# Feeling, Thought and Spirit The Ceramic Work of GLENLUKENS

# Feeling, Thought and Spirit The Ceramic Work of GLEN LUKENS

Exhibition June 10th-August 20th, 2006

# For Vera O'Dell

 $^{\mbox{\scriptsize C}}$  2006 by the Curators of the University of Missouri

ISSN 0077-2194 ISBN 0-910501-36-X

The exhibition Feeling, Thought and Spirit: The Ceramic Work of Glen Lukens was organized by the Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri-Columbia, with financial support from Marquis C. Landrum, First National Bank & Trust Company, Columbia, and the Missouri Arts Council.



Design: Stephanie D. Lyons Photography: Jeffrey B. Wilcox Printed by MU Printing Services

On the cover: **Bowl** ([18] detail of lower wall and foot) Undated. Off-white ceramic with red glaze over white crackled glaze and stain, signed.

# Acknowledgments

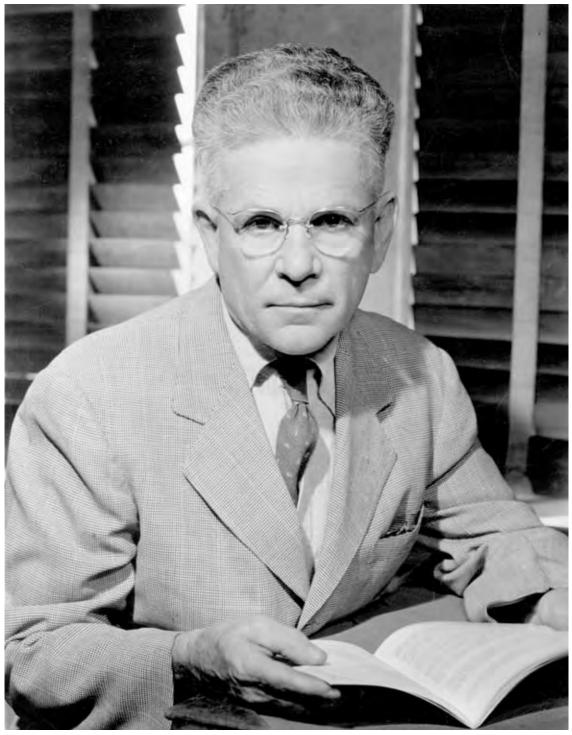
Vera O'Dell, Glen Lukens's niece, has long wished for more recognition for her uncle's achievements. She has actively promoted his life and work for many years and preserved examples of his creations in clay, glass and metals from throughout his career. The exhibition *Feeling*, *Thought and Spirit: The Ceramic Work of Glen Lukens*, which opened at the Museum of Art and Archaeology on 10 June 2006, celebrated the contribution of Glen Lukens to twentieth-century ceramics, but was also a tribute to Mrs. O'Dell's devotion to her uncle's memory. She and her husband, Boyd, made the exhibition possible through the loan of thirty-nine works from their private collection. I am deeply grateful to them both. This catalogue is dedicated to Vera O'Dell in recognition of her support and as a record of the museum's gratitude.

I am also grateful to Greig Thompson, who served as guest curator of the exhibition and as author of the catalogue. Despite his other extensive commitments, he oversaw the design and installation of the exhibition, working with Barbara Smith and Larry Stebbing, the museum's preparators. He has produced a catalogue that not only illustrates Glen Lukens's major achievements in the world of twentieth-century ceramics, but which also highlights Lukens's personal history and emphasizes his social engagement and commitment.

Several members of the museum's staff merit special thanks. Jeffrey Wilcox created the images of Lukens's works reproduced here, and Stephanie Lyons designed the catalogue. I wish particularly to thank Jane Biers. Jane organized this project and guided it to its completion during her tenure as interim director. She has been an able advocate both for this exhibition and for the museum; each has benefited from her energy and her enthusiasm.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the financial support of Marquis C. Landrum and First National Bank & Trust Company, and the Missouri Arts Council.

Alex Barker, Director June 2006



Glen Lukens

# Feeling, Thought and Spirit The Ceramic Work of Glen Lukens by Greig Thompson

At a time when an emphasis on design and decoration dominated American pottery production, Glen Lukens cast aside tradition to explore the expressive potential of ceramic materials. He pioneered a bold approach to pottery, producing simple, massive forms that married bright colors to raw surfaces. He employed the vessel form not to mimic shapes found in nature nor to serve as a ground for pictorial representation, but to explicate the qualities and processes inherent in the physical character of clay and glaze. In a region of the country nearly devoid of a ceramic tradition, far from the schools and factories of the East, Glen Lukens embraced the materials and inspiration of the American Southwest to forge an original expression of self and place.

Born in 1887 on a farm near Cowgill, Missouri, Lukens spent his youth working on the land. He recalled that although his family had no money for toys, he was permitted to make what he liked from whatever was available and was always praised by his parents for his efforts.<sup>1</sup> Early in his life he determined to pursue a career in teaching, and by age 18, while a student at Missouri Wesleyan College, he was already so engaged.<sup>2</sup> He continued his studies at the state's Fifth District Normal School in nearby Maryville, but neither of the Missouri schools offered a baccalaureate degree, and Lukens left for Oregon State Agricultural College to obtain a degree in education with an emphasis on drawing and painting.<sup>3</sup> There, in the basement of the Mines building where Art Education was taught, he was introduced to ceramics, and "[t]hat ended painting.<sup>14</sup> Upon completing his degree, Lukens enrolled in classes at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he studied with Myrtle French, a graduate of Charles Fergus Binns's ceramics program at the State University of New York at Alfred. The curriculum at Alfred, based upon a simultaneous allegiance to Arts and Crafts ideology and a belief in the usefulness of the machine, was balanced between training decorators for commercial work and teachers for technical schools.<sup>5</sup> French apparently instilled in her student a regard for all aspects of ceramics investigation that may have led to his later interest in the problem whose solution first earned him national acclaim, the production of a glaze that equaled the color of Egyptian blue faience.<sup>6</sup>

In Chicago, Lukens was introduced to a simple type of potter's wheel, adapted from the base of a treadle sewing machine, which he was to use throughout his career, often erroneously being identified as its inventor.<sup>7</sup> The "sewing machine wheel" was better suited to the turning of moulds than to "throwing" pottery, and the particular capabilities and limitations of the device greatly inspired Lukens's artistic output and teaching methods.<sup>8</sup> He purchased one of these wheels before leaving Chicago to work in a program of the United States Surgeon General's Office, where he employed it in establishing therapeutic exercises for World War I veterans in hospitals throughout the country.<sup>9</sup> Lukens returned to teaching in 1920, accepting a position in a Minnesota mining town and leading classes in arts and crafts, including ceramics, for the children of recent immigrants from Europe. He developed a keen interest in these children and their cultures, and a genuine admiration for their uninhibited expressions.<sup>10</sup> It was during this time, while on a summer trip to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, that Lukens encountered a faience Ushabti figurine that inspired a quest to produce "a blue as beautiful as that Egyptian blue."<sup>11</sup>

Lukens meanwhile had been searching for a position in California. In 1923, he was hired to teach ceramics and jewelry at Fullerton High School in Fullerton, California, and by the next year his classes included students from Fullerton Junior College as well.<sup>12</sup> In California, Lukens found a world of potential and freedom, with untapped natural resources and the whole-hearted support of school administrators. He also discovered that the available materials largely restricted ceramics education and ceramics manufacturing in the state. Both school and industry relied on the use of local red earthenware clays; other native clays were unsuited to conventional pottery processes, and the expense of importing materials was prohibitive.<sup>13</sup> Lukens began making trips into Death Valley, gathering raw materials with which to experiment.<sup>14</sup> Working with Dr. Tom Curtis, a ceramics engineer at the Gladding-McBean Terra Cotta Company, he and a group of his top students



Fig. 1. Glen Lukens and a ceramics class.

perfected a low-temperature, white-burning clay body using magnesium silicate hydroxide (talc), a mineral abundant in California, to modify local clays.<sup>15</sup> Experiments with the alkaline minerals he brought out of the desert also proved fruitful, leading to the creation of a family of glazes that he named for regional features and locales and, eventually, to the successful conclusion of his quest to reproduce a glaze equal to Egyptian blue faience, bringing him national attention (7, 8, 12–14).<sup>16</sup> The reflective quality of the "talc body" enhanced the brightly colored, transparent glazes Lukens developed, and the union of white clay and vibrant glazes contributed to a veritable revolution in the dinnerware industry with the introduction of what became known as California Colors.<sup>17</sup> Lukens's excursions in the desert also nourished a deep love of natural beauty. He had grown up in a sparsely populated region of the Midwest, and although he cherished the company of his students and friends, his actions and writings reveal a passion for the earth and for solitude, and a longing to escape the complications of modern life.<sup>18</sup> His unaccompanied trips would last for days, and his reveries would find interpretation in ceramic form. In describing his raw, rugged pots, he would write, "They are the incarnation of the West."<sup>19</sup>

In 1932, Lukens was asked to introduce evening courses in ceramics and jewelry in the College of Architecture at the University of Southern California, and the next year he left Fullerton to establish and chair programs in those fields at USC.<sup>20</sup> He instructed students from both the school of art and the school of architecture in coil-building, slip-casting and press-moulding, again using the sewing machine wheel for turning patterns and moulds (Fig. 1).<sup>21</sup> He apparently also gave his classes demonstrations of the true potter's wheel, but little instruction on its use (Fig. 2).<sup>22</sup> Using the same basic processes he had learned in Oregon, Lukens started a program that would include among its students F. Carlton Ball, Harrison McIntosh, Beatrice Wood, Laura Andreson, Sam Kramer and Frank Gehry.<sup>23</sup> Working alongside his students, Lukens adapted his artistic output and his curriculum to the circumstances, employing techniques that harmonized with his affinity for strong, primary forms and permitted beginning students to produce large plates and bowls successfully. His vessels became simpler



Fig. 2. Glen Lukens demonstrating use of a traditional potter's wheel.

and heavier, their surfaces more textural and rugged. "Instead of doing delicate things, we did bold things...and we are still doing it. And I like it better that way. Because it's just as the Indians say, 'I do this because it is the earth speaking....'"<sup>24</sup> He pressed ragged wads of clay into his moulds and lined the interiors of his bowls with pools of glazes shaded in jewel-tone colors. When the transparent glazes formed fissures and cracks, he filled them with contrasting glazes or stains and fired the pots again, accentuating this unplanned occurrence (15–18, 26–28).<sup>25</sup>

In 1932, the *Robineau Memorial Ceramic Exhibition*, a small exhibition in memory of Adelaide Alsop Robineau, was organized at the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, with entries restricted to artists from New York State.<sup>26</sup> In 1934, the exhibition was declared "open to potters of the United States" and became the *National Ceramic Exhibition*.<sup>27</sup> Two years later, at the fifth exhibition, the bright colors and strong forms of Lukens's ware brought him first prize. His large platters were not well received by all, including one critic who described them as "fairly well formed but thick and clumsy pieces by Glen Lukens finished in what he calls 'Death Valley raw yellow alkaline glaze.'"<sup>28</sup> The exhibition was subsequently sent on a European tour financed by the Rockefeller Foundation and was displayed at the Whitney Museum on its return.<sup>29</sup> The following year, Lukens was invited to participate in the *Exposition internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne*, Paris, France, and was made an Honorary Member of the Delta Phi Delta National Art Fraternity.<sup>30</sup> Building on the acclaim from the award at the Ceramics National, Lukens brought national attention to the state's potters and sculptors by helping organize the first all-California ceramics exhibition, hosted at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1938.<sup>31</sup>

Lukens's work grew more raw and fundamental. He raked and scoured the thick walls of his pots, exposing coarse material added to increase the roughness; he left large expanses unglazed, and his viscous glazes separated, pulled up into nodules, and dripped freely (**18**, **25**, **26**).<sup>32</sup> Galleries in California and other states had carried his creations for years, but even they were unprepared for this new work. In 1938, the Amberg/Hirth Gallery in San Francisco rejected a shipment from Lukens. Entered in a competition hosted by the New York Society of Designer-Craftsmen, however, these rejected pieces earned Lukens an invitation to exhibit at the 1939 World's Fair in New York and a citation for "having reached a new high in ceramic art in America today." Lukens's work was also displayed in the Art Deco buildings of the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition, where it was characterized by one concerned attendee—convinced of mistaken attribution—as "just awful; it looks like Gargantua has made it." Lukens proudly accepted the appellation, boasting "I am a barbarian."<sup>33</sup> In that same year, his work was awarded a Purchase Prize at the Ceramics National in Syracuse, and Oregon State College (formerly Oregon State Agricultural College) conferred on him an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Ceramics.<sup>34</sup>

In the mid-1930s Lukens had begun to experiment with glass, melting discs cut from sheet glass into forms he turned from clay.<sup>35</sup> He created the moulds using the same techniques that produced his ceramic bowls and applied his glaze technology to the coloration of glass, spraying stains based on metallic compounds onto the upper surface of the clear discs. Upon firing, the glass sagged into the roughened moulds, imparting a texture to the underside of the plates and bowls that reflected sparkling light back through the thin layer of color above. Lukens called his creations "California Desert Glass" and assigned names to their various colors evocative of the state's natural beauty, such as "Desert Gold," "Green Valley" and "Water of the Sea" (11, 21, 24).<sup>36</sup> In 1941, the upscale department store Lord and Taylor recognized "the technical perfection, artistic quality and industrial importance" of this work with a \$1,000 award in its fifth annual design competition.<sup>37</sup>

Following the United States' entry into World War II, the government called upon Lukens's skills in ceramics technology to develop a non-metallic cookware for use on the "home front."<sup>38</sup> Lukens returned to the desert in search of materials for this project, apparently with successful outcome.<sup>39</sup> He also participated in the development of a new curriculum in occupational therapy at USC, once again employing the treadle-powered turning wheel.<sup>40</sup> The war's close gave rise to a vigorous market for American products, including the work of Lukens and his students, but this economic success was followed rapidly by an aspect of commerce that was anathema to Lukens: "A great many style thieves began to appear...." Simultaneously, a change was taking hold in the world of ceramics: the low-temperature clays and their colorful glazes were passing from favor as widespread interest turned to higher-fired stoneware pottery.<sup>41</sup>



Fig. 3. Bowls press-moulded in a half gourd shell, at right, displayed on a table outdoors on Haiti.

Beginning in the 1930s, Lukens collaborated with local art teachers in Los Angeles to establish special training programs in crafts. In the summer of 1943 he led an experiment in teaching residents of a federal housing unit how to manufacture cooking utensils. The project culminated in an exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum and orders from an Eastern retailer.<sup>42</sup> In 1945, at the request of the State Department, Lukens took a leave of absence from USC to introduce ceramics production in Haiti. The people and the landscape of the island nation captivated him, and he threw himself into solving the familiar problems of limited funding and limited natural resources. Through trial and error, Lukens eventually located suitable clay and worked out a production regime that used gourds as press-moulds (Fig. 3).<sup>43</sup> He went back to the United States the following year to raise additional funds for materials, scholarships and staffing, returning to Haiti in 1948 to establish three new ceramics centers.<sup>44</sup> Of this visit to the United States, Lukens recalled that the pervasive shift in interest from low-fire to high-fire ceramics made him feel "like Rip Van Winkle."<sup>45</sup> He had written from Haiti, "Life is primitive here. The let down suits me fine. The ultra ultra of getting going again in the USA was too superficial. Wish I could stay here always."<sup>46</sup> Lukens resigned his teaching position at USC and with money provided by UNESCO continued his work in Haiti until 1955.<sup>47</sup> He was presented the Charles Fergus Binns Medal, the highest award in American ceramics, at the annual meeting of the American Ceramics Society in 1949, and received from the Haitian government I'Ordre national d'honneur et mérite in 1951.<sup>48</sup>



Fig. 4. Publicity photograph of a bowl that Glen Lukens created specifically for floral arrangements.

On his return to the US in 1955, Lukens addressed himself again to experimentation, focusing on his work with glass. He shared his findings and projects in magazine articles, advocating the spontaneous approach to design that had guided his own work and teaching for so long: "...the purpose has been to give intuition and the emotions an opportunity to bring up some new merchandise."<sup>49</sup> He continued production of dinnerware and bowls for flower arrangements using moulds prepared in years past (Fig. 4) and concentrating on the development of new colors; he explored architectural applications such as windows and room dividers; and he continued to exhibit, although no longer selling what he displayed.<sup>50</sup> In 1964, at the age of 77, he collaborated on a Peace Corps project with Susan Peterson, preparing volunteers to help with the recovery and replication of ceramic artifacts damaged by earthquakes in Peru.<sup>51</sup> When interviewed by Helen Bray in September 1966, Lukens was preparing an article on the application of underglaze with a palette knife, pleased that his words would reach some 300,000 readers.<sup>52</sup> He displayed a strong optimism about the future and what he saw as a growing receptivity to intuition and spontaneity in art, education and social conduct.<sup>53</sup>

At the time of his death in 1967, Glen Lukens had witnessed eight decades of profound change in the development of the ceramic arts in California, the United States and the world, a development in which he played a pivotal role. His pioneering research in the use of California's native materials helped drive the growth of the state's dinnerware industry and ushered in a new pottery aesthetic that celebrated strong, pure colors. Through his efforts, economically disadvantaged populations were engaged in sustainable ceramics enterprises. He elevated the status of the clay vessel to art form in the early years of the twentieth century, anticipating the revolution that would shake the world of ceramics in the 1950s, and the example of his approach to the creative process inspired generations of artists to value intuitive search as the key to honest expression.



Glen Lukens in 1933, the year he established the ceramics and jewelry programs at the University of Southern California.

#### Notes

- 1. Helen Bray, interview with Glen Lukens, unpublished transcript, Oakland Museum, 1966, p. 32.
- 2. Postcard to aunt, Mary Haydin (?), June, n.d.: "I'm in Cameron, MO. attending school. Had fine success this year teaching and will try it another year;" Bray, Interview, p. 32: "...because I was only about 18 then and I had taught my first year of school."
- 3. Susan Peterson, "Glen Lukens 1887–1967," *Craft Horizons* (March–April 1968) p. 23. Peterson gives the name of the school as Marysville [*sic*] State Teachers College, but records indicate that at that time the college in Maryville, Missouri, was named Missouri Fifth District Normal School. <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest\_Missouri\_State\_University">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest\_Missouri\_State\_University</a>.
- 4. Susan Brown, American Studio Ceramics 1920–1950, Minneapolis Museum of Art (Minneapolis, 1988) pp. 25, 28; Bray, Interview, p. 35.
- 5. Elaine Levin, The History of American Ceramics, 1607 to the Present: From Pipkins and Bean Pots to Contemporary Forms (New York, 1988) pp. 128–129.
- 6. F. Carlton Ball, "Glen Lukens," transcript of a speech delivered at Oregon State University, 1980, p. 9. Egyptian faience is a glazed non-clay ceramic material.
- 7. Garth Clark and Margie Hughto, A Century of Ceramics in the United States, 1878–1978, E. P. Dutton, in association with Everson Museum of Art (New York, 1979) p. 303; Brown, American Studio Ceramics, p. 25.
- 8. Bray, Interview, p. 26.
- 9. Bray, Interview, p. 10; Brown, American Studio Ceramics, p. 25; Clark and Hughto, Century of Ceramics, p. 303.
- 10. Bray, Interview, p. 33.
- 11. Bray, Interview, p. 13.
- 12. Bray, Interview, pp. 3–4.
- 13. Bray, Interview, pp. 3, 6.
- 14. Bray, Interview, p. 39.
- 15. Bray, Interview, p. 2; Ball, "Glen Lukens," p. 8.
- 16. Bray, Interview, pp. 14, 28, 40; Levin, History, p. 171; Dalzell Hatfield Galleries, Glen Lukens Pottery-Glass (Los Angeles, California [ca. 1942]) p. 3;
- 17. Bray, Interview, pp. 7, 13; Jo Lauria, Color and Fire: Defining Moments in Studio Ceramics, 1950–2000, Los Angeles County Museum of Art in association with Rizzoli (New York, 2000) p. 93.
- 18. Bray, Interview, p. 26; postcard to niece, Vera O'Dell, from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, postmarked 12 November 1945.
- 19. Elaine Levin, Glen Lukens: Pioneer of the Vessel Aesthetic, Fine Arts Gallery, California State University (Los Angeles, 1982) p. 22, fig. q, caption (pages unnumbered).
- 20. Bray, Interview, pp. 5, 19, 20.
- Mary MacNaughton, oral history transcript of a tape-recorded interview with Harrison McIntosh, Claremont, California, 1999, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, pp. 9–12. <a href="http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/mcinto99.htm">http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/mcinto99.htm</a>>.
- 22. Bray, Interview, p. 9; MacNaughton, oral history transcript, pp. 9–12; Paul J. Smith, oral history transcript of a taperecorded interview with Susan Peterson, Carefree, Arizona, 2004, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, pp. 6, 17. <a href="http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/peters04.htm">http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/peters04.htm</a>>.
- Clark and Hughto, Century of Ceramics, p. 303; Levin, History, p. 183; Toni Greenbaum, "California Dreamin': Modernist Jewelers in Los Angeles, 1940–1970," *Metalsmith Magazine* 22 (2002) p. 41; Marjie Goudy and Brian Nettles, "A Museum Dedicated to Potter George Ohr," *The NCECA Journal* 26 (2005) p. 128.
- 24. Bray, Interview, p. 26.

25. Bray, Interview, pp. 41–42.

- 26. Warren E. Cox, The Book of Pottery and Porcelain, vol. 2 (New York, 1944) p. 1060.
  - Adelaide Alsop Robineau (1865–1929), one of the most important figures in ceramics in the early twentieth century, studied painting under William Merritt Chase and porcelain making under Charles Fergus Binns. She was awarded Grand Prize for her work in porcelain at the International Exposition of Decorative Arts at Turin in 1911. She was co-founder and editor of the magazine *Keramic Studio* and taught at People's University in University City, Missouri, and Syracuse University. The Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, now the Everson Museum of Art, purchased 32 Robineau porcelains in 1916, initiating one of the most comprehensive collections of American ceramic art.
- 27. Clark and Hughto, Century of Ceramics, p. 97; Levin, History, p. 171.
- 28. Cox, Pottery and Porcelain, p. 1062, fig. 1441.
- 29. Clark and Hughto, Century of Ceramics, p. 96; Cox, Pottery and Porcelain, p. 1060.
- 30. Dalzell Hatfield Galleries, Glen Lukens, p. 5.
- 31. Bray, Interview, p. 23; Levin, History, p. 171; Clark and Hughto, Century of Ceramics, p. 97.
- 32. Bray, Interview, pp. 22-23, 44.
- 33. Bray, Interview, p. 28; Dalzell Hatfield Galleries, Glen Lukens, p. 5; Bray, Interview, p. 24.
- 34. Brown, American Studio Ceramics, p. 29; Dalzell Hatfield Galleries, Glen Lukens, p. 5.
- 35. Bray, Interview, p. 39; Ball, "Glen Lukens," p. 6.
- 36. Glen Lukens, "California Desert Glass," unpublished papers.
- 37. Bray, Interview, p. 39; Dalzell Hatfield Galleries, Glen Lukens, p. 5.
- 38. Dalzell Hatfield Galleries, Glen Lukens, p. 5.
- 39. Letter to sister, Edith Stone, dated 1942.
- 40. Brown, American Studio Ceramics, p. 32.
- 41. Bray, Interview, pp. 29-31.
- 42. Letter to niece, Avanelle (née Lukens), and her husband, Don, dated 27 September 1943.
- 43. Bray, Interview, pp. 14–19. The note on the back of the photograph from Haiti shown in Figure 3 reads, "There is no gypsum with which to make plaster of Paris. We used gourds split in half and pressed thin walls of clay then modelled by hand to get finish...."
- 44. Chantalle Francesca Verna, "The Role of International Aid in Creating Ties between Haiti and the United States, 1934–1957," p. 9. <a href="http://archive.rockefeller.edu/publications/resrep/verna.pdf">http://archive.rockefeller.edu/publications/resrep/verna.pdf</a>>.
- 45. Bray, Interview, p. 38.
- 46. Postcard to niece, Vera O'Dell, postmarked 12 November 1945.
- 47. Brown, American Studio Ceramics, p. 32.
- 48. Levin, History, p. 171; F. B. Skeele, News Release, University of Southern California News Bureau; Clark and Hughto, Century of Ceramics, p. 303.
- 49. Bray, Interview, pp. 50-51.
- 50. Bray, Interview, pp. 39, 42-45.
- 51. Telephone interview with Susan Peterson by the author, Scottsdale, Arizona, 7 June 2006; Peterson, "Glen Lukens," p. 24.
- 52. Bray, Interview, pp. 27, 42-43.
- 53. Bray, Interview, p. 42; Peterson, "Glen Lukens," p. 25.

# 1. Vase with Two Handles

1927Slip-cast white ceramic with glaze and overglaze lustres.H. 8 in., W. 4 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (at widest point of handles).

Inscribed, "Made for Vera Stone By Glen Lukens 1927," this small vase is notable both for its style and because it is dated, a practice Lukens rarely followed. By 1927, Lukens had been in California for three years, and his work had begun to show the influence of the materials and tools—as well the inspiration of the landscape that he found there. In particular, the elegance of the handles and the conventionally delimited application of gold as accent are a conspicuous departure from the bold approach Lukens was then defining, perhaps calculated to suit the taste of his young niece, for whom the vase was created.





#### 2. Pitcher

Undated. Wheel-thrown and altered buff-colored ceramic, with applied strap handle, glazed interior and exterior. H. 6 in., D. 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (at widest point).

# 3. Vase

Undated. Wheel-thrown buff-colored ceramic, glazed interior and exterior, stamped GL on bottom inside a circle. H. 7 % in., D. rim 3 % in.





# 4. Five Plates with "Winddrift" Glaze

Undated.

Mould-made off-white ceramic, stained, with variously colored glazes layered over off-white glaze, signed on bottom.

H. 1 % in., D. 7 % in.

These signed plates epitomize several characteristics of Lukens's aesthetic and technical approaches. The plates were quickly produced from moulds made from a single prototype, or original, quite basic in form; the artist could then turn his attention to the investigation of glaze texture and color. Lukens discovered that the off-white glaze melted and separated in a second firing, creating a finely dappled pattern in a thin layer of brightly colored glaze sprayed over it. The texture suggested to him the look of wind-blown snow—hence, the name "Winddrift." Lukens combined a chance occurrence with carefully controlled application to produce a subtly shaded, spontaneous-looking result.

# 5. Jar with Metal Lid

Undated.

Wheel-thrown jar of buff-colored fabric with interior and exterior glaze; raised lid of copper alloy, with stone inset in finial.

H. 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (with lid), H. 3  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (without lid), D. rim 8  $\frac{5}{8}$  in.

Lukens was a skilled metalsmith who founded the metals and jewelry program at the University of Southern California. He was trained in both forging and casting but generally endorsed and followed an intuitive approach to design that was better suited to fusing than to either of these techniques. In this work, Lukens topped a low, uncomplicated ceramic jar with a refined, decorative metal cover. The detailed craftsmanship of the lid attests to his abilities in metalwork, but the character and relative abundance of the ornamentation point curiously backward to the sensibilities of an earlier time.



6. Cuff Bracelet Undated. Sterling silver. H. ¾ in. (max.), D. 2 ½ in. (max.).

Lukens fashioned this silver cuff bracelet for his niece, Vera, whose name is presented against a rectangular field of chased texture.





# 7. Vase

Undated. Off-white ceramic with blue glaze over crackled glaze and stain. H. 8 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in., D. 4 in. (max.), D. rim 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.

Although this vase is unsigned and undated, it bears the striking "Egyptian Blue" glaze that Lukens perfected in the early 1930s, after nearly ten years of striving to capture the color of a small faience figure he had seen at the Walker Art Center. He attributed receiving an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Ceramics from Oregon State College to his discovery. This particular piece is anecdotally identified as having been his favorite.

### 8. Bowl with Raised Foot

Undated. Off-white ceramic with blue glaze over crackled glaze and stain, signed. H. 4  $^{1}\!$  A  $^{1}\!$  In. D. rim 7  $^{5}\!$  in.

The color of this bowl is similar to that of 7, but not identical. The raised foot and underside of the bowl are unglazed, revealing the fabric and providing some clues to Lukens's treatment of clay and glaze. The fabric is nearly white, which brightens the overlying transparent glaze, but Lukens preferred less contrast from clay left exposed. Consequently, he stained the surface with oxide washes, sealing it with a paraffin-based waterproofing agent rather than firing it again to attain permanence. It is also apparent that the blue glaze is applied over a layer of glaze that had been previously fired, developing a deep crackle that is stained a darker blue than the surrounding glaze.



# 9. Coffee Pot with Heated Stand

Undated (anecdotally dated before 1940). Mould-made and hand-formed light-orange ceramic with clear and blue glazes, signed; commercially made heating coil. Tea pot: H. 3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in., D. 7 in, W. handle-to-spout 10 in.; lid: H. 2 in., D. 3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.; stand: H. 4 in., D. 6 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.

Lukens never abandoned the vessel format, and his work frequently addressed utility. This unusual set is evidence of an attempt to update the tradition of the hand-crafted serving vessel with the convenience offered by advances in technology.



## 10. Spherical Vase

Undated. Off-white ceramic with glaze and stain. H. 9 in., D. 9 in. (max.), D. rim  $5 \frac{11}{16}$  in.

The dark glaze on this vase might have been inspired by the traditional black pottery of the American Southwest. Lukens owned fine examples of the work of Maria and Julian Martinez of New Mexico's San Ildefonso Pueblo. He had met and befriended them, and he claimed a strong affinity for the values and traditions of Native American cultures.



# 11. Six "California Desert Glass" Plates

Undated (after 1935). Slump-moulded, clear glass with sprayed color. H. 1 in. to 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  in., D. 7  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

These plates were created in ceramic moulds that Lukens made with the same basic techniques and materials he used for his ceramic bowls and plates. Discs of sheet glass were placed over the moulds, and when heated, the glass gradually "slumped" into them, taking on the form and texture of the interior of the moulds. Many of these plates were made in the same mould, identified by code etched on the bottom of the plates. As with his "Winddrift" plates, Lukens used an expedient forming method in order to focus his energies on the development of colors, which he named for their suggestion of natural features.

### 12. Disc

Undated. Off-white ceramic with blue glaze, metallic lustre decoration and stain, signed. H.  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. D. 6  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

This ceramic disc is carved with a stylized image of a pelican; the transparent blue glaze shows darker where it gathers in the recessed areas. The perimeter was treated with a narrow band of metallic lustre, a finish that requires a very low firing temperature and must therefore be applied after the glaze has already been fired. The representation of the bird recalls motifs of the Arts and Crafts movement.

## 13. Disc

Undated. Off-white ceramic with blue glaze, metallic lustre decoration and stain, signed. H.  $\frac{1}{2}$  in., D. 6  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.



# 14. Plate

Undated. Off-white ceramic with blue glaze over crackled glaze, signed. H. 1 ¼ in., D. 10 ½ in.

The glaze was applied over the entire form; marks left by devices used to provide support in the firing are evident on the bottom of the plate.

# 15. Standing Female Figure

Undated. Slip-cast buff-colored ceramic with glazes and stain, signed. H. 14 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>6</sub> in.

This standing figure is a rarity in Lukens's artistic output, which consisted almost exclusively of vessel forms.





# 16. Large Bowl

Undated. Off-white ceramic with lavender glaze over white crackled glaze and stain, signed. H. 3 % in., D. 13 % in.

Lukens carved three concentric circles into this bowl before coating it with a white crackle glaze. He stained only the crackle on the interior and applied a second glaze at the rim in a manner that allowed it to drip and flow.

### 17. Bowl

Undated. Off-white ceramic with red glaze over white crackled glaze and stain, bearing an inscription. H.  $2 \frac{1}{2}$  in., D.  $8 \frac{1}{4}$  in.

A dark stain over this shallow bowl enhances the fine network of fissures in the white glaze. The inscription contains two names: 'Joe' and 'Lukens.' It is unclear whether Glen Lukens made this bowl as a gift and inscribed it with the name of his long-time assistant Joe, or whether Lukens's brother Joe produced the bowl. According to family lore, Glen Lukens taught his brother how to work clay.





# 18. Bowl

Undated. Off-white ceramic with red glaze over white crackled glaze and stain, signed. H. 3  $\frac{1}{4}$  in., D. 7  $\frac{3}{8}$  in.

This small bowl exemplifies Lukens's esteem for the role of chance—or its appearance—in his work. The thick, white glaze has been permitted to slide off the outer wall, collecting in pendulous drops near the bowl's foot. A layer of red glaze covers the white glaze exactly, showing as a darker red where it penetrates the deep crack-le. The bare surface of the casually turned foot has been stained with oxides to disguise its light color.



# 19. Plate with Slip-Trailed Rim

Undated.

Off-white ceramic with multiple glazes sprayed over white glaze, signed. H. %6 in., D. 9 %6 in.

Lukens used a thick suspension of clay, called slip, to create a raised ornamentation of lines and dots around the plate's rim. His application of yellow, blue and green glazes sprayed from different angles produced a shadow-like effect, amplifying the low relief.

### 20. Large Plate with "Winddrift" Glaze Undated.

Off-white ceramic with blue glaze over textured white glaze, signed. H. 2  $^{11}$ /<sub>16</sub> in., D. 19  $^{18}$  in.

Lukens commonly trimmed and tooled his mould-made plates when they were partially dry in order to create visual interest and a texture that suggested manufacture on a potter's wheel. This plate has been so treated on both the glazed interior and unglazed exterior.





# 21. Large Bowl with Flattened Rim

Undated. Clear glass with sprayed colorant, signed. H. 3  $\frac{1}{8}$  in., D. 22  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

Formed in a roughly textured ceramic mould, the underside of the plate bears the impression of the form's uneven surface. The color, from the same sources used in Lukens's glazes, was applied to the top surface as a suspension sprayed from an air gun.

# 22. Large Bowl with Multicolored Inclusions Undated.

Clear glass with inclusions of colored glass, signed. H. 1 % in., D. 14 % in.

Small fragments of multicolored glass were laid in the center of the clear glass disc that formed this bowl.



# 23. Small Plate with Wiped Decoration Undated.

Clear glass with sprayed colorant. H. 1 in., D. 7  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

Before firing this plate, Lukens wiped abstract linear patterns into the layer of colorant sprayed on the top surface. The motif recalls those of Native Americans, one of the few influences on his work that Lukens readily acknowledged.



#### **24. Large Bowl with Flattened Rim** Undated. Clear glass with sprayed colorant, signed. H. 2 ¾ in., D. 19 in.



# 25. Deep Plate

Undated. Off-white clay with multiple glazes and stain, signed. H. 2 in., D. 12  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

The bottom of this plate, roughly trimmed to expose the coarse fabric and stained a red-orange (see detail), contrasts strongly with the smooth, liquid feel of the pooling green and amber glazes in the interior. Lukens felt that his work interpreted the West Coast's natural beauty, and here, perhaps, he attempted to express the range of its geology and climate.



## 26. Hemispherical Bowl with Raised Foot

Undated.

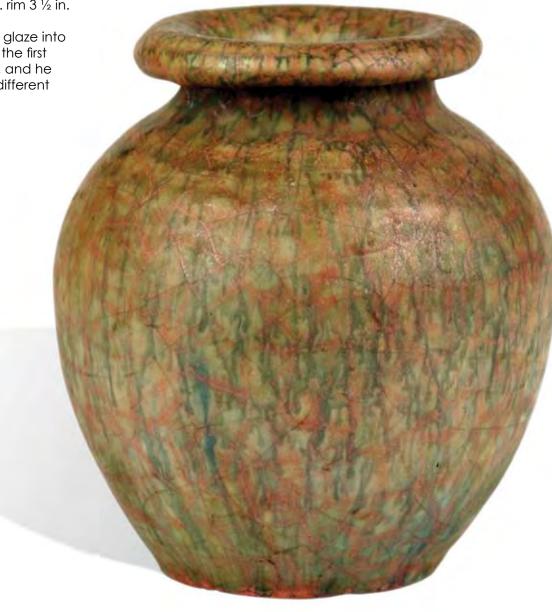
Off-white ceramic with underglaze, glaze and stain. H. 3  $^{1}\!\!\!/_{4}$  in., D. 6  $^{5}\!\!\!/_{16}$  in.

This small bowl encapsulates many of Lukens's interests and innovations. His concern with spontaneity is evident in the interior glaze, with its casual application and deep, stained crackle. The expanse of coarse, roughened, unglazed clay reflects his fascination with the natural world and approaches the treatment of the work that brought him great notoriety in the 1930s and led to his pronouncement, "I am a barbarian." The underglaze floral motif suggests an awareness of and respect for Asian traditions, and simultaneously recalls his early training as a painter.

# 27. Vase

Undated. Buff-colored ceramic with multiple glazes, signed. H. 5 % in., D. 5 ¼ in. (max.), D. rim 3 ½ in.

Lukens rubbed a contrasting glaze into the cracks that appeared in the first glaze layer when it was fired, and he repeated this process using different glazes in multiple firings.



# **28. Bowl with Flattened Rim** Undated.

Off-white clay with underglaze, glaze and stain, signed. H. 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  in., D. 7  $\frac{7}{8}$  in.





**29. Large Bowl** Undated. White ceramic with glaze. H. 3 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in., D. 16 in.

The red glaze on this bowl is one that Lukens characterized as "commercial," by which he meant that it found a ready market.



# 30. Large Plate with Flattened Rim

Undated. Buff-colored ceramic with glazes and stain, signed. H. 3 % in., D. 19 % in.

Lukens freely tooled the underside of this plate, leaving the surface rough and the broad rim jagged. Over a thick, deeply crazed clear glaze he layered a transparent blue-green that stained the cracks and collected on the rim's edge.

