



Clay & Life



Suze Lindsay & Kent McLaughlin

Our story begins at Penland School of Crafts in the late 1980's. A shared love of clay is what brought each one of us there as students, then studio mates, but we did not know each other well. Our life situations changed over the next couple of years, and when Cynthia Bringle invited both of us to be her studio assistants at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, we each signed on. Blame it on the starry nights or lounging on the granite boulders overlooking the ocean, but the magic of that place in time cast its spell. A few years later, we returned as instructors, and planned to marry at this special place. Unbeknownst to us, Maine had a policy of having to wait several days to actually receive the marriage license after the application is first made. We attribute it to a "cooling off or sobering up" policy. In spite of not having the official license, word went around the entire school of our intentions. During the final studio



Kent McLaughlin

walk through we were surprised when every studio made a contribution in celebration. The metals class made rings, the fibers class made a bride's veil and groom's bow-tie, and the paper class created banners and flyers that were held over Suze's head as she made the trek from the landing at the ocean up countless stairs to where Kent, Stu, and Susan Kestenbaum waited. Stu then recited the poem from his and Susan's wedding, from the heart. Thus our journey together went to a new level.

We bought our farmhouse in Bakersville in 1995, and have slowly built a studio to include a glaze house, kiln pads, showroom, and studio bathroom. We work in one large shared studio space but we use different clay bodies, kilns, and processes to make our work. Kent fires celadons, shinos, and iron red glazes in his gas reduction kilns. Suze once-fires white stoneware in her salt kilns. We each make bodies of work that are distinctive, representing our individual aesthetics and



Suze Lindsay

problem solving approaches. Our interpretations concerning utilitarian wares are varied and diversified.

Our pottery is incorporated and we call our business Fork Mountain Pottery Company. We make our living selling our pots from our showroom and supplement that income by teaching workshops. Traveling nationally and internationally to share knowledge about making pots is a teaching and learning experience that is incredibly rewarding. Eight years ago a small group of local artists started a co-op gallery in our small hometown that has been an additional source of income. Kent also has a "side-hustle" making and selling deer-tail brushes. Where we live and how we live allows us to sustain our way of life. Penland School and numerous potter's studios are in close proximity to our home and studio. It's a benefit to have an educated audience that comes to study at Penland and with the possibility of a visit and direct sales. We are fortunate to live in such a supportive, non-competitive community. Getting to this point in our careers has taken

many twists and turns. Those experiences include doing indoor and outdoor art fairs, wholesaling, consignment sales, home studio events/sales and group studio tours, the most important being the St Croix Valley Pottery Tour in Minnesota. We have joined together with other artists to create events and educate the public. Our schedule is varied and different each year, and keeps us on our toes!

We don't consider ourselves collectors, nevertheless, our home is full of pottery.

The pots that surround us have an unavoidable effect, be it conscious or unconscious. We also feel that way about watching each other work. Our partnership is supportive, and complimentary.

Our personal life includes 2 children and 5 grandchildren. Our families have been exuberant supporters as well! We feel so fortunate to have such a rich and full life.

