



Danlami Aliyu  
Paul Barron  
Sebastian Blackie  
Jill Crowley  
Natasha Daintry  
Katerina Evangelidou  
Henry Hammond  
Gwyn Hansson Pigott  
Ashley Howard  
Agnete Hoy  
Mo Jupp  
Gareth Mason  
John Maltby  
Siddig el Nigoumi  
Magdalene Odundo  
Farnham Pottery  
John Reeve  
Duncan Ross  
Rupert Spira  
Peter Ting  
Takeshi Yasuda





Over the last few years I have become increasingly interested in Farnham and its rich history of producing ceramics, in particular Farnham Art School and the colleges which followed. This exhibition has given me the chance to highlight a 'golden era' of ceramics - a snap shot of pioneering teachers and pupils that I think need to be recognised. I would like to thank those who have shared experiences and stories from their time in Farnham.

- **James Fordham**, Director of Oxford Ceramics Gallery





From the late 1940s onwards the attractive brick-built market town of Farnham in Surrey became home to two remarkable art school departments - specialising in ceramics and textiles respectively.

Over the decades the two courses gained international fame and attracted students from across the world. Farnham Art School was initially housed in the old Grammar School in Farnham High Street, but the college moved to extensive new premises in 1970, when it was renamed the West Surrey College of Art and Design (now the University for the Creative Arts). From 1947 to 1979 Farnham's ceramics course was by led by the potter Henry Hammond (1914–89). Before the war, Hammond had been a student of William Staite Murray (1881-1982) at the Royal College of Art in London. Murray was one of the true pioneers of British studio ceramics and Hammond had switched to ceramics after initially studying mural painting under Edward Bawden and Eric Ravilious. Henry Hammond was a remarkable draftsman, with particular skill in East Asian brushwork. He combined his career as a department head at Farnham with a small but steady production of outstanding stoneware and porcelain pieces, decorated with his inimitable painting style. He is regarded now as one the 'greats' of 20th century studio ceramics.

Like his mentor, William Staite Murray, Hammond did little direct tutorial teaching, but instead used his knowledge and contacts to design a course that placed as much emphasis on drawing, art history, ceramic technology and basic geology, as on regular ceramic instruction. Henry Hammond seemed to know everyone and through his time at Farnham employed a stellar range of full-time and part-time lecturers that represented the avant-garde as much as the ceramic establishment. During my own time as a student at Farnham (1969-1972) visitors to the course included David Leach, Michael Cardew, Harry Davis, Gwyn Hanssen and Michael O'Brien, while Mo Jupp, Jacqueline Poncelet, John Maltby and Dan Arbeid supplied new ideas and new directions to students less involved with wheel-thrown ceramics. Full time staff at this time included John Reeve, Paul Barron and Siddig el Nigoumi - all significant artist-potters in their own right. Among the multitude of graduates who benefited from the Farnham experience could be mentioned Dame Magdalene Odundo, Rupert Spira and Geoffrey Fuller. This small exhibition includes both former tutors and Farnham graduates. It shows something of the special character that the Farnham ceramics course was able to bring to the development of British studio ceramics in the second half of the twentieth century, while at the same time making its own contribution to the progress of British art school education.

- Nigel Wood 2022





I arrived at Farnham in the autumn of 1968. That summer students at the Sorbonne had taken to the streets. At Hornsey and Guildford School of Art students were occupying the campus. At the other end of the Hog's Back a much quieter revolution was going on at Farnham. Thanks to the world Craft Council conference of 1952, organized by Bernard Leach and supported by academics like Henry Hammond, the head of ceramics at Farnham, and HMI Robin Tanner, crafts like pottery and textiles had been introduced to state schools. It meant that despite the prosperous, middleclass character of the small home-counties town there were many students such as Geoff Fuller who came from working class backgrounds in northern industrial cities. This together with overseas students like Katarina Evangelidou made for a stimulating cohort with which to study. After graduation I returned to Farnham for a period of further study after which I was invited by Hammond to join the staff. With his encouragement I succeeded him as Head of Ceramics and finally resigned in the early 90's exhausted from defending the department from predatory institutional politics and negative external criticism from people who, within a decade or so, would see the closure of almost every ceramic degree course in the country. I knew every Farnham graduate showing in this small exhibition with Natasha Daintry being the last just before I left. From my perspective there are many more who would need to be included for the course to be accurately represented and it is disappointing there is no one from a younger generation. James Fordham generously agreed I could make clear I have not been part of the curatorial process, a condition of my agreeing to take part. I am grateful to James that he has borrowed a John Reeve bowl of mine. For many a Farnham exhibition without John would be unthinkable. In 1970 Surrey County Council merged Guildford and Farnham schools of Art. The new campus provided many new opportunities including developing the kiln site to include wood firing. Thanks to the mentoring of Michael O'Brian and the subsequent input of visiting staff like Takashi Yasuda and Richard Launder we were able to develop a lively wood fire kiln site, a particular feature of the course at that time. Patrick Sargent and Danlami Aliyu are the best know beneficiaries of this resource.



As Professor Nigel Wood has made clear Henry Hammond was the extraordinary architect of the course. Though quite specific in his own practice he was alive to the creative spirit irrespective of ideology and supported a broad approach to the subject with a dazzling array of visiting staff. He was an impossible act to follow and his support of me as his successor was something of a poison chalice. I discovered I had inherited twice as many full time lectures, twice as many technicians and double the part time budget of any other ceramic course of similar size in the country, a direct result of the local authorities amalgamation a decade earlier. Almost immediately after I took charge the government began to implement reforms in Higher Education making the cuts at Farnham twice as painful.

When I consider this Farnham exhibition at Oxford I reflect on how much we owe to others. Paul Barron, unfairly eclipsed by Hammond as an artist, but who's dogged hard work made Hammond's vision function. The generosity and technical expertise of Michael O'Brian. Gemma Bontempo, though long since ceased to make herself, helped many find their individual creative voice. The scholarship of Nigel Wood, Michael Cardew who invited Magdalene Odundo to Abuja one summer holiday who in turn showed me the visceral Gwari coiling method, a version of which has been used to make the pots I am showing. Nigoumi who brought smoke firing to the British cannon and pioneered a synthesis of African and European traditions. Ryoji Koie, whose anarchic energy has had such a profound effect on Gareth Mason and myself. John Maltby's passion and prejudice. The vision and professionalism of James Fordham and others like him who showcase our efforts. I am reminded of Hammond's thoughts on tradition. He saw it as a collaborative and generous enterprise. It might produce stars but this was only because of a mass of people engaged in a similar dynamic endeavour. He finished an essay on tradition published by Athene: "Tradition implies movement, the crest of the wave lies on and in the sea".

- **Sebastian Blackie** 2022





















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FARNHAM OXFORD CERAMICS GALLERY



Siddig el Nigoumi 1931-1996 Dish with Motifs from Nubian house decoration, Flowers, Birds, Scorpion, Earrings and 'Allah Akbar' in Arabic script 1970 / SEN 003  
Front cover: Ashley Howard © 1963 Large Font (detail) AM005

