



# CHINESE CLAYART NEWSLETTER

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## PROFILE

[Chinese Traditional Ceramic Decoration Technique](#)  
[Cut Paper Resist Technique](#)

## TRAVEL

[Tour of Ceramic China, May 31 - June 15, 2007](#)

## EVENTS

[Three Events on the China Trip of October 2006](#)  
[PROFILE OF A CHINA TOUR](#)

## OPPORTUNITIES

[English Teacher Wanted in China](#)

## LETTERS

[A Perspective on Contemporary Chinese Ceramics by Andrew Maske](#)

**CLAY TOOL and BOOK STORE**  
[HOLIDAY SALE - UP TO 20%OFF](#)

## 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. (Copyright 2000, The Chinese Ceramic Art Council, USA. All rights reserved)

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[TOP](#)

## PROFILE

Chinese Traditional Ceramic Decoration Technique:  
Trailed-slip Technique, Fahua Style (14th - 15th centuries) - Use white slip to trail patterns on the surface of a low-fired stoneware pot, then fill inside the lines with alkali-lead earthenware glazes.

Cut Paper Resist Technique:  
Works same as wax-resist, cut-paper technique has been used since the Song Dynasty in Jizhou

Ware. Cut pieces of paper were laid onto the damp, black-glazed ware, then a lighter color glaze was blown on the top. To purchase Chinese cut paper purchase, please visit [www.ChineseClayArt.com](http://www.ChineseClayArt.com).

[TOP](#)

## **TRAVEL**

### **Tour of Ceramic China, May 31 - June 15, 2007**

16 days: Beijing, Xi'an, Jingdezhen, Yixing and Shanghai for \$3,350.

22 days: All the above plus Yangshu, Guilin, Shengzhen, and Hong Kong for approximately \$4,400.

The cost may vary if you return to a city other than San Francisco.

The fee includes international air tickets, local transportation, lodging, three meals a day, workshop tools and materials, and tour guides/interpreters. Please buy your own insurance.

#### **PLAN A:**

Day 1, Leave from the San Francisco airport.

Day 2, Arrive in Beijing in the evening.

Day 3, Visit the Great Wall in the morning and Lulichang in the afternoon.

Day 4, Visit the antique market of Panjiayuan in the early morning and Tiananmen Square and the Ancient Palace Museum/Forbidden City in the afternoon.

Day 5, Visit Tshinghua University and hold exchanges with the faculty and students. Take overnight train to Xi'an in the evening.

Day 6, Arrive in Xi'an in the morning. Visit Terra-cotta Warriors Museum and antique market.

Day 7, Visit Chenlu, a historical ceramics village, and Yaozhou Museum.

Day 8, Take an airplane to Nanchang, and a 3-hour bus to Jingdezhen.

Day 9, Take a one-day tour to Yaoli Village and Gaolin Mountain.

Day 10, Take a one-day tour around Jingdezhen: Ancient Porcelain Factory and Museum, Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute, Hutian Porcelain Factory (12'vases are made here), and the Jingdezhen Sculptural Factory. Take overnight train to Nanjing.

Day 11, Arrive in Nanjing and take a 2-hour bus to Yixing.

Day 12, Take a one day tour to Yixing: artists' studios, Qain-shu dragon kiln site, Yixing Ceramics Museum, and Teapot Market. Slide talk in the evening.

Day 13, Visit clay art tool stores, have a hands-on workshop (teapot or sculptures using local clay, tools and techniques; the art works will be fired and shipped to the US within three months).

Day 14, Take a 3-1/2 hour bus to Shanghai, shopping and relax in hotel.

One-hour cruise on the Huangpu River.

Day 15, Visit Shanghai Museum in the morning and the Yu-yuan Garden and the market in the afternoon.

Day 16, Leave from the Pudong Airport for home and arrive in San Francisco in the morning (the same day in local time).

#### **Plan B:**

Day 1 to Day 15 are the same as Plan A.

Day 16, Fly from Shanghai to Yangshu.

Day 17-18, Tour in Guilin for two days.

Day 19, Fly from Yangshu to Shengzhen, transfer to Hong Kong.

Day 20-21, Tour in Hong Kong for two days.

Day 22, Leave from the Hong Kong Airport for home and arrive in San Francisco (or other city on the west coast of the US) in the morning (the same day in local time).

[TOP](#)

## **EVENTS**

### **Three Events on the China Trip of October 2006**

On last October's trip, we participated in three events. First was in Beijing, on Nov. 15, we visited

the Academy of Arts and Design at Tsinghua University--the first conference of the International Society for Ceramic Art Education and Exchange (ISCAEE). The society was established by a group of art schools in China, Korea, Japan, Australia, Thailand and the United States. We spent half a day there. We had a tea party with a professor and the director of the ceramic department, Mr. Zheng Ning, and both Bob Dixon and I donated a ceramic piece for the special event exhibition in the gallery.

The Jingdezhen International Ceramic Fair was held from Oct. 18-22. We experienced a grand opening of Chinese-style fireworks, red carpet, and endless exhibition halls of ceramic art and industrial ceramics.

The Yixing Ceramic Art Festival and the 8th National Competition and Evaluation of Designs and Creations in Ceramic Art were held from Oct. 27th to 30th. The event was hosted by the National Ceramic Industry Association, the Yixing Ceramics Association and the Municipality of Yixing. During the opening ceremony of October 28th, two plaques to "The Teapot Making Centre of the World Yixing China" from Tony Franks, President of the International Academy of Ceramics" (with approval from the former president, the plaque was made in the USA), and a plaque "The World Capital of Teapots Yixing China from Chinese Ceramic Art Council, USA" were handed over to the Yixing mayor.

## **PROFILE OF A CHINA TOUR**

Have you ever been to China? Do you want to go? (Answers by Bob Dixon)

I have had the privilege of returning to China on eight occasions. First in 1995 on my own, which took me to Qingdao and an exhibition of my work, and then Beijing. Each time I returned to see more and more of the "true China", the "old China", and the "new China". This year was my third visit with the group led by Guangzhen "Po" Zhou. Without hesitation, I can recommend Po as the best leader on your tour of China. Let me take a moment to explain.

Our trip this year started in Beijing and of course the normal tourist places; Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden Palace and the Great Wall. All as stunning as one can imagine. We had an additional surprise of a visit to the Summer Palace. A treat and a less formal place than the Forbidden Palace.

With Po's tour, we always take time to visit the universities, meeting the professors of art and the local well known potters and artist. Not to be redundant, Po takes the tour to universities and famed artists in their studios at all cities. He is well known and respected throughout China, and thus opens many doors for the tour.

Xian, the next stop on the tour, and the Terra Cotta Soldiers. Seeing it once may be enough, but I look forward to the markets where one can find almost anything and offer a bid to purchase. Xian has a delightful place to eat and be entertained, the Shaanxi Grand Opera House. We stop here each trip experiencing a meal of 23 varieties of dumplings. This along with the Tang Dynasty Style songs and dances tops off the evening. A must to see.

An overnight train to Jingdezhen is not for some, but if you go to China, I think you must experience this ride at least once. Jingdezhen always welcomes new visitors and artists. There is always an event, whether an International Ceramic Exhibition and workshops throughout the city, or trade shows displaying porcelain in all shapes, forms and fine glazing. To see the making of a 14 foot tall porcelain vase is a wonderful experience.

Jingdezhen is one of my favorite stops on the tour. The center of the porcelain industry and a place that opens its doors to welcome you as though it is your home.

This was my first visit to Yellow Mountain. We stayed in a hotel on top of the mountain that would have taken over 5 hours to walk up, if not for the gondola ride. Even at that, the walk up and down the steep steps is sometimes overwhelming. Almost all people in the hotels got up before dawn and at 6:13 am the sun broke the horizon and hundreds of cameras began clicking. The

landscape is the most impressive site I have experienced.

Shanghai becomes a stop between Yixing and home. You must spend a few days in Shanghai and Po's tour always gives you a first rate overview of this great city. It is like New York and Las Vegas combined, but twice as big. Here again is a wonderful market for purchasing almost anything before your return home. The gardens and parks are stunning. Of course, the Museum is one of the best in the world on Chinese bronzes and ceramics from all dynasties.

Yixing's visit gave the group on the tour a view of the World Centre of the Teapot. Here the tour visits factories, individual artist studios, local trade shops, and local national treasures.

So, if you are planning to visit China, you must consider the ChineseClayArt tours led by Guangzhen "Po" Zhou. The tours are well planned and sometimes visits to small pottery villages like Chenlu, a Ming Dynasty style village, and the Song Dynasty kiln site at Yaoli are an additional surprise.

In China, an expression, "you must remain liquid" (go with the flow), is very appropriate. There is too much to see in China, so prepare yourself to make a second visit.

Bob Dixon, Professor Emeritus  
University of Illinois at Springfield

[TOP](#)

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### **English Teacher Wanted in China**

Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute in China needs an English teacher who will be able to teach in China for a half or full year. Monthly Salary: RMB 3,500 (about \$450 USD), plus free room, health insurance, and traveling premium.

Starts in the middle of February 2007. Contact: Guangzhen Zhou, Chinese Clay Art USA. Tel. 800-689-2529, ChineseClayArt@hotmail.com.

[TOP](#)

## **LETTERS**

A Perspective on Contemporary Chinese Ceramics by Andrew Maske, Fulbright Research Fellow I am a researcher of Asian art who specializes in ceramics. For the period of September 2006 through July 2007, I will be investigating creative ceramics throughout China under a U.S. Fulbright Research Grant.

Since arriving in Beijing in early September 2006, I've been fortunate to be able to participate in a number of large ceramics-related gatherings around China. Less than a week after arriving, my wife and I went to the Ninth Annual Tangshan Ceramics Festival not far from Beijing. There, I was introduced to a wide variety of industrially-produced ceramics and decorative wares. I also attended a symposium at which a number of prominent people in the ceramics world discussed the challenges facing China's ceramics industries. I learned that to most Chinese people, the term "art ceramics" (meishu taoci) means any ceramics made for display, not necessarily those that are handmade or have been created by an artist.

I also found out that many of the people who are referred to as "ceramics artists" are in fact ceramics decorators - they don't make pots, but simply paint on them. This made me wonder why Chinese don't call people who paint on paper "paper artists" instead of "painters"!

In any event, it quickly became clear that popular attitudes toward ceramics in China are very different from those in Japan, the place where I first fell in love with works in clay. Appreciation of

creative ceramic work in China seems to be confined to a fairly small circle of educated elites, many of them ceramics artists themselves. Because of the political climate in China during the 1960s and 1970s, the development of modern artistic taste was interrupted, with the result that today even many wealthy Chinese prefer ceramics that stay close to traditional patterns to those that radically break new ground.

In mid-October I went to another ceramics exposition, this one in Jingdezhen, China's porcelain capital. Like Tangshan, there were a large number of exhibitors of industrial ceramics and tablewares, but the only area for creative ceramics was a relatively small space displaying wares by foreign artists who had worked at Jingdezhen. The organizers had asked me to be a judge for the exposition's competition, but it turned out to be a competition to select the best ceramics marketing booths, not the best ceramic works. Still, it was great to visit the old kiln complex in the center of town, to tour the Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute, and to take trips out to the porcelain source sites of Gaolin and Yaoli, as well as to see what may be China's only operating dragon kiln.

Most recently, I visited Yixing, which held its Eighth National Ceramic Arts Competition at the end of October. I was asked to give a short lecture on Japanese ceramics, my specialty, but the day before the opening, the judging committee decided to ask me to act as a competition judge as well. As a judge, I was fortunate to have almost unlimited access to the several thousand works on display over a period of several days. I was assigned to the Modern Ceramic Arts (Xiandai taoyi) committee responsible for evaluating more than nine hundred ceramic works. The two other sections of the competition were Traditional Ceramic Arts and Daily Use/Art Ceramic Products.

While still in the U.S., I was able to study a number of catalogues of past contemporary Chinese ceramics exhibitions and competitions. Based upon the works I saw at the Yixing competition, it appears that the standard of Chinese creative ceramics is rising slowly but surely. Although there remained many works that seemed to lack careful thought or sophistication, there were some that combined originality, skill, and subtlety with a strong sense of purpose. Such works, however, were few. Many of the artists seem to be exploring or experimenting without a clear idea of where they are going or what they want to achieve creatively. There were also works that were one-dimensional in that they seemed trite or facile, or were simply a vehicle for demonstrating a technique or use of material. Worse, there were a few works that were clearly taking their main ideas from works by other artists illustrated in overseas catalogues and books, as well as some that were put on display despite the fact that they were clearly misfired or had been broken in transit.

At the closing ceremony, each of the judges was asked to offer a critique of the works as a whole. As you might imagine, it took a very long time for nineteen judges to give their critiques! I tried to keep mine very short, but suggested that each of the artists keep in mind their motivation - what they wanted to communicate through their pieces. After all, art is not really about technique or even originality; it is about expressing oneself in a way that makes a connection.

As a critic, curator, and educator, it is my job to identify works of art that make connections with people. I suggested to a couple of members of the committee that they might consider including some critics, curators, or ceramics historians (not necessarily non-Chinese) as adjudicators for future competitions. The world of ceramic art can be very "clubby" and in China in particular, I believe it is important to do as much as possible to make the field more widely accessible.

I tried my best to judge carefully and thoughtfully, but my inability to speak or read Chinese fluently put me at a disadvantage. Although instructions were communicated to me via translation, I was not able to discuss ideas freely with the other members of the committee, only one of whom spoke much English. I was also unable to discern most of the hastily-scribbled titles of the works on their placard labels. The most valuable exchange came during brief discussions in Japanese with Gao Zhenyu, a member of the Traditional Ceramic Arts committee who studied in Japan for a number of years. When it was time for me to give my closing critique, there were no English-speaking translators available, so I made my remarks in Japanese, which Professor Gao graciously translated for the audience.

My experience with contemporary Chinese ceramics thus far makes it clear to me that I have much

to learn, and that there is still much to see. I am looking forward to visiting studios and university art departments around the country during the coming months.

[TOP](#)

## **CLAY TOOL and BOOK STORE**

### **HOLIDAY SALE - UP TO 20%OFF**

New items have arrived. Please visit our website for details:

Water Based Decal Sheet (no alcohol needed) Apply over fired glaze surface only. Clean up the ceramic surface. Prepare a pan of warm water (about 30Â°C) of sufficient size to cover the decal paper.

Dip the decal paper in the water for 2-3 minutes. Spray water on the surface of the ceramic piece. Slide the decal onto the surface to attach it. Use a soft rubber scraper to smooth and drive out any air bubbles. Use a dry towel to take off the extra water. Wait about five hours until the decal paper has dried completely.

Fire it in oxidation (normally in an electrical kiln) at cone 015 (800Â°C).

Started firing at lower speed. Keep the kiln door slightly open until the paper burns off (about 300Â°C), or the images may turn blackish. Let the temperature cool down naturally after shutting off the electricity. The images will be transferred to the glazed surface permanently after the firing.

Liquid Spraying Pipes, stainless steel, 5.5" long Use your mouth to spray glazes or oxides on clay works easily and quickly.

Adjust the two pipes to a 90 degree angle, insert the thin and long side into the container with liquid glaze or oxides. When you blow air through the top bigger and shorter pipe, you create suction that pulls the liquid up through the vertical tube, and the liquid exits the container as a mist.

[TOP](#)