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I try and bring that style, that feeling of work into the modern period is one of my main driving forces.

"When working with clay I am aware of an instant communication between myself, the maker, and those who use my pots and dishes and bowls, more so than say my paintings because of the fact that a person is holding the form touching it with their lips, feeling it as an entity, not just as a form of art but something to use in their daily rituals of life.

"In addition to, but quite apart from, the narcissistic pleasure of creating the object, knowing that ones work is being used and understood in some form or another, is definitely a reason I like creating.

"But there is another reason as well. When it all comes down to it, it is something else that drives me to create, something I cannot pin down, it is like a madness, a sickness even.

"It is not that I enjoy looking at things after I have made them. As soon as they are made I really don't even look at them, yet I just have to create for some reason

"One of my ambitions as a potter is to be better than the people that have influenced me in the past. Unless you think like that, I really don't think you are able to grow past them, to build upon what they have added to art.

"When I look forward to where my art is now and where I want to go as an artist, a potter, I hopefully will keep progressing, moving ahead. Stagnation is something that one has to be aware of especially in the style I have chosen. Let's take, for instance, a bowl. There are certain parameters that one needs for a successful bowl. One needs to work within those parameters and find new ways to express yourself. That is the interesting thing with domestic pottery, to find freedom within the box"

"One of the highlights of my carer was to have Koie san (Koie Ryoji) come and join in at a work shop that I was doing at a gallery in Japan at his hometown, he actually complimented me on my work. Before this I had heard he had said my work was good from other gallery owners ,but to have him say it to my face was amazing. One must understand that Koie Ryoji is one of those 'God-like' artists.

Aaron says another highlight was when he and his family were staying at a friend and mentor Nakashima san



(katchan). They stayed at his house after Fukushima and played around in his studio a bit. "My work is all over the place, in private collections and even, museums but it is these personal bonds one makes with peers and mentors and teachers that really matter in my life."

Looking back on his career as an artist Aaron says: "I believe true talent represents only about five per cent of the equation for any form of art, perseverance and practice is the other 95%."

"I have just made as many pots as I could have found that once you get to this stage they just start to come naturally but that only happened to me recently, over the last few years."

The biggest obstacle in Aaron's career, and possibly his life, was the Fukushima nuclear accident that forced his hand at coming back to New Zealand. He lost everything. "The 16 years I had spent in developing my Oribe style had to be left behind as well as all the clays and glaze materials that I had gathered and which are completely different here in New Zealand. In artist terms it would be like having to change from oil to watercolours over night."

"But then," he adds optimistically, "If you are flexible enough any clay and glaze should be able to be used in an aesthetically pleasing way - Fukushima was a speed bump."

While many artists learn from making mistakes Aarons seeks them out. "It is fortunate because the style that I work in (Oribe style) is actually all about imperfect forms. I have always been after those mistakes and many of the methods I use in making my pots breeds mistakes so that they come out naturally without me having to force them. Essentially I am in the business of mistakes."

A self-confessed hermit Aaron does not belong to clubs, societies or any art organisations. He says that lately he has been really enjoying splashing and painting the white slip onto terracotta with a hake brush. "It is adding a depth and movement to my work that I can only describe as astonishing."

He does not have a fixed favourite medium moving from one to another as mood the suits or depending on what exhibition style is working on. "A month ago it



was porcelain, all I wanted to do was porcelain, today I am enjoying terracotta. Different clays are like the weather, it's not nice to have sunshine everyday, one needs more turbulent weather.

His favourite piece of equipment is his wheel. "It's like playing music, full of rhythm although in my case a bit wayward."

On the wayward theme Aaron says in pottery it helps to be a bit schizophrenic. "You are always moving between wheel work, decoration, loading kilns, glazing, finishing, creating again. Some times just to avoid doing this work one goes and does it anyway. Another day it will be different. The one thing that always stays constant if I go into the studio to make a cup I will end up making a vase. I can't simply plan on what I am going to make and then go and make it – that's where the schizophrenia comes in."

Asked if he had any tips for new artists Aaron says simply: "There are no truths in art, only ego maniacs who pretend there are so you think they are gods."

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News

UNDER HIS OWN STEAM

Arguably one of New Zealand's most important potters and a major figure in the development of a distinctive, indigenous art, Barry Brickell will exhibit a carefully curated selection of his work at the Waitakere Contemporary Gallery from April 11 to May 31.

Brickell uses coarse local clays to produce exuberant and elemental forms that pulse with a humour and sexuality, rare in New Zealand craft or art. His most well known forms are the Spiromorphs, large-scale spiral creations that twist and unfold in expansive curves and visceral ridges, drawing on the relentless energy of nature. This exhibition, which goes under the title 'His Own Steam: A Barry Brickell Survey', spans over 60 years and



is the first significant survey exhibition of Barry's work. The touring exhibition brings together approximately 50 works, drawing on the sizable holdings of both The Dowse Art Museum and Brickell's own collection, together with key works from around New Zealand. **N**