

Convergent Paths

With different backgrounds, even nationalities, couple creates unique works

BY LYNN R. PARKS | PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLYN WATSON



Morty Bachar was an electrical engineer, with degrees from Bramson ORT College, a now-closed New York City institution, and the New York Institute of Technology. A native of Acre, an ancient port city in Israel, he excelled in his career. He says: “I began to be pushed toward the administrative part, with fancy titles, and eventually I had my own technology company.”

His life partner, Patty Storms, has been an artist since she was a child. She started taking lessons in oil painting when she was just 8 years old; throughout her years at the North Yarmouth Academy in Maine and

then at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, Storms was “always very involved in the arts — pottery, oils, watercolor, sculpture, anything I could get my hands on,” she says. “I was hungry for learning, but my focus was always art.”

Despite very different beginnings, Bachar and Storms are now in the same place as owners of Lakeside Pottery near Lewes. There, they have a painting studio, where Storms creates her watercolors and pencil drawings; a pottery studio, where she and Bachar make objects of clay; and a restoration studio, where they repair broken three-dimensional art pieces. ➤

Patty Storms and Morty Bachar, life partners as well as co-owners of Lakeside Pottery near Lewes, hold ceramics that they have created. In addition to making new pieces, the couple repair broken ceramics. In her home studio, Storms also paints and draws.



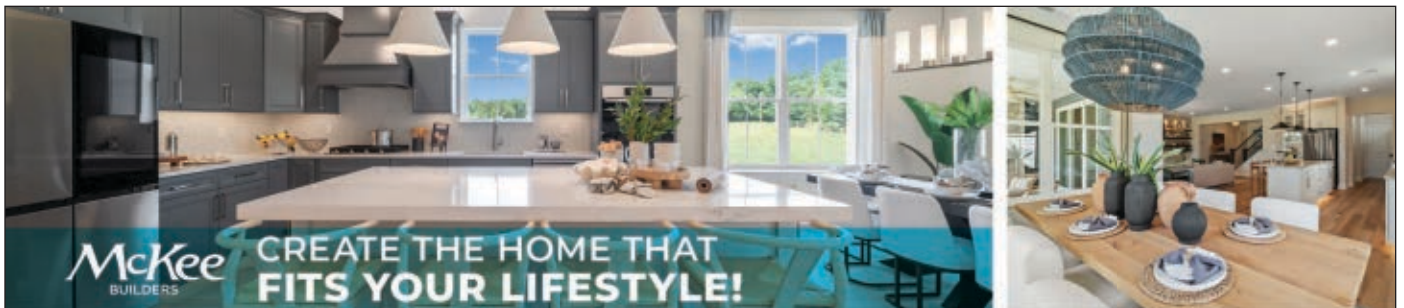
Morty Bachar puts the finishing touches on a piece of pottery that he has repaired following the Japanese art of kintsugi, emphasizing the seams with gold rather than hiding them.

It is the last of those three that has gotten the most attention recently. Bachar follows the Japanese art of kintsugi, or reassembling broken pottery by sticking the pieces together with a lacquer that's sprinkled with gold powder. Instead of hiding the seams — typically a goal in ceramic repair — the gold emphasizes them.

In 2021 and again in April this year, the State Department has asked Bachar to make new vases and then apply the the gold kintsugi process, as gifts for two prime ministers of Japan. The first time, he used a large red vase. For the second gift, he used a unique blue vase he had made. See more:

<https://youtu.be/W5xWHPeTnFQ>

Bachar also seamlessly restores sculptures and ceramics objects. He carefully reassembles the pieces of a very broken Picasso platter, for example, or of a centuries-old Han Dynasty Chinese terra-cotta sculpture. To finish the piece, Storms or Bachar use thier painting skills to duplicate what was there originally and to perfectly match the



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new colors into the original. “She does painting that is so intricate,” Bachar says. “I’ve learned from her, but I’m not as good as she is. So I recruit her.”

In the pottery studio, Bachar makes commissioned historical pieces. “I try to stay with unique requests, projects that require research,” he says, such as a re-creation of the vessel used in ancient Greece to serve souvlaki — long and skinny and higher on one end so that the juices run to the bottom — and of clay jugs historically used to transport water, one on one side of a donkey and one on the other. The trick there was to put a circle of clay at the base of the neck to keep the water from splashing out, but with a small hole in it so the rider could drink.



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Unlike Bachar, Storms creates her pottery purely by inspiration rather than commission. One shelf in the pottery studio is lined with crooked buildings, each about a foot tall. “I make them just for fun,” she says. “They make me smile.”

She is working on a series of miniature houses, replicas of residences in Porto, Portugal. “All the houses there seemed to be squished together on cliffs,” she notes. “So I’m going to paint these in Porto colors — ochre, blue and sand — paint the roofs red and then glue them onto pieces of driftwood. If people like them and they sell, I’ll make more.”

And she also enjoys using sgraffito, a technique in which she paints a partially cured pot black, then scratches off the black to reveal the white clay underneath. Scratched designs on her pots include turtles, fish and birds, as well as leaves and bees. ➤



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The painting studio is Storms' alone. There, she created a series of pencil drawings of animal faces: a handsome lion, a noble water buffalo and a pair of ostriches that seem to be asking what you're looking at. Among the drawings is one of a river otter that she drew for Bachar after otters came into their backyard pond and caught and ate the koi that were there. "They left us the heads," Bachar says. "I was angry. So Patty, to bring me back to love otters again, drew me a picture of this cute otter, and I do love them again."

She also does watercolors — landscapes as well as portraits — and paintings of animals, and is working on a series of fanciful drawings of animals for a children's book she is planning.



My aunt was a huge influence on me, and when I started showing interest in art my parents helped me by taking me to private lessons."

Their stories

Storms grew up in southern Maine, "where I had the ocean in front of me and the woods behind me," she says. As a child, she was inspired to paint by her paternal aunt, Rita Fava, who lived in Rome and was well-known for her portraiture. "She was a huge influence on me, and when I started showing interest in art, because of her, my parents helped me by taking me to private lessons."

After college, Storms worked at Christie's auction house in New York, in its 19th- and 20th-century photography department, and then at New York's Light Gallery, now closed but which specialized in photography of the same era. "I love the idea of

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black-and-white, and am still working with that in my sgraffito,” she says.

Storms was a stay-at-home mom for a while, drawing and painting while her children napped. Then she started taking pottery classes at the Lakeside Pottery School and Studio, which Bachar had opened in Stamford, Conn. “And that was where I met Morty,” she recalls.

As a young man, Bachar left his native country for Africa after serving his mandatory time in the Israeli army. A Jew, he had grown up around Arabs and was greatly influenced by their culture. “They were the kindest, nicest, most honorable; they taught me lots of things,” he says. “But after my time in the army, I was very conflicted. Arabs were our enemy, and yet I had a lot of Arab friends. I wanted to step back and gain a broader perspective, to find a way to advocate for social justice without being confined by the government’s agenda.” >



Ever since working in a gallery that specialized in 19th- and 20th-century photographs, Patty Storms has enjoyed working in black-and-white. Lately, she has started drawing on black paper with white pencils. “There’s something exciting about it, the way the image sort of pops out at you,” she says.

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He was in Africa for about 18 months, hiking and camping and, when he ran out of money, working as an electrician. He returned to Israel to go to college and then, “when I realized I couldn’t live there, which is what I thought would happen, I came to the United States.”

Though successful in his career as an electrical engineer, Bachar was not happy. “I was driven by providing for my family to take a path I didn’t want to,” he says. “I wanted to stay an engineer. But I wanted to innovate — to ‘build the bench’ — rather than be the boss.”

To satisfy his urge to produce something, he took pottery lessons. “I decided that that was going to be my hobby, and I built a home studio. Then one day, at the prime of my career, I just quit my job. I stopped the whole wealth-accumulation thing and became a potter.”

In 2002, he bought a building in Stamford and started Lakeside. The business flourished for 14 years, offering classes for adults and children and room for artists to work. “It was expanding, growing,” he says. “Then one day, Patty whispered in my ear, ‘You know, you’re going corporate.’ It was time to move.”

The couple liked the idea of living in Maine. “But Maine is too cold,” Bachar says. Through a customer, they learned about Lewes, “as Maine as it gets.” They moved to the bayside town in 2016.

Bachar says that when he started making pottery, and even after he opened his Connecticut studio, he didn’t consider what he

was doing to be art. “I was a craftsman, and I was making crafts,” he says. But Storms, who eventually joined the studio as a teacher, “is an artist in her soul. And she switched what we were doing from craft to art.”

As an illustration, standing in the couple’s pottery studio, he picks out of a large, flat blue bowl one of five softball-sized clay human heads, painted blue, all with their eyes closed and with distinctive facial characteristics. He shakes it, and it rattles.

“Pre-Patty, our pottery was that,” he says, pointing to a traditional vase on a nearby shelf. “Now, Patty is here, and *this* is our pottery,” he adds, shaking the small head. “You make a bowl that matches, and put some of them in it. And what we do becomes so much more than craft. It becomes art.” ■

Lynn R. Parks is a frequent contributor to Delaware Beach Life.

SEE FOR YOURSELF Lakeside Pottery co-owner Patty Storms sells her drawings, paintings and pottery through pattystorms.com. Information about the enterprise’s restoration studio, as well as instructional videos for people who want to try it themselves, can be found at lakesidepottery.com. Also at that website is information about commissioning a new piece of pottery from Lakeside’s other owner, Morty Bachar.

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