



This page:  
Oona sitting on top of  
a new delivery of clay  
Photo: Charlie De Deyne

Opposite page:  
**Tina Wheatley**  
*Washerwoman*, 2024  
handbuilt porcelain  
with crocheted yarn  
and burnout technique  
h.30cm, photo: artist

## RAISING KIDS AND MAKING POTS

*This has been the year I thought about parenthood the most. I am a woman in her mid-30s, and watching my circle of friends becoming parents in the last few years, I pondered the balance of parenthood and having a ceramic practice. I thought about the rising cost of living and the many juggles required of an artist. I reflected on my experience growing up with a big extended family, all working in our small family-run factory; where my parents worked was my childhood playground. I remember sitting in the office after school, doing homework and reading books. I remember sitting on a forklift with dad, zooming around the factory. I remember going into the rice field and playing with mud after harvest season.*

*This article was intended to give our ceramic community an opportunity to share the ups and downs of being a parent while managing their art practice. I believe in the power of storytelling for building a stronger community. Personally, reading everyone's stories on this subject has been insightful for me to process my own complicated feelings on the subject. I am grateful to everyone who has taken the time to respond to the open call. For this print article, we selected just some of the many responses we received; every submission can be read online via the QR code at the end of the article.*

Ruby Yu-Lu Yeh

### TINA WHEATLEY (NSW)

I combine knitting and crochet with handbuilding clay, as these two methods of craft production allow me to be creative whilst also caring for my family. This is not new among women: in four out of five traditional societies, women organised their time for making pots between care for their families and other forms of work, allowing food to be cooked so it could nourish children and the elderly.<sup>1</sup> In Victorian times, textile work was a prime source of income for women. Portable and creating little or no mess, yarn crafts are easy to pick up and put down quickly when parenting duties arise.

As a result of combining these methods, I have been able to work on my yarn sculptures in waiting rooms for doctors, optometrists, psychologists, dentists, and surgeons, in hospitals, in the car, on the sporting sideline, waiting for children to get off the train, off the bus, or come out of the school gate. I have celebrated the achievements of my children, supported my family through illness, surgery, and recovery, and grieved for those I have cherished. Like many women before me, all these moments in time have been punctuated by the language of craft and counting. And through capturing these seconds in porcelain, the strength and fragility of these moments are highlighted and celebrated.

<sup>1</sup> Moira Vincentelli, *Women and Ceramics: Gendered Vessels*, Manchester University Press, 2000, p.45

[tinawheatley.com](http://tinawheatley.com)

### HYEYOUN SHIN (QLD)

A ceramic artist is one of the best possible careers for a mother with children. With just a small space and a few tools, you can work from home as much as you want, and you can work intermittently without being constrained by time. The dining table is where I started my business. But of course, it is not as easy as it sounds.

My days used to be like this: packing lunch for kids, driving them to school, quick grocery shopping, going back home, starting the washing machine, washing the dishes, tidying up the house, then working with clay, back to hanging out the laundry and back to clay, eating a light lunch, shoulder exercising, back to clay, school pick up time, making snacks for kids, back to clay, take down the laundry, cooking dinner for the family and finally back to clay again! Chaos and order coexist.





There are many creative artists, but developing that talent into a sustainable business is not easy. As the saying goes, despair makes the best artists. I believe that the daily grind of raising a family and caring for children can be a driving force that helps maintain and grow the business.

**Instagram: @illyswall**

**PHILIPPA A TAYLOR (VIC)**

The impending birth of my second child was the catalyst to reconnect with my clay practice, a pathway I had left in the 1990s when opportunities for an emerging potter with postgraduate qualifications were rare. The decision to return was purely emotive. I felt like something was missing from my life, and I wanted my children to be surrounded by the life of a maker. The work I have made over the past ten years has been dictated by time. Initially, I created small porcelain pieces that a fellow mother-potter kindly fired for me. As my children grew, I was able to return to the wheel and slowly resurrect my early

throwing skills. I have juggled my role as a parent to my children with the commitment to my practice, each pulling upon me and demanding my attention and time. I nurture both by accepting limitations and finding the space in between. To ensure momentum this year, I omitted the process of turning my forms. I now throw, alter, and decorate on the bat, and all work is finished and left to dry in one sitting. It was a liberating move.

**Instagram: @philippataylor**

1 **Hyeyoun Shin**, *illy's wall* doll vases, handbuilt porcelain, tallest h.8cm  
Photo: Joseph Kim

2 Elin posing with her mother's pots at McClelland Design Store, Langwarrin smiling because she was bribed with Hungry Jacks; photo: Philippa A Taylor

3 Tamara Pottier with son in arms; photo: Hugo Pottier



**TAMARA POTTIER (NSW)**

My heart is pulled in many directions. As a mother, a wife, and an artist, the complexities of these roles are profound. My creative drive is deep, as is my desire to uphold my family's legacy. My children and husband are my greatest supporters – without them, I wouldn't be the artist I am today. However, time and energy are limited. I adore my children but often feel frustrated, balancing my creative work with parenting. I steal moments to work with clay, savouring my creativity while grappling with guilt. My children sometimes resent my absences but admire my work. This conflict is evident in my art, where I often reflect on my experiences as a mother. My children even contribute by painting on my creations, feeling involved in my art. Our home is filled with art, and despite occasional rough play, they understand the importance of caring for it. I once took on a challenging café commission with a toddler and a primary schooler, which was financially draining due to time and mistakes. Ceramics, combined with parenting, is incredibly demanding. I tell my students that while it's mostly challenging, the inspiring moments make it worthwhile. Ceramics centres me, but the pull in multiple directions is a heavy load.

**Instagram: @tamarapottier\_artist**

### RUBY PILVEN (VIC)

I grew up immersed in the world of ceramics, spending countless hours in my parents' studio in Ross Creek. My parents, Peter Pilven and Janine Ronaldson, seamlessly balanced their creative work with raising a family. I was actively involved from a young age – pugging clay, scraping down bats, helping at markets, attending exhibitions, and even making my own pots. I can still picture my dad smiling, watching on as I carefully navigated the studio on my scooter. When visiting friends' homes, my first question was often, "where's the kiln?"

As I entered parenthood, I worried about maintaining my productivity. However, I soon found myself adopting my mum's approach. I worked with baby monitors on, planned my tasks meticulously, and engaged Lindsay with activities like crayons and clay. I worked during Lindsay's naps and remained flexible, setting work aside when necessary. This experience led me to reassess my work habits and adapt my business model to suit my new life better.

Pregnancy sparked bursts of creativity, driving me to explore new ideas. Family and ceramics are equally important to me, and I hope my children will one day share this passion, continuing the legacy into a third generation.

**Instagram: @rubypilven\_ceramics**

Lindsay next to a board of earrings by Ruby Pilven, 2022  
Photo: Ruby Pilven



### BILL POWELL (QLD)

I have always been a potter; I know no other lifestyle. I wasn't always a father, but there were many years when I needed to combine the two and do it on my own with two boys and two girls, the youngest being five and the oldest 12. This was no walk in the park. Potting full-time and selling at markets on weekends required a level of time management that had to account for the timing discipline working with clay demands. I couldn't support us with just studio work alone, I needed the condensed form of income generation that production throwing provided. Each morning meant getting kids fed, ready and delivered to two schools, then heading up the mountain to throw 300kg of clay into water filters, then back down by 3pm to do pickups. After-school care was a godsend. So are white goods; if only one child hated that day's dinner, that was a win. Then putting the kids into bed by 8.30pm after which I was either back out to the studio at 9pm or sometimes I simply collapsed and prepared to do it all again the next day. Those days taught me resilience and a profound admiration for single parents and what it takes to raise a child, let alone three. Raising four kids as a single parent while potting full-time? Well, that was wild, but I did it, and I am proud of my kids. Funnily enough, I think they have turned out OK.

**ceramx.com.au**

### RONÉL KOEN (WA)

I've navigated my unique path as an older mum and a migrant without family support. In midlife, I transitioned from advertising to running a small ceramic studio in Perth – a significant career change. This shift led to immense personal growth and helped me improve my parenting; I rediscovered myself – a journey I hope will inspire my daughter.

Motherhood has not just influenced but profoundly reshaped my relationship with creativity. Before becoming a parent, I felt pressured to succeed and achieve, which hindered my ability to create for the joy of creating. Being a parent and running a ceramic practice changed that. I now pick my creative battles carefully and realise that everything in life is transient, short-lived, and requires flexibility. This has liberated me to see creativity not just as a way to make money, but as a process of self-expression and exploration.

Due to my parenting responsibilities and school hours, I have limited time. To maximise time, I established a clear creative identity and style from the outset. This has helped me be mindful of what I create and how I create it, ensuring that everything I make is sustainable, impactful, and imbued with a sense of purpose.

**Instagram: @swaloceramics**

### FRANCESCA GERONIMO (WA)

Entering my 30s as a structural civil engineer, I never imagined a life surrounded by children. I had been diagnosed with stage 4 endometriosis, and doctors said parenthood was unlikely. But life had other plans. Today, I'm a single mum of two small boys – one toddler and a four-month-old baby; and I'm a full-time potter and happier than ever. My children inspire me, and my craft

provides a sense of accomplishment. My baby naps in his bouncer or watches me create pieces while my toddler mimics my processes. I wear my baby while working, and during feedings, I tackle admin tasks and customer service. I'm mastering the art of multitasking, fuelled by love and determination. I'm proud of the strong, independent woman I've become, building a life against all odds. I'm setting an example for my children, showing them that pursuing dreams requires effort and perseverance but is achievable. As I shape clay into art, I also shape a life of purpose. This decade may have started with uncertainty, but it's ending with wonder, gratitude, and a sense of fulfilment. I'm exactly where I'm meant to be, surrounded by love, clay, and possibility.

[frasc ceramics.com](https://frasc ceramics.com)

### NIKKI DOWDELL (SA)

My experience of balancing my ceramics practice and my role as a parent has been challenging at times, but ultimately a wonderful and rewarding experience. The process of creating work and raising children share similarities in that both demand our time and attention in order to develop their greatest potential, providing valuable lessons along the way. Prioritising the needs of my daughter and ensuring a happy and healthy future for her is my primary focus. As my partner and I have no practical familial support, the flexibility afforded by being self-employed has been to our benefit, but we've had to make many sacrifices and cultivate a level of discipline to make it all work. Some aspects of my practice have taken a back seat over the years as I've learned to focus on what I can realistically achieve with my limited studio hours. When I'm exhausted or under pressure, I remind myself that change is inevitable, and everything is temporary. The day will come when my daughter won't need me to take her to school, sports, parties, playdates, etc. and our fun, creative 'clay play' days in the studio will become less frequent. I feel immense gratitude and savour these moments while they last.

Instagram: [@nikkidowdellceramics](https://www.instagram.com/nikkidowdellceramics)

### KATIA CARLETTI (SA)

I have two boys aged six and two and a half. I have always found a way to keep up my practice amongst the very high demands of parenting young children. In the early days of one baby, I would rush down the hall to my studio as soon as he was down for a nap. With two kids it has become trickier, but the mix of school, my partner, and grandparents has meant it still gets done, albeit slowly. The one thing that has really allowed me to keep making has been the way I make – everything is handbuilt, and so can be covered in plastic at a moment's notice to make a snack, find a toy, rush to a baby awake from a sleep. I love the flexibility of my work and how it can be so intertwined with family life. It would have been easy to put my work aside and focus wholly on my children, but I need to keep going for me. The urge to create and use my hands and the need to complete something is very strong. Parenting is so unending, but the making cycle offers a full stop when the work comes out of the kiln; and that sense of accomplishment knowing something is 'done' is very grounding.

Instagram: [@katiacarletti](https://www.instagram.com/katiacarletti)



1 Francesca Geronimo with second son playing and watching mum painting a coral vase in the studio  
Photo: courtesy Francesca Geronimo  
2 Isabella Edwards, *Spring Walk* 2023, wheelthrown porcelain, hand painted stains and ceramic oxides glaze, h.32cm, photo: artist  
3 Maya Marillanca in the studio 2024, photo: Nikki Dowdell  
4 Katia Carletti in the studio with baby Jude, 2022  
Photo: Melissa Boulden



### ISABELLA EDWARDS (NSW)

When my son was born, my approach to making *completely* changed – I wasn't able to create the way I had previously. My son couldn't stand being put down and would only nap while held. I wasn't prepared for always having my hands full. Simultaneously, I was overflowing with ideas, but the demands of being a new mum meant I had no time to make. From time to time, my husband would take our son so I could have some solid studio time. When he returned to work, I would have our son nap in the baby carrier so I could paint while he slept. I found other tricks along the way: utilising my local pool's crèche to watch my son while I painted on bisque ware at the café, or using the time when he's napping in my arms to manage my social media. I learnt the true value of time in early motherhood. Becoming a mum has limited my time but has made me a better artist because I am disciplined about how I spend it. I am more productive than ever these days, and I have my son to thank for that.

Instagram: @isabella.edwards.artist

### CHARLIE DE DEYNE (QLD)

I am a single mother with a two-year-old daughter and I run a business in ceramics with my mother Mieke. We kept it in the mother-and-daughter theme! I create ceramic work with my mum under the collaborative name Mas & Miek, and we run two teaching studios in Brisbane called Mas & Miek Ceramic House. At first, I found it very hard to balance running a business of that size, teaching a few times a week, with being able to still make my own work, all whilst raising a baby on my own. But the fact that I do it with my mother makes it much easier and 100 times more enjoyable. The studio is a second home for my daughter, Oona. She knows everyone here, and we always go to the studio together on my days off for a cappuccino and a baby chino together. For the first year of my daughter's life, I found it very hard to prioritise my own practice. With the mental load of motherhood, it can feel near impossible to hush the millions of things running through your mind, sit on the wheel and allow time and space to be creative. If you are currently in this new baby phase, please be gentle with yourself! It will calm down, and your clay will always be there waiting for you when you are ready.

Instagram: @the\_ceramic\_house

### GREER ARNOTT (VIC)

*Don't touch that!* is probably the most common thing I say to my two kids in the studio (two and four years old). There are the challenges of safety, of losing products, of balancing time with my children, and of choosing to fill my creative cup. I've been working full-time as a potter for one year, and building a business has been challenging. Friends often say, "I don't know how you do this all Greer" and the answer is, I don't, I always must choose. Choose between making more money, having a clean house, or spending time with my children. I'm choosing to keep my business at a manageable level for the next three years until school starts for both kids. I choose a messy house that I frantically clean when visitors come over. It is so hard, there is a market for my work and I want to grow, to make more. But, these years with my beautiful children will not wait



Greer Arnett's son occupied in the studio painting slip on a bisqued pot  
Photo: Greer Arnett

as the ceramics will, I don't want to miss it for the world. Working from my studio at home has allowed me to vent the volcano of creativity while waiting until the day I can choose myself and filling my creativity cup.

Instagram: @greerarnottstudio



**KENDAL CROSSFIELD (QLD)**

I'm a mother to three children age ten, three, and two. I've been making ceramics for a decade, and within that period I've had lots of breaks as motherhood can be enough work for the hands most of the time. But I always gravitate back to the wheel. You can only handle so many tantrums without needing to breathe and throw a pot. In retrospect, those overwhelmed times that I've stepped back from ceramics have been a blessing in disguise. They have given me time to pause in my art and re-evaluate what truly inspires me within the world of ceramics. I have evolved both in my journey as a mother and simultaneously in my journey as a potter. Both influence each other. I have found the beauty in how both children and ceramics remind us of the importance of presence in each moment and step. I am grateful for the art of the juggle. It truly does make my pots feel more intentional and, most definitely, very 'slow-made'.

**Instagram:** @mudtongue

**ELIZABETH BELL (VIC)**

Balancing the demands of parenting two young children aged four and one, with running a full-time ceramics business, is a unique challenge, but one that brings immense fulfilment. Ceramics provides a calm oasis amidst the chaos, a creative escape, and mental rejuvenation. The hands-on nature of pottery dovetails seamlessly with the hands-on demands of parenting, both requiring patience, creativity, and adaptability. While managing a small business is the hardest I've ever worked, it also grants me the freedom to shape my schedule around my family, enabling me to be a more present parent. This blend of artistry and work not only supports my career but enriches my family life, making every moment more meaningful. Ceramics and parenting truly go hand in hand, each enriching the other in countless ways.

**Instagram:** @elizabethbellceramics



1 Kendal Crossfield of Mudtongue Pottery, 18 February 2022; photo: courtesy artist

2 Elizabeth Bell and her children in the studio; photo: Stephanie Rooney

3 Kate Stevens with Maeve; photo: artist

4 Lauri Anderson with pinch-pot cup in progress; photo: Julie Sisco



**KATE STEVENS (ACT)**

Making work looks different since my daughter Maeve arrived last year. She has been coming to the studio since before she was born, up until my belly made it too uncomfortable to throw. Once we emerged from the all-encompassing newborn days, I returned with Maeve in tow. I'd wrap her snugly in the carrier close to my body as I hand-built. Her gummy grin would beam at me from her bouncer while I threw. I'd pace up and down, urging her to nap, delirious from lack of sleep, patting and shushing, in order to forge out thirty precious minutes of work time. Working

with clay and becoming a parent gifts you a patience you didn't think you had. Both have taught me to slow down. Over the summer, Maeve became too big and mobile to come to the studio. I now carve out whatever time I can, unloading the kiln once she's asleep, and bringing pots home to finish on a chaotic, makeshift workspace. I love that Maeve is part of it. I was afraid to lose who I was when I became a parent, and it's been a treat to discover that motherhood has given me so much more. It's given me a drive that didn't exist before. I work more efficiently, I try new things, and I am no longer afraid to fail. It's a difficult balance, but being a mother and a potter feels like home.

**Instagram:** @katestevensceramics

**LAURI ANDERSON (QLD)**

The arrival of my second child was a major creative diversion. I longed for the days of uninterrupted potting, clay smudged on my face, hours whiled away making. Life became a whirlwind of tiny human needs, and my studio gathered dust. I refused to let my community pottery club membership lapse, but it felt like many moons would pass until I had 'time' again. I needed to make that time, and show my children my creative spark blended with self-care, which for me comes through having my hands buried in clay. It began with stolen moments during naptime, and as my self-confidence grew, has led to my taking part in the 2024 Stradbroke Island Arts Trail. I create ceramic art celebrating motherhood, and I look forward to seeing my little ones grow and create alongside me one day. My husband is my champion, some days giving me space to create to my heart's content (albeit with many baby feeding breaks). My day-to-day is very different now, but I haven't lost the sense of joy in the journey of ceramics.

**instagram:**@sensim.ceramics



**LAUREN SIEMONSMA (NSW)**

I am new to motherhood and still navigating how mother and potter coexist. My little one is four months old. The stage I am in involves Artie in the carrier and me adding a new move to all that I do in the studio – bouncing. Recently to my delight I discovered that the sound of sanding the bottoms of my ceramic pieces after glaze firing is quite similar to the sound of ‘shhhhhh’ – soothing my little one to sleep. I’m not sure when I will be able to make a mug from start to finish without worrying that he’s about to wake before I attach the handles. But all in all, it brings me so much pride that he’s with me, watching his mum follow her passion, and I hope it inspires him to follow his.

**Instagram: @ochre.thelabel**

**KYMBERLEY SANDERS (NSW)**

Balancing family life, a full-time teaching career, and an active ceramic art practice, has been a challenging yet rewarding journey. As the Head of Visual Arts, my days are filled with teaching and administrative responsibilities. Despite the demands, I am deeply committed to nurturing my creative practice and furthering my skills through TAFE courses, and at a community centre in Blacktown.

Raising my two young ADHD boys, age seven and ten, requires constant attention and care, but it also fuels my creative inspiration. My home studio is a sanctuary where I transform the chaos of daily life into serene, tactile expressions through clay. Late nights and early mornings are dedicated to my art, allowing me to immerse myself in the meditative process of ceramics.

1 Lauren Siemonsma in the studio; photo: courtesy artist  
2 Danica Wichtermann with Aurora signing a mug, 2023; photo: Steve Cook  
3 Ansgar and Torvin’s animal creations, 2023; photo: Fenja T. Ringl



This balancing act is not without its difficulties, but the support of my family and the joy I find in both teaching and creating make it possible. My sons benefit from seeing a living example of pursuing passion alongside professional and personal responsibilities. This journey has taught me resilience, time management, and the importance of maintaining a creative outlet amidst a busy life. Through ceramics, I find a harmonious blend of family, work, and personal fulfillment.

**Instagram: @berley\_pherson\_studios**

**DANICA WICHTERMANN (WA)**

Balancing life as a parent is no easy feat. Finding a harmonious daily rhythm, carving out one-on-one time with your children, and still making space for yourself, your business, and your passions can feel overwhelming. Yet, there’s a delightful solution: clay. This versatile medium is tactile, safe, and engaging for all ages.

My children adore their studio time. From a young age, they’ve learned to immerse themselves in clay projects, working independently for 10 to 40+ minutes. They also enjoy helping with tasks like unloading the kiln, painting freshly bisque-fired pots, or “cleaning” the pottery wheel, which often results in joyful chaos. I recall the day when I ducked inside and left my children in the studio, who were excitedly taking turns on the wheel, to summon their father to see their progress. We came back to find clay splattered everywhere, a rapidly spinning wheel, and a mop bucket filled with slip water in an attempt to clean up the fun mess.

These moments of creativity with my kids teach me patience and understanding in my own art practice. They remind me to savour the process, appreciate the simple things, and sometimes just laugh at the mess. This journey with my children is a profound learning experience, and I feel blessed to share it with them.

**Instagram: @rediscoverceramics**

**FENJA T. RINGL (NSW)**

When I left a research career in 2020 to take up printmaking as my main occupation, I quickly discovered clay as the perfect medium on which to print my nature-inspired linocut art. Around the same time, I welcomed my third son into our family.

My ceramic experiments have steadily grown into a successful small business, including both fine art and functional pieces. With three active kids filling up my life and my house, I am always

surprised at what I can achieve in a few slotted-in hours, and within the limited space of a small printmaking nook, a shared garage workbench, and a little kiln at the side of the house.

In school holidays, my two older sons (age ten and seven) like to make their own clay creations, which they recently (and with satisfying success) sold alongside mine at a local potters' market. It's not always easy juggling a growing business and a young family, but my kids' involvement means they have a very good understanding and appreciation of what mum does for work. And I have the fulfilment of mentoring a new generation of creatives.

**Instagram:** @fenjatringle

### LAYNE GEORGE (QLD)

Striking a balance between a personally fulfilling ceramics practice, running our family pottery studio, and raising a one-year-old, feels like an ephemeral concept. Some days, it's baby-wearing whilst wedging; some days, it's playing peek-a-boo whilst unloading the kiln; and some days, it's letting pots dry more than I wanted them to so I can be a present for Bobby's big toddler feelings. It's hard, but having my hands in clay reminds me of who I am and allows me to be the best version of myself for my daughter. I am humbled by both ceramics and motherhood on an almost daily basis, and feel intensely grateful for the lessons taught by both. I don't always get the balance right, but clay is always the first to give. Unlike my daughter, I can recycle, reclaim, and fix almost any mistake I make. For the love of both, I will keep seeking that ephemeral balance.

**Instagram:** @ala\_\_clay

1 Layne George with partner and daughter at their recent exhibition at HAKE House of Art, Sydney  
Photo: Sage Hammond

2 Spiral-wedged clay with little Benny's hand, 2020  
Photo: Grace Moseley

3 Kate Warner with her children in the studio  
Photo: artist



### GRACE MOSELEY (TAS)

Balancing life as a parent and a ceramicist is indeed a delicate act. I embarked on my pottery journey when my second child was six months old. At that time, motherhood had overtaken my sense of creative identity. To reconnect with my sense of self, I attended night pottery classes while my partner looked after the kids. Now, seven and a half years later, I run a part-time ceramics business from my own home studio.

Managing this balance remains challenging. Juggling wholesale orders with caregiving duties means my children always come first, and my pottery comes second. Often, I find myself working late into the night in the studio, crafting pots while the family sleeps. It's not uncommon for me to arrive at school pickup in clay-splattered clothes and muddy boots. Despite the struggles, being present for my children is my top priority.

Having a creative outlet in clay is a blessing. It allows me to express myself – I can nurture my family and then return to my craft. The challenge is worth it, and I wouldn't trade this dual role for anything.

**Instagram:** @blackwood\_ceramics



### KATE AND MICHAEL WARNER (NSW)

My husband Michael and I opened our ceramics business, Braidwood Clayworks, in 2018. Our children Alfie and Edith were seven and five at the time, and it has definitely been a learning curve. It was challenging during lockdown when I found myself trying to make pots while having maths questions fired at me! In the end, we made it work by taking turns potting and home-schooling. Work gets done in small chunks, not long sessions in the studio like before, and you have to set realistic goals. Being adaptable is key. You can still make enough – and make a living – just sometimes at odd times of day. We have found our customers to be pretty understanding if there are delays with orders due to family commitments, you just need to keep them in the loop. Our kids are an integral part of our business now. They help during our open studios, make pots on the wheel and handbuild, and know their way around a Square payment processor. They're great at wrapping orders, talking to customers, doing photoshoots, and filming and editing reels for Instagram. They're learning so much, and so are we. We wouldn't change it for the world.

**Instagram:** @braidwoodclayworks



### HOLLY FARMER (QLD)

Balancing family life with running a ceramics studio is a dynamic adventure! Since launching my first studio in 2021 when my son was just seven months old, I've been managing the exciting chaos of motherhood and entrepreneurship. For that first year, my little one joined me at work every day, turning the studio into a lively mix of clay, creativity, and giggles.

Being a practising artist and arts educator since 2015, I've always cherished creativity. As I prepare for baby number two, I continue to blend my passion for art with the joys of family life. The studio isn't just a workspace – it's a place where my family and creativity intersect. Having my son around while I work allows him to grow up amidst the vibrant world of ceramics, sparking his curiosity and imagination.

Balancing the roles of artist, mum, and wife involves carefully setting boundaries to manage both creative and family responsibilities. It's about creating dedicated times for art while ensuring family needs are met, and vice versa. This act can be challenging, but it's also rewarding. The support from my family helps fuel my creativity, and integrating my artistic life with family life brings a unique sense of fulfilment. Growing up with a mum who celebrated creativity, I'm thrilled to pass that same spirit on to my children. Each day offers a new opportunity to mix art and life, making our world a bit more colourful and joyful.

**Instagram:** @dhmakers

### ELOISE RANKINE (NSW)

A moment of quiet, the baby sleeps in a carrier on my chest. I unwrap the clay as quietly as I can. A little grunt, head back, but she's still asleep. My mind lingers on the idea of creation as I mould the ball of soft clay into shape. Destined to be a little house painted with patterns from my mother's quilts – blue, yellow, pink, green, and a rainbow, remind me of the nursery rhyme. As my little creation breathes softly, pressed against me, I wonder what she is destined to become. How will the world, and I, mould her?

As I make, I recall the exhaustion from throwing cup after cup, tinged with longing for a positive test result to signal the creation of her. Now, from my kitchen table studio, I think of my wheel, abandoned through months of exhaustion and nausea. I relish this moment of making, for my arms, my hands, my fingers, to move freely, to reconnect to clay, until my favourite creation starts to wiggle in my arms, and I know my time with clay, at least for now, is up.

**Instagram:** @elphceramics

### ADELE MACER (VIC)

Being a mother of two small children and maintaining a ceramics practice is a delicate balancing act, far from the idealised version others might think. My ceramics journey began before my first son was born, but finding a job compatible with motherhood was daunting. After my son's birth, it took months to return to the studio. Navigating my new identity as a mother, and ensuring my child's needs were met meant working in short, unpredictable bursts, often leaving the studio a mess at the first burst of a cry.



1 Holly Farmer's son in the new studio; photo: artist  
2 Adele Macer and Leo, 2022  
Photo: artist  
3 **Eloise Rankine**, *It Takes a Village (Sea Foam Small Leaves)* 2024  
Photo: artist

Attending markets with my babies was a challenging yet rewarding experience, both of them sleeping under the market table. Now, with a seven-year-old and a five-year-old, my home studio offers flexibility but also constant interruptions. While the kids are at school, I manage my business, make pots and teach ceramics; on weekends, they join me in the studio, scraping bats and making more mess than creations. Anxiety is high as there are hazards everywhere.

Motherhood and ceramics share similarities – both teach patience, demand attention, allow for introspection, test boundaries, bring joy, and occasionally cause heartbreak. Balancing both roles is tough, but it's fulfilling blending creativity with the chaos and love of family life.

**Instagram:** @adele\_macer\_ceramics

**LISA FRANKLAND (FRANKY) (VIC)**

I'm a full-time ceramicist and proud queer single parent to eight-year-old Izzie. For the last three years, I have worked for several ceramic studios in Naarm (Melbourne) producing slipcast and wheelthrown products. I recently collaborated on a tableware range for a local ceramics business. I balance producing for clients, teaching classes, and working in my own studio.

Before giving birth, I wondered how parenthood might impact my arts practice. I was regularly exhibiting my installation and drawing work, taking part in artists residencies, and attending numerous exhibitions, but that stopped after I gave birth. After Izzie was born I felt like everything I had previously poured into my practice I now needed for her, and for surviving those intense early years.

When she was around age three, I felt like I had completely lost touch with my identity. It was a really lonely time for me. This is when I took my first wheelthrowing class. After one term, I set up a wheel in my garage and practiced. I've always been very disciplined and determined, but I've never been patient. Parenting taught me patience. She is eight now, and I now have two days per week in my own ceramics studio. I'm working towards a solo exhibition of my wheelthrown vessels, and hoping to apply for an artist's residency in 2025.

This privilege is not lost on me.

**Instagram: @frank.land\_ceramics**

**HANNAH ROGERS-WERE (NSW)**

My ex gave me a pottery wheel he found in a cow paddock out near Nimbin. It was dilapidated, and the grinding sound it made was horrendous, but nevertheless it sparked my interest in ceramics, and I am forever grateful. While pregnant, I took an eight week throwing class, and as my daughter grew, so did my practice. I also welcomed a son two years later.

Developing my skill has been slow going, as I am mostly self-taught. This method has certainly had a lot of drawbacks, but it has allowed me a serious line of sanity in amongst the chaos of those first years of motherhood. Due to a lack of childcare, my children have always been in the studio with me. As distracting and messy as it was at the time, it is now yielding some wonderful fruit, they are passionate and budding potters!



I draw so many parallels between parenting and ceramics. Both have taught me the joy of slowing down, discipline, patience, creative thinking, the art of timing, and the gift of redefining ourselves!

**Instagram: @hannah\_were\_**

**CARLA EJARQUE CALDÉS (SA)**

I'm Carla, a potter specialising in bespoke tableware for restaurants in Adelaide. I have a one-month-old baby, Liam, and a two-year-old, Adam. Balancing work and parenting is challenging. I used to run numerous classes which made up 80% of my reliable income. However without family support, I had to reshape my business. A fixed schedule became impractical due to the frequent illnesses my first child brought home from childcare.

Being a potter and a mum means I'm often covered in clay because I rarely have time to shower before picking up my toddler. My baby also ends up covered in clay when I try to calm him. Organisation is a constant struggle – sometimes pieces dry too quickly because of an unexpected sick day with my child after throwing 40 pieces. Late nights are now the norm as I work when the situation at home is calmer. On the positive side, I could breastfeed until I was ready to stop, thanks to working from home and organising my schedule to balance both parenting and work. While it's tough and makes me consider if a fixed job might be easier, I love my work and feel fortunate to manage both aspects of my life.

**carlaejarque.com**

**MEGAN GLASS (WA)**

As a mother to a five- and three-year-old, parenthood has allowed me the space to re-evaluate my previously chosen career path of physiotherapy. Fortunately, with support and childcare, I was able to throw myself head-first into ceramics. Working from a home studio has allowed me to tap into my creativity and breastfeed my children to three-and-a-half and 20 months, respectively. The ceramic community is a beautifully supportive place, especially when one can feel very isolated as a new parent.

1 Lisa Frankland and brother Craig Frankland, *Ziggy* 2023, slipcast glazed stoneware, h.14cm, w.16cm d.13cm Photo: Carli Wilson  
2 Carla Ejarque with her son Adam making his baby footprint on ceramics, 2023; photo: Carmen Alcedo



Recently in this current climate, it has felt beyond challenging at times to run a small business and juggle the role of primary carer, especially with a partner who travels for work. I decided to return to physiotherapy, with the cost of living rising. I am now doing part-time physio, part-time pottery, and parenting. Returning to physio took the pressure off trying to earn everything from pottery and has brought back joy and creativity. I love both roles, and now I only make what I want to. Despite the busy schedule, my focus is to avoid hustle, find time to unwind, and focus on what really matters – enjoying this precious life we have and our connections.

Instagram: @meg\_ceramics

### TOM FREEMAN (WA)

I'm an artist with two kids (two and seven), and I work four days per week at an art gallery. My art practice pulls from all aspects of my life. My whole environment and surroundings, as well as past and present places and experiences, all affect and shape me, and it all comes out in my making. As parenting is such an encompassing and constant aspect of my life, it inevitably informs many of the outcomes of my creative practice. The daily crafting and drawing I do with my kids, the ongoing conversations and imaginative ponderings, the playful acting, the drama, and the worries and fights, all make their way into my studio and through my hands.

My art practice mainly consists of painting and sculpture, both of which are quite varied and experimental. Ceramics often plays a key part in my sculptural practice. This most recent body of work consists of mixed-media sculptures that started as an attempt to make abstract paintings using clays and glazes. They're a range of ceramic wall forms with all sorts of material additions, each a small story, memory, or experience that overall grasps the melting pot of my current place in life.

Instagram: @tomfreemanartist



1 Tom Freeman, *Open up a packet of chips*, 2024, glazed stoneware clays, enamel and acrylic paints, various glues, plastic, rocks, shells, h.30cm w.25cm, d.15cm; photo: artist  
2 Visiting mum in her exhibition December 2023  
Photo: Meital Lawrence  
3 Luisa Faux, afternoons in the studio  
August 2024  
Photo: Rylie Vincent



### MEITAL LAWRENCE (NSW)

Raising my two daughters and pursuing pottery has proven to be one of the most challenging yet rewarding endeavours I have undertaken. The constant juggling between family responsibilities and creative pursuits leaves little room for respite. Despite the chaos, I wouldn't have it any other way. My girls are my primary source of inspiration, and my number-one fans. Our go-to activity is playing with clay, a cherished bonding experience.

Rocking up for pickup covered in clay from head to toe, stealing moments at the wheel after tucking the girls into bed, or glazing plates with a head torch at night so I can put the kiln on in time – my days are a whirlwind of activity. From cooking dinner to folding laundry, my schedule is a dance of domestic duties and artistic pursuits. Balancing the demands of family life with my passion for pottery remains a work in progress, a delicate tightrope walk that I navigate with gratitude and determination. The ability to chase my dreams while nurturing my daughters fills me with immense appreciation for this stage of my life.

Instagram: @mudlove.pottery

### LUISA FAUX (VIC)

Over the past two years, we've welcomed two little beings into our lives. While our babies are small and these early days are so precious, it's hard to imagine being anywhere else right now. I'm trying to figure out how to weave maker into mammahood. Most days, I daydream about being back in the studio. On some days – usually when both babies are sleeping – I tiptoe down the hall, and the moment my hands touch the clay, I feel like I'm reconnecting with myself again. For now, I'll keep creating in my mind, and in the moments I can I'll work on slowly filling the studio shelves for this summer's markets. My burn to create will never dim, and the time to make will slowly grow as the babies do too. I keep reminding myself that creativity doesn't diminish – it evolves.

Instagram: @fluxcreation

**CHRIS WINTERTON (VIC)**

As a parent of three kids under ten, I've learned that I'm a happier human and a better parent when I feel creatively fulfilled and tired, than I would be if I got a good night's sleep. Sacrificing sleep – an already scarce commodity as a parent – seems like a fair trade-off for me. Those late night and early morning hours, when the house is quiet apart from the sounds of slapping clay and the hum of the wheel, carry a nocturnal charm where anything seems possible.

It feels important to me to actually show the kids there's more to life than screens, so my practice takes place in and around their lives. The shelves in the living room house are drying works and half-finished sculptures. Some of the best creative criticism I've ever received is, "I want to put that one in my room". Ceramics as an expressive medium is an apt analogy for the chaos and unpredictable nature of raising small humans. We shape, influence, embed memory and culture, but ultimately, the results are unpredictable. And therein lies the magic.

[wint-studio.com](http://wint-studio.com)

**HEATHER MAY (NSW)**

People ask me if I am more creative now – somehow more inspired since having my daughter. The truth is, I'm so tired now, and my brain is full with figuring out how to raise a child, that there is no space for creativity currently – for those moments of stillness where ideas come and light up your soul. My rebrand has been on pause, and I have sustained a minimal business profile. Days in the studio feel like coming home, where I remember a life that is truly my own.

There is so much pressure currently for parents (especially women) to be everything at once. Although it's tempting (and sometimes necessary) to work with our kids right there, it doesn't seem fair to either of us. It would not be accepted in other workplaces, and arts practitioners should not be singled out to have to run a business this way.

My daughter loves holding my hand and walking me to work (the garage door), watching from the step and stamping patterns into clay slabs out in the sun. I chose to do less work for the



first three years of my daughter's life, which I felt was important for her development. I'll never get those again. Until preschool next year, and probably still after that, I will be working until interrupted, and finishing work after my daughter's bedtime.

[heathermayceramics.com](http://heathermayceramics.com)

**CHANTELLE BAISTOW (NSW)**

The demands of raising children while exploring a career as a ceramicist has been an experience for my entire family. It has often involved making space for my children in the studio or at a market stall. My parenting responsibilities have always been intertwined with working with clay, like multitasking naps and rushing to the shed to pour another slip-cast cup while listening for a bit of sound on the baby monitor.

I grew up in my mother's craft studio, and my 11-year-old has free access to many craft materials. She is fond of experimenting with various mediums, while my autistic son has shown an interest in 3D printing with clay, the results of which he displays in his room. Their ambitious clay experiments result in soggy bowls and worthwhile messes. There have also been troubles – a delicate porcelain 3D print collapsed while I was occupied with dinner, and alarms to adjust my old kiln's temperature in the dead of night disrupts everyone's sleep.

I look forward to conducting practice-led research at the UNSW soon, advancing sustainability in ceramics and addressing pollution on the Central Coast of New South Wales, where my children are growing up.

**Instagram: @chantellebaistow**



1 **Chris Winterton**, *Gloopy Blue Vessel with Mini Gloopy Vessel* by **Herbie** (age 7), 2024 wheelthrown stoneware with crawl glaze; photo: Philippa Cahill  
2 **Juniper Baistow**, *Flower handle mug*, 2024, stoneware clay, handbuilt and 3D printed  
Photo: Chantelle Baistow



Josephine Powell with her children mark-making using shells, 25 August 2024; photo: artist

### JOSEPHINE POWELL (VIC)

Ceramics and being a mother are truly intertwined for me. I feel that when I began practising ceramics the chemicals in my body changed, enabling me to become pregnant after a stressful time of trying. Since then, my children's artwork has brought me much pleasure and has informed my own work.

When I left teaching music to pursue ceramics in 2016, my wish to become pregnant was realised. At that time I was taking my first wheelthrowing class with the late Julian Centofanti at Carlton Arts Centre. Almost a year after having a child, I returned to the world of ceramics and quickly became pregnant with my second child. It did seem that for me, practising ceramics and having children somehow belonged together.

My children's first paintings and drawings made me aware of my love of abstract art. The dynamics and pure abstraction of the lines, movement and layers of colour left me absolutely inspired and amazed. Since then, I have aimed to mimic this freshness, freedom and energy in my painted bowls and cups. My handbuilt forms evoke the human figure and groupings suggest a mother and child, or a family.

[josephinepowell.com.au](http://josephinepowell.com.au)



Melissa Murphy-Vella's children (5-year-old and 2-year-old) enjoying working with clay on the pottery wheel, 2020; photo: artist

### MELISSA MURPHY-VELLA (VIC)

As an artist, educator, and full-time mother of three young children, I have been time-poor, but against all odds, I still find working with clay and shaping a sculpture or a bowl brings me endless joy. I began my ceramic journey at age ten, with encouragement from my mother and art teacher (who amazingly later became one of my ceramics students). I commenced my ceramics degree at the Victorian College of the Arts when I was 17, and later studied education at the University of Melbourne. I then taught art in the secondary school sector for 20 years.

During the last decade, I juggled the demands of raising three young children and my art practice while running ceramics classes for all ages within the community, including the Karen Community for refugees from Myanmar (Weaving Old Ways New Ways Program). I remember travelling to and from my studio to load my kiln with my three children when they were little – a 45 minute drive from home down the highway – two to three times per week. Baby harnessed to me, toddler and pre-schooler in tow, boxes of artwork nestled in the pram, making multiple trips from the car in a busy industrial estate, unloading all of the ceramic work.

**Instagram:** @melissa.ceramics