

RON IN FIVE FRAMES

BY MARY BARRINGER

I ● Of the pots I live with made by Ron, all are small cups and bowls—except one. The big one is a jar with a mean skinny rat chasing a mean, stupid cat around the sides—the perfect container for dog biscuits. I like the smaller pieces, though, for their sneaky insinuation into my home and for the fact I can afford more of them—both factors allowing me daily, multiple readings of the Ron Meyers mark and menagerie. The small pots also bring into play a wondrous convergence of the hand of the maker, the hand of the painter and the hand of the user. As such, this user has noticed—as I imagine the inhabitants of the caves at Lascaux once noticed—the animals are not just drawn onto the surfaces but are animated from beneath by its topography. Ron begins drawing by his pulling, shaping and handling of the soft clay; the marks of brush and tool from which the cats, frogs and rabbits (no bunnies here) emerge are merely the outermost layer. The drawings are exuberantly and rebelliously physical—grasped simultaneously by the eye and the hand.

II ● A bowl, generously curved, with a messy-mouthed feline sprawling across its interior. This is not the cat that swallowed the canary; it's the cat that swallowed your canary.

III ● There are not too many dogs, as I remember. Dogs are too lovable, too much "man's best friend" to qualify in Ron's pantheon. They lack the requisite slyness and their every antisocial fault has been Marley-ized into something endearing. Ron's animals are more like the unreconstructed punks taunting Officer Krupke in *West Side Story*. Their eyes slide sideways, their mouths stretch toothily and they own their turf—from rim to rim. If Dennis the Menace were to channel de Kooning, the results might look like Ron's creatures.

IV ● Henri Cartier-Bresson famously described photography as capturing "the decisive moment." The photographer's process is (or was) measured in frames of film—dozens or hundreds of them required to yield the essential, unforgettable image. Cartoonists think in frames, too, building and pacing their stories. Over years of making, individual pots are the frames of a potter's working life—both in the way they spool out by the hundreds or thousands and in the way they freeze the potter's ephemeral touch. Moments of wetness and softness, of practice and mastery, of decision and experimentation accrete into a body of work, pot by pot. The cartoon-quick gestures are frozen by heat, lasting a thousand years.

V ● Ron's pottery demonstrations are one of the wonders of the clay world. They make me grateful for our field's stubborn adherence to the unfashionable activity of making pots. What, exactly, is transmitted during such a performance? Watching Ron work is a mystery in plain sight: an artist being true to his gift.

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