



The Art of the Cup: Variations on Cups from RAM's Collection

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Disposable plastic cups notwithstanding, a cup has historically been defined as a bowl-shaped vessel for drinking, usually outfitted with a handle. While a cup can have social or cultural functions beyond use—such as a trophy or a vessel used within religious ceremonies—its primary historical role has been its functional capabilities as a container of liquid. Cups, made of a variety of materials, have been unearthed in archaeological digs throughout the world.

Unlike the teapot, whose functionality and meaning has been challenged or reframed repeatedly, the cup has not been the source of as many philosophical investigations within the field of contemporary craft. This does not mean it has been marginalized or avoided. In fact, handmade cups are ever popular as serving ware and as subject matter for numerous exhibitions in galleries and museums.

Contemporary makers, balancing the traditions of the past with those of the present, create cups that reflect their style and interests. Drawn from RAM's collection, **The Art of the Cup** features contemporary iterations of cup forms made with clay, glass, and metal, sometimes as multiples within a set. Mugs and goblets are included to offer comparisons and contrasts. There are also examples by artists who play with the idea of a cup as a symbolic or metaphoric vessel.

Biographies and statements from select featured artists

Wesley Anderegg was born in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1958. Anderegg earned a BS in geography at Arizona State University. During his university career, Anderegg was introduced to ceramics. After college, he pursued his education with the material at the Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass Village, Colorado, as well as at the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, Montana. Later, Anderegg was an artist-in-residence at both locations. Throughout the last 26 years of his career, Anderegg has created an impressive exhibition history that includes 22 solo exhibitions and countless group shows. His ceramic sculptures are frequently figural but can take recognizable functional forms, such as cups. Anderegg's works follow imaginary narratives that convey his social and political concerns. His characters tend to be in some sort of perilous situation. Wild eyes and gap-toothed grins embody his idiosyncratic style, both unusual and comical at the same time. Anderegg lives in Lompoc, California, where he shares a ceramic studio—converted from an old horse barn—with his wife Donna who creates functional ceramic dinnerware.

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American ceramic sculptor **Robert Arneson** is often regarded as the father of Funk Art. The term describes an anti-establishment movement that blossomed in California in the 1960s and 1970s, which showcased haphazard and flippant assemblages. Later proponents melded pop culture imagery with lewd subject matter and a cartoon aesthetic. Artists associated with Funk Art were generally interested in a pointed critique of society and culture. Arneson was born in 1930 in Benicia, California. He began his education at California College of Arts after which he worked as a cartoonist for a local newspaper, primarily creating watercolors. After discovering **Peter Voulkos'** work, Arneson began to pursue ceramics. He played with the history of ceramics, and objects in general, often referencing functional items—like bricks and toilets—while transforming them into objects of absurdist humor. Late in his career, Arneson shifted into heavier, darker sarcasm to address political issues. After his death in 1992, his widow stated that, "...people viewing Arneson's work should look beyond what initially seems to be edgy, nasty, or funny, to find serious comments that are about political, social, and economic issues."

Born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1939, **Cynthia Bringle** has been drawn to art since childhood. Bringle began studying art at the Memphis Academy of Art where she intended to become a professional painter. Through a required class in ceramics, and the chance to throw pottery on a kickwheel, Bringle soon uncovered a love of the material, and shifted her artistic goals. After graduating with a BFA, Bringle continued her education at Alfred University where she received an MFA. Following her studies, she moved back to Tennessee to open her first studio. In honor to her contributions to the field, she was asked by the Smithsonian Institution to complete an oral history interview for the Archives of American Art in 1992. Bringle's ceramic works can be found throughout the United States in museums and galleries, yet she makes sure to emphasize that the primary place to find her pottery is in kitchens and homes.

Born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1904, ceramicist **Eugene Deutch** started his artistic career as a jack of all trades, learning carpentry, cabinetmaking, and woodcarving. In 1923, he relocated to France to work as a carpenter, taking various craft classes in his free time, including ceramics. In 1927, Deutch moved to Chicago to join his brother Alfred who had a business that specialized in handcrafted items such as ceramics, objects with wood inlay, and painted fabrics. A year later he opened his first studio on Kilbourn Street. In 1933, Deutch began to teach pottery classes at various locations including Hull House Kilns and the Lewis Institute. Throughout his career, Deutch criticized mass-produced ceramics, always lobbying for the value of handmade objects. His style is unmistakable—showcasing strong, simple forms with complex glazes and interesting surface textures. Deutch passed away in 1959 in Wilmette, Illinois.

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Katherine Gray was born in Ontario, Canada, in 1965. Favoring glass as a medium, her works range from handblown to assembled installations of found glass. Gray uses the material to comment on larger issues, such as the environment, society, and community. She earned an undergraduate degree at the Ontario College of Art and an MFA at the Rhode Island School of Design. Currently, Gray is featured as a Resident Evaluator on season one—and in the near future, season two—of the Netflix original reality TV show, *Blown Away*. She is also a professor of art at California State University, San Bernardino.

Zachery Lechtenberg, born in Quincy, Illinois, in 1989, is an artist whose work revolves around his skills as an illustrator. Drawn to pop culture as well as contemporary cartoon imagery, Lechtenberg creates enamel objects that are populated with colorful characters and fantasy-like scenarios. He addresses a range of issues through an aesthetic inspired by street art, comic books, and cartoons. Favoring champlevé enameling—a technique in which troughs are carved, etched, die struck, or cast into the surface of a metal object, and filled with vitreous enamel—he transfers his illustrations onto jewelry, cups, and plates. Lechtenberg also designs t-shirts, stickers, ashtrays, cutting boards, and skateboards. Often challenging expectations, he has been known to engrave on the reverse side of pieces as well as the front. Lechtenberg earned a BFA from Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, Illinois, and an MFA from East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

Born in 1948, glass artist **Robert Levin** now calls Burnsville, North Carolina, home. Originally attracted to glass because of its liquid qualities and sense of immediacy, Levin works to capture the elegance, fluidity, gesture, and whimsy that he associates with the material. He received a BFA from Denison University, Ohio, and an MFA from Southern Illinois University. Levin was formerly a long term artist-in-residence at Penland School of Crafts, North Carolina. He has lectured, taught, and led workshops throughout the US, Ireland, and New Zealand.

Born in 1970 in Osaka, Japan, **Yoko Sekino-Bové**, now lives and works in the United States. Sekino-Bové earned a BFA in graphic design at Musashino Art University in Tokyo, Japan. Upon arriving in the United States, she worked as a commercial designer in Los Angeles before pursuing an MFA in ceramics from the University of Oklahoma. Sekino-Bové completed an Arts/Industry Residency at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin as well as artist-in-residence tenures at the Archie Bray Foundation in Montana and Cerdeira Village in Portugal. Her work is technically functional, which she uses as a tool to draw people in, making it a design element similar to color or scale. As Sekino-Bové's career has progressed, her interest has shifted to the similarities and differences across cultures. In her work, this is evident in the *Genuine Fake China* series, in which she combines images and text. One side of these objects has a Chinese/Japanese proverb while the other has the English equivalent.



Born in Michigan in 1935, **Anna Silver** began her artistic career by studying painting, printmaking, and sculpture at the University of California–Berkeley, and the University of California–Los Angeles. From UCLA, she went to study at the Art Students League in New York and with **Fernand Léger** in Paris during the 1950s. Later, she returned to Los Angeles to attend the Otis Art Institute where she was introduced to ceramics by legendary innovators like **Billy Al Bengston**, **Michael Frimkess**, **Paul Soldner**, and **Peter Voulkos**. Silver turned to working solely with clay in 1975. During the 1980s, she developed her signature style that walks the line between classical, modern, functional, and decorative. Her ceramic pieces—with their emphasis on abstract forms—are influenced by a variety of sources, including Greek pottery, the colorful paintings of **Henri Matisse** and **Pierre Bonnard**, and abstract expressionist compositions.