



John Glick slip decorating 26-inch plates at Plum Tree Pottery, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

DEAR MR. GLICK,

I had loved your work and purchased a 16-inch plate about 25 years ago. Workers in my home accidentally broke it and I am devastated. I need to determine the value of this plate and I wonder if you can help with this problem.

Sincerely, Gloria Smith

Dear Mrs. Smith,

Such a plate today would be approximately \$450 to replace.

John Glick

Dear Mr. Glick

Thank you for your feedback. At your suggestion, I have asked for reimbursement of the amount you stated. I do hope I can find a plate as wonderful at your gallery.

Best regards, Gloria Smith

Dear Mrs. Smith,

Any plate from this phase of my work will be notably different than one from 25 years ago. But, then, that is why I am still at work making things—the fun of exploring new ideas!

Thanks, John Glick

That was an e-mail exchange that took place recently (I have changed the name of the client for privacy reasons). It struck me as I began this task of writing about core issues in my beliefs about potting for a living that what mattered to me was to keep my focus on things I have come to think of as the foundation stones in my professional life. One thing is for sure; having been at this for 43 years, I know that what keeps me interested is exploring ideas that motivate me.

So, if I were to say where my artistic recharging comes from, I would say it comes every day that I work. I feel blessed that my way

John Glick

Foundation Stones

of working has formed itself around allowing “surprises” to occur on a regular basis and the playful pursuit of things that are born out of the question “what if?” This leads to color changes, shape variables, turning things around to see other options, surprises, changing the rules—having no rules.

So, the e-mail exchange above speaks to the reasons why I continue to work this way; it feeds my enthusiasm.

It is tempting to consider trying to lay out a plan about how to survive creatively in a career in clay. I could list a series of “must do” things that would help ensure survival both financially and emotionally. Frankly, I didn’t do that during those heady days in 1964 when I rented a building and began Plum Tree Pottery. I wonder if anyone really does such strategic planning at the outset?

From the safety of hindsight, there have been things that have helped knit together my sense of wellbeing as an artist over the past 43 years. Here are some for consideration:

Having a Showroom

My studio showroom has been my window to an ever-growing and changing cross-section of supportive clients. Some families have been using my work for over three decades, meaning that at special times I may see family members from all three generations during one visit. My heart is often *melted* by the goodwill felt during such visits. Seeing folks sitting on the floor of my showroom poring over choices, chortling over discoveries and passing pots back and forth with one another—great moments for the soul! Countless times, I have returned to work reassured that this way of interacting with my supportive clientele has a wonderful impact on my life.

Consider the almost daily feedback from a wide range of clients over so many years. This has been a wonderful, ongoing, real-world education, since I am privileged to observe people reacting to the evolutions in my work year in and year out. Naturally, not everyone is uniformly pleased with the changes that occur in some aspects of my work. But, almost to a person, I sense an acceptance and respect for the fact that in my studio, the work will evolve and old favorite phases of work a client recalls will not be revisited.

Gallery Involvements

For wider community involvement, I have worked with galleries throughout my career. But I have kept the numbers of such involvements low so that I never feel driven or tempted to make work aimed at satisfying an external demand, which could potentially diminish the feeling of inner commitment to my natural working process and the resultant pots. So, I do have a desire to be in good company with other artists whose work I respect in clay gallery settings, but only in moderation.

Working Rewards; Daily Experiences

When I know I am on the right path in my work process, I notice clues that have become like old, welcome friends showing up during the quiet moments, when I am alone in the studio. I especially love the pre-dawn moments when I re-encounter pots from the previous workday, perhaps waiting for further resolution. Magical.

A recent session produced a large series of constructed floral arranger vessels. (See the image below of raw vessels and a fired example.) They were engaging to do and surprisingly effortless in the making, which is exactly what I want to happen since it is my instinctive way of working. The pots seem to make themselves.

Clockwise from top left: Handbuilt plate, 14½ in. (37 cm) square, stoneware, with imprinted clay detailing and multiple glazes, reduction fired, 2007. Unfired floral arrangers. Floral arrangers, to 12 in. (30 cm) in height, thrown and handbuilt stoneware, with multiple glazes, reduction fired, 2007.



Where to See More

Red Lodge Clay Center, Red Lodge, MT
www.redlodgeclaycenter.com

The Clay Studio, Philadelphia, PA
www.theclaystudio.org

Pewabic Pottery, Detroit, MI
www.pewabic.com

AKAR Design, Iowa City, IA
www.akardesign.com

The Works Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
www.snyderman-works.com

Plum Tree Pottery, Bloomfield Hills, MI
<http://johnglick.com>

John's photography blog, "Fresh Plums," includes advice and resources for digital imagery:
http://web.mac.com/johnglick/site/fresh_plums/fresh_plums.html