



TERRE & MOI



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• CRAFT/PROFESSION

Christelle GINGREAU is a potter and ceramic artist. In her studio at Mont-Dore, she handcrafts items in various pottery wares (earthenware and stoneware), with a preference for white or black clays.

“My work needs a lot of patience” she explains, “because each piece is unique and made entirely by hand”. Each stage takes many hours, the clay must be modelled then left to dry so that all moisture is eliminated, a process that can take from one to several weeks; the piece is then given an initial firing, known as the bisque, for around 10 hours at between 1000 and 1200°. Cooling takes around 20 hours. I then apply the final decoration (glaze) before the second firing, which gives the glaze a waterproof glasslike finish”.

Christelle uses a variety of techniques to work with clay (modelling, coiling, slab building, pinch pot or turning), firing in an electric kiln, or a gas kiln for Japanese raku firing, which involves much shorter glaze firing times. The piece is removed from the kiln at bright red heat, exposing it to a thermal shock which causes the glaze to crackle. The ceramic ware is immediately covered in sawdust (leaves or paper) which catches fire on contact and releases smoke to create a blackened crackle pattern. Christelle discovered raku firing at an exhibition and fell in love with the technique.



• BACKGROUND

Christelle was introduced to pottery when she was a teenager and took part in a community club workshop. It was love at first sight. She began working as a trainer at the club, teaching pottery to new members.

For around fifteen years, she only worked on her pottery from time to time but in 2105 she began learning how to turn pots by hand with a craftswoman based in Noumea.

Christelle was fired with enthusiasm and found great satisfaction in handling the clay. She decided to start doing her own work and acquired all the necessary equipment. “I love creating things and seeing the clay change shape and take form in my hands. Clay is alive and is full of good or bad surprises. Every single time, I have to wait to open the kiln to see the result” she explains.

• INSPIRATION AND ART/DESIGNS

Christelle creates decorative pieces such as hanging ornaments and pots, or useful items such as plates, bowls and trays, as the fancy takes her. She adores contrasting brightly coloured glazes with unglazed “raw” clay. She also makes clay beads to use in jewellery designs: necklaces, bracelets, earrings and pendants.

New Caledonia's natural beauties are one of Christelle's key sources of inspiration. “I draw so much inspiration from the colours of the south all around me” she confides.