

Goblet with ELEGANCE

by Yoshi Fujii

In 2010, I participated in the 12-week residency exchange program at Tainan National University of the Arts in Taiwan through Baltimore Clayworks. During the time I spent there and the short visit to my home in Japan, I experienced many great conversations and connections with old and new friends that revolved around sharing various drinks. Based on this experience, I decided to focus on both creating drinking vessels as I practiced my skills and on collecting patterns and motifs for surface decorations during the residency. This continues to be the interest and inspiration in my current studio practice.

Everyday Elegance

Drinking cups are high-use items that people get attached to. I use my yunomi for almost every drink at home; from milk or orange juice in the morning and coffee in the afternoon to wine or scotch at night. I hope my work is chosen to be part of someone's everyday life, like enjoying 15 minutes with a cup of coffee or tea on quiet morning while everyone else is asleep or relaxing with a drink after a long day of hard work. Recently, I have received more requests for the goblets I make. People select them both as a gift for weddings or other special events and for simply making daily rituals special.



Yoshi Fujii's wheel-thrown goblets are glazed with soft celadon colors that emphasize his intricately carved patterns.



Teacup set, featuring four carved patterns: woven, wave, diamond, and floral. All patterns were made with the help of a grid overlaid onto the leather-hard porcelain. The pieces were coated with celadon glazes and fired to cone 10 in reduction, 2014.

Throwing the Stem and Cup

First, I throw the stem of a goblet off the hump, like I am making a small bowl with a tall, flared foot. Compressing with the round end of a wooden rib helps the curve to be consistent in size and form (*figure 1*). I create a groove with a wooden knife tool at the bottom of the stem and cut it off of the hump using a cut-off wire (*figure 2*). While the stem is drying, I throw the body of a goblet on a bat. For a goblet, I begin with 1¼ pounds of clay and throw to 5¾ inches in height (so it shrinks down to the target size of 5½ inches when leather hard). I trim and clean the tumbler as much as possible while it's still freshly thrown on a bat (*figure 3*). It's important to erase the outside throwing lines with a straight-edged rib, so there is no visual distraction when I draw and carve designs on the surface.

While the body dries, I trim the stem into an hourglass shape (*figure 4*) suggesting a pedestal for this drinking vessel. The center axis of the stem is thick, so I trim it hollow to take away some of the extra weight (*figure 5*).

Assembling the Goblet

When I assemble the body and stem together, I carefully select the perfect matches. Even though the parts are all measured, thrown, and trimmed in the same way, each piece is still slightly different. The body is placed back on to the wheel upside down, then the corresponding edges of the cup or tumbler bottom and the stem are slipped and scored, centered, and compressed well (*figure 6*). I poke a hole in the bottom of the stem with a needle tool to vent the hollowed-out area during the firing and disguise the mark with my stamp (*figure 7*).

I usually make only five to six of the same form, like these goblets at one time. I can throw more but throwing more pots means that I also have to carve that many pots before they get too dry, and that is difficult to manage. To preserve the strength of my hands and fingers after long hours of carving, unfortunately I have to limit the number of pots I make at a time.

Drawing Patterns

Once the pot becomes leather hard, I draw patterns and motifs on the surface. After placing the pot on a flat surface, a guiding vertical line is drawn between the rim and bottom using a soft 8B drawing pencil and a clear flexible ruler. Starting at the guide line, the rim is then divided into twelve sections using a decorating disk (*figure 8*), and the bottom of the body is also measured into twelve with compass dividers (*figure 9*).

Here is when more complicated design work starts. First I draw the vertical lines connecting the points at the rim and foot to separate the surface into six planes. Next, starting from the rim of the goblet, I measure the distance between two of the lines (usually 1 inch) using the dividers. Keeping this measurement, I make a mark that is this distance down from the rim on the vertical line. I place my dividers on this new mark, measure between two of the vertical lines again, (the measurement becomes slightly narrower) then use the first mark I made on the vertical line as the starting point and mark off this new distance further down the line. I repeat this process, measuring the distance between the vertical lines at the last mark made, then continuing to mark off the corresponding lengths down the vertical line until I reach the middle of the goblet. Changing the size of the horizontal spacing by small

process | Goblet with Elegance | Yoshi Fujii



1 Throw a stem using a kidney-shaped wooden rib.



2 Use a wooden knife to make a cutting line for the stem.



3 Use a wooden knife to trim down the bottom of the tumbler/body.



4 Trim the leather-hard stem to create an hourglass shape.



5 Trim the inside of the top of the stem to reduce thickness and weight.



6 Score and add slip to the two parts, attach, then compress the connection.



7 Poke a hole into the stem to vent the hollow area then sign or stamp the bottom.



8 Mark the rim with a decorating disk to divide the surface into six sections.



9 Mark the sections along the bottom using a compass. Connect the marks.



10 Measure the width between the vertical lines. Mark this measurement on the vertical line, then repeat the process.



11 The measurement between the vertical lines decreases toward the stem. Make the last mark just above the stem.



12 Connect the marks on the vertical lines with a pencil and a flexible ruler to guide your carving.



13 Carve recessed windows out of the space between the diagonal patterns.



14 Use a small trimming tool to carve the diamond pattern defined by the lines.



15 Smooth the edges of the carved areas using a wet cosmetic sponge.



16 Refine the carved edges and add detailed carvings using a small triangular trimming tool.



17 Apply slip using a slip-trailing bottle to add raised texture after the carving is complete.



Bowl with flower and leaf pattern, wheel-thrown, carved, and slip-trailed porcelain, celadon glaze, fired to cone 10 in reduction, 2014.

GREEN CELADON Cone 10 Reduction

Whiting	20%
Custer Feldspar	30
EPK Kaolin	20
Silica	30
	100%
Add: Red Iron Oxide	1.5%

Super easy and super nice. Same/similar to Southern Illinois University Carbondale's ceramics studio celadon glaze.



increments creates a scale shift in the divisions and subsequently in the patterns that I create based on the divisions. The scale of the repeating elements decreases as the diameter of the cup decreases. Continue to measure the incrementally smaller divisions between the vertical lines (*figure 10*) and marking this distance on the vertical line, starting at the rim and working down, and finishing when the dividers meet the bottom of the cup (*figure 11*). Once one section has been marked off, transfer the marks to the other vertical lines. This method for measuring is usually pretty close each time, but even if this drawing process is slightly off, I can adjust the distance as I connect the marks diagonally for diamond or weaving patterns (*figure 12*) or with concentric circles for waves. For diamond patterns, once I reach the middle, I alternate the decorating panels to create open areas for variety (see *figure 12*).

Carving and Finishing

After I draw patterns on the surface, the piece is generally at the hard to leather-hard stage and it's time to carve! Using small triangle-shaped trimming tools, I patiently carve out the surface one line at a time tracing the lines that I drew. Some straight lines, such as the window shapes, are carved without lines by using the width of the tool as a guide (*figure 13*). The diamond pattern is carved away to create a recess starting at the bottom point to about the vertical middle of each diamond, creating visual and physical depth (*figure 14*). After the entire surface is finished, carved edges are gently wiped down to eliminate any harsh edges. I use a damp, wedge-shaped cosmetic sponge because it's extremely soft and smooth and doesn't leave streaks like a throwing sponge (*figure 15*).

Once the carved lines have been softened, I go back and touch up the pattern for a second time until it achieves a desirable clarity of line and depth. Depending on the design and patterns, additional detailed carving and slip decoration are added afterward (*figure 16*). The secondary carving is done with a needle tool or the carving tool, but afterward I don't smooth it with the cosmetic



Floral-patterned sake set, wheel-thrown, carved, and slip-trailed porcelain, celadon glaze, fired to cone 10 in reduction, 2014.

sponge, as I want to preserve the sharper edge. At this point, I may add dots and lines with a slip-trailing bottle filled with porcelain slip to add visual three-dimensionality and tactile communication back on to the surface (*figure 17*). I prefer to use a narrow tip and soft slip to have a delicate line quality and better control.

After the pot is bisque fired to cone 06, I wipe down the entire form with a wet sponge to clean up all dust and unwanted marks then let it dry completely. Celadon glaze is applied in layers by dipping to create the depth into the crevices. To finish, the pot is fired in a gas kiln to cone 10 in a reduction atmosphere.

Yoshi Fujii is a resident artist and the gallery manager at Baltimore Clayworks in Baltimore, Maryland. He received a BFA from the University of Southern Mississippi and an MFA from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. More information about Yoshi is available at www.yoshifujii.com.