Interviewee: Keith Hershberger (KH)  
Interviewer: Meredith McGriff (MM)  
AFC Collection Number: AFC 2018/030  
Interview ID: 5060  
Date: October 15, 2018  
City/State: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
Venue: In the dining room of interviewee Keith Hershberger’s home.  
Language(s): English

Note: Keith’s infant daughter and his dog were both present for the interview, so there are a number of background noises as well as interruptions (and therefore many shorter video files).

Video File #1 (afc2018030_05060_mv01.mp4)

MM 0:02  
I'll start us off. I'm Meredith McGriff, it's October 15, 2018, for the record. And if you would introduce yourself, and just tell us where we are.

KH 0:13  
Okay. You want me to look at the camera when I talk or look at you?

MM 0:16  
Either way.

KH 0:17  
Okay. My name is Keith Hershberger and we're in my house in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I'm a full time potter at this point. I've been been working, making my living in clay for over 20 years. Teaching, production, varieties of things like that. But a couple years ago, quit the day job and gradually have sort of lost the part time positions as well. Now it's what I do. Well, I have a baby. So I watch my baby and I make pots.

MM 0:50  
Great, thanks. So how did you first get started with ceramics?

KH 0:57  
My very first was high school. I, in... I mean, I'm trying to think when I first took clay, I don't know. I mean, my first memory of it. My first memory of clay was, we had a sculpture class in high school and we had one week that we were allowed to work on the wheel because we only had one wheel. And it was this, it was a, it was like a double wheel in a in a metal, looked like sort of like a dry sink. Like a metal box with two wheels and a little, like it was, I don't know what it was made of, and it had an off/low/high switch. And my memory is that our teacher didn't actually really know that much what she was doing but we got one week to play on the wheel. So I like, spent one week and I made one pot and every day... I have it actually, I can go get it. And I would cover it with plastic every day, and come back and work on it. Hold on... grab it, it's right here. Yeah, this is my first, the first pot I ever made right there.

MM 2:07  
That's great.

KH 2:08
There it is. Work of genius. No, just kidding. But uh... So I did that and I liked it. But then I went to school at, in Goshen, Goshen College, and went sort of expecting to be an art education major. And very quickly realized that the feel of the ceramic studio was where I felt at home. Part of it, I think, was sort of the potters' natural inclination towards community and friendliness and communication and sharing ideas. And whereas, even in a small school, like, the fine art department is very much like you forge your way as the lone artist and, and I felt like, wow, this is just a great place to hang out. Like, I liked it. So I just started spending more time there, taking more classes. And along the way, I dropped the education part, too, which is funny, because I ended up teaching for most of my professional life. But at places where I didn't need a certificate. But um, but yeah, so I, coming out of college then I had been, I had sort of after... Sorry I'll start that sentence again. I would say my sophomore year of college, the first term of my sophomore year of college is the last term that did not take clay, I took then clay the, every term for the rest, I just like kept taking, like advanced, like, ceramics 300, or whatever it was, right, again and again and again and again. And yeah, it was, it was great. Getting out of college, I was able to find, luckily enough, work in clay, and I've been doing it ever since. So.

MM 4:12
That's great. Did you grow up in Goshen?

KH 4:14
I, no, um, I grew up, I was born in eastern P.A. And then my family was in Kenya for a while. And then I was in Lancaster County. And then I was in Lancaster for like middle school, high school, and then Goshen. And my sister is in Indianapolis and my sister had gone to Goshen. So it was just sort of a natural place, and... yeah.

MM 4:41
Why did you pick Goshen?

KH 4:43
I grew up Mennonite, and I don't know, I don't know your background and how much you know about Mennonites. But as a Mennonite youth, at least in the late 80's... As a Mennonite youth in the late 80s. I don't know, it was just sort of expected like, you will go to one of the Mennonite colleges right? And really there were two choices. There was sort of the like, good Mennonite college in Virginia. And then there was the like, not bad, but like, the like rebel Mennonite college in Indiana. And that was the one that had the art program. Like the other one didn't even have an art program. You would take art classes at the other local college or whatever, but. It was where I wanted to be. I don't know, my everyone I knew who I like, liked went there. And I was like, I don't know, I guess it's a stupid reason to go to college. But I, like I look at these kids that I've been teaching it with, like I taught high school for a number of years and just the work that they go into with like researching schools and like applying to schools, and I think I was like an idiot. I just like I visited Goshen. I was like, yeah, I'm sold, sign me up. But I would say I loved Goshen. I mean, the a great thing for me about Goshen was that it was, it was so small, that I felt like I had very sort of one-on-one almost friend relationship with Marvin Bartel. And I could bother him, he could talk to me, you know, like we... and, and because it was small, there weren't a queue of people like signing, lining up to be the person who ran the studio or did things in the studio. So like, I ended up, I fired most gas kilns that, like got fired, I fired for like several years there towards the end, because it's sort of like, someone's got to do it, Marvin specifically wanted students to do it. And so I was like, yeah, I'll do it. Like and I didn't know what I was doing. But I like looked at the wall and like figured out how to do it and then you teach other people as well, like people were coming up behind you. And I don't know, like that sort of, like now I just look at people with masters [degrees] who are fighting for studio tech positions. And I'm just like, I am so lucky that I came through when I did because like, I was just able to sort of fall into some work. Not so glamorous work all the time. But like I, I don't know, like my, like I said like college was... Marvin's attitude was always try it. See what happens. And in a small program like that, it worked. Like, I like, we would do ridiculous things. I tried, there was a like the bones of an old catenary arch kiln that I said, like I want, I wish that was a wood kiln. And he said, "Well, why don't you try to research how to do, castable, and build a castable door. And like, just fire it and see if you can fire it as a wood kiln." And I was like, "Okay, that sounds fun." And so I tried. It actually
didn't, I mean, it got to, it got to temperature, but it started, the door started falling apart as I was firing it. So like, I did not get nice parts out of it. But it like, it was an experience like, so like, I don't know, I feel like that sort of thing you wouldn't necessarily get at a massive competitive situation. So I was, I was really glad for Goshen.

MM  8:20
Yeah. That's great. What did you do after you got to college?

KH  8:26
The very first thing I did, which is, I don't know, sort of ridiculous, but I was sort of at a loss for what to do next. And a friend of mine who lives in Tucson ran into this woman who was running an art gallery, and it's called Tubac, it's like halfway between Tucson and Mexico. Like out in the middle of the desert. It's a little like, it's a little tourist town, like it's a little like, shops, and no one actually lives there. They like, live in Tucson or whatever, and then come in to open up the shops. But she did. Her and her husband did. They lived in the gallery and they like, pulled a cot out of the closet at night. And they wanted a potter. And so I went and it was, it was really bad. I shouldn't have done it. Like I mean, I I didn't stay, like I was there for like a week I was like, I realized, like no one comes here. I'm totally alone, like I'm not going to make any money. And, and probably just the place I was at in my life too was like, I'm not up for this challenge. Like you need someone... I don't know, I maybe I should have stuck it out, maybe my life would be like ridiculously different if I had stuck it out and made it work. I'm sure I could have made it work. But I was, at that point, it felt like this is not the right decision. This was an impulsive move to like, get out and go somewhere. So that was my first... which didn't work.

KH  10:01
And then I moved back home to Lancaster. And that summer got a job in Maine teaching ceramics at a summer camp. And then very quickly, I found... Pittsburgh, there is this program that had just started called Pulse. Which was, again Mennonites, there's this Voluntary Service idea of going and living somewhere for a year or two and sort of living in the community and doing service work. And Pulse was this sort of, I don't know like VS point two sort of thing where, it was a house, a bit like it was there was one physical house in Pittsburgh, it's actually like two blocks from here. And people would come and live there. And you would get a, you live for free there and you'd get a food stipend and a very small, I think was $50 a month at that point, living stipend. And you could then... and they would find a job placement for you in your field. And the idea would be like living community, most of the jobs were sort of like helping professions. Not all, but the idea was getting kids who didn't have, at that point, I feel like the mission was getting kids from rural areas into the cities, into Pittsburgh, like Pittsburgh needed young people. It was bringing people into Pittsburgh, the founder was a big proponent of Pittsburgh, and Mennonite, and thought that Pittsburgh could use some like, hard workin' young people to come and stay. And maybe that's not what he would say. But that's sort of how I felt about it. So I came in, I got a tech position at Manchester Craftsman's Guild, which is a nonprofit youth and arts center in Pittsburgh. And at the end of the year, they hired me on part-time and I was able to find also part-time work as production potter for another, it's called Zotter the Potter. Walter Zotter is, he's now deceased, but the pottery is still going. And so I worked there throwing and decorating his pots, and doing tech work and then eventually started doing some teaching as well at Manchester. And that went on for a couple years. I... Manchester it, I think sort of all nonprofits, they go through the sort of cycles of like funding and not funding and hard times and good times. And so most of staff was laid off at one point and I went full time at the pottery then and so I worked for, think I was full time with the production for like four or five years. And eventually got to the point where I felt like, I'm no longer learning anything here. And sort of serendipitously, a full time teaching position opened up back at Manchester. It wasn't in clay, but I then moved back and it was sort of a generic art teaching position. And then moved through a variety of teaching things there doing, like I worked in digital arts for a couple years and then moved back into ceramics and I did some exhibition stuff as well, and then finally was like, if I'm not gonna make a break now I'm never gonna make the break. And so I just said it's time to make pots. Also in there, I you know, odd jobs, I taught adjunct professor occasionally at community college ceramics classes. And I taught like one off, like, like, sort of visiting artists classes at a local elementary school for a little bit and stuff like that. I'm sort of glad to be done teaching right now for a little bit. I mean, I love teaching, but I'm sort of done.
Take a break. Sounds good. Yeah.

I guess also in there, I'm trying to think of like my full ceramic resume I... So after I... So, during the period when I was doing the production work, I wasn't really making my own pots at all. I think that's largely just, I mean, I didn't have a kiln. I mean, I had his space, but his space was so geared towards doing, and we made like sort of faux salt-glazed like blue and gray, you know, mostly pots for people's weddings that said, you know, like, Jim and Marilyn, June 22, you know, like that sort of thing with a little logo. And so his firing was very regimented. And like he did it just the way he wanted and, and there are, most of the glazes I was familiar with, I wasn't sure if they'd look good in that kiln and I wasn't about to suggest that we fire a different way or asked to use this. And it was very, like, it's his livelihood, I didn't want to, like get involved in that, right. So I just made his pots and occasionally would try to find things to stick in, to make things.

Moving back MCG, I was able to make some work in the evenings there. But eventually, that became just sort of, I wanted more, and I moved to Union Project, which, you know, probably from Justin Rothshank was one of the founders of Union Project. And that also is just a couple blocks from here. And so I joined the co-op there, and I was in the co-op there for, I'm gonna say three or four years. And it was fantastic. At that point, we, we had just built a, and I had helped them even before I was part of the so-op, I'd helped them build a wood kiln. But, and that was sort of a situation very similar to Goshen at that point, where it was like, you want to figure out how to like, fire wood kilns? Yeah, build one, go ahead, do it, you know, we don't have anyone else, we don't have anyone who's in charge of it. Because it's like, the way the co-op was structured was, if there is a desire for something, then you should do it. And like, if there's money or whatever, you know, you should make it happen. And then like, bring people along. And, you know, if you want to, like there was a gas kiln, like then people like who wanted to find the gas, would fire the gas, you know, people who wanted to fire the electric kiln, you know, whatever, if there's something you want to try, you should do it. And so, Joe Delphia is another one of the other co-op members at that point, and I had been part of the original team to build the kiln, and then became sort of the only ones firing the kiln for a period of like, maybe even eight... like it was a long time that we were firing that kiln. And learned a lot about wood fire. And just by doing it, because I'd done it occasionally. And I sort of knew the basic idea of like, you put wood in and it gets hotter. But I didn't know, I don't know, you know, I didn't. And I still don't know the ins and outs. Joe has done, Joe now has a masters and did a lot of work on learning how to use the fire to get different effects and learning. So he's much more of a master than I am, I'm still more of a play it by feel sort of wood firerer. But...

Yeah. But so, that was a very, that was a great place for me to sort of go from someone who is doing, making pots from living but like, but doing it by making other people's pots and teaching other people how to make pots, and occasionally making my own pots, to like, "Okay, I'm actually making work now that I'm excited by," and I can then find venues to try to sell work. And eventually, then I got to the point where I felt like I was outgrowing it and I needed my own space, I needed sort of more autonomy, room to leave work out and like have stuff in process that I didn't you know, I guess as time gets shorter, too, you, like you don't necessarily have, like, if I can only get there for an hour, it's not even worth it because I have to like go set up my wheel, throw for 40 minutes, clean up my wheel wrap pots that are soaking wet in plastic and you destroy them, you know. And plus, I started selling in numbers that I felt like I needed space. So again, just sort of happened that a number of us reached that, that ceiling at the same point. And we're lucky enough to find space for... So there's four of us who are across the river in Sharpsburg renting a studio space there.

That works for some people.
And I'm actually now in the midst of, we are likely moving soon to Philadelphia, my wife is done with her job here. And probably in January will start to move to Philadelphia. So I'm going for the next, in my next... The next thing is I'm going to find a bigger studio just for me. Because like we have, like 1400 square feet in a basement for four of us. And it seemed like, and I think many of us when we started, we're still at this point where like, yeah, this is fine. But a number of us have, are now at the point where we're making enough work that it's just not, it can't contain everything we're doing. So I'm working here and I'm working at home and I'm sort of shuttling stuff back and forth. Yeah.

I graduated in, so I'm trying to think when I... I stayed four and a half. So I left, I left Indiana in 1995, in like January 1995. Technically, I walked in '94. But I moved to Arizona for a week in 1995. And then I ended up in Goshen. No sorry, I ended up in Pittsburgh then the following fall, like September of '95. Then I worked at Manchester and Zotter's until, I want to say I worked three years until I was full time as Zotter's, and then I worked at Zotter until 2003 I think and then I moved back full time to MCG and finally stopped working it MCG two years ago, I think...

I'm going to pause just for a second because I have a time limit on my camera...

So, tell me about your, your style with pottery. How has that developed over the years, the different techniques you've tried and things like that?

That's, I don't know. That's really interesting. I've been thinking about that lately. Because, so for years, and I think this is part of, a function of the way I bounced around, like I, in college, you see things and they're exciting and you try them. I always have been interested in function. For whatever reason, I've never, I've never wanted to be a sculptor I've never wanted to make... I've wanted to make pots. Somehow, I think Marvin showed me a book of Warren MacKenzie in college and Warren MacKenzie became my God. And I like, I actually I went on pilgrimage to meet Warren, like the summer I graduated from college, I, I looked him up in the like, I called directory assistance. And it worked. And I got Warren MacKenzie and I, and I called him on the phone. Like, who does this right? Like, but whatever I did, I called him and said, "Hey, I'm from Indiana, and I want to come see your pots. When can I come?" And he said, "Well, I'm unloading a kiln next Tuesday, if you want to come Wednesday, there'll be pots." And like, all right, so I just hopped in the car, and like, went off and got there at like, seven in the morning. And I had sort of first pick of the pots. It was pretty crazy. So I was just like looking at everything, it was me and a friend. And about 40 minutes later, someone, like a car started pulling up with people with boxes. And they just started coming like, putting stuff in boxes. And I was like, Okay, now it's like, I've been
looking. now I have to grab like, the... So I've got a handful of Warren Mackenzie pieces, from back then and he was amazing. And I love that whole, it was a very romantic idea of like, the potter living out in like, with this beautiful little studio in the woods and like... And no, I'm not there anymore.

KH  2:03
But like, I do love that idea of, of making beautiful, affordable, functional pieces that people will, that people can afford to use every day. And that has been a challenge. I mean, we can talk about that, whatever, that's like, pricing is a challenge. How do you afford to actually be a person and you know, you can, there's this whole fight about he's a bad person, because, you know, he was able to fund his pottery by teaching university and the rest of us can't do that. And so he's... whatever, like, but I don't care. I think it's a great, I think it's a great model, that if you can make a lot of pots, then you can afford to sell them so that people can buy them. And I, I am not at a place where I'm selling pots as cheaply as I sometimes wish I was. But, I don't know, if that's a whole different question. But any case. So I have that as sort of my, that has always been sort of my center is I want to make pieces that are beautiful and functional. And that can be accessible to people. And I like wood fire. I'm not sure what drew me to it at the beginning. But part of it is that most of what, most of what, and I think actually most of what most people know of as ceramics is this sort of, at least in my generation is this sort of cone 10 stoneware you know, like drippy, blue, black, like iron red glazes. And that's fine, but it never like, it never like, really got me going. And there was something about the, the I know magic is a bad word, I guess. But like there's something magic about the, and I liked raku for the same reason except for they weren't, it's not functional. So I like, got rid of it because I wanted to be able to say you can use this thing. But there's something about the way the fire does the decoration in a potentially unexpected way. And I would say... I'm going to keep digressing as I talk, and I'm sorry, that's just how I am.

KH  4:23
I would say that even now that I feel like I have a good deal of control over wood kiln, I still am, I still love the magic of it. Like I don't think it has to be either/or, I think that I can say, I know what I'm doing, and I know how to get these effects. But there's still, I can't like, I can't put a pot into a wood kiln the same way I can put a pot into an electric kiln and say I'm going to get this exact thing, right? There's a little bit of, of sort of the magic of the firing that, that makes you open the kiln and like there's a sense of wonder, you know. And that I think is a lot of what I loved about wood firing. I love the surface of the soft and the changes. I love to, not having to do a lot of decoration and having it have, because I really like subtle things I don't really like sort of over the top, loud colors. And so there was something about not having to do a ton of decoration, and having stuff come out of the kiln looking interesting. I've always aesthetically, I've always been attracted to sort of weather like old, you know, like, like, billboards that are old and peeling, and you see the layers coming through, and cement and, you know, like, like, I love the sort of like old leathery, that sort of, that sort of texture is what I really like and, and wood fire is getting there. It's, you know, that's probably I mean, there's other ways you can do it manually. But like, there's something about the process of wood firing that gets you in that ballpark. Just without having to do a ton of work to get there. I mean, you have to do some work, because you have to cut the wood and like whatever, but you don't have to like, painstakingly do layers of decoration. And I sort of like that the kiln is the decorating tool. I don't know if that makes sense.

KH  6:28
So that was where I was drawn. And then I ended up not being able to do it for years, and just sort of did whatever was available. And so my work was sort of everywhere. And most of it was, you know, cone 10 gas, because that's what I had. I was not interested in electric firing, because what I knew of electric firing was, it looked like plastic. It felt like plastic, like, it was bright colors. I didn't want it, right. So I was doing shinos, I was doing other things, but like, just experimenting. And then we built the wood kiln and I had sort of unfettered access for that period of what? Like, six, seven years. And I was just like, I considered myself like a wood fired potter. You know, and it felt like my kiln because we were the ones managing and we were the ones firing it. We fired four or five times a year, and it's a pretty big kiln. And...
Union Project?

Yeah. And then, I saw the end of my Union Project term coming and thought, "What am I going to do?" Because I don't have a wood kiln. And I need to find a way to make pots. And so I, while I was still at, so I was still at MCG--Manchester Craftsmen's Guild--and working with the co op. And so I started doing research. And this is one of the great things about MCG is that there is, the teaching artists there are in charge of what classes you teach. And they want you to at least to some extent to teach what you love and what you're interested in. And if that means that you are pushing forward your own work, while you're bringing kids along with you, then that's fantastic, because that's how you bring the most excitement, right? And so I did some classes in red, you know, like I said, let's try and figure out this red cone 6 thing. And so we did some work like that. I played around, I found some glazes that worked, I found like some dipping in slip sort of thing that worked. And, sort of moved to the cone 6 so that I had sort of a line of work ready for the wood fire, quit. And I still sometimes put work in the wood fire kiln, but they officially fired it for the last time this fall, so it's done now.

But I found, sort of to get your first question about like how's your work developed. Over the past two years, I would say that I've realized that wood fire is now the thing I do for fun, like as a hobby. And it's, and I've found a way to do things that I'm happy with aesthetically in my electric kiln in a way that now, wood firing seems, not frivolous, but seems like, "Well, that's not what I do." It's something that I can, like I have it in my toolbox, but it's not like, my work is the red clay stuff I'm doing now. And so far I've been like, gearing it exclusively towards sort of a production line, which is kind of clean and has been taking off in sort of unexpected ways, which I'm happy about. But I feel like now I'm at a place where knowing that the wood firing is, is sort of not going to be, I'm not gonna be making many wood fired pots in the next coming years, that I've been, I haven't actually started doing it yet. But like, it's all in my head, like the next step of now how can I take what I'm doing and bring back the sort of looser aesthetic of the wood fire. And I have ideas, they're coming, we'll see.

Yeah.

So, so it's fun. I don't know, I feel like it's fun to, it's fun to play. And I guess it's like, like I said, I've always sort of been everywhere. And, this is the sort of the first time in my life where I've narrowed myself down to like, this is my line of work. And like what I make fits aesthetically as a unit. And I guess I'm ready to start playing with that a little bit, but sort of trying to keep it in... I'm ready start playing... How can I say this? Like I, I think it will still feel like, of a piece. But it'll be like, "Oh, that's clearly different." But I can see that, I can see the similarities, like some of the images will be the same, but the form is going to be slightly different. You know. And then with the word fire I love sort of like the runny like, the dipping of the slips and the finger marks and the, like, wadding marks and that sort of thing. And I, and like painterly, like brushwork and that I don't have it all in my, in the cone 5 stuff I'm doing now. I've been doing decals, and like, clean glazes and, and there's still a little bit of grips on the glazes and stuff. But I'm trying to keep it sort of clean-ish. But I think I will try to start pursuing more of a matte surface and more slips and... as well. So, that's where I'm at.

And I've seen all this work now that people are doing with low fire soda. And that's super exciting. I actually own a pile of brick. A friend of mine had to tear down his wood kiln, and he's in his mid 60s and said, "Look, I'm too old for this. I'm too old to tear down the this kiln and rebuild it. So if you want to clean out the kiln site and tear down the kiln, you can have the brick." And I was like, "Well, that's a steal." I didn't realize it's like way more work than you could ever possibly imagine. It was out in the middle of this meadow like up a little hill and this
thing, and like no truck is going to get up there to get it. So I had to like, carry, I think my estimate for the tonnage of brick I moved by hand to where a truck could get it is I think around 16 tons.

MM  12:55
Wow.

KH  12:59
Or else, maybe it was sixteen, maybe it was eight tons, maybe it was 16,000 pounds. But it was a lot, with like brick tongs, down the hill onto pallets, to where like I had to then rent a truck that had a like a four by four, like a big three wheeler forklift to come out through the meadow and get it and take it back to where there was gravel for the truck. And then moved it to, I have a cousin in Washington PA, it's about an hour south who has a plot of land, so I moved it there thinking I'm going to build it before the baby comes. And the baby, my, I had a baby this last November. This all happened like summer, year and a half ago. And it didn't happen. And so now I've got a pile of bricks there. And now we're moving to Philadelphia. So, I haven't told them yet that they've inherited a pile of brick. I need to figure out what... I mean someday I will. I will. I mean it's not in their way. I'm sure. It's down like in the woods, off, so I think it'll be fine. But, um.

MM  14:00
Maybe better that you don't have a kiln there?

KH  14:02
Yeah, it probably is. It probably is. But so someday I will build a kiln, and I'm thinking maybe what I'm going to build, you know, I have enough that I could build a small wood kiln, and build like a small, low fire soda. Which, because it was a big kiln. So hey, you know, it's exciting, I don't know, that's...

MM  14:21
Yeah, I'm curious to see where that goes for you.

KH  14:31
Oh, you know what, she's sitting up. Can we take a break now?

Video File #3 (afc2018030_05060_mv03.mp4)

MM  0:03
So, something I'd like to hear more about is, you've got this shared studio right now with other people. How do you divide up the space? Do you share equipment, how you navigate working?

KH  0:17
Yeah. So we have sort of four areas that we've delineated for private space, there's no walls, but like, there's sort of roughly mapped out areas. So we each have our own shelving and work area. And then we have a, we have, each of us has a kiln. And luckily they're, they're all different sizes. So I have a large oval kiln. And then there are two sort of, like, mid range like, sort of, like a regular Skutt, and an L&L and then there's a baby kiln. And so you can...

KH  1:05
So we share kilns. And we just have a kiln firing schedule that we sign up, we share a calendar, like a Google Calendar and sign up for when we need the kiln. And that, you know, is occasionally frustrating, but works pretty well. And then we have a shared, two shared tables, like a, like a sort of a staging area table, that is near the kilns where we can move stuff onto the table and into the kilns, from the kilns onto the table, and then back to our area, or workspace and then a glazing area. And the idea with both of those is that you don't leave stuff on them. You
know, it works sometimes. And sometimes it doesn't. But like I think it has, so far it's been great. It's nice. I do like working alone. But I also, it's nice to have people who I respect to sort of bounce ideas off of, especially if I'm... sorry, is there anything in there that she can't have?

MM 2:18
We're good. If she starts pulling stuff out, we'll talk.

KH 2:20
Okay, okay alright. Okay. It's, it's nice to have people to bounce stuff off of, and I feel like people who work totally alone, and sometimes going down the sort of road of not realizing that their values or their like, that stuff is slipping without having someone to sort of keep them in line. I don't know if that makes sense. But so you know, doing testing doing whatever, then like, also, I don't... there's opinions. There's also like, shared resources if someone has, like, Jenna has a slab roller, I don't have a slab roller. You know, it's nice to be able to use her slab roller occasionally, I don't have to use it very often. But like, occasionally, it's nice to be able to do slab rolling, right.

MM 2:46
Without having to buy one.

KH 3:02
Yeah. So stuff like that is really nice for the shared space. Well, I think again, my next space, I think I'm not going to share. But I think that's just a function of the fact that I'm getting orders that are bigger than I can, that I've had to turn people away. And so I feel like I need to set myself up in a position where I can get, I don't know like, employees if I need employees, I need, you know... It's a strange place to be in, but I feel like that's where I'm at now. I'm gonna need some space.

MM 3:49
Yeah, yeah, it's a transition. If you're gonna have a lot of stuff... process... yeah, need the space. How and where do you sell your work right now?

KH 4:01
Um, it's been changing. I started out doing shows mainly, craft shows. And sort of, I started dabbling in wholesale. And then with the birth of Lydia, realized that shows weren't really going to work that much. Like I can't do much traveling and so I started doing almost exclusively wholesale, except for a couple shows a year and some local shows that are easier to do. And I recently got a wholesale client that is ordering more than I can handle. So..

MM 4:42
That's great.

KH 4:42
So yeah, that's what at this point, I don't know and I need to find a way to, I don't know what's going to happen next. I don't know how to deal with that, like how to, because they would take like they, they tried to place a 7000 piece order this fall. And I said do you understand that I'm, I'm one person and I'm making these things by hand. And I said just for perspective, I have a big kiln but like, my. I have to fire these things three times. So even just a firing schedule for 7000 pieces would be almost six months, like not even making it not even like time to make it or pack it or ship it or whatever, just firing it would be like heating it up, cooling it down, heating it up again, you know, and they said, "Well, can we front you some money to buy another kiln?" And I said, "Well, yeah, except for that if I need another kiln then I need another space, and then I need to find another space and I need probably hire employees." So like and this isn't something that happens overnight. And so when I told him I was moving, like "Well, if you're moving like, let us know what we can do." So I'm like, I'm sort of feeling, like foolish not to
like, like take the gravy train that is, like, handed to me. Especially because I'm making, it's not like they pitch me work. Like I, like they took my work and said this is what we want. And so I'm like, "Okay, I'll do it." And this is sort of like, I hope that like my five year ago self wouldn't think I'm being kitschy, but like I started doing these dinosaurs, I love dinosaurs. And so I have these images of dinosaurs on the mugs and with this latest iteration actually have one right over here...

**Video File #4 (afc2018030_05060_mv04.mp4)**

KH  0:01
So anyways I'm making these mugs with the images of dinosaurs on them. I like them. It does feel a little weird to be sort of in mass production of something. And I, but, I don't know I feel like as long as I like, mean they're, they're nice mugs, the handles go nice. They're nice to use. They're attractive. And I think, I don't know I feel like I was talking to people at the show this year, this summer, and people were asking, like, what's with the dinosaurs and... I mean I first started doing, I like, I had said earlier that I worked in digital arts for a while. And graphic design stuff and I just, I like these sort of clean graphic images on these things. And I had some other stuff I was doing some plants and some birds and stuff and just for a joke I put dinosaurs on them because I love dinosaurs. And they started selling. So, I don't know, I feel like dinosaurs hit this like weird nostalgia point with, with a lot of people where, they remind us of our childhood and they like, make you smile. But dinosaurs, if you see them in popular culture are either scary, like Jurassic Park scary, or else they're like goofy cartoons. And so I feel like I've got this like, elegant dino art niche. Like, where I don't see anything like this where it's just like a clean design of a dinosaur on like, a well designed... So in any case, that's what I'm making. And they're buying them up as fast as they can. And so then my hope is like, if I can find a way to, to mass produce these a little bit more and still like them, then I could maybe then have time to make stuff that... Like do the more, explore... that I was talking about.

MM  1:58
Absolutely. That's neat.

KH  2:03
Um, sorry. So you were asking about the studio. So yeah, so yeah, that's what I'm doing. I feel like I have to move to my own space to like, just have the space I need.

MM  2:14
Yeah. That makes a lot of sense... Just looking through... How far were you travelling for craft shows, and how often were you doing those?

KH  2:27
The year that I did a bunch. I would say, and by a bunch. I mean, I think I did... can you find different toy? Sorry. Give me that.

MM  2:47
But it's the best one!

KH  2:47
Yeah, that is the best one.

KH  2:50
The year that I did a bunch of shows I probably did 12 to 15, which I know isn't a bunch for some people, but it's, it felt like a lot to me. And it was sort of just within a day's drive. I think my furthest away was Brooklyn. I'm still doing Ann Arbor every year because Ann Arbor is a great show. I've done Three Rivers because it's in my backyard and I can say here at night. I went to Virginia Beach. That was another far one. But sort of, that was sort
of my stipulation was I don't really want to, I don't want to have to be out for multiple shows. I want to be able to come back. Part of that is, like, I started doing this with what I have and what I have is a Honda Fit. And I can fit my booth and my pots in my Honda Fit for one show. And some shows I'm, like, tucking loose-packed mugs under the seats. You know, like all you know, it's pretty crazy, but it like, I found a booth display and a tent, and a way to put pots in that fit in the Honda... Yeah.

MM  4:05
It's a lot of work.

KH  4:05
It is a lot of work.

MM  4:11
So you also have this pottery tour.

KH  4:13
Yeah. Here, I'm just going to move that to where it's not very visible. Yeah, that has been really exciting. Um, that... So a number of years ago. I'm going to say 2010. I saw.. here, maybe I'll move that down there, like, is it in screen if it's there? Is that a problem?

MM  4:38
No. It's fine.

KH  4:38
I think it was 2010. I met Bob Briscoe. And he did Three Rivers Arts Festival. And that same year he came to Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, and did a workshop. So I had spent some time with him, and then went to talk to him at his booth at Three Rivers Arts Festival. And he ended up not having a very good show week. And he said to me and a couple of people who were there with me, said, you know, the thing is these house tours, you really need to do this. Like, it's, it's a great way to sell pots. So I, I don't know, at that point, I had... maybe too much personal information, but my wife had left me that year. And I felt like, I need a project. I'm going to make a pottery tour, right. And so, and I, and Highland Park, I mean I think partially because of the Union Project. Partially because 10 years ago, this was a very inexpensive neighborhood to live in. There are a bunch of potters in the area. And so I talked to Jenna and I talked to Joe, Joe lives a couple doors down and Jenna lives a couple blocks that way. And said, Hey, I want to do this thing. And so we sat down and planned it out. There was another couple of people who were involved at the beginning who don't live here anymore. And then we asked another guy, Jeff Guerrero, who I worked with at MCG who also lives in the neighborhood if he wanted to be in it. And Union. And Union Project that same year was sort of trying to plan a holiday sale. And Jenna was the head of the co-op at that point. And so we said, well, why don't we just band together and do it all as one rather than doing two separate events, which doesn't really make sense. And so we started it. I remember the first year, I had... So it's in our houses. So it's structured a little bit differently than some other tours that I know. I mean, until recently, I would say it was the only tour I knew of that was urban. I know now that Philadelphia has an urban tour. It's the only tour I know of that is walkable, that is neighborhood specific. It is the only tour I know of that is in the homes of potters. I think most tours are in studios. And part of this was necessity for like, how we were set up. But part of it also is just that we liked the idea of inviting community into our homes, right. I guess it's nice to see where you met your work, but... I'm sorry, she's not normally fussy.

KH  7:38
But we liked the idea of like I said, inviting people into our homes. And we would get all these comments all the time, like, "You mean you invite strangers, like off the street into your homes? Like, what if someone's drunk? Or what if someone, like, tries to rob you? Or..." I'm like, "No one is going to try to rob us like, like it's a neighborhood" Like, I don't know, like, I don't know it... That was never a concern of mine. The concern that I'm
finding is more space. That as the tour continues to grow. Last year, there were several hours that it was tough to walk from this room to that room. There were so many people in the house, which is a great problem to have. But, so what I was saying the first year it was me and my friend Amanda Wolf was my guest that year, and we bought a box of wine and we set up and we said okay, you know, worst case scenario, it's the two of us drinking wine all day, right? And it was great. And it worked really well like, and each year continues to get more traffic, and more sales and sort of more public recognition of it. Which is fun. There was an article in, I forget, it wasn't a newspaper was some sort of online blog or something, last year that referred to this neighborhood, Highland Park, as a mecca of the pottery scene. I was like, all right. So. So it's been fun. This is the eighth year that we're doing it. There are, there are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 homes and Union Project. Each home has at least two guest artists. Some have three guest artists. And Union Project has I think six members of the co-op showing this year.

MM  9:48
So have you had people kind of come and go, over those years?

KH  9:51
Yeah, I have for for the whole tour until this year, I always had my friend Amanda Wolf as part of the tour. This year I finally felt like you know, I need to get fresh blood. And I tried to have three artists before to like be able to keep her and also mix it up. But it just felt too crowded with three artists. So this year, I'm having Mark Arnold who's in North Carolina now, and Sasha Barrett from Philadelphia. So it's a combination of local and national artists. We have yet to be bringing in... I guess Mark Arnold is sort of a, kind of a like commonly, like he's a recognizable potter. He's Insta-famous [Instagram famous]. But we don't, you know, we're not getting Bob Briscoe. We're not getting... you know, we're not getting big names at this point., but... it's a like, a little community tour.

KH  9:58
I'm gonna get her some toys... Here's a book... and your shaky egg. That'll make noise.

MM  11:15
We can pause if you want.

KH  11:16
Actually, maybe I'm gonna, do you mind if I sit her here, and I can talk and she might just be getting hungry.

Video File #5 (afc2018030_05060_mv05.mp4)

KH  0:10
So we were talking about the pottery tour. I don't know, I don't know what's next with it. I mean, the one interesting thing is I'm really bummed to be leaving town. Because I'm not sure then how, you know, at this point, our plan is to not sell this house right away. We have friends who are potentially going to rent it, and would be willing to let me run the tour out of it. And assuming my other for me, at this point seem to be okay with it, wouldn't mind having me as a, running a stop as someone who doesn't actually live here anymore. It sort of flies a little bit in the face of the idea. But I mean, it's always been a local/national, right. And I would still actually own the house. It's not like... I don't know, we'll see. But I hope that someone... It's a lot of work. It's a lot of work. And I feel like, because it's always been sort of my baby, I've been the one to just step up and do the work. And I'm not complaining, I like it. But I, I hope that someone else. I mean, I can continue running from Philadelphia that feels even weirder. So, I hope someone, I hope someone makes sure that it keeps going because it has become an institution. I mean, like people come every year, the same people come every year.

MM  1:38
Yeah. Did you, had you attended other tours? Did you have other models you were looking at?

KH  1:45
I didn't. So when I talked to Bob Briscoe, he said, you need to start a tour. Call me if you have questions. So once again, I think he actually gave me his number, as opposed to calling directory assistance like I did for Warren. But so again, I called him and we talked on the phone for like an hour. And I said, Look, we want to do this. But I mean, right off the bat, you run into problems of like, what is, what is the power structure? Like, I've never thought about this stuff, like, we're going to do this thing, like who is in charge of it? Who gets to make decisions as to how it runs? Right? You... Like we're starting at, when we started, we had five, we had five homes. And one person who lived, who was part of the founding group, who lived outside the neighborhood, right? So there were sort of six of us. Who were in charge of running it. One of those was Jenna, who was also the voice of the Union Project. So Union Project was sort of, Jenna was two hats. And so, I mean, and, and we didn't really, I know like... So I talked to Robert, about this, about like, how we should, how we structure it. And he said, Well, what we've done is we've said that, people who run their houses are in charge of their houses. Without question. Like, I get to decide who I invite. But no new houses are invited, no new stops are invited onto the tour without unanimous vote. So it almost never happens. Like so, they're at this point where they're not going to get any bigger unless like someone who everyone loves moves into the area. So that's, that was a question. And it's still a question because it's like, just over the course of like your general, like, if you have to make decisions with other people, like, you're not going to see eye to eye, right, all the time. And it gets difficult. And then when it comes down to like, making money and/or spending money. It's not easy. And so we, we sort of, our loose structure is that there's four of us, me, Jenna, Joe, and Jeff, who are sort of the, I don't know what you call it, the managing board, or whatever the like, the managers of the tour. The fifth house that we have now is, Stephanie Flom is her name. And she is, she makes pots, she does a number of other, she's not a full time potter, she does other work. And she does other visual arts as well. She makes really nice work. And she's got a good eye and she's got a lovely house. She's in the neighborhood. And so we said would you join the tour as sort of like a non-voting member essentially. Like, we can help you find guests if you need help finding guests.

KH  5:16
And so the four of us that make decisions about the tour in general, and she agrees to to be a stop. And I think it works out well for her because she enjoys it, she makes some money, but she also, like it's a fun event. So I don't know, like how do you grow? The problem with the neighborhood model is that you need to be in the neighborhood. And so as like, do you ask people to to host who aren't potters? Or do you ask any potter who happens to be living in the neighborhood to be a host whether or not you know, you know what I'm saying like, I don't know. So, and is like, renting an apartment in the neighborhood, does that count? I guess you know, I mean, Jeff rents an apartment so that's always been the case. We've always had apartments from day one. Yeah, but there's sort of questions. So I talked to him, we talked about that. We talked about structure, we talked about like marketing. How do you make it work? Where does marketing money go? And I think it's different for different things. He found that for him, underwriting public radio was massive. For us like, it's so expensive. I don't know like, if you've done this but like, we were, the first couple years we decided to do that we like, sunk you know, like something like ridi... like 80% of our budget into like marketing. But maybe not quite but like, huge chunk of our small budget into public radio and we did not see firm proof that it did anything. Like we had maybe one person say "Oh, I heard about it on the radio. That's why I came." At this point they're now, the both, or two of the three local public radio stations are our media sponsors so that we get, so that's good. I mean, like and that's something that Union Project... so this has been, Union Project is another interesting partner because, again, like at the start of the tour, Jenna was the voice of Union Project and she was also part of the tour and so we, everything was sort of, for the good of all, right? Um. Jenna left Union Project at the same time that I left MCG to get our own studio... and... and I love Union Project. I'm not, I don't want to say anything bad especially not on the record about you know, not even off the record! I don't want to say anything bad about Union Project! I love Union Project. But they are a separate organization with separate needs and separate wants. And having their name on the tour gets them very specific things, that they can then use for like, to go get funding and... but it's not
as easy anymore. That relationship especially because, like, what are the chances that people see this, like should I not

MM 8:38
I can turn this off if you would, if you want to give me some background, I can turn it off for a minute.

Video File #6 (afc2018030_05060_mv06.mp4)

KH 0:01
So yeah, working with Union Project, and we're trying to find ways to make everyone happy. To have Union Project get these things because they're doing. Like, I think a lot of what it does for them is it gets, they get to count people who come to the tour as like, interacting with Union Project. Right? Which they do, because they stop. But it's also like, we are in collaboration with you regarding, this is a Union Project sponsored event. Right? So they get to have, you know, a day when people from every neighborhood in the city, come and use Union Project. Which is really good for them. Right. Um, it's a diverse group, I guess, so you could be more diverse, but potters in general seem to be a white bunch, and draw white bunch... but, um... So that was another thing is how do you, how do you negotiate these sort of relationships? Union Project is invaluable for us, I think, because they have connections, they have, there are people who come because they know Union Project is on it. Like, they are known to be a force for good in the community. You know, they are, they're a well-thought-of community organization. They have a mailing list. That is, you know, thousands of people that we don't have, and they can target it, you know, so we have this sort of like super, like high tech targeted postcard mailing. They, you know, there's all sorts of things that being partners with Union Project gives us. It does mean that there are, that there's just things to think about. I mean, part of it is this whole idea of, we want to be about small space about like, people meeting artists in their own spaces.

KH 2:08
So like, I remember, so Union Project does this spring event called Mother of All Pottery Sales, where there's like 30 or 40 ceramic artists in their Great Hall, which is a really fun event. But the first year that happened, I remember people saying, why don't you just do this instead of a pottery tour? Why not, like, why make us go to all these spaces, why not just have one big place? And I'm saying, well, that's the whole point, like the whole, and maybe it's not a great model, in the long run, maybe this will be the downfall of it. But like, the whole point is that it's a event where you get to like, walk around and see different spaces. So, in some ways, I remember one year, the co-op had really large group of people participating. And they all sort of like pitched in money. And they had like, I don't know, if they had a keg, but they had like, it was like a party. And so like, people were coming here saying, like, man, the party's happening at Union Project. And I was like, okay, we need to find a way to nip that in the bud. Because that's not the idea. You know, not that I want them to do badly, but I don't want them to, like, suck the rest of the tour dry.

MM 3:25
Yeah.

KH 3:25
And so then we try to like, I almost feel like, thinking about it now I almost feel like when I hear reports on the people who run the Fed, like, you know, it like putting like brakes on or like, like making my new moves and like the rules of how things work to try and like, keep everything going together? Because then we started like, also, I don't know if this is interesting to you, but how do you run this sort of thing? Like, where does the money come from? Right? So we have, we first started doing a per person, like a per head fee. And it was nothing. I think it started out as like $75 per head, right. And then some hosts said, "Well, this year, I only want to have one person at my house. So then you're only giving $150, and I'm giving $300 for, my house is giving $300 your house is giving $75. Like that's not right, like you're getting the full-on benefit of not pulling your weight, of like not going
to the... It's not easy to have more people but like, you do the work and you get good people who like, promote the show, right? The more people promoting the show the more people come. So we tried to be like, Okay, let's do a per-house fee. Right? So you can have one, you can be by yourself if you want, but you're paying the full, whatever it is. And now this year, we finally are moving away from that, because it doesn't make sense anymore because we're, we're losing money, because now some people are having three artists and they're only paying for two, you know, so you know, like, Okay, so let's move to a per head again. But with the stipulation that you have to have at least two artists. So I don't know.

KH  5:15
So but, then the co-op was always this sort of like weird gray area, because they're not a stop. I mean, they're a stop. But if you charge them the stop rate, then they're... and they have six artists. So we always made them pay a per head fee, which was then weird, like, why are we paying so much and these people aren't paying so much? So now it just makes more sense. everyone pays the same. Right? Yeah. But it's all these sort of like negotiations and like, we went like back and forth of like, how many, part of it is quality, right, the co-op. The co-op's role is to have a space for people to grow and learn and make their work. So there are like, definitely, super, like, well-respected, really great artists working at the co-op. They're also a lot of people who just came out of school, and are trying to learn how they want to make their work, right? This is sort of their first step. And so we really want the pottery tour to be established artists making serious work. Whatever that means, like we want, we want good potters, we don't want... And we also, we don't like, if we don't want someone selling pots that, like we can't vouch for their like, their like food safety, or their like, use safety or like we don't want someone selling $10 mugs down, you know. So I think we do have also like a, I forget what it is. But I think we have a price limit on mugs specifically. And we didn't want 15 people at Union Project making it this big party atmosphere and having low quality work. But then yeah, we don't want to say like, you can't be in it. So how do you do that? Right? So they have an application process, I don't know if they have... also Union Project has a variety of spaces that they can use to do the show in. And so that became an issue too, with people saying like, we're unhappy, co-op artists saying we're unhappy because they stuck us in the basement or you know, whatever, but so you have to figure that out. And different spaces work better with different amounts of people. But it's been around six to eight people in the past couple years who have actively wanted to do it and make nice enough work to be allowed to do it. So yeah. But it's something

MM  7:48
That's a lot to navigate.

KH  7:49
And I guess it's community, right. That's the whole idea, again, is like working with your community to make this event happen. And they are our community. So it feels like they're a very valuable partner.

KH  8:07
Want some Cheerios... Right here... we'll try and put you down again.

KH  8:17
I'm trying to think of other things around the tour that have been that have been issues. Um, yeah, I would say our biggest, our biggest problems right now are how do we grow? Because growth. And some I mean, I think that maybe there's a question of like, do you need to grow? And I don't, I mean, I sort of feel like you do need at least grow a little bit, it needs to, like, in order for it not to die it needs to keep doing something. I don't think we need to like, go crazy. But like, it's nice to have different artists, it's nice to maybe have more artists, it's nice to occasionally have new stops. Just so it doesn't get. And that's sort of why I wanted new people just like just fresh blood this year, because I don't want people to say like, "Oh, it's always the same stuff that Keith sells." And I'm sure like, guaranteed there's going to be 30 people like, "Where's Amanda, I came here for Amanda?" You know, like, I know it's going to happen, right? So I will give them Amanda's phone number or email or whatever, you know, like, but. So I think that's gonna that's sort of the biggest issue because having it in homes, like the
definition of how we want this thing to run limits the space availability that I can grow in my space. And so it means I guess, more stops, and maybe it'll be a challenge for the next person down the road, maybe not.

MM 10:08
Yeah.

KH 10:08
But so far, the idea of having Stephanie has been working really well. We sort of helped her out with guests for the first year. And since then, she's been having and choosing her own people and she seems to be enjoying it. But yeah, there are there are other people in the neighborhood that we have not asked that we probably could ask. I know of one other potter who's living neighborhood. There's also a lot of people who I'm sure would be glad to just host it for a fee, you know, to like open up their home for a day. There used to be, right when I moved to Pittsburgh, there was this fantastic thing called the East End Event. Which was, I think it was for people who owned homes, again, in this specific neighborhood. And maybe this is where I got this idea from, I never thought about it this way, but like, they opened up their houses. But there was they were sort of way more dramatic with how they did it. Where like, they would have like, installation artists. Like they would like, totally remove everything from the first floors of their homes and their like, yard spaces, whatever. And people would like do installations, or like just like, complete... Like I remember one year this one woman had done these like amazing little tiny paintings. And just had hundreds of them over all the walls of the first floor. Like it was really fun. But it was just a ton of work for the homeowners. And the last year they did it, there was like, you know, like 600 people or something came. And I don't, I mean I'm making that number up. But it was like, there was a flock of people moving from, and there was like it had gotten huge, and there were like, again, there were kegs. And there were like, you know, like, like wanton drunkenness happening and like, it was, it was like really fun. But I think it became like, okay, this is too much. We're done.

MM 12:23
Yeah. Yeah... the liability at some point.

KH 12:28
Yeah. Well, that's like, you know, I'm not one who thinks about this, but Joe. Sometimes I call him Uncle Joe, because he thinks about these things. I always like to get a rise out of him. Like he has a pickup truck and I'm like, "Oh don't worry Joe, I'll just ride in the back" and he's like "No, Keith, that's not safe." But so, Joe does not offer alcohol at his stop because it's a liability. If someone walks down the stairs and falls, you know, after having had a glass of wine in your house, they could sue you, right. To me, I feel like it's my house. I want to offer my guests wine. You know, so and I don't know what... I forget, I think I looked into like what the law is of me giving people wine in my house is, because I think they're like, at some point, it would be illegal for me to do it. I'm, if I'm like a vendor of you know, but I'm, I'm just giving you wine. You're a guest, and I'm giving you wine. So I think as long as it's that, you're a guest in my house. I'm giving you wine. I'm allowed to do it. Yeah, I'm not giving it to minors or not.

MM 13:41
Yeah. Yeah. And it sounds like that's maybe a good thing that you each get to control it your own.

KH 13:44
Yeah. So we do our own. So yeah, that's one thing is we all do our own food, we all do our own... We thought about trying to get like, local restaurants that pitch in and like, give food. Just never got around to doing it. I don't know how worthwhile these things would be, I don't know that we, I don't know that it would actually be worth their while. And part of that might be a function of that Highland Park is a more neighborhood, is more residential neighborhood. Like we've got one business district a couple blocks up with some restaurants. But they're sort of higher end restaurants. And like I so, I mean, I told you like, hey, if you need a lunch, go to Park Brugge. Right.
Like, it's fantastic. But they're not going to give us like, moules frites. So like, you know... But I think one year we might have gotten coffee from a coffee shop, but...

KH 14:41
The thing that, so the other, the fun development, and like this is I guess part of growth too, is like finding new things. Two years ago, there is a seminary, that is in the neighborhood that has a archaeological museum of like, pottery and other stuff from the Holy Land. And they said, you know, hey, we've got these, we've got this museum that no one knows about, like, like, we don't have many visitors, we want more visitors. You're a pottery tour, we've got 2000 year old pottery, you know, in the neighborhood. Like, can we somehow get involved? And so they gave us a couple hundred bucks, we put them as a stop. Like when we just said, like, you know, and sort of like, they were offering free tours, we said, you know, take a break from seeing, like... Every stop, right. So that's fun... oh, that reminds me I need to actually send an email.

KH 15:53
One thing that and I think this was also talking to Robert Brisco, I think he may have given me this idea, is that I want to one year, and I think I'm going to ask them to see if they want to do this because they have a van and a van driver. And if we could have a shuttle, even just for a couple hours one day, that would be amazing. Just a van that would just rotate just for, you know, spend four hours driving the tour and stopping it and like unload and load, unload and load. You could have a like, you could do a docent-led thing I suppose if you wanted as well. But, you know, I feel like just even having like a central place to park and then like... would be great. Because it is walkable. It's a mile from the furthest stops. But walking two miles is a long way to walk with carrying pottery, in December.

MM 16:45
Not everybody can do that.

KH 16:46
Yeah.

MM 16:47
Might open it up to people.

KH 16:48
Yeah. That's another issue is accessibility. And again, I don't know the legality of accessibility when... We started without even thinking about that.

MM 17:03
It's your home.

KH 17:03
It's my home. And I and yeah, I feel like, and if it came down to that point we would just have to stop. Like if we were like, you'd have to... Because we can't ask houses to put ramps in for a one, like a two day a year event. But I'm trying to think if there have been... I think that one year wheelchair did come and just got help up the stairs. There is one apartment that has more stairs than my house. But other than that, I think I have the most stairs. Joe and I are the same, we have the same house. His is the same duplex just a couple doors down. Yeah, so that's another thing like, growing like, what would that mean? I mean, that's a whole other thing. And that's why... Are you interested, like is this what you're interested in? Like what it takes to run it? Or how like the thoughts behind running it? or?
Yeah, oh, I'm, all of the above really. I'm really interested in different ways that potters come together, because it is often perceived as a very individual type of career.

KH  18:28
That's interesting, because I feel like pottery is what is not. Like pottery is... almost everyone, I mean, and there are some things... So I guess my thought about sharing is I will give you anything, I'll give you my recipes. I'll give you whatever, you know. I mean, I got, I mean my glaze is now I formulated my own glaze. But it's a base glaze that I got from someone else. And then I tweaked it. Right. So if someone wants it, I can give it. I feel like so much of it is about application. And, and each individual touch that, I mean there are people who can just like, rip off other people, true. And you know, yes, it is true. But I feel like, if you are an artist worth your salt, you're going to have your own voice with the material. And that's what I love about clay is like, the width and breadth of what you can do with clay is amazing, like so many crazy things. And I feel like most potters will share almost everything with you. There are some things that like, Look, I spent a lot of time working to get this specific glaze just to work just right for me. And I'm not going to tell you the recipe, and I can respect that. But most people share things. One really interesting thing about that, right now, if you're interested in this sort of thing is, I don't know if you're, and I'm going to I'm going to be careful, because this is going on the record, but so one of the processes I use is decal transfer. Are you aware of this, what's going on with decals?

MM 20:16
Go ahead and describe it, so... I might know, I'm not sure.

KH  20:21
My understanding is that this process has been around for a long time. And I don't know who discovered it or how, but the way it works is that there's a specific kind of decal paper, which was never meant to be used in a firing but was meant to be slid on to finish ceramic work or plastic models to give an image. And someone discovered that if you print with certain inkjet printers that have high iron content in their black ink, and then slide it on to finished glassy ceramic work and then re-fire it to a low temp, the decal burns away. But the iron will set into the glaze.

KH  21:07
Someone else then discovered that it was not patented. And my understanding, I could be wrong is that it was already clearly the public use when this patent was placed. But there is now a patent. And this person is now going around suing manufacturers... Well, first of all, suing artists who do it. And who explain how it's done, until an artist explained to her that like, you're not doing yourself... and she markets paper. She markets paper at roughly four times the going rate. And markets it as this is a thing you can do to make money, you can go to thrift stores and buy pre-made, twenty-five cent plates, and put people's pictures on them and sell them for 50 bucks, right. And my understanding... is she went after someone I know, for explaining how the process works. And his, him or his lawyer said you don't want to come after me because I'm explaining how this gets done. The more I'm an evangelist for your product, like the more people I teach how to do this, the more money you make. And so then she said, "Okay, well, then you're just not allowed to tell them where you can get paper other than from me." And then she went after paper manufacturers. And so now she's put every, as far as I know, every manufacturer of the variety of decal paper that will work through this process in the USA, now out of business..

KH  23:05
And yeah, and so those of us who do it are scrambling, because first of all, I don't want to pay four or five times the going rate of what I'm used to paying for. Second of all, to be spiteful. I don't want to give her anything. Because this is no way to be in community. Like, sure, you're going to make a buck. But like, at what cost? Like seriously, because potters, this is what we do. We share with each other. And so just this morning, and so I've been like, so I had this idea, like I wonder if someone outside the country is making it. Right? So I found, I have paper being shipped right now from Australia. I won't tell you where! ...that I'm going to test.
Yeah.

But um, but then I found this other person said, well, there's this woman in Canada. So I call, I emailed her and she said, "Yes, I have paper, like I'm getting it, but I can't tell you about it. Because if I sell to someone from the States, this person will sue me and put me out of business. So her patent does not affect me in Canada. But it affects me if I sell you paper, or if I tell you my international source, like she can come after me for doing that." So just this morning, she posted on Instagram, this sort of like, "Hey, everybody, like, this word has gotten out that I've got paper, like, I've decided that I'm not going to be in the paper business. Like, I will gladly tell non-USA people where to get this paper." I'm not, she's not mentioned it in the post. But like, it makes more sense... and like, "I know that I can make a bunch of money in Canada selling the paper, because I have a source. But that's not the way we do things. And so if you want it, I will tell you, and you don't live in the United States, I will tell you where to get it. And you can just go directly to my manufacturer in China." And so now we're like back channels, like did she tell your... or so I don't know where it's from. But like, and, you know, it's the sort of thing or like, I don't know, it's just, it's just wrong. So at this point, I, luckily, my, the, where I used to get my paper from sent me an email saying, "Hey, we're going out of business." So I bought like 1000 sheets of decal paper, which I should have bought more. It seemed like a lot of the time because I thought there's other decal paper out there. I thought like, Oh, you know, like, I see all this other stuff, this will work. It doesn't, it doesn't work. There's a specific thing that it needs. So I've been testing and failing. So I'm like... I've got like a year of decal paper left.

Really, talk about changing your style.

Yeah. Yeah. And the shame of it is I just switched to this in the last year because I used to use stencils. But the stencils were messier, and not as clean. And they didn't, like that, because it's iron it matches my clay body. I like the way that looks. And I like again, I think it's sort of the graphic designing like I'm talking about texture and weathered-ness. So I like to be able to put like a weathered texture in the image. So I'm Photoshopping, and I'm creating these images in Photoshop, like layering textures. And it's very subtle, and probably a lot of you won't notice there, but it makes me happy. Right. So I didn't get that with stencils. So I couldn't move back to stencils if I wanted to. I could also buy a full-color decal printing situation, which is not covered by the patent. That's a $6,000 printer and then like, just even the printing is way more expensive. But it might be fun. So maybe rather than support someone who I'm angry with, I might just buy a $6,000 piece of equipment.

Something will work out.

Yeah.

Yeah, oh my gosh.

But yeah, so that goes to like, you talking about how people see it as an individual... I guess I would just agree with that. With potters. I feel like we in general, are a community that shares with each other.

I think that's really, that's part of what drew me to it, honestly, was that idea of the individual artists gets focused on so much and
KH  27:35
Yeah

MM  27:36
...you know, in written histories and books and things. And I just thought, you know, because I did a degree in ceramics and thought, this is not what I'm seeing here.

KH  27:46
Well, that's, that's what I was saying too, is that that's what drew me down to the basement of Goshen College was like, this is not a competitive atmosphere. This is a, hey, we're all learning. We're all in this together, we're all trying to figure this stuff out. And that, I, maybe it's because I'm like, a wuss and I don't have like the like, cutting edge spirit or not cutting edge, but like cutthroat spirit. But, but I don't. Like I just want to make nice stuff that people can use and makes their life a little bit better. You know, I don't know that's, I guess I feel like, I like using nice handmade things I feel like it... I don't know life is, life is not easy, right? Life is hard and dark and painful. And there's a lot of there's a lot of bad shit going on. And not that pottery makes it better. But like, for a second in the morning, I can sit down and I can like, drink my coffee out of my nice Nicole Aquillano mug with the Pittsburgh bridges on it. And I'm like, "Oh, look, I can have a second to like, "This is really lovely. This, someone made this by hand, and now I'm using it." And that's nice for me. And so if I can do that for people and like, I get testimonials, which like I love, it like, warms my heart, like I get the dinos, that's what like, so I've got, you know, several people said, like, I have this dinosaur mug, that every morning when I use it, my son goes "Rarrrr, rarrr." And so then I had to buy him a little dinosaur cup so he could have his own, you know, because we like to play dinosaur noises every morning. And I'm like, that's fantastic. Like, I love that, that you can have moments with pottery like this. Like it's a, it's an extravagance for sure. Especially at like, whatever, $40 to $150 a mug, depending who you are, right? But it's, it's something that you can use and like be part of your day and be sort of intimate. I mean, I remember this is one thing I think this is one thing I got off of Warren MacKenzie...

Video File #7 (afc2018030_05060_mv07.mp4)

KH  0:06
One of my co-workers, we were sitting down looking at pots and he said, Well, I learned this lip. This is the Steven Godfrey lip that like if you see this lit in a mug, like someone either worked with Steven Godfrey, cuz Jen Allen has the same lip. And he's like and I did a workshop, with Stephen Godfrey and this lip is amazing to drink from. The Steven Godfrey lip, so you throw. So like, and I don't know if mine is like exactly the same, but the idea is when I throw, I'm getting a thin-ish wall and then I pull off at the top. And so there's, this is substantially thicker than this. And then I like, right, my first move after I do my first centering pull is I, thumb here I like finger and make this bevel, like a 45 degree bevel on the fat lip that I then don't throw, I mean I throw a little bit but it, so it's fat, like a quarter inch below the lip, it's fat. And then it's like really thin at the very top and it fits in your mouth. And it pours nicely in. And like, I used to like big chunky lips and I realized that when you drink they dribble down the side of your face, right? And so this gives you like a substantial lip that you don't break and just fits right in your mouth. And I was making this like, Whoa, this is fun. And my sister, like got one of my mugs and... "This lip! What did you do, it feels so good?" I'm like, "Yes! That's what I'm talking about." Like, so, like some people realize it, maybe it's me and... So it's nice when you can get, I don't know, validation of that as well. But I feel like, and also handles I feel like handles are very, I've spent a lot of time working on my handles to make them comfortable to hold and to have them look good at the same time. I don't know. So I don't know how we got on that but, ceramics.

MM  2:08
Yes.
Yeah, quick question...

Sorry...

MM 0:02
No, no, this is fine. It's really interesting. Um, you're moving more to wholesale?

KH 0:07
Yes.

and I assume that means less interaction with customers.

Yeah, that's interesting. Um, yeah, that's it. Because this also like, this sort of taps into what I was saying about I don't want to become like a hermit living in a hole making pots, that I never have interaction with the outside world, because I feel like that does you damage, because you don't get the feedback of like, "Oh, this handle feels really nice. Oh, this I really like the way this works," like that is. And again, like, sort of the myth of like, the artists making their work, you know, it's not really... Like, that's not how I work. I, I don't I never want to chase... it's a fine line between designing something that I love and making it, and chasing money. I've never been the one to be like, Ooh, this year, you know, sponge holders are hot, or egg separators. Like this happens at, like the summer fairs, like egg separators, are the thing this year. And so some people like, get on the egg separators. And they're like, they don't sell next year, but like, you like made a mint off the egg separator. So like can you chase that sort of whatever thing is selling. And like, to some extent, like, if something of mine sells, I'm going to make more of it. And I will experiment with new things. And if that new thing starts selling, I'll make more of it. So I'm not saying I'm going to like, I'm not saying I'm, I'm going to make my work whether you like it or not, like, that's what I'm saying either. There has to be like, I'm a person who sells things for a living, like people have to like them in order... And I feel sort of the same way about the dinosaurs is, is I like the dinosaurs. And that's why I started doing them. I never thought I wanted to be a person who like, someone would buy my mug because it has a picture of a thing on it. Like I would, I never, this is why I like wood firing, it's, I didn't have to decorate it. Like I didn't have to do, it was beautiful just by itself. And it... And I was very curious about it. And then I started doing images because I liked it. And then people liked it. And I'm like, Okay, I guess that's what's selling so I'm gonna make more, you know. So, yes, that sort of move away from having interaction with my customers is, it's not fantastic. Which is why I'm never going to only do that. I love the pottery tour, I hope I can continue to do the pottery tour. But I will always do a couple shows a year at least, just... Number one, like a really good show is a really great way to make money. But number two, it's a great way to interact with people, like you're saying. And also, it's sort of fun. I mean, in some ways, it's fun, in some ways it's brutal and painful. And like you sit in a booth for nine hours a day, you know, watching strangers walk past your booth and like, "Oh they don't have anything with cats on it," you know, and keep going. Like... but it's, it's a way to, yeah. So I think that I do need to be careful. I need, and there is... there is Instagram. But I feel like Instagram is sort of this false... There's this whole discussion at, so NCECA [National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts] is the national ceramic, the national conference for education for the ceramic arts. And a couple years ago, there was this sort of crisis of conscience, conscience about Instagram and pottery and some of the people, some of the people in the ceramic world who really pushed to set up Instagram as this like vibrant force for sharing pottery. Uh, she is on...
Yeah, that's really stable but, I'm gonna hold on to it for a minute...

KH 4:01
Yeah, why don't we...

MM 4:02
You're gonna try to pull it.

KH 4:03
Yeah, why don't we just, let's, let's try this...

KH 4:16
So, a number of people who sort of helped to set up this vibrant community were saying, "We almost feel like we've done a disservice." Because people who are not experienced are now throwing up work on Instagram, which they can mask flaws, or whatever, and they can get 1000 likes, and so they feel like, I'm really good. And they can disregard the advice of their professor or their peers, because they're getting 1000 likes on Instagram. And it is potentially like a downward spiral of people not growing, or just chasing, like I was saying, chasing the thing that will get the Insta-likes. So I do think it's a valuable way to throw things out there and say, like, "Hey, I'm making this thing. What do you think?" But I also think, and it's a super valuable way to market work as well. But as a place for honest feedback, I don't think so much.

MM 5:23
It's very different type of interaction with the work, to just see the image of it versus have it...

KH 5:29
And it's all about the curated image of it, too. It's not like the actual, it's not about the thing, it's about how you like...

MM 5:35
What filter you use.

KH 5:37
I'm sorry,

MM 5:37
This is so exciting, isn't it. Well, I need to get out of your hair anyway.