

Artist Dennis Portz – Queer Love

Dennis lives in Portland and has worked with clay since he was a child, digging yellow and blue clay from the stream beds in Eastern Iowa with his siblings and drying pots in the sun. Over 15 years ago, he started making work at a community studio in Iowa and selling at shows a few years after that.

“I grew up in a small town in rural Iowa as a gay cis male. I didn’t know any queer people until I was in college. There were no role models, no rainbow flags, or other symbols of queer culture when growing up. That stigma continued in my life and kept me closeted until I was in my late 20s. I started considering my queer ceramic work about 5 years ago, but didn’t actually start making any until the last two years. I start with internet photos as inspiration to create line drawings. Those line drawings are transferred to clay in a couple different ways. I like the feel of the work to be raw in both the drawing style and general feel. Some of the imagery being graphic helps with that feeling. The work is still evolving and changing.”

I make primarily wheel thrown pottery with a little hand building from time to time. The wheel is where I feel most at home. I do carving and decorations both on the wheel and off the wheel. I have been using underglazes to add color and dimension to the work. All of my work is fired to cone 6 in an electric kiln. I use a minimalistic design and add color, lines, circles, dots, and hand carvings to add visual depth and a tactile or touchable look. I prefer a textured look and feel to my work. That is why I leave the exterior of the work unglazed. The interior and rims are all glazed so that they are food safe.

bio

Dennis currently owns and operates two businesses, Portz Pottery and a small fruit-farming business, while serving on the board of the Oregon Potters Association. He has shown work in Portland and Salem on The Edge, and has work in numerous shops and markets across Oregon.