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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this thesis is to explore the therapeutic use of clay as a dual artistic and recovery practice. My research within my studio practice encompasses the themes of addiction, recovery, labor, and time. Within this paper I connect my recovery practice with my artistic practice and utilize a personal narrative to guide the reader through my methodology. First the paper opens with depictions of my daily studio process, then discusses past installations and works, and finally biographic information of my background as a studio potter. Four poems and a song are used to introduce and separate sections of writing. This document serves to position my artistic practice, clarify the visual exhibition of this thesis, and act as a marker of my personal and artistic progress.

The Next Right Thing:
Making My Way in Clay

by

Devon Gelhar

A.A., Rochester Community and Technical College, 2015
B.F.A., University of Wisconsin-River Falls, 2017

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Studio Arts.

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MAKING MY SOBRIETY

Say there's a game: You're walking by yourself on a dirt road through a forest at sundown, and all you have to do is keep walking. Nothing to it. One foot, then the other foot, then the other foot, forever, and the only thing you aren't allowed to do—even when the sun slips down behind the hills, even when the darkness thickens all around you, even when the devil starts his moaning in the trees – the only thing you aren't allowed to do is run.¹

My work and my practice deal with recovery, the experience of time and the marking of each day. Drawing from the therapeutic benefits of clay, I make to move through my recovery using both fired and unfired clay. Living in recovery means I live my life one day at a time. For me, each day is full of potential, work, and often, beauty. Frequently, the beauty is found in the most humble, unadorned objects and unassuming forms. I mark my days not only by the number sober, but by the pots that I make. As part of my daily practice I make a pot, usually a pinch pot, as a meditation and marker. There is a pull to make with my hands, to create an object or vessel as a means of feeling more human and more alive. These pots and the days they record accumulate in my life and in my studio. Sometimes this accumulation is a joy, sometimes it is a trial, and sometimes instead of counting the days, I count the seconds. Addiction stole time from me, but more than that, it obscured integral parts of who I am. Being an artist, making with my hands, using clay, has allowed me to find a way back and actualize the person that I am.

¹ Sobriety, David Rutschman, Into Terrible Light, 2017

I sit down and remind myself to breathe. True relaxation is hard to come by. After years of using chemicals as a shortcut and means to escape my reality and physical body, it takes a concerted effort to relax and feel present. My mind and body are constantly busy. The impulse to escape is ever present. I make a conscious choice to attend to the moment, to the day, to the thing at hand. There are few things that allow for a slowing of my thinking and breathing, a centering of myself. Making is one of these things. Working with my hands allows me to bring myself back to the present, narrowing my vision and thoughts down to a set of concrete, tactile experiences in front of me.

I keep my clay in tall, plastic barrels. There is no order to it, just two hundred pounds of raw, wet clay, shoved onto itself. Every day I reach into one of the barrels and lump by lump, dig out the clay that I will be using. Currently the barrels contain a soft, white, porcelain clay. There is a freshness and vibrancy to the porcelain that excites me, offering up seemingly endless possibilities. If I have mixed the clay exactly right, gotten all proportions of the recipe measured correctly, and added just enough water, when I reach into the barrels, it is ready to go. It will have the strength and consistency to stand up to outside pressures being performed on it and transform into a useful object. Sometimes I get the amounts wrong, weighing the dry materials out in a rush, not looking as I add too much water. Then the clay is too wet, delicate, easily defeated, it slumps and is incapable of holding its form. If I work with the same piece too long, pinching and turning it over and over, the clay starts to dry and crack in protest. Sometimes I use water to smooth, repair, and hide these cracks, other times I leave them, exposing these flaws to the world, allowing the pot to be enough as it is.

Once I have dug the clay out, an often laborious, sweaty process, I grab a ball of it, usually as much as I can comfortably hold in my hand and start pounding it into a round, spherical shape. I hold this globe like shape in my hands and decide where I will start the opening of the vessel I will be making. I push my thumb into the giving, yielding ball. From here I push outwards, rotating the ball in slow circles in my hand, mimicking the motions of the potter's wheel. I pinch my fingers together, thumb on the inside, fingers on the outside, meeting up with each other through the thin porcelain wall in a steady rhythm, over and over. I repeat this process as many times as it takes to move the clay from shapeless lump into balanced, gentle bowl. The last thing I do is address the rim of the pot. Often, I pinch the rim until it is unbearably fragile, so thin that it seems that the slightest breath could cause it to crumble. Alternatively, if it feels that the pot is asking for a sturdier, concrete, solid rim, I dip my fingers into the water bucket I keep next to my work table, and begin rubbing them in concentric circles around the rim, applying the water like a balm to the pot. When I am finished, I cradle the small bowl in my hands before setting it down on a board to dry. In this moment I feel still, whole. I choose the form of a bowl because it is open, ready to be filled. Reading Paulus Berensohn's book, *Finding One's Way with Clay*, I was struck by a passage where he describes what drew him to the pinch pot. He writes about the idea of the "begging bowl" and how the notion sparked a recognition in him. He says the begging bowl was "a bowl, as I read it, in which to receive what he needed for the nourishment of his life, physically, emotionally, and spiritually." (19) Similarly, I see the bowl form of

my pinch pots as an extension of my cupped hands, waiting to receive or conversely, waiting to give.

Pinching as a forming method is innate to humans. Give any person a ball of clay and some time and they can figure out the process and produce a small pot. There are many more advanced techniques that I could utilize to make objects, but the immediacy, connectivity, and simplicity of the pinch pot offer me more feedback than any other object I can create. This small, humble ball turned and transformed into an equally small, humble vessel connects me to my humanity more successfully than any other thing I have created. Because of this, I return to this way of making over and over.

I pinch for minutes. I pinch for hours. On a productive day I can pinch for eight hours, stopping only to go to the bathroom or eat something. Sometimes I can only pinch a few pots before my attention wanders, or my hands scream at me to stop. Each pot takes anywhere from thirty seconds to ten minutes to finish, depending on my mood, my energy level, and the strength left in my fingers. Occasionally I am called away from my studio midway through the process. I set the half-formed pot down and walk away, leaving it in my studio like an unfinished thought, or half spoken sentence.

I find it hard to sit still. I stand, pace, bounce, and walk my way around my studio. My body vibrates with restless energy when I start pinching for the day. The energy flows out my body and through my fingertips, sometimes resulting in a pot that has been touched too much, handled too long, pinched too far. This can happen before I even realize consciously what I have done. One minute I am forming the clay, the next, a finger is poking through one side, reprimanding me to be more careful. I do not usually

try to mend these holes, I leave them be, accepting that sometimes these things happen.



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² Devon Gelhar, Studio shot 1, 2019, clay, Syracuse, Syracuse University.

I pinch until my fingers literally crack and bleed, my skin zapped of all moisture from the clay. The years of using my hands for repetitive tasks are felt in my wrists and fingers by the end of the day. I dread and crave the pain that comes after a long day of working. It signals a productive day, a day worth marking, while also hinting at the startling, unknown path of growing old. I never put much thought into aging until I got into recovery. I courted dying, and sometimes actively welcomed it during my addiction. Now I find that I greedily hoard my seconds, my minutes, and my days. Everyday matters now that I have been given them back. Using my hands and body to make, guides my life and reminds me of this fact. Part of the draw of working with clay is the physical component. Mundane tasks, achievements, failures in the studio are all felt throughout my body. This methodical pinching and physical output of labor help connect me back into my body, tethering me to my life and my surroundings. I think best when my hands and body are busy. My thoughts untangle and flow freely once I am in motion. I keep a coil pot or two on hand in my studio, ready to go, particularly when I need to unravel my thoughts and turn them into work. I add coils to the pot or pots, rotating them on simple banding wheels, methodically running a series of wooden and metal ribs over the surface, almost entranced, hands dancing, mind flying. Some days I only add a coil or two, others, I work at these pots for hours. They have yet to live anywhere outside of my studio, acting simply as a vessel and facilitator for my thoughts.

Idle conversation is a rare time when I can sit still and pinch and watch the minutes drop away. I allow the rhythm of the conversation, the waves of sound, and the impression of the words wash over me, allowing the pinching to fall into the background and become automatic. Comfortable in this rhythm I can make dozens of small white

pots before any sense of time occurs to me. Music can have this affect as well, helping me switch onto autopilot, quiet my thoughts, and let my hands and fingers do the thinking. There are days, however, where conversation or noise become one sensation too many. I lock the door to my studio, flick the fluorescent lights off, and pinch alone in the quiet, hearing only the sounds of the clay moving in my hands. These are the days where my emotions feel as raw as the clay in my hands. In order to not let the feelings overflow around me, shutting me down, freezing me in place, I block out everything but the ball of clay in my hands and the act of pinching it open into a vessel. I allow myself to be hypnotized and soothed by the rhythmic turning and pinching in my hands, until my thoughts quiet and I can breathe again.

Time slows when I am in my studio. I lose myself in the cadence of making these pinched pots. This rhythm differs from the rhythm of functional making. Paulus Berensohn writes about this difference in rhythm and speed:

Making pinched forms has been important in my recent life as a potter for one reason especially. My work on the wheel had been largely marked by productivity, high spirits, rapid rhythms and often breathless excitement and ambition. The more I pinched, however, the slower I seemed to move; my breath deepened and my very posture as I worked seemed to become less tense. I discovered soon that pinching offered me an alternative to my usual rhythm of work and an enrichment of it. My pinch pots asked to be formed slowly, quietly and with deep attention. (20)

Each pot looks different from the next. You would think after the thousands of pinch pots I have made in the last three years they would start to share a uniformity with

each other. Sometimes in making I fall into a rhythm of scale and in that way each pot reflects the next, but then the rhythm gets broken by something, a mood, a thought, an interruption to the making. They range in size from the size of a peanut to that of a large orange. I think about how they fit into the space of two cupped hands. They range in color from a subtle cream to a pristine white. There are a few outliers, made in a red or brown clay. These hold a separate thought or private feeling, something I am not ready to share with the world. There are currently around two thousand seven hundred eighty of these pots, one day for over seven years. Generally, I allow the clay to tell me when the pot is done. The limitations of the material inform this decision. Sometimes I run out of clay to pinch, and that tells me I am finished. Sometimes the clay cracks and breaks from overwork, not giving me the option to continue. And sometimes, I can tell the pot is done because of the sense of satisfaction it fills within me when I hold it in my cupped hands.



³ Devon Gelhar, Pinch Pot detail, 2017, clay, Syracuse, Syracuse University.

Each pot shows the marks created by my fingertips. On some if you look closely you can see my entire fingerprint. This record is indelibly fired into the surface of the pot, leaving this trace long after I die. Sometimes the pinch pots are not pots at all. Some are squares, or balls, or random shapes, created in a moment of spontaneity and humor, reflections of inner thoughts or personal jokes. Other times there is nothing but a raw, untouched lump of clay. These are the days where I can barely bring myself to attend to the day at hand. In recovery terms, these are the days that instead of working a spiritual program, I simply do not use or drink. I just exist and make it through the day. There is not an option in my mind to not make one, to not mark the day. Even when I do not want to, even when I am exhausted, lonely, angry, hungry, or whatever else is getting in the way, I must produce something. To not mark the day seems to give up, to stop putting one foot in front of the other, to give in. This is not an option. I see these days and these pots as a reward, not something to endure. Each pot is a validation, a benediction. Each pot helps form another part of myself. Mary Caroline Richards wrote once about pots that, "It is the pots we are forming, yes. And it is ourselves as well. The integration of this twofold realm, clay and person, is tended here with special regard...that without physical practice and work done, the rhetoric of wholeness is also a dead end."⁴

⁴ Mary Caroline Richards, Longmeadow, 1972

I divide, organize, rearrange, and count the pots in my studios like the days they represent. I place the pots in logical groupings to keep an accurate count, trying to exert what control I can. I keep them in the order they were produced for a short while, a neat testament to the orderly calendar they record. I leave them this way for a while, until I circle back and revisit them and the memories they store. I move the pots into neat rows, arranging them into a grid. I group them by size, by form, by texture. I love this power, the power over each day, each memory, rearranging them and organizing them to suit my needs. Eventually, however, I must move them off the worktable, onto a cart, or into a box for storage, making chaos of the order I have tried to impose. They accumulate and demand attention even when I move them out of my sight. I start to think about time by how much space it takes up, the mass it incorporates. One month is a studio ware board. One year is a large twenty-seven-gallon Rubbermaid tote. A year and a half fill the floor space of a six by eight-foot cell. Two years takes up six shelves on a studio cart. Three years fill the worktable in my studio that runs the length of one wall. The years grow and the mass accumulates. I wonder if I laid seven years of pots out in a line how far I would get.



⁵ Devon Gelhar Studio shot 2, 2020, Syracuse, Syracuse University.

The installation and arrangement take on the cadence of a ritual. I install them in a gallery space, methodically placing pot after pot in rows and eventually piles, on the floor, forming a large body. As I step up to the waiting rows of pots, I hold one pot in both of my hands. I lay the first pot in a corner, and start to lay another and then another, one after the next, until all the pots are placed in front of me. Each time I step up to the rows with a pot, it feels as though I am carrying an offering to an altar. Because the pots are laid out on the floor, it forces me to bend at the knee and sometimes kneel to put the pot down. As I do this I sometimes count in my head. Other times I reflect on the day the pot represents. Some pots are memorable and viewing them again brings me back to the day they represent, allowing me a chance to reflect on the feeling of that day. I chuckle to myself as I pick up a small round ball, like an inside joke with an old friend. I frown as my hand selects a rough lump of material fired and made permanent in its exhaustion. The reflective surface the pots sit on reward the curious viewer. If you approach the pots closely, and peer at them from above, you are faced with your own reflection in the mirrored floor, literally asking the viewer to reflect on themselves. When I have finished placing all the pots I step back. I feel a sense of satisfaction and calm. The ritualistic installation of the pots fills me, healing made real through installation. During the deinstallation, I can run into trouble. There is something that occurs as I uninstall each pot. I often find myself crying as I do this. By the end of the process I am wrung out, drained, and melancholic. There is a period of grief that I experience after every installation. I mourn the end of what each piece represents.



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⁶ Devon Gelhar, *Sometimes I Count the Seconds*, 2019, porcelain clay, Syracuse, Syracuse University

⁷ Devon Gelhar, *Sometimes I Count the Seconds*, 2019, porcelain clay, Syracuse, Syracuse University

SHAPING MY GUILT

*It must have been an odd object to begin with.
Now the ghosts of its uses
Whisper around my head, tickle the tips
Of my fingers. Weeds
Reclaim with quick silence the beams, pillars,
Doorways.
Places change, and a small object
Stands defiant in its placelessness.
Durable because it contains intense meanings
Which it can no longer pour out.⁸*



I use the process of making work to navigate difficult spaces I do not quite understand and emotions I do not always know how to handle. What do you do when your memories can be a minefield? I grasp onto impressions of memories, time, and place like silken threads only to watch them slip from my fingertips. Sometimes I make to escape these memories, other times I make to record them. These feelings and

⁸ Object, Jimmie Durham

⁹Devon Gelhar, *Guilt*, 2017, clay, Syracuse, Syracuse University.

memories necessitate an outlet, so I turn to making. I keep exploring them over and over, returning to them almost incessantly over the course of the past three years in graduate school.

Once, I locked myself in a room for seventy-two hours with five hundred pounds of raw clay, a prison issued cot mattress (thanks to the Bob Barker prison supply company), and a blanket. In this dark room, all I did was pinch and sleep, sleep and pinch. Time became a loose, hazy construct with minutes blurring into hours and seconds dragging on for days. To ground myself, guide myself, and keep some thread of sanity the one constant I had was pinching. I filled in a cell of pots, ritually laying each finished pot in a line, one after the next, until I had around five hundred pots. I laid these out in the floor plan of a six foot by eight-foot cell, the average size of an American solitary confinement cell. The first day I used greyish stoneware clay, mimicking the grey walls of a cinder block institution. This ring of pots acted as my inner cell walls. Over the next two days, using a bright red earthenware clay body, I widen the cell walls, adding two rings of pots, hinting at institutional red brick. These formal considerations where not inherently conscious, I allowed my mind to drift and focus on my memories, my emotions, and the experience of time. In between bouts of pinching and pot making, I used a yellow earthenware clay as a marker of time and a visual output of my feelings and thoughts. They filled in the space in the cell with me, eventually crowding in until they came up to the prison mattress, leaving only a small space for me.

They Keep My Friend in A 6' x 8' Cell is a response to the occurrence of my fifth year sober, the start of graduate school, and my friend's tenth year incarcerated. Spending seventy-two hours locked in a room making pinch pots as a marker of time,

an archive of memories, thoughts, and emotions, and as an offering, I reflected on the ways our lives had diverged. Using this work to navigate my memories through making, I hoped to pull from the therapeutic benefits of clay to record time and process. I often dwell on the seemingly arbitrary divergence of my life and the lives of the people I once knew. That I found recovery instead of incarceration weighs on my mind. I wear my guilt like a lead blanket. This guilt weaves its way into the fibers of my studio practice. It is in everything I do. Through making I hope to mold and shape this guilt in the way I mold and shape clay, turning it from an immovable lump into something purposeful and functional.



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¹⁰ Devon Gelhar, *They Keep My Friend in a 6' by 8' Cell*, 2017, clay, variable dimensions, Syracuse, Syracuse University.

¹¹ Devon Gelhar, *They Keep My Friend in a 6' by 8' Cell*, 2017, clay, variable dimensions, Syracuse, Syracuse University.



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¹² Devon Gelhar, *They Keep My Friend in a 6' by 8' Cell*, 2017, clay, variable dimensions, Syracuse, Syracuse University.

¹³ Devon Gelhar, *They Keep My Friend in a 6' by 8' Cell*, 2017, clay, variable dimensions, Syracuse, Syracuse University.

REWARDS OF LABOR

*The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half-submerged balls.*

*I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.*

*I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.*

*The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.¹⁴*

I feel tied to the traditions of folk pottery practices. I started working with clay as a studio potter, learning directly from other practicing potters. For many years prior to graduate school, I identified simply as a potter. When my practice shifted into installation-based work in graduate school, I used the lessons learned from my functional pottery background to help guide me. This included the notion of work as an

¹⁴ "To Be of Use, Marge Piercy

integral part of living, labor as its own reward, and creating with one's hand as a driving, human need. In critic and curator Glenn Adamson's pivotal book on craft theory, *The Invention of Craft*, he writes that:

Craft's reputation is as something eternal. It has always been with us, it seems, since the first pots were made from clay dug out of riverbeds and the first simple baskets were plaited by hand. Seen from this perspective, craft is intrinsic to what it is to be human (5)

In an interview, American potter Warren MacKenzie once remarked that, "The challenge is to do the thing you have to do because you're in love with it and can't do anything else. Not because you want to become famous or rich, but because you will be unhappy if you can't do it."¹⁵ I started making pots in high school as part of a required art course. It quickly became an outlet and a form of self-expression that I connected with. It was one of the major pieces of myself I lost to addiction. When I dropped out of high school and started using, I left my work like a thought left unsaid, a thread left unraveled, just waiting for me. Ten years later, when I got out of treatment, I enrolled in a community college nearby. I felt overwhelmed by all the course options and I turned to my mother for guidance. She said, "Why not a ceramics course, you loved that in high school." So, I did and a piece of me fell back into place. Making gave me an outlet, a discipline, a daily practice, a way to communicate thoughts and feelings. The studio gave me a place to go. Getting sober, I went from always being around people to being utterly alone. I was the social addict, using in groups, always busy, to stave off the loneliness and pain that drove me into addiction. In recovery I found myself alone,

¹⁵ Warren MacKenzie, Studio Potter, 1990

except for meetings and the studio. The studio offered me solace, community, and solitude without loneliness. It gave me a place to belong. In the studios of the potters I learned from, I saw a road map on how to make and how to live. I set off into the unknown, one step after another, just doing the next right thing. Each step got me a little further, a little better, a little more ok. Like approaching the making of a piece. I do not often know ahead of time what it will be, I just know a few certain things; I will use clay, I will be involved in the making, my touch will be in it. I head off in the unknown, taking step after step till it adds up into a greater whole.

WE DO RECOVER

*You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.¹⁶*

There are two things in my life that feel concrete, resolute. One; I am in recovery from addiction. Two; I make art using ceramics as my primary medium. I often think about the people I once knew and the lives that have touched mine. Every arrest I hear about, every overdose that happens, pushes me to stay sober and keep making. I make because I must, because they do not get to. I make to stay alive. Each pot I make helps put distance between myself and that place I never thought I would be. This is not a hobby or even a job. It is survival and it is necessity. My studio practice is as integral to my life as breathing. Each time I touch clay it is showing me that I am alive, that I am in recovery. In the year I got sober, three people I knew were arrested and imprisoned. Two other people died. The disease of addiction kills people at a startling rate. But we

¹⁶ Wild Geese, Mary Oliver, 2004

can and do recover. We keep living, one day at a time. Those days add up, they mean something.

My experience with recovery comes from recovery from addiction, but there are so many forms and ways people face recovery. My trauma and pain are mine alone, they are not any greater or less than someone else's. When someone views my work, it is my hope that they can relate to the feelings contained inside it, not the specific details of the struggle that sparked it. Seeing a room full of small white pots, perhaps they are reminded of their own struggles, their own labor, their own time, or their own recovery. My work comes from a place of vulnerability and openness. With it, I hope to unite individuals to consider what living in recovery means and to see the possibility of every day. Making feels like an extension of my thoughts, emotions, and body. Making feels like breathing. It is something that is both natural and necessary. Working in clay offers a rhythm that is seductive in its simplicity and routine. Trauma has a funny way of making you relive the past like it is currently happening. Making often brings up these traumatic memories and feelings but gives me a therapeutic outlet and a tangible means to cope. I think and learn through physical action and agency. This process of working allows me to experience my trauma at a safe distance, to recognize that it is in the past, to carry it with me, because I always will, but to move forward with it as a foundation not current, unhealed wound. My work does not take me out of life, it keeps me present in it.

*The birds they sang
At the break of day
Start again
I heard them say
Don't dwell on what
Has passed away
Or what is yet to be
Ring the bells that still can ring (ring the bells that still can ring)
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything (there is a crack in everything)
That's how the light gets in
That's how the light gets in
That's how the light gets in¹⁷*

¹⁷ Excerpted from Anthem, Leonard Cohen, 1992

ARTIST STATEMENT

Drawing from the therapeutic benefits of clay, I make to record time, register my presence, and move through my recovery. Living in recovery means I live my life one day at a time. For me, each day is full of a feeling of potential and often, beauty. I mark my days not only by the number sober, but by the pots that I make. As part of my daily practice I make a pot, usually a pinch pot, as a meditation, offering, and marker. There is a pull to make with my hands, to create an object or vessel as a means of feeling more human, more vital, more alive. Time slows when I am in my studio. I lose myself in the cadence of making these pinched pots. These pots and the days they record accumulate in my life and my studio. Sometimes this accumulation is a joy, sometimes it is a trial, and sometimes instead of counting the days, I count the seconds.

Through my work, I reflect on my life and the lives of those I once knew. I often dwell on the seemingly arbitrary divergence of these lives. That I found recovery instead of incarceration or death weighs on my mind. Through making I hope to mold and shape these emotions in the way I mold and shape clay, turning it from an immovable lump into something purposeful and functional. Addiction stole time from me, but more than that, it obscured integral parts of who I am. Being an artist, making with my hands, has allowed me to find a way back and actualize the person that I am. This disease kills people at a startling rate. But we can and do recover. We keep living, one day at a time. Those days mean something, they add up, they matter. I hope to invite individuals to consider what living in recovery means, to reflect on the unfulfilled potential of lives lost to addiction, and to see the possibility of every day.

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