



ESIAS BOSCH

1000

Strauss & Co



ESIAS BOSCH: 100

13–20 February 2023
Strauss & Co, Johannesburg

Timed Online Auction
www.straussart.co.za

Lots 1–55

LEFT
Lot 37 Esias Bosch *Porcelain Vase*



Terra Cognito – A Celebration of Esias Bosch, South African Ceramist and Artist (1923–2010)

Ronnie Watt, PhD

2023 is the centennial anniversary of the birth year of Esias Bosch. It invites renewed recognition of Bosch for his remarkable career and achievements as ceramist and artist, but also a review of the inter-play of know-how, influences, ingenuity, creative flair, and personal ethos that materialised in Bosch's oeuvre.

Bosch is generally acknowledged as the most eminent amongst the pioneer studio potters of South Africa in the twentieth century. His practise and style inspired the rise of successive generations of potters, and his ceramic works retain a commanding presence in private and public collections. Hence, his works have justifiable collectable and investment value. Bosch's legacy, however, is at risk if his works merely assume the status of precious showcase objects and the contexts of their becoming – what they encapsulate and represent – are not considered as intrinsic to their cachet.

The driving force for Bosch's work in earthenware, stoneware and porcelain was the pursuit of an economy of form, integrated textural quality, a modicum of decoration, and actual if not conceptual functionality. This integrated discipline evolved from his earlier apprenticeship under Raymond Finch (1914–2012) at Winchcombe Pottery in Gloucestershire and later at the Wenford Bridge pottery of Michael Cardew (1901–1983). Cardew believed that a pot made for the purpose of being useful did not strip it of its dignity nor impact on its aesthetic appeal. Bosch, echoing Cardew, was emphatic that: 'Usefulness did not preclude the possibility that an object might be a work of art' (Bosch & De Waal 1988:26).

Despite being capable of prodigious output, Bosch remained highly critical of his work. He stated that he might

at best have produced ten truly good pots in any single year and that 'in a kiln of 200 or 300 pots there will be only one pot that invites a second look' (Basson 1976). Bosch stayed true to his dictum that an artist's work should not remain static 'for as soon as a certain proficiency is achieved, the danger exists that the work becomes repetitive instead of creative; it becomes superficial and lifeless' (Van Rooyen 1976:131). This is illustrated by his switch from earthenware to stoneware, followed by a directional change to porcelain and then progressing to lustre and laminated tiles.

With specific reference to Bosch and his close studio pottery associate Hyme Rabinowitz (1920–2009), the ceramist and ceramics art historian Ian Calder (2010) stated that the ways in which they developed their materials, technique, form and decoration, resulted in a distinct South African self-identity and visual vocabulary. Bosch's decorative motifs were derived from his everyday surrounds (Basson 1976). The art historian Hans Fransen (1982:339) defined the works as having 'a certain uncontrived African flavour, achieved not by the use of overt African motifs, but more by its general feel and the nature of its decorations.'

In 2003, Bosch ceased all work in ceramics in favour of drawing and painting – the subjects in which he excelled as a fine arts student at the Witwatersrand University and the Johannesburg School of Art. As themes for his paintings, he favoured cloudscapes, landscapes, seascapes, indigenous trees, and the fauna and flora in his immediate surrounds. He considered how the painting itself and the mood it presented would spill out of a frame into its surrounding space, becoming a larger concept than just a painting.

What is the measure of Bosch? It does not centre on his

status as a pioneer figure in South African studio pottery, but rather that he pioneered new materials, processes, studio technology, forms and styles that gave him a singular presence amongst his contemporaries. It is not described by his remarkably diverse oeuvre but rather that all of his output bears the hallmark of technical and artistic integrity. It is in part influenced by the fact that Bosch's works – and specifically his later ceramic panels – achieved record prices for South African ceramics at premier public auctions, but more so that the collector appeal for any of his works has been lasting and growing, prompted by the recognition that Bosch and his works lay claim to a premier positioning in South African ceramics art history, and that the being-ness of Bosch of which humility was the essence, is locked within and reflected off his works.

The British ceramist and author Edmund de Waal (2004) holds that a ceramic work is 'entangled in the values of the maker and in that maker's appropriation of ideas and images, as well as the values of those through whose lives it is successively animated'. Implicit in that statement is that our experience of the work is supported by our knowledge of its context. In the case of Bosch, it would be our familiarity with the 'how' and 'what' of his works and, more particularly, of our awareness that his works flow from a confluence of knowledge, influence, experience, a unique creative vision and an ethos of creative integrity on which he could call to give shape to form, intent and impact. A celebration of the life and oeuvre of Bosch is a confirmation that his works retain the agency to influence our perception (what we understand) and excite our reception (our response flowing from understanding) of his works.

REFERENCES

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- Van Rooyen, A. Esias Bosch. *Ons Kuns* 3. Toerien, Heine & Duby, Georges (eds). Pretoria: The Foundation for Education, Science and Technology, 131–137.

RIGHT

Lot 16 Esias Bosch *Lustreware Tile*

PAGE 3

Lot 7 Esias Bosch *Landscape Lustreware Tile*





Esias Bosch

South African 1923–2010

Esias Bosch is considered to be one of the world's few master potters and has been described by art historian Murray Schoonraad as the father of South African ceramics. Bosch's profound influence on the development of South African pottery stems from his training in England, his constant and unrelenting exploration of the possibilities of the clay medium and his obsession with producing objects of technical and artistic excellence.

He was born in Winburg in the Orange Free State. Instead of pursuing his parent's wish for him to become a dentist, his tertiary studies began with a course in fine art at the University of Witwatersrand and then a teacher's diploma from the Johannesburg School of Art, where he excelled in portraiture. In 1949, at the age of twenty-six, he was awarded a three-year scholarship to study ceramics in England. He spent the first year at the Central School of Art in London, studying under Dora Billington. This was followed by a practical apprenticeship with two of England's most highly considered potters, Raymond Finch and Michael Cardew. Both British potters soon recognised in their young apprentice a natural talent for pottery.

Bosch returned to South Africa in 1953 where he taught ceramics for two years at the Durban Art School before moving to Pretoria. During this time, his production was primarily domestic earthenware decorated with slips and oxides. He was the first potter in South Africa to make studio ceramics and even at this early age he caught the attention of art buyers. He moved to the Lowveld, eventually settling near White River in 1961. Here

he developed a smallholding known as Die Randjie (The Edge), where he built his own kilns and set up an immaculately organised studio. He worked and lived on Die Randjie until the end of his life.

Bosch continued to create domestic ware, but moved from earthenware to reduction stoneware production, which gave him more creative opportunities than earthenware. He explored and mastered the medium for the next fifteen years. His stoneware work brought him considerable acclaim and commissions for numerous murals, including commissions for the foyer of the Schlesinger Centre (now the WesBank Building) in Braamfontein and the international departures hall of Jan Smuts Airport.

Subsequently, in 1975, Bosch, who always reached for ever greater challenges to master, changed his medium once more and began working exclusively in porcelain. He soon overcame every challenge this medium posed and made porcelain jars, bowls, vases and platters of great elegance and delicacy.

By 1979 Bosch progressed to a new period in his oeuvre, and focused on the production of large, richly decorated lustre tiles, which became highly sought after for their extraordinary beauty. He said of his lustre tiles, 'The real world is such a hard place: so, when I paint my lustre tiles, I try to make them things of joy'.

In 1988 Bosch turned to making very large and extremely thin vitrified wall tiles with a translucent quality and compelling depth of colour. The tiles were decorated with multiple layers of underglaze ceramic stains mixed with

china clay and various frits under a clear glaze, and fired several times. As with all Bosch's previous work, this work also very soon became sought after and reached the attention of collectors. These tiles moved him ever closer to a dream he harboured – to eventually stop working in ceramics and devote himself solely to oil painting, watercolour and drawing.

When he turned eighty in 2003, Bosch gave up ceramics and returned to painting and drawing. His last years were devoted to the passionate pursuit of drawing 'portraits' of the Lowveld trees he loved so much, which soon became highly regarded. He said of his tree drawings, executed in ink with pens that he cut from wood, 'Every drawing is unique, as each tree has its own light and shadow and interesting leaf, branch and trunk characteristics. I have great admiration for botanical artists, but I am not one – I try only to capture the character of each tree'.

Esias Bosch, known as an artist of great integrity and a keen sense of excellence, won numerous awards during his career. He was, for instance, awarded a silver medal in 1963 by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC and he received a medal of honour from the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns. He received numerous commissions during his lifetime and participated in several group and solo exhibitions in Europe, the United States and South Africa. His work is represented in international collections such as the Keramion Museum in Cologne, Germany, and most public collections in South Africa.

See esiasbosch.co.za for more information.



1

*Large Stoneware Dish
with Birds*

stoneware with wood-ash glaze
and iron and cobalt decoration
height: 9 cm; diameter: 51,5 cm

R8 000 – 12 000



2

Large White Lidded Jar

porcelain with white glaze and
cobalt and iron decoration
height: 28 cm; diameter: 16 cm

R8 000 – 12 000



3

Lidded Square Box

slab-built stoneware with granite
glaze and iron decoration
height: 8 cm; width: 11,5 cm;
depth: 11,5 cm

R1 000 – 2 000



4

Slab-built Stoneware Box

stoneware with iron glaze
height: 7,5 cm; width: 21 cm;
depth: 20,5 cm

R3 000 – 4 000





5

Stoneware Vase

stoneware with iron glaze and
incised decoration
height: 31 cm; diameter: 19 cm

R2 000 – 3 000

LITERATURE

Andree Bosch and Johann de Waal
(1988) *Esias Bosch*, Cape Town:
Struik Winchester, illustrated in
colour on page 76



6

Large Triangular Vase

earthenware with granite glaze,
iron decoration and incised
decoration
height: 54,5 cm; width: 44 cm;
depth: 42 cm

R15 000 – 20 000



7

Landscape Lustreware Tile

porcelain with lustre decoration

33,5 by 50,5 cm

R30 000 – 50 000



8

Porcelain Lidded Jar

porcelain with white glaze and
cobalt and iron decoration
height: 25 cm; diameter: 18 cm

R8 000 – 12 000





9

Hexagonal Box and Lid

slab-built stoneware with
wood-ash glaze and iron and
cobalt decoration
height: 9 cm; width: 21,5 cm;
depth: 24,5 cm

R4 000 – 6 000



10

Small Stoneware Vase

stoneware with celadon glaze
height: 10 cm; diameter: 11,5 cm

R500 – 700



11

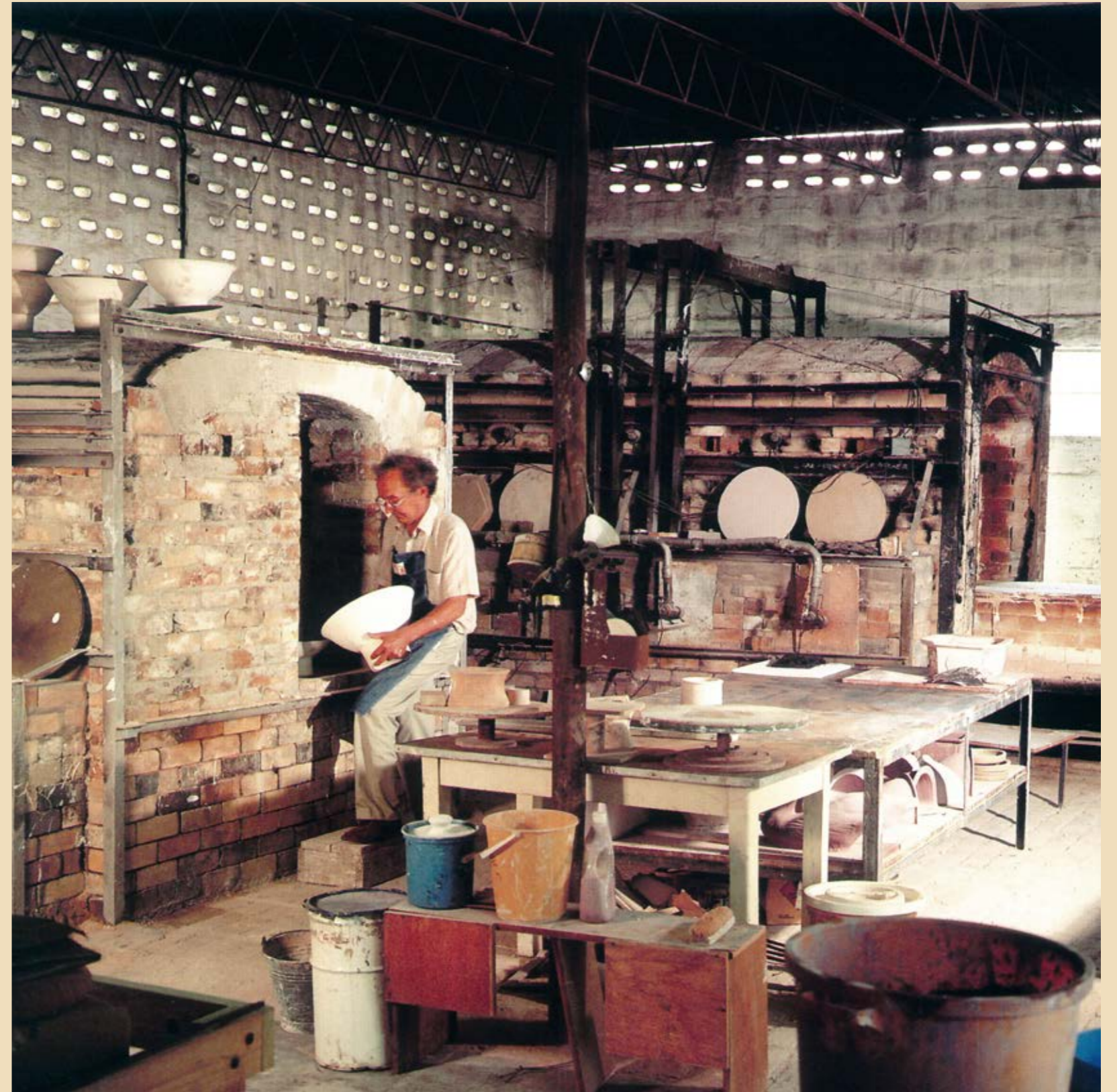
Large Stoneware Bowl

stoneware with granite glaze and
iron and slip-trail decoration
height: 13 cm; diameter: 27 cm

R3 000 – 5 000



Bosch at the trolley kiln examining some of the remaining bisqued porcelain pieces, thrown in the late 1970s.



The artist at his oil-fired porcelain kiln.



12

Small Stoneware Platter

stoneware with wood-ash glaze
and iron decoration
height: 5 cm; diameter: 35,5 cm

R2 000 – 3 000



13

Green Stoneware Plate

stoneware with semi-matte celadon
glaze and iron decoration
height: 3 cm; diameter: 26,5 cm

R2 000 – 3 000



14

Large Stoneware Dish

stoneware with wood-ash glaze
and iron decoration

height: 9,5 cm; diameter: 74,5 cm

R25 000 – 30 000



15

Large Lidded Jar

porcelain with white glaze and
cobalt and iron decoration
height: 38 cm; diameter: 21 cm

R8 000 – 12 000



Esias and Valerie in London on their wedding day, 16 March 1951.



ABOVE AND RIGHT In Raymond Finch's Winchcombe Pottery, 1951.





16

Blue Ashtray

stoneware with a blue iron glaze
and relief decoration
height: 4,5 cm; width 20,5 cm;
depth: 20 cm

R1 000 – 2 000



17

Large Earthenware Plate

earthenware with wood-ash glaze
and iron and cobalt decoration
height: 4 cm; diameter: 40 cm

R8 000 – 12 000



18

Lustreware Tile

porcelain with lustre decoration

in an acrylic glass case

40 by 32,5 cm

R30 000 – 50 000

19

Green Bowl

stoneware with wood-ash glaze
and incised decoration
height: 6,5 cm; diameter: 20,5 cm

R2 000 – 3 000



20

*Lidded Stoneware
Container*

stoneware with celadon glaze
and incised decoration
height: 10 cm; diameter: 18 cm

R2 000 – 3 000





21

Large Hexagonal Vase

stoneware with iron glaze, incised
pattern and relief decoration
height: 69 cm; diameter: 36 cm

R12 000 – 16 000



22

Large Lidded Hexagonal Jar

stoneware with dark green granite
glaze, iron decoration and incised
pattern
height: 62 cm; width: 34 cm;
depth: 30 cm

R12 000 – 16 000





23

Large Lustreware Tile

porcelain with lustre decoration
125 by 160 cm

R400 000 – 500 000



24
Large Stoneware Vase
stoneware with dolomite glaze
and incised decoration
height: 119 cm; diameter: 26 cm
R20 000 – 30 000



25
Porcelain Vase
porcelain with celadon glaze
and slip-trailed decoration
height: 31 cm; diameter: 22 cm
R5 000 – 7 000

Stoneware Dinner Service

stoneware with iron glaze and incised decoration
(58)

R12 000 – 16 000

14 dinner plates height: 3 cm; diameter: 26 cm
 13 side plates height: 3 cm; diameter: 21,5 cm
 7 coffee cups height: 6 cm; width 9 cm; depth 7,5 cm
 8 saucers height: 1,5 cm; diameter: 12,5 cm
 8 dessert bowls height: 4,5 cm; diameter: 13,5 cm
 1 medium bowl height: 15 cm; diameter: 23 cm
 1 large bowl height: 17 cm; diameter: 30,5 cm
 1 large platter height: 6 cm; diameter: 38,5 cm
 1 small casserole dish height: 10,5 cm; diameter: 20,5 cm
 1 large casserole dish height: 16,5 cm; diameter: 34,5 cm
 1 medium jug height: 12 cm; width 13 cm; depth 10 cm
 1 large jug height: 15 cm; width 15,5 cm; depth 11,5 cm
 1 beer mug height: 12,5 cm; width 13 cm; depth 9 cm





27

Large Stoneware Dish

stoneware with wood-ash glaze
and iron and cobalt decoration
in an acrylic glass case
height: 39 cm; width: 31 cm;
depth: 3 cm

R8 000 – 12 000



28

Large Stoneware Plate

stoneware with granite glaze and iron
decoration in an acrylic glass case
height: 3 cm; diameter: 35,5 cm

R12 000 – 16 000



29

Stoneware Plate

stoneware with wood-ash
glaze and iron decoration in an
acrylic glass case
height: 4 cm; diameter: 38,5 cm

R12 000 – 16 000



30

Butterfly Lustreware Tile

porcelain with lustre decoration
160 by 125 cm

R500 000 – 600 000



31

Large Earthenware Vessel

earthenware with green glaze,
relief decoration and incised
pattern

height: 31 cm; diameter: 41,5 cm

R12 000 – 16 000



32

Large Earthenware Vase

earthenware with green granite
glaze and relief decoration

height: 42,5 cm; diameter: 25 cm

R8 000 – 10 000

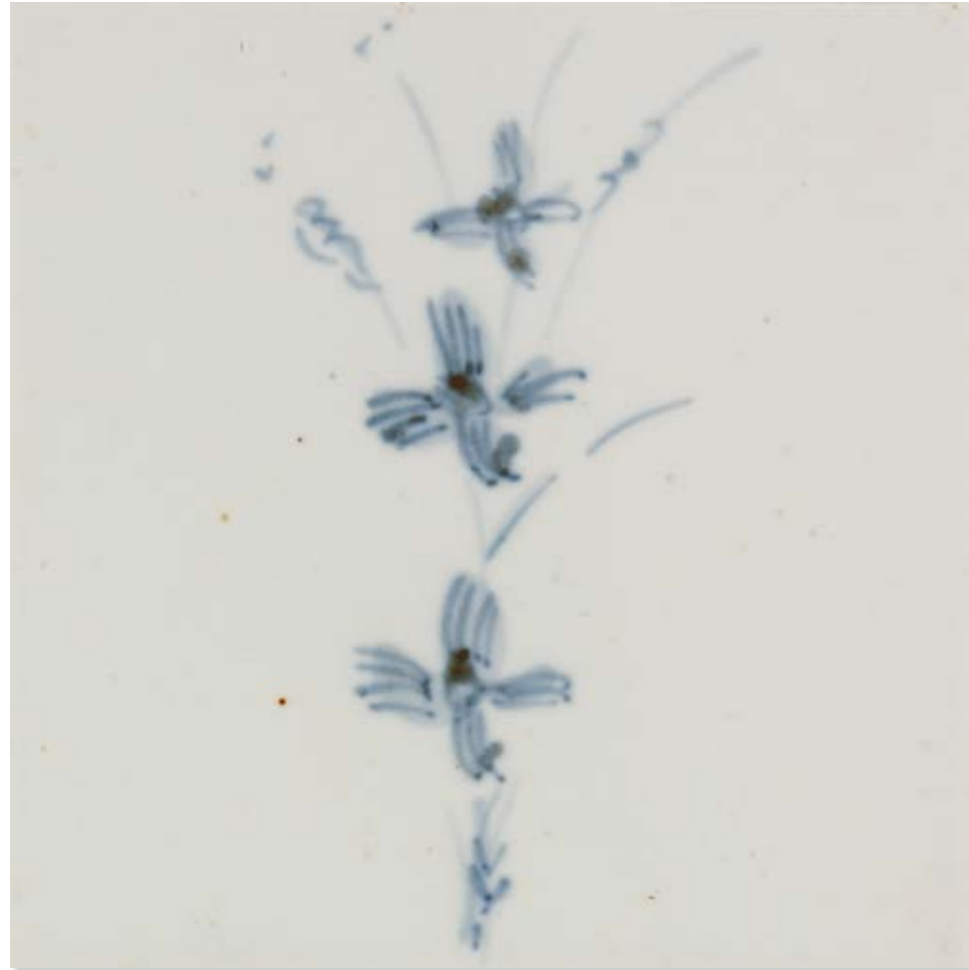


33

*Very Large Earthenware
Teapot*

earthenware with a white semi-
matte glaze and underglaze
pencil decoration
height: 51 cm, including handle;
width: 37 cm; depth: 31 cm

R50 000 – 60 000



34

Porcelain Tile

porcelain with white glaze
and cobalt decoration in an
acrylic glass case
24 by 24 cm

R2 000 – 3 000



35

Porcelain Tile

porcelain with white glaze
and cobalt decoration in an
acrylic glass case
21,5 by 28 cm

R2 000 – 3 000



36

Porcelain Tile

porcelain with white glaze
and cobalt decoration in an
acrylic glass case
24 by 24 cm

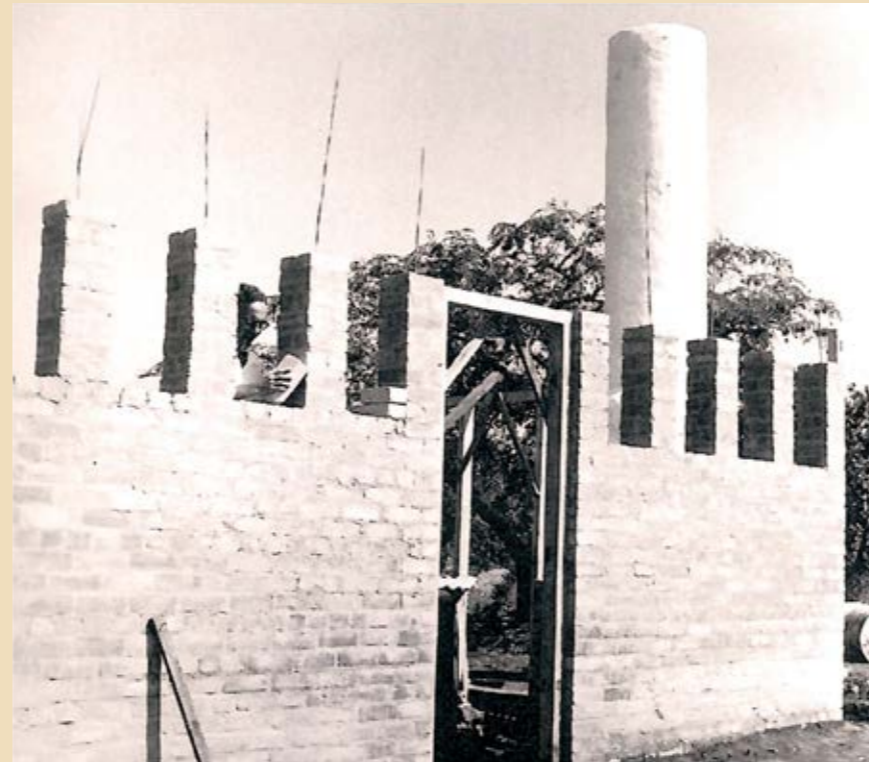
R2 000 – 3 000



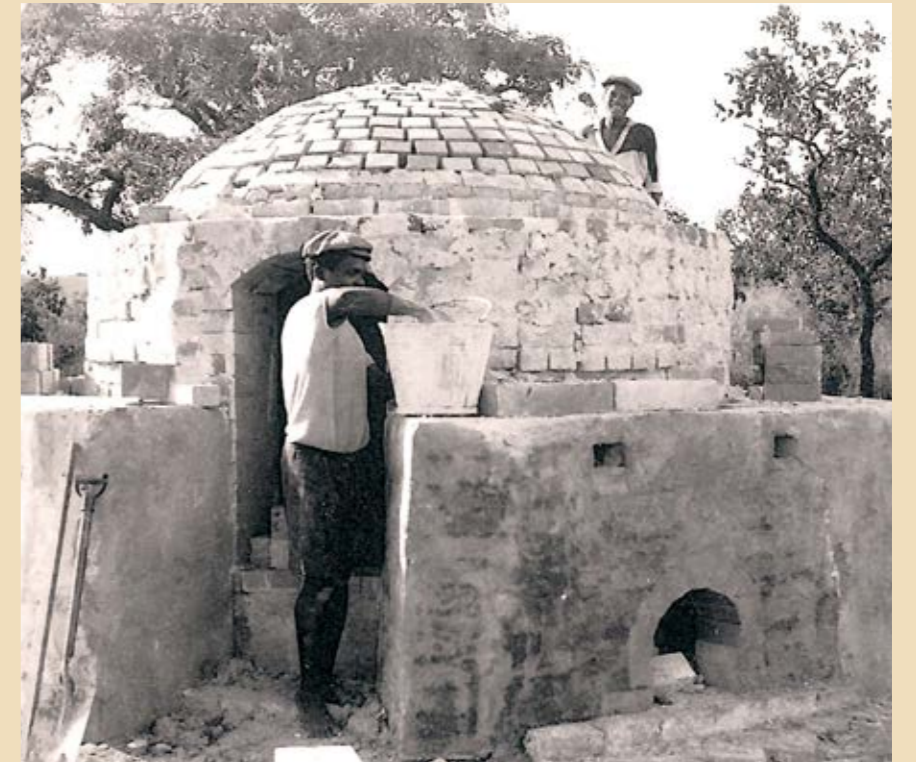
Hyme Rabinowitz and Esias at Die Randjie, early 1960s.



Esias resting after a firing.



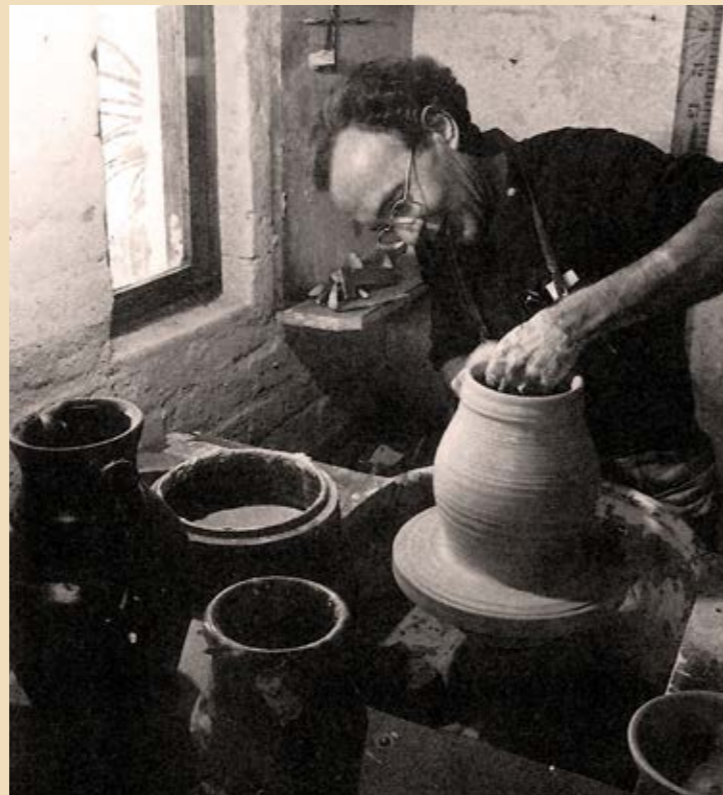
The Norman Eaton-designed studio being erected around the kiln.



Construction of the Cardew wood-fired kiln at Die Randjie, 1960.



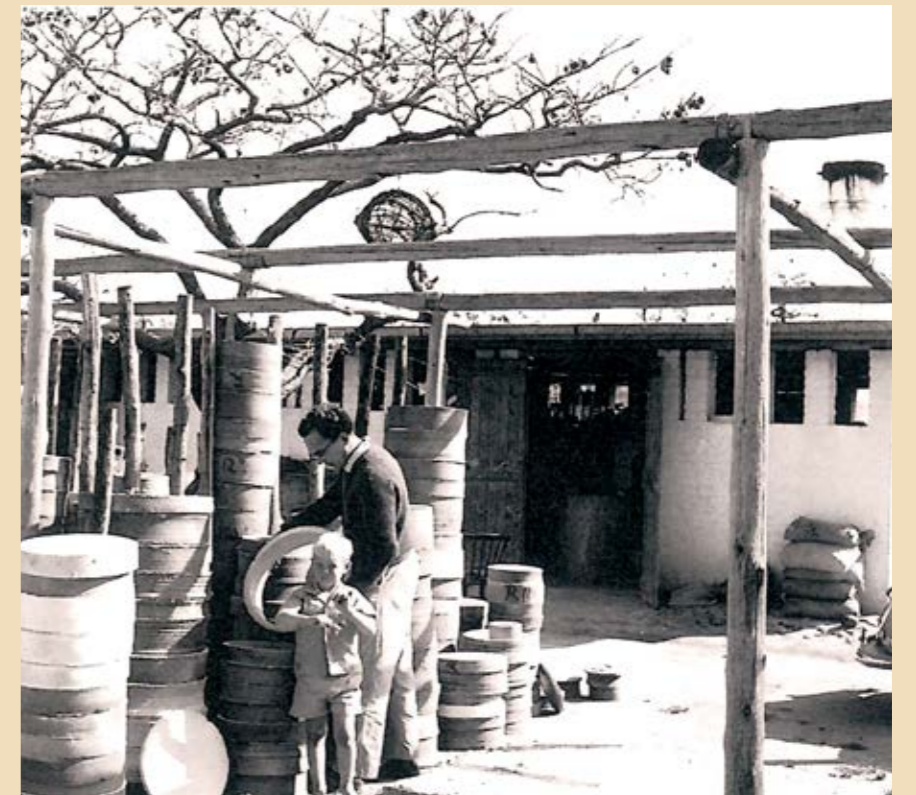
Raw-glazing a large stoneware piece, 1967.



Throwing stoneware, 1965.



Valerie, Esra, Andree and Anton visiting the incomplete studio.



Sorting saggars with Anton outside the completed studio.



37

Porcelain Vase

porcelain with white glaze and
cobalt decoration
height: 35 cm; diameter: 20 cm

R7 000 – 9 000

38

Landscape with Tree

signed with the artist's initials,
dated 19 01 09 and inscribed 'Aan
Ron Baie Geluk' in pencil
watercolour on paper
56 by 76 cm

R18 000 – 24 000



39

Acacia

signed with the artist's initials,
inscribed with the title and 'Ron - Sias'
ink on paper
56 by 76,5 cm

R18 000 – 24 000

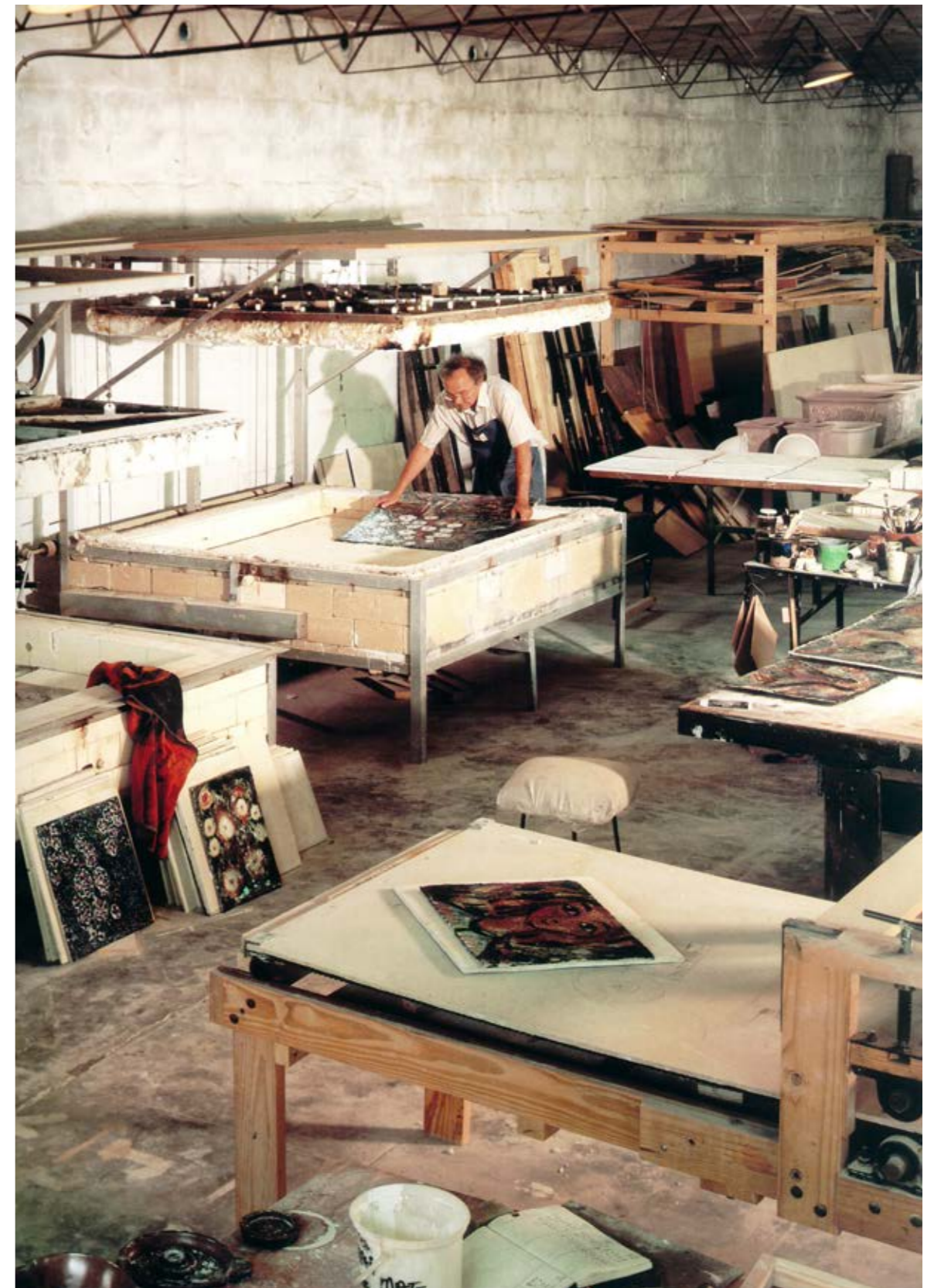


40

Porcelain Plate

porcelain with white glaze
and cobalt decoration in an
acrylic glass case
height: 2,5 cm; diameter: 37 cm

R8 000 – 10 000





41

Porcelain Bowl

porcelain with white glaze and
cobalt decoration
height: 10,5 cm; diameter: 30,5 cm

R6 000 – 8 000



42

*Porcelain Bowl with
Blue Birds*

porcelain with white glaze
and cobalt decoration
height: 7,5 cm; diameter: 21 cm

R3 000 – 5 000





43

Large Stoneware Bowl

stoneware with wood-ash glaze
and iron decoration
height: 10 cm; diameter: 43 cm

R12 000 – 16 000



44

Large Earthenware Plate

earthenware with wood-ash glaze
and iron and cobalt decoration
height: 4 cm; diameter: 38 cm

R8 000 – 12 000



45

Bird in Landscape
Lustreware Tile

porcelain with lustre decoration
55 by 56 cm

R40 000 – 60 000





46

Large Stoneware Box

stoneware with wood-ash glaze
and iron and cobalt decoration
height: 22 cm; diameter: 26 cm

R12 000 – 16 000



47

Small Stoneware Bowl

stoneware with wood-ash glaze
and iron decoration
height: 7 cm; diameter: 22 cm

R2 000 – 3 000

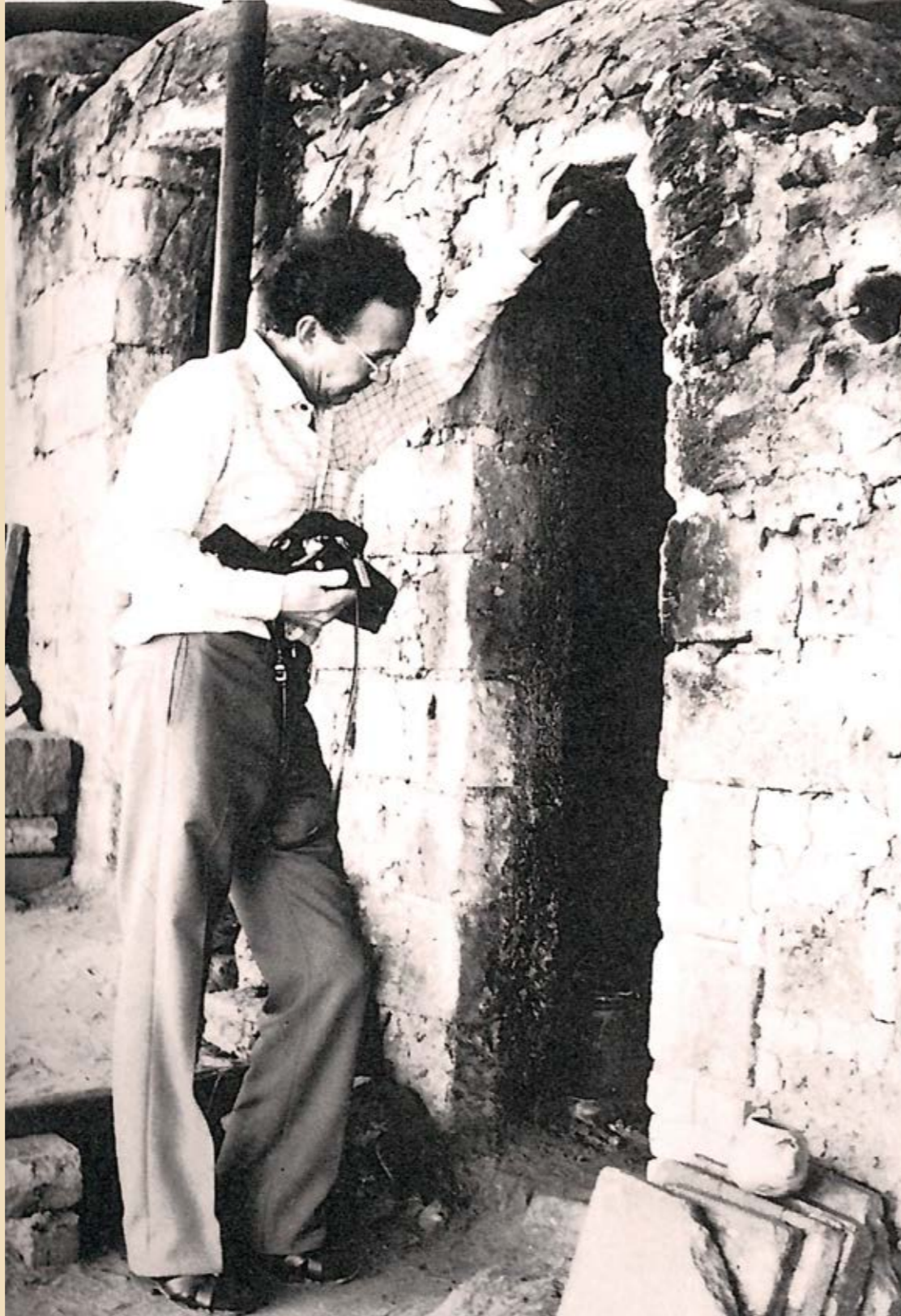


48

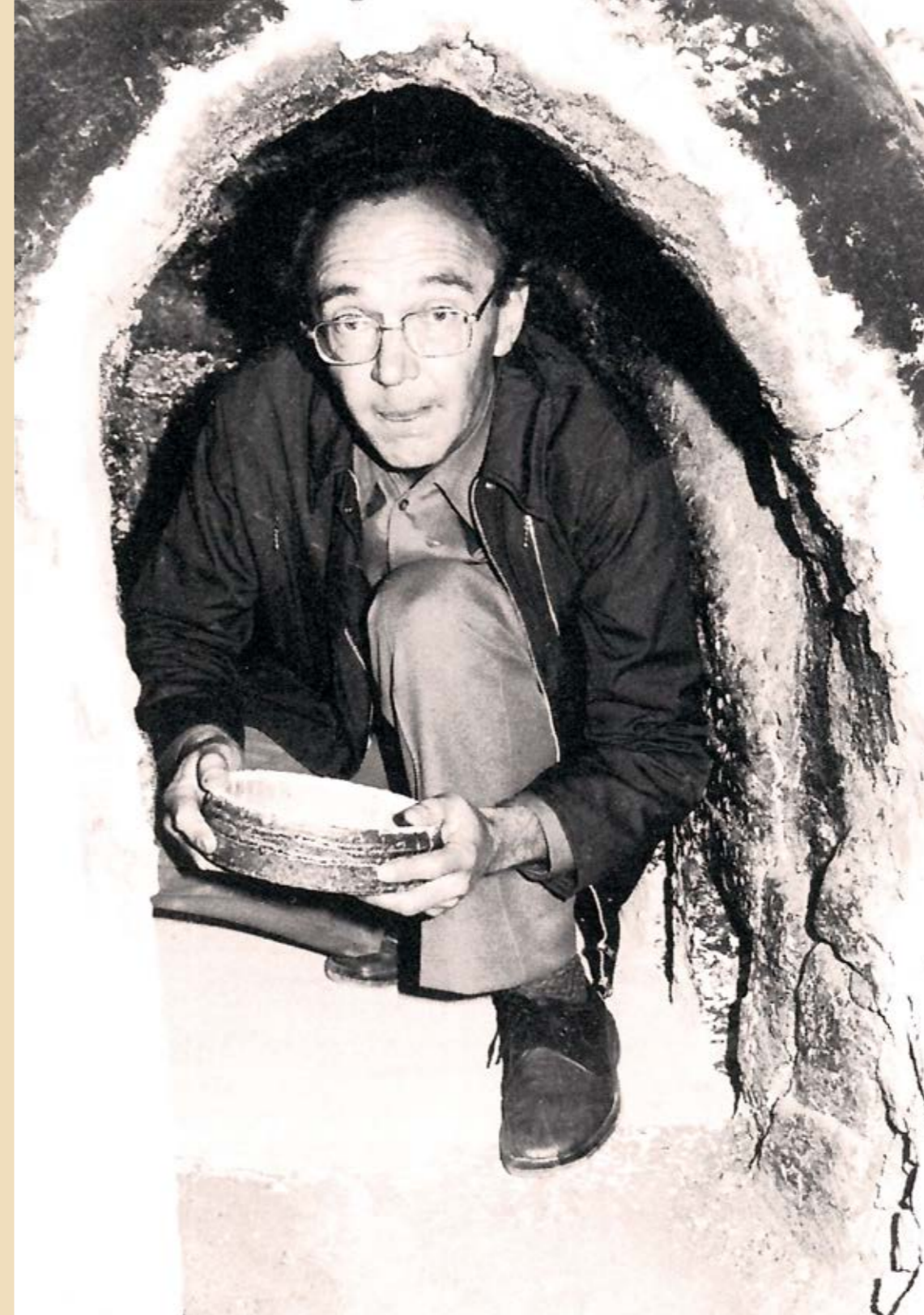
Large Stoneware Bowl

stoneware with wood-ash glaze
and iron and cobalt decoration
height: 13 cm; diameter: 34 cm

R8 000 – 12 000



The artist inspecting a traditional climbing kiln during a tour to Japan in 1974.



Inside one of the kilns.





49

Seascape

printed and glazed ceramic tile
item size: 125,5 by 159,5 by 5,5 cm,
unframed

R200 000 – 300 000



50

Stoneware Relief Tile

stoneware with green glaze
and iron oxide decoration
45,5 by 46 cm, excluding frame

R5 000 – 7 000



51

Small Stoneware Relief Tile

stoneware with dolomite glaze
and relief decoration
29 by 29,5cm, excluding frame

R1 000 – 2 000



52

Large Porcelain Bowl

porcelain with white glaze and
cobalt decoration
height: 12 cm; diameter: 31 cm

R6 000 – 8 000



53

Small White Lidded Jar

porcelain with white glaze and
cobalt decoration
height: 21,5 cm; diameter: 12 cm

R3 000 – 5 000





54

Large Hexagonal Box

slab-built stoneware with
blue-green glaze and cobalt
decoration

height: 9,5 cm; width: 24 cm;
depth: 27 cm

R5 000 – 7 000



At work on earthenware pieces in the Hatfield studio, Pretoria, late 1950s



55

*Vase of Red and White
Flowers*

Painted and glazed ceramic tile
item size: 126 by 125 by 5 cm,
unframed

R150 000 – 200 000

