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Education Resource
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Tooth and Nail: Cross Cultural Influences in Contemporary Ceramics

An RMIT School of Art & NETS Victoria touring exhibition
curated by Stephen Gallagher

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About this Education Resource

This education resource is intended for use as a starting point to generate discussion and activities before, during and after a visit to *Tooth and Nail*. It is designed to be used in conjunction with information provided in the exhibition catalogue, gallery wall texts and on the NETS Victoria website. The resource includes an introduction to the exhibition, definitions of key terms, artist profiles, suggested points for discussion, activities for students, and references for further research. Teachers may select relevant aspects of this resource to tailor their own response sheet for use in the exhibition.

Planning your visit

Before visiting *Tooth and Nail* it is suggested that you contact gallery staff to determine the following.

- Opening hours, transport and parking options, cloakroom facilities and admission fees
- Suitability of content for the year level you intend to bring
- Staff availability for introductory talks and tours
- Education and Public Programs, artist talks etc. that coincide with the exhibition

Before your visit you may wish to discuss the following with your students

- An introduction and background to the history of ceramics, with particular reference to the history of the links between Asia and Australia (see this resource – Introduction)
- Your expectations for appropriate behaviour at a gallery, in regards to the safety of both students and artworks, and given that a gallery is a public space.

Curriculum links and themes

Use this list to generate ideas, activities and points for discussion, and where possible contact your local gallery for other ideas and suggestions. This document is designed to be used by students at VELS levels 5 and 6, and VCE Units 1-4, however the material may be easily tailored to suit younger students.

Visual/Creative/Studio Arts

- Artists' practice, ideas and inspiration
- Responding to Artworks: formal analysis and interpreting meanings and messages
- Exploring artists' personal and cultural perspectives
- Exploring symbols and metaphors expressed in artworks
- Exploring possibilities for materials, processes and techniques

Visual Communication and Design

- Understanding principles of design such as balance, form, scale, focal point
- Overall exhibition design – interior exhibition design and graphics that reflect a consistent theme and create a specific ambiance

Design Technology

- Product Design

History/Politics/Economics

- The interaction between politics, culture and economics – objects of desire and how they impact on the evolution of nation states

Introduction

Stephen Gallagher and RMIT in Asia

Stephen Gallagher, the curator of *Tooth and Nail*, is a practicing artist and works at RMIT as Galleries Coordinator for the School of Art. He trained as a gold and silver smith and is currently undertaking his Masters in Elizabethan ornamentation. Gallagher grew up in Queensland where he was a regular visitor to the Asia Pacific Triennial at the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) in Brisbane. The APT is the only major exhibition series to focus exclusively on the contemporary art of Asia, the Pacific and Australia. GOMA is one of few public institutions to collect both contemporary Asian and Pacific art and uses the APT to develop its collection. For Gallagher, growing up in Queensland meant that cultural connections with Asia were naturally obvious, given Australia's geographical position. *Tooth and Nail* is the second major touring exhibition that Gallagher has curated, the first being an exhibition called *The Presence of Things: Sense, Veneer and Guise* in 2006. Contemporary artworks integrating woven, embroidered and printed textiles, glass, ceramics and jewellery, cut paper, metalwork, inlay and printmaking, were exhibited alongside historic pieces of embroidery and lace from which the artists drew inspiration. Gallagher is interested in how historical material informs the present. He seeks new ways of displaying craft objects, avoiding the traditional glass cabinet.

RMIT has a long history of educational connections with Asia. In 1998 RMIT was invited to establish a campus in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The first classes were held there three years later.

This was the beginning of a cross cultural exchange which developed further when, ten years ago, RMIT partnered with the Hong Kong Art School to deliver a course covering the disciplines of painting, drawing, ceramics and sculpture.

As tertiary art institutions are becoming more widely established in the Asia region, at the same time art schools in Australia are gradually dropping ceramics from their courses. In a paper called *Futures: Education, Craft and Design in Australia*, Dr. Robyn Stewart from South Queensland University comments:

“What is happening in most Australian art schools is that those studio areas which rely on the development of specialist skills, the craft skills, are being closed and their uniqueness denied in the name of conceptually based production. Consequently the ‘disciplines’ of Textiles, Ceramics and sometimes Printmaking have disappeared from many of our institutions, and their skills are appropriated only when they are seen as necessary expressive tools for conceptual realization.”

A possible result of this trend may be that in the near future, increasing numbers of Australian students will seek technical training in Asian countries, further strengthening cultural and educational links.

Three of the Asian artists from *Tooth and Nail* are from the Hong Kong Art School course established by RMIT (Fiona Wong, Josephine Tsui and Joe Chan). In early May 2011 curator Stephen Gallagher travelled as an invited member of an **Asialink** research delegation to foster connections in Singapore, Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong. This was very productive in creating partnerships with arts and educational



Fiona WONG, Lai Ching
Green Baby, 2010, Porcelain; *Hazelnut*, 2010, Porcelain; *Whitehood Orchid*, 2010, Porcelain; *Aeranthes*, 2010, Porcelain; *Spathodia*, 2010, Japanese black clay; *Black Moon*, 2010, Japanese black clay.
All works collection of the artist.

institutions, and enabled Gallagher to select additional artists from China for *Tooth and Nail*.

Hong Kong has a unique cultural identity due to its convoluted political history. It became a colony of the British Empire after the First Opium War (1839–42). It was occupied by Japan during the Pacific War (part of World War II), after which the British resumed control until 1997, when China resumed sovereignty.

During the colonial era the region adopted an attitude of minimal government intervention and this has greatly influenced the current culture of Hong Kong, often described as “East meets West”. The architecture of Hong Kong combines ancient Chinese Temples, Victorian Colonial buildings and contemporary glass sky-scrapers. Religious practices include Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism, however, the majority of people in Hong Kong have no religious affiliation.

East meets West

Porcelain and Tea – China’s great exports

A refreshing cup of tea sipped from a dainty china cup and saucer is something that we usually think of as quintessentially English, however the tea and the porcelain from which the cup is made, were originally only available from China (hence crockery being referred to as ‘china’). Porcelain was developed in China around 200 AD, and by 600 AD was beginning to be exported to the Islamic world. Soon becoming highly prized and very expensive, it was brought to Europe by Portuguese traders in the sixteenth century.

Thirteenth century explorer **Marco Polo** describes how porcelain was seen as a family legacy in China:

“Let me tell you further that in this province, in a city called Tinju, they make bowls of porcelain, large and small, of incomparable beauty. They are made nowhere else except in this city, and from here they are exported all over the world. These dishes are made of a crumbly earth or clay which is dug as though from a mine and stacked in huge mounds and then left for thirty or forty years exposed to wind, rain, and sun. By this time the earth is so refined that dishes made out of it are of an azure tint with a very brilliant sheen. You must understand that when a man makes a mound of this earth he does so for his children.”



Jie ZHOU
CCTV-1, 2011, Ceramic. Collection of the artist.

In Europe the quest to discover the recipe for porcelain was taken on by the alchemists. These early chemists sought the mythical formula for turning lead into gold, but finding the recipe for porcelain was a more practical and ultimately lucrative project. The formula was finally discovered in 1708 by alchemist Johann Frederick Bottger in collaboration with Walter Tschirnhaus. Bottger had been imprisoned in a laboratory by the King of Poland in order to create gold, but with great daring, the alchemist escaped. He was re-captured and sent to Dresden to work on the formula for porcelain. Porcelain is made from kaoline, a fine clay, feldspar (calcinated alabaster) and quartz. The title for this exhibition, *Tooth and Nail*, refers to the calcium component of porcelain. Dresden became a world centre for the manufacture of high quality, ornate porcelain products, and German craftsmen influenced their Chinese counterparts who had to now compete in the market with new European products.

Tea and Opium – how Hong Kong came into being

Tea has been consumed in China for thousands of years but it became a craze in Europe in the 1600s when Catherine de Braganza, the Portuguese wife of Charles II, introduced tea drinking into the English

Court. Tea was very expensive and became a very important export for China. China closely guarded its tea industry, keeping its plants and processes under great secrecy. By the end of the eighteenth century Chinese tea, porcelain and silk were great demand in Europe, but there were very few European products that the Chinese would exchange for these, so they demanded hard currency for their products. This created what the **British East India Company** considered to be an unfair trade advantage. In retaliation the East India Company began importing opium grown in India into China. The highly addictive drug was soon in great demand. The Chinese government tried to ban opium trade, and this eventually gave rise to the **Opium Wars**. The British defeated the Chinese in the Opium Wars and part of the peace treaty (The Treaty of Nanking, 1842) included the relinquishing of Hong Kong to the British. Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997.

During this period the English also sought the redress the balance of trade power by sending a spy to China to steal tea plants. Robert Fortune, curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden disguised himself as a Chinese man and trekked across China gathering seeds and plants and observing the processes of harvesting and drying tea leaves. He finally managed to bring back some plants to India where the East India Company established plantations.

The Flowering of Australian Ceramics in the 1970s

During the 1960s and 70s there was a great flowering of interest and activity in ceramics in Australia. Ceramicists were focused on the craft of the manufacture of vessels, and proudly referred to themselves as 'potters'.

They drew on the ancient traditions of Chinese and Japanese pottery, as well as those of medieval England.



Kris COAD
journey..., 2011, Bone china, cotton. Collection of the artist

Bernard Leach (1887-1979) was a British potter and art teacher who was highly influential in the twentieth century in Asia, Europe and Australia. He was born in Hong Kong, his father was an English colonial judge and his maternal grandparents were missionaries in Japan, so Leach was culturally a typical product of Hong Kong's 'East Meets West' chequered history. As a young man he studied etching at the London School of Art before settling in Japan where he became fascinated with pottery and studied under the great master **Kenzan**. Here he came into contact with a group of young Japanese art lovers who called themselves **Shirakabaha**. Through them he learned about William Morris and the **Arts and Crafts Movement**.

Leach and his friend, potter **Shoji Hamada**, set up the Leach Pottery at St. Ives, Cornwall in 1920, including the construction of a traditional Japanese wood burning kiln. The two of them promoted pottery as a combination of Western and Eastern arts and philosophies. In their work they focused on traditional Korean, Japanese and Chinese ceramics, in combination with traditional techniques from England and Germany, such as **slipware** and **salt glaze** ware. They saw pottery as a combination of art, philosophy, design and craft. *A Potter's Book* published by Leach in 1940 defined craft philosophy and techniques, and distributed his ideas globally.

The Australian ceramicists Ivan McMeekin (1919-1993) and Gwyn Hanson-Piggot (b.1935) were students of Bernard Leach, and through him the great Asian traditions and techniques were celebrated and developed in Australia. In the 1970s McMeekin set up ceramics studios for Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. The popularity of ceramics concurred with the rise of the environmental movement, and

was perceived as a way of de-stressing from the increasing pressures of late twentieth century life, and in some way maintaining a connection with nature and the Earth.

Many Australian artists went to study in Japan including Les Blakeborough, Peter Rushworth and Janet Mansfield. Japanese ceramicists lived, practiced and taught in Australia such as Mitsuo Shoji (b.1946) who lectured at Caulfield Institute of Technology in Melbourne.

Some ceramicists did not travel far afield, but were still influenced by Chinese and Asian art through their exposure to Chinese artworks in Australian institutions. Harold Hughan (1893-1987), a highly regarded and influential potter, was inspired by the Herbert Kent Collection of Chinese ceramics on display at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Passionate historian and ceramicist Dennis O'Hoy (b.1938) taught the history of ceramics for 39 years at Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE. O'Hoy is from a Chinese family who settled in Bendigo during the Gold Rush in the 1860s. His name is now attached to a LaTrobe University ceramics award for innovation. Many of O'Hoy's past students are now practicing potters in the Central Victorian Region.



Josephine TSUI, Tze Kwan
Circle, 2009, Glazed stoneware, stoneware powder, Glazed terracotta, terracotta powder, Glazed porcelain, porcelain powder.
Collection of the artist.

ARTISTS, ARTWORKS and ACTIVITIES

The artists in *Tooth and Nail* are as follows:

Australia: Sally Cleary, Kris Coad, Andrei Davidoff, Robyn Phelan, Jane Sawyer, Kevin White

Hong Kong: Fiona Wong Lai-ching, Josephine Tsui Tze Kwan, Joe Chan Kiu Hong

Beijing: Jie Zhou

Taiwan: Monxi Wu

Below we look in more detail at four of the artists and their work.

Joe Chan Kiu Hong

Joe Chan grew up in a rural area in Hong Kong called Yuen Long, where the traditional Chinese houses have tiled roofs. He remembers very clearly as a child listening intently to the gentle, rhythmic sound of rain on the tiles of his house. Looking out of the window at the natural landscape surrounding him, he felt very peaceful. That peaceful feeling is in stark contrast to the experience of the complex, noisy and fast paced city of Hong Kong where Joe now lives and works at the Hong Kong Art School. Chan's early experiences of contemplative listening to the sounds of nature have instilled in him a continuing interest in sound and music. As well as working as a tutor in the sculpture department at the Hong Kong Art School, Chan also produces outdoor music concerts. He has a keen interest in interior design. Chan studied in Melbourne at RMIT where he completed a Masters of Fine Art in 2009.

Joe Chan's work *Jing Ting (mobile set ver. 1)*, 2009 brings together his diverse interests and influences – sound, contemporary design and lifestyle, natural and traditional materials. Combining fine porcelain and headphones, Chan has created personal resonating devices which amplify the sound of rain for the wearer.

Questions and points for discussion:

- Can you think of a natural form that amplifies sound in a similar way to Joe Chan's work? Small enough to hold up to your ear?
- Are there other ways that sound can be amplified in nature?
- Can you think of another way that ceramics are used to create or amplify sounds?
- What does the title *Jing Ting* mean?
- Can you make up some words that mimic sounds?
- Can you hear the sound of rain on your roof at home?
- What is your roof made of?
- What word would you create to mimic the sound of rain on your roof?
- There is a special word for these kind of sound/words – can you find out what it is?

Creating and Making

- Make a collection of objects that you think might make good 'resonating chambers'.
- Test out your objects by tapping them and pouring water into them – thing of other ways to make sounds with them. How does the shape of the object affect the sound? Make some notes about what you have learned.
- Try recording the results of your experiments.



Joe CHAN, Kiu Hong
Jing Ting (mobile set ver. 1), 2009, Porcelain and mixed media.
Collection of the artist.

- You could get together with some friends and create a collaborative ‘sound work’.

Exploring and Responding

- Although we can view *Jing Ting* in a gallery, the artwork is a proto-type for a personal artwork that is used by just one individual.
- Do you think this is an effective strategy for making artworks? Why? Why not?
- Explore other ways to create personal artworks, that are made for just one person to enjoy.

VCE Art/Studio Art

- Joe Chan uses porcelain, a traditional material originally from China, and combines it with a contemporary headphone set to create his artwork. Discuss his choice of materials – what impact does this have on the meanings and messages embodied in the work?
- How do the art elements of sound and space work together in Joe Chan’s work *Jing Ting*?
- What effect do they produce?
- *Jing Ting* exists as an artwork on display at a gallery, but it also has an *imagined* function. Do you think that the object would function effectively in the way it has been intended? Is it an artwork or a proto-type? Can it be both?
- Can you find any other examples of artists who have created objects as artworks, but also have an imaginary use beyond the gallery?

Robyn Phelan

Melbourne-based artist Robyn Phelan has a background in visual arts and crafts teaching and management. In 2006 she won a Siemens-RMIT Fine Art Scholarship which enabled her to travel to China in 2008 and undertake a residency in the Jingdezhen Pottery Workshop and Experimental Sculpture Factory. Jingdezhen has been the porcelain capital of China since 1300 - it was the where the Emperors had their porcelain made. The town is the size of Adelaide and just about everyone is involved with ceramic production. During her residency Phelan took hundreds of photos and explored all the local ceramics factories and shops. She became fascinated with the history of the area and the landscape from which the famous clay was sourced. Her recent work is based on those histories. In 2009 Phelan was interviewed and commented on the decorative aspects of her work:

"Ceramics is very laden with history and the story I am telling in these works is how the landscape in Western and Eastern art is read. I have used Chinese **decals** that I brought back from Jingdezhen. These are the same as the decals Wedgwood would have used in the 1400s. The decals are cobalt blue and have a tissue back and you apply them to your work. On one mountain I have shown how a western landscape is read with a vanishing point, and the objects getting smaller in the distance...In the other work I have cut the decals up and I have used a meandering line to show that perspective isn't important in Chinese scroll painting, it's more about the story and the journey that you take."

The form of Phelan's sculptures reflects the Chinese landscape (the distinctive shape of the mountains of Guilin and Yanshuo). This reflects the artist's environmental concerns. The surface is textured using finger marks which draws connections between the human body and the earth, the hand built process and the material from which the work is formed, both originating in the delicately balanced natural world. The clay that Phelan uses is called *Southern Ice Paperclay*. It is perfectly pure white porcelain which was devised by a Tasmanian artist. It is so refined and luminous that it does not require a glaze, which Phelan prefers for sculptural work.

Creating and Making

- Look around at your local environment.
- Are there any shapes that you could utilise to create an interesting sculptural form?
- Look at some different styles of ceramics from different periods in history, for example Chinese, Japanese or Korean.
- Design a ceramic sculpture that is influenced by your chosen style.

Exploring and Responding

- Research the some of the ceramics centres in various parts of the world. You can look at Jingdezhen in China, Dresden in Germany or Bendigo in Central Victoria.
- What other places can you find where ceramics is an important part of local culture and history?
- Why has ceramics production flourished in these areas? Do they utilise local clays? What is the history of ceramics production in those areas?

VCE Art/Studio Art

- Describe the various influences on the work of Robyn Phelan.
- Research the historical context of the Jingdezhen porcelain 'capital' of China.
- What is the relationship between the surface textures of Phelan's work, their decorative elements, and the form of the work? Consider how these three aspects of the work function together. In your opinion do they work well together? Why? Why not?
- What aesthetic traditions inform Phelan's work?



Robyn PHELAN

Depleted, 2009, Southern Ice Paperclay, cobalt glaze; *Depleted-Torn*, 2010, Southern Ice Paperclay, cobalt glaze; *Depleted-Ripped*, 2010, Southern Ice Paperclay, cobalt glaze; *Depleted-Sorry*, 2010, Southern Ice Paperclay, cobalt glaze. All works collection of the artist.

Kevin White

Kevin White grew up in England where he studied Fine Art at Leeds Polytechnic. Throughout his career he has travelled to various places in Asia to study and research ceramics. In 1978 he was awarded a Japanese Ministry of Education Scholarship to research ceramics in Japan. He studied under the late Professor Yutaka Kondo at Kyoto City University of Fine Art and then worked for three years in the Kyoto studio of Satoshi Sato, a member of the *Sodeisha* group of contemporary ceramic artists. The influential *Sodeisha* group was formed in 1948 and was radical in that it concentrated on purely sculptural forms. Three young Kyoto ceramists, Yagi Kazuo (1918-1979), Yamada Hikaru (b.1924) and Suzuki Osamu (b.1926) were the force behind *Sodeisha*. In the post World War II environment of Japan, dissatisfaction was rampant amongst many of the young artistic community. They rebelled against conservative forces by refusing to submit work to official exhibitions, and avoiding overt references to traditional aesthetics. Their approach was bold and naive. They discussed whether or not the mouth of a work should be closed or not. If left open it became a vessel, and thus to close it was the only way to have it taken seriously as ceramic sculptural art.

In 1983 White returned to London where he completed his Master of Arts at the Royal College of Art. After finishing his Masters he moved to Australia and now lives and works in Melbourne. Appointed Associate Professor at RMIT in 2000, he is currently the Deputy Head of International Development at the RMIT, School of Art. He travelled to Shanghai and Jingdezhen in China in 2006, and in 2009 undertook a residency at the Department of Philosophy, Lingnan University Hong Kong. White has been very influential in the development of RMIT's exchanges with various institutions in Asia.

White's works are influenced by his experiences in Japan, where he learnt the technique of **onglaze** decoration. Since then he has developed an approach that combines elements from Japanese culture with Western influences and designs of his own imagination. The shapes of White's porcelain vessels echo the simple curves of Japanese ceremonial dotaku bells. They are thrown on a wheel and then altered. The initial design is painted in **underglaze** blue, then glazed with a clear glaze. After this, colour in the form of onglazes is added and fired on in a third firing.

Creating and Making

- Kevin White's works use a grid format in their decoration – use this form of pattern as an inspiration to create a two-dimensional artwork – you could think in terms of using images or motifs from different cultures.

Exploring and Responding

- What motifs can you recognise in Kevin White's work?
- Can you see any Australian motifs? What are they?
- Describe the shape of Kevin White's Vessel/s. Make a drawing of the shape.
- Do you think Kevin White's works are sculpture or made to be used?
- Discuss how Kevin White has used tone in his glazing techniques. What effect does this create in the work?

VCE Art/Studio Art

- Consider and carefully describe how rhythm is created in Kevin White's work.
- Comment on his use of symmetry and asymmetry.
- What effects do these elements create in the work, and how do they impact on the meanings embodied in the artworks?



Kevin WHITE

Vessel 1, 2010, Porcelain; Vessel 2, 2009, Porcelain; Vessel 3, 2009, Porcelain. All works collection of the artist. Represented by Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne and Beaver Galleries, Canberra.

Monxi Wu

Born in 1968, Monxi Wu lives and works in Kaohsiung, Taiwan where she teaches at Shu-Te University. In 2008 she travelled to Melbourne to complete a PhD in Fine Art at RMIT. Kevin White was one of her teachers at RMIT. Monxi Wu's work is based on ideas of duality. This is evident in the hand-built forms of the work, as two similar yet different forms are fused together. She explores space and form in terms of Yin and Yang – concepts from Taoist philosophy. Yin and Yang are concepts that are deeply connected with nature: masculine and feminine, positive and negative. In this case the term 'negative' is used in a

more Eastern sense. It is not a value judgement as it is thought of in the West, where negative equals 'no', 'wrong' or 'bad'. In Taoist philosophy moral judgements are discounted in favour of a sense of balance between dualisms. Yin and Yang are not opposing forces, but complementary opposites, that interact within a greater whole as part of a dynamic system, e.g. dark and light, unseen and seen, interior and exterior, female and male, low and high, cold and hot, water and fire, earth and air. Everything has both Yin and Yang aspects as light cannot exist without darkness and vice-versa, but either of these aspects may manifest more strongly in particular objects. Monxi Wu explores these relationships through the use of contrasting textures and colours – these are created with **crackle glaze**. The forms that she sculpts refer back to nature, the foundation of duality, and appear like abstract organic, botanical forms.

Creating and Making

- Think of objects that have similarities and differences. Make a list of them. Think about how you might be able to use 'found' objects to create an 'assemblage' (a sculpture made of found objects – like a three-dimensional collage). Your objects would need to fit together, but also contrast each other.
- Construct your sculpture.
- Make some drawings of your sculpture.
- If you were to make a version of your sculpture out of clay, what techniques would you use to build it?
- If you use clay at school, build a version of your sculpture, it can be based on, but not exactly the same as your assemblage.

Exploring and Responding

- What plant forms in nature does Monxi Wu's works *Contrasting Rhythms 9* and *18* remind you of?
- Do they remind you of any other natural forms? Geological or animal?
- Research Taoism. Where does it come from? When was it developed?
- Think of as many pairings as you can of 'complementary opposites'. Make a list of them, see if you can assign them to Yin or Yang qualities.

VCE Art/Studio Art

- Research some examples of traditional Japanese Raku ware.
- Compare your examples to the works of Monxi Wu. What are the similarities and differences?
- Describe how Monxi Wu's cultural context has informed her works in *Tooth and Nail*.



Monxi WU

Contrasting Rhythm 9, 2006, Raku clay, crackle glaze and slips. RMIT School of Art Collection.

Contrasting Rhythm 18, 2009, Raku clay, crackle glaze and slips. Collection of the artist.

Key terms

Asialink – Asialink is a centre for the promotion of public understanding of the countries of Asia and of Australia's role in the region. The organisation is a provider of information, training and professional networks. Asialink is a non-academic centre of The University of Melbourne. Its mission is to work with business, government, philanthropic and cultural partners to initiate and strengthen Australia-Asia engagement.

Marco Polo – Marco Polo (c. 1254 – January 9, 1324) was a Venetian merchant traveller whose travels are recorded in *// Milione*, a book which did much to introduce Europeans to Central Asia and China. He learned about trading whilst his father and uncle travelled through Asia. In 1269, they returned to Venice to meet Marco for the first time. The three of them embarked on an epic journey to Asia, returning after 24 years to find Venice at war; Marco was imprisoned, and dictated his stories to a cellmate. He was released in 1299, became a wealthy merchant, married and had three children.

British East India Company – The British East India Company was formed in 1707 (formerly it was the English East India Company). It was a joint-stock company with the purpose of pursuing trade with the East Indies but which ended up trading mainly with the Indian subcontinent. Shares of the company were owned by wealthy merchants and aristocrats. The government owned no shares and had only indirect control. The Company operated its own large army with which it controlled major portions of India. The East India Company traded mainly in cotton, silk, indigo dye, salt, saltpetre, tea and opium.

Arts and Crafts Movement – The Arts and Crafts movement was an international design movement that flourished between 1860 and 1910, continuing its influence until the 1930s. It was led by the English artist and writer William Morris (1834–1896), and it stood for traditional craftsmanship using simple forms and often applied medieval, romantic or folk styles of decoration. It advocated economic and social reform and has been said to be essentially anti-industrial.

Slipware – Pottery in which ‘slip’ is used to decorate the surface of the vessel by dipping, painting or splashing. Slip is clay that has been watered down until it has a thin, creamy consistency – sometimes other minerals are added such as mica, feldspar and quartz.

Salt glaze – A glazing process by which salt is thrown onto the kiln during the higher temperature part of the firing process. The sodium in the salt reacts with the silica in the clay to create a translucent textured surface similar to orange peel. Colours can be clear or various shades of brown, blue or purple, depending on the addition of other minerals.

Decals – A decal is a kind of transfer made from plastic, cloth, paper or ceramic. It has printed on it a pattern or image that can be moved to another surface upon contact, usually with the aid of heat or water. The word is short for *decalcomania*. The word *decalcomania* is derived from the French word *decalquer*, and was coined by Simon François Ravenet about 1750; it became widespread during the decal craze of the late 19th century.

Onglaze – Onglaze is a method of decorating ceramics, where the decoration is applied after it has been glazed. The vessel is fired once with a glaze, and then fired a second time at lower temperatures. During the second firing the colours fuse into the glaze and so the decoration becomes durable. Because the decorating fire can be at a lower temperature with on-glaze decoration, a more varied palette of colours is available than with underglaze decoration.

Underglaze – Underglaze is a method of decorating ceramics in which the decoration is applied to the surface before it is glazed. Because the glaze will subsequently cover it such decoration is completely durable. It uses pigments derived from oxides that fuse with the glaze when the piece is fired in a kiln.

Raku – Raku is a type of Japanese pottery that is traditionally used in the Japanese tea ceremony, most often in the form of tea bowls. It is traditionally characterised by being hand shaped rather than thrown; fairly porous vessels, which result from low firing temperatures; lead glazes, and the removal of pieces from the kiln while still glowing hot. In the traditional Japanese process, the fired raku piece is removed from the hot kiln and is allowed to cool in the open air or in a container filled with a combustible material such as sawdust. ‘Raku’ means “enjoyment”, “comfort” or “ease” and is derived from Jurakudai, the name of a palace, in Kyoto.

Crackle glaze – Crackle glaze, often used in Raku pottery, is a glaze that has a broken surface texture. Because it is a Raku glaze, it melts and sticks to the clay at a much cooler temperature than usual. The Raku glazes melt at around 1800°F, whereas under glazes melt anywhere from 1,200°F-2000°F. After firing, most glazes are completely ‘set’, but when the crackle glaze is removed from the kiln it is still slightly soft. As it cools the cracks appear. Variations in the texture of the cracks can be controlled by varying the speed at which the piece cools.

Useful websites:

<http://qagoma.qld.gov.au/exhibitions/apt> (Asia Pacific Triennial)
<http://www.ceramicsvictoria.org.au/>
<http://www.australianceramicstriennale.com/>
<http://australianceramics.com>
<http://ceramicart.com.au/>
<http://www.sheppartonartgallery.com.au>
<http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/> (Asialink)
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