



Just the Facts

Clay

Grolleg porcelain

Primary forming method

Wheel throwing

Primary firing temperature

I fire to cone 9/10 in reduction

Favorite surface treatment

I leave a lot of (finely sanded) unglazed porcelain. I also use several celadon and celadon-type glazes, as well as a transparent wash with accents of satin black glaze.

Favorite tools

I have three tools I don't know what I'd do without. My red Sherrill Mud Tools rib, my Bison trimming tool, and my wheel. Having a drying box is also extremely helpful, especially in the dry southwestern climate.

Most-used piece of equipment

I use my wheel for every pot I make. While I also have ribs and other various tools that I use on each piece, the wheel is my primary tool in the studio; everything starts there.

studio

My studio is in my apartment. I have a 14×20-foot room that is primarily studio space, but I also use it as my living room and office. My apartment is just a few blocks from the Railyard district where Santa Fe Clay is located. The studio has its own entrance and a sink, but is really just a converted bedroom. Two windows and a door provide pretty good light during the day, and it has great hardwood floors. It's a challenge keeping things clean, because I really don't want to track clay all over my house. I sweep pretty much every day, and mop two or three times a week. I like this work; it's a good time to reflect on the pots I'm making. Other than two photographs hanging on the wall, there is no art in my studio—no postcards, no posters, no paintings, and no pots other than the ones I'm making (with the exception of the cup I'm drinking out of). There's an abundance of visual stimulation everywhere I look—at work, when I'm out with friends, in galleries, walking down the street. When I'm in my studio I like a clean slate.

I like loud music when I work. I have rather eclectic taste in music, and I like that I don't have to consider anyone else when I turn on my stereo. There's a space—a mental space—I try to find in the studio. I find this space when I simultaneously enter the states of deep thought and not thinking at all. Good, loud music helps. Most of all, I enjoy the solitude of a home studio. While I appreciate the social aspect of community ceramic studios, I feel like I'm most productive and creative in my own space.



Not having a kiln in my studio is frustrating. Every pot gets carefully packed and driven to Santa Fe Clay to bisque fire, then back to my studio to glaze (it takes me a few weeks to glaze), then back to Santa Fe Clay for the glaze firing. It's nerve racking, but so far there haven't been any casualties. But my apartment is wired for an electric kiln, so I'm considering making that purchase.

paying dues (and bills)

I am the studio director at Santa Fe Clay. This job has responsibilities that include firing kilns, technical maintenance of the studio, administering programming such as classes and workshops, managing studio monitors, as well as helping to curate and install gallery exhibitions, etc.

I took several ceramics courses while in college at Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg, Virginia, though my degree is in graphic design. After college, I did a year and a half residency at Red Star Studios in Kansas City, Missouri, followed by graduate school at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, where I graduated with an MFA in ceramics.

I spend 40–45 hours a week working at Santa Fe Clay, and probably another 30–50 hours a week in my own studio, depending on how close I am to an exhibition deadline.

body

It's difficult to work a full-time job managing a studio, then another full-time job as a studio artist, and still find time to take proper care of my body. I try to remember to spend time stretching before and after making pots. Also, I stopped making my own clay. While I think it's a good skill to have, making quality porcelain without a pugmill is time consuming and hard on the body. I'm affording myself the luxury of commercial clay, but I recycle every ounce of it.

As for health insurance, I just try to be very careful.

mind

Lately I've been reading several things at the same time, having various books to read depending on my mood. I am currently reading *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, by Victor Hugo; *The*

Autobiography of Mark Twain, edited by Charles Neider; and *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, by Pierre Cabanne. Generally I read a lot of fiction, a lot of 20th century American novels. Vonnegut is my favorite.

I think I'm most creative when I'm in the midst of my work cycle. One idea leads to the next. At the end of the night, I often have something I need to draw in my sketch pad for the next day. In the long run, however, it's healthy to step away. Spending a couple days out of town, whether to visit family and friends or to see some interesting place always helps me recharge to get back in my studio. I think working at Santa Fe Clay also helps. Not only am I surrounded by great work in the gallery all the time, but for eight hours a day I can't be in my studio. I think about the work I have going at home, and I always leave work excited to get back to my own studio. Teaching is another great way to stay creative. I generally don't demonstrate my own work in community classes, and I experiment a lot while teaching. Every now and then something from a demo will resonate, something I might not usually have done. It's really exciting when this hap-



pens. I also take breaks from throwing every few hours. I like to play guitar for 20 minutes or so when I feel myself getting burned out. It's a good way to clear my mind.

marketing

Most of my work is sold in galleries. My primary gallery is Santa Fe Clay, where my work is beginning to develop a following. A lot of pots get sold right out of the kiln. My main career focus right now is to expand my gallery network. I had pots for sale at Northern Clay Center this past winter, and I always have some work at Red Star Studios. My website also brings in a fair amount of sales. Although I always thought of my site as an online image database, rather than a sales gallery, people email me asking for prices. I need to make this easier for customers, so an "available for purchase" page is coming soon. I am yet to join any local studio tours since moving to Santa Fe, but I've only been in my own studio for a few months, so perhaps in the future . . .

Shipping work to galleries around the country is expensive, but so it goes. I think I prefer to spend the money shipping work and splitting sales with galleries in exchange for the extra time in my studio. I've never been comfortable in the art fair environment. Self-promotion is not my strong point. I just try to make the best pots that I can, and hope that the work will speak for itself.

Online exposure has been huge for me in terms of growing my market and finding new ones. People find my website and get in

touch with me. It's also the best tool for keeping friends, family, and collectors up to date with my latest work. Since I manage my own site, it's very easy to update. I like how immediate the web is. My website is linked to friends' websites, and vice versa, and this has proven to be a great system. I also submit packets to various galleries for exhibition opportunities and apply to a lot of juried shows.

The most disappointing thing about the Internet is that there are images of old work circulating that I wish I could remove, but there they are.

most valuable lesson

Not unlike most ceramic artists, I've had my share of disappointing firings, and of course there have been a few disasters here and there. I'm working hard to keep from getting too attached to work before it comes out of the kiln. It's easier said than done, especially when there's a show around the corner, but I guess the lesson I've learned is that it can all go wrong at any time, and I need to keep in mind why I'm in this field to begin with. It's supposed to be about making life better, for me and for others. When it gets to a point that stress is all I know, I remind myself that I'm trying to bring joy into peoples lives.