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**Head, Heart and Hand:
Studio Pottery in Nelson
1956 – 1976**

Vic Evans
2007

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**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in History at Massey University**

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Abstract

This thesis considers the growth of the studio pottery movement in New Zealand between 1956 and 1976. It uses Nelson as a case study to represent trends that took place across New Zealand. It seeks to explain the spectacular growth of interest in hand-made pottery and the surge in participation at both the amateur and professional level and the effects that this had on the movement.

The people who were involved in the revival of studio pottery were, in general, relatively well-educated and prosperous individuals who had experienced changes that had taken place within the New Zealand education system from the late 1930s. Others had similar experiences overseas. In New Zealand they were also the beneficiaries of a relatively stable, highly protected and prosperous economy. Furthermore, New Zealand was subject to the same influences that impacted on individuals overseas – issues relating to work and play and the place of women in society.

Overseas experts introduced the pioneers of the New Zealand movement to pottery traditions based on a confused blend of Anglo-Oriental craft philosophies. The experts also linked their beliefs to middle-class unease about industrialisation in the Western world. When the movement reached a level of participation that indicated it would have a significant cultural and economic impact the supporters of the imported tradition began a national organisation and assigned to themselves the role of guardians of the tradition. They attempted to define what ‘standards’ should be adhered to and, as a result, who could exhibit their work in national exhibitions. The standards were based on the Anglo-Oriental traditions that were largely foreign to most New Zealand potters and the buying public. Potters needed to adapt the traditions to be financially viable.

This thesis will show that many participants in the movement had no difficulty selling their work to a public that had an almost insatiable appetite for hand-made pottery. Because the ‘standards’ set by the national organisation were largely irrelevant to many potters who did not seek national recognition, the organisation began to lose control of the movement. A second generation of potters, many of whom did wish to make their mark nationally, were not prepared to accept the controls of the pioneers so, by the end of the period this thesis considers, major changes within the movement were underway.

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Abbreviations

AJHR	Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives.
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library.
NZP	New Zealand Potter magazine.
NZPG	New Zealand Potters' Guild.
NZSP	New Zealand Society of Potters.
NCP	Nelson Community Potters.
NIDC	Nelson Industrial Development Company. Also known as the Nelson Industrial Corporation and the Nelson Industrial Promotion Co. Ltd.
CPN	Craft Potters Nelson.

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