

# Zine **Verschenken**

#10 | march 2023 | tea



# Editorial

Hi readers, I hope you are nice and cosy for this one. Our theme this month is tea. Something we hold near and dear to our hearts. I am sure you all have a special memory stimulated by the scent or the warmth a tea can bring. Whether it is a special recipe your grandmother made or the comfort it can bring after a difficult day. I trust you are looking forward to hearing our stories.

I was rather late to the tea appreciation club. Growing up in a hot country, it took several winters and many memories to guide me through my journey here in Europe. But I can say with confidence that I have been converted. Now I even seek out teahouses when I travel. Have you ever been to one? If not, I hope this story will entice you to visit one this winter.

My first experience in a teahouse was one cold January in Bucharest. The snow was as tall as the cars and those stationary were buried within it. Perhaps to some this was the worst timing for a traveller to visit. Yet for me, it has led me to habitually visit the east each winter.

This particular teahouse had a loft, plenty of board games and even a cat. Several other guests gathered together and we played, chatted and patted as we sipped our teas, all beautifully arranged on trays, in individual teapots with just the right accompanying biscuit. The snow was falling outside and I felt this ultimate feeling of cosy contentment.

And so I was hooked.

I continue my tradition of visiting the eastern teahouses as I travel. I have visited a wooden indoor treehouse, with its many levels and trapdoors cascading from every corner, where you need to precariously balance your tray as you climb a rickety ladder up to your chosen spot.

Next was the underground bunker, each room a different theme, all of them lands that celebrate tea. Here you are cut off from the external world and better yet phone reception, leaving you with nothing but your book and of course your seemingly bottomless pot of tea.

Finally a layered garden, with its benches and seats set into the walls and floors themselves as to create a perfect fly on the wall scene, where you can disappear into the backdrop and let your eyes take in the moment.

Each one is so different from the last, but they all carry a particular type of energy. The creators of these spaces each have taken time to carefully spend on the details to design these little pockets fixed within their own stopwatches. No one hurries or hurries you along. It may be a fading image of the old world. One that Berlin was

once a part of.

For Berlin too once had a teahouse. In another time on a very different Rigaer Straße to the one you might know today, stood a teahouse. A community project, a not for profit. With only the love in their hearts, this crew worked their magic. It was a space for artists, performers, storytellers and for some, it was a warm space to keep off the streets. Everyone was welcome and the drinks were cheap. Maybe this became its downfall. The energy started to change and slowly more people were coming to keep warm and less who were interested in performing. Soon over time it became more of a warm house and less of a teahouse. Eventually the team were instructed to close their doors forever and the teahouse was no more. I never made it to this teahouse as it had closed its doors not long before I arrived in the city. It leaves me wondering if anything could have varied the outcome.

Was there a lack of funding for warm houses back in 2010?

Did the older Berliner mentality serve the community more frequently within itself?

Was there some unspoken mistrust preventing those who needed it to ask for help?

I suppose I will never know the reasons why. But this small piece of Berlin's history should be shared regardless. As should the memories of the remaining teahouses of the east and the secrets they keep.





## A Beginner's Guide to Tea Leaves Reading

First of all, **choose your cup**. You want a nice light color to be able to see the leaves properly. You also want the sides to form an angle for the leaves to be able to cling. Apart from that it might be a normal cup, but having a specific cup special for this ritual can help you set up the atmosphere and get into the flair.

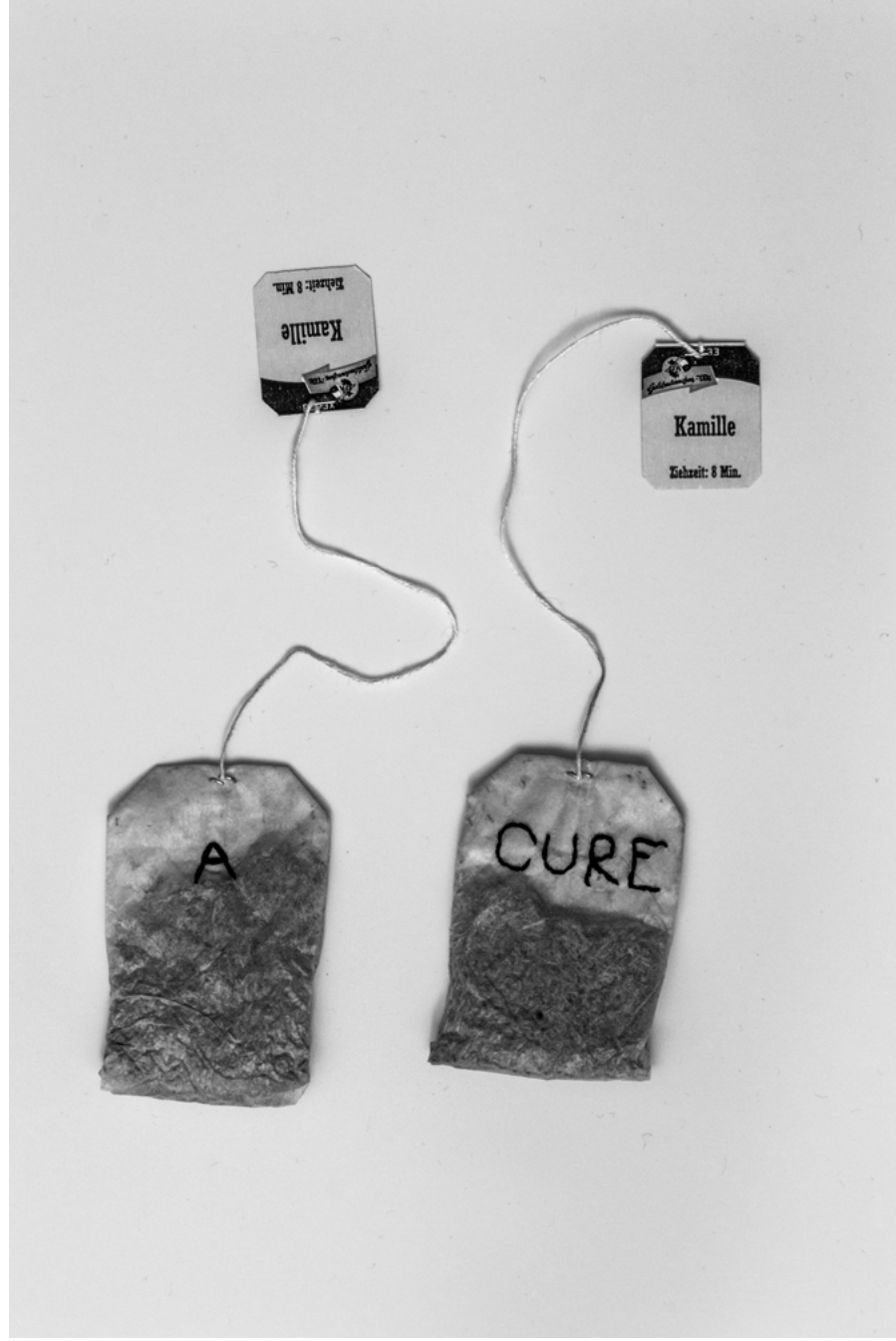
Secondly, **choose your tea**. You want a loose leaf tea with a broad leaf, such as oolong or gunpowder tea, as it will make shapes easier. Tea-bag tea won't work here as the leaves are tiny and also easier to get swallowed. Apart from that, it is all about your taste. Choose a tea you like and focus on the smell, the taste to start this journey of introspection.

Once you have drunk the tea, put the cup upside down on the plate to drain the liquid and slowly turn it three times clockwise. During the whole process, just to **take your time, enjoy the moment and focus on your question**. This is, above everything, a moment just for you for meditation and reflection.

While picking the cup, leave the side with the handle the closest to your body and turn it around. Now, with the liquid drained, you will see the tea leaves making shapes around the cup. Watch for all the angles and sides and consider the distribution of the leaves. See how the elements interact between them. For a **past-present-future reading** you can divide the cup in three parts, where the bottom part will represent your past and the upper side your future. Search for symbols, images and even letters. Just let your imagination get free!

If you need some inspiration, there are some common-seen figures you can search for and their meanings, such as anchors representing stability, celestial symbols representing like or serpents meaning danger. However, remember not to take this as a rule. Remember that all interpretation is subjective and **pay attention to your own intuition** and emotions while reading. That will tell you much more than any set-up meaning. Just focus on your own intuition and emotions while reading and it might be not only a more pleasant but eye-opening experience. There you have, your future in a cup, no further than your own hands!





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