1] The Hailes took over the tenancy from Bernard Leach, the charismatic patriarch of British craft ceramics whose workshop at St Ives became an exemplar for the movement.[2] Leach established a pottery on the site in 1933 to explore a proposed collaboration with the Dartington Estate.

#### Fig.1 Agateware bottle, 2003

Porcelain, thrown, gas-fired

15.0 cm(h)

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Dartington was a creative experiment on a large scale sponsored by the wealthy philanthropists Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst where a plan to put fine hand-crafts into small-scale commercial manufacture was one radical programme among many.[3] It was at Dartington that the watershed gathering *The International conference of craftsmen in pottery and textiles* was held in 1952, which de Trey attended.[4] This event brought Leach's closest Japanese associates, who had inspired his ceramic philosophy, to a wider audience and included leading makers such as weaver Marianne Straub and potter Lucie Rie.[5] In the mid-50s de Trey

was a founding member of the *Devon Guild of Craftsmen* which has grown into a major support network for the regional crafts.[6] Hence Marianne de Trey was in the thick of the post-war consolidation of British craft pottery. Yet despite de Trey's sustained production of popular tablewares and experimental personal work, her ceramics do not receive analysis comparable to those of her compatriots such as David Leach and Michael Cardew.[7] However a major retrospective exhibition of de Trey's work Marianne de Trey: pattern in pottery, organised by the Devon Guild, is now planned for April 2007.[8] Currently there is one slender monograph available: De Trey at Dartington (1995).[9] Tanya Harrod's substantial study *The Crafts in Britain in the 20<sup>th</sup> century* (1999) cites de Trey once.[10] Sam Haile is discussed in this volume several times yet his relationship with de Trey is never touched upon although they were married in 1938 and spent most of the war years together in the USA. In fact where de Trey can be found in print is in several publications posthumously treating the work of Sam Haile.[11] This is telling, and the tragic death of Haile in a car crash in 1948 on the eve of the couple launching the pottery together punctuates de Trey's biography. Haile is widely recognised as one of the most talented and original potters of his generation with an ambitious artistic sensibility.[12] Any narration of de Trey's career must recognise the impact of their partnership – it was with Haile that de Trey went to America in 1939, and through him that she took up pottery though originally trained in printed textiles at the RCA.[13] But the intense critical awareness of Haile's promise perhaps creates an implicit comparison between his unrealised intentions and Marianne de Trey's concrete achievements. Sam Haile's single-minded dedication and his revolutionary creative vision conform to the romantic archetype of the driven artist.[14] Does Haile's self-conscious, undomesticated genius act as a context for de Trey's well-planned, steady business? In such a contrast the practicality and popularity of de Trey's ceramics (designed very deliberately with these qualities) may appear ordinary, conventional and untheorised. Another factor which may have hampered appreciation of Marianne de Trey's work is the general taste for austerity in craft pottery circles. De Trey has staunchly made decorated pots from the 1950s onwards (**Fig.2: Painted plate, top view**) while colourful and complex surface decoration was regarded with deep suspicion well into the 1970s.[15] This reflected a broadly Modernist ideal of honesty in materials and form following function. In A potter's book Bernard Leach condemns the naturalistic motifs of transfer-printed commercial china as hackneyed stereotypes.[16]

**Fig.2 Plate painted with floral motif, top view, 1950s**

Tin-glazed earthenware, thrown, electric kiln

12.7 cm(d)

Crafts Study Centre, Farnham

2004.177.2

*Indeed the more elaborate and expensive the decoration the more lifeless it is, and the nearer it approaches the long deceased fashion of naturalism of the nineteenth century, when close attention to detail and the careful painting of pictures upon porcelain was considered the summit of ceramic art - 'applied art' with a vengeance.[17] Studio pottery was seen as an answer to the bourgeois aesthetic of mass-produced ceramics and refined finishes, charming designs, and 19th century*

shapes. To reinvigorate domestic ceramic practice both Bernard Leach and William Staite-Murray, Head of Ceramics at the RCA, looked to the Far East for inspiring, crafted, clay vessels.[18] Thus in Britain a broadly oriental style expressed an aesthetic intention to make vital and meaningful pots. Craft potters especially admired Chinese Sung dynasty (960-1279AD) pots which were characterised by sober hues, subtle textures and colour gradations. An early pupil of Leach's, Katharine Pleydell-Bouverie, spent 14 years on extensive and painstaking trials of the incremental effects of different wood ashes in glazes after the Sung style (**Fig.3: K Pleydell-Bouverie pot**).[19]

**Fig.3 Bowl by Katharine Pleydell-Bouverie, 1930s**

Stoneware, thrown and faceted, wood-fired  
16.5cm(h)  
© Prunella Pleydell-Bouverie/Crafts Study  
Centre 2001  
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*I want my pots to make people think, not of the Chinese, but of things like pebbles and shells and bird's eggs and the stones over which moss grows.*

In the Oriental school applied decoration was generally limited to calligraphic brushwork which was suggestive rather than illusionistic.[20] Marianne de Trey's polychrome tablewares with naturalistic motifs vibrant against a white background, which flirted with the style of domestic china, were unorthodox in this respect. A recent gift to the Crafts Study Centre from Marianne de Trey includes a selection of pots spanning her career alongside examples of student work made in printed textiles at the Royal College of Art in the 1930s (**Fig.4: Silk square with seaweed motif**). The gift also incorporates collected textiles gathered locally and internationally (**Fig.5: Guatemalan shirt**). This body of work enables threads to be drawn out that go back beyond when Marianne de Trey met Sam Haile. Above all pattern and decoration emerge as a central preoccupation of her creative work.

**Fig.4: Silk square with seaweed motif, 1930s**

Silk, block-printed  
72.0cm(w)  
Collection of Marianne de Trey, recorded for Headley  
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**Fig.5 Guatemalan shirt, 1970s**

Cotton, fabric woven in bands and  
blanket-stitched together  
70 x 58cm(h)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
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De Trey's passion for textiles of all kinds resonates with this focus yet this appreciation has been little related to her pottery practice. Decoration and cloth are not widely understood or respected as artistic fields, so the core of de Trey's inspiration falls outside what is conventionally given deep consideration and value. It is arguable that women create from a social, economic, and imaginative state that is different from their male contemporaries. Some of de Trey's perspectives and

priorities appear to have been little-examined in line with gender-biased preconceptions. A close consideration of the pots themselves together with Marianne de Trey's own evaluation of her career shows her ceramics to be both unusual and innovative as well as practical and popular.

### Standardwares at Shinnars Bridge - the appeal of decorated pottery

From 1949 to 1980 Marianne de Trey managed the production of several standard ranges of decorated tableware at Shinnars Bridge. Over 30 years the pottery's functional ceramics traversed an eclectic range of styles, and went through several technical incarnations. The wares sold well from the beginning, both locally and in London outlets like Heals.[21] A resiliently popular design, known as 'pattern 1', was simply produced by partially dipping the item into a slip pigmented with manganese (firing dark brown), then after a first firing it was dipped into a white tin-glaze, matured in a second firing. Where the layers overlap a biscuitcoloured band results (**Fig.6: Jampot with lid, pattern 1**).

**Fig.6 Jam pot with lid, pattern 1, 1960s-1970s**  
Stoneware, thrown, electric kiln  
10.0 cm(h)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham

This method nicely mixed consistency and uniqueness, since each item was individually dipped. It could be readily applied to a whole range of shapes, for example the 'punch sets' made at Shinnars Bridge comprising a large bowl, ladle and a set of small mugs or tots (**Fig.7: Tot and ladle for punch set, pattern 1**). Pattern 1 was consistently on display at the Design Centre in London, the showcase of the Design Council, evidently capturing a modern, practical look esteemed as good contemporary design.[22]

**Fig.7 Tot and ladle for punch set, pattern 1, 1960s-1970s**  
Stoneware, thrown, electric kiln  
Tot: 5.0 cm(h); Length of ladle handle: 29.0cm  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham

As well as being an outstanding commercial success de Trey's business in many ways fulfilled the studio pottery ideal set out by Bernard Leach: making a modest living by your craft and serving a grass-roots audience whilst contributing to a fresh British style of potting.[23] But the circumstances of the launch of Shinnars Bridge pottery were shocking bereavement and post-war rationing with shortages of many industrial materials; de Trey was three weeks pregnant and had no other adequate source of income.[24] When Sam Haile was killed suddenly in 1948 de Trey put aside their plans to formulate a contemporary saltglazed ware[25], and set out to conjure a viable line of crafted domestic pottery from zero output and no experience of such a business. Two of her sisters came to help but there was a clear imperative to make it a paying concern. De Trey's aesthetic choices were constrained by the immediate need to make a living and the resources she had at her disposal: one small electric kiln, untrained labour and womens' physical strength, and relatively little potting experience.[26] Amongst de Trey's earliest production at Shinnars

Bridge were earthenwares with slip-trailed decoration (**Fig.8: Slip-trailed soupbowl**), a type of ware she had made with Haile for a year or two at the Bulmer Brickyard in Suffolk, before coming to Devon.[27] The maker notes that she was confident with the kiln temperatures and timings for such pots, crucial for achieving a reliable commercial manufacture.[28] De Trey also asserts technical familiarity as the determining factor in her choice to make tin-glazed earthenware which became the main medium of Shinners Bridge standardwares throughout the 1950s.[29] This is an earthenware fabric covered with a white glaze (opacified with tin), giving a shiny white ground which can be painted with coloured pigments (**Fig.9: Painted plate, side view**).[30]

**Fig.8 Soup bowl with slip-trailed decoration, 1950s**

Earthenware, thrown, electric kiln

14.0 cm(d)

Crafts Study Centre, Farnham

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**Fig.9 Plate painted with floral motif, side view, 1950s**

Tin-glazed earthenware, thrown, electric kiln

12.7 cm(d)

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2004.177.1

This technique was used in many of de Trey's standard designs to striking graphic effect. A long-lived example was 'pattern 5' - although this style was actually made in a stoneware clay it still utilised a white background decorated with coloured pigments (**Fig.10: Cup and saucer, pattern 5**).[31] A wax resist has been used with green and black slips to build up the foliage-inspired pattern. Melted wax can be brushed onto the surface like paint and acts as a waterproof layer, resisting any glaze or slip laid over it (in the firing the wax burns away). Thus the texture of the waxy (negative) brushstroke adds complexity to compositions swiftly and relatively easily (**Fig.11: Saucer, pattern 5, top view**). It is a core component of many of Marianne de Trey's ceramic designs.[32]

**Fig.10: Cup and saucer, pattern 5, 1960s-1970s**

Stoneware, thrown, electric kiln

Cup: 7.2 cm(h)

Crafts Study Centre, Farnham

2004.171a-b

**Fig.11: Saucer, pattern 5, 1960s-1970s**

Stoneware, thrown, electric kiln

Cup: 15.8 cm(d)

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2004.171b

Tin-glazed earthenware has a long history in Europe going back to the Islamic rule of 15th century Spain. [33] It is characteristically brightly and figuratively painted and became unfashionable in the 20th century according to Modernist tastes. Tin-glazed earthenware was also a left-field choice at a time when many British potters adopted a stoneware body in emulation of Far Eastern pottery. An admiration for the ceramics and the powerful kiln technologies of Japan and China inspired a general conviction of the aesthetic and technical virtues of stoneware that was bound up with

a desire to improve the status of clay in European circles. Where earthenware is relatively low-fired and must be glazed to be waterproof, stoneware bodies mature at a substantially higher temperature and are more tough and vitrified - impervious to water. It is these high temperatures that define the much more muted palette of glazes relative to the rainbow of low-fired pigments available on earthenware.[34] However, Marianne de Trey refuses to partake of these symbolic codes invested in her materials. When I proposed that tin-glaze was associated with European models and hence unlike Far Eastern ideals de Trey asserted that this didn't weigh with her. *Well, it is European, I don't think I worried about whether it was European or Eastern ... I loved pattern and knew something about a tin-glaze decoration, both slip and the tin-glaze ... it's a big field and you have to stick to something you know if you're going to make any money out of it.*[35] Counter to received good taste, colourful and individual ceramics were greatly in demand immediately after the Second World War as the British public had been restricted to the plain white utility ware imposed by rationing.[36] De Trey attributes the initial buoyancy of her business to this hunger for variety.[37] So the maker highlights market forces alongside artistic inspiration, and the lively decorated earthenware made at Shinners Bridge responds to a democratic and popular estimation of the buying public rather than a prescriptive moral design that seeks to educate people into more esoteric tastes.[38] When Marianne de Trey did start working in stoneware she explains her decision by citing material facts, not historical precedents. De Trey changed the entire standardware production over to stoneware in 1960 after a fire partially burnt down the existing kiln. She emphasises the practical advantages of the body and the high quality of the stoneware clays dug locally in Devon.[39] *We changed from earthenware to stoneware so that customers would be happier with its hardness and durability, its sheer practicality.*[40] In this she claims more commonality with the local utilitarian pipe and brick-making industries than with the aesthetico-moral debates of studio pottery. So in Marianne de Trey's own narration of her career she insists that the pots were shaped more by the concrete external world than by a subjective inner world. She finds that personal inclination and the freedom of artistic expression are constrained by the nature of the raw materials, the need to make a living, and the requirements of the public for whom the work is meant. That is there are indisputable physical facts, and moral responsibilities such as breadwinning. This premise for creative work is quite different from the Romantic model of the artist established in the 19th century where the drive of individual creative consciousness is paramount and work is valued for its expression of personal character and grandeur. In this familiar archetype conforming to normal criteria of what is possible or appropriate is weakness. Women artists have often lacked the space, support, and conviction to create with disregard for others and in defiance of social expectations. In 20th century studio pottery Dora Lunn and Ruth Duckworth are chastening examples of women potters whose creative lives were frustrated by social and personal pressures.[41] Dora Lunn began an informal pottery training in her late 20s with a view to assisting her eminent father Richard Lunn, a professor at the Royal College of Art, with a teaching studio on his retirement. When he died in 1915, without being able to carry through this plan, Dora studied ceramics at Camberwell School of Art and set up the Ravenscourt Pottery at Hammersmith in 1916. Moira Vincentelli describes the social disapproval and loneliness Lunn endured in pursuing her vocation and finally the heartbreak as she was forced to choose between the pottery and her marriage – selling the pottery.[42]

She continued to work creatively, teaching and in the 1930s taking up pottery again on a smaller scale. It seems that for Marianne de Trey duty and impossibility are likewise concepts with force, not just restrictions to be overturned. The maker expressly notes the limits necessity imposed on her artistic choices for most of her career. In such a framework creative practice is justified by its recognition of reality and others rather than by metaphysics, aesthetics, or psychology. An emphasis on efficiency and practicality is evident in many aspects of manufacture at Shinners Bridge. The standardwares at the pottery were wheel-thrown but de Trey quickly decided that all the plates would be mould-made (although the earliest examples were made on the wheel, **see Fig.s 2 and 9**).[43] This was a concession to the demands of economy and quality control - throwing plates to match consistently is far more difficult than for any other common shape. Whereas a re-usable plaster mould permits the reliable production of a uniform set of items without extraordinary skill. The form may be slip-cast where liquid clay (slip) is poured into the mould, or press-moulded where a sheet of clay rolled out to an even thickness is pressed in. The porous plaster draws moisture away from the clay and the shape shrinks away from the mould slightly as it dries.[44] Many artist-craftspeople have regarded this as a necessary economy but mechanisation is frequently felt as a loss, a compromise of craft integrity. However Marianne de Trey experienced the introduction and proliferation of moulds at Shinners Bridge as an empowerment rather than an alienation from her craft. De Trey learnt to make and use plaster moulds at Alfred University in New York State during the war years. In the tense years starting out at Shinners Bridge this expertise represented technical confidence and control. *I learnt fortunately how to make moulds which came in useful later because I didn't have to get somebody else to do it as I knew how to manipulate plaster. I was pretty green as far as actually making pots went but it all came in useful later.*[45]

Indeed de Trey clearly enjoyed originating the designs and the pottery began to turn out a wide range of moulded dishes of all sizes from little dishes to large serving platters (**Fig.12: Square moulded dish**). In fact the pottery became known for one-off moulded dishes! These sizeable oval or triangular plates, freed from circular symmetry, were decorated by de Trey herself with freely-painted motifs such as a fish or a cockerel.[46] It is apparent that de Trey's personal aesthetic inspiration has been enabled rather than diminished by this technically practical measure. Moulded platters continue to be a strand of de Trey's work today (**see Fig.40**).

**Fig.12: Square mould-made dish, 1950s**  
earthenware, press-moulded, electric kiln  
Cup: 9.5 cm(w)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
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Such individually created designs should be contrasted with the bulk of Shinners Bridge decorated wares. The patterns used on the repeat lines were designed to be swiftly reproduced by a range of workers in the pottery. The small square dish with the floral motif illustrated above was made in large quantities (**see Fig.12 above**)[47] First, the inside of the dish was painted with white slip, the flower-heads were created by sweeping a brush through the slip while still wet - thickening it in some places and thinning it in others. The stem was slip-trailed and the whole dish glazed.

So Marianne de Trey's surface elaboration is as much structural as painterly, manipulating the layers of glaze, pigment, and clay that are the vessel's skin. Another simple procedure used in de Trey's hands to build up sophisticated graphic effects is sponging which can be seen in pots of the style 'pattern 1A' (**Fig.13: Dinner plate, pattern 1A**). This variant on pattern 1 uses the same dark brown manganese-slip and white tinglaze. The darker pigment was applied first, right up to the rim of the plate. The central daisy motif was made by sponging off this slip back to the clay itself, and the pot biscuit-fired at this stage. The dark brown outline of the larger flower-form was then preserved by painting this area with wax and the whole plate was dipped in the whitened tin-glaze which didn't adhere to the waxed section. After the glaze firing this coat appeared white against the body alone and flax-coloured where it overlapped the brown layer. Thus the colours and texture of this design were built up and exposed in a stratified way which is more like printing than painting.

**Fig.13: Dinner-plate, pattern 1A**, 1960s-1970s  
stoneware, jiggered and jolleyed, electric kiln  
26.8 cm(d)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
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### Sustainable workshop production and the disciplined potter

A pragmatic agenda is borne out in de Trey's management of production at Shinners Bridge. In fact the discipline of filling orders is one aspect of her craft that de Trey willingly expands upon.[48] Shinners Bridge employed several people (reaching a maximum of five) from 1950 until 1980 when de Trey contracted the pottery to an individual studio operation on the same site.[49] The pottery operated broadly on the principle of division of labour where people had specific responsibilities. De Trey always employed someone who was an able, committed decorator besides having several skilled throwers.[50] Workers focussed on the tasks that reflected their talents. An extreme case of this system would be the production line where each worker does the minimum action, repetitively, and is cut off from the manufacturing process as a whole. At Shinners Bridge this rational structure was managed fluidly according to personal inclination and ability. At one time de Trey employed a local lady who was not a potter to pack the kiln, a job that she enjoyed and showed particular talent for (as well as other general tasks that took the potters away from skilled work).[51] Marianne de Trey explicitly contrasts Shinners Bridge with the workshop set-up at Alan Caiger-Smith's Aldermaston Pottery in Berkshire.[52] Caiger-Smith ran this small production pottery over a comparable era (1955-83), making tin-glazed earthenware and employing up to seven people at one time. He has written eloquently about his conviction, put into practice at Aldermaston, that every member of the team should be a full participant in all the processes – throwing, decorating, firing, and selling.[53] As far as possible each worker would follow their pots through from making to decoration.[54] It is a model incorporating Socialist ideals of the pride of workers in their labour. It also draws on Arts and Crafts' philosophies of fulfilment in handwork over the machine, where objects made with pleasure are esteemed as more wholesome. This prominence of philosophy in the

practical business of the pottery is foreign to de Trey who perceives her own workshop as governed more by the bottom-line than by universal principles. At Shinners Bridge apprentices were encouraged to pursue their individual craft in their spare time and it is arguable that this clear separation between the work of the business and private creative development was a freer philosophical environment.[55] De Trey's insistence on considering the real costs of hand manufacture runs counter to the utopian agenda of most meditations on the craft workshop. The small production pottery has been the focus of much idealism in 20th century hand-made ceramics. Bernard Leach's call for a revived craft pottery in A potter's book argues for the local workshop as the proper place to develop a self-conscious aesthetic sensibility in clay.[56] Concrete experiences have demonstrated the tensions inherent in siting the creative individualist in an historicising rural, craft workshop (which is not to say that exceptional, interesting work hasn't been produced).[57] Leach's student Michael Cardew established several rural potteries including Winchcombe Pottery in 1926 to make slipwares, and the Pottery Training Centre at Abuja in Nigeria in 1952 making stonewares.[58] These small production workshops practised traditional methods and utilised local craft knowledge but in both cases the pots produced were exhibited to acclaim in fine art galleries.[59] At both sites Cardew set himself the mammoth task of establishing an aboriginal tradition from scratch in a decade, using local materials and building an Ur range of shapes. In his autobiography Cardew describes the arduous labour and heartbreak involved in committing himself emotionally and aesthetically to projects he could not complete with the available physical resources.[60] The identification of workshop manufacture with the wholesome, not-alienated experience of labour is crucial here and it enshrines the time taken in making as a sacrifice to good craft – the worker and Art should dictate how long a task takes, not the regime of capitalism.[61] This inevitably sets up a conflict between the aim of production and the pursuit of creativity, putting the market and the maker at odds. In this scenario the potter is constrained by the demands of the public and frustrated by the disobedience of the raw materials. Hence Marianne de Trey's enthusiasm for matching her production to the commercially desirable outcome and her ability to work with the nature of her medium comes from a different paradigm of practice.

It is not only macro-organisation of workflow that de Trey applies standards of efficiency to in her craft production. De Trey advocates the drive to streamline physical procedures all the time. She notes that they didn't trim the foot of jugs or mugs at the pottery though this was judged a necessary finishing touch on cups and saucers.[62] The discipline and economy of movement involved in efficient reduction throwing is widely recognised among potters. De Trey goes further and argues that decorative processes should be adapted for speed and reliability. *One must constantly be searching for better, quicker ways of doing things and 'time and motion' is extremely relevant. This applies equally to glazing and decorating; tools must be conveniently to hand; it matters whether one uses two rather than three colours or brushes, and decoration has to be worked out to gain the maximum effect for the minimum time. (This could become an obsession, but in fact I find it adds rather than detracts from the satisfaction of general craftsmanship.)*[63] We have explored some of the innovative formulas de Trey worked out to generate vibrant patterns quickly and simply but it is her assertion that achieving efficient decoration should be a stimulating and inherent part of the creative challenge that is

striking. This conviction resonates with the aesthetic inspiration found by de Trey in the mould-made dishes produced at the pottery. It is a significant and an unusual attitude and it cuts at the very definitions of modern craft as a utopian form of labour. It is not surprising then that de Trey describes her personal creativity as conditional on the success of the pottery as a commercial business. She speaks of her good fortune in gathering a group of capable, dedicated people at Shinnars Bridge which freed her to devote time to private work.[64] De Trey cites especially Frank Middlebrook who acted as her works manager from 1959, making sure all the orders were filled on schedule. So when de Trey emphasises efficiency in the workshop operation it is implicitly about making space for a personal practice. This is important as the weight placed on financial viability and efficiency in de Trey's own assessment can suggest a venal preoccupation with the profit margin against the high-minded tone of many craft memoirs. But there is a strong moral sense surrounding de Trey's pursuit of her own aesthetic inclinations. *It happens to very few people that they can start a pottery exactly as they want it. The two decisive factors are the amount of capital involved and the personality of the potter. (If you only want to make 'one-offs', hurry in search of some part-time teaching, for you won't make a living otherwise.)* [65] This is an implicit ethics whose discipline the potter imposes upon herself but it clearly positions individual expression as a luxury. The foundational viability of the bread-and-butter lines is a badge of honour for the potter, denoting relevance in the real world.[66] In this way de Trey's individual aesthetic development is in tension with, but not in direct opposition to, an economically rational craft manufacture. The emphasis de Trey places on the grace and the assistance of others in enabling her creativity disowns the notion of the artist as an entirely self-generated phenomenon. De Trey's rationale for her co-operative functional work at Shinnars Bridge has been more articulate than any vindication of her private work. The maker herself feels that she has not lobbied strongly on her own behalf for exhibitions and reviews – the substance of a public persona.[67] This ambivalence about promoting an ego-focussed artistic identity resonates with de Trey's reluctance to mobilise universal theoretical ideas when reflecting on her craft choices. Feminist approaches in art history have suggested that women artists face a dilemma because they are conditioned to experience themselves as objects of representation as well as feeling subjects. This introduces doubt into the conventional (masculine) expressive artistic treatment where the conscious self reproduces the external world of objects. If we propose that de Trey's uneasy relationship with idiosyncratic and defined artistic intentions is partly to do with a gendered psychological position, then we may accept that her commitment to her vocation may be expressed in unfamiliar ways.

### The wood kiln: serendipity and unique work

Browsing through British studio pottery journals of the 1960s and 1970s demonstrates that Marianne de Trey was making and exhibiting individual work as well as delivering a range of production wares.[68] This private work has moved through several 'periods' with very diverse formal styles. So the initial physical presence of de Trey's one-off ceramics suggests a scattered rather than a cumulative effort. Marianne de Trey's creative projects have often been prompted by unplanned and serendipitous opportunities. In the mid-1960s a journeyman member of the Shinnars Bridge workshop team built a substantial wood-fired kiln. Colin Kellam, a talented all-round potter who worked with de Trey for nearly six years

before setting up the Lion Brewery Pottery in Totnes in 1969, was keen to attempt the wood-burning kiln because of the greatly expanded range of effects that can be achieved. Most historical Far Eastern ceramics were fired in this way and in particular the highly-esteemed ash glazes of Sung wares depend on the peculiarities of wood firing. De Trey was sceptical about the practicality of the kiln but agreed to pay for the materials if Kellam undertook to build it (in his spare time) which he duly did!<sup>[69]</sup> *A year or so later [~1962] we built a small oil-fired kiln for my personal work. To diversify in this way makes life more exciting but is stupid from the business point of view and when in 1965 we built a wood-fired kiln, I might have been accused of gross self-indulgence.*<sup>[70]</sup> Despite this self-critical assessment, where the temptation of personal inclination is reined in by business sense, Marianne de Trey ambitiously responded to the potential of the process. Her wood-fired pots utilized ash glazes and explored a broader application of glaze and decoration and more subdued colours. Ash glazes incorporate plant cinders in the glaze recipe as a flux, which assists the melting of the mixture, in place of a more uniform mineral component.<sup>[71]</sup> The distinctiveness and variability of this natural material introduces not only a range of glaze effects from different species but subtle variations within a glaze batch and on the pot surface. A tall cylinder vase fired in the wood kiln bears a partial covering of a thick, greenish ash glaze (**Fig.14: Cylinder vase, grooved**). The glaze has been poured down the body (possibly held upside down) in two overlapping curtains giving a random coverage. The body itself is given interest by deep, wide grooves dragged lengthways at regular intervals. This feature gives angularity and rhythm to the circular form but it also embodies a violence and spontaneity in making. Such works develop a sketchier, rougher aesthetic in contrast to the disciplined, designed and domesticated style of de Trey's standardwares.<sup>[72]</sup> This creative departure depended partly on the determination of de Trey's apprentice who went ahead despite her reservations about the proposal.

**Fig.14: Cylinder vase, with faceted and grooved sides**, 1970s  
stoneware, thrown, cut, and grooved, woodfired (reduction)  
20.0 cm(h)  
Collection of Marianne de Trey, recorded for Headley Trust Project  
MDT5

Other recurring glaze effects in Marianne de Trey's oeuvre at this time are particularly celadons, a dense, pale green finish prized in Far Eastern ceramics (**Fig.15: Celadon bowl**).<sup>[73]</sup> Importantly, firing with wood introduces a partially reducing atmosphere to the pots, that is the fuel consumes oxygen as it burns and if the airflow into the kiln is restricted it will strip oxygen from ingredients in the clay bodies and glazes.<sup>[74]</sup> The green of celadons is generated through the reduction of iron oxide in the glaze which usually gives rusty reds and dark browns (**Fig.16: Tenmoku bowl**)<sup>[75]</sup>. Celadons continue to be an important strand of de Trey's work today (**Fig.17: Celadon 'Chinese' bottle**). Alongside these fresh developments we can recognise enduring themes in de Trey's decorative practice throughout the 1970s.

**Fig.15: Celadon bowl**, post 1980  
Porcelain, thrown, gas-fired

(reduction)  
8.0 cm(d)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.175

**Fig.16: Tenmoku bowl**, 1970s  
Stoneware, thrown, cut, and  
grooved, oil-fired (reduction)  
11.5 cm(d)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.183

**Fig.17: Celadon 'Chinese' bottle**,  
post 1980  
Porcelain, thrown, altered, and  
constructed, gas-fired (reduction)  
11.5 cm(h)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.167

A rectangular slab-built vase from this period combines a plant motif and wax resist with the rugged approach and the ash glazes of the wood-firing (**Fig.18: Rectangular vase with foliage motif**). The whole exterior has been painted with white pigment, the leaves of the foliage spray painted in wax resist, then a greenish ash glaze has been poured down the body (not adhering to the wax) and finally the stem detail has been scratched through all these layers to the reddish body beneath. This complex superimposition of layers and textures building up depth in the design recalls and extends the aesthetic understanding established in the decorated standardwares.

Fig.18: Rectangular vase with foliage motif  
Stoneware, slab-built, wood-fired  
(reduction)  
23.0 cm(h)  
Collection of Marianne de Trey, recorded  
for Headley Trust Project

The boldness of this looser manner in Marianne de Trey's wood-fired ceramics contrasts with her doubts about the financial viability of the process. *The economics of wood-firing are hard to work out; it is cheap in terms of fuel but very expensive in terms of labour; we get a high proportion of 'seconds' but the 'firsts' are far superior to the products of either electricity or oil. The satisfaction and the frustration are greater too - how must one balance these factors? I have to admit that without the steady production from the electric kiln I should find it hard to justify this whole project.*[76]

The same factors that make wood-fired pots sensually rich increase the difficulty and the failure rate of the firing, above all consistency and predictability are sacrificed. Using wood as the combustible material introduces some direct effects of the fire into the kiln - flying ash and a directional airflow as the flame generates a draught which draws the heat over the pots. A round-bellied pot by de Trey bears a flash on one part of the body where a differential in temperature and atmosphere has created a sort of flare or aura on the clay (**Fig.19: Round vase** with impressed decoration).

De Trey has worked the outside with imprinted stamped shapes which further plays on the subtlety of the surface. The use of ash glazes can create unpredictable glaze flows because the ash is such an effective fluxing agent. Here just the rim and the top of the shoulder of the pot bears a creamy-pale ash glaze that appears to be spilling down one side, its smooth glossy surface sets off the dry, rough texture and the rich reddish tones of the greater part of the pot. The large unglazed exterior areas that act as a canvas for unpredictable kiln effects are a new development in de Trey's work at this time, often contrasted with the sheen of glazed surfaces inside the vessel and about the rim.

**Fig.19: Round vase with impressed decoration, 1970s**

Stoneware, thrown, wood-fired (reduction)  
13.5 cm(h)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.166

But molten glaze can fuse pots together or to the kiln shelf and the fierce heat of the fire can warp or crack the pots. Such inherent uncertainty is inimical in many ways to the rationale of Shinners Bridge Pottery which was governed by prudence and the minimisation of waste. The creative challenge the wood-fired kiln posed for de Trey is demonstrated in a very honest self-reflection on her practice. *I do find some of the Japanese 'treasures' difficult to accept - things that have split and broken, but I am constantly aware that pots with imperfections, or things that you don't expect, may provide the greatest satisfaction.*[77] In this meditation de Trey is referring to Zen Buddhist aesthetics (perhaps most familiar through the Japanese tea ceremony) where misshapen or damaged vessels are esteemed over symmetrical and conventional beauty.[78] In such a philosophical taste the imperfect offers insight into the nature of the universe rather than the limited beauty of a human scale of values. De Trey links the uneasiness provoked by such kiln-damaged wares to her upbringing where there was an emphasis on the right way of doing things and careful attention to detail.[79] The aesthetics of the wood-firing are very much those of fire, ordeal, and accident and in practice de Trey clearly responded to the undetermined potential of the changeable kiln atmosphere. She describes the drama of the kiln opening with its mixture of anxiety and anticipation: *Well, that was wonderful, there were things that turned out as you hoped they would and things that got stuck together and things that fell off the roof.*[80]

The exhilaration and allure of the unexpected and unlikely result is exemplified by a small bowl with a rare lavender-blue chun glaze that the maker is extremely proud of (**Fig.20: Bowl with chun glaze**). The colour of a chun glaze is an optical effect derived from a suspension of trapped particles within the glaze layer (called opalescence). Daniel Rhodes concludes that it is a combination of the atmosphere of a wood kiln with the presence of phosphorus through wood ash that can give rise to the effect and this is exactly the sort of elusive, non-reproducible result that the wood firing makes possible.[81]

**Fig.20: Bowl with chun glaze, 1970s**

Stoneware, thrown, wood-fired (reduction)  
13.9 cm(d)

When this delight is compared to the persistent force of notions of propriety, usefulness, and self-restraint in de Trey's ceramic practice it is possible to see the radical significance of the wood-fired pots which invited and crystallised a latent devil-may-care artistic impulse.[82] Some of the commentary surrounding the experience communicates the emotional charge of this work for de Trey. *This was where the real magic came in - it was a wonderful experience to fire a wood kiln, very demanding. The amount of air, the amount of fuel, how often you filled the firebox, all the variations were important and subtle. It was this kiln that I enjoyed more than anything else. There was a very special atmosphere in the workshop when the fire was going.*[83] It was a physical and technical adventure as well as an aesthetic experiment. The firing itself requires considerable stamina and hardiness to stay up all night dealing with acrid smoke, heat, ash, and often prickly fuel, trying to get the temperature up to stoneware levels (>1200 degrees Celcius).[84] The sense of discovery was enhanced by the fact that there were only a few such kilns in England in the 1960s so very little expertise and advice was available and de Trey and Kellam pioneered much of their achievement through trial and error.[85] And despite 'all the madness that flames lead one into',[86] de Trey observes it was a sad day when the wood kiln was pulled down to make room for Dartington Pottery.[87] Another important creative venture that gathered considerable momentum for de Trey was the cycle of flower vases made from the early 1960s. This project gave rise to an exhibition *Mainly for flowers* held at the Cider Press at Dartington in 1965. These pots shared a common theme as a response to the Japanese art of ikebana or flower-arranging and, like the wood-fired pots, initially arose through external circumstances. At Dartington Hall during the 1960s and '70s inspiring classes in ikebana were lead by Emily Thomas who was in charge of all the flower arrangements at the Hall.[88] Thomas had access to the Elmhursts' valuable collection of Far Eastern ceramics which she used practically in demonstrations.[89] This generated a demand for similar vessels in the class and Thomas approached De Trey to consider making some things in a comparable style. De Trey studied the collection and did produce some things for the students. But the invitation gave rise to an independent fertile exploration of the vase-form as a vehicle for display. A striking example of de Trey's investigation of the vessel as visual spectacle is the series of shoulder vases that she made at this time (Fig.s 21-22: Shoulder vase). This is an innovative thrown, altered, and constructed form where a cylinder forms the upright stem of the vase; another cylinder is cut in half lengthways and laid across the top of the first giving the vessel a bold 'T-shape'.[90] This sculptural form acts as a frame for any bouquet, interacting with the display. It is one of the first instances of de Trey playing with the avant-garde idea of function versus non-function in her pottery.

**Fig.21: Shoulder vase**,post 1970s  
Stoneware, thrown, altered, and constructed,  
wood-fired (reduction)  
21.0 cm(h)  
Collection of Marianne de Trey, recorded for  
Headley Trust Project  
MDT9a

**Fig.22: Shoulder vase, other side**, post 1970s  
Stoneware, thrown, altered, and constructed,  
wood-fired (reduction)  
21.0 cm(h)  
Collection of Marianne de Trey, recorded for  
Headley Trust Project  
MDT9a

*I have always been primarily interested in domestic wares and I enjoy designing and making functional shapes ... Through circumstances rather than choice I employ three assistants and still hope that one day they will run the pottery so well that I can relax and confine my attention to creative work. My present interests include small porcelain pieces and large slab built lamps ... As well as tableware I have designed a series of shapes for flower arrangements. I am still evolving new ones.[91]* It is characteristic of de Trey's approach that she openly and generously attributes this development in her work to Emily Thomas and Dartington.[92] This willingness to adopt the initiatives of others and surrender to the serendipitous is an unfamiliar relinquishment of control and the conviction of destiny in a creative career. Yet despite the wide variation encompassed in the genres of de Trey's ceramics they are broadly united by an intricate feel for the surface of the vessel. From her 'vases for flowers' a slab-built rectangular vase has a mainly unglazed exterior baked to a warm orange which contrasts effectively with the limpid green of the celadon-glazed interior (**Fig.23: Rectangular vase with impressed decoration, celadon glaze**). De Trey has treated the external surface with a random scattering of impressed motifs and fragments of texture, giving it a complex topography caught between pattern and landscape. These contours have been highlighted by brushing the celadon glaze over, and wiping it off so it remains caught in the depressions.

**Fig.23: Rectangular vase with impressed motifs**, 1970s, celadon-glazed  
Porcelain, slab-built, wood-fired (reduction)  
20.0 cm(h)  
Collection of Marianne de Trey, recorded for  
Headley Trust Project  
MDT12

### Early textiles: the organisation and seduction of pattern

We have seen the persistent emphasis on surface decoration in Marianne de Trey's ceramics, and the constant experimentation. It is also a sphere where she readily asserts ownership and expresses least doubt: the designs for the standardwares are all acknowledged as her invention.[93] This contrasts with the prominence assumed by accident in much of de Trey's self-reflection on her career. Several recurring themes in de Trey's ceramics are prefigured in the printed textiles she made as a student at the RCA in the 1930s (**Fig.24: Silk square with repeating design of sea creatures**).

**Fig.24: Silk square with repeating design of sea creatures**, 1930s  
Silk, block-printed  
72.0 cm(w)

A silk square bearing an all-over pattern of sea creatures demonstrates de Trey's early facility with bold and complex pattern - the design is built from one repeating block (lino-cut mounted on wood) printed as a continuous field. A taste for naturalistic motifs is immediately apparent. The maker recalls that as children she and her siblings were botanically aware, identifying plant families by the number of petals in the flower. [94] Thus the confident sketching of plants and animals which is a hallmark of de Trey's design apparently grows out of a way of looking at the world absorbed during childhood (**See Fig.25: Sketch of birds**).[95] A green silk square with a repeating pattern of cells in cross-section (**Fig.26: Silk square with cellular design**) demonstrates an early venture by de Trey into resist methods of decoration. The cell motifs were block-printed using a paste resist on the fabric square (already dyed green). The cloth was then boiled up and the dye bled out where it had been printed yielding a paler pattern. Marianne de Trey also experimented during her degree with simple tie dyes where knots tied tightly in the cloth prevent penetration of the dye, so reserving parts of the design (**Fig.27: Tie-dye textile**). These negative methods of creating graphic effects resonate with the wax-resist and sgraffito strategies that de Trey has so frequently utilized on ceramics.

**Fig.25: Sketch of birds after Bairei** (Ukiyo-e school), 1930s

Watercolour on paper  
17.0 x 22.5 cm

Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.186.1a

**Fig.26: Silk square with resist pattern of magnified cells in cross-section**, 1930s

Silk, block-printed, paste-resist  
72.0 cm(w)

Collection of Marianne de Trey,  
recorded for Headley Trust Project  
MDT18

**Fig.27: Silk with tie-dye pattern**

**Silk**, 1930s, tie-dyed  
72.0 cm(w)

Collection of Marianne de Trey,  
recorded for Headley Trust Project  
MDT16

De Trey's focus on pattern construction in her work towards her teaching diploma the year after her graduation from the RCA indicates a self-consciousness of the centrality of surface elaboration in her inspiration. A portfolio compiled as the journal and outcome of this project forms part of the gift of her student work to the CSC (**See Fig.28: Marianne de Trey's portfolio, teaching diploma**). This remarkable album contains 23 sheets of diverse repeating designs demonstrating paste-and-paint resists, potato-block prints, freehand recurring patterns, and many others (**See Fig.29: Potato-block print from portfolio**).[96]

**Fig.28: Marianne de Trey's portfolio,**  
completed 1936, teaching diploma  
Hardboard folder with loose sheets  
29.0 x 42.0 cm  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.185.1

**Fig.29: Potato-block print from RCA portfolio,**  
completed 1936  
Sheet of paper with examples of potato-block prints  
28.0 x 38.0 cm  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.185.1.4

De Trey's study represents a thorough understanding of pattern and the principles of repetition, geometry, symmetry, and colour that enable its invention (**See Fig.30-31: Examples of pattern design from portfolio**). This fluency in the fundamentals of decoration enabled Marianne de Trey to earn a living when she and Sam Haile were living day-to-day in New York in the early 1940s. Among other things Haile worked as a pottery tutor at the Henry Street Settlement, a charitable complex of art workshops for local underprivileged children.[97] De Trey carried out freelance textile design, including furnishing fabrics and elaborate Italian wedding dresses.[98]

**Fig.30: Portfolio sheet: block-prints in turquoise and red,** completed 1936  
Sheet of card with variations of a block-print on paper  
27.0 x 32.0 cm  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.185.1.10

**Fig.31: Portfolio sheet: 'Change and Counterchange XVI',** completed 1936  
Sheet of card with two examples of pencilled and watercolour repeating patterns in lime-green and violet respectively  
28.0 x 38.0 cm  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.185.1.12

*It was a matter of being told what was required and I knew enough about pattern construction to know what a 'half-drop' was or what happened when you reversed it or did it upside down. All those things fascinated me because if you get involved with pattern it's just a necessary part of any job.[99]* This natural inclination together with her professional approach undoubtedly assisted de Trey in designing an attractive and practical range of decorated standardwares at Shinnars Bridge. In fact de Trey recalls that her earliest encounters with clay incorporated decoration. This took place at the New York State College of Ceramics, Alfred University. Sam Haile gained teaching work at this prestigious institution in 1942 and de Trey was left to her own devices in the well-equipped workshops. *I certainly started to learn to throw, I don't think I got terribly skilful but they had a salt-glaze kiln there and I made a few things, I think the only one I've got still is that little bowl up there ... I couldn't resist putting a bit of decoration onto it.[100]* Here we encounter a sensitivity about the sense of indulgence and triviality that attaches to decoration on crafted pottery. This

wellspring of experimentation in de Trey's creative work is confessed by the maker as a potential weakness. She is conscious of the reservations of commentators on this aspect of her work. *I've always had a passion for decoration, I mean I've been accused of over-decorating my pots because I can't resist putting more.*[101] This shadowy status of the aesthetic pursuit de Trey finds so fascinating has created pressures on her artistic identity. The pursuit of unrestrained pattern as an unofficial and private pleasure appears in Marianne de Trey's student days when she salvaged her uncertainties at the RCA by slipping into the Victoria and Albert Museum to pore over the opulent surfaces of tapestries, enamels, and porcelains. *I mean what I liked about textiles was the pattern ... that's what got me started on all this decorating. When I was at the Royal College and I didn't know what I was supposed to be doing and I was too shy to ask I would go over to the V&A and spend hours just looking at things, drinking up all this pattern, it might have been embroidery or lots of different techniques, and that has been what I really enjoyed.* [102] Thus even in the discipline of printed textiles - working explicitly with a decorated medium - it was difficult to find an artistic vocation on the passion for pattern. Marianne de Trey experienced the teaching at the Royal College in the 1930s as fairly brusque and indirect - either you were brave enough to go and ask for advice or you organised yourself.[103] Both approaches assumed a degree of confidence and de Trey reflects that she was retiring by nature and instead proceeded by a sort of osmosis, gaining technical knowledge by observation and exchange with her contemporaries.[104] Hence Marianne de Trey's most important personal work has been carried out in a marginal space, with little affirmation and guidance.[105] Another source of insight into de Trey's aesthetic convictions and the coherence of her creative endeavour is her collection of textiles. Samples have been gathered from as far afield as Indonesia and Thailand, as well as Devon (**Fig.32: Woollen scarf by Sylvia Hayes**). De Trey is enthusiastic and well-informed about their technical production: she emphasises the complexity of an elaborate polychrome batik made in Indonesia (**Fig.33: Polychrome batik, Indonesia**).

**Fig.32: Woollen scarf by Sylvia Hayes**, c.1980, member of Devon Guild  
Handspun and crocheted  
132.0 x 10.0 cm(w)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.187

**Fig.33: Polychrome batik, Indonesia**, contemporary  
Cotton with vegetable dyes  
114.0 x 33.0cm(w)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.188

Batik is a wax-resist process where a design is marked out in hot wax on the cloth before dyeing, reserving these areas. In fact the prominence of resist processes among the items gathered by de Trey is striking. When questioned about parallels with her ceramic design methods de Trey responded affirmatively. *I think this whole idea of using some sort of resist whether it's wax or gums or even just tying things so the dye doesn't penetrate, they're all of a piece really, and the knowledge of the dye you're using is crucial. ... these things are what makes it all so fascinating; and the*

*process of 'resist' I was playing about with in textiles is a technique I've used since in all my patterns on pots - stoneware and porcelain. [106]* Another example acquired by de Trey of particular note is a deep blue (indigo) and white patterned shirt, also made in Indonesia (**Fig.34: Ikat shirt, Indonesia**). This is a fine ikat, an extremely skilled craft where the threads of the cloth are resist-dyed before weaving. They are knotted tightly at intervals corresponding to the desired pattern and when dyed the colour does not penetrate these sections (like tie dye in principle). When untied and woven the pattern emerges as the white, undyed areas accrete into a design. Marianne de Trey explains the sophistication of this process in detail and describes the double ikat where the threads for both the warp and the weft are treated in this way before being united into the woven textile.[107]

**Fig.34: Ikat shirt, Indonesia, 20th century**  
Woven cotton, indigo dye, handsewn  
62.0 x 62.5cm(w)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.189

De Trey's respect for these traditions and her consciousness of the people who made them is quite different from an art historical connoisseurship based on the formal delectation of objects.[108] World textiles are not a canonical genre like Chinese celadons or Sevres porcelain, and they do not have the same accumulation of European critical ideas. Their prominence in de Trey's estimation provides a telling insight into her aesthetics, which are sympathetic to women's experience, and eschew a public and masculine agenda. In South-East Asia, where many of these cloths were made, textiles are designed, dyed, and woven by women; they are designated mens' or womens' cloths, and many motifs on them refer to inter-relationships between the sexes. Roszika Parker's study *The subversive stitch* sets out how (in Europe) the pursuit of embroidery has historically contained women's expression and yet become a vehicle for distinctive identity. The shifted position of Marianne de Trey's ideals relative to a conventional artistic framework makes her passion for textiles an essential part of her craft vocation and this includes a variety of home-sewing projects. De Trey has continued to knit and carry out other sewing tasks based on skills she gained as a young girl.[109] *I've always had to do something with my hands. When I was a child I started by learning to knit and to crochet, and I made clothes for dolls from about the age of eight. We had what was called a sewing maid (we were a very large family) and I learnt to sew by watching her. She made me make every stitch exactly the same and I thought there was something radically wrong if they weren't. That was my introduction to craftsmanship.[110]* In recent years she has taken up spinning in the winter months when she does not pot.[111]

### Post-workshop and the limits of function and freedom

Since 1980 Marianne de Trey has worked alone making one-off pieces in a small workshop. At this time she changed from making stoneware to work almost entirely in porcelain, a high-fired, vitrified (glassy) clay which is translucent when potted thinly, and extremely strong.[112] The thin walls and pristine white grounds of these ceramics express the peculiar qualities of the porcelain body but they also carry

characteristically graphic, layered webs of brushwork and wax-resist patterning. A bowl pure-white on the outside bears a striking design on its inner surface in lustrous charcoal-gray and red which is abstract but hints at natural motifs - stars, sea-urchins, or flowers (**Fig.s 35-36: Flared bowl with grey and red starlike motif**).

**Fig.35: Flared bowl with grey and red star-like motif**, >1980

Porcelain, thrown, gas-fired (reduction)

10.0 cm(d)

Crafts Study Centre, Farnham

2004.173.1

**Fig.36: Flared bowl with grey and red star-like motif**, >1980, top view

Stoneware, thrown, altered, and constructed, woodfired (reduction)

10.0 cm(d)

Crafts Study Centre, Farnham

2004.173.2

A wax resist has clearly been used to reserve the white patches in the interior against the dark, slipped surface; the radiating spines in these spaces arise from the spots of wax being scratched back when dry before any painting is applied (**see Fig.36**). After this the whole inside was painted with a manganese-bearing slip to give the heavy lead-gray layer which also fills the sgraffito lines. The substantial and opaque qualities of the slip form a distinct layer on the surface of the clay body contrasting with the light-transmitting properties of the porcelain itself. This pigment layer was fired on in the first (biscuit) firing. The whole pot was then glazed with a clear glaze and then a spot of copper-red pigment is applied in the centre of the white spaces over the glaze. In the glaze (second) firing this latter pigment matured red but also traveled slightly in the glassy medium of the glaze giving a blurred outline to the spot. This decorative scheme is recognisable on a range of different shapes made by de Trey and her porcelains generally cluster into 'families' around pattern themes where a series of pots work out unique dispositions of one elaborative process. The motifs often recall the floral and animal world, for example the 'peacock' pattern which de Trey has also used on bottles and vases (**Fig.37: Lobed bowl with 'peacock' design**). Similar glazing preoccupations are apparent in a porcelain bottle which utilises the same grey and red pigments to create an entirely different effect (**Fig.38: Bottle with grey and red 'fishscale' pattern**).

**Fig.37: Lobed bowl with 'peacock' design**, 1980s-1990s

Porcelain, thrown and altered, gas-fired (reduction)

11.0 cm(d)

Collection of Marianne de Trey, recorded for Headley Trust Project

MDT1

**Fig.38: Bottle with grey and red 'fishscale' pattern**, >1980s

Porcelain, thrown, gas-fired (reduction)

15.5 cm(h)

Crafts Study Centre, Farnham

The grey bands about the base and neck of the bottle and the fishscale-like pattern in red are painted on first and fired; then the whole vessel is clear-glazed and the spots of copper-red are brushed on over this layer. Once again during the glaze-firing these spots move and bleed a little into the glazed surface. Note that at the centre of these red areas the darker greenish eye results from the colouring properties of copper in minerals - it can exist in either a green or a red form, depending on the degree of oxidation. All of de Trey's post-1980 work is fired in a gas kiln enabling her to use a reduction atmosphere and the green portion is copper that has not been completely reduced to the red form. So the dynamic processes of the kiln are captured in this piece and the variable firing effects de Trey first investigated in her wood-fired wares are sustained here.[113] Thus in de Trey's late ceramics a fundamentally physical, and literally elemental, working of the surface has been achieved, drawing on 40 years of experience. Despite a familiar exuberance in surface treatment these thin-walled, elaborate, porcelain vessels are clearly different creatures from Marianne de Trey's practical, streamlined standardwares. Their fragile, willowy shapes with quirky silhouettes and embroidered surfaces investigate the unlikely rather than the consistent. That is, although they could be used as flower vases, bottles for liquid, or bowls for nibbles, they are primarily spectacles - slightly whimsical demonstrations of ceramic process. De Trey notes explicitly that she no longer feels bound to make things with dimensions that reflect the scale of human hands and the discipline of everyday use.[114] The medium itself, decorated porcelain, speaks of special occasions, refinement, and leisured pastimes. Marianne de Trey's ceramic aesthetic continues to resonate with the realm of domestic china but in the slightly mannered fashion of the knick-knack rather than fine teawares, playing to the pleasures of the gaze.[115] However although in 'retirement' de Trey has consciously released herself from the duties of practicality and service to a public she remains ambivalent about the extra-functional nature of these pots. *Well most of them I think I would find pretty useless, they don't break, you can put things in them but I don't make them for that purpose ... so people buy them just because they like them, for reasons unknown.*[116] The imposition of practical limitations as a focussing mechanism for her creative work emerges as important. De Trey's decision to work solely in porcelain and with the gas kiln was a conscious simplification of her practice after the breadth of Shinners Bridge Pottery's manufacture with the electric, the oil, and the wood kiln.[117] She cites Shoji Hamada on the creative motivation provided by physical restrictions. *I am painfully aware of hearing Hamada say that he deliberately chose to settle in an area where the clay is coarse and difficult because he needed the limitations in order to work simply.*[118] The focussed investigation of making within a defined set of parameters also informs de Trey's reworking of graphic schemes in the porcelains. The dark grey and red pigments prominent on the pots illustrated above (a manganese and copper-bearing slip respectively) are a *leit-motif* of Marianne de Trey's post-1980 work and are utilised in several designs. Here we can recognise the strictness that disciplined de Trey's finelytuned standardwares reoriented as a spur to her personal work where formal restraints edit self-indulgence and profligacy in making, and provide an ethical guide for potting. So what principles and ambitions drive this late work since it is not the utilitarian rationale that sustained de Trey's previous ceramics? A short time into this new period of making de Trey published a

reflection on her ceramic aspirations in *Ceramic Review*. *I shall always be drawn towards the pot as container or vessel rather than as object, and I want my pots to look like clay ... Above all I want my pots to be alive, not ashamed of having been made by hand out of soft clay. The perfection I am seeking has nothing to do with what industry has always meant by that word or the precision which is so much in fashion at the moment.*[119] So in pursuing the slightly mysterious nature of these late works we must emphasise an intimate understanding of their technical nature and the hand-processes of their manufacture - 'I want my pots to look like clay'. Their meaning and intention consists in their physical presence; they are not ciphers for de Trey's biography or the History of Ideas. In de Trey's comment above she hints at the quest for the exceptional pot suggesting each work can be regarded as a unique, concerted endeavour to capture an authentic complete artefact, rather than a stepping stone in a story of invention or reaction.

*I'm really back to something very simple; the desire to make an object in which hand, clay and fire have worked together to produce a timeless quality which speaks to others! I don't know if I've ever done it but I go on trying.*[120] Such intentions demand a different sort of appreciation; the self-possession of de Trey's pots is a challenge to our ability to explain things away. We have seen the self-discipline de Trey imposes in her spare palette of pigments and the reworking of decorative schemes over and over. What is less immediately obvious is that the maker generally restricts herself to two clear glazes. One is a conventional shiny feldspathic glaze; the other contains the element barium and makes the surface impermeable but is matt in appearance (**Fig.39: Bowl with sgraffito border of vertical lines**).[121] An example of how de Trey's pared-down repertoire of materials can give rise to the new and unexpected is found in a large oblong dish (**Fig.40: Oblong platter with floral design**).

**Fig.39: Bowl with sgraffito border of vertical lines,**  
>1980  
Porcelain, thrown, gas-fired (reduction)  
11.0 cm(d)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.174

**Fig.40: Oblong platter with floral design,** >2000  
Stoneware, mould-made, gas-fired (reduction)  
37.0 x 26.5cm(w)  
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham  
2004.179

This moulded platter bears a spontaneous and opulent all-over design built up with the familiar copper and manganese slips used under and over the glaze in combination with wax resist. The final semi-abstract painterly effect derives from both the immediacy of de Trey's gesture and the dynamic effect of the kiln atmosphere. But on this item another level of variation has been introduced - it occurred to de Trey to use a different clear glaze on each end of the dish. This generates a changing chromatic development of the slips across the platter as they interact with the matt and the shiny glaze differently. Thus de Trey's thorough knowledge of her materials invests them with a high aesthetic concentration and enables her increasingly subtle orchestrations of them. However, despite the

mastery of her medium manifested here, the maker's subjective experience of her own innovation is very different. De Trey eloquently describes the aesthetic impact of alternating the glazes, and then asserts that it only happened because her tubs of glaze weren't big enough to immerse the whole object. That is, in turning the dish over to cover the second half it occurred to de Trey to dip it in the other solution. This dispersal of agency to accident and the relinquishment of inspiration to chaos confounds our ego-led scale of values for appreciating artistic work.

In de Trey's own words: *Real value ... can only be present when we forget ourselves for an instant and hit the nail on the head without meaning to do so. We all know when this rare and happy moment occurs.*[122]

### The radical decorator

Marianne de Trey's ceramic accomplishment demonstrates bravery and commitment in all its diverse expressions, from reliable standardwares to metamorphic wood-fired stonewares and enigmatic porcelains. A close investigation of the physicality of de Trey's pots, considered with the evidence of her early textiles, makes plain the centrality of decoration for her inspiration. Where surface elaboration is admitted as a skill and a worthy pursuit de Trey's life's work appears coherent and unified, and gathers momentum. Characteristically her pattern-making draws deeply on its materials, manipulating the fundamentals of glaze layers, texture, and the dynamics of resists and dipping and pouring. De Trey's aesthetic is a graphic one but it springs from a relish for the medium of crafted clay. The chameleon-like expressions of de Trey's ceramics coupled with her ambivalence towards intellectual rationales for craft practice mean that she is not readily assimilated to any one movement such as Orientalist, Modernist, or Avant-garde. In a way de Trey's withdrawal from the fray of ideological debate, and the staking of artistic claims, has allowed her to pursue her own preoccupations in surface design, and serving a public, unchallenged and with a free rein. However, her eschewment of a grand narrative can lead to an assumption that her pots are workaday productions, without the elevation of imagination or artistic goals. De Trey's refusal to loosely intellectualise her work, and her disavowal of ascetic, ambitious individuality offers an implicit critique of some favoured dreams and strategies of modern craft. Does her example itself suggest that conceptualism risks artifice and unbounded self-expression can be indulgent and immature? De Trey's head-on confrontation with the unmalleable facts of potting and the contradictions and temptations of handwork addresses some of the most obscured issues of 20th century craft: the prescription of taste versus popular appeal, and profit or loss-making manufacture. This working in the Jungian shadow of handmade ceramics conceivably contributes to the anonymity, and non-interpretation of de Trey's pots. We may not have a neat progression of artistic actions for de Trey unified by an articulated narrative that both explains and vindicates her vocation but there is a very honest body of self-reflection on the choices, costs, and significance of making. De Trey's vision of her practice incorporates obstacles, insufficiencies, ambivalence, and the contributions of others as well as her own desires, achievements, and inventions. Her reflections are remarkable for their unflinching self-examination and their aspiration to an intrinsic ethics in the work. In this way de Trey's career demonstrates both the vulnerabilities and the radicalness of a feminine experience of craft-making in the mid-20th century. Social expectations of femininity exert pressure to express a sense of duty and self-effacement in work

where men may be brought up to see themselves as naturally anarchic and individualist. The rejection of this in important and revolutionary work by women potters of the 1970s such as Alison Britton is rightly celebrated but working through or with these burdens also merits study. The fairly narrow narration of what (and who) mattered, and what led to what, in 20th century studio pottery is not disrupted by demoting de Trey's work to a second order of craft-potting. In the heterogenous world of modern handmade ceramics Marianne de Trey's pots represent a sustained and relevant presence. Acknowledging and understanding their reasoning broadens our understanding of the field.

**Footnotes:**

1. The pottery premises were privately leased from the Dartington Estate and managed as an independent concern rather than as a branch of the programme for commercially viable handcrafts that was established at Dartington by Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst in the 1920s (M. Coatts 'Pots from six decades' in *De Trey at Dartington* [1995], p.4).
2. Leach's influential tract *A potter's book* was written at Dartington in the years 1939-40 (D. Whiting *Dartington: 60 years of pottery, 1933-1993* [1993], p.8). Sam Haile had built up an acquaintance with Bernard Leach and his son David towards the end of the war, spending time at St Ives when he was on leave from the army (M. de Trey 'A memoir' in *De Trey at Dartington* [1995], p.9).
3. The programme at Dartington Hall was founded in 1926 when a progressive school was opened. The estate itself was a testing ground for modern farming techniques. These together with a music and drama programme were the core activities. In the 1930s a textile and a furniture workshop were set up to explore avenues of semi-mechanised but skilled production. Leach's planned pottery, which never became reality, was to be along the same lines – making stonewares inspired by Chinese Sung era pottery. For a discussion of ceramics at Dartington see D. Whiting and others *Dartington: 60 years of pottery, 1933-1993* (1993), and T. Harrod *The Crafts in Britain in the twentieth century* (1999). For the Dartington experiment in general see M. Young *The Elmhirsts of Dartington – the creation of a utopian community* (1982).
4. A copy of the proceedings with transcripts of the major presentations is available in the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum.
5. De Trey along with many delegates found the Japanese contingent inspiring but she was impressed by the example of Lucie Rie working as an independent woman potter making modern domestic wares (*De Trey at Dartington* [1995], p.12).
6. <http://www.devonguildofcraftsmen.co.uk> and see an outline of the history of the Guild by Simon Olding in "The courageous association of free individual workers": a short history of the Devon Guild of Craftsmen' in *Fifty* (2005).
7. De Trey maintained close collegiate associations and friendships with both David Leach and Cardew.
8. The show will be held at the Guild's newly refurbished premises in Bovey Tracey, and will be accompanied by a publication with a substantial catalogue essay by Margot Coatts. See the website (note 6 above) under *Touring Exhibitions* for more information.
9. There has been some significant oral history material recorded with de Trey but this primary evidence has not yet translated into a presence in histories and interpretations (video/interview [1992] for the National Electronic and Video Archive of the Crafts, NEVAC, see [www.media.uwe.ac.uk/nevac/](http://www.media.uwe.ac.uk/nevac/)).

10. In a list of craftspeople and items exhibited as part of the 'Entertainment at home' room-set at the Festival of Britain in 1951 (p.348).

11. See P. Rice and others *Sam Haile: potter and painter 1909-48* (1993), and the exhibition catalogue *Sam Haile* Birch & Conran gallery (1987), and 'Sam Haile, potter and painter' in *Ceramic Review* (1987) Vol.107.

12. Haile was a working class South Londoner who initially gained entry to the RCA painting department in 1930 with a portfolio built up at evening classes after his day job at a shipping firm. His artistic preoccupations owed much to Surrealism and other French avant-garde movements which were little esteemed in the RCA painting studio and he found the ceramics department more open-minded. The Head of Ceramics William Staite-Murray had an ambitious vision of ceramics as art and a non-interventionist teaching style and it seems that the physicality of clay appealed to Haile. He continued to paint and draw but was committed to clay as a medium.

13. De Trey is frank about the transformative effect of meeting Haile: 'He was everything I wasn't. He had not been brought up in the same way, he thought all upper-middle-class standards were crazy and was a revolutionary in practically every sense. He introduced me to serious music and all kinds of things which my background had skated over, because it was somehow dangerous ground.' (*de Trey at Dartington* [1995] p.8). They led a successful partnership under difficult circumstances and it seems fair to assume that this was not just one-way. There is little consideration in reflections on Sam Haile of what enabling, anchoring, or indeed inspirational effect Marianne de Trey may have had for his work. This is undoubtedly an oversight and is connected to a lack of recognition of de Trey's own vocation. There is a significant literature on the psychology and stereotyping of other artist partnerships such as Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock which is relevant here.

14. Extracts from Haile's notes setting out his philosophy of art are published in the 1987 exhibition catalogue by Birch & Conran, *Sam Haile*.

15. Alan Caiger-Smith who had embarked on a similarly unconventional project to make brightly coloured and richly painted tin-glazed earthenwares at his pottery in Aldermaston in 1955, observed that such decoration was then regarded as 'almost immoral', see NEVAC interview December 2002.

16. See Chapter 1 'Towards a standard'.

17. B. Leach *A potter's book* (1940), p.3.

18. See T. Harrod *The Crafts in Britain in the twentieth century* (1999), especially Chapter 2, and P. Rice and C. Gowing *British studio ceramics in the 20th century* (1989).

19. See P. Rice and C. Gowing *British studio ceramics in the 20th century* (1989), especially Chapter 4. And for a thorough breakdown of the results of Pleydell-Bouverie's investigations see B. Leach *A potter's book* (1940), p.161-64.

20. Bernard Leach describes his methods and aims in decorating pots thus 'One may almost go so far as to say that it is that element in the pattern that is unlike the natural object which gives it piquancy and a deeper verisimilitude. Imitative realism can only have a confusing effect on the decoration of pots, and when it is carried to the extent of three-dimensional representation the results are almost invariably bad, for the pot itself provides the third dimension.' (*A potter's book* [1940], p.102-03).

21. In the 1950s and '60s Heals had an area called 'the Craftsman's Market' where hand-made goods were sold which embodied a modern and well-designed aesthetic for the contemporary interior, see T. Harrod *The Crafts in Britain in the twentieth century* (1999), Chapter 8.

22. M. Coatts in *De Trey at Dartington* (1995), p.5. De Trey describes the attention that was paid to designing the tablewares for practical use and human movement: 'In general I have found that the pots I like to use every day are the practical ones, easy to wash up and stack, comfortable to hold, with cups and jugs that are light and well-balanced' ('Workshop – Marianne de Trey' Ceramic Review [1971] Vol.10, p.5). See also de Trey's remarks on this aspect of design in the NEVAC recording (1992), CD21.

23. *A potter's book* (1940), Chapter 1 'Towards a standard'.

24. Both of Marianne de Trey's parents had passed on in the 1930s; the family had been well-off during her childhood but their assets were largely dissipated by the combined effect of depression and war (personal communication). A small inheritance (divided between six children) helped to tide de Trey over into actual production (NEVAC recording [1992], CD 20).

25. The area around Dartington supported a number of local pipe works where clay sewer and water pipes were salt-glazed – a simple, cheap, and extremely tough glazed finish which involves adding ordinary table salt (sodium chloride) during the firing (it does however produce toxic chlorine gas fumes as a by-product). Sam Haile had toured some of these and Marianne de Trey notes that he was interested in historical German salt-glazed wares of the 16th-18th centuries and had realised that you could incorporate colour, although utilitarian salt-glazes are usually the reddish brown of the fired clay (personal communication). They had already ordered the refractory bricks for the kiln that were needed to withstand the punishment of the firing when Haile met his accident. In the 1940s and 50s salt glaze was not a studio ceramics technique but its unique dimpled 'orange peel' surface is now widely used aesthetically by potters in North America, and Australasia, as well as in the UK; Walter Keeler is an example of a British potter well-known for the process.

26. Marianne de Trey first tried her hand at potting at Alfred University in New York State in 1941 where Sam Haile taught for a period. When Haile was eventually conscripted in 1944 de Trey worked in a charitable workshop teaching ceramics to wounded servicemen in New Hampshire. On her return to the UK in 1945 she and Haile worked for themselves at the Bulmer Brickyard in Suffolk, throwing earthenware, before they came to Dartington. See M.Coatts (ed.) *De Trey at Dartington* (1995), p.30-31, for a complete chronology.

27. Slip is a fine suspension of clay in water that can be pigmented. It is a liquid about the consistency of cream which may be painted on but slip-trailing is similar to cake-decorating with an icing-bag and nozzle where a steady line is run out managed by the wrist.

28. The physical properties of the clay control the glaze recipe that will work with it. Any failures here can be disastrous for functional ceramics since the glaze provides the glassy surface which allows thorough cleaning and is impervious to liquid.

29. Personal communication.

30. The term earthenware describes a type of clay that matures at a relatively low temperature (around 1100 degrees Celsius) but remains porous when fired, for example terracotta, so it must be glazed to be waterproof and useful on the table. It is softer than porcelain and tends to have thicker walls and rounder outlines when thrown than commercial china.

31. The opaque glaze applied to the stonewares, made at the pottery after 1959, was whitened with a mixture of tin and zirconium oxides (personal communication).

32. De Trey states that she picked up on the potential of wax resist from seeing Harry Davis's work (a potter who worked in Bernard Leach's workshop for a time) (NEVAC recording [1992], CD22).

33. The technique originated in the Middle East. It is the medium of the polychrome maiolica of Renaissance Italy, the 17th century blue and white delft from the Netherlands, as well as being familiar in 18th century English decorated pottery. For a comprehensive survey see A. Caiger-Smith *Tin-glaze pottery in Europe and the Islamic World* (1973).

34. The significance of these material associations in the 1950s is apparent in the critical scandal surrounding a group of potters referred to as the Picassoettes who used tin-glazed earthenware to make exuberant, colourful, figurative installations for London coffee bars (a new popular culture phenomenon at that time) (See T. Harrod *The Crafts in Britain in the twentieth century* [1999] p.267-69, and J. Jones 'In search of the Picassoettes' [2000] *Interpreting Ceramics*, Issue 1 [www.uwic.ac.uk/ICRC/issue001/picasso/picasso.htm](http://www.uwic.ac.uk/ICRC/issue001/picasso/picasso.htm) ). These were received with bewilderment and distaste by the studio pottery establishment as were the Picassoettes' smallscale sculptural works and vessels in the same highly decorated medium. Dora Billington, Head of Ceramics at the Central School of Art and Design expressly advocated their new work in the Studio in 1953 and '55 as an antidote to the visual stereotypes of Orientalising pots. The group seems to have hit a nerve as 'Picassettes' is the derogatory term that Leach applied to the group in a review, implying they were copyists of the loose, Primitivist style of Picasso.

35. Personal communication.

36. See T. Harrod *The crafts in Britain in the 20th century* (1999), p.250. Interestingly Alan Caiger-Smith cites the same phenomenon as giving him his boost when he started manufacturing colourful domestic tin-glazed earthenwares in the 1950s. Indeed for him the sensory deprivation of utility wares played a part in his desire to make such things, see NEVAC recording, December 2002.

37. De Trey recalls an entire dinner service commissioned by a client in peacock green at this time, (personal communication).

38. From the NEVAC recording (1992), CD 21: Mike Hughes: 'Did you think of yourselves as improving the taste of the general public?'; MdT: 'Well I don't think I could assume that, I think our customers enjoyed things to have and to hold, they appreciated that, and we made the same designs for a long time which shows that they remained popular.'

39. De Trey notes that conversations she had with Michael Cardew were influential (personal communication). Cardew initially worked in once-fired earthenware in the 1920s and '30s (at Winchcombe Pottery, Gloucestershire) which gave him technical problems as the glaze frequently crazed. He started working with a stoneware body in Africa during the Second World War and much later back in England worked entirely with stonewares at Wenford Bridge albeit with glazing effects which have the look of earthenwares – slipwares and tin-glazes. See P. Rice *British Studio Ceramics* (2002), Chapter 3.

40. 'A memoir' in *De Trey at Dartington* (1995), p.10.

41. A study of Duckworth has very recently been published (J. Lauria and T. Birks *Ruth Duckworth: modernist sculptor* [2005]); she is now a very successful sculptural ceramicist in North America but during her 20s and 30s she struggled to find support and training in the British ceramic scene.

42. *Women and ceramics, gendered vessels* (2000), p.226-31; Vincentelli expressly considers gendered issues in this work and the material on Dora Lunn is based on Lunn's own unpublished autobiographical reflections *A potter's pot-pourri* held in the Archive of Art and Design, Blythe House, London.

43. Personal communication and 'Workshop: Marianne de Trey' *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.10,

p.5. In fact the standard round dinner plates were 'jiggered' where a sheet of clay is pressed onto a spinning plaster mould and trimmed to a uniform shape and thickness by a metal profile held down by a lever as the clay revolves (R. Fournier *Illustrated dictionary of practical pottery* [2000], 4th ed.).

44. In slip-casting this drawing action causes a layer of clay to adhere quickly to the walls of the mould and the remainder of the slip is poured out leaving the hollow form to dry.

45. Personal communication.

46. See M. Coatts in *De Trey at Dartington* (1995), p.5, and the full-colour illustration in this publication of catalogue no. 21.

47. They were fired in stacks with little trivets separating them so the glaze wouldn't fuse them together, the dimples from these can be seen on the surface (personal communication).

48. See 'Workshop: Marianne de Trey' *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.10, and 'A memoir' in *De Trey at Dartington* (1995), p.11.

49. Initially de Trey continued in the same premises in a sharing arrangement with younger independent potters who enjoyed the use of the facilities in exchange for contributing the harder physical work of maintaining the workshop. However de Trey fairly quickly decided to work alone in a small studio on the Shinnars Bridge site and the larger workshop was taken over by Dartington Pottery. This was initially an apprentice training scheme, and is now a successful commercial operation utilising computer-aided design (CAD), see D. Whiting and others *Dartington: 60 years of pottery, 1933-1993* (1993).

50. Personal communication, and 'Workshop: Marianne de Trey' *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.10, p.4.

51. Efficiently packing a large kiln is a complex 3-dimensional puzzle because different temperatures may be reached in different sections of the kiln chamber. Consequently certain potsizes or shapes or glazes will fire better in some positions than others. At Shinnars Bridge, when running at maximum production, they fired the large electric kiln three times a week, so a significant amount of labour was involved in this alone.

52. 'He ran things rather differently from me, I think he gave his employees and students more opportunity to do their own work than I did, I think that was the difference; I used to compare notes with him from time to time ... I liked him and admired what he was doing.' (personal communication).

53. See A. Caiger-Smith *Pottery, people, and time: a workshop in action* (1995). In an interview carried out for NEVAC Caiger-Smith traced this vision back to a book he read which described how in the modern world people are employed and paid for only one or a few aspects of their character and other potentials and talents are ignored; Caiger-Smith observed that not all his employees were totally happy to divide their time between all the tasks of the pottery. A transcript of this interview is included as an appendix to the author's MA thesis: *The mastery of process: the development of reduced lustre in the studio pottery of Alan Caiger-Smith* (2003), held at the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

54. This condition is a key element of B. Leach's definition of craft as opposed to design, however well-made or well-thought out, see B. Leach *A potter's book* (1940), Chapter 1.

55. De Trey recalls that Colin Kellam and Andrew Hague were two employees who dedicated considerable time to their individual practice out-of-hours.

56. In such a system, Leach argued, the modern artistic ego could be contained within the proper relation to tradition: humility with respect to the methods of the past, attention to the fundamental virtue of usefulness, and embeddedness in everyday life (using local materials and serving local customers). Indeed this continues to be an inspiring model for potters and other craftspeople, now often combined with a green consciousness of living simply and locally, see T. Harrod *The crafts in Britain in the 20th century* (1999) p.459.

57. Leach himself became disillusioned with incorporating art school-educated pupils into his workshop at St Ives and recommended unintellectualised local labour (*A potter's book* [1940], p.258). His own style of potting continued to be less shaped by a production regime than by an abstracted philosophy of the marriage of Eastern and Western aesthetic canons and a twodimensional design method, sketching out pot-profiles and brush-decoration on paper.

58. P. Rice *British studio ceramics* (2002), p.37-39; interestingly in the latter case Cardew brought a stoneware fabric to a community where ceramics were historically all low-fired earthenwares whose porosity was utilitarian – cooling water by evaporation.

59. In 1938 Cardew's slipwares were shown at the Brygos Gallery in Bond St; then in 1958, '59, and '62 the African pots of Cardew and his students at Abuja were shown at the Berkeley Galleries (P. Rice *British studio ceramics* [2002], p.37-40).

60. M. Cardew *A pioneer potter: an autobiography* (1988), this book was compiled posthumously by Cardew's son from a working manuscript.

61. This is stated explicitly in the final pages of *A potter's book* (1940), p.257 in 'A potter's outlook' where Leach insists that if there is a conflict between economics and Art then Art must win out: 'Delegation of authority can only be successful if the businessman is sensitive enough to allow the artist to retain control of all the essentials which contribute to the beauty of the ultimate pots'.

62. 'Workshop: Marianne de Trey' *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.10, p.5.

63. 'Workshop: Marianne de Trey' *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.10, p.5. |

64. 'A memoir' in *De Trey at Dartington* (1995), p.11.

65. Workshop: Marianne de Trey' *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.10, p.4.

66. Alan Caiger-Smith also distinguishes an artistic practice supported by teaching as a very different vocation to making a living from a craft business, see NEVAC recording, December 2002

67. 'I did have one or two exhibitions in London and here and there but I've never been very good about organising my own exhibitions ... if they happened to turn up then that was alright but I've not been a very good organiser for my own benefit.' (personal communication).

68. See P. Barron 'Marianne de Trey – porcelain and stoneware, Craftwork, Guildford' in *Ceramic Review* (1974) Vol. 29, p.18; M. Fieldhouse 'Biographical notes – Marianne de Trey' *Pottery Quarterly* (1963) Vol.8 no.30, p.8; W. Ismay 'Marianne de Trey – Porcelain and Stoneware' in *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.12, p.13; M. Rogers 'Marianne de Trey and Colin Kellam, Commonwealth Art Gallery 1972' in *Ceramic Review* (1973) Vol.20, p.16.

69. 'Workshop: Marianne de Trey' *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.10, p.4.

70. 'Workshop: Marianne de Trey' *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.10, p.4.

71. Glazes generally incorporate an alkaline metal oxide as a flux; plant ash, when thoroughly

burnt and washed, typically comprises metal oxides and silica and includes sodium and potassium oxides which are alkalis. A rough proportion of ash:feldspar:clay of 2:2:1 is suitable (See R. Fournier *A dictionary of practical pottery* [2000], under entry 'ash').

72. The Shinners Bridge standardwares continued to be oxidation-fired in the electric kiln.

73. Celadons made in the historical Far East and South East Asia make reference to the translucent, cloudy green of jade, a rare mineral highly esteemed in these societies which is difficult to shape (hence the appeal of a clay facsimile).

74. A reducing atmosphere can be achieved in an oil-fired and a gas-fired kiln, though not in an electric kiln without other equipment, but the natural variability and fluctuations inside a wood kiln create more unusual and richer effects.

75. A *tenmoku* glaze is broadly defined as one strongly coloured by iron oxide. Historical Far Eastern *tenmokus* were fired in a straightforwardly oxidising atmosphere. Many *tenmokus* made in modern times in the West have been partially reduced to develop some lustre in the glaze but the dark brown and rusty red of this finish derives from iron in a more oxidised form, (F. Hamer and J. Hamer *The potter's dictionary of materials and techniques* [2004], 8th ed., under 'Tenmoku').

76. 'Workshop: Marianne de Trey' *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.10, p.4.

77. Personal communication.

78. De Trey recalls how different and compelling the unashamedly rugged Japanese pots appeared to eyes accustomed to the polish of historical Chinese wares when pictures and publications first started to become available in the 1960s, see NEVAC recording (1992), CD20; and M. Coatts 'Pots from six decades' in *De Trey at Dartington* (1995). In particular de Trey cites *Japanese ceramics* (1960) by Roy Miller, a Japanophile who paraphrased a recent Japanese ceramic history in his English text.

79. See NEVAC recording (1992), CD19, and M. de Trey 'A memoir' in *De Trey at Dartington* (1995), p.8.

80. Personal communication.

81. 'The chun blue glaze is one of the few ancient Chinese glaze effects which cannot be easily reproduced.' (D. Rhodes *Clay and glazes for the potter* [1973], p.267). A feldspathic glaze with a small proportion of iron is the necessary medium where the presence of phosphorus may induce such an effect. However Rhodes notes that a suitable mixture fired under reduction in a gas kiln rarely works and he believes that the natural alternation between reduction and oxidation achieved when using wood is crucial.

82. 'It was only after finally acquiring a good technique that I understood that this is a means to an end ... the rest is a question of harmony, of "right-working", the balance between care and freedom and for me, with a natural preference for order, of being aware of the danger of killing the pot for the sake of efficiency.' ('Bernard Leach – a living tradition' *Ceramic Review* [1987] No.108, p.42).

83. M. de Trey 'A memoir' in *De Trey at Dartington*, p.11.

84. See the Arts Council film of Michael Cardew *Mud and water man* (1984) which includes a sequence showing a wood firing at his pottery in Abuja, and Caiger-Smith's account of a wood firing in *Pottery, people, and time: a workshop in action* (1995).

85. Personal communication; De Trey and Kellam did make a trip to Michael Cardew's wood-kiln at Wenford Bridge and helped with a firing there to get a feel for the process.

86. 'Workshop: Marianne de Trey' *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.10, p.4.

87. Personal communication.

88. Thomas was married to the butler at Dartington and had worked at the Hall from a young age (personal communication).

89. The Elmhursts' ceramic collection was built up partly under the advice of Bernard Leach and comprised examples of the most valued periods and dynasties, T. Harrod *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th century* (1999), p.142.

90. Margot Coatts notes that the experiments of the 1960s and 70s resulted in a proliferation of vessel shapes constructed by techniques other than wheel-throwing, departing from the limits of circular symmetry ('Sources of inspiration' *Crafts* [1995] Vol.135, p.41).

91. M. Fieldhouse 'Biographical notes: Marianne de Trey' *Pottery Quarterly* (1963) Vol.8 no.30, p.8.

92. M. de Trey 'A memoir' in *De Trey at Dartington* (1995), p.12.

93. M. Coatts 'Pots from six decades' in *De Trey at Dartington* (1995).

94. Personal communication.

95. Margot Coatts notes that many of de Trey's early pottery designs grew out of sketches accumulated while abroad in the US during wartime ('Sources of inspiration' *Crafts* [1995] Vol.135, p.41). Sam Haile took his sketchbook when the Hailes were holidaying and carried out large fluid watercolours of the scenery (M. de Trey 'Sam Haile: potter and painter' *Ceramic Review* [1987] Vol.107, p.31). Thus we can propose a shared passion, de Trey certainly recalls how struck they both were by the wildness of the countryside when walking in North America (personal communication).

96. De Trey's investigation was partly focussed on how you might teach children to create and think in terms of creative patterns, reflecting the emphasis on practical employment throughout her art school training.

97. See P. Rice 'Sam Haile' in *Sam Haile potter and painter* (1993).

98. The Hailes were then living on the Lower East Side in the midst of many immigrant communities, from their roof they had a view of the Brooklyn Bridge (personal communication)!

99. Personal communication.

100. Personal communication.

101. Personal communication.

102. Personal communication.

103. Personal communication. Consider the parallel macho atmosphere of the RCA Ceramics Department where Sam Haile was training: the Head William Staite-Murray mainly kept to himself, occasionally handing out a few choice judgements. A contemporary of Haile's, Henry Hammond, recalled that Haile used to have to cajole and demand to get Staite-Murray to criticise his pots ('A

magnetic teacher' *Crafts* [1975] Vol.14, p.34).

104. Personal communication. In an article in the *Journal of Art and Design Education* Val Walsh describes some of the pressures on women's personalities and creative inclinations in the art school environment from the early 20th century through to the 1960s and '70s ([1990], Vol.9, no.2, pp.147-61). Her evidence indicates that implicitly gendered expectations were experienced as diffuse pressures by women to hide their ambition or pursue other paths.

105. It is worth noting that Sam Haile was exceptional for making exuberantly decorated pots, his own artistic sense was not only figurative and expressive but anarchic. Hence it is arguable that this partnership offered de Trey a sense of acceptance or at least acknowledgement of her graphic sensibilities.

106. Personal communication.

107. Silk double *ikats* are known as *patolas* and are among the most highly valued ancestral cloths in India and South East Asia, for a comprehensive reference work see R. Maxwell *Textiles of Southeast Asia: tradition, trade, and transformation* (2003), full colour edition.

108. In fact, de Trey is at pains to make clear that her knowledge of the fields she is interested in is incomplete, her understanding is partial, and she could never hope to make cloths of such intricacy. This overt humility is quite unlike the customary Western scholarly approach which implies encyclopaedic knowledge, and often claims a more complete understanding than the practitioners themselves.

109. De Trey recalls a Kaffe Fassett jumper as a particular challenge (personal communication); Fassett is known for his extremely complex, brightly-coloured designs.

110. M.de Trey 'A memoir' in *De Trey at Dartington* (1995), p.8.

111. Personal communication.

112. De Trey had made individual pieces in porcelain before but it was not the bulk of her practice.

113. Red is a notoriously difficult hue to get on clay using glazes – the *sang de boeuf* (ox-blood) reds on Chinese pots, especially of the 17th century, and the glowing red lustres of 14th century earthenwares from Muslim-ruled Spain both derive from reduction of copper pigments.

114. 'After spending years worrying about the exact use and weight and size I don't really want to have anything more to do with that.' (personal communication), and see M. de Trey '35 years a potter' *Ceramic Review* (1983) Vol.83, p.18.

115. De Trey's most recent work incorporates lustres, suggesting gilding and extending this sense of the ornament.

116. Personal communication.

117. In fact the very hot conditions at the top of the gas-fired kiln caused de Trey to continue to make and fire a few stoneware vessels which withstand these firing conditions better than porcelain items (personal communication).

118. 'Workshop: Marianne de Trey' *Ceramic Review* (1971) Vol.10, p.4.

119. '35 years a potter' *Ceramic Review* (1983) Vol.83, p.19.

120. '35 years a potter' *Ceramic Review* (1983) Vol.83, p.19.

121. The salient characteristic of a matt glaze is the surface remains rough and so scatters light rather than reflecting it sharply (D. Rhodes *Clay and glazes for the potter* [1973]).

122. M. de Trey in 'Bernard Leach – a living tradition', *Ceramic Review* (1987) No.108, p.42.