

stillness

BY THE POTTERY STUDIO

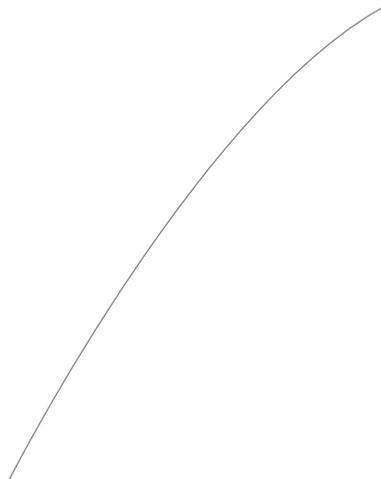


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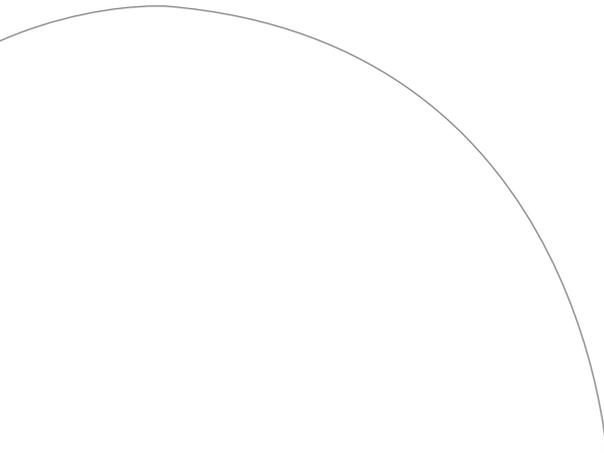
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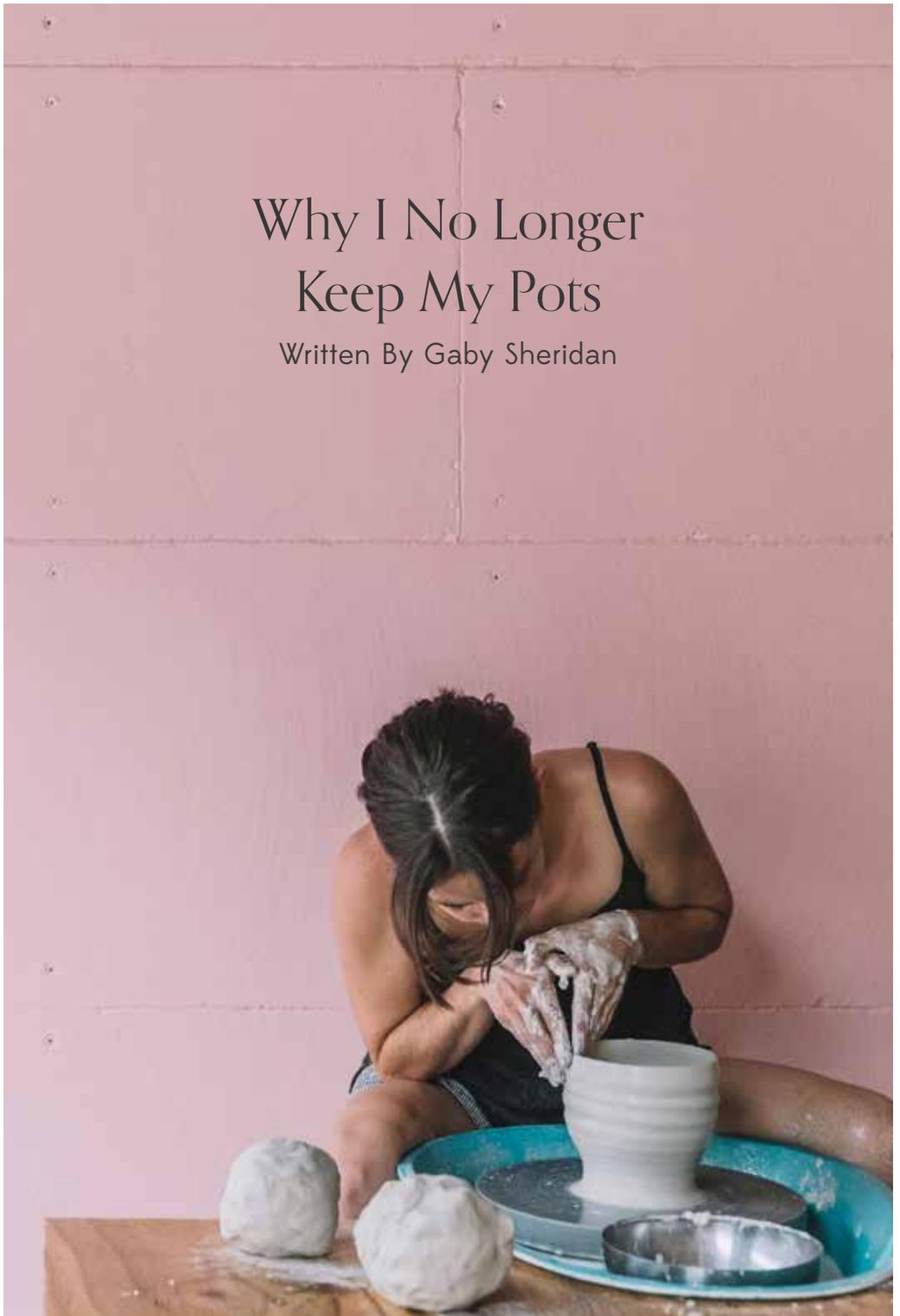
Our Philosophy

Embrace stillness and find fulfillment in the process.



Why I No Longer Keep My Pots

Written By Gaby Sheridan



When I first started learning to throw I was very attached to everything I made. Any time I made something slightly better than the last I would stop throwing and pull it off the wheel. I was throwing for the purpose of making vessels and although I didn't know it, in doing so was inhibiting my own learning, both personally & practically. As strange as it may sound it wasn't until I started throwing with no intention of keeping my work that I really started to improve.

My teacher, Peter Wallace, would always say to me, anytime I commented on how good he was, "I have just failed more times than you". I now understand exactly what he meant. By not clinging onto the outcome of what I made I began to push myself more. I wasn't scared of breaking what I was making, which meant I could test out the limits of the clay and myself. This detachment from what I made quickly turned into me intentionally crushing my work. This may sound unnecessary, or maybe even wasteful, but I chose to think of it as liberating and purposeful. By making something squishing it and starting again you allow yourself space to make mistakes and to grow.

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How can I ever
know how thin I
can make a pot if I
don't push it until
it's too thin.

One thing I have learned through doing this is that growth doesn't come from perfection, growth comes from things that are difficult, things that fail, things don't turn out as we expected. When you have no intention of keeping your work you let yourself play, you remove expectation and you are more able to relax and actually be present with what you're doing.

“

And in doing that you not only learn so much more about how to make a good pot and but also about how to let go of self-criticism and perfectionism.

This is not to say that I don't keep any of my work, but with my focus being removed from the final product I approach my wheel without expectations and walk feeling satisfied with myself even if I made nothing. Now at the beginning of all of my wheel classes I deliberately make something then crush it up. I do this so that the people in my class can realise that the class isn't about learning to make the perfect pot. My wheel classes are about slowing down.



Meditation is to be aware of every thought and of every feeling, never to say it is right or wrong, but just to watch it and move with it. In that watching, you begin to understand the whole movement of thought and feeling. And out of this awareness comes silence.



Stillness Through Senses

Sensory Meditation:

It is easy to get caught up in the busyness of everyday life. In fact, our culture almost praises it. We keep ourselves busy to create an illusion of productivity. In reality, we are our most productive when we have allowed ourselves time to slow down and act consciously. How often do you stop and pay attention to the world around you? If you were to be present at this moment, what would you notice? Maybe the sharp edge of the magazine in your hand or a subtle sound in the distance. Take a moment to observe your surroundings, do so without judgement.

Pottery is a practice we can use to drop into touch. Feeling the weight and textures of the clay as it moves through our hands. The forgiving yet delicate nature of a piece in progress. The resistance of the clay, ebbing and flowing on the wheel. Allowing ourselves to be present in this sense gives us the opportunity to experience stillness.

Meditation is another practice we use to drop in, inviting us to acknowledge all of our senses; smell, sound, sight, taste and touch. Awareness and presence invite acceptance, invite forgiveness and invite peace. This is what we gain from being still. Stillness comes from within not from our surroundings and it is up to us to make a choice; to be still or to let ourselves be overwhelmed by the chaos around us.

A psychologist told me when experiencing panic attacks to focus on my senses. The grounding technique invites you to focus on five things you can see, four things you can feel, three sounds you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste. Focusing our energetic mind on these tangible senses brings us back to presence and inherent peace.

Mindfulness and sensory meditation techniques are now being used as treatments for both physical and mental illnesses. Simple practises that bring you into the present moment, such as focusing on your breath, can be beneficial to anyone's daily routine.

Whether we step into it out of habit or with intention, our first sip of coffee always finds itself at the centre of our morning. We often get caught up unconsciously consuming, distracted by our surroundings and detached from one of our most intimate senses. We unknowingly allow the intensity of it's rich and delicious flavour to pass us by.

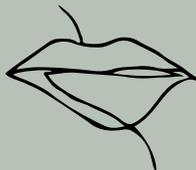
But if we were to sit and observe this sense, our experience would heighten. We would notice as our taste buds feel each sensation as the flavours come to life.

When we allow ourselves to be completely and solely present in what we are doing, we enter a meditative state. By intentionally engaging in this sense we begin to experience elements of our inner self, just as we do with meditation.



Smell

Aromas of a home-cooked meal on the stove. Freshly cut grass and salt in the ocean air. A candle burning by your bedside or a grounding, calming essential oil that soothes the chaotic moments; our favourite smells are what make us unique. They provoke fond memories and allow connection with the world around us. In meditation, we use smell to bring us back to a relaxed and still state. This may be a candle or oil we use with each practice or it may be accidentally smelling something we normally consider unpleasant and attempting to shift our judgement. At any moment we can drop into the present by noticing the smells that surround us.



Taste

The sweet, stickiness of strawberries that linger long after the fruit is gone. The first gulp of cold water after waking from a bad dream in the middle of the night. The bitterness of lead and wood while chewing on a pencil, unaware and deep in thought. Our taste-buds ever working to decipher the category of a meal, only to discover that nothingness has a flavour too if we are searching hard enough. We all have a favoured flavour, but have we ever considered what that feels like without the memories attached? To sit simply, and solely, in the stillness of the sense.

Whether you taste the sharp, salty, sea air, or the remnants of your bitter morning coffee and the salivating of waiting for a meal - stop to observe this most intimate sense. Observe the insight into the innermost self. Don't pause to pass judgement, but notice the tastes present. Sit simply, and solely, in the stillness of the sense.



Sight

A beautiful sunset, showing off the paddle pop colours of the sky. When we traditionally consider meditation, the sense of sight ceases to exist. We close down our eyes to escape from the busyness of life. We no longer people watch on the streets or notice the subtle mannerisms of our closest friends. But there is stillness in watching; in remaining a silent observer as the world continues around us. A walking meditation, moving through space and time with presence and reflection, or a Drishti, a focussed gaze where we develop concentrated intention; our sense of sight does not limit our stillness.



Sound

When one sense is momentarily lost, the others work to compensate. Background chatter becomes an internal dialogue, traffic passing by becomes a constant rumble. Unless we sink into our surrounds, the outer world begins to overwhelm. If we silently reflect our surrounds with stillness, without label or judgement, we may find the peace that exists amid chaos. Some choose spiritual chanting, others follow along with the bass guitar in their favourite song; sounds are soothing when we open our minds



Touch

What does it feel like to touch? To reach out and grab something and hold it in wholeness in the strength of your hands? This is the only sense we need as potters. Without touch, nothing is possible, but forget all the others and anything is possible. We don't speak. We don't need to hear. We can be without taste and smell. And it is better that we do not look when practising as we critique our piece with visual judgement when all we need to feel is the clay.



Rod's Vipassana Experience

Studio co-founder Rod spent another ten days in silence delving slightly deeper into his meditation practice. Through the ancient technique of Vipassana, he spent his days meditating, observing the nature of impermanence. We find out how he has taken these teachings and applied them to the pottery studio and day to day life.

We asked him to elaborate on his journey:

How is this kind of meditation different from any other kind of meditation?

Vipassana is a self-observation meditation. The first three days of the Vipassana course you are asked to practice a meditation called Anapana, which translates to mindfulness breathing. Essentially all you do is observe the breath, and when a thought arises, you go back to the breath and give no notice to it. This is to concentrate the mind enough to begin Vipassana. Most meditation practices I've experienced are comparable to Anapana as they concentrate the mind, whether you are observing the breath, a sound, an image in your mind, repeating a

mantra... they all concentrate the mind. Vipassana allows you to go deeper than the concentration of your mind. It is the observation of the ever-changing sensations that arise and pass away throughout your body at every moment. Vipassana conditions your unconscious mind to react less to these sensations, which ultimately are what we are reacting constantly to. It may seem like you are reacting to the external world, but really, your mind is reacting to the sensations that arise on the body. Practising Vipassana can take you out of the habit of blind reaction.

What did you notice coming out of the experience?

The benefits are super obvious that come from the practice when you first come out of the course. It is easy to see and feel how intense life is when you have just left 10 days of 'mental silence.' The important thing is to keep the practice going because like any addiction, if you allow it to consume you, you will slip back into those habits of blind reaction. We are all constantly stimulating ourselves in reaction to our mental state.

In what ways did you grow?

Vipassana teaches you Annica (Impermanence) at the experiential level that nothing lasts forever. So, it is foolish to attach yourself to anything that will ultimately change. The more you cling to things, when they change, the more you suffer. So, I suppose the increased capacity to accept reality as it is, react to experiences the least amount as possible and continue to flow with life. It helps you roll with life's punches and still maintain purpose and it helps you maintain humility in the good situations as they also don't last either. Look at our current situation, just like that the world has stopped for a virus.

How do you stop yourself from 'attaching' to things without completely detaching from society?

I don't know if I do it intentionally. Once you start to train your mind not to react to things, you automatically do it. It's not that I am completely detached from the world, I think a better way to put it is that once you know why you are reacting the way you are, the period of which you remain in that state is lessened. So it isn't that I don't crave things or attach to my things, it is that my ability to separate the craving and just observe it is better than it was before meditation. But, if I do not practice, like a muscle, it too will go.

What's it like going from the extreme of your day-to-day life to extreme stillness?

Honestly, if I don't meditate morning and night, I can't keep up. My life is essentially spent project managing a variety of projects. So I suppose there is a lot to juggle and it is the contrast of tasks which I find switching from a construction hat to a pottery hat is the

most difficult. If I have meditated, I can maintain it. The hardest part is going from chaos to stillness and telling yourself to sit and meditate for one hour. It's hard, and there are always weeks where I go days without meditating and I definitely notice the difference to sleep quality and my ability to maintain focus during the day.

Would you like a world where you can live in complete stillness? Why or why not?

Look, once you experience the peace, it is unreal, I don't actually think you can truly articulate it. But do I believe that we should all become monks? No. I do believe that everyone should at least taste the meditation. Not necessarily 10 days in silence, but sit down to an Alan Watts, Sam Harris or Joseph Goldstein meditation.

What are the elements of this practice that we can apply to our everyday lives?

Practice mindfulness and you will feel the benefits, those glimpses of complete presence, beyond thought and judgement. Taste these moments and I think you will want to go deeper. The notion of stillness at the studio was derived from the common feedback of experience through customers and our own. Where one is completely present and lost in the playful making of pottery.

How can you apply the lessons you learnt in Vipassana to your pottery practice?

Non-judgement and acceptance of what is, absolutely. I've embedded the philosophy in Gaby's practice that helped her improve. People love to attach to things, even if it's a wonky pot with a hole in the bottom that they make on their first time. It is the feeling of possession that prevents them from throwing it out. Just smash the pot.

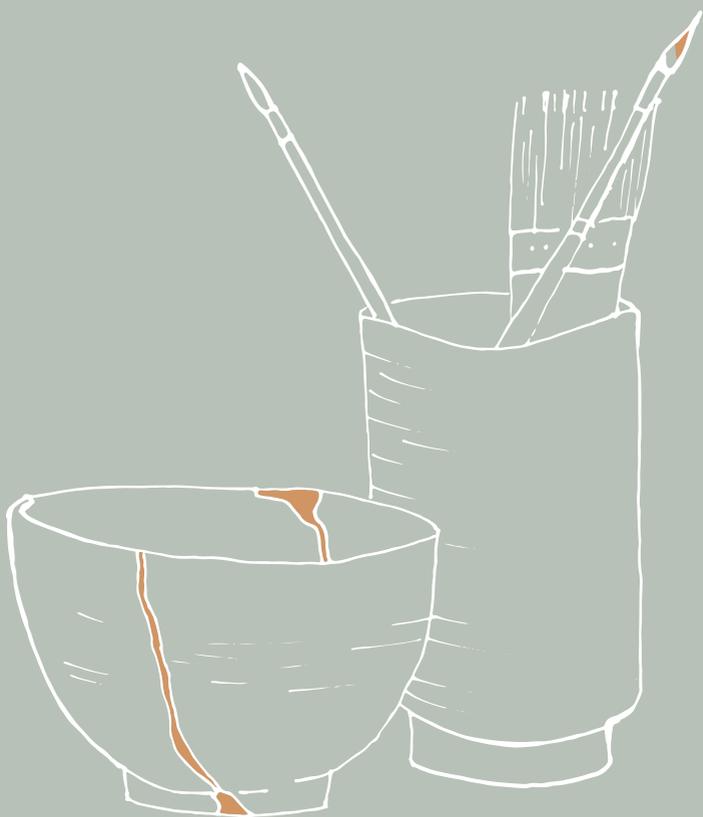
Would you encourage people to venture into this type of meditation practice? Why?

I would never discourage anyone to experience Vipassana. It is a wonderful technique.

Experiencing Vipassana

When you are ready to embrace your own journey into Vipassana, don't think about it too much, just do it. End of the day it is just 10 days, we are all in isolation now for who knows how long. Maybe it will help the people who say 'they could never' sit still for that long. I think if I was checked as a child for ADD, or now for that matter, I would most definitely have it. Yet I have managed something like 40 days in silence now. The life you gain in present living after a Vipassana course will far exceed the 10 day investment in my opinion.

why is this happening for me





Lydia Saxon

I remember having one of those days covered in clay, where I couldn't seem to centre a thing and felt like giving up. Whenever I was managing to throw a semi-recognisable shape I wanted to cling to it, fire and glaze just so I could feel like I had made something. My wonderful mentor Lucy was watching me try and try again, and saw me putting all my hope into any little piece that somewhat worked. She told me not to hold too much attachment to the mounds of clay I was trying to throw or the pieces that I wanted to fire and allow it all to be a learning process full of mistakes that help us grow. Our pieces will sometimes flop, crack in the kiln or maybe the glaze won't look as good as you hoped, but these are all experiences to learn from and try again. Having too much attachment to your work especially when learning can leave you in ruins when a piece doesn't come out as you expected.

Letting go of attachment has influenced me to have more fun and allow throwing to be not just about creating a perfect or expected piece but a continuous learning process that I am very much at the very beginning of. When I sit in my hot little garden shed at the wheel or in the studio I now try and go in with no expectation or attachment. This doesn't mean not having any plans to create something, say a cup, but to be sure that if it doesn't work out quite how I expected I can try again tomorrow or maybe a new style of a cup will come out of it.

I have always had a love for all things pottery but my practice emerged was when I started to propagate my indoor plants & my passion grew and grew for plants... quite literally. My boyfriend suggested instead of buying endless plant pots I should try to make them myself. We searched and saved for weeks until we found a pottery wheel and I started, very painfully, learning off YouTube.

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I think if pottery is for you, you fall in love with the pottery world; the joy of making something with your hands & working with the earth.

I love walking into a room full of lush vines and how this can make me feel like I am outside in nature. I love the countless species and how one plant can grow and appear so dissimilar from the next. I love waking up and seeing a new leaf or node on a plant that I have been gently tending to with no signs of growth for weeks! And I love how happy they make friends and family when I gift them as an everlasting love bouquet in their home.



My inspiration comes anywhere from seeing a little pottery bowl holding salt at a restaurant to hearing someone new to pottery talk about how much they love it and how excited they are. I've only had the pottery bug for maybe a year now, and I think being a beginner I get my inspiration from all around me especially from the talented potters in Byron Bay that I have been so lucky to connect with. Also, if you haven't watched any seasons of The Great Pottery Throw Down I highly recommend. It is such a fantastic program involving the sweetest potters battling it out to finish set tasks. You get so much inspiration from this program seeing peoples creations and different methods and you also get very invested.

“

Pottery has taught me patience; to have
patience with yourself and patience with
what you create with your hands.

But it's also taught me creativity and to give things a go. That may be trying a new glaze or clay to see if you like it. There's every chance you might not, but how else will you know?

Learning the process of wedging has been one of the more challenging moments, and finding my own rhythm and way of doing it. I just could not quite crack it. Honestly, it felt like weeks. I spent hours YouTubing, watching fellow potters, kneeling on the ground, standing up next to a bench... until one day it finally clicked. It has also been pretty challenging being in little hot Byron Bay throwing in the garden shed out the back of my house, a perfect sauna. This can definitely test my patience on those super hot days, but living by the beach sometimes my throwing attire is my bikini.

I'm still learning what my favourite pieces are to create each and every day. I think it changes all the time from day-to-day depending on my mood. I loved making little cups as over Christmas they were the perfect hand-crafted gift to give my friends and family. Also, my tall planters with feet - they are practical for my plant addiction and become the perfect homes for all my propagated plants. I love working on the wheel. I love the way it feels on your hands and watching the way it moves. I relish in trying new types of clay and feeling the different textures and experiencing how different, easy or challenging they can feel to throw.



Studio Work

A collection of talented
hand built work by students of
The Pottery Studio.











“In total silence,
there is nothing;
you are nothing.
If you are something,
there is no silence but noise.
When there is noise,
you cannot hear or see.
When there is nothing,
there is complete stability,
complete security.
Then only can the mind find out
if there is or is not something nameless,
something that is beyond time.
All this is meditation.”

KRISHNAMURTI



Emma Peterson

Hand-Building Student

Emma is a baker by day and potter by night. She first visited The Pottery Studio soon after our doors rolled open, overjoyed about a new creative space opening around the corner from her kitchen. What began as a gift from a friend soon became an addicting affair with a new medium to be explored. When asked why she keeps coming back, it's the endless possibilities that keep calling. "Mostly it's just because I keep having ideas about things that could be made with clay," she laughs. "I also love the relaxing vibe of the studio, and you never know who you're going to bump into there either."

The Nambour local's journey into pottery is not without lessons and challenges. Learning to take time and invest in the works is mirrored in day-to-day life. "When I first started coming to the studio, I was so excited and had so many ideas that I just wanted to pump out as many things as I could in the time I was given! A few lessons later and I've learnt to look again, smooth a bit longer, work out those cracks," she remembers. "You're building something that can last forever - it's worth putting a bit of extra time into it to make something timeless." Even when not in the studio, she finds herself stopping to take a second look.

"I'm spending more time working out the kinks in the moment as opposed to just hoping for the best in the future. I think it applies to so many areas in life and it's the classic saying, right? A stitch in time saves nine."

She admits that it can be challenging when the idea in Emma's head doesn't reflect the clay in her hands, be it a wonky handle or a splotchy glaze. A gentle reminder of non-attachment helps the baker to see the beauty in all of her crafts, and in her life. "I think it's so great that in a world where there is so much pressure and things can seem like life or death, there's a place to go where you can chill out and get your hands dirty. And if it all works out, then that's amazing and you've built something you can use and cherish forever. But if it doesn't, then that's okay too - because it's more about the experience than just having something

When it comes to baking, in her naturally charming cakes, Emma is ardently finding inspiration from her clay creations. "I'm dying to make a cake that looks like it's been covered in a speckle glaze," she divulges. "I love taking baking inspiration from weird stuff that has nothing to do with food, and ceramics is such a versatile art form with a wide range of possibilities - a bit like food - so it's impossible to not get ideas! Especially because once you start to open your mind up to those possibilities, it spills over in over areas of life. If I can make a squiggly clay statue that looks super arty and weird, how can I make that kind of thing but delicious and cake-y?" she asks. Emma's most beloved pieces are those that she uses every day. Her mugs and her plates, that she can share when guests drop in for a treat. They serve as a constant reminder of the process. "I feel like when you take a moment to focus on how things look, feel, smell, even something like washing the dishes or smoothing a coil pot can feel like a mini-vacation."

You can delve into the magic of Emma's baking at [@cornerstoreco](#) on Instagram

Katrine Fox

Wheel Throwing Student





If you're in any way proud of your pottery, cutting the pieces open to dissect the insides is the last thing you would want to do. Which is exactly why you should do it. At this stage, Katrine had been playing with the medium for nearly a month, excited to explore the foundations of pottery. "Most importantly, it teaches you that the clay has a mind of its own, and in order to build what you want to build, you need to be in control," she reflects. "Technical skills and deep synchronisation with the clay is the only thing that will allow you to do that. I sliced my cylinder in half, to analyse the thickness of the walls. I have to admit that was pretty devastating, but observing the piece gave wheel-throwing a whole new meaning. From then on, I became pretty ruthless with smashing my work; I'm conscious of not getting attached to the pieces themselves, I'm focused on the process.

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Discovering pottery has
really grounded me in
ways I had never imagined.
It has taught me to slow
down, completely being in
the moment.

Katrine first stepped into the studio with her husband for a wheel and wine date night. The two are adoringly competitive and spent the evening letting go and discovering the process. "All jokes aside, in my view, the first class should really be about learning to centre your piece," she laughs. "I've seen so many stressed people focusing on creating something to bring home from their first class, they almost forget to just enjoy the process and the

feeling of the clay." For someone with a stressful international career in the high-growth tech start-up space that sees her moving all over the world, Katrine is aware and present in living a meaningful life. she contemplates. "I always say clay is pretty unforgiving, you have to feel it and be present. If your attention slips for a moment and your finger or nail slips into the side of the wall or trim, it's really hard - if not impossible, to recover the shape." She is addicted to and makes a living off of technology, yet it's beneficial and confronting for Katrine to have her hands covered in clay and physically unable to touch her phone. "I think we could all need this once in a while," she ponders.

Learning to let go of attachment has become a core part of the mum of two's life in recent years. "Over the past decade I've moved my family and my belongings across four different continents," she says.

I'm of the firm belief that attachment to things is a limiting factor in our pursuit of a meaningful life and happiness.

We think this stuff makes us happy but in fact, it anchors us down to somewhere or something that isn't necessarily the best thing for us. Letting go of unnecessary attachments is what makes us grow." This conscious approach to life has been integral in Katrine's pottery journey as

she learns, practices and grows. "Practicing is exactly this; letting go of an attachment to one way of doing things or feeling attachment to a piece," she explains. "Instead, in order to move forward, we need to analyse the piece we've just made, so we can learn and grow and become even better."

When creating, Katrine indulges in the opportunity to zone out and let the clay guide her hands. It's an approach that leaves her with bowls of all shapes and sizes and allows her to drop into a mindful state. "I would love to say I meditate in the traditional sense of the word, but I simply don't have the patience to sit still for too long at a time," she admits. "Growing up in Copenhagen, I'm used to cycling everywhere - achieving something and at the same time getting fresh air, free thoughts and good exercise. Pottery is similarly practical yet meditative - I presume this is why it resonates so well with me."





Lindsay Merchant

Hand-Building Student

In an ever-busy and bustling world, we look for any opportunity for a moment of stillness. We may find this solace in a meditation or yoga practice, getting out in nature or sinking deep into a craft with a ball of clay between our hands. For Lindsay, The Pottery Studio has evolved into her happy place, where she feels relaxed and calm when escaping to a session. “I used to practice regular yoga which I found was a great mental escape from the hustle and bustle of life. For me, pottery is the same,” she says. “It’s so therapeutic. The staff are all so lovely, really supportive, helpful and friendly, which creates the perfect environment for creativity. I also love seeing what other people have created in the studio too, it’s very inspiring.”

As she delves deeper into her practice, working with clay becomes an opportunity to let go and grow. It's important to acknowledge that we all move at different paces and Lindsay's path into non-attachment has been a slow one. "I've had to try and let go of the fact that often things don't turn out the way you had initially envisioned. I love a lot of the more 'organic' work that other people make, but in my own work I find it hard to let go of symmetry and smooth edges. I guess it's inherently part of my personality," she suggests. "Saying that, early on one of my pieces got broken, and I wasn't at all upset, it's part of the process - the risk of cracks, bits falling off or not turning out how you'd hoped.

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It's good not to get too attached as there's always an opportunity to try and make another piece and improve on the original design.

While some love to keep the creations to adorn surfaces in their homes, Lindsay is happy to part with her pieces when the time feels right. Often she will work with someone in mind. "I really enjoy creating things as a gift, with a person in mind when I'm creating the piece," she reflects. "It's nice when there is meaning behind what you're making. I've given away almost everything I've made." Pottery is wonderful in that every creator approaches work in a different way. Some smash, cut and analyse until they achieve growth and perfection. Others embrace the flaws and see the quirks as part of the beauty. "I've never smashed anything, but I have donated a couple of pieces I didn't like to the op shop. I'm sure someone out there will be able to use them," she says. "The most valuable lesson is to roll with the changes. It's okay to turn up with a plan in your head to make a bowl and leave at the end of the session having made a wall mounted plant pot and a key ring!" Even the challenges with glazing and texture serve as learning curves for the next time she takes to the tools.

Nissa Jahnke

Wheel Throwing Student



Learning to let go of expectations is a part of pottery that Nissa is learning to embrace. Our curious student has been on an ever-evolving journey since she arrived at her first hand-building class with a vision of a vase. "I remember walking in with big expectations of making something perfectly cylindrical with smooth lines, 90-degree angles and absolutely no bumps," she reminisces. "The end result was the exact opposite - but I still loved it - and the more classes I attended, the more I began to embrace the so-called imperfections in my work. This took all the pressure off, which also made the process a lot more enjoyable. In fact, it's the rougher pieces I've made which have been the ones that I'm most fond of.

Nissa's exploration of the wheel came as a natural next step for the potter. She describes it as very much a labour of love but finds it so satisfying holding a finished product in her hand at the end of class. The development of a skillset also comes with new challenges that arise yet the idea of breaking apart pots to grow can seem counterintuitive. "It was in one of my first wheel throwing classes and I'd just finished making a bowl, but I wasn't entirely happy with it," she reflects. "I showed Gaby who suggested that we cut it in half so I can see how even the walls were and improve my technique. To be honest, I didn't hear anything past "cut it in half" because the thought of destroying something that I'd spent so much time and energy on horrified me. But then it occurred to me that my walls definitely needed work, I had plenty of time to spare and nothing to lose... It was nowhere near as painful as I thought it would be and I gained some valuable lessons that day. My next pot ended up being my best one yet!

Gifted with this new tool of self-observation, Nissa is forever embodying lessons from the process and practice.

"I am learning to surrender, to my own expectations and to my inner perfectionist,

she acknowledges. "The moment I began appreciating the dimples in my work, the more fun and satisfying it became." Letting go of any attachment has helped the student rise to this challenge. "My favourite piece to date is a cup that I made by complete accident," she laughs. "Ever since my very first pottery class I'd wanted to

make a coffee cup but I was never happy with any of my previous attempts. It was only when I'd completely removed any expectations and started to experiment with shapes that I ended up making one I liked. When it came to glazing, Nikki had just ordered a fresh new colour but didn't have any sample tiles yet. I have complete faith in her taste in glazes so I covered the whole piece in it without hesitation. The end result was a gorgeous raspberry coffee cup that I use every single day and smile. To this day, I absolutely believe that if I was too attached to this cup that I would not have taken that risk."



Tabitha Atkinson

Hand-Building Student

For those flooded with creativity, pottery is an extension to a traditional perception of art. Hand-building student Tabitha finds happiness and moments of peace in creating works through her clay practice. "I love the idea of creating a piece of art. I like to layer the clay into almost a picture," she says. "I can't wait to check the shelves for my finished work or get my hands dirty with a new piece. Sometimes I get so lost in what I'm doing that I don't realise how quickly time has flown by. It helps me de-stress for the week and I always leave with a feeling of happy accomplishment."

Like those who have walked through the studio's roller doors before her, Tabitha is constantly learning to adapt and change with her work.

"I very rarely make what I had intended and that's okay because it's the journey that's the most fun,"

she laughs. "The vision in my head probably won't turn out the way I want it to... I just have to let it go. I now tell myself that if it was perfect it wouldn't be mine and that's what makes it an original. Some of my favourite pieces are the ones that turned out nothing like how I envisioned."

Some of these pieces begin as bowls and end as trivets, others have become sideways, square planter boxes. "I was introduced to pottery by a friend - we still do classes together - I thought it would be something different to try," Tabitha remembers. "I had all these grand ideas that I was going to make this beautiful bowl. I couldn't get the sides to stay up, they were too thin and uneven - it was a shocker. I ended up making a trivet. I also learned what a trivet was..."

Building works of art will continue to be an invitation into the unexpected for Tabitha, as with each class in her "happy place" there comes a new lesson to learn. Sometimes these lessons translate into the greater world around her, at other times they are simply an opportunity to learn acceptance and let go of attachment to any material possession.





Aloe Frost Piece

The process of a potter

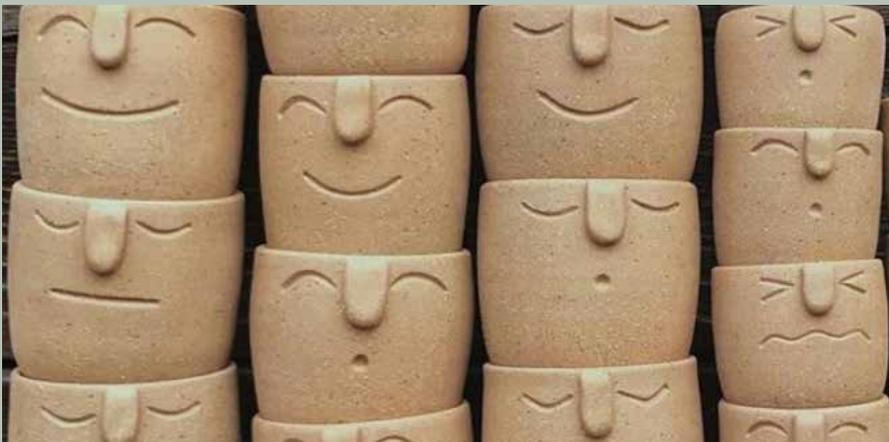


Mistakes are going to happen, and you will have pieces that don't meet your standards. Maybe it's because of a crack or a chip, glaze or firing problems, poor proportions, or something that just doesn't feel right, but you will have pieces that don't represent you as an artist. Some people destroy any pots that don't meet the highest standard, and others try to salvage nearly every piece. I understand both ways of thinking, but I prefer a middle path. Pots with minor flaws are considered seconds and sold at a discount. Most of my customers don't mind this at all, especially in a handmade item, and often what I consider to be a flaw is not even noticed or considered a flaw at all. I may not be happy with the pot, but someone else may think it's perfect! Art is subjective, so I think it is responsible for the average potter to recoup some of the time, energy, and materials in their almost work by offering it as seconds.

Some teachers do not allow their students to keep any pots until they have become proficient in the basic skills. They might throw a few dozen cylinders in a day, and then they all go straight into the reclaim bucket. I am self-taught, and it was important for me to go through the whole process, from throwing or band-building to the final glaze firing, in order to grow and understand what I liked and what I didn't. I kept most of my pieces until I became comfortable and confident in my abilities to be able to make a design more than once. As my style slowly emerged, those initial tests weren't so important, and I got in the habit of tossing subpar pieces in the reclaim bucket instead of putting them in the kiln. It's an automatic

response now. If I am having a bad day at the wheel or I carve a bit too deeply, it immediately gets dropped in the bucket without hesitation, and eventually, it will be reincarnated into a better pot.

This is the ideal situation, because only a bit of your time is sacrificed, and even then, you've still grown in your skills through practice. There are, however, always a few pieces that make it through the final firing that I am really not happy with. I keep a hammer and bin in the studio for those. It does get easier after those first few pots have been destroyed, and I have come to enjoy the cathartic nature of smashing pottery and regaining control over the work.



I have always had a huge interest in history and spent a good portion of my time at university working in archaeology, so I have seen a lot of potsherds. My decision to save all my broken pottery and put them to use in my garden as mulch around the studio was inspired by that experience and seeing sites littered with terracotta fragments in Crete. In addition to that, I have great respect for outsider art, especially those roadside environments which often feature mosaics of found objects, and that also influenced my desire to turn what others may consider waste into something useful and beautiful. An appreciation of vanitas and impermanence also transforms a broken vessel into a subtle meditation on the nature of life. Ultimately, you cannot hold onto anything forever. Although ceramic is a strong and durable material that will last millennia, pots are fragile and they break. It's important to accept this at the start and to embrace it.

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The act of creation is just
as important as the finished piece,

and all of the skills and ideas that go into making a pot or sculpture are continually improving and evolving. The cultivation of that knowledge is at the heart of being an artist, more than any individual piece.

observe. accept. release. transform.
yung pueblo

OUR CLASSES & WHY

Pottery & Chill

Our original class where The Pottery Studio emerged from. These sessions are just as much a wonderful starting point for first-timers as they are an opportunity to trust the process for the most experienced potter. Pottery & Chill is a process of learning, of exploring, of dropping into the present and of getting your hands covered in clay. When was the last time you played? In this class, three methods are walked through, giving anyone the ability to create almost anything. You are given an invitation to embrace stillness. To take in the senses and watch your vision develop a life of its own.

Clay & Wine

We know the most creative ideas come after a glass of wine; when you've cast aside any limiting beliefs holding you back and when you're open to letting the ideas flow. These classes follow our beloved Pottery & Chill sessions, working through an array of hand-building techniques, where you can smooth out the cracks and get your hands dirty.

Sunday Wine Down

Sundays are me-days. A day of rest, of tucking your sheets in for the week ahead and doing something to serve you. A chance to wind down before the week ahead. At The Pottery Studio, we offer the most grounded Sunday session on the Coast, where the reward is less mind-numbing and more present.

Beginner Wheel Throwing

For those who wish to explore the meditative state of making mud go in circles, our beginner wheel classes are an opportunity to let the stresses of the day subside and learn to stretch, squeeze and squash shapes together. Guided by our studio manager Gaby, you are invited to explore the process and presence needed to create your vessels. Prepare to let go of any expectations or attachment and get completely covered in clay. Frustrations and comparisons are a natural part of throwing, but by learning to acknowledge these emotions, we find ourselves in peace, perhaps with pots for days.

Wheel & Wine

In comparison to the day time wheel classes we run, these classes tend to be a bit more relaxed and free of self-criticism. It's funny how wine can do that. We always find that when people let go of the expectations they come into the class with (or that they hold themselves to), they have a better experience regardless of what they make. The wine helps break the ice and any nerves people have trying a new skill, but once this initial barrier is broken it is easier for people to manage these emotions with their breath in all classes thereafter. We prefer to encourage the breath to calm you rather than alcohol.

Glazing Session

Our glazing sessions are the second, sometimes forgotten part of the pottery process. This class is an opportunity to return to the process, to return to your work and to return to creativity. Experiment with colours, textures, shapes and firing techniques. Two weeks after your work, hand-built or wheel-thrown, heads to the kiln, it will be awaiting your inspired touch. Play with the colours to dress your vessel. As a technicality, your glaze is as functional as it is pretty. The glasslike glaze waterproofs and seals your clay, making it practical for a plant, a platter or a pet bowl. There is always an opportunity for the unexpected to happen, even for the most experienced potters.

Pre-Loved Glazing

While most of our students love to be involved in the process from start to finish, some of the works are abandoned after the first firing. As an ever-growing hub of creativity, stillness and inspiration, there is only so much space on our studio shelves to hold the pieces. After two months, any works that have not been claimed go into the donations for you to glaze. If painting is more up your alley, or you see something that takes your fancy, take this as your invitation to breathe new life into a forgotten work of art. These classes follow the same principles as our Glazing Sessions, but in the spirit of sustainability, aim to reduce, reuse and recycle.

School Holiday Classes

The perfect peaceful activity to inspire creativity, play and presence in smaller people. Our school holiday classes are for both parts of the pottery process. Our first class offers the basics of hand-building; pinch, slab and coil. It's somewhat like play-dough, but children can create a treasure forever. When they return to glaze, there is an invitation to use colours and textures to brighten up their work. It's mindfulness for tiny minds. Please note: children under 8 must be accompanied by an adult.

Private Bookings

You may be searching for a hen's party with a difference, or a team-building activity where your workmates can get to know each other outside of the usual 9-5. Perhaps there's a bunch of old friends looking to catch up over some clay and wine, or you're surprising your best friend for their birthday. There's an abundance of reasons to be a little selfish and want the studio for yourself. The Pottery Studio now offers the space for private bookings, where you and your loved ones can come to learn, create and simply unwind in the process.

Send an email to hello@thepotterystudio.com.au for more information.



Although there is noise all around

There is silence too

Small pocket of rest



