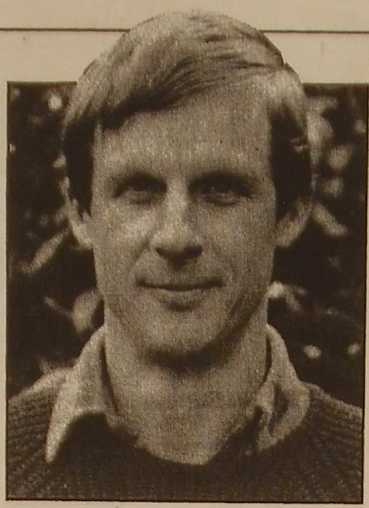


ARTS/Lotte Streisinger

Alan Kluber in Transition



Alan Kluber is a well-known and respected local potter whose work is featured at Opus 5 during December. Lotte Streisinger, who is also a potter, talked with him this weekend.

WH: You are having a show and sale of your work at Opus 5 this month. How would you describe this collection of pieces?

AK: This work spans the period from 1969 when I first came to Oregon until a little less than two years ago, when I stopped working in clay.

I was very inexperienced in '69—a beginner but hard-working; I worked towards maturity and recognition, locally and nationally. So this show contains some of that earliest work from graduate school: academic and with no audience concern.

It also contains functional work made with intention to sell, originally at the Saturday Market. There are also sculptural pieces, continuing ideas from graduate school (the addition of color, until color became the main concern); two or three groups that are exploratory and have never been shown before; and finally, pieces where clay has become glass.

WH: I understand this is your farewell show. Why are you saying farewell to clay?

AK: Farewell, for now. It is not an intention to stop. I just stopped because the work felt complete. I was at a point where my work began to feel predictable, and, to the extent that it was predictable, it was less interesting and vital for me. But also I found myself without energy for more pots. It felt different from normal downswings, and I decided to listen to that, and trust it, and not force myself.

There are other areas of life I want to devote myself to, where I have no idea about what will happen, and which seem enormously exciting. If, in the future, the clay work no longer seems complete, I may do some more, but I have no such plans just now.

WH: You have been an important, central figure in the local pottery community for a very long time. How long?

AK: Since I worked at Maude Kerns Art Center in '74.

WH: You have been a teacher, advisor, role-model for many of us. Let's talk about your history a little. You came to pottery through dance. . . .

AK: I didn't come to pottery through dance, although dance did influence my work. I came to pottery by accident, in my last term as an English ed. major. I was immediately seduced. From there I did an apprenticeship with Byron Tempel (a student of Bernard Leach) in New Jersey. I took a workshop with Karen Karnes, and a kiln-building workshop with Paulus Berensohn and M. C. Richards.

WH: All the greats.

AK: I worked in a pottery factory in Chicago and then came to graduate school in Eugene. For Byron Tempel I had done production wheel throwing, and when I started to throw at the University, all the pots looked like Byron's. For a year I tried throwing my own pots, but they still looked like Byron Tempel stoneware. So, I put throwing aside, and started to hand-build with porcelain.

WH: So you danced into claywork, and now you are dancing out again. How does it feel to be so airy?

AK: Sometimes it feels wonderful, and sometimes I feel I am dancing with lead sneakers. It always feels correct though, even when I am full of self-doubt. I am trusting that following my energy and intuition will lead me to the places that are right for me, even though there is a considerable sense of loss. I feel like I am giving some things up, but in doing so, I'm creating space for other new things.

Initially I felt working with clay was an act of self-healing, and that initial impetus had receded as I focused on being successful.

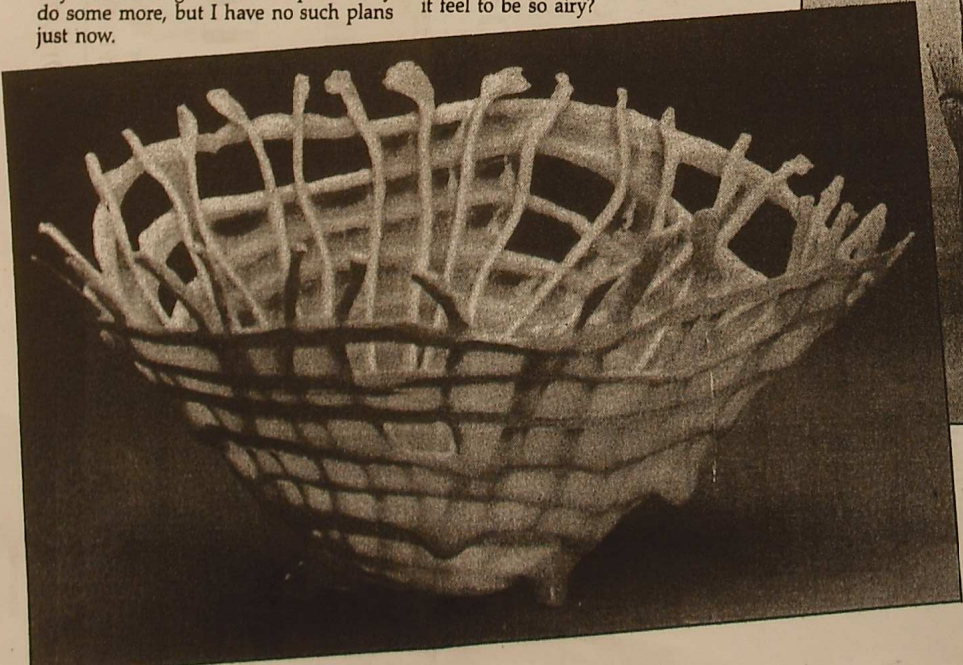
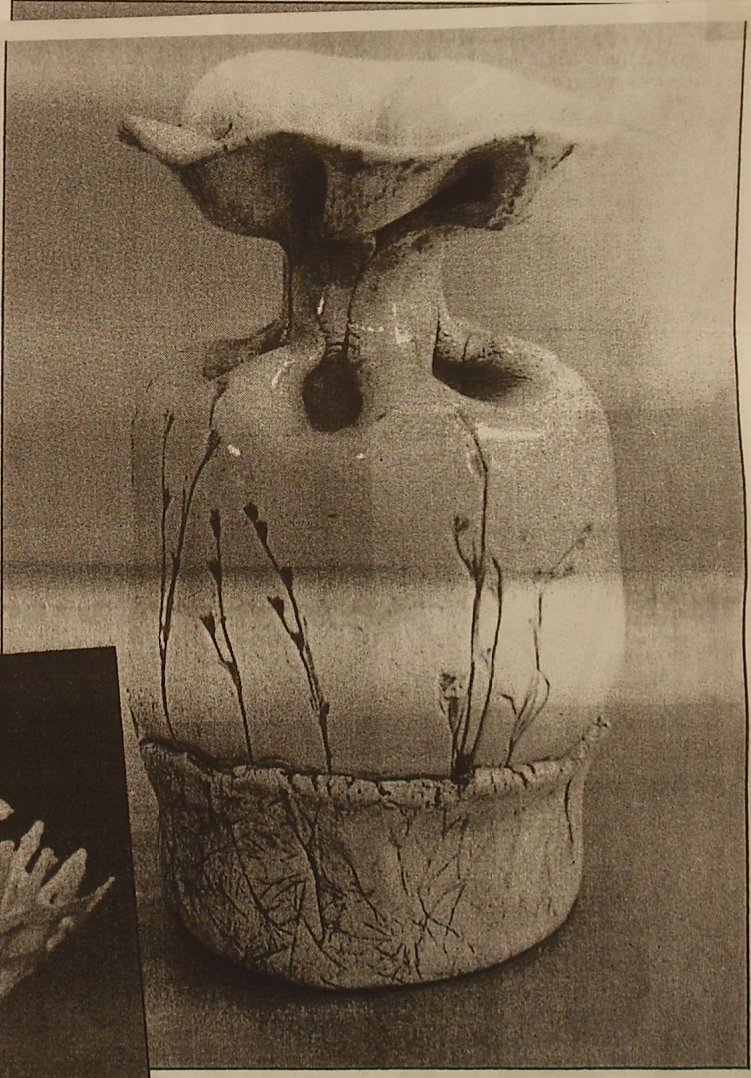
WH: Actually, I am not surprised at this development. Wouldn't you agree that, in recent years, your pots have been composed of more and more air, and less and less clay?

AK: It's true. In a sense, the walls of the pots have been becoming more transparent. Pots are often seen as a human

metaphor, and the walls of the pot like our own walls, and I got to the point where I wasn't interested in just seeing through the top. I wanted everything to be open and revealed. In a sense, the last work—the clay turning into glass—did that, and I sort of used up the metaphor.

WH: Once, when I was experiencing great difficulty in my own life, and didn't know whether I could go on working in clay, you said, "Oh, but clay is so expressive." How do you think you will be expressing yourself in the future?

AK: It seems impossible to me not to be expressive. What I am looking for now is a form for that expression, that is challenging, nourishing, and of value in the larger world. It could turn out to be more clay, but right now it feels like it will be through a more direct relationship with other people.



Clay vase and Porcelain bowl by Allan Kluber.

Opus 5 Gallery is located at 136 East Broadway between Oak and Pearl. Other artists featured this month are: Hannah Goldrich, jewelry; Barbara Kensler, wooden figures; and Mike Pease, drawings. Holiday hours are Monday through Saturday 10-6 and Sunday 12-5.