



Pamma FitzGerald

Pamma FitzGerald is a multi-media artist originally from London, England. With studios in both Canada and France, she is constantly collaborating with other artists from diverse backgrounds, learning old techniques and developing new ones. In June 2018 she was a recipient of the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Emerging Artist Award.

How did you get started in your practice?

The quick answer is: I was born, because I can only ever recall being surrounded by art. I grew up in London with my grandparents, two aunts, and my Dad. In our living room we had a plaster copy of an ancient Assyrian work on the wall, my Dad had painted an abstract painting around the fireplace, and Henri Rousseau's "The Snake Charmer" was over the dining table. My Dad built miniature wood furniture for me when I was very little, he processed photographs in the bathroom, and on the weekends we took the bus to the The British Museum or the Tate Gallery.

What inspires you?

I am drawn towards the sadnesses that occur in everyone's life - I feel compassion and empathy for different characters - whether real or imaginary. For example, in the recent past, I have made bodies of work in clay and collage that are based on this sadness. A body of work called 'Left Behind' is based on two of the very few survivors of an entire village massacre during WWII in France. Another body of work that's currently on exhibit in Calgary at The Alberta Craft Council is called 'Unhappily Ever After', based on seeing Fairytales through new eyes.

What role does a craft artist have in society?

When I see a beautiful needlework or a meticulously painted porcelain bowl or a tiny etched wooden box, the fast pace of the 21st century slows down and I imagine the hands that made those items... Perhaps the role of an artist is to slow things down so that society can reconnect with the breadth of abilities that we all have and can nurture and grow in one way or another.

How do you know when a piece is finished?

Ha! I often go too far and then have to re-do a piece with less... knowing where to stop can be challenging, because once it's out of the kiln, it's gonna stay on that clay! Collage gives me the ability to remove areas as well as add, plus there's a very different quality to paper adhered on top of clay, to a decal fired into the surface of a glaze. Another way I know when a piece is finished - I am already working on the next piece in my head!

Do you have any wild stories to tell?

I have had exhibitions in a Medieval Abbey in France where my heavy pieces had to be strung with wire usually used for keeping animals inside their fields. One of those times, as soon as the man hung the heaviest piece and said "this'll hold anything" - the piece crashed to the floor - the day before the opening.

(See Pamma's "Unhappily Ever After" at the Alberta Craft Gallery, in Calgary, AB, from June 9 - August 18, 2018.)

**Visit Pamma's website at
<https://pammafitzgerald.wordpress.com>.
This interview has been edited for
clarity and brevity.**