

By Marjorie Husain
Chawkandi exhibits Shazia Zuberi's clay forms, which are not only beautiful but also utilitarian and can be used in day to day living

Exhibited at the Chawkandi Art, Shazia Zuberi's light, lively clay forms, reverberate with movement, a continuation of the young Ceramist's interest in classic dance traditions. Amongst a collection of over seventy, clay pieces, the curving shapes, glazed in varying shades of turquoise, blue, ochre, some with mottled effects, exuded a seductive tactile quality. Picking up a delicate piece with spiked edges, Shazia handled it in a matter of fact way. "This," she said, "could be used as



Microwave proof pottery

salad bowl." Immediately I saw it in my mind's eye, bright green leaves and red tomato slices contrasting pleasingly with the muted shades of the dish. She was right, it looked wonderful, a real conversation piece.



A dancing form on jagged clay edges

Amidst the peace and isolation of the region, Shazia described her 'response' to the intriguing patterns of nature's designs; the angular crevices and corners found in the rocks, the spectacular beauty of the weathered and austere terrain. Most ceramist's are drawn to nature in its diverse aspects, many to mountains; not surprising as clay consists of the residue of great igneous rocks, formed over a millennia.

Shazia is one of a new wave of young ceramists involved in exploring the medium of clay in Pakistan in a climate of positive response from local art galleries and public interest. In September, a group known as ASNA, whose primary aim is to preserve the potter's art in Pakistan, organized a well attended sequence of demonstrations and workshops on various aspects of clay work at the Karachi Arts Council. At the same time, ASNA arranged a group display of ceramics in which Shazia Zuberi was a participant. The variety of pieces exhibited gave an interesting insight into the work being currently produced by newcomers to the discipline. The present trend is a far cry from the '60s, when Masood Kohari pioneered the phenomenon of studio pottery in Pakistan to scant response.

Clay movements

Unlike many ceramists who insist that their pieces are strictly non-utility, Shazia wants her work to be used in day to day living. She seals tall, vase-like forms, so that they will safely hold water for flowers. Many pieces can be used in the micro-wave oven, and all are coloured with lead-free materials. Enjoying the experimental aspects of her work, Shazia picked up several examples of found objects, greenware plates, which she glazed and paint-

ed to create a sequence of contemporary designs. Among the ceramic collection, one finds a number of free-standing, sculpted pieces built up by hand. Some with clay areas torn away to reveal an interior painted with dancing forms. These are larger scaled than her earlier experiments, developing into figurative forms. This recent body of work is the result of a sojourn in the rugged, mountainous areas of the Baltistan region of Pakistan.

One of man's earliest artistic expressions, heat-hardened clay is resistant to decay and for this reason, numerous relics have survived the ages. On excavation sites throughout the world the clay relics have revealed to historians important factors of their times.

Often the well preserved pieces, in some cases entire pots and urns, carry patterns designed thousands of years ago which contemporary artists translate into their own idioms. ■