

Amanda Bury

WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA

Ceramics Monthly: How do you come up with the forms and surfaces that are prevalent in your work?

Amanda Bury: The formal language of my work is firmly rooted in everyday function and is based on growth patterns of nature, which manifest through geometric shapes and patterns. My surface pays homage to the origins and systems of our food production. I use slip to create abstracted imagery of crop fields and plow rows. These provide a backdrop of color and movement, while handmade stamps of seeds or plant life bring variation. The monochromatic drawings that occupy the foreground are inspired by personal experience in gardens and on farms, as well as scientific illustrations and seed packets. My image library includes pollinators, to whom we owe much of our food supply; tools such as shovels, which reference the human hand in our agricultural system; or specific food plants. It is important to me to not dissect the parts of the plant familiar to our kitchens from the whole.

In addition to the standards like bowls, cups, plates, etc., I enjoy making forms that draw us closer to our daily interactions with sustenance such as citrus juicers, rinsing bowls, salt cellars, or garlic boxes. I use wheel-throwing and handbuilding techniques and find joy in the challenge of combining them within one form. I will often choose specific drawings for objects based on associations with the formal language or the function of the pot. For example, my mugs are five sided, which relates to the number of petals found on the flowers of both the tea plant and the coffee plant. Both plants make appearances on my mugs along with the honey bee, which pollinates those plants. In essence, I am inspired to make pots because I am inspired by the bounty of food in nature and moved by the interconnected systems operating to get food to our tables.

CM: What is the most valuable advice you've received as an artist?

AB: To read the book *Art and Fear: Observations On the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking* by David Bayles and Ted Orland. A mentor suggested it to me very early in my career and, of course, being young and dumb, I didn't think I needed a book to tell me how to be an artist. I read the book over a year or so later and I have never stopped reading it. Since it was written in the mid 1980s, some of the specifics are outdated. Nevertheless, the book continues to be a well of knowledge for me. It is a witty and comically entertaining reminder that art is a vulnerable and lifelong pursuit. It has often been a comfort in times of anxiety and self doubt. I keep it close in my audiobook library and I revisit it through individual chapters or in its entirety several times a year. Each time, I see something more clearly about myself or the work, even while listening to the same sentence I have heard at least a dozen times before.

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1



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1 Flask, 4½ in. (11 cm) in height, mid-range brown stoneware, slip, glaze, nichrome wire, fired to cone 6, cork, wood, cotton thread, 2021. 2 Garlic box, 7½ in. (19 cm) in height, mid-range brown stoneware, slip, glaze, fired to cone 6, 2021.