

Makers: A History of American Studio Craft
By Janet Koplos and Bruce Metcalf

University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill, A Project of the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design, Hendersonville, N.C. 2010.

Chapter 10 1980-1989, Money and Images

Dorothy Hafner (b.1952) studied ceramics at Skidmore College and wanted to make sculpture. After she moved to New York City, she made and sold individual plates to cover the cost of the studio where she worked nights and weekends. A commission for dinnerware, which she at first resisted, set her to thinking, as did the fact that a fashion designer who had bought her plates planned to steal the design.

In 1978 Hafner introduced a white porcelain ware with a graphic pattern that got good press- it was different from most handmade dinnerware at the time, and it photographed well. She studied business management, talked to people, and made some large one-of-a-kind platters, and then, with a boost from a well-connected acquaintance, she was invited to design a dinnerware line for Tiffany & Co. She spent six months developing three lines; Tiffany took two. She also produced the Kyoto Homage pattern, an extension of her one-of-a-kind plates, which she marketed privately and through galleries. The designs seemed an expression of the highly charged 1980's- colorful, energetic, certain.

Hafner's characteristic style is complex, varied, and colorful, often juxtaposing completely different patterns and colors in a manner inspired by Japanese Oribe ware. The square plates of Kyoto Homage consist of a white- outlined central square that seems to sit on top of large and small diagonal stripes. (Figure 10.22) The colors sound incompatible- mostly golden orange, navy, purple, brick red- but they are all put slightly at was by a dusky value. Her sets employ a given vocabulary, but decoration is not identical from piece to piece.

From 1979 to 1981 Hafner developed and supervised a staff to make production wares. The team also manufactured limited-edition sets that she decorated, and she make unique works by herself. She was the first American artist to produce signature collections for Tiffany, and she continued to work with the company for ten years. During the 1980s she also designed for the porcelain manufacturer Rosenthal and created a bed-and-bath textile collection for Cannon Royal Family. In the early 1990s she took a sabbatical and made a surprising shift to glass (which will be discussed in chapter 11).