

## LES BLAKEBROUGH AM (1930 – 2022)

*Les Blakebrough was one of Australia's most eminent ceramicists. In a career spanning more than fifty years, his body of work ranged from beautiful functional ware to delicate exhibition pieces of ethereal beauty, 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, and then studied in Japan with Kawai. 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 Professor, 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 in both Australia and overseas including the National Gallery of Australia, Commonwealth Collection (UK), Imperial Palace Collection (Japan), 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 the first Australian artist selected as a 'living treasure' for the touring exhibition series "Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft". He received numerous awards including a gold medal at the International Exhibition of Ceramic Art (Faenza, Italy) and was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday honours in 2013.*

### 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
2012	Established studio at Coledale, NSW
2013	Awarded an AM in Queens Birthday Honours List
2022	Died November

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019	"Moving forward – Looking back", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
2017	"Gathering Light II", Bett Gallery, Hobart
2016	"Gathering Light", Beaver Galleries, Canberra
2014	"Living Treasure", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
2012	Beaver Galleries, Canberra
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

- 2005 "The new porcelain", Beaver Galleries, Canberra  
"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  
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**

- 2020 "L'uomo – masters of ceramics", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
- 2018 "Something blue", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
- 2017 "Salute XIII", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
- 2016 "Salute XII", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney  
"Abundance – The Australian Landscape in Ceramics", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
- 2015 "Salute XI", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney  
"Salute X", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
- 2013 "Salute IX", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
- 2010 Hobart City Art Prize exhibition, Tas  
"Winter", Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
- 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 Tasmanica 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

- 2016 "White porcelain the work of a master craftsman", Kerry-Anne Cousins, *The Canberra Times*, 16 April  
2012 "Elegance and quiet beauty", Kerry-Anne Cousins, *The Canberra Times*, 17 November  
2010 "Les Blakebrough 80th Birthday Exhibition at Bett Gallery", Monograph  
2006 "Southern Ice, ethereal beauty", Meredith Hinchliffe, *The Canberra Times*, 8 October  
2006 "The changing face of craft", Sharon Peoples, *The Canberra Times*, 14 May  
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 Collectors 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.