

Shirley Arsenault

"It's never too late to be what you might have been" (George Eliot). Indeed! I was introduced to clay in my teens and again in my 20s, and I was totally taken by the sensation of creating something out of clay; getting my hands dirty and feeling the earth. I was raised on a dairy farm in Minnesota; loving the outdoors and the beauty of the natural world, so touching clay always felt like coming home.

Being a potter would have to wait, however, as career and family became the priority. I would fit in an evening or weekend class now and again wherever my husband's military career took us – Germany at the University of Maryland, Minnesota night classes with two great potters and Montana and the good fortune of classes with Josh DeWeese at MSU, an amazing potter! At last, being retired and moving to Arizona 10 years ago, clay took over my life. I immersed myself in classes at the Mesa Arts Center with some exceptional potters, and I was at last pursuing "what might have been!" I continue to take at least one class a semester at Mesa Arts Center.

I work primarily out of my home studio in Scottsdale, firing stoneware pieces in an electric kiln. I enjoy making affordable functional pieces as I feel pottery should be used in the daily lives of everyone.... drinking coffee out of a handmade mug, enjoying a bowl of soup or salad out of a handmade bowl! I also enjoy making pieces for home decor; vases, wall hangings, bookshelf stacks. And, because I have access to the Mesa Arts Center specialty kilns of Soda firings and Raku firings, I allow the pleasure of creating a whimsical sculptural piece. With clay, as is with all art, one can completely lose themselves in the piece, and at the same time, find oneself. Creating pieces out of clay, be it functional pots or whimsical sculptures feels like I had indeed found myself and have become what might have been if I had pursued art at the beginning of my career journey.