



3301 4th Street • Lubbock, TX 79409-3191 • (806) 742-2442 • FAX 742-1136 • EMAIL: museum.texastech@ttu.edu • www.museum.ttu.edu

For Immediate Release: April 4, 2007

Contact Person: David Dean, 742-2442

A “Most Curious Tea Party” at the Museum of TTU

The Museum of Texas Tech University (MOTTU) presents *Teapots: Object to Subject*, opening Sunday, April 22, and continuing through August 12, in the Special Exhibitions Gallery located at 3301 4th Street (SE corner of 4th and Indiana Avenue), where ample free parking is available in the north and west parking lots.

A teapot has a traditional silhouette: a protruding pour spout, a handle loop for the server to grasp, and a symmetrical container for liquid. Yet among the works included in this exhibition are what appear to be a stack of cardboard packing boxes, an embroidered homage to a Frank Stella canvas, and a rotund exotic dancer figurine swathed in flowing veils. The spouts and handles are deceptive, and the vessels themselves are wildly inventive and engaging.

Of course, commercial makers still produce ceramic, metal, and glass teapots in traditional shapes, but artists constantly stretch and test the boundaries of the contemporary teapot, striving to challenge its concept as predictable and traditional. As Alice expressed in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, “This is the most curious tea party I've ever been to...”

Some of the artistic visionaries in the exhibition incorporate fabric, precious metals, or found items from nature, and their artistic approaches vary from *tromp d'oeil* (a painting style simulating 3-D or realism), to the whimsical and sculptural.

The 2004 Survey of Contemporary American Teapots at the Craft Alliance in St. Louis, MO, selected the 45 examples in *Teapots: Object to Subject* as the finest entries, representing the best from both established artists and the most promising, innovative new artists.

Exhibition curator Leslie Ferrin, author of *Teapots Transformed: Exploration of an Object*, has been curating shows of contemporary teapots for more than 20 years. In *Teapots: Object to Subject*, Ferrin presents the concept that, as the teapot becomes more abstracted, its function becomes less relevant, making the subject of the work the primary focus, and the object, the teapot, a secondary concern for the artist and the viewer.

For more information or to request special assistance, contact the MoTTU Education Office at 806.742.2432, or email to museum.education@ttu.edu. Stay up to date with MoTTU exhibitions and events at www.museum.ttu.edu.

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“There’s something for everyone at the Museum.”

Artists:

Claudia Tarantino, who works exclusively in porcelain, explains, "*Organic forms and the artistry and complexity of nature inspire my work . . . that brief moment when fruit or vegetable is just right, at its prime, ready to be eaten*"

Born and raised in Colorado, Blair Meerfeld enjoys incorporating native clays and material in his work, particularly salt-glazed stoneware. The objective of his work, says the artist, "*is to unite traditional processes with contemporary color and form, resulting in a unique statement in clay.*"

Other artists in the exhibition include Adrian Arleo, Richard Notkin, Karen Marie Portaleo, Peter Scherzer, Richard Swanson, Bennett Bean, Michael Simon, and Noi Volkov.

Exhibit Information	
Name of Exhibit:	<i>Teapots: Object to Subject</i>
Date:	April 22 — August 12
No. of Objects:	40-50 teapots
Circulating Org:	Exhibits USA 912 Baltimore Avenue Suite 700 Kansas City MO. 64105 Phone: 800.473.EUSA Fax no.: 816.421.3918 Web Address: www.exhibitsusa.org
Contacts for Interviews:	
Leslie Ferrin Exhibition Curator Ferrin Gallery 69 Church Street Lenox, MA 01240 tel: 413.637.4414; fax: 413.634.8833 email: info@ferringallery.com	
Mid-America Arts Alliance (ExhibitsUSA) 2018 Baltimore Avenue Kansas City, MO 64108 tel: 816/421-1388; fax: 816/421-3918 info@maaa.org	
Molly Alspaugh Exhibitor Relations Coordinator, ExhibitsUSA molly@maaa.org —OR—	
Rachel Saalweachter Exhibitor Relations Assistant, ExhibitsUSA rachel@maaa.org	