Jan McKeachie-Johnston  
River Falls, Wisconsin

Artist's Statement

I have worked as a studio potter/ceramic artist for more than twenty years. My work grows out of a strong tradition of functional ceramics from England and Japan (Leach/Hamada). Over the years it has also been informed and inspired by the ancient Minoan pottery of Crete, Jomon pottery of Japan, American Indian and Japanese basket forms, Iranian pottery, and many aspects of African art including pottery and masks. My interest in these cultures and their art is the strong sense of form, rich surface pattern and texture, and a universally understood connection between humanity and art, elements which I am concerned with in my own work.

I fire the majority of my work in a Japanese style wood fired kiln. It is a sixty-hour firing process during which wood is continually stoked into the kiln. The accumulation of ash on the surface of the pieces enhances the surface textures and subtleties of form that I consider critical to the qualities I am trying to communicate.

Working within a traditional framework, it is important to me that my work moves beyond that framework to carry information personal to myself to the viewer/user. Each piece is considered as an individual. I approach my work intuitively, finding that while I have certain ideas or parameters about form and finished product it is essential to the vitality of the piece to remain open and maintain a dialogue during the creating process. Through this process I hope to reveal the unique, friendly and responsive, and robust qualities of clay as a material.

My intent is that these pieces stand alone as visual objects. My hope is that they move beyond that to express emotional, sensual, tactile, spiritual, and ritual sensibilities these sensibilities being enhanced by the communication and sharing that occurs through use. Accessibility is also an important component of my work and I am never happier than when someone expresses their delight in using one of my pieces.