



# LEABROOKS WITTER



August 1st 2021

The Artists' Forum at Leabrooks Arts Complex. Keeping in Touch

## First thoughts

With life now opening up following the restrictions of the pandemic it might be wise to consider what we have learned during the last eighteen months: it has been a time of unprecedented opportunity to assess our lives both as individuals and as a society.

As artists we have had ample time to practice and develop our skills while giving some thought to the best ways to share our work. It's also made most of us aware of the importance of community: its value in providing support, the sharing of information and encouragement - as well as a powerful incentive to get on with the job! With this in mind we're hoping to reinstate **Leabrooks Artists' Forum on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup>. September, 2021**. You are cordially invited to attend this event at which every effort will be made to ensure that you feel safe and confident in meeting others. I'll send you more information closer to the event.

CBJ



**Ann Bates works with clay, making beautiful tiles, art works and funerary urns. Each of is created with the care and sense of engagement which reflects her warmth and kindness as a person.**

'When asked which art discipline I favour I say that I work with clay. I have a relationship with the material: I respect it as it is of the earth. Humble, yet fickle, it will go its own way if pushed too far too quickly. To help keep it workable I have a bag of clay indoors so that it's not too cold sticky in the summer. In essence I nurture the material and the subsequent emerging form in a similar way as I would a developing child: I guide it and keep it safe until such time as it goes out into the world.

As artists we all face challenges. Sometimes when ideas flow it can be difficult to resist the temptation to add another coil of clay to a developing piece, but I know from experience this is where clay calls a halt to proceedings and the specific challenges faced by artists producing ceramics begin.

I build vessels by hand and the clay sets the pace. When it wants to rest and to be left to firm up, I have learnt to do that; there is no point in fighting the material, I know I won't win!

Vessels made of clay will soon degrade unless they are fired in a kiln. I have more success if pieces are dried slowly and thoroughly before the first or bisque firing. Any remaining moisture in the vessels at this stage will turn to steam when heated and could result in the piece exploding and taking others in the kiln along with it. Successful bisque firing results in no chemically bonded water left in the clay.

The final stage in the process is to coat the vessel with a glaze that has been tested and fire again to a temperature of 1250c; this melts the material at a molecular level into ceramic.

Each of the stages that a clay form passes through requires thought, patience and a degree of experience. My advice – be a tortoise rather than a hare when working with clay – slow and steady wins the race!

Just had to share this with you! No, it's not a work of art created in a prime spot in the Gallery garden while we were trimming the box hedge during the pandemic! It's the work of someone Else: a very talented topiarist with vision, skill and time on his hands!



It's a reminder that art comes in many shapes and forms and that the garden is both a source of inspiration and a powerful means of artistic self-expression, (ref: Monet's garden at Giverny). Don't expect to see anything similar in the garden at Leabrooks Arts Complex any time soon though!

## A Special Invitation

You are invited to attend an afternoon 'In Celebration of Artists', on Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2021 any time between 12 pm and 4pm at Leabrooks Arts Complex.. Guests of the Phoenix Exhibition artists are also welcome. Drinks and nibbles will be provided, there will be the chance to meet fellow artists and the opportunity to cast your vote in the Phoenix Exhibition Competition.

We have lots of space, fresh air, garden seating and, hopefully, good weather!

We look forward to seeing you.



P.S. The Phoenix Exhibition closes on Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2021. Don't miss the chance to see it!