Rhonda Willers – Interviewed on January 24, 2014
Transcript
H. Wang

KF: I first interviewed Rhonda on January 24, 2014. Over the years of firing in River Falls, I have had the pleasure of getting to know Rhonda, and I have enjoyed watching her career and family grow. Our conversation was one of the most difficult to edit because there was so much good information about mothers, makers, feminism, and the future. We also shared formidable highlights from our time spent working and taking workshops at Anderson Ranch Art Center.

Rhonda completed her BFA at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, a post-baccalaureate at UMass-Dartmouth, and her MFA at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. From 2009 to 2012 she served as the Director at Large for the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts. Rhonda is a lecturer in the Art Department at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She maintains a studio at her home in Elk Mound, Wisconsin, where she lives with her husband and children. I hope you enjoy our conversation.

Can you give us a little background on yourself, where are you from originally, where did you go to school, any highlights in your ceramic path that we should all know about, and where and how long you lived in your current location, and where do you work in relation to that location, too? I do know that you don't work and live in the same place.

RW: Okay. So my past. I grew up in a small town called Star Prairie, Wisconsin, with a population of just over 500, so very tiny. Went to school in a neighboring town. I guess I would say—when I've talked in the past about influential things from that, growing up, it was the time spent in nature. And so that's really been a major influence on my life and also general curiosity. My parents were both—still are very curious people. And my dad always asks questions that have no answers, and it really bothers my mom. And I do the same thing to my husband. Because it's like, "Oh, I wonder what that building's for," and you know you'll never know the answer. But you're just curious. Ask the question. So I think that foundation in curiosity and kind of being—I guess that it was modeled to just ask questions and be okay with the fact that some have answers, and some don't. I think that was really critical in terms of my art making and what happened later.

So I picked River Falls, and I was studying English Education and Horticulture were my two areas of study at first. And then I just kind of took an art class—and it's actually a class I teach now. And my instructor was like—we were doing drawing—he was like, "You're kind of good at that. You might want to take a drawing course." He doesn't even remember making the comment, because I've talked to him about it. And I took more classes. I took drawing and made a friend, and she was like, "Let's take ceramics." So I remember going to Randy's office with my add card and being like, "Can I take ceramics next semester?" And for

some reason, he said yes. And I still don't know why, because he probably had a waitlist. And yet he signed me in at that moment. And I wasn't an art major either, at that time.

So then three years in Nebraska, and during that time I did another workshop at Anderson Ranch. I applied for a scholarship to do—I went to learn how to weld. So I went out to do a sculptural furniture workshop with Jim Kohl. It was supposed to be with he and his wife Melanie, but she couldn't come because she was pregnant with twins. But he was so great, because he was like—I forget how old he was at the time, like 50s, 60s. And he's like, "Yeah"—'cause we were talking about, 'cause I was just gonna be getting married. And he's like, "Yeah, do you think you guys will have kids?" 'Cause we had lunch together quite a lot. I'm like, "Yeah, we talk about it. We're not in a rush." He goes, "Sometimes it takes you 18 years to decide you want to have kids." Just like—it was so cute. I was like, aw, you're just so sweet.

So I had a great experience doing that, and finished up school, and then what happened…Sometimes it's so shocking, how long it's been.

Then my husband had a job with Menards, and he got hired in at the office. And so we moved to the Eau Claire area, to Elk Mound specifically, but he works in Eau Claire. Elk Mound is another small town, a little over 1,000 people. I rented a studio in Eau Claire at a big old tire factory that had been renovated. And it was 600 square-foot space, and it was really nice, and I had my kiln and a big washtub and plenty of workspace, good light, beautiful roof to look out at, things like that. And it was really good to have the space. I think it was important to have that. I rented that space not really having money to support it necessarily, but just knowing that it was critical to have a workspace because we were renting a duplex, and there really wasn't a place to have a studio space to work with clay in because of the mess involved. Like the garage wouldn't have worked. It wasn't heated or insulated.

So probably about two or three years of that, and then we bought a house. And then the house, when we were looking, we wanted to have studio space. So I have studio space here. That was really significant. I mean it cuts down on so much cost when you're not paying rent for a studio space. And also convenience. It's way more convenient to go downstairs than it is to drive 20 minutes to town, or 30 minutes sometimes, depending on traffic.

KF: You did mention, when you were talking about your current home and also in your questionnaire, that your studio is at home. Can you talk a bit about the advantages or disadvantages of the home studio arrangement, especially in relation to family life and children?

RW: I think it's very helpful that it's in the basement so that they can come to me if they want something. And it's been interesting to see them learn along the way

too. Like when I first would say I was gonna work in the studio, they would come—we have a cat door to the basement, and they would be at the cat door, talking to me through the door, like if Eric was upstairs watching them. And so it would be like, "Mommy. Mommy." I was like, "Mommy's working."

And then they've learned. Like now when I say I'm going to work, they don't talk to me anymore really. Like they know that I'm just working. So it's been interesting to watch them learn. And I've also myself learned how to ignore the sounds of the upstairs, is the way I think of it. 'Cause when I'm downstairs, I can still hear things that are going on. And when you're a mom, you know the sounds of your kids. And I'm like, oh, that probably means this, or that means whatever. And I try to, obviously, not be involved, like when Eric's trying to parent. I don't want to be like, "Well, you should really do this." Unless it keeps escalating, and then I'm like, okay, he probably needs to know, like, that this is the problem. And then I have a babysitter come. And so when she's here, I really don't—I honestly feel like I don't hear them after a while because I'm just working and in my space. You know how you get in your headspace when you're working. So I'm in that headspace, and I don't hear their sounds. Or I don't connect their sounds to them anymore. They're just kind of part of the background.

So I think the benefit is just the convenience, that it's not like I have to drive to get out and drive to get there. But the disadvantage sometimes is that it becomes easy to be distracted by my home too, and think, oh, while I'm down here I might as well put in some laundry. And it's like, no! Don't even put in the freaking laundry, because then you're gonna think that you should keep it going or fold it or—

KF: [laughing] If I had a quarter for every woman I've interviewed that said something about having their studio at home and laundry, I would be buying myself a couple of bags of M&Ms tonight.

RW: 'Cause there's so much damn laundry every day with your kids. You can't—it's unavoidable. And I hate doing laundry. It's probably why I mention it. Laundry and dishes, I hate those two household tasks.

But so it's so convenient though, 'cause you think, "Oh, I could do that while I'm down here." And then it's like, no. Do not. I have to set rules. I feel like I set structure and rules for myself in order to keep myself doing what I should be doing. I say, this is this time. And I've become much more disciplined about how my time is used and when it's used. So if it's work time, it is work time, and it's not time to check email. It's not time to do whatever, read. It is time to work. And that discipline has been really critical in learning.

Sometimes it's a disadvantage though, too, at home because, like, shipping materials or—I just got through mixing clay. And I bought the materials from Continental and brought them to school and mixed at school because I'm like, I'm

gonna mix my own clay like I used to do. Because I was buying it for a little bit. And when I did it, I was like, this is so much time. And I'm mixing 500 pounds. And I'm lugging it from my car to the clay studio back to my car, to my house, then down the stairs. And I was like, this is stupid. My time is worth more than this. So I've just decided I will now pay for my clay to be mixed. But it took just doing it once and being like, all right, this isn't worth it.

KF: So can you talk a bit about your current studio practice? So how often are you able to work in your studio? I know from your responses it seems like you are able to have a little bit more time in the summer. And you mentioned also January. From your responses, it seems, like many people in education, you have kind of those time frames where you can devote more to the creative practice and then other frames where time has to get devoted to the preparatory for teaching and everything. So how do you manage all that along with care needs for your children?

RW: I think it's been so incredibly beneficial learning, myself, that I learned I needed to hire somebody to watch my kids so I could work in my studio. I think I just did not understand that, for some reason, before having Iris. August, I just didn't care, on some levels. I was so happy to just be a mom for the first time that I think I was totally okay with stepping away from my studio for a while to enjoy that experience. And then when I had Iris I remember I just—I wanted to be in my studio again. I wanted to be making. I wanted to be—like on a regular basis.

Now what I've done, and what I did last fall, and then what I'm doing again this spring is, when I'm in preparation for some big deadlines, then I have my babysitter—my at-home babysitter—come two days a week. So she comes on Tuesday and Thursdays, and then she usually comes for four to five hours at a time. So then that gives me about 8 to 10 hours a week in the studio when she's here. And then when she's here, I'm really cautious about not thinking, oh, it would be so convenient to go get groceries without kids. Or, it would be so good to go to the post office without kids. And so it's again being disciplined and using that time.

But it is—I found I had to have her come two times a week because our weekends, I used to get work time on the weekends. And now it's just there's just so many family invites and things to do, and my husband travels on weekends and usually has to work a bit on weekends, so it's just not time that I can count on. And then I try to keep Sunday afternoons for a couple hours of school prep. So it's like I've gotten stricter about how much time I allow school to take up and trying to give more time to my studio life.

But then, say, once I get done with the NCECA time, probably about April, then I'll have my babysitter come just one day a week and start working on school work the other day of the week. And so more will have to go to school at that time because of grading and end-of-semester things. So it's just—I think I can give

more time at the beginning of the semester to my own personal artwork, and then end of the semester always transitions to being more needs towards school.

And in the summer I'm hoping this summer to find a new babysitter because mine's going to graduate from college, which I'm really bummed about. So try to find—couldn't you just take five years instead of four? Go a little longer? So now I'm gonna find someone to come and watch them, hopefully a couple days in the summer each week so I can work. But also I plan, weekends like this because my parents have started, they've said, "Well, we can take them for weekends so you can work or do things." And so I'm gonna try to take advantage of that a little bit more too.

KF: Oh, that's a real blessing, for sure.

RW: Yeah. And I wasn't ready to let them stay away, but I do feel that I'm still very interested in maintaining studio time a little bit more than I was before. So I think even with the third coming, I'm thinking, okay, in the fall, how do I—who can I have come so that I can still work in the studio at least one day a week? Just kind of giving myself one day a week is good, to get in there.

And even if it just becomes I work on exploring sketching and drawing that I really enjoy—maybe I don't get to work in the clay for the fall semester because I won't have the time to keep going back, so maybe I switch to my other materials that I really like working with too.

KF: When I asked you in that questionnaire about taking time away from the studio after birth, that idea came up. You did have really great insights. And you brought up drawing, research, idea-gathering, as well as the practical side of studio. You mentioned arranging your studio and cleaning out old work and materials as well as building shelves. My question, related to those thoughts, is, what led to choosing these activities, and how did this type of engagement make you feel? What did it give back to you? Because those are all things—the reality of what we do is, those are things you have to do in your studio. It's stuff you have to do for your work. But I think sometimes we don't count it as work. We neglect its importance.

RW: I think I will give strange credit to Robert Irwin for that, the artist, because he has this great film that goes along with his book, "Seeing is Forgetting the Name of What One Sees." But he has this video that's called "The Beauty of Questions," I think, if I remember right. And in it, he talks about making himself go to the studio, even if it was just to sweep the floor. The fact was that he made it to the studio every single day. And it may have been to sweep the floor, sometimes it would be to sit and actually look at one of his paintings. And there's something like, he says, "I might have moved a line 3/4 of an inch down and then spent time looking at it." And I think that one little bit had this weird, sitting-in-the-back-of-my-mind for a long time, of like, sometimes being in your studio is about

being in that space and letting your mind sort of spend time in the creative space, but not necessarily making. So It's like you're playing with the ideas in your head and just giving yourself—it's sort of like meditation. You're just giving yourself the space to play with the ideas, to play with what you might do in here.

And when I'm arranging the space, or when I was kind of planning making these shelves and shifting where things were located, it was all with the thought of, I want this area to be available for drawing and painting activity and to stay clean from my ceramics. And I want this wall available so that I can start hanging pieces on the wall and start arranging and considering work in that way. And I want this space to be for my glaze area so that it stays kind of messy over there. And really thinking about the flow of the space. And I honestly think it came back from that, watching him and reading him, too, reading what he says about his work process.

It's interesting because I kind of contrast him with Frank Gehry. And another favorite film of mine is "Sketches of Frank Gehry." And in there he starts off the film with, "Is starting hard?" That's his first question, or that's Sidney Pollack's first question to him. And he said, "You know it is. You make these appointments. You do other things to make yourself feel like you're doing something. But you're really avoiding, and you're kind of in denial that you're gonna be doing this next thing." And to me, those are like two different thoughts. One is embracing the fact that sometimes we do meaningless things in our space—seemingly meaningless. And then the other is like, sort of being down on yourself about doing these meaningless things. But I tend to align more with the way Robert Irwin thinks about it, in that that time in that space is so critical. And even when I just walk downstairs to do laundry, I go into my space. I walk in there just to look at it and think, it's ready. It's ready for whatever is next.

KF: I really appreciated a statement you made in your questionnaire responses. You were given the question, "How has your studio practice changed since the birth of your children?" And you said—and I'm gonna quote you here—"In a way, having children forced me to treat my studio as more of a job, meaning that I need to arrange for care for my children just as would for my teaching job at the university." Can you talk a bit about your decision and the process of seeking childcare in your home location? I know we've touched on it a little bit. So can you talk about the process of seeking childcare in your home location for these times when you need to be in the studio? I know for some moms this decision comes with guilt. So my question is, was this true for you? If not, why or why not?

RW: Yeah. I didn't have guilt. I had financial guilt. That's what I had. I didn't have guilt for my children, because I had quality time with them. I still saw them enough. I didn't have that kind of guilt. But I had financial guilt of the expense that that put onto our family. It was basically, I think, I spent an extra $80 a week to have someone come. That was a big deal, to be like, I'm gonna spend $80 more of our family's money per week so that I can work in my studio. And so then I

would always think too, you need to make enough work to compensate for that expenditure on some levels, and make that time count, because it's costing our family money.

But I think what was weird too is that I never once second-guessed hiring somebody so that I could work at my teaching job. But the difference is, you get this regular paycheck from your teaching job, and your studio work, depending on what's coming up, you may or may not get paid for that work time until months later. So in a way I think I was like, I'm taking a loan from our family to do this.

And it was a tough decision. And my husband, at first, was like, too, "This is financially expensive. I don't know if we can do this." And then there was a certain point where I just started doing it. And I didn't care if he thought it was a good idea or not anymore. And then what was great, though, was that after I had invested all that, I had a really great fall sale, in terms of making money. And it was my best sale ever. And then he was like, "Okay, it was worth it to do it." So I think he saw that the more time I put in, the more I was also able to get back financially for my work.

In addition to that, I was a little bit happier, not so cranky and short. 'Cause I stopped saying to him, I really need you to get home one day a week, early, so I can get down in my studio. Early meaning "leave work at your posted time of 5:30 and not 7:00 or 8:00 at night." And I stopped asking for that because I was like, okay, I'm getting my time.

But yeah, I had financial guilt.

KF: People have financial guilt. People have emotional guilt. And I think sometimes because we feel like that what we do in the studio is so enjoyable, we suddenly have guilt because we're enjoying ourselves. And our child, who we also really enjoy, is being cared for by somebody other than ourselves. And so there's all—guilt comes in many different forms.

RW: [laughing] So many forms.

KF: Like many other moms in this project, you addressed the issue of time. So to quote you again, "Not enough time to work in the studio. Not enough time to pursue opportunities and so on." And you mentioned the words of one of your mentors, paraphrased as, "Let go of the stress of thinking I'm going to do anything right now." So can you talk a bit about what this mentor's sentiments mean to you and also, how does this idea of rearranging semantics—so for example, telling yourself, "It's not a priority right now" instead of "There's not enough time"—how this rearranging of semantics and priorities works for you and has helped you.

RW: Well, it was Gail Kendall who told me, "Let go of the idea that you're going to make anything overly productive until your kids are in school." And I think her thought was like, her studio time really may have stopped quite a lot for her. But I think the sentiment of—it was basically like, "Don't put that extra pressure on yourself," is the way I interpreted it. You're gonna have enough pressure transitioning to being a mom and then again to being a mom with multiple kids. And to just sort of give yourself a break, it sort of seemed like. Like, you're going to be able to make. You'll always be able to make. You're not going to lose that. I'm not going to lose that just if I stop for awhile. I might lose momentum in the field and being recognized, if that's of importance, but I will still have the ability to make, and make an impact, if that's what I want. It just might not happen as quickly.

With that said, another person that I had been quite a lot as a friend, and it was a female, after I told her that I was pregnant with August the first time was like, "Well, I'm happy for you, but I feel like it happened kind of early for you." And I remember being like, I'm 30, 31—I can't remember. I think it was 31. And I remember thinking, it was like, I don't think that's exactly "early." So I was kind of put off by that kind of comment. Basically I took it as like, "Well, maybe you shouldn't have kids, because now your career is gonna kind of stop here instead of move forward." And then that makes me get into kind of fiery mode, like, oh, well, I can do it. I can be out there. I can still be a professional in my field.

Those two comments came at about the same time, so it was sort of this two different perspectives on it.

And then the idea of "it's not a priority," that, I think, is—I still use that with anything. I think, hey, do I want to spend time doing this? It's like, even with the clay. Do I want to mix my own clay, take the time to do it, or do I want to see if someone else can mix it and it will be good enough. It might not be perfect, but it'll be good enough. And it's the idea of saying, I don't have time really to put that much time into mixing my clay, but it's also not a priority to me right now that I mix my own clay. It's more of a priority that I have clay to work with than it is that I've mixed that clay myself.

I would never give up firing my work though. I feel like that's far too personal to give up. But the mixing of the clay—I think that's what being a mother and my time changing has also taught me is, like, what am I willing to sort of farm out? What do I really need to be involved in to be able to feel like I am doing it?

I still toy with the idea of, could I ever hire a studio assistant. Could I ever let them put clay on molds for me or make slabs for me or—but Kate, I feel like I couldn't, because I feel like it's so integral to the way that I scrape my clay on my mold. I feel so neurotic—not neurotic. I feel connected to it. That's it. It's not neurotic. It's that I feel like that motion, my choice to scrape in a certain way and then to go across another way, is so important to me and my process.

KF: So I really enjoyed the image of you with your child and children at the meetings for UW-River Falls and NCECA, both in person and via Skype. And I have to admit, it reminds me a bit of Licia Ronzulli, the Italian Member of Parliament. Have you ever seen her photos?

RW: Yes, yes, I have.

KF: That she brings her daughter to the meetings. Can you talk a bit about this experience of having your child at those meetings and how those organizations have allowed this type of maternal flexibility? And also, was it nerve-wracking or intimidating to ask for these types of accommodations, and were there positive/negative reactions?

RW: Well, I think I can talk about each one. It's funny, was talking to my mom about this today when I dropped the kids off, just about how I traveled with August when he was like 5 months old, just took him on the airplane to the meeting in Seattle for NCECA, the board meeting, the three-day board meeting, and I'm hauling him along with me. And we took him to the conference in Tampa. He just, he came along. That was just the deal.

NCECA was awesome. I do have so much respect for that organization on many levels, but especially for the way that they allowed me to be a mom, and they celebrated it. And in fact they even wrote a thing like, "This is an opportunity to show our membership how we embrace changing roles of our members." And they were so incredibly supportive.

I said, I can't come unless I can bring him with. He's young, and he just sits in one place kind of thing. And I remember, I brought him. I cleared him with the main up-aboves, like the presidents of the board and the Executive Director, Josh Green. And when I got there, I remember I had August with me at the first meeting. And Marge Levy was like, "And did you arrange for childcare for him?" And I was like, "No, he's just here with me." And she was like, "Oh." And that was her comment.

And I was like, okay, not sure how to take it, but don't always know how to take you anyways. I like you and respect you and you kind of remind me of Gail. And then he just—he was a great little kid. He sat on his blanket, played with his toys, he was happy. I would step into the other room to nurse him. And afterwards she's like, "I can't believe how well-mannered he is." And just very complimentary.

And then he was being really silly with the other board members. Like he would sit in my chair with me at the big board table and smile and make eyes with people across the table, and they all engaged with him while we're having this productive meeting. So I think it was just like, they were all so—a lot of them had

been parents before, and they just all were like, "Yeah, bring him along. We'll make this work."

And then American Craft Council, that one was one I was nervous about because I had signed up to go to the thing before I—somehow I didn't know I would have August, or I thought maybe I would be able to have Eric watch him, but he couldn't leave work early or something. So I just had emailed them and said, would it be okay if I bring my young child with? And they were just like, "Of course, it's okay. No big deal." And so positive. And it was just—and I think I wrote in there, people came up to me afterwards and were like, "We're so glad you brought your baby with you." It was just crazy. And nobody was negative in those experiences.

And River Falls, I think that was the most nerve-wracking, was to ask for exceptions. Actually that was probably the hardest place to ask for them. And they were great about letting me Skype in from home on days when I needed to. And they understood if the kids were just kind of around.

One time I did ask to bring August to a meeting when he was maybe two months old because I wanted to come to the meeting, and I was like, "Can I just bring him with? He's only a couple months old." And at the time, I was told no. Which is okay. I mean I understand that. But I also was like, all he did was sleep, at the time, and I didn't—I wanted to come for this one hour long meeting, and to have to get care for an hour long meeting seemed kind of silly at the time, when he would just sleep. So that was a little bit like, okay, well, I get it.

But most of the time, most people just think it's funny when they're in the video with me, and I'm really serious. And they're like, "How do you type and get this done?" And that was when they were younger. So I mean, I think people were surprised that I could multitask at that time and still manage things.

I think with two, though, it's different. I would never bring two of them to a meeting, nor at this age would I bring them to a meeting.

KF: What do you think we can do in the clay community to prevent making women feel that they must choose maternity or career?

RW: When I hear that, I think it's such a big question. That's a huge…

KF: It's a huge question, and you don't have to have The Answer. But kind of what are some of the things you see that could be changed, or how can we change our outlooks, perspectives, attitudes, you know. What can we do? One person brought up even the idea of the timing of openings. Why do openings always have to be at 7:00 p.m.? Why can't openings be at like, 3:00 in the afternoon? Somebody else brought up the idea of why can't residencies be more family-friendly?

RW: Yeah, that's a good one, 'cause I don't apply to residencies because I can't envision how I would get my family there or how I would manage time with my family. Yeah.

KF: Why can't there be a residency where one of the interns takes some time with your children to help you out? Why can't there be a mother-friendly residency opportunity available?

RW: That's maybe a niche that somebody could develop. That would be really interesting to see what you could put together for that kind of—I think about quilting weekends. Ladies go away and rent a retreat space to go quilting. And it's like, couldn't you do that for mothers with young children, and you have the nursery room where all the kids go and play and hang out? I think you could do that.

I think on a really broad level, what comes to mind—and it's maybe too broad because it's not specific, but it's the idea of simply supporting other women in the field too, and young mothers, and trying to not—sometimes I think maybe—and I don't know if this is true. But maybe there's a perception that if somebody is a young mother, that they're not able or ready to participate in an exhibition or activities, and so they're maybe passed over because of that. And I think if there was just a general thought of maybe "we should invite this person" and not give thought to "well, they just became a mother," let them be the decider of if they are able to participate or not in that event. So I think providing just more support and opportunity to one another is a good place to start too.

I think in general, setting an example and maybe even to some degree becoming more vocal about your role as both a mother and a ceramic artist is important. It's kind of like that thing of "talk about it." If something happens, talk about it. So talk about—what you're doing, I think is great because it will bring awareness, and I think it'll resonate with a lot of people. I think there are a lot of stay-at-home dads, too, who are makers. Someone that comes to mind is this guy I was at school with at University of Nebraska. His name is Peter Scherr. He stays home with—they have three kids, and he stays home full time with their three kids. And he's a maker too. And so he's making art, thinking about things, and his production level isn't as much as it used to be, but it's still that idea of I want to support someone like that, who's making a choice to take care of their family too.

Exhibitions, I think it would be nice if sometimes they felt more open to families coming, for bringing your children. Because I have a couple coming up, and I'm thinking about okay, is that one where I feel like having kids there is gonna be okay, or are people gonna act weird? But then part of me also learned, when I was bringing the kids along, bringing August to these meetings, is that I learned that sometimes you just have to do it, and you lead by example. And people see that yes, this can work. Not every child is going to be a good one for coming to

meetings or something, but some kids are. And to show people that that works, like just leading by example, I think.

Being brave, as a parent, and being like, "I'm gonna bring my kid to this event." Or like, when I take my kids to the art museum, I sort of feel brave. Like I'm taking my toddlers to the art museum, and I'm risking that they might get out of line, that they might touch something. It's kind of how I feel when I let them walk at the store, like oh, my god, walking at the store with toddlers. What do people think of this? Are they getting in their way? Let's try not to—let's just do our thing. Encouraging people to be more willing to take that risk on their own but creating environments that it feels safe for them to do that, too, is important.

KF: So what advice do you have for young women working in the ceramics field as they begin to think—or not—about their future as mothers and makers?

RW: I number one think you decide, what do you want. Do you want to be a parent, and if you want to be a parent, then you make those choices. But I do think that it helps to understand that when you choose to, say, have children, that it does mean that it cuts—it takes away time from your studio or time from your pursuing different things. Unless you have the luxury of maybe having somebody…

Like sometimes I think, what if I had a daycare person for five days a week, and I worked in my studio five days a week, just like any other person works at their job? What would I be able to produce, what would I be able to do in that amount of time? So I think maybe just having real conversations with young women who are thinking about being mothers, here are some of the things that we've thought about. Here are some of the things that I've learned that I didn't know, that no one told me. "You are going to need to hire somebody." Or, "You are going to need to have someone come so that you can work in your studio." I feel like writing a book: "Naptime Isn't Enough."

[laughter]

Naptime isn't enough. It's enough to get a quick job done, to take care of a couple of paperworks. But naptime is not enough for me, personally, to do quality work in my studio.

KF: I hope you enjoyed this conversation. For more information or to listen to additional interviews like the one you just heard, please visit www.bothartistandmother.com. Funding for this project was made possible by St Olaf College's Academic Innovation Fund. Special thanks to Caleb Genheimer for his audio editing, the Eriksons for their music, Heather Wang for her transcription skills, Rachel Elizabeth Murphy for her web expertise, and to all of the artist mothers, thank you.