

BUDDHIST TEMPLES INSPIRE RICH *colours & designs*



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY JESSICA DEEKS



Tucked away in a picturesque backyard of the city's Island Park neighbourhood is a quaint pottery studio operated by ceramics artist Jane Snider. It's a light-filled space built by her husband, Larry Nafziger, when they first bought the house 12 years ago. This is where she comes to create her distinct porcelain pieces; bowls, platters and goblets in stunning vibrant hues.

While based in Ottawa, Jane's inspiration comes from much further away. She and her husband spent many years working and travelling in Africa and Asia. "I think a lot of influences are stored in visual memories that I have of the places we've been," she says. "We worked with craftspeople when we were there; potters, as well as weavers, wood carvers and basket makers. You absorb that."

They worked overseas with a development organization called Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), representing Ten Thousand Villages (a program of MCC) in East Africa and spent time in Tanzania, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. Later, they travelled to Laos with the same organization to work with craftspeople.

"A lot of potters will sketch their work first," Jane says. "I do that sometimes and I realize that, when I do, I am drawing from those

experiences overseas. When I came back from Asia, the overwhelming images for me were the Buddhist temples, which is represented by the golden yellows and reds in my pieces."

Jane says she often thinks about the round offering bowls in which the monks collected their food in the morning. These images inspired the forms and colours in her work.

Her bowls, serving dishes, plates and mugs, in bright reds, blues, yellows and greens, are artistic yet practical and designed for everyday use. "It is all quite utilitarian and that really speaks to my practical nature," she says.

Her pottery collection ranges from baking dishes, large platters and vases to smaller items, such as votive candle holders and French butter dishes. She showcases her work at various craft shows, including the Originals Ottawa Christmas Craft Sale in December (11th-16th only). Her work is also featured locally at Hintonburg Pottery and as far away as Toronto and St. Jacobs, where she once worked as an apprentice after graduating from university.

Jane grew up in Waterloo and went to Goshen College in Indiana. There, she took some pottery classes and says she was hooked from that point on. "You can make anything out of clay," Jane explains. "It's this huge open window to creativity because you are making it an expression of who you are." She left Goshen to work for Phil Yordy, a potter in St. Jacobs. Jane credits him for giving her the confidence to go out on her own.

Her pottery is always evolving and she likes to spend most winters experimenting with new ideas. Lately, she has been working with a slip trailing technique, creating lines and shapes on her pottery as if she were decorating a cake. She is also developing pieces that feature overlapping colours that evoke landscapes.

For Jane, making pottery is both a relaxing and satisfying experience. "It is hard to put into words but a lot of the process of making things is very repetitive and there is something very soothing about just doing that repetitive work over and over," she says. While there is repetition in the process, there is always opportunity to explore and learn. "There are many different aspects involved in making pottery so I don't see myself as a glaze technician, for instance," she says. "Working out all the different glazes is a challenge, as is perfecting the firing of the kiln... there's always something to learn." **OH**

