I believe handmade objects, pots in particular, function much like a photograph. They may conjure up memories of people and places, leaving the user with a lasting impression and a permanent connection heightened through interaction. I believe that most of us are continually learning through our work about what matters to us as individuals. It’s this connection that can be formed through handmade objects which is at the core of my inspiration.

I was fortunate to grow up in a home that valued handmade objects whether they were my father’s photographs, my mother’s quilts or my grand father’s furniture. Growing up with handmade objects has played a critical role in my memories as well as influencing the path I chose to take with my career. These objects have taught me that they hold an inherent value when compared to a mass produced object. I don’t have a problem with manufactured work but most of the time it doesn’t reflect my values. Machines provide a certainty and eliminate the opportunity for risk and individuality. Of course not all handmade objects function well and many mass produced objects surpass what the human hand can do, but ultimately I often find a sterile quality to machine made pieces. My life is far richer because of the unique objects that I surround myself with whether they are pots, photographs or jewelry.

Integrating my personal history into my work has always been at the core of my inspiration. Figuring out how to incorporate the specific source through my mark making is where the challenge comes in. Most of my surfaces have been inspired by textiles specifically stitches with a nod towards the women in my family history who have helped customize my domestic experience through quilts and other various textiles. More recently I’ve began taking inspiration from my father’s illustrations.

What intrigues me most about pottery is that it’s accessible to everyone by virtue of its immediate connection with human experience. This hands-on experience allows pottery to be an immediate vehicle to connect the maker to the user through both touch and sight. In a sense there is a forced engagement that hopefully will elevate the dining experience. There are not many mediums that get handled as often as a pot does. Ultimately I feel that it’s my role to elevate the experience of eating and celebrating by balancing craft with art.

As a teaching artist one of the things I try to teach my students is the value of handmade and how interacting with unique objects can improve one’s surroundings. We find individuality in the clothes we wear, the music we listen to and the color of our phone cases but all too often we forget about the walls in our homes and our dining room tables.

Kate Biderbost