

SHARDS

A Newsletter of the
Volume 7, Issue 3 China Students' Club of Boston May 2004

A Message to Our Members

The Board of the Boston China Students' Club recently considered various fundraising ideas to help ensure the quality of our ongoing lecture series. A decision was reached to offer our members sponsorship opportunities for individual lectures. Sponsors will be acknowledged both in Shards and prior to each presentation. Lecture sponsorship has been set at two hundred dollars. We greatly appreciate your membership, involvement, and, if possible, occasional sponsorship support. If interested, contact Carolyn Parsons Roy at 603-422-7526 or croy@strawberrybanke.org.

We are disappointed to have learned recently that the Women's Educational and Industrial Union

in Boston will close its doors this summer. Thus, the China Students' Club is seeking a new regular lecture and meeting venue. The College Club on the first block of Commonwealth Avenue seems to be the most likely possibility.

We may, at the new location, be afforded the option of eating lunch (individual choice to participate) either before or after the lecture. Do you prefer a lecture at 11:00AM, with a lunch option to follow, or an 11:30AM lunch option to be followed by the lecture? Your input is much desired. Please contact Carolyn to make your views known.

Jim Kaufman

Seventy Years Later

By Donald Ferland

The first meeting of the China Students' Club of Boston, Inc., was held on 17 April 1934 at the Twentieth Century Club, at 3 Joy Street in Boston. Twenty-nine people were in attendance. The original statement of purpose that the members of the club be "students" of ceramics is still in effect. This is the oldest organization in the United States formed specifically for the study and appreciation of ceramics.

As the end of the 2003-2004 club year approaches, there are 96 members (85 individual, 8 family, and 3 honorary). Seventy-three members are from Massachusetts, 7 Rhode Island, 6 New Hampshire, 3 Connecticut, 3 Maine, 2 New York, 1 Maryland, and 1 Vermont.

The longevity of the current members may be of some interest. (The record cards in Vivian Hawes' file box are incomplete and inconsistent; some members are listed as having joined during a given club year and for others the joining dates are indicated. Joining dates were not located for Barbara Clemson, Susan Hill Dolan, and Louise Williamson.)

1959-1960:

Catherine Fennelly

1964-1965:

Vernona Gomez Banas

1966-1967:

Dorothy-Lee Jones, Mary Andrews Wolff

1967-1968:

Consuelo Cotter

1972-1973:

Harriett Carlton Goldweitz, Diana Edwards Murnaghan

1973-1974:

Faith Tiberio

1974-1975:

Jean Stetson

1975-1976:

Beverly Rosen

1979-1980:

Nancy Smith

1980-1981:

Louise Richardson

Continued on page 2



Seventy Years Later

Continued from page 1

1981-1982:

Penny Sander (honorary member), William Sargent, Marilyn and Glenn Shealey

1984-1985:

Crosby Forbes, Carolyn Parsons Roy

1985-1986:

Barbara Glauber, Tracy Wiggin

1986-1987:

Donald Ferland

1988-1989:

Elizabeth and Jeffrey Brown, Anne Kilguss, Charlotte Wilcoxon

1989-1990:

Barbara Cummings, Jane Leatherbee, Beck Whittemore

1990-1991:

Jo Ann Brown, Barbara Hoadley

1991-1992:

Elizabeth Aidicon, Marion Bianchi, Stuart Slavid, Grace Yeomans Thaler

1992-1993:

Sandra Adams, Anne Lanning, Martha Pinello, Barbara Renner, Jacqueline Schonbrun, Linda and William Wiseman

1993-1994:

Gretchen Viall, Estelle Tomson Wilson

1994-1995:

Merrily Glosband, Nicholas Johnson, David Kantrowitz, Amanda Lange, Julia Smith

1995-1996:

Carl Crossman, James Kaufman, Margaret Walsh,

John Wright

1996-1997:

Dora and Yonathan Bard, Abigail Homer, Klaudia Shepard

1997-1998:

Cheryl Robertson, Mary Sidney Treyz, Nan Wolverton

1998-1999:

Robert Barth, Barbara and Clarke Comollo

1999-2000:

Karina Corrigan, Betty Douglas

2000-2001:

Allison Andrews, Nancy Carlisle (honorary member), Emma Christopher, Elaine Gordon, Marcia Lightbody

2001-2002:

Adams National Historical Park/Cultural Resources, Lorna Condon, Martha Frigoletto, Sally McBrearty, and Andrew Hill, Johanna McBrien, Marilee Meyer, Patricia Ostrander, Carol Riley, Marguerite Schnepel, Gerald Ward (honorary member)

2002-2003:

Ruth Brennan, James Fichter and Bruce McAllister, Karen Fischer, Jessica Lanier, Emma and Jay Lewis, Patricia Sanford, Mickail Simmons, Tara Webber, Ronald White

2003-2004:

Barbara Almy, Jill Carni, Patricia El-Baz, Marietta Lynch, Yvedt Matory, Edward McCabe, Shirley Nichols, Elsie Page, Edward Stanley, Frederick Watson

Robert Mowry on Korean Ceramics: The Great Tradition

Report by Jeff Brown

The CSC reconvened in the New Year for the second half of its program season with Program Director Ann Lanning introducing Robert Mowry, Curator of Chinese Art at the Harvard University Art Museums. Mr. Mowry addressed the group on *Korean Ceramics: The Great Tradition*, a subject that attracted him during a stay in that country after college while in the Peace Corps.

Mr. Mowry first dispelled any 20th century im-

pressions we may have had of Korea. Subjugated by Japan between 1910 and 1945 and then ruined and impoverished by the Korean War, these tragedies were not the norm throughout most this country's vibrant history. On the contrary, from the earliest times Korea, rich in natural resources, has been a technological leader second only to its much larger neighbor, China. And it is a testimony to the resource-

Continued on page 3



Korean Ceramics

Continued from page 2

fulness and brilliance of the Korean culture that as soon as China developed any innovation in ceramics, or any of the arts, Korea readily adopted it and equaled it. One only needs to look at present day Korea to see how in a mere fifty years it has surged back from the devastation of war to become a huge thriving economy—that resilience and resourcefulness is the norm. That is the culture that has produced such magnificent ceramics.

Korea's culture goes back several thousand years, but Mr. Mowry started with ceramics produced during the Three Kingdoms period around the 5th and 6th centuries A.D. The country had not yet been united under one central governmental system; so there were the Silla, Paekche and Koguryo kingdoms. Koguryo was by far the largest and most powerful,

occupying most of the northern peninsula, but the two smaller kingdoms were the great artistic centers. Much of what survives from this period comes from large royal and aristocratic burial mounds that still dot the countryside to this day. The mounds are loaded with ceramic vessels, sometimes still containing the remnants of food offerings intended to nourish the spirits of the dead. The most common forms found are covered food cups or bowls on tall perforated pedestal bases. The Koreans were just starting to adapt Chinese characters as their written language so, unfortunately, there exist no in-depth descriptions of their religious beliefs from this period. The ceramics from this time in all three kingdoms were made of unglazed grey stoneware. Producing these humble wares was no mean feat and the Chinese and the Koreans were the only ones at this time who were technologically advanced enough to do it. These grey stonewares would later be the foundation for the famous Korean celadons. Sometimes these light-colored wares have a dark carbon skin as they were fired without saggars and had no protection from the smoke in the kilns. These wares were relatively undecorated except for the perforated bases. Other common forms were covered jars for holding wine or oil, and round-bottomed jars. It has been speculated that the round-bottomed jars were placed upright in depressions in earthen floors or were meant to sit in stands. Another characteristic of Korean ceramics of this period that continues throughout their history is an interest in sculptural and openwork decoration. The Koreans probably took their inspiration from Chinese tomb figures, but whereas the Chinese figures were specifically intended as sculpture, the Koreans tended to make sculptural figures into functional objects.

The Three Kingdoms period lasted from the first century B.C. down to the 7th century. In 668, the Korean peninsula was unified for the first time in history by the small kingdom of Silla with the aid of China. With this unification comes the introduction and dominance of Buddhism. The unified Silla period runs from 668 until 935, contemporary with



**Tall unglazed stoneware Ceremonial Stand
5th-6th century**

Continued on page 4



Korean Ceramics

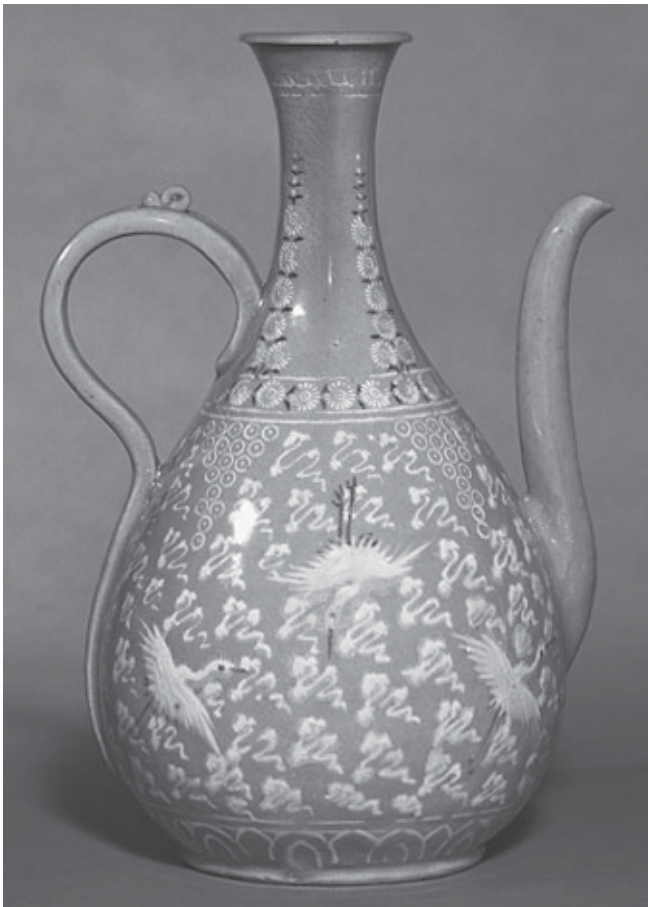
Continued from page 3

China's Tang dynasty. Stonewares continue to be made, but the tall conical base disappears and older more complex forms fade away in favor of more sophisticated forms from China. There is also the slow appearance of low-fired glazes and stamped decoration, both foundations for later celadons.

All these innovations came together in the Koryo dynasty, founded in 918 and running until 1392. This was a Golden Age and the aesthetic ideals of the Koreans matched those of the Song dynasty in China. Most of the lacquer, metalwork, Buddhist painting, and ceramics were mirror images of their counterparts in China. The great celadons were produced during this period along the southwestern coast where the best clays were found. These wares were direct imitations of the ones being made

in China. The earliest celadons were undecorated, but very quickly they moved on to incised decoration in the 11th and 12th centuries. From the mid 12th century on, there are pieces carved in low relief. The old taste for sculpture and openwork asserted itself, too, as evidenced from a fine brushrest that Mr. Mowry called "one of the treasures of world ceramics." The next innovation came in the form of slip filled inlaid designs, using contrasting colors to make up the decoration. There were also painted designs as well as marbelized wares made up of three clays all covered with a celadon glaze.

The last of Korea's historical dynasties, The Choson or Yi dynasty, ran from 1392 until its fall in 1910. With its establishment, the Buddhist religion was pushed aside and neo-Confucianism was adopted as the state religion. The Koreans practiced it even more strictly than the Chinese. While later Chinese ceramics were characterized by an ever broadening palette of colors, in Korea the ceramics made for ritual use were pure white and the aesthetic was one of severe restraint. There are two branches of ceramic development during the Choson period—one is porcelain and the other is the punchong stonewares—becoming the successors to the earlier stonewares. The pongchung wares are characterized by thinner celadon glazes which produce a very light-colored grey surface. Whereas the celadons were celebrated during the previous dynasty, they became rather humble wares during the Choson period. They were oftentimes painted over their thinly glazed bodies in an attempt to imitate porcelain. The wares never seem to be dipped in glaze, but instead the glaze was brushed on. As for the porcelain, a great deal was made in the 14th and 15th centuries, but because of wars, little of it survives. Some of the 16th and 17th century pieces were decorated with underglaze iron slip. This is a rare departure from the Chinese who almost never use brown slip to decorate porcelain. Another color used was underglaze copper red—notoriously difficult to work with as it required very precisely controlled firing temperatures. A classic Korean form was established about this time—a jar with very wide shoulders tapering



Celadon ewer with inlaid floral and crane-and-cloud décor, Koryo Dynasty, early 13th century



Korean Ceramics

Continued from page 4

down to a very narrow base. Decoration seemed to be based directly on silk and scroll paintings, freely done across the object, unlike the Chinese who liked their symmetric designs contained within borders and reserves. The shade of cobalt was paler than that used in China.

For the most part, ceramic development in Korea has pretty much mirrored the technological and aesthetic developments in China over the past 2000 years.

Mr. Mowry concluded noting that we are fortunate to have in Boston two of the finest collections of Korean ceramics in the country—one at the MFA and the other at Harvard’s Sackler Museum.

Note: The illustrations accompanying this report were taken from the Harvard Museums website. The illustrated items are all in the Sackler collection.

On right: Blue-and-white porcelain Long-Necked Bottle with Bamboo and Blossoming- Plum Branch Decor; Choson Dynasty, 19th century



Linda Roth on Detecting the Hand of the Artist: Sèvres Painters on Porcelain Report by Jeff Brown

Our March meeting convened at Seccomb Hall to hear Linda Roth, Curator of European and Decorative Arts at the Wadsworth Athenaeum, speak on “Detecting the Hand of the Artist: Sevres Painters on Porcelain.” Attendance appeared to be the highest we’ve had this year—obviously a very popular subject!

“Sèvres” porcelain was initially produced in soft paste during the 1740s at the Chateau of Vincennes. The factory later relocated to its present site, the Parisian suburb of Sèvres, and continued to produce both hard and soft paste wares up until about 1800 when it switched to exclusively hard paste porce-

lain. Before the Revolution, under royal patronage, it became the pre-eminent porcelain manufactory in Europe, known for its innovation and the high quality of its wares and decoration, surpassing even the great Meissen factory.

Most of these early masterpieces are not marked and early Vincennes factory records are sketchy. Painters’ marks on individual pieces were not introduced until the 1750s. At best, with scrutiny, we can group together pieces that have stylistic affinities with each other and attribute those to a single artist. Linda pointed out small details such as facial fea-

Continued on page 6



Sevres Painters on Porcelain

Continued from page 5

tures on certain figures or the manner in which flowers, foliage or drapery were rendered, that can help one identify the hand of a specific artist. By associating these pieces together with one painter's hand we can get an understanding of the painter's output and achievements, although his identity may forever be unknown.

Much scholarship on Sèvres has until now been concerned with the introduction of new shapes and models or with known artists and modelers. By sorting and grouping stylistic details we can give these unknown painters an artistic identity.

Some painters to whom Linda has tried to attribute various unmarked pieces are Phillippe Xrowet who was with the manufactory from 1750-1755 and a pair of brothers by the name of Armand (known as the elder and the younger) who worked at Vincennes/Sèvres from the mid 1740s into the 1750s as well as a prominent figure painter, Antoine Caton, who was active from 1749-1790.

With all these artists the methodology remains the same—find a marked piece by the painter and stylistically try to match the work with other unmarked pieces. Just to make things interesting, though, some popular scenes and images were often repeated on more than one object, and not always painted by the same painter. All these artists had specialties, whether floral designs or birds, children, putti, military or genre scenes—each with their telltale attributes of brushstroke and rendering. Details hold the clue!



Sèvres pot-pourri a jours, ca. 1752-53, Wadsworth Atheneum; possibly painted by Armand the younger



Left: Sèvres Vase Urnes Antiques, ca. 1770, painted by Jean-Baptiste-Etienne Genest, Wadsworth Atheneum
Right: Sèvres Vase Chinois, Firlle Place, Sussex, England (detail); possibly painted by Genest

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Upcoming Ceramics Events

CSC Meetings:

5/27: Jessica Lanier on 'Elias Hasket Derby and the Post-Revolutionary Ceramics Trade in Salem, 1785-1799,' plus Annual Meeting and Tea, 1 PM, Secomb Hall.

Auctions:

British and/or continental:

5/19, Christie's NY
5/20, Christie's London (19th century)
5/21, Sotheby's NY (French and Continental)
6/22, Christie's Paris
6/24, Christie's London
7/5, Christie's London
7/15, Sotheby's London
9/16, Christie's London

Asian:

5/18, Sotheby's Amsterdam (Chinese and Japanese)
5/19, Christie's Amsterdam (including porcelain from 16th century wreck off Mozambique)
6/7, Christie's London (Chinese monochrome

porcelain from E.T. Hall collection)
6/8, Christie's London (Chinese and Chinese export)
6/9, Sotheby's London
6/11, Christie's London (Chinese)
9/21, Christie's NY (Chinese)
9/22, Christie's NY (Japanese and Korean)
9/30, Christie's London (Japanese)
10/31, Sotheby's Hong Kong (Chinese)

Miscellaneous:

6/2-5, Christie's NY (Doris Duke collection)
6/8, Christie's Milan (Maiolica and porcelain)
6/15, Sotheby's Milan
6/21, Sotheby's London.

Conferences and Seminars:

The Northern Ceramic Society Summer School this year is entitled *People & Pots*. Chester College, Chester, England, 11-15 August 2004. For information contact lyn.hillis@btinternet.com.

Bits and Pieces

On the afternoon of February 22 a small but distinguished audience gathered at the Dedham Historical Society to view this year's crop of Bits and Pieces, led by experts Jeff Brown, Dorothy-Lee Jones, Louise Richardson, and Tracy Wiggin. A sampling of the pieces discussed appears on this and the following page.



Pennington teapot, 1780-90



Caughley cream jug with decoration by Chamberlin, 1780s



Tea & toast plate and cup, possibly French, 1870s



Contents

A Message to Our Members 1
 Seventy Years Later, By Donald Ferland 1
 Robert Mowry on Korean Ceramics: The Great Tradition, Report by Jeff Brown 2
 Linda Roth on Detecting the Hand of the Artist: Sevres Painters on Porcelain
 Report by Jeff Brown 5
 Upcoming Ceramics Events 7
 Bits and Pieces 7

Note: The report on Andrew Maske's lecture on Japanese ceramics was not ready in time for this issue. It will appear in the next one.

Bits and Pieces (continued)

Right: filligreed tin-glazed plate of unknown date and origin
 Below, right: large Chinese Export punch (?) pot with Imari decoration, ca. 1770; plus a small Chinese Export teapot with oval reserves on powder-blue ground, ca. 1750—toy or miniature?



Persian (?) hookah and ceramic tile, probably 20th century



Beakers: Chelsea (1747-9) and Meissen-Böttger (ca. 1715, decoration later)

Brameld imitation-
Wedgwood jug, 1806-10