

STUDIO VISIT

Jesse Jones

Pleasant Hill, Oregon



Just the Facts

Clay

stoneware and porcelain

Primary forming method

wheel throwing and slipcasting

Primary firing temperature

wood firing, cone 13+

Favorite surface treatment

wad marks

Favorite tools

Giffin Grip, metal ribs, a welder, and a chainsaw

Studio playlist

Pandora and podcasts

Wishlist

floor drain

Pleasant Hill Pottery was founded in 2000 by the late Tom Rohr and his wife Kathryn Finnerty. Tom and Kathryn built their studios and completed many improvements on the beautiful 10-acre property. I began working with Tom in 2005 and became a member of his firing crew. My wife, Lauren, and I purchased the property in 2012 with the goal of continuing to build a wonderful place for the community to fire and preserving the legacy of generosity at Pleasant Hill Pottery.

Studios

Pleasant Hill Pottery is home to two full studio spaces and four wood kilns. My 800-square-foot studio is attached to the house and divided into three rooms. A main workroom houses my wheels, work tables, shelves, and slab roller and is connected to a small room with two bisque kilns and shelving for greenware. Slip casting and glazing happen in the third room. The large work tables and adjustable shelving allow me to work on multiple concurrent projects. I throw standing up and have set my work tables at a variety of heights.



The 2400-square-foot barn started as a 6-stall, dirt floored horse-barn with a seasonal creek running through it. Rohr remodeled part of this space into a 1000-square-foot studio with sweeping views of our local peak, Mount Pisgah. The barn studio is used by the resident artist and, during firings, by the crew. It is equipped with wheels, tables, and shelves and also houses the clay mixer, pug mill, mold-making area, and dry materials. Firing crew quarters and a photo room are located upstairs.

I am currently in the design phase of an expansion of the barn that will include a large gallery, wood shop, metal shop, materials room, and more. Once complete, this new space will allow me to offer firing workshops at Pleasant Hill Pottery.

The wood-salt kiln and wood-soda kiln share a chimney, and are located in the barn. Ware carts can be rolled between the studio and these kilns. The train kiln is located adjacent to the

barn in its own kiln shed. The anagama is about 300 feet down the hill in a 1500-square-foot kiln shed. I routinely carry pots via ware boards from my studio to the anagama and back, a round trip of 1000 feet.

Paying Dues (and Bills)

I have been working with clay for 20 years. My interest in ceramics began in high school and grew during the time I spent at Oregon State University's craft center. My training has come from a few key instructors (Keith Moses and Tom Rohr), observation of my peers, and hands-on experience. I spend 10–20 hours a week in the studio, generally on evenings and weekends with no set schedule. I make a variety of work throughout the year and tend to stockpile bisqueware; selecting the appropriate work depending on the type of firing. My primary focus is functional



kitchen and tableware (usually fired in the salt and soda kilns), although lately I have been making larger coil-built pots and slab-built trays specifically for the anagama and train kiln firings.

Much of my time is spent facilitating firing opportunities for a wonderful (and expanding) community of wood-fire artists in the Pacific Northwest. We work together to process wood, fire the kilns, and maintain and improve the facilities. Firing with a group of artists leads to lively discussions and refinement of ideas. We average about 10 firings a year, burning 30–50 cords of wood scrap sourced from three local sawmills.

I offer a one year work/trade wood-fire residency program. The resident shares the workload of running the pottery, allowing me more time to focus on making my own work. Examples of the work/trade tasks include clay and glaze mixing, yard work, and wood processing. The resident lives in a 200-square-foot tiny house located between the anagama kiln shed, the wood-fired sauna, and the lower studio.

I have a full-time job as a civil engineer, managing public infrastructure construction projects. My engineering education has provided me useful organizational and problem solving skills that I utilize daily in the studio. This stable source of income, along with the fact that I am an organized pack rat—scavenging bricks, scrap metal, and other building materials for use in future projects—allows me to pursue improvements.

The momentum of the operation is escalating quickly as new opportunities and improvements continue to present themselves. I will continue to grow Pleasant Hill Pottery and plan to eventually transition to running the facility full time.

Research and Inspiration

Social media, primarily Instagram and Facebook, provide me with immediate inspiration and feedback. With the advent of instant and global communication, I feel connected to the larger wood-fire



ALL PHOTOS: JOE ROBINSON/EAST CREEK ANAGAMA.

community in a way that would not have been possible even a few years ago. Workshops, conferences, and reading bolster my creative spirit. Firings and work parties allow the crew to share ideas (and potluck recipes).

Rohr instilled a playful attitude at the pottery that I seek to continue. A hard day's work processing wood is followed by a round of bocce ball, a session on the climbing wall, or a trek around the land on the newly installed disc golf course. During the work week, I alternate between swimming and yoga at lunchtime and play in a weekly ultimate Frisbee league.

Inspiration also comes from our large garden that provides vegetables, fruit, and a place to relax outside the studio.

Marketing

I maintain a small gallery (150 square feet) that is open year round and I host two large pottery sales each year. These sales,

which take place in May and December, showcase the work of my firing crew as well as other local artists. The pottery sales have been growing steadily and are a great way to connect with our local community of supporters. During the sales, the crew cooks wood-fired pizza and gives tours of the property. Customers end up staying for hours, becoming informed and engaged in the process.

I exhibit my work at several group and invitational shows each year, as well as in a few local galleries. I post images of finished and in-process work on social media and my website and plan to start an Etsy account to sell work online soon.

If you're in the area, stop by for a visit and see the kilns, studios, current projects, and future plans.

www.pleasanthillpottery.com

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