

# Making functional pots in today's big world.

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The ceramic artist of today, making functional pots, is faced with the daunting task of developing lines of well-crafted pots that stand out from all the other pots around. Between the ancient Greeks and the Chinese (and all the other potters of the past), it has all been done before.

If you are a studio potter, designing and making your work, you must compete economically with industrially produced pottery. Beautiful work can be produced by high-capacity ceramic factories for a fraction of the studio potter's price. Industrial processes can duplicate any design but they cannot endow the pot with the spirit of the single maker. Hand making the work captures the energies, feeling and the potter himself in the piece through individual variations like finger marks, random paddle patterns, unique glazes and designs. The only way for the potter to compete is to produce a high quality pot, imbued with the individual potter's personal identity. When you view the piece it sings "I was made by this special potter!"

I am a member of the Association of Clay and Glass Artists of California. We are dedicated to promoting excellence in and appreciation of ceramics and glass. Those who wish to join at the professional or exhibiting level must be examined by a jury of exhibiting members. Among the criteria judged are craftsmanship and personal identity of the work. "Personal Identity" is the sum of the potter's life experiences, his feelings, questions, musings about life's questions of time and space. Fine craftsmanship can be learned but the unique quality of the work is achieved by the reflection of the maker's personal identity carried in the pot. Your personal identity that is fused into the matrix of the work is what raises your piece from a knock-off or copy of someone else's pot to a unique creation. This fusion of potter and piece is a major component of the value of the work.

I would like to present my work in the context of my personal identity and how I represent it in my pots. The most important influence on my work is the natural world. I was born and live in an area of superb natural beauty in the seaside, forests and mountains. From the earliest age I was drawn to the animals and plants of my world. My original training was as a marine biologist and for a number of years I studied sea life in a scientific way, using logic and the scientific method. This training taught me the power of observation, to experiment and to be ready for exciting findings. When I was introduced to clay, I was immediately captured by it, love struck by my ability to transform amorphous clay into a finished pot. The process seemed to open a window into my spirit, the non-scientific, intuitive side.

I love working in clay because of the biological nature of the process. The clay flows, grows and is shaped like a developing life form. Instead of a genetic time-line, the direction is from me, through my hands. Passage through flame is like a birthing, releasing the potential held by the embryonic pot to yield a mature, finished piece.

I have chosen to make mainly functional pots. Using pots creates an intimate bond between the piece and the person. Holding a well-formed bowl in your hands calms and centers. Seeing your food presented on a beautiful plate enhances the nurturing qualities of the meal. The requirement for utility limits the basic forms to simple ones of plate, bowl and cylinder. Basic modifications can be made to these, but they all must do the job of holding or presenting. The surface of the form offers a wide latitude for innovation and individuation. Color and texture can transform the simple form to an object of beauty that stands out in the daily world of the table.

My work is all about the surface with color and pattern expressed on simple forms. The surface defines the form, giving it substance, emphasizing the mysterious space within. I like colors deep and intense.

They engage the viewer, drawing his eyes to the pot. I like reds, greens, blues and black. They are the fundamental colors of life.

Patterns bring order and movement to the colors. I form the patterns using sponge stamps. Painting with sponges allows the rapid application of the glazes in patterns that are both loose and structured. The loose arrangements of the blocks of color in the patterns creates a sense of movement and life from the tension with the seemingly rigid pattern.

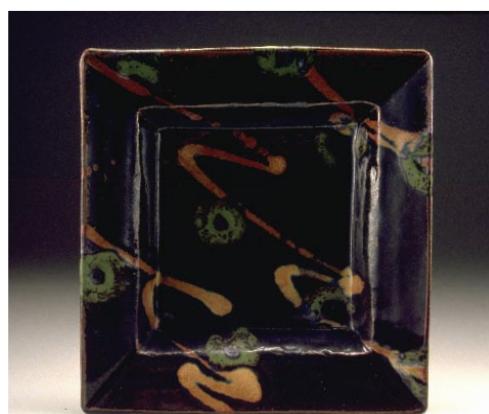
The firing process is very important to the organic vitality of the pot. Neutral atmospheric firing produces a flat, one-dimensional surface lacking warmth and soul. Reduction firing produces a surface with complex depth; a surface with flow and movement into the depths of the pot. This illusion of a 3-dimensional surface contains and is part of the inner space of the pot. Melted layers of glazes, flowing on the surface, impart a feeling of movement, fluid and dynamic.

Today's studio potter is faced with great competition in both the domestic and international markets. I believe that one of the most effective responses is to create work that captures your soul in the piece. Be open to all the world's influences and work them in your creative center. Make pottery that is uniquely yours in design and feeling. Many talented artisans make well-crafted pots, but what separates the artist from the artisan is creating pottery that is from the heart.

### Images:



1. "Full-Bloom" bowl. 50cm Dx8cm H. Stoneware.



2. Square plate. 30cm Wx3cm H. Stoneware.



3. "Red coral" platter. 38cm Dx4cm H. Stoneware.



4. "Blossoms in a cloudy sky" bowl. 32cm Dx15cm H. Stoneware.



5. "Hibiscus" mae byong. 15cm Dx33cm H. Stoneware.



6. "Eastern garden" tray. 21cm x43cmx3cm. Stoneware.