

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
COLUMBUS

DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS
PAINTING
SCULPTURE
DESIGN
HISTORY OF THE ARTS
CERAMIC ARTS
TRAINING OF ART TEACHERS

December 7, 1938

Mr. Linn L. Phelan
The Rowantrees Kiln
Bluehill, Maine

Dear Linn:

As always, I was much interested in your report of work accomplished and the progress you are making. I am especially pleased to find that you are still happy and content in your work. Somehow I thought you would fit yourself into that situation and build a simple, satisfactory craftsman's life out of it, incidentally improving the work and helping the place to grow along sane lines of progress. You seem to be doing just that, and I get a kick out of being right in my estimate of your ability to do it. I think you are wise and fortunate in your viewpoint which, I take it, rates as an important value in life the chance to work at something you like to do; finds simple living more worthwhile than a high pressure merry-go-round; and includes enough tolerance and tact to see you through some irritating circumstances which may turn up now and then. Many people would not fit the spot at all. I'm glad you do.

Your class in Banger sounds interesting and will probably lead to more opportunities of that sort and to increased private students in summer, all of which will help your income.

I am not surprised that you have some questions in your mind about the Syracuse Show if they only accepted one out of twenty pieces from your group. I don't understand quite such a large percentage of rejections unless the pieces were of a type which the jury thought either too ordinary or too extraordinary or wild. It is true, I think, that they rejected a good many pieces this year which would have been accepted in previous years. They had over 1500 to pick from and rejected more than half of them. That would mean that by the time they had picked the most outstanding 400 or 500 they would have reached a point where a piece had to have something more than just ordinary merit to be added to a collection which was approaching the desired number which could be shown to advantage. No doubt a show almost as good as some of the earlier exhibitions could have been picked from the rejects when they got through. Anyway, as you know, it is nothing to be discouraged about if a jury turns things down. Another jury may have quite a different opinion.

I can explain the cases where more than five pieces were shown. Several potters who have been regular contributors and in whose work they had confidence were especially invited to send ten instead of five pieces. This was done because they were very anxious to get enough fine pieces to make up

Mr. Linn L. Phelan--December 7, 1938--2

a show for San Francisco and another first class travelling show to be sent around the country. In a way I suppose this policy might be considered unfair to those who were not given the special invitation, but on the other hand it can be regarded as an incentive to force yourself into the specially invited class by exhibiting outstandingly good work for a year or two.

Juries have a thankless job at best. They try to be fair; to pick the best things; to build up the best possible show in balance, variety, etc. Sometimes a very good thing may be rejected because so many others of similar character have already been accepted and the jury feels that more of that type would be monotonous. That is just hard luck for the pieces that are considered last instead of first while the jury is fresh. On the whole, I am sure that juries are sincere and conscientious, in spite of which they always make some mistakes. They do their best, and over the course of a number of exhibitions I think an exhibitor gets his share of the breaks. Better luck next time. Keep on sending stuff to Syracuse. It is a good show and is doing a lot to make the country conscious of ceramics as a fine art for individual expression.

I was in Cranbrook a month ago and was much pleased to see two of your pieces in one of their museum cases with other choice pots. They look fine and you should feel quite "set up" to have them there.

Best of luck and a happy, busy winter to you.

Sincerely,

Arthur E. Baggs.

Arthur E. Baggs

AEB:EB