

For submission to the Temple Bulletin by Denise Gordon

Featured Ceramicist Loren Kaplan for Project Betzalel:

### **Longing for South Africa Mid-town Toronto Artist Loren Kaplan Creates Objects of Splendor & Reverential Beauty**

When Loren Kaplan isn't making beautiful ceramic objet d'art in her downtown studio, she can be found walking the neighbourhoods of Toronto with Fred, her adorable black lab-poodle mix. They are a dynamic duo, and I was able to meet them both to discuss how the lifeblood of South Africa informs all aspects of Ms. Kaplan's impressive body of work.

Loren welcomed me into her mid-town apartment on a sunny late summer's day. Upon entering, one is immediately struck by the beauty of the art that thoughtfully adorns the walls and shelves throughout. Loren informs me that the collection is the work of South African artists, Loren's included, and that she surrounds herself with the soul-art of her friends to keep the connection to her former life in Jo-burg fresh and alive; there is memory, remembrance and reverence for the life she had once inhabited 6 years back before immigrating to Toronto to join her parents, Holy Blossom congregants Etienne and Aubrey Kaplan, and her brother.

By her own admission, Loren is "deeply attached to South Africa...its people, the intense living conditions, the kindness, and generosity" of those she considers her friends and family. Living through Apartheid and her quest for social justice only strengthens Loren's attachment to her homeland and its people. This is the place where Loren's interest in art was ignited. This is the place where Loren went on to earn her Bachelor of Fine Arts, majoring in photography. Like many art students, Loren set off to travel the world, totally immersing and eventually saturating the photographic medium. At 23 years of age, a friend recommended that Loren take a pottery class. Thus sparked her love affair with clay, and as they say, the rest is history.

By Loren's own admission, pottery offers an "antidote to overthinking." Loren adores the "physicality of the medium" and how she can explore and "surrender" to its tactility. Nevertheless, her of connection to South Africa continues to permeate her psyche and is ultimately transposed into her work. The patterns, shapes, colours, and even some of the clay that she utilizes is a direct homage to her love of nature and her love of ancient African vessels.

Loren purposefully creates ceramic objects to "hold something." For Loren, the vessel can be multi-purpose and is meant to start a conversation between the object and the viewer. It might hold light, or sound, or even a metaphor like hope, or perhaps human potential and opportunity; perhaps the vessel can function to hold something like a flower. These sculptural ceramic vessels are notably a beautiful nexus between contemporary and traditional styles, between the ancient and the modern, between exquisite form and functionality.

In addition to creating beautiful ceramic objects, Loren Kaplan shares her expertise by instructing students individually and in small groups at her downtown studio. To her, the creation and sharing of art enables her to bridge her transplanted South African roots onto Canadian soil, extending her love of her craft to grateful viewers, would-be artists, and collectors alike.

Loren Kaplan's work was recently premiered on September 16<sup>th</sup> at the opening of Holy Blossom's Sisterhood Gift Shop and Project Betzalel, showcasing in-house artists affiliated with the Temple community. All are welcome to feast on the splendor of Loren Kaplan's eternal objects of contemplation, beauty, and soulfulness.

For additional information about Loren Kaplan, visit Holy Blossom's Sisterhood Gift Shop or contact Loren via her website at: [www.lorenkaplan.com](http://www.lorenkaplan.com) or through Instagram at: [lorenkaplan](https://www.instagram.com/lorenkaplan).