

...Inspiration

In art, the hand can never execute anything higher than the heart can imagine.
--Ralph Waldo Emerson



FEATURED ARTIST ELIZABETH WOOLRYCH

It is quite a stretch... from ballet shoes and modern dance to "slinging mud" and "throwing pots"...*or is it?*! According to Spanish Village clay artist, Elizabeth Woolrych some of the basics she learned in dance at 6 years old carry through to her pottery. It is all about "line and form". "When I was a dancer, I created shapes with my body" like living sculpture. "Now I use my hands to create shapes in clay."



Her fascination in working with clay surfaced around the same time she started studying dance. When she was a child her family spent many summers vacationing in Cape Cod. Often, during those summer visits, she would watch a local potter throwing on the wheel. "I can remember thinking the clay was magically raising!"

When she was 11, she and her little brother walked to Cal Western through the canyon by their house, to a summer pottery class. It was taught by Franklin Jew, a well respected San Diego area potter and, for years, a member of the Potters' Guild in Spanish Village. A few years later, when she discovered Franklin Jew's studio in Ocean Beach, she pestered him until he agreed to let her join the adult pottery class, although she was only 15 at the time.

When she graduated from High School, her parents agreed to take her to a clay workshop in the Cape Cod area. The teacher was the potter she had watched throw so many times as a child. That clay artist was Harry Holl. Following the workshop, Elizabeth, then 18, was one of three students chosen by the master potter for a two year apprenticeship. "It was a lot of work, long hours of mixing clay and other menial jobs, but I got a lot of experience throwing, too!" The work was intense, but she was able to perfect some very intricate techniques during those 2 years.

When the apprenticeship was over, Elizabeth stayed in Cape Cod but was ready for a change! She began working on a fishing boat "because it paid really well!" She saved her money in order to continue her study of dance. When she had enough saved, she went to Boston to attend dance class and perform with a professional dance group. When the money ran out, the cycle started again...working, saving, dancing!

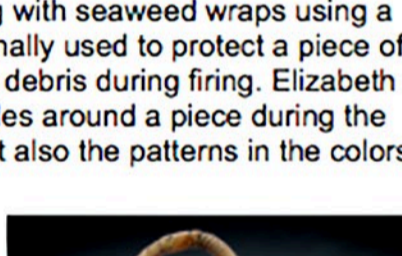
Within a few years, a family emergency brought Elizabeth back to San Diego...it was supposed to be temporary...that was some 35 years ago!! She hunted down her mentor, Franklin Jew...got back into pottery. Found a modern dance group...got back into dance. Waited tables to make ends meet. And she made new friends...who told her about the Potters' Guild in Spanish Village. "I listened to everything people had to say, their opinions about Spanish Village...both good and bad. But at some point, I just had to see for myself. I knew in my gut that Spanish Village was a good fit for me. As luck would have it, a studio artist needed a partner right away."

I asked Elizabeth what she liked most about being a member of Spanish Village. "It's the interaction with other artists. Can you really tell if you are growing as an artist if you are working alone in the garage? Being around other artists makes you stretch and experiment. As artists, we all need to experiment. I like to share results, both good and bad, with the other artists for their input."

Elizabeth likes to experiment with firing techniques. One is a westernized version of Raku, the 16th Century Japanese firing method. The traditional Raku technique involves firing, then removing the work from the kiln to air cool quickly, rather than slowly in the kiln. The western version, also known as American Raku involves heating the clay, removing it when it is red hot and placing it in a container of combustibles, like newspaper, sawdust, leaves, straw, etc. which causes flames, "bursts" of color and soot blackening. Actually the technique was the result of a "happy accident" when an artist doing a demo of Raku dropped the red hot piece he was removing from the kiln into some nearby dry leaves!

Elizabeth is currently experimenting with seaweed wraps using a "saggar". A saggar is a vessel originally used to protect a piece of pottery from smoke, gases and kiln debris during firing. Elizabeth uses the saggar to pack combustibles around a piece during the firing, not only to affect the color but also the patterns in the colors.

For Elizabeth, it is not about brilliant colors. It is about subtle colors, simple shapes and clean lines. "I like to see the clay. I also like using black to emphasize the shape and lines of a piece, rather than multicolors that might distract from those lines."



Of course to achieve those "simple" clean lines and shapes requires difficult throwing techniques and years of practice. We have all seen the shot of the potter, throwing a piece on the wheel, arm elbow-deep, wheel spinning, hollowing out the vessel, thinning the walls. A good artist makes it all look so easy!!

Elizabeth is not only an award-winning clay artist. She is also a well-respected educator. She has been teaching for more than 25 years. She introduces children as young as 6 to working in clay with a technique called "hand building". This is also the primary technique used by accomplished clay sculptors.

However, wheel throwing remains Elizabeth favorite technique. "I generally won't seriously teach this technique to kids under 10, although I often let younger kids play a little with it. However, they won't have the upper body strength or muscle coordination to throw successfully."

Elizabeth's proudest accomplishment as an educator thus far, was being invited to China for three weeks to demonstrate and lecture at the Academy of Arts and Design in Beijing.

For awhile, Elizabeth was making pottery to show and sell in her studio, teaching, dancing professionally and even modeling...all at the same time! "This was a wonderful time, but lots of work! I am glad now that I took advantage of each and every opportunity that came along, rather than going to college. Especially the dance... I would probably have missed out on the dancing. A dancer's career is such a small window of time!! I still get that "feeling" every time I watch a dance performance! I can't dance professionally anymore...but I can dance in my living room! Pottery, on the other hand is wide open...the possibilities are endless."

Elizabeth loves "slinging mud" and "throwing pots"...the feel of the earth and water gliding between her fingers. And she loves simple colors and patterns. It all brings her back to the summers spent in Cape Cod, playing in the sand and looking at the patterns and colors on the beach as the tide went out. And I would be willing to bet that on those cool summer days on the beach as a child, there was dancing!

Thanks for Listening!!
Maureen King
Studio 35

Elizabeth's work can be seen 7 days a week from 11am-4pm in Studio 6 of Spanish Village Art Center. You can meet and talk to artist Friday, Saturday & Monday.

Elizabeth will be participating, along with several other clay artists, in the San Diego Potters' Guild Semi-Annual Sale, November 8-9 on the Spanish Village Patio.

[to see Elizabeth's website](#)
[to learn more about Spanish Village Art Center...](#)



BEST OF SHOW CANINE COSTUME CONTEST

Halloween Family Day in Balboa Park
October 26, 2014

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SPANISH VILLAGE THIS MONTH



November 8-9
San Diego Potters' Guild Semi-Annual Show & Sale

Saturday & Sunday, 10am-4pm
Spanish Village Patio

Dozens of San Diego Potters' Guild members will display and sell their newest creations. Just in time for holiday gift-giving!

[more about San Diego Potters' Guild](#)

GALLERY 21 EVENTS IN NOVEMBER

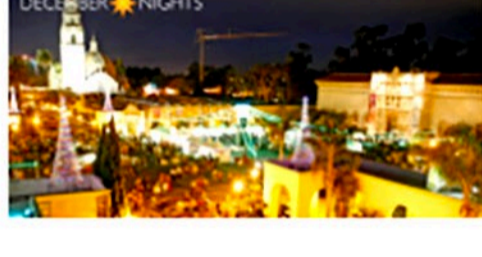
October 29 - November 10
22nd Annual Colored Pencil Society of America Exhibition, San Diego Chapter

November 12-24
7 Printmakers

November 26-December 8
Nadia Salameh Photography

[more info about Gallery 21](#)

EVENTS IN SPANISH VILLAGE COMING UP IN DECEMBER



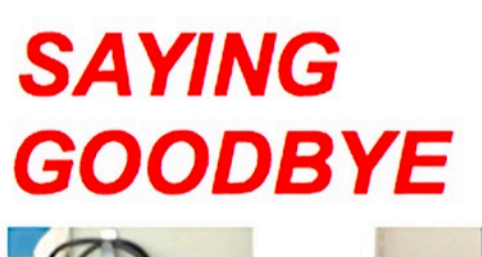
December 5 & 6
December Nights

Friday & Saturday
11am-11pm

Balboa Park December Nights takes place on Friday & Saturday, December 5-6 and attracts over 350,000 visitors. Spanish Village will be covered in thousands of colored lights with live entertainment, tons of food and hot apple cider to take the chill away. Open till 11pm, our 37 artist's studios and guilds offer unique handmade gifts. Help support local art and artists by purchasing handcrafted items this holiday season and year round!

[Balboa Park park-wide celebration](#)

SAYING GOODBYE



Sadly, we had to say goodbye to one of our Spanish Village artists, Marty Marshall, who passed away in October. Actually, in Marty's case, it was all so sudden and unexpected that we never had the chance to say goodbye. "Shock" and "disbelief" was expressed by everyone as they heard the news.

Marty was a talented glass blower and valued member of the Spanish Village Art Center, the Glass Guild and Studio 24. He has been described as "passionate", "enthusiastic", "generous" and "supportive" with a "wry sense of humor". But most importantly, "a genuinely nice man" who will be greatly missed.

Marty died doing what he loved... working with his wife, Jean, on a challenging new glass project in his hot shop, "Marshall Arts".

"In a way it was fitting for Marty to leave so abruptly," said one of his closest friends. "Often we would be standing in the doorway of my studio, talking at the end of the day. Marty would see Jean arrive to pick him up. He would turn and simply say, 'See ya', and he was gone..."