



FINDING YOUR OWN PATH CAN LEAD FULL CIRCLE

Jemerick Art Pottery

SHUNNING PRODUCTION WORK for individual craftsmanship is at the heart of the Arts and Crafts movement. Finding your own path is also part of living the Craftsman lifestyle, and Steve Frederick and Cherie Jemsek of Jemerick Art Pottery know a lot about that. They create unique, hand-crafted pottery in their Saugerties, N.Y., studio.

Although their paths to pottery led them from different places—Steve studied English literature and Cherie was an art teacher—they blended their love of nature with the Craftsman lifestyle to create Jemerick Studios. Steve found his direction when he discovered pottery and trained at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine, under Mutsuo Yanaginara and Jack Troy. Cherie found herself inclined to become an inde-



pendent artist rather than an art teacher after rekindling her friendship with Steve.

“I was intrigued by Steve’s pottery and his ability to be creative and make a living of a sort selling what he made,” she says. Disillusioned with teaching and school, she decided to drop out of a master’s program and work with Steve as an artist. While he worked as a studio potter, she made jewelry boxes and small pieces. “At that time the whole craft-fair phenomenon was happening. You could be a part of these craft shows and sales for next to nothing. It allowed people to participate with very low overhead.”

The studio pottery movement rejected mass production, instead embracing small pottery studios crafting individual pieces of functional stoneware—an ethos similar to that of the Arts and Crafts movement. “We were also very much into building everything ourselves, including forms, ovens, etc.,” says Cherie.

Steve’s participation in a “Clay Molds Workshop” in Kohler, Wis., with Richard Knotkin and Jack Earl allowed him to incorporate cast and assembled sculptural pieces into his repertoire. These new skills added a new direction to his work. “After the clay molds workshop, we were able to incorporate mold building and make our own glazes and colored porcelain,” he says. “This moved my work in a more modern direction.”

A series of fortunate opportunities eventually led them to Saugerties, N.Y., on the Hudson River 95 miles north of New York City and 10 miles west of Woodstock, where Steve met antiques collector and dealer Art Accardi.





“Art specialized in Arts and Crafts pottery. He showed me samples, and he had an extensive library. I borrowed some books to study, and I was particularly taken by the works of Teco and Grueby.” Accardi told Steve and Cherie that Arts and Crafts pottery was an up-and-coming market because of the movement’s 100-year anniversary.

Their techniques and skills gave them the foundation to move in a new direction, and they embraced the opportunity. Steve decided to make a few pieces in the Grueby style. Accardi displayed the pieces at Grove Park in 1997 and received a great response, prompting him to sell Jemerick pieces through his company, The Arts and Clay Company. “For a time, we designed and produced about 95 percent of the ceramics for the Arts and Clay Company,” says Steve.



But Accardi favored traditional reproductions, while Steve and Cherie were interested in showing their own ideas in new lines at fine-art fairs. It was during the American Craft Council show in Baltimore that a representative from the Metropolitan Museum of Art approached Cherie. “I took her card and decided to send a small sample of our work with a Jemerick card to her when I returned to the studio.”

The idea paid off. The Met picked two pieces from Steve and Cherie’s Classic series to include in their catalog. But after two years of production work, they realized they missed their roots.

“We believed in the studio-pottery philosophy and we wanted to make individual pieces more than production pieces,” Steve says. “We were relieved when the catalog orders ended but appreciated that it helped us keep our heads above water during the recession.”



Today, Steve and Cherie have returned to producing Arts and Crafts-inspired pieces in the studio-pottery tradition. Calling on more than 40 years of experience, they develop pieces focused on capturing the essence of the Arts and Crafts movement. Their pieces are both interpretations of traditional pieces and reflections of their personal styles and skills. All of their pottery is hand thrown on a wheel from stoneware clay and sculpted by the artists before being fired to cone 7 (2,200 °F) in an electric kiln. Each piece carries the artists’ mark.

Their journey has come full circle. They forged their own artistic path and are educating people unfamiliar with Arts and Crafts style through their artistic vision.

Jemerick Art Pottery
845 246-6952
jemerickartpottery.com