

LES BLAKEBROUGH

Les Blakebrough is one of Australia's most eminent ceramicists. In a career spanning more than fifty years, his body of work has ranged from beautiful functional ware to delicate exhibition pieces of ethereal beauty that are etched to emphasise the translucency and fragility of 'Southern Ice' porcelain. This unglazed porcelain reflects the cool, almost blue, qualities of glacial light, and was developed by the artist after extensive research to find a clay body with the plasticity of porcelain and the translucent character and whiteness of bone china. All of Les' works have a luminous quality, revealing an extraordinary precision of technique and an uncompromising insistence on the harmonious unity of form, colour and decoration.

Emigrating from England as a young man, Les was apprenticed to Ivan McMeekin at Sturt Pottery in the 1950s, then studied in Japan. He was appointed Director of Sturt Craft Centre in 1964 and was a foundation member of the Crafts Board of the Australia Council. In 1973, he took up the position of Senior Lecturer, later becoming Head, of the ceramics department at the Tasmanian School of Art and, in 1990, he established the Ceramic Research Unit there. Les undertook further research in 1993 at major porcelain factories in Scandinavia and the UK. His work is represented in major collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Commonwealth Collection (London), Imperial Palace Collection (Tokyo), International Museum of Ceramic Art (Italy), National Museum of Applied Art (Norway) and the Royal Collection of the Queen of Denmark. In 2005, Les was one of three artists selected for the touring exhibition series "Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft". He has received numerous awards including a gold medal at the International Exhibition of Ceramic Art, Faenza, Italy.

BIOGRAPHY

- 1930 Born in Surrey, England
- 1948 Arrived Australia
- 1957-59 Apprenticed to Ivan McMeekin, Sturt Pottery, Mittagong, NSW
- 1963-64 Studied in Kyoto, Japan, with Takeichi Kawai
- 1959-72 Manager, Sturt Pottery, Mittagong, NSW
- 1964-72 Director, Sturt Craft Centre, Mittagong, NSW
- 1965 Foundation member, Craft Association of NSW & Craft Council of Australia
- 1973-77 Foundation member, Crafts Board, Australia Council
- 1973-81 Senior Lecturer and Head, Ceramics Department, Tasmanian School of Art
- 1974 Established private workshop, Mount Nelson, Tasmania
- 1978 1st judge, International Fletcher Brownbuilt Award, Auckland, NZ
- 1989-94 Associate Professor and Head, Ceramics Department, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania
- 1990 Established Ceramic Research Unit, University of Tasmania
- 1993 Research Study at major porcelain factories in Scandinavia and UK
- 1996 Travelled to Europe on a Churchill Fellowship
- 1996 - Principal Research Fellow, Ceramic Research Unit, University of Tasmania
- 2005 Member International Academy of Ceramics
- 2008 Tasmania's Senior Australian of the Year

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 "The fifth decade exhibition", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
"The fifth decade exhibition", Bett Gallery, Hobart
- 2009 "New Porcelain", BMG Art, Adelaide
"New Porcelain", AXIA, Melbourne
- 2008 "Living Treasures" tour, Tweed River Regional Gallery, NSW; Port Macquarie Gallery, NSW
Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston; Noosa Region Art Gallery, Qld
- 2007 "The New Porcelain" Primavera, Cambridge, UK
- 2006 "Living Treasures" tour, Bathurst Regional Gallery, NSW; Form, Perth; Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, NSW; Craft ACT, Canberra; Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
"The new porcelain", Beaver Galleries, Canberra
- 2005 "The new porcelain", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
"Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft series", Object Gallery, Sydney
"Flora Tasmanica", Botanic Gardens Gallery, Sydney
- 2001 Beaver Galleries, Canberra
- 2000 BMG Fine Art, Adelaide Festival Exhibition

- 1998 Sturt Gallery, Mittagong, NSW
- 1998 BMG Fine Art, Adelaide
- 1997 Savode Gallery, Brisbane
- Ceramic Art Gallery, Sydney
- 1996 Beaver Galleries, Canberra
- Cooks Hill Gallery, Newcastle, NSW
- Distelfink Gallery, Melbourne
- 1995 Ceramic Art Gallery, Sydney
- 1993 Distelfink Gallery, Melbourne
- 1990 Cooks Hill Gallery, Newcastle, NSW
- 1989 "Les Blakebrough: Retrospective", Ballarat Fine Arts Gallery, NSW; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne;
Canberra School of Art Gallery; The Barracks, Sydney; South Australian School of Art Gallery
Distelfink Gallery, Melbourne
Macquarie Galleries, Sydney
- 1988 "Les Blakebrough: Retrospective", University of Tasmania
- 1963-80 34 solo exhibitions in Australia and overseas

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 Hobart City Art Prize exhibition, Tas
- 2007 "Smart Works: Design & the Handmade", Powerhouse Museum, Sydney
- 2006 "Artbank Celebrating 25 Years of Australian Art", State & Regional Galleries, Australia
"Surface Connections", Manningham Gallery, Vic
"International Ceramic Award", Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Qld
- 2004/5 "Surface: Beneath & Beyond", A Tasmanian Touring Exhibition
- 2002 "Material Culture, Aspects of contemporary Australian craft and design", National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
"Ritual of Tea", Jam Factory, SA (and regional tour)
- 1999 "Contemporary Australian Craft", Powerhouse Museum touring exhibition, Japan and Australia
- 1998 "Southern Light", SOFA, Chicago, USA (Beaver Galleries)
- 1997 "Four visions of Antarctica", Newcastle City Gallery, NSW
Tresors: Fifth International Fine Art Fair, Singapore (Beaver Galleries)
Contemporary Art Fair, Drill Hall Gallery, Canberra (Beaver Galleries)
- 1996 Newcastle Purchase Award Exhibition, NSW
"Triaxial Blend", Rochester Institute of Technology, New York, USA
- 1995-96 "Delinquent Angels", touring exhibition of Australian ceramics to Italy; Japan; Australian State Galleries
- 1995 "Home Made", Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart
- 1993 Gold Coast Ceramic Award Exhibition, Qld
North Queensland Ceramic Award
- 1991 50th Sturt Exhibition, Mittagong, NSW
- 1990 International Exhibition, Oslo, Norway
Axis Exhibition, Tokyo, Japan

AWARDS / COMMISSIONS

- 2005 Commission of Flora Tasmania Limited Edition Porcelain for HRH Princess Mary of Denmark
- 2002 Commission of Vice-Chancellor's porcelain dinner set, University of Tasmania
- 1998 Australia Council Creative Arts Fellowship
- 1996 Sidney Myer ceramic Award / Exhibition, Shepparton, Vic
- 1995 ARC grants
Newcastle Open Award, NSW
- 1994 ARC grant for Hillka Hiltunen Lecture Tour in five capital cities
- 1993 Arts Tasmania Residency Grant for Elina Brandt Hansen, Norway
Boral Award, Qld
- 1992-93 Large ARC grant, kiln design research grant
- 1992 Churchill Research Fellowship
- 1991-93 Australian Research Council (ARC) research grant for Tasmanian Porcelain Clay
- 1990 Commission of Centenary Fountain, University of Tasmania
- 1986 Merit Award, Fletcher Brownbuilt Exhibition, Auckland, NZ

- 1989-90 Research & Kiln Design Project for Historic Site Renovation of Port Arthur, Tas
1982 Commission of ceramic mural, University of Tasmania
1974 Gold Medal, International Exhibition of Ceramic Art, Faenza, Italy

PUBLICATIONS

- 2006 "The changing face of craft", Sharon Peoples, *The Canberra Times*, May 14
2005 "Les Blakebrough - Ceramics", J. Holmes, *Living Treasures - Masters of Australian Craft*, Thames & Hudson
"Whiter than white: a marriage of materials and desire", Janet DeBoos, *Object*, December, pp 34-39
2003 "The remarkable work of Les Blakebrough", Grace Cochrane, *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, No. 53, pp 17-20
1997 "Flexible Format Kiln Research", *Ceramics Technical*, Vol. 3/3
"Things mother taught me", Giles Auty, *The Weekend Australian*, October 18-19, Review, pp 25
1996 "Porcelain Clay Research", *Ceramics Technical*, Vol. 1/1
"Les Blakebrough's Southern Ice", Jonathan Holmes, *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, issue 24
Southern Light: contemporary Australian porcelain, Beaver Galleries
1995 *Contemporary Ceramic Art in Australia & New Zealand*, Janet Mansfield, Craftsman House
"Southern Ice", Les Blakebrough and Ben Richardson, *Ceramics TECHNICAL*, No.1, pp 3-15
1994 "A way ahead", Andrew Darby, *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, No. 18, pp 3-7
1993 Profile by Andrew Darby, *Craft Arts International*, Vol. 28
1992 *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History*, Grace Cochrane, NSW University Press
1989 *Les Blakebrough: Potter*, J. Holmes, Bay Books, Sydney
1988 *A Collector's Guide to Modern Australian Ceramics*, Janet Mansfield, Craftsman House
1984 *World Ceramics: Art and Craft (Kunst und Handwerk)*, Düsseldorf
1978 *Nine Artist Potters*, A. Littlemore, and K. Carlstrom, Melbourne
1973 *Twelve Australian Craftsmen*, P. Thompson, Sydney
1972 *The Artist Craftsmen in Australia*, F. Bottrell and W. Stacey, Sydney

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide; Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin; Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart; Australian National University, Canberra; Flinders University, SA; University of Queensland; University of Tasmania; University of Western Australia; Shepparton Regional Art Gallery, Vic; Admiralty House, Sydney; Crafts Council of Australia, Sydney; Government House, Canberra; Reserve Bank of Australia, Melbourne; Victorian State Craft Collection, Melbourne; Australian Embassy, Peking, China; Royal Palace Collection, Copenhagen, Denmark; International Museum of Ceramic Art, Faenza, Italy; Imperial Palace Collection, Tokyo, Japan; National Museum of Applied Art, Oslo, Norway; Commonwealth Collection, London, UK; National Bank of Austria, Vienna.