



KANIMBLA CLAY

Helen Hay

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LIVING IN THE AMAZING KANIMBLA VALLEY

for almost eight years has been the sort of enviable adventure creatives around the world could only dream about. This very special place in the Blue Mountains has provided Helen Hay with the inspiration for Kanimbla Clay. A home-based business which has sourced its materials and ideas and energy directly from its magical environment to create unique handmade ceramics has, in this short time, built up a devoted following and





featured on the pages of numerous style, home, design and cookery publications.

Helen and partner James Beverley both grew up in the UK, studied for their degrees and then saved up in order to travel, which they did from 2001. Helen's background is in art and design: ceramics and hot glass, and as a gold and silver production jeweller. James is in engineering, so they have the ideal combination of talents for their rural

lifestyle and a business which depends on the operation of a busy kiln.

Helen's work reflects their life in the valley, from the wonderfully misty layering of the landscape to the flora and fauna they see on their hikes. In particular the valley has inspired Helen's unusual valley and flora vessels. She collects different objects to imprint into the clay, such as seed pods, leaves from the vegetable gardens (it might be

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sage, rosemary or flowers and weeds) as well as things found lying in the bush. She uses different native leaves and blossoms to create designs with energy and movement, reflecting spring breezes that lift leaf litter into the air:

Helen says: 'After pressing the leaves, blossoms, tendrils and seeds into the clay, the vessel is formed and then placed onto the drying shelf.'





Most of the flora drops out as the pieces dry, but some burn during the firing.

'Everything is handmade. I think it's a wonderful thing to see perhaps a small fingerprint or mark from the maker on the surface of a pot. It reminds you that the work has been made by a real person. I'm also very passionate about quality so every piece I produce has been made to the highest standard of craftsmanship.'

'Any colour that is inlaid into the work is clay that I have stained. And all the line work has been hand-painted and carved. I work with porcelain and stoneware clays to produce homewares, lights and jewellery. Each piece is made either on the wheel, slab built, a pinch pot made from a ball of clay or slump mould. I do everything myself from the designing, to the clay work, loading and unloading kilns and the packaging. My partner Jimmy is on hand to help with fixing the kilns, workshop maintenance and he makes the best cup of tea!'

Kanimbla Clay was established in 2009 and Helen began selling her work at local markets. Interest in her ceramics grew as she attended larger events such as Finders Keepers market in Sydney, Canberra Handmade and the Undercurrent market at the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra. This led to Helen's ceramics gaining exposure in publications such as Country Style and Home Beautiful.

The first part of the grand adventure, however, has now come to an end and Kanimbla Clay is in the throes of moving to the beautiful island of Tasmania, to new vistas and new inspiration. It will be fascinating to watch how this change in their natural environment will affect the design and materials in the new range of Kanimbla Clay ceramics. Helen will be keeping the name Kanimbla Clay and invites you to keep in touch.

www.kanimblaclay.com



