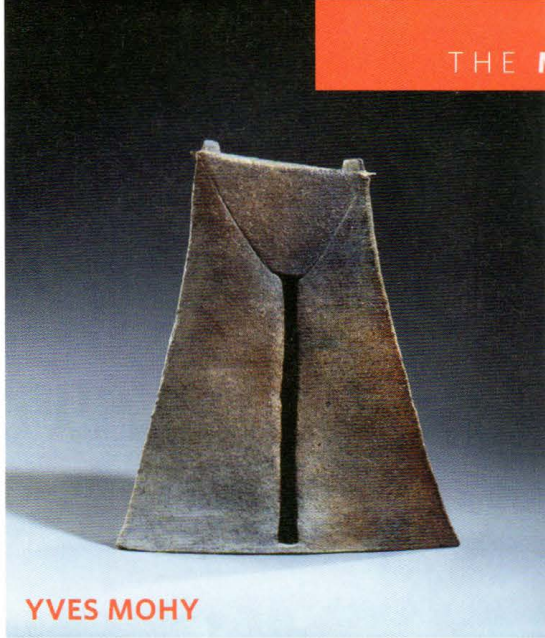


It Makes a Village



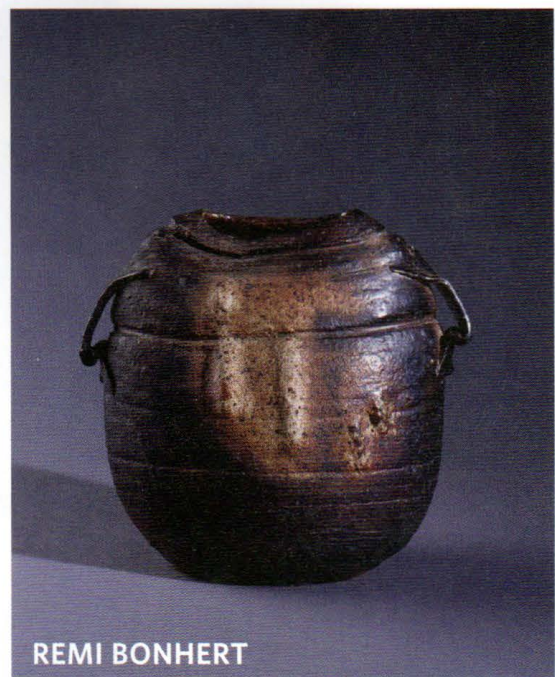
YVES MOHY



GERARD BROSSARD



JOËLLE DEROUBAIX



REMI BONHERT

THE CLAY-RICH SOILS SURROUNDING LA BORNE made the French village a center of decorative pottery throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. But “the village of potters” fell into a period of decline by the 1920s, and with the specter of another war looming, its rich, artisanal tradition might have been forgotten altogether were it not for a pair of young ceramists who arrived in 1941 to reclaim it as their own.

When Jean and Jacqueline Lerat began shaping the local iron-abundant clay into sculptural objects instead of functional vessels they unwittingly sparked a new conversation in the village of La Borne. “They were young artists, shaped by two world wars, in search of a simpler life that was more connected to the earth,” Hugues Magen, founder of New York’s Magen H Gallery, says. Thus began the renaissance of La Borne: for the next forty years, talented young ceramists, many with architectural backgrounds, would flock there to work in the mold of Jean and Jacqueline.

A selection of these works will be on view at Magen H in an exhibition titled *La Borne: 1940–1980 A*

Post-War Movement of Ceramic Expression in France, from November 8 through December 15. All of the works in the exhibit belong to Magen’s personal collection, which he began twelve years ago after finding himself captivated by the glazes and pigments that give the ceramics from this period their idiosyncratic appeal. “They are demonstrative, not decorative,” Magen says. “Each piece speaks to the individuality of the potter who created it.”

What distinguishes the works in Magen’s exhibit is the way they braid together a local specialized craft with the broader aesthetic movements of postwar Europe. The potters fired their works over wood to achieve a signature black-spotted glaze, just as the potters before them had done, while also drawing inspiration from the rigorous ideals of modernist architecture and the essentially human qualities of primal art. “These pieces were constructed as you would construct a building,” Magen says. “That’s one of the reasons they feel as modern today as when they were made.”

magenxxcentury.com

— Damaris Colhoun