

Australian Pottery

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Doreen Goodchild Sugar Glider Figurine - signed D.G.- circa 1930 Colonial Pottery

Australia has a tradition of pottery production going back almost to the first fleet. The first pottery produced in the fledgling colony was Stoneware Ginger Beer Bottles. This early pottery and in fact all pottery produced before the 1911 Act of Federation is known as Colonial Pottery. Bendigo Pottery Water Filter manufactured for the New Zealand Stone Company in South Melbourne - circa 1885 - finished in a magnificent Majolica glaze

During the second half of the ninetieth some manufactures began to glaze there utilitarian Pottery with majolica glazes. Bendigo Pottery was founded in 1857 and by 1879 was applying majolica glazes to its Bread Plates, Tobacco Jars, Teapots, Jugs, Cheese Dishes, Sardine Dishes, Salt Celler's, Water Filters, Jardinières and Vases. Some of which where also decorated with Australian motifs. Bendigo Pottery Dogs Head Tobacco Jar - circa 1885 - rare blue glazed base

The Melbourne suburb of Brunswick was known for its deposits of clay, so it is not by chance that it became a centre for pottery production. Brunswick companies producing Colonial pottery where; Cornwell's Pottery, Hoffman's Pottery, Gillbrook Pottery, Victorian Art Pottery, Federal Pottery, and the Brunswick Brick, Tile & Pottery Works. Cornwells Majolica Bread Plate - circa 1890

Colonial Potteries operated out of almost all states; in NSW there was Mashman Brothers & Sandison Pottery, Bakewell's Pottery and Lithgow Pottery. In QLD there was Sandhurst Pottery and Coorparoo Pottery. From the Tasmania town of Launceston we have Campbell's Pottery and the McHugh brothers. In SA we have Bennett's Pottery.

Studio Potters

It is debatable who is the the first Australian studio potter, but it is either William Ferry or Richard Sturrock, both where manufacturing pottery in Brunswick during the late Victorian era. Merric Boyd is thought of as Australia's foremost Artistic potter. Merric Boyd began operating a studio from his Murumbeena home from 1913. Some say that Merric Boyd is the father of Australian Studio pottery. This is of course debatable, but there can be no doubt of the artistic dynasty founded by Merric Boyd and his wife, Doris Lucy Gough. Doris Boyd signed Cat Figurine - dated 1926

This dynasty includes Guy Boyd, (or Martin Boyd), Arthur Boyd (A.M. Boyd) and David & Hermia Boyd. Of course there are also the many ceramic artists associated with the Boyd's, such as Hatten Beck, John Perceval, John Howley and Neil Douglas. A.M. Boyd Plaque - "Gum Leaves In Sunlight" by Neil Douglas - circa 1950

Golden Age Of Australian Pottery

I believe that the period from the 1930's to 1960's was the Golden Age for Australian Pottery. This Golden Age was the fruit of the Great Depression. Manufactures that had produced clay pipes, roof tiles and bricks turned to Art Ware to keep the kilns fired and their families fed.

Companies like Bakewell and Regal Mashman of NSW, McHugh and John Campbell of Launceston in Tasmania, Bennets of South Australia and Bendigo, Hoffman (Melrose) and Cornwells in Victoria. All had produced some Art Pottery since Colonial times, but as The Depression took its toll these companies turned to Art as an economic savior. William Ricketts Possum Man

The Depression also saw a boom in Studio Potters. Artisan such as Marguerite Mahood, Grace Seccombe, Castle Harris, Phillipa James, Klytie Pate, Una Deerbon and William Rickett produced figural and hand decorated pottery that are some of the iconic Australian art works of the twentieth century.

It was during the early 1930's that Premier Pottery Preston where refining the style that would go into producing Pamula and then Remued Pottery. In 1934 Bakewell Brothers of Sydney employed Daisy Merton who went on to hand paint pottery with Australian themes, later Joy Yasman was also employed. Post WWII Pottery Carl Cooper Hand Painted Plaque - dated 1949

Due to the restrictions during WWII little art pottery was produced during the first half of the 1940's, but from 1945 production began again with almost a vengeance. From this period onwards there was a movement towards hand painted decoration. Martin Boyd Wall Plaque - Circa 1950

This change was led by studios such as A.M. Boyd, Martin Boyd, Carl Cooper, Vande Pottery. Other post war manufactures produced slip cast product, companies such as Diana, Pates, Modern Ceramic Products (MCP) and Casey Ware. Guy Boyd Plaque - Australian Outback scene by Jock Fraser - circa 1955

From the late 1940's Australia saw an influx of European migrants; these migrants brought a range of skills that enriched not only the art pottery scene, but Australia in general. MCP Bowl - Orpheus Arfaras painted Aboriginal Style Motif - circa 1950

Amongst the migrants where the ceramic artists, Orpheus Arfaras, Norm Sherratt and Lillian Pakulski. Not only where the talented migrants employed by existing producers, some went on to form their own potteries such as Kalmar Pottery (ACP), Studio Anna and Little Sydney Pottery Company. Studio Anna Candle Holder - circa 1962