

Les Blakebrough: Ceramics is an Object Gallery travelling exhibition.

Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft is an initiative of Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design. The annual series aims to celebrate the achievements of Australia's most iconic crafts practitioners, through a touring exhibition and a major monograph publication.

Living Treasures is presented by Object in collaboration with Craft Australia and Museums & Galleries New South Wales. This exhibition is supported by the Tasmanian Government through Arts Tasmania, the University of Tasmania through the office of the Vice Chancellor, and Object's National Exhibitions Strategy funded by the Australia Council.

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Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design is a non-profit organisation supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments. Object is assisted by the New South Wales Government – Ministry for the Arts, and the Australian Government through the Australia Council its arts funding and advisory body.

Cover: Les Blakebrough, *Oval Form* [from the 'Forest Floor' series], 2004, unglazed *Southern Ice* porcelain, deep etched, shellac resist.

Exhibition dates:

19 November 2005 - 15 January 2006

Object Gallery will be closed between 24 December 2005 and 2 January 2006 inclusive

Main Gallery:

Les Blakebrough: Ceramics

Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft

Project Space:

Vicky Shukuroglou
Alt

Window Space:

zuii
Somewhere Between

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Les Blakebrough: Ceramics

Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft

19 November 2005 – 15 January 2006





Les Blakebrough: Ceramics

Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft

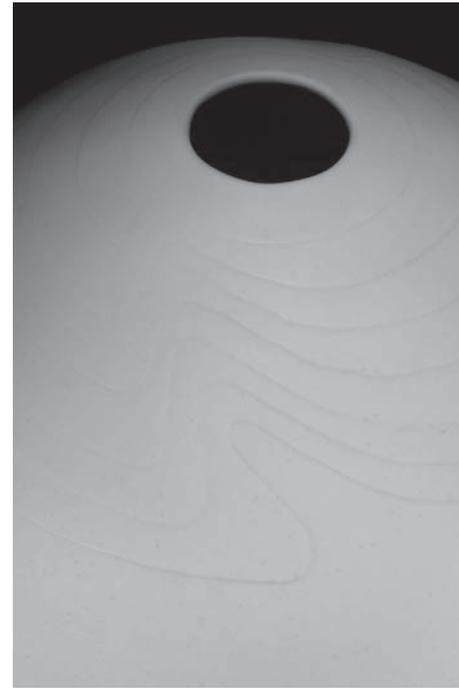
In a career spanning five decades, Les Blakebrough (born 1930) has become one of Australia's most acclaimed and influential ceramic artists. His body of work has ranged from earthy functional wares to more recent, delicate forms. The ethereal beauty of these later works emphasises the translucency and fragility of the *Southern Ice* Porcelain he trademarked and spent more than five years developing. His passionate research and development of the techniques and materials of ceramics have led him on journeys of discovery from studying with master potters in Japan in the 1960s to working with leading manufacturers of industrial ceramics in Scandinavia in the 1990s.

Blakebrough has made an extraordinary contribution to visual art, craft and design in Australia as a practitioner, teacher, mentor and visionary advocate. He has been Director of the Sturt Pottery and Sturt Workshops, a founding member of the Crafts Board of the Australia Council, Head of Ceramics at the Tasmanian School of Art and a Principle Research Fellow at the University of Tasmania. He has been awarded numerous awards and commissions and his works are held in all major public collections in Australia and in many others around the world.

Southern Ice Porcelain

Les Blakebrough has had a pioneering role to play in the development of porcelain clay since the 1960s when he worked at the Sturt Workshops at Mittagong in New South Wales. During the following thirty years he continued to refine porcelain clay of increasing whiteness. During the 1990s, Blakebrough focused on the development of this project and by 1999 had achieved a product of international quality. *Southern Ice* Porcelain was trademarked and produced commercially by Clayworks Australia in Dandenong, Victoria, that year and the research undertaken by Blakebrough was to be acclaimed worldwide.

Image: Les Blakebrough in the Ceramics research unit at the University of Tasmania inspecting a recently etched large bowl. (Photographer: Lynda Warner)



Peter Lane, author of *Contemporary Studio Porcelain*, stated that *Southern Ice* 'is one of the most exciting white and translucent porcelains that I have ever used.'

Since 1999, Clayworks Australia has been exporting large quantities of this world-class porcelain clay to Europe, the United Kingdom and North America and its use features in the oeuvre of many of the most significant porcelain makers. *Southern Ice* Porcelain clay is used in all of the works on display. Les Blakebrough shows its special qualities – its translucency, whiteness and strength – to great effect in this exciting survey of recent work.

Current work

The distinctive relief decoration is a dominant feature of the pure white *Southern Ice* Porcelain forms in this exhibition. The imagery is generally derived from nature – leaves, grasses, wind patterns on water – although most recently Blakebrough has been using the vessels to record passages of text.

In order to achieve the particular qualities of the decoration, the artist paints the images on to the still pliable porcelain body using shellac which is allowed to harden. Blakebrough then gently sponges away the clay surrounding the decoration so that it is left in relief. The forms are usually fired unglazed and the buff surfaces have a lovely velvety texture when handled.

Southern Ice Porcelain is renowned for its whiteness and strength and this latter quality allows the artist to create monumental and yet highly refined forms that exhibit great translucency. This enhances the decoration and gives these pristine objects their ethereal beauty.

Jonathan Holmes

Image: Les Blakebrough, *Sphere [Contour]*, 2002, unglazed *Southern Ice* porcelain, deep etched, shellac resist. (Photography: Uffe Schutze)

Image: Les Blakebrough, *Large Bowl* (from the 'Forest Floor' series), 1999, unglazed *Southern Ice* porcelain, deep etched, shellac resist. (Photography: Uffe Schutze)