

# TEAPOT SELF PORTRAITS

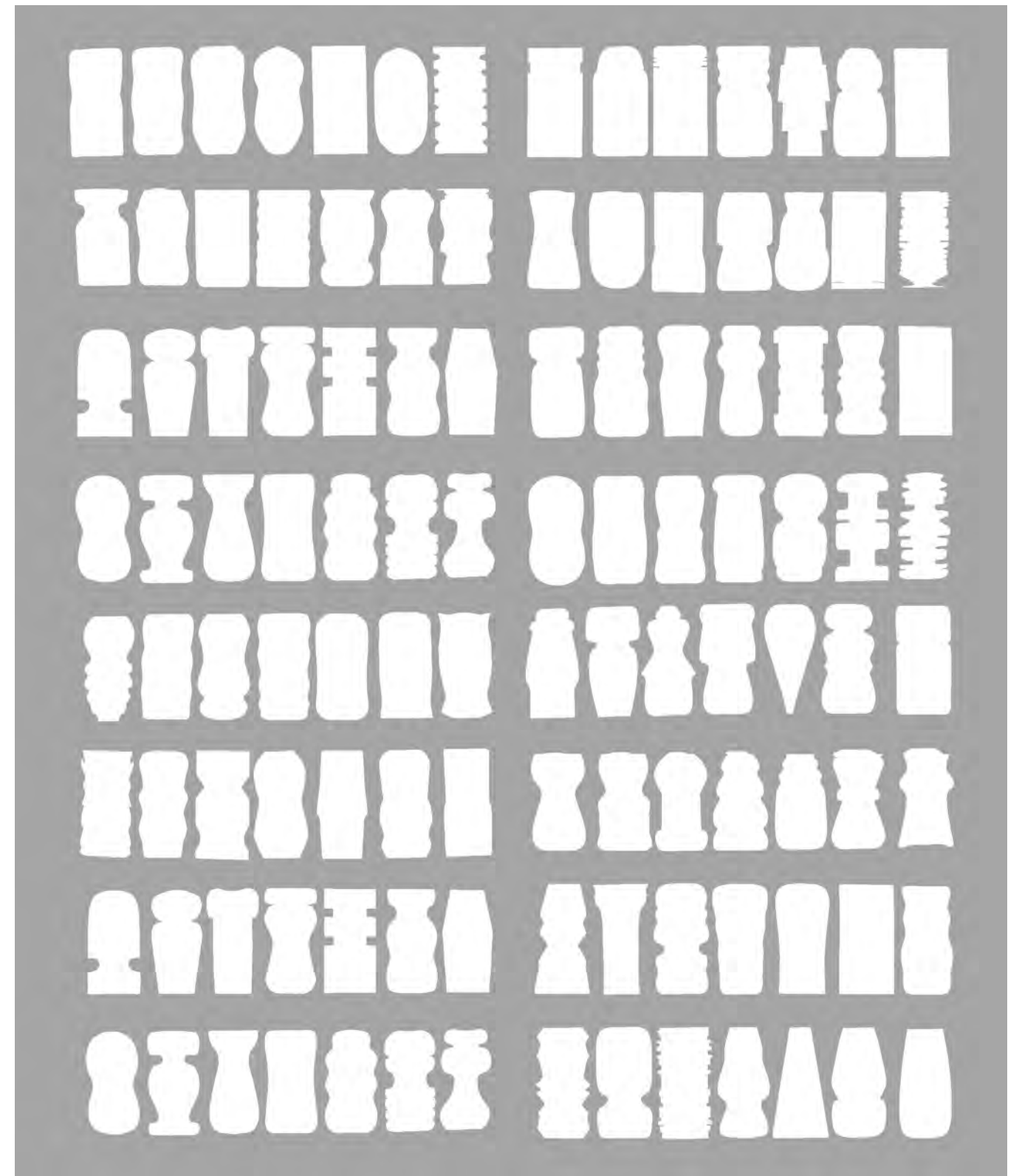
Personal Characteristics  
as Unintential Self Portraits

by Gerald Gulotta



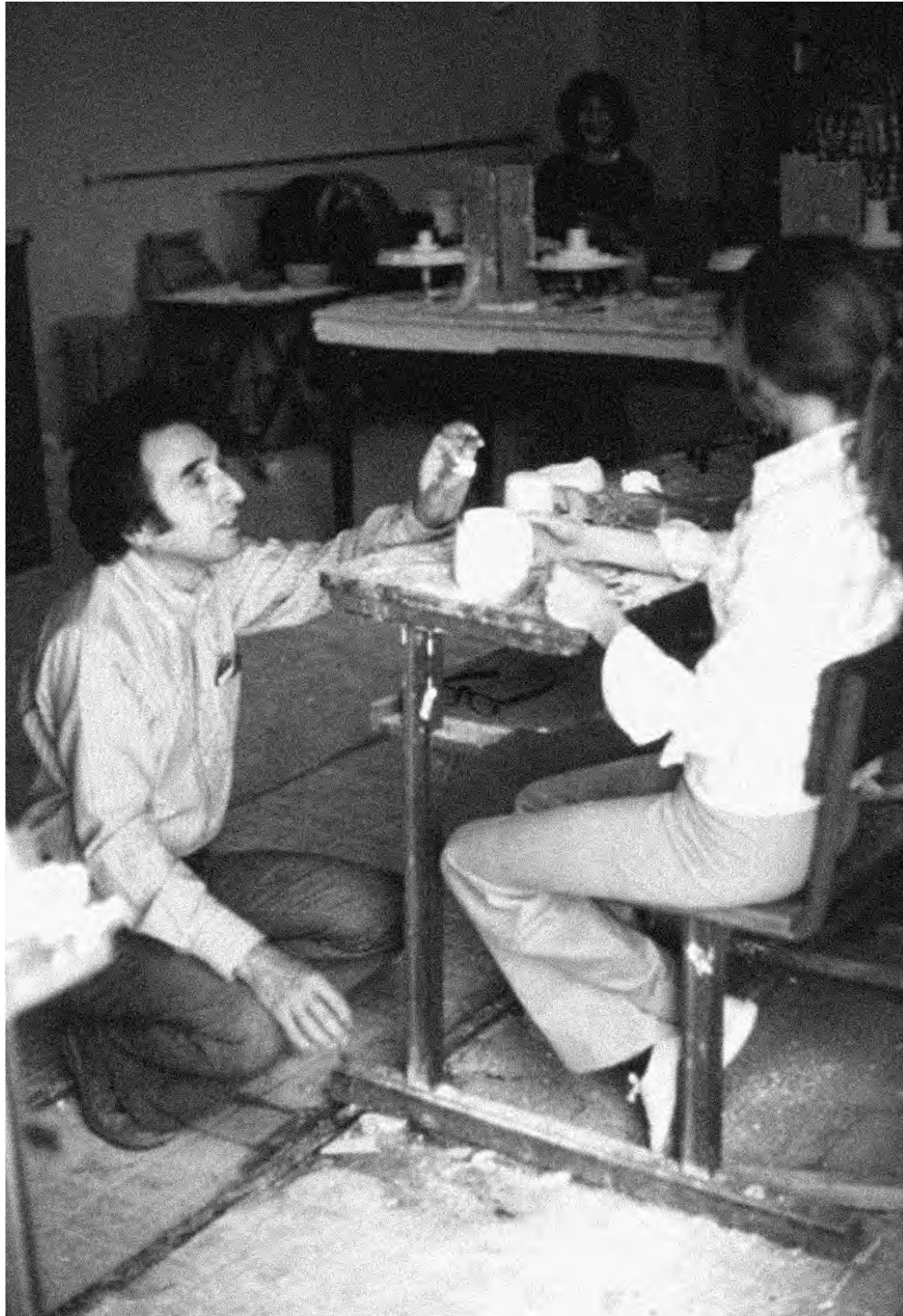
Compiled by Tucker Viemeister

Photographs and design by Gerold Gulotta  
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Silhouette prompts: Fatherly, Motherly, Masculine, Feminine, Cold, Warm, Hard, Soft, Aloof, Serene, Lazy, Cozy, Sophisticated, Flamboyant





Gulotta with workshop student Isabel, in Portugal 1974

## Gerry Loved Teapots

Gerold Gulotta was a lifelong tableware designer, beginning as a student at Pratt Institute in the early years of the industrial design program created by Donald Dohner, Alexander Kostellow, and Rowena Reed Kostellow. In 1955, five years after he graduated, Gulotta became an instructor, taking over the ceramics class created by his teacher, Eva Zeisel.

Of course, tea can be brewed in a bucket, but that's missing the point! Teapots are a medium of self-expression, cultural ceremony, and open-ended play for designers.

The teapot project was a pivotal sophomore or junior year assignment, consuming the entire fall semester. Using the design process, students learned about 3D form, function, meaning, personal expression, and the ceramic production process, all while engaging in hands-on craft and navigating the temporal demands of plaster.

The teapot project begins with two-dimensional conté crayon gestural sketching. Students explored meaning through creating symmetrical silhouettes—much like making valentines—by folding paper in half and cutting a shapes. They unfold it, revealing a silhouette that students used to imagine as the shape of a vase or container. Prompted discussions about its meaning: “Does it look happy or cranky?” Or, “How does it communicate a function like holding honey or spice?” Using these silhouettes as templates, students transform them into three-dimensional forms by spinning plaster models and creating plastiline clay prototypes. These prototypes are meticulously developed into teapots with spouts that don't drip and handles that feel good to the touch. Next slip casting, firing, and glazing, to produce working ceramic teapots they could give their mothers.

Gulotta assigned his teapot project for over 30 years and was always excited by the students' results. He took these photographs and designed a book showcasing work from two classes, 1959 and 1973, demonstrating the consistency of results over time. He shared a mock-up with me once, and we have now finally recovered the images from a couple of CDs. His photographs show how he was fascinated by the correlations between the pots' shapes and the students themselves. “Personal characteristics became evident as unintentional self-portraits,” he said. You can see how the teapots reflected themselves at the time—but what are the rest of their stories?

Tucker Viemeister



**PRATT INSTITUTE**

Sophomore Ceramics Class  
Fall Semester 1959

personal characteristics became  
evident as unintentional self-portraits



Howard Berelson



Joseph Morgado



Joseph Koncelik



Arthur Apissomian



Carla Schroeder



Stanley Pearlstein



John Mezits



Jackie Barlow



S. Diplock



David Gilchrist



Michael Fend



Lance Crawford



Stanley Moskowitz



John Bordnick



John Moy



John Debroske

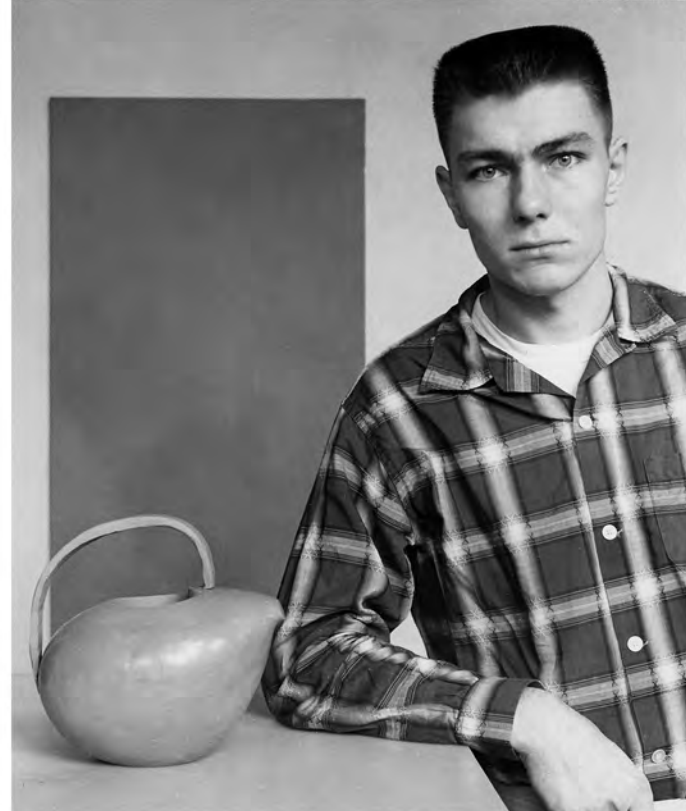
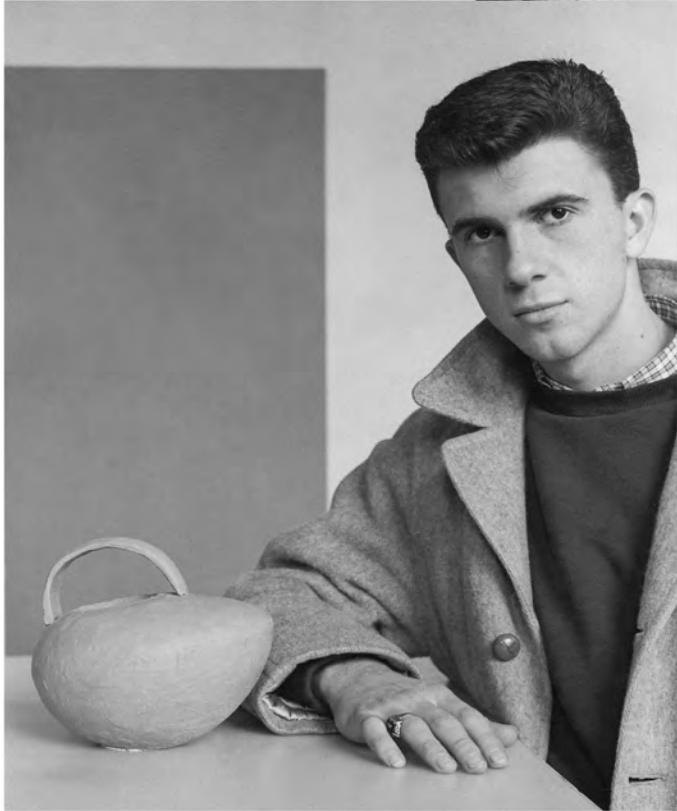
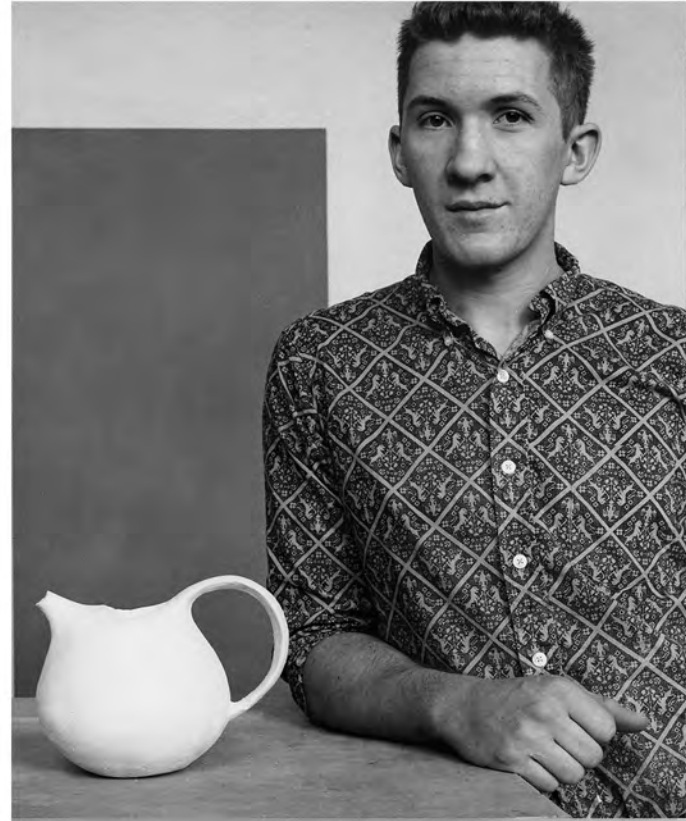
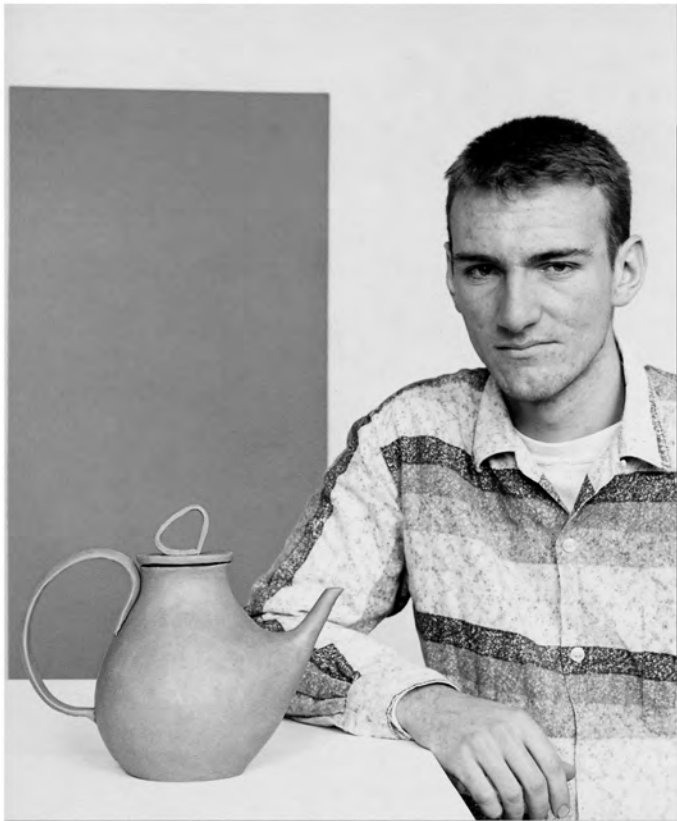


John Pai

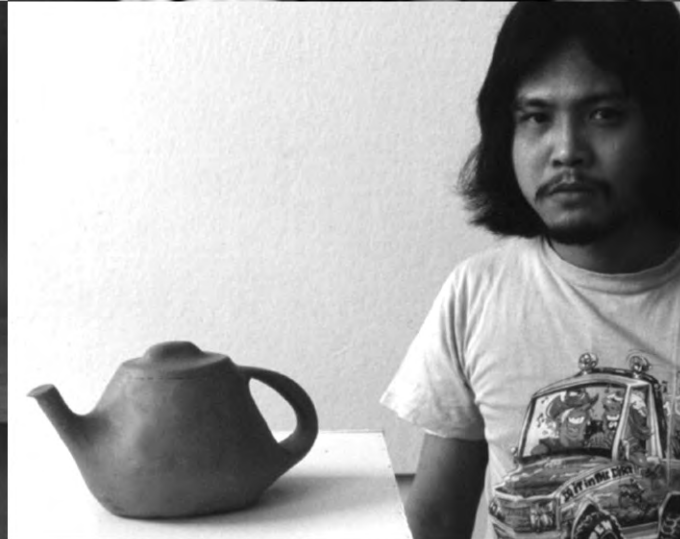
1959







1974

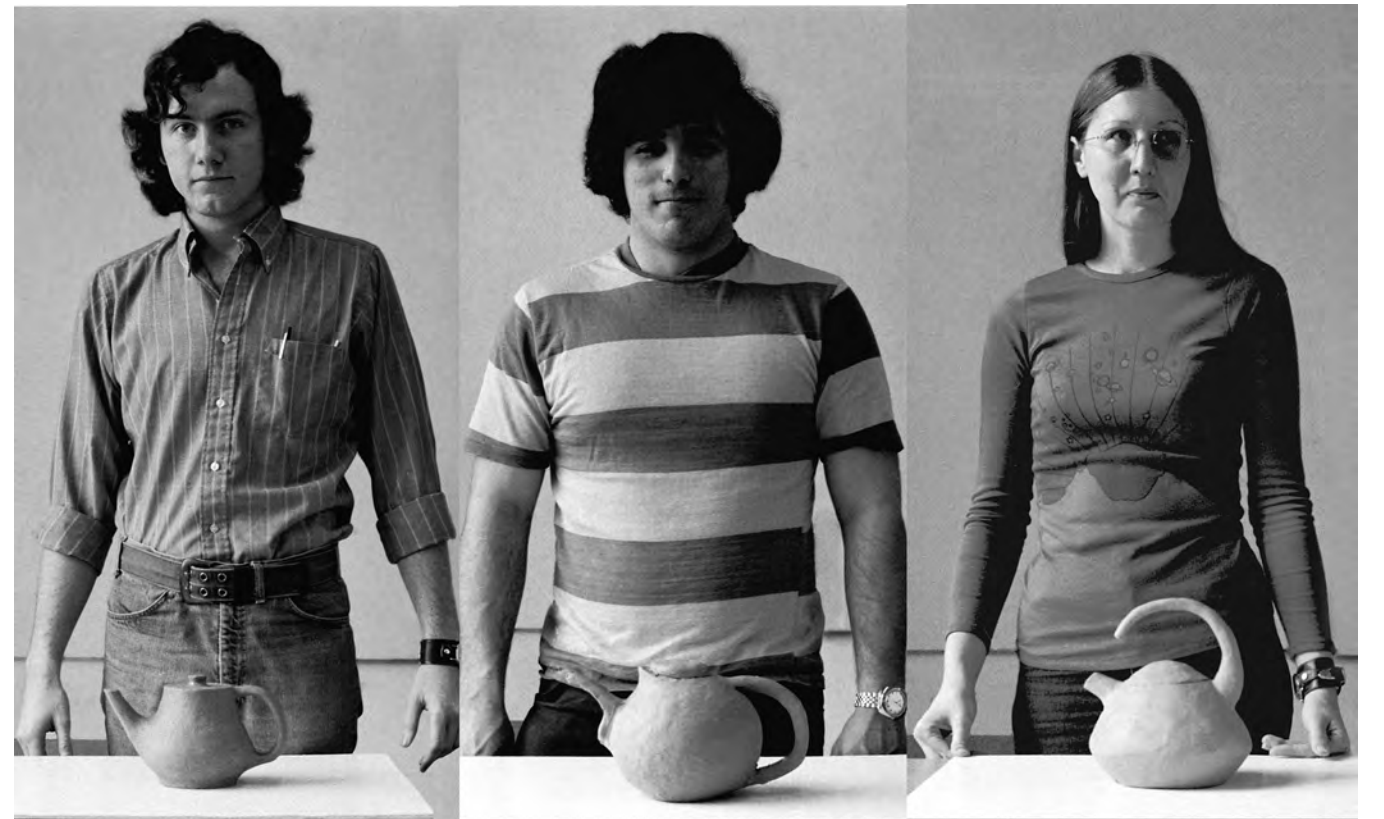






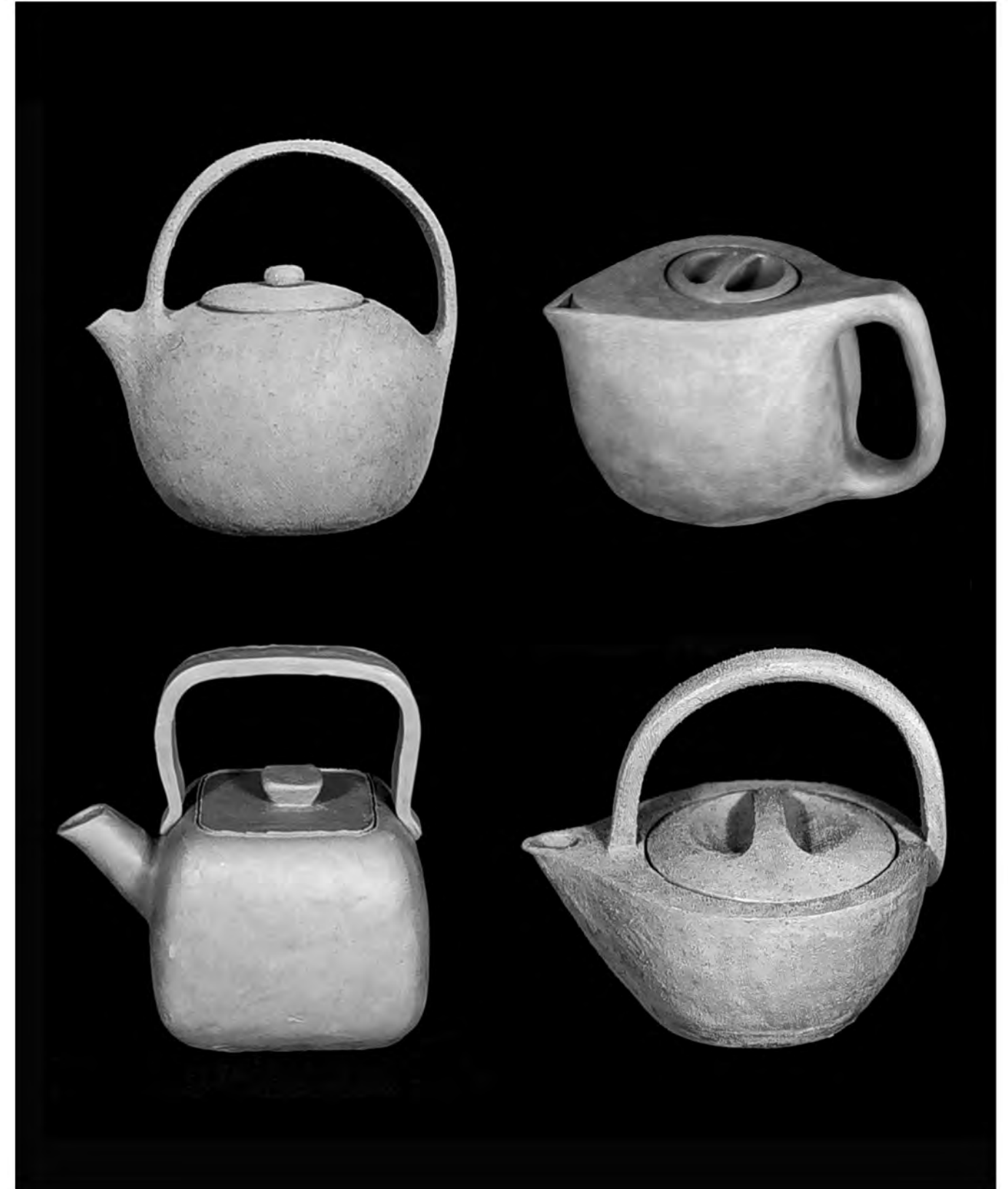






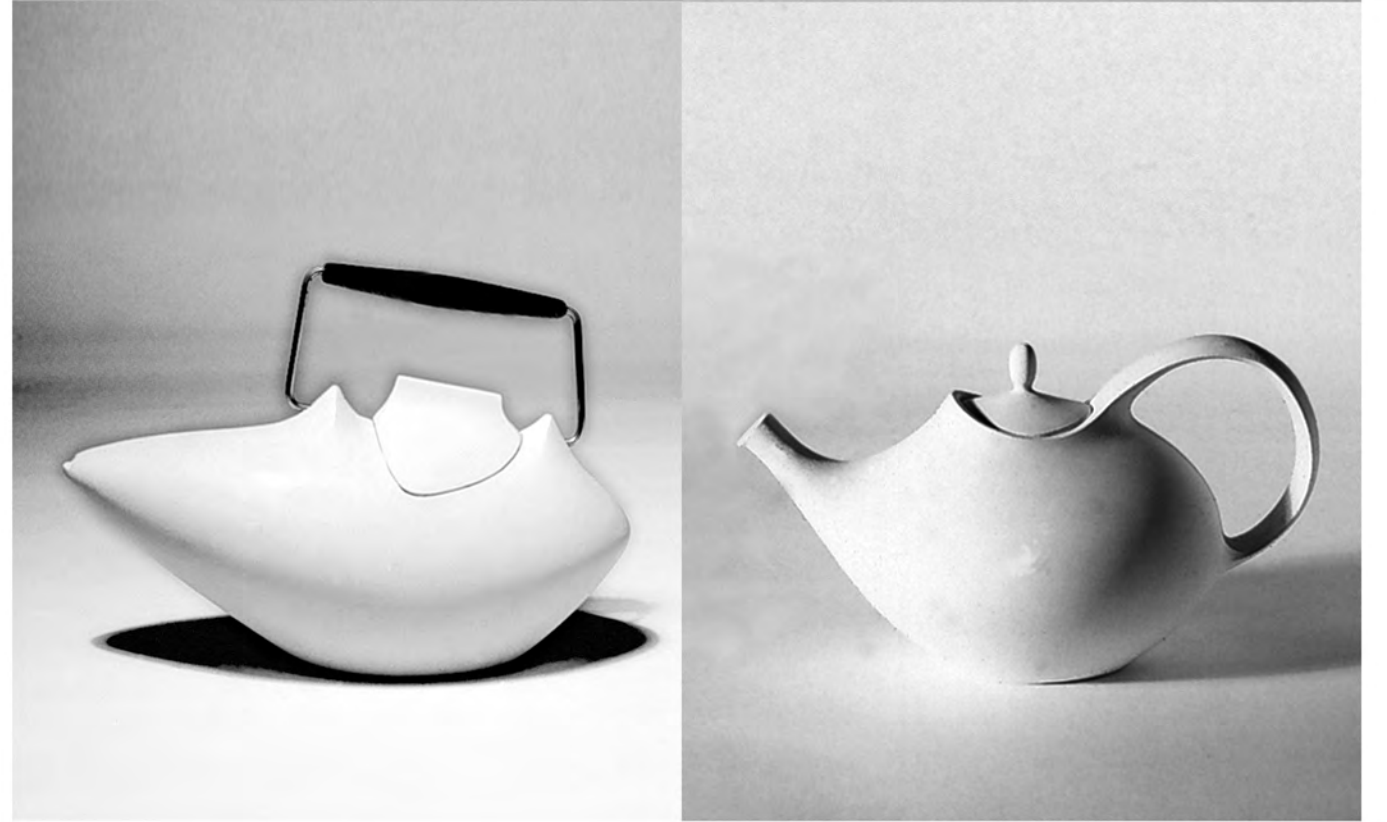
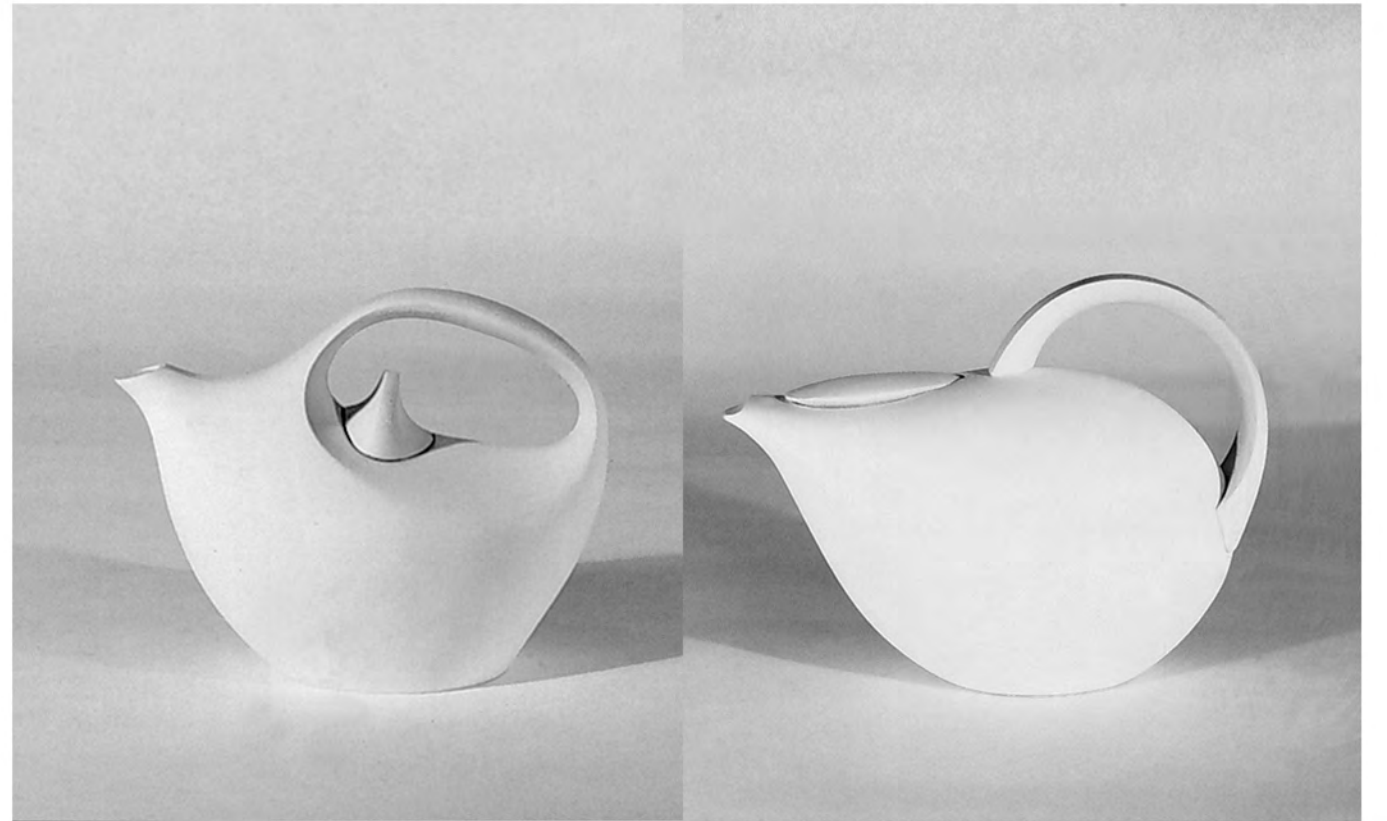




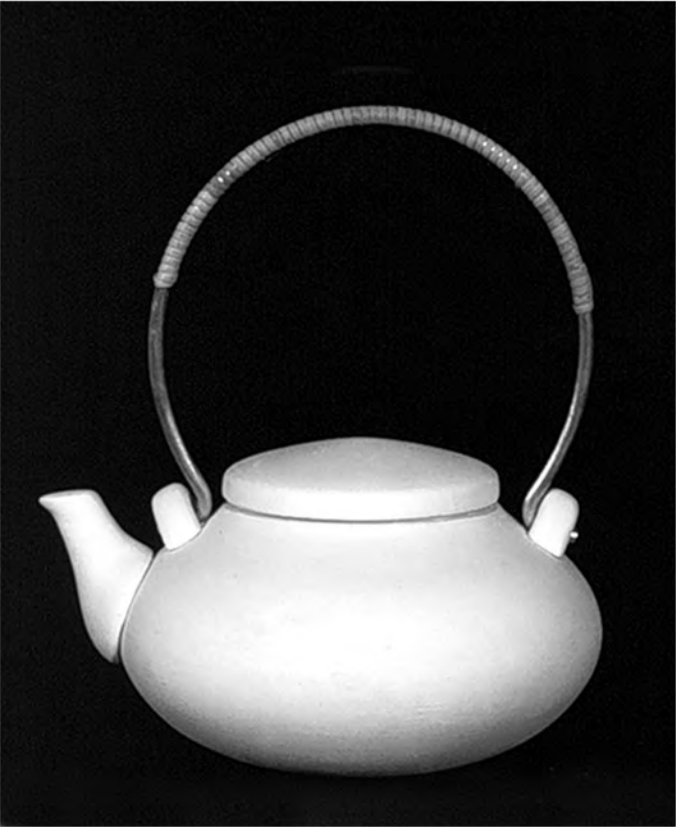














Gulotta with student at Pratt in the 1950's.

### **Gerald D. Gulotta: Master Designer and Educator**

Born in Rockford, Illinois, Gerold Gulotta (1921-2018) graduated from the Pratt Institute in New York in 1949 (MID '83). His early career saw him design for luminaries such as Eva Zeisel, George Nelson, and Raymond Loewy, as well as Towle Silversmiths. In 1960, his flatware won the prestigious Sterling Silver International Design Competition. By 1963, he established Gerald Gulotta Design, Inc., gaining international acclaim for his innovative ceramics and glass designs.

His reputation as an artist-designer was solidified by the broad appeal of his “Transitions” tableware line for Block China. Gulotta’s approach extended to his “highly personal and sculptural” collection, Chromatics (1970). This line, manufactured by Porzellanfabrik Arzberg in Germany, included dinnerware, flatware, and glassware in a variety of color combinations. He also lent his design expertise to Dansk International Designs, Libbey Ware cookware, and Owens-Corning’s experimental fiberglass furniture and bathroom units.

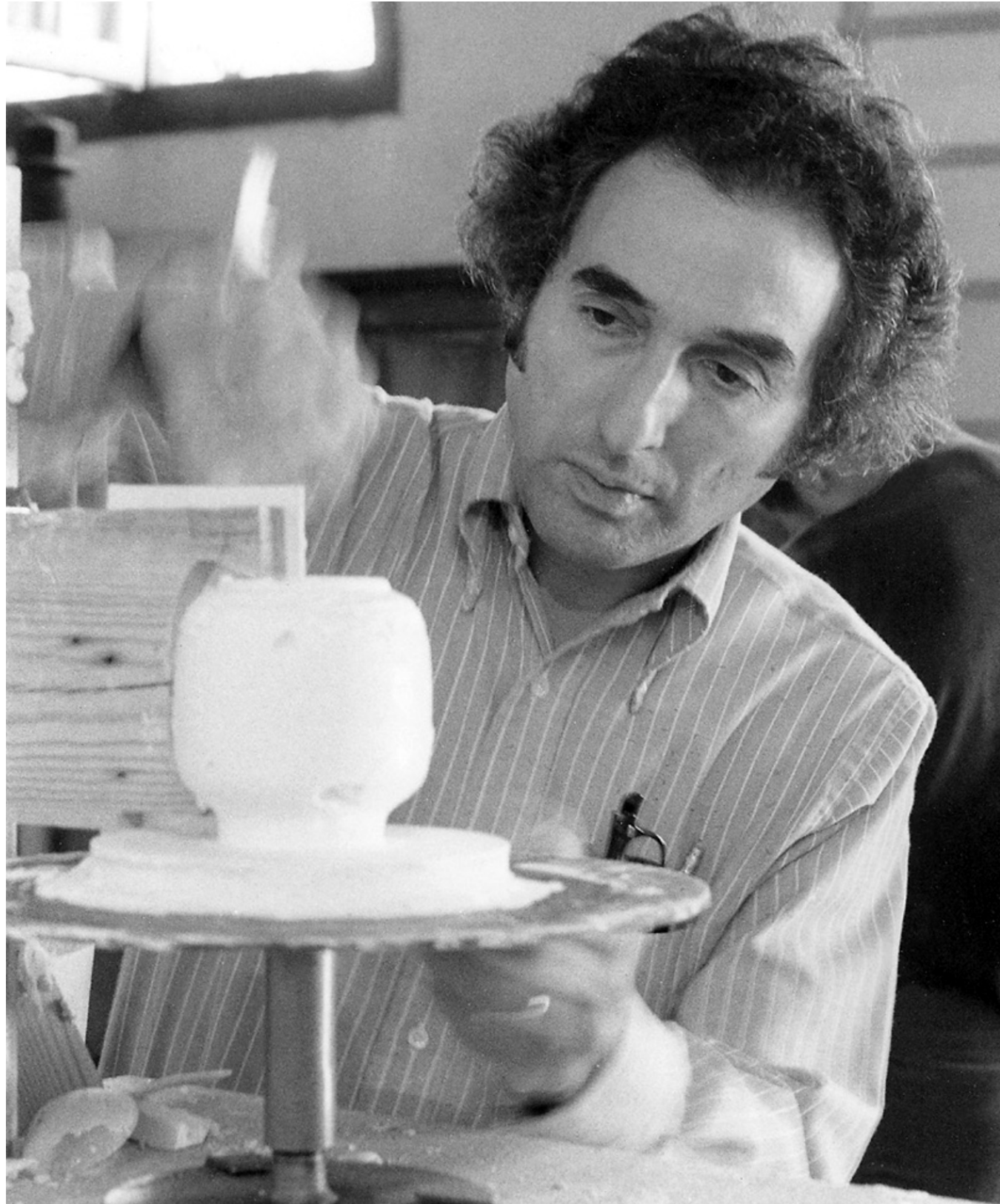
One of his most popular and enduring products is Corelle. Introduced in 1970 and still in production today, Corelle was the result of Gulotta’s close collaboration with Corning’s scientists. They developed the advanced technology behind this unbreakable tableware, which is vacuum-formed using a proprietary three-layer Vitrelle glass lamination process. This process thermally bonds two clear “skin” layers of glass to a white or beige “core” layer, with controlled annealing creating a surface tension that makes it amazingly strong and backed by a “No Chip, No Crack Guarantee.”

Gulotta married Laura Babayan, a Columbia University Library Science graduate. They raised their daughter, Lisa, in a beautiful house they built in New City, NY. He was also a dedicated mentor, employing some of his best students as assistants, including George Schmidt, Tip Sempliner, Ron Petruska, Daniel Ramirez, and Greg Davis. Beyond his design practice, Gulotta was a passionate educator. From 1955 to 1985, he served as a professor at Pratt Institute and co-chaired the industrial design department with Yasuhiko Jerry Okuda (1970-72). He advanced design pedagogy, with close collaboration between design students and commercial production operations.

His influence extended globally as an education consultant abroad, contributing to foundational programs in Portugal (Industrial Design Workshop 1974, where Ted Muehling worked as his assistant and I had the pleasure of meeting his wife Laura and daughter Lisa) and workshots in Guadalajara, Mexico (1976, 1977). He also lectured at several prominent Chinese universities. In 1987, the China National Arts and Crafts Corporation invited Gulotta to design an exclusive collection of miniature stoneware teapots for the Violet Sand Factory in Yixing, China. Seven of these “Yixing teapots” were selected for limited edition manufacture, examples now reside in the permanent collection of the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum. Gulotta’s functional objects—crafted from glass, porcelain, ceramic, silver, and stainless steel—are also included in the collections of The Brooklyn Museum of Art and London’s Victoria and Albert Museum. *Décor* magazine rightly stated that “Gulotta’s innovative approach has left a lasting impact . . . Gulotta’s designs are not only functional but also serve as exquisite works of art, making them a staple in any sophisticated collection.”

Gerold Gulotta passed away on Sunday, February 11, 2018, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, leaving behind countless beautiful products and a generation of students who continue to carry on his remarkable legacy.





"Yixing teapots" miniature stoneware teapots for the Violet Sand Factory, China.



Tarik Currimbhoy and Gulotta in his Manhattan loft with his display of some of his samples c. 2010.



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Portfolio of the remarkable work of students under one of Pratt Institute's most distinguished Industrial Design professors: Gerry Gulotta. Witness an assignment that masterfully integrates 3D form, meaning, personal expression, and the hands-on craft of ceramic production with the demanding temporal process of plaster. For over 30 years, Gulotta observed his students echos in the teapots they created - testament to the intimate connection between creator and craft