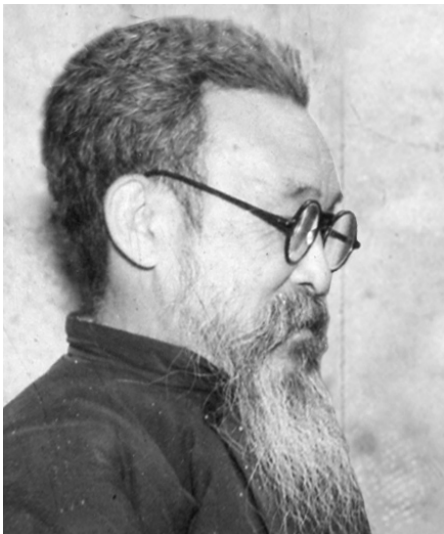


---The man who influenced me most

Li Zi Yuan (China)

Life is short. Nobody can tell how many things he has lived through, how many people have helped him, and how many people have got his help. But, there are some events and some persons will stay in your memory forever, and get more and more distinct. I do not dare of forgetting the words which changed my life track, and the person who opened my mind, Li Zuoquan. (Fig. 1)



(Fig. 1)

I graduated from a middle school in the 50s of last century. Due to political and economical issues of my family, I could not get into high school, and enrolled into Zibo Ceramic Industrial School and spent two hard years there. After the school I became a worker of color decoration in Zibo Ceramic Factory while my dream was to be an artist. After one year of practice, I was assigned to Mr. Li Zuoquan as his student. Mr. Li Zuoquan, also named as Xingyuan, and Shuyuan, Yantian Old farmer, was a famous Chinese painter. He was 74 when I started with him. To me, he was both a serious god father, and an elder being good at teaching. Under his guidance, I learnt porcelain painting including skills, composition of pictures, history of porcelain painting, etc. Hard studies and learning brought me, a lost boy, new hope. To let me develop comprehensively, he asked his friend, Mr. Ze Ruchuan to teach me calligraphy and classical literature. During those two years, I felt as if I were in the heaven of arts. The comment Li gave me while I became a formal worker was “Promising young with unlimited future”. With Mr. Li Zuoquan I was on my way of art.

In the sixties of last century both Mr. Li Zuoquan and I were unjustly wronged and forced to work in workshops as coolies for punishment. Our homes were searched, books and materials were burnt. We suffered unbearable criticism, beat, and heavy works. Under the horror, I suffered in pain and uncertain, and lost confidence and direction. Even in jail Mr. Li Zuoquan still gave me guidance. He told me China could not be like this forever. He sent me two sentences which are “The nature is firm and strong, and a gentleman should constantly strive to become stronger. The earth is solid and gentle, and a gentleman should be self-discipline and social commitment.” His words woke me up and brought me back to the right track. I realized that I should keep faith and be broad minded, and with firm and indomitable willpower. I copied books and material I could get at any means by handwritten. I sketched a lot from the nature, including flowers, birds, and landscape, which formed a solid base for my later progress.



(Fig. 2-4)

(Fig. 2-4)

Mr. Li Zuoquan was forced to go back to his ancestral home in 1967, and passed away with unjust charges on Dec. 31, 1968. At that time, what I could do was keeping his words, “The nature is firm and strong, and a gentleman should constantly strive to become stronger. The earth is solid and gentle, and a gentleman should be self-discipline and social commitment.” in mind, and making strenuous effort to satisfy his spirits in the Heaven.

Thanks God, the 10 year’s havoc ended in 1976. I got rehabilitated and, after 12 years, moved back into my studio on Dec. 21, 1976. I felt the urge of the time, and wanted to work 100 times harder to get the lost time back. These years I obtained 6 national and provincial awards, which made me an outstanding craft. My father’s unjust case was rehabilitated in 1980, which released my creative enthusiasm further. I was so lucky that was assigned to participate the 34th International (Munich) Handicraft Exhibition in 1982. My work, 5 piece carved porcelain ware of stationery of Shandong celadon won gold medal of the exhibition, and I was rewarded artist of the best achievement. Holding the gold medal, facing the east, I told Mr. Li Zuoquan’s spirit that I did it because of you. (Fig.5-7)

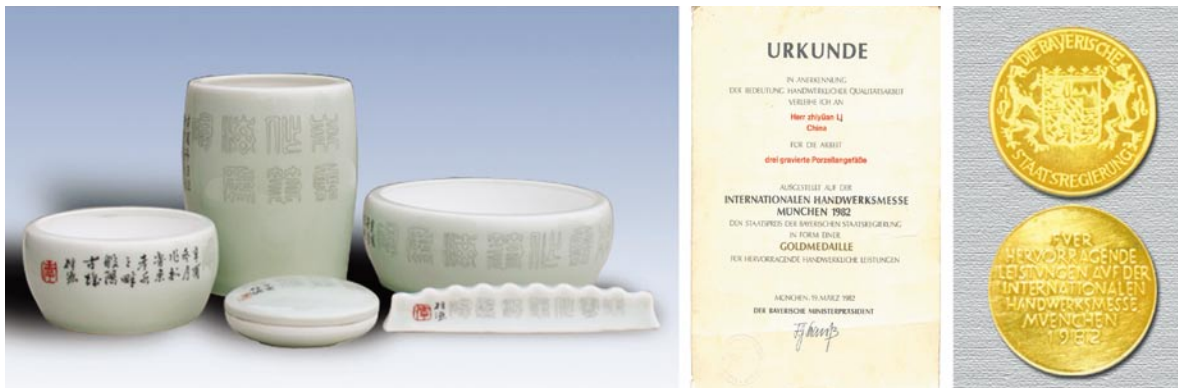


图 5



图 6



图 7

I was promoted as senior craft master in 1988. In 1992, I obtained special life time allowance offered by the State Council, and was granted Shandong Provincial Craft Master. In 2003, 35 artists out of more than 100 thousand ceramic crafts in China were granted China Ceramic Master, and I was one of them. I established Li Ziyuan Art Center in 1994. (Fig.8)



(Fig.8)

Since 1987 I have become Deputy Chairman of Zichuan District of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and Deputy Director of Association of Ceramic Industries of Shandong Province.

Recalling my track, every step is accompanied by Mr. Li Zuoquan's painstaking effort. I feel Mr. Li Zuoquan has been with me all the time.