

SHARDS

A Newsletter of the

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China Students' Club of Boston

September 2006

A Message from Our President

Dear Members,

It was my great pleasure to assume the presidency of the China Students' Club of Boston last May. At the annual meeting our outgoing President Carolyn Roy ceremoniously passed onto me the Club's gavel and her good wishes. I want to thank Carolyn for her devoted work, energy, and enthusiasm for the past two years! I have big shoes to fill.

As school starts up again and the leaves begin to change, our minds return to the official start of another year of programming and activities of the Club. This Fall 2006- Spring 2007 year will bring an exciting group of speakers to the Club, including Yonathan Bard, Robin Emmerson, Wendy Harvey, Robert Mowry, Carolyn Roy, John B. Vander Sande, and Barbara Veith. For more information about specific programs, please see the schedule printed in the Blue Book and in this issue of *Shards*.

As one of the oldest groups devoted to the study, appreciation, and understanding of ceramics, we rely on our members to share the fruits of their research and

collecting. I want to thank Carolyn Roy and Yonathan Bard for their contributions to the program calendar. I also encourage anyone who is interested in preparing a lecture or more informal program for the Club to get in touch with Anne Lanning, Program Director.

For those of you who often can't get to meetings, our Newsletter *Shards* provides a great way to keep in touch and up to date on the latest news and research. As always, we appreciate current members who share their interest in the Club with potential new members; this can be as easy as inviting someone to a meeting and letting them know what we have to offer. As we approach the celebration of our 75th anniversary in 2009, I hope to see new faces in the coming months!

Thank you for your assistance in publicizing and promoting our Club. Please feel free to call me at (413) 775-7206 or look me up at a meeting to share ideas, opinions, and strategies for our Club's future. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Best wishes,
Amanda Lange

Jennifer Goldsborough on "Fit for an American Empress: Betsy Patterson Bonaparte's French China" Report by Jeff Brown

Editor's note: Unfortunately we were unable to obtain pictures of any of the china, but Betsy's and Jerome's pictures appear on the back page.

Elizabeth (Betsy) Patterson's life reads like a true 19th century romance novel. Born one of thirteen children to a very wealthy Baltimore merchant, William Patterson, she was a dazzling beauty with a captivating intelligence and biting wit. In 1803 she met the youngest brother of Napoleon Bonaparte, Jerome, a dashing French naval officer, at a ball given in his honor. In less than twelve weeks they fell in love and impetuously married on Christmas Eve over the objections of all their families and friends. They toured the new American

Republic on their wedding trip and were received as royalty wherever they went. Betsy's impressive jewelry collection, revealing style of dress, and great wit, scandalized society and caused quite a sensation. In the spring of 1805, the couple sailed for Europe to face the Emperor who had been opposed to this union from the start. Betsy was six months pregnant when the ship was refused entry into France. Jerome left Betsy in Portugal and made his way to Paris to plead his case face to face with his brother Napoleon. Betsy never saw him again. The very dashing but rather weak-minded Jerome was browbeaten by his brother into abandoning this mar-

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Betsy Patterson Bonaparte's French China

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riage to a commoner, and was later used by Napoleon as a pawn in his marriage game to install relatives on as many thrones of Europe as possible. Napoleon had the civil authorities declare the marriage invalid. The Pope, though, refused to annul the union. It is interesting to note that all of Jerome's siblings and his mother served as advocates on Betsy's behalf and it was Napoleon alone who was adamant about the dissolution of the marriage. In 1807 Jerome was married off to the Princess of Würtemberg and was styled the "King of Westphalia." In 1805, Betsy's son, Jerome Napoleon, was born in England where she had taken refuge. She then returned to her father's house in Baltimore. She spent the rest of her long life fighting for her son and grandsons to be accepted as legitimate princes and heirs of France and it is to her credit that she was relatively successful—no matter what the regime, republican or royalist, she was awarded a pension from the French government throughout the 19th century.

It was in 1819, on one of her earlier extended trips to France to press her claims, that she most likely purchased her Paris porcelain. The china has descended through the family to the Maryland Historical Society and it is a very interesting collection to study. Some of the pieces bear the mark of "Stone, Coquerel et Le Gros" and it is assumed that the whole set came from this company which did not make the porcelain but, rather, was a decorating shop. Le Gros, who had previously worked at Creil, perfected the transfer-printing method on creamware. But Stone, Coquerel et Le Gros seem to have been among the few decorators who did transfer-printing on porcelain. The partnership broke up in 1818 and was having a large close-out sale of its stock during Betsy's visit. This would explain the hodge-podge of designs on her china which technically isn't really a "set." Stylistically it works as a group, but nothing completely matches. The porcelain bodies vary as the decorators used different blanks from different sources. Each piece has a neoclassically designed border, some gilding, and a central scene. But the amount of gilding varies and the

borders and scenes and themes vary—although they each relate somehow to at least one other piece in the group. They all have black overglaze transfer printing, which is rare on porcelain of this period. Some prints are hand-colored and some have a sepia/bronze background. Intended as a dessert service, there are two different pairs of ice cream urns, fruit baskets, sauce tureens, shaped dishes, and stacks of plates all relating to one another. One finds a pair of dishes with one style of design and thirteen with another. Some of the scenes are of English country houses, some are classical, some of the Muses, some are architectural engravings; more gilding, less gilding...; the differences abound. The set is a great case study of how decorators were working in Paris in the early 19th century.

The set is in pristine condition primarily because we think it was never used! Betsy spent her life traveling back and forth across the Atlantic, staying with friends or relatives or in discreet boarding houses and she never established a household of her own. Her meticulous inventories pay great attention to clothes and jewelry, but no interest is shown for china or furnishings. The porcelain was probably purchased simply because it was considered part of the trappings of the life she aspired to for herself and her son.

Betsy continued to dazzle and captivate high society until the end of her life, and was horrified when her son, while attending Harvard, fell in love and married a "commoner" from Boston!



A Stone, Coquerel et Le Gros plate recently offered on Ebay (no connection to Betsy Patterson)

Please send comments/contributions to: Yonathan Bard, 6 Holland Street, Newton, MA 02458; telephone (617) 244-7688, fax (617) 965-2897, e-mail (the preferred venue!) doryon@rcn.com



Bob Barth on “Yixing to Elers and Beyond: A Superficial Review of Unglazed Red Stoneware Teawares” Summary by Bob Barth

Unglazed red stonewares from “zisha” or purple sand clays of Yixing are documented as far back as circa 900 AD. Teawares in this medium were probably copied from earlier wine pots and unless inscribed poems referring specifically to tea are present it can be difficult to differentiate. The earliest documented Yixing teapot was excavated from the grave of an individual who died in 1534. In the late Ming dynasty unglazed red stoneware was preferred by the Chinese as it was believed that the slight porosity of the pots purified the water and improved the taste of the tea. Among scholars, poets, and other intelligentsia red stoneware was preferred over porcelain which was associated with the vulgar rich. Teawares by master potters were highly prized and collected, commanding fantastic prices.

Surfaces might be left sandy or burnished to a sheen. Variant clays yielded colors ranging from yellow to red to purple.

With the introduction of tea to Europe in the mid-17th century lesser quality red stoneware teapots were imported (Fig 1 left) as well as blue and white wares and Blanc-de-Chine porcelain of Dehua.

Some period European paintings show the mixing of porcelain cups and saucers with a red stoneware teapot; thus the idea of improved taste imparted by red stoneware had presumably been transferred to the Eu-

ropean market.

In the 1670s the supply of teapots to the European market had been outstripped by demand and several Dutch delftware potters began imitating the Yixing stonewares (Fig 1 right) from which they are easily distinguished. The Dutch pots were thrown and required a maker’s mark, while the Yixing are built up from slabs and seamed. Ary de Milde was the most prolific of the Dutch makers and apparently he was instrumental in helping Böttger develop his red stonewares by 1708. Böttger copied both de Milde and Yixing pots. They are easy to distinguish as they are press-molded and seamed in 3 parts. The seams are easily discerned even on the exterior. Unfortunately they are also frequently faked.

In England, archaeological investigations at John Dwight’s Fulham pottery reveal that he had experimented in the 1680s with thrown unglazed red stone teawares, but none have survived and it is doubtful they were commercially produced.

The brothers John Phillip and David Elers, Dutch-born and trained metal smiths, arrived in London around 1685 and between 1690 and 1693 were producing slipcast red salt-glazed stone teawares until one of John Dwight’s many lawsuits over patent infringement exiled

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Fig 1 Left: Yixing unglazed red stoneware teapot, ca. 1700, with contemporary European metal mounts.

Right: Dutch thrown unglazed red stoneware teapot, marked Ary de Milde, ca. 1685, with contemporary silver mounts.



Unglazed Red Stoneware Teawares

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them to Bradwell Wood in Staffordshire where from 1693 to 1697 they produced some of the finest unglazed red stonewares ever made (Fig 2 center). Until the 1930s most of their wares were misattributed, and most wares attributed to them had not been made until the 1760s. In 1936 E. B. Honey finally correctly assigned most Elers wares on the basis of style of decoration; but it wasn't until the 1970s and 1980s that Gordon Elliott, utilizing archaeological finds at Bradwell Wood, experimentation, and documentary research, appears to have definitively differentiated Elers wares from all others with reasonable certainty. He determined that the pieces reassigned to Elers by Honey were all slipcast, whereas the mid 18th century wares, previously assigned to Elers, were all thrown. Indeed, the Elers appear to have invented the technique of slipcasting. The unusually fine-grained and homogeneous Bradwell Wood clay allowed the Elers to slipcast their wares without the use of additives required by almost all red clays—a technique not rediscovered until the 19th century.

The Elers lathe-turned exterior surfaces while in the leather-state to a silky smoothness, while leaving the interior diffusely granular. The fine turning marks are faintly seen. Other characteristics include light weight and thin walls, although the bases are relatively thick as coarse particles of slip settle to the bottom. Bubbles rise to the shoulders where they may be seen broken

into by the lathe. Some wares are marked with one or more of four different pseudo-Chinese hallmarks. Color varies from light-red to a deep plum-purple due to variations in reduction firing.

The decoration on Elers pieces consists almost entirely of stylized tea branches or prunus in imitation of Yixing, while the decoration on later thrown pots is similar to contemporary white salt-glazed stoneware circa 1760 (Fig 2 left).

Although awareness of Elers wares is increasing, most auction houses, dealers, and collectors still tend to designate these pots as Yixing. The Elers produced a wide variety of forms of higher quality than the imported Yixing or the Dutch, and their wares reached a wide market. Many pieces have recently been found in continental Europe in museums, including the collection of Augustus the Strong. Almost all were catalogued as Yixing until quite recently.

Although production of European unglazed red stone teawares was sporadic and short-lived, Yixing wares have been continuously produced to the present time. Indeed, in the 1930s master-potters in Yixing were producing imitations of Ming pots which have found their way into the market and major museum and private collections. That said, some very nice, contemporary Yixing teawares can be found, particularly in museum shops (Peabody-Essex, MFA) at very reasonable prices (Fig 2 right).



Fig 2 Left: Staffordshire thrown, unglazed red stoneware teapot, ca. 1760.

Center: Slipcast and lathe turned unglazed red stoneware tea canister, marked with pseudo-oriental hallmark; attributed to Elers; Staffordshire, ca. 1695.

Right: Yixing unglazed, polychrome red stoneware teapot, 2005, price \$21 at MFA shop.



Upcoming Ceramics Events

CSC Meetings

All meetings at 1 PM at the College Club, 44 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

9/27, “At the Sign of the Golden Teapot:” Abraham Isaac in 18th-Century Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Carolyn Parsons Roy, C.S.C. member

10/26, The Vivian Hawes Memorial Lecture: *The Early English Tea Ceremony*; Robin Emmerson, Curator of the Department of Decorative Art, National Museums, Liverpool

11/30, *Collecting Ceramics for an Early Coastal Massachusetts Home*; John B. Vander Sande, collector

1/25/07, *Chinese Porcelain: The Yuan Revolution (1279-1368)*; Robert D. Mowry, Alan J. Dworsky Curator of Chinese Art, Harvard University Art Museums

2/22, Bits and Pieces; Members are invited to bring an object or two for discussion

3/22, *Tiles—Commonplace, Yet Sublime*; Wendy Harvey, tile enthusiast

4/26, *Edward Lycey and the Faience Manufacturing Company*; Barbara Veith, Research Associate, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

5/24, Annual Meeting and Tea; *Lady Charlotte Schreiber: Collector Extraordinary*; Yonathan Bard, C.S.C. member.

Auctions

Asian:

9/6, Christie’s London

9/19, Christie’s NY (Chinese)

9/21, Sotheby’s NY (Chinese)

9/21, Christie’s NY (Japanese, Korean)

10/8, Sotheby’s Hong Kong (Chinese)

10/21, Skinner, Boston

10/31, Christie’s Amsterdam (Chinese, Japanese)

11/8-9, Sotheby’s London (Chinese, Japanese)

11/10, Christie’s London (Chinese)

11/15, Sotheby’s Amsterdam (Chinese, Japanese)

11/28, Christie’s Hong Kong (Chinese)

British and/or continental:

9/9, Skinner Boston: a two-owner fine ceramics sale featuring (1) the Zeitlin Collection of English Pottery. The Zeitlins of Philadelphia were one of the premier collec-

tors of pottery in the second half of the 20th century and the collection includes a wide variety of early Wedgwood, Doulton, Minton, Martin Brothers, DeMorgan, Delft wares, and 18th century lead-glazed wares with tortoiseshell glazes, agate ware, Pratt-type ware and a variety of Leeds wares; and (2) the Klein Collection of Wedgwood consisting of a wide variety of types and glazes, mostly manufactured post-1850

9/7, 10/19, 11/30, Christie’s London

9/28, Sotheby’s London

10/3, Christie’s Amsterdam (incl. Dutch Delft)

Miscellaneous:

10/30, 12/18, Christie’s London.

Conferences

9/15-17, With the publication of the catalogue *Chinese Export Art at Historic Deerfield* (2005) and the exhibition “The Canton Connection: Art and Commerce of the China Trade, 1784-1860,” Historic Deerfield in Deerfield, Massachusetts, will host a three-day symposium on the “Decorative Arts of the China Trade.” The speakers and their topics are: Patrick Conner, *Early China Trade Pictures: Origins and Oddities*; Karina Corrigan, *Chinese Export Furniture: The Scent of Rosewood and the Sheen of Lacquer*; Carl Crossman, *Good, Better, Best: The Connoisseurship of China Trade Paintings*; Ron Fuchs, *Made in China: Export Porcelain from the Leo and Doris Hodroff Collection at Winterthur*; Amanda Lange, *The Canton Connection: Art and Commerce of the China Trade*; Edward Maeder, *What’s Chinese about Chinese Textiles: A Workshop on Chinese Silks and Embroideries*; Thomas Michie, *From Parapet to Pantry: The Impact of the China Trade on New England Architecture and Interiors*; and William Sargent, *New Theories for New Acquisitions at the Peabody Essex Museum*.

For more information contact Amanda Lange at (413) 775-7206 or lange@historic-deerfield.org.

Exhibitions:

Cosmophilia: Islamic Art from the David Collection, McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA; until 12/31. (*Editor’s note: Go see it !!!*)



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Yours affly E.P.



Jerome Bonaparte

Betsy Patterson and Jerome Bonaparte