



RIGHT AT HOME

Morty Bachar and Patty Storms in their Lakeside Pottery Studio in Lewes.



Imperfections at Their Finest

THE ANCIENT ART OF JAPANESE “KINTSUGI” HAS COME TO LEWES

Story and Photography by **Deny Howeth**

In his small, upstairs **Lakeside Pottery Studio in Lewes**, Morty Bachar uses *kintsugi* to mend broken pottery while taking traditional Japanese techniques in new directions.

Historians say the art of kintsugi was originally used to repair a broken pot for an important aristocrat who then proclaimed the repair was more beautiful than the original piece. There are few kintsugi artisans in the country, and Bachar is one of them.

His most famous work is a red vase that was created by a potter peer in record time who was able to produce the specific vessel with red glaze the US States State Department desired. He then, unfortunately, shattered it. Using kintsugi techniques, Bachar repaired the vase, which was later presented by President Joe Biden to then-Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga in April of 2021.

The always jovial Bachar still carries a light accent. Born and raised in Israel by Bulgarian immigrant parents, he moved to the U.S. in 1981. Bachar began his career as an engineer but then transitioned to own and operate the very successful Lakeside Pottery School and Studio in Connecticut. While teaching ceramics, Bachar recognized how heartbroken the studios younger students would be to discover, after long hours of work, some of their handmade clay figures cracked in the kiln during the firing process. “I secretly mended the pieces,” Bachar said.

What he didn’t realize was that his path to 3-D art restoration and kintsugi gold repair have begun.

When fixing a broken piece, instead of hiding the repair, kintsugi uses gold to highlight the break lines. Kintsugi, he said, “is a metaphor people can apply to themselves. Emotional or physical scars can be carried with pride because those are what make you beautiful.”

About 10 years ago, a priest asked him to assist with a ceremony involving kintsugi. He researched the art form and discovered it was difficult to find artists and materials. After a few months of experimentation, Bachar felt the quality met his standards, and he began offering kintsugi through Lakeside Pottery Studio using the traditional real gold process.

There are several steps to complete a kintsugi repair: bonding the segments, preparing the surface and applying gold powder over lacquer. Bachar spent more than a year developing a proprietary blend of powdered metal and bonding materials to mimic the look of real gold. It is offered at a lower cost compared to real gold, making the kintsugi art more affordable and accessible to many more who seek to use the beautiful and healing metaphor,” he said.

His first purposeful 3D art repair came from an artist friend who found himself on hard times. Priceless Mexican pottery had been entrusted to his friend for repair; but the efforts were not flawless. Bachar researched how to make a seamless repair and both Patty and he helped the artist to finish the project so he could keep his client, and this opened the floodgates to Patty and Morty's restoration business.

"I decided I would record the process of a seamless repair and post it on our website for others to learn from, and the number of hits on that page taught me there was a niche for this type of business and a hunger for education," Bachar said. He shares his knowledge freely with anyone who wants to know. (www.lakesidepottery.com)

Bachar's mind is always in motion, looking for solutions. "With restoration, my goal was to not see the repair at all. The typical process and materials available were older and did not utilize the latest technologies used by other industries. So, I began my journey of researching materials, testing and experimenting with instrumentation, adhesives, fillers and glaze companies," he said. For example, he landed on a cold glaze used in the Avionics industry that could withstand UV light without altering colors, or, a filler that was modified to meet his requirements for better performance, which has since become the new standard for 3D art restoration.

"With any frontier, you make a lot of mistakes," he said. By helping others along the way, he has assisted in enhancing and utilizing more modern products and processes that are used by more restorers in the industry.

Bachar and Storms wanted to relocate to an area that had similarities to Storms' native Maine. A new customer in the Lewes area introduced them to eastern Sussex County. Now in Lewes, the studio does seamless repairs on priceless heirlooms, as well as sentimental and historical significance objects.

He also does custom kintsugi. If you already have a broken piece or select a piece of pottery from the website, Bachar will break it with as many cracks as requested, repair it with the technique and stay within your budget. Choose gold or gold effect metal blend, which is indistinguishable from real gold and more economical for the client. **CS**



HIGH PRAISE Kintsugi is said to have originated in Japan in the late 15th century. Using its techniques, Bachar repaired the red vase shown here, which was later presented by President Joe Biden to then-Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga in April of 2021.



Images of red vase courtesy of Morty Bachar, Lakeside Pottery Studio.

www.LakesidePottery.com