



Chigusa and the Long Life of a Tea-Leaf Storage Jar

**By Louise Allison Cort, Curator for Ceramics,
Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery,
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.**



Tea-leaf storage jar named *Chigusa*, China, probably Guangdong province, stoneware with iron glaze, 13th-14th century. Shown with rare silk accessories essential for adorning the jar. Height 41.0 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (FSC-P-6964).

On Monday, March 14, Louise Allison Cort will speak about how, when an object crosses the border between one culture and another, it is not uncommon for its meaning to change, even sometimes profoundly, in the new context. Such is the story of the jar named Chigusa. The standard Chinese storage jar that would become known as Chigusa was made at a workshop in southern China for use as an all-purpose container. By chance it was put onto a ship heading to Japan. Once emptied of its (unknown) commercial contents, it was repurposed for use as a storage jar for tea leaves. This occurred just at the time when tea-drinking was becoming important as an elite social activity. The jar's appearance came to be admired by tea connoisseurs, and as a result it acquired not only a reputation as an outstanding jar but also, as was common for famous objects, a personal name, Chigusa. We know a great deal more about the history of Chigusa in Japan because of the written records from the sixteenth century that describe its display at tea gatherings and its status among famous tea utensils of the day. Chigusa also retains many of the accoutrements that its succession of owners provided, including rare silk accessories essential for adorning the jar when it was displayed, documents recording its change of hands, and sturdy wooden boxes for storage and transport. Nonetheless, while esteemed for its aesthetic qualities within the context of the tea room and in the eyes of connoisseurship of tea utensils, Chigusa never lost its importance as a practical container for tea leaves. This talk will use the associated texts and textiles to tell Chigusa's story over the past six hundred years.



Tea-leaf storage jar named *Chigusa*, China, probably Guangdong province, stoneware with iron glaze, 13th-14th century. Stages of adornment. Height 41.0 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (FSC-P-6964).

Louise Cort is Curator for Ceramics at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, which she joined in 1981. She is the author of *Shigaraki, Potters' Valley*, (1979 reprinted 2000). Cort prepared, with George Ashley Williams IV and David P. Rehfuss, the online catalogue *Ceramics in Mainland Southeast Asia: Collections in the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery* (2008). Her study on Indian ritual earthenware, *Temple Potters of Puri* (with Purna Chandra Mishra), was published in 2012. With Andrew M. Watsky, she organized and co-edited *Chigusa and the Art of Tea* (2014). In 2012 Ms. Cort received the thirty-third Koyama Fujio Memorial Prize for her research on historical and contemporary Japanese ceramics, as well as the Smithsonian Distinguished Scholar Award, which recognizes a scholar's sustained achievement in research, longstanding investment in the Smithsonian, outstanding contribution to a field, and ability to communicate research to a non-specialist audience.

The lecture will take place on Monday, March 14 at the Bruce Museum, 1 Museum Drive, Greenwich, CT at 1:15 p.m., with tea to follow. Admission for non-CCSC members is \$25. Information: 203-531-6831 or programs@csc.org.

Coming on Monday, April 11 CCSC SEMINAR The Magic and Majesty of Majolica

With three lectures presented by Nicolaus Boston and a delicious box lunch, this seminar promises to be one of our most interesting looks at the colorful, sometimes whimsical and amusing forms of majolica in the Victorian era. The Seminar will start at 9:30 a.m. and go to 2:30 p.m.

The lectures are as follows:

1. **“Herbert Minton’s Drive for Perfection”**
2. **“Victorian Majolica: The Great Dynasties and the Great Designers”**
3. **“A World View: Forms, Shapes and Delights”**

Sign up sheets have been emailed and one is attached to this Newsletter. Be sure to send in your reservation today, with check made out to CCSC! Members and students with ID, \$95; non-members, \$125. Questions to Marilyn Chou at 203-863-9655 or marylin.chou@gmail.com. Reservations to Ms. Chou at 20 Church Street, A65, Greenwich, CT 06830.



Prometheus Vase, Minton Majolica earthenware, designed by Victor Simian, Circa 1873. Height 40”.

CCSC Website is Soon to Be Up and Running!

CCSC webmaster Ginny Waters is delighted to announce that the new website for the Connecticut Ceramics Study Circle is almost live! When the new website is launched you will be able to type in “Connecticut Ceramics Study Circle” in your browser and be directed to ctcsc.org. Ginny’s hard work over the last months has created an attractive and informative web home for the CCSC. Our new website provides information about the CCSC’s history and mission, seminar, and calendar information. You can look to ctcsc.org for connections to the world of ceramics through its links to important organizations – a great resource for exploration into the beauty and history of ceramics.

Don’t forget: Members who have items in their collection they wish to digitally share (anonymously) on ctcsc.org, please contact Ginny Waters at 203-485-0091 or at ginywaters@me.com to find out how to contribute their images.

Who Was Phyllis Simons?

On the CCSC 2016 Membership Application, you will see the option to make a contribution to the Phyllis Simons Lecture Fund. Many members did not have the chance to know Phyllis Simons, who died in 2011. To learn about Phyllis, the role she had in the CCSC and why she was honored after her death with a named fund, read on.

Phyllis was not a founding member of the CCSC, but was a formative member with recognizable contributions to the organization. She knew ceramics and was a professional editor when she was asked to establish the CCSC newsletter. She was the newsletter’s writer and editor for its first 16 years, leaving that post to become program chairman; she later served as president for two terms. She was instrumental in making the CCSC known in the wider world through advertisements and articles in various national publications. Through her encouragement, a group developed who traveled long distances to every CCSC Seminar. Phyllis’s final board position was her last, as newsletter chair, completing her final newsletter two months before her death.

That the CCSC has a lecture fund in her name gives honor to Phyllis’s more than 16 years of highest level research and writing in the newsletter and all the other capacities in which she served the CCSC. When Phyllis’s name is mentioned at an American Ceramics Circle Symposium, she is still well known and remembered by lecturers, art historians and curators. She is thus recognized as a representative of the intellectual driving force that began and matured the organization, and members’ contributions to the Phyllis Simons Lecture Fund help perpetuate the excellence of CCSC lectures and seminars.



Artist: Ron Baron

Clay Art Center Exhibit: NY, NY: CLAY

As part of its year-long series of exhibits, In Our Backyard, the Clay Art Center announces its upcoming exhibition, NY, NY: CLAY, curated by author, NYU professor, and CCSC member, Judith Schwartz, PhD. The exhibition opens on Sunday, April 3 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and runs through May 25, 2016. It showcases an eclectic representation of young, mid-career and mature clay artists and is a sampling of the work of those who live, work, and build their careers in our backyards.

The Clay Arts Center is located at 40 Beech Street in Port Chester, NY. Information dominique@clayartcenter.org or 914-937-2047, x226.

Elsewhere in the Decorative Arts

March 7, “Indian Textiles and Elihu Yale’s Tapestries: Conversations in Cloth in Seventeenth-Century London.” Speaker: Sylvia Houghteling, Sylvan C. Coleman and Pam Coleman Memorial Fellow, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015-2016, Lecture: Greenwich Decorative Arts Society, 1:15 p.m. Bruce Museum, 1 Museum Drive, Greenwich, CT. Information: info@greenwichdecorativearts.org.

March 11 and March 25, “Porcelain in the Portico.” Gallery Talks for “From Sèvres to Fifth Avenue: French Porcelain at The Frick Collection.” Noon, The Frick Collection, 1 East 70th Street, New York, NY. Free with museum admission, no reservations necessary. Information: 212 288-0700 or www.frick.org.

March 14, “Chigusa and the Art of Tea.” Speaker: Louise Cort, Curator of Ceramics, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, The Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D. C. Lecture: CCSC, 1:15 p.m. Bruce Museum, 1 Museum Drive, Greenwich, CT. Admission non-members, \$25. Information: 203-531-6831 or programs@csc.org.

March 17, “European Origins, Transatlantic Exports: History, Technology, and Trade of Tin-Glazed Earthenware in North America.” Speaker: Amanda Lange, Curatorial Department Director and Curator of Historic Interiors Historic Deerfield, Deerfield, MA. Lecture: The Pottery and Porcelain Club of Providence, 2:00 p.m., Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Benefit Street, Providence, RI. Information: 401-351-4042.

March 24, “Portuguese Faiança in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.” Speaker: Steven Pendery, Ph.D., Adjunct Member of CLEAT, Université Laval, Quebec, Canada. Lecture: China Students’ Club of Boston, 1:00 p.m. King’s Chapel Parish House, 64 Beacon Street, Boston, MA. Information: jab422@comcast.net.

April 3 - May 25, Exhibit, In Our Backyard, Clay Art Center, 40 Beech Street, Port Chester, NY. Information, Dominique Mason at 914-937-2047, x226 or at dominique@clayartcenter.org.

April 11, Seminar, The Magic and Majesty of Majolica in three lectures, “Herbert Minton’s Drive for Perfection,” “Victorian Majolica: The Great Dynasties & the Great Designers,” and “A World View: Forms, Shapes and Delights.” Speaker: Nicolaus Boston, specialist in Victorian-era pottery and porcelain, dealer, curator and author. Connecticut Ceramics Study Circle, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Bruce Museum, 1 Museum Drive, Greenwich, CT. Members and students with ID, \$95; Non-members \$125. To reserve your space, contact Marilyn Chou at marylin.chou@gmail.com or at 203-863-9655.

April 16, Symposium, “CLAY AT THE CORE: NY Art, Architecture & Design.” Moderator Judith Schwartz, Ph.D, NYU Professor. Panelists Glenn Adamson, Toby Buonagurio, Susan Tunick and founders of KleinReid, James Klein and David Reid. 1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., Port Chester Senior Community Center, 222 Grace Church Street, Port Chester, NY. \$25 Clay Art Center members; \$35 non-members; \$5 full time students w/ ID. Register: www.clayartcenter.org.



**CONNECTICUT
CERAMICS
STUDY CIRCLE**

The Magic and Majesty of Majolica

By Nicolaus Boston

Author, curator and proprietor, Nicolaus Boston Antiques

Three lectures:

“Herbert Minton’s Drive for Perfection”

From France’s 16th-century ceramicist Bernard Palissy to England’s Herbert Minton in the 19th century, this is a story of the drive for perfection. We learn how intrigue and deception finally produced a variety of vibrantly colored and molded decorative objects at the Minton manufactory.

“Majolica: The Great Dynasties and the Great Designers”

Examining the influences of contemporary art and social movements of 1849-1900, we cast an eye on the English designer Christopher Dresser, French sculptors Baron Carlo Marchetti and Albert Carrier-Belleuse, and the English architect A.W.N. Pugin.

“A World View: Forms, Shapes and Delights”

A sampling of pieces from the many 19th-century majolica potteries throughout Europe and America, ending with an illuminating look at the more whimsical shapes and fantastical themes of the era.

**Monday, April 11, 2016 from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
at the Bruce Museum, 1 Museum Drive, Greenwich, CT**

CCSC Members \$95. Non-Members \$125. Students \$95.

A box lunch is provided.

All checks should be made out to: CCSC

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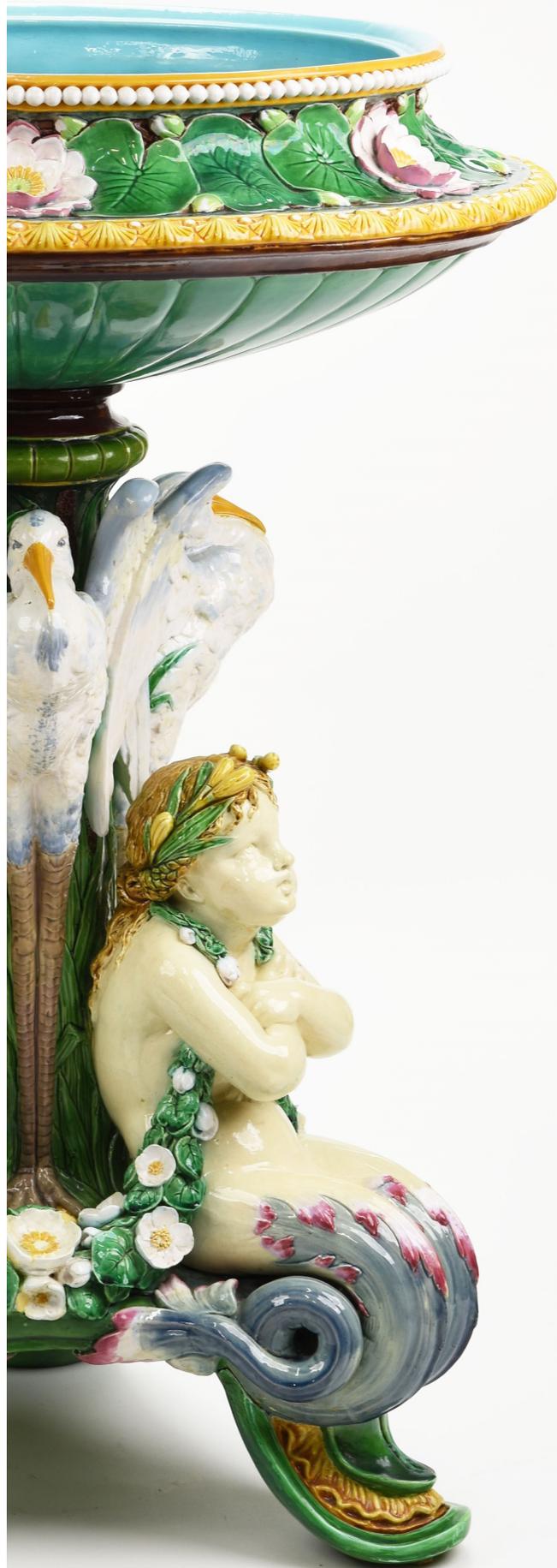
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Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Return completed form with your payment to:
Marylin Chou, 20 Church Street, A65, Greenwich, CT 06830
For more information, call Ms. Chou at 203.863.9655
or email marylin.chou@gmail.com



Lily Conservatory Jardiniere, Minton Majolica earthenware, circa 1875, H. 46”