

Breakout Session Record

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Date: 14 July 2005

Institution: Victoria and Albert Museum

Title of Breakout session: Subjects from Nature in porcelain and stoneware, in particular techniques and motifs from Asia

Name(s) of Breakout session leaders: Dr. Rupert Faulkner and Hilary Young

General themes discussed at the Breakout session:

The general theme was on natural forms in ceramic tableware (albeit mostly decorative). Figurines were not dealt with.

Most of the objects presented dated from the 17th and 18th centuries and entailed the influence of Chinese and Japanese styles and material (clay, glazing) in European ceramics.

Twenty objects were discussed, and a lot of the attention went into material, ways of making (press molded, cast, turned), the type of glazing, ways of firing and the natural forms used.

Any other information about the session:

Object information

Object Title: Grotesque fish, ewer

Object Date: late 16th century

Museum accession number of object: 633-1870

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

Vase in shape of a fish, earthenware with black and white glazing.

Function of the object?

It is labeled as a sauce boat, but might as well be called a vase.

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

It was a decorative item, not used but viewed

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Q: was this a form of early casting? A: indeed it was molded, because of its complex form. Q: how did they do the glazing? A: it is a swirling mix of tin and manganese glazing

Object information

Object Title: Palissy dish

Object Date: third quarter 16th century

Museum accession number of object: 418-1854

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

A crafted dish with life cast animals with colour glazing and two drill holes of later date.
Possibly by Bernard Palissy, but could also be a fake.
Earthenware, under glazing and lead glaze

Function of the object?

Decorative object

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Object information

Object Title: Dish

Object Date: 1820 Minton

Museum accession number of object: Schr.I.810

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

Staffordshire bone china, ceramic nuts in a small dish, tin glazed

Function of the object?

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Object information

Object Title: Dish, early 18th century and Pumpkin Teapot, 1984

Object Date: 1) FE.19-1983 2) FE.64-1984

Museum accession number of object:

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

Two Chinese objects of the same material

- 1) a small dish with nuts, cast nuts and seeds in a dish with a basket design
- 2) teapot

The material is a very fine clay, stoneware with wax coating. Both were discussed together to compare the clay.

Function of the object?

- 1) decorative
- 2) functional: tea drinking

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

- 2) the Chinese believe that this material is better for the tea since the material does not affect the taste of the tea.

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

- 1) the nutty dish has been signed by the artist, which is very unusual.

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Q: how high was the temperature in the kiln? A: circa 1200 to 1500 celsius

Object information

Object Title: two wine pots, 1) jumping fish, 2) peach

Object Date: 18th century

Museum accession number of object:

1) 1997-1855

2) C.460-1910

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

1) A porcelain jumping fish shaped wine pot, purple and yellow lead glaze

2) A porcelain peach wine pot, light and dark blue glazing, with a hole in the bottom to pour in the wine

Both Chinese

Function of the object?

The description "wine pot" is not very accurate, it may be rice wine or fermented wine.

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

The pots both have symbolic meaning. Peach stands for longevity and the jumping fish for success.

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Q: was it used ceremonially? A: not necessarily

Object information

Object Title: Incense burner in the shape of a rooster

Object Date: 19th century

Museum accession number of object:
363-1877

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

Japanese porcelain cockerel incense burner. It is green celadon, high fired and molded

Function of the object?

It was an incense burner but never used, since there is no trace of this happening

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

The rooster is one of the zodiac signs, it is talismanic against the evil forces of darkness.

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Q: why is the inside also glazed? A: not sure, may have something to do with the firing, or maybe to clean the inside of soot easier?

Object information

Object Title: Bamboo vase

Object Date: 19th century

Museum accession number of object:
7228-1861

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

A Chinese celadonic light green vase. It is not sure if it supposed to be bamboo or some other plant.

To create light green they have used 2-5% iron oxide and reduction firing

Function of the object?

Not sure, probably decorative

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Q: the green of celadon and jade are similar. A: yes, this is very popular in Chinese culture.

Object information

Object Title: two bamboo teapots 1) Chinese, 2) English

Object Date: 1) late 17th century 2) 18th century

Museum accession number of object:

1) C.1060-1910

2) 158-1874

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

1) dark green round teapot, bamboo design, and press molded porcelain

2) yellow and green lead glazed oval teapot, bamboo design, molded cream ware. Made in 1760s in Staffordshire

Function of the object?

Teapot

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Object information

Object Title: pineapple teapot

Object Date: 1760s

Museum accession number of object:
Schr.II.294

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):
Green and yellow pineapple teapot. English

Function of the object?
Teapot

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?
Q: how was it made? A: molded and turned

Object information

Object Title: Fish-shaped sauce boat, with saucer and lid

Object Date: 18th century

Museum accession number of object:
C.1451.1924

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

Chelsea porcelain, cream ware (clay and additives) sauceboat and lid shaped like a flat fish, plaice, used for sweetmeat.

Function of the object?
Part of a dinner service

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?
It was considered funny to serve sweetmeats from a plaice tureen.

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Object information

Object Title: two tureens

Object Date: mid 18th century

Museum accession number of object:
FE.12+13-1971

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

A pair of Chinese sauce tureens in the form of ducks. Decoration could be done in Canton, but this is not where the porcelains were made.

Function of the object?
Decoration

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Object information

Object Title: Brush pot

Object Date: 17th century

Museum accession number of object:
C.342-1720

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

Porcelain brush pot in the shape of a crab. It is clear glazed "blanc de chine" popular in South East Asia and from the 18th century also in Europe. It is a high fired porcelain, press molded

Function of the object?

To wash the ink of the brush

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Is was on a desk of a Chinese gentleman-scholar

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

The Chinese word for crab and harmony sound almost the same.

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Object information

Object Title: Salt dish

Object Date: 1760s

Museum accession number of object:
3986-1901

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

A dish with life casts shells. Plymouth. This is an attempt to make true porcelain

Function of the object?
Decorative tableware

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Remark: Castings made from life shrinks about 40% through the process of making porcelain. In the case of earthenware it shrinks 20 to 30%. This is due to the evaporation of water.

Object information

Object Title: plate

Object Date: 18th century

Museum accession number of object:
C.47-1944

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

The plate has painted flower and leave decoration that can be linked to Hans Sloane. The leaves are very life-like whereas the painted insects are not. It was made in Chelsea. Bisquet fired with enamel glazing

Function of the object?
Decorative object

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Object information

Object Title: terrine and lid

Object Date: 18th century

Museum accession number of object:
423-1872

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

Wedgwood green and white cream ware in the shape of a nautilus shell.

Function of the object?

Part of a dinner service

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

Object information

Object Title: Stoneware jug

Object Date: 1781

Museum accession number of object:
C.90-1985

Description of object (please attach any information received from breakout session leaders to this sheet):

Brown stoneware jug with raised decoration, the jug is made to resemble wood with molded decorations. The vessel was turned.
Made, and signed by Sowerby

Function of the object?
Decorative

Where was the object used/viewed/consumed?

Who used it?

Original context of the object?

The significance of the object?

What questions did the audience ask about this object?

1 D/pkin
Maling
C19 1/2

WAYS OF MAKING AND KNOWING

Model of basket containing nuts and seeds

Coloured stoneware

Mark of potter Hecun, alias of Chen Mingyuan (active 1662-1735)

Chinese, Yixing kilns

18th century

FE.19-1983

- Yixing kilns to east of Shanghai, Jiangsu province (map), important from C16 onwards, especially for teapots, which were associated with the spread of steeped tea drinking practices (which replaced earlier boiled and whipped tea)
- Chinese delight in natural forms and fascination with copies thereof – artifice, craftsmanship and, as very evident here, supreme modelling skills
- Signing of Yixing something of a peculiarity, suggestive of the high status of Yixing potters relative to those working in other ceramic centres – related to the more than usually direct involvement of artists and literati, who teamed up with potters to design and embellish (teapots) with poems (cover of book, published 1991)
- Probably a copy, Chen Mingyuan being particularly famous and much imitated
- ... pumpkin teapot (show photocopy of XXVIII)

revisitable

Teapot in the form of a pumpkin

Reddish-brown stoneware

Chinese, Yixing kilns

1984

FE.64-1984

- bought in Yixing in 1984 by Rose Kerr on a buying trip documenting contemporary Chinese ceramic practice (photos at back of book, showing modern arrangements plus historical dragon kilns etc)
- free-hand potting / press moulding ?
- 1100-1200 degree firing followed by waxing / polishing
- 'purple sand' teapots 'drive away the smell of boiled water but do not rob the tea of its aroma' (When Zhenheng, Superfluous Things, 1600-1640) – preferred to silver teapots, for example, which were more expensive but thought to be in less good taste
- C16 and C17 pots tend to be quite large, but from C18 onwards they come in all shapes and sizes– Gongfu, small pots needed
- again delight in natural forms and the artifice of skilfully crafted copies - (pass book around)
- Yixing teapots exported to Europe following introduction of tea in C17 - and copied, e.g. Elers, Staffordshire, ca. 1690, and in Holland
- also prized (espec. Chen Mingyuan, hence lots of fakes) in Japan with spread of steeped tea drinking – and later copied, e.g. Tokoname equivalents important from mid-C19 onwards

Vessel, probably a winepot, in the form of a leaping fish
 Porcelain with coloured glazes
 Chinese, Jingdezhen kilns
 18th or early 19th century
 1997-1855 (early acquisition)

Vessel, probably a winepot, in the form of a peach
 Porcelain with turquoise and and purple glazes
 Chinese, Jingdezhen kilns
 18th century
 C.460-1910

- Both vessels made in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province (map), China's main centre for the manufacture, historically and today, of porcelain and the source of over 90 percent of ceramics exported from China to the West up until the end of the 19th century
- recent archaeology indicates that ceramic production began in Jingdezhen in the 10th century - green-glazed stonewares plus white-bodied porcelain with bluish-white glazes (yingqing / qingbai wares) that were the ancestors of all the different kinds of porcelain produced there in later centuries, blue-and-white porcelain from the 14th century (much for the Middle East), for example, and enamel-decorated porcelain from the 15th century onward
- These two pieces are decorated in enamel colours, which involves the addition of colourants to a lead-silicate mixture fired to between 700 and 90 degrees centigrade. The colours on the peach-shaped vessel are derived from copper (turquoise) and manganese (purple); those on the leaping-fish vessel ****
- Probably both 'wine' vessels – 'wine' a misnomer in that Chinese alcoholic beverages are mostly produced from cereal grains, either fermented or, increasingly from the 10th century onwards, fermented and distilled. Alcohol consumption, like tea-drinking, has always been a fundamental aspect of Chinese culture
- Symbolism an important aspect of many Chinese artefacts, in this case the peach representing longevity and the leaping fish aspirations to success in the meritocratic system of Chinese bureaucracy – the belief being that a fish that succeeds in leaping up the rocks of splashing rapids turns into a dragon, symbol of heaven and the imperial order
- Modelling / moulding ****

Incense burner in the form of a cockerel
Porcelain with celadon glaze
Japanese, Sanda kilns
Early 19th century
363-1877

- Made in Japan at the Sanda kilns, to the north of Kobe / Osaka (map)
- Ceramic manufacture began in this area at the end of the 18th century. During the period 1810-1840 the Sanda kilns made a wide variety of high quality and much sought-after celadon wares that copied Chinese originals from the Longquan kilns (Zhejiang province, southern China) historically imported into Japan (**show book, especially Kinuta vase, no. 85 – pass around**).
- Celadon is a high-fired glaze in which small quantities of iron in the glaze mixture fires green or bluish-green in a reducing atmosphere (ferrous oxide)
- The copying of Chinese ceramics was one manifestation of a nationwide early 19th century trend that was marked by a reassertion / revival of Japan's long-standing interest in Chinese art and culture - one aspect of which was the formalisation of methods of steeped tea drinking involving Yixing and other types of Chinese teapot and their Japanese equivalents.
- This is an incense burner such as might have been placed in the display alcove of a formal Japanese room.
- It is in the shape of a cockerel / rooster. This is one of the twelve zodiac signs – 2005, for example, is the year of the rooster (**show Mingeikan New Year card**).
- In terms of symbolism, the rooster was considered talismanic in that its cries were believed to bring protection against the evil forces of darkness.
- Bought as part of a group of Japanese ceramics shown at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition before coming to the V&A
- Modelling ****

Vase in the form of bamboo
Porcelain with celadon glaze
Chinese, Jingdezhen kilns
First half 19th century
7228-1861

Teapot / ~~winepot~~ in the shape of bamboo
Porcelain with green glaze
Chinese, Jingdezhen kilns
Kangxi period (1662-1722)
C.1060-1910

- Two examples of Chinese ceramics exploring in different ways the enduringly popular bamboo, which is native to large areas of China and other parts of Asia. Used as a building material and for the fashioning of craft items of various kinds, the bamboo also features as subject matter and decorative motif in all forms of Chinese art.
- Being upright and vigorous, it symbolises firmness and stalwartness, both physical and moral - in Japan, where the image of bamboo bending in the face of a raging storm is often conjured up, there are also associations with flexibility and resilience.
- The vase, made in Jingdezhen, has a high-fired celadon glaze – compare with the contemporaneous Japanese Sanda ware incense burner.
- The ~~winepot~~ / teapot has a low-fired lead-fluxed copper green glaze.
- Formerly at Burghley House; bought by George Salting at Christie's, sale of the property of the Marquess of Exeter, in June 1888, and bequeathed to the V&A in 1910 as part of an enormous bequest
- Modelling / forming ****

• 'pen the verde' in broadest sense - popular in Europe.

→ English bamboo teapot etc. / Chinoiserie ~ exoticism.

1 /

pair
Pair of soup tureens in the form of ducks
Porcelain painted in overglaze enamels ('famille rose')
Chinese, Jingdezhen kilns, probably decorated in Canton
Mid-18th century
FE.12+13-1971

*Chelton sh.
shiny*

- Special order ceramics, probably forming part of a large dinner service – **show boar's head and other examples of special order ceramics, Chinese Export Art and Design**
- Porcelain blank decorated in Canton, the main (and from 1760 the sole) port out of which Europeans traded.
- William Hickey, 1769, 'We were shown the different processes used in finishing the chinaware. In one long gallery we found upwards of an hundred persons at work in sketching or finishing the various ornaments upon each particular piece of the ware, some parts being executed by men of a very advanced age, and others by children even so young as six or seven years.' Obviously big business by this point
- Designs supplied in the form of engravings, book illustrations, drawings and models (from (late) C17 onwards)
- Decline in popularity of Chinese (special order and other) porcelain from about 1770 onwards – due to the rise of Staffordshire, e.g. Wedgwood, and other English and European factories – i.e. shift in taste / also change in taxation system that worked against Chinese ceramic imports. Last time the English East India Company commissioned a dinner service (for its India Presidencies) was in 1805.
- Modelling ****

Water pot for calligraphy in the form of a crab
Porcelain with clear glaze
Chinese, Dehua kilns ('Blanc de Chine')
1620-1720
C.342-1720

- Dehua kilns in Fujian Province (map)
- Dehua kilns produced porcelain (qingbai, i.e. with bluish glaze) from the 10th century onwards / lustrous white wares known in Europe as 'Blanc de Chine' first produced during the 16th century (show book for variety)
- Pure pocelain stone or pocelain stone with small additions of clay / high-fired in stepped chambered kilns / oxidation?? / flawless translucent glaze
- Many exported to Europe, especially in the 18th century, country houses etc., like decorated export porcelain ... but this a domestic piece, a 'scholar's desk' item, used for washing brushes; also exported within Asia, especially to Southeast Asia, from 17th century onwards
- Symbolism: two-character homophone with one of them for crab having the meaning of harmony
- Press-moulding / modelling etc ****