

## Crack Pot

I once had a perfect, deep blue, ceramic lamp base circa 1916, the size and shape of a classroom globe. A wedding present from my three sisters, it had been too hastily packed up as one of them, Julie, and I made our getaway from an Arts and Crafts symposium in North Carolina. Later, at a motel off the highway in Virginia, near the unfortunately named town of Lynchburg, we opened the doors of the van and watched the lamp bounce merrily out of its shoddily taped carton, like a dog who can't wait to get out of the car. Packing material went flying; styrofoam peanuts, shredded newspaper and size 7 Pampers, looking as though we'd been trying to ship a large baby through the mail. But it was the sound like a cracked egg that froze us to the spot.

When a treasured piece of pottery breaks, the five stages of grief are compressed, like Cliff Notes, into a more manageable three. "Denial"- is skipped completely because, well there it is clearly broken on the concrete in front of you. So, **Stage 1** is not so much Denial as BLAME.

"Why weren't you more careful!"

"If they'd wrapped it like I told them..."

"We should have left earlier!"

"Tsk, Geminis!"

This quickly morphs into the more simple and emotionally freeing **Stage 2** -VINDICTIVE FURY.

"You are a ham-handed oaf who should never be left near anything of value!"

"Perhaps this just is a metaphor for the end of our marriage."

But then sanity and calm ooze their way back into your brain and you see the broken pottery for what it is; a collection of minerals, water and mud, fused together by heat. You become philosophical with... **Stage 3: EMPIRICAL RESIGNATION** A final stage achieved with the help of yoga....and vodka. “Why, that piece of fired earth has merely been...reformed. And wasn’t it E.B. White who said, “There’s more genius in a cracked pot than a whole one.”?

When I pick the lamp up off the pavement, a jagged, equatorial fracture now circles its once smooth surface. Stages one and two of grief pass rapidly through me, as I look horrified at the expression on Julie’s face, which mirrors my own. Seconds of dead silence erupt into cries of “Oh no!!” and “Shit Shit Shit!”, followed almost instantly by spasms of head bobbing, prune-mouth laughter. Apparently **Stage 3** is precipitated by an acute sense of the absurd.

The Arts and Crafts period flowered again in the late 1970’s and everyday objects scattered around our house were suddenly showing up in galleries and magazine articles and the irony was palpable. A story went around ad nauseum how an ex- brother-in-law used to chip shot golf balls into the same vase that ended up being featured in a Soho gallery, then later donated to The Newark Museum. But do they know about the tattered copy of *Betty and Veronica’s Summer Spectacular* which was finally extricated from the bottom of the Monumental Black Amphora, before the vase was transported to the American Decorative Arts wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art?

Alongside our often-brusque relationship to the old pottery, trot the pretensions and excesses of the art world that elevated it. So, I’m obliged to lampoon... and elaborate.