Artist Statement

IN RAY’S WORDS \*

I could never work as a production potter, tried a couple times, was going to make things to sell, but it just didn’t work out. I was making each piece as an individual piece, one of a kind. That’s just the way I am (I tend to go for the feeling or an impression”). The market place never determined my direction. But at the same time I tended to make ceramics that were useful, functional, pitchers, teapots.

When I say I work by feeling, I mean for instance, when I’m working on anything that’s good, it’s painful. It’s not enjoyable until it’s done, then there’s some pleasure. But during the work, no, if it isn’t a struggle, then the work probably isn’t much good.

It’s in the spontaneity; it’s in the excitement of firing the kiln and never knowing quite what’s coming out. When the NCECA conference came to Portland I went out to George Wright’s place to help build a Korean hill climbing kiln. Now that was exciting!

F. Carlton Ball, Shoji Hamada, and Peter Voulkos are the potters that most influenced me. I watched Hamada work for three weeks and somehow it moved my own work in a new direction. It has something to do with putting life into pottery. Sitting there, its looked like he worked very slowly, but he got a lot into every piece. I noticed a year or so later, my work had gotten better, freer. The workshop changed my attitude and my way of handling clay.

I never considered myself a teacher, but I was sincere, and I insisted on having a studio where I taught. My teacher in art school, Werner Drewes, had one and I thought it was so great. The students could see me working and watch the process. I also brought in good people like Daniel Rhodes and Peter Voulkos to share what they know. I got a lot of enjoyment out of helping the students achieve their goals. We use to go on bike & ski trips; have raku parties at the farm of one student’s family.

I think the key to any success we had was that I always tried to be straightforward and honest. No secrets, nothing held back. “I’ll share everything I know,” I told them.

\*quotes compiled from the Ceramics Monthly article: “Ray and Jere Grimm” by John Nance, March 2004