

American Shino

THE GLAZE OF A THOUSAND FACES



A GLAZED AFFAIR

Confessions of a Shino Collector

Judith S. Schwartz, Ph.D.

I must admit, I am a romantic! I love beautiful things that stand the test of time, and I am grateful that my husband of forty years knows full well that it is not necessary to lure me with flowers or chocolate, or recite sweet nothings into my ear. Just show me opulent and beguiling classical glazes and I am off in a fantasy world as rich and thrilling as any attempt to win my favors could produce. I adore Hare's fur, long after Oil Spots, covet Lustres, appreciate Aventurines, meditate over the Celadons, and marvel at Crystallines. But I particularly go out of my way to purchase Shinos wherever and whenever I can find them.

Of the countless forms and varieties of handmade pots in my kitchen, the ones I use and prize the most are bowls. Bowls are versatile. A busy lifestyle—especially during a hectic week of teaching late-night classes—has led me to one-dish meals, and nothing brings me more joy and comfort than my Malcolm Davis Shino bowls. Linus can have his blanket; I'll take my Davis Shinos.

The luscious, richly colored, dazzling effects of a Shino glaze are incomparable. Shinos are gorgeous and alluring. They are varied in texture and can be as expressionistic as a Pollock painting. Everything looks good in them, and next to eating out of them, there is nothing better than handling and admiring them. Their seductive shine, subtlety, nuance of surface (from translucence to matte) invite attention—no, more than that, they cry out for examination. I often mix a table setting of these bowls with John Glick's ewers, Jeff Oestreich's saucers, Mark Pharis's and Scott Goldberg's plates, and Randy Johnston's cups, and the result

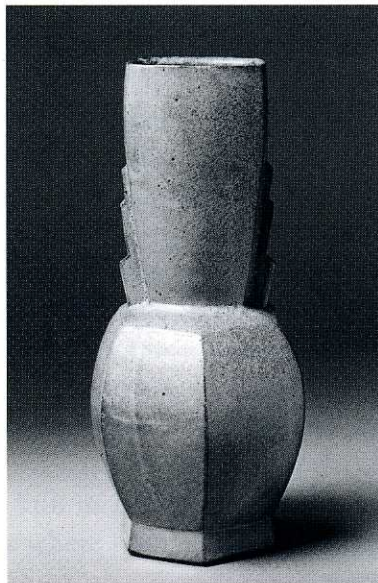
is an array of visual delight.

As a consumer searching after Shino, I marvel at their surface energy, but my specialized knowledge of ceramics leads me to a particular appreciation for the artists who develop the glaze recipes, test their variations, and fire and re-fire them in various kilns, using assorted fuels. Their skill cannot be underestimated. Shinos are difficult. From the maker's point of view, they demand attention, awareness, and manipulation to come to life. The glaze is not merely applied, dried, and fired. The way the glaze is applied, how it is dried, and precisely how it is fired makes all the difference.

In an extraordinary comprehensive four-part series in *Clay Times*, author and glaze expert Pete Pinnell explains in minute detail Shino's intricate nature. Who would have thought that one could do so many things to a pot before, during, and even after the glaze is applied, long before it ever reaches heat? Here are just a few of the contortions he suggests to achieve those luscious effects: "drying an open pot upside-down, putting wet clay coils on a pot as it dries, drying a pot in front of a small fan or heater, repeatedly rewetting part of a pot by misting it with water, wrapping a pot with textured paper or plastic, burying it in wood chips, drying pots while crowded close together." The list is endless.

As a collector, one of the treasured yearly rituals in my search for Shinos takes place in New Jersey at the Old Church Cultural Center in Demarest. The organizers of this show, Mikhail Zakin and Karen Karnes gather some of the best functional potters from across the country. It is here that I go with the anticipation of finding these glorious, intricate glazes.

In twenty years of searching, I have not been disappointed. I hope American Shino will inspire others to investigate its wonders



JEFF OESTREICH



LES RICHTER, CURATOR, TEA BOWL, STONEWARE, GAS-FIRED, 5 1/16 X 3 1/16 INCHES

American Shino: The Potters