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Legacy — The studio pottery of Ian Glenny (1952–2023)

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ABSTRACT

Scholarly attention to South African studio pottery of the later twentieth century has been negligible, succeeding at best to provide an overview of its rise in the 1960s, the emergence of a fraternity of studio pottery practitioners, and the development of individual expressions. There is a lack of in-depth scholarly accounts of the lives and oeuvres of the more eminent studio pottery figures of that era. The posthumous disclosure of his own works in the personal collection of the studio potter Ian Glenny (1952–2023) presents not only the opportunity to illustrate the development over the span of five decades of his oeuvre but also to reflect on the cultural pottery traditions that the studio potters referenced in the later twentieth century. In the case of Glenny, his preference to borrow from the cultural pottery traditions of Japan, China and Korea and the manner in which he adapted those influences as distinctively personal expressions, can now be detailed and illustrated with reference to works in his collection. The essay provides further substance to the dismissal of the randomly used discriminatory label of the twentieth-century South African studio pottery for its assumed adherence to the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery. This discourse on Glenny's oeuvre shows that influences were not summarily copied but that their essences of form and intent were attentively studied to enable the re-representation of that in forms that would appeal to a consumer and collector base.

KEYWORDS: Ian Glenny, cultural pottery traditions, reduction firing, studio pottery, studio pottery aesthetics, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The disclosure of the extensive private collection of his own works by the South African studio potter Ian Glenny (1952–2023) (Fig. 1) soon after his death, creates the opportunity to present an account of his practise and oeuvre; review his contribution to South African studio pottery in his stylistic variations of reduction-fired stoneware of the later twentieth and twentieth and-first centuries; and add critical information to the scholarly account of twentieth and twenty-first century South African ceramics. The absence of a significant volume of primary resources relating to the senior South African studio pottery figures complicates the task of constructing authoritative accounts of their lives and oeuvres.[1] This perspective on the practise and oeuvre of Glenny considers two in-depth interviews with the studio potter[2,3]; published, albeit brief material; information gathered from his family and associates; and an assessment of a selection of the works in his personal collection.

Figure 1: Ian Glenny (circa 2011). Photograph by Patrick Flanagan©

Glenny's daughter Sarah Rich-Glenny (pers. comm., 10 July 2023), estimated that he reserved some 400 of his own works during the span of his career, which were representative of the scope of his oeuvre and, significantly, also included the works that he deemed as exemplary (Figs 2–6). Few people knew of the

1 Amongst those would count Bryan Haden (1930–2016), Hyme Rabinowitz (1920–2009), Tim Morris (1941–1990), Bruce Walford, Barbara Robinson (1938–2002), Jerice Doeg, Elza Sullivan (1935–2020), Sonja Gerlings (1942–unknown), Marietjie van der Merwe (1935–1992), Neville Burde, Chris Green, and the partnership of David Schlapobersky and Felicity Potter.
2 Author's interview with Ian Glenny. September 2010, Dargle, South Africa.
3 Herbst, R. 2022. *ClayChat with Ian Glenny*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zq3i4lja0Sw (accessed 21 January 2024).

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Figures 2, 3: (2) Ian Glenny and Kali Griffin, circa 1987, signed "I.G." and "K.G." on reverse. Porcelain charger, wheel-thrown. Brushwork motif in iron oxide under tenmoku glaze of two standing herons. Fired in an oil kiln. Width 43cm × depth 8cm. This charger was thrown and glazed by Ian Glenny with *the* motif artwork by Kali Griffin. **(3)** Ian Glenny, early 1990s, unsigned. Slabbed stoneware vase with motif of three birds in flight. Front and back decoration in iron oxide over paper 'cut-outs' of birds at the bisque stage and then ash-glazed. Reduction-fired in an oil kiln. Width 28cm × depth 12cm × height 39cm. (Refer to Fig. 4 that shows Ian Glenny holding the same vase, presenting the other side with a decoration of two birds in flight.). Both items private collection. Photographs by Christo Giles, not to scale. (Courtesy of Rust-en-Vrede Gallery + Clay Museum, Durbanville, South Africa)

existence of the private collection which was kept secure and out of sight. In the process of creating an inventory of his estate, family members gained access to the collection and agreed to release 54 of those works for an exhibition hosted by Rust-en-Vrede Gallery + Clay Museum in Durbanville, South Africa, during April and May 2024. Titled *Legacy – The Life and Works of the Studio Potter Ian Glenny (1952–2023)*, the exhibition re-established the eminence of Glenny as a twentieth-century studio potter but, of equal importance, added to the knowledge of the factors and circumstances that contributed to the rise and shaping of the twentieth-century South African studio pottery.

THE FOUNDATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN STUDIO POTTERY

The lives and oeuvres of only two of the leading figures of twentieth-century South African career studio potters have received comprehensive and detailed scholarly or authoritative attention. They are Esias Bosch (1923–2010) (Bosch & De Waal 1988; Watt 2017, 2020, 2023) and Andrew Walford (Wright 2009). The account of the twentieth-century South African studio pottery therefore presents as a generalised overview rather than a comprehensive and detailed narrative. This can be deduced from the fact that the Association of Potters of Southern Africa (APSA) numbered more than one thousand practicing

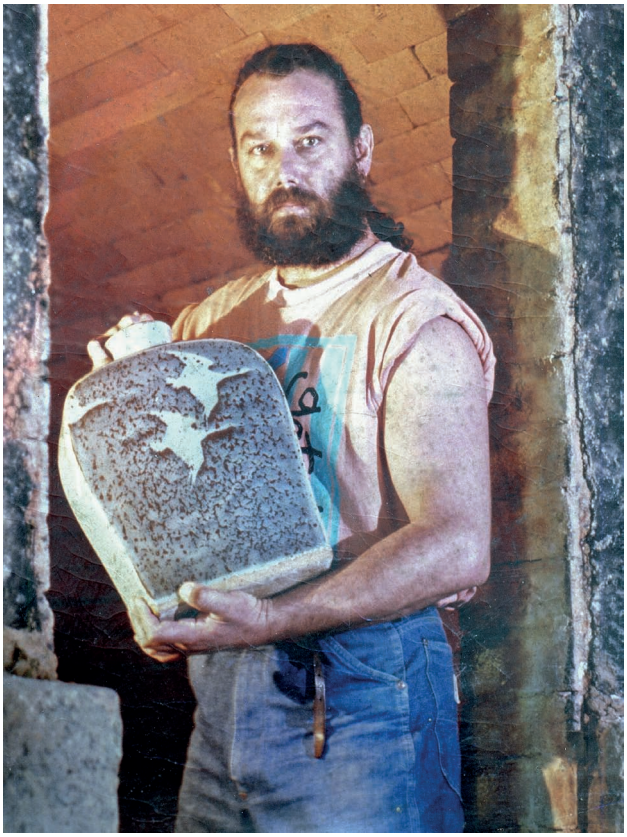

Figure 4: Ian Glenny in the doorway to his chambered kiln (late 1980s). The reverse side of this slabbed vase with a decoration of three birds in flight is shown in Fig. 3. Photograph by Grant Erskine. (Courtesy of the Glenny Estate)

Figures 5, 6: (5) Ian Glenny, circa 1982, signed "I.G." on foot. Stoneware lidded jar with handles, wheel-thrown. Tenmoku glaze over a celadon glaze. Reduction-fired in an oil kiln. Diameter 28cm × height 36cm. **(6)** Ian Glenny, circa 1986, signed "I.G." on foot. Stoneware lidded storage jar, wheel-thrown and facetted. Triple dip tenmoku glaze over ash glaze, wax resist decoration. Reduction fired in an oil kiln. Width 15cm × height 16cm. Both items private collection. Photographs by Christo Giles, not to scale. (Courtesy of Rust-en-Vrede Gallery + Clay Museum, Durbanville, South Africa)

studio potters and ceramic artists by 1998 (Feldman 1988). Another estimate notes that an additional three thousand practitioners, who did not hold the APSA membership, were active by 1992 (Lapping-Sellars 1992: 19). These numbers referred to both career professionals and part-time practitioners of studio pottery[4] with a focus on utilitarian and ornamental wares that dominated the decades of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, as well as the ceramic art practitioners who challenged the traditions and conventions of the former and made a later appearance in that time frame.

The other significant figures in the studio pottery genre of that time did admittedly receive attention in the quarterly *Sgraffiti* editions of the APSA and in the *National Ceramics Quarterly* published by the APSA's successor organisation, Ceramics Southern Africa (CSA). They also attracted attention in press reviews of exhibitions, features in lifestyle magazines, and synoptic exposure in subject-specific books (Nilant 1963; Clark & Wagner 1974; Zaalberg 1985; Cruise 1991), and scholarly works (Watt 2017, 2020). Nilant's text was principally concerned with the emergence of earthenware production pottery that would garner wide public appeal and paid attention to but a single studio potter namely Bosch. Clarke and Wagner introduced a number of the early prominent studio potters with some of those who would now rather be considered as ceramic artists for their oeuvres that broke with utilitarian forms. Despite attracting a following amongst collectors, Glenny, was, however, paid scant attention in the APSA and CSA publications. The ceramist and ceramics art historian, Wilma Cruise (1991: 44), did, however, acknowledge Glenny as one of the significant studio potters practising in the idiom of "the Anglo-Oriental tradition" alongside such acclaimed figures as Bryan Haden (1930–2016), Hyme Rabinowitz (1920–2009), Steve Shapiro, Andrew Walford, and Yvonne Levy.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the outcomes of the first three generations of South African studio potters were dismissed as imitations of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery (Cruise

4 A studio potter is defined as a person who practises pottery as a professional or semi-professional career; operates and manages an independent studio pottery or has a dedicated pottery studio; primarily specialises in utilitarian ware but also produces one-off pieces which could be considered ornamental, sculptural, environmental or architectural; and whose personal oeuvre has achieved a distinctive style (Watt 2017: 1).

1991: 21, 41; Geissler 1982: 6; MacIntyre-Read 1976: 4) that was wrongly perceived to have staid forms, and bland colours and decorations. The reality, however, is that the influences of multiple pottery traditions, and interpretations of those, contributed to both the intent and forms of the twentieth-century South African studio pottery. Those influences ranged far and wide and included the craft pottery of England, Germany, Scandinavia, Korea, China, and Japan, with the 'folk craft' of the latter, known as *mingei*, holding special appeal. *Mingei* was promoted by Soetsu Yanagi (1889–1961) who was a close associate of the English studio potter, Bernard Leach (1887–1979), and the Japanese potter, Shōji Hamada (1894–1978). They are collectively considered to be the fathers of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery. Yanagi's *mingei* philosophy was absorbed into the tenets of that tradition and placed the emphasis on "simple but finely crafted functional ware, created with purpose of form and decoration for the very sake of being utilitarian, and for the work to incidentally gain an art value" (Watt 2017: 68–69). The British ceramics art historian Oliver Watson summarised this style as beauty to be revealed in anonymous, humble, selfless, and ego-less utilitarian folk craft (Watson 1993: 15).

The earlier South African studio potters faced the challenges of a lack of available materials and technology. The ceramics art historian Ian Calder (pers. comm., 8 July 2024) noted that the early-twentieth-century English studio potters had the benefits of access to established industrial developments of glaze raw materials, kiln refractories and pottery equipment. By comparison, stated Calder, the early South African earthenware production potteries had to import their glaze materials from Britain with the studio potters 'prospecting' for local supplies of materials such as feldspar, whiting, dolomite and silica from local mining operations. With no readily available raw materials for stoneware glazes, the South African studio potters had to adapt the by-then established Anglo-Oriental stoneware glaze recipes and modify their clay supplies to suit their needs.

A second obstacle that faced the early studio potters was the prevailing consumer preference for imported English production table and decorative wares over handmade wares produced by local studio potters. Nilant's (1963: 73–74) research that was conducted in the early 1960s showed that consumers, in particular 'housewives', had a definite preference for English and Continental wares. Nilant's survey further showed that consumers had little actual knowledge of and preference for locally produced earthenware. It was to be a slow process for the studio potters to capture the attention for their visions of the handmade in which they reflected new ethics and aesthetics. The Association of Potters of Southern Africa established the Pottery Gallery in Johannesburg to promote the works of its members. Helen de Leeuw created the very popular The Craftsman Market and subsequently the Helen de Leeuw Gallery in Johannesburg. Other galleries across South Africa followed suit in featuring the studio potters and their wares. The studio potters themselves contributed by presenting forms and decorations with which the market had some familiarity, notably, of East Asian wares. Hyme Rabinowitz (1920–2009), Walford, and Glenny reflected some East Asian 'look and feel' in their output. Their East Asian forms included tea cups, tea bowls, lidded jars and bud vases but they also introduced forms not usually associated with but decorated in glazes and brushwork that evoke the East Asian styles in such works as casseroles, chargers, serving dishes and jugs.

Walford's studio practice and oeuvre were well documented in a biographical work (Wright 2009) and in the quarterly editions of *Sgraffiti* and in *National Ceramics Quarterly*. Early in his career he worked in porcelain at the Gustavsberg Studio in Sweden, followed by a stint of teaching pottery at the Hamburg Art Academy before settling in South Africa. Walford (pers. comm., 26 January 2010) explained that it was only because he was solidly grounded in pottery techniques, materials and processes, that he could selectively introduce elements of other schools and styles of pottery. Whilst his works were invariably associated with the Anglo-Oriental tradition of pottery, Walford (pers. comm., 26 January 2010) was adamant that it was perhaps so in their shapes but that the interpretations were South African. Glenny, on the other hand, received scant attention in the APSA and CSA magazines. Calder's (pers. comm., 8 July 2024) insight is that Glenny was perceived by the 'APSA Establishment' as a relatively 'minor' contributor to stylistic developments in the mainstream South African stoneware studio pottery and furthermore for standing in the shadow of his mentor Walford. He did merit recognition by Maarten Zaalberg (1985: 38), Wilma Cruise (1991: 44) and Watt (2017: 67–69). The lack of scholarly attention to Glenny must not be construed as ignorance or oversight but rather that the earlier research focused on establishing the broad history and contexts of South African studio pottery with references to some of its leading practitioners.

IAN GLENNY AS A PRINCIPLED 'ARTIST-CRAFTSMAN'

At an early age, Glenny was fascinated by his grandmother's collection of salt-glazed ware. After school, he enrolled at the Natal Technikon in Durban to study fine art but did not complete his degree and set out to become a full-time potter. Even then, he was very much influenced by folk pottery of China's

Figure 7: The Dargle Valley Pottery studio complex of Ian Glenny at Dargle Valley in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. Photograph by Patrick Flanagan©.

Tang and Sung dynasties (600–1000AD), Japan and, in particular, Korea (Zaalberg 1985:38; Herbst 2022). His first studio was in the suburb of Berea in Durban where, with the assistance of Walford, a two-chambered oil-fired kiln was built. In 1975, he acquired land in the picturesque Dargle Valley, nearby the town of Howick-uMngeni, on which he built his house and a large, sprawling studio named 'Dargle Valley Pottery' (Figs 7, 8). To contend with the very cold temperatures during the winter months when clay would freeze and heavy frost caused the pots to collapse, Glenny built a thatched house inside a barn where he threw pots and let them dry for firing (Herbst 2022).

Along with his range of the usual forms of utilitarian and ornamental wares, he produced fireplaces, tagines (Moroccan-style casserole dishes), pizza ovens and *hibachi* (a Japanese-style 'fire-bowl' for barbeque). By 1985, he stepped up production of wares that would appeal to tourists who were attracted to the Midlands Meander, of which he was a founder member. Two other studio pottery members of the Meander were David Walters (1950–2022) with his Cavesham Mill studio, and Lindsey Scott of the Hillford Pottery studio. The Meander eventually featured some 180 artists and craftsmen (News24 2018). The Meander grew to be a significant source of income to support his studio. As an extension to the studio, Glenny established a gallery in an old house opposite the railway junction of the nearby Lion's River. It was a practical consideration to find

Figure 8: Ian Glenny throwing on a potter's wheel (circa 1989). Photograph by Barry Downard©.

Figure 9: Ian Glenny, circa 1984, signed "I.G." on foot. Stoneware floor jar, wheel-thrown. Decorated with a shino-style glaze with 2% salt and fly ash. Reduction-fired in an *anagama* kiln. Diameter 38cm × height 60cm. Private collection. Photograph by Christo Giles. (Courtesy of Rust-en-Vrede Gallery + Clay Museum, Durbanville, South Africa)

a balance between maintaining "puritan aesthetics" in creating collectors' items and financial survival through the production of commercial wares (Cruise 1991: 44). Glenny's justification was that the works had to be "saleable so that I could make a buck out of it ... I didn't want to be a starving artist"[5]. A team of eight assistants supported Glenny with throwing and firing. Amongst the assistants was Richard Mnikathi who started work at the studio at the age of 12 years in 1986 and came to be Glenny's alter ego.

Glenny's career as a studio potter spanned from the mid-1970s to the early 2020s. In that time, he achieved recognition for his studio pottery of works in terracotta, stoneware and porcelain, as well as for his mastery of reduction firing during which clay and glaze was put under severe stress when the kiln was super-heated to usually around 1200–1300 °C. At a critical stage during the firing, the atmosphere in the kiln was starved of oxygen. The only other source of oxygen was in the molecular structures of the clay and glaze which was then extracted. The reaction process is known to be unpredictable but, if successful, reaps the reward of exceptional textures and colours. The British ceramics art historian Jeffrey Jones (2007: 31) writes of the potter's "respect for and a delight in the 'caprice of the fire'". That, perhaps, summarises the appeal of reduction-fired stoneware with the understanding that the outcome is not solely dependent on whatever knowledge, skills and experience the studio potter has but that "happen-chance" wrought about in the kiln ads to the allure of the work.

Calder (pers. comm., 8 July 2024) recognises in Glenny's works an "innate spontaneity and vivacity in the creative processes of his pottery" for which he merits a deeper appreciation:
"The fortuitous interaction of natural phenomena that arise during the pottery processes – digging and working with raw clay, forming wares, mixing ash and earth's materials, firing a combustion kiln - are an integral part of [Glenny's] pottery's beauty and utility … Glenny was a robust, brawny person, a 'man-of-action' in his life and in his pottery … [which] moved him to use his physical energies in pottery processes that essentially harnessed natural forces."

INFLUENCES

Glenny travelled in Europe and the United States but never had the opportunity to visit the Far East. He gained his insights into Chinese, Japanese and Korean pottery traditions and conventions from books. He was also well-versed in Leach's *A potter's book* (1940) and Michael Cardew's *Pioneer pottery* (1969). In his formative years as a studio potter, he was mentored by Walford who had his studio in Shongweni. Walford gave further support to Glenny by introducing him to gallerists who featured and promoted his works. Glenny's contact with the other contemporary studio potters was limited: "There was benefit in the adversity. I knew the other potters. There was a lot of mutual respect … a cohesion of thought and cohesion in passion … but the geographical distance between us prevented close association"[6].

5 Author's interview with Ian Glenny. September 2010, Dargle, South Africa.
6 *Ibidem*.

Figure 10: Ian Glenny and his son Daniel Griffin at the Dargle Valley Pottery studio (2003). Photograph by Barry Downard©.

Figure 11: The *ohm* monogram of Andrew Walford (top) and the initials signature of Ian Glenny (bottom). Photographs by Ronnie Watt©.

Glenny struck up a friendship with the English potter Chuck Schwartz in 1987, at the time when Schwartz was resident in Durban. The surface textures of Schwartz's stoneware vessels recall Japanese *bizen*- and *shigaraki*-wares. The *bizen*-style typically has a reddish-brown colouring and ash residue because of the effects (*yohen*) of lighter and darker markings resulting from the placement of individual pieces in a wood-fired kiln. In the *shigaraki*-style, the clay is gritty, and the forms are more informal. Glenny achieved the same effects of those styles when using a mix of dark and light-coloured clays that he sourced himself. This clay mix created a rich texture with the addition of an ash glaze. He fired those works in his 5.66-cubic-metre *anagama* kiln, which is a traditional Japanese-style catenary arched kiln, sloping upwards and fired with wood.

Accompanied by his son, Daniel Griffin, Glenny attended a workshop by the studio potter Svend Bayer in 1999 in England. Bayer, an earlier pupil of Cardew, produced very large vessels which also featured in Glenny's oeuvre. Some of Glenny's large pots were of such dimension as to require 55 kg of wet clay for their throwing and of which only two could fit in a kiln at any time (The Witness 2010) (Fig. 9). Griffin served a number of three-months-long apprenticeships under his father (Fig. 10) with the last of those in 2014. He set up his own studio with an *anagama* kiln near Hermanus in the Western Cape Province in 2002.[7]

Glenny's oeuvre includes very large vessels similar to those of Bayer and works that speak of the *bizen*-style and *shigaraki*-styles as produced by Schwartz. A distinctive resemblance to features in the works of Walford must be noted as inexperienced collectors could misidentify the correct maker unless they are familiar with the potter's monogram showing the *ohm* symbol of Walford and the initials signature of Glenny (Fig. 11). There is, however, a distinct difference between 'copy' and 'resemblance'. As in any form of art or craft, ideas and techniques are freely emulated. Glenny most certainly reflected other traditions and styles in his own work, but he did not copy those blindly. He explored, assimilated, refined and individualised styles which, according to the English ceramist and ceramics art historian

7 The father and son team staged a joint exhibition of their wood-fired works at the Dargle Valley Pottery studio in 2003.

Edmund de Waal (2004), speak of the spirit of the potter and the pot:
"All objects are 'entangled objects'; entangled in the values of the maker and in that maker's appropriation of ideas and images, as well as the values of those through whose lives it is successively animated."

PRAXIS

Glenny was, for the greater part, self-taught. His skills developed from repeated throwing, glazing, and firing of the same forms which required strict discipline and patience. He was frank about the early hardships:

"I was very patient. The stumbling block was the technical side of pottery. I could not serve an apprenticeship. I had a farm to run, build a house, build a kiln. In a way I had to serve an apprenticeship under myself. Learning the craft is an arduous thing. I had to go through so much trauma getting the form, glazing, firing just right. My first pieces were terrible. They were misfired … the kiln was too hot or too cold. There were moments of absolute sadness when things didn't work out [in the firing] the way I planned. And moments of absolute joy where I never expected pots like that to come out of the kiln. But I tried and I tried, and I tried. I simply had to achieve what I set out to achieve."[8]

Glenny placed great emphasis on form. The forms are robust but, even so, elegant in design and eloquent in communicating their intent to be functional pieces. The non-negotiable feature of a signature piece, said Glenny, is its form[9]. The correctness of form is not easily defined. Form does not equate with shape and goes beyond being of the correct proportions, and the balance of the foot, belly, waist, shoulder, neck, and rim. It entails style which is not only the shape and function of the actual object but also its outward appearance.

With the form achieved either by throwing on the wheel or slab-building, Glenny would consider the decorations and glazing which, he maintained, had to fit that. He shared the sentiment of Cardew (1938) that "[a] glaze is not to be judged only by its hardness & durability, its colour & surface, but above all by its depth, & the 'Kindness' of its quality". Glenny's decorations included brushed painting, sgraffito, combing, rouletting, or the use of tools that create textured surfaces. These were applied to both unglazed and glazed works. In the process of throwing and shaping, incidental decorative texture could be created of which Glenny was tolerant because they were integrated into the form.

His choices of glazes included iron-bearing, *shino*-style and celadon glazes and, in particular, ash with the latter layered in double or even triple dips. Natural ash, said Glenny, "sings for me" (Herbst 2022) and those were harvested from his own domestic wood-fires and seasonal plantation- and grass-fires in and around the Dargle Valley locale. He estimated that 90% of his works had ash content. Calder (pers. comm., 8 July 2024) explains that Glenny's incorporation of salt into an ash-glaze is extremely unusual. Salt-glazed stoneware is the result of an ephemeral process by which salt is vapourised in a kiln. Rather than a raw material added as a component of a glaze recipe, packets of salt (NaCl) are added into the kiln at high temperature, and so vapourise to form a vitreous glaze on clay surfaces. This, according to Calder, emphasises that Glenny's innovative and even maverick approach, demonstrates his willingness to embrace happen-chance, as opposed to predetermined effects, as a significant factor in his studio practice of reduction stoneware.

To give a further dimension to ash glazing, Glenny would dip a biscuited pot in a thin, ash-glaze followed by further dipping, dripping, and spattering to cover parts in a thicker, darker ash glaze after which he sometimes applied a *shino*-style or turquoise glaze in areas such as the neck and shoulders. *Shino* ranges in colour from milky white to a light orange but Glenny could achieve a *shino*-style glaze of pale apricot-pink on the contrasting thick and crusty ash glaze. This pinkish hue is similar to the *beni-shino* seen in the older style Japanese studio pottery. The turquoise glaze is likely a celadon with the addition of a small amount of cobalt oxide (Calder, pers. comm., 8 July 2024). For his brushwork decorations, he opted for Japanese brushes. It is Walford's opinion (pers. comm., 19 June 2024) that the brushwork was in the style of Hamada's *tetsue* (iron oxide) decorative work that typically showed a leafed bamboo shoot. Equally admired are Glenny's work with a *tenmoku* glaze. *Tenmoku* is a deep-coloured glaze ranging in colour from dark plum to yellow, to brown and to black. The conventional basic raw ingredients are feldspar, limestone and kaolin, with iron oxide as the colourant. In the controlled heating and cooling of the reduction firing within the stoneware glaze

8 Author's interview with Ian Glenny. September 2010, Dargle, South Africa.
9 *Ibidem*.

Figure 12: Ian Glenny, circa late 1980s, signed "I.G." on foot. Porcelain bud vase, wheel-thrown. Double dip in turquoise and *tenmoku* glazes, wax resist decoration. Diameter 11 cm × height 20 cm. Collection of Ronnie Watt, Canada. Photograph by Michelle Heins.

the result is in a silvery 'oil-spot' appearance. *Shino* and *tenmoku* glazes were features of wares in the Anglo-Oriental tradition of pottery and via that influence became adopted into the South African studio pottery. To an outsider, the shiny brown appearance of *tenmoku* might be too reminiscent of the drab brown of the twentieth-century Western industrial teapots. Glenny acknowledged that when he stated that *tenmoku* "stirs the soul [but] does not stir everyone's soul"[10].

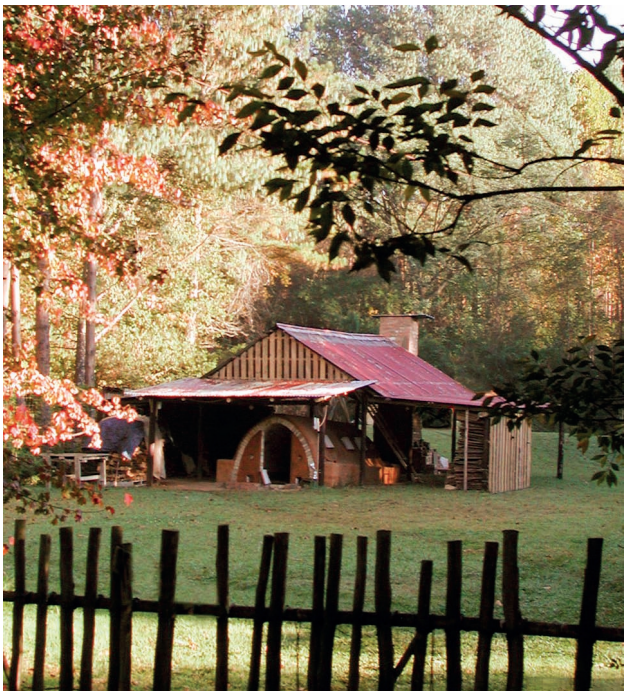

Figure 13: The kiln facility of Ian Glenny at Dargle Valley, built inside a farm shed. Photograph by Barry Downard©.

For double glaze dips, Glenny favoured a first glaze of celadon followed by an iron oxide glaze. A triple dip could entail celadon, turquoise and *tenmoku* with some of those applied in two dips. His turquoise glaze has an intense blue-green hue, which is amplified when contrasted with the rich red brown of *tenmoku* (Fig. 12). Equally dramatic are those works with a first dip in a milky white *shino*-style and a partial dip in *tenmoku* glaze to produce a bold contrast, which, Glenny said, was intended to "challenge the eye and the mind"[11]. The best of Glenny's works employed a process of double and triple dip glazing with which he achieved the "fat waxiness, richness and depth that are the hallmarks of the best reduced stoneware" (Cruise 1991:42).

Glenny preferred wood firing his works that would, at times, produce spontaneous surface effects as opposed to oil firing that gives a greater degree of control. He claimed to have operated sixteen kilns during his career, saying that he "indulged a bit" (Herbst 2022) in kilns (Fig. 13). Firing by either wood or oil fuel can produce accidental visual and tactile artistic effects. Those could be flame flashes (light burns), pinholes (small, exposed pits in the glaze), crawling (where the glaze fails to adhere as a result

10 Author's interview with Ian Glenny. September 2010, Dargle, South Africa.
11 *Ibidem*.

Figures 14, 15: (14) Ian Glenny, circa 1989, unsigned. Stoneware vessel with angular shoulders, wheel-thrown, paddled and pinched. Triple ash glaze. Reduction fired in a wood kiln. Width 22cm × diameter 13cm × height 22cm. Compare with Fig. 15 that shows a similar form fired at a later date in an electric kiln. **(15)** Ian Glenny, 2006, signed "I.G." (2006). Stoneware vessel with angular shoulders, wheel-thrown, paddled and pinched. Triple ash glaze. Reduction fired in an electric kiln. Width 23cm × diameter 13cm × height 23cm, Stoneware, wheel-thrown, paddled, and pinched, three ash glazes, fired in an electric kiln. Compare with Fig. 14 that shows a similar form reduction-fired at an earlier date in a wood kiln. Both vessels private collection. Photographs by Christo Giles. (Courtesy of Rust-en-Vrede Gallery + Clay Museum, Durbanville, South Africa)

Figures 16, 17: (16) Ian Glenny, circa early to mid-1990s, unsigned. Porcelain teacup, wheel-thrown. Brushwork motif of birds in flight, double-dip *shino*-style and *tenmoku* glazes over paper cut-outs of birds. Fired in an oil kiln. Diameter 8cm × height 7cm. **(17)** Ian Glenny, circa late 1980s, signed "I.G." on foot. Stoneware tea bowl, wheel-thrown. Seashell impression, *tenmoku* and ash glazes. fired in a wood kiln. Width 11cm × height 8cm. Both items private collection. Photographs by Christo Giles. (Courtesy of Rust-en-Vrede Gallery + Clay Museum, Durbanville, South Africa)

Figures 18, 19: (18) Ian Glenny, circa 1983, signed "I.G." on foot. Stoneware lidded casserole, wheel-thrown. *Sgraffito* decoration into iron oxide glaze at leather-hard stage, followed by ash and celadon glazing. Diameter 34 cm × height 24 cm. Reduction-fired in an oil kiln. By Glenny's own admission (Herbst 2022), the form is a copy of the "gwari-casserole" produced by Michael Cardew in the 1970s at the Abuja Pottery Training Centre in Abuja, Nigeria. Private collection. Photograph by Christo Giles. (Courtesy of Rust-en-Vrede Gallery + Clay Museum, Durbanville, South Africa). **(19)** Ian Glenny, circa 2002, unsigned. Stoneware lidded vessel with lugs, wheel-thrown, altered, and gouged. Ash glaze. Reduction fired in a wood kiln. Diameter 17 cm × height 16 cm. The vessel resembles a *mizusashi* (freshwater container) used in Japanese tea ceremonies and shows elements of both the Japanese *bizen-* and *shigaraki* pottery styles. Collection of Ronnie Watt, Canada. Photograph by Eryn Bell.

of the glaze application), and crystallised burns on heavily applied cobalt and iron-oxide glazes. Glenny revelled in such "imperfections" because they added to the end result[12]. As his health declined in the early years of the twenty-first century, Glenny could no longer produce the volume of work that the firing of his wood and oil kilns justified. He did, however, produce a small number of stoneware works that could be fired in an electric kiln. With those electric firings, he sought to copy the effects that wood or diesel kilns would produce[13] (Figs 14, 15).

As with any studio potter, Glenny produced one-off works that could be designated as "signature works". Those included works associated with the Japanese tea ceremony (*sadō* or chadō) teacups (*yunomi/gyunomi*) (Fig. 16), tea bowl (*chawan/ochawan*) (Fig. 17), freshwater containers (*mizusashi*), tea caddies (*chaire*), and bottle-shape bud vases, but also the more familiar forms of plates, chargers, bowls, teapots, lidded storage jars and casserole dishes (Fig. 18). Of these, he explained:

"At first, I didn't make a conscious decision to create one-offs. When I was making domestic ware, the one-off pieces came from amongst them. As I developed as a potter, I could set out to create one-offs. In the 1980s … those were my pinnacle years … I could produce one-offs at random. It was an evolution of getting to a certain point in exploring and then exploring more. All of this over a long period of time."[14]

Irrespective of whether the works fell within Glenny's regular range of wares or were deemed as one-off collector items, he stamped his identity and ethos on them: "You cannot separate the pot from the potter … The fate of a pot must be that it will be assimilated into the life and environment of the buyer. That is the ultimate reward for the potter"[15].

The weight and balance of form and decoration are integral to a pot's character. Glenny's works are neither fragile nor frugal. The sensory impressions are that they look, lift, hold and feel "just right". He approaches his forms decorated with simple ash

12 Author's interview with Ian Glenny. September 2010, Dargle, South Africa.
13 Greger, F. Personal correspondence to the author, 2 February2024.
14 Author's interview with Ian Glenny. September 2010, Dargle, South Africa.
15 *Ibidem*.

Figure 20: Ian Glenny, circa 2022, unsigned. Stoneware bottle-shape vase with lugs. Wheel-thrown stoneware, altered and gouged, thin and thick ash glazes. Reduction fired in an oil kiln. Width 17cm × height 31cm. Private collection. Photograph by Christo Giles. (Courtesy of Rust-en-Vrede Gallery + Clay Museum, Durbanville, South Africa)

glazes with the Japanese concept of *shibumi*[16] that loosely translates as "effortless perfection" with "a simplicity of spirit; an attitude of refinement without pretension, honesty without apology, beauty without artifice". *Shibumi* suggests complete harmony, tranquillity and balance. It is "eloquent silence" and "understanding, rather than knowledge"[17]. In objects deemed as representative of *shibumi*, the whole appearance might look to be simple but the details, such as in the balance and textures, reveal a complexity. Yanagi (1972: 124) formulated *shibumi* as:

"… beauty with inner implications … not a beauty displayed before the viewer by its creator; creation here means, rather, making a piece that will lead the viewer to draw beauty out of it for himself. In this sense [it] is beauty that makes an artist of the viewer."

Glenny continued to produce some works as late as 2022 with his long-time studio assistant Richard Mnikathi. Those works show a departure from his more refined earlier aesthetics in that they approach, but most likely not intentionally so, the more informal forms and features associated with *bizen*- and *shigaraki*-style wares (Fig. 19). In differing from that, Glenny would, for some works, add thick drippings of ash glazes (Fig. 20). Calder (pers. comm., 8 July 2024) notes "expressively direct forms and disquieting glazes" in these works which "represents a most clear expression of his 'true nature'".

CONCLUSION

With his studio pottery career coming to an untimely end in 2023, it robbed Glenny of the attention of the current generation of studio pottery collectors and scholars. The significantly expanded data for his praxes, the contextualising of critical influences on his oeuvre, and an appraisal of his works from an art historical perspective, make for a belated but nevertheless meaningful profiling of Glenny. It emerges that Glenny was not bound by loyalty or attraction to any specific tradition of pottery, but that he sought to put a personal stamp on his innovations of forms and decorations. From the conceptual stage to the finished work, Glenny set in motion a sequence of actions, decisions and techniques with each of those adding layers of meaning to the form, feel and look of his works. The unplanned for quirks in textures and decorations that took shape in the reduction-firing, do not subtract from but rather add to the aesthetics that Glenny pursued. He was a disciplined potter in seeking to be truthful in his selection of materials and his processes of production but at the same time Glenny rejected convention as can clearly be seen in the forms and decorations of his last works. In the bold appearance of Glenny's works, there are also subtle nuances to be discovered. For that to happen, collectors have to

16 Stone, J. 2017. *What is shibumi?* https://shibumidesignstudios.com/about/what-is-shibumi (accessed 13 January 2024).
17 *Ibidem.*

consider not only the pot for what it is, but for all that it encapsulates.

This addition to scholarly South African studio pottery art history provides specific data on the scope of influences that came to play in the shaping of oeuvres, emphasising that influences were not blatantly copied but reinterpreted in a manner that would appeal to the consumer and collector base. This essay illustrates that the profiles of the other eminent twentieth-century South African studio potters can similarly be constructed through diligent research of source material even if those sources are synoptic, more often than not from incidental rather than focused references and published over extended periods of time. When considered collectively, such source materials can create more comprehensive, insightful and scholarly accounts of the individual lives and oeuvres of those studio potters. These accounts would, in turn, further contribute to a more complete and authoritative documentation of the South African ceramic art history. The success of such attention to individual studio potters is dependent on attracting the interest of the country's ceramic art historians of whom, regrettably, few are currently engaged in this field of study.

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The Ian Glenny Estate, via Sarah Rich-Glenny and Reuben Glenny, generously gave access to Glenny's personal collection of his own works and contributed significant information on his life and praxes. Fiona Greger and Glenny's studio assistant, Richard Mnikathi, were authorities for data on Glenny's studio pottery. The photographer, Barry Downard, gave free access to his archive of images of Glenny and the studio environment at Dargle Valley Pottery. Rusten-Vrede Gallery + Clay Museum, Durbanville, claimed the opportunity to host and promote the 2024 exhibition of works from Glenny's personal collection, with those works photographed by Christo Giles.

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