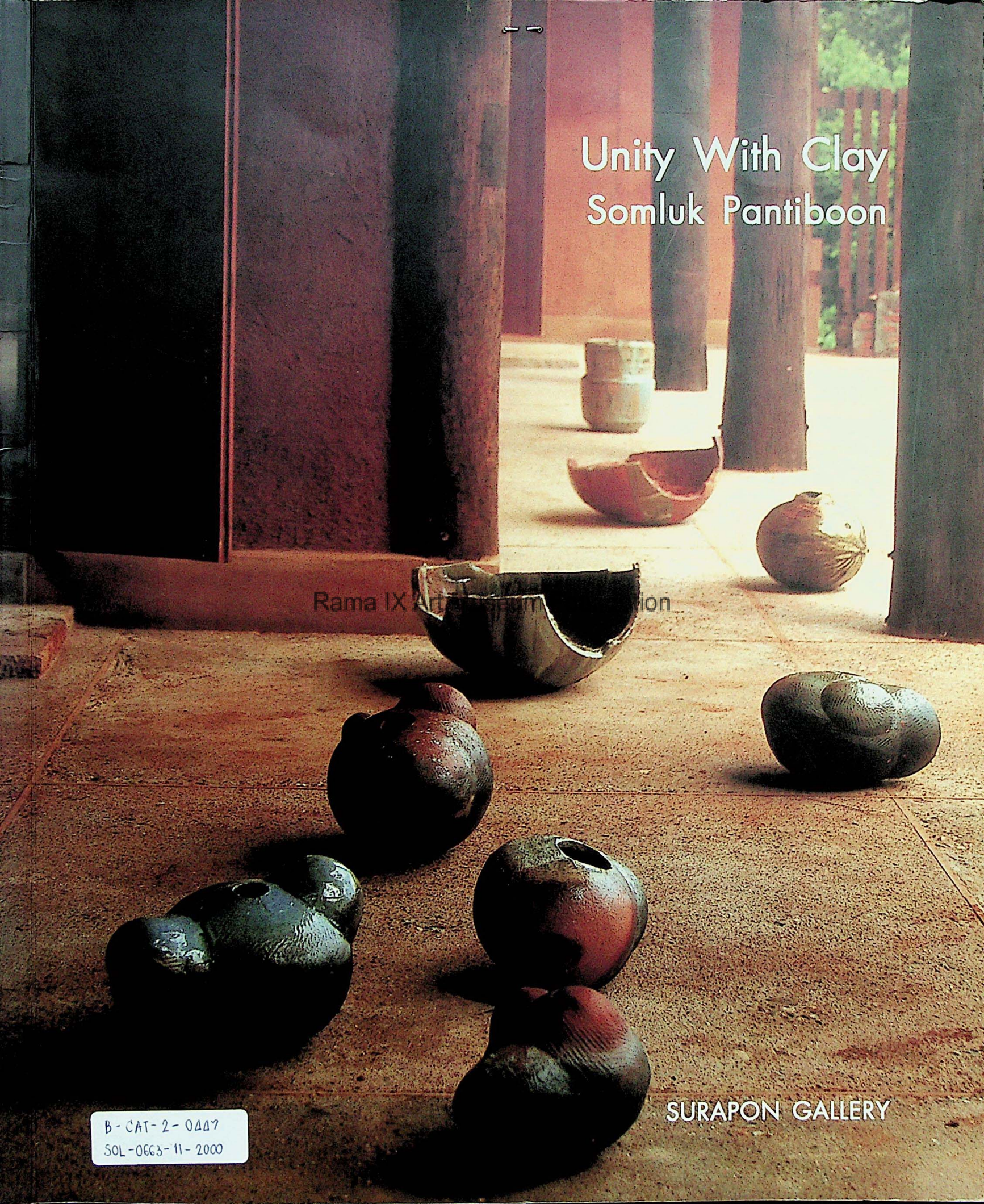




Unity With Clay Somluk Pantiboon

Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

SURAPON GALLERY

B-CAT-2-0447
SOL-0663-11-2000

UNITY WITH CLAY

A contemporary ceramic exhibition

Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

by

Somluk Pantiboon

November 23 - December 23, 2000

SURAPON GALLERY

Touching the Starting Point of Pottery

for Khun Somluk's exhibition
by Fumiko Boughey

Since ancient times men have enjoyed touching clay. Wherever there is clay, one can always find pottery. Some are things made by children while enjoying clay's sensuous muddy feeling, some are water jars or pots for storing food, sometimes they are objects used in offerings to Gods, or the fruition of the artistic expression of a certain artisan.

The Japanese are known for their fondness of pottery. Whenever I visit different parts of the world, I cannot help searching for ceramics, old or new. Here in this limited space, it is difficult to talk about the history of ceramics in general, however I am always amazed to find characteristics common to many different types of pottery throughout the world, especially in the prehistoric era. Looking at all these different objects, one definitely feels for the potter's universal reverence and appreciation of the world around him.

South East Asia is a treasure house of ceramics for those involved with CHADO, or The Way of Tea of Japan. In the 16th century, the great tea master Sen Rikyu established WABICHA that emphasized simplicity and austerity and he preferred to use simple bowls such as the rough Korean Ido-ware as well as Japanese pottery as tea bowls instead of the perfect luxurious ceramics imported from China. Almost all of the great tea masters at that time studied Zen Buddhism. There is a saying that to study the Way of Tea is to study Zen. Other tea masters followed Sen Rikyu's lead toward simplicity and soon there was a demand for unsophisticated rustic Japanese ceramics such as KARATSU, BIZEN, SHIGARAKI, RAKU, SHINO corresponding with the newly found aesthetic sense of the tea masters. Following this fashion, simple unsophisticated everyday ceramics from South East Asia made of rough clay were brought to Japan. The most prized items by the tea masters were glazed jars called Ruson jars which were suitable as tea containers and they were found at Luzon, trade port of the Philippines in the 16th century. The tea masters also favored Sawankhalok ware known as Kaki-no-te, meaning a persimmon shaped incense container. It was actually shaped like the Thai mangosteen. Vietnamese tea bowls with designs of underglaze blue which appeared more blurred and soft in comparison with the precise Chinese blue and white ceramics were also favored by them. Therefore, the tea masters created a new artistic and spiritual value in the simple and rustic ceramics. They looked beyond the perfectly balanced shape and found beauty in asymmetry. South East Asian ceramics have touched the Japanese people's hearts since ancient times and unknowingly to them, might have given influence to Japanese pottery.

I recalled vividly my first encounter with Khun Somluk's pottery about ten years ago. While walking on Sukhumvit Road one day, I chanced upon a ceramic exhibition that was being held at the Nailert Building. When I saw Khun Somluk's pieces I felt very nostalgic because of the clear influence of Japanese ceramics. Then I learned that he had studied under the renowned Master Potter Taroemon Nakazato. Several years later, I had an opportunity to visit several kilns in Chiang Mai and Lampang with Khun Somluk and his wife Tamako-san while I was writing an article of present-day earthen ware pottery of Thailand. I learned that he also had a great knowledge of old Khmer and Thai. Additionally, his ceramics reflected his gentle and natural character. Whenever I go to his exhibitions I always find new pieces which are expressed with definite ideas towards artistic creation. On one occasion while I was looking at one of his pieces, I was struck by the similarity with Ban Chiang pottery, a universal appeal that transcended time and space. This to me was the essence of Khun Somluk's work: contemporary ceramics with their starting point linking to ancient Thai aesthetic values and spirit.



「陶芸の原点にふれて」
—ソムラックさんの個展に寄せて—

ブーイ文子

人間は太古の昔から土に触れる喜びを知り、土がある世界中あらゆる場所に焼物が存在した。それらは子供たちが粘土をこねて遊びながら造ったもの、暮らしの中の必需品として水や食料を貯えたり、煮炊きしたりするもの、儀式用として神に捧げられたもの、あるいは芸術的理念が表現された鑑賞用の美術品などがある。

私は焼物好きの日本人の国民性によるのか、世界中どこへ行っても一番気になるのがこの焼物である。ここで焼物の歴史をあれこれと語るつもりはないが、ただ先史時代の焼物などを見てみると、作り手の根源的な意識の中に発想や動機など多くの共通点が見出されることには驚かされてしまうのである。例えばエジプト、メソポタミア、中国、南アメリカ、そしてタイのパンチェン土器に見られるようなクリーム色の地に朱色で昆虫、動物、性器文様、幾何学文様などが大胆に描かれた陶工の技術の普遍性には、彼らの大自然への畏敬、感謝、祈りが感じられるのである。

さて、日本の茶道の世界に携わっている者にとっては、東南アジアはまさに焼物の宝庫である。というのは16世紀頃、武野紹鷗、千利休などを中心とした侘茶が確立し、今までの完璧な唐物万能主義であった茶道具から、茶人達の新しい美意識に基づいた素朴で自然な高麗の井戸茶碗を初めとして、唐津、備前、信楽、楽、志野焼などの和物が主流となった。それとともに東南アジアから日本へ貴重品としてもたらされたものが呂宋壺などで有名な南蛮、島物とよばれた東南アジアの焼物であった。それらは粗雑な土で作られ、極めて古拙な雑器の類ではあったが、素材に込められたその独自の趣が当時の茶人達の目に留まり、珍器としてなかなか手に入らないものであった。タイのサワンカロークもその一つで、日本では宋胡録と呼ばれ、茶人の間で香合として非常に珍重された。マンゴスチンの形をした合子が多く、柿の実に似ていることから柿の手とも呼ばれた。また、安南染付の中で絞手と呼ばれ、染付の藍が滲んだ発色をした茶碗も茶人の鋭い鑑識眼に適ったものであった。飾らぬ自然な姿に真の価値観を与えた当時の茶人達の果たした役割は大きく、その後の日本人の美に対する価値観を決定的にしたと言える。不均衡な中にある新鮮な美を掘りだしたのである。このように、お茶の世界を中心として東南アジアの焼物は古くから日本人の心にふれ、また日本の陶芸にも無意識のうちに影響を与えていったものとも思われる。

私がソムラックさんの作品に出会ってから、かれこれ10年あまりになる。最初にふらりと入った彼の展覧会で、当時の彼の作品の中に日本的なものを色濃く感じて、何か郷愁のようなものさえも覚えたものであった。それもそのはず、唐津の中里太郎右門先生の下でも修行をなさったと後からお聞きした。また、私はタイの土器について丁度執筆していた時に、奥様のたまこさん達と一緒にチェンマイやランパンの村を訪れた。そして彼がクメールやタイの古い焼物にも造詣が深いことを知った。私にはソムラックさんの焼物について評論する力もそのための分析力も持ち合わせていないが、彼にお会いして感じたことは、いつも自然体で何事にも何人にも媚びず、ひたすら挑む姿は彼の作品そのものであるような気がする。と同時に、彼の展覧会を見るたびに感じるのは、御自分の創作理念を持つ中にも、タイ人の美の原点というものを失わずにいるので、一つ一つの作品の中にそれぞれ違った新鮮さを見出すのが楽しみである。ある時、彼の作品の一つに何気なくパンチェン土器のもつ普遍性を感じ取った瞬間、時空を超えた何か神秘的なものが心に響いたのであった。それには“叩きのコンテンポラリー”とも言うべき作品の力強さと、作家の“いのち”が込められているようであった。

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UNITY WITH CLAY

Somluk Pantiboon

Since childhood, my close relationship with nature has never changed. The surrounding mountains and hills of my hometown were my favorite playground. In my adulthood, wherever I moved, the mountains were always in my sight. In those years I never knew what the green mountains and trees held in store for me in the future but as long as I could see the green around, its reflection of life's activities always put me at ease.

Now a full-time potter myself, I am fully aware of the fact that my life, my clay works and nature are inseparable and totally interdependent. The surrounding nature sustains me and my work with essential natural materials for pottery-making-clay and glazes. Clay comes from nearby mountains or rice paddies where farmers dig to make a fish pond; main glazes from the ashes, locally available (wood ash, rice straw and husk ashes, or ashes from any vegetation around) and also red clay as a glaze from the grounds of my studio.

In pottery, clay is like a canvas and glazes like paints. They are inert materials unless put into use. It is therefore the task of a potter to bring forth an art object from these materials. I must say that it is not only the glaze formula nor the method nor the temperature which makes a good pot. It is the potter's vision and his own development in pottery-making that result in the effective use of materials and the creation of a good pot. If a potter knows through his experiences how to use the natural materials around him, there is an unlimited opportunity to produce creative works with clay.

Some twenty years ago, as a college student I took a first step in the course of ceramics. Ten years ago I set up my studio in Chiang Rai to become a studio-potter and began to pursue pottery as the way of life. The more I dipped my head and hands into the clay, the wider I saw the horizon open for clay work. I could perceive the potentialities of working in clay which are beyond traditional potting, in other words, pottery as providing other forms of creativity: i.e. painting, drawing and sculpture. They are all interrelated and can be demonstrated in one form, pottery. The perception that pottery is a potential art form, was a promise as well as a hope for my endeavors in clay work and furthermore, in my pursuit of art in ceramics.



In preparation for this exhibition, I consciously set about to achieve contemporary forms, or clay sculptures rather than function-oriented forms which I used to work with in the past. These sculptural forms, to my understanding, can express and illustrate more individualized ideas drawn from one's intuition, feelings and creative processes than through traditional forms. Each work becomes a new creation and reveals the process of its making and invention. Its process is like a cohesion of two energies - the raw energy of clay, ashes and fire and the inner energy of my being. But working each time anew is quite demanding as well as challenging. Some works simply flow out of my hand but others just sit on the wheel, waiting to draw every drop of my sweat and energy. Whichever way the work may come out, I enjoy the moment of intensity as well as intimacy of working on the process of a clay sculpture.

On the surface of a newly created form, I often use a swift touch, the touch of sharp lines and strokes or motifs, the abstract expressions of what I perceive from the natural surroundings. They may be from the shape of hills, the movement of leaves and plants, or the feeling of wind and sky. Though limited in my ability to perceive the essence of nature, I try to convey, through a swift motion of line and stroke, a sense of the freshness or liveliness which nature presents. When the lines are touched upon the surface, the form becomes lively, joined with the power and beauty of glazes, all in unity in life, with clay.

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There is still much more to discuss about the methods and techniques which I used for the works on display, e.g., the use of a traditional paddling method to distort and create a new form of clay sculpture or the application of new glazes and their effect on the clay, etc. However, in order to challenge and explore the breadth or the depth of pottery, there are more works instead of many words yet to be done. So I will conclude my thoughts with the words of Michael Cardew, an English potter and pioneer in the development of twentieth-century pottery. "...the only way to set about that with any hope of ultimate success was by hard work..., cut out the talk and concentrate on the work - that is, do some practical thinking, leave the discussions for another time, or a future age."

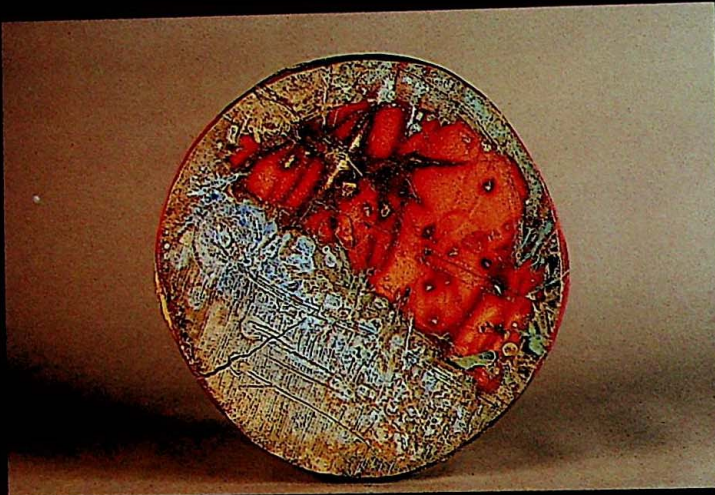


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PLATE, WOOD AND LEAF ASH GLAZED

44 x 6 cm.



PLATE, UNGLAZED
43 x 4 cm.



POT, WOOD ASH GLAZED
38 x 34 cm.



POT, UNGLAZED
29 x 27 cm.

seum Foundation



VASE, IRON GLAZED
32 x 36 cm.



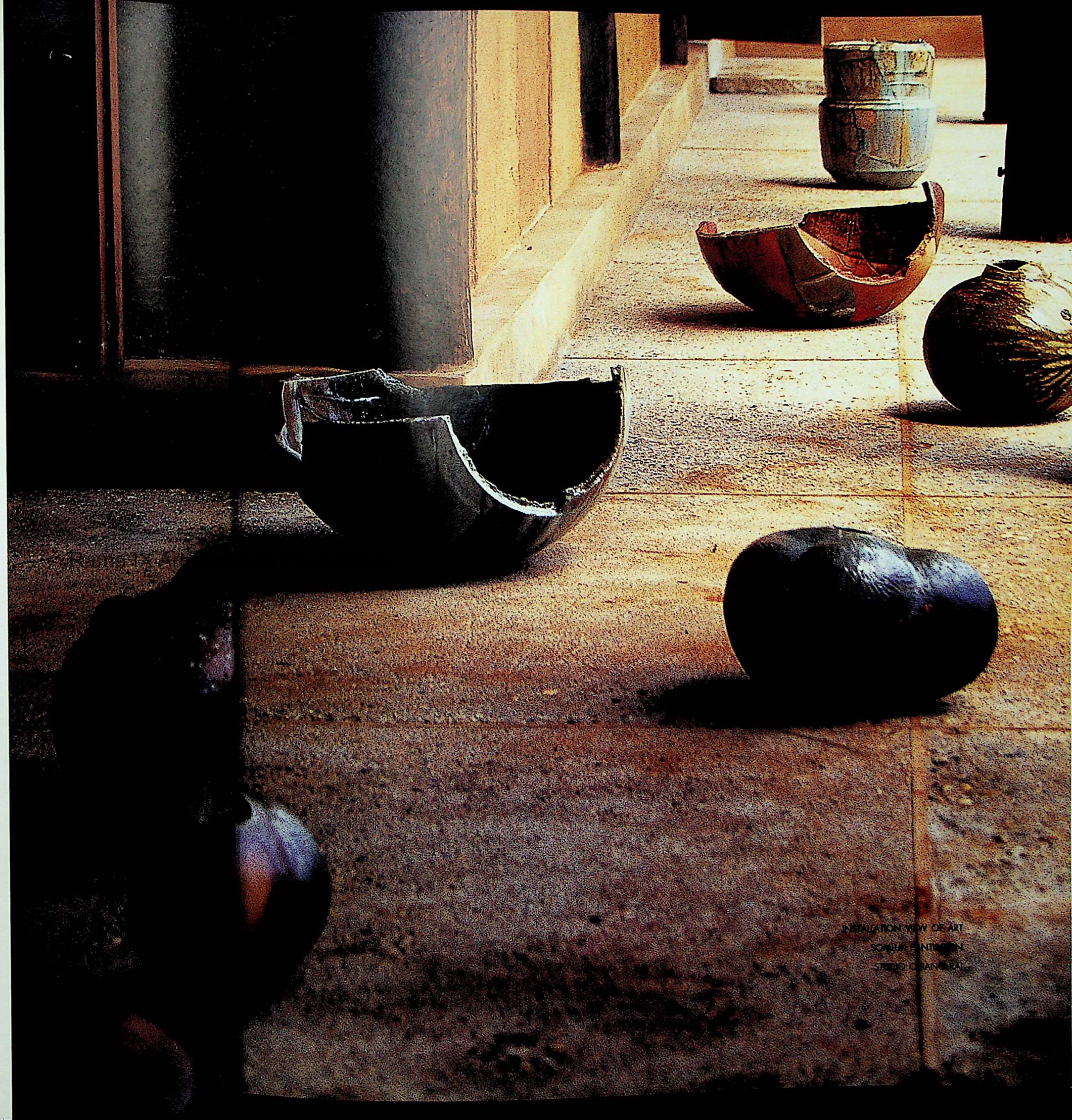
VASE, COPPER RED GLAZED
24 x 41 cm.



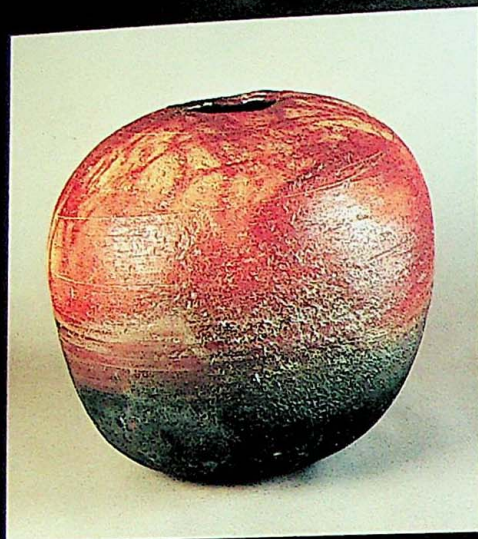
BOWL, WOOD ASH GLAZED
42 x 28 cm.



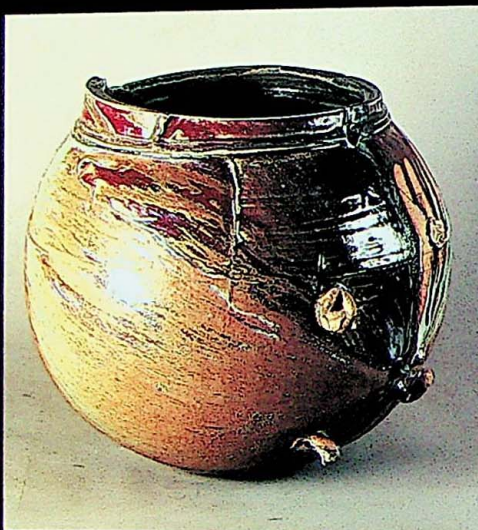
VASE, WOOD ASH GLAZED
35 x 22 cm.



INSTALLATION VIEW OF ART
SOMER PENTON
STUDIO CHANDRA



POT, UNGLAZED
40 x 35 cm.



POT, LEAVE ASH AND COPPER RED GLAZED
36 x 32 cm.



POT, UNGLAZED
30 x 25 cm.

seum Foundation



VASE, IRON GLAZED
20 x 38 cm.