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HANDS-ON: FULL TIME FILMMAKER TALKS THE PURE AND SIMPLE JOY OF CERAMICS

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When you stare at a screen all day long, real life can feel kind of far off. Whether focused on a screen for work, feeding the addiction at home or zoned out so much you don't even realize it, it can be easy to forget life's tactile pleasures. After picking up ceramics in high school, full time photographer and filmmaker, Brad Curran, re-discovered the joy of getting his hands dirty and creating something functional at the same time. Fast forward three years and Brad has now discovered how to strike a balance between his digital and hands-on pursuits, even merging the two together at some points, in the process furthering his creativity in both mediums. Between his freelance commercial work, teaching a video production course at a local Seattle college and throwing pots in his spare time, Brad has slowly been working to turn his passion for ceramics into a paying gig. We had a chance to catch up with Brad to learn how he got started in ceramics, where his unique style comes from and the benefit of having an in-garage studio at home.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN CERAMICS?

was first introduced to ceramics in high school. We made heavy bowls, weird sculptures and of course the occasional bong. We'd have to put a thin layer of clay over the hole for the stem so it could pass as a vase. Then after the firing we'd chip open the hole. I think we managed to get one "vase" through firing without the teacher catching on.



But beyond bongs, I really got into clay while I was in college at Southern Oregon University. The ceramics studio was in the basement of the admin building and We had 24/7 access to the space. Late one night during my freshman year I remember one of the older students jamming out and making these crazy sculptures on the wheel. I asked him what he was listening to and he handed me a clay-covered cassette—a dubbed copy of Built to Spill. Ha ha, this was like in 1999. Our teacher was part of this crazy ceramics movement that happened in the 60's where a group of potters became sculptors and redefined the medium. I think he instilled some of this energy in the studio.

The next year the school built a state-of-the-art ceramics facility and I took more and more classes. I got really into Raku and spent all my free time in the studio. I should have majored in clay. When I moved to Seattle in 2003, Pottery Northwest became my home away from home. I took various classes and was a studio tech for a bit.

This was a funny time in my life. I was doing too much at once-playing in bands, making videos, making pots and working in restaurants, but not really doing any of it well. Around 2008 I decided to stop flailing and focus on photography and video as a career path. I told myself I could reintroduce ceramics and music into my hobbies once

could make a living in the photo/video industry. In 2015 I started casually working in clay again.

YOUR FULL TIME GIG IS IN VIDEO PRODUCTION. WHAT'S IT LIKE TO HAVE AN OUTLET LIKE CERAMICS THAT IS STILL CREATIVE BUT WITHIN A DIFFERENT MEDIUM?

It really helps strike a balance in my life. I'm always striving to be an artist, or more of an artist, but often times my day-to-day work is commercial in nature (which I also love). Making pots feels very pure and simple. My goal is to make functional art that people connect with on a day-to-day basis.

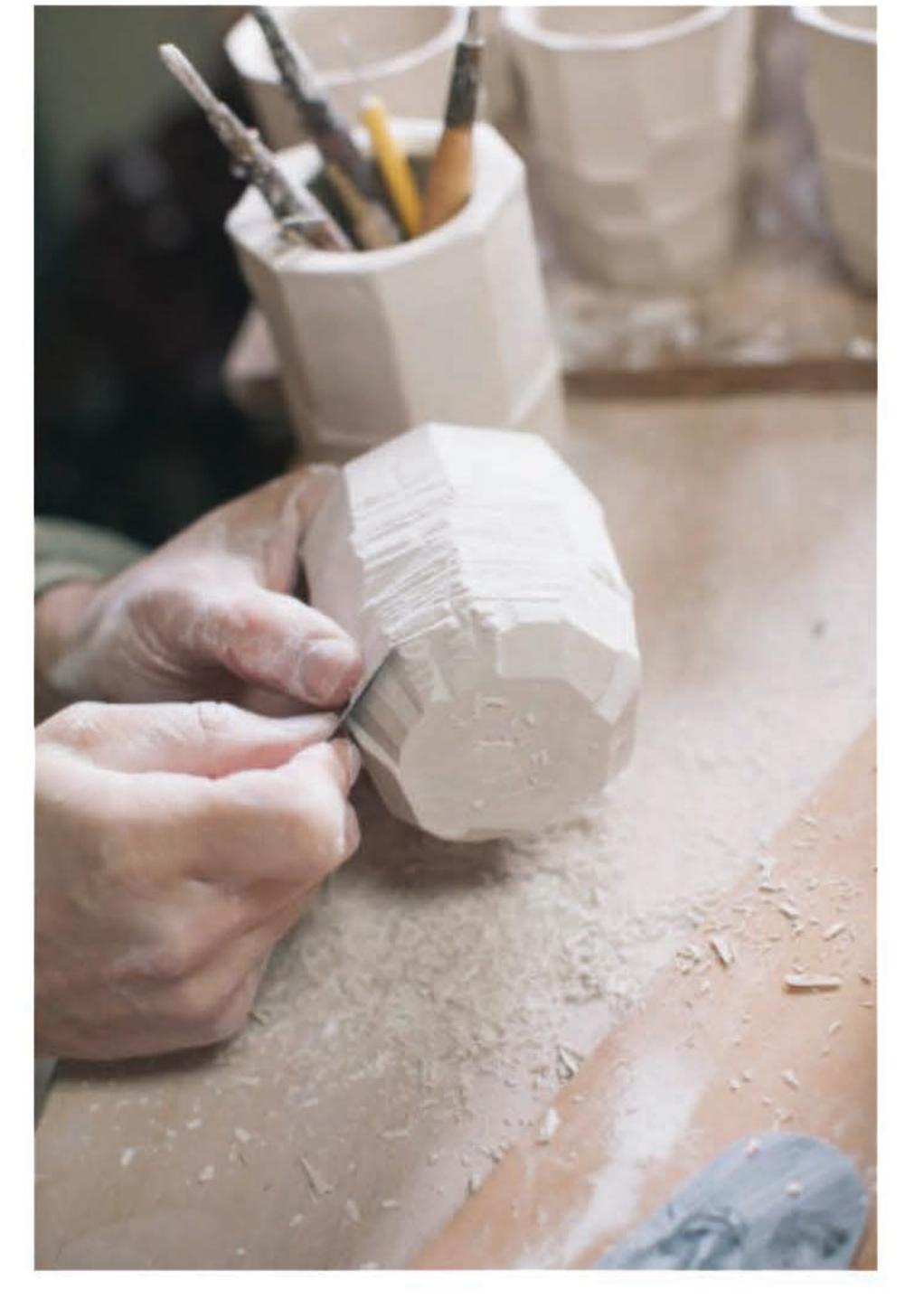
YOUR GEOMETRIC STYLE FEELS PRETTY PRETTY UNIQUE TO WHAT PEOPLE GENERALLY THINK OF WHEN IT COMES TO CERAMIC POTTERY. WHAT DRAWS YOU TO THESE SHAPES AND HOW IS PROCESS OF CREATING IT DIFFERENT THAN MORE CYLINDRICAL SHAPES?

Back when I was at Pottery Northwest I was exploring the sculptural aspects of the vessel. I was throwing pots but then slicing them up, manipulating and reconfiguring. Lots of experimenting. Most of them sucked of course. But this influenced how I work with clay now.

Currently I'm definitely on a faceting kick. I throw the vessels a bit thicker than usual, then use a wire tool to create the facets. I think I'm drawn to this treatment because it has a sort of geologic, glacial, fractured feel. It's also just fun to do. The process is loose and forgiving. Potters have been using this technique for hundreds, maybe thousands of years. Pottery is old as shit. It completely baffles and humbles me.



My favorite thing is when I hear that someone uses one of my pots often. Usually this is a simple faceted cup. When it comes down to it, I want to make things people love and interact with. Sometimes I'll have a hair-brained idea but then have to ask myself—will someone actually be able to



HOW HAS HAVING AN IN-HOME STUDIO CHANGED YOUR PROCESS, BEING SO MUCH MORE ACCESSIBLE?

use and enjoy this regularly? But to answer your question more directly, I really like making larger



vases for floral arrangements.

I'd love to say it allows me to get up and spend more time in the studio. Hopefully this will be the case someday. Currently, the space is minimally insulated and quite cold. My fiancé and I have big plans to convert the garage into a ceramics studio/mother-in-law. One of the downsides to owning a home is you get sucked into maintaining and improving instead of enjoying. This being said, I'm extremely lucky and privileged to own a home in this city, especially as a creative. Once spring rolls in I'll be spending more time in the studio.

HAVE YOU HAD A CHANCE TO COMBINE VIDEO WORK WITH YOUR PASSION FOR CERAMICS? IF SO, HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT AND HOW DID IT GO?

As a photographer and filmmaker, there's nothing I love more than documenting and collaborating with artists. Once or twice a year I partake in a wood firing in Index, WA. The process is very collaborative and visually rich. We go through about three to five cords of wood over three or four days to get the kiln hot enough so the ash melts on the pots. The results are unpredictable but the process is addictive. It's a wonderful thing to experience and document.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOUR CERAMICS WORK?

I'd like to create a more distinct line for my faceted forms, perhaps utilizing slip casting for consistent results. I just got engaged—which is super exciting—and I've been thinking about making a unique series of wares for the guests at our wedding. As a photographer, I'm a nerd for light and how it affects a space, so I'd love to try making some light fixtures. It's really all across the board. I'm an across the board type of guy. A jack of all trades. But, what do they say? Variety is the spice of life?