

Lakeside Pottery Ceramic School and Studio

Morty Bachar and Patty Storms, Proprietors



The human pursuit of happiness drives much of modern life yet rarely finds its fulfillment. Too often, what excites the human heart has no place in the daily grind of life. It is rare to find the coexistence of avocation and vocation, blended in a

balanced life that reaches out to a community of like-minded individuals. For **Morty Bachar** and **Patty Storms**, of Stamford, Connecticut, just such a centered life grew out of their mutual work in teaching pottery. Lakeside Pottery Ceramic School and Studio, established in 2002 by Bachar, stands as the locus of the couple's life principles, a place from which they share their ideas and knowledge through a dynamic educational program that extends well beyond their Connecticut community.

As the 21st century was dawning, Morty Bachar was a successful corporate executive, in the high tech industry. He was living the "American Dream." He recalls, "I was supposed to be happy. I wasn't. One day, I just quit cold. I had no idea what I would do." One of his hobbies was ceramics, which helped him wind down from his hectic work life. Beginning with what he enjoyed, Morty seized on the idea to open a pottery studio and began to work with his typical vigor toward this new goal. "I never looked back," he says.



Morty Bachar

He took some classes and practiced at his home studio. "I sought out high-end potters, signed up for their workshops," he says, "and found out what it means to be a good potter." He also gained a great deal of knowledge of materials and equipment decisions from ceramic suppliers.

In 2002, Lakeside Pottery Ceramic School and Studio was established. And in 2004, Patty Storms, hoping to refresh her pottery skills, looked into taking a ceramic class. She was at a transitional stage in life and her children were

growing independent. She quips, "I saw my pink slip as a Mom coming soon and wanted to expand what had been mere dabbling in ceramics up to that point." Her "dabbling"



Patty Storms

included previous lessons with potter Ken Kanro in Portland, Maine. Art had always been a very strong part of her life. She had painted and drawn from a very young age, was an art history major in college and worked as a curator for 19th and 20th century photography exhibitions in a New York gallery. Patty's pottery skills came quickly back to her as a student at Lakeside Pottery, and she found Morty's studio and school just the right atmosphere to develop her creative talents. The two soon became friends, and over time, Patty took on teaching responsibilities. Eventually, Patty and Morty became partners in both the business and their lives.

When Morty started his studio, his focus was on the craftsmanship of making pottery. With his first classes he concentrated on fundamentals, imparting the techniques and insights he had so recently learned. He recalls, "I learned very quickly, always staying one step ahead of my students. In a way, this made me a better teacher, because the frustrations of the learning process were fresh. I could be much more empathetic." Over time, Morty gained confidence and considered himself a good craftsman. His student body grew, including the addition of children's programs, teachers were hired, and a community of people interested in and trained in pottery began to develop.



Lidded jar by Morty Bachar



Sgraffito bowl by Patty Storms

Morty credits Patty with helping Lakeside Pottery transition and expand its focus from craftsmanship to art. Morty says, "Patty came on the scene with her expertise in painting, hand building, and sculpting. People took an interest in



Sculptural Piece by Patty Storms

her classes, and soon we had shifted our focus from only making functional pots to creating beautiful things." He points out that the process of teaching how to make a pot is finite, in that the steps can be mastered. Making art, on the other hand, is infinite. The couple

has seen this played out in the number of repeat students who see the classes as opportunities to endlessly explore their artistic concepts through clay.

Both Morty and Patty emphasize the centrality of education in the mission of their studio. Patty says, "People are often afraid to try an art. They are afraid to enter the intimidating atmosphere of the typical ceramic studio." Creating a warm



Educational Programs at Lakeside Pottery

and welcoming atmosphere is an intentional focus for the couple. Morty points out that the studio is not an insular group of potters working in solitary pursuit of their own art. He says, "The purpose of starting this was to create a lifestyle, not a business. We are building a community." Lakeside offers seven to nine classes each week from September to May. The summer is

busy with a very popular children's summer camp program, in addition to a scaled-back schedule of adult classes. Lakeside's policy of not charging for clay helps to provide a warm atmosphere that encourages unlimited experimentation and creativity. In addition to Morty and Patty, a small staff assists in teaching. Patty says, "Teaching has helped me to be more willing to experiment in my own work. Part of teaching is learning. Even though I may have to set aside my own creative work during my heavy teaching schedule, I am okay with that. I know that I am building up a store of knowledge that I will use later."

With thousands of student registrations within the last twelve years, Lakeside Pottery has spawned a large community. With this growth has come a network of communication about pottery. Morty says, "We were always getting calls with questions about a specific technique or problem. We were glad to take the time to explain and help. But soon, we found we were getting the same questions



Finishing technique demonstration

over and over again. We started to scribble down notes, detailing our answers." With the growing body of how-to advice, Morty and Patty conceived of a plan to make this information more widely available. His technology business mind-set still active, Morty employed the use of the

Internet. On the company's website, Morty posted the how-to advice as the questions came in. Today, the site offers over one hundred items, ranging from simple answers to technical questions, to project suggestions, to step-by-step tutorials.

[Visit <http://lakesidepottery.com/Pages/Tips.html>.] A person can find how to make a wedding table, watch a video on trimming a pot, or follow step-by-step instructions for making a water font. Morty and Patty treat this work as an integral part of Lakeside Pottery's mission, which is to share their knowledge freely. The tip site is dynamic, with an active blog engaging people in ongoing discussion. Morty says, "This is no gimmick. We went back to our mission statement. We are educators first. So we put it out there. Here it is." He reports that the site is highly ranked by all search engines, with over 3,000 unique visitors daily from all around the globe.

Morty's and Patty's interest in helping others gave rise to a new direction for Lakeside Pottery. They were often asked about broken pottery and china pieces and what could be done to repair them to their original strength and beauty.



Restoration process – before and after

Just as he did when he started Lakeside Pottery, Morty learned, studied and practiced until he became an expert restorer of ceramic, stone and iron sculpture. Using his engineering background, he worked closely with adhesive, filler and cold glaze manufacturers fine tuning the process using the most current technology and instrumentation. Because of their understanding of ceramics and materials, Morty and Patty can sculpt missing pieces that are then set in place and painted.



Kintsugi restored wood fired bowl

Patty uses her painting background to fill in missing intricate details. This aspect of the business has ballooned and a small staff was trained. Their clients include collectors, auction houses, cleaning and shipping companies, religious institutions, and individuals from all over the world. Morty has introduced a unique method of repair based on the traditional Japanese *kintsugi*, mending pottery with gold, transforming a broken pot to "better than new"

Both Morty and Patty continue to explore ways to manifest their life philosophy. They have expanded their summer camp program to include scholarships for children who cannot afford tuition. Patty hopes to plan a special Tuesday program for underprivileged teens, an often forgotten age group that she considers ripe for development through creative expression. Certainly the lines have blurred between work and life for these two individuals. Patty sums up, "When people walk into our studio, they always say it feels so homey, so warm, so safe. We just love what we do, and because of that, the people we touch have become our family." Morty Bachar and Patty Storms' life pursuit just may have led them to that elusive goal of happiness, not only for themselves but in some way, for all those whose lives they have affected.



Lakeside Pottery

Ceramic School and Studio

For more information, visit the pottery studio at www.lakesidepottery.com. And the restoration studio at www.renewceramic.com

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