



sarah the potter

Sarah Connor is a mum of two who took a chance, swapped careers, and followed her passion for ceramic artistry in Manjimup, Western Australia.

I'm one of those clichéd artists who can say, *"I've been illustrating since I could pick up a pencil"*. I went into a career of graphic design and over 10 years built a great name for myself. But being in front of a computer all the time became draining and I was stressed out.

I took a break from graphic design while on maternity leave, and started working with clay as a stress reliever. it was new and exciting. For the first time ever, I was drawing what I felt like drawing, not what I was paid to. Changing careers was terrifying. I felt like I was letting down

everyone who had helped me get to that point. My background isn't wasted though. I make my own logos and branding, and design my own packaging.

How do you make a clay creation, like a mug? I get a ball of clay, I wedge it – which is like kneading dough – and I work it on my wheel until I have a vessel. I'll leave that to dry for several days before attaching handles, carving a design and allowing it to dry some more. I then paint the mug with under-glaze and it goes into its first fire in my kiln – a heating chamber used to harden materials at high temps.

The mug then gets a second, glossy coat of glaze and back into the kiln it goes. At last, you've got a mug for drinking!

In the beginning I made so many mistakes. The ceramics process is long and you never know if you've done it right until the very end.

I didn't want to spend too long on something intricate, only to find, the clay had exploded! I began drawing moons, then flowers, then moved onto cute, little



characters. They were weird mutations... but now I love my characters! They're such happy little weirdos, so I continue to make them.

How did you start selling your work?

I started selling when my room filled up with really crappy pottery! I was making and firing pieces every night for hours after my kids had gone to bed. I began sharing my pottery on social media, amongst my illustrations and when my friends saw I was throwing pieces out they offered to buy them instead! I sold early pieces for cheap, because I thought they weren't good. But people have been so supportive and lovely. If I hadn't started selling my

pottery I couldn't have continued – it's an expensive enterprise.

What are the pros and cons of advertising your business on social media?

If you've had a bad day, you can be open with people, and be flooded with love and support. A good following doesn't necessarily mean big numbers, but genuine people who are interested in what you're doing. One downside is if the platform changes their algorithm, you can be made invisible. The platform gets to control who sees your work.

Do you have any tips for those trying pottery? Watch what other potters do and how they throw their clay. Don't be

afraid to get messy. When I first started, I saw my imperfect pottery as rubbish! Now their imperfections are endearing to me. I love knowing what I'm selling is handmade.

You can always go to a store and buy a mug, but I like my mugs a bit wonky – it shows time and love went into it. I adore seeing fingerprints on clay once it's glazed, and noticing edges which aren't completely smooth.

My biggest tip would be to just try it. Get on the wheel and make something hideous, fire it and put a plant in it. Be proud of this hideous thing you made. Just keep making hideous things!