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Sunny side up

Lori L. Phillips

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Sunny Side Up

By
Lori Leigh Phillips
November, 2006
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Lori Phillips
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INTRODUCTION

Some Thoughts on My Pots to Keep You Company

My pots are about grace and hospitality. I want you to feel that they welcome you with open arms. As I return to the southern arms of the home I know so well, I ask myself, "How can the essence of the warm sun, the sweet smell of honeysuckle, and the delight found in watching lightning bugs amid the humid summer nights, find their way into objects of clay?" The smells, sounds, sights, tastes, and textures of the south give me a sense of where I have been and where I might go; the outstretched hand tugs gently.

My pottery reflects personal perceptions of southern generosity instilled in me through family and friends. The company I keep and the relationships among us generate images and visual associations of warmth, caring, giving, and nurturing. Characteristics like these are hard to project in objects, especially in a society that has a "disposable" mentality. Convenience, ease of function, and efficiency seem to be dominant elements that foster a sense of indifference and complacency between the user and the object. Again, the outstretched hand tugs gently as I look for some means of communicating among the maker, the pot, and the user.

In searching for a motif to help me translate my thoughts of these southern perceptions, while I eliminated many, the lowly chicken kept rearing its little beak and big tail feathers. The poultry industry is prominent in North Georgia, friends and family raised chickens, and the cartoon character, Foghorn Leghorn, is a treasured part of my history. As this bird starts to surface in images of pottery I
study, ancient to contemporary, its proportion and silhouette seem to reflect what I want to capture in my pots. Not only is its stance curvilinear, it exudes mass and volume. I feel generosity and abundance from its heart shaped body as its trusting gaze seems to search for my acknowledgment. These qualities of “chicken-ness” speak to me in a subtle and relaxed manner, but I fancy another element that emerges and seems to be inherent in this motif: A quirkiness that is endearing and genuine. This quality invites a smile, maybe because I find humor in small oddities. Its impetuous physical movements, coupled with a capricious, appeal to our need for whimsy and uniqueness often found in the “imperfect;” a natural balance to uniformity and perfection. This is an idea that I can play with. I find myself envisioning unpredictable scenarios playing not only with visual aspects of the somewhat ungainly bird, but also manipulating its quirky attributes. I begin to see how I can translate these characteristics into a southern welcome with a sense of comfort, maybe even the warmth of “nesting.” Holding the southern hand that has led me this far, I am able to stop, visit, and reaffirm my relationships of family and friends via my chicken pottery. With a playful twist, I create pots to welcome you home and keep you company.
HISTORICAL REFERENCES

The Rear View Mirror

As I consider the roots of my own aesthetic choices, the influences of a broad scope of art history, media, technique, and criticism are undeniable. Within this scope, I examine and reflect on the question, “Why do I make pottery and what influences the content, style, and surface design of my artwork?” As I search for historical references that support and extend my ideas and artistic intentions to make functional objects, I bear in mind that the artist often rebels against the mundane, and embraces and reconfigures events of life. The work of the artist presents perceptions that in turn are interpreted through the lens of the viewer. Many of these works are nonfunctional in their intent, which sometimes is a factor when historians and critics categorize art and craft. The myriad of factors that contribute to the development of one’s aesthetic direction is enlightening and could entail a lifetime of study for me. The thesis work I created is a response to these factors. To focus on my original question, I have explored a core of personal and historical influences.

In serving, consuming, providing, and experiencing food and drink throughout my life, the majority of the dishware that I have encountered and used have been manufactured or mass-produced. Variations in the decorative aspects coupled with an affordable price made dishware a visual and utilitarian accessory, if not an essential feature of any celebration. For this we can thank British potter Josiah Wedgwood who proposed the idea that all people could have access to manufactured dishes. The attitudes associated with pottery and
china were changed forever with the fruition of his industrialization plans. In America, for instance, elevating the style in which we feast helped occupy the middle class who needed reassurance that social life was advancing along with technology and science. When considering feasting traditions and conventions, abundance, artifice, and special presentation give the host the opportunity to share dining rituals with family, friends, and guests. Having access to a huge variety of dinnerware and servingware to indulge these principles makes the effect of the Industrial Revolution as powerful today as when dishware first became widely available. Variations in dishware, for me, have played an important role in many gatherings of family and friends and in this communion, the “dish” continues to address Wedgwood’s earliest interest in bringing beauty to the table.

The china services that Wedgwood created in the 1800s and continuing in his name today, in my opinion, are elegant, stylish, highly polished, and perfected. Bringing his design sense and modes of industrialization into the 21st century, I ask myself: Can these attributes exist in the pots I make, and also include the mark of the maker? The idiosyncrasies and nuances that characterize hand crafted work, in contrast to the uniformity of manufactured dishes, have the potential to either delight the user, or to aggravate the person who rejects forms that evidence little regard for consistency, polish, or perfection. As I look for potters whose work exemplifies this dichotomy, I see past the product and consider the idea that pots and dishes one chooses to use tend to reflect the personality of that person. With this perspective in mind, and with contemporary
attitudes that often favor the ease of disposal and replacement, why would a person choose to buy and use hand crafted dishware? Many makers and users of the handmade celebrate the subtle differences that gently remind us of artful imperfection and that hundred percent control is not always needed or obtainable. I make wheel thrown pots that borrow some utilitarian and visual features of manufactured china services (such as cups and saucers), but incorporate handcrafted uniqueness in form and surface treatment. Slight imperfections and variations in the forms are appealing and often generate a personal connection to the functional object. These links can cause memories of life experiences to surface that not only remind us of emotions, but also of smells, sights, and sounds of other times and places; things we often refer to as “retro” or “the old days”

Growing up, I was exposed to many handcrafted objects from different time periods and cultures. Flea markets, antique stores, travel, and experience with family from different regions of America contribute to my eclectic nature. I appreciate the elegance of china created by potteries that developed with the onset and progression of the Industrial Revolution. In comparison, my fascination with “kitsch” also developed from many years, as I found myself drawn to this particular class of objects that simply captured my imagination. Kitschy objects and images can sometimes be tasteless and sentimental; they can also evoke commentary on stereotyping in relation to social class and regionalism; in general, kitsch is based in humor, often at the expense of good taste. Looking for humor based in beauty and function of past decades is quite entertaining as I
reflect on American culture and its impact on my own sense of aesthetics. As I consider just how I have incorporated a playful aspect to my work I see that it reflects personal eclectic impulses such as manufactured decal images reminiscent of decades past. Dadaism is one such influence.

The artwork of the early 20th century Dadaist Movement evoked an often caustic brand of humor rooted in the fantastical, nonsensical, and absurd. While the Movement was often characterized by a negative wit, I chose to explore the unconventional use of media and techniques, and I focused on the positive features of their highly imaginative use of subject matter, while discounting the confrontational negative messages of this basically anti-art Movement. I combined these Dadaist influences with the more lighthearted humor, play, and whimsy of “Kitsch” in my work.

The Dadaist used a variety of media to express their protests against World War I. Their rebuttal of anything considered traditional influenced the images and text they used in collage. Dadaists Hannah Hoch, Otto Dix, and Kurt Switters specifically addressed their perceptions of society with materials and imagery they had readily available. Hoch collaged images that reflected her viewpoint on the role of women during this time period in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*. Cutting and splicing bits and parts of familiar media into unique and unfamiliar arrangements added to the whimsical style that contradicted the norm of the art world from 1916. Along with Dix and Switters, Hoch used design to reveal viewpoints concerning society and its relationship to the consuming of manufactured goods. Although I am not interested in reflecting personal
discontent with social and political issues through my pottery, I find a common thread with these artists in that I use manufactured materials (decals) to compose images on the surface of pots that are not machine made.

Contradiction and the element of surprise visually taunt the viewer to question the unfamiliar arrangement of subject matter. This form of expression, whether in support or protest, continues to give artists alternative ways to make social statements.

Using manufactured objects and techniques associated with mass production, one specific ceramic artist used this mode of response to society. During the 1960s, Howard Kottler produced a series of dinner plates on which he spliced and reconfigured decals of familiar imagery as a design element to express personal viewpoints. The manufactured became his canvas on which decals of "souvenir" type images were recomposed to express visual puns on society. Like the Dadaists, his intention was to reject traditional ceramic practices and challenge conventional notions of religion, gender, and politics. Wanting to elevate ceramics as an art form to the broader context of modern art, Kottler arranged decals of iconic images to illustrate his opposition to conventional thinking and mainstream America. Placing emphasis on the content and message, he used manufactured pottery along with handcrafted surface techniques to cross over into the realm of the modern art world. The Dadaist movement and artists such as Howard Kottler invented new ways to approach media, design, and content that are today taken for granted. In contrast to Kottler, the decals I use do not confront the user with social commentary. Quite
the contrary, while I honor the media, techniques, and motivations of the artists discussed, the decals I select confront the user with the content of visual reality and a message of comfort and warmth in design and decoration.

Further examining my interests in unconventional approaches, I investigated the work and ideas of another movement and a particular artist who influenced my work. Cubism challenged and pushed traditional approaches in the art world as well as in the crafting of ceramics as an art form. Cubism and its developer, Picasso, challenge our perceptions visually and conceptually. Studying Picasso’s well-developed notions of rearranging reality by fragmentation, altered picture planes, and unconventional uses of media inspired me to explore these approaches in the forming and surface design of pottery. The design of the surface treatment on my pots has its roots in fragmentation and recomposition. In the same way that a sense of movement and life is felt as one’s eye flows through the composition of a Cubist painting, I want the user of my pottery to feel a sense of rhythm that flows around the form; a sense of playfulness in form and image. Picasso’s paintings often captured the moment of tension when a gesture goes off balance. This quality that opposes static solidity is also seen in his later works in ceramics. In his wheel thrown forms, he was able to capture the essence of a gesture, even as he kept the altering and manipulation of the form to a minimum. As I developed the chicken motif in my forms, I worked to find that elusive point that implies gesture, without detail. I closely attended to the spontaneity and variation within each form as I sought to find subtle personalities within each cup or pitcher. I wanted individual nuances
to explore as I attempted to express the idea of uniqueness within a homogenized society. Studying the way Picasso used tricks of perspective and how he reconstructed figures by means of their volume helped me define the often elusive gestural form and understated surface treatments in my own work.

In contrast to Picasso's looser and gestural forms of expressive pottery, the design-oriented work of Eva Zeisel captures a simple essence in clay. With roots in painting and pottery, Zeisel spent much of the 20th century creating glass and ceramic objects emphasizing design and a quest for beauty in three-dimensional forms. I find a kinship to her work ethic and her approach to designing functional objects, but most of all, to her desire to create things that bring joy and spirit to our visual lives. Examining design in the 21st century, Zeisel hopes that the prevailing negative attitudes in the art world today that seem to undermine the creation of objects that focus on beauty will diminish. The definition of beauty might be different for the designer and the user, but the intent should be evident. The forms and surface treatments I have developed speak to a personal pledge to meld visual pleasure with utility: I want my work to be as great a pleasure to look at, as to hold, handle, and use. As I watch the cream pour from the spout of my chick pitcher, I delight in the animated form and motion. The “dialogue” between the pot and its user is a major consideration in my work, as it is in Zeisel's.

I find that Zeisel's work is also about togetherness and a sense of family. Her influence is apparent in my work: Groupings and the relationships among the pots play a dominant role. Emphasizing personalities and the subtle nuances that
exist among the parts, create a connected sense of wholeness when objects are viewed together. Whether I used the chicken motif as form, or the chicken motif as decoration, a feeling of togetherness is apparent. This communal sense is found in the social structure of a community of chickens, a theme that I use to narrate my interpretation of relationships.

As a collector, interpreter, and personal record keeper of my own existence and relationships, the influences of the past will continue to affect my future work. The historical references discussed bring clarity when I examine the reasoning behind the form and design commitments in this thesis study. My own sense of aesthetics has been shaped by these ideas and the functional pottery I produce interprets my vision.
PERSONAL ANALYSIS OF WORK

Which Came First?

Since the cave, people have long made pots with purpose and even now continues to develop these objects in response to needs. I, too, have developed forms to fit the necessities of function, focusing on vessels that encompass the drinking aspects of nourishment: pitchers, cups, mugs, storage containers, and supporting wares. Working the clay form on the wheel, determining proportions, and honing required components of utilitarianism, my progression evolved from tight and rigid to looser and more plastic hand altered vessels. I resolved to search for forms that addressed utility, but also forms that could be adjusted to enhance visual interest. These forms then became the springboard from which to alter and manipulate in order to express my own personal ideas. My perceptions and thoughts about comfort, humor, and how we interact with functional objects became a playground for me, a bottomless well from which to draw.

Comfort, as a verb defined by the dictionary, means to bring strength and hope. People, places, things, or any combination of these, can bring comfort into daily life. We interact with objects on a daily basis that share a history with us and become part of rituals that enrich our lives. No matter how small, these rituals give purpose and dignity to the objects and to the environment in which these rituals or traditions take place. I want my work to evoke a sense of familiarity and subtle recognition suggestive of comfort. These intimate residents are made to be used regularly and to become a defining aspect of what is comforting in the home.
What constitutes comfort for individuals is as unique as each personality. Although we all have a different story, commonalities are often revealed through the objects we use and through the social intercourse and behavior we associate with them. Customs, rituals, traditions, and daily social patterns affect the purpose of and response to utilitarian pottery. The presence of handmade pots as an integral part of daily routine implies a sense of aesthetic valuing. This sensibility is nurtured when we look past function to find beauty. This aesthetic awareness is part of what becomes consoling and nurturing; it is what makes us humane. Feeling a heightened sense of self in relation to objects we value relates to the processes that we use as we assimilate life experiences into our psyche. Taking the time to care and notice what meaningfully brings comfort should be more than a luxury which time demands rarely afford us in today's fast paced world.

The societal demands of time in happenings of every day occurrences challenge me. One method of assimilating my life experiences and creating my own sense of comfort is through humor. Eliciting laughter and amusement, in others as well as myself, is comforting to all parties involved. The enjoyment that accrues when one has the ability to see that something is funny can generate a greater sense of self. It is in this temporary state of mind, humor, where many find strength to overcome challenges. I want my pots to take advantage of this strength and be able to elicit a comical response in the user. This search led me to notice mood changes when users interacted with forms and design images associated with the lowly chicken when elevated to a more regal status in and on
my pots. I, along with others, found amusement and delight in its personality and physical characteristics.

As a result, the chicken silhouette, stature, and variation became the origin of my investigation. My intentions were not to replicate this bird, but to capture the fundamental nature the essence, of its gesture and spirit. Subtle and non-threatening, the chicken motif adds whimsy to daily life, out of the coop, but visually, pictorially in the kitchen and even the dining room. Extending the barnyard, symbolically, into today's home brings reminiscence of past associations and invites new interactions that celebrate the essence of barnyard without all the dirt.

With its fullness of feathers and heart shaped silhouette, there is a wonderful feeling of heft and breadth in the chicken. The animation of this bird is humorous as thin, angled legs maneuver a large robust figure with quirky mannerisms. Disjointed, yet graceful, the chicken roams its terrain with head held high and tail feathers alert. Asymmetrical balance is somehow conquered by jerky movements and perpetual motion, becoming my challenge to capture in wheel thrown forms in porcelain. Like the chicken, this dense white clay can be stubborn and intimidating. The challenges associated with raising poultry and working with porcelain are more easily addressed when one accepts the stereotypical roles they play; the rooster is dominant and ornamental: the clay is unforgiving and elegant. The hen is submissive and nurturing, the clay is plastic and alluring. The forms evolved and progressed as I developed my throwing
skills and my ability to alter, bend, and manipulate forms to capture and exploit these roles.

Fortuitously, I happened upon the notion of using decals on clay surfaces. In my mind, I began to explore the possibilities of incorporating chicken decals into the design of the surface in order to create a harmonious relationship to the clay form. Commercial images are ingrained in me from a lifetime of exposure to mass media and commercialism in society. American culture teems with mass produced images that often link our thought and associations to past and present people, places, things, and experiences. My intention was to layer the imagery of chicken decals one upon the other to elicit a sense of nostalgia, comfort, and warmth. This wistful feeling might evoke memories associated with objects in the daily communion of family.

The decal images of the chicken that I selected were rendered realistically which allowed me to be the visual manipulator. The ridiculously funny stare and stance of the birds made me chuckle with the possibilities of manipulation. The sheets of decals gave me chickens of various sizes, types, and poses. As I studied the body mass of the chicken, I began to throw clay forms on the wheel that mimicked the bellying out of the lower body, and the narrowing of the neck. I explored the incising technique of mishima as one layer to create a surface design. I then thought about cutting up and rearranging parts of the decals to create a composition. Juxtaposing and intertwining these images of chickens among the vertical mishima lines became a means to instill a sense of humor within the work.
Pulling the entire style together as a whole became the challenge. Despite my eclectic nature, the process of elimination became the means to reveal the true nature of what I wanted the forms to be. I needed simplicity in form, color, texture, and surface design in order to express what I felt was humorous and comforting in the chicken motif. Continual analysis and evaluation brought forth development not only in technical advances in ceramic processes and skills, but also in my perceptions of what a community of chicken pots might be. Taking these new ideas and incorporating them into pots associated with serving beverages would enable me to mesh my own relationships with family and friends into the chicken motif. As time progressed, the following sets of work emerged to represent comfort and humor.

The Barnyard Scenarios

Hen and Chicks (slides 1-4)

She bustles around the pen with a watchful eye. Keeping her chicks close, safe, and attended to is her domestic strength. Willing to care for all chicks, not just her own, the hen displays behavior associated with being a great mother. A hen shaped pitcher was placed within a group of chick cups. Alone, the chicks would wander aimlessly without her guidance. The individual personalities of each cup are evident when one’s attention focuses on the gesture created through the hand altered process of the thrown forms. Each chick must be held differently, thus reflecting the idea of celebrating differences. I wanted a nurturing and playful atmosphere associated with the grouping, therefore, spacing and
placement of the objects becomes an interactive game for the user. As I watch others arrange the hen and chicks, they reveal a perception of motherhood as they smile, giggle, and act out little dramas.

**Hens (slides 5-10)**

I listen to them, these docile and sweet feathered friends. Mostly their cooing is soft and gentle, but there is something to be said about the comparison of a ladies bridge tournament to a chicken house. As hens roam together, the visual spacing and direction of the birds create a feeling of intimate conversation between friends. Letting my imagination run, I eavesdrop as the hens carry on. The use of a large, low riser hints at the idea of a chicken pen with hens of various breeds bustling about while several banter. The altered hen forms, handles, and lips evoke different spirits and moods that are then intensified by glazes.

**Chicks (slides 11, 12)**

The chorus of peeps call to the mother, beaks vertically outstretched for a treat. The sweetness of this scene is also a metaphor for what is contained within these pairs of pottery chicks: cream and sugar. Pressing into the malleable porcelain, indentations that suggest wings create places for the hand to hold and pour. The gesture of the chick, soft and rounded, fits into the palm as if the user was picking up a living creature. The sugar container lid is a hand built rattle. Gently shaken, this chick head simulates the peep sound as the handle alludes to the beak. When placed on the countertop, the head can roll around like a toy
and be played with, something a chick would do. Small gold luster rosettes are sometimes applied on the head, intending to emphasize the purity and sweetness found within.

Rising in the morning (slides 13-20)

“Cock-a-doodle-do” sounds the feathered trumpeter as the sun breaks where earth meets sky. This morning greeting represents a fresh start and a warm welcome to a brand new day. The rooster, confident and handsome with colorful plumage, struts through the barnyard finding food for his hens. After all, he rules the roost and is the stereotypical dominating male who provides for and protects the females. New and old decals of roosters, hens, and chicks were combined with floral and text elements to bring the morning barnyard onto the surface of the pots. Focusing on cups, saucers, and juice sets, the pots were thrown with the full-bodied silhouette of the bird in mind. The decals repeat the same curves throughout the design and because many of the images were made in the 1960s-1980s, a nostalgic feel is evoked. Juxtaposing sections of chicken decals that vary in style, size, and direction invites humor into the composition. Little surprises and interesting mixes of poultry anatomy add mystery and wonder to the story. I want the viewer or user to enjoy and smile while engaging with the little scenarios and the imagery to relay the message of rise and shine, start your day! The past is a memory, the future awaits, this moment is a time to look back and move forward. The weight of the world is felt on the shoulders of many. The pottery I make is meant to steal back moments that bring hope through the amusing microcosm of the chicken.
The inclusion of serving ware (slides 3,10,12)

Perky tail feathers and the captivating form of the egg are not only components of chickens, they correspond to the functional elements of a spoon. The chick sugar bowl was designed to have a spoon continually rest within. Using the feather as the handle, this silver plumage visually creates the perky aspects of the tail as it protrudes from the container. The egg, nesting and developing from inside the body, is the giver of sweetness. It also represents the hope for the future and pays tribute to the past where the circle of life is revered. Feathers and eggs transformed into small, delicate objects that quietly sparkle are meant as reverence for domesticity and living each moment to its fullest.

The inclusion of photography

A gallery setting does not lend itself to disclosing the true purpose of the work. The space has the potential to showcase the aesthetic and conceptual aspects but the functional engagement between the user and the object is absent. What the pots could contain and how they are presented is very much a part of the communal feeling of the work. I chose to photograph people using the functional objects in spaces that would address this deficiency. I cropped the compositions to emphasize the pottery rather then the people using it. The photographs were printed in black and white as I felt that this format would invite the function of the work into the gallery and suggest a more intimate setting.
PROCESSES

Going Broody

Throwing the Forms

Chicken Cups, Pitchers, and Containers

Thrown porcelain forms were altered from round uniformity to suggest the gestural mass of the chicken. Using darting and pinching techniques, the fullness of a heart shaped body combined with the narrow qualities of the leg, neck, and head were rendered. It was important to imply the quirky movements of the bird without over stating the realistic characteristics of the chicken.

Natural gripping points occur around the body of each cup, eliminating the need for a handle. Silhouettes vary from all views and are as individual as each bird. Handles on pitchers were formed with slab and pulled methods of construction. When comparing an actual chicken to the pots, the linear quality and negative space within the tail feathers are suggested graphically in the handle. Subtle shifts in size, scale, and attachment of the handle give each pitcher a personality that relates harmoniously to the gesture of the body and foot.

Decal Cups, Pitchers, Plates, and Containers

A traditional approach to throwing forms with a curvilinear silhouette was explored using porcelain. Again, the figurative qualities of the chicken were emphasized and used for reference. The swelling of the breast and tail feather regions reference a heart shape that converges with the legs. Handles, pulled or slab constructed, refer to feathers and are intended to exaggerate the ascending...
and descending line that leads the eye back towards the body of the bird. Spouts were added using slab methods or were pinched from the rim. An actual chicken beak is small and thin which causes functional concerns when pouring liquids. To address these concerns larger spouts were designed into the rim which also contribute visually to the curved quality of the wattle, comb, and beak of the bird's head.

Non-traditional lids were created to engage the user in a sense of play. Slab constructed rattle lids have chicken beak handles and make noises that sound like chirping. The rounded form of the lid rests slightly inside the container rim suggesting an egg with a hen brooding. When the lid is placed on the counter, its rounded bottom allows the form to wobble like a toy top. I want to encourage the “toy” like feeling in the lid to enhance use and invite surprise.

**Glazes**

Satin matte and shiny base glazes were formulated to reflect light differently and create variation in the surface. Keeping utilitarian needs in mind, the texture and the caressing qualities that a glaze possesses had to be comfortable and inviting to the touch in order to be harmonious with the forms.

Color and its properties of hue, value, and intensity, were considered in the varying amounts of stains and oxides added to the base glazes. The percentages of colorants, the temperature of the firing, and the firing atmosphere, all affected the range of results in color.
*Dragon base glaze,* with three percent *Marigold* Mason stain developed into a surface that varied depending on the firing atmosphere. A reduced firing atmosphere with varying temperatures of cone six to seven gave results that were neutral enough in color to enhance the form and not detract from the addition of decals. Transparent, translucent, and opaque qualities can be obtained in a reduction fire atmosphere. The slight crazing in the glaze visually works with the implied feeling of "age and use", but is still tight enough to fit the clay body and contain liquid.

A *satin matte glaze* reflects less light and was needed for contrast. The stability of the glaze selected along with its tactile attraction worked as a liner, exterior, and detail enhancer. *Best Black* Mason stain, was added to the color palette. This non-moving glaze contrasted with the runnier glazes and worked well as a solid shape or a detail line.

*Lucas honey,* a shiny glaze with very warm hues of brown, varied in thickness. The form could take on a solid or textured color surface depending on how the glaze was applied. Dipping, pouring, and brushing methods were all used. This glaze also allowed fine lines of the black satin matte glaze to run slightly, thus enhancing a natural feel of feathers.

A shiny liner that could introduce color to the interior of the pouring and drinking vessels was needed to contrast with the neutral palette chosen for the exteriors of the vessels. The use of *Alec Karros base glaze* with different *Red-Orange* and *Yellow* Mason stains had the effect of inviting the eye into the form.
The shiny, flat surface quality varied only in color when fired in a reduction atmosphere making for a reliable liner and detail glaze.

**Surface Treatments**

Mishima, a technique of inlaying colored slip, was used to accentuate and enhance the silhouette of the form. Vertical lines incised with a sharp blade were repeated around the forms to make bands of varying spaces. Red, brown, and dark blue slips were applied to fill the incisions. Excess slip was wiped away leaving a thin, clean line, which contrasts with the white clay body. The bands provided areas on which to compose and create depth with the decal images. Compositions and the play in depth-of-field added one more layer- from clay, to mishima lines, to glaze, to decal.

Decals, commercially designed and mass produced, were applied to the glazed surface of the work. I purchased a variety of images that fit my compositional plans to create humorous scenarios of the chicken. The application of a decal involves soaking the image in water to release it from the paper backing and then floating the thin film onto the glazed surface. Finger burnishing the image to the glazed surface is carefully done to remove any air bubbles and to create a tight bond. The image bonds permanently when the work is fired to cone 014 (1465 degrees Fahrenheit). Metallic gold luster and gold decals are then applied and the piece is fired to cone 022 (1165 degrees Fahrenheit).
Firing

A four-foot gas kiln was used to fire small loads of pots. Taking advantage of smaller firings with two burners allowed more control to achieve a diversity of effects in surface and color. The amount of reduction varied from one firing to another providing the opportunity for uniqueness in color. Ranging from light, butter yellow to root beer brown, the *Dragon base* glaze was affected the most. Particular placement of the pots on the shelves, along with the amount of reduction from two different burners, added to the suspense of each firing. A temperature range between cone six and seven gave the best results for all of the glazes used.
MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Clay Body

Standard Clay Company, Julia Galloway Special, #549, porcelain, cone 6

Slip

Slip made from the clay body with stains and oxides added for color:

- Brown: 5% red iron oxide
- Red: 5% Degussa red stain
- Blue/Black: 5% Mason stain

Stains/Oxides

- Degussa stain- red
- Mason stains- marigold, lobster, coral red
- Oxides- red iron

Glaze Recipes

**Dragon Base**

- 44g K-200 Feldspar
- 22g Cornwall Stone
- 18g Whiting
- 5g EPK
- 8g Zinc
- 4g Titanium Oxide

For color: 3g Marigold # Mason Stain

**Lucas Honey**

- 30g Custer Feldspar
75g Whiting
75g Ballclay
45g Red Iron Oxide
75g Silica

**Satin Matte**

20g Frit 3124
27g Silica
20g OM4
20g Dolomite
20g Kona F4 Feldspar

For color: 6g Best Black # Mason Stain

**Alec Karros Base**

11g Kona F4 Feldspar
21g Nephelene Syenite
18g Gerstley Borate
4g Whiting
8g Wollastonite
6g Frit 3124
10g EPK
40g Silica
2g Bentonite

For color: 10g Marigold Mason Stain (yellow)

8g Lobster Mason Stain (red-orange)
8g Red Mason Stain (red)

Decals

Decals were purchased from the following suppliers via the internet:

Instar Decal Company  [www.instardecals.com](http://www.instardecals.com)

EBay  [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)
CONCLUSION

Sunny Side Up

There is a lyric from an *Indigo Girls* song that says, “Darkness has a hunger that’s insatiable, and lightness has a call that is hard to hear.” Human tragedy and destruction balances and defines what is “good” and fulfilling. It appears that our society, specifically the worldwide media, spends countless hours and energy exploiting the sadness of the human condition. Like black velvet fabric with its light absorbing properties, emphasis on the negative tends to suck any hopes of lightness away. This is to say: it is not that I emulate the ostrich with my head in the sand, rather, I find myself looking at the world and wanting to nurture a sense of hope. The words to the song, “Keep on the Sunny Side of Life”, repeat in my head as I ask: What is my life worth? What, if any, contributions to society can I make? I left teaching art in the public school system, sold my house and goods, packed up, and headed north to study ceramics. Throughout the hills and valleys of graduate school, I have not once regretted this life changing process. The commitment I feel towards the value of being a potter is life affirming and one that carries a new set of responsibilities. Not only will I continue to develop my own voice and message using clay as the medium, I will promote the creative endeavors of the ceramics community.

Personal artistic development is a never-ending process. Through continual exposure to visual, verbal, and written thoughts and ideas, I challenge myself to grow as a maker. Looking at the past through researching ceramic history helps me define how I would like my own work to play a part in daily life of
my patrons. I gained a keener sense of understanding by reading history of everyday eating rituals in America from the mid-1800s to the present. Politics, war, work, education, religion, economics, gender, and all other aspects of our society effect what we eat and how it is served. Food and the serving of food relates to our definition of culture and society revealing our beliefs in a way that does not threaten others. We all hunger and the sharing of a meal feeds more than the belly. The presentation of the meal is in itself an act that reflects the host's philosophy of living. Might it be true to say that leisurely domestic rituals of dining provide comfortable reassurance of our existence? Designing and making pottery that engages the user to feel and care about his or her quality of life is of great value to me.

In terms of design, I want to continue to investigate form and surface decoration. The interplay of the silhouette and surface treatment is intriguing to me and I see endless possibilities. Pulling from memories and my attraction to pattern and decoration, I look forward to sequencing, combining, and juxtaposing various techniques. Using the past as a catalyst, the inclusion of decals as an element in surface treatment and decoration becomes another layer for me to explore visually, philosophically, and symbolically as I formulate intent and meaning in my work. The images that I have chosen to work with thus far in this endeavor were chosen for their formal design aspects but they also seemed to evoke a sense of humor and play in myself as well as in others.

This marvelous chicken motif gave me the opportunity to connect to people in a humorous way. When looking at my work, viewers share their
personal stories and attitudes about this quirky bird. Laughter and smiles usually are involved as they feel a sense of ease around the work. The conversations continue long after I am gone as they interact with the pots in everyday life. Although amusement, humor, and comedy are defined by each individual and situation, I feel that I can contribute imagery and forms that suggest lightheartedness and reason to smile. The rewards for me as a potter come from the sheer thrill of having another person squeal with delight because of the visual and functional qualities of the objects I make. The desire and pursuit of happiness in life might be found in a simple cup, especially if it has a chicken with flower tail-feathers and is nesting on an oversized tomato design.

As an educator, I hold the responsibility to enable students to discover the field of ceramics as being a viable and worthy subject. The passion for learning about any topic lies within a natural sense of curiosity. Fortunately, clay possesses an alluring quality that speaks for itself; once the introduction is made, guidance and encouragement support this curious nature. It amazes me to watch students learn through their sense of touch. The hand, translating among the intellect, the heart, and the clay, becomes a caring, creative communicator. A sensitivity to this earthly medium develops while working with an infinite number of variables which translate into appreciation and respect for ceramic objects.

Being active in any type of community takes dedication and loyalty. Finding a connection among the beliefs, goals, and objectives of the people of the clay community has not been difficult for me. The act of making functional objects that also enhance daily life is a thread common to many potters. When
life becomes dramatic or when a moment is worthy of remark we tend to celebrate with a meal. Bringing people together, having them enjoy each other as they interact with the objects used in sharing this meal, allows potters to participate in this circle of give and take. Locally and nationally, I want to involve myself with ceramic artists for visual growth, intellectual stimulation, professional support, and emotional sustenance. Whether working through educational settings, conferences, community settings, or small groups, my admiration for the field of ceramics is and will continue to be heart felt.

I am here in this great barnyard with all of these other chickens
Their loyalty to community is genuine
Let us give thanks to this bird as a reminder of how living life
is about being true to yourself in knowing your part
There will always be the “Henny Penny”
Someone will always point out that the sky is falling
I am a hen, so let me be
Bustle, gather, care, nurture
Sunny side up is not a bad place to be
After all, tomorrow is another day.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


SLIDE LIST

Lori Phillips  Slide # 1
2006 Pitcher & Cups
Porcelain  9" x 6" x 6"

Lori Phillips  Slide # 2
2006 Pair of Tumblers
Porcelain  6" x 4" x 3"

Lori Phillips  Slide # 3
2006 Pitcher
Porcelain  18" x 8" x 9"

Lori Phillips  Slide # 4
2006 Pitcher
Porcelain  9" x 5" x 6"

Lori Phillips  Slide # 5
2006 Pitcher
Porcelain  15" x 8" x 7"

Lori Phillips  Slide # 6
2006 Pitcher
Porcelain  10" x 7" x 7"

Lori Phillips  Slide # 7
2006 Pitcher
Porcelain  18" x 10" x 8"

Lori Phillips  Slide # 8
2006 Tumbler
Porcelain  5" x 4" x 4"

Lori Phillips  Slide # 9
2006 Pitcher & Cups
Porcelain  8" x 6" x 6"

Lori Phillips  Slide # 10
2006 Pair of Cups
Porcelain  5" x 3" x 4"

Lori Phillips  Slide # 11
2006 Pitcher & Cup
Porcelain  10" x 6" x 6"
Lori Phillips  Slide # 12
2006 Creamer
Porcelain  4” x 3” x 3”

Lori Phillips  Slide # 13
2006 Creamers
Porcelain  6” x 4” x 4”

Lori Phillips  Slide # 14
2006 Syrup
Porcelain  6” x 4” x 4”

Lori Phillips  Slide # 15
2006 Cup & Saucer
Porcelain  5” x 6” x 6”

Lori Phillips  Slide # 16
2006 Cup & Saucer
Porcelain  4” x 6” x 6”

Lori Phillips  Slide # 17
2006 Cup & Saucer
Porcelain  5” x 6” x 6”

Lori Phillips  Slide # 18
2006 Cup & Saucer
Porcelain  4” x 6” x 6”

Lori Phillips  Slide # 19
2006 Lidded Jar
Porcelain  7” x 4” x 4”

Lori Phillips  Slide # 20
2006 Teacups/Strainer
Porcelain, S Silver  4” x 4” x 4”

Lori Phillips  Slide # 21
2006 Tea Strainer
S Silver  3” x 3” x 1”

Lori Phillips  Slide # 22
2006 Sugar/Creamer, Spoon
Porcelain, S Silver  5” x 4” x 4”

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Lori Phillips Slide # 23
2006 Spoon
S Silver 5” x 1” x 1”

Lori Phillips Slide # 24
2006 Sugar/Creamer, Pick
Porcelain, S Silver 5” x 4” x 4”

Lori Phillips Slide # 25
2006 Lemon Pick
S Silver 4” x 1” x .25”

Lori Phillips Slide # 26
2006 Sugar Cube Tongs
S Silver 5” x 2” x 1.5”

Lori Phillips Slide # 27
2006 Spoon
S Silver 5” x 1” x 1”

Lori Phillips Slide # 28
2006 Spoon
S Silver 5” x 1” x 1”
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23  Bevier Gallery view V
24  Bevier Gallery view W
25  Bevier Gallery view X
26  Bevier Gallery view Y
27  Bevier Gallery view Z
Lori Phillips
Thesis: Sunny Side Up
2006
Gallery Images
.jpg files