



Hart and Soul

Leura ceramic artist Lyn Hart takes pottery to the top shelf.

By Jacqueline Forster

Lyn Hart is worried. She feels people are losing touch with the aesthetic side of life in a rush to buy the latest, biggest trend. She wants people to reconnect with the handmade through time honoured, traditional arts and crafts; to feel art, in a tactile way, through pottery.

It is mid morning when I find Lyn hard at work in her Leura studio; the warmth of the spring sunshine and the sauna-like wooden studio cocooning us from the outside world. Today Lyn is throwing porcelain, a delicate clay, developed by the Chinese for its translucent beauty, durability and natural qualities. But porcelain is an unforgiving substance to work with. "It can slump and you have to work carefully and fast," says Lyn. "But I do like porcelain – it allows light through the body, highlighting form and decoration." Indeed, Lyn's porcelain pieces resemble fine sea shells, transforming everyday vessels into contemporary works of art that have made their way into collections all over the world, including a recently completed corporate commission for Komatsu to make 15 Japanese tea sets.

Influenced by her surroundings of Leura sandstone, cliffs and the imposing image of distant Mt Hay, Lyn creates pieces to reflect her Blue Mountains home. She exhibits at her Leura home gallery, and in galleries in Sydney's Turrumurra and the Rocks. She is also a teacher, taking on students from beginners through to advanced potters. "Many people come because they're looking for relaxation or they've always wanted to try to pottery," she says. "People may never pot again but it's a lot of fun and certainly breaks down barriers within groups whether they be corporate, wedding parties or family groups."

Lyn began learning her craft in the early 1980's at Meadowbank Technical College under the tutelage of Helen Gulliver. "She inspired me to submit my pieces to East Sydney Tech. and I was accepted into Brookvale Technical College," she recalls. "After the course I started to make lots of domestic ware and tried to improve my throwing. I went back to TAFE to get my diploma and that's when I started doing sculptural work and other things I was

interested in."

Moving to the mountains Lyn raised her family and practised her craft, building her skill set to include mastering the art of various glazing techniques including Chun, crackle and Celadon. Decoration is achieved through intricate carving and reflects native flora and topography. As part of the Verandah Potters she held joint exhibitions at the Renaissance Centre in Katoomba. A six month stint in Melbourne inspired Lyn to renovate her Leura studio, create a home gallery space and begin teaching. "Melbourne has a thriving arts community which is well supported," she says. "I wanted to be able to educate people to the beauty of pottery so they will look at art in another light because they know how much work and dedication has been involved in making it."

Lyn's domestic ware includes highly decorative pie dishes, teapots, cups, bowls and sushi platters made using fine white stoneware clay that is excellent for use in the oven, withstands the rigors of the dishwasher and ideal for the micro wave





oven. "I don't do a lot of domestic ware because it is hard to compete with cheap, imported lines but I think people appreciate that each piece is individual and heart felt. It should never feel like a production line," she says.

A trip to India revealed another side of the art/spiritualism spectrum for Lyn and she began to explore free form sculpture. "I loved the whole experience of India. Just seeing how people in another culture live was fascinating. The Indian women with their bright saris carrying clay water vessels from the wells. It was very inspiring," she recalls. Buddhas, boulders, birds and standing stones are created with a strong sense of the natural environment and a nod to indigenous forebears. There's also a touch of whimsy in creations like Le Pengouin. "Rocks, relationships, textures and forms influence my sculptural pieces," says Lyn. "A lot of my sculptures are based on rocks, their form, grouping together and placement." Techniques employed to create sculpture pieces include slab building, coiling and pinching.

Lyn feels most at home when throwing for personal pleasure. "My studio is a hive of activity. I enjoy creating and throwing my work whilst looking out over a beautiful garden set amongst a bush setting," she says. "I've spent a lot of time trying to perfect my art. It's a constant learning process and I'm always developing and exploring new ideas."

Presently, Lyn is working towards establishing a Japanese themed garden around the studio to add to the ambience. "I hold workshops and studio tours where groups can come and watch me at work or take part. I want to be able to offer a real mountains experience that includes interaction with a local artist in a beautiful setting."

"I had a group of Japanese visitors do a two hour workshop and although they had never potted before their work was outstanding. They took more away with them from the mountains than mere snapshots."

Between workshops, private tuition and corporate studio tours, Lyn finds time to

teach people with mental disabilities which she says is a lot of fun. "It's rewarding to see these people interact with the clay."

Despite her personal achievements Lyn laments the lack of a regional gallery in the area. "Unfortunately there is nothing that is not attuned to postcards and mountain views – we really need a true, sophisticated artists' space," she says. "The mountains have so much to offer international visitors but we need to be able to offer them what they're used to seeing and that is a great art gallery. The talent up here is extraordinary and we should foster that," she says adamantly.

"A lot of people think pottery is the poor cousin to art and that's a shame because pottery has so much to offer."

Pick it up, turn it over, run your hand over it - you'll understand.

Lyn is holding a studio sale on the weekend of December 5-6 at Hart Studio Acacia Avenue, Leura. For more information about the sale, pottery classes, workshops or commissions phone 4784 1990 or go to www.hartceramics.com.au *