



CHINESE CLAYART NEWSLETTER

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Brief introduction to Chinese art history and
Chinese contemporary ceramic art

CHINESE CLAYART

Chinese Clayart is a newsletter emailed monthly to professional ceramic artists who want to know about ceramic art in China and things related. This newsletter will be a bridge between China and Western countries for the ceramic arts. Comments and suggestions are very welcome.

Editor Guangzhen "Po" Zhou
P.O.Box 64392, Sunnyvale, CA 94088, U.S.A.
Tel. 408-777-8319, Fax. 408-777-8321, Email: pozhou@email.msn.com
<http://www.silverhawk.com/crafts/zhou/welcome.html>

FEATURE ARTICLE

Brief introduction to
Chinese art history & Chinese contemporary ceramic art
---by Guangzhen "Po" Zhou (part 1)

Along the Yellow River and Yangzi River reaches, Chinese hand made pottery about 7,000 - 8,000 years or early has been unearthed. China was called "the Home of Porcelain". There are many traditional ceramic production areas (or called kiln sites) developed from dynasties one after another. But, Chinese contemporary ceramic art is still not as popular as that of developed countries.

Chinese Art Education

Back to 19 century, there was no such thing, so called 'art degree'. In Chinese tradition, calligraphy is considered as a part of art and a symbol of education. Many Chinese started to practice calligraphy at childhood. To be a real scholar, the person has to be good at four things: Chinese harp (music), chess, calligraphy and brush painting; To be a real art master, the person has to be good at another four things: poem (literature), calligraphy, brush painting and seal carving.

Since early 20 Century, Chinese people have been greatly influenced by many aspects of Western culture. Prior to the World War II, many Chinese artists studied in Europe. They studied all aspects of academy of European fine arts, their drawing, painting and sculptural techniques and concepts, and the use of light, shadow and color, as well as critical, theory and attitudes about art in general. Some western kind of public art schools have been established in China at that time.

Socialist Realism Dominated 50's - 70's

During the 1950's to 1970's, addition to the Europe art tradition, the westernized art styles of the former Soviet Union became the arts education standard in the most of Chinese academies, and the Socialist-Realism dominated Chinese fine art field for thirty years.

In the Socialist Realism paintings, the themes were always about the working class, peasants, soldiers, or revolutionary leaders. depict the aspects of historical events, victory of war, etc. "Red,

brightly, and shining" the three elements were the typical Socialist Realism characters. The revolutionary heroes have to be in the center of the paintings, and larger, taller than other people. the strong figure with large eyes looking up towards the sky, showing the power of the revolutionary people, and to admire the revolutionary people and the revolutionary leaders.

"In the world today, all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are, as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine."

Mao Zedong "Talks at the Yen'an Forum on Literature and Art" (May 1942).

Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong

"The Rent Collection Courtyard" might be the typical example of Chinese Socialist Realism in the sculptural field. This exhibition of life-size clay figures takes its setting from the former rent collection courtyard of Liu Wen-Cai, a landlord despot of Si Chun Province. More than a hundred sculptures portraying the story of the rent collection are the work of a group of revolutionary Chinese artists (No individual name can be mentioned at the Cultural Revolution).

[Link to Part 2.](#)

PROFILE

Female Clay Artist Wen-Zhi Zhang. Born in 1959, She graduated from Guangdong Arts & Crafts College 1980, received her Master of Arts degree from Guangzhou Fine Art Academy, Guangdong province 1993. She have participated many group exhibitions and have had solo shows, such as Illinois State University 1996 and the National Art Museum, Beijing 1998. She also received many awards and featured on a lot of Chinese newspaper and magazines. She is one of the first Chinese Delegation of Ceramic Artists, has participated NCECA conference in Columbus Ohio 1999. Wen-Zhi Zhang is the most active female clay artists in China and have organized some ceramic art events in Foshan that included Foshan Millennium Wood-firing and First Foshan International Ceramic Wood-Firing Conference.

NEW BOOK

China Contemporary Ceramics, Compiled by Lu PinChang, vice director and associate professor of the Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing China, the book was published by Jilin Fine Art Publishing House, PR. China with over a hundred Chinese clay artists' works, total 251 full color plates. All text of the book printed in both Chinese and English. This book will be available in the United State soon.

Note: A new service has just been added to the China Clay Art web site

[China Clay Art Book Shop](#)

EXHIBITIONS

San Francisco Bay Area Chinese American Children's Clay Art Competition April 22-28, 2000.

Opening reception: Saturday, 2-5 pm, April 22.

Address:

1253 Kentwood Ave. San Jose, CA 95129. Tel: 408-777-8319 [Email:](#)

claygroundstudio@hotmail.com

To promote children's clay art and San Francisco Bay Area multi-cultural community, the Clayground and the Chinese Ceramic Art Council, USA are co-sponsored the exhibition. The Clayground is a clay art school and studio, that offer classes for both children and adults.

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