

Chico ER

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Kristy Edmonds etching in her own art studio. Photo by Leila Rodriguez
Chico >> Saturday is Kristy Edmonds' favorite day of the week.

The sole ceramicists behind California Soulshine Designs has been posted at the Chico Certified Farmers' Market selling her highly recognizable handmade ceramics for three and a half years.

"I think everything tastes better out of a handmade mug or off of a handmade plate," she said. "It gives it a better experience. That's my driving force."

The beloved Chico potter works out of her home studio. It's a peaceful atmosphere of music bumping mixed with the steady hum of fan circling the small space that harbors shelves of completed works and ones awaiting a glaze.

All of Edmond's pieces are also dishwasher and microwave safe.

"I'm not very interested in sculpture," Edmonds said. "I want to make things like mugs and bowls, plates, trays, platters — things you can eat off of and drink out of. I think it takes everyday acts that makes them more special, more like a ritual that enriches your life."

Whether it's the bark of a tree or the veins of a leaf, Edmonds is inspired by nature, music, textile and Moroccan art, which is reflected in her choice of glazes.

"I see a lot of beauty in the world around me and I find a lot of inspiration there," she said. "Clay gives you such an opportunity to manipulate it. It'll take any impression that you can come up with."

A lot of Edmond's patterned designs are made from clay stamps she carved. Piercing and carving into the clay is a new technique the artist has been utilizing with her pieces especially with newer fruit bowls.

But it's her jewel-toned, earth-toned color palette that sets her pieces apart. They are colors, the artist said, she feels most drawn to. It's a reflection of her spirit.

Small details added like a swirl at the bottom of pot are subtle signatures Edmonds adds as well. The spiral on the pottery's wheel kind of perpetuates the movement of the wheel even after it's fired and finished, she said.

"I think when I look at other potters' work, I liked work that seemed more refined," she explained. "The reason to me that it seemed more refined were those details. Little special surprises that maybe aren't necessary, but they just kind of take it to the next level."

Watching Edmonds work in her studio, one would think art was always her path, but the artist took a detour before studying her craft.

Twenty-two years ago, Edmonds took her first ceramics class in high school and she said it was a natural fit. The appeal of working with clay found her spending lunch hours in the ceramics studio. Though the apparent love for the craft was there, Edmonds ventured off to Purdue University to study wildlife management.

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During that time, she picked up a paid apprenticeship in a ceramics studio and taught classes at a local art museum. Needless to say, her science studies didn't pan out and the artist followed her heart.

"Purdue isn't necessarily known for art, it's more of an engineering school," Edmonds said with a laugh. "So after awhile I decided I'd be better off to transfer to Indiana University and that's where I graduated with a bachelor of arts with a focus on ceramics and here I am, 22 years later, making functional things for people to use in their everyday lives."

She moved to Chico, sight unseen, and said it has been the best decision she has ever made.

"I fit in so much more here than I did in Indiana," Edmonds said. "I was meant to be here and that is why my business is called California Soulshine designs. I feel like my soul shines through so much stronger here."

Just last year the artist was able to walk away from her last waitressing job to fully engulf her time making ceramics and living off her craft.

“I’m not getting rich by any means, but I love what I do,” Edmonds said. “Chico is a really great community and to have the Farmer’s Market every Saturday morning as my venue. I’ve been able to develop a nice following there and I have a lot of repeat customers.”

Her work can be found mainly at the Saturday market with the exception of a few pieces at Made In Chico.

She also teamed with KZFR where she created 50 custom mugs as gifts for the stations’ past pledge drive.

Edmonds said she will never sell her artwork online because it takes away from meeting her customers. The artist said she enjoys the story behind each sell and appreciates the customer engagement.

“I love what I do and I feel really, really lucky,” Edmonds said. “Finally after many years of bartending and waitressing, to support the building of my business, I am now finally able to make a living of making pottery.”

For more on Edmonds and her artwork visit californiasoulshinedesigns.com.