

# PEOPLE

*THIS MONTH: A ceramicist who creates colourful, exuberant pieces; a weaver of textiles inspired by her Greek heritage; and an artist whose paintings are both abstract and figurative*



Ceramicist Kate Malone and her husband Graham Inglefield in their sitting room in Kent, with their cat Biscuit asleep on the sofa. A woven bowl by Kate is displayed behind an Onggi kick wheel that once belonged to Shoji Hamada. It is a treasure that Kate sometimes uses in the studio across the courtyard





*Lifestyle*

# FEATS OF CLAY

In studios in London and Kent, KATE MALONE crafts distinctive ceramics that sell worldwide. While she and her husband Graham now have a house in Kent, they are still actively involved in creative communities in the capital and beyond

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PHOTOGRAPHS MICHAEL SINCLAIR

ABOVE FROM LEFT Kate and Graham gathering dahlias in the garden. Their house dates from 1750. CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW LEFT Ceramics on the mantel include Kate's first *Blackberry* and *Pineapple* designs. Graham in the billiard room, which was constructed in 1929. The bathroom is lined with glass mosaic tiles. Kate holding *Atomic Rising*. OPPOSITE With her assistant Louise Chopping in her Kent studio, converted from two carpports



**K**ate Malone is as joyous as her wonderfully exuberant, colourful and detailed ceramics. Meeting her in her one of her two studios, one in Kent and the other in the north London mews where she has been based for decades, is to be swept up in a vortex of warmth, talk and enthusiasm. And not just for her work – to which she is totally committed – but her community, be it her nine part-time studio assistants, the various small businesses in the mews or the world in general. Hers is just the voice we need.

Born in 1959, she is the first to admit how fortunate she was to be part of the generation who benefited from an education that valued the creative arts, in which crafts such as pottery or metalwork were considered to be just as important as other subjects on the curriculum. She attended a good comprehensive school in Bristol, which although 'a bit rough', had the most amazing art department. 'At the time, I took it for granted and it is only in retrospect that I realised how fortunate I was to be educated at this time,' Kate says. After a BA in ceramics from what was then Bristol Polytechnic, she studied for an MA in ceramics at the Royal College of Art from 1983 to 1986. On both courses, Kate was taught by her hero, the ceramicist Mo Jupp, who challenged his students to make pieces they thought were beyond their capabilities. Staff >





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were plentiful, the students received grants, fees were paid and materials were provided for free.

Kate was fortunate, too, that on leaving the RCA in 1986, she was able to move into a free studio in the South Bank Craft Centre, next to the Royal Festival Hall, part of the initiative by the then leader of the Greater London Council Ken Livingstone to promote cultural life in the capital. Though basic, it offered a car park, a kiln and free electricity – a large percentage of potters' overheads. 'Thanks to this circumstance, I developed my rather extravagant multiple glazing style,' she explains.

But perhaps her greatest piece of good fortune came in 1983 when she met her now husband Graham Inglefield, whom Kate freely admits is the mainstay of her work and family life. Graham started out as a patisserie chef. 'I once won a golden thermometer for making the best Hovis loaf,' he says with pride. But he quickly segued into building work, antiques and architectural salvage. 'Without Graham, who built both my London studios and has encouraged me all the way, I would be doing something completely different,' Kate says. 'He is the reality check behind my work, giving me the confidence to take on the large-scale public works.'

The couple share a love of nature, adventure and a challenge. One of their first dreams to be realised was building a community studio in London. In 1986 and heavily mortgaged, they bought a Georgian terrace house on Balls Pond Road, N1, with land and derelict buildings behind with mews access. Over the years Graham built Balls Pond Studio, with its gloriously ornate metalwork gates. The space became part of the local community, housing 14 ceramicists who ranged in age from 20 to 75, >



ABOVE Bisque-fired works in progress, including a *Tree* piece made during the first lockdown, which has evolved over time without a specific plan. Also shown are part of *Atomic Flower Brick* and a *Magma Box*. BELOW Kate and Louise packing a glaze firing in the bespoke electric trolley kiln, which was made in Stoke-on-Trent by expert kiln maker Jan Komar. The work is packed using loose refractory kiln shelves and props



ABOVE Pumpkins are a recurring motif in Kate's work. Here, she begins forming a pumpkin stem by hand, which will be twisted into shape while the clay is still soft. She will then whittle the stem as it dries to further refine its shape







ABOVE Kate, Graham and their daughter Scarlett in the kitchen-dining area of the live-work space in their London house. Graham designed the Formica marquetry wall and island. BELOW A painting by Anthony Pilley is teamed with *Bud*, a 2012 work by Kate

as well as the biggest studio kiln in London. The studio hosted an annual show of work and was one of the first custom-built craft spaces in the capital.

As is the case with many artists, to help financially Kate was teaching a day a week at Middlesex Polytechnic as well as working on her own pieces and was, she admits, 'ducking and diving... It was big news if I sold three pieces a year for £600 each'. In 1994, she came to the attention of the art dealer Adrian Sassoon. Then Britain's leading dealer in antique French porcelain, Adrian wanted to branch out into contemporary ceramics and asked the curator Tessa Peters for a list of the top 10 makers in that world. Kate's name was on it. She offered him three pieces that sold quickly and he soon became her main dealer. 'I look on him as a friend who has my best interests at the top of his list,' she explains.

Today, her work is displayed in Oxford and London, in the Ashmolean and Victoria & Albert museums, and she has buyers all over the world. 'My pieces are orphaned until they find a home,' she explains. 'Some go to places beyond my dreams, but there is also a hospital porter who collects my work. I love that.' Adrian handles everything she makes that sells for more than £350, so that she can still make some smaller works to sell at her annual open studios, which also showcase her assistants' work.

Kate, Graham and their daughter Scarlett lived partly abroad for a few years from 2001, in France and then Barcelona. When they returned, they sold the original Balls Pond Studio; its new owners rent it out to six potters under the name Culford Studios. Since then, Kate and Graham have developed another building in the same >





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mews, which they have also named Balls Pond Studio. Craft builder extraordinaire Graham set to work, creating a live-work studio at the back of the property with a multi-use ground floor, where he and Kate work and Scarlett, an actor, runs the Culford Collective, a group for creative freelancers to explore new ideas with their peers.

In 2017, the family bought their dream house in Kent. Dating back to 1750, with additions from 1850 and 1929, it was lived in by the Baxter family, of Marsh & Baxter's sausage fame. The Baxters, like Kate and Graham, believed in using local craftsmen – as seen in the detailing of the lychgate, doors, panelling and chimneypieces. There are 100 windows that allow in a fantastic amount of light and it is a house, in Kate's words, 'of intelligence and honesty'. Graham has established an impressive vegetable garden and is making plans to create new views and walkways.

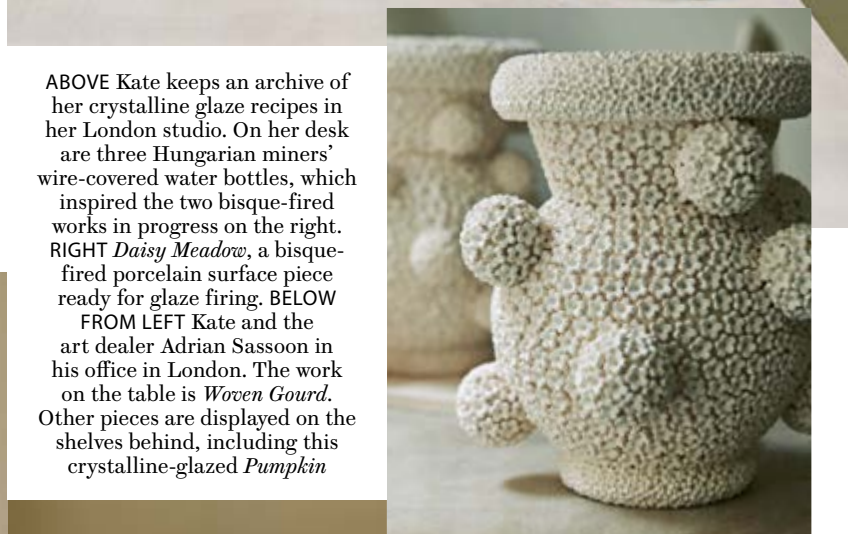
Kate has a magnificent studio in what was two carparks – the once-open front now lined with Crittall-style windows overlooking a courtyard. This time, Graham did not do the conversion himself: instead, they used local craftsmen, who made the interior seating and shelving.

True to form, although she sometimes works a 16-hour day, Kate still finds time for her communities, and leads a project called FiredUp4, which is building ceramics studios in OnSide Youth Zones. The project will also supply training for the young people who use these after-school centres to enjoy a spectrum of activities, discover new skills and socialise in a safe and positive way.

With so much energy and enthusiasm to share, perhaps in future Kate should be linked up to the National Grid ☐

*Kate Malone: [katemaloneceramics.com](http://katemaloneceramics.com)*

*FiredUp4: [firedup4.com](http://firedup4.com)*



ABOVE Kate keeps an archive of her crystalline glaze recipes in her London studio. On her desk are three Hungarian miners' wire-covered water bottles, which inspired the two bisque-fired works in progress on the right. RIGHT *Daisy Meadow*, a bisque-fired porcelain surface piece ready for glaze firing. BELOW FROM LEFT Kate and the art dealer Adrian Sassoon in his office in London. The work on the table is *Woven Gourd*. Other pieces are displayed on the shelves behind, including this crystalline-glazed *Pumpkin*

