

AMERICAN MADE

Everyday Works of Art

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Handmade ceramics make our ordinary routines just a little more extraordinary. "The more high-tech we are in our day-to-day lives, the more we are drawn to things made by hand," says style director Ayesha Patel, whose favorites are on these pages. Here, we share the work of 11 artisans who are making pieces that you'll want to incorporate into your own daily rituals—from morning coffee to candlelit dinner.



By sticking to a simple color scheme, such as this one, you can combine works by potters of varying styles and textures on one table. **1. Joan Platt's** plates feature a striking speckled glaze. **2. Teresa Chang** uses a modified porcelain that is fired at a lower temperature, saving energy. **3. Clam Lab** applies an array of watercolor-like pastel glazes to its dishes. **4.** To create texture, Michele Michael of **Elephant Ceramics** presses linen to wet clay, as she did for this platter.

Opposite: Don't let their pristine looks fool you. Each of these white pieces has a purpose and is meant to be used. Besides, "you can get a real sense of the maker when you feel it in your hand," says Ayesha. Set the table with, *from left*, Kelli Cain's cork vessel (perfect for holding sugar), Lilith Rockett's graceful candlestick, Clam Lab's teapot for one, and Elephant Ceramics' small cheese board.

1

KELLI CAIN
Delhi, New York

She may have purchased her first kiln and wheel less than two years ago, but Cain felt at home as soon as her fingers touched clay. "Working with clay feels eternal, like a muscle memory from a past life—or just the childhood memory of playing with dirt," she says. Her pieces, including canisters made out of vitrified porcelain (which is fired at high temperatures for a stronger result), reflect a minimalist aesthetic and a careful consideration of how an object will be used. "My process begins with a story and a need," she says. "Creation follows intention." kellincain.com.

2

MIRENA KIM
Los Angeles

"The curves in thrown pottery can be as expressive as a human face," says Kim, who has been making ceramics for nearly 20 years. Her experience as a graphic designer informs her work. "It trains your eye to look for the hidden meaning behind lines and shapes. You can spend a lot of time making very small changes in the hope it will make a big difference," she says. But this attention to detail doesn't equal preciousness. "My wares are designed to be knocked around a bit," she says. mirenakim.com.

3

FARMHOUSE POTTERY
Woodstock, Vermont

Zoe and James Zilian have been creating pottery together since they met in college. Now married, the two have built a lifestyle company that celebrates "heritage craft in a modern-day world." Using their own blend of beige stoneware from Massachusetts, they hand-throw kitchenware, garden pots, and decorative items, including a collection inspired by old barn beams. Each piece is then finished with their signature white glaze. farmhousepottery.com.

4

TERESA CHANG
Philadelphia

Chang had her eureka moment looking at bridges—specifically the "simple, elegant" early bridges of Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava. "They are a testament that forms pared down to their structural essence are inherently beautiful," she says. The trained architect applies this philosophy to her ceramics. A full-time potter since 1997, she focuses on hand-thrown porcelain tableware, including bowls and sculptural teapots. (It took her "more than a decade to come up with teapots that were any good.") teresachang.com.

5

ERIC BONNIN
New York City

"I prefer a restrained palette," says French native Bonnin. "I use only four glazes, which I mix myself." The colors—white, black, green, and blue—take on a different appearance depending on the type of clay used. When a matte white glaze is applied to black stoneware, it "renders a more sandy or oatmeal color, because the dark clay can show through," as evidenced below and on page 103. He has a delicate touch with his glazes, yet his pieces feel substantial when held. "I like simple shapes that can be mixed and matched," he says. ericbonninceramics.com.

6

HANAKO NAKAZATO
Union, Maine

Nakazato comes from a long line of potters in Karatsu, Japan—14 generations, to be exact. However, she didn't immediately follow in her family's footsteps. It wasn't until she returned to Japan after attending school in America that she decided to learn this art. "When I left Japan, I became more appreciative of my own culture," she says. "It's what ultimately led me to pottery." She apprenticed with her father, then returned to America to continue her ceramics education. Soon she developed a style uniquely her own, blending Japanese and Western aesthetics. monohanako.com.

7

LILITH ROCKETT
Portland, Oregon

There are no bright glazes or flashy patterns in Rockett's pottery. "Rather than impose too much visual stimulation on the work, I try to allow for the quiet details to express themselves." And they do. Working mostly in porcelain, Rockett produces delicate pieces—pendant lights, bowls, and vases, as shown on page 105, with "thin walls" that are almost translucent. "I love it when people use my work. The feel of my hands, the choices I make about the design, the voice of the material—all of that is transmitted when the work is used." lilithrockett.com.

8

ELEPHANT CERAMICS
Dresden, Maine

Michele Michael doesn't use a potter's wheel but instead builds each piece by hand, draping clay over a plaster mold or rolling it out with a rolling pin or slab roller to get the desired shapes and curves. "I want my work to feel somewhat earthy and organic but with a certain amount of refinement," says the former prop stylist and magazine editor. To achieve this look, Michael often adds texture and uses glazes to reflect the colors—blue, green, brown, white, gray, and straw—she sees outside her studio window in rural Maine. elephantceramics.com.

9

JOAN PLATT
Piermont, New York

Platt started making ceramics in the 1970s, after a skiing accident led to an injured shoulder. As a form of physical therapy, she registered for pottery lessons. It was a fortuitous turn of events. Three decades later, she is well known for her rustic but elegant tableware. While she sometimes works on a wheel, most of her stoneware tableware pieces "are made upside down with slabs on slump molds," onto which she applies simple glazes that she mixes herself. joanplattpottery.com.

10

JIM FRANCO
Chicago & New York City

"I started doing ceramics partly to make pieces to use in my images," says photographer and self-taught potter Franco. He took a couple of night courses and then spent "a lot of time" in front of YouTube. "I watch videos about ceramic artists or technique nearly every day," he says. He's been focusing on bowls, incorporating his training as a photographer to create objects that will capture light in a way that enhances each piece. "I look for that beautiful, slow gradation of a shadow as it slips up the side of a bowl." jimfrancoceramics.com.

11

CLAM LAB
Brooklyn

When Clair Catillaz was in middle school, her mother took her to her first ceramics class. "I have been working with clay ever since," she says. Her collection, which includes teapots, pitchers, and platters, begins on the wheel. The pieces are then "altered, trimmed, fired, sanded, glazed, and fired again." She uses raw materials such as plants, rocks, and clay to make her distinctive glazes, which range in color from pale pink to gray, olive, and black. "I make glazes like I make cakes," she says. "A little of this, a little of that—never the same thing twice." clamlab.com.

A NOTE ON CLAY

High-fired stoneware—such as Farmhouse Pottery's kitchen vessels, Mirena Kim's tableware, and Eric Bonnin's stacked mixing bowls—is sturdy and can handle some wear and tear (as well as the dishwasher and microwave). While porcelain is a bit more delicate, it has a finer finish and can be formed so thin it turns out translucent, like Lilith Rockett's elegant vases.



BLACK WALNUT CHEESE BOARD AND RAW HONEY, WESTWINDORCHARD.COM

Eric Bonnin has a painterly way with his glazes. Rather than trying to achieve an even polish, he uses a white glaze against black stoneware to emphasize his drips and stroke marks, finding beauty in imperfection. His utilitarian pieces for the kitchen include nested mixing bowls (equipped with a spout for pouring), mugs (inspired by old tin camping cups), plates, and pitchers.

Opposite: Feel free to mix batter, muddle some herbs, or pour yourself a cup of tea with these task-oriented pieces—a reminder that form can equal function. **1.** Store kitchen essentials such as sugar, salt, and oil in **Kelli Cain's** corked porcelain vessels.

2. **Joan Platt's** tableware, including her spaghetti and dessert bowls, are dishwasher- and microwave-safe. **3.** **Mirena Kim's** "squeeze" cups and pitcher feature indentations for a good grip. **4.** **Farmhouse Pottery's** cheese stone and mortar and pestle highlight the beauty of unfinished clay.





The texture of a ceramic piece is often dictated by the type of clay used. Porcelain is smooth and silky, while stoneware has more texture due to the minerals embedded in the clay. Here, **Lilith Rockett's** stoneware pendant hangs over white porcelain pieces (also by Rockett) and a tall, black stoneware-and-porcelain vase by **Hanako Nakazato**.

Opposite: 1. **Lilith Rockett** often leaves the exteriors of her vases unglazed for a matte look. 2. Oval bowls by **Eric Bonnin** feature oatmeal and white finishes. 3. **Jim Franco** likes to layer different glazes onto his bowls to "produce subtle variations in color," he says. 4. A serving bowl by **Franco** shows hints of blue in the light. 5. In addition to a dinnerware line, **Teresa Chang** also offers an array of teapots and cups.

Created by Ayesha Patel and Jennifer Wagner