

AS KATE MALONE EXPLAINS, HER DESTINY WAS TO BE A POTTER.

What If... my grandma, now 101 years old, and my mother and father (undisclosed ages) had not passed on their energy and genes that I feel lucky to have been given... Perhaps I would not have been such a hard worker.

What If... there had not been a little pottery department under the concrete E Block stairs of the large Henbury Comprehensive School in Bristol in the early 70s, with a handsome dusty pottery teacher, Mr Eveleigh – I might never have looked through that clay smeared window at the age of twelve and felt that immediate magnetic interest in the mysterious jars of powders on the shelves... Perhaps I may have become a schoolteacher instead.

What If... George Rayner, Mo Jupp, Nick Homoky and Wally Keeler had not been teaching during the four glorious years I spent on a BA course at what was then Bristol Polytechnic... Perhaps I would have still wanted to be a potter, but may have not learned as much in such an interesting and thorough way.

What If... I had not got onto the Royal College of Art Ceramics MA course for an intense learning-packed three years of studies under the wise guidance of David Hamilton and others... Perhaps I would not have undertaken the large-scale public projects that I have faced with mad, blind confidence over the past twenty-two years.

What If... I had never met Graham Inglefield in that friend's kitchen twenty-five years ago – praise that day – my partner and father of our eleven-year-old daughter Scarlet... Perhaps I would not have faced my career with such confidence as he is always there to encourage and advise. We would not have the Balls Pond Studio in Islington, London, which housed the huge kiln that made all my large architectural projects possible and gave non-profit ceramic studio spaces to over eighty ceramists over a period of twelve years. I would never have moved to set up a small secondary studio in France seven years ago, would never have met the fabulous French circle of friends and potters in Provence, and, with Graham always interested in the new, would not be now setting up a third small studio in Barcelona... and meeting and learning who knows what from September 2008.

What If... I had not met art dealer Adrian Sassoon eleven years and 1,000 large and small pots ago, who, now with Clare Beck, works so well to show decorative arts in places I could only have dreamed of, in a fashion I couldn't have dreamt of... Perhaps I would be making different, more simple pots.

What If... I had never met the amazing creative artists, my gurus, designer Zandra Rhodes and artist Andrew Logan, perhaps I would not have been inspired to follow my colourful dreams feet first with such gay abandon.

What If... I had never had students, helpers and mostly my fabulous assistant Michelle Aitken by my side to assist in the workshop... Perhaps I



would be working in a messy, disorganised studio. Without my French 'Friday afternoon circle' of ladies from the village, I would not have developed a range with complicated time-consuming surfaces like the *Magnolia Seed Heads* or the *Fizzy Atomic* series. I would never have considered them if they didn't come knocking at my window.

What If... *Ceramic Review* didn't exist... Perhaps I would never have started to use crystalline glazes inspired by an article by Derek Clarkson published in CR137.

What If... I had not been a potter at all (impossible, impossible)... Perhaps I might have become an architect, a doctor, a nurse, a teacher, a TV presenter like my father and brother, or a parent of many children like both of my brothers... Perhaps pigs might fly... I feel like I was born to pot: if it wasn't so wonderful and challenging an experience I would think it was an addiction.

What If... has reminded me that it is people that matter, and I feel so lucky to have met the ones I have, with still, hopefully, more to come. ☐