

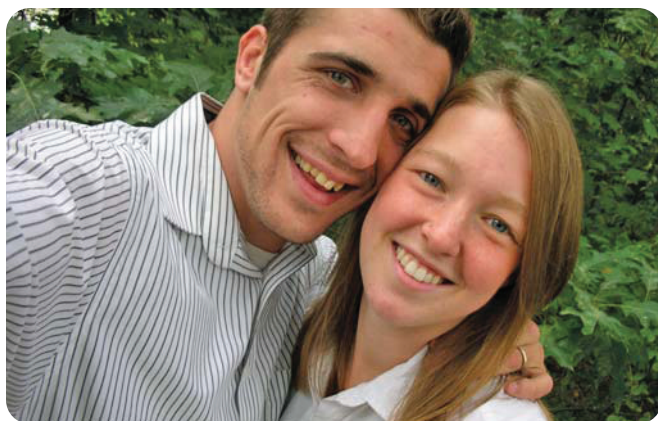
Kari Therrien (Olstad)

Kari Therrien (Olstad), 2007 BFA Ceramics alumnae, attended the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) conference in Spring 2007 where ceramics faculty member, John Baymore, introduced her to Phil Rogers. Rogers, an internationally renowned potter from the United Kingdom, presented the opportunity for a three-month assistant position at his studio. She said, "I didn't think it would happen and I was really intimidated, but I sent some images to Phil anyway."

Just a few months after graduation, Therrien was on a plane headed for Wales. Therrien experienced the life of a successful, self-employed potter. "I did everything with them. I walked the dogs, cooked dinner, cleaned," she explained. She organized the studio, priced some of his work, and wrapped pieces for shipping. "I did a lot of the small tasks so he could focus on making his work."

The transition from an educational environment to an individual studio was challenging for Therrien. However, working with Rogers, she was also able to learn valuable lessons from a successful potter. She explains, "He wanted to impart his knowledge to me so I could continue the circle of traditional functional pottery."

During her stay, Rogers was in an accident, which limited his ability to work, thus impacting Therrien's assistantship. Understanding the impact this had on her experience, Rogers invited Therrien back for a second assistantship upon his recovery. In January 2008, Therrien returned to Wales where she worked on her own pottery and was confronted with different, less decorated styles of clay work. She was in awe of the contrast in styles and how American pottery was so different. She says, "I was confronted with a different style of work while trying to figure out how my style fit into my own culture." She also



KARI THERRIEN (OLSTAD) / (above) tenmoku box (below) with husband Joey

traveled to St. Ives, England where she met artists and historians whom she learned about while at the Institute. Therrien explains, "I met the man who wrote one of my history books! It was so humbling. It made me realize that I am but one artist in this whole world."

Rogers remained helpful to Therrien upon her return to the States, helping her secure a studio space in Bedford, NH. She spent time in the studio trying to implement all the things she learned from her trip into style that reflected her experience. She admits, "I struggled when I came back from Wales. It was difficult to balance a full time job with working in a self-directed manner. I learned a lot about dedication and discipline from Phil." Therrien turned to her connections at the Institute. "I met with my old professors and took advantage of their council; it was very helpful."

Therrien continues to work on her pottery and meets with college friends for handbuilding and simple firings. "I have a knowledge base and skills that will never leave because of my education and experience," she said. Therrien continues to carry a sketchbook to make sure she stays creative. "If I was to stop being creative it would be like artistic atrophy. I have to keep exercising that muscle. Being an artist is a way of life, not just a career."