

## Potter Preparing for Annual Spring Studio Tour

April 18, 2012 Bill MacLean

Barbara Banfield's studio is in the basement of her stunning home at 92 Pine Crescent...yes, the red brick street. There she creates unique and artistic pieces out of clay and porcelain, most on a traditional potter's wheel which takes up much of her laundry space.

"I retreat here in the winter," Banfield said of her studio. "I take turns doing pottery one day, and laundry another."



Potter Barbara Banfield works at her potter's wheel in her home studio, ahead of the upcoming Beach Studio Tour. PHOTO: Phil Lameira / Beach Metro News

In another small corner of the basement are racks and racks of small drinking glass-shaped items in varying colours, as well as small tile-sized pieces. These, she said picking each up to display its underside, are dated with glazing information written on them. They are reference pieces. During

the summer months she retreats to her cottage up near Jackson's Point where she says she can "expand more."

Banfield came to her career as a ceramic artist rather late in life. After earning a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Western Ontario in 1976, she attended the Toronto School for Fashion and Design. That led to a career with the women's fashion company Northern Reflections. Later she went into business with her brother designing and importing athletic wear called Banfield Design.

"We were one of the first businesses to create clothing using Gortex," Banfield said. When her children were born she decided to "get off the treadmill" and re-evaluate her life. As well as doing volunteer work in the community, she took art classes at the Cedar Ridge Creative Arts Centre in Scarborough.

"I love to work with my hands, so I took to the process [of pottery] well," Banfield said.

She decided to take art more seriously and went to the Metchiosin School for the Arts, and Sheridan College to study glaze chemistry.

"The more you learn about your raw materials the better you will make your finished product," she said.

At Sheridan she was able to make use of the school's huge brick kiln, where she learned about the techniques of soda firing and wood firing. At home she uses a computerized electric kiln which, although not as dynamic as the big brick kiln, nonetheless gives her very effective control over heat, allowing Banfield to, as she said, "create more interesting glazes."

Banfield said she tries to make her work more "sculptural," and enjoys crafting larger pieces that lend themselves to celebrations and special events rather than everyday use. She creates large salad bowls, tea sets, oil & vinegar pourers, and serving dishes and platters that could grace a holiday table setting.

As part of the Spring Beach Studio Tour, Banfield said that there's a growing appreciation for the handmade pieces she creates. This is her second appearance on the Beach Studio Tour. Banfield said she started doing studio tours in the Georgina area, and really enjoys the process.

"I think studio tours are a wonderful way for artists to connect with other artists in their own community," she said. "Personally I thoroughly enjoy meeting everyone who comes into my home. It gives me a chance to explain what I do...This exchange is very valuable for the artist, as we work mostly alone, and the feedback you get from a studio tour...is very useful for greater learning."

Banfield will be sharing her home studio space with fine artist Katherine Wortel.

The Spring Beach Studio Tour runs May 4 to 6. It will feature 22 artists at 12 studios throughout the Beach. It's always a unique opportunity to catch a glimpse into how these artists – painters, potters, sculptors, fabric artists, photographers and jewelers – create their masterpieces. And because it is just before Mother's Day, it's also a chance to pick up a little something for Mom or Grandma while you're there. Many, if not most, of the artists will be offering refreshments at their studio, and each artist is holding a draw to win a piece of original art. Admission is free, and there are maps at several locations (including Beach Metro News) or on the website, [beachstudiotour.ca](http://beachstudiotour.ca). Keep an eye out for the bright yellow bicycles scattered strategically around the neighbourhood. They will point you towards the nearest studio location.

<http://www.beachmetro.com/2012/04/18/potter-preparing-annual-spring-studio-tour/barbarabanfield/>