**What’s so special about a wood-firing?**

Firstly, the ash from the wood floats through the kiln during the firing and settles on the pots. It is made up of all the chemicals necessary to form a glaze when it joins up with the clay and silica which make up the pots. The pots are placed in the kiln with the flame path in mind - I like to think of the kiln pack as my decorating because I have a good idea of how the ash will fall - the side of the pot facing the fire box obviously will get the greater portion of ash glaze, however pots slightly behind might have a little gap in front which will then get that part glazed. Venturi effects produced by pots being placed very close together also give lovely swirls of colour.

The other aspect that makes wood-firing so special is that, being a fuel kiln, one is able to create a reduction atmosphere. What does this mean?

All clays and glazes are made up of oxides. Clay is essentially alumina (aluminium oxide) and silica (silicon dioxide). These combine with fluxes in the wood ash ( sodium, potassium, calcium and magnesium oxides) to produce various ash glazes.

Fuel requires oxygen to burn properly. When, at high temperature one reduces the amount of oxygen necessary to burn the fuel, perhaps by closing the flue exit with the damper, then oxygen will be drawn out of the clay and glazes to assist with burning of the fuel. This changes not only the colour of the glaze and clay, but also the surface quality. This happens in any fuel kiln be it fired with wood, oil or gas.

The most reactive and easily reduced molecules in both clays and glazes are the oxides of iron. Different degrees and duration of reduction and oxidation on these produce a vast range of subtle colours in clays and glazes, particularly when combined with variations in the other chemicals in fly-ash, clays and applied glazes.

However, in the atmosphere of a wood-fired kiln, every time you throw in more wood you get some reduction. The atmosphere then becomes neutral as the wood burns down and finally oxidising. Each wood stoking cycle sets up a wave of reduction - neutral - oxidation throughout the firing which in turn adds to the special quality of the pots.

Another interesting aspect to wood-firing is that as you control the strong reduction cycle with the damper, turbulence created by each stoking produces swirls and eddies around the pots, thus changing the clay and the glaze in different parts of the same pot.

I am attracted to the wood-fired pot by the total carelessness of how each mark is made, as if delivered by chance. The appeal of the object lives in this apparent indifference to the maker. The results, achieved through deliberate skill, effort and nurturing are visible, but should not be seen as the outcome of explicit action.

For form, my influence comes from Art Nouveau; techniques are informed by pottery from China, Korea, Japan and Germany; my colours are inspired by the Australian landscape, especially the Australian outback which I find best captured by wood-firing.

Using the language of wood-firing, I create a personal vocabulary with new subjects, grammar and syntax, that make of each pot a one-off object, containing all.