Ceramics to me is both two dimensional and three dimensional. The two dimensional aspect is involved with the surface of the pot. It can be used like a drawing or even a painting if desired. Layers of surface can be built up to enhance the shape and to add depth. I hope this will become clearer as I explain some of the stages and interests in my work.

Why do I make what I make? At first it was an attempt to find a different shape - away from wheel thrown and handbuilt forms. I found it hard to relate to both of these by themselves. I like the combination of both and I came across a shape that included both. It wasn't a search for a particular shape. It was a search for something different. Since working on this shape I have found many aspects which suit my method of working and my style of decoration.

When I first began work on these pots I threw each base shape separately and added the handbuilt extensions individually. With this I also had a surface to decorate and work on. Through this method of working I found a regular shape emerging. So I decided to make a mold of this shape. I could then duplicate each pot by press-molding. This made working much quicker and gave me freedom to work on the surface treatment - a major interest in my work. This method has opened up a new way of working, with many different styles and ideas to explore.

It seems that the method of mold making for pots was carried out quite extensively by many early civilizations - the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs and to a lesser degree the Egyptians. I look at these early pieces because there is something there that excites me. I try to learn from them and get the same sort of feeling in my own work. It is more than the material, more than the shape, the design, the size. I can not explain it - it must be a combination of things. I began with my own work with the shape.

I have tried to make the shape interesting without being dominant or too complex. It has to be interesting enough to make people look at it. Maybe it's something they haven't seen before, maybe it's something they've seen before but not quite like this. I feel that unless you are specifically interested in the field you have to be brought into the pots, not just left standing staring from a distance and feeling removed from them. A shape that looks interesting makes the viewer come closer. The colour and surface treatment may then take over and show the viewer a closer more intimate aspect of the work. Of course that is not to say that a colour can not grab the viewer's attention and do the same thing. In the end shape, colour and decoration have to work together - not individual parts fighting each other for attention. One may dominate, but the others have to know their place.

The round discuss shape of the pot is much like a bowl - in shape and overall appearance. But it becomes more than that with the
The spouts have to look attached, not an afterthought. This is done by giving each spout actual lines. These lines act like a staple holding the spout onto the base - they are also giving the pot another direction. The shape on the reverse side is plain, the main consideration being the continuation of the outline from the base through the spouts. It is important to keep a smooth flowing line without a major change in direction. This side can act as a contrast to the upperside, a sort of restful area.

My style of decoration, or surface treatment, is influenced by the architecture of early civilizations. This architecture shows a good use of non-pictorial, repetative patterns. Patterns which are more than geometric shapes; they have layers of understanding. They are used to accentuate a particular feeling or direction, or they can be purely decorative. This is why I like them. Sometimes I feel static and I will try to make my pots static, rigid and purely repetative. Sometimes I feel like moving faster than the speed of sound, so I will try to create this on my pots. Sometimes I feel like relaxing and enjoying myself, this I will try to recreate. Always I try to make my decoration work in with the form and my feelings, trying to make good use of everything.

There are two or three main areas to concentrate my decoration. The first being the bowl shape on the upperside. This can be treated as much within a certain perimeter, or it can go over those boundaries. There is also an imaginery line running across the bowl shape cutting it in halves. This can be used or ignored. The other areas of decoration are on the reverse side. This side can be divided into two or used as one. Most times I will use it as one area with the main concentration being on the back of the spouts. The spouts are raised and can be seen when the pot is upright, so it is a natural place to decorate. Sometimes I try to tie what's going on on top with what's going on underneath and vice versa, but other times I prefer to have the areas contrasting each other. It's the surprise of the unexpected to see a totally different thing on the back of something that I like.

I decorate my work to give people more to look at. More than a shape and a colour. I feel that shape and colour can become monotonous when you see them everyday, so the decoration is there to stop the pot becoming so. As time goes by more and more can become known about the pot - it is not all grasped at first sight. Careful study brings out new things that weren't discovered before. Even a thing such as a thumb print or some sign that the pot was handled before it was made hard and permanent excites me - and I hope many other people. I try to create areas which dominate, bring the viewer in close to look at the pot; then as they get closer more subtle areas open up for them to see. Some parts I will make predictable and repetative, these don't require too much concentration. But with this I will try to contrast them by having
something opposite - opposite in feeling and sensitivity.

Other than just a pleasing shape, a beautiful colour or a piece of pure decoration I try to integrate the lot into a more exciting piece for the person who looks into it. Hopefully they discover more and the work may be appreciated because of it. But the shape and colour have to be interesting enough at first sight to allow the viewer to look closer.

I use the dry glaze on my work because of its colour range and its sensitivity to the shape, decoration and firing. It seems to be the best to enhance my work. At first glance the colour appears much the same but when you get into the pot you begin to see various colours and subtle changes coming out. I have found that you can build up layers of colour. Glazing and decoration work together - without one the other is lost. Visual appearance can be governed by colour tones. A pot with light colouring looks light and airy, a pot with dark colours looks heavy and bulky. These aspects can be accentuated with shape and decoration, and how they are displayed.

Rather than having a pot of one monochrome colour, I prefer to have tones across the surface to work with the shape and decoration. This alteration is governed by the shape and decoration of the pot, the type of slip applied to the pot, the constituents in the glaze, the way the glaze is applied to the pot, the way the pots are packed in the kiln and the firing procedure. All these have to be considered for the best results. There are also manual alterations that can be done by the maker. One part done not so well lets down the performance of the whole lot and eventually lets down the finished pot.

Knowing what works best all the time can become a trap. If the work is made to a set of formulas it eventually becomes tired. You have to know when you know enough to push on, or even come back from. To push yourself past the safe areas onto the unknown. This is where the excitement is, and this excitement usually comes forward into the work itself.

The firing can be the most crucial part of the work. If everything else is going okay up to the firing you still haven't made it home. One little lapse in concentration may ruin the whole lot. Probably because of this there is a tendency to go for the safe tried and true firing. But this type lacks the vibrance that can be achieved by the less safer options. I choose the unsafe road because it best suits my work. I try to put so much into the work before the firing stage I feel it is a pity not to get the best out of it. There are many losses at first, but the experience gained helps make the work better in the end, a thousand times better and that's what I'm after - quality not quantity.

Now that the pot has come this far is through the making,
decorating, glazing and firing it is a pity to let it down with no post-firing consideration. By this I mean displaying it. I found this quote that says it all:

"The task of arrangement obviously involved exploiting the qualities of each piece; it's period, it's closest allies in the collection, it's ideal display conditions, it's size, it's character, it's preservation and it's potential as a piece of spatial scenery." from 'A new look at Egypt' by Nigel Coates. Connoisseur Feb '82 Vol. 209 No. 840. pg. 95. We can do a lot towards the standard of ceramics by showing the public how to display or look after their purchases as we the maker see it. Maybe in some cases the whole display should be sold along with the pot. I guess it can be seen like a frame around a painting - not always necessary but in some cases very necessary.

To overcome this problem in my work I have begun to caste metal stands. It is not just an afterthought or another gimmick. I like the idea of metal with ceramics and feel there is a lot that could be done in this area. At the moment the use of metal has just begun to emerge. The stands are two-fold - firstly to lift the pot off the ground for visual effect and to allow people to see underneath, and secondly to introduce another material into my work. I am again looking for something different and it is experimental at the moment. I am not sure if it works or not but it's worth giving it a go. As time goes by I hope to integrate the metal with the clay and use it as another surface.