



Psykter with Athletes Practicing in a Gymnasium, attributed to Oltos, terracotta with red-figure decoration, circa 510-520 BCE. H. 13 5/8 in., Diameter 11 in. (34.9 cm, 27.94).
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Rogers Fund (object number 10.210.18).

"Painted Pottery and the Transformation of Athens"

by Robin Osborne

Professor of Ancient History, Faculty of Classics,
King's College, University of Cambridge
and Fellow, The British Academy

Sponsored by Deborah Dearborn
and Anne Griffin

Monday, December 8 at 2:00 p.m.
on Zoom

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/7217598441544/WN_OOFYoZ1QS2zvt7BrCgmMA

Professor Osborne will introduce us to the pots painted in Athens in the middle of the fifth century BC, which depict different scenes from those painted at the end of the sixth century and depict them in a different way. This fact is so well known to scholars that it is taken for granted. In this lecture Robin Osborne looks more closely at what changes occurred, and in particular at the changes in the scenes depicted. He argues that, rather than taking the changes for granted, we should see them as the best evidence we have for the moral, political and aesthetic preferences that constituted and distinguished classical Greek culture. Athenian pottery, he shall claim, not only offers us an unparalleled window through which to view the transformation from archaic to classical Greece, but also an insight into why that transformation took place.

Professor Osborne explores the moral and political implications of the changes in the selection of scenes represented, and he makes the case for the impact of aesthetic factors on how people saw the world and considered their own relation to it. He then discusses the ways in which the history of sculpture does and does not parallel the history represented in painted pottery.

Robin Osborne was introduced to both Classics and the History of Art at Colchester Royal Grammar School in the UK. He read Classics as an undergraduate at King's College Cambridge (1976–79), where he wrote his Ph.D. thesis on Classical Athens and Attica under Anthony Snodgrass's supervision, and was then elected to a Research Fellowship at King's Cambridge from 1982 to 1986.

From 1986 to 2001 he taught in Oxford as a Fellow of first Magdalen College and then Corpus Christi College, then in 1996 as a titular Professorship in Ancient History. In 2001 he returned to Cambridge to the established chair in Ancient History, retiring in 2024. He has published widely on Greek History and Greek Art and Archaeology, including *Athens and Athenian Democracy*, (2010) and *The History Written on the Classical Greek Body* (2011). He has been a Fellow of the British Academy since 2006.

Registration Link for the December 8, 2:00 p.m. Zoom Lecture:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/7217598441544/WN_OOFYloZ1QS2zvt7BrCgmMA



Pair of Chinese Porcelain Fahua-Style "Lotus" Jars and Covers, China, Porcelain, Fahua style, Qing dynasty, Height each approximately 18 1/2 in. (47 cm). Photo: iGavelAuctions.com.

REGISTER NOW FOR THE 2026 CCC SEMINAR!

You may now register on the CCC website at cceramicsc.org for the 2026 Seminar on Monday, February 9, "A Guide to Chinese Ceramics Ancient and Modern, and How to Navigate a Complicated Market," two lectures given on Zoom by the renowned appraiser and expert in Chinese works of art, Lark Mason, Jr.

The lectures will occur at 1:00 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. on the 9th, and the fees are as follows:

\$35 for Members

\$45 for Nonmembers

\$75 for Seminar and 1/2 Year Membership (through June '26)

The two talks are complimentary and build upon an understanding of ceramic types and cultures within China and those with Chinese trading partners. Ancient trade is not isolated from today's markets, because trade from the past distributed Chinese ceramics internationally and exposed Chinese ingenuity and techniques and materials to cultures outside of China, influencing not just ceramic manufacture, but also relationships between China and the rest of the world.

We hope you will join us for this splendid occasion! Register at cceramicsc.org.



Exciting News!

The Transferware Collectors Club has reached a new milestone, now having more than 20,000 patterns with 1500 sources in their database. Twenty years ago, there were 500 recorded, the growth has been achieved by a increased number of knowledgeable volunteers.

The database was developed under the leadership of members Nick Routson, Loren Zeller, and its first General Editor Connie Rogers, followed by current General Editor Len Kling. This valuable source of information is made available to current TCC members, and its users are authors, archaeologists,

collectors, curators, historians, dealers, and researchers who actively access and rely on the valuable data the resource provides. It is now cited and acknowledged in books, articles, catalogs, and even by online sellers. Funding for the development of the database has been provided by Patron Members Klaus and Marcia Zech. Congratulations to the TCC on this achievement!

<https://www.transferwarecollectorsclub.org/> will take you to the Transferware Collectors Club website for more information.



Chickens! A Collector's Fowl Tale by Richard White

At this turkey time of year, following is a story for your amusement and edification from Richard White, CCC member, Archivist and Program Committee Chair:

Birds have appeared as decorative motifs on ceramics for centuries, pictured in flight, in landscapes, as part of an overall design and even as figures. Like flowers and plants, some birds appear as symbols or denote various cultural meanings.

Included in some of this bird decoration is both the domesticated and wild chicken. Hens, roosters, cockerels, chicks, junglefowl et al, have appeared as decoration around the world on a variety of media. Domesticated in Southeast Asia 7000-10,000 years ago, the chicken is still remarkably omnipresent. Here is a very shallow dive into a handful of 18th century porcelain examples across cultures and factories.

The Chinese were using kilns for ceramic production before 2000 BCE and modern "true" porcelain production dates from the Han Dynasty (206 BCE - 220 CE). What Western manufacturers refer to as hard-paste was imported into

Korea and Japan before the start of their own production in the 14th and 17th centuries to be later exported on a large scale from China to the West beginning in the 16th century. By then birds and, of course, chickens had long appeared as decoration or subject matter on Chinese ceramics.

In Chinese culture roosters (*gōngjī*), cocks and cockerels (young roosters) are associated with the sun, the ability to scare away evil spirits, as symbols of good luck, strength and masculinity. In China a hen and a rooster together appearing in art and decoration more often denote the simple life and marital bliss blessed with prosperity.

Japanese iconography and decoration mirrored and expanded this symbolism. Also appearing as symbols of the sun and rebirth, roosters were associated with virtue, reliability, and were even used as talismans for home fire protection. Hens were variously associated with spirituality, status, prestige and elegance.

Europeans may have been aware of these meanings when decorated pieces appeared on imported ceramic wares, but probably not from any awareness of Asian culture. Still, the German, French and British factories of the time copied popular motifs and were well aware of the domesticated chicken, *gallus domesticus*. The Latin translation of *gallus* refers to both a rooster and a citizen of Gaul. The kings of France had already appropriated the rooster as a royal symbol of bravery and as the national emblem of France. The rooster and hen were also associated with fire, sun and rebirth on the Continent and in Britain, propagated by Christians who identified them with rebirth or resurrection and as symbols of fertility and motherhood.

So with all the rooster-and-hen symbolism existing across several cultures, it's not surprising to see a bit of iconography show up in decoration, including on ceramics. Pictured here are a few pieces in my own collection that give a very small glimpse into why the chicken was and continues to be a symbol with many meanings.

The Chinese *blanc-de-chine* figure (top right in image above) of a standing cockerel on a rockwork base from the Qianlong period (1736-1796) is typical of Dehua porcelain. White symbolizes purity in many cultures, including China.

The mid-18th century Japanese rooster (left in second row above) painted in Kakiemon colors from the Edo period ca. 1700 sits regally on a later gilt bronze rococo base. Here he sits, hen-like, with a quiet strength befitting his status.

On the mid-18th century Chinese Export porcelain basin (top item above) from the Qianlong period, ca. 1775, and part of a large ewer-and-basin set, is an illustration of a scene from a 1744 etching taken from a drawing by Charles-Nicolas Cochin the Younger. The scene is of four European men engaging in a furious outdoor tussle; the Chinese artist recreating the scene has added a pair of roosters on the left of the main composition to parallel, in a manner of speaking, the larger cockfight already in progress.

The small soft-paste snuff box (bottom left, above) was manufactured at the Mennecy factory circa 1760, with silver mounts stamped with the *déchargé* mark of the Parisian silversmith Eloy Brichard, active 1756-62. Here the mother hen guards her two small chicks, appearing as raised and brown-painted decoration along the sides.

The square Bow dish (right side, second row above), ca. 1745, with both Japanese and Chinese-inspired decoration is painted in Kakiemon colors, picturing a domesticated scene, and so with some implication of a simple, domestic life: a rooster and hen couple together, in polychrome colors and gilt highlights.

The Vincennes-Sèvres manufactory was well known for colorful bird decoration in flight and in landscapes, often within reserves on colored grounds. Many of the birds that appeared were creative, impressionist interpretations until the second half of the 18th century when services with far more identifiable subjects were referenced using George Edwards' and the Comte de Buffon's illustrations. However, most of the fanciful birds on this Sèvres écuelle, ca.1780, are unidentifiable save for one on the soup bowl cover: a clearly recognizable rooster standing alone on a rock in a landscape.

In conclusion, *Gallus domesticus* and their cousins around the world appear in most cultures as important symbols, often on ceramics, and here on porcelain. This discussion only scratches the surface, pun intentional. Look for our feathered farmyard friends, they are everywhere, their presence rife with historical meaning among many cultures and artists.

New Members: Please Add Them to Your Directory

Kate Cordsen, 18 Gramercy Square South, New York, NY 10003,
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Andrea Cross, 11 Owenoke Park, New Canaan, CT 05880,
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Elsewhere in the Decorative Arts

December 5: "The Post-Revolution Evolution of Dining in Great Britain and America," lecture and holiday luncheon presented by the Pottery & Porcelain Club in Providence, Rhode Island. Lecture by Janine E. Skerry, Ph.D.. Specialist Museum Consultant and Retired Curator, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. To RSVP, email Judith Brott at judithbrott@gmail.com by

November 26 and mail your \$50 check to The Pottery & Porcelain Club, c/o Judith Brott, 31 Elmgrove Avenue, Apt. 1, Providence, Rhode Island 02906.

Ongoing to May 24, 2026: 'Laurent Craste Iconoclasts,' porcelain urns and vases that make for a striking commentary on themes of dominance, fragility and resist. At the Everson Museum, Syracuse, New York. <https://everson.org> for more information.

Ongoing to April 12, 2026: 'Linda Rotua Sormin: Uncertain Ground," clay Sculpture, video, sound, watercolor painting, digital fabrication in a multi-sensory environment. At the Gardiner Museum in Toronto, the reimaged first floor of which is now open. Visit <https://www.gardinermuseum.on.ca> to find it all.

January 12: "Common Languages, Distinct Accents: Mexican Ceramics in Dialogue at the MFA Boston and Beyond," by Lucia Abramovich Sánchez, Carolyn and Peter Lynch Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, presented by the Connecticut Ceramics Circle via Zoom. More information at cceramicsc.org



Kylix with Woman Pouring Libation and Courtship Scenes, attributed to the painter Makron and the potter Heiron, slip-decorated earthenware, circa 490-480 BCE. Diameter 11 1/2 in., H. 4 7/16 in. (29.21, 11.43 cm). Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio; Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey (object number 1972.55).



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