

## **The Use Of Art In The Japanese Tea Ceremony**

### **How do the Japanese incorporate art into their tea ceremony?**

Almost everyone knows that the Japanese are famous for their regard of tea. They perform very intricate tea ceremonies and appreciate tea so much that they create art to incorporate into their famed ritual of tea drinking. To the Japanese, art and tea are intertwined.

At the Japanese tea ceremony, the host will commission one piece of art to reflect the reason for the celebration. This scroll painting, called a kakemono, will have been created by a master entirely and solely for the tea ceremony. It is very important that it is pleasing to the guests because it will be the only decoration present in the tea room outside of the utensils, like the tea pot. Once guests are ushered inside the tea room, Japanese tea ceremony protocol dictates that the guests will take turns admiring the scroll before they are seated. Then, protocol dictates that at the conclusion of the tea ceremony, the host will carefully take down the scroll and replace it with flowers before going about cleaning and sweeping the rest of the tea room.

## **Tea Bag Art**

### **What are other uses of tea bags?**

The ritual of drinking tea, for some people, is an everyday occurrence. People pour tea from their [tea kettles](#) as they start their day, unwind from their day and socialize with friends, without even thinking twice about it. However, did you know that some people depend on tea drinkers to better their lives?

The people of Mandela Park, just outside of Cape Town in South Africa, live in an informal settlement of homes made from wood frames and tin roofs. In order to help support their families, they create tea bag art, by painting on empty, used tea bags, and sell them to tourists.

A company called Original Tea Bag Designs was founded by Jill Heyes, an expatriate from England who felt for the residents of Mandela Park and wanted to find a way to help them. She began teaching art classes at a local community center, which eventually led to the idea of painting and selling used tea bags. And it is working to better lives. Families have used their earnings to move their families from makeshift homes into brick and mortar homes.

## **Chinese Tea Art**

### **What is Chinese tea art known for?**

There is no shortage of Chinese tea art, with some the most famous being the work of painter Tingqua, whose watercolor paintings depicted the stages of tea preparation, from plant growing to the actual tea brewing.

The Chinese also contributed by creating the tea pot as we know it today, in both its functional and decorative form. During the Ming Dynasty, tea pots were developed as the leaf infusion method of brewing became popular. The tea pots were made with the YiXing region's purple clay, just as some of today's most revered tea pots are still made. Through usage, this porous clay absorbs tea flavorings, making for a more robust cup over time.

Another tea pot art development that began in China was porcelain (hence the term "china"). Seventeenth and 18th century British high society so revered this fine material that they soon adopted it for their tea drinking needs.

## **Russian Tea Art**

### **What is the purpose of a tea glass holder?**

In Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus and some other neighboring countries, tea is enjoyed in a vessel known as the "podstakannik."

The purpose of this "tea glass holder," as it is commonly known, is to hold and subsequently protect the drinker's hands from the extremely hot, handleless glass of tea inside.

The wealthiest Russian tea drinkers used podstakanniks made of silver; however, the use of this more expensive metal seems to have been more symbolic than practical, as silver conducts heat very quickly. While these elite tea drinkers might have hosted a fancier tea party, the hands of those who drank from tea glass holders made of more traditional metals such as nickel silver and other nickel alloys were probably cooler.

Not only do these vessels serve to protect the drinker's hands and lessen the hassle of dishwashing, but they are also usually decorated with some sort of historical or architectural image. So, it seems that the Russian podstakannik is not only pragmatic, but is also another manifestation of the graceful art of tea.

## **The World's Largest Tea Pot**

### **Where is the world's largest tea pot?**

The Bramah Museum of Tea and Coffee in London markets itself as the world's first museum completely dedicated to the history of tea and coffee. And though it features many examples of tea pot art, perhaps its most famous on display is the world's largest tea pot.

Clocking in at 339 pounds (when full), and standing at two-and-a-half feet tall, this tea pot requires three to four pounds of tea to make a full pot, about 800 cups worth.

Now, that may not seem like much for the “world’s largest tea pot,” but consider how big the kiln was that created it.

Another tea pot stakes a claim at being the world’s largest. A roadside attraction in Chester, West Virginia stands 14 feet high. However, it is really more of a giant keg with a spout and handle than functional tea pot.

## **Tea And Art**

### **How do people create art out of tea?**

Tea has been enjoyed in many cultures since its discovery. From cultivating and picking the leaves, to brewing a fresh pot and finally taking that first sip from a new cup, some say that the ritual of drinking tea is a kind of art form. Which is, perhaps, why some people got the idea to mix tea and art, by creating art with tea.

One of the ways that people create art out of tea is to paint used tea bags. Out of these unique canvasses, people create tea bag collages, tea bag jewelry – including earrings and necklaces – and even tea bag coasters. Another way that people create art out of tea is to press tea leaves and create pictures from them. In addition, probably the most prevalent art made from tea are paintings of tea kettles, tea settings and tea gatherings, which have reflected the essence of the drinking tea ritual since tea was discovered in the Far East.

## **The Art Of Tea**

### **When did people start to create art depicting the ritual of tea drinking?**

Since the first tea cup was raised to a mouth in the Far East centuries ago, the ritual of drinking tea has been a part of social gatherings and religious ceremonies. It has also been one of the favorite subjects of artists, perhaps because of the tranquility that surrounds the drinking of a cup of tea. In fact, some of the earliest paintings depicting tea in China were painted in the Tang Dynasty. Here are just a few examples of these paintings that are still in existence today:

“Xiao Yi Wrangles Over the Masterpiece of Calligraphy Lan Ting by Strategy” painted by Yan Liben, in the Tang Dynasty, is one the first instances of tea and art in the world.

"Auspiciousness and Happiness" painted by Tang Xuan in the Tang Dynasty depicts Emperor Minghuang serenely drinking a bowl of tea.

"Classic of Tea", created in the T'ang dynasty by Lu Yu vividly illustrates the utensils used in crafting and drinking powdered tea. It established a precedent for the importance of these utensils in tea ceremonies.

## **Tea Cards**

### **What are tea cards?**

Tea cards were a prevalent tea marketing vehicle from the early 1900s until the 1980s. Some of the common brands offering these popular children's collectibles were Red Rose, Typhoo and Brooke Bond tea. The cards were similar in size and stature to baseball cards, with artwork on the front and information on the back. Cards were broken up into general sets, each with a unique theme such as dinosaurs, transportation and space-age technology, to name a few.

The detailed artwork – some of it commissioned to prominent artists, including naturalistic painter Charles Tunnicliffe — eventually made its way to promotional posters, which are now coveted by tea card collectors as rare tea wall art.

A testament to their enduring appeal, websites and eBay auctions dedicated to the tea card-collecting hobby are quite prevalent.

## **The Art Of Tea Divination**

### **What is tasseography?**

The art of tea divination, or Tasseography, was invented in the Far East. It was thought that the experience of drinking the cup of tea, would define or have an effect upon the rest of the day. Tasseography is also associated with the Gypsies, the Scots, the Indians and the Irish.

There are many methods used to read tea, but generally, a cup of tea is poured without the use of a tea strainer and is drunk in stages. The diviner then reads the floating tea leaves at each stage. The tea leaves at the top level of the [tea cup](#) represents the present, and as the level of water reaches the bottom of the cup, the tea leaves represent the far future. The diviner interprets the meaning of the tea leaves intuitively from a set of pre-defined symbols.

Although the art of tea divination is ancient, it is still widely in practice today. Just a search of the internet will produce hundreds of thousands of websites dedicated to the art of tea divination.

## **Mary Cassatt: The Art Of Tea**

### **Who was Mary Cassatt?**

Turn of the century American painter Mary Cassatt is perhaps one of the most renowned artists to capture the art of tea in work. Critics suggest that Cassatt examined the intimate moments in the lives of women in her work, drawing particular attention to moments of reflection or social bonding during a tea party. Mary Cassatt captured that intimacy quite poignantly through the art and pleasure of social tea, a

common theme in her work. Art critic Frank Getlein claimed in his book Mary Cassatt: Paintings and Prints (via World Tea News), “If there is a universe in a drop of water, there is infinity in the taking of a cup of tea, and Mary Cassatt has explored the degrees of that infinity.”

Mary Cassatt’s original paintings are now worth millions and are prominently displayed in the finest museums and galleries around the world.