

# RARA Studio Ceramics

Aliça Rose Tibbs

## / My Background

I'm a practicing artist and ceramicist working and living in Melbourne, Australia. I have a background in Fine art. I received my BA with honours (first class) at Kingston University in London and my Masters (with High Distinction) in Fine Art at the RMIT University in Melbourne. I was the recipient of the ADFAS Yarra Art Graduating Award for excellence and was in the top 1% of graduates in all courses in that year.

I have been working as an artist since I graduated in 2013. I have worked for several local councils running community art and public art projects as well as exhibiting extensively.

I first began making ceramics with a Japanese artist in 2013 and really fell in love with the process. I got a very positive response to my early work and after selling a few pieces I decided to start a business. I feel blessed that I can use my talents and range of creative and social skills to make a living running my own business.

## / Subud Background

I grew up in a Subud family and was opened when I was 17 in England and have been doing the latihan regularly ever since (15 years). I have been part of many groups and have had several committee roles. I was part of the central London group committee as the SD and SICA representative and was part of the National SICA committee in Australia for two years. I lived and worked as a volunteer teacher at Bina Cita Utama School in Rungan Sari Kalimantan Indonesia where I taught art, English and sport. I have also taught art workshops and helped run exhibitions and activities at both national and international congresses in Australia, England, New Zealand and Mexico. I also ran the Subud Online Art Auction with my brother Immanuel in 2009 and 2014. This initiative raised thousands of dollars for the Youth Travel Fund which assisted in helping youth from around the globe attend World Congress. I have also been a helper since 2013 and am currently an active part of my local dewan in Melbourne.

## / My Business

RARA Studio ([www.rarastudio.com](http://www.rarastudio.com)) is a ceramics business that I established in Melbourne in 2015. I design, hand-build and hand-paint all RARA Studio pieces.

I create unique, functional pieces for the home and to wear, using a range of clays and hand building techniques. Each piece is one of a kind, with the marks of the maker celebrated, forming the texture of the work. I create objects that can be used and enjoyed every day for arranging flowers, having your morning coffee or a piece of cake. I use food safe glazes and fire to stoneware temperatures, making my pieces strong and durable. Wherever possible my materials are locally sourced and my packaging is recycled and/or recyclable.

I sell my work through my online shop and currently have 14 stockists across Australia. I am now also stocked in Japan and Denmark, countries that are home to incredible ceramics and design. I also sell my work at the most high-end design markets in Melbourne including the Big Design Market, Finders Keepers and Markit. These popular events have very competitive stallholder selection processes and have a high profile in the design world. I have also been featured in magazines in Australia and Japan and on online websites and blogs around the world. I also have a growing online following on Instagram (@hellorarastudio) of nearly 5,000. In addition to building a strong community around the RARA Studio brand, this social media platform plays a crucial role in my business, through direct sales, opportunities for free cross-promotion and leads for new wholesale stockists locally and internationally. Through Instagram I also have an

established following of stylists that use my work in editorial photo-shoots that provides further free advertising to my demographic and professional images to promote my work.

My business has been growing steadily, but this year it has reached a point where I'm struggling to meet demand. I've reached peak production capacity with my current hand-building processes. While working to fill my growing list of orders from stockists, it can be a challenge to build stock supplies for my online shop and for markets.

To be able to become more efficient I have decided on two approaches: 1) mechanise some parts of the production process and 2) reduce expensive out sourcing of firing. To finance this relatively large change from business cash flow would be a slow process and obtaining a bank loan is difficult to impossible for a small art based business.

## **/ Budget and Outcomes**

Additional capital would allow me to purchase new equipment that would greatly help my business to produce more ceramic pieces more efficiently, without compromising aesthetics or quality.

I will use the project grant money to purchase two pieces of equipment: a kiln and a slab roller.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Top loading electric Kiln	\$8,000
Slab Roller	\$2,495
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,495</b>

A slab roller would allow me to quickly roll clay into flat slabs ready for cutting and pinching into popular items such as large plates, trays and wearable pieces like earrings and necklaces. Using a slab roller would cut down production time on such items by at least 50%.

A new large kiln would allow me to fire more ceramic pieces at once and save both time and money in the process. I currently need to carefully pack, drive, drop off and pick up my pieces at a local general firing service that charges per kilo and has a two-week turnaround. With my own kiln, I would save time and money at every stage in the process and significantly shorten lead times on orders and reduce production costs. After the initial outlay to purchase the kiln, running costs will be a fraction of the general firing costs, not to mention fuel and time spent on transportation. I currently spend around \$180 to hire a large kiln to do a glaze firing; electricity costs to fire a kiln full of stock would only be around \$50. Other benefits would include more flexibility in planning and fewer breakages and other damage that can occur in general firings.

As described above, these two pieces of equipment would allow me to not only more efficiently and effectively fill my increasing number of orders, but also build stock for markets and restock my online shop. This will lead to increased sales potential and profitability for the business.

## **/ Giving Back**

In supporting my business through the grant, Subud would be fostering a growing enterprise that seeks to both bring Subud into the world and contribute financially to the Subud organisation. As RARA Studio becomes more profitable, I would like to pledge a percentage of the profits to supporting Subud.