BERNARD LEACH AND BRITISH COLUMBIAN POTTERY:
AN HISTORICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF A TASTE CULTURE

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an historical ethnography of the art world and the taste culture that collected the west coast or Leach influenced style of pottery in British Columbia. This handmade functional style of pottery traces its beginnings to Vancouver in the 1950s and 1960s, and its emergence is embedded in the cultural history of the city during that era. The development of this pottery style is examined in relation to the social network of its founding artisans and its major collectors.

The Vancouver potters Glenn Lewis, Mick Henry and John Reeve apprenticed with master potter Bernard Leach in England during the late fifties and early sixties. Upon returning to British Columbia they played key roles in the establishment of handmade pottery as a vibrant and expressive art form on the Canadian west coast. The style of pottery made by the former Leach apprentices and their students held a prominent position in the Vancouver art world during the 1960s. Its success was dependent not only upon the artists, but upon the support of a particular local taste culture. A taste culture is a group who can be identified by shared aesthetic preferences [Gans 1966]. Mapping the circulation and appreciation of this pottery enables the discernment of a larger social pattern at work. The taste culture consisted of the artists, the collectors, the dealers/gallery owners, and the curator/critics in Vancouver who were interested in modernism as an art movement with the potential to impact daily living. As a group they shared similar values and aesthetic preferences outside of their interest in handmade pottery. These shared values and aesthetic standards are examined through the operation of the taste culture in significant social spaces. My analysis of the social forces and networks underpinning the development of this pottery style is balanced by the acknowledgment of the need to recognize the pottery's expressive value. This is what Janet Wolff refers to as the "specificity of art" (1983).

As an ethnographic analysis of the Vancouver art world and a local taste culture, this thesis answers the questions: Why was the pottery collected and by whom? How was the pottery displayed or used? How was it represented in private collections, galleries and museums? How did the taste culture arrive at a set of aesthetic discriminations? And finally, how did these reflect a particular social network and its social values? This thesis contributes to the anthropological literature in the area of art and anthropology, and provides new perspectives to the current museum studies research on collectors and taste cultures.
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PREFACE

My interest in this topic grows out of my intellectual and creative biography. I am a potter and a graduate student in cultural anthropology. I took up pottery fifteen years ago as an undergraduate and later attended The Philadelphia College of Art. But my real education as a potter came through my job at an unusually ambitious community art center in Pennsylvania that was devoted to the appreciation and promotion of ceramic art and artists. Through organizing exhibitions and speaking with artists and collectors, I became acquainted with the work of accomplished potters across the United States. At that point in my career I discovered that the people making the pots I loved the most were in some way linked to the English potter Bernard Leach or to his Japanese colleague Shoji Hamada. I was excited to learn about this "genealogical" connection to a contemporary ceramic tradition. Who were these artists and what was the philosophy that linked them together? I became obsessed with the pursuit of these questions and sought out opportunities to study with every former Leach apprentice that I could find. Between 1994 and 1998 I attended four courses offered by potters who had apprenticed with Leach, Hamada or one of their students.

Fueled by my enthusiasm for this type of pottery and eager to learn more about the Asian ceramic history that inspired Leach, Hamada and their students, I set out to locate a graduate program in cultural anthropology that would allow me to pursue material culture studies in the context of a museum with an extensive ceramics collection. Through my experiences as a potter, a pottery teacher and a member of a professional potters' guild I had developed a respect for the hand made object that compelled me to deepen my inquiry and which in turn led me to UBC and the Museum of Anthropology.

Upon moving to Vancouver in 1998 I joined the B.C. Potters' Guild and the Fraser Valley Potters' Guild. My activities as a guild member, my research on the ceramics collections at the UBC Museum of Anthropology, and conversations with potters and collectors raised questions about the history of pottery movements in British Columbia. Further inquiries uncovered the presence of a Leach tradition dating to the 1950s. I located the names of four potters from Vancouver who had apprenticed with Leach, yet to my surprise very few local potters were aware of this aspect of British Columbia's ceramic and artistic history. Hardly anything had been written v
about these artists and I found it extremely difficult to locate any examples of their pottery, even though I observed that the work of several potters in Vancouver galleries exhibited stylistic qualities and technical sensibilities that referenced the Leach aesthetic. How was this aesthetic established in British Columbia? Was it directly imported from the Leach Pottery by the Canadian apprentices who returned to Vancouver? All four of the potters, now in their mid-sixties and early seventies, no longer make pots. Two of them live on the nearby Sunshine Coast and two live outside of Canada. I sensed that an important historical legacy for future generations of potters was about to slip away unrecorded. Informed by my graduate courses I began to wonder about the mechanisms through which an artistic movement or tradition is established, remembered or forgotten. What is the role of the collector, the gallery or the museum in this process? How do these entities work together (or not) to create, strengthen and preserve the life of an artistic tradition?

It has become clear to me through conversations with the potters, collectors, gallery owners and museum curators I have interviewed that there was a distinct style of pottery in British Columbia during the 1960s that was directly informed by the group of potters who apprenticed with Leach and returned to Vancouver to teach and make pots of their own. I will refer to this type of functional handmade pottery as the west coast style or the Leach influenced style. My conversations with the potters, their students and those who collected the work were characterized by an animated excitement when recalling anecdotes about the vibrant and experimental art scene that was thriving in Vancouver in the 1960s. Pottery was part and parcel of the Vancouver art world at that time. The absence of strict divisions between artistic disciplines, such as painting, sculpture, pottery, and film allowed for a cross-pollination of creative ideas and philosophies. This is a vitally important aspect of Vancouver's artistic history and signifies the presence of a local taste culture that is quite different from what exists today. This thesis examines the cultural matrix from which a west coast style of pottery emerged and a local taste culture was established.

I am drawn to investigate this topic because I have a personal affinity for ceramics and for this type of pottery in particular. I am equally compelled by my intellectual interest in the cultural conditions that encouraged the production and appreciation of this pottery in British Columbia. The theory I employ in this study helps me to understand the social mechanisms at work which
allowed this pottery to become especially popular and accepted here, but it does not entirely explain
the appeal of this pottery in a way that is compatible with my lived experience as a potter. Being a
potter allows me to understand the expressive value of pottery in an intimate way. I derive joy
from working with clay and I take pleasure in viewing and holding a well made pot. Because I
have engaged myself as a maker of pots, I have an embodied sense of the objects I am writing
about. I cannot divorce myself from this sensual knowledge. For this reason I have felt tension
between the academic and objective demands of my research on this topic and the more personal
subjective nature of my relationship to pots and the pottery community.

The ethnography that I present is centered on just one facet of British Columbia's ceramic
history and collecting culture. By necessity, my study is focused on a limited number of potters
and a small segment of the population that collected pottery. From the wealth of information that
was shared with me I have had to choose which aspects of the collecting culture to include and
which to overlook. This task is always a formidable undertaking for the researcher who feels
bound to portray her experience as a whole and who feels an allegiance and a responsibility to the
people who shared their insights with her. The framework I have chosen, or any other single
framework, cannot realistically address the range of pottery made in the province or the many
reasons individuals choose to collect it. I would hope that readers will take this into account in the
formation of their own impressions about this aspect of Vancouver's collecting culture and ceramic
history.

I would like to thank everyone who helped me complete my research and write this thesis.
I am grateful for the hospitality of the many potters and collectors who invited me into their homes
and so generously shared their collections and their memories with me. Special thanks are due to
Donna Balma, Mick Henry, Glenn Lewis and Doris Shadbolt. Without their encouragement,
cooperation and enthusiasm this project would not have been possible.

The idea for this research was nurtured by my former advisor the late Marjorie Halpin and
came to fruition with the sensitive guidance and support of my current advisor, Ruth Phillips. I
would like to thank my committee member, Carol Mayer for sharing her knowledge and
appreciation of ceramics with me and for providing me with opportunities to research the ceramics
collection at the Museum of Anthropology.
I thank my husband John for his adventurous spirit and my baby son Roan for being a good sleeper and a happy presence. My gratitude also goes out to my family and good friends Bree Willson, Michael Viens, Kim and Stephen Wright, and Cathi Jefferson. You have all provided a network of love and support to sustain me through my graduate studies.
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents an historical ethnography of the art world and the taste culture that collected a west coast or Leach influenced style of pottery in British Columbia. This handmade functional style of pottery traces its beginnings to Vancouver in the 1950s and 1960s, and its emergence is embedded in the cultural history of the city during that era. Although Leach's work affected potters across Canada, British Columbia is the only place where this tradition took root on a large scale. I will document how an interest in this pottery style developed in relation to the social network of its founding artisans and its major collectors.¹

The English master potter Bernard Leach (1887-1979) sought to develop a fusion of Eastern and Western aesthetic traditions in the art of ceramics. In 1920 he and the Japanese potter Shoji Hamada established the Leach Pottery in St. Ives, Cornwall, England. Of the approximately thirty young potters from around the world who served apprenticeships at the Leach Pottery only four hailed from Canada (MacKenzie 1987; Whybrow 1996). All four had attended the Vancouver School of Art and three of them returned to the Lower Mainland upon completion of their apprenticeships in the early 1960s. The lives and work of these three Vancouver potters, Michael Henry, Glenn Lewis, and John Reeve influenced a generation of potters in British Columbia. Together these potters and their students played key roles in the establishment of handmade pottery as a vibrant and expressive art form on the Canadian west coast.²

I am interested in why and how the pottery made by Leach, Henry, Lewis, Reeve and their students came to hold a position of prominence in the Vancouver art world during this era. Mapping the circulation and appreciation of this pottery enables the discernment of a larger social pattern at work. I argue that the establishment and success of this recognizable pottery style in British Columbia was dependent not only upon the artists, but upon the support of a particular local taste culture. A taste culture is a group who can be identified by shared aesthetic preferences [Gans 1966]. The taste culture I document consists of the artists, the collectors, the dealer/gallery owners, and the curator/critics in Vancouver who were interested in modernism as an art movement with the potential to impact daily living. I identify the social spaces in the Vancouver art world that facilitated the formation of the taste culture and demonstrate how the taste culture operated through the inter-relationship of its component parts within these social spaces.

¹
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This thesis will answer the questions: Why was the pottery collected and by whom? How was the pottery displayed or used? How was it represented in private collections, galleries and museums? How did the taste culture arrive at a set of aesthetic discriminations? And, how did these reflect a particular social network and its social values? Finally, I assert that there are issues beyond the scope of this study related to the pottery's expressive value and the aesthetic experience of the collectors that cannot be fully explained by an analysis of the social construction of art. This is what Janet Wolff calls the "specificity of art". She writes that the "irreducibility of 'aesthetic value' to social, political, or ideological co-ordinates ... has become an increasingly worrying problem among sociologists of art ... who, while rightly refusing to reinstate any essentialist notion of the aesthetic, have begun to see the need to accord recognition to the specificity of art" (1983:11-12). My concluding argument in favor of the expressive value of the pottery is intended to balance my main presentation of the social forces and networks that underpinned the development of this pottery style in British Columbia. I acknowledge both the autonomy of the expressive value of art and its dependence upon social and historical conditions.

Theoretical Framework

Herbert Gans provides a useful model for the examination of this social network. His concept of taste cultures reflects the diversity of "cultures" beyond the stereotypical categories of popular culture and high culture. He describes the existence of subgroups of people who can be identified by the similar values and aesthetic preferences they share. Gans writes;

There are a number of popular cultures, and they as well as high culture are all examples of ... taste cultures ... whose values are standards of taste or aesthetics. ... A taste culture consists of the painting and sculpture, music, literature, drama, and poetry; the books, magazines, films, television programs; even the furnishings, architecture, foods, automobiles and so on, that reflect similar aesthetic standards (1966: 551).

I argue that a core group of people who supported Leach style pottery were members of the west coast modernist vanguard. They shared similar values and aesthetic preferences outside of their interest in handmade pottery. A keen interest in modernism informed this group's collective notions about taste and influenced their social values. It is this group which defines the local taste culture that is the subject of my analysis.
In order to understand how the taste culture operated as a social network we must first identify its component parts and situate it in a historical context. Howard Becker's concept of the "art world" is useful for this purpose. Becker writes,

All artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people. Through their cooperation, the art work we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be. The work always shows signs of that cooperation. The forms of cooperation may be ephemeral, but often become more or less routine, producing patterns of collective activity we can call an art world. The existence of art worlds, as well as the way their existence affects both the production and consumption of art works, suggests a sociological approach to the arts. . . It produces . . . an understanding of the complexity of the cooperative networks through which art happens (1982:1).

According to Becker, in addition to the work of the individual artist, many activities must be carried out by a wide variety of people such as those who supply the materials and equipment, those patrons or governments who offer financial support, those who publicly display a work of art (i.e. shops, galleries, museums, etc.), those who respond to and appreciate the work and those who provide critical review. Becker argues that "the artist thus works in the center of a network of cooperating people all of whose work is essential to the final outcome" (1982:25). Collectors play a crucial role in this network because they provide critical feedback and financial support to artists.

Appadurai coined the complementary concept of the "social life of things" by which he asserts that because objects or commodities do not always stay in the exact context for which they were intended, and do not necessarily remain in the region within which they were produced, objects are said to have a "social life" (1986). The identities and meanings of art objects do not remain stable. Their value, spirit and meaning change as they move and are exchanged among different users, makers and owners. In the case of this study, Appadurai’s theory is particularly relevant. When the pottery made by Leach and his students entered the context of the Vancouver art world new meanings and values were attributed to those same objects. I am interested in determining what the local taste culture valued in this pottery.

Pierre Bourdieu dissects the mechanisms by which the making of aesthetic distinctions operates along socially defined lines. As Bourdieu writes,

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed (1984:6).

In his essay "Making Distinctions" John Codd summarizes Bourdieu's position as follows,
Using observational and survey data collected over many years, [Bourdieu] has attempted to reveal that regularities of taste within lifestyles are produced by social regularities which always have the potential to generate effects of cultural demarcation or distinction. For Bourdieu, this notion of distinction, with its connotations of both difference and superiority, is the theoretical key with which to unlock a social critique of aesthetic judgment. He takes the position that the making of aesthetic distinctions cannot have a priori validity because they are cultural practices engendered by the same general dispositions (habitus) as eating preferences, dress styles, sporting interests and other facets of day-to-day culture. Thus, aesthetic distinctions identify different positions in social space . . . (1990:133).

The aesthetic choices made by the pottery collectors help to identify their positions in social space. The operation of the taste culture was dependent upon the interrelationship of its members and their activities within several different social fields simultaneously. Richard Kurin's concept of a "culture broker" will be used to refer to key members of the taste culture. He defines culture brokers as people who "study, understand, and represent someone's culture (even sometimes their own) to nonspecialized others through various means and media" (1997:19). Through their roles as museum professionals, festival organizers, and critics, culture brokers "enable important transactions, interrelationships, and exchanges" (1997:20).

Methods

My research was conducted through a process of structured interviews designed to permit the creation of an historical ethnography. My approach was qualitative rather than quantitative. Through my studies at the UBC Museum of Anthropology and my activities as a professional potter, contacts were made with those most closely associated with the Leach influenced pottery history in British Columbia. I held formal and informal interviews in person and by telephone with potters, collectors, dealers, gallery owners and curators who were located in the greater Vancouver area, on the Sunshine Coast and as far away as Waterloo, Ontario.4 Since the majority of people live within driving distance I was also able to view their pottery collections and, in some cases, photograph them. I based my questions on preliminary library and archival research, and my training in the field of ceramics.

I formally interviewed twenty seven people and had informal conversations with seven others (see Appendix A). Participants were given a consent form explaining the nature of the research project. All chose be identified by name in this thesis and were given the opportunity to approve of quotations. Those interviewed included sixteen collectors, seventeen potters, three
gallery owners and two curators. Several individuals fit into more than one of these categories. Three of the sixteen collectors were main actors in Vancouver's educational and cultural establishment at the time they began collecting pottery. Three others later became prominent members of Vancouver's professional community in the fields of art and architecture.

Overall very few people in Vancouver were involved in the modernist cause and even fewer, perhaps less than a hundred people were serious pottery collectors. The small size and the interconnectedness of the group is a specific trait of the taste culture. Although I was unable to interview the group in its entirety, the sample I chose reflects a diversity within this closeknit social network.
CHAPTER 2 -

THE MODERNIST VANGUARD AND THE VANCOUVER ART WORLD

This chapter introduces the taste culture in the context of Vancouver's modernist vanguard and tells the story of the Vancouver art world in the fifties. I map the confluence of events that set the stage for the formation of a taste culture that took a special interest in the Leach style pottery made by the returning apprentices in the early sixties. By the late 1960s local handmade pottery was in the limelight and the potters who made the work enjoyed the patronage of influential people in the city. Speaking of that time, former Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) curator Doris Shadbolt emphasized, "The potters were a vital part [of the Vancouver art world] because they were a part of the dialogue" (Personal communication, Burnaby, April 9, 2002). This chapter outlines the conditions that led up to this moment in the history of ceramics on the west coast.

There were several factors that contributed to a receptive climate in the Vancouver art world for both Leach's pots and those of his apprentices. Between 1945 and 1967 Vancouver's quickly growing population expanded from 275,000 to 430,000 people (Shadbolt 1983:108). Local potter and collector Jean Fahrni described the atmosphere in the city after the war, when she said, "It was an exciting time as far as the arts went. Vancouver was opening up at that time. International people, students returning from world travels and studies, many Asian immigrants and European refugees began coming to the west coast and were able to use their talents. Many of these families such as the Koerners, the Benes and the Horvaths brought music and the arts with them. They brought this rich influence which before that time was completely lacking in Vancouver (Personal communication, Vancouver, November 14, 2001).

The city's emerging cosmopolitanism created a lively and open environment for the arts that had not existed previously. Upon moving to Vancouver in 1955 Alvin Balkind described it as a "sleepy, provincial, rather stuffy city" whose "'gentry'... were not universally inclined toward a knowing engagement with the arts". He writes,

Augmenting this group was a handful of well-off Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, and Czechoslovakians... who escaped from Europe: humanists who yearned for reminders of the upholstered, haut-bourgeois, cultivated alt Welt they had to flee, where enlightened arts patronage was an honoured way of life (1992:66-67).

Abraham Rogatnick, another newcomer to Vancouver explained,

When Alvin Balkind and I arrived in Vancouver in 1955 via Kingsway and the downtown east side, the superficial impression of the city was one which catered primarily to the accommodation of workers in the fishing, logging and mining industries; saloons and bargain stores seemed to
dominate. However, we very quickly became aware of an influential community of people who had already founded a thriving public art gallery, a very good art school, a top-notch symphony orchestra and a well subscribed chamber music society. The Community Arts Council had already organized a landmark exhibition of "good design". These institutions were founded by parents bringing up children in the twenties and thirties, when the city was less than half a century old. They became the donors, volunteers, docents, board members and fund-raisers for these institutions long before the creation of the Canada Council and other public funding agencies. These amenities attracted world renowned figures who visited the city and added to its cultural development. (Personal communication, Vancouver, May 2, 2002).

The years following the war witnessed considerable changes in the Vancouver art world that resulted in the establishment of more permanent cultural institutions, increased community involvement, and a willingness to entertain new ideas. One of these new ideas was modernism. Watson explains that,

...enthusiasm for modernism appeared to be stronger in Vancouver than elsewhere in Canada. Here modernism was received and supported not only by artists, but institutions, such as the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Vancouver School of Art, and the University of British Columbia (Watson 1983:72).

The nascent taste culture thus consisted of a group of people who considered themselves to be modernists. Although several of them were born and raised in Vancouver, many of them came from Eastern Canada, Europe and the United States in the post war years. Pioneers of a sort, many of them played significant roles in the emerging cultural life of the city. Although the roots of the Leach pottery tradition lay in a synthesis of Eastern and Western aesthetics and a late-Victorian reaction to industrial mass production, the ideas associated with this pottery overlapped with the modernist project in Vancouver.

Janet Wolff explains that in Western capitalist societies "where power is based on economic position, . . . , the ideas which tend to dominate in society are those of the ruling class (1981:52). In the 1950s at the time members of Vancouver's modernist vanguard took up an interest in handmade pottery, they were not necessarily members of the ruling class, but they possessed other validating statuses because they were educated, or came from a foreign place or had travelled or studied abroad. A few came from wealthy families, while others did not. In some cases, they were returning World War II veterans who came home with a new sophistication and ties to a broader community of ideas and people. Others were artists, such as the instructors at the Vancouver School of Art who nurtured a special relationship with the arts colony of St. Ives in
Cornwall which was home to the Cornish school of landscape painters, abstract avant-garde painters and sculptors, and the Leach Pottery.  

When remembering the fifties and sixties there was a nostalgic sense among the people I interviewed that they were doing something that had never been done in Vancouver. The shared belief that they were creating something "new" and "fresh", "getting away from traditional things" and partaking in something that was "like a Renaissance" identifies the members of this group more as rebels than as members of the ruling class. One person explained,

The most wealthy [in Vancouver] went to Birks and bought English bone china and Wedgwood. I preferred the handmade pottery and the modest house (June Binkert, personal communication, Vancouver, May 14, 2002).

In the post-war years there were few places to buy handmade pottery in town other than directly from the artists, from a few shops or from exhibitions held at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

As ceramics curator Carol Mayer explains,

As with nearly everywhere else in Canada, the people of British Columbia relied on English exports for their finer wares. Because the colony was a protected marketing area, the British did not actively promote Canada as a place for potters, and costs of export wares were kept deliberately low to discourage any development of a home industry. In addition, fine Chinese wares were imported either directly or via California. As long as this taste for fine wares persisted, there was little marketplace left for the individual craft potter (1998:7).

Two modern design shops began importing Leach pottery from England in the early fifties, but for the most part mass-produced dishes that imitated fine English china were the norm.

English bone china was valued as a symbol of status and wealth. An advertisement from that era proclaimed, "the most prized china in the world is English bone china . . . simply because whiteness is the standard of excellence and English bone china is the world's whitest!" (Royal Adderly China, Canadian Homes Magazine, October 1962:22) (see Figure 1). As described in the following chapter, the Leach aesthetic subscribed to a very different standard of excellence. An advertisement for Spode china emphasized the value placed on elite dining and offered the possibility of membership in this tradition,

The wonderful thing about exquisite Spode dinnerware is that it adds beauty and distinction to every period, every background. . . So give your home the ageless elegance that has delighted generations, choose Spode! (Canadian Homes Magazine, October 1962:26).  

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The local taste culture that supported Leach style pottery was not interested in joining or continuing a tradition of "ageless elegance". One person I interviewed characterized the attitude of the taste culture by saying,

Beginning in the 1930s there was a growing conviction among lovers of art, architecture and craft that Vancouver did not need to imitate the past. This was especially notable in the years after World War II. By the 1950s local potters aware of the work of Bernard Leach as well as of Japanese ceramics were finding inspiration in these examples which reinforced the modernist quest for simplicity and functionalism in design. Their works expressed what was fresh, contemporary - truly of their own time - which needed no apology (Abraham Rogatnick, personal communication, Vancouver, May 2, 2002).

Conclusion

By 1960, then, the modernist vanguard had already become a presence in the Vancouver art world. When the Leach apprentices began to return to Vancouver in the early sixties there was a social structure already in place to support their work and their ideas. The local taste culture expressed its interest in modernism and in pottery in a variety of ways, through the roles its members played as potters, collectors, dealers, teachers and curator/critics. Some began organizations and events to educate the public about modern design and to provide a place for like-minded people to get together. Some joined established cultural and educational institutions and began to explore their interest in modernism through their work at these institutions. A few opened shops and galleries that featured the latest in modern designed furniture and objects for the home. These interrelated aspects of the taste culture will be analyzed in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER 3 - LEACH POTTERY AND THE MODERNIST AESTHETIC

The local taste culture valued Leach style pottery because it possessed a host of qualities that its members considered to be commensurate with a modernist aesthetic and a contemporary west coast "attitude" and lifestyle. Their modernist aesthetic was based on ideas developed at The Bauhaus School founded by Walter Gropius in 1919. According to Mayer, "The school sought to combine art with engineering and craftsmanship, and to elevate the status of crafts to the same level enjoyed by fine arts" (Mayer 1998:16). The following section will describe the physical characteristics of the pots that were collected, while exploring the relationship between the Leach pottery aesthetic and the west coast modernist aesthetic in order to determine how the taste culture arrived at a set of aesthetic discriminations.

Good Design

The local taste culture based its criteria for "good" taste on the modernist principle of "good design". Whether in pottery, furniture or architecture, "good design" exemplified a simplicity, a form that related to function, a harmonious relationship of the parts to the whole, and an honesty to the materials used.

Although Leach was not a modernist, the style of pottery that he advocated fit the modernist requirements of "good design" to the letter. His aesthetic and his philosophical beliefs grew out of his early ceramics training in Japan and his British Arts and Crafts sensibilities. Mayer notes that like the Bauhaus artists Leach "preached 'less is more,' but within a warm, rough, spontaneous framework", as opposed to the "typically Bauhaus modernist combination of understatement and functionality: industrial, cool, controlled" (1998:9). Throughout his career as a potter, teacher and writer Leach stressed the principles of truth to materials, appreciation of simplicity in design and the importance of the handmade object. Inspired by his predecessors, John Ruskin and William Morris, Leach heralded the beginnings of the studio potter movement while upholding the virtue of pots that were both useful and beautiful (see Figure 2).

Functional Forms

The functional aspect of this pottery is inseparable from its other aesthetic merits. This was central to Leach's teaching and is therefore quite evident in his students' work. The form of the pot spoke directly about how the pot was meant to be used. It was important that all the parts of
the pot (handle, foot, rim, spout, lid, etc.) relate to the whole both proportionally and functionally. There were no extraneous details, no unnecessary surface decorations.

The local taste culture based its definition of "good design" on the modernist ideal of functionality. Abraham Rogatnick, co-owner of the New Design Gallery identified this as one reason why Vancouver's modernists became interested in this style of pottery. He said,

Functionality is the key to why these avant-gardists were interested in ceramics and Leach. [According to modern principles of design] the best form comes from the function it yields. There was a love of form as opposed to decoration. No wonder they fell for Leach. He didn't decorate his pottery. He wasn't a Wedgwood (Personal communication, Vancouver, May 2, 2002).

Japanese Influence

The pottery made by Leach and his students developed out of a theory of making that idealized the simplicity and modesty of early Japanese and Chinese pottery. Although some of the pots referenced the classical simplicity of Song dynasty wares, many emulated the modest style of Japanese peasant pottery. As in the traditional workshops of Japan and Korea, the pots were made on a wooden kickwheel as opposed to an electric wheel. This slowed the process down and imparted a more organic quality to the form and surface of each pot. Visible signs of the hand of the maker on the finished pot were valued. This quality was said to give vitality to the pot while also providing proof that the pot was not machine made.

Leach's colleague Soetsu Yanagi, the Japanese philosopher and founder of the Mingei Folkcraft Movement, explains how the Tea Ceremony created an aesthetic based on Zen Buddhism whose aim was "not merely appreciation but rather the experiencing of beauty in the midst of daily life" (1972:147). He writes,

Tea taught people how to look at and handle utilitarian objects more carefully than they had before, and it inspired in them a deeper interest and respect for those objects... The second point in regard to Tea is that it formulated criteria for recognizing beauty at its height - and that not idealistically but through such concrete features as form, colour, and design. Many words were invented to describe the beauty that was to be the final criterion, and of them all perhaps the most suggestive is the adjective shibui (with the noun shibusa), for which there is no exact English counterpart. Nearest to it, perhaps, are such adjectives as "austere", "subdued", and "restrained", but to the Japanese the word is more complex, suggesting quietness, depth, simplicity, and purity. The beauty it describes is introversive, the beauty of inner radiance. Another way of approaching its meaning is to consider its antonyms: "showy", "gaudy", "boastful", and "vulgar" (1972:148)

The Japanese aesthetic that influenced pottery making also informed modern design. A good example of this influence is evident in the modern west coast style of architecture. By the early 1960s an interest in Japanese design was already being incorporated into a domestic
architectural style and was therefore familiar to the local taste culture that had begun to collect the pottery of Leach and his apprentices. It is significant that the architect-designed homes being built at that time had no formal dining rooms or living room parlors. The open floor plans encouraged a casual ease of living and large windows blurred the division between inside and outside. Affordable handmade pottery that embodied the values of simplicity and modesty, that was meant for use in an everyday context, and that mirrored aspects of the surrounding landscape belonged in these newly created, Japanese inspired spaces. This is one reason why I would argue that the taste culture was predisposed to resonate with pottery that was Japanese in "feeling".

Compatibility with West Coast Landscape

The west coast modernists wanted to create an identity that was unique to this part of Canada. They looked to the rugged British Columbian landscape for inspiration and supported local potters and other artists whose work reflected the surrounding environment. The pottery made by Leach, and especially the pottery made by his Vancouver apprentices and their students, was described by the collectors as being extremely compatible with the west coast landscape in feeling and in color. Clay is a natural material that comes from the earth and there was a belief that the finished pot should reflect that origin. The potters used a glaze palette of quiet, subdued colors: browns, dark greens, oatmeal whites and iron streaked blacks. The highfire stoneware clays that were used had a rugged quality. Unglazed surfaces were rough to the touch, and "imperfections" such as grit or tiny stones were thought to enhance the organic "feel" of the pottery. According to Leach's principle that artisans should strive to maintain an honesty to the materials they worked with, the natural qualities of the clay were not masked, but allowed to "show" and to be enhanced through the glazes and firing methods chosen by the maker.

The potters who returned from their apprenticeships in St. Ives brought back a knowledge of how to construct highfire kilns and an enthusiasm for teaching others how to build them in economical ways. Their preference for a live flame from gas, oil or wood fuel allowed for higher temperatures to be reached and made an entirely new range of glazes possible. These firing methods also imparted a depth and richness to the glazed surface of the pot that was virtually impossible to obtain using an electric kiln.
Curator and director of The Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, Glenn Allison acknowledges that the organic aspect of the traditional Japanese aesthetic reinforced the Leach aesthetic and fit particularly well with "the Canadian coastal mountain environs". He elaborates on this point by saying,

Rosenthal, Wedgwood and Spode spoke clearly of British imperialism. This is a gross generalization to make the point: traditional Japanese folk wares demonstrate nature to which both the pot and potter are subsumed, while western wares, in long descent from the Greek tradition, represent nature egocentrically regarded, abstracted (1994:5).

According to several collectors the potters on the west coast developed a recognizable style. Pottery collectors Alan Bell and Elizabeth Bell remembered that the pottery being made in British Columbia during the sixties was unique to this part of Canada. Elizabeth Bell recalled,

All of our friends in Montreal were collecting pottery too. When we moved there in 1968 we noticed that the west coast type of pottery was not common. Outside of British Columbia the pottery was more self-conscious. The glazes were much slicker and you didn't get the depth in the glazes. The pots were not as chunky. The designs and patterning were applied, not as loose (Personal communication, North Vancouver, May 16, 2002).

Alan Bell added,

The pottery was not Japanese looking at all. It was much different from what was happening here. The west coast aesthetic incorporated more natural and earthy colors and tones. During the hey day of ceramics there was a notion that Vancouver's artist community was separate from the rest of Canada (Personal communication, North Vancouver, May 16, 2002).

June Binkert, who has always bought local pottery since arriving in Vancouver in 1952, characterized the west coast style of pottery when she said,

I think of it as being influenced by a Japanese aesthetic - earthy, simple, rather muted colors and mainly functional things that people could use in their homes. But now pottery here has become so eclectic that there isn't a west coast style anymore. We regret the demise of the style because it [that style] seemed to reflect the landscape here and the lifestyle (Personal communication, Vancouver, May 14, 2002).

Glenn Allison summarizes some defining aspects of the pottery style. He writes,

One of the miracles of twentieth century craft unfolded on the west coast of British Columbia in unique forms of production which . . . are somewhat related to Mingei. While informed by both the Leachean approach and by direct contact with various oriental cultures, it is not a self-conscious movement ordained by a group manifesto, nor is it the product of academically generated problemsolving. It is one formed by loose alignment centered in the affection for beautiful, well-made, useful pots - pots with presence (2000:3).

Art in Living

Leach believed in a fundamental connection between life and art. He championed the idea that "aesthetics' was a matter of daily life" and that "art and life should penetrate one another to the
Central to this notion of art and life was the idea that the environment one lives in reinforces how one lives. Harmony, integrity, order and balance in life could not be achieved if one used poorly made mass produced items that showed no concern for aesthetic quality. This viewpoint echoes ideas first made popular by the Arts and Crafts Movement and later endorsed by the Bauhaus modernists.

Walter Abell, the founder of the magazines Maritime Art and Canadian Art stimulated these ideas in Canada during the forties. For him the idea of "art is living" meant attractive homes and finely planned communities to live in. It means beautiful public buildings enriched with painting and sculpture expressing the traditions and ideals of the community. It means well designed rugs on our floors, artistic dishes on our tables, attractive clothes to dress in. . . (Abell 1944 as quoted in Watson 1983:74).

Forty years later local art historian Scott Watson, reiterated this point in his essay "Art in the Fifties", where he states, "The equation between art and living was the cornerstone of fifties' modernism" (Watson 1983:74). These ideas manifested themselves in Vancouver through the Art in Living Group (1944-1947) and the Vancouver Arts Council (founded in 1946). These two organizations sponsored exhibitions of "good design for the home " that made a special point of displaying local handmade pottery alongside paintings and sculpture. The catalogue for the First Annual Ceramics, Textiles and Furniture Exhibition held in 1951 elaborates on the goals of the organizers,

It is hoped that their [the artists'] efforts may be equally exciting for the layman, the prospective consumer of their work. For it is only through the active participation of the public, exercising a critical taste, showing encouragement and understanding where it is deserved, that finer contemporary products will result (Mollie Carter 1951:33).

An interest in promoting contemporary designs and in educating the "layman" in the merits of "exercising a critical taste" were key objectives of Vancouver's modernist vanguard.

In the early 1950s several members of the local taste culture were inspired to build architect-designed homes in the suburbs. The desire to furnish these homes with the latest in modern design was fueled in part by the philosophy of art in living. As such the artwork and utilitarian crafts within the home were meant to harmonize and compliment the architecture.

Painter, pottery collector, and former instructor at the Vancouver School of Art and the UBC Fine Arts Department, Gordon Smith is one artist who was greatly influenced by the "art in living" philosophy. His home was designed by the young architect Arthur Erickson. Smith says,
At that time we were all interested in good design. It was in part a reaction from the war. We wanted a clean and functional design. We were all building houses. Pottery was used by painters and artists and architects in Vancouver in the 1950s. The idea of "art in living" extended into everything. I think that in Vancouver people like Bert Binning, Doris Shadbolt and the Bobacks were responsible. They were interested in quality design and they all had these wonderful things designed after the war. That had a huge influence. Also at that time there was a strong connection between craft and the Vancouver Art Gallery. At one time they used to mount good design exhibitions. There were galleries like Puddifoot and Mollie Carter on 10th Avenue who brought the pots and there were enough people who were artists and architects who bought it [the pottery] and could support it [the galleries and the potters] (Personal communication, West Vancouver, December 12, 2001).

Some believed in the modernist message that there were "design solutions to social, economic and emotional problems" (Watson 1983:77) and that "good design had an uplifting moral and spiritual effect" (Watson 1983:75). One person explained, "Vancouver embraced modernism for the same reasons that inspired the Bauhaus: its emphasis on simplicity which promised not only economical, functional products available to a wide range of consumers, but also created an art, architecture and craft possessing an intrinsic beauty of form which required no elaborate decoration" (Abraham Rogatnick, personal communication, Vancouver, May 2, 2002). Well designed communities, homes and objects were ideally meant to be affordable to everyone. The counterpart to this idea was subscribed to by Leach who reacted against the exclusive and expensive products of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Tam Irving, a local potter who was influenced by the former Leach apprentices remembers, "The philosophy of making simple functional pots for use at a reasonable cost was an ideal we struggled for" (Personal communication, Vancouver, April 25, 2002).

Conclusion

Those who collected Leach style pots in Vancouver fit those pots into their definition of "good taste" as it was described within the philosophy of modernism. As such, this group or taste culture spoke a common language. They knew how to decode the pot, recognize the same visual cues and insert what they were seeing into a larger scheme of understanding. The pots they collected acquired additional meaning for them because they referred to a larger world of ideas about how one ought to live and relate to objects. The pots not only functioned as examples of good modernist design, but they also symbolized a utopian modernist future.
CHAPTER 4 - THE POTTERS AND THEIR INFLUENCE

Technical and aesthetic changes in the realm of pottery making in British Columbia coincided with the return of the Leach apprentices and an increased interest in Japanese aesthetics. This chapter describes the potters and provides some reflections on the impact they had on the development of a west coast pottery aesthetic (see Appendix B).

John Reeve

Reeve was the first Canadian to apprentice with Bernard Leach and became one of his most illustrious students (see Figure 3). He and his wife, Donna Balma, lived in St. Ives while John apprenticed from 1958 until 1961. He returned once in 1966 to produce the large standardware pieces and again in 1974 to help run the pottery. Donna Balma captures the dynamism of the learning environment at the Leach pottery, when she writes,

[Bernard] saw that we were going to return to North America and that we would be his disciples. We were going to spread the word. He definitely influenced our thinking. He didn't talk to you, he talked about the importance of the cup you were drinking from and where it had come from and its importance in tradition. The talk was all about ideas, religion, and philosophy and how we relate to the objects in our environment. We were fascinated... We all listened and we did become disciples of a tradition (Balma 1983:105).

A charismatic teacher and exceptionally talented potter, Reeve's enthusiasm for handmade pottery was communicated to hundreds of young artists that he taught through courses and workshops at the UBC extension program during 1961-1962 and as a visiting artist at the Vancouver School of Art from 1972-73. The interim years were spent running his own pottery in Longlands, Devonshire (1963-68) and teaching at Farnham School of Art in England (1966-72). Reeve's return to Vancouver in 1972 coincided with a solo exhibition of his work which was held at the Vancouver Art Gallery, curated by Doris Shadbolt. In the seventies he and potter Martin Peters planned to build a pottery on land they purchased on the Sunshine Coast. These plans collapsed following Reeve's departure for the United States.

During his career his work was featured in local galleries and major exhibitions across Canada, and selected by Vancouver architect Ron Thom to compliment the modern architectural style of Massey College in Toronto. Although Reeve has not lived in Canada since the early 1980s, his influence in British Columbia was far reaching. Much of this is due to the process-driven approach he developed with the medium and his gift at communicating his progressive ideas to his
students. He wrote and self-published books about his innovations in glaze technology that were widely circulated. The courses he taught at universities and art schools across Canada, England and the United States encouraged his students to develop their skills while pushing the medium of clay beyond their limits. As one former student, Jean Fahni remembered,

Leach taught his apprentices to be strong, disciplined potters who were passionate about what they did . . . and Reeve was a good teacher . . . There are production potters and there are art potters. Reeve worked half-way between artistic things and straight production. There was a discipline to it and we learned a lot. We became less afraid to tackle something we would never have done before with the clay (Personal communication, Vancouver, November 14, 2001).

Local potter Ron Vallis studied with John Reeve at the Vancouver School of Art from 1972 to 1974. He captures the scope of the Leach legacy and its influence on a whole generation of Vancouver potters:

John Reeve influenced me when I was a student because the type of work I liked to make were pretty straightforward pots like the kind I saw him making when I was his student. I tried to emulate his sort of loose style . . . My work falls somewhere between John Reeve and Tam Irving. The Leach influence is certainly visible if you lined up all the work that was made at that time. Leach and John Reeve were our heroes. We thought they could do no wrong. They were the bee's knees. We ate that stuff up. Hamada, Leach, Cardew - they were the guys we were talking about and the pottery we were looking at (Personal Communication, Vancouver, May 14, 2002).

Glenn Lewis

Glenn Lewis, a Leach apprentice from 1961-1963, returned to Vancouver in 1964 and immediately began teaching pottery and methods at the UBC Faculty of Education (see Figure 4). In this position he taught several young art students who later ran production potteries of their own and a few, like Gathie Falk, who went on to become well-known Canadian artists. After a guest teaching post in 1970 at Alfred University, New York, Lewis again returned to Vancouver this time to teach ceramics and sculpture at the UBC Department of Fine Arts.

Lewis' own career as a producer of functional pottery was short lived although he attributes his years at the Leach pottery with having given him a "philosophy of life and art".

The Leach aesthetic was based on a certain mastery of the material but it had that particularly Japanese feeling about ideas of imperfection. It was also based on the human form. For example, you would want the pot to be generous looking. If you made a bowl you would want a nice, firm generous lip, not tight and mean looking. Being at the Leach Pottery was a real revelation. I gained a heightened sense of living the every day . . . That was a lesson for me. I carried on with this attitudinal skill when my artwork moved on from pottery to other art forms, and I incorporated what I learned from my apprentice experience into my teaching philosophy (Glenn Lewis, personal communication, Roberts Creek, June 21, 2002).
Lewis became known for his avant-garde ceramic sculpture and his involvement with performance art through the Western Front where he was a founding member and the director for thirteen years. From 1987-1990 Lewis worked for the Canada Council as the head of Media Arts. He now lives in Roberts Creek, B.C. on land that he bought together with John Reeve, Donna Balma and other artists.

His former students, Gathie Falk and Charmian Johnson ran a pottery studio together from 1967-1970. Johnson continues to make pottery and draw, while Falk is known for her painting, sculpture and performance art. Falk has clear memories from the years she studied functional ceramics with Glenn Lewis:

We got the lifestyle and the history of the teachings of Bernard Leach and Hamada. Glenn was also anti-consumerist. It was a new idea to me. He encouraged us to dress down everything, to not value money and the things you can buy with money. It was about valuing things for their inherent value rather than for their being brand new or the latest fashion (Personal communication, Vancouver, June 24, 2002).

Mick Henry

Mick Henry set up his own production pottery with the help of Glenn Lewis upon returning from his apprenticeship in 1965 (see Figure 5). First located in Vancouver, his pottery was later moved to the Sunshine Coast on land he purchased with potters John Gregg and Anna Hill. Henry ran The Slug Pottery there from 1972-1979. His work was sold at local galleries and included in national exhibitions until he shifted his interests away from pottery making due to a chronic back injury. In reference to an exhibition of his pottery at the Bau-xi Gallery in 1965 the newsletter "Western Potter" gave this review:

His pottery has great simplicity, strength and honesty of execution. If a bowl is to be made, his only real concern is that it be synonymous with the use for which it was intended. His expression is in the success of the "bowl-ness" of the bowl. He is in fact "being a bowl"! (1966:8-9).

Tam Irving, a potter and former instructor at the Emily Carr School of Art and Design, credits both Mick Henry and John Reeve for having influenced his work. He explained the impact that the returning Leach apprentices had on the development of his aesthetic:

The Leach apprentices were important. They brought out the Leach message and through their own work they gave an example of what the Leach aesthetic was all about. Initially I didn't understand what they were doing. They were not at all mechanical in feeling. Their pots were looser in contrast to the tight and hard-edged Scandinavian aesthetic that was more prevalent in Vancouver before they [the apprentices] returned (Personal communication, Vancouver, April 25, 2002).
Conclusion

When the Leach apprentices returned to Vancouver from St. Ives they brought with them a knowledge of technical skills for making and firing functional pottery that had a direct impact on their students and other potters with whom they had contact. Their practical skills were complemented by a philosophical approach that integrated art with daily living. Curator Glenn Allison encapsulates the holistic attitude associated with these potters when he states,

There was an understood dialogue as to what constituted a good pot, and what the place of the pot was in society... They believed a good straightforward pot could change the world, that it had the power to transform (Allison as quoted in Crawford 2002:7).

The work of Reeve, Lewis and Henry contributed to the development of a high standard of craftsmanship and helped to define a west coast pottery aesthetic that was prevalent in the 1960s.
CHAPTER 5 - HOW THE TASTE CULTURE OPERATED IN SOCIAL SPACES

In this chapter I identify four social spaces in which the local taste culture operated:

1) arts organizations and festivals, 2) private shops and galleries, 3) cultural institutions such as the Vancouver Art Gallery, and 4) educational institutions such as UBC and the Vancouver School of Art. This chapter is organized around these four fields. Within each category I will first describe the social space and then describe members of the taste culture who were principally involved in that particular field. However, it is crucial to note that the operation of the taste culture was dependent upon key members who were involved in more than one of these institutions, organizations or activities. These people will be identified as culture brokers and their roles within the taste culture and as collectors of pottery will be described.

ARTS ORGANIZATIONS AND FESTIVALS

The work and message of early groups such as Art in Living and the Vancouver Arts Council were continued in later years in the form of The Arts Club (1958-1964), the Vancouver International Arts Festival (1958-1968), and the UBC Festival of the Contemporary Arts (1961-1970). While contributing to Vancouver's international exposure in the arts and helping to raise the public's awareness about contemporary ideas, these events also served to "encourage a taste for eclecticism in the arts" (Balkind 1992:68). In this section I will profile collectors Mr. and Mrs. B. C. Binning, and Geoffrey and Ruth Killam Massey.

B. C. Binning and Jessie Binning

B. C. Binning was the founder of the UBC Festival of Contemporary Arts and a key figure in three of the four social spaces I have identified. As a culture broker he played a large part in the establishment of the Vancouver art world. Binning, who was trained as an artist in Vancouver at the Vancouver School of Art and in England under Henry Moore, made it his life's mission to introduce the contemporary arts to Vancouver. "He believed not only in a strong interaction between the arts but also that art was connected intimately with the everyday living environment" (Archambault 1994). His commitment to modernism helped to develop and define a local taste culture that was responsive to functional handmade pottery, such as the work of Leach and his students.
Originally an instructor of figure drawing at the Vancouver School of Art, Binning went on to teach art in the Architecture Department at UBC and later began the University's Fine Arts Department in 1955. It was there in 1961 that he launched the first Festival of Contemporary Arts which was responsible for bringing world-renowned artists and thinkers to Vancouver. Art patron Alvin Balkind's description of the Festival helps to place it as a significant "social space" in which the values of the modernist vanguard were communicated on a large scale. He writes,

B. C. Binning... was convinced that, by bringing in outstanding contemporary artists in all fields from wherever they might reside, the local scene would be stimulated to move ahead more boldly into its own advanced ideas and inventions... These artists were of a stature equal to the talent invited during the Vancouver International Festival in the late fifties, although their focus was completely in the vanguard. Outstanding among them were John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Robert Rauschenberg, Stan Brakhage, Allen Ginsburg, Robert Duncan and Robert Creeley (1992:71).

A self-taught architect, Binning designed the first modern home in Vancouver (1941). His home became the gathering place for the core group of Vancouver's modernist vanguard, many of whom collected Leach's pottery and pottery made by his Vancouver apprentices. His widow, Jessie, now in her nineties, is an avid collector of pottery and was responsible for introducing many Vancouverites to the work of Leach's Japanese colleague, Shoji Hamada. The Binnings traveled several times to Japan where they met with Hamada in his workshop and purchased pottery. Mrs. Binning's knowledge and appreciation of the Japanese aesthetic expertly exemplified in Hamada's pots was communicated to her friends and colleagues who shared an interest in handmade pottery.12

When describing Binning's impact on the formation of a local taste culture, his long time secretary June Binkert explained,

In the sixties under the influence of Binning particularly people were beginning to realize that good works of art were being produced locally. Certainly Binning stressed that it was important to be Canadian and apart from being Canadian it was important to be British Columbian... Along with that was his whole approach to modernism which meant being more up to date, not looking backwards, or always looking east or looking to England in particular... A group of people were also building their own homes that were west coast in style... They wanted things to go into their homes that reflected the west coast (Personal communication, Vancouver, May 14, 2002).

The taste culture was defined and its members united by the shared concept that they did not need to look east for inspiration or approval. Mrs. Binning recalled, "There was a spirit. It was like a Renaissance. We were doing something we wanted to do... there was just a little clique" (Personal communication, West Vancouver, April 30, 2002). This little group recognized
qualities in handmade pottery that went beyond the pots' visual reference to the west coast landscape. The pottery came to express a forward looking spirit because the pottery's design was considered to be up to date and in keeping with the modernist criteria of good design. Choosing to put these pots in your home signified that you were also forward looking and that you possessed good taste.

Geoffrey Massey and Ruth Killam Massey

Geoffrey Massey was the first president of the Vancouver Arts Club (1958-1964). After studying architecture at Harvard University under Walter Gropius he moved to Vancouver in 1953 and later started an architectural firm with Arthur Erickson. With the hope of intensifying the "dynamics of the arts" in Vancouver, The Arts Club held poetry readings (Lawrence Ferlinghetti), lectures (Marshall McLuhan), plays, dance-happenings, films, and concerts (Balkind 1992:68).

When asked about the involvement of Vancouver's modernist vanguard, another founding member of the Arts Club replied,

Yes, we did form a kind of community, a wonderful confluence of people in the various arts: writers, musicians, theater people, artists, sculptors, ceramists, poets, architects. In 1958 a group of us started The Arts Club which was a manifestation of this confluence (Abraham Rogatnick, personal communication, Vancouver, May 2, 2002).

Massey and his wife, Ruth Killam Massey also have an extensive personal collection of local pottery that they have incorporated into their home and use on a daily basis. Geoffrey Massey explained how his interest in collecting pottery relates to his training as a modernist architect. He said,

My interest in pottery was a matter of good design. If you are an architect you are interested in the design of everything. We were all trained in a functional aesthetic so we tended to lean toward that in pottery (Personal communication, West Vancouver, April 30, 2002).

Ruth Massey is a painter who was active in the Community Arts Council and helped to organize the "Design for Living" exhibition in 1949. Raised in Vancouver, she attended art school in eastern Canada and the United States. When asked how she became interested in pottery, Ruth Massey said that her mother was an artist and pottery was "always around" her when she was growing up. While she was still in art school she traveled to St. Ives and bought a mug at the Leach pottery that she treasured. Later she and her husband purchased Leach plates that they used
every day. She explained how her taste in pottery continued to be developed by spending time with potter friends.

You begin to see things through them, like the way Nerina Bene held a pot in her hands caressing it and feeling its life. Also going to the potter's shows, ... and perhaps it also had something to do with the VAG [Vancouver Art Gallery]. They had huge shows of pottery (Personal communication, West Vancouver, April 30, 2002).

In 1975 Geoffrey Massey began a collection of Canadian crafts together with his cousin Hart Massey. The Massey Foundation Collection now housed at the National Museum of Man in Ottawa demonstrates the range of functional work that was being made in clay, glass, fibre, wood, leather, and metal across Canada. A large proportion of the potters represented in this collection are based on the west coast. They include former Leach apprentice John Reeve and some of the potters he influenced such as Wayne Ngan, Tam Irving and Jean Fahrni.

PRIVATE SHOPS AND GALLERIES

The demand for modern designs in art and home furnishings began to be addressed when local potter and arts organizer Mollie Carter opened a store in the early fifties devoted to this purpose. In addition to offering the work of local potters and other craftspeople, she was the first in Vancouver to sell Leach's standardware pottery. In reference to Mollie Carter's modern design shop Mrs. Binning noted,

There must have been good taste here. She didn't have much competition. There were not many places we could shop for things that matched our aesthetic. We weren't buying that much, but there was a demand for that style (Personal communication, West Vancouver, April 30, 2002).

Jack Puddifoot, an Englishman, opened a store in 1953 that featured the latest in imported modern designed furniture and objects for the home. He knew Leach personally and displayed his standardware dishes and individually signed exhibition quality pieces alongside streamlined Scandinavian furniture. Local collectors Gordon and Marian Smith, and Carol Jutte acquired their first Leach pots from Puddifoot in the mid fifties. Both he and Mollie Carter played a significant role in educating the public about the value of handmade pottery. "They were important centers because if you wanted to see modern designs [in craft] you went there (Abraham Rogatnick, personal communication, Vancouver, April 24, 2002). There were no private commercial galleries devoted exclusively to contemporary art or craft until the opening of the New
Design Gallery in 1955 (Watson 1983:82). One of the founders of this influential gallery is profiled below.

**Abraham Rogatnick**

Abraham Rogatnick was a prominent figure in all four social spaces that I have identified. Born and educated in Boston he moved to Vancouver in 1955. Like Geoffrey Massey, Rogatnick also studied architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design during the directorship of Walter Gropius. He was a professor of the History of Architecture at UBC for thirty years, a lecturer in modern art at the Vancouver Art Gallery and a founding member of the Arts Club. He and Alvin Balkind established the New Design Gallery in 1955. "The New Design Gallery was dedicated to the promulgation of the best in contemporary art and craft, especially the work of British Columbian and other Canadian artists" (Abraham Rogatnick, personal communication, Vancouver, July 4, 2002). Rogatnick recalls,

Those of us involved in the design world in B. C. in the fifties did not need proselytize; the audience was already there, eager to support a growing community of people who were able to produce fine works of art, architecture and craft which reflected the times and our own design philosophies. The continual hunger for art and culture was the reason for the instant popularity and support of the New Design Gallery (Abraham Rogatnick, personal communication, Vancouver, May 2, 2002).

**CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS**

Public institutions that displayed contemporary design and included this style of pottery as a significant exhibition subject operated as powerful social spaces because they were associated with the dominant social and political structure. The situation at the Vancouver Art Gallery during this period was unusual because the artwork it chose to support did not necessarily conform to the values of the dominant ideology in the city. Potter Ron Vallis recalls,

At the VAG there was a culture of inclusiveness and celebrating local stuff. A lot of local artists had quite big shows. There was more room for functional potters. That has changed over the last twenty years (Personal communication, Vancouver, May 14, 2002).

This section profiles three collectors whose participation in the Vancouver Art Gallery spanned over a thirty year period. Doris Shadbolt was a curator at the Gallery, Alistair Bell was a local printmaker whose work was exhibited numerous times at the Gallery, and Betty Bell was involved in the running of the Gallery Shop.
Doris Shadbolt

Doris Shadbolt was an instrumental figure in the local taste culture. In her central role as a curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery Shadbolt worked for decades to promote crafts and an awareness of modern art and design. An avid collector of local pottery, she also made silver jewelry at one time. After training at the National Gallery in Ottawa and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York she moved to Vancouver in 1945. She married the abstract painter Jack Shadbolt who was an instructor at the Vancouver School of Art and an active participant in local arts organizations.

Doris Shadbolt joined the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1951 as the director of education and became a curator in 1963. During the years that she was active at the Gallery (1951-1978) thirteen exhibitions included pottery as an integral component (see Appendix D). Four of those exhibitions were solo shows devoted to different local potters. This is an unprecedented number of ceramic related exhibitions when compared to other fine art museums in North America both then and now. Shadbolt explains,

One person could make a difference and I was the one who was crazy about good craft. We would have ceramic shows and potters would do demonstrations at the Gallery on the potter's wheel . . . They [the potters] were a presence in the arts in general. Pottery was not a discipline that cut them off (Personal communication, Burnaby, April 9, 2002).

In her role as a culture broker, Shadbolt supported artists and educated the public about the value of handmade crafts. Her work helped to define an institution that had the power to validate the interests of the local taste culture of which she was a member. Shadbolt pointed out that people's interest in handmade pottery was "stimulated by the fact that it was being taken seriously by the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Vancouver School of Art, the University of British Columbia and the National Gallery" (Personal communication, Burnaby, April 9, 2002). Her description of the west coast at that time indicates her belief in the power of institutions to effect change. She said,

I used to think the west coast was a place where daring things could happen, but it didn't have enough history to have the institutions in place that would pick up on those ideas and support them. There is an openness to the environment here [that makes it] freer for people to be open and inventive. There is a considerable time lapse from what happens on the east coast and influences that come from Europe. [Because we were] unshackled from eastern influences in the forties and fifties, that made for a freedom. What was happening in Vancouver often amazed people from the solid east and even from the States (Personal communication, Burnaby, April 9, 2002).
Alistair Bell and Betty Bell

Alistair Bell was an accomplished printmaker whose work was featured in three solo exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery (1951, 1957, 1961). Betty Bell was one of the volunteers who founded and ran the Gallery Shop at the Vancouver Art Gallery. This venue was one of the first places to sell the work of local potters who had studied with Leach. Through her contacts at the art gallery shop, Betty Bell began collecting pottery in the mid 1960s. Her collection and the Bell's home were described by more than one member of the taste culture as epitomizing a modern sensibility. One person said,

In the fifties and sixties I think everyone out here [on the west coast] was really quite modest. Things were well selected. I feel people had quite a discerning taste. . . . It was characteristic of that particular period and this place where we live. The Bells are a good example [of this aesthetic and this discerning taste] because they lived very simply. Their house was very small and it was full of exquisite things, small things because they couldn't afford larger things. All were beautifully selected and displayed (Personal communication with June Binkert, Vancouver, May 14, 2002).

The Bell's son, Alan, now owns much of the pottery that had belonged to his parents.

When asked to describe his parents' taste Alan Bell explained,

They had a keen eye for good design and a limited budget. Everything had a clean line, a simplicity. There was nothing extraneous . . . It was about freshness and getting away from traditional types of crockery and cutlery. It was more about being surrounded by . . . art that you can use, that you can eat off of every day. Art wasn't just something that you hung on the wall. Everything you had was chosen with care (Personal communication, North Vancouver, May 16, 2002).

Alan Bell's wife, Elizabeth Bell, speculates that "Maybe it was a reaction to the pretentiousness of people who had to have the bone china". She added,

Clearly it was an aesthetic that they were all into. [She points at a Dansk woven tablecloth for an example]. Your parents' whole house had that feeling of the plain, the handmade. There was also a Scandinavian influence. . . . and there was definitely a strong Japanese influence in the west coast architecture and pottery. . . . The colors were all natural earth colors, no bright glazes - no gold on the rims (Personal communication, North Vancouver, May 16, 2002).

When asked about his parents' interest in modernism Alan Bell responded by saying,

My parents had an awareness that they were doing something different. They wanted to surround themselves with twentieth century things as opposed to earlier things. . . . Modernism here was for people with really modest means. My parents didn't have a lot of money. People then wanted to be closer to nature so they were moving out to places like West Vancouver where property was quite affordable at that time. Making the choice to move away from Shaughnessy and Kerrisdale meant leaving the more traditional setting behind and it went with turfing your [traditional English china] dinner set. My parents were more avant-garde than elite. Avant-garde in the sense of moving beyond the traditional norms for how you did everything, like how you served dinner. They wanted to evolve things. They were creating a life with art and with nature. . . . It was part of casting off the idea that the best art was the most refined art (Personal communication, North Vancouver, May 16, 2002).
Elizabeth Bell recalled a strong personal reaction to an early encounter with handmade pottery that captures the spirit of the taste culture. She said,

The first time I ever saw anyone serve coffee out of pottery was at the Bobaks probably it was 1969. I was so impressed that you could actually serve coffee out of a handmade container. I just thought it was the most contemporary thing you could do! After growing up with bone china and silver it was such a different aesthetic. It seemed modern. It wasn't traditional at all. It was to me a part of the art world - it was like an entry. It was almost risque! (Personal communication, North Vancouver, May 16, 2002).

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In the post war period Reg Dixon and David Lambert taught ceramics at The Vancouver School of Art. They introduced many students (including Reeve, Lewis and Henry) to A Potter's Book, Leach's first publication (1940) that described his pottery aesthetic and life philosophy. Meanwhile, UBC's Department of Extension began offering pottery classes in 1948. The first teacher, Mollie Carter, was later joined by instructors Rex Mason, Olea Davis, Hilda Ross and Thomas Kakinuma among others (Mayer 1998:9-10).

The collectors Olea Davis, Jean Fahrni and Nerina Bene all worked in clay. Their activities in the field of education will be described in this section.

Olea Davis

Olea Davis was active in several aspects of the local taste culture through her work at UBC and her involvement with local crafts organizations and exhibitions. Her pottery was chosen for the Canadian Ceramics '67 exhibition in Montreal and also appeared in numerous exhibitions and sales held at the Vancouver Art Gallery and the UBC Fine Arts Gallery during the fifties and sixties.

Davis was responsible for running the UBC "Pottery Hut", as it came to be known. In this position she helped to establish a summer school for the arts and invited master potters from California and elsewhere to give workshops. In 1955 Davis became the first president of the Potters' Guild of British Columbia. Stan Clarke, an original member of the Guild and founder of the Ceramic Department in the UBC Faculty of Education (1959) captured the challenges facing the growing number of local potters in the early years. He said,

Back in the 1950s it was bloody hard to sell stoneware. No one knew what it was. The public only knew California slip cast wares or English dinner wares. The Guild really promoted stoneware and educated people by hosting exhibitions and giving demonstrations . . . Both the
"Pottery Hut" and the Faculty of Education were doing highfire stoneware and porcelain (Personal communication, Vancouver, March 29, 2002).

Clarke maintains that the excellent studio facilities and the high quality of teaching and workshops being offered through the UBC extension program attracted serious professional potters as well as "hobbyists". The returning Leach apprentices who taught courses and workshops through UBC and the Vancouver School of Art greatly contributed to the growing excitement about both making and collecting handmade functional pottery. As more pots were made, more exhibits were held and more pots were available for sale. Whether amateur or professional, the pottery community expanded significantly during the sixties due to the commitment of potters such as Olea Davis.

Jean Fahrni

Many who took classes at UBC also became collectors of other potters' work. Among these was local potter, collector and former nurse Jean Fahrni who began working in clay in 1955 at the UBC extension program. She studied sculpture for six years before switching to pottery. She remembers, "Tommy Kakinuma stressed form and balance. John Reeve sparked my interest in empirical research using local clays and ashes in porcelain glazes" (Personal communication, Vancouver, June 27, 2002). She began collecting local pottery at that time. A self-described craftsperson, Fahrni explained that she "didn't acquire pots to have them but to use them" (Personal communication, Vancouver, November 14, 2001). She said, I enjoy those which were made by my friends, as mine is not a "collector's" collection. The pots are to use and to stir my memory. They are about people, about friends (Personal communication, Vancouver, June 27, 2002).

In 1968 Fahrni's husband accepted a position as a doctor with a CARE Medico mission in Indonesia and she accompanied him in her capacity as a surgical nurse. While there she bought her first ancient celadon bowl. Motivated by a desire to make available to potters in British Columbia a study collection of historic ceramics, she returned alone to Asia in 1972. Fahrni's prodigious collection of Asian trade ceramics is now housed at the Vancouver Museum. As president of the B.C. Potters' Guild from 1977-80 she travelled throughout the province delivering slide lectures. She served four times as the president of the Canadian Society for Asian Arts, co-curating four major exhibitions of Asian pottery at the Vancouver Museum. In her multiple roles Fahrni has
encouraged and promoted the clayworks of British Columbian potters, and educated the public about local and international ceramics.

Nerina Bene

Described as "a friend to all potters", Nerina Bene was active in Vancouver's modernist vanguard as a patron of the arts (Ruth Massey, personal communication, West Vancouver, April 30, 2002). Born and raised in Italy, she moved to Vancouver in 1951. She brought with her a cosmopolitanism and a personal connection to the European arts community. Influenced by the artistic avant-garde and free thinkers of her time Nerina Bene possessed, according to her son, a "loyalty, liberality and worldly wisdom that made her a good friend to many creative people who confided in her and also valued her opinions about aesthetics" (Martin Giuffrida, personal communication, Chase B. C., July 7, 2002). Her home was renovated by modern architects Ron Thom and Arthur Erickson to have a "very quiet, serene Japanese feeling in which the inside and outside spaces blended together" (Veronica Bene Watts, personal communication, Chase, B.C., June 11, 2002).

Nerina Bene became interested in collecting handmade pottery after meeting John Reeve in 1961 while he was teaching her daughter, Cris Giuffrida at UBC. Inspired by Reeve's work and enthusiasm, Mrs. Bene travelled to St. Ives where she became personally acquainted with Leach. She also visited Hamada at his workshop in Japan. For the rest of her life she supported and encouraged local potters.

By participating in art courses (drawing, painting, pottery, sculpture and sumi), organizing exhibitions and patronizing galleries Mrs. Bene helped to educate her peers in the local taste culture. Some of her personal collection of pottery were auctioned at Sotheby's shortly after her death in 1994. She is remembered by her colleagues as "a great patron of painting, sculpture and pottery" (Donna Balma, personal communication, Roberts Creek, November 26, 2000) and by her family as a person who had developed a sensitivity to the human soul which allowed her to appreciate "the soul of art" (Martin Giuffrida, personal communication, Chase, B.C., July 7, 2002).
The Operation of the Taste Culture

The artists, collectors, dealer/gallery owners and curator/critics I have described comprise the constituent parts of the taste culture. The institutions and organizations they belonged to and the events they participated in formed the social spaces and mechanisms which allowed for the production and operation of the taste culture. A central function shared by all four of the social spaces was to provide events and physical spaces in which members of the taste culture could gather and reassert their membership in the group. For example, Shadbolt says that "an opening would cover a great range of people - the young artisans and the second generation who would include the buyers" (Personal communication, Burnaby, April 9, 2002). Unlike today, potters mingled socially and professionally with the painters, sculptors, architects, writers, poets and critics that encompassed the Vancouver art scene. They were "part of the dialogue" contributing to the flow of ideas and experimentation that characterized the times. By deliberately deciding to exhibit pottery alongside other contemporary objects of "good design", cultural institutions, galleries and stores communicated a belief in the value of handmade crafts. They also contributed to a dialogue that was inclusive of ceramics, yet critical in their assessments of what constituted "good taste". This stimulating environment fostered a social network that supported modern art and counted pottery among objects that had aesthetic merit.
CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSION

The taste culture's social values are linked to its aesthetic discriminations. As stated earlier, the pots symbolized a larger world of ideas about how one ought to live and relate to objects. The multiple roles played by members of the taste culture in the social spaces I have identified provided a structure in which the values and meanings associated with this pottery could be publicly expressed. As a result, local handmade pottery achieved an elevated status in the Vancouver art world during the fifties and sixties.

Social Values of the Taste Culture

As described in Chapter Three members of the taste culture identified Leach style pottery with "good taste" because Leach's aesthetic overlapped with their interest in both a modernist and a Japanese aesthetic. The taste culture tended to prefer "functional" objects of "good design" that possessed a "modest simplicity" and a "clean line". Many of the collectors associated these qualities with a Japanese "feeling" which they described as "earthy", "quiet", and sensitive to the natural environment. Just as they considered these aesthetic qualities to be "contemporary", they also described themselves as being "concerned with up-to-date ideas" and the "things of our time" as opposed to "imitating the past", "looking backwards" or following "the traditional norms for how you did everything". These statements demonstrate that the local taste culture valued "freedom" and the opportunity to "do something we wanted to do" - something "new" and "fresh". For them, the pottery they chose reflected the "openness" of a "west coast lifestyle" that stood apart from "the rest of Canada". In their pursuit to "cast off" old ideas they recognized that they were "doing something different" and "almost risque".

Particularly well-suited to local handmade pottery, the new west coast style in domestic architecture contained spaces in which art could become "intimately connected with every day living". The notion that "beauty could be found in every day objects" (like dishes), and that things "did not need to be refined to be of value" is a another belief that unites the taste culture.

Chapter Four described how the "modest" "straight forward" pots produced by Leach, his apprentices and their students embodied a holistic approach that fit a "simple" lifestyle. When describing the ideal of the simple life Donna Balma explained, "It was about money not being any
object and about a reverence for the raw, the unrefined, unmediated, untutored. There was a belief that a simple life was more rewarding. There was a recognition of the beauty of simple things" (Personal communication, Roberts Creek, June 21, 2002). Glenn Lewis elaborates on this point, saying,

Being at the Leach Pottery gave me a microcosm for looking at the world that touched on life as well as art. It was about the appreciation of things around you, a heightened sense of natural materials. An appreciation of craft gives you that [awareness] to some extent. If I hadn't had that experience I might like shiny cars and shop at Woolworths. I wouldn't have the experience of seeing something deeper in the things you use everyday... On the west coast we wanted to get back to something more real, more down to earth as opposed to the kind of modernism that was centered in New York (Personal communication, Roberts Creek, June 21, 2002).

The assertion that it was "important to be British Columbian" echoes Lewis's viewpoint. Culture brokers like B. C. Binning and Doris Shadbolt communicated the value of recognizing the west coast as "a place where daring things could happen". They emphasized that the Vancouver art world "did not need to look toward England" or the east coast for inspiration or approval. As one collector stated, "We're not Montreal and we're not Toronto, so we better be us. And casual friendliness is what we are" (Jean Fahrni, Personal communication, Vancouver, June 27, 2002).

The local taste culture reacted against the convention and formality of the colonial British lifestyle which was still prevalent in British Columbia during the 1950s. They also shared a "desire to evolve things" beyond Vancouver's lingering frontier culture of logging, fishing and mining. As such, they were creating and claiming a unique identity as British Columbians which stood in contrast to the rest of Canada. They would no longer be "backward looking" - either toward England or east of the Rockies. Art critic Joan Lowndes writes that by 1966 Vancouver had "turned on". She writes,

Gifted artists, imaginative curators, money, and a supportive art press came together to make a scene... Up to that time Vancouver had suffered from an apologetic end-of-the-line feeling. Now we about faced: we were not at the end of the line but poised on the Pacific Rim, attuned to our own vibrations (1983:142).

As an emergent ideology, west coast modernism sought to express a new and alternative set of values and cultural reference points based upon freedom and a simple lifestyle intimately connected with "every day" art. The social values connected with owning, using, displaying and exchanging well-designed local handmade pottery had to do with the taste culture embracing an
aesthetic and a value system that was commensurate with these goals while outwardly showing membership in a group of like-minded people.

Bourdieu's work is useful in helping us to understand the taste culture's social position within the class structure as being more avant-garde/intellectual than bourgeois. The following quote exemplifies his position. He writes,

[T]he contrast that is usually drawn between 'intellectual'... taste and 'bourgeois'... taste is not only an opposition between the preference for contemporary works... and the taste for older, more consecrated works... between the taste for solid values, in painting and music, as in cinema and theatre, and the commitment to novelty. It is also an opposition between two world views, two philosophies of life (Bourdieu 1984:292).

In the case of this study, the opposition between these two philosophies of life could be symbolized by the differences between handmade pottery and English bone china, or a modern home situated close to nature and a traditional home in the neighborhood of Shaughnessy. As avant-garde intellectuals members of the local taste culture valued freedom over convention and open-mindedness over tradition. Their adventurous, forward looking spirit stands apart from those who were content to value the past and its ornate Victorian trappings.

The Field of Cultural Production

Consisting primarily of artists, architects, gallery owners, and curators, the taste culture was intimately engaged in the field of cultural production. As cultural producers members of the taste culture occupied influential positions in the major cultural and educational institutions in Vancouver. They had the power to validate and promote certain types of art work, influence what was available on the art market, set standards of quality and affect what artists made. Wolff acknowledges the social processes at work in assigning meaning and value to works of art, when she writes,

In the production of art, social institutions affect, amongst other things, who becomes an artist, how they become an artist, how they are then able to practise their art, and how they can ensure that their work is produced, performed, and made available to a public. Furthermore, judgements and evaluations of works and schools of art... are not simply individual and 'purely aesthetic' decisions, but socially enabled and socially constructed events (1981:40).

I have shown how the Leach style of pottery's rise to an elevated position in the Vancouver art world can be understood as a socially enabled and socially constructed event dependent upon the formation and operation of a particular taste culture. In Bourdieu's terms, the taste culture I
have described is a system of power relations that operates to support the creation of social distinctions thereby allowing for the establishment of class. For Bourdieu, "art and cultural consumption are predisposed . . . to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences" (1984:7). People require certain artistic products according to their class conditioning, and they choose to like particular artistic objects because these objects fit their social position (Wilkes 1990:119). As a product of social, economic and political conditions, "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (1984:6).

Although I agree with Bourdieu and Wolff that social, economic and ideological factors informed the production of Leach style pottery and the taste culture's support of it, I would argue that this is not the whole story. As a humanist I maintain that art is expressive of the human spirit both in our capacity to create and to appreciate. Reliance on intellectual analysis to understand the meanings and values associated with a work of art runs the risk of overlooking the intuitive and sensual aspects of our experience as human beings. When asked what he considered craft to be, Leach replied, "Good work proceeding from the whole man, heart, head and hand, in proper balance" (1972:95). I suggest that a similarly balanced and holistic approach should guide the analysis of art and taste.

I agree with many of the collectors I interviewed who described their favorite pots as having an "expressive" or "spiritual" content. They resisted answering my questions about the social value of their interest in pottery, insisting on holding on to the mystery of their attraction to each particular pot. Some people exhibited discomfort when pressed to explain why they chose certain pieces saying simply that they "liked it" or saw "a certain depth in the glaze" or "pleasing contour of a bowl". Potter, collector and former gallery owner, Hiro Urakami described the experience of seeing a pot that he likes, by stating,

The pot draws me to it. I want to hold it. I want to touch it. It is a sensual feeling, almost sexual. I must have it. It is a very strong feeling. It is never an intellectual decision. There is no intellectual reason. I don't know how to explain it. It is very immediate. Loving a pot happens very instantly for me. It is like a love affair. I know when I like it and I have to have it. I never buy a pot as an investment or for reselling. I choose to have it because I like it. I am not afraid if somebody else doesn't like that pot. Once I showed a pot to my Japanese friends and they said, "Aren't you embarrassed to like that kind of thing?" They like shibui, quiet pots and this was a more fanciful pot. But I am not afraid of what I like. My collection reflects my personality. It is very intimate to me and it is honest to my sensitivities (Personal communication, Vancouver, June 30, 2002).
Urakami's description stands in opposition to Bourdieu's thesis that tastes serve "to function as markers of 'class'" (1984:2). In fact, Urakami explicitly states that he is "not afraid if somebody else doesn't like that pot". His taste in pottery is intuitive rather than intellectual, "very intimate" to him as opposed to socially motivated or dictated. Doris Shadbolt also discussed the ability of objects "to pierce to the heart" (Personal communication, Burnaby, April 9, 2002). Although there is value in using analysis to deconstruct works of art so that they may be re-framed as complex cultural products, the aesthetic and expressive value of art works cannot be dismissed as invalid. In her defence of aesthetics against sociological reductionism Wolff cautions that the specificity of art must be recognized and guaranteed. She argues,

The experience of it, and hence its evaluation, cannot be reduced to the totally extra-aesthetic aspects of ideology and politics, although as we have seen, it is equally true that an aesthetics which ignores the social and political features of aesthetic judgement is unacceptable and distorted. Art has its own specificity, first, in the relatively autonomous structures, institutions and signifying practices which constitute it, and through which it represents reality and ideology. This is simply to reassert that art is not just a reflection of the world in literary or pictorial form. But art also retains an autonomy with regard to the specifically aesthetic nature of the apprehension and enjoyment of works of art (1983:107-8).

The theories employed in this thesis have demonstrated the social conditions and mechanisms that contributed to the establishment of a distinct style of pottery in British Columbia during the 1960s. My aim has not been to elaborate on the specific aspects of this pottery as an expressive art form, questions which would be better addressed within the field of aesthetics and which therefore lie outside the bounds of this study. Yet, my research and my personal experience as a maker of objects reinforce my position that in addition to the social, economic and ideological forces at work in the arena of cultural production there are also very real embodied human experiences that played a role in the taste culture's reception and appreciation of this pottery.
Collectors shall be defined as those individuals, couples or families who have accumulated multiple works of pottery made by Leach, Hamada, Reeve, Lewis, Henry or their students (see Appendix C). In nearly every case, the collectors I interviewed had no original intention to begin forming a collection of handmade pottery. Most of the people interviewed said they do not consider themselves to be collectors. This phenomenon has been documented in the literature on collecting, see for example, Pearce 1992 and 1998, Mayer 1995, and Stewart 1984.

The four Canadian potters who served two year apprenticeships at the Leach Pottery are: John Reeve (1958-61), Glenn Lewis (1961-63), Michael "Mick" Henry (1963-65), and Ian Steele (1963-65). Steele returned to B. C. for a few years, began a salt-glazed pottery studio in Nanoose Bay on Vancouver Island, then returned to England. Due to lack of information about him and very few samples of his work, he will not be included in this study.

I first came across Gans’ concept of taste cultures when reading Molly Lee’s article, "Tourism and Taste Cultures", on collecting native art in Alaska (1999:269). She uses Gans’ model to explore several types of middle class collecting. She concludes that "taxonomy is culture-bound rather then scientific law and carries with it its own set of assumptions, exclusions, and contradictions" (1999:280).

Interviews varied in length from one to three hours.

In cases in which the member of the taste culture is deceased I interviewed family members and colleagues.

The relationship between St. Ives and Vancouver was strong during the 1950's and 1960's. In addition to the Leach apprentices several members of the taste culture spent extended periods of time in St. Ives. The painters Bruno and Mollie Bobak spent a year painting in St. Ives in 1958. They lived in Vancouver from 1945 until 1960 and were collectors of Leach pottery. Vancouver painter and pottery collector Gordon Smith and his wife Marian spent his sabbatical year of 1960 in St. Ives. The Vancouver printmaker and pottery collector, Alistair Bell and his wife Betty, spent time in St. Ives and Cornwall in 1950 and 1960. In 1957 the UBC Fine Arts Gallery hosted an exhibition entitled "Recent Acquisitions in British Art" which included the work of St. Ives artists Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, and Graham Sutherland. The following year The Vancouver Gallery of Art hosted an exhibition "Contemporary British Painting" also featuring the work of many artists based in St. Ives.

I noticed these advertisements for Royal Adderly and Spode English bone china while looking through the Olea Davis Papers at the UBC Archives, Box 5, File 16. The advertisements were found in magazines that had been saved by potter, UBC ceramics instructor and collector Olea Davis. Although it is probable that she elected to keep those particular issues of Canadian Homes Magazine because they included lengthy articles about contemporary ceramics, it was interesting to note the juxtaposition of these advertisements on the opposing pages. The promotion of contemporary handmade pottery and English bone china in the same issue, and the wording of the advertisements indicate that there was competition between the two ceramic styles.

Leach was born in Hong Kong of English parents in 1887. He lived in Japan from 1909-1920 and for one year in 1934.

Doris Shadbolt trained under Walter Abell at the National Gallery in Ottawa during the 1940's before coming to the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Local artists Don Jarvis, Jack Shadbolt and Gordon Smith are among those who had houses built in the fifties.

This issue of Western Potter was found at the UBC Archives in the Olea Davis Papers, Box 7, File 12.

In addition to pottery by Hamada, the Binnings also have pieces by Kawai, another Japanese potter who influenced Leach. June Binkert explained how the Binnings learned about Hamada and Kawai from Shu Kato, a Japanese writer and film critic who taught at UBC in the 1950's (Binkert, personal communication, July 7, 2002).

In Vancouver during the 1950's Charlotte Kennedy and Don Adams ran stores featuring the latest in modern furniture and design, but they did not sell Leach's pottery or work by his former apprentices.

Jack and Barbara Puddifoot also sold the work of Leach apprentices who lived and worked outside of Canada, including William Marshall and Kenneth Quick (Carol Jutte, personal communication, Vancouver, May 23, 2002).

"An artist, Ron Kelly, had tried to operate a gallery in the mid-fifties but it was short-lived" (Watson 1983:82).
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Thomas, Nicholas

The Vancouver Art Gallery


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Watson, Scott

Western Potter

Whybrow, Marion
Wilson, Richard L.  

Wolff, Janet  

Yanagi, Soetsu  
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Allison, Glenn

Balma, Donna

Bell, Alan

Bell, Elizabeth

Binkert, June

Binning, Mrs. B. C. "Jessie"

Clarke, Stan
Potter and founder of UBC Faculty of Education Ceramic Department. Surrey, B. C. Interviewed by phone, March 29, 2002.

Fahrni, Jean

Falk, Gathie

Giuffrida, Martin

Grauer, Sherri

Henry, Michael "Mick"

Huang, Xisa

Illian, Clary

Irving, Tam
Potter and former instructor of ceramics at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. West Vancouver, B. C. Interviewed by phone, April 25, 2002.

Johnson, Charmian

Jutte, Carol

Kiss, Zoltan
Lewis, Glenn  
Potter and former Leach apprentice. Roberts Creek, B. C. Preliminary conversation, August 26, 2000.  
Interviewed at his home, June 21, 2002.

Massey, Geoffrey  

Massey, Ruth Killam  
Painter and collector. West Vancouver, B. C. Interviewed at her home, April 30, 2002.

Michener, Sally  
Potter and former instructor of ceramics at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. West Vancouver, B. C. Preliminary conversation, November 9, 2000.

Mingosa, Santo  

Rogatnick, Abraham  

Rogers, Gail  

Shadbolt, Doris  

Smith, Gordon  

Smith, Marian  

Thom, Chris  

Urakami, Hiro  

Vallis, Ron  

Watts, Veronica Bene  

Weghesteen, Robert  
Potter and former instructor of ceramics at the Vancouver School of Art. Delta, B. C. Interviewed at his home, April 11, 2002.
Appendix B:
The Potters: A "Genealogy" Chart

- John Reeve
  - Vancouver School of Art 1954-56
  - Leach Apprentice 1958-61
  - Potters who took courses and workshops with John Reeve
    - at UBC 1960-62
    - Jean Fahrni
      - Chris Giuffrida
    - Heinz Laffin
      - Wayne Nga
        - taught pottery at Vancouver School of Art
          - Lari Robson
        - taught
          - Wayne Nga
            - John Springer

- Glenn Lewis
  - Vancouver School of Art 1956-58
  - Leach Apprentice 1961-63
  - Potters who took courses with Glenn Lewis
    - at UBC Faculty of Education 1964-67
      - Ron Vallis
        - Sam Kwan
    - Tam Irving

- Michael "Mick" Henry
  - Vancouver School of Art 1957-59
  - Leach Apprentice 1963-65
  - Apprentices who worked with Michael Henry
    - at UBC Fine Arts Department 1971-74
      - Cathie Falk
        - Charmian Johnson
      - Andrew Wong
    - at The Slag Pottery 1972-1979
      - Martin Peters
        - Daniel Tetrault
### Appendix C:
The Collectors: Distribution of Pots Collected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Collectors</th>
<th>Bernard Leach</th>
<th>Shoji Hamada</th>
<th>John Reeve</th>
<th>Glenn Lewis</th>
<th>Mick Henry</th>
<th>Jean Fahrni</th>
<th>Gothie Falk</th>
<th>Chris Giuffrida</th>
<th>Tam Irving</th>
<th>Charmian Johnson</th>
<th>Sam Kwan</th>
<th>Heinz Laffin</th>
<th>Wayne Ngan</th>
<th>Lari Robson</th>
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**APPENDIX D:**
Ceramic Exhibitions at The Vancouver Art Gallery (1951-1978)

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<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Exhibition Title</th>
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<td>Sept. 1951 - Oct. 1951</td>
<td>Ceramics, Textiles and Furniture Group Exhibition</td>
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<td>Nov. 1952 - Dec. 1952</td>
<td>2nd Annual B.C. Ceramics, Textiles and Furniture Group Exhibition</td>
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<td>March 1958</td>
<td>Contemporary British Ceramics Group Exhibition</td>
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<td>April 1958</td>
<td>Ceramics by Beatrice Wood Solo Exhibition</td>
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<td>December 1961</td>
<td>Robert Weghsteen - Ceramics Exhibition Solo Exhibition</td>
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<td>February 1962</td>
<td>Ceramics by Kakinuma - One Man Solo Exhibition</td>
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<td>November 1966</td>
<td>Beatrice Wood Ceramics Solo Exhibition</td>
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<td>March 1969</td>
<td>Ceramics '69 Group Exhibition</td>
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<td>May 1972</td>
<td>Japanese Ceramic Art Group Exhibition</td>
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<td>Nov. 1972 - Jan. 1973</td>
<td>John Reeve: Ceramics Solo Exhibition</td>
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<td>May 1972 - June 1972</td>
<td>Rosenthal Porcelain Relief Series Group Exhibition</td>
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"We live in a ranch bungalow... our Spode blends in perfectly!"

The wonderful thing about exquisite Spode dinnerware is that it adds beauty and distinction to every period, every background. Its delicate hand-painting produces a richness of colour that can be attained no other way. So, give your home the ageless elegance that has delighted generations, choose Spode! Write for folder.

"Pink Tower"

Spode dinnerware

"PANDORA" — a delicate fine Grey print design on Minton's famous sparkling white. Platinum edge. Moderately priced.

"ADAM" — a beautiful combination of classic design on a contemporary shape. In shaded Green and Brown tones, Gold edge.

October, 1962
JOHN REEVE
1929–
VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA
LEACH POTTERY: 1958–1961
STONEWARE VASE 10”H.
GLENN LEWIS
1935–
OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA
LEACH POTTERY: 1961–1963
STONEWARE COVERED JAR 7 1/2" H.
MICHAEL HENRY
1939–
VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA,
CANADA
LEACH POTTERY: 1963–1965
STONEWARE PITCHER 10¾"H.
MADE AT MacKENZIE POTTERY
STILLWATER, MINNESOTA 1966