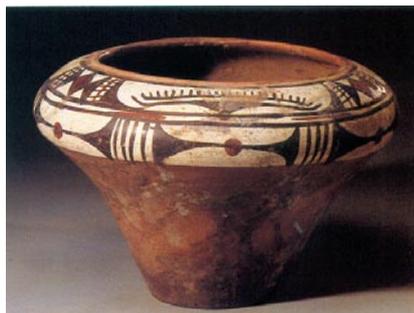


Contemporary Ceramic Art in China

Li Ziyuan

Contemporary ceramic art is both new and familiar to me. Through exchanges with ceramists of Korea, Japan, and western countries, I have built up a new understanding on it. Started in the middle period of the 20th century with the involvement or influence of Rodin, Renoir, Ganguin and Picasso. Peter Voulkos started “Otis revolution” in Los Angeles Art College which marked the beginning of contemporary ceramic art.

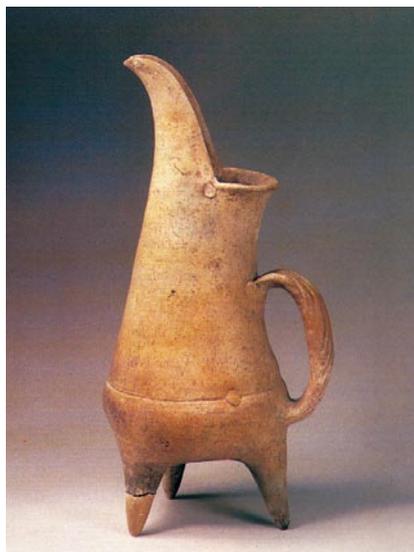
China is with 8000 year history of ceramics. “Pottery” or “crocery” was the word used in ancient China both for porcelain and pottery. “Kao Kung Chi”, a hand book of technology of the Chun-Qiu period (about 2000 years ago), recorded “curdling earth into pottery”, “forming clay into ware”. Pottery were the best utensils to our ancestors before metals were used. Our ancestors worshiped fire, needed water, accidentally discovered the results generated by earth, water and fire which brought new knowledge to them. To pursue better life and more knowledge, our ancestors developed the first good time of pottery with their innocence and plain. At various time, places and tribes there were various cultures, such as Yangshao Culture, Majiayao Culture, Dawenkou Culture, Machang Culture, Longshan Culture, etc., with same feature--- childish, rough and simple. Those pottery wares were admired by later generations as treasures.



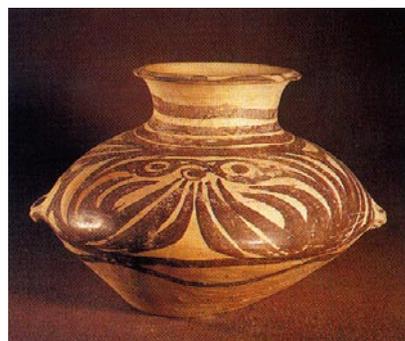
白衣彩陶钵 (Yangshao Culture)



尖底双耳瓶 (Banpo Culture)



黄陶实足杯 (Longshan Culture)

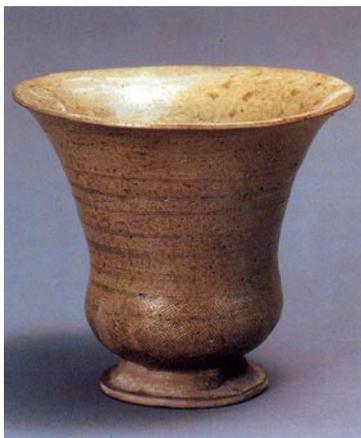


鸟文彩陶双耳罐 (Majiayao Culture)

Through the Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties till the Tang and Song Dynasties, forms, decorations and glazes of ceramic wares reached a level of nearly perfect, which formed the unique Chinese ceramic art style admired by the world. But since the late Ming and the beginning Qing Dynasties the Chinese ceramics lost their simple, naïve, pure and spirit.



兽面纹彩陶罐 (the Xia Dynasty)



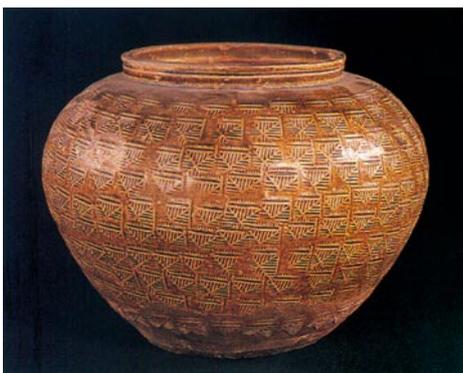
青瓷旋文尊 (th Shang Dynasty)



青釉直条文双系罐 (the Zhou Dynasty)



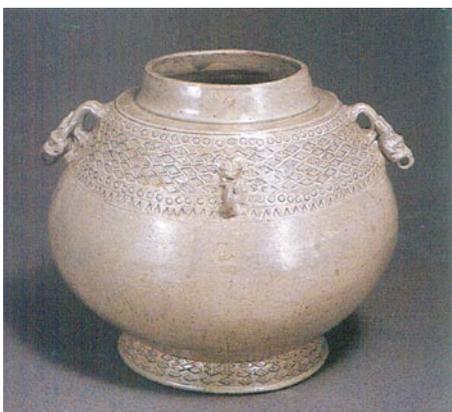
灰陶俑 (the Qin Dynasty)



黑褐釉印文罐 (the Han Dynasty)



褐黄釉陶龙柄瓶 (the Wei Dynasty)



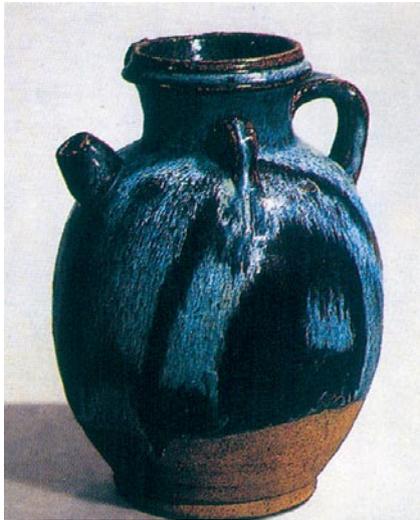
青釉印花双系卣 (the Jin Dynasty)



青釉莲花尊 (the Nanbei Dynasty)



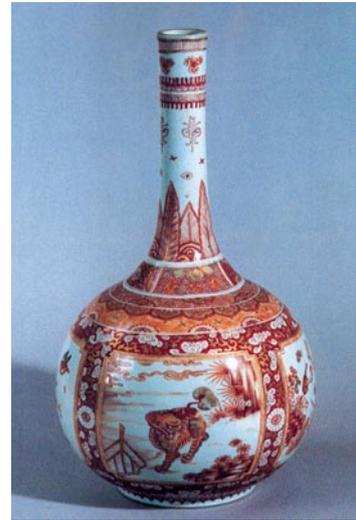
白釉贴花壶 (the Sui Dynasty)



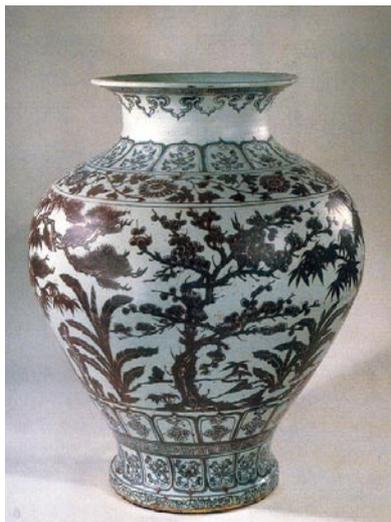
黑釉彩斑执壶 (the Tang Dynasty)



龙泉青瓷 (the Song Dynasty)



红彩描金开光鸟兽瓶 (the Qing Dynasty)



釉里红松竹梅纹罐 (the Ming Dynasty)

What we should consider is why our ancestors could create 8000 year history of ceramics, and excellent masterpieces which can not be duplicated today. The most vital reason might be our ancestors did not have restrictions, not disturbed by thoughts, and without burdens such as commerce and , fame and gain. What influenced them were barely simple cognition to life and the world, understanding and feeling to earth and fire. They brought their real feelings into their forms. No matter how high the late generations evaluated the forms, I believe their creating process is very simple, from function to decoration, from concise function wares to simple and childish decoration, reflected the Chinese spirit and pragmatic characteristics. Chinese ceramics reached the top level in the Tang and the Song Dynasties, and influenced the world. After the late Ming Dynasty, rulers interfered and influenced Chinese ceramics, especially in the middle of the

20th century. Our nation are with the burden of 8000 year history, and are framed by Confucian and Taoist thoughts, can not break the traditional restrict. Therefore, the gap with western countries appears.

With the opening policy and exchanges between China and western countries, Chinese ceramics are influenced by western contemporary ceramic art. There are lot of people involved in contemporary ceramic art both in colleges and among the people in China. There will be a quick development in China with the precondition of knowing and understanding the indigenous culture and history. "National is international. Only the distinct national culture and art will have their position." This is an everlasting definition since different regions, different culture will influence people's life and understandings. Every country, every nation must have strong representation of its national culture. Maro's work "Bird woman" is reflecting Hellenism and with strong modern thinking and character. She said, "Greece is a perfect sculpture, and sculpture is our language of creating. " American ceramist, Lee Middleman's work "Sunflower" is combined tradition with modern creating ideas. Works of Sim Jae Cheon and Kim Yong Moon are reflecting both Korean culture and modern culture. China is getting more opening to the world. Ceramists should break

frames and liberate their thought, being learned and thinking more, reacquainting life and the world and realizing the real meaning of earth and fire. Contemporary ceramics must overcome two misunderstandings in China, which are insisting and holding tradition, refusing new ceramic language and, the other side, throwing away tradition and knowing little western culture, creating works without spirit. Therefore we should increase training, enhance acuity to life and the world, learn from the nature and really understand earth and fire. There are many young ceramists in China who have created excellent works. They are the hope and the future of Chinese contemporary ceramics.

Development, progress and improvement need exchanges. In China we have old sayings, “There must be my teacher among three of us”, “The one with three masters is the more skilled one”. To increase exchanges is our aim to hold this forum of international ceramic art. 2010 International (Zibo, China) Forum of Ceramic Art will be a grand meeting of international ceramics. Creating, forming, firing and academic exchanging will promote friendship, skills, and bring joys to us, and will influence ceramics and let ceramics reach a higher level, leave fine idea and excellent works to later generations and to the world.



灰釉跳刀水波瓷碗. 2009



跳刀纹罐. 2000



“风范” 2010



“异形” 2010