



# Conversations *in Clay*

Portland ceramic artist Jenny Poston draws on a multitude of inspirations for her wide-ranging repertoire.

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Artist Jenny Poston works out of a Quonset studio in Southeast Portland (opposite). Her repertoire runs the gamut from more traditional vessels (left) to furniture and lighting (below), which often take on fantastical outlines thanks to her passion for experimentation and exploration.



What some see as a lump of clay, Portlander Jenny Poston regards as the jumping-off point to an infinite number of possibilities.

In her hands, the humble material assumes a variety of iterations—from lighting to furniture to purely abstract works. But even when she’s creating functional wares, Poston means for her pieces to be seen in the round, like sculpture. “An object may be static,” she says, “but there are lines and inflection points that always lead the viewer somewhere, whether it’s a literal line on a surface or the lines created by edges.”

For Poston, who studied industrial design at the Rhode Island School of Design and worked for designer Kelly Wearstler in Los Angeles, primarily developing her lighting collection, exploring clay’s possibilities led to a revelation. “Working with my

hands makes me feel like I am an honest representation of myself,” she muses. “Previously, it always felt like something was missing, and I was not quite satisfied with my design profession.”

Self-taught in her current medium, the artist doesn’t shy away from trying something new. Recently, she’s become fascinated with *nerikomi*, a Japanese technique in which the potter builds pieces using slices of colored clay. “It’s more of a pure form if you’re not adding things to the surface, like a glaze,” she says. Poston is also building a lighting collection that reflects her wide-ranging interests. A fan of Brutalist architecture, she incorporated the style’s repetitive patterns and monolithic forms into her Butterfly lamp. Her fascination with structure and anatomy led to her almost skeletal Lattice lamp.

Then there’s her “Waste Naught” series of gracefully curved vessels, which originated from a desire to make use of

leftover clay. She began removing slices of the material and returning them to her forms in different places. “With just a few motions, I could create something completely different,” she marvels. But she also produces purely sculptural pieces, and on any given day she happily alternates between the two. “That movement back and forth keeps me interested and my brain exercised,” she says. “I could be working on a sculpture, but if I scale it down, it could be a cool table. One idea can be expanded into so many different things.”

While Poston’s work often transcends the traditional, functional history of her medium—“I laugh at myself because I make so many things that can’t hold water, which is the antithesis of pottery,” she admits—she hopes that viewers appreciate her pieces for what they are. “The lines, the shape and the colors,” she says. “Hopefully it brings joy to them every time they look at it, and maybe it’s a little different every time.” ■