

FORM



Peter Voulkos giving a workshop at Greenwich House Pottery, 1962

"I don't like to stick to rules for working. How can I say what I am trying to do?... Function? What does it mean?"

– Peter Voulkos at the First Annual Conference of American Craftsmen by the American Craftsmen's Council (ACC) in 1957

The artists in this section began to experiment and depart from the idea of the objects they created as purely functional. Looking to Abstract Expressionism, the mid-20th-century avant-garde movement in painting and sculpture on the East Coast, ceramicists in California, most notably Peter Voulkos, began to use a spontaneous, gestural approach to clay. Voulkos's rebellious attitude to ceramics led to the opening up of opportunities for others to embark on creative and innovative expression. These artists were neither traditional nor vessel (or shape) oriented, using instead a sculptural approach. Free of the need to make a useful or "utilitarian" object, artists could instead explore the properties of clay and the chemistry of glazes.