




Kicker Tea Tumbler

Tea meets technology.

We use technology as a material. Rather than trying to isolate it to a screen-based 'device', we believe technology can be added into materials in order to make objects smart. In other words, technology gives great tools an added kick.



We interviewed tea drinkers, talked with tea shops and observed baristas at work. We found that tea was **purposefully low tech**. We discovered there were specific temperatures and steep times for different types of teas. We paid attention to the **behaviors** in the ritual of tea making, noting the **visual and tactile cues** necessary to complete them.

CALMING

Calming
 Relaxing
 Soft
 Soothing
 Calm
 Down
 "Calm my soul"

Warm
 Peace
 Focus mind to step back & enjoy
 Comfort

REFRESHING

Refreshing
 Energizing
 Wake up
 To drink
 Invigorating

RITUAL

Ritual
 Focused
 Special
 Routine
 Habit
 Sacred

REFINED

Refined
 Elegant
 Sophisticated
 Quality

We developed a list of guiding principles to design against.

Respect the Ritual.

No new steps, nothing that feels like a dramatic change.

My Tea, My Way.

Allow tea drinkers the flexibility and control to make the tea how they like it. Allow for adjustments on the fly.

Not Just Taste.

Tea is about the senses. Design for sight, smell and warmth too.

Digital Enhancements, Analog Experience.

The process should feel like something low-tech. No Screens.

WARM

Hot
 Cozy

Nice
 Warm
 Cozy
 Party

SOFT/MILD

Soft
 Mild
 Gentle
 Easy
 Relaxing
 Comforting
 Smooth

FLAVOR

Many Flavors
 Aromatic
 Flavors
 Taste
 Depth of Flavor

COFFEE

Alternative from coffee
 Less harsh than coffee

SOCIAL

Healthy
 Social
 No Screens
 Low Tech

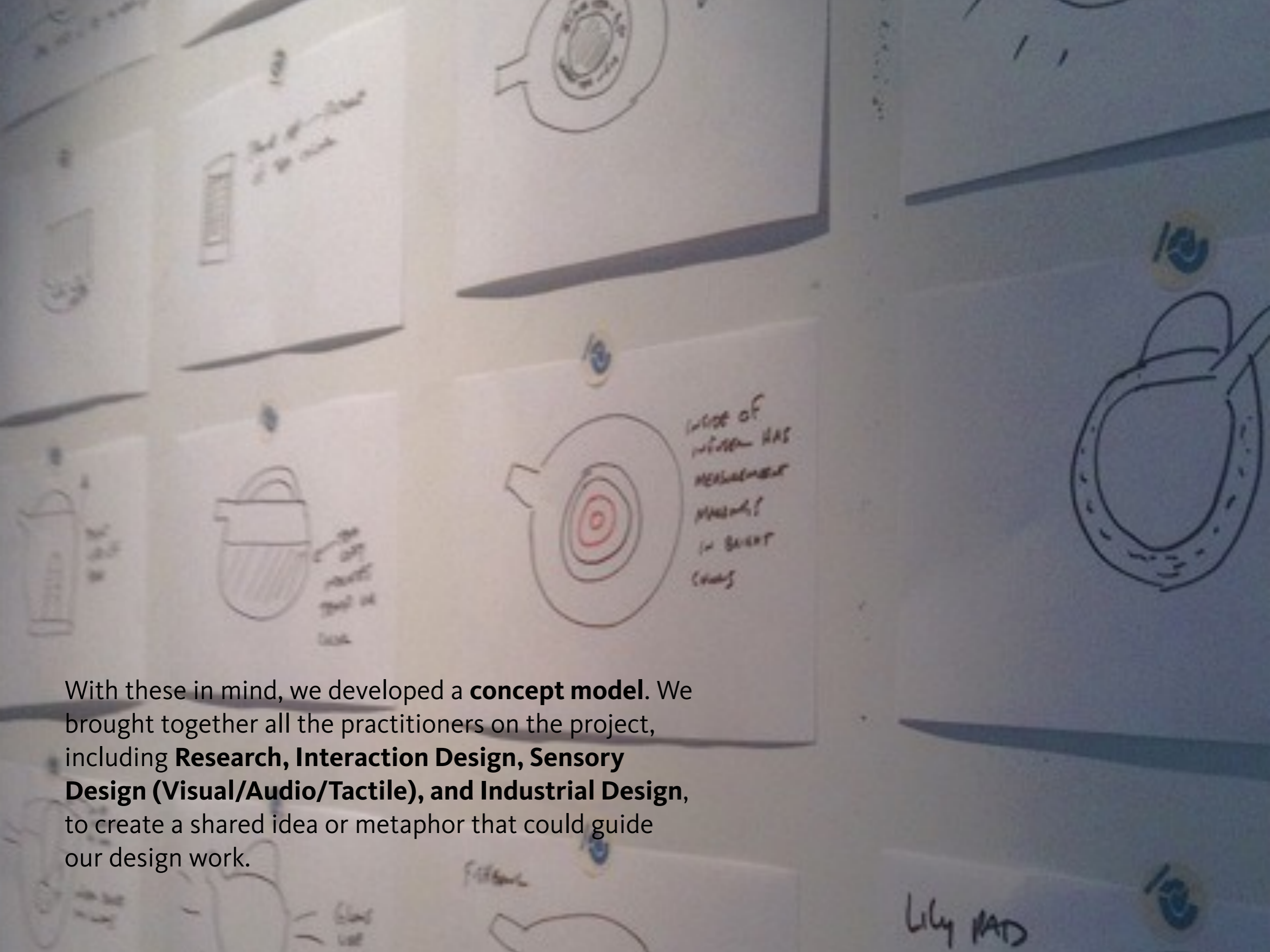


Then we looked around at what was happening with **technology and tea**. We found that most electric tea makers adopt a style more in line with what we imagine is characteristic of coffee, not tea. There was plastic. There were digital displays. There were buttons and sliders.

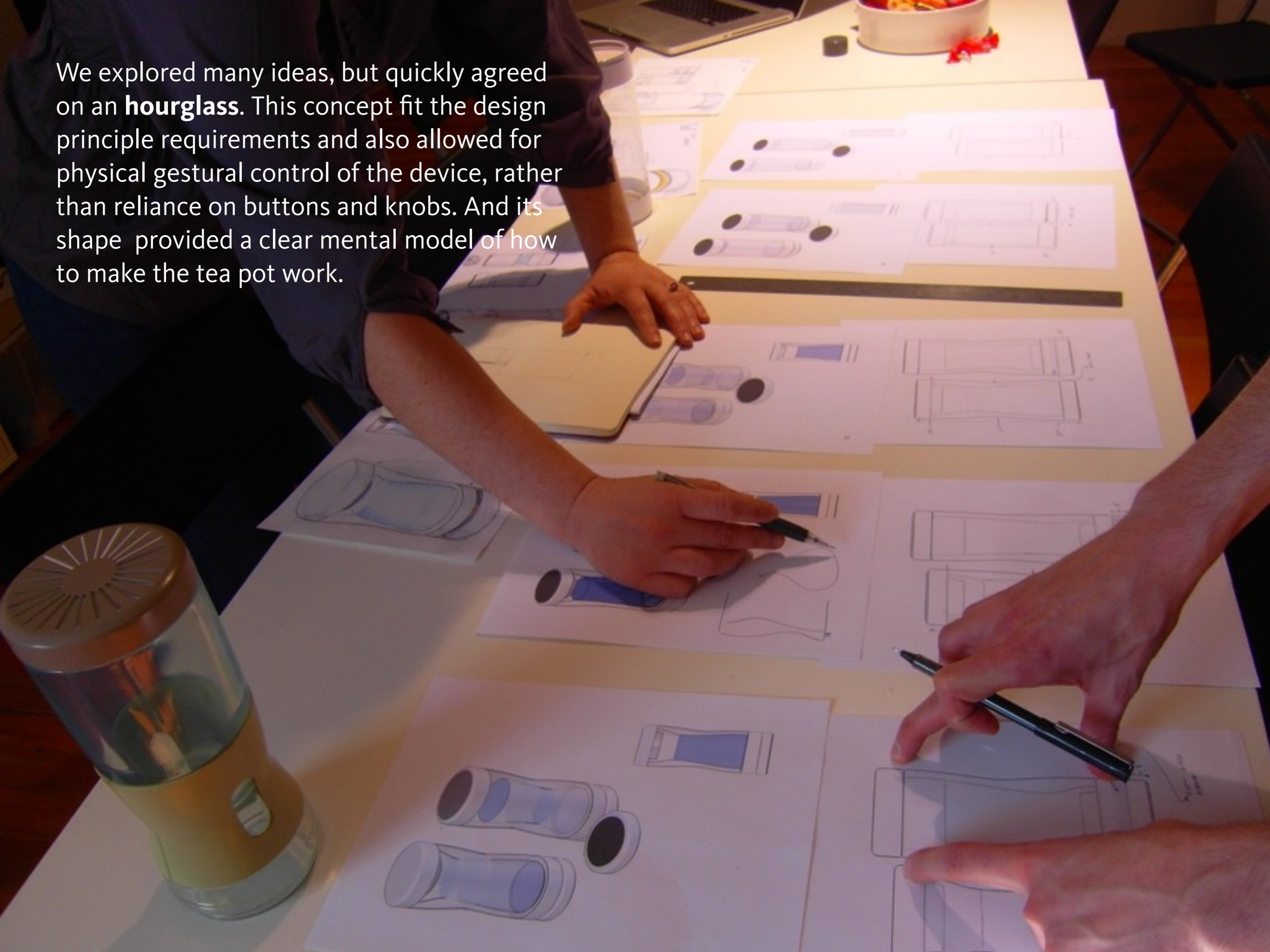
But there were also clear ideas of what is most important to a tea drinker. There were lots of heaters. There were lots of timers both for steeping and for boiling. From our contextual research, we knew there was a reason for that. **The timers and heaters are essential.**



With these in mind, we developed a **concept model**. We brought together all the practitioners on the project, including **Research, Interaction Design, Sensory Design (Visual/Audio/Tactile), and Industrial Design**, to create a shared idea or metaphor that could guide our design work.



We explored many ideas, but quickly agreed on an **hourglass**. This concept fit the design principle requirements and also allowed for physical gestural control of the device, rather than reliance on buttons and knobs. And its shape provided a clear mental model of how to make the tea pot work.



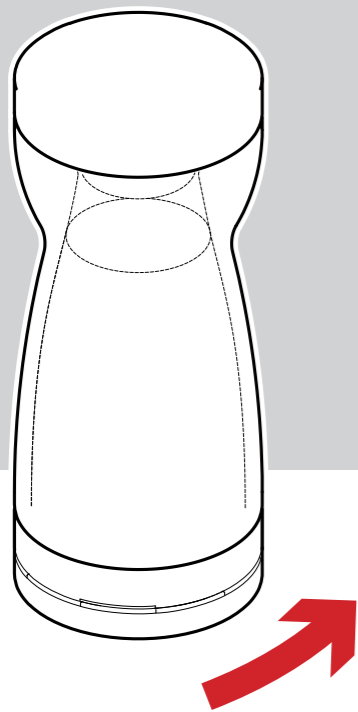
Based on our sketches we made several rounds of **prototypes**, from rough plastic bottles to a printed 3D model, to an Arduino with a tilt sensor taped to a glass tea jar.



We used the prototypes to concept how we could **interact** with the device in order to make it feel low tech, but still clear and intuitive to use. We wanted to avoid obvious technology interfaces like screens and buttons. We developed a series of **physical interactions** to operate the device instead.

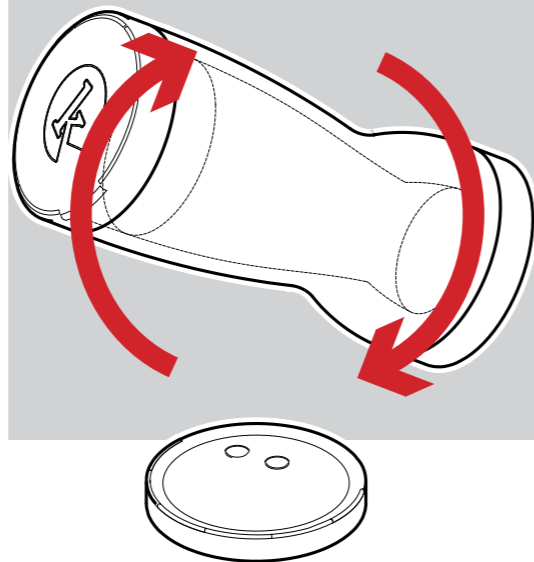
Step 1: HEAT

The placement of the tea pot in the base selects the type of tea.



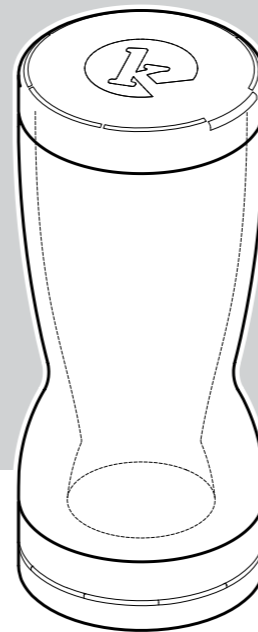
Step 2: FLIP

Rotate the tea pot to start the brewing process.



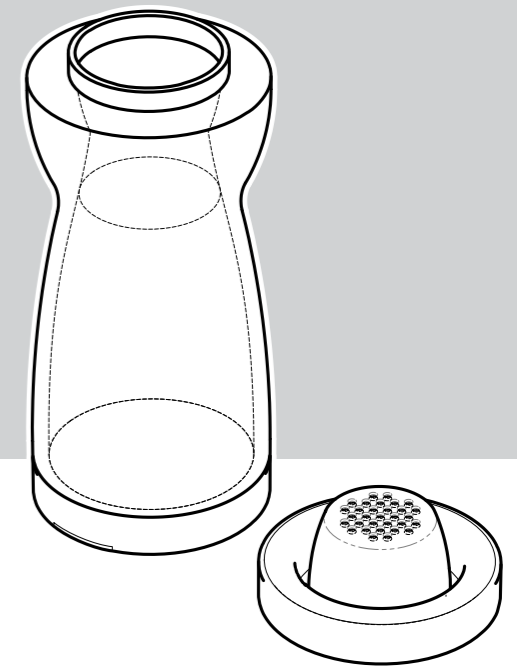
Step 3: STEEP

The timer is pre-set based on tea type. User can tap the lights to +/- time.



Step 4: POUR

Flip the hourglass right side to stop steeping. Unscrew the cap and pour.



We determined what **sensory cues** the user needed to be guided along the way to a perfect cup of tea. We worked on the physical, visual and sound design in tandem to maximize efficiencies in the sensory language.



The resulting Kicker Tea Pot allows the interface to disappear, so **the focus is on the tea, not the technology.**





Tea anyone?

Kicker Studio
300 Brannan Street, Suite 207
San Francisco, CA 94107

ph. 415-796-3434

jenn@kickerstudio.com

www.kickerstudio.com