

**Inside the Artist -
Jeremy Ayers
April 2016**



Tell us about your journey in art / as an artist.

My Dad was a wedding photographer. When I was a teenager, he was an English teacher and ran the school yearbook. At a time when film was expensive, I was lucky to have access to his school's equipment. My Dad gave me the freedom to use as much as I needed and he processed my photographs without judgement. I started by taking pictures of myself and my skateboarding friends and after a while, I began to see life through the black frame of the camera. It developed the way I came to see all my work. From the age of 13-14, I had that freedom and access. In high school, I became the yearbook photographer and spent most of high school in the dark room.

I had my parents blessing and support to go to art school and I went in thinking that I would become a photographer or a photo journalist. In my first year, I took Intro to Photography and Intro to Ceramics. My 18-19 year old self was searching for who and what I wanted to be and I really identified with ceramics after that first class. I had a knack and I fell in love with being a potter. It was very anti-establishment...staying up all night to watch over an outdoor kiln. In college I really felt pressure to decide who and what I wanted to be. I decided to do what I like and my parents were very supportive of it. I'm really thankful to them for letting me follow my passion and not pressure me to go into a career that would just pay the bills.



I earned my Fine Arts degree in Sculpture at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in 1998. I focused on ceramics. Since ceramics are so small scale, I was able to start selling work in college. I felt like I had an advantage over my friends who were trying to sell \$300 paintings at age 20. Because I could sell a piece for \$20, I could start selling from the beginning.

Post college, I did all sorts of jobs, but I always had some sort of studio space. I always kept making art and I never stopped, even after working all week. I kept at making art, whether it was part-time or full-time. I believe that was a major advantage. There have been a few life things that have gotten in the way, but I have never really stopped making art.



Now at 41, I have the joy of being a mature artist. I'm not searching anymore. I know what my artwork is about. I am still exploring, but I am also comfortable and I enjoy it. I remember having an idea and not being able to execute it and I don't struggle with this anymore. The downside to this is that it becomes easier to paint yourself into a corner. I've been doing the same thing now for a couple of years and am just now making a shift. Balancing the expectation that my work should line up with what I have been doing while trying to push in new directions.

What is the medium you most like to work with/in? What draws you to this medium? What do you like about your materials?

I am a potter so clay is always my medium. I am comfortable with most art mediums, but I am not a drawer or painter by trade. I have taught them all, so I am comfortable with them. I've taught lots of people who, like me, fall in love once they touch clay. Clay has an immediacy to it that is really clear. You pinch it

and it changes. You can stick pieces together (with the right technique) and they stay stuck together.

Ceramics is an art of multiples. It creates a nice range with lots of chances to do well. This morning I threw 6 plates. I know that two will come out just right, one not quite right and three, somewhere in the middle. There is always a chance to do better. With maturity, I've learned to keep everything I make.

Every pot carries with it what you didn't get before. Since it is a medium of multiples, you take it with you as a collection of experience from every other pot that has come before. I can't picture myself doing any other medium. Even if I were to go back to teaching full-time, I will always do clay.

NOTE: Jeremy currently teaches at St. Michael's College in the art and graduate education departments. He is also an instructor at Burlington City Arts.

What most inspires your work - Has there been anything that has been life changing or that has influenced your practice?

The practice of working is what is most inspiring to me. The more I work the more ideas I have. Work inspires work. My work is not narrative or conceptual really (although there is more narrative in some of my recent work). My work is about pattern and line and how forms and patterns relate. Looking at the ceramic vessel and how patterns lie on them. I make enlivened pots that are pattern heavy...there is a lot going on. I've rejected color in my more recent work, away from the bright rainbow colors toward a more mono-chromatic or black and white palette. Mono-chromatic interests me. Color is about the contrast between the glaze and the clay. I've been doing work where I am showing the clay, exposing it and contrasting it next to the glaze. My work is about interplay; patterns over form. That excites me. Some patterns I do over and over again and some I experiment with. The language of pattern and line enlivens my work.



What blogs or books are you reading or would recommend?

Life as an artist is quite solitary. I work alone so there is lots of listening time and I listen to lots of music. Every Friday, when albums are released, I am out there looking for what is new. I spend time on music blogs like Stereogum and BrooklynVegan where people write about new music.

There's not much time for pleasure reading since having kids. I do love *A Potters Workbook* by Clary Illin. It is about making and teaching pottery making and is a book I always go back to.



Visit Jeremy at his new studio on Elm Street in Downtown Waterbury (opened October 2015). It is in his grandfather's carriage barn and is open to the community Tuesday through Saturday 12-5 pm.

“I’ve waited a long time for a studio like this one. It took lots of planning and has an attached shop. It’s great to have the studio and shop side by side. I think it tells the whole story. Visitors can see the pieces in process and then see the finished work so they can envision it in their own homes/spaces. I feel blessed; I’ve never had such an intentional studio space before.”