



Small Hum Thrown Bowl 5 cm. Nuka Glaze with Tenmoku Lines.



Faceted Jar. Tenmoku Glaze.



Jug 24 cm. Nuka Glaze. 2013



Bowl 35cm. Shino glaze with Iron cross

by Rachael Chambers

# James Hake

**Y**ou may have seen James Hake's work before, perhaps at Potfest in the Park, and like many others, marvelled at the ingenuity of creating such large forms with such unusual coloured glazes. How does he do it? Being curious too, I decided to catch up with James to ask him where it had all begun and what had influenced his design style.

Having initially studied 3 Dimensional Design at Manchester Metropolitan University, James developed his skills further on the Pottery Skills Course in the Republic of Ireland. Run by the Crafts Council of Ireland, the apprenticeship style teaching focuses on the technical side, allowing design skills to develop as the individual progresses. This mix of training helped James bridge the gap from student to full time maker.

Now a full time potter, James is able to look back and recognise the people who helped him make his journey into ceramics.

"It's really hard to know why you fall into one particular thing," says James. "I have always been interested in making things and when I was at secondary school I had a good ceramics teacher, which really got me started. Also I think I'm the kind of person who enjoyed learning by actually trying things out and experimenting, and clay is perfect for that. I have been fortunate to have had some great teachers along the way, particularly Gus Mableson at the Pottery Skills course and Alex McErlain at Manchester Metropolitan University."

While studying at Manchester James visited a touring exhibition of Japanese ceramics at Blackwell House in Cumbria, this was to be a turning point in his own design work, influencing both the scale and decoration of future ceramics.

"I was totally amazed by a large Hamada plate and some pots by a local potter, Edward Hughes. I was also struck by the simplicity and boldness of the decoration, I guess it left a lasting impression on me at a formative time when I was just starting to make."

The scale of James's work along with the colour and decoration through glazes remains a big part of what he does. James mixes his own glazes from materials found locally to his home and studio.

"From the very beginning I have been really interested in the use of colour in ceramics. When I was at university I was lucky enough to go on work experience with Will Levi Marshall, during this period I spent most of my time mixing and testing glazes. Since then it has become part of my practice to constantly mix new glazes or adaptations for each firing. In my studio I have a shelf of test tiles that I refer to when I'm making at the wheel.

"All of my glazes are mixed by hand from the raw materials. As I have progressed I have tried to keep my glazes as simple as possible, often they are simple combinations of just two or three materials. Near where I live there are lots of quarries so I have started collecting local materials, such as limestone, granite and wood ashes to incorporate into my glazes. On many of my pieces I use different glazes together in combination by pouring or brushing them over each other. These fuse together in the heat of the kiln. Like the making process, a lot of it is about experimentation and adapting slightly what you already have.

"It's impossible to talk about glazing without mentioning the firing, this makes a huge difference to the characteristics of the glaze and is the final creative part of the making process. All my work is

reduction fired to 1300° C in a gas kiln. This process involves restricting oxygen into the kiln during certain periods of the firing and helps promote the richness and depth to glazes. One of the joys of this process is that it can be quite unpredictable, glazes can have different characteristics in different parts of the kiln, or if the firing cycle is changed."

All this is done in James's studio, a once derelict barn that he has transformed into a small, but neatly ordered working space. The studio has a mezzanine level where James works under the eaves, with the light from the



Small jar. Hawthorn ash glaze.



skylights pouring in. There's a small electric wheel and racks that house drying pots and on the floor are numerous buckets holding a multitude of James's handmade glazes.

With a grant from the Arts Council, James has been able to purchase a larger gas kiln for his studio, which has enabled him to develop his work further.

"I've always wanted to challenge myself to make work on a larger scale," he explains. "This started with large platters and now I've started making larger bottles in thrown sections. I think that part of me has always wanted to challenge myself beyond my comfort zone, even if this means I fail sometimes. If I was being philosophical about it, I would say that the mistakes were part of the process to making better work, but it doesn't always seem like that at the time!"

"The larger the work, the bigger the challenges. With the large bowls for example, simply flipping them over so that they can be trimmed is a two-man operation. One of the things I really love about larger work is they provide a huge surface to decorate. However, the logistics of glazing really big pieces is also very difficult and I have had to rethink the way I apply the glazes so they go on evenly and don't run off in the firing.

Large Square Dish on raised feet.  
Nuka glaze, with kakii square and tenmoku spot.

"The final aspect of making big pieces is the firing, where the pots are exposed to the heat of the kiln. All you can do at that stage is hope for the best."

Talking to James, I can't help but feel his admiration for the raw materials of clay and glaze, this mixed with his passion for experimentation is a powerful combination that continues to push him.

"I think it's really important to make from the heart and try and make the things you are really passionate about. I would like to continue to push myself a little beyond my comfort zone, even when it involves some failures along the way. With this in mind I would like to keep challenging myself to make larger work, but also to develop my repertoire of glazes."

James Hake Ceramics  
Plough Barn, Over Kellet, Carnforth,  
Lancashire LA6 1DA  
T: 07769 945487 (studio)  
E: jms\_hake@yahoo.co.uk  
www.jameshake.co.uk

James will be exhibiting at:  
Art in Clay: 3-5 July, Hatfield House, Herts AL9 5NQ  
Potfest in the Park: 25-27 July, Nr Penrith CA11 9TH



## MAs and BAs in Contemporary Design Crafts



Places available for September 2015  
Talk to us about funding and part-time study.



plymouthart.ac.uk

## COCKINGTON COURT

What better way to spend your leisure time **CRAFT CENTRE**



Cockington Court has over 20 craft makers from start ups to established businesses ranging from jewellers, guilders, textile artists, sculptors, bespoke tailors, ceramicists and furniture makers.

Uniquely the craft makers can also access free, independent business advice and benefit from an exciting events and activity programme, designed to attract visitors throughout the year.

Visit our brand new Welcome Point and Gallery showcasing crafts from a variety of contemporary makers. To find out more email Marissa Wakefield, the Centre Director on [Marissa.wakefield@tedcltd.com](mailto:Marissa.wakefield@tedcltd.com) or visit [www.cockingtoncourt.org](http://www.cockingtoncourt.org)

**Free admission**  
Cockington Court,  
Cockington, Torquay TQ2 6XA  
01803 607230



[www.craftanddesign.net/search](http://www.craftanddesign.net/search)

## eventful days out

### CRAFTED WITH YOU IN MIND

Shugborough Country Show  
**June 27 & 28**  
Shugborough Estate  
Milford nr. Stafford ST17 0XB

West Anglia Country Show  
at Huntingdon Racecourse  
**July 11 & 12**  
Brampton Cams PE28 4NL

The West Suffolk Country Show  
**July 18 & 19**  
Rougham Airfield  
Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk IP30 9LZ

Kedleston Hall Country Show  
**July 25 & 26**  
Kedleston Hall Derby DE22 5JH

Poole Town & Country Show  
**August 1 & 2**  
Upton Country Park  
Poole Dorset BH17 7BJ

The Knebworth Country Show  
**August 15 & 16**  
Knebworth Hertfordshire SG1 2AX

Osterley Park Country Show  
**August 30 & 31**  
Jersey Road Isleworth London TW7 4RB

Northamptonshire Food Show@Holdenby  
**September 5 & 6**  
Holdenby House Northampton NN6 8DU

Cambridge Garden Produce & Food Festival  
**September 19 & 20**  
Parker's Piece Cambridge CB1 1JF

Rockingham Castle Country Show  
**September 26 & 27**  
Rockingham Market Harborough  
Leicestershire LE16 8TH

so if you'd like to join us at any of these super events you'll be most welcome and you'll find info and details at:

[oakleighfairs.co.uk/events](http://oakleighfairs.co.uk/events) | 01206 263088



craft&design July/August 2015