

## Deb Bazer



Ceramic artist Deb Bazer lives in the village of

Lake Pleasant in the town of Montague. The tiny and close-knit community of cottage-style homes lines one end of this pristine lake, which is a reserve water supply for Montague and ostensibly off-limits for recreation. It is also home to the National Spiritualist Alliance, a community of psychic believers formed in 1874 by “Psychic Songster” Rev G. Tabor Thompson. Every week there are meetings, and the last Saturday of the month there is a Psychic Fair where people can buy consultations from a variety of mediums.

“We like it here, it’s such a quirky and wonderful place,” said Deb when I visited with her recently.

“It’s a lovely community of people pulling together to get things done, kind of like from another time

period.” She and her artist husband, Lahri Bond, have lived in Lake Pleasant for six years.



Bazer’s studio occupies several areas of their home including most of the front porch, where a unique tile press stands ready to squeeze clay into the plaster molds she uses for these forms. Her tile designs start with a drawing which she impresses on a clay slab by pressing through the paper as she traces the design. Her imagery is inspired by Celtic and Nordic mythology which both she and Lahri have a fascination for.

Then she carves her image into the clay, and makes a plaster mold. “I like for my work to be affordable, and molds are a way to make affordable things. It takes a long time to carve, and I can reproduce it, but what I love is that no two really look the same and that makes me really happy,” explained Deb.



She uses the mold in the press that she and her father built many years ago out of plumbing pipe and hardware store items. She demonstrated the process and I asked if the clay ever gets stuck in the mold. “The clay doesn’t stick to plaster; plaster likes water, and there’s lots of water in the clay, so that when I press the clay in and scrape off the excess, and let it sit for 5 or ten minutes like a cake cooling, it shrinks a little. Then I can tap it out with a mallet, tap! tap! and it plops out.”

Deb has a degree in ceramics from UMass, and also studied at the Moravian Pottery and Tileworks in Doylestown, PA. This tile factory was founded by Henry Chapman Mercer and was at the forefront of the Arts & Crafts movement in the US; it is now a working history museum producing tiles with locally dug clay.

Tiles are what Deb sells most of at the Shelburne Arts Coop, as well as some slab built dinnerware made from terra-cotta colored stoneware, but she also does ceramic sculpture and pulled out a

whole series of works in progress from the storage area in her basement.



“I’ve been looking at buildings that nobody is living in, and how nature takes over — how quickly it takes over, once people vacate,” said Deb. Inside the carved clay buildings were trees growing through or animals cavorting or sleeping. On the walls, beams and branches intertwined. The inspiration for the abandoned buildings series of sculptures came from many walks around the old Northfield Mount Hermon campus in Northfield after it closed about ten years ago. “I would see foxes and deer trotting across lawns...it’s beautiful and inspiring. The architecture is incredible there. But if it weren’t for the maintenance crew, I think the whole place would be in brambles.” In 1999, Deb went back to UMass to get a degree in education and has been teaching preschool pretty much full time since. This leaves less time for her art, but she manages to squeeze it into the corners of her busy schedule. If she were to ever explore another medium, it would be fiber. “I’ve always loved fiber...I would love to do more with that. I have been doodling around in that realm and I really enjoy the colors and textures. I would do felting..I have done it with kids, dying the wool with natural materials. I look to nature for everything that I do!”

Nina Rossi  
[nalerossi@gmail.com](mailto:nalerossi@gmail.com)  
[ninasnook.com](http://ninasnook.com)