

Meet the second artist to join West Elm's ceramics residency

Iran-born, Brooklyn-based artist Abdolreza Aminlari applies his knowledge of textiles and embroidery to a new medium

Pushing boundaries in a new medium

Post pandemic shutdown, the ceramics studio at our product design facility in Brooklyn was ripe for reimagining. “We spent three weeks reclaiming all the dried clay that had been sitting since Covid,” says senior studio manager Gary Webb, who spearheaded the residency initiative. Now, the space hosts established and emerging BIPOC artists who don't have access to a traditional ceramics studio to explore the medium.

“We're a Brooklyn-based company, so artists are in our backyard,” says Gary. “It's easy for them to get here and create new work.” This year, eight BIPOC artists will each have 12 weeks of full studio access, plus the assistance of a ceramic technician to help with things like running the kilns and monitoring the drying process.

Abdolreza Aminlari, an Iran-born, Brooklyn-based artist and our second resident, says that working with unfamiliar materials is how he's learned to let go. “You have to get rid of each piece being so precious and delicate because it will break at some point.”

What is home?

Abdolreza, displaced by war in Iran, makes this question a throughline of his work.

Cultural memories: “These geometries were born out of me breaking up a pattern: seeing animals, then seeing a connection to Persian rugs, then to things in my mom’s house and to my Iranian culture.”

Familiar objects: “When you look at the objects a country is known for, you realize everything’s dependent on both the idea and the material. To me, that’s what’s interesting: nothing is of a singular place, and yet it is.”

Family history: “My mother, grandmother, and great-grandfather had done embroidery. I think everything’s relying on the past. One body of work informs the next body of work for me.”





“A sense of in-between-ness is part of the immigrant experience—you’re not part of the culture you came to or the one you came from.”

