



Cleveland-based ceramics artist Gina DeSantis creates functional art that is meant to be used around the house.



Tabletop Art

Not all art should be hung on the wall at home; some of it is meant to be used. And that's what Cleveland-based ceramics artist Gina DeSantis creates.

"I've always done functional work, but it's still art," DeSantis says. "It's a challenge to marry something beautiful — an art object — with something that's actually going to function in daily life."

DeSantis, who was born and raised in Lorain, almost missed her ceramics calling. She swore off the medium in high school after a clay flower she'd carefully designed fell apart. But as a student at Cleveland State University, she took a chance on another ceramics class and fell in love. She went on to earn her MFA in ceramics at Kent State University, and now produces her own line of porcelain and stoneware home goods.

Working primarily on the throwing wheel, DeSantis molds a smorgasbord of ceramics, including mugs, serving trays, noodle bowls, dinnerware sets, sushi sets, candleholders and coasters. Hand-rolled or carved accents lend the pieces additional character and style. Her works are always finished in food-safe glazes, which she fires in her electric kiln.

"It's nice to have something handmade in a day where you spend all day at a computer, instant messaging, with your BlackBerry, on your cell phone, text messaging. It's nice to have something that still has a human touch to it," DeSantis says.

DeSantis, who also works fulltime as a visual merchandiser for Z Gallerie in Legacy Village and Crocker Park, teaches ceramics at the Art House in the Brooklyn neighborhood. Her line is available, retail and wholesale, through her Web site (www.ginadesantisceramics.com) and at local galleries, including Local Girl Gallery in Lakewood and Room Service in the Gordon Square Arts District. She also designs works for commission, so art lovers can ask her to make whatever household items they'd like.

"There's a connection of making something that goes on to someone else, that they hold and use everyday. It becomes part of their ritual, their routine," DeSantis says. "And I get to be part of it."

—Tori Woods

GET INSPIRED

Gina DeSantis notices the world around her — linoleum block print, a doorknob from Target, '50s martini glasses and a hand-painted shelf become inspiration for her ceramics. You can do the same thing. Use what inspires you to create exciting new ideas at home.



WEARABLE ART

DeSantis says she is inspired by what she sees people wearing, like an all-black outfit with a splash of pink in the purse.



How You Can Use It: If you see an outfit you love, paint those colors on the walls to create a makeshift runway in your hallway.

MAD FOR MOD

DeSantis is inspired by the geometric use of line in '50s and '60s fabric.

How You Can Use It: Hang old black-and-white photos on a large open wall, arranging them to form a large square, rectangle or any shape you choose.

OUT OF AFRICA

DeSantis says she is drawn to traditional African art.

How You Can Use It: If the organic, flowing lines of folk art appeal to you, consider ditching the linear and arranging a series of vases with a single bud in a curving pattern on your table.

—TW



Gina DeSantis
www.ginadesantisceramics.com

Tabletop Art photos courtesy of Emma Wing