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Artist-made teapots on display at Racine Art Museum



Patrick Horsley, Teapot, 1991–93. Glazed stoneware, 14 1/2 x 24 1/2 x 2 1/2 inches. Racine Art Museum, The Donna Moog Teapot Collection.



RACINE, WI.- Over the last twenty years, the [Racine Art Museum](#) has built one of the largest public collections of contemporary artist-made teapots in the United States. With over 500 pieces—mostly made of clay yet also including metal, fiber, and other media—there are a number of artists subjects and techniques represented. Open through July 25, 2021 in the unique street-facing Windows on Fifth Gallery at RAM, Someone's Cup of Tea: Contemporary Teapots from RAM's Collection features a sampling of the museum's current holdings.

Objects that are used in rituals—and therefore connected to social and cultural traditions—have symbolic or metaphoric significance as well as practical function. The teapot can be a container for liquid but could also be considered a vessel for communication and a symbol of interpersonal relationships as well as historic events. As part of a ritual, it is held in human hands though it can be understood without being touched. As such, the teapot is a rather mundane object that can still have power.

Interested in the past while looking to investigate and innovate, contemporary artists sometimes use the teapot form specifically because it is both easily understood and ripe for experimentation. By drawing on a familiar object, they can connect with others fairly easily—even if they ultimately upend expectations or specific notions about how a teapot should look or what it does. A summary presentation of RAM's teapots, Someone's Cup of Tea highlights a few common subject areas as well.

Artists such as Ah Leon and Richard Shaw manipulate clay so that it looks like other materials. Their use of trompe l'oeil style—a French phrase that roughly translates to "fool the eye"—allows them to reinvent clay teapots into doppelgangers of objects like a twisted tree branch, a suitcase, screws, or even a shoe.

Cindy Kolodziejski and Joan Takayama-Ogawa explore decorative concepts both in form and content. Both artists use shiny, luster glazes that draw the eye and imply a certain kind of wealth and luxury. Yet their works also directly challenge the use and function of a teapot as they create conceptual objects that examine the form or serve purposes other than being actual containers for tea.

Maintaining more traditional shapes and a sense of function, Carmen Collell and Mark Shapiro offer somewhat more conventional versions of the teapot, reflecting their concerns with the practical as well as the aesthetic.

These themes are represented through diverse styles and techniques by artists from across the United States. The teapots featured in Someone's Cup of Tea reflect a general interest in analyzing the past and a particular interest in exploring the idea of form and function.



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