

BA CREATIVE ADVERTISING
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1000 Years of Asian Ceramics

My exhibition is called “1000 years of Asian ceramics”, this exhibition will be about 5 ceramic pieces, each from a different country in Asia. I wanted to display the culture of each country through their ceramics. This exhibition will be presented at The National Gallery in London. I have chosen this gallery because it is well-known so my exhibition would reach a wider audience, as it’s in a busy city with many visitors, but it does not showcase any Asian art. As well as that, this exhibition could introduce people to Asian artistry and culture. The walls of the room would be a plain off-white colour to let the ceramics show off their feature without distractions and the pieces would be placed spread out in a circle to represent Asia being “one” and this allows the pieces to be viewed from all angles.

Piece 1:



Figure 1

This piece is a pilgrim’s flask from China. It was made in the 6th Century (550-577) during the reign of the Northern Qi dynasty. The decoration and shape on the flask are influenced by West Asian pilgrim’s flasks while the figures on the flask are influenced by Sogdian (ancient Iran) culture. The flask is made of earthenware and has an olive glaze over top the molded decoration. The earthenware is made by firing clay until it becomes vitrified then the object is suspended in water containing finely ground glass powder and finally it is fired a second

time during which the powder fuses into a glasslike layer sealing the porous body. There are 7 figures on the flask depicting a performance; there is a male figure in the middle performing the “Sogdian Whirl” on a platform while 3 other figures are playing the pipa, flute, and harp. Sogdia was a middleman in the Silk Road Trade, they facilitated cross-cultural exchanges and therefore had the chance of meeting Chinese merchants. As well as that, the Silk Road used Sogdia’s language to communicate this meant that they had a high influence, and this may be why the Chinese depicted them on their ceramics. This piece is in my exhibition because it encapsulates how China became influenced by other countries during the Silk Road Trade and how much of an influence Sogdia had.

Piece 2:



Figure 2

This piece is a *buncheong* vase from Korea. It was made during the 15th century (after 1460) during the Joseon dynasty. Buncheong is short for *bunjang-hoecheong*, this means ‘decorated celadon’. Celadon’s use was continued after the previous dynasty (Goryeo). Buncheong is similar to celadon as the clay and glazing is the same but it has lower iron content hence making it brighter in colour than its counterpart and it uses white clay as a slip, this differentiates it from celadon. This vase uses a technique called *Cheolhwa*, this involves painting with red clay containing iron onto the white slip using painting methods from blue-

white porcelain. “The main feature of Cheolhwa was the powerful and energetic harmony of brown-black and white patterns or designs” (Kim, Ro and Kim, 2013, p. 73). Before designs became abstracted, the government controlled the quality of the ceramics and had the stamp of which government office it would be sent to, to avoid theft. The quality of the ceramics were low as metals such as gold and silver were paid as tribute to Ming dynasty China and bronze was used for military purpose thus clay was used for the buncheong. When the country began producing porcelain, buncheong was changed from ceremonial ware to tableware, this led to government managers, who did the quality control, to leave consequently leading to no restriction with the designs on the buncheong. “The surfaces became more lively, informal, experimental, witty, and playful” (Knapp, 2012 p. 24-25). The vase above (figure 2) displays an abstract floral design. I chose this piece because it shows how uncontrolled, inexpensive designs can become fluid and unique in their own way.

Piece 3:



Figure 3

This piece is a dish from Vietnam. It was thought to be made in the 15th or 16th century during the (Later) Le dynasty. The piece is stoneware with cobalt-blue underglaze decoration. The dish (figure 3) has abstract cloud motifs which are thought to be inspired by the Yuan dynasty of china (1279-1368), however, the shape and overall composition is thought to be inspired by the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Vietnam had been invaded by china several times and

therefore it was not surprising that the designs on the ceramics were inspired by Chinese designs. During the Ming dynasty, porcelain from Jingdezhen was banned from exporting thus leading to Vietnam, Thailand and Burma to produce and export porcelain to other countries, this may have led artists to use their culture (the elephant for example) to allow others to identify the origins of the piece. Vietnamese craftsmanship was highly sought after and were treated as status symbols and therefore the stoneware pieces were used as heirlooms. Although Vietnam had suffered 1000 years of domination, they still had their own flair in their art, indicated by the recumbent elephant on the dish. I chose this piece because it has a lot of history behind it, and it shows how the artists' culture inspired them to create a unique piece that is representative of their country.

Piece 4:



Figure 4

This piece is a bowl and is thought to have been made in Samarqand (present-day Uzbekistan). It was made during the late 10th to 11th century. The bowl is earthenware displaying polychrome slip decoration on a white slip (engobe) with transparent glaze over top and it displays Arabic calligraphy, known as *kufic*, on it, expressing *baraka*—a blessing. Although the calligraphy has a message there is an additional word, “the”, that has no relation to the rest of the inscription and the long strokes that come from the edges to the middle are flourishes

added for extra decoration. The white slip engobe and underglaze helped mimic porcelain that was being imported by the Chinese. The underglaze was made of lead as it was colourless and it allowed the ceramics' surface to be smooth. The slip paint and the underglaze allowed the designs on the ceramic to be clear and the epigraphic designs on ceramics became the new motif unique to the Islamic world. I chose this piece because it shows how religion plays a part in design (calligraphy) and how different techniques and materials were used to make precise, clean and crisp designs.

Piece 5:



Figure

This is an exhibition vase made in India by the Bombay School of Art. It was made in the 1880s. It is earthenware with a clear glaze over coloured slips. This vase was meant to preserve Indian artistry. The reason why India would have wanted to preserve Indian craft is because the British ruled India and thus would have highly influenced or even forced their culture on the Indians leading to losing their own heritage. The drawings on the vase are scenes from the third book of Ramayana—Aranya Kanda. The vase contains Indian culture as well as British culture as the shape and some geometric motifs have been influenced by the British; during the making of the vase, India was still under British rule and that is why

the shape and other motifs were influenced. The Ramayana is an ancient Sanskrit epic, it is one of the most influential literary works of India and it contains Hindu teachings. The piece has a lot going on and could become confusing, however, there are labels on the surface so people who don't know who is who or what the scene is meant to be about. As well as the epic tale, the elephants on the neck of the vase is of huge cultural relevance; elephants are the national animal of the country and thus it wouldn't be a cultural piece without it. I chose this piece because it represents the thousands of years of culture in one piece.

I chose these 5 pieces for my exhibitions because each piece represents its culture, history and artistry. The pieces clearly show that china's dominance in the past 1000 years (and beyond) highly influenced places china traded with and invaded, it also shows that invasions influenced the art pieces (figure 3 and 5), but it didn't overtake the culture and motifs of the country. For example, the dish (figure 3) was influenced by Chinese culture, but the elephant motif was a part of Vietnamese culture and thus did not take away Vietnamese culture from the piece. The message I wanted to send with the exhibition is that although Asia is one continent, it does not mean that everything in Asia is similar or the same, even the countries dominated by china have a unique culture and craftsmanship: for example, the ceramics made by Vietnam were stoneware but had the same status as porcelain; this leads me to believe that the craftsmanship was extremely good.

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