

CANBERRA POTTERS NEWSLETTER | APRIL 2020

# FIRED UP

connecting through clay



## THE NEW NORMAL

Well who would have thought a month ago we'd find ourselves living as we are today. The last few weeks have been tumultuous for the world, and in our small corner that is the community of Canberra Potters.

As we all struggle to come to terms with the changes and create some normality and security in our lives it's great to know that there is a group of likeminded people out there with whom we can share the journey.

Potters are often solitary folk working out of their studios on a daily basis so to retreat to our work spaces is not such a great hardship but I suspect many of us will also miss the daily comradery and networking of chatting to our customers, peers, students and workmates.

It's important we keep in touch and reach out to each other through this time. If you know of members who live on their own, who have health issues that are creating stress and are keeping them completely isolated in their homes, or who are lonely and perhaps struggling please make contact with them. Say hi and see if there's anything you can do to help. Share ideas, start conversations. Have a virtual catch up and coffee or just make a call and touch base. Use our mutual love of clay to keep connected.

We are exploring ways to keep connected and create opportunities to keep your minds and hands engaged in the creative process. We will be posting regularly to our social media platforms and sending you emails to keep you up to date with the world of clay. If you have ideas, or things you'd like to share, let us know at [editor@canberrapotters.com.au](mailto:editor@canberrapotters.com.au) or click the link below.

So in an effort to embrace this new normal let's talk clay!

[I've got an idea or something to share](#)

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Does social isolation or COVID-19 have you feeling a little off centre at the moment? You're not alone. These times can be tough.



Remember that there is help out there. Click the [Beyond Blue Image](#) to find information on national help lines and websites.

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## **Q & A**

A few questions have been coming through the emails so we thought we'd address them here as we're sure there are others thinking the same thing.

### ***Can I still come to Canberra Potters and pick up my fired work?***

Yes you can. You will need to park offsite and we ask that you only come onto the Kiln Shed veranda. All fired work is there. Please observe social distancing and remember that only two people can be there at a time. Please wait your turn if others are already there.

### ***I came down but I couldn't find my work or it was there but I don't think its been fired. How do I know?***

All work that has been fired is on the veranda. We are still firing kilns so it may be that work hasn't come out. You may need to check back the following week.

### ***I can't get there. Will my work be safe?***

We will do our best and we will not be throwing anything that's been fired out. All the usual issues apply so we cannot make this guarantee 100%.

### ***I didn't get a chance to pick up my work from the workshops. Can I still collect it?***

Unfortunately, no. We are unable to grant access to the workshops.

### ***I have left some items in my locker. Can I get them?***

Sorry, as above we are unable to grant access. All alarm codes have been suspended so you are unable to access the building.

### ***When will you reopen?***

We will be keeping in touch and as soon as we are advised it is safe we will let you know via emails and our social media channels.

### ***How am I going to get my clay fix?!***

We're working on it. We will be rolling out new ways to engage with clay over the next few weeks. Stay tuned!

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## EDUCATION

### Jo Townsend & Sue Cant

We've taken a few days to recharge, with Jo heading off to her studio and Sue working on an assessment she's been putting off. The last few weeks have been stressful and hectic. Thank you to everyone for working with us as we went through the process of temporarily suspending classes.

There have been some highlights. The *Time for Tea Course* was a huge hit and member Kerry Byers has written an article about the course which you will find below. It's always great to get the perspective of the people who attended. Thanks Kerry for a great read. Sounds like everyone really benefited from Chris's teaching and skill.

Hopefully when all the social distancing is over participants get together to share their creations.



## KIDS AND CLAY

Social isolation at home presents its challenges, especially when you have kids to occupy. Clay is a great medium for creative minds and energetic bodies. There are lots of opportunities to explore form, texture and balance, to use clay to create stories and explore scientific and mathematical ideas to support both

classroom learning and leisure time.

Clay can also present opportunities for both solitary and shared play, and it can help ease stress and frustration or let children escape into their imagination.

Very little is needed that you won't be able to find in your own home.

### **What do you need?**

- Clay! Something nice, soft and malleable
- a string, fishing line or cutting wire to cut it into workable pieces
- an apron, old clothes or t shirt
- paddle pop sticks, toothpicks, an old toothbrush, an old rolling pin or piece of dowel.
- interesting natural and man-made items to make patterns and textures (leaves, seeds, gumnuts, textured fabrics, garlic press, old toothbrush, a fork, cookie cutters and a potato masher are some suggestions)
- Cling wrap, damp clothes or plastic bags to store children's creations and clay.
- Paintbrushes and non toxic acrylic paint.
- An old plastic placemat, old bread board, newspapers, an old tablecloth, old biscuit pan or piece of board to work on
- A well sealed container to store clay
- A space to create. A small tarp taped to the floor may help with any spills or outside in the backyard, the shed or garage.

### **What to do?**

Have fun! Get children occupied, settle back and let them play. Step in and encourage them, provide support or extra items when and if needed. Children often like to return to their play and to continue creating over days and weeks so make sure you have some plastic on hand to cover their projects between sessions.

For very young children simply offer a ball of soft clay and encourage them to pound, pinch, flatten, squeeze and poke as they explore and manipulate the clay.

As they grow more confident show them how to roll it and make coils, how to roll it flat and cut out tile shapes and then how to join with slip, toothpicks or paddle pop sticks.

As their skills increase add in objects to make textures and patterns. Seeds, stamps, shells and textured cloth work well.

Teach them how to make a slurry or slip with a little clay and water mixed to a thick creamy consistency for joining pieces together.

As they develop greater dexterity show them how to make and join simple pinch pots that can form the basis of animals, people and imaginary creatures. Make slabs that can be joined to make interesting angular shapes and boxes.

You may find that clay play turns into imaginary play as their creations take them into the world of story. Keep an eye on them and suggest ideas or new items to use when you see they are stuck.

Older children can be encouraged to explore and draw plans for their creations. Talk about how they might plan out their project and encourage them to try new ideas. The internet has a wealth of videos and information on working with clay. Explore these together to find solutions to construction problems.

Creations can be painted and displayed or kept for firing. If you have underglazes at home you can use these to paint their creations for firing but non toxic acrylic paints can also be used after their items have dried if they are not going to be fired.

Roll unused clay into balls, push your thumb in to make a hole, fill the hole with a little water and store in a sealed plastic container for next time.



We are developing three project kits for you to purchase to use at home. We are just waiting on a few items to complete them and we expect to have them available in the next 7-10 days.

You will be able to order them online and we have arranged a contactless delivery system.

The kits will contain all the required materials, tools and instructions for you to complete your project.

Bisque firing is include in the price.



## STARTER KIT FOR KIDS

This kit includes clay and some simple tools for getting started with clay for younger children.

A great way to get a head start on introducing clay play into your routine at home.

Price TBA

## KIT 1 - CARTOON HEADS

Kits include instructions and materials to have fun creating cartoon style heads. A great way to encourage children's creativity while at home.

This kit will contain all the required materials, tools and instructions for you to complete your project.

Bisque firing is included in the price.

Price TBA



## KIT 2 - PORCELAIN PRIMER

Following on from our great short course this kit includes everything you need to create simple objects from porcelain.

This kit will contain all the required materials, tools and instructions for you to complete your project.

Bisque firing is included in the price.

Price TBA



[Register your interest](#)



## SHOP

### **Kelli Donovan**

Thank you to everyone for their help and positive assistance in the last few weeks before the temporary shut down in the shop. It was very fast and changed daily with what we could do in and out of the shop. I've never worn a mask and gloves while selling anything before!

We had a fantastic response to the 'Chef and the Potter' work on sale in the shop. The tableware displays received lots of great feedback from customers and sales were fantastic. We have seen a growth in new customers during this period, many from interstate, and there was lots of compliments and positive feedback from customers and members. We look forward to more of these joint exhibition and shop events soon!

We are still accepting new applications to join the shop when we reopen. Get busy and creative over this close down period. We'd love to see your work in the shop.

We will keep you informed about the progress of the shop over the coming months and closer to the reopening time.

Keep us in the loop with your Instagram posts and social media posts. Don't forget to add #canberrapotters so we see your posts. We love to see what you are making and inspiring others to get creative with clay too.

Keep safe and have a lovely isolation time! The best time to be creative!



## Shop Application

### GALLERY

Katrina Leske



Johnon MacDonald of Akiba and Chris Harford Floor Talk, *The Chef and the Potter* Exhibition.

What a month it's been. We were proud to present the hugely successful exhibition, *The Chef and the Potter*, which was opened by Janet de Boos on March 5.

Janet gave a thoughtful and insightful opening speech, reflecting on the importance of spreading our understanding of objects as makers and consumers. She commented that this knowledge manifoldly increases the pleasure of dining, and just experiencing life, when you engage with people and engage with things that are made with love and care. This spread of knowledge was embraced enthusiastically by the media and our visitors: please read the [Canberra Times Food and Wine writeup](#) and [review](#) as well the article in each [Canberra Weekly](#) and [City News](#)

I would once again like to thank Georgina Bryant, Joey Burns, Andres Caycedo, Richilde Flavell, Chris Harford and Annie Parnell for participating in the show.

Unfortunately, with our ongoing suspension we have made the decision to postpone all scheduled exhibitions for the next 6 months. These exhibitions will be rescheduled in 2021. We are hoping our exhibition program will resume in October 2020, however will keep you up-to-date with any changes as they come.

Canberra Potters prides itself on supporting our artists and members, and hope that by postponing our program we will be able to make it even bigger and better in 2021.

We are now in the midst of planning alternative online events and programs to keep Canberra Potters engaged with you, our fantastic community. Thank you for your ongoing support and we look forward to presenting some new and exciting things for you soon. Watch this space!

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## TECHNICAL

**Mark Saunders**



All current work from the interrupted term will be fired and out on the shelves by the end of next week (10/4/20). The work will stay on the shelves for at least a few more months so there is plenty of time for collections.

Several people I've spoken to seem to be under the misapprehension that all uncollected work is going in the skip some time very soon. This isn't the case. I'm not sure if they were misinformed somewhere along the line or if my reign of terror is more effective than I thought!

However, you should still come collect your bisqued work ASAP because it will gather dust and grime. This will create problems with glazing and your work will require washing and drying to prevent issues with the final glaze and fire. It will fair much better if collected quickly and then stored in a sealed container or plastic bag until you are ready to glaze.

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## MEMBER FIRING SERVICE & CLAY PURCHASING

During April we will be commencing a **Member Only** clay sales and bisque firing service to operate during the temporary shut down period.

***By appointment only***

***10.00am -2.00pm Tuesdays and Saturdays***

***Starting Tuesday 21 April***

We are hoping this will help you get work fired and be able to progress your projects during the shut down.

We know the system sounds a bit arduous but we must remain compliant with all government directives if this service is to be successful. We hope you will work with us by following the process outlined below.

### **Process**

- Members will need to email [technical@canberrapotters.com.au](mailto:technical@canberrapotters.com.au) to make an appointment to drop off their bisque work and/or purchase and collect clay.
- Appointment can be made between **10.00am - 2.00pm on Saturdays and Tuesdays** only.
- All enquiries about the service should be sent via this email. At present we have no capacity to pick up phone calls and messages. Email only.
- Members can request a time and will receive a confirmation or alternative closest available time by return email. Government required social distancing must be maintained. The appointment system is necessary for everybody's safety.
- Please enquire about clay stock availability before making an appointment. Many of our suppliers are unable to provide a full range of clays at this time.
- When you arrive take your work to the Kiln Shed. Limited parking will be available in the drive way leading to the kiln shed. Only one person at a time is allowed to drop off work/collect clay. If you arrive with other people they must stay in your car.
- Your work will be weighed and payment taken. Card only please.

- **6kgs maximum of bone dry work will be accepted for drop off on any one day. Work to be no larger than 30 x 30 x 30cm.** This isn't open to negotiation during the shutdown period, sorry.
- The usual rate for members bisque will apply.

Generally, we have the following clays in stock but please remember to email and check your choice is in stock and the price first.

#### Clayworks

Cone 6 White	LGH
Chris's Light Speckle	RGH
School Red	SWS
Chris's Dark Speckle	TMK
Cool Ice	
Southern Ice	

#### Keane

Ironstone	Red Terracotta
Special K	Stoneware 33
Keane White Raku	
Lumina Midfire	
Lumina Porcelain	

#### Walkers & Feeneys

Feeneys BRT	Walker's White Pottery
Feeneys Buff Stoneware	Walker's White Midfire
Feeneys Fine Blend	Walker's White Earthenware
Feeneys Chocolate Brown	
Walker's PB103	
Walker's Superior White Porcelain	
Walker's No.10 Stoneware	

[Make an appointment](#)

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Click the image for a short video from the workshop

## TIME FOR TEA

Kerry Byers- Member

Over the Canberra Day long weekend, we met to learn all things teapots.

The Canberra Potters Society website told us:

**“Making a teapot is one of those landmark moments in learning pottery. Teapots are an exercise in learning about three dimensional design. Consideration of function, form, aesthetics and proportion are all vital to success of the final teapot.”**

The workshop description assured us that we would be taken through the process and find our own unique designs. We ended up with all that and more.

Clay whisperer and teapot guru Chris Harford led us through this landmark moment with skill, good humour and confidence that we would all have a teapot at the end of the three days. After taking us through the weekend Chris commented that this course is always fun to teach. He said it always interesting to see the range of teapots that come out of it, and how they each express the individuality of the makers.

We started with making the teapot body on the wheel. Teapots were large and small, some with shapely bellies and some tall and angular. We thought about whether the teapots required a gallery, whether that gallery would be shallow or not, would the lid sit over or below the teapot rim? Lids were then formed; some would drop in and some sit on top.

Chris demonstrated throwing lids off the hump and we discussed the importance of measuring inside and out so that lids and pots fit together perfectly. Nina said she is a long time potter but has never made teapots before. She felt that “you can’t go wrong with Chris as a teacher. He always has so many tips,” and it was worth the cost of the course just to learn that “holes don’t shrink.” At the end of day one everyone had at least two teapot bodies and several lids to choose from.

Day two took us through trimming and further shaping of the pots and lids. Chris demonstrated techniques for adding texture and decoration to pots. Some techniques required a steady hand and eye as in chattering; others were as simple as hitting the side of the pot with a stick, but the effect was gorgeous and these pots took on subtle curves and indentations that would surely take on glazes in the

loveliest ways.

We started to consider spouts with Chris demonstrating techniques for throwing, cutting and fixing spouts to pots. More decisions needed to be made, would the spout be short and fat, long and thin? Would the teapot have holes drilled or would it pour freely, tealeaves and all?

Day three and we were on the home stretch, near completed teapots sat in front of us as we pulled handles and remembered to make a hole in the lid for the steam to be released.

Handles and spouts were attached, decorations applied and final touches worked through. Chris took us through applying glazes that would work with the texture and decoration on our pots as well as how to consider where glazes will go to down the pot, how to wax inside galleries and where to glaze and wax on lids.

And then three days of intense pottery were over. Many in the group commented on just how much is covered in those three days with Jill noting how useful our learnings are for all aspects of our pottery practise, not just in relation to teapots. We all felt that the course is, at times, challenging with “why would anyone make a teapot?” as a common refrain. Still, everyone commented on how much fun we had and that the course had far exceeded expectations.

The group appreciated Chris’s depth of knowledge and experience and, as Erin put it “his affable and solution focused approach” to teaching the workshop. We are hoping to get together some time in the near future to show off and compare our teapots.



BE THE POTTER ON  
EVERYONE'S LIPS  
CANBERRA POTTERS 45TH  
ANNIVERSARY CUP COMPETITION



## CANBERRA POTTERS 45TH ANNIVERSARY CUP COMPETITION - SUBMISSION DATE EXTENDED

We're not giving up on our anniversary. Now might be the perfect time to work on that cup design. We are extending the closing date for submissions until Friday 31 July 2020.

Let's get those creative juices flowing!

[Learn more](#)



## read

Not ceramics but a great read.

[Why You Should Ignore All That Coronavirus-Inspired Productivity Pressure](#)

By Aisha S. Ahmad March 27, 2020 The Chronicle of Higher Education

and something ceramics as well...

[Novelty Mugs Are the Only Mugs I Want to Drink My Coffee From | Bon Appétit](#)

is well worth a quick read if you're making mugs at the moment.

## watch

We're enjoying watching Keith Brymer Jones on Instagram [@keithbrymerjones](#). Some great short demos to learn some new skills or brush up on ones you already know.

## listen

MudTalk Podcast

[Your Must Have Clay Tool](#)

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## Contributions to the Newsletter

Would you like to include something in our Newsletter. We welcome your input and ideas. Please send text and photos to [editor@canberra.potters.com.au](mailto:editor@canberra.potters.com.au) by the end of the second week of the month.

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