



*Studio shot of taboret and Paasche airbrushes.*



*Resist materials, latex, respirator, and shield.*



*Books and labels for stencils and wax paper resist.*



## Colour, Air, Illusion

*Nan Smith writes about her work with airbrush painting for sculptures and tiles*

*Above right: Nan Smith removing the background shapes from the pattern before transferring the pattern to the clay piece.*

THE AIRBRUSH HAS BEEN USED BY CERAMISTS since the 1960s when artists working with white earthenware clays experimented with low-fire commercial products and techniques. Ceramics decals, commercial underglazes and slipcasting were materials and processes used by artists such as Warashina, Kottler, Rice and others, to create objects which possessed aesthetic and technical virtuosity. Although, during the past 40 years many examples of airbrush-painted ceramics have been created, written information describing materials and methods is limited and often basic. When I





Top: *Oneness*. Full view. 1999. Airbrushed, glazed earthenware, wood (pedestal). 140 x 58 x 110 cm. Centre and above: The leaf pattern is placed on the sculpture and the vinyl design is transferred to the bisque clay form. The sections of the pattern have to be aligned. The underglaze colour is applied by airbrush; small areas are applied with a paint brush. The airbrushed underglazed pattern is glazed using a large paint brush. Amaco Hunter green underglaze is sprayed in layers on the sculpture.

accessories can be replaced and purchased separately when needed.

The Paasche F-#1 is an external mix brush. I have found that cleaning an external mix airbrush is easier than disassembling and cleaning an internal mix airbrush design. In the F-#1 the tip of the brush which screws on to the front is removed for cleaning. The airbrush is moved manually in the air to create tighter and broader spray patterns. In contrast, the dual action airbrush design is one where the trigger can be moved forward and backward while depressed to change the diameter of the spray. I have found the physical movement in space to be easier when spraying three dimensional forms. The orifice of the spray (which controls the diameter of the mark) is changed by screwing or unscrewing the nozzle tip. Small adjustments of the nozzle can make a large difference in the diameter of the mark.

The Paasche F-#1 airbrush is durable and the kit economically priced. A basic instruction booklet 'Paasche 22 airbrush lessons' also comes in the kit. These instructions describe some beginning exercises which can be done to familiarise yourself with this tool. The booklet also contains airbrush drawing and painting projects. I have found some excellent airbrush books on the market which provide general information and references. These are helpful in describing process, and colour layering techniques. A book that I recommend is titled, *Airbrush: The Complete Studio Handbook*, written by Radu Vero (available through Axner's Pottery Supply, and Bennett's Pottery and Ceramic Supply, Oviedo, Florida). This book has a diverse gallery of colour plates as well as information about masks and free-hand painting techniques using a shield. The books that are available in the field and developed for ceramists on airbrushing are elementary