

The Walk:

On a daily walk in early spring, I became aware that I was standing on soft wet earth rather than the frozen ice and snow that I had become accustomed to over the past five months. Instead of icy blues, grays, and whites I was looking over a vast field of browns, yellows, and greens. The air was moist rather than dry and crisp. It smelled of mud and wet grass. Soon I would be able to shed my winter coat and boots and lay in the dry warm field again. My perceptions were changing under new conditions, leaving me refreshed and animated. I am attentive and responsive to the transitions in my physical world; these changes remind me that I am alive.

While I am making a pot, I recall an experience recorded in my memory. This experience is sensory: a smell, a tactile recollection, or a noticed color. My memory regenerates the feeling or energy of the experience, reminding my senses of what they detected. Unlike the actual experience though, the recollection is not tangible, and it soon dissolves back into a memory. Concealed within my work are memories of my experiences, manifest on the potter's wheel as notions such as: hard and soft, hot and cold, bright and dull, wet and dry, fast and slow.

The Garden:

When I planted my first garden, I watered and maintained it daily. My constant and routine attention sustained the garden's health. However, other forces such as temperature, sunlight, stormy weather, and hungry critters influenced the garden as well. This element of chance brought change to the garden. The inevitability of new conditions kept the garden in an uncontrollable state of continual flux. Although I worked hard to support the garden's well-being, its unpredictability excited me.

Spontaneous decisions challenge purposeful ones to fuel change in my work. When I am making a pot, I utilize structure via shape, volume, and ornamental marks to affirm the physical articulation of my idea. I employ a very direct, but irregular handling of the clay to confront the certainty of the structure. Irregularity and spontaneity provide an element of chance, inspiring the unintentional occurrences that continually redefine my pots. I seek a subtle, but constant state of flux in both my work and life. This state is found in a balance between intention and chance.

The Question:

One day I was asked, "Do you even realize that everything you make is round?"

As I work on a series of cups, the first one might start out as a circular shape, but through succeeding attempts I reinvent the original. I think about the assumption that objects made on the wheel are inherently round and wonder how I can challenge this. I respond to this question with solutions that, through making the series, have redefined the original. Failing to ask a question of each succeeding object leaves me, the maker, disengaged and disinterested; ultimately, I am inattentive. Asking a question of each piece and responding to this query in succeeding attempts maintains my interest as a maker, while it assures that my work is sentient and alive.

The Shirt:

Sometimes my friend wears a shirt that seems too small for him. What is it about the shirt that is too small though? In reality, the shirt is not too small; it fulfills its purpose of covering his torso. However, it is smaller than the shirts others wear; this shirt challenges the standard.

When it is time to add handles to a series of cups, I can begin by attaching a conventional round handle, not unlike the ubiquitous diner mug. Instead though, I could confront this standard of what is correct and incorrect in a handle. What if I attach a triangular shaped handle to the cup rather than the circular handle? Would it look different or visually awkward compared to the diner mug? Could this awkwardness be interesting? In truth, the triangle handle would not make the cup any better or worse; rather, it would function differently. The triangle handle is in tension with my preconceived standard of what the handle should be. These experiments engage me while they also conjure questions about my assumptions and the relevance of utility and standards. Answering questions physically and conceptually redefines my work.

Rock Climbing:

**I was a rock climber for many years.
The days that I performed best were
those when I was not worried about
precision or reaching the end of my
route. Instead, I was rapt in the
individual moves that built the route.**

When I am making a pot, I have a general idea of what it will be, but I do not preplan how I will make it, nor do I know exactly how it will look. While I am observant of my surroundings or what is happening in the work, I do not have a defined objective. I aim to grasp a balance between physical cognizance and mental ease in both my practice of making and in the work itself. This state embodies a powerful but momentary energy that resides in a casual purposefulness.

The Shovel:

Every summer I garden with a shovel that was my grandmother's. This tool carries many dents and scratches acquired through years of her devout gardening. Using and thinking about this shovel reminds me of my grandmother's desire to garden and the value she placed in both the shovel's purpose and the act it signified. Her relationship with gardening was an annual rhythm and evolution that provided her with some normalcy: it was both a physical and a spiritual nourishment throughout her life. For me, this shovel now embodies a hallowed energy that exceeds and enhances its original function.

Objects have transactional functions; they serve beyond their apparent purpose. Pots play a practical role, but there is another aspect that leads me to be fascinated by them. There is an initial attraction that causes me to take a specific pot home, but I often do not know, at first, what that quality is. Paying attention to a pot over time through use and contemplation generates my understanding of its purpose and personality.

Summation:

Any source or experience could be the precursor to what physically happens in my work. As a maker, the action of my hand can trace the memory or energy of these experiences through illusive rhythms generated by form, deliberate mark making, and building process marks. This unpredictability prevents a sense of austerity and instead gives the work an unassuming but active sensibility. This can inspire a sensory response, visually and tactilely, offering a sense of pleasure both for me as the maker and for the user. Instead of a lasting feeling of happiness, this state provides a momentary relief and a feeling of delight—a temporary sensation, almost, but not quite tangible or definable; a lively sensation made seductive by its fleetingness.

Each piece physically and conceptually records an animate sensibility derived from my experiences. This record is the catalyst for a call and response relationship that exists between maker, object, and user.