Cowan Pottery: The Spirit of Collaboration

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Cowan Pottery... a classically Chinese vase in iridescent lustre, with an Ikebana floral spray; dancing nymphs poised in mid-air, their features and musculature skillfully defined; dramatic tableaus from ballet and ballroom, opera and storybook, Scripture and fable, ceramic sculpture that is both dignified and animated; bold black and silver explorations of geometry and repetition; and the swan song of this remarkable enterprise, Viktor Schreckengost’s Cubist "jazz bowl," a work he calls New Year’s Eve in New York City… these images drift to mind when we recall the name R. Guy Cowan. An early graduate of the country’s first ceramic engineering program, Cowan moved to Cleveland in 1908 to teach high school students how to work with clay. By the time his factory closed in 1931, he had produced some of the most innovative art pottery of the twentieth century. Although Cowan strongly preferred individual studio work to pottery produced in duplicate, he slowly came to value the idea of collaboration—a term whose roots mean "doing the work together." And it was this new outlook, with its consequent transformation of his working methods and products, that enabled him to accomplish what he did.

Collaboration, on any scale, implies a division of labor. This simpler concept Guy had learned as a youngster, when on week-ends or vacations from school, he spent time at his father’s workplace, the Onondaga Pottery Company of Syracuse, New York. Louis A. Cowan was head decorator there, overseeing the production of hand-gilt and painted dinnerware for which Syracuse was famous. Entire crews of workers were necessary, as Guy could see firsthand, to fill a single order. Upon entering high school—as was customary then—Guy began his apprenticeship at the china company, so that he would know a trade and could earn a decent living. At Onondaga, Cowan learned for himself how many steps were required to design and manufacture a single teacup.

At Alfred University, under Professor Charles Fergus Binns, Cowan discovered another meaning of the term collaboration, an intellectual sharing of energy and ideas for a common goal. Binns was a founding member of the American Ceramic Society, established a few years earlier, in 1899. Like his colleagues, Binns believed in sharing information about ceramic materials and process instead of viewing them as secrets to be jealously guarded. He felt that this kind of information ought to be codified and documented in a public forum, for the advancement of the whole industry. To that end, in 1900 Binns had prepared for publication by the ACS a Manual of Ceramic Calculations.

When Guy Cowan moved to Cleveland to teach at East Technical High School, he started making pottery on a wheel, using the ancient technique that Binns had taught him, and working on his own. The earliest known example is an eight-inch vase that he built in three smaller sections, as he had been
instructed, and then carefully fit together, using a caliper to measure overall diameter and wall thickness. This vase, dated 1909 and signed, simply, "Cowan," was made from clay that Binns recommended he obtain from the Western Stoneware Company of Monmouth, Illinois, a clay that burns to a buff color when fired. The vase is clad in a thick dark green matt glaze whose formula Binns also must have provided. Therefore, this earliest piece of Cowan Pottery is a kind of collaboration—the design, construction, and firing being Cowan's—and the method of working, clay body, and glaze formula being Binns'. Cowan continued to produce studio pottery, gradually introducing glazes of his own design, and by 1911, switching to a local Lakewood clay, which burns to a brick red.

Because Cowan's primary responsibility at the High School was to manage the kilns and assist in glazing, he soon became involved in collaborations that were nothing more than a simple division of labor. For example, he had not been in Cleveland a full month when Herman Matzen, head of the sculpture division at the Cleveland School (now Institute) of Art, came to discuss his ideas with Cowan. Matzen wanted some of his smaller models for bronze and marble sculpture to be glazed and fired as ceramic figures. And by 1910, Matzen had installed a small kiln at his studio on campus for this purpose.

This kind of collaboration, in fact, soon constituted Cowan's principal source of income. In the spring of 1913, he gave up his teaching post, thanks to the support of investors and art patrons, who commissioned him to produce fireplace lintels, garden ornaments, and other pieces, often according to designs or ideas that they themselves provided. The work was steady enough for Cowan to hire his father away from Syracuse, and together they developed tile and architectural faience that was sturdy enough to survive the Cleveland winters. Cowan's tile installations included projects for some of the most influential citizens of Cleveland and Akron, as well as for the Cleveland Museum of Art, which opened in 1916, and St. Agnes (Roman Catholic) Church, dedicated that summer. In the case of St. Agnes, every detail of the building, including its furnishings, had been specified by Pittsburgh architect John Theodore Comes. Thus we see again a simple division of labor, with Cowan responsible for carrying out Comes' design for a mosaic near the altar—two peacocks symbolizing immortality—with geometrical trim radiating out to a floor covering a plain reddish brown tile.

Also during this period, jeweler and silversmith Horace Potter, who taught design at the Art School, began purchasing an occasional piece of Cowan Pottery. When he first arrived in Cleveland in 1908, Cowan rented a room in Potter's Euclid Avenue studio and considered Potter a friend and mentor from the start. Soon Potter set to work on handsome pieces of Cowan's studio pottery that he felt might benefit from the addition of a hand-wrought lid. A splendid example is now in the Cowan Pottery Museum, located in the Rocky River Public Library. It is a cocoa-colored mustard pot for which Potter has fashioned a sterling lid with a carved ivory knop and matching spoon. Because these works were undertaken after Cowan's role was complete and without his participation, they can be considered
collaborations only from Horace Potter's perspective. But their attractiveness to Potter and to his exclusive clientele served to further Cowan's reputation and to open him up to the idea of working with other artists.

In the summer of 1917, Cowan appears to have hired a spring graduate of Alfred's ceramic and design curricula, a young man ten years his junior, named Guy L. Rixford. Cowan and Rixford forged an intensely creative partnership that summer, experimenting with glaze and form until they accomplished a body of work that Cowan viewed as his best to date. This new line that he called "Lakewood Ware" earned him a feature story in the September 8, 1917 issue of Cleveland Topics. Author Edith L. Sommer thought this pottery to "bear the rare stamp of both distinction and originality" and compared it favorably with Ruskin ware, a well-regarded lustrous pottery from England. By the end of the month, Cowan had been invited to participate in the Annual Applied Arts Exhibition of the Art Institute of Chicago. He sent them a representative display of twenty-three pieces of the new ware, each vessel signed by both Cowan and Rixford. The judges were impressed. Cowan Pottery won the Armour Prize that year, given infrequently to the "best exhibit of pottery or glassware," and his award-winning Lakewood Ware was then shown in Cleveland during much of December. One well-known example of this Cowan-Rixford collaboration can also be found in the Cowan Pottery Museum collection, a striking 12" covered jar, glazed in jet black flambe over a crystalline marigold lustre.

With the Great War came a sour economy, and Cowan nearly gave up the pottery for fear of being unable to support his wife and two small children. But his friend and business manager, Wendell Wilcox—who had been his chemistry teacher at Alfred—convinced Cowan to embark on a new path, namely, to standardize the mass production of molded work. Cowan's immediate goal was to "turn out a product of the highest quality at a price relatively so close to the cheaper and flashy stuff with which the market was flooded, that a new field was there for both merchant and manufacturer." The first experiments with molded pieces were conducted with the buff clay from Illinois. These examples are often quite attractive, but for some reason the clay body proved unsatisfactory to Cowan, who was searching for a purer slip.

Shortly after 1920, Cowan hired John Brunt to help him refine a new clay slip employing china ball clay imported from England, and in particular, to rid it of blebs, or air bubbles. Brunt had worked in pottery factories for more than thirty years, starting as a full-time apprentice instead of finishing high school. Defining an ever more specific division of labor at the plant, Cowan soon found himself hiring the whole Brunt family—sons Chester ("Chet"), William ("Bill"), George, and Clarence, along with daughter Reva, Bill's wife Waunita ("Emily"), and George's wife Evelyn. The eight Brunts worked well together and with the rest of the staff, and each soon perfected his or her routine into an art. Cowan was so happy with the Brunts that he featured them in a small booklet titled "The Story of a Bowl," which he printed to explain the manufacturing process to customers.
What went into making a simple bowl? First, one of the boys would work a handful of clay into a flat, pliable shape called a "pancake". Then, another worker centers the pancake inside a mold whose shape allows the bowl to be easily removed from it later. Placing the bowl with its clay lining into a revolving platform, or "jigger", someone will lower a profile tool down against the rotating clay, thus paring away and smoothing the inside of the bowl to match a predetermined shape. After the excess clay is trimmed off with a sharp knife, the soft clay bowl is allowed a short drying time and then removed from the mold. Cowan himself describes this process: "It has no fine lines yet. It is thick and heavy and has a clumsy foot or base. I take the soft bowl to the lathe. On the end of this is an apple wood block or 'chalk', accurate in shape and size to the inside of the thick, soft bowl. The unfinished bowl is now fitted like a cap on the block. The lathe turns the block and the bowl rapidly. Then with skill and precision, I hold a tool a little heavier than a safety razor blade against the side of the rotating bowl, paring it down until the outside has the beauty of line and the exact thickness desired."²⁷

Now the bowl is ready to be glazed by dipping into a large vat. One of the women wipes excess glaze off the foot so it won't stick. A runner carries a plank full of bowls away, swinging the plank overhead so skillfully that no one is distracted and nothing is lost. Another worker will load the glazed bowls into round ceramic boxes called "saggers". Someone stacks the saggers inside the kiln. And firing begins, with another skilled worker patiently watching the flame, adjusting air and gas supplies as needed, waiting for the little Seger cones to droop, and then shutting everything down for the gradual cooling. The entire process depends on a careful division of labor, with each worker an artist. The industry is still too young for scientific instruments like hydrometers and pyrometers to assist them.²⁸ But the results are impressive: one of Cowan's hand-turned bowls will soon earn the 1924 Logan Medal at the Art Institute of Chicago, a prize that is essentially the "best of show".

Assembly is required for more complicated shapes, such as the Arts and Crafts gypsy moth vase. Here the hands of John Brunt are especially useful, for accurate assembly was his specialty.²⁹ Because a two-piece mold is used for the vase, seam lines must be carefully carved away. Then the moths are hand-applied to the surface, each having been molded separately. Likewise, the handles of fan vase #649B required separate manufacture and assembly. Along with the fine hand-turned bowls, this vase won the Logan Medal in 1924 and is therefore known today simply as the "Logan Vase."

Now Cowan began bringing his visions of ceramic sculpture to life. He hired a young dance instructor, Phyllis Gott, to pose for his sculpture work, having studied drawing, sculpture, and design in evening classes at the Art School ever since arriving in Cleveland. Gott remembers the chilly studio with its bare light bulb as one of the few sources of heat—and she in only a swimsuit. And she remembers quite clearly that it was Guy Cowan doing the modeling work for figure #698, not Walter Sinz as Cowan later advertised. Gott and Cowan had each gone to the farewell performance of Russian ballet sweetheart Anna Pavlowa, and this pose was that used on the program that night.³⁰ Unfortunately, the piece was not balanced properly, and it wouldn't stand up.
Cowan took the small statue to Sinz, by which time it had dried up quite a bit. Sinz took one look and exclaimed, "Well, of course it won't stand. You have the proportions wrong!" And he prodded her chest with his index finger, unintentionally breaking the figure in half. Sinz was undisturbed. He took out a handful of clay and quickly remodeled the dancer, explaining to Cowan, in the process, how to locate properly the center of gravity. Cowan was so thankful for the help he received from Sinz, both on this occasion and previously, that he attributed the piece to his sculpture professor. In reality, the Pavlova figure is a product of collaboration in the truest sense.\(^{31}\)

Once Cowan began sculpting the lady flower holders for which he became world-famous, John Brunt's skills in assembly were absolutely essential. The heads and limbs of these ladies were molded separately from their torsos, and everything had to be of the correct moisture content, or an uplifted arm would end up slumping during the fire. A leg might fall off, or a drape come loose at one end. And all the other workers' jobs were necessary too, so much so that, in a sense, every piece of Cowan Pottery can be seen as a kind of collaboration. This fact is unfortunately too often forgotten when we praise the inventiveness of a designer.

Starting as an apprentice in about 1912, while still a high school student, Richard Hummel was in charge of running glaze tests and developing firing schedules. He sometimes threw a piece on the wheel, often with pleasing results. But it was Arthur Baggs who was the true artist in developing Cowan's spectacular crystalline and crackle glazes. Baggs had been a classmate of Cowan's at Alfred before leaving school prematurely to found the Marblehead Pottery in Massachusetts. Marblehead was already legendary when Baggs came to Cleveland in 1925, and he was eager to collaborate with Cowan and his artists in developing new glazes for sculpture and other exhibition pieces. Occasionally, he too would take a turn on the wheel, and the results were exceptional.\(^{32}\)

Baggs' first assignment was to develop a family of crackle glazes in the manner of Chinese stoneware. In particular, Cowan was anxious to begin using a brilliant blue glaze, if Baggs could devise one, that would mimic the color of the mummy beads used in King Tutankhamen's tomb. This glaze was given the name Egyptian Blue, and at the Cowan Pottery was first applied to the ceramic version of a marble statue of Moses, sculpted by the Russian-born artist Alexander Blazys. Substituting another mineral for copper in this glaze produced Terra Cotta, the glaze Cowan employed on his own Adam and Eve figures a few years later. Parchment was the color of veined marble, and was chosen for Blazys' Russian Peasants, two earlier versions of which had been cast in bronze. At the end of the factory's history, a fourth crackle glaze, Melon Green, was given additional black airbrushing to create Shadow Green for the limited edition Artichoke Vase, designed by Waylande Gregory. Each of these pieces, therefore, carries the genius of Arthur Baggs, in addition to the designer's handiwork. Baggs should also be given credit for developing the family of crystalline glazes involving the mineral rutile, such as the lovely golden October glaze used to good effect on Elmer Novotny's pouter pigeon bookends. And it seems likely that he developed the semigloss Black glaze, as well as the metallic Bronze and Silver.\(^{33}\)
An interesting and convoluted tale of collaboration has also unfolded around the design of the push-pull elephants. Long believed to be the work of Margaret Postgate, who also designed an ovoid elephant that was produced in four different sizes at Cowan, these bookends are modernistic yet comical. Researchers thought the case closed when Henry Hawley, Chief Curator, Later Western Art, at The Cleveland Museum of Art, discovered that Postgate had shown an Angular Elephant at the 1928 Applied Arts Exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago.\textsuperscript{34} However, Bianca Brown, one of the curators of the Yolande Gregory estate in Warren, New Jersey, remembers hearing on many occasions, from both Waylande and Yolande, that Gregory had designed something at Cowan Pottery they referred to as "the push-pull." Brown did not know that the design in question was a pair of elephants, nor that they were bookends, until she was interviewed for this project.\textsuperscript{35} In the meantime, the photograph of an angular "striding elephant" in bronze had turned up in the April 1928 Woman's Home Companion, attributed to the Gorham Company and predating the 1928 Chicago exhibition by a good seven months.\textsuperscript{36} And according to Cowan's daughter Jeanne Jessen, Waylande Gregory indeed moved to Cleveland from Chicago in 1928.\textsuperscript{37}

The conclusion we might draw from this tangle? Collaboration. It must have been originally an angular striding elephant, designed by Margaret Postgate and sold to the Gorham Company for execution in bronze, that Postgate exhibited in Chicago. Earlier that year one of her designs had won first prize in the professional division of the fourth annual soap sculpture competition, sponsored by Proctor and Gamble.\textsuperscript{38} If her elephant took the prize, this award may explain how Gorham acquired the model, since the company sometimes participated in the competitions by casting bronze sculptures of one of the year's outstanding designs.\textsuperscript{39} Cowan is likely to have met Postgate in Chicago, where Gregory was then living, working in the studio of Lorado Taft. Because the modernistic elephant design had already been licensed, it could not be used by Cowan without substantial alteration. Hearing Cowan's disappointment, Gregory—who was about to join him in Cleveland as a full-time designer—must have envisioned just how to accomplish this goal. In Gregory's mind, the single elephant became two, no longer simply walking with trunk held somewhat ahead of the advancing right foot, but engaged in a metaphorical struggle with the books that would separate them. For the "push" elephant, he would follow the design of the striding elephant's left legs and make minor adjustments in the position of ears and trunk. For the "pull" elephant, he would follow the design of the striding elephant's right legs. Each elephant would be placed onto a rectangular base, so as to provide more stability. Voilà! The design had been altered significantly, in both function and meaning. If Cowan then assigned the tasks of redesign, mold-making, and so on to Gregory, as a beginning-level project for his new employee, it seems plausible that Gregory would begin to view them as his own design. The original bronze of the striding elephant would be acknowledged in this early use of Cowan's new Bronze glaze.

Polychromes make up another whole category of collaborative work at the Cowan Pottery, particularly after the hiring of Thelma Frazier and Paul Bogatay in 1929.\textsuperscript{40} These pieces typically have a bas relief design as part of the molded surface. When such a design is hand-painted in polychrome—
literally, "many colors"—then it has been decorated by hand with under-glaze paint and/or with actual glazes applied by hand. One well-known example of a polychrome mosaic that is said to have been decorated by Frazier is Elsa Vick Shaw's *Egyptian Mosaic*, which can be seen in the Rocky River Public Library. The artists were also free to try polychrome decorations on a variety of pieces of their choice, it seems, although they may have given preference to vases of their own design, such as Frazier's *Orange Tree Vase* or Bogatay's *Squatty Art Deco Vase.* F. Luis Mora took full advantage of this decorative possibility by designing a group of four different limited edition figures to be painted in polychrome. Although the three Navajo and one Mexican figure were painted to a specific color design of Mora's, each of these figures is slightly different from the others.

All sorts of collaboration continued to take place at the Cowan Pottery all those years. The artists would come up with a topic or approach, and for a week or two, everyone would give it a try. Wahl Pen Company worked with Cowan Pottery on a group of pen trays, inkwells, and other desk pieces. Several lamp manufacturers were commissioned to design hand-painted shades and brass or teak fittings for Cowan lamps, each being considered individually. Someone was located to produce wrought-iron stands for larger pieces. Russ Manufacturing came to Cowan for a good soda fountain design, not merely the tile but the appliances too! Important techniques were also the result of collaboration in some cases, such as the drypoint method of decoration that Viktor Schreckengost put to such effective use in 1931, with his fish vases, and of course with the piece that everyone recognizes as true Art Deco—*The Jazz Bowl.*

Cowan continued to fire work for other artists, such as Alexander Blazys whom William Milliken, director of The Cleveland Museum of Art, had commissioned to sculpt a portrait of his mother, Mrs. Milliken. The pottery kept taking commissions from its patrons, such as the Alice and Wonderland doorknobs, designed by Waylande Gregory, that Harvey Firestone wanted for a child's room in his Akron mansion. Some artists never seem to have visited the factory—merely sending in a plaster cast from which to make a mold—as A. Drexel Jacobsen did. Other artists, like Russell Barnett Aitken who was too young to be employed as a designer before the factory failed, bought Cowan Pottery blanks at the end, and decorated them later in their own studios—a kind of collaboration that Horace Potter would surely have approved. And there was also the charming Chinese-inspired horse by little Ralph Howard Cowan designed with the constant vigilance of both Guy Cowan and Waylande Gregory—the kind of collaboration that can be enforced by accident of birth, but which is loving and gentle all the same.

Looking back, sixty years after the closing of the Cowan Pottery, what do we see? Case after case of an unusual openness to new ideas. Artists and craftspeople dedicated to their work. An optimistic faith in the prospects for art in a civilized community. And a warning against pride, against risking everything for a try at the summit alone, like Faust, who left Marguerita and their child to perish in the
wintry blast. In finding a group of like minds with whom to commune, the artists and workers and glaze chemists and clerks at the Cowan Pottery must have felt a special pride in having been asked to produce a limited edition candlestick for the Rowfant Club in 1925. For the Rowfant Club motto, a line from A Midsummer Night’s Dream, seems to endorse the idea of “doing the work together”: it reads, “Light Seeking Light, Doth Light of Light Beguile.”

Endnotes

1. “Cowan Pottery” The Spirit of Collaboration: is an early version of material to be published, in revised and expanded form, in Mark Bassett and Victoria Peltz, Cowan Pottery (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 1996), and may not be reprinted in any form without prior written permission from the author. Anyone with information, suggestions, or collections of Cowan Pottery is asked to write to Mark Bassett, P.O. Box 771233, Lakewood, Ohio 44107.


3. Cowan’s professor at Alfred University, Charles Fergus Binns, was instrumental in helping locate the post in Cleveland. A signed autograph letter from R. Guy Cowan (RGC) to Charles Fergus Binns (CFB), October 4, 1908, states that Cowan was now settled there. The Cowan-Binns correspondence can be found in the College Archives, Scholes Ceramics Library, New York School of Clay-working and Ceramics, Alfred University.

4. Long-time collector and artist Esther Myers, of Philadelphia, calls Cowan “one of the most innovative art potteries of the twentieth century” because of the company’s groundbreaking progress in the field of ceramic sculpture and because of their unusual glazes.

5. Cowan comments briefly about his younger days in an undated clipping, circa December 1914, mistakenly titled “Roy Cowan: Potter,” a copy of which is in the Cleveland Institute of Art Scrapbook.


8. This method of working is discussed by Binns in his classic text The Potter’s Craft (1910) and is also demonstrated in accompanying photographic illustrations that show him working at the wheel.

9. Carbon copy of unsigned typed letter, CFB to RGC, July 6, 1908, includes a recommendation for the Western Stoneware clay. Also, CFB to RGC, October 6, 1908, provides two glaze recipes that fire to a matt finish under proper conditions. Other glaze recipes of Binns’ design were available in the various publications of the American Ceramic Society and were also published in The Potter’s Craft.

10. A fourteen-inch vase in the author’s personal collection is dated 1911 and bears a glossy “ermine” white glaze that is pocked with burst bubbles and frothy in spots, allowing the red clay body to show through. Cleveland-area potter Kathy Barbero has examined some of these pieces with red clay, and having tested local clays in her kilns, believes that Cowan’s red clays were collected locally (interview with Mark Bassett and Victoria Naumann Peltz, July 5, 1993).
11. The following passage is quoted from carbon copy of unsigned typed letter, April 27, 1908: "I wonder would you care to accept a position in a school to manage mixing of clays and firing. They have teachers of art but want a technical man to do this kind of work.... It is in the city of Cleveland."

12. See signed autograph letter RGC to CFB, undated (but written after receipt of a letter from RGC, dated October 6, 1908).


15. "Roy Cowan: Potter."

16. The mosaic is described in Edith L. Sommer, "Lakewood Ware, the New Pottery, Cleveland Topics, September 8, 1917: 19-20. For details about the church and its furnishings, including photographs of peacocks on the altar gates, said to be reused in the mosaic, see Anne O'Hare McCormick, St. Agnes Church, Cleveland, Ohio: An Interpretation (1920), 49 pp., Archives, Diocese of Cleveland.

17. Horace Potter's collaboration with Cowan Pottery was first theorized by Henry Hawley, "Cowan Pottery and The Cleveland Museum of Art," The Bulletin of The Cleveland Museum of Art, 76 (September 1989) 238-263; see especially pp. 238-239. Hawley later found that the program of the 1916 Applied Arts Exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago states that Potter showed a "Mustard cup, Cowan pottery, silver scoop, lid and tray." In addition, Cowan's daughter Jeanne Cowan Jessen remembers the long-lived friendship and Potter's interest in Cowan Pottery (interview with Mark Bassett, November 30, 1992).

18. Rixford's graduation date can be confirmed in the records at Alfred University. He served as art editor and chief illustrator for the 1917 Kanakadea, the annual student-edited yearbook. Given this background, along with the fall exhibition dates in Chicago, the author believes Rixford could have worked in Cleveland only during the summer of 1917, shortly after his graduation.


21. The program of the 1917 exhibition, available in the Archives, Art Institute of Chicago, provides brief descriptions of the twenty-three pieces, with the entire display being attributed to both Cowan and Rixford. Additional examples of their collaborative work, which do not seem to match these descriptions, have also been located in present-day collections. An announcement of the Armour Prize was made in "Prizes for Cowan of Pottery Fame," Cleveland Topics, December 1, 1917: 29. Announcements that the prize-winning pieces would be shown (and sold) at the Rohrerheimer-Brooks Studios appeared in "Cowan's Prize Pottery to be Exhibited," Cleveland Topics, December 8, 1917: 28--and in display ads placed by Rohrerheimer-Brooks on December 8, 1917: 9; and December 15, 1917: 14.

22. Jeanne was born in 1913 and Ralph in 1917. (Carolyn came later.) The short-lived plans to close were announced in "Cowan Closes Studio," Cleveland Topics, April 5, 1919: 25.

23. Wendell Wilcox is listed as Cowan's chemistry teacher in the records at Alfred University. His business sense has been attested to in interviews with both Jeanne Jessen and Ralph Howard Cowan, previously cited.

24. This quotation, which paraphrases an interview with Cowan, is taken from Uthai Vincent Wilcox, "A World Old Craft," undated clipping, circa 1925, Cowan Family Archives.


26. This booklet is in the Archives, Cowan Pottery Museum, Rocky River Public Library.

27. Cowan's explanation of this process is quoted at length in Uthai Vincent Wilcox (p. 7).

28. Ralph Howard Cowan interview.

30. Anna Pavlova's farewell concerts in Cleveland took place on Thursday, November 13, 1924. She danced "The Coppelia" and "Snowflakes," together with nine divertissements during the 3:15 pm matinee; and "Don Quixote," along with nine divertissements, during the 8:15 pm evening program. See the advertisement in Cleveland Topics, November 9, 1924. The author has not yet located a copy of the program itself. Phyllis Gott Arney, now living in a Florida retirement home, told me these stories in two telephone interviews and in correspondence, during the fall 1992.

31. According to Phyllis Gott Arney, she and Cowan referred to the flower figure #698 by the name "Pavlova," and that was the only name she ever remembered it having.

32. According to Roberta Stokes Persick, Arthur Eugene Baggs, American Potter (Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1963), Baggs lived in Cleveland for nine months and spent his summers at Marblehead during 1925-1928. In the fall of 1928, he took the position of head of the newly established Ceramic Design Department at Ohio State University, created to complement the Ceramic Engineering Department. However, Thelma Frazier (Winter), in "R. Guy Cowan, Ceramist: His Influence on American Ceramic Art" (possibly unpublished typescript, written after her 1973 book on ceramic sculpture), recalls meeting and working with Arthur Baggs during her 1929-1930 stint at the Pottery. Because Columbus is a short distance from Cleveland, Baggs could have continued to do occasional consulting and design work for Cowan during 1928-1931.

33. Arthur Baggs' experiments with crackle and crystalline glazes (as well as other glaze effects) are noted in "Cowan Pottery," Bulletin of the Society of Arts and Crafts [Boston], October 1927; "The Cowan Pottery: Glaze and Form Distinguish Ceramics at Arts and Crafts," Boston Evening Transcript, October 1, 1927; and "Cleveland's Ceramic Art," Cleveland Town Topics, May 5, 1928: 19-20.

34. Hawley 262 (n. 60).


40. Thelma Frazier Winter, "R. Guy Cowan..." typescript, states that Bogatay arrived a few months after Frazier, in 1929.

41. A note in Frazier's handwriting on the reverse of a contemporary photograph testifies that she and Bogatay designed these, and other, pieces as limited editions. The photographs show them applying the polychrome paint to these shapes. Author's collection.

42. Robert Brunt interview.

43. The 1931 Cowan Pottery catalogue attributes this technique to R. Guy Cowan. However, since both Gregory and Schreckengost had already employed a variety of sgraffito techniques in earlier works of art--not at the Cowan Pottery--it seems likely that they each contributed ideas of their own too.

44. Viktor Schreckengost interview.

45. Ralph Howard Cowan interview.