

THE CREATIVE CURRENT

Dirty Hands, Creative Play and the Clay Creations of Kelly Hastings



Artist Kelly Hastings.

“Art is the only way to run away without leaving home” Twyla Tharp

By Vanessa Coplan

Meet Kelly Hastings. Kelly is an OOS resident who lives in a beautiful, artfully designed and whimsically decorated home. Antique wood pieces, art, and well-loved and lived in spaces permeate the home. Kelly and husband Al raised their three now-grown boys in this house. They live there now with their dog Barney.

Kelly works as a Strategy and Governance Advisor for Ottawa Community Housing. In Kelly’s words, “I read, write and give presentations, it’s all about words, and has to be of a certain caliber.” What she loves about clay building is that she can get her fingers dirty. It isn’t about how good it is, there is no deadline involved. She can make a pot and squash it if she doesn’t like it. It is about pleasing herself before anyone else.

I interviewed Kelly while she was bustling around her busy kitchen preparing supper for the family. Two of her three sons stopped in for an impromptu visit during our conversation, while one of their dogs was ambling her way through the house. The fridge door opened and closed many

times. And our discussions continued past the time we planned to spend together in her kitchen that day.

It was entirely fitting to be speaking with Kelly about her creative pursuits while she was cooking; multitasking is the norm for so many of us. Kelly explained to me that her earliest clay pursuits happened when her eldest was a baby. However, as the demands of family life ensued Kelly found that she had little time and energy to pursue interests outside of her domestic sphere. So, Kelly channeled those creative drives into her home in

continue to feel motivated to engage in creative acts. In psychology what is called a flow state or, colloquially, as, being in the zone. The suspension of time and space, being and experiencing the enjoyment of being in that focused, mindful and attentive space. Experiencing ‘flow’ is I think essential for a human’s well being.

Kelly’s work has moved from earlier pieces such as plates and teapots that explore texture and form, to more recent creations such as mugs that are glazed and painted with images of goddesses. When Kelly reflected on the importance of



A new goddess teapot and cup by Kelly Hastings.

PHOTOS BY ALLAN HIRSCH

the form of cooking and presentation. According to Kelly, “it was always about food and making it good and fun and interesting for my kids, my family and friends... how I would present it... the coulis over the soup.” But in more recent years, Kelly continued “my idea of creativity has changed ... I’m not that interested in cooking anymore. I’d rather let Al cook and I go upstairs and play with my clay!”

Kelly describes her reconnection to clay in the following way, “after our kids moved out, my husband and I were rebuilding our lives together. My husband had his music and I wanted something for myself.” Now that she has rediscovered and pursued her love of hand building with clay Kelly says, “I can do it for hours. I don’t even know how much time has passed. When I am in my studio upstairs I can work for hours and forget about everything else.”

Kelly is describing what many creative types feel when they are working and, why, in part, they

working with clay in her life her she said, “I think (it) has helped me redefine myself as more than a mom, friend, employee, wife.”

I may even go so far as to say that working with the new Goddess imagery has contributed to that sense of empowerment and (re) claiming of her self.

This is the first of a series of articles on creative pursuits.

Vanessa Coplan is an artist, art teacher, creative coach and a resident of OOS.

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