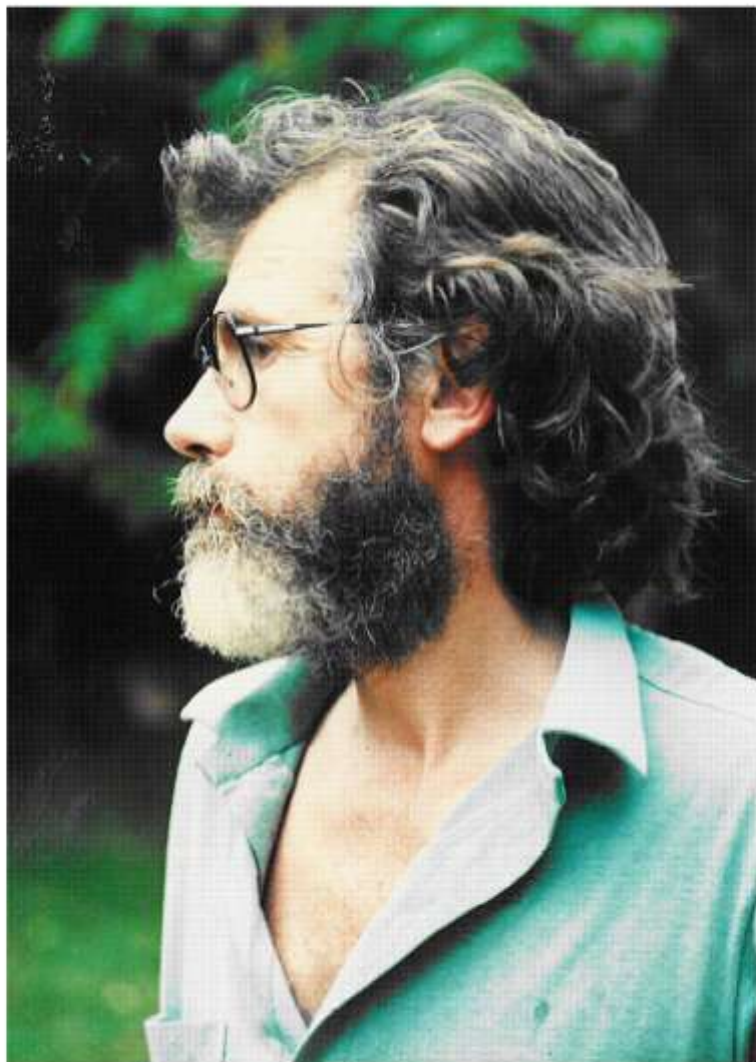


Tim Morris

1941 – 1990



Transcript from the book:

Potters of Southern Africa

by Garth Clark and Lindsay Wagner, published in 1974

To Tim Morris output is important. He does not subscribe to the aggrandisement of pottery as an expensive elitist art form.

Provided a potter puts in a full day's work, pottery is one art form that can be made available to all at reasonable cost,' he insists. He works fast, throwing as much as half a ton of clay a day.

Morris, born in March 1941, trained initially as a painter. At school he showed such flair that he wrote his 'A' levels on the subject two years before he wrote his 'O' levels. Graduating to the St Martin School of Art in London, he swiftly obtained the national diploma in design, majoring in painting.

Following this he qualified for the teacher's training diploma at London University. Then he moved to the Central School of Art where he studied pottery under many of Britain's acknowledged masters; Ruth Duckworth (with whom he also worked for a short time), Ian Auld, Kenneth Clark, Dan Arbeid, Gordon Baldwin and John Colbeck.

The book, **Contemporary Ceramics in South Africa** by Wilma Cruise and Doreen Hemp, published in 1991 was dedicated to the memory of Tim Morris.

His Contemporaries remember him:

Chris Patton

In the recent history of South African Ceramics Tim Morris must be recognized as a leading force in the development and promotion of creative craft pottery. He was a driving force in the establishment of the Potters Association (now Ceramics Southern Africa), which in turn has done so much for the craft in this country. Tim was one of the definitive South African potters of the seventies who were to shape ceramics for many years.

Although very much an Englishman drawn from the English Art school system, St Martin's and the Central School of Art, the centre for ceramics at the time, he found a home and an environment here in South Africa suited to his nature and his search for creative freedom.

He loved music, which was always in evidence in his studio when cricket wasn't being broadcast! He had a system where he could throw pots and watch cricket on television through a hatch between his studio and the living room, and that's not easy.

As with many creative people he could at times be difficult, even mildly eccentric, however this was always balanced by an enormous generosity and a wicked sense of humour. His immensely popular workshops conducted with a theatrical panache entertained and endeared him to many and perhaps offended a few. His colourful use of Anglo Saxon was perhaps a little too much for the more sensitive aspiring potters. His workshops were "Showtime"!

Tim created all the elements of his environment himself. He built his house and Studio on a beautiful site on the banks of the Crocodile River. The pottery and the house seemed to blend into one. His large oil fired kiln, which belched smoke and flame from every orifice was a Morris fabrication as were his clays, glazes and colours. His inspiration and style was initially drawn from many sources - the Middle East, the contemporary English craft movement and the Japanese potters.

When I first met Tim in the late seventies, he had found his niche in the Japanese tradition as expressed by Leach, Cardew and Hamada and the potters of the Sung Dynasty. He worked at a ferocious rate on a large scale producing volumes of reduction stoneware; however for me it was his spontaneous brushwork, which produced a vibrant free decoration, that became his signature. The placing and balancing of his brushwork was masterful and a joy to watch being applied with such freedom.

Tim's personality was such that his studio home, though at that time miles from the city, had an almost continuous flow of visitors, customers, friends and family dropping in and out, being greeted by Baska (Baskaville), the great Dane and shouted at by Cyril the parrot. Some came to buy, some to watch and listen as he worked, it was a place of life activity and industry.

He would share his knowledge and the tricks of his craft with one and all with a great generosity of spirit. I will always be grateful for the information he gave to me on local materials and markets when I arrived here as a migrant potter. He was almost always gregarious spontaneous and extrovert but at times needed space and time for himself. His wife Marlene was a tower of strength and reason, doing all the organizing and paperwork and basically running the show releasing Tim to concentrate on what he did best, his ceramics. Creativity and order do not always go together. He could not have achieved what he did without her.

Time changes our perspectives of people and events, however my view of Tim remains that of a highly intelligent individual, a creative artist with a generous nature, a raconteur with great humour, a sensitivity that was not immediately obvious and above all... a potter with all that that implies.

Digby & Penny Hoets

We remember our first meeting with Tim. Digby was about to build his first oil-fired kiln on a friend's property in Midrand (we lived on a sixteenth of an acre in Fairwood, Orange Grove at that stage) and, with some trepidation we went to visit the famous Tim Morris to get his advice. That was the first of many visits to the Morris' wonderful home and studio in Muldersdrift and trips with him and Marlene to Okavango, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Italy.

Tim was always the most generous person when it came to sharing his extensive knowledge on all aspects of ceramics and he and Marlene were always so warm and welcoming. Tim was a prolific and talented potter – a superb thrower with an innate aesthetic consciousness and sensitivity to form and design. His distinctive brushwork decoration flowed from his skill as a watercolorist.

The irony is that while Tim did a huge amount for South African pottery, potters and especially APSA (as Ceramics SA was then known) his role was never fully recognised and appreciated in his lifetime. It always distressed Digby that Tim never won the National Award. In the urge to recognise what was new and different, the tendency was to award "one pot wonders," who produced something different, trendy or exciting, rather than someone like Tim whose work had much greater merit and staying power.



Maldives 1981

As anyone who ever met Tim knows, he was a brilliant showman and raconteur who could keep friends and audience thoroughly entertained. His demonstrations drew large audiences to his studio. He had the sense of humour and breadth of knowledge that sometimes and fortuitously results when a good brain encounters a good British education and is compounded by a wide circle of highly diverse and interesting friends.

But in Tim's case the downside came when the audience left and Tim increasingly withdrew into a dark and distant place, which ultimately claimed his life.



Guggenheim Museum, Venice, 1986

Wendy Goldblatt

A JOURNEY TO JAPAN

In 1981 I bumped into Tim at an Exhibition and he told me about an exciting ceramics tour he and Marlene were going on to Japan, organized by Martin Zaalberg, and suggested that I come along. It took me 5 minutes to think about it and a couple of months later a group of about 20 of us assembled at Jan Smuts airport ready for the great Japanese adventure.

We travelled from Fukuoka in the South of Japan right up to Tokyo visiting Living National Treasures and seeing wonderful pots wherever we went. We had many discussions on all aspects of ceramics as we visited various studios, Tim was always there to share his knowledge with everyone and he was a great fund of information.

Travelling with Tim was a wonderful experience; he was so enthusiastic and excited by the whole trip and always fun to be with. Every day, he was up earlier than any of us, often out alone, sketching and painting watercolours. It seemed he just couldn't get enough of the landscape and atmosphere of Japan.

He was always entertaining to be with, always shared his extensive knowledge of ceramics and although he did not suffer fools gladly, he was there to give advice and assistance. His eagerness to see and do everything stimulated the whole group and, as a result, he made the trip quite unique for all of us.

David Schlapobersky and Felicity Potter

"Have only those things in your home that you know to be useful or believe to be beautiful."

William Morris (1834 – 1896)

"Pottery is at once the simplest and most difficult of arts. It is the simplest because it is the most elemental; it is the most difficult because it is the most abstract".

From his book 'The Meaning of Art' by Herbert Read

These two quotes summarise so well much of the influence that Tim had on our life and work at a crucial stage in our development.

We were among a large number of people who were influenced and inspired by Tim Morris, and others who were at the forefront of the Studio Pottery environment in this country during the very early 1970's, at a time when the

Association of Potters of Southern Africa, now Ceramics Southern Africa, was in its infancy. Tim was a founder member of APSA.

Many of the other names, faces and personalities of that era are still fresh for us today; Hyme Rabinowitz, Esias Bosch, Sammy Liebermann, Andrew Walford, Mike Kamstra, Gordon Wales, Bill van Gilder, Toff Millway, Molly Fish, Thelma Marcusson, Joyce Keyser, Pam Bass, Peggy Wolstenholm, Gail de Klerk, Wendy Goldblatt, Helen de Leeuw and Annette Lewis-Barr to name but a few.

It was an environment that also brought us into contact with the Studio Pottery environment abroad and the prominent producers of high temperature, reduction-fired work at that time. The work of people such as Bernard Leach and his sons, Michael Casson, Michael Cardew, Joe and Ray Finch, David and Margaret Frith in the UK, Robin Hopper in Canada and John Glick in the USA; the list is endless and the influence profound.

It was while we were house parents at Cresset House, a Camphill school and training centre for children in need of special care, that David was sent off to Gordon Wales at his studio in Parkhurst, Johannesburg for 'a few pottery lessons so that he could teach the children to make pots'.

At the end of 1972 we had to remove ourselves from the school for a few weeks as Felicity's children had German measles and there were two pregnant teachers at school at the time. With a bit of time on our hands we approached Tim, who Felicity had met a few years earlier, for help and guidance in establishing a pottery studio at the new premises of the school in Halfway House.

Not only was he willing to share his time and expertise with us personally in the weeks that followed, but in a flash he was instrumental in facilitating a fund-raising exhibition at the school in aid of the new pottery workshop to be established there.

A number of prominent personalities and emerging artists and craftspeople responded with enthusiasm to Tim's invitation to take part in the exhibition; among them were people such as Eduardo Villa, Cecil Skotness, Tessa Fleisher and Digby Hoets.

This anecdote is told to share with you all some of the energy, passion and dedication with which Tim approached so much in his life and we are aware of many others who have benefited from his involvement in a range of community and social responsibility activities in addition to his work as a superb Studio Potter and artist.

His interest in those around him and his willingness to share with all from his vast knowledge and experience were legendary, as was his capacity for work.

He was a wonderful role model and practitioner in the 'Visual Arts' with the intellect, spirit and drama to complement it all.

Here, along with other things, we think of the school that he and Marlene started on their property in Muldersdrift, their role in many fund-raising initiatives, the pottery workshops that he ran with such skill and humour, his activities with APSA, and his role in the establishing of the Crocodile River Arts and Crafts Ramble, and on the committee of Woodmead School, etc etc...

Tim's pots and paintings are to be found in use in ours and many other households in this country and abroad, still enriching the lives of so many. He played a critical role in promoting the arts in general and Studio Pottery in particular; all the time stimulating the interest of many people.

Our own life and work as fulltime Studio Potters has been so very rich and rewarding, and we have so much to be thankful for. We have had the distinct advantage to be able to work at home while at the same time being able to care for James, and find ourselves through our work to be connected to such an essential and timeless tradition. Tim and so much of what he represented remains a central part of the life that we have made through our work.

A modest tribute to Tim has been on our Website since it was published about five years ago, and we are honoured to have been asked to add this tribute to Tim along with others at the time of the Tim Morris Retrospective exhibition in Johannesburg.

Our congratulations and warm appreciation goes to Marlene Morris and Ceramics South Africa for organising this Tim Morris Retrospective exhibition and affording us all the opportunity to pay our respects to a unique person in our community.

We also wish to pay our respects to those who through their association with him, and those who he taught and mentored, have in their own way extended the legacy of Tim Morris and contributed to the growth and appreciation of Studio Pottery and the Arts in Southern Africa and further.

Our last contact with Tim took place a week or so before his death, we hadn't seen him for ages, and we were impelled by a phone-call from him seeking reassurance that we were still there! We followed the call up with a visit out to see him at his studio, which proved to be the very last time that we saw him. We saw each other only for a moment on that day as he was in full flight; demonstrating at his wheel for a large group of onlookers, with all the excitement, humour, stories and drama that characterised his style and his personality.



Gail de Klerk

The early 1970's saw the establishment of many studio potters as well as the beginning of The Association of Potters, now Ceramics SA. The Anglo-Oriental genre predominated and one of the leading lights of these movements was Tim Morris.

He built his studio on the banks of the Crocodile River in Muldersdrift and together with his wife Marlene created a beautiful home there as well. Their hospitality was legendary and an invitation to their home was an invitation cherished by all.

Tim's enthusiasm always prevailed and in his workshops he generously shared his knowledge and inspired and encouraged everyone to create better pots. If help was needed in setting up exhibitions he was always available no matter his work schedule. He also wrote articles and shared his knowledge in Sgraffitti, the first South African pottery magazine. At times other potters may have been having a difficult time and Tim would endeavour to come to the rescue. I remember one time when Hyme Rabinowitz was suffering from ill health and unable to fire his big kiln. Tim got going and was able to get people to contribute to get an electric kiln to help Hyme keep working.

After his untimely death, Wendy Goldblatt and I arranged an exhibition in his honour at the then Helen de Leeuw Gallery in Hyde Park. Many of South Africa's leading potters as well as some international potters contributed work to the exhibition and the proceeds of this exhibition were the start of the Tim Morris Bursary Fund.

A legend in his lifetime and those of us who had the privilege of knowing Tim, he is remembered with great respect and affection.

TIM MORRIS/CSA SCHOLARSHIP

In order to assist Tim's widow, Marlene, through her initial financial difficulties after his untimely death, a few top ceramists donated work for auction/sale in order to raise funds. When Marlene repaid the Association, it was her wish that the money be utilized to establish the Tim Morris scholarship to assist students in the ceramic field.

The students selected are those with the highest marks in studio ceramics registered for the final year of the B. Tech Ceramic Design course offered by Gauteng Universities of Technology. As a special gesture to celebrate the 2008 Corobrik National Ceramics Exhibition, an amount of R5 000 was approved for the award-winning scholar. Nominations from tertiary institutions who are members of CSA in KZN and the Cape was also considered.

From 1996 to 2008 R29 000 will have been paid to fifteen recipients. The awards are presented to the nominated scholars at the Gauteng AGM. The first scholarship was donated to Linda Wilson (nee Wattleworth), a Wits Technikon (now University of Johannesburg) student in 1996.

METHOD OF BOOSTING FUNDS

In 1998 Marlene Morris donated an amount from the profits of a private exhibition to the fund. A donation was also received from Tim's half-sister and her husband, Lester & Linda Sher and other friends from the U.K. Other funding is derived from interest earned on the invested fund money.

The City of Johannesburg Arts, Culture and Heritage Services, who were cosponsors of the 2002 African Earth Exhibition, donated R25 000 to the Fund.

The following people received bursaries:

2008	Kennedy Sonono - UJ
2007	Liesel Erasmus - Centurion College William Saunders - UJ
2006/2005	NO GRANTS AWARDED DURING THIS TWO YEAR PERIOD
2004	Clarissa Hathorn - UJ Kobus (JM) le Grange - Tshwane Univ. of Technology
2003	John Shirley - UJ Suetannia Lepuru - Vaal Univ. of Technology
2002	John Shirley - UJ
2001	Catherine Jacobs - UJ Marlene Schmidt - Vaal University of Technology
2000	Bronwen Rogers - UJ
1999	Beata Pacholik - UJ Violet Maphoto (Molefe) - Vaal University of Technology
1998	Michelle Legg - UJ
1997	Candice Fenianos - UJ
1996	Linda Wattleworth