Short and Stout an ICAN Exhibition

Welcome to the International Ceramic Artists Network (ICAN) juried exhibition, "Short & Stout." This annual contest is open to all current ICAN members and is displayed each year at the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) conference. This year's pieces were chosen by editor and ceramic artist Katie Sleyman, who had the difficult task of narrowing down the entries to only 20 lucky winners.

Due to the unfortunate, but understandable, cancellation of NCECA this year in light of the COVID-19 crisis, we have chosen to showcase those 20 amazing teapots here in Pottery Making Illustrated. *We have paired the pots with Ivor Lewis' article that elaborates on the important considerations of making each part of the teapot should you want to try one on your own. Please join Katie and myself in congratulating this year's winners. Enjoy the show! —Holly Goring, Editor*

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Teapots are common utilitarian forms made by many studio potters. British potter Seth Cardew regarded teapots as having profound social importance, providing a focus for intimate exchanges between people. A pot of tea often serves as a focal point when people meet, and creates an environment for social interaction where relationships may blossom. For many, tea provides access to comfort and solace—a "nice cup of tea" invigorates the body, primes the mind, and enlivens the spirit. These, among other things, inspire teapot makers, and potters are encouraged to embellish teapots and explore new ways of expressing feelings about human needs.

Some teachers and critics regard the creation of teapots to be a considerable challenge because they are made from many parts, each of which has infinite potential for variation. Potters often experience difficulty when attempting to create designs that unify dissimilar, unrelated forms into a cohesive unit, which must function efficiently and effectively and yet exhibit aesthetic merit. Teapot invention challenges both our individual artistic imagination and our design intellect.

1 Shana Salaff's *Chubby Teapot*, 9 in. (23 cm) in height, porcelaneous stoneware, fired to cone 5 in oxidation. **2** Fong Choo's *Ameboid*, 4½ in. (12 cm) in height, porcelain, fired to cone 6, 2019. **3** Stephanie Osser's *Bluebird Teapot*, 7½ in. (19 cm) in height, slip-cast porcelain, clear glaze, fired to cone 5, decal transfers of the artist's original illustrations from a non-fiction children's book, second firing to cone 4, 2020.

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DESIGNING THE TEAPOT

Potters delving into constructing teapots have generally achieved a consensus about basic design principles. The efficiency and effectiveness of a teapot will be reduced should any of these concepts be disregarded. Though these ideas can conceal aesthetics, the following practical applications should be initially considered.

SHAPE

An ideal teapot shape is spherical. Spherical forms have maximum volume with minimum surface area. First, the amount of clay needed to make a pot of a specified volume is reduced; and by reducing the weight of clay in the pot, there is less physical strain when the pot is filled and the tea is poured. A teapot should have a high volume-to-weight ratio so that it feels light even when full.

Second, a smaller surface area means heat loss is kept to a minimum since there is less space from which radiation can occur, so tea made in a round or near-spherical pot stays hotter for longer. Third, smooth contours encourage convective circulation and mixing as the tea brews. This reduces the time between scalding the tea and achieving a strong mash of uniform strength, so the tea is ready to drink sooner.

STRAINER

The strainer prevents fragments of tea from flowing out of the pot. It forms a dam against which wet leaves rest as gravity sucks liquid tea through the spout. The total area of strainer holes through which tea flows must be equal to or greater than that of the spout, but each hole should be small enough to trap individual flakes of tea.

There are several consequences when the total area of the holes is smaller than the area of the spout mouth. Suction makes the leaves bind into a barrier against further flow. Air can suck back into the spout, releasing a surge of liquid as the vacuum is broken. When tea leaves block the strainer, a user may tilt the pot further. Then tea may overflow from under the lid. An inset or impressed strainer, where the sum of the area of the holes is at least twice the area of the spout, allows a more efficient flow of tea with the minimum discharge of spent leaves.

Location of the strainer and the seating of the spout influence the behavior of the contents of the pot as well as the aesthetic of the design. Disrupting the contour of the pot with a drooping protrusion where the wide funnel of the spout meets the body may create an aesthetically distasteful form. While a low strainer allows stronger liquid to be drawn first since this is closer to the lees, a strainer located below the midpoint of the body allows leaves to dam the flow of tea. If the strainer and spout are above the equator, the pot has to be tilted further to obtain all the contents. Weak tea is drawn first from a high-set strainer and spout. A strainer that is distributed equally across the equator allows complete drainage without tilting the pot beyond the vertical.

SPOUT

Spout design has a major influence on the way a teapot works, and should consistently direct the stream of tea toward the appropriate target. This tapered tube should have a smooth interior with no

4 William Jackson III's *Sci-Fi Teapots*, large teapot: 9 in. (23 cm) in height, small teapot: 8 in. (20 cm) in height, 710 brown clay, fired to cone 6, 2019. **5** Kimberly Cook's *Me and My Teabird*, 11 in. (28 cm) in height, porcelain, underglaze, fired to cone 6, gold luster, 2019. **6** Swanica Ligtenberg's horsehair raku teapot set, 11½ in. (29 cm) in height, high-fire white clay, black clay, mishima, bisque fired to cone 04, sugar, ferric chloride, raku fired to 1150°F. (621°C), horsehair, food-safe lacquer.

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deviations, corrugations, interruptions, or abrupt changes of direction from strainer to lip.

Eddies are created by changes in the space where fluid flows. Liquids tend to overshoot changes in contour, then flow back to fill spaces adjacent to the main stream. An abrupt change in contour or direction causes an eddy to form in the flow. Eddies pull fluids around corners, and this is a major cause of dribbles and drips from the tip of the spout. Creating a sharp edge on the lip of the spout cuts the flow of tea.

A spout should not extend a great distance from the body. The maximum length it might project is about half the diameter of the body. Longer than this can result in the tip being chipped when the pot is emptied and cleaned, and spouts function better when they project only half this distance.

The height to which the tip of the spout rises is also important. Placed above the level of the gallery, it may allow tea to overflow from under the lid when a full pot is tilted. When located below this level, however, the pot cannot be filled to capacity without tea flooding from the spout. Bent downward at the tip, it may cause a drip or even create a siphon.

HANDLES

Lifting, carrying, and pouring a teapot are functions of the handle. There are three common handle styles used on

7 Adam Yungbluth's *Over the Top Grand Stand Teapot*, 15 in. (38 cm) in height, stoneware, slip, glaze, wood fired to cone 12, wood, hydrocal, 2020. **8** Leilani Trinka's *Perahu Teapot*, 7½ in. (19 cm) in height, Cool Ice porcelain, clear glaze, fired to 2192°F (1200°C) in an electric kiln, 2019. **9** Hayne Bayless' small blue teapot with hinged lid, 8 in. (20 cm) in length, white stoneware, extrusions and slabs, cobalt slip, inclusion stains, fired in a gas kiln to cone 10 in reduction, metal hinge pin, 2018. **10** Brooke Millecchia's *Foyer—Maple Syrup Ewer*, 5 in. (13 cm) in height, handbuilt white stoneware, underglaze, glaze, fired to cone 6 in an electric, 2020. **11** Hayun Surl's untitled, 7 in. (18 cm) in height, clay, metal, fired to cone 10–11, 2018.

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teapots. A handle may be placed at the back opposite the spout, on the side, or above the top of the pot as a stirrup. A stirrup handle may be in line with the spout or may be perpendicular to it. The contours of a handle should show some affinity with the shape made by the fingers as they enclose and grasp it. Handle cross sections should be smooth so that a degree of comfort is given to the user.

Each style of handle has advantages and disadvantages. Excessive curvature along the length may cause discomfort to the user. Extending the handle away from the body of a pot can increase leverage on the wrist and forearm. The task of the designer is to coordinate the movements of both hands so that pouring is a comfortable and controllable action. When the handle is at the back, it should allow sufficient space for the hand to grasp it, without causing stress on the wrist, yet the space should not be so narrow as to cause pourers to burn their knuckles. A loose stirrup handle should rotate easily. A fixed stirrup handle should allow space for the lid to be removed when the pot is charged, emptied or cleaned. Stub handles that are placed at the side, also need to be angled and located to prevent strain on the wrist as the tea is being poured. An estimate of the degree of rotation of the forearm needed to pour the total contents may influence the angle between the handle and the spout. Volume will influence the mass of a loaded pot. Above a certain capacity, easier lifting may be achieved by incorporating a second handle.

LIDS

The form and setting of the lid should prevent it falling from the gallery as tea is being poured. When the pot is tilted,

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12 Scott McClellan's terra-cotta teapot, 7 in. (18 cm) in height, wild earthenware, fired to cone 1, 2019. **13** Lora Rust's *Ivory Nouveau Teapot*, 7 in. (18 cm) in height, porcelain, soda fired to cone 7, 2018. **14** Hannah Carver Graeper's cobalt teapot, 7 in. (18 cm) in height, brown stoneware, fired to cone 6 in an electric kiln, 2019. **15** Ulla Sonne's *The Geometric Teapot*, 4½ in. (12 cm) in height, porcelain, clear glaze, fired to 2300°F (1260°C), Mahogany, 2019. **16** Sam Scott's black and white teapot, 7½ in. (19 cm) in height, Kai porcelain, fired to cone 11, 2019.

tea should flow until the pot is empty, without the lid falling out. High placement of the strainer, above the equator of the belly, may influence the design or style of a lid.

Lids should be vented, well seated, and not grate or grind when rotated in their galleries. A gallery that is depressed into the body of the pot may cause problems. The gallery on which the lid sits should not protrude inside the body where it would trap spent leaves that might mold and taint future brews. A deep gallery will form a collar inside the pot, making it difficult to quickly and efficiently empty or effectively clean.

FOOTRINGS

The body should be supported by an adequate foot. Footrings have both physical as well as aesthetic functions. In many designs, elevation by a footring provides a visual balance for the rim and lid. A footring lifts the pot above its surroundings, subjectively attaching importance to the pot's presence as a social tool. And, by lifting the body from the table, the amount of heat conducted to the surface is reduced. —*"Design in Depth" by Ivor Lewis, was originally published in* Pottery Making Illustrated *in the Spring 1998 issue.*

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17 Polina Miller's tea set, teapot: 7½ in. (19 cm) in height; cups 3½ in. (9 cm) in height, wheel-thrown stoneware, fired to cone 6 in oxidation, 2019. **18** Joan Ulrich's *Roundabout*, 8½ in. (22 cm) in height, stoneware, fired to cone 10, 2019. **19** Marcia Selsor's *Botanical Vision*, 7½ in. (19 cm) in length, porcelain, faux celadon glaze, fired to cone 6 in oxidation, 2020. **20** Marion Angelica's *Flat Iron Teapot*, 8 in. (20 cm) in length, Grolleg porcelain, fired to cone 10 in reduction, 2016.

JUROR'S STATEMENT

For me, the teapot evokes feelings of warmth and comfort, along with images of steaming cups and weekend mornings. More than other functional forms that accompany the slower moments of everyday life, this vessel also reminds me of the challenge of working with clay. Each part of the teapot—its body, spout, handle, lid, and foot—must be considered, designed, and executed to work in unison.

Evaluating the many submissions to select only 20 teapots was a difficult task, and the pieces shown here reflect the skill and ingenuity of the entries as a whole. In assessing each teapot, I looked for evident confidence in the handing and craft of material, creativity in approach to form, and a certain tempting quality that sparked in me the desire to take hold of its handle and pour. The variety in construction, firing technique, surface, form, and gesture demonstrates the innumerable ways of addressing the challenge of making a teapot. Utilitarian, playful, ornate, or quiet, each teapot in this grouping invites interaction.

—*Katie Sleyman, Acquisitions and Content Editor of* Ceramics Monthly, Pottery Making Illustrated, *and Ceramic Recipes*