

ceramics

M O N T H L Y



enhancing life

by Suze Lindsay and
Kent McLaughlin

If you have the predilection to live with handmade objects, the size of your collection is only limited by the size of your home. When visiting Suze and Kent's, every room is like a comfortable visit with an old friend.



1 Top: Rainbow Gate's plate. Bottom: Ron Meyers' platter. 2 Image of Suze Lindsay and Kent McLaughlin in front of their living room mantle. Top shelf: platters (left to right): Suze Lindsay, Scott Goldberg, Rock Creek Pottery (Will Ruggles and Douglass Rankin); Jan McKeachie Johnston's vase. Bottom shelf: Earl Robbins' animal vessel, Michael Simon's box, Kent McLaughlin's shino jar.

Anyone who has visited our home would safely conclude that we love ceramic pots. Our collection is eclectic and ranges from the flamboyant to the reserved. We have many pots whose beauty lie in their subtle and straightforward utility, and larger-scale vessels and sculpture that require breadth and space. We've acquired our collection through trading, purchasing, and being given pieces as gifts. Whether from a workshop, a craft fair, a home sale, or a studio tour, these acquisitions represent a time and place that we have shared with the maker.

There are two potters in our household and we each have different approaches to making work, different tastes, and different aesthetics. Kent appreciates straightforward functional wares projecting subtle, quiet beauty. Suze's taste is more diverse and unrestrained, yet we both share a love for functional pots. We don't consider ourselves collectors; nevertheless, our home is full of pottery. Pots crowd every room.

Our home is a small North Carolina farmhouse that Kent renovated with the display of pottery in mind. There are built-in book cases, a mantle over the fireplace, and cathedral ceilings creating more wall space to display platters and sculpture. There are several groupings of specific forms—teapots, pitchers, vases, and of course mugs and yunomi. Some are displayed on shelving that was specifically built for them, and some are tucked away in cabinets and drawers.

Kitchen cabinets and hutches have glass doors so pots can be seen when not in use.

It's a Small World

As potters, we talk about how pots can tell stories, how they affect and enhance daily life, how their use brings back certain memories or might spark a past experience. Using a specific pot made by an artist we know is like having a visit with them.

A favorite story of ours occurred when potters from Nepal were touring the US with a program organized by New York artist, Kathy Erteman. The Nepalese potters landed in Bakersville at our friend Lisa Clague's studio for a couple of days of demonstrating and visiting area studios. They visited our house for tea and Suze showed them a pot that was brought to us from another friend who had been living in China and had traveled to Nepal. They gasped! They knew the maker, who lived in their small village. When coincidences like this occur, it makes our clay world seem very small and close knit.

Sharing and Using a Collection

When we are teaching locally, we share pots from our collection. If the class is studying bowls, for example, we arrive with a box that holds several individual resolutions to form and function, surface



3 Collaboration of Doug Sigler's wood vanity and Kent McLaughlin's sink. On the vanity from left to right: David Stuemple's pedestal bowl; Mary Barringer's plate as soap dish; George Bowes' double-handled cup; covered jars by Warren MacKenzie, Kent McLaughlin, Silvie Granatelli and Michael Simon; Gay Smith's tiny vase. On the shelf from left to right: Jan McKeachie Johnston's tall vase, Andrea Sorenson's sculpture, Silvie Granatelli's covered jar, Susan Filley's covered jar, Beth Lambert's neti pot. On the wall: Mary Barringer's sculpture. 4 Top of the kitchen cabinet, left to right: Jeremy Randall's bottle with funnel, Jan McKeachie Johnston's vase, Warren MacKenzie's platter, Tom Turner's covered jar. 5 Top of the kitchen cabinet, left to right: Clary Illian's pitcher, Victoria Christen's platter, Jeff Oestreich's pitcher. 6 Full view of Kent and Suze's kitchen. 7 Kitchen teapot collection, shelving by woodworker Doug Sigler.



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8 Kitchen drawer storage. 9 Family room hutch. 10 Kitchen cupboard, bowl storage. 11 Yixing teapot collection displayed on shelving over entryway into the family room.

and scale. They are a great source material for students to look at and analyze while they ask themselves why they are drawn to certain approaches and qualities they might transfer to their own work.

We enjoy sharing and using pots with workshop participants when they visit from nearby Penland School of Crafts, Wild Acres in Little Switzerland, or Odyssey Clay in Asheville. Many times the students might show up for a picnic lunch on our deck and then have some time to mill around the house, seeing how it is to live with so many pots. Some visitors may have a favorite ceramic artist and are able to see and handle a piece from that artist in person for the first time.

We also try to educate the public about using pots. When we have our home sales, we serve food on large handmade platters and bowls, and serve coffee and tea in handmade mugs and yunomis. We often invite customers into our home so they can get a better understanding of how to live with handmade objects.

The pots that surround us have an unavoidable effect on our own work, be it conscious or unconscious. We feel privileged to live with our own private learning library. By observing other makers' approach to proportion, surface, utility, personality, and function, our visual and aesthetic language is enhanced. We have daily conversations with the pots we choose to drink from, cook with, serve in. Suze is an avid gardener, and many times a single bloom is picked for a specific vase. Choosing the morning coffee mug starts our day. Finding the appropriate whiskey cup in the evening after a day of making in the studio completes our day.

We are so fortunate to have all these wonderful pots to enrich our lives and our work.

the authors *Suze Lindsay and Kent McLaughlin are potters living and making in their home studio, Fork Mountain Pottery, in Bakersville, North Carolina. To learn more, visit www.forkmountainpottery.com.*