



*There are two leading positions concerning the nature of the whole, from which the issue of the whole-part relationship stems. First is the reductionist position, which contends that the whole is nothing more than the parts put in a certain order; hence, the part is more fundamental than the whole, since the whole can be reduced to the parts that constitute it. Second, there is the essentialist position, advocating that the essence of the whole cannot be simply reduced to the parts, since we do not find the whole in any of the parts; hence, the whole is more primary than the part.*

– Tao Jiang

The idea of devoting this issue to parts and wholes began with compound pots – teapots and lidded jars – where the fruitful tension between the integrity of individual components and the resolution of the whole pot is most sharply felt. Every experienced maker soon learns that attention must be paid to both aspects, and that success, utility, and vitality depend upon managing the balance among all the parts in the service of the whole.

Then there is the rhythm of working itself. For potters, ideas tend to unfold in series; there are so many places where something could go wrong or turn out unexpectedly that we grow accustomed to working in multiples, seeing new possibilities and aspects as the pots accumulate on the ware board – and this habit of thinking may persist even if we have given up production pottery. Thus our “work,” although it might go out into the world as individual objects, is in a sense the aggregate of all the versions of an idea, the strokes and passes that mark our working time.

In *THE STUDIO POTTER*, themes function as a kind of enclosure within which a variety of perspectives amplify, contradict, or butt up against one another, and it is almost always true that the individual voices resonate in unexpected ways when read alongside others. This issue’s theme has more diversity than usual built into it, as it includes both new pieces and glimpses from past decades. Putting the issue together, the envisioned parts kept shifting, and the wish to corral them into a cohesive whole kept being undermined by uncertainty and last-minute changes. Yet it seemed a strangely fitting problem to have in relation to this particular theme.

This journal began as an idea in the shape of a need: for a publication that would reflect the realities, complexities, and aspirations of studio life. Forty years on, that amounts to a pile of issues eighteen inches high, weighing a little over fifty pounds. If *SP* is an entity – a whole – it is one that, any way you measure it, contains multitudes: more than 1500 articles, dozens of interviews, thousands of images, and many thousands of gestures of support. All these parts have remained their own distinct selves, yet have come to mean something more by being held between the covers of *THE STUDIO POTTER*.

– MB