

STUDIO VISIT

Nick Moen and



From left to right: Tyler Anderson, Laurie Caffery Harris, Evan Cornish Keefe, Nick Moen.



Just the Facts

Clay

porcelain

Primary forming method

design (sketching, 3D modeling, 3D prototyping), mold making, slip casting

Primary firing temperature

cone 6 oxidation

Favorite surface treatment

glaze chemistry

Favorite tools

ruler and double diaphragm slip pump

Studio playlist

jazz to metal, but always Alanis Morissette

Wishlist

a couch

Studio

The Bright Angle Design Studio is located in the Refinery Building on the south slope of downtown Asheville, North Carolina. The building hosts 18 artists working in a variety of mediums as well as the Asheville Makers' Space. We designed and built the 2000 square-foot studio from scratch, constructing everything from the tables to the production kiln. I started by drawing a layout of how the work would flow through the studio from mixing slip all the way through the production process to shipping. The open layout of the studio allows everyone to work and laugh together. The community studio environment was shaped by my time at Odyssey Clayworks with Gabriel Kline. I envisioned a space that would focus on the design aspects of craft; a place where an intangible idea could come to fruition as a tangible object with the utmost precision and quality.

The Bright Angle is unique because our practice involves collaborating with the whole team that works in the studio. Currently, Tyler Anderson is handling production management and logistics; Evan Cornish Keefe is handling glazing and materials science; and Laurie Caffery Harris is the content and marketing manager. I do most of the technical designing, prototyping, and mold making. We meet once a week to talk about how the process is working for each person and how we can improve to create an enjoyable workflow with an emphasis on quality.

We also have a space for hosting resident designers. Residents get to utilize the studio and facilities to explore ideas and work with the production team to help them focus on

The Bright Angle

Asheville, North Carolina



certain parts of the process that they need time to play with. Our residents have ranged from ceramic artists and designers—including Adrienne Eliades, Austin Riddle, and Shannon Tovey—to jewelers and weavers such as Emily Rogstad and Daniel Garver.

My employees are involved in every part of the design, prototyping, mold-making, production, packing, and marketing processes. This creates a symbiotic workflow in the studio that allows designs to be produced that incorporate considerations such as production techniques and marketing. Each artist in the studio assists with designs, so they are excited and integrated in the whole process. It is great to have such talented creative people around that feel connected to the work. We believe making things together encourages the development and production of thoughtful products.

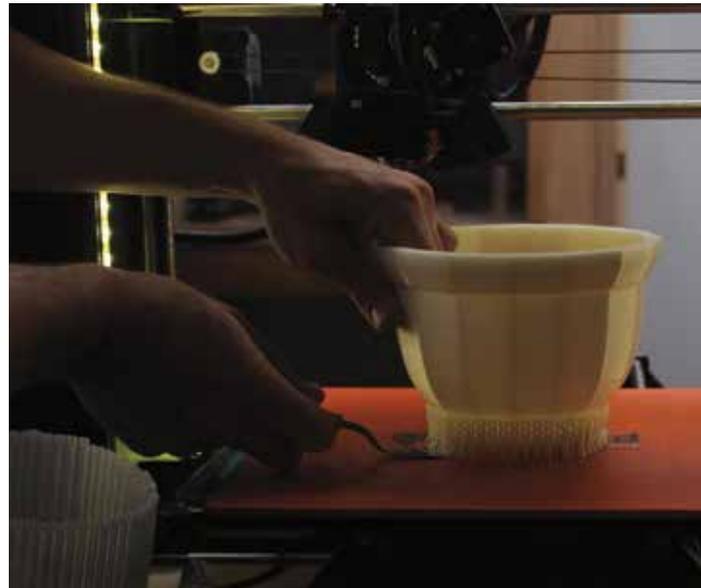
Paying Dues (and Bills)

The Bright Angle has a number of different sales channels. We exhibit at the NYNow gift show twice a year to acquire wholesale accounts. Our website is used to sell our Bright Angle items as

well as any limited-edition projects from resident designers. We also travel the country to shows like the Renegade Craft Fair and the American Craft Show. We sell work through ceramics galleries such as The Clay Studio, Baltimore Clayworks, and The Signature Shop. Some of our work is creating private label products for larger retailers and designers. We also sell our high-end design work and lighting through 1st Dibs.

One of our favorite projects is working on The Democratic Cup project with ceramic artist Ayumi Horie. This is a very exciting project because we really care about the conversations that the cups create. The Democratic Cup allows us to work with a wide range of amazing potters and graphic designers.

In May 2017 we had success releasing our first collaborative collection on Kickstarter. This was a great way to introduce the brand and the model of artists working in a collaborative environment. We have a wide array of products including tabletop, garden, lighting, and home décor. Our process is focused on using digitally prototyped models to create mold systems. The Bright Angle aesthetic has a



foundation in dimension and measurements because we want to make the sleekest products that have a modern feel and are designed to work well. This digital design process also allows us to incorporate other materials and work with local woodworkers, leather workers, glass blowers, and engineers.

Marketing

Our marketing budget is allocated between show costs, online advertising, film, and photography. We market online through our email list, Facebook, Instagram, Google, and Pinterest. We use local graphic designers and marketing firms on a project-by-project basis. I believe the most direct way to get work in front of customers is to exhibit it at shows, where you can meet admirers of your work and form relationships with them.

Evidence shows that the future of shopping is online, where the buyer is searching for a quality brand with good reviews. Social media is an important channel to learn who your customers

are so that you allocate your budget effectively. It is also a great avenue to share your story through voyeurism. It isn't uncommon for social-media followers to visit us at retail shows or come by the shop and feel a connection to The Bright Angle because they follow us online.

Most Important Lesson

It is important to have a wide range of video and photo content. We do lifestyle photo shoots multiple times a year with various photographers. We also have a product photography booth in the shop, which allows us to get really clean product shots. Our content manager Laurie Caffery Harris has also been capturing the nuances of our process through photo and video. We are making three-dimensional things and sharing them in a two-dimensional world so sometimes it is hard to convey the subtleties of the work. For example, we developed a satin glaze that can be appreciated a lot more in person as the subtleties get lost in images. We are





planning to open a brick-and-mortar shop in the future to be able to put the physical objects in a place where they can be held.

Research and Inspiration

I took my first ceramics class as a freshman at Central High School in St. Paul, Minnesota. I grew up taking classes at the Northern Clay Center and visiting the St. Croix Pottery Tour, which helped foster my appreciation for ceramics. I will never forget a teabowl that Warren McKenzie gifted me when I was 14. I studied ceramics and engineering at Alfred University. When I moved to Asheville, North Carolina, six years ago I gave up the potters wheel because I was tired of circles. I spent 18 weeks at Penland School of Craft as a studio assistant, working with incredible ceramic artists like Matt Kelleher, David Eichelberger, and Heather Mae Erickson exploring other shapes.

Afterward, I completed a 3-year residency at Odyssey Clayworks in Asheville to develop my creative practice. I learned what it meant to apply work ethic and perseverance to launch a career in ceramics. Gabriel Kline and the Odyssey Clayworks community fosters those qualities and provides a foundation to make a living as a working ceramic artist.

I get a lot of ideas from being on the road, visiting many places, meeting lots of people and getting glimpses of their lifestyles. I have travelled to 48 states in the past 6 years selling pots, teaching workshops, and observing how we have chosen to design our world.

My work schedule often requires me to work late and on weekends to make sure that everything gets done and done well. In my time off I love to eat with friends, especially if it is a wood-fired pizza party. I love to get outside to fish, paddle, or hike to a favorite swimming hole or waterfall. When the weather is good, the team will cut work and take canoe trips down the French Broad River, which runs through Asheville.

Western North Carolina has an amazing community of artists and makers. It is exciting to work with a digital design perspective in an epicenter of master craftspeople.

www.thebrightangle.com

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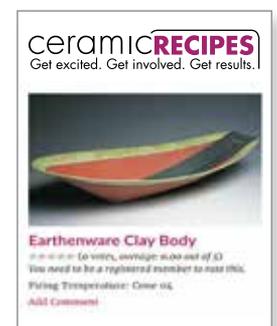
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