

13 September 2009
Frogsiders

From raku to roof tiles

Visit Nik Meergans and he may greet you covered in clay or glaze or hail hello from a rooftop - the multi-disciplinary designer's vision encompasses dramatic pottery to roof ridges.

For Nik Meergans, living and working in France is the opportunity to realise a dream - a home and workspace that reflect his love of experimentation and form a showcase for his artistic finishes.

He's taken on a substantial challenge. The renovation plans for the old *fermette* and *dependances* rely on Nik's ability to pour concrete foundations, repair torchis and build oak structures through to making each and every floor and wall tile.

Nik trained in ceramics at Medway College of Design where he specialised in salt-glazing. He worked in designing and making bas-relief tiles and mosaics before moving on to other materials including wood, resins and pewter and exploring the possibilities of computer-modeling.

He's no stranger to a country setting - in England, Nik's workshop was situated in a converted chicken shed on an organic farm in the heart of the Sussex countryside. In this working environment, he was surrounded by both natural beauty and the charms of ageing, often discarded, agricultural machinery that is always a feature of a working farm. It's a combination and contrast he found constantly stimulating and is recreating in St Georges.

Look around the site near Hesdin and his love for different materials - old and new, natural and man-made - are evident in unusual and pleasing complimentary contrasts. Enormous cement pots decorate the courtyard. Painstakingly recreated roof tiles match century-old ones. A terracotta chicken and tub of flowers threaten to tumble from roof tops. Quirky garden statues of welded old farming implements dot the garden.

Although the renovations are consuming, Nik has created two workshops for himself; one where he can return to his roots as a potter and another as a base for the renovation and where he can continue to experiment with new materials. He has also developed two ranges of pottery; cream traditional tableware and, by complete contrast, decorative raku, dramatically glazed in burning sawdust.

Nik and his partner Donna are happy to welcome visitors willing to brave the busy building program and Nik can provide masterclass tuition for keen potters. Future plans include residential and day courses when the renovations are complete.

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