

Dish with 'Leaping Deer' design

Sold



REF: 10738

Width: 19.5 cm (7.7")

Description

Bernard Leach

Dish with 'Leaping Deer' design, circa 1965

Porcelain, all-over yellow green celadon glaze over a raised design of a deer within a circle.

Impressed BL and Leach Pottery seals

Diameter 19.5cm (7 5/8in.)

BERNARD LEACH (British, 1887-1979)

Widely recognized as the father of studio pottery, Bernard Leach (1887-1979) played a pioneering role in creating an identity for artist potters in Britain and around the world. Born in the East (Hong Kong) and educated in the West (England), throughout his life Leach perceived himself as a courier between the disparate cultures. His exquisite pots reflect the inspiration he drew from East and West as well as his response to the basic tenets of modernism-truth to materials, the importance of function to form, and simplicity of decoration.

Bernard Leach was born in Hong Kong, living both there and in Japan until 1897 when he returned to England to attend Beaumont Jesuit College in Windsor. He studied at the Slade School of Art (where he was the youngest pupil) and etching at the London School of Art under Frank Brangwyn. In 1909 he returned to Japan to teach drawing and etching. Leach 'discovered' pottery at a Raku tea party, attracted to the art of the Japanese potters he studied under Ogata Konzan, a master of Raku craft. Ogata Konzan was the original head of the Konzan School of potters and tradition decreed that the Master of the School should permit his best pupils to use his name, palette and glazes. Bernard Leach represented the seventh generation in the Konzan tradition.

Leach exhibited in China and Japan, before returning to England in 1920 with his family and the potter Shoji Hamada, with whom he started a pottery on the outskirts of St Ives in Cornwall. In 1934 he once more returned to Japan, and there he worked with Hamada, by then a potter of repute with his own pottery in Mashiko. Two years later Leach began writing, and his first book *A Potter's Book* was published in 1940.

In 1961 a retrospective exhibition of his work was shown in Britain and Japan, and that same year he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Exeter University, together with the writer Agatha Christie. In 1973 he was made a Companion of Honour. The Victoria and Albert Museum mounted a major exhibition of his work in 1977 and in 1998 a retrospective exhibition was toured throughout Japan.

Leach's pots at their best are truly wonderful, his understanding of form, balance and pattern is without equal. A recurring theme of his decoration is nature, birds, perhaps standing for freedom and fauna, wild grasses and flowers all beautifully represented and glowing with fire of life. He would sketch his ideas before decorating his ceramics, and was an expert at combining pattern and motif with the colour and shape of each work.

His studio pieces are mainly in stoneware and porcelain and his use of decoration owes much to his understanding of Japanese calligraphy and brushwork. He maintained the high standards of form, glaze and decoration that Leach felt was fundamental.