



The
Devon Guild
of Craftsmen

Saturday 9 May – Sunday 21 June, 2009

In celebration of the simplest, most pleasurable everyday experiences, CUP is a look into how this little word can be interpreted in many ways, and in many different materials.

Makers of national and international importance have been encouraged to work outside their normal boundaries to produce work of all mediums, in 2 and 3D, both functional and non-functional

CUP hosts sixty exhibitors and cups are represented in a variety of materials including enamel, ceramic, felt, 2D, wire, wood, willow, recycled tin, textile and mixed media. All two hundred and thirty-two of them.

**A crazy man that found a cup,
When all but dead of thirst,
Hardly dared to wet his mouth
Imagining, moon-accursed,
That another mouthful
And his beating heart would burst.
W.B Yeats (1865- 1939). *The Empty Cup*.**

The makers' statements are diverse but many pay their respects to the ritual of tea drinking, the romance of the loving cup or the sheer practicality of a small, watertight vessel. Others have used cups in legend or literature and some have referred to ceramic history and tradition.

**Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this world much wrong:
Have drowned my glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my reputation for a Song.
Omar Khayyám (d. 1123). *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyám*.**

Tim Andrews, in his statement, mentions the earliest clay cups. Moulded between the hands from soft clay, scooped directly from the ground, a rudimentary cup is made. Technologies, and cups, have since come a long way. Conor Wilson, using a bone china tea cup decorated with a hugely popular pattern 'Old Country Roses' has something to say about the curious evolution of tradition and 'civilisation'. A flowery tea cup might be described as 'quintessentially English' yet nothing about tea drinking, or this cup, is particularly English. Even roses originated in China. And the flowery cup itself? Royal Albert has moved production of its wares to Indonesia.

**The glacier knocks in the cupboard,
The desert sighs in the bed,
And the crack in the tea-cup opens
A lane to the land of the dead.
W.H. Auden (1907-1973). *As I Walked Out One Evening* (1. 41-44).**

When the first cup, a pair of overlapping hands, evolved into an object which could be passed from one pair of hands to another, this must have heralded the moment where drinking rituals began and

cups became objects of value as well as utility. Cup has become a rich metaphor in poetry and literature, the cup of life, of love and the cup of poison. Really, a cup can contain pretty much anything! But remember...

**A full cup must be carried steadily
(English proverb)**

It's fair to say that a CUP is a vessel frequently overshadowed by the ubiquitous MUG. But how much more beautiful is CUP as a word and a concept? With this in mind, here is a small voyage through some famous cups, real and fictitious, natural and un-natural.

Years steal

**Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb,
And lifes enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim.
Byron (1788-1824). *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, stanza 8**

We should start with **The Holy Grail** even though this is sometimes described as a dish or a plate. Since it hasn't yet been found, a cup is a good bet. According to Christian mythology, the Holy Grail was the cup used by Jesus at the Last Supper. Joseph of Arimathea used the Grail to catch Christ's blood, while interring him, and then founded a line of guardians, in Britain, to keep it safe. The quest for the Holy Grail makes up an important segment of the Arthurian cycle. The Holy Grail is said to possess miraculous powers. The legend may combine Christian lore with a Celtic myth of a cauldron endowed with special powers.

The **Volpi Cups** are awards given to actors at the Venice Film Festival. Awards for best actor and best actress have been given since 1935. In the mid-1990s awards were also given to supporting actors and actresses, and in 1993 an award was given to an entire cast. The cup is named in honor of Count Volpi di Misurata, the founder of the Venice Film Festival.

The World Cup (and just imagine how much less of an icon this would be if it were known as The World Mug), so grandly named that football elevates itself to the world's most important sport simply by virtue of its trophy's name.

The **Breeders' Cup**. Awarded to the winner of a one mile thoroughbred horse race for 2-year-old colts and geldings raced on dirt. It is held annually at different racetracks in the United States or Canada.

Bee Cups: A few female larvae in special queen cups may be selected to become queens. Their special queen cups are flooded with royal jelly for six days.

The Ryder Cup. A golfing trophy.

The America's Cup. A sailing trophy You must have a big boat and bank balance to get involved in this. Claims to be the oldest active trophy in international sport, predating the Modern Olympics by 45 years.

A **Quaich** (pronounced /'kweɪx/), archaically **Quaigh**, is a special kind of shallow two-handled drinking cup or bowl in Scotland. It derives from the Scottish Gaelic *cuach* meaning a cup. According to the 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica, the quaich was inspired by the low silver bowls with two flat handles frequently used as bleeding vessels in England and Holland in the 17th century.

The **Bragarfull** 'promise-cup' or **Bragafull** 'best cup' or 'chieftain's cup' was, in Norse culture, a cup used on ceremonial occasions, often involving the swearing of oaths as the cup was passed around and drunk from by those assembled. The cups were passed across a fire and blessed and the four traditional toasts were to Odin, for victory; to Freyja, for a good year; to Njörd, for peace; and Bragi, for celebrating the dead in poetry.

Loving Cup is a song by The Rolling Stones featured on their 1972 album *Exile on Main St.*

Loving Cup (the other sort) is a large two-handled cup, often made of silver but can take many forms. In the past, at weddings, banquets or meetings, a loving cup might be shared by a number of people for ceremonial drinking, symbolising friendship and unity. The French have their own version of this, the **Coupe de Mariage**.

A poisoned chalice, as described by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, has come to mean something that looks pretty good but really isn't.

A **chalice** (from Latin *calix*, cup, borrowed from Greek *kalyx*, shell, husk) is a goblet or footed cup intended to hold a drink. In general religious terms, it is intended for quaffing during a ceremony. The Holy Chalice is not to be confused with the Holy Grail, the Chalice was merely used to serve the wine and not to receive the blood of Christ.

On Monday, 15 June, Julian Stair, acclaimed ceramicist will be giving a talk in the **Terrace Café, at 6.30pm. £6/£4** Booking essential

Compiled by P.de Burlet, The Devon Guild. May 2009.