הוי אריאל אריאל קריית חנן דוד

*Ho, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped (Isaiah 29:1)*

# אריאל ariel

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phoned the good pal and asked him what on earth was going on? The good pal stuttered that he had been made a present of the box by Glick, the engineer, in honour of the Sinai victory. Onward! The engineer had received it four years before when the twins were born, from his sister-in-law (the chocolate, that is). The sister-in-law had received it from Goldstein (1953), Goldstein from Glazer, Glazer from Stelmach, Stelmach from Ilka, and the good aunt, in 1951 — wait a moment... yes, indeed — had received it from us in celebration of her changing her grey floor tiles for white ones.

Just think of it — this very box of chocolates had passed through the hands of practically the whole country, participated in every house-warming and cornerstone laying!

We feel it our duty to inform the public that the country's only gift chocolate box has been withdrawn from circulation. Someone ought to buy a new one and start the ancient merry-go-round again.



# The Beginnings of Israeli Ceramics

Gideon Ofrat

As Israeli ceramic art enters its sixth decade, we should ask ourselves what defines our ceramics as uniquely Israeli. To answer this question we will examine both the tradition that was established here and its sources. Those who look at Israeli ceramics today can easily see that it is a product of a continuous process that began in 1932, was influenced by several movements, and developed a certain quality that marks its uniqueness.

In these beginnings can be found all the various elements: the struggle with place (the Mediterranean and the desert), with local shapes and colours, and with local clay. Moreover, we can perceive the tradition from which the first artists came, and which served as a backdrop to their meeting with new forms and content.

An overview of exhibitions of Israeli ceramics held both here and abroad, especially in the 1950s, pinpoints the medium's problems of cultural status and the fact that, through the years, it has hovered precariously between "art" and "craft."

In 1939, the first exhibition of Israeli crafts was held at the Bezalel National Museum in Jerusalem. It included several ceramicists, most notably, Hedwig Grossmann, who displayed small figurines of people from the Nahalat Ahim neighbourhood of Jerusalem). It was only in 1951 that the first exhibition of artistic ceramics was held, at the Museum of Modern Art in Haifa and it included two generations of local potters, most of them from the Haifa Bay area.

In 1953, in honour of the small, but first of its kind in Israel, exhibition of ancient Persian and Islamic ceramics from the private

collection of Harry Phillips at the Bezalel Museum, the editorial board of the *Mas'a* weekly decided to focus public attention on ceramic art in Israel. Concurrently, the fifth exhibition by French ceramic artists was held at Valeury, France, featuring the works of Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Masson, Dufy and others. Hedwig Grossmann reviewed the Bezalel show for *Mas'a*, emphasizing the cultural values of a nation as reflected in its ceramics. This was the background for the thrust of her criticism, reflected by her words: "We are still far from perceiving ceramics as one of the fields of cultural creativity." Against the blossoming international ceramics movement following World War II, the local dearth was pronounced. Grossmann presented manual pottery-making as the answer to modern man's mechanization, automation and intellectualization. Pottery was seen as a "desire for perfection in life, for creativity emanating from unity and integration." Grossmann riled against those who would copy the *Jugendstil* style prevalent in Europe, and no less so against the functional *Bauhaus* style and against the copying of ancient styles. Basic to her theme was the call to start from the very beginning, from the form, and from the colours that would express the potter's individual character.

The truth is that it was difficult to start from the very beginning. Grossmann and other Israeli potters carried a heavy heritage of ceramic know-how with them from Europe. As we shall see, their story is the bridging of that know-how with their new Middle-Eastern experience.

Let us begin with a few words about the state of ceramics in Israel and in Europe before the arrival of the "founding fathers" (actually "mothers,") in Palestine. Until the beginning of the 1930s, only Arab potters were active, making functional utensils, especially jugs, using low heat and usually no glaze. There were no kilns in the land (the first of these would be built by immigrants, or imported from abroad) and not much local clay (the settling of the Negev had not yet begun.) In the art schools, ceramics was not a recognized art form, and even when the New Bezalel was founded in 1935 in Jerusalem, ceramics was only a marginal pursuit, part of the sculpting training given to metalwork and graphics students. The Arab pottery, made by southern Bedouin and by craftsmen in Hebron, Acre and Nazareth, would become one of the focal points of inspiration in shaping the new Israeli ceramics. Hedwig



Hedwig Grossmann and Rudi Lehmann in their Jerusalem studio, early 1950s

Grossmann wrote of her first days here in 1933: "We looked for, and found, in the Land of Israel, dozens of rural Arab potters who lived close to the place where their raw material was to be found. Their major product was the *jara,* (large pottery vessels for storing water or oil) as well as simple planters and utensils. In their form, these vessels were a reminder of ancient times. Some of these potters were good craftsmen. In Jerusalem, there were two workshops for artistic ceramics owned by Armenian potters with an Islamic folklore tradition. Apart from them, there were two factories for building blocks — one in Jerusalem, in the Syrian orphanage (under the management of the engineer Schneller, one of the leaders of the Templar order) and the other in Motza outside Jerusalem, established in 1905 by Steinberg, a Russian Jew, who was a building block artisan and a farmer. We were received warmly as fellow craftsman, and received advice about finding raw material and about solving the particular problems caused by the local weather."

It is relevant to note here the nascent European ceramics movement in the Bauhaus from 1920 and the pottery classes given by the sculptor Gerhard Marcks. Five women and two men studied in the pottery department of the Bauhaus, which was situated in an ancient castle in the village of Dornberg, some 24 kilometres from Weimar. Marcks and his assistants fashioned artifacts that were sold to local villagers. Marcks designed the pottery based on the functional principles of Bauhaus director Gropius and, accordingly, it was characterized by clean, simple trigonometric shapes, without ornamental images and covered with a monotone glaze. All of this served as a backdrop to the work of the ceramic artists who came to Israel from Germany, although most of them did not actually study at the Bauhaus. Paula Ahronson, who did study there, is the exception; nevertheless, as we shall see, Hedwig Grossmann had an indirect connection to the Bauhaus, and her pivotal role in the advancement of Israeli ceramics gives this connection its importance. Thus, for example, the simplicity of form and minimal ornamentation in the ceramic works of Hanna Zuntz-Harag, who immigrated in 1940, is a reflection of this style. Between the influence of Arab pottery and the thrust of the Bauhaus movement in the 1920s, we must also stress another influence, which was that of archaeology. Several Jewish ceramic artists who were active



in Israel from the 1930s onwards, worked with local archaeological institutions and adopted the form and content of ancient Israeli and Canaanite pottery traditions.

It is possible that, somewhere between these three focal points, the Israeli ceramic tradition developed and forged its own personality. Nevertheless, the individual personality of each and every artist — and especially the women artists — was decidedly the factor that afforded the Israeli ceramics industry its special character. Let us turn therefore to the works of some of the women who were the leading lights in the field.

Hava Samuel (1904-1989) first encountered ceramics at the age of 19, after her studies in painting and graphics. During her stay at the German artists' camp, Wopowede, she became familiar with the ideas of the Bauhaus movement and decided to study ceramics.

When she immigrated to Palestine in 1932, she already had eight years of study and specialization in ceramics behind her. As soon as she arrived, she opened the first ceramics studio in Jerusalem (in the courtyard of the Alliance school on Jaffa Street) along with the engineer Y. Reich. She called her studio *Ha'yotzer* ("The Creator,") and there she fashioned figurines of typical Jerusalemites: Jews with black cloaks, Arabs in headdresses, Yemenites, etc.

In 1933, as soon as she arrived from Germany, Paula Ahronson joined Hava Samuel. She wrote: "In June, 1933, I immigrated to Israel and joined Hava's workshop just as Mr. Reich left it. Everything was primitive. We hauled water for a distance of twenty to thirty metres, from a pit in the yard, in empty fuel cans. The kiln worked on crude oil. We had no compressor and instead used the pressure of steam from water boiled over a large field stove. We hardly reached temperatures of 900°C-960°C. Working at the wheel (my main speciality,) the clay that Hava used did not suit me. On the advice of the geological department of the Jewish Agency (Mr. Tishbi) we searched for clay in the Har-Tuv area. We transported clay in bags, which we filled with the help of an Arab, by train to Jerusalem. I started working enthusiastically and quickly filled the kiln. Everything went well... until the first firing. Everything burst. Afterwards, we began to work with clay from Motza that was brought by Arabs from Beit Iksa."

The Beginnings of Israeli Ceramics: (*opposite above and lower right*) Hedwig Grossman, (*lower left*) Hava Samuel, (*overleaf, above*) Hanna Charag-Zuntz, (*lower*) Zvi Gali

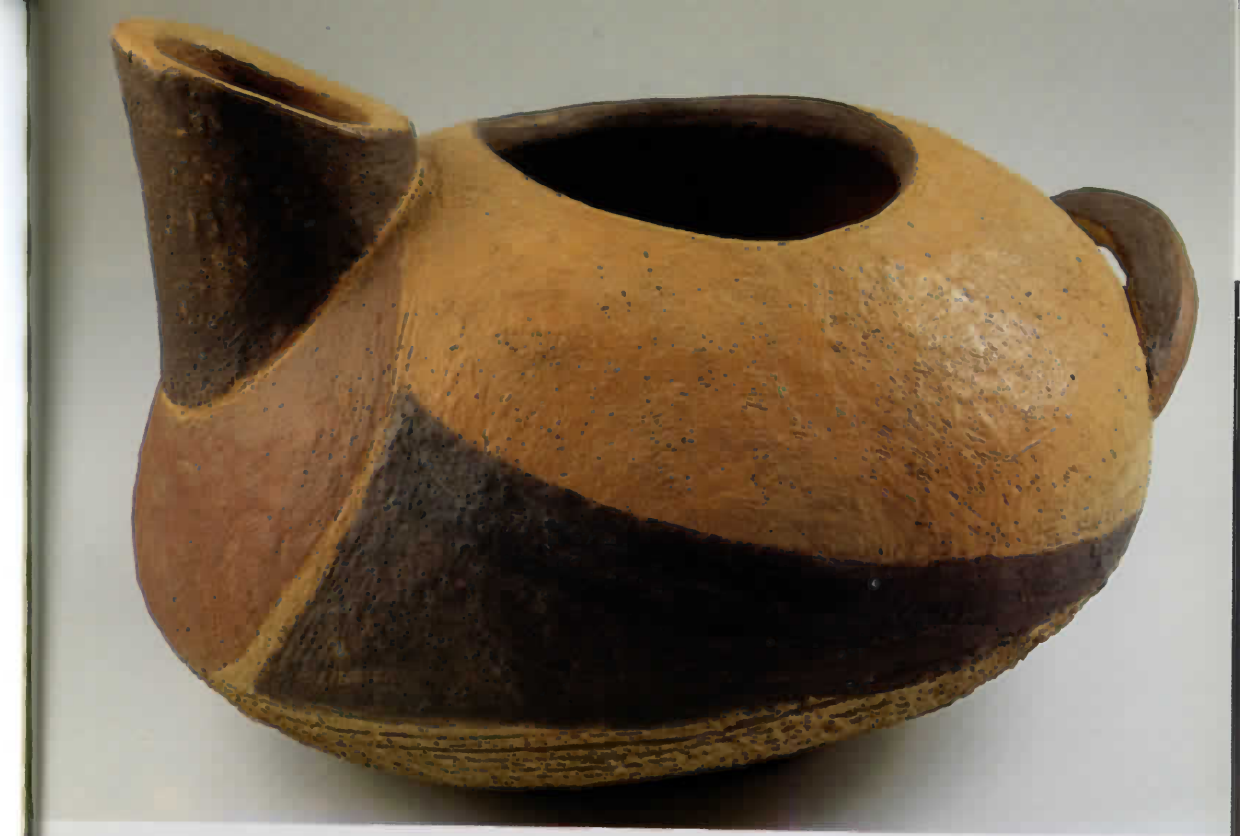
While on the subject of clay, here is the report of Mira Libes, who joined the Samuel-Ahronson studio in 1933 as a trainee. "One fine day, a man from Kfar Vitkin came to visit us and brought some samples of clay from there. Apparently they had dug a tunnel in his village and found this clay. We examined it, that is, we saw how we worked with it (there was no other way of testing in those days), and it seemed the material was satisfactory. We ordered more. One morning, a truck arrived with an Arab driver, loaded down with clay, naturally unbagged... Most of the time, the kiln was not properly operational. There was no money and for a long time there were no profits. All the possible disasters that could befall potters, did. The goal was to fashion simple utensils, functional and beautiful, in order to educate the public taste, which was then beyond the pale. The forms were usually influenced by the Bauhaus, where Paula had studied, and by Hava's simple and wonderful ornaments-paintings."

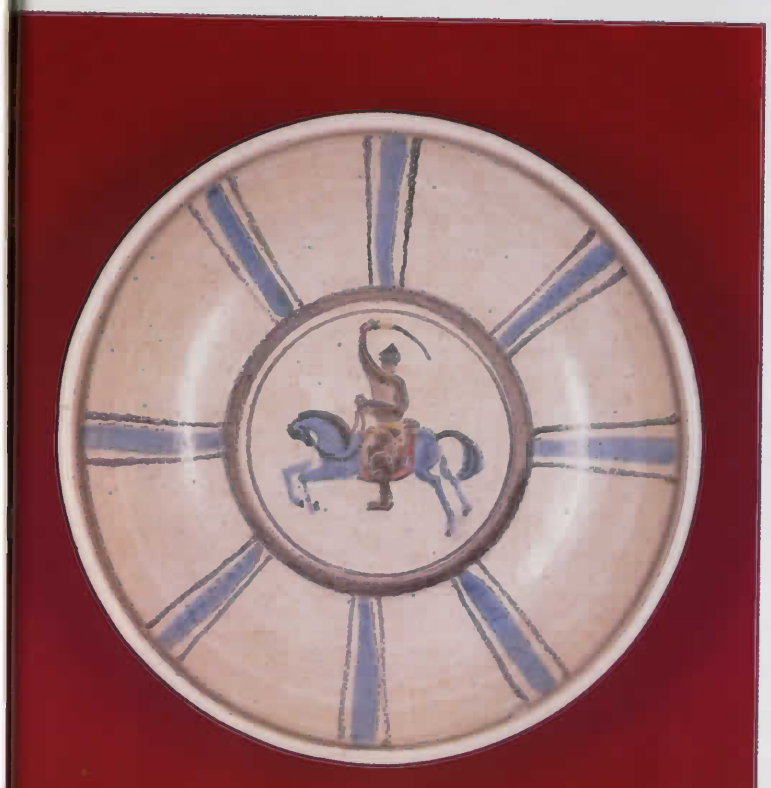
In her work, Hava Samuel bridged the gap between painter and potter. In 1940, she still exhibited her paintings at the Tel-Aviv Museum, but in 1946, she won first prize for applied art at the Bezalel Museum and her ceramic works were displayed at the Bezalel Museum. Her approach to ceramics was that of a painter and a sculptor, even though the painting took up only a small part of her pottery. Hers is decorative, spontaneous, restrained painting, with themes mostly taken from nature (local flowers and animals,) oriental figures, and the Bible.

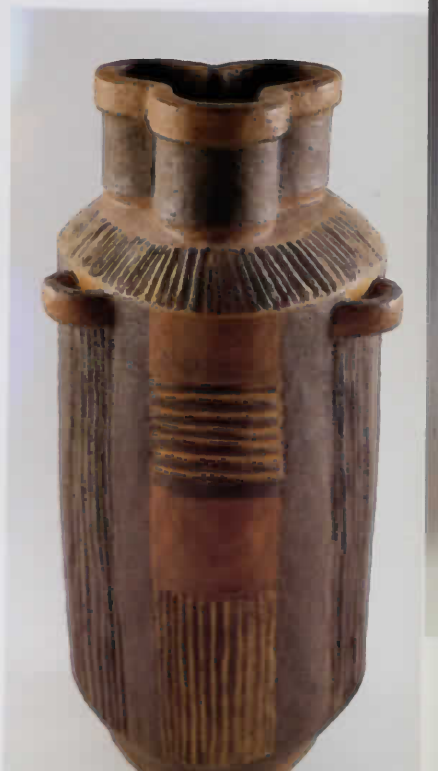
Without diminishing the pioneering importance of Samuel, there is no doubt that much of the credit for the consolidation and advancement of early Israeli ceramics must be attributed to Hedwig Grossmann. She was born in Germany in 1902, immigrated to Israel in 1933 and dedicated her entire life to making, teaching and encouraging the making of pottery in a local style: "I have a positive approach to the national and folkloric foundations of the arts, for these elements have a richness of colour and are typical of the works of people all over the world."

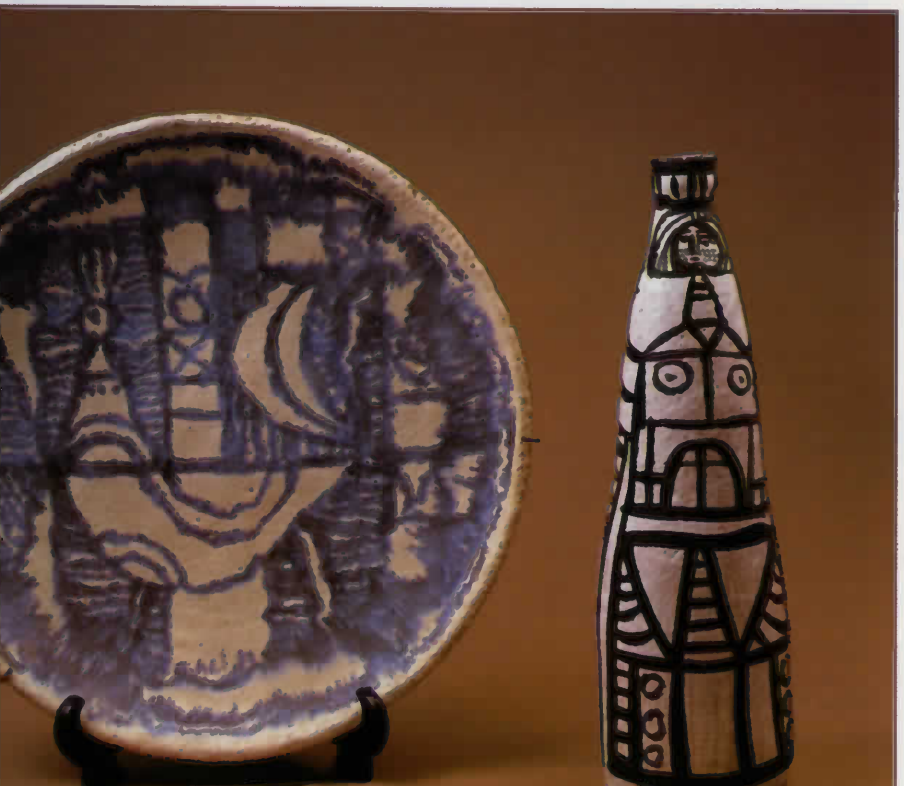
Nevertheless, it is important not to lose sight of the great debt Hedwig Grossmann owed to the comprehensive ceramic education she received in Germany before coming to Palestine. Grossmann's first professional steps were taken during World War I, when she attended

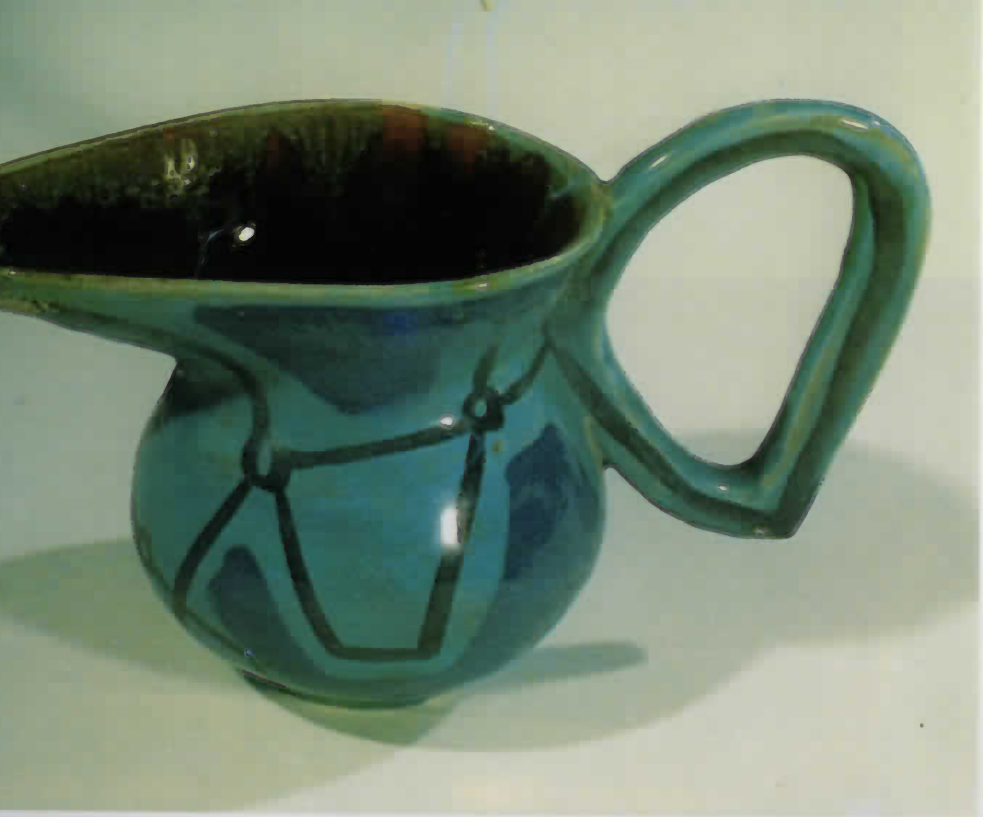












The Beginnings of Israeli Ceramics (*opposite, upper*) Aharon Kahana: (*lower*) David Kalderon (*previous page*) Gedula Schweig-Ogen

lectures in anthropology and art history at Berlin University. In 1927, she enrolled at the ceramics and sculpting department at the arts and crafts school run by the municipality of Berlin, where a fellow student was Rudi Lehmann, whom she would later marry. Still in Germany, she travelled to Wenzlau, a region crowded with hundreds of pottery workshops. Here, at the side of a 70-year-old potter, she learnt the method of fashioning giant pots from one massive piece of clay. She also studied how to test raw materials for ceramics (some of them from Eretz Israel), how to combine colours, and so on. In 1932, she contacted several Jewish potters in Germany and planned their joint work in Israel, and also turned to the Jewish Agency for help in establishing a factory for artistic ceramics in Haifa.

In 1933, Hedwig Grossmann immigrated to Haifa with her husband. As soon as she landed, she began looking for suitable clay in the Haifa and Jezreel Valley regions. A year later, based on their findings, Grossmann received a plot of land from the Jewish National Fund, in Bat Galim, near Haifa, and the Technion gave her a place for setting up an experimental workshop and a laboratory for testing materials, combinations and colours. Here the foundations for the *Kadar* ("Potter") plant were laid, and here Rudi Lehmann installed a primitive wood-burning kiln.

The nurseries of the collective agricultural settlements needed some one million trees a year. Abba Khushi, then chairman of the Haifa Labour Council and later mayor of Haifa, put Grossmann and Lehmann in touch with Kibbutz Yagur and the Solel-Boneh construction firm in order to set up a factory in Yagur to manufacture clay planters. The couple moved to the kibbutz, and with clay found near the Kishon river they manufactured planters in two coal-burning kilns that they built with the help of the kibbutz members.

In 1937, the couple moved to Jerusalem and set up a studio for artistic ceramics and sculpting which quickly became a miniature cultural centre. In their courtyard, under an ancient olive tree, the couple built a wood-burning kiln and began the process of pottery-making. In the early Jerusalem years, Grossmann was invited by the Hebrew University's archaeology department to carry out tests that would clarify what pottery technologies were current from the Stone Age to the Iron Age.

By the beginning of the 1950s, two different ceramic movements had clearly emerged. The one, influenced by the work of Hava Samuel, Paula Ahronson and Mira Libes, was characterized by proficient technique and decorative ornamental glazes and inclined towards rich, oriental folklorism, with only a marginal consideration of form. The other was mostly influenced by Hedwig Grossmann (and Rudi Lehmann); here, the emphasis was on form, through the treatment of its essence, while negating external folkloric elements, searching instead for local materials, basing the pottery more on ancient Mediterranean shapes than on scenery and the weather. Grossmann's renunciation of glazes and ornamentation was derived from the soil; she favoured letting the pottery remain "dry" and earth coloured, with only the circular signature of the wheel.

A major part of the ceramics industry in Israel — both artistic and industrial — was established in Haifa. One of the central contributors to the development of ceramics in the northern region of Israel was Hanna Zuntz-Harag. Her story is yet another connection between ceramics training in Germany and taking up roots in local pottery. She grew up in Hamburg and began her artistic studies in 1934, when she studied jewellery-making and textile design. She and her Zionist friends dreamed of establishing an urban kibbutz in the Land of Israel that would provide interior design services.

In 1938, Zuntz-Harag travelled to Czechoslovakia and studied ceramic engineering and technology. During that time, she visited Palestine and brought back with her to Europe some of the clays that she found. It is interesting to note that Israeli factories at that time still imported clay from Europe. In 1940, Zuntz-Harag immigrated to Palestine and settled in Tel Aviv. Because she had met Hedwig Grossmann during her visit to Israel in 1938, she moved to Jerusalem and founded a workshop making coffee pots and cups in the Arab town of Beit Jalla near Bethlehem.

A few words about the Beit Jalla workshop are in order. Pessach Friedmann, a self-taught potter worked at the building blocks factory in Motza and surrounded himself with several chemists and other specialists, among them the geologist, Loewenberg. Loewenberg was commissioned by Emir Abdullah of Trans-Jordan to locate potable water near the Dead Sea. Here, he found a type of white clay that



interested him. It may be noted, by the way, that Grossmann was herself in the midst of negotiations at that time with Emir Abdullah about setting up a factory for manufacturing clay planters and jugs near Amman. At any rate, the clay from the Dead Sea served Zuntz-Harag's workshop in Beit Jalla, where she worked alongside Arab potters. While working for two years with Hedwig Grossmann, she expanded her knowledge of local clays, climate (the dryness and the light), and archaeology.

In 1943, Zuntz-Harag moved to Haifa and began working privately. She still had no kiln and mostly worked at the wheel, using clays she found in the Negev and in other places. When the War of Independence broke out, she met Dr. Michaelson, a renowned ophthalmologist, who asked her to make pottery with soldiers who had eye injuries. This work of hers in Haifa parallels the dedicated years spent by Hedwig Grossmann with disabled veterans in Jerusalem. By now, Hanna Zuntz-Harag was one of the most notable potters in Israel, her work characterized by the attempt to create ceramics in the *Terra Sigilata* style, an ancient art form that flourished around the Mediterranean 2,500 years before. From the first she searched for glazes that would blend in with the basic colours of the clay. She did not agree with Grossmann's anti-glaze edict. At the same time, she realized a personal tendency towards the very simple forms that emerge from wheel-work: fluent, quiet, non-dramatized forms with no distortions.

Haifa served for a long time as the capital of ceramic creativity in Israel. Here the Na'aman, Lapid, Harsa, Pal, Kadar and similar factories were established. These factories employed first-rate ceramic technicians and some even employed ceramic artists such as Wolfgang Mayer-Michael, a sculptor who had studied ceramics in Germany in the 1920s and immigrated to Israel in 1935 and forms for tableware for Na'aman, and Elsbeth Cohen (Goldstein) who worked at the Lapid factory from 1952.

Cohen immigrated to Israel from Germany in 1937, and studied with Hedwig Grossmann. When she arrived at Lapid, she found a factory that manufactured only soup bowls and toilet bowls. She had at her disposal two temporary kilns, with no wheels, and only low grade clay

as raw material. The only unusual line was that of a few flowerpots fashioned from pictures found in a Soviet catalogue.

In 1945, influenced by ancient Israeli ceramics at Ha'aretz Museum in Tel Aviv, Cohen fashioned, (combining manual work with the wheel,) a series of small vases decorated with birds and flowers in brown and white (the colours of the plants she had gathered.) This put Lapid on the map as Israel's premier pottery factory.

Many years were to elapse before a ceramics department would be established at the Bezalel School of Arts. In 1958, Hedwig Grossmann received an offer to reorganize the Schneller ceramics workshop in the heart of Jerusalem; she advised that the workshop be incorporated with Bezalel.

The decision to set up a ceramics department at Bezalel was made by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which instructed Bezalel's director to offer classes in industrial design to serve the various ceramics factories in Israel. So, in one small room at the Schneller workshop, pottery classes began. One kiln arrived as a gift from abroad, but was never utilized fully, because with only moderate firing temperatures, the pottery invariably crumbled and the frustration grew intense. There were some ten students in the department, and their anger increased with each jug that broke in the kiln. At that moment, Gedula Schweig-Ogen arrived.

Schweig-Ogen set out on her artistic path while studying drawing with Jakov Steinhardt (1947-48,) painting with Mordechai Ardon and calligraphy with Jerehmiel Schechter (1949-1951). During 1950-51 she worked as Hedwig Grossmann's chief apprentice. Her task was to knead clay, fill and even shape vessels according to Grossmann's models. Schweig-Ogen arrived at the workshop with no previous experience in ceramics but, because her father was a noted photographer who documented archaeological digs and exhibitions at the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem, she was exposed to many ceramic displays and found herself drawn to them.

At night, after working all day at Grossmann's workshop, Schweig-Ogen went home to create her own private designs. She made and fired huge works in a large kiln in her back yard, with a crude oil-burning field stove. In 1955, at the Maskit arts and crafts shop, she displayed



her works, which combined Grossmann's influence with the inspiration of ancient Israeli history. She painted her works freehand and in broad strokes with the help of the flames that emanated from the open kiln.

From 1955-1962, Gedula Schweig-Ogen taught at the Zionist Youth Farm in Jerusalem. Her work bridged the gap between sculpting and the potter's wheel. Her lessons with Ardon, in the spirit of Paul Klee's Bauhaus exercises, now fused with the spirit of Hedwig Grossmann's wheel creations, including the dry clay and the lack of glaze, and thus the vessel in the wheel became important in terms of the foundation for the stylized-figurative image it formed. She began making animals and human shapes at the wheel: birds, ants, sheep, spiders, etc., all of them the product of the circular and cylindrical forms made by a potter's wheel and all of them steeped in the ancient spirit of Israel. Her first monumental work in this tradition was a mural made in 1963 for the Hebrew University campus in Jerusalem.

Outside the Bezalel ceramics class, the painter Dede (David) Ben Shaul developed his own ceramics language independently. He was influenced by the red drawing on ancient Israeli pottery, dating from the First and Second Temple periods. Later, he turned to the casting of clay bottles with circular upper handles, some of them decorated with an ornament or a painting, and some of them black. He brought the dark clay from Eilat: Elana Offer, an Eilat-based potter, had developed a special clay mixture in the south, and Ben Shaul, as a guest in Eilat, used that clay to fashion some of his works — which brings us to ceramic activity in the south of Israel.

During the final years of World War II, a factory for sanitation utensils named Harsa was erected in Haifa using materials brought over by the truckload from Trans-Jordan. At the end of 1949, following the War of Independence and the great waves of immigration in its wake, Solel Boneh decided to build another factory for sanitation utensils, this time in Beersheba, with the aim of employing immigrants from Iraq, North Africa and Romania.

Only in 1956 was Harsa's artistic ceramics department formed under the management of Nehemia Azaz. The purpose of this department was to train a new generation of potters in a far-flung development area (it was hoped the local potters would set up

The Beginnings of Israeli Ceramics: (*opposite, above*) Agi Yoeli, (*below*) Jean Mayer

independent workshops after their graduation) and to forge an artistic line based on desert motifs, using the Negev's raw materials.

It was hoped at one time to make Beersheba into Israel's ceramic centre, and its story is presented here in the words of Pnina Amir-Zamir, the director of the artistic ceramics department at Harsa from 1961-1966.

"Nehemia Azaz studied sculpting techniques with a stonemason in Italy, and trained in Holland. When he returned to Israel at the end of 1956, he thought that it would be good to utilize the great potential of a large ceramics factory with its huge kilns, where there are always small unused areas, and open a department of artistic ceramics that would employ veterans and new immigrants alike. He drew to him people from different backgrounds with no previous training in ceramics.

Azaz shaped the models in plaster. Apart from the tableware, most of the shapes were sculpted, that is, free-form and asymmetrical. His viewpoint in terms of form was greatly influenced by the sculptor Zadkine but was also informed by natural shapes, such as the boulders of the Negev, where Azaz spent many years during his tours of duty in the army. He believed that the form had a more immediate impact on the onlooker than colour, and that is why he greatly emphasized form in his work.

The production was carried out by making a cast using vitreous clay, from which the sanitary utensils were fashioned, and then turned over to women whose duty was to decorate them. Many of these decorators had never held a brush in their hands before.

Each decorator was asked to develop her own decorating style, and she was also responsible for a production line, and each piece was signed both by the one who fashioned the form and by the decorator. In the beginning, these unusual items were received cautiously, even reluctantly by the public. But the pottery slowly entered the unflooded market, and the new homes, and eventually got through to the public, perhaps changing their conventional approach in due course."

As we have shown so far, Israeli ceramics mostly flourished outside Tel Aviv, that is, far from the country's central artistic stage. Possibly this was yet another reason for pottery's historic identity problems in Israel. Tel Aviv was so involved with steering painting and sculpture



from French expressionism to abstract lyricism (at the same time pushing aside any preoccupation with thematics and local forms) that it left little chance for ceramic expression whose essence, certainly in the first thirty years, was rooted in local materials and forms.

But nevertheless, between Tel Aviv and Ramat-Gan, ceramic works were produced by a few individuals who had neither the connection with, nor the backing of, any ceramics factory. It is interesting that we are talking about artists linked with the *Ofakim Hadashim* ("New Horizons") movement, the group responsible for the move towards the abstract in Israel.

The most outstanding of these individuals was the painter Ahron Kahana, who immigrated to Israel with his wife, Mida, in 1933 and later became one of the most important abstract painters in Israel. Kahana studied ceramics at the Weisshof-Siedlung in Berlin. However, his pottery only got off to a start in 1947, along with his abstract-archaeological painting, after he and his wife studied art in Paris. For Kahana, ceramics was both the seed and the culmination of his creations: his symbolic-semitic abstraction drew its form from the world of ancient Mediterranean pottery, while at the same time fulfilling itself as an end product with the sculpted ceramic artifacts that he produced with his wife. In 1950, the public first became acquainted with Kahana's products: mugs, candleholders, plates, jewelry, jugs, vases, etc.

Another artist in the *Ofakim Hadashim* group was the Tel Aviv sculptress Ruth Zarfati (Sternschuss), who also worked in ceramics, making both artifacts and jewelry. As a sculptress, Zarfati's work was close to the sculptures of Henry Moore. As a ceramicist, she was close to ancient Middle-Eastern artifacts and created ceramics shaped like animals and mythical beings. Her jewellry was in the form of primitive bluish-brown strands, very grainy and heavy, reminiscent of the oriental jewellry worn by Bedouin and Yemenites.

Zvi Gali, a native of Haifa, died in 1962, aged 38. He, too, had exhibited with the *Ofakim Hadashim* movement. Primarily a painter, Gali specialized in frescoes and ceramics in Rome and Florence and painted semi-abstract paintings that were influenced by the work of Picasso, Georges Braque and Paul Klee, but also veered towards Middle-Eastern archaism. Gali painted on plates, jugs and other



vessels, some of which were designed in the shapes of thin, elongated figurines that resembled ancient ritualistic images.

The presence in the artists' village of Ein Hod, south of Haifa, from its inception in 1953 to the end of 1957, of Hedwig Grossmann and Rudi Lehmann, was only part of the ceramics activity in Ein Hod, thus realizing the dream of its founder, Marcel Janco, founder of the Dada movement, to gather together workshops of various arts and crafts that would work side by side to create Mediterranean folk arts and crafts. In this connection, Janco himself produced several ceramic murals using painted-glazed tiles that together formed either a truly abstract work or a semi-abstract work full of nationalistic symbolism.

From 1955, a community ceramics studio was active in Ein Hod. The studio and the kiln were put at the disposal of any artist who wanted to use them. This is how Genia Berger, Aviva Margalit, Louise and Bezalel Schatz, Barbara Sovkovitch and others became interested in pottery.

The ceramic sculptures made by Genia Berger in Ein Hod represented a world of youth and legend, where the kings of Judea and the heroes of the Bible walked hand in hand. The language is very primitive, Byzantine and ancient Middle-Eastern in style. "Pottery combines both painting and sculpting," says Berger, "and this is Israeli art, close to the earth, the sand, the nature of the place, the roots. Israel has a lot of clay, it is a country where many ancient peoples made pottery."

In 1956, Prof. Luzzatti, the noted Italian potter, gave a course in artistic ceramics at Ein Hod. He greatly influenced the ceramic style developed by the participants. One who did not attend the Luzzatti lectures and yet produced pottery in Ein Hod from 1955-1960, was the painter Louise Schatz. She studied ceramics in the United States, where she had worked as an apprentice at a studio run by a potter who used the wheel. Her ceramic works at Ein Hod, mostly utensils, plates and mugs, emphasized painted elements. She imported the glazes and used them to create abstract paintings that veered on the geometric. Forms, colours and functionalism — these were the values that made her interested in ceramic art in the first place.

In the community studio at Ein Hod, the painter Jean David, who immigrated to Israel from Romania in 1942, was active in crafts, such

as jewellry design, enamel work, graphics, carpets and ceramics. His pottery is mainly divided between murals (such as one designed for the Hebrew University campus in Jerusalem, 1954) and his painted plates. The studio in Ein Hod produced the ceramic tiles for his murals, while the plates were made by the Pal Ceramics plant in Haifa Bay, which also supplied Jean David with the raw materials and the glazes. In his ceramic paintings, Jean David expressed that same graphic surrealism, tending towards decorative abstraction, which characterizes all of his work.

In the book "Art in Israel", John Cheney, who wrote the section on Israeli crafts, reported on the flourishing business experienced by the ceramics factories, and the increasing interest in ceramics by Israeli architects. In fact, many ceramic murals were installed in buildings all over the country (made by Bezalel Schatz, Ahron Kahana, Gedula Schweig-Ogen, Jean David, Genia Berger, Shulamit Tal, Zvi Gali and others).

The early 1960s, then, were the climactic years of Israeli ceramics, and its turning point as well. On the one hand, the first artists received recognition, and on the other, a new generation of ceramic artists came to the fore, including students of the "founding mothers."

But in the early 1960s, the major thrust came from the direction of those who deviated from the traditions presented in this article: the return of Ziona Schimshi (who would later head the Bezalel ceramics department and become a successful and influential ceramic sculptress in Israel,) the arrival of David Morris from New York, Magdalena Hefez from Germany, Sonja Natra from Romania and so on — who together opened Israeli artistic ceramics to new vistas and new shades.

There is no doubt about it: the first thirty years of Israeli pottery both opened and closed the circle. From here on, a new chapter in the history of local ceramics begins.



# Contributors

*Ori Dvir,* Israeli-born, is chairman of the Public Committee for Trail Marking in Israel and is a well-known writer and radio and television broadcaster on the natural history and geography of Israel.

*Mordechai Gumpel* was born in Germany in 1912. Barred from studying at German art academies, he came to Israel in 1939 where he was a kibbutz shepherd. He has been an artist and art teacher, specializing in murals and mosaics.

*Ephraim Kishon,* born in Hungary in 1924, came to Israel in 1949. Israel's leading satirist and humorist, his books have been published all over the world in more than thirty-eight million copies.

*Shulamit Lapid* was born in 1934 in Tel Aviv. She studied at the Hebrew University and has been chairperson of the Israeli Writers' Association. She has published short stories, novels, plays and children's books, Her novels have been translated into several languages.

*Arik Lubovsky,* born in 1939 into a pioneering family in Yesod Hama'ala in the Upper Galilee, studied agriculture at Mikve Israel and in Britain. He is a historian and archivist and has worked at Beit Dubrovin since 1980.

*Matthew Nesvisky,* writer, book reviewer, columnist and journalist, was for many years a senior staff member of the daily newspaper *The Jerusalem Post.* He writes extensively for other papers and magazines.

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*Amir Or,* poet and critic, was born in Tel Aviv in 1956. He has lived in Holland and India and worked as a shepherd, building labourer and yoga instructor. He is co-editor of the poetry journal *Helicon.*

*Pamela Silver,* artist, was born in Johannesburg in 1948 and grew up in Zimbabwe. After studying at the universities of Cape Town and London, she immigrated to Israel in 1973 and has held solo and group shows in Israel and abroad.

ERRATUM: The following was omitted from the list of contributors in the previous issue of ARIEL (no. 89):

*Sidney Shapiro (Sha Boli),* was born in New York in 1915. After graduating in law, he studied Chinese history and culture at Cornell, Columbia and Yale Universities. He has lived in China since 1947 and is a prominent writer, translator and lecturer.