



Kumbha Mela

D O C U M E N T A T I O N

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IDC, IIT Bombay.
आई आई. टी मुंबई-76.

Documentation of Kumbharwada

Visual Communication Special Project by :

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Guide

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Kumbharwada

Approval Sheet

The Visual Communication Special Project

"Documentation of Kumbharwada"

By : **Ghodke Rajesh Prakash**

is approved for the partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the post graduate degree in
Visual Communication.

Guide

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Introduction:

Kumbharwada documentation...

This subject gave me an opportunity to explore my favorite medium, photography, and more than that know how about the Asia largest slum, Dharavi.., the Kumbharwada. Kumbharwada can be called as, most creative place in the Mumbai city.

To begin with the project was a gather most basic information like; Where is this place? How to reach there? Whom to meet there? and many more questions. I had very odd experience while reaching kumbharwada first time, but the work over there just gave me the much needed motivation, a new hope and a wide view to look through the eyepiece of my camera.

As somebody has written, " Pottery is a measure of a countries civilization." It is one of the oldest method through which man has tried to express himself, his thoughts, his surroundings, his culture, his institution and his soul. Pottery is all about tradition.



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We can see some designs as old as thousands of years which are transferred through generations to generations. Throughout the ages these craft is developed and is one of the prominent and promising business opportunity today.

There are approximately 800 houses in 'Dharavi' khumbharwada. Each house has its own potter and their own designs. What I observed was, some work with same older methods and techniques of pottery while some of them have blended their work and approach with the modern world and its technology. They are developing their work to cope up with the needs of modernizations, some of them don't bother about all these factors, they just carry on their working methods of pottery and earn money.

There are as many attitudes, as different as their designs. Pottery is a work done through soul, and which give each individual its own touch, then let it be a mass produced items, or an art piece for a special occasion. The work reflects the image of the potter.

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Today they have the electrically charged wheels with variable speeds but the technique of throwing the clay on the wheel will never vanish. Their hands simply create the forms, unending creations, limitless designs which give us enormous options to select a kind of work with which we decorate our living rooms, gardens and surroundings.

All this and many more things with different experiences can be discussed, as I had a wonderful opportunity to prepare and peep through the window of potters creations.

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D O C U M E N T A T I O N



Pottery:



Pottery is the language of the soul, soul of the potter. But at the same time it is a useful and decorative ware made up of baked clay.

Number of different items from ash trays, vases, flowerpots, water pots, garden pots, roof matts and hundreds of others to be mentioned. The word pottery also means a factory that makes pottery. It has been traditionally developed skill by the human being from the available natural resources, pottery is also one such very creative way of using clay by giving it a desired shape and baking it to make it useful.

Pottery belongs to a large groups of items called ceramic products. Ceramic products are made from a material called ceramics. They content products like bricks, cement, grinding tools, sewer pipes, table ware , electrical equipments etc. Ceramic is a very good insulator material so it is used in a cars spark plugs. As this project caters only with the need of documenting the potters work so it may be obligatory to discuss on the subject like ceramics. Ceramics in itself is very vast subject to ponder upon.

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Types of Pottery :

Pottery can be divided into 3 major types.

1. Earthenware
2. Stoneware
3. Porcelain

This classification is made on the facts of mixture of clay that it contains and the temperature at which it is baked. In kumbharwada porcelain pottery is not made. Potters in kumbharwada mainly work in earthenware.

EARTHENWARE :

The mixture of earthenware clays makes the earthenware are more brittle and chips more easily, but very good colorful glazes can be obtained from this type of pottery. This type of pottery is baked at low temperature.

STONEWARE :

It is a mixture of stoneware clays as a result this kind of pottery is heavier than earthen than earthenware. It is strong, this type of pottery is baked at high temperature as a result it gets a glaze on it.



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Methods:

Pottery is made under these 4 methods and they are as under :

1. Preparing clay
2. Shaping the clay
3. Decorating/Glazing
4. Firing

1. PREPARING THE CLAY

Potters prepare clay by pressing and squeezing it with their hands or by mechanical methods. This treatment makes clay soft and smooth, and it eliminates air bubbles that could cause the clay to crack during the firing process.



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2.SHAPING THE CLAY :

It can be done by various methods some of these methods involve hand building, in which potters use only their hands to shape the clay. The easiest way hand-building method consists of pinching the clay into the desired form. Many beginners use this process to make small bowls called pinch pots. Another method of hand building, called solid forming, consists of shaping a sculpture out of lump of clay.

The most common ways of shaping clay include :

- 1) the coil method
- 2) the slap method
- 3) the MOLD method
- 4 the wheel method

The first two methods involve hand building, and the second two method require equipments.

A potter may use a combination of these methods. For e.g., the potter might form the body of a teapot on a potters wheel and use a hand-building method to make the handle and spout.



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THE COIL METHOD :

It is one of the oldest and simplest ways of making pottery. After preparing the clay, the potter shapes part of it into a flat piece that will be the base of the ware. The remaining clay is rolled into long strips. Using the base piece as a foundation, the potter coils the strips of clay on top of one another. The coils must be attached together to make the pottery strong. The potter attaches each coil layer to the next with a creamy substance called slip. Slip, which serves as a cement, is made by adding water to clay. Potters always smooth the inside surface, depending on the design of the piece. In kumbharwada coil method is used along with the wheel method. Here the rolls of the wet clay are placed on the base which is kept on the wheel, then the coils are placed on each other to form the clay walls, which are afterwards shaped to create new forms.

THE SLAB METHOD :

The slab method forms pottery from flat pieces of clay. The potter shapes the clay into flats slabs by pounding it with the fists or by flattening it with a rolling pin. Using one slab as the base, the potter places or other slabs at right angles to it to form the

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sides of a piece of pottery.
The slabs are then attached together with slip .Slabs may be difficult to work with, especially if they are large For this reason ,the potter may let the slabs harden slightly before fastening them together.

MOLD METHOD :

The mold method is used to produce identical pieces of pottery . One technique of mold shaping, called slip casting, is used to turn out a large no of pieces of hollow pottery in slip casting, the potter pours slip into a mold and lets part of it dry. The slip nearest the sides of the mold thickens quickly . After a few minutes, the slip in the middle of the mold is poured out, leaving the thicker slip attached to the sides. The thick slip dries into a finished piece of pottery. Mold shaping can also done by jiggering. Jiggering involves a device called a jigger, which consists of two pieces of plaster that form a mold. The potter puts the

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clay between the two pieces of plaster and, by pressing them together, squeezes the clay into the desired shapes.

THE WHEEL METHOD :

The wheel method involves the use of a potters wheel . This device consists of a round, flat, wooden surface that turns while the potter shapes clay on it. Most wheels are electrically powered and turn when the potter places presses a foot pedal.

As the wheels turns, the potter pushes the thumbs or other fingers into the center of the spinning clay. This action forms the clay into a pot that has low, thick sides The potter shapes the sides into the desired form by pressing one hand on the outside of the spinning pot .



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DECORATING AND GLAZING :

Potters here put simple decorations on their ware by pressing their fingers into the soft clay or by scratching lines into it. Potters frequently use the plastic gears of different teeth distances which gives a design on the rims or on the sides of the ware. These gears are attached to the wooden stick and are free moving on the axis of the wheel. This is the most simple method of decorating the ware. In the molded items the molds have the designs carved in it which in turn get raised on the items made out of these molds. Potters in kumbharwada also explore possibilities of making the opening of the pots in different styles, e.g. oval shape opening, hexagonal, round etc. It has been observed that most of the items don't have extreme designs on the side walls of the pot, so as to avoid the settlement of the dust. Also in the molded items the molds consists of two hemispheres so it is very difficult to obtain identical design on the side walls. Plain surface is easy to finish and to make item look as one piece. Elaborate designs can be drawn on pottery by using coloured substances that will not be damaged by heat during firing such substances include enamel, glaze and slip. Geru is commonly used enamel in kumbharwada to ma.



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Glazing is used not only to decorate, but also to smoothen and to make water proof pottery. Potters have developed many types and colour of glaze. They apply it in several ways, including brushing, pouring, or spraying it onto pottery. In kumbharwada glazing is mainly done by brushing the pottery. After a piece of pottery is glazed, the potter fires it. Some type of pottery must be fired before being glazed. After glazing, they are fired again to bake the glaze. A few kinds of pottery are usually not glazed. They include a stoneware called jasper and an earthenware called terra cotta.

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FIRING :

firing makes pottery hard and strong. It also makes glaze stick to clay, and it hardens the glaze as well. Pottery is fired in an oven, called Kiln. In dharavi the kilns are provided by government to the potters in the area allotted. They share the kilns to bake there items. These kilns are brick constructed and they are been developed by the potters themselves.

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How Pottery is made

HOW POTTERY IS MADE :

First, the potters select and prepare the clay. The potter shapes it, using one of several methods. Three common methods are described below. After the clay dries, the potter may coat it with a smooth glaze. Finally the potter bakes the pottery in an oven to harden it.

COIL METHOD :

It involves cutting out a bottom and then rolling ropes of clay and stacking them. The potter then may smooth the layers together. In kumbharwada coil method is used along with the wheel method. The base is kept on the potters wheel and then the ropes of clay are stacked on it. It was observed that, when the pot was of excess height potter used this type of method. Even it was seen in many places that the coiled clay was used to prepare the rims of the molded items and even for the items made on the potters wheel.

THE SLAB METHOD:

The potter first cuts the clay into slabs and then fastens the slabs to one another with a creamy clay called slip.

THE MOULD METHOD:

Slip is poured into the mould. After the slip next to the mould hardens, the extra slip is poured out. The mould is split, and the piece is removed.

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Potters wheel

MAKING POTTERY ON A POTTERS WHEEL

Since early times, people have made vessels by using a potters wheel. The wheel consists of a revolving disc mounted on a spindle. The potter spins the disc by using a foot control or mechanical power. Various hand and finger movements are used to mold the clay into the desired shape. In early periods the potter himself had to rotate the wheel with the help of the stick. It is the most common method of pottery seen in kumbharwada.

1) A LUMP OF CLAY :

A lump of clay is spun on a wheel. The potter smooth it and pokes both thumbs into the top to make it hollow.

2) THE SIDES :

The sides of the vessels are shaped by drawing up the clay. The potter locks thumbs to steady the hands.

3) EXCESS CLAY :

Excess clay is trimmed off with a tool, above. Then the potter removes the finished vessel with a wire or a knife.

4) FINISHED POTTERY :

Finished pottery is given colour, smoothness, and extra toughness by being glazed and fired.

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Types of pottery



As mentioned earlier there are more than 800 potters in Kumbharwada and each one is having his own style of pottery. They produce thousands of pots everyday. To make it more simpler, to understand the kind of work done here groups are formed under different headings namely :

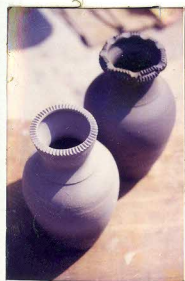
- 1) Tradition items
- 2) Regular items
- 3) Gifts items
- 4) Festive items
- 5) Special items

1) Traditional Items :

Pottery is a work which is evolved and is passed through generations to generations for many years. In this process some type of work has become traditional as it came from ancestors and is still followed in same way. In fact, all the work carried out in Kumbharwada can be stated as traditional pottery.

Some potters here have developed their work with the changing times and requirements, major factors for this is that, pottery nowadays is not made just for utility purpose but is gone far beyond to become a art piece, a gift item or a mass produced item. We can still easily point out some traditional work.

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Regular items:-

Regular items can be defined as, mass produced pottery as per the placed order. Many potters in Dharavi are regularly preparing these items such as :

- 1) Garden pots
- 2) Flower pots
- 3) Vases
- 4) Water pots

Traditional items & Regular items may seem to have lash but fact is regular items are made accordingly to the orders placed while traditional items are just made as they always have going in the market in quantity as per orders utility.

Festive items:-

Festive items are those produced for the festival purpose like in quantity for Diwali etc or low price utility or no quality and quantity.

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Special items:-

Special items can be stated as those items which are prepared specially for some occasion, galleries, hotels to serve food, or some designed garden pots also branded items can be stated as special items. Special items are made as per the given specification to the potter by the buyer, such as :

- 1) Curd bowl (For hotels)
- 2) Flower pots
- 3) Glasses
- 4) Dhoopdani
- 5) Branded items (which have their brand names embossed on the item.)

There are many more such items which are under specialised items. And as per orders and utility and quantity these special items are made.



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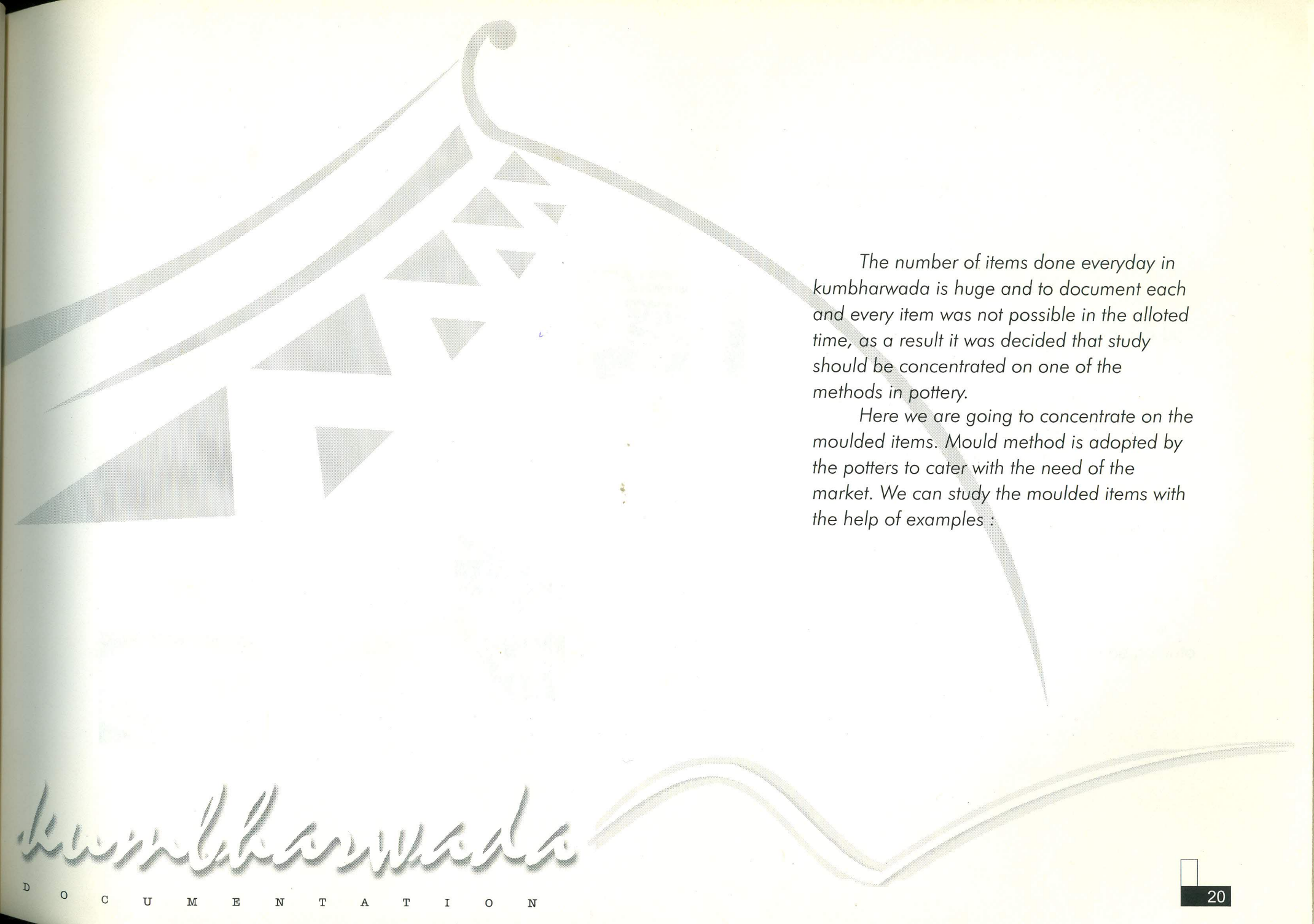


Gift items:-

Gift items are in large variety. These items are basically designed keeping in mind their purpose and that is to be given as gift, or as a showpiece. Designer has a lot of opportunities in this section as he gets this section as to work under his freedom of thoughts and also to work to blend them to form an excellent are piece. They are normally not produced in a bulk quantity. Pricing may be high as they are more intricately or critically designed from the designers point of view by putting a carved surface or providing it as a gift surface finish, cliff shapes, using metaphors etc and then utility has last priority.

After going through different vanities of pottery what was observed was the methods used . Though every potter has its own methods but here we have seen there are hard rules to follow some type of methods .Mould making method was very closely observed as it was the method adopted by potters to catch the market needs.

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The number of items done everyday in kumbharwada is huge and to document each and every item was not possible in the allotted time, as a result it was decided that study should be concentrated on one of the methods in pottery.

Here we are going to concentrate on the moulded items. Mould method is adopted by the potters to cater with the need of the market. We can study the moulded items with the help of examples :

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Moulded pottery

Item name : Garden pot
Mould Type: Wooden Mould.

Procedure : Moulded garden pot is made by following method :

1. Lump of the clay is made to flat slab on the jute carpet by the use of hands, it is observed that no air bubble remains in the clay slab.
2. By use of the template, clay slab is shaped. these template have the specific size and shape according to the size of the pot.
3. Templates are simple wooden or steel rod brackets, which once placed on the wet clay give the specific area of the slab to be put into the mould.



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4. The slab of the clay is treated by the saw dust on one of the surfaces.

5. Open wooden mold is placed on the slab and turned.

6. Wooden mold holds the clay inside it and then it is clamped.

7. The mold with the clay is placed aside for the 10 -15 minutes and then it is finished

8. After the mouth of the pot is finished by the use of coil method, mold is opened to keep the pot to dry. Mold is easily separated from the clay as it has the saw dust layer in-between to prevent the contact of the clay to the wooden surface of the mold.

9. While finishing the pot, base is also attached to the pot when it is inside the mold.

10. Pot is then separated form the wooden



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Moulds

mold.

These wet pots are kept to dry for 12 to 15 hours and then baked in the kilns. As some times the quantity of the pots prepared in a day is less then the pots get dry for more than two days.

Molds :

Molds are of wood as well as plaster. Wooden molds are mainly used to make garden pots, while plaster molds are used to make Water pots, Tulsi Kundi, Roof matts etc.

Mold used to make the garden pots have sides to it, they are open molds and are folded to form the template for the pot.

These molds have varying sides to it, ranging from 6 sides to 18 sides. Due to different number of sides, design of the pot changes.

The sides of the molds are attached to each other by hinges. Mold gets fold to form the template for the pot, the two adjoining side when folded are tied together by string.



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Wooden moulds are done by the carpenters and can last for many years. There are different types of wooden mould, rectangular, circular, squarish etc. They can be designed as per the needs of the potter and the design of the pot.



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Plaster Molds :

Plaster molds are mainly used to make water pots, Taki's, Tulsi kundi's, Roof matts etc.

Plaster molds are made of the plaster of paris and last longer without damage. It was seen that most of the potters had 10-15 years old plaster molds. These molds are replaced when it is required, they are also replaced to change the design.

Item : Water Pot (Matka)

Mold : Plaster mold.

Soil : Red soil

Procedure :

1. Clay slab is made by hands on jute back.

2. This slab is placed in one of the part of the plaster mold.

3. Clay placed inside is pressed to get maximum closer to the walls of the mold. Dolamine powder is applied to the inner surface of the mold so as to prevent the clay from sticking to the walls of the mold.

Dolamine powder is applied by puffing the powder from the cloth.

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4. Same is done to the other hemisphere of the mold.

5. These two parts/hemisphere's are placed on top of each other. Mold has the locking system on the sides. Clay is kept for 15 -20 minutes inside the mould and then the mould is opened.

6. First the top hemisphere is opened. Design carved inside the walls of the mold get raised on the surface of the pot.

7. Using coil method finishing is done on the wheel, after removing the pot from the mold. Mouth of the pot is attached to the molded pot on the wheel, by shaping the clay.

8. Molded pot is ready to dry and then bake after 12 - 15 hours.

Plaster molds are done by the potters themselves. They carve designs in wood and place the carved wood inside the plaster of paris. Mold is derived from the positive part of plaster. Plaster molds have intricate design on the upper level of the pot, in case of tulsi Kundi, gods and goddesses are carved inside the walls of the mold. Mold for roof matt's is simple bended mold. Inside surface of the mold is highly finished.

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to get proper outer finish to the items. Many times base is provided inside the mold itself but if not then the stand and the lid are made by throwing the clay on the wheels. Items are finished to make it feel, as if they are made in single piece.



Using these molds potters produce identical items with respect to the size, shape and design. Molds are mainly used to produce bulk. Plaster molds can be designed as per the order and they give large scope for innovation.

Tap is lastly attached to the baked item.

Due to the use of molds, potter can produce 15 - 20 molded Garden pots, 25 - 30 water pots, 200 -300 roof matt's, 50 -75 Tulsi kundi's in a day.



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Preparing the clay slab, on the jute surface

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Slab is placed on the wooden mold.

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D O C U M E N T A T I O N



Wooden mold is turned around

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D O C U M E N T A T I O N



Mould stands and is tied by the string

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D O C U M E N T A T I O N



Ready for finishing

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D O C U M E N T A T I O N



Finished pot is been removed from the mold

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D O C U M E N T A T I O N



Garden pot ready to dry.

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Mold for the roof matt's :

It is made of plaster of paris. This is the typical example of mass produced molded item. Size can be specified as per the requirement of the user. But maximum tensile strength should be considered. Maximum length of the roof matt can be 16 - 18 inches. Roof matt's are made by slab method.



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History

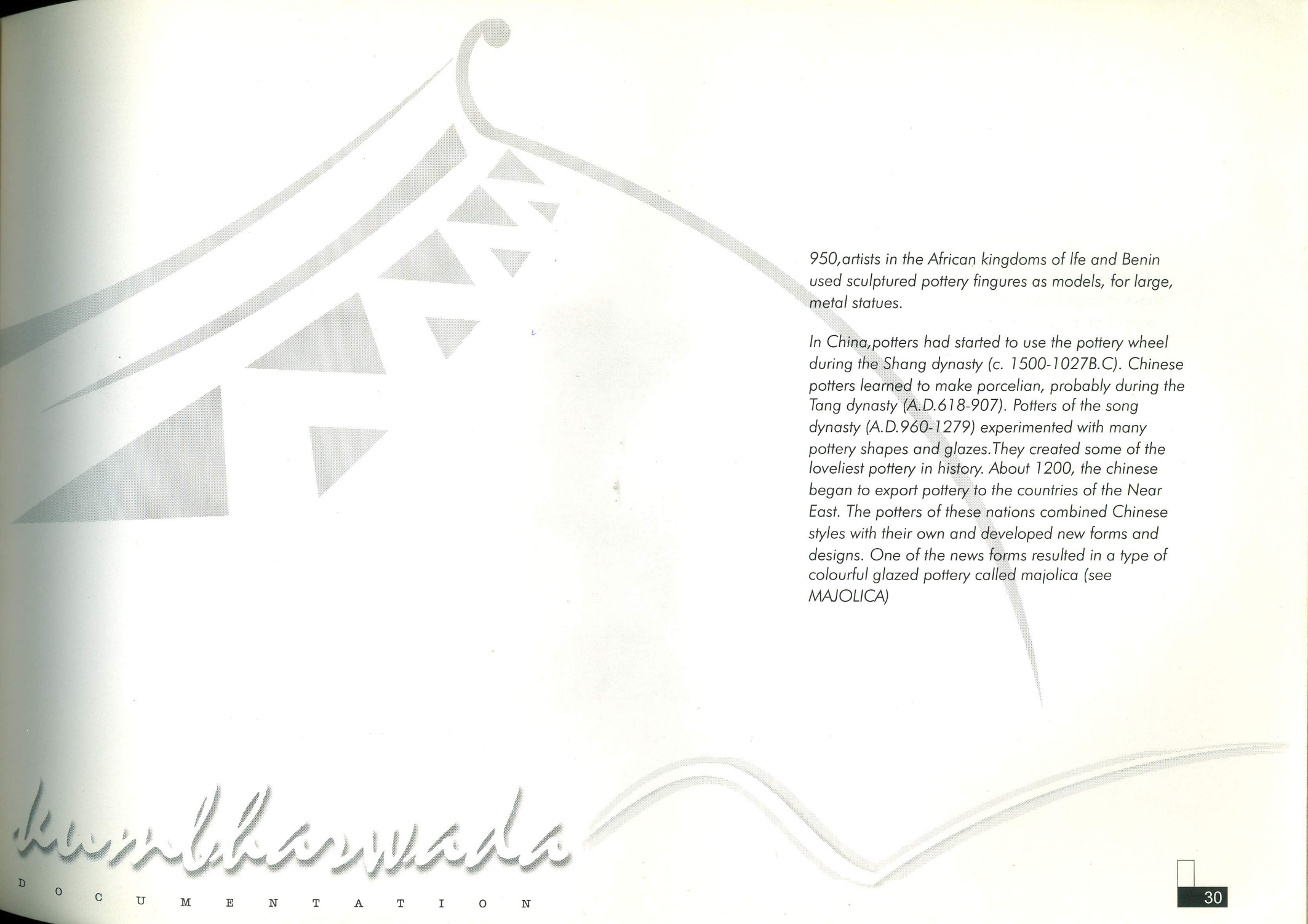


Methods of making and decorating pottery influenced greek ware. The ancient Greeks made graceful pottery and decorated it with vivid designs. Peoples in other parts of the world also developed pottery skills. In north and south America, many Indian tribes developed the art of pottery. Tribes that created especially beautiful pottery included the Inca, the Maya, and the Pueblo. In Africa, potters in the kingdom of Nok had developed an advance pottery style by about 5000B.C. They specialised in making decorative pottery in the form of realistic human heads. Between about A.D.6000 and

EARLY POTTERY :

Early pottery consists of simple household utensils. People in several parts of world were making pottery by about 11,000 B.C. The egyptians about 3000 B.C, Became the first people to glaze pottery. Pottery making spread from egypt and the near east to the areas around the Mediterranean Sea. By about 1600 B.C people on the island of crete in Greece were producing beautiful pottery decorated with curved designs and pictures of animals.

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950, artists in the African kingdoms of Ife and Benin used sculptured pottery figures as models, for large, metal statues.

In China, potters had started to use the pottery wheel during the Shang dynasty (c. 1500-1027 B.C.). Chinese potters learned to make porcelain, probably during the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618-907). Potters of the Song dynasty (A.D. 960-1279) experimented with many pottery shapes and glazes. They created some of the loveliest pottery in history. About 1200, the Chinese began to export pottery to the countries of the Near East. The potters of these nations combined Chinese styles with their own and developed new forms and designs. One of the new forms resulted in a type of colourful glazed pottery called majolica (see MAJOLICA)

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POTTERY OF THE 1700S & 1800 :

featured developments in Europe and the New World. The nations of the Near East began to export much of their pottery, included majolica, to Europe. European pottery-making centres, especially in Italy, copied the near styles of their own as well, including types of majolica called delft and faience.

In 1708, Johann Friedrich Bottger, a German chemist, became the first European to discover how to make porcelain. The Chinese had refused to share the secret of porcelain making. After European industrialists established factories to make porcelain making a secret. Many European wares greatly influenced pottery making, these wares included Meissen, Sevres, Wedgwood, and Worcester.

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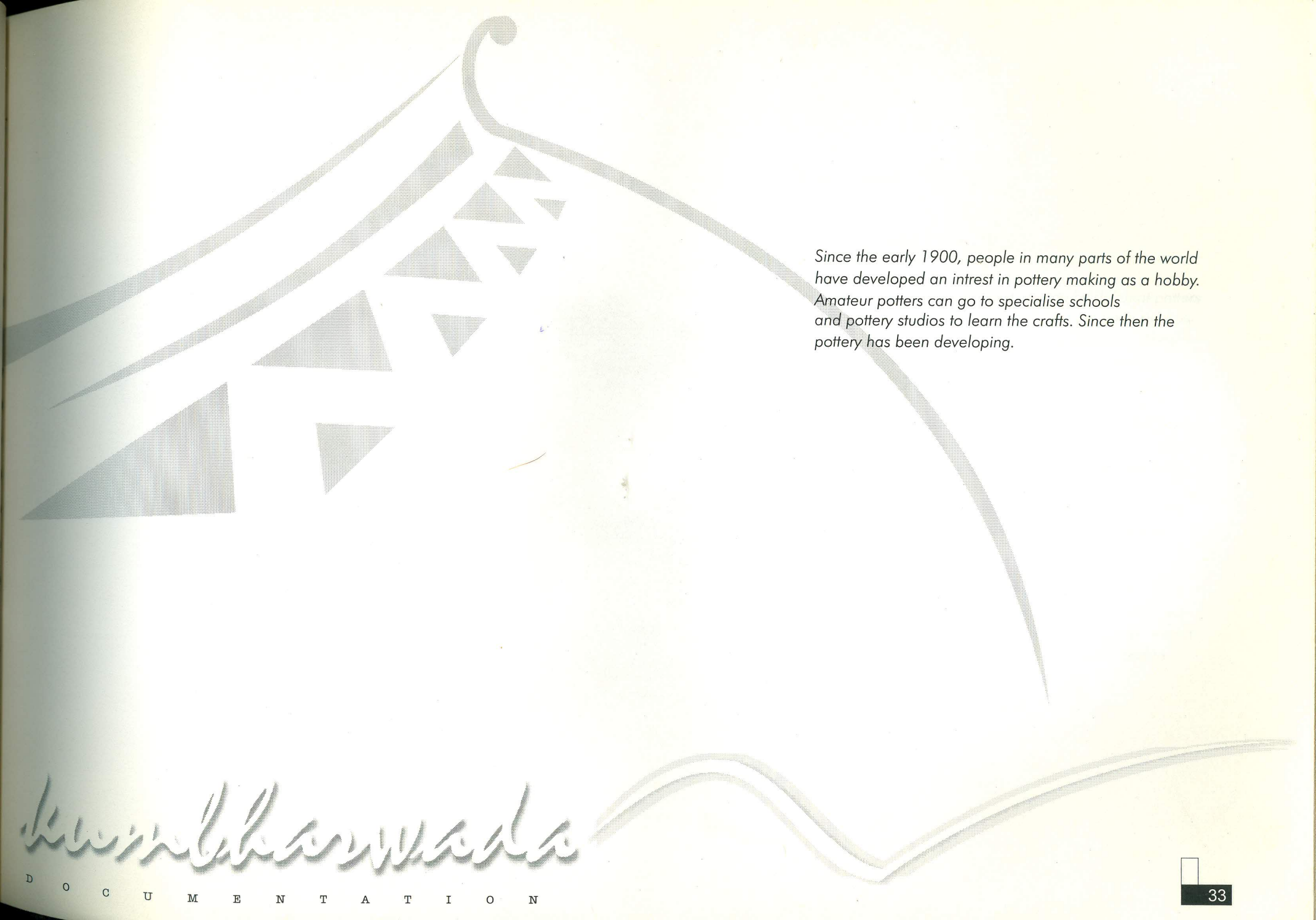


Modern Pottery :

English potters of late 1700 were the first to industrialize pottery making. By the early 1800 England led the world in pottery production, and still exports more more pottery than any other country. Some English potters still make pottery by traditional methods. These potters, usually called studio potters or artists work on their own or small groups. Their products include domestic objects such as mugs and bowls.

MODERN STYLES OF POTTERY :

It has developed during the 1900. These styles resulted from the desire of potters to create individual, personal ware. Today, most studio potters use methods of shaping and decorating that were used before the industrial Revolution of the 1700 and 1800. Development in pottery design that take place in one part of the world quickly reach and influence potters in other regions.



Since the early 1900, people in many parts of the world have developed an interest in pottery making as a hobby. Amateur potters can go to specialised schools and pottery studios to learn the crafts. Since then the pottery has been developing.

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Conclusion

Conclusion :

Documenting the creative work done by different potters was really an extraordinary experience. I came to know most interesting things about potters creations. Place like 'Dharavi' which is termed as a slum, is the most potential business area in the Mumbai city.

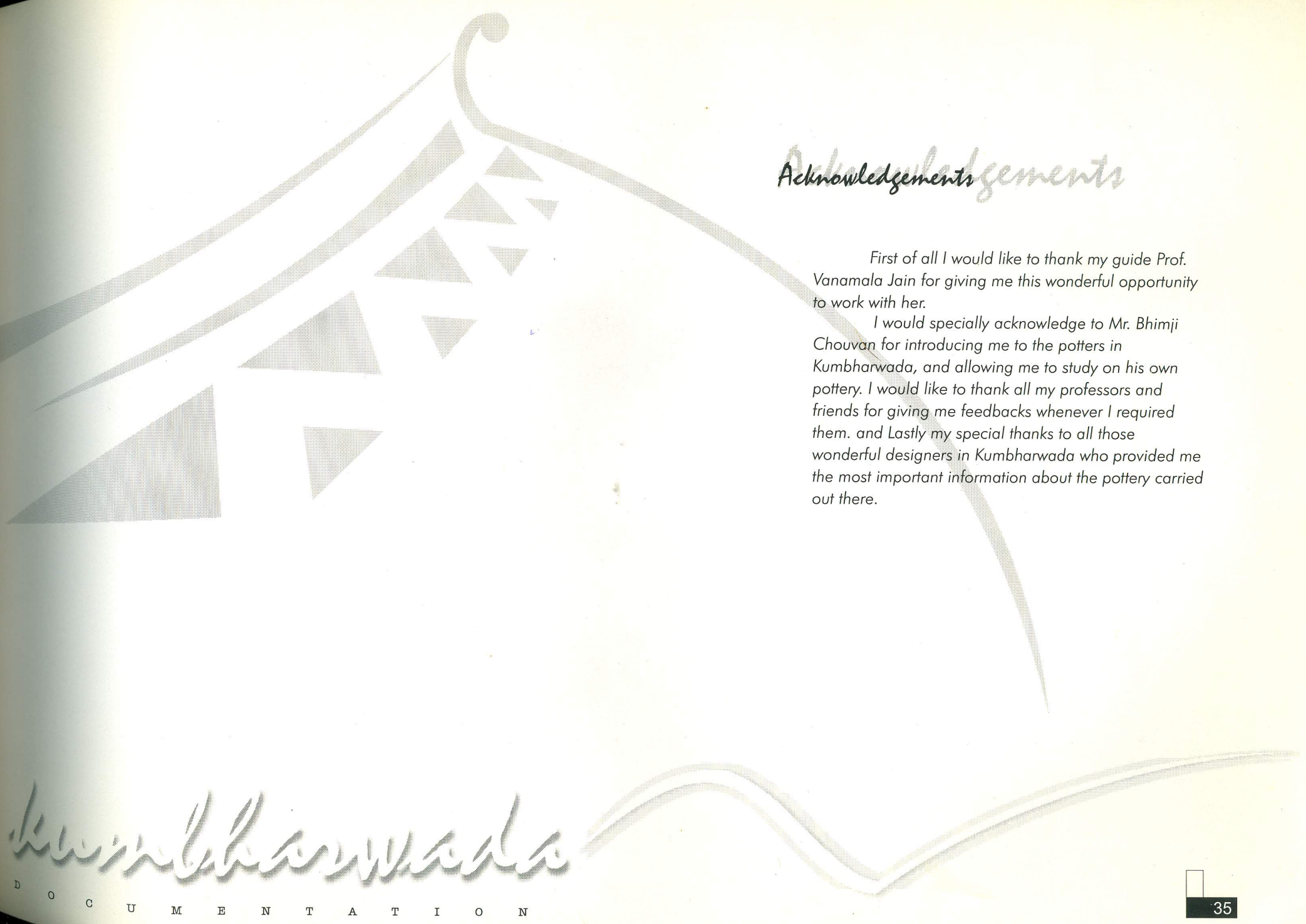
This documentation gave the brief idea of kind of work done in the pottery today and what sort of developments can be done in the fields designs, utility and decoration.

This humble effort is done towards uplifting the quality of the work so as to provide a potter more revenue through his own work.

This project gave me more knowledge about the hard facts of life and a courage to fight, to achieve the best out of our life. It was a wonderful experience to interact with potential designers, to share their views and to watch them working.

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Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to thank my guide Prof. Vanamala Jain for giving me this wonderful opportunity to work with her.

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