

**Inside the Artist -  
Cristina Pellechio  
April 2015**



**How did you get started in this artist endeavor of a visual artist? What has been your journey? What brought you to the place where you thought you wanted to do this?**

I feel fortunate to be able to be on this path as an artist, and my time spent in the studio is a gift. It really is. So to have the opportunity to keep manifesting this part of me up to this point, I feel really fortunate.

I knew at a really young age that I would really love to be an artist. I think that's a really natural ..... "Oh, I want to be an artist," but it seemed like my life kept taking me in that direction; it wasn't even that I was conscious about it at times. It just kept on circling back to it, so my path has been hardly straight.

I've always been involved in painting. When I was younger I did a lot of painting and a good deal of photography (which I love!). My Dad taught me how to use a 35 mm camera, so I had so much fun, dabbling in photography. Then when I was in college (UNH) I took my first photography class and ended up getting a minor in photography. I did a lot of documentary work in Boston. And loved it. I would drive down to the city and find myself there, somewhere, doing something. I did a project down there with the homeless, and another project on an old Italian barber in the North End, and it was so fun. I loved it!

I lived in so many different places until I found myself in Vermont. I was talking to someone who was working at the glass blowing studio in Waterbury, and they said they were taking a class from School House Pottery on the Moscow Road in Stowe (now Seminary Arts in Waterbury Center). And that's how I met Mame (McKee). And took a class with her and I fell in love with clay. I had never done anything with clay before but the next thing I know, I'm taking an apprentice with her--with the most amazing teacher that I probably have ever had. Mame McKee - she's amazing. And I kept at it.

In the meantime, I had a slew of other jobs. I have a joke with

my daughter about how many different positions I've held in my life...but I think that's part of being an artist. It's not a straight path. At all.

So I just kept at the clay and eventually my husband, Job, and I moved to Delaware and I got a position at a place called "The Clay Studio" in Philadelphia. I think that was a turning point for me because it's a facility that has all these amazing ceramic artists who are very committed to their craft/art and got me thinking that I could really do this as a profession. And that's when I made the switch. When I became pregnant with my daughter (2002), we didn't want to live there and have our baby. So five months pregnant, no jobs we just hit the road back to Vermont and figured it out. It was pretty cool.



**What most inspires your work right now? What are the criteria, the guide to choosing your creative projects?**

Nature has a huge influence in my work...maybe that's why there are so many artists in Vermont, because we are so inspired by our surroundings, and our love of nature. And within that context, I love pattern, and repetition, and detail, which you find in nature. I often get asked, "How did you do that? It must have taken you so long!" And it will be like 500 dots on something. For me it's a meditation, I love the repetition of it. It gets me in a state where I have a clear mind and I don't think about how long it's taking; it's just part of being in the moment. And letting go.

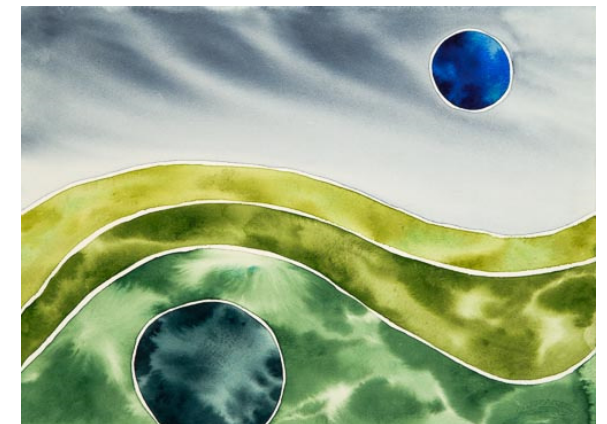
Growing up on the ocean (in Rhode Island) I think there is a lot of that in my work. So there's always a lot of flow, movement,

and rhythm in my work. So that's a big influence on me even though I now live inland; I feel like the ocean comes out in a lot of my work.

I'll be walking on the beach and I'll find a pile of beautiful white stones and think how can incorporate them into a ceramic piece? What I like doing with ceramics is that I can make it a three dimensional painting. So I have this medium that allows me to be more textural than I can probably be with just a canvas, but I still will incorporate all the color and texture that I love and that ceramics allows you to achieve.

Working in ceramics takes a long time: I'll make it and dry it and put it in the kiln, and then it will come out and it's time to glaze. I think a lot of people don't realize that when you're glazing ceramics, the color you put down on it and then gets fired is completely different. For example, you could be painting with a rust colored glaze but then you fire it and it turns out to be blue. It can be challenging. That's what's nice about ceramics - there's a lot of letting go. There's so much you can't control. The minute you put that in the kiln it's really up to the Kiln Gods to decide how that's going to come out. It forces me to put it in the kiln and say "it's going to be what it's going to be"- and be okay with that. But when I need to feel a little more structure in my life, then I might paint. Sometimes I need to see that the red is the red and the blue is the blue. So it's an opportunity to switch it up to keep my imagination and my brain stimulated.

Color: absolutely; love it; I can't get enough of it. If I look out the window I love the palette that I see but when I'm working, I just want to saturate it with color. Because it just seems to be what my soul wants and needs. Color is a big part of it too.



I think one of the hardest things about being an artist in Vermont and in this community is that you're so insulated unless you really reach out and find those people in your community. It's really a solitary existence. It's one of my biggest challenges. There's so many people that are capable and have so much insight and that could be really helpful to me as an artist...these fantastic creative people are out there, but my paths just don't cross with them that often. Part of it is my own doing. But I also feel like I would like to have more of these dialogues, and conversations, and feedback on my work - in person.

**What has been the biggest thing/event to influence your work? Do you have any artistic heroes, ceramic or otherwise?**

I love Andrew Goldworthy. I think he teaches us all an important lesson to be in the here and the now because his art is so transient and impermanent. But also his use of pattern, repetition and color is right up my alley. I think he is quite astonishing.



As far as my own path and what's influenced me, I think it has to do with all the places that I've lived. I been fortunate enough to live in a lot of different places and to travel quite a bit and I think you take those experiences with you and they form who you are and an appreciation for all those different environments. I'm sure

they have all come out at one time or another in the work; whether it's the color, or the feel or the flow of the places.

And then I think becoming a mother has influenced my work, I can't imagine that it hasn't. The fact that I can still work and raise my children is awesome, not easy, but it has definitely made me a different person, a stronger person, a better person. I'm not sure visually how it's manifested in my work, but I know that in terms of how I approach my work, it has changed.



**Tell us about activities you enjoy outside of making art.**

I love to be outdoors. I love traveling; it's a passion in our family. I love spending time with family, not just my nuclear family but also my extended family, who live out of state. And I hate to sound so stereotypical, but I love to ski, run and be physical.

**What are you reading right now?**

Typically I'm a voracious reader and I love to read. But I'm laughing, because I haven't been able to pick up a book and even start it for like, the last 4 or 5 months, which for me is such a big deal. I'm having a hard time beginning and ending things right now. So what I'm reading right now is short stories because I can get through them. I typically get a collection that I find at library sales or a book sales and I'll pick them up. I love fiction, anything by Richard Russo or John Irving, these quirky funky writers who put this spin on small town New England. They make me laugh. Visually, any book by Andy Goldworthy; I can flip through his books forever. Typically I love to read fiction, but not lately. Literally there are 4 or 5 books on my nightstand, barely started.

**What's next for you?**

I am looking forward to the longer days. I seem to really need

the light, not only for my soul, but for my art. It's literally brighter and I can see things so much better. And it's inspiring. In the summer I typically don't get as much done because I'm home with my daughters. But this year my daughter started kindergarten so I'm in this new phase where I'm going to have more time in my studio than I've had in a very long time. I'm really excited, if not a little intimidated because it's a daunting task ahead of me when I think about all the time I have in a day to create and what will I do with it?

I'm looking forward to starting some larger scale projects. I've done a lot of smaller works in the past few years so I'd like to start working on something larger scale. Like maybe a public art installation somewhere. Perhaps some commissions. I'd like to see what happens when the art gets physically bigger.

I'm continuing to paint and enjoying that as well. I have a piece that's going in a show in California next month. I'm excited about that. So I try to get my work out of the state quite a bit. I'll enter shows or look for gallery representation so I get my work moving. It's great to make, but I don't feel like it really fulfills its purpose until it seen. And I've had a lot of work that's been unseen. I'd really like to get it out there. I don't need to hang onto it. I used to not want to part with my art, but now it's more about the making. Seeing that it brings other people joy is a great gift for me. So I'd like to share the joy more. It's time. Let's move it forward.

