



Jo Priestley

(1947 -)

'Art is about awareness, heightened awareness. And it's about telling stories.' Jo Priestley has been telling stories all her life, through her pottery and her garden, but also through the personal connections she has made in Mission.

Jo was born in 1947, in Yorkshire, England. At age twenty, she married Michael Priestley and immediately embarked on a two year adventure to Canada. After spending 1 year in Ontario they set off in their 1956 VW beetle for the West Coast eventually settling in Vancouver.

It was here that a chance encounter with clay change paved the way for Jo's future career.

In 1971 they moved to Steelhead. Shortly after she joined the Mission Potters guild and later took throwing class with Herman Venema in Matsqui. She took naturally to the craft and opened her first studio Creekside Pottery in 1976.

Jo discovered that life as a creative entrepreneur involved a careful marriage between business and artistic creation. The success of which depends on the ability of the artist to not only believe in oneself and their work but to have the confidence to share this passion with the public.

To find her passionate voice Jo turned to Mission Toastmasters an organization which helps its members improve their communication skills. She long conquered her shyness and is now a confident and speaker and communicator. In 2012 Jo became the B.C. impromptu speaking champion. She now gives back to Toastmasters through coaching and mentoring, and is currently serving as the club's president.

As her confidence grew he has been a great advocate for the arts in Mission and has served with the Arts Council, the Potters Guild, and the District Arts and Cultural Board.

In addition to her pottery, she maintains a beautiful garden which links her English roots with her love of Canadian environments. Her passion for art and for the outdoors converged in Painters in a Potter's Garden, a private art show which took place in Jo's garden for seven years. From its humble beginnings with a budget of \$200 and four artists who doubled as cookie-bakers, the event matured into a beloved celebration of visual and performing arts, attracting guests from all over the Lower Mainland.

Jo has shown at many international events and has won numerous awards. However, when asked about her work, she speaks primarily about the artistic process and about the importance of passing on her knowledge to younger generations. For many years, she has been sharing her craft through workshops in local schools and in her own studio.

From childhood, Jo has been an adventurer and an artist, and unfailingly encourages journeying in others. Be it through speech or through visual art, she recognizes how communication contributes to the intricate journey of self- and communal-discovery which never reaches a conclusion.

You've got to keep learning,' she insists, 'I still don't know what I want to do when I grow up.

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