

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Wednesday, 17 September 2008 02:29

---



On her Web site, Liz Robertson explains the circumstances that inspired her to pursue ceramics as a career: "From my early childhood I seemed to understand that clay, when put to fire, makes a permanent thing. My father was a bricklayer. Our backyard was good red clay. Our coal furnace, with its handy ledge, was where we placed our crude pinch pots to bake."

But necessity made her switch from throwing pots on a wheel to the hand-building technique she primarily uses today.

"I got pregnant" in 1974, she said. "I used to be a thrower ... and after a given number of months, the potter's wheel kind of disappeared ... I just came up with a different approach that was more suitable to my condition at the time. And I'd always dabbled a little bit with hand-building processes, because it's a foundation of really learning how to work with clay."

Robertson, who lives with her potter husband in the Dubuque area, is one of more than 100 artists at this year's Riverssance Festival of Fine Arts, which runs Saturday and Sunday in Lindsay Park.

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Wednesday, 17 September 2008 02:29

---



She won the best-in-show award at Riverssance last year, and said she and her husband were initially interested in the festival because it is *run* by artists. “Riverssance appealed to us because artists are the ones involved managing it,” she said. “If anybody has the empathy and the consideration for our needs ... they know.”

Robertson compares what she does with clay to mosaic, or “clay quilting.” She often works “flat” on canvas and wraps the piece around a shape before releasing the canvas. “It’s always done spontaneously without a sketch,” she said. The design is fully “revealed” with the release.

Her designs are both functional - that is, watertight - and decorative, and they find a pleasant medium between sturdiness and attractiveness. The foliage of some designs almost appears genetically fused with the vessel shape.

She joked that a piece takes “40 years” to make, but more seriously said her work represents a “slow evolution.” She uses an iron wash with most of her pieces and works with a palette of roughly 100 glazes. In recent years, she has been combining thrown and hand-built pottery. She also said she’s working to incorporate fiber into her ceramic pieces.

## 40 Years in the Making: Riverssance, September 20 and 21

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Wednesday, 17 September 2008 02:29

---



Robertson Pottery is the only pottery in the world that has been making pottery for over 40 years. For more information about Robertson, visit [ChickenhillPottery.com](http://ChickenhillPottery.com).