

Jason Walker has a few questions. What is the relationship between humans and the things that surround us? As we “progress” and build and create, what happens to nature and to the things and places we come from? ‘Timing Chain’, one of Jason Walker’s teapots, explores some of these issues.

The name of the piece directly refers to the circular platform on which Mr. Walker’s interesting teapot sits. The exquisitely detailed drawing that covers the body of the teapot depicts a grid of metal pipes. Entwining the pipes are vines and branches. A lone bird rests among the foliage. The handle and the spout of the teapot are mechanical and reminiscent of pipes, tubes and a smokestack. The most crucial part of the spout, the lip is made of the head of a bird. To “top” it all off, the lid is a pressure gauge.

It is important to note that all of the nature based imagery is contained within the body of the teapot, except for the lone bird head at the end of the spout. By stuffing all of the flora and fauna into a confined (yet crucial) part of the piece, we might conclude that Walker is speaking out against our crowding and suffocating nature with industry. But then there’s that bird head at the end of the spout. It has escaped its designated boundaries, though it is now disjointed. By the juxtaposition of a pipe with a bird’s head we are asked to think about how all of this works together. Though the appendages of Timing Chain are modeled after industrial objects, the piece does not scream about the evils of industry. The vines, branches and bird on the body of the teapot are not overwhelmed (though they are crowded) by the gears and pipes. If anything, they are acclimating to their industrial existence. They even threaten to take over the limited space they are allowed.

Though Walker does not show the human figure directly, he shows man by the products of his existence including machines, pipes and factories. We normally associate these things as anti nature, especially with the ecological crisis we now find ourselves in. He is asking questions, but Walker’s not giving many answers. His work could easily become dogmatic and preachy, but he takes a step back and tastefully asks us to find a conclusion, to make a decision.

When I see ‘Timing Chain’ I have to ask, who will ultimately take over or is there a happy coalescence we can find? In ‘Timing Chain’, nature is not backing down. It is adapting as we try to box it in and suffocate it. Instead of making the statement that man is destroying nature, I see that nature is still working hard to keep its place. In his work Mr. Walker does not give us these answers but keeps the questions floating in mid air, morphing and evolving just like his intricate drawing does on his vessels.

-Kathryn Wingard