The Etchings of Bernard Leach
Simon Olding
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Crafts Study Centre, Farnham, Surrey, UK, 2010, 135 pp, pk

Techniques using Slips
John Mathieson
ISBN 978-1-4081-0626-6
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In 1920, when Bernard Leach returned to England from Japan, after over a decade, as well as a collection of ceramics, he also brought a printing press and a bundle of etchings. Although Leach seems to have continued producing etchings after settling back in England, they remain one of the least known aspects of his oeuvre. A recent exhibition at the Crafts Study Centre, in Farnham, England, brought together nearly all of the known etchings by Bernard Leach for the first time. Curated by Simon Olding, who authored the beautiful accompanying catalogue, the idea of the exhibition was to show that between the time Leach spent at the Slade School of Art, under Henry Tonks, and at the London School of Art, under Frank Brangwyn, to his return from Japan in 1920 (he had gone there in 1909) he ‘worked prolifically in the medium’. On the cover of Olding’s catalogue is a striking self-portrait by Leach from 1914, which gives an immediate sense of the dreamy expressionist line and soft ground tonalities in his etchings.

Leach had gone to Japan with the rather brash idea of earning his living as a teacher of etching. However, his work in its Eastern context seemed rather Western, ‘predictable and unexceptional’ and none of the Japanese intelligentsia circles into which he fell were converted, although friends such as Koun Takamura, Ryusei Kishida, Soetsu Yanagi and later Soji Hamada all voiced admiration for his etchings. The significance of these etchings cannot be underestimated, neither can the fact that Leach came to ceramics, as Olding points out, through fine art.

Throwing Large
Nic Collins
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Ceramics transfer printing
Kevin Petrie
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Ceramic transfers and decals offer exciting creative potential for studio based artists or designer makers. A ceramic transfer allows pictures, patterns or text to be transferred onto ceramic forms – 2D and 3D. This added layer of meaning might have artistic or commercial ends. Importantly, print can achieve distinct aesthetic effects on ceramics that are not possible by using other decorative methods such as hand painting.

Drawing on over twenty years of experience, Kevin Petrie offers a focused analysis of the potential of ceramic transfer printing as a creative medium. He traces the history of the subject and explains the distinctive visual qualities of a range of transfer printing methods. The specific materials and techniques for making versatile screenprinted ceramic transfers are explained from the ‘low-tech’ to the more sophisticated. Other approaches by artist researchers are also brought together and recent developments with digital transfers appraised. A range of case studies shows the potential and diversity of approach in this area, which extends beyond ceramics to include enamel on metal and glass.