

# troika 63-83

by Ben Harris and Lawrence Illsley

Published by It's pronounced 'Aitch' ISBN 9780957487307

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## **Troika 63-83 is a new book about the collective of artists known as Troika.**

It is the culmination of two years extensive research and interviews by the authors Ben Harris and Lawrence Illsley. Due to Lawrence's personal connections to the story they have had privileged access to previously unseen photographs and documents and have held in depth conversations with over twenty former employees; all of whom were keen to tell the real Troika story. A story that has been shrouded in uncertainty and misunderstanding.

Through this research the book contains new information which is vital to any collector, academic, or dealer interested in Troika's work. There is a comprehensive list of decorators with monograms which, for the first time, enables accurate dating of the work. The book is liberally illustrated throughout with original photographs, including some hitherto unknown pieces.

Troika began as a commercial pottery in March 1963. It was set up by potter Benny Sirota, sculptor Leslie Illsley and architect Jan Thompson. Over time Troika's work changed from functional craft objects to conceptual stand-alone pieces of sculpture, extending the ideas and practise of sculpture into the medium of clay. The use of clay at Troika meant they, as artists, had access to a medium of creation. Through mass production they were able to allow more people access to the ownership of art objects. A process now known as 'the democratisation of art.'

Troika 63-83 sets out to capture a unique period in the artistic and cultural history of St Ives and Penwith, Cornwall. A time of great hope, freedom and endeavour for the multitude of now highly regarded artists who were working on the peninsula at that time. The book tells the personal journey of three young opinionated men who set out to challenge the establishment and who succeeded on their own terms. It also highlights and discusses new interpretations of Troika's work, which the authors argue should be seen primarily as sculpture rather than functional objects.

Benny Sirota fully supports this new book and is quoted on the back cover saying "I never dreamed that it would have had such a long-lasting effect." Troika 63-83 hopes to celebrate and understand just what their impact was and how it continues to resonate today.

Troika' work has featured on many episodes of Antiques Roadshow and still is present in thousands of homes around the globe. Troika 63-83 communicates the artist's original intentions and illustrates that the true value of these objects emerges through their appreciation as pieces art rather than how much they are worth at auction.

Although it is easy to see Benny and Leslie alone as the force which moulded Troika's journey through two decades, it is important to recognise the others who influenced their history. To see Troika as a group we also need to understand the contributions made by those people who joined the collective; the casters, fettlers, decorators, and those who bought the work they produced. Fundamentally this is their story.

The book will be launched to accompany the exhibition Troika 63- 83 at the Penlee House Gallery, Penzance which open on the 19th January.

Enhanced with 20 pages of colour illustrations, Troika 63-83, 21cm x 21cm paperback (177 pages) is on general release from 21/01/13. RRP £25.00. For further information or to request a copy of the book for review please contact the publishers [info@troikapeda.co.uk](mailto:info@troikapeda.co.uk)