

# Behind the wheel

A talented designer shapes a new career path, trading textiles for the cool feel of clay



WORDS LIN FONG PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS GROENHOUT

When Australian textile designer Chela Edmunds was living and working in New York, she started night classes in ceramics as a way of winding down from her fast-paced job. It sparked an unexpected love affair with the craft.

"The owner of the ceramics studio was an amazing French woman and the classes were full of real characters; a great mix," Chela recalls.

"I would jump on my bicycle after work and ride across the bridge to get to Brooklyn. When I hopped on the wheel for the first time, it just felt right. It felt good to get my hands dirty. It's the most unpredictable craft, but I love it."

That was in 2011. Now back in Melbourne (she couldn't stay away from the beaches and relaxed Aussie lifestyle), Chela has launched her own ceramics label, Takeawei.

The term is a play on words. It marries the Chinese term 'wei', which refers to positive, protective energy, and society's obsession

with throwaway, mass-produced things, which is not something you could call Takeawei's range of beautiful hand-crafted ceramics. Each item is precious, functional and designed to be cherished over the long term.

"I like my work not to be too serious, but to be fun, relaxed and playful," Chela says.

"One of the things about ceramics is it loosens you up. You can't be too fixed to the outcomes because things blow up in the kiln, or you might drop things. I play with materials while on the wheel – it's an organic process."

Takeawei operates out of North Melbourne's Elm Place Studios, a steadily growing community of creative souls.

The label's eclectic "consciously made" debut range includes serving bowls, mountain vessels, textured platters and the ever-popular Horizon hanging planters and big mugs – all in pretty pastels and flamboyant neon colours.

Chela explains she is inspired by material impressions from nature and the ability to

bring out special qualities from the Victorian clays she uses. "People often say my ceramics are so unique. That's really nice to hear," Chela reflects. "My work combines simple organic shapes and quality material with bright colours and a sense of humour." ■



PHOTOGRAPHY: CHELA EDMUNDS

## TAKEAWEI

CREATOR Chela Edmunds.

WHAT Ceramic wares including serving bowls, platters, planters, mugs and vessels.

PRICES \$55 for Horizon hanging planters; \$65 for big mugs; \$159 for Horizon serving bowls; and \$88 for Origami platters.

WHERE TO BUY Online at takeawei.com; or see website for stockists.



above The Horizon hanging planter has an organic look

inset Chela Edmunds loves the unpredictable nature of ceramics

below left Footed planters combine texture and style

below Go troppo over the Pineapple cheese platter



PHOTOGRAPHY: CHELA EDMUNDS

