



Amazing glaze



Bob Steiner's colourful glazes and tactile forms are inspired by New Zealand.

How did you get started in ceramics? I started potting when I was 14. I spent weekends with friends exploring the characteristics of clay and experimenting with glazes using wood ash and clay materials. My father bought me my first throwing wheel for my 15th birthday.

How has your work evolved over the years? After I studied pottery and sculpture at Elam Art School, I headed north to the Hokianga, where I made a good living making pottery, but a decline in the ceramic and pottery industry in the early 80s brought about a need for change. I headed to Auckland and worked in co-operatives until I opened my own shop in Kingsland in 1991, producing slip-cast and hand-painted designerware. Having staff allowed me to build one-off creations such as double-sided forms of fish and heads. In the mid-1990s there came a need to let the sculptural forms speak for themselves without busy patterns and I developed a unique matt glaze with strong colour which had immediate appeal. For many years I worked from my home-based studio, but I now work from a purpose-built pottery in Avondale where we have a more boutique personality and reject the pressures to produce offshore. I create my own inspirations, produce customised orders, sometimes follow fashion trends and sometimes work collaboratively.

Photography Larnie Nicolson Styling Alice Lines



Tell me about your latest work... My current range of domestic ware is made with simplicity in mind. Some of the work is embossed with flowers and plants, but other pieces are left plain and I let the sculptural qualities and the colourful glazes speak for themselves. I have been creating wall art pieces using a range of shapes and sizes inspired by the beautiful natural forms of New Zealand. They can be combined to create wall art installations. The latest exciting challenge is creating an application on our new website which will allow you to build your own composition using all the pieces.

Would you say your work is sustainable? Yes, my work is a reformation of natural earth products fused with a process as old as man's history. We use hydro-electric power, which is sustainable energy.

What does Made in NZ mean to you? I feel it is important to be based in New Zealand for the sense of value it gives to us as New Zealanders and to support local employment and creative skills. People can come to us and see the work being made and feel the sense of pride we have in working as a team.

In which direction do you see your business developing? My strength has always been in sculpting. I am doing more one-off sculptures and I look to create a range of moulded work that reflects this approach. The vessel form of conventional pottery, however, always draws me in. The simplicity of a thumb-dimpled beaker can bring so much pleasure every day.

For more on Bob Steiner's recent work, visit www.steinerceramics.com