

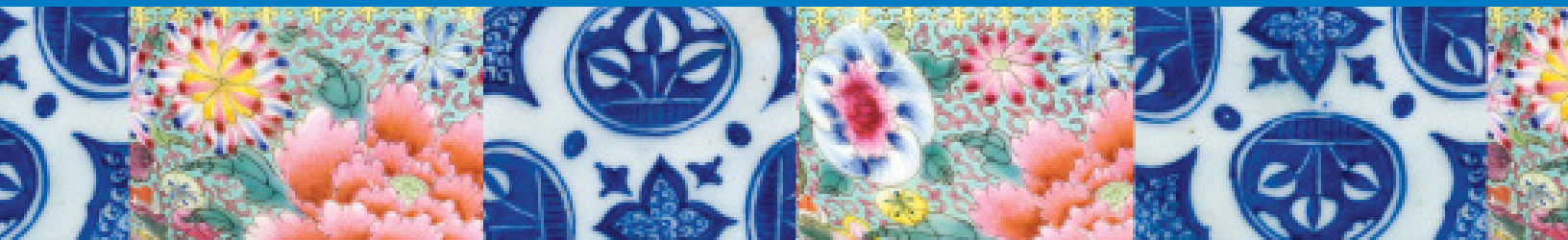


The Potter's Tale

Contextualizing 6,000 Years of Ceramics

26 August 2014 – 31 May 2015

VISITOR'S GUIDE





INTRODUCTION

Ceramics have transformed the world. For thousands of years, humans have shaped and fired clay into practical, social, artistic, and ideological objects that can be found in almost every culture around the globe. Important social and scientific information imbedded in manufacturing techniques and decorative motifs of ceramics has been passed on for generations, exchanged between cultures, and has revolutionized people's way of life. This exhibition highlights the Art Museum's ceramic collection which spans six continents and six thousand years. Looking through the lens of cultural and technological influences and exchanges, this showcase seeks to reveal the depth and diversity of the collection and the power these wares possess in shaping our functional, social, and esthetic lives.

The Potter's Tale: Contextualizing 6,000 Years of Ceramics
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

Curated by
Aaron F. Miller, Assistant Curator of Visual and Material Culture
Yingxi Lucy Gong, Art Museum Advisory Board Fellow

This exhibition is made possible by the Susan Davenport Page 1931 and Margaret Davenport Page Fales 1929 Art Fund.

Technology & Production

As the fragmentary pieces in this case demonstrate, there are three primary types of ceramics: earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain. These categories differ based upon both the clay and the temperatures at which the vessels are fired in the kiln. Earthenware is fired at the lowest temperatures, and as a result, is the most porous and susceptible to cracking. The higher temperatures used for stoneware and porcelain also require specific varieties of clays and other minerals to allow the process of vitrification to occur, in which the silica in the clay becomes glass. Both stoneware and porcelain are impermeable to liquids, but porcelain is distinguishable by its pure white, semi-translucent body.

The ceramic variety is only part of the story. Many wares are glazed for both functional and aesthetic reasons. Glazing is particularly important for earthenware, and acts as a sealant to ensure that the contained liquids and foodstuffs aren't absorbed into the porous body, which would result in breakage. Different glazing compounds (lead, tin, salt, manganese, and more) produce various colors and textures in the firing process. Both before and after the application of the glaze, pigments and thin clay slips can be added to create diverse and dazzling motifs.

1



Kiln waster of fused bowls, Sukhothai period (1238-1438)
Sukhothai (from Sawankhalok, Thailand)
Stoneware with underglaze iron-oxide pigment
Private Collection
2013.L3

Heat fluctuations in the kiln resulted in this amalgamation of fused dishes and kiln furniture. This example was discarded, then later excavated, and offers a rare glimpse of how vessels were arranged during firing. It reveals that between each bowl the potters placed a small ceramic stilt to (in this case unsuccessfully) allow separation between vessels during firing and to permit glazing on all sides of an object.

2



Tripod stilt kiln furniture, 323-31 BCE
Hellenistic (from Nicaea, Turkey)
Earthenware with black glaze
Gift of Mrs. Frank S. Owen (Margaret Owen)
in memory of Austin B. Mason
1989.7.31

This example of a Hellenistic kiln spacer stilt or “spur” bears remnants of the black glaze that was used to coat the vessels in the kiln. One cannot help imagining the potentially stunning ceramics that shared the kiln with this object. (See Fig 1)



Fig 1. Cross-section of bowls in the kiln showing tripod stilts (image from The Fitzwilliam Museum)

3



Plate fragment, early 17th century
Dutch (from the Netherlands)
Earthenware with tin glaze and blue pigment
Private Collection

Although earthenware comes in many colors, Dutch delftware is generally light-bodied yellow or tan. Note the thickness of the opaque white tin glaze.

4



Rhenish jug fragment, early 17th century
German (from Westerwald, Germany)
Stoneware with salt glaze and underglaze blue
Private Collection

This elaborate molded stoneware with its glossy salt glaze over a grey body is typical of many of these wares that were produced in both Germany and America.

5



Teabowl fragment, ca. 1730-1740 (Qing dynasty)
Chinese (from Jingdezhen, China)
Hard-paste porcelain with feldspathic glaze and underglaze blue
Private Collection

Through the firing process porcelain effectively becomes glass and held to a light a vessel appears translucent. Note the pure white body and glossy feldspar glaze.

From the Apothecary's Shop

The Museum is in many ways a collection of collections. These spectacular albarelli and drug jars highlight a much larger assemblage gathered over a lifetime by Joseph J. Hammer. Both shapes of these earthenware vessels were used in apothecary shops and in the home to store various wet and dry medicines and herbs. The examples here are coated with a white or bluish tin-based glaze. This technique evolved in the Near East as an attempt to replicate the appearance of porcelain. Spanning the 16th to 18th centuries, these apothecary vessels became canvases for striking and often sophisticated painting. They can reveal aspects of everyday life, from the crests of their noble owners to the prescribed remedies for maladies. Drawn from mythology, classical sources, science, folklore, religion, and politics, these designs offer a treasure trove of information.

6



Albarellino, ca. 1560-1570

Italian (from Castel Durante, Italy)

Earthenware with tin glaze and polychrome pigments
Joseph J. Hammer Collection, Gift of Roy A. Hammer
2002.3.3

Decorated with an entwined classical bust bordered by griffins, trophies, a cherub's head, and other motifs, this albarello carries the inscription "zuccarum violarum." The vessel was designed to store and preserve Zucchero Violato, a sweet compound made from violets and used for a variety of ailments. This cure-all was administered to aid the lungs, cure headaches, sleeplessness, and to balance the humors as well as flavoring drinks and as an ingredient in cooking.

7



Albarelo, 16th century

Italian (from Cafaggiolo, Italy)

Earthenware with tin glaze and polychrome pigments

Joseph J. Hammer Collection, Gift of Roy A. Hammer

2002.3.11

The abbreviated inscription describing the contents of this vessel has not yet been deciphered, though it is clear that it held some variety of preserve. Adding to its enigmatic nature, prior to the firing and painting process, a yet unidentified mark, likely that of the potter, was perforated on the surface of the vessel.

8



Drug bottle, 18th century

Italian (from Castelli d'Abruzzo, Italy)

Earthenware with tin glaze and blue pigment

Joseph J. Hammer Collection, Gift of Roy A. Hammer

2002.3.24

This bottle is one of a pair likely painted by Saverio Grue (1731-1799) or Gesualdo Fuina (1755-1822), master ceramicists from Castelli d'Abruzzo in southern Italy. This beautifully painted bouquet of irises and other flowers is a testament to the painter's virtuosity. In contrast, the applied foot shows another artist's hand, revealing a collaborative creative process. From the form and the abbreviations for Aqua Rosa Rubra we know the vessel contained rose water, an ingredient in a variety of products ranging from cosmetics and perfume, to drinks and cooking.

9



Wet drug jar, early 18th century

Italian (from Savona, Italy)

Earthenware with tin glaze and blue pigment

Joseph J. Hammer Collection, Gift of Roy A. Hammer

2002.3.45

The ornate decoration of this vessel focuses on a galloping armored knight bordered by a pair of haloed eagles perched over open books, perhaps a nod to the Holy Roman Empire. A hidden element created by the potter, but neglected by the painter, is the molded face at the base of the handle. The abbreviation "JULEP. SOL. MAG." stands for sweet marjoram julep, a drink used to treat coughs, colds, indigestion and to aid in relaxation and sleep.

10



Albarello, early 17th century

Italian (from Sicily, Italy)

Earthenware with tin glaze and polychrome pigments

Joseph J. Hammer Collection, Gift of Roy A. Hammer
2002.3.40

This vessel is decorated with a playfully painted classical bust above a Latin inscription. The reverse displays an equally whimsical image of a smiling satyr. The inscription consists of the abbreviation *pillole masticmor*, indicating the jar was used to store pills made from mastic resin harvested from the Mediterranean tree/shrub *Pistacia lentiscus* and used for gastrointestinal conditions.

11



Drug jar, ca. 1750

Dutch (from the Netherlands)

Earthenware with tin glaze and blue pigment

Joseph J. Hammer Collection, Gift of Roy A. Hammer
2002.3.50

Dutch and English delftware vessels like this one were produced by the tens of thousands throughout the 18th century. These jars were decorated with some variation of a contents label flanked by peacocks with a basket of fruit or flowers above and a cherub below. This example held mercury pills that were used to treat various maladies, most notably, syphilis.

Devotion & Delectation

DEVOTION

Religious subjects and decorations in clay have existed for millennia. Small-scale sculptures of deities and other religious figures have long been important devotional objects, used widely in private prayer and meditation. Other sculptures of religious scenes and subjects may have served primarily as decoration—a visually pleasing and collectible reminder of one’s own piety.

12



Bocage figure, early 19th century
British (from Staffordshire, England)
Refined earthenware (pearlware) with overglaze
polychrome enamels
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Bonadies
1986.27.23

The biblical scene of Abraham offering up his son Isaac for sacrifice is the subject of this figural work. Pious scenes like this one were made by the various potteries operating in Staffordshire in the early 19th century and were popular decorations on mantles and tables. The term *bocage* derives from the Germanic word for the foliage often seen behind the figures. Scenes like this were first modeled in European porcelains that required the physical support of the trees, before the clay was hardened in the firing process.

13



Seated Guanyin (Avalokiteshvara), mid to late 18th century with mark of Xuande reign (1425-1435)
 Chinese (from Dehua, China)
 Hard-paste porcelain (blanc de chine)
 Gift of the estate of Jennie Tower
 1944.12.J.G

The kilns of Dehua are famous for their *blanc de chine*—hard, white porcelain with a transparent glaze. The long-celebrated translucency and warm ivory color of Dehua ware was the result of very accurate temperature control in the kiln. This figure represents the Bodhisattva, Guanyin, who by this period was generally depicted as a graceful and benevolent woman (earlier depictions show Guanyin as male). The elegance of this small figurine is evident in its simple but masterful design. The figure bears some evidence of damage—it is missing the top half of its middle finger. There is some evidence of a Chinese tradition in which a family would break off a finger of a porcelain Guanyin on the occasion of the birth of a son. This vessel's damage could be accidental, but the possibility of an intentional break is intriguing. This figurine may have been used in private devotion in a Buddhist home, or made for export to the West, where such statuettes were valued as exotic collectables.

See another sculpture depicting Guanyin in the Norah J. Warbeke Asian Gallery.

DELECTATION

Religious subjects and decorations in clay have existed for millennia. Small-scale sculptures of deities and other religious figures have long been important devotional objects, used widely in private prayer and meditation. Other sculptures of religious scenes and subjects may have served primarily as decoration—a visually pleasing and collectible reminder of one's own piety.

14



Toby jug, ca. 1810-1820

British (from Staffordshire, England)

Refined earthenware (pearlware) with overglaze polychrome enamels

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Bonadies

1986.27.1

The origins of the toby jug are not totally clear although they are likely linked to the story of a corpulent and thirsty Yorkshire gentlemen by the name of Henry Elwes aka Toby Philpot (Fill-pot). The English poet Francis Fawkes (1721–1777) immortalized the man in his song, *The Brown Jug*, which described Toby in this colorful verse:

Dear Tom, this Brown Jug, which now foams with mild Ale,
 (In which I will drink to sweet Kate of the Vale,)
 Was once Toby Philpot, a thirsty old soul,
 As e'er crack'd a bottle or fathom'd a bowl:
 In boozing about 'twas his praise to excel,
 And among jolly topers [alcoholics] he bore off the bell.



Fig 2. Carrington Bowles, *Toby Fill-pot*, 1786 (image from the British Museum)

Made in myriad forms and often poking fun at celebrities and notables, these functional drinking vessels were produced by the hundreds of thousands from the late 1700s to today, amusing viewers for centuries. (See Fig 2)

15



Vessel with two feet, 1000-800 BCE

Persian (from Iran)

Earthenware

On loan from the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, New York

Relatively little is known about Iranian ceramics from the Iron Age. Objects like this wine-vessel, however, can give us remarkable glimpses into the lives and tastes of those who lived in the distant past. The bulbous body of the vessel may be a visual reference to a wine sack, indicating that its use was for drinking. The two feet allow the vessel to stand, but also make this a humorous take on a functional form.

Text Messages

Though function is often paramount, ceramic vessels also display myriad decorations and designs, and sometimes even written messages. Whether conveying national pride, social mores, or other proclamations, ceramics can be conspicuous means for both the serving of food and drink and the transmission of ideas. Sometimes these messages are explicit, other times more subtle.

16



Doucai stem cup, 1723-1735 (Qing dynasty, Yongzheng period)

Chinese (from Jingdezhen, China)

Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze blue and overglaze polychrome enamels

Gift of Mrs. Samuella Crosby (Class of 1880)
1936.7.Q.A

The shape of Chinese stem cups may have come from 7th-century metalwork, when China had close contact with Central Asia. Ceramic vessels of this shape started to emerge in the 13th century. This particular piece is much shallower than usual suggesting it may have been used for solid food instead of liquid. The elegant floral decorations exemplify the famous *doucai* (“contrasting colors”) technique, which combines underglaze cobalt blue with overglaze enamels to create this particular visual effect. On the inner foot of this stem cup, a single line of six Chinese characters reads: *Daqing Yongzheng Nian Zhi* (“Made in Qing dynasty Yongzheng period”), indicating that it was produced in the imperial kilns. (See Fig 3)



Fig 3. Detail of mark

17



Bowl with calligraphic inscription, 10th century
(Samanid period, 819–1005 CE)
Persian (from Nishapur, Iran or Samarkand, Uzbekistan)
Earthenware with white slip and black slip underglaze
decoration
Purchase with the John Martyn Warbeke Art Fund
2013.29.2

Bowls such as this one have been found in large numbers at the site of the medieval Iranian city of Nishapur, a thriving urban center during the Samanid Period (819–1005). The starkly graphic design of this bowl consists of one simple line of Arabic calligraphy, encircling the entirety of the bowl's deep rim. The gracefully elongated horizontals and sharp-tipped verticals of the letters are unique to an early type of Arabic calligraphy known as 'new style *kufic*.' As the bowl's sole decoration, the writing is simple yet visually powerful, and conveys a characteristic message: "Generosity is a disposition of the dwellers of Paradise. Good fortune." As a serving bowl likely used for entertaining on special occasions, the message of hospitality is apt.

18



Pitcher, ca. 1804
British (from Staffordshire, England)
Refined earthenware (creamware) with polychrome transfer-printed enamels
Joseph Allen Skinner Museum, Mount Holyoke College
SK 2006.487.INV

This large pitcher is decorated with an American trade ship above the banner "Success to Trade" accompanied by the Great Seal of the United States with a quote from Thomas Jefferson's first presidential inauguration speech. These pro-American themes reveal British ceramic manufacturers attempting to appeal to the hearts and wallets of American consumers. This trend began at a time of tentative relations between the two nations—just after the Revolution and before the War of 1812. The print on the verso entitled "A Man of War towing a Frigate into Harbour" portrays a British warship with what might be a seized American vessel – one of the issues that led to the War of 1812. If so, this would be an ironic illustration for the British manufactures to include on a pro-trade pitcher.

Six Centuries of Lusterware

Lustrous glazed ceramics first appeared in ninth-century Iraq in imitation of more expensive vessels made of silver and gold. With the spread of Islam into what is now Spain, these vessels were introduced to a receptive European market. Successive centuries saw new adaptations of these shiny metallic glazes and new variations of form and decoration. From the Early Middle Ages to the present, from the Islamic world to America, the allure of lusterware has endured.

19



Deep dish with bryony design,

ca. 1450-1475

Spanish (from Valencia or Manises, Spain)

Earthenware with tin glaze and luster-painted decoration

On loan from the Hispanic Society of America, New York, NY.

Lusterware first appeared in Spain in the 10th century during the reign of the Spanish Umayyads, a Muslim dynasty (Spain was under Islamic rule from 711 to 1492). Lusterware vessels were imported into Spain during this period, where they were welcomed as desirable luxury objects. Christian armies had retaken most of Spain by the time this dish was made in the 15th century, but the new rulers continued to employ Muslim artists and were deeply influenced by the designs, motifs, and techniques of the Islamic culture that had preceded them in the region. Despite that strong influence, the Christian milieu in which this was created is clearly announced by the initials in the middle of the dish – IHS – the monogram of Christ.

20



Shell molded wash basin, early 19th century

British (from Staffordshire, England)

Refined earthenware (pearlware) with luster-painted decoration

On loan from the President of Mount Holyoke College

For many years, a collection of objects related to the early history of Mount Holyoke College were displayed in the Mary Lyon Room within Mary Woolley Hall. During World War II, this space was used for volunteers knitting for the armed forces and the contents of the room were dispersed across the campus to make room for the war effort. Like many other objects from that collection, this basin may have belonged to the College's founder Mary Lyon. Based on the date of manufacture, this is a possibility. The basin and a matching pitcher were part of a lusterware wash set that has molded elements recalling the Rococo style. Lustrous glazed earthenware vessels were extremely popular in Great Britain and America in the early 19th century and the technique embellished many forms and designs.

21



Drug jar, 12th-13th century

Persian (probably from Kashan, Iran)

Stonepaste with tin glaze and luster-painted decoration

Purchase with the John Martyn Warbeke Art Fund
2013.29.1

Around the time this jar was made, a new ceramic technology was revolutionizing pottery production in Iran and much of the Islamic world. A composite-body ceramic called stonepaste, or frit, began replacing the more porous and fragile earthenware, allowing for greater variation in decorative techniques. The refined calligraphy (in this case, lines of poetry and good wishes) and ornate vegetal designs are rendered in gold-sheened luster against a creamy white ground. The popularity of lusterware in the Islamic world may have been due in part to a religious prohibition against gold vessels. It is also very likely that lusterware production responded to the demand of a growing and wealthy middle class who could afford such luxury ceramics.

Mark Hewitt: A Potter's Tale

This contemporary vessel is at first glance just that—contemporary. However, no work of art is created in a vacuum. This masterpiece of form and design was shaped by thousands of years of ceramic innovation and pottery traditions. The potter, Mark Hewitt, recognizes the influences that have molded him as an artist, from his kiln based on a centuries-old Thai model and his adaptation of Asian glazes, to the forms and decorative motifs of West Africa and the traditions of Europe and America.



Hewitt comes from a long family tradition of pottery making. He was born in Staffordshire, England, a major center of ceramic production. Like the region, his family has long ties to the ceramic industry. With a personal style deeply rooted in the history of global ceramics, Hewitt also plays an important role in the future of the medium. The surrounding objects illustrate the depth of the artist's foundation in ceramic history.

22



Vase, 960-1279 CE (Song dynasty)
Chinese (from Henan Province, China)
Stoneware with gray-green glaze and splashes of blue and plum glazes (Jun ware)
Gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation
2012.40.8

This spherical jar is an example of Jun ware, typically made for ordinary households across northern China during the Song dynasty. The most striking feature of this elegant spherical jar is the rich quality of its thick, semi-transparent, and flowing glaze. The crimson splashes result from the deliberate addition of copper to the glaze. Early examples exhibited light crimson spots which were embraced by subsequent potters whose use of the technique became increasingly bold and more common. The mastery of materials and firing seen in Jun ware and other Chinese ceramics has been a major influence in Hewitt's work.

23



Jidaga (water jug), 20th century
Bamana (from Mali)
Earthenware
Gift of Charles and Blanche Derby
2012.59.1

Hewitt spent time with the potters of Abuja, Nigeria studying and learning from various traditions of manufacture and decoration. This jidaga was fashioned by a Bamana potter of Mali and its applied motifs, coiled partitions, and incised ornamentation are mirrored in Hewitt's work which is influenced by both African and African American pottery. The slave trade resulted in an enormous influx of West African peoples to North America, particularly in the American south. These populations brought with them their own diverse pottery traditions which mingled with Native American and European techniques. (See Fig 4)



Fig 4. Hewitt (far left) observing a potter in Abuja, Nigeria in 1978 (image from www.cfileonline.org)

24



Hendrik Martensz Sorgh
(Dutch, 1609/11-1670)

An Inn Interior with Peasants, ca. 1641-1645

Oil on panel

Gift of the Trustees of the Carlyn H. Wohl
Trust, by exchange

2012.13

Stoneware—Hewitt's chosen ceramic media—has a long history in Western Europe. First developed in the 14th century, Germanic countries produced vast quantities and varieties of both utilitarian and decorative salt-glazed wares. Hendrik Martensz Sorgh's *An Inn Interior with Peasants* reveals a typical aspect of everyday life in 1640s Netherlands, including the kinds of ceramic vessels used in the period. As today, ceramics are important physical manifestations of daily human experience. Center stage, catching the light from an unseen window, is a prominently displayed Westerwald German stoneware *kugelbauchkrug* (ball-belly pitcher) used for serving beer or wine. These vessels were common across early modern Europe as well as wherever Europeans traveled, from the Virginia Colony to Guangzhou (Canton), China. (See Fig 5)



Fig 5. Detail of kugelbauchkrug

25



Jug, first half of the 19th century

American (from New England)

Stoneware with salt glaze and blue pigment

Joseph Allen Skinner Museum, Mount Holyoke College

SK B.11.G.62.4

The salt-glazed stoneware handled jug is an iconic American ceramic vessel. Variants of this ovoid form were produced by the small family-operated potteries in the 19th century and were found in most American cellars and pantries. The maker's mark EW could represent the Hartford-based Webster family workshop whose members (including an Edward Webster) relocated to North Carolina and began the stoneware tradition that Mark Hewitt has so heartily embraced. The drips of built-up glaze off the ceiling of the kiln, the 'kiss' marks where vessels touched during the firing process, and the petrified dribble of cobalt blue, reveal how circumstance or expedience can sometimes result in unintended beauty.

26



Teapot, ca. 1755
British (from Staffordshire, England)
Stoneware with salt glaze
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Bonadies
1986.27.16a-b

White salt-glazed stoneware has its origins in the late-17th century in Hewitt's hometown of Staffordshire, England. It was developed in an oft-repeated quest to find a whiter ceramic body evocative of Chinese porcelain. Common manufacturing techniques for those wares were press-molding or slip-casting in which the moist clay was pressed between a block with the design in reverse. These manufacturing processes resulted in a wide variety of forms and decoration including everything from text to fantastic sculptural forms.

27



Mark Hewitt (British, b. 1955)
Diadem, 2012
(made in Pittsboro, North Carolina)
Stoneware with manganese slip and alkaline glaze
Purchase with funds from Christopher Benfey and Francis
Murphy in memory of Rachel Thomas Benfey and with the
Art Acquisition Endowment Fund
2013.36

Since the 1980s Hewitt has lived and worked in a region of North Carolina rich with ceramic history. This vessel is illustrative of Hewitt's most recent work. He creates pots on a monumental scale, while blending a medley of ceramic traditions into a style that is all his own. Embracing functional shapes with simplicity of form and decoration, the artist writes: "When I work, making connections between these different traditions...I am acknowledging the lives of the real individuals who made the incredibly beautiful, often simple and unsigned, useful pots that I love above all others." ("A Pot in the Hand," 1997).

Enduring Traditions

It's not unusual for ceramic traditions and centers of manufacture to endure for generations. In a sustaining cycle, masters took on apprentices who learned the requisite skills and in-turn took on apprentices of their own. Across the globe, styles of pottery such as Kutani persisted in this way. Additionally, in today's world, ideas and techniques are exchanged through global travel, education, and the emergence of the internet. This modern fluidity of information often results in the borrowing of ideas, combination of styles, and experimentation. Contemporary vessels like these reveal a marriage of both the old and the new.

28



Kurt Weiser (American, b. 1950)
Pair of Cubist Vases, 2013
Porcelain with underglaze blue
On loan from Ferrin Contemporary

The artist Kurt Weiser explores the notion of East meeting West in this pair of contemporary vases, utilizing a traditional blue and white palette on a non-traditional sculptural surface. The hand-painted designs feature well-known Chinese and Japanese motifs, such as koi fish, a Kabuki actor crest, as well as peonies and other flowers.

29



Bowl with kintsugi repair, ca. 1750

Japanese (from Kaga Province, Japan)
Stoneware with overglaze polychrome enamels
(Kutani ware)

Gift of Weston P. and Rebecca Partridge Figgins
(Class of 1940), in honor of her class
1984.18.3

This vessel features a *sgraffito* (scratched or incised) landscape of mountains, drying nets and huts. It also reveals the influence of landscape designs found on Chinese porcelain from the Ming and Qing dynasties yet through color and application is unmistakably Japanese Kutani ware. On the rim of the bowl, there is a small chip that was mended with the traditional Japanese Kintsugi technique of “golden joinery,” in which ceramics are restored with a lacquer resin mixed with powdered gold or silver.

30



Jun Takegoshi (Japanese, b. 1948)

Blue Ibis Platter, 2009

Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze blue and
polychrome overglaze enamels

On loan from the Collection of Carol and Jeffrey
Horvitz

Traditional *go-sai*, or “five-color,” ceramics originated in Kutani, Japan in the middle of the 17th century. They are known for their bright palette of blue, mustard yellow, purple, red, and green. Trained in traditional Kutani techniques, the contemporary Japanese ceramicist Jun Takegoshi adapted the *go-sai* palette for this platter depicting two crested ibises. Jun’s masterful style is characterized here by a strong, graphic line, a wonderful contrast of glossy and matte surfaces, and impeccable control over the dripping glaze.

Blue & White: A Global Love Affair

Contact between cultures through trade and conquest has facilitated the spread of ideas, raw materials, and manufactured goods. China has historically had a profound influence on this global exchange, exemplified by the widespread distribution of blue- and-white porcelain. The kilns of Jingdezhen and other ceramic centers manufactured large quantities of the thin, white, durable ceramic. These highly-prized wares began leaving China's borders by camel, wagon, and seagoing vessels in the 12th century, and their distinctive color scheme has permeated artistic traditions ever since.

Potters in the Islamic world and the West pursued the secret of the elusive technique for centuries. Blue-and-white porcelain was exported to the Islamic world, Africa, Europe, and the Americas, and its initial rarity and exorbitant price naturally resulted in imitation. This centuries-long aesthetic love affair with both the material and the color scheme launched ceramic varieties such as stonepaste, delftware, bone china, and pearlware to name a few. Many of these ceramic types were painted with blue and white motifs directly copied from Chinese examples.

31



Kraak porcelain dish, 1573-1619 (Ming dynasty, Wanli period)
Chinese (from Jingdezhen, China)
Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze blue
Purchase with the Sylvia Chen Chinese Art Memorial Fund
2014.10

The term kraak porcelain is thought to derive from the Portuguese ships *car-racks* that first arrived in the West with cargos of Chinese porcelain. Dishes like this were produced in vast numbers for export to the Near East, Africa, and the West in the early 17th century. Although the designs incorporated Chinese scenes and symbols, these wares were produced solely for export and designed specifically to appeal to the foreign market.

32



Tibor (jar), ca. 1700
Spanish (from Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico)
Earthenware with tin glaze and blue pigment
On loan from the Hispanic Society of America, New York, NY.

Puebla blue on white is a type of majolica made in the Spanish colonies of the Americas. From the 15th century, Spanish ships crisscrossed the Pacific Ocean, exchanging New World silver for the silks and porcelains of Asia. Many of the early puebla decorations were based directly on Chinese porcelain forms and designs. This vessel was likely modeled after a 17th-century *Guan* (jar), much like the one pictured here. Although nearly all of the designs are borrowed from China, the potter has adapted the central motif of a crane on a garden rock to suit their own desert locale with a cactus. (See Fig 6)



Fig 6. Chinese porcelain Guan (image from Sotheby's)

33



Dish, ca. 1580-1585

Ottoman period (1281–1924) (from Iznik, Turkey)

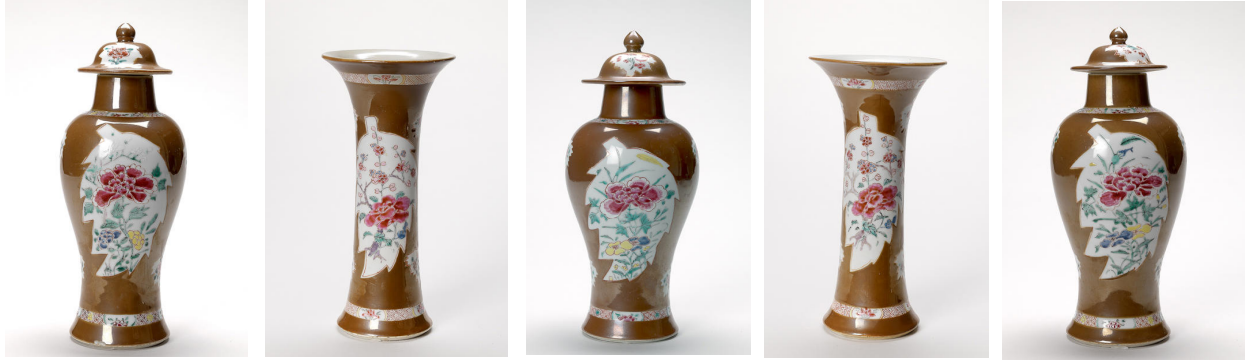
Stonepaste with underglaze blue

Purchase with the Warbeke Museum Fund 1980.8

The Ottoman Empire controlled a vast region covering all of modern-day Turkey as well as parts of the Middle East, Europe, and North Africa. The center of ceramic production for this powerful empire was Iznik, in northeastern Turkey. The ceramic workshops of this city produced dishes and tiles for the Ottoman sultans for their palace in Istanbul. But the potters also used the same royal designs on commercial wares to be sold across the Empire to those wealthy enough to afford these luxurious vessels. This dish's color scheme is indebted to Chinese porcelain, a prized import commodity in the Ottoman Empire, and many of the motifs are stylized versions of those found on Ming dynasty blue-and-white porcelain.

Garniture

34



Garniture set, ca. 1750

(Qing dynasty)

Chinese (from Jingdezhen, China)

Hard-paste porcelain with iron oxide slip (Batavia ware or Café-au-lait) and overglaze famille rose polychrome enamels

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John K. Knorr III (Elizabeth Walker, class of 1937)

2004.4.2a-e

Garniture sets are groups of decorative objects that were produced in sets of three, five, or seven that were designed to be placed on furniture or mantles. These sets were purely decorative and intended for prominent display. As trade increased between Asia and the West, silks, tea, and porcelain became available to a wider range of society and the significance of owning these once exotic objects changed. In early 17th-century Europe, owning any porcelain vessel was an important indicator of status, but by the mid-18th century it was much more commonplace. This occasioned a growing demand for more eye-catching varieties such as these.

Snuff Bottles: Ceramics in Miniature

Introduced to China from Europe in the 17th century, snuff (powdered tobacco) was commonly used for its supposed medicinal qualities by the Chinese elite. Porcelain snuff bottles were first produced at the end of the 18th century, when the demand from the general public dramatically increased. By the 19th century, snuffing (nasal inhalation) of the powder and the collecting of associated bottles, had spread among the social classes, becoming a popular nationwide activity. Later, these miniature vessels also attracted the attention of Western collectors. The featured bottles came from the Josephine Purtscher Fellows Collection, which contains over 170 Chinese snuff bottles of diverse materials, subject matter, and manufacturing techniques from various periods.

35



Snuff bottle with scholar scene, 19th century
(Qing dynasty)

Chinese

Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze blue, jade, and ivory

Bequest of Josephine Purtscher Fellows (Class of 1924)
1986.33.321

In the form of a tiny heart shape, this snuff bottle exemplifies the famous blue and white technique with freehand depictions of a scholar and his attendants. The stopper and the spoon are made of different materials—jadeite and ivory.

36



Peach bloom snuff bottle, 19th century (Qing dynasty)

Chinese

Hard-paste porcelain with peach bloom glaze and glass
Bequest of Josephine Purtscher Fellows (Class of 1924)
1986.33.318

The scaly crack patterns and the zigzag decoration are effects resulting from intentional techniques. While the lip of the bottle is left white, the green and peach together make a beautiful color palette.

37



Double snuff bottle with crickets, late 19th century
(Qing dynasty)

Chinese

Hard-paste porcelain with polychrome overglaze enamels and silver
Bequest of Josephine Purtscher Fellows (Class of 1924)
1986.33.325

This double snuff bottle is remarkable for its exquisite shape, as well as its intricately painted crickets. Keeping crickets as pets emerged in Tang dynasty (618-906 CE) China and various associated pastimes developed, such as cricket fighting and associated gambling. The selecting and breeding of crickets reached its height during the Qing dynasty, eventually spreading beyond the elite to other classes.

38



Snuff bottle with a dragon, 19th century (Qing dynasty)

Chinese

Hard-paste porcelain, wood, and ivory
Bequest of Josephine Purtscher Fellows (Class of 1924)
1986.33.338

This lovely bottle shows a ferocious dragon on one side and *xiangyun* (“auspicious clouds”) on the other. The delicate open-work decoration is achieved by carving away the clay while retaining the integrity of the interior compartment.

39



Snuff bottle with children, late 19th century

(Qing dynasty)

Chinese

Hard-paste porcelain with polychrome overglaze enamels, glass, and ivory

Bequest of Josephine Purtscher Fellows (Class of 1924)

1986.33.327

Using various bright colors, this bottle's painter designed a lively garden scene with four children playing and holding different items including toys and a lotus. An inscription on the base reads *Qian-long-nian-zhi* ("made in the Qianlong period").

40



Flambé snuff bottle, 19th century (Qing dynasty)

Chinese

Hard-paste porcelain with flambé glaze, jade, and ivory

Bequest of Josephine Purtscher Fellows (Class of 1924)

1986.33.314

A dreamy visual effect has been achieved in this remarkable snuff bottle through the use of various glazes and pigments under the manipulation of masterful ceramicists. The surface of the bottle contains tones of pink, peach, purple, and blue, creating an almost iridescent effect. Its thick glaze has hardened in heavy drips at foot of the vessel—an enduring reminder of the glazing and firing process of this small bottle.

Cultural Exchange

Material goods have long been traded between East and West. In Europe, and eventually in America, Chinese porcelain was highly prized and avidly collected. Eastern potters capitalized on the Western interest in porcelain by making wares that responded specifically to Western tastes. Some of these ceramics retained a distinctly Asian flavor, while others instead utilized Chinese interpretations of European designs. Aware of the popularity of porcelain in the West, European potters began producing their own versions, which often combined Eastern and Western designs and motifs in one vessel. The result of this cultural exchange can be seen in these ceramics—from both China and Europe—that are decorated with a rich amalgamation of disparate artistic traditions.

41



Export bowl, ca. 1750

(Qing dynasty, Qianlong period)

Chinese (from Jingdezhen, China)

Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze polychrome enamels

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Bonadies

1986.27.21

Western merchants would often commission Chinese potters and porcelain painters to create monogrammed dinner or tea services, some of which copied European prints. The depiction on this bowl is *The Judgment of Paris*, a popular western mythological scene seen frequently on mid-18th-century Chinese porcelain. The exact print it was modeled on remains elusive, although Marcantonio Raimondi's work was a likely source for this Chinese artisan. (See Fig 7)



Fig 7. Detail, Marcantonio Raimondi, designed by Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio or Santi): *The Judgment of Paris*, ca. 1510–20. (image from The Metropolitan Museum)

42



Bow Porcelain Factory

Tureen and lid, ca. 1750

British (from London, England)

Soft-paste porcelain with overglaze
polychrome enamelsGift of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Bonadies
1986.27.15a-b

The Bow Porcelain Factory operated in the London suburbs between 1744 and 1775 producing high quality soft-paste porcelain, also called bone china. Many of the Bow wares borrowed Asian decorative elements, including popular Japanese motifs. Bow and other European porcelain manufacturers of the period, such as Meissen, were particularly interested in producing wares similar to those from Arita, Japan, painted in the Kakiemon style. This lidded tureen presents an interesting amalgamation of East and West; the primary design is the Japanese “two quail” pattern, while the handles and other molded details are distinctly Western. (See Fig 8)



Fig 8. Late 17th-century Japanese Deep Bowl with Lid (image from The Metropolitan Museum)

Eggshell Bowls



- 43** **Pair of eggshell bowls**, early 20th century (Qing dynasty or Republic)
Chinese (from Jingdezhen, China)
Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze polychrome enamels
Gift of Weston P. and Rebecca Partridge Figgins (Class of 1940), in honor
of her class
1984.18.8a/b

Intricately hand-painted porcelain bowls like these are thinned in a shaving process that results in vessel walls so slender and delicate they are practically translucent when held to the light. Although the bowls' bases are decorated with a Qianlong period (1735-1795) reign mark, these vessels are likely early 20th-century homages. It is not uncommon in Chinese art to see earlier marks on later pieces as a form of veneration.

Stories in Fragments

The Museum galleries are filled with examples of ceramics excavated in Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Some of these objects were recovered intact, others were found shattered and reconstructed later. In most cases, archaeologists find only a few scattered fragments of centuries- or millennia-old ceramics. Fragmentary artifacts can tell us a surprising amount about life in the past. Sometimes, a broken vessel can even illuminate more about the context in which the complete object was used, how its purpose changed over time, and how the item was eventually lost or discarded.

44



Female figure, Early Roman Period (30 BCE-150 CE)
Roman (from Ehnasya, Egypt)
Earthenware with white slip
Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund
1904.2.A.C

This fragmentary sculpture depicts a woman holding a shallow bowl known as a patera, used in Greek and Roman rituals. When this figure was made, Egypt was a province of the Roman Empire and many Egyptians embraced aspects of Roman culture and religion.

The relief's reverse was not intended to be seen, but reveals one of the most intimate facets of the object's story—the artist's fingerprints. Figures like this one were made by the thousands in workshops manned by laborers and slaves. The majority of these artisans left no lasting record of their lives except for the surviving fragments of their toil. These fingerprints are a small remnant of an individual maker—a testament that they were once here. (See Fig 9).



Fig 9.

45



Fragment from relief of Perseus and Athena,
27 BCE-14 CE
Roman (from Italy)
Earthenware
Purchased in Rome
1910.6.C.C

Relief panels like this were common in the Roman world. Found in affluent houses and public spaces they were an economical alternative to carved stone because they were easily produced in molds. Originally painted in bright pigments, all that remains today of this relief sculpture is the color of the earthenware.

Close looking reveals a woman's arm and torso, and what looks like the rim of a shield. This imagery was not uncommon in ancient Rome but when placed in its original context, this fragment tells a much larger story. Reliefs of this kind were manufactured in molds and often many identical examples were produced. A more complete section of the same relief can be seen in the Temple of Palatine Apollo in Rome and depicts the Greek hero Perseus presenting Athena the head of Medusa. (See Fig 10)



Fig 10. Relief from the same mold at the Palatine Museum, (image from www.vroma.org, photo by Barbara McManus)

46



Lid fragment, 530-320 BCE
Greek (probably from Athens)
Earthenware with black pigment
Probably from the Louise Fitz-Randolph Collection
1997.99.22.1

In classical Greece, ceramics like this would have been luxury items. This fragment likely comes from the lid of a *pyxis*, a covered container used by women to hold small objects and toiletries. The decoration is an example of red-figure pottery, a popular technique that originated in Greece around 530 BCE. The technique allowed for greater detail which can be seen in the fine features and delicate hair style of the woman on this sherd. This is likely the work of a member of the Meidian circle, a school of skilled painters who are known today for depictions of elegant women and mythological scenes. (See Fig 11)

You can see an example of a red-figure pyxis along with other Greek ceramics in the Evans Gallery.



Fig 11. Lidded *pyxis* with similar design elements, end of 5th century BC (image from the Ashmolean Museum)

47



Bowl fragment, 100 BCE-300 CE
 Roman (from Italy or Gaul)
 Earthenware with burnished red slip
 Louise Fitz-Randolph Collection (probably)
 1997.99.22.2

Terra sigillata (roughly meaning ‘sealed earth’) was a common ceramic type in the Roman Empire. These wares were pressed in a mold to create their form and decoration. A glossy finish was achieved by applying thin slips of clay to the surface, which was then burnished. Many of these vessels have maker’s marks that can provide insight into ancient ceramic production. This example bears the impressed mark “Felix Sergius,” indicating that the vessel was made by a slave toiling in a ceramic workshop owned by Sergius. It also bears another mark – the letters “A” and “J” scratched onto the base – probably signifying ownership of the vessel. The Roman alphabet did not include the letter J, so this inscription must have come centuries later. We will never know who “A. J.” was, or why he or she marked the vessel, yet the mystery makes the object all the more fascinating. (See Fig 12 & 13)



Fig 12 & 13. Detail of marks on vessel

48



Stamped brick, 1045-992 BCE (Third Intermediate period;
 Dynasty 21, Reign of Menkheperre)
 Egyptian
 Earthenware
 1910.2.A.SVII

Sometimes the most humble objects have a fascinating story to tell. This brick dates from around 1045-992 BCE, and comes from Egypt, where sun-dried mud bricks were used for centuries to build most structures including many pyramids. More durable baked bricks, like this one, were rare. The presence of a name stamp is of particular interest. It belongs to Menkheperre, a high priest of Amun who took on royal privileges, including placing his name in oval cartouches. When found during an excavation, a brick like this can help archeologists date or identify the structures they find, making them profoundly useful material documents.

Other works of art from ancient Egypt are on view in the Evans Gallery.

The Bowl: A Universal Form

The bowl—one of the most basic and practical forms of containers—can be found in nearly every culture. Over time, cooking and storage vessels of stone and wood were replaced by pottery that was lightweight and durable. With examples from South America to China, the group on view here highlights the extraordinary diversity of this functional shape.

49



Bowl, 3600-3200 BCE

(Predynastic, Naqada II period)

Egyptian

Earthenware (black-topped redware)

Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, London

1911.Utop.1.A11

Formed by a potter nearly 6,000 years ago, this bowl is the oldest object in the exhibition. Made well before the age of the pharaohs, the vessel is a relic of late Stone Age Egypt. During the Predynastic period, Egypt was engaging in trade with parts of Africa and the eastern Mediterranean and developing techniques of sculpture and pottery. The ceramics of this time often feature the simple red and black palette seen here, with the black achieved by careful manipulation of the firing process.

Other examples of Egyptian ceramics are on view in the Evans Gallery.

50



Famille rose "medallion" bowl, 1821-1850
(Qing dynasty, Daoguang period)
Chinese (from Jingdezhen, China)
Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze blue
and overglaze polychrome enamels on incised
decoration
Gift of Weston P. and Rebecca Partridge Fig-
gins (Class of 1940), in honor of her class
1984.18.5

This bowl is an excellent example of the extremely ornate and luxurious style that was favored by Chinese emperors during the mid- to late-Qing dynasty. Combining various techniques on a single object, the potter contrasts the blue-and white interior with the flamboyant overglaze enamel of lemon yellow on the exterior, a technique that reached its height at Jingdezhen during the Daoguang era. The exterior is further covered by a brocade-like scrollwork (or *graviata*). More complexity is added with the auspicious decorations of *sanyang* ("three-ram"), the phoenix feather spiral *graviata*, and the roundel *bogu-tu* ("hundred antiques" pattern) that was used exclusively by the royal court.

51



Megarian bowl, 2nd century-1st century BCE
(Hellenistic Period)
Greek
Earthenware
Gift of Cedric H. Marks
1973.2.C.SII

Bowls like this one were produced using molds and are thought to have been made as cheaper substitutes for similar metal vessels. The bowl's uneven bottom suggests it was meant to be held, and was probably used as a vessel for drinking wine. The term "Megarian" is traditionally used to describe these bowls, though Megara is not generally thought to be their primary place of production. Similar examples have been found in Asia Minor (Turkey), and Argos, in Greece. These wares fell out of favor around the 1st century BCE with the spread in popularity of glossy-surfaced terra sigillata pottery.

An example of terra sigillata can be found in the Stories in Fragments section of this exhibition.

52



Bowl, early 13th century

Persian (from Iran)

Stonepaste with underglaze black and turquoise glaze

Gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation

2012.40.16

Under the Seljuq rulers Iran saw a flowering of the arts – from the proliferation of illustrated manuscripts and the building of architectural monuments, to the production of refined ceramics. While the Muslim artists of the Seljuq period did not shy away from depictions of humans and animals, they also perfected purely floral and vegetal designs, like the ones seen on this bowl. The simple black and turquoise color scheme is subtly enhanced by the use of different designs on the interior and exterior. The interior is filled with radiating lotus palmettes (a motif adapted from Chinese art), while the outside features a looser composition of scrolling vines sprouting split-leaves (known as *rumi* leaves).

53



Bowl with hummingbirds, 150-275 CE

Nasca (from Peru)

Earthenware with polychrome pigments

Purchase with the Nancy Everett Dwight Fund

1962.7.F(a).A

The Nasca culture flourished between 100 BCE to 800 CE along the southern Pacific coast of Peru. Best known for creating the massive desert designs known as the Nazca Lines, this culture had vibrant and complex traditions of decorative arts which notably included pottery. Artistically and technically advanced polychrome ceramics like this one were produced by the application of colored slips (liquid clays). Animals such as these hummingbirds were common decorative motifs within the Nasca's broad visual repertoire.

54



Corrugated bowl, 980-1300 CE

Ancestral Pueblo, from Southwest, United States

Earthenware

Joseph Allen Skinner Museum, Mount Holyoke College

SK K.B.7

The cultural groups known today as Ancestral Pueblo peoples resided in parts of Arizona, Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico from approximately 1200 BCE to 1300 CE and their modern descendants still call this region home. Best known for monumental stone and mud architecture, such as that found in Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde, these groups had progressive agriculture, vast trade networks, and rich artistic traditions. Corrugated pottery like this example was made using a coiling technique to build the walls of the bowl and the textured pattern was achieved by the potter pressing their fingertips into the clay.

55



Mocha bowl, ca. 1820-1830

British (from Staffordshire, England)

Refined earthenware (pearlware) with polychrome slip decoration

Transferred from Mary Woolley Hall (Mary Lyon Room)

1975.3.12

During the first half of the 19th-century, many British manufacturers of refined earthenware produced various ceramics decorated with thin colorful slips of clay that are often seen alongside wheel-turned textural motifs. These wares, collectively known as 'mocha,' were primarily found on utilitarian vessels and were commonplace in British and American kitchens and dining rooms. This example is ornamented with a cable decoration of multicolored slips which were applied using a tool called a slip cup that enabled three colors to come together in a single drop.

56



Celadon bowl, ca. 1400

Sukhothai Kingdom (from Sawankhalok, Thailand)

Stoneware with celadon glaze

Gift of Mr. Hershel Richman and Dr. Elizabeth Rosner Richman (Class of 1967)

1996.9.24

The Sukhothai Kingdom ruled parts of northern Thailand from the 13th to the 15th century. Just north of its capital city of Sukhothai was the pottery center of Sawankhalok, which produced vast quantities of stoneware, like this bowl. Many of the wares produced in these kilns, including green celadon, were influenced by the Chinese ceramics of the time.

*The kiln waster (a vessel accidentally ruined during the firing process) on view in the **Technology & Production** section of this show is also from the Sawankhalok kilns.*

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