

# New home no crock for potters

OLD EAST VILLAGE

By [KATE DUBINSKI](#), THE LONDON FREE PRESS

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**VIDEO: The London Potters Guild's new building becomes a working studio.**

In one corner, two women work on the wheel, making mugs.

In another, a potter decorates his work and gets it ready to be fired.

At the back, two new kilns fire at 1,900 degrees Fahrenheit, turning clay into bisqueware.

At the new London Clay Art Centre, the London Potters Guild has finally moved into its home in the middle of the Old East Village, drawing foot traffic to the troubled area that's becoming home to an increasing number of London artists.

"They're getting foot traffic in this neighbourhood (that it) hasn't seen in years," said Darlene Pratt, a guild member since the early 1990s who spearheaded the Seize the Clay campaign to raise money for the new building.

After years of sharing a space in east London, the potters finally have their own building -- and they're embracing the neighbourhood they've moved into.

"Seeing us in here gets other people and other businesses to come here," Pratt said. "They're definitely reaping the benefits of us being here."

The first public event for the new Clay Art Centre is a pottery sale at the end of November. Londoners are invited to buy local artists' wares and explore the new location, just east of Adelaide on Dundas St.

The bright, open-concept interior holds classes for beginners and more advanced potters. Artists can rent space in the building to work on their pottery and three massive electric kilns -- where clay is fired in a two-step process that turns it into the final glossy product -- sit in a back room.

A gas kiln will also soon become part of the centre.

"We had a wish-list of things we wanted . . . we found it all here, above and beyond," Pratt said.

Previously, the potters shared a space at the London Artisans Centre on Churchill St. in east London, but the organization was getting too big for the small space.

Now, on a busy thoroughfare and bus route, it's expected more people will join. Already, people have been walking in off the street curious about what the new occupants are doing.

The guild offers classes to beginners and advanced potters, taught by artists and guild members, said Beth Turnbull Morrish, one of the instructors and a London clay artist.

"We cater to anyone who likes clay," Turnbull Morrish said. "Anyone, from people who walk in off the street to people who have been doing this for a long time."

Eventually, there will be a second floor to the facility, which has a ramp in the back for clay and kiln delivery and is wheelchair accessible.

Some interesting surprises have also popped up during renovations -- a turn-of-the-century stained glass window was embedded into one of the walls, hidden behind layers of plywood. It was a sign for a general store that used to be on the site.

The foyer will in the future include a reception area and a sale area.

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## IF YOU GO

**What:** London Potters Guild show and sale.

**Where:** London Clay Art Centre, 664 Dundas St.

**When:** Nov. 27 - 6 p.m.-9 p.m.; Nov. 28 - 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Nov. 29 - 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Admission:** \$2