

ELISA HELLAND-HANSEN



CUP

WHY A CUP ?

In 2009, Norwegians consumed 45,000 tons of coffee. This adds up to nearly 10 million cups of coffee. This is an incomprehensible amount of cups.

As a two-year old child I drank milk from a silver cup. When things were to be distributed from my parents 55 years later, there were six siblings wishing to acquire the same cup. Everybody remembered this special cup as their own from childhood.

As an eight-year old child I shaped my first cup in clay. Twenty years later I could call myself a potter. During the last 30 years I have made countless numbers of cups in my studio in Norway. Some additional hundreds have been created in other studios in other parts of the world.

My love and interest in this small ordinary item is as great today – or even greater.

The cup has a practical function, a social function – and a great artistic potential. It is simple and at the same time complex in all its details, from running lines and rhythm in body and handle, thickness and distribution of weight, the angle and closure of the lip, choice of color, and decoration to the tactile quality of the glaze. It requires focus and presence in every step of creation from the person who makes it by hand. I am constantly challenged in my search of bringing life into this everyday object.

In this catalogue you see photos of my cups from 2007-2011. The texts are not directly related to the pictures.

Elisa Helland-Hansen, April 2011





EVALUATION

Think plan sketch call order drive collect pay lift carry drive unload carry
lift open slice weigh wedge center open throw pull look hesitate doubt
collapse center throw pull reconsider finish cut lift dry wrap turn see check
score attach wax scrape dip dry lift carry load bisque cool unload carry write
weigh mix stir pour sift decorate glaze apply lift carry load saw split stoke restoke
stoke stoke stoke stoke stoke saw split stoke saw split stoke saw stoke
check stoke saw split stoke soak cool unload carry see consider
evaluate look doubt criticize break destroy see keep wonder
sand photograph prize wrap pack carry drive send transport
saw paint screw hang drill hammer move lift place consider
arrange move consider evaluate see light photograph welcome
smile believe hope hear tell talk sell wrap carry close eat sleep wake see
repeat the entire process once again repeat repeat practice learn hear
repeat again and again and again rest sleep travel read inspire draw
exchange teach give workshops travel work throw throw rework
repeat the process repeat another time and continue working
repeat again and again criticize evaluate learn consult have a
break swim dance laugh love sleep eat discuss think listen
read write visit learn see build paint work work work
repeat the entire process once again see hesitate
cry laugh rest work rework consider think
read I simply look forward to repeat
the whole thing once again

CUP

Grandfather is leaning back in his black leather armchair; On the small birch table next to him lies tomorrow's newspaper; His glasses are lying in the open spectacle case. In the middle of the table is placed what is Grandfather's pride, over any other object he owns. It is the big round cup with a handle so small he can only fit one finger in it. The other fingers he holds well around the cup. Now grandfather is sleeping. He is probably dreaming about the cup. The cup is white with a picture of a mountain on it. Over the mountain is written: Master Walker 1998. Grandfather was participating in a contest about taking the most walks. Grandfather was retired and took a walk twice a day. Grandfather won and was very proud. Now he has been drinking from this cup every day for 13 years. Now he is 90 and just as fit. I am happy that my grandfather owns this cup.

Eli Laupsa, 11 years



The Old City in Beijing, March 2011. In front of me I have hundreds of teacups. As a starting point they all function equally well for their purpose. Therefore, it ought to be of no consequence which of the teacups I choose. Nevertheless, I stand looking at the cups for a long time, feeling each of them once in order to find the perfect cup.

The Greeks of antiquity spoke of such things as pragmata. Things were first and foremost perceived as functional objects. This may be our first relation to things: we use them to do something. This usage has, however, not only a functional, but also an emotional aspect. Two cups with the same function can give me totally different emotions, and this affects the way I make use of them. The choice of cup therefore stands out as a choice of importance.

A teacup is only a thing, but things can have significance if we choose to give them significance... if we look at them as carriers of identity and continuity rather than something which only shall be consumed. This is a teacup that shall be filled and emptied time after time, which shall accompany me year after year.

But none of the cups I look at in Beijing this day in March are the perfect cup to bring with me. So I travel on empty handed. Maybe I will find it next time.

Lars Fr. H. Svendsen

Professor in philosophy, University of Bergen



NOT JUST A CUP

I have been a ceramicist since 1975, creating many unique cups. In 1984, I wrote for the Norwegian craft magazine, *Kunsthåndverk*, about two meetings with history which were decisive for my relationship with this object:

Ceramics of the Minoens - a shock

The Minoens lived on Crete three to four thousand years ago. Their ceramicists did not spare themselves. They used all nuances and stretched all possibilities both in small and large scale. They drew patterns in all directions, adding layers and scraping them off. There was no standardizing and no thought-stopping rationality. If you are to see their work in museum showcases today, your thoughts may fly and your mind may be filled with surprises like an unknown freedom, so beautiful it can make you completely dizzy.

Ceramics of the Nordic Iron Age - in many ways the contrast of the Minoens. Variations over a few simple and clear shapes, lines and dots scratched and imprinted in different ways. No colors, strict forms. So beautiful in dignity, strength, weight.

What do I think now, in 2011? The shock from these museum meetings has naturally subdued. I have seen more...new impressions and inspiration...and I am not making cups for the time being. But it still surprises me that just one cup in a museum showcase, made so far from our own time and way of living, can radiate such power and outspokenness.

Nina Malterud

Ceramic artist, previous professor in ceramics at Bergen National Academy of the Arts



Stoneware, h.7cm, wood and soda fired, 1300° C



Stoneware, h. 7 cm, wood and soda fired, 1300° C

This is a beautiful cup.
It gives me warm cocoa.

Isak Øystese Berge, 7 years



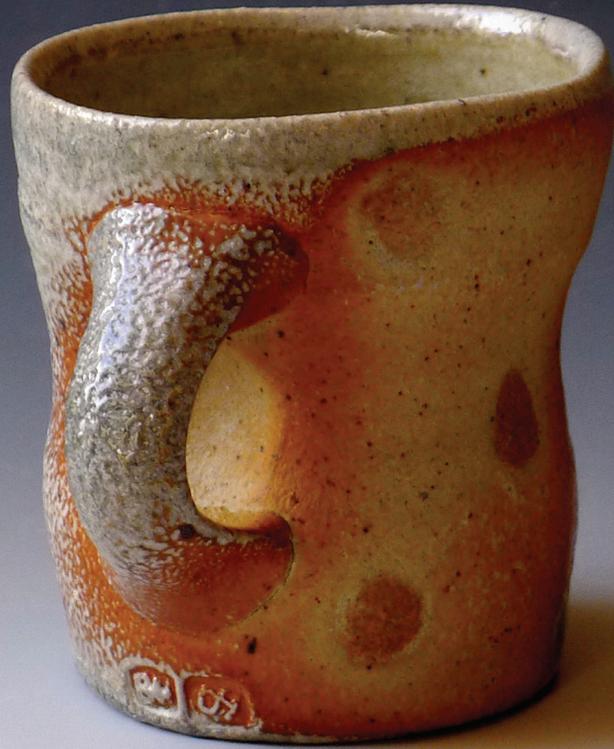


Every summer I stay with uncle Robert. He is a sailor. And in his house there is a cup. He always keeps it in the windowsill. Always. Always with coffee. You see he tells fortunes from the grounds. It is quite big. With a picture of Hardanger Center for Preservation of Ships on it. The one which says: On an even keel. He always brings it along and it always stands in the windowsill. Even in the testament it said that it shall always be placed in the windowsill.

Erling Asmundson Mostad, 10 years



Porcelain, h. 7 cm, oxidation atmosphere, 1240° C



Stoneware, h. 9 cm, wood and soda fired, 1300° C



Porcelain, h. 8 cm, copper glaze, oxidation fired 1240° C

My cupboard needs cups from all the world's corners. They are loved friends from beloved friends. Every day we acquaint, the cups and I. If art is communication, then cups are an excellent example of this. Every day my lips get to meet the well known body, my hands get to hold around exciting shapes. My eyes get to look at the fantastic relations between handle, body, surface and look at marks from hands and tools... process and time. A physical experience. Look at these cups made by the Norwegian Elisa Helland-Hansen. The clay is allowed to keep its character through the whole journey. The body has this elegant floating line which so many craftsmen (in the name of good craftsmanship) wipe away; insensitive and incomprehensible. Look how the handle seems to grow from the body as a natural part. Look how the coolness of the porcelain brings forth the warm brown coffee. The intelligent and technically complicated black line on the outside of the cup plays with the liquid in it. The porcelain is thick and heavy. The coffee stays warm for a long time This I call true art!

Jennifer Forsberg

Ceramic artist, Sweden. Published in the magazine Österlen 360° summer 2009



Porcelain, h. 8,5 cm, reduction fired 1300° C



Porcelain, h. 10 cm, reduction fired 1300° C



Porcelain, h. 10 cm, oxidation fired 1240° C

Living with thirteen other people, you can't expect your favorite mug to always be waiting for you in the morning... especially when five of your housemates have decided that it, too, is their preferred cup. You find yourself looking for it when it's not in the cupboard. Places the cup could be hiding: in the dishwasher; forgotten in the living room, out in the studio, or, worst of all, hidden away in someone else's room. Soon, you find you're not the only one having these thoughts. Lunchtime conversations quickly turn to investigations of when the last time was that anyone saw the beloved mug. As you finish your meal and return the bread to its place, the mug in question sits on the shelf just above your own. The name on the shelf is that of your roommates. If you take the cup, your roommate will know it was you. You decide then that there is only one thing to do. You must travel to Norway and find the maker of the cup, so that you may acquire an Elisa mug to call your own.

Crista Ames

American ceramic artist, resident at Ceramic Research Center, Guldagergaard, Denmark 2011



Porcelain, h. 9 cm, reduction fire, 1300° C

WHAT IS A CUP ?

Cups are functional objects – utensils with which to drink from. They are therefore necessary. We cannot do without them. However, what we use every day quickly becomes routine, and in routine, content becomes more important than form. We see the coffee, but not the cup.

Yet if the morning's tea was to be served in the German-Swiss surrealist Meret Oppenheim's *Object (Le Déjeuner en fourrure or Lunch in skin)* from 1936, the cup would become more important than the content. In fact, cup, saucer and teaspoon in this work are shaped from the thinnest, most brittle porcelain, yet each piece is wrapped in the skin of a Chinese gazelle. The cup is thus stunning, so extraordinary that we see it immediately. Nobody likes to get hair in their food, yet here you get a whole mouth of it. The fur is pleasant to the touch, but noxious to taste. Furthermore, when the fur-covered object is also concave, erotic associations are invoked; the piece becomes a not insignificant feminist revolt against all the masculine sculptures that commonly surround us.

When the cup in one way or other becomes remarkable, WE SEE IT. Oppenheim chose the skin of a gazelle – this is a striking medium, but can only be used once. Elisa Helland-Hansen has opted for a more difficult path: rather than adding a foreign material to the cup, she allows form, color, texture, tactility and ornamentation to enhance the cup's visibility. Upon grasping the cup, the surface stimulates our skin, yet we also feel how comfortably it sits in the hand, as if we were receiving a handshake from the artist herself. In addition, an enticing shimmer of color meets our eyes. Our tactile senses are invoked, these in return challenging our sense of taste. When the cup manages all this on the premises of ceramics itself, it has fulfilled its destiny – as a ceramic work of art.

Gunnar Danbolt

Professor emeritus, Department of Art History, University of Bergen



Textile: Ida Helland-Hansen 2011



Stoneware, h. 8 cm, wood and soda fired 1300° C

ELISAHHELLAND-HANSEN

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EDUCATION

National College of Art and Design, Bergen, Norway 1975-78
Trondheim School of Art, Norway 1973-75

SOLO EXHIBITIONS, SELECTED

Gallery Ann Linnemann, Copenhagen, Denmark 2011
Vandhuset, Hjørring, Denmark 2010
Sogn & Fjordane Art Museum, Norway 2009
Kunstnerforbundet, Oslo, Norway 1988, 96, 2009
Kaolin, Stockholm, Sweden 2008
Gallery Vilvin, Risør, Norway 1993, 2007
Sintra, Gothenburg, Sweden 2003
Gallery Vikerødgården, Hamar, Norway 2000
Blås & Knåda, Stockholm, Sweden 1994, 99
Gallery NK, Rogaland Art Center, Norway 1992
Drammen's Museum, Norway 1991
Union Hotel, Geiranger, Norway 1990
National Museum of Decorative Arts, Trondheim, Norway 1986

GROUP EXHIBITIONS, SELECTED

Artifact Gallery, Deloraine, Tasmania, Australia 2011
Penland Museum of Art, North Carolina, USA 2010
ESSENS, Kunstbanken Hamar, Norway 2010
Kunstnerforbundet, Oslo, Norway 1988, 2010
Gallery Vikerødgården, Hamar, Norway 1990, 2009
Red Star Studios, Kansas City, Missouri, USA 2008
Gallery Voss, Norway 2007
Art Association Verdens Ende, Tjøme, Norway 1992, 2001, 07
NAU Art Museum, Flagstaff, Arizona, USA 2006
European Ceramic Context 2006, Bornholm, Denmark 2006

Keramikcentrum, Pankov, Berlin, Germany 2005
The Danish Museum of Ceramics, Grimmerhus, Denmark 1997, 2002
Gulgong County Hall, Australia 2001
Norwegian Contemporary Ceramics, Amsterdam, Holland 1999
Greenville Museum of Art, North Carolina, USA 1999
Gallery Studiolo, Iowa, USA 1999
Tendencies, Gallery F15, Moss, Norway 1986, 89, 98
Riksutstillinger på vandring, Norway 1996-97
Joanne Rapp Gallery, Arizona, USA 1997
Hordaland Art Center, Bergen, Norway 1996
Gallery Snipetorp, Skien, Norway 1989
Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, Oslo, Norway 1989

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Sogn & Fjordane Art Museum, Førde 2009
The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Norway 2009
Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, Oslo 1986, 89, 96, 2007
The West Norway Museum of Decorative Art 1990, 92, 96, 2007, 09
National Museum of Decorative Arts, Trondheim 1986, 2007
Røhsska Museum, Gothenburg, Sweden 2003
Swedish Art Council (Statens Konstråd) 2003
Rackstad Museum, Sweden 1994
Arts Council Norway 1985, 86, 88
The Norwegian National Collection 1985

TEACHING

Summer class Penland School of Crafts, NC, USA 2010
Visiting artist/workshops, Guldagergaard, International Ceramic Research Center, Denmark 2002, 03, 06, 07
Visiting artist, Utah State University, USA 2006
Professor at HDK, Gothenburg University, Sweden 2000-05
Visiting artist, Colorado University, USA 2004
National College of Art and Design, Bergen, 1983-2000
Guest lecturer in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Australia, Iowa, California, Wisconsin, Arizona, North Carolina, Colorado, Utah and New York

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