

January 5, 2017



Life with Clay – A retrospective of the life and work of Jan and Helga Grove opens at the AGGV

The life's work of two world renowned Victoria potters will be the focus of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria's first exhibition of 2017. *Life with Clay: Pottery and Sculpture by Jan and Helga Grove* opens January 21, and is comprised of roughly 60 pieces of pottery and 40 sculptures with bright colours and matte glazes, often decorated with geometric and abstract designs.

This retrospective by Victoria artists Jan and Helga Grove is guest curated by Allan Collier and runs through May 28 in the AGGV's Pollard Gallery. Included in the exhibition will be several experimental pieces highlighting Jan's modernist forms and glazes and Helga's unique geometric and fable animal decorations. The often whimsical and thought-provoking exhibition will also consist of photographs, catalogues and other historical material documenting the work and lives of these extraordinary artists.

"Selected by the Groves from hundreds of examples, this retrospective of their work shows Grove pottery and sculpture at its very best: pottery with a refined sense of form and colour and a mastery of glaze and surface decoration; and sculpture skilfully using animal and human forms to comment on human behaviour and the mysteries of the human psyche," said Exhibition Curator Allan Collier. "My hope is that the exhibition - and 128-page catalogue documenting the Groves' 'life with clay' - will confirm the widely-held notion that the Groves are among Canada's most accomplished ceramic artists."

Born in Germany, both Jan and Helga Grove apprenticed under Jan's parents and worked in Lübeck, Germany in the late 1940's and 1950's. The two fell in love and married in 1952. They moved to Turkey and lived in Istanbul for 5 years, where Jan taught ceramic design, before coming to Canada in 1965. From 1966 to 2009 they operated studios in Colwood, and later in Metchosin where they produced pottery with bright colors and matte glazes, often decorated with geometric and abstract designs.

The Groves first exhibition at the AGGV, *An Exhibition of Pottery by Jan and Helga Grove* ran from November 15 to December 4, 1966. Writing in the *Daily Times*, Robin Skelton described Jan's blue glaze as "crude, challenging and vivid...elementary and elemental," and said that "the pieces glow and tremble with it." In Helga's decorations he observed "a strain of humour and whimsy."

An AGGV member's only preview of *Life with Clay: Pottery and Sculpture by Jan and Helga Grove* takes place on Friday, January 20, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The artists and curator will be in attendance from 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 21 during a free all-day Public Open House.

Inspired by *Life with Clay: Pottery and Sculpture by Jan and Helga Grove*, Urbanite—one of Victoria's most dynamic and unique events—is coming back to the AGGV on February 3 and tickets to go on sale at noon on January 11 for AGGV members and January 16 to the general public (available at aggv.ca/urbanite). The evening includes custom cocktails, exhibition tours, funk soul tunes by DJ Joshua James and hands-on activities.

Curator Allan Collier will lead three guided tours of the exhibition during the month of February for dates and times visit <http://www.aggv.ca/calendar/2017-02>

For more information visit aggv.ca

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