

JANUARY 2019 EXHIBITION



# Southeast Asian Ceramics

Selections from the Collection of James E. Breece III



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The ceramics of China have been famous for centuries and clearly influenced ceramic production in nearby Southeast Asian countries. This may be the most apparent in Vietnamese ceramics, as parts of the country were closely aligned to China for nearly one thousand years. Although, Vietnamese potters inherently introduced local styles and motifs to their work.

Many other regions brought their own styling and techniques to the ceramic tradition, as well. In what is modern day north and central Thailand, ceramic production flourished between the 14th and 16th centuries, with iron-black under glazed wares and Sawankhalok celadon produced for an export market that was dominated by Chinese blue-and-white wares. While in Burma, a green and white glazed ware was produced during the 16th century, only to be identified in the late 20th century.

These ceramics are under represented in museums around the world and have a greater artistic validity than is largely recognized. Most importantly, to this day these wares reflect the cultural nature of these three countries.

James E. Breece III  
December 2018



James Breece with Polly Phinit from Wiengkalong Ceramics at a Kalong kiln site.



# Vietnamese Ceramics

After separating from China in 938, the Vietnamese began making their ceramics with new indigenous styles and production techniques. The Chinese-styled ceramics catering to the colonial ruling class were no longer made and new wares reflecting traditional Vietnamese society and culture were popularized. Buddhist motifs were often reproduced on the ceramic vessels, which mostly included lotus and chrysanthemum, but hibiscus, peony, fish, birds, and animal motifs were also featured. The color brown was also introduced to enhance the white and ivory-white glazed wares.

Celadon pottery was also popularized in the Ly-Tran dynasty (1009–1400), reflecting Vietnamese Buddhist art. These ceramics are recognized as they ranged from a very light green to leaf green to a brownish or yellowish green. The ceramics produced during this period are nearly identical to similar Song wares, thanks to diplomatic relations between the two.

Most of the Vietnamese ceramics in this collection are illustrated in the March 2004 “Arts of Asia” Magazine.



## Storage Jar

Stoneware with incised design and cream and brown glaze, H. 33 cm  
12th–14th century, Ly-Tran dynasty (1009–1400) Vietnam

Large storage vessels such as this were the most revolutionary styles at the time. Identifiable by the brown paint applied to the carved design, these vessels featured motifs such as flowers, animals, fish and birds, which were new to Vietnamese ceramics. Scholars point out these innovations as “combining painting with sculpture.”

This piece almost certainly once had a lid.





### Storage Jar with Lid

Stoneware with incised design, H. 18 cm  
11th century, Ly-Tran dynasty (1009–1400), Vietnam

Some covered pots of this era were unglazed. Simply sculpted saw-tooth patterns were carved at the base and on the shoulder of this pot.



### Chrysanthemum Petal Shaped Dish

Stoneware with pale green glaze, D. 16.5 cm  
Tran dynasty (1225–1400), Vietnam



### Chrysanthemum Petal Shaped Bowl

Stoneware with cream glaze, D. 10 cm  
Tran dynasty (1225–1400), Vietnam

This small bowl particularly mirrors the accomplishments of Song and Yuan dynasty Chinese potters.





### Ewers with Lids

Stoneware with incised design and celadon glaze, H. 20 cm

Stoneware with cream and iron underglaze, H. 21 cm

Stoneware with pale olive-green glaze and iron brown splotches, H. 21 cm

Tran dynasty (1225–1400), Vietnam

Patterns were incised or molded into the interiors and exteriors of monochrome ceramics. The ewers and covered pots of the Ly-Tran dynasty were either celadon, white or ivory-white glazed wares with undecorated bodies or incised horizontal floral/leaf patterns.

The lids on the left two ewers allude to lotus leaves. Those lids may be associated with the base. The ewer on the right has an original lid and is certainly influenced by a Yuan dynasty export ware produced at the Longquan kilns in China.

### Bowl

Stoneware with mold impressed design and caramel brown glaze, D. 16.2 cm, Tran dynasty (1225–1400), Vietnam

In the center are the Chinese characters *guanyao* "official ware" surrounded by a mold impressed floral and leaf motif. The notched rim creates a distinct pattern under the glaze.



### Bowl

Stoneware with mold impressed design and dark brown glaze, D. 16 cm, Tran dynasty (1225–1400), Vietnam







### Deep Dish

Stoneware with underglaze blue and polychrome enamel, D. 34 cm  
15th–16th century, Le-Mac dynasty (1427–1789), Vietnam

Numerous examples of polychrome over underglaze blue decoration were found in the "Hoi An Hoard" shipwreck dated to late 15th century. It is possible this piece was from a shipwreck, but is unknown. Some shipwreck examples show glaze degradation and even crustacean shells still adhered to the surface.



### Large Dish

Stoneware with underglaze cobalt blue decoration, D. 36 cm  
15th–16th century, Le-Mac dynasty (1427–1789), Vietnam

The main decorative motifs behind the blue-and-white as well as polychrome wares, were usually animals, birds, fish and flower/leaf sprays. These designs contrast with those of the more simple lines on the brown-painted ceramics of the Ly-Tran dynasty. Designs that were commonly seen on traditional Chinese wares, including the dragon, phoenix and qilin were also characteristic of Le-Mac ceramics.



# Thai Ceramics

The old Siamese capitals of Sukhothai and Si Satchanalai were famous for their pottery production. These kilns flourished between the 14th and 16th century and have only been excavated in the late 20th century. In Si Satchanalai, the pottery excavated is primarily grayish-white stoneware with a gray-green colored celadon glaze. Decoration was typically achieved by carving the ware, and consisted of floral designs, such as chrysanthemums. The most common forms of ceramic excavated at these kilns are bowls, dishes, boxes, ewers, kendis, bottles, and jarlets.

Another common type of ware found is one that consists of an iron-black painted underglaze and animal motifs. This type of pottery resembles the form and technology of Vietnamese ceramics from the Tran, Le, and Mac dynasties and Chinese ceramics from the Yuan and Ming dynasties.

Though they were significantly less popular than the Chinese blue-and-white ceramics of the Ming dynasty, these wares reached a height of export throughout Asia during this period.



## Large Bowl

Stoneware with incised decoration and celadon glaze, D. 32 cm  
15th century, Si Satchanalai, Ko Noi kiln, Thailand

This is a fine example and classic product of the Si Satchanalai kilns.





### Bowl

Stoneware with translucent cream and iron-black underglaze, D. 28 cm  
15th century, Sukhothai, Thailand

Between the 13th and 16th centuries, ceramic wares from the hundreds of kilns located along the Yom River in Si Satchanalai as well as from Sukhothai city were exported in vast quantities to Indonesia and the Philippines where demand was great.

### Bowl

Stoneware with translucent green and iron-black underglaze, D. 25.5 cm  
15th century, Si Satchanalai, Ko Noi kiln, Thailand

The kiln sites of Si Satchanalai are some of the best-known for Thai ceramics since the late 19th century. Wares created in these kilns were high-fired stoneware and are identifiable by their bodies that have a greyish hue with black spots. This is due to the clay's high iron oxide content, making the iron appear as black, red or silvery in color.



### Large Bowl

Stoneware with slip and olive brown glaze, D. 30.5 cm  
14th century, Si Satchanalai, Ko Noi kiln, Thailand

This rare piece is Sawankhalok "Mon" type. It features a "quasi" barbed rim possibly enabling rim-to-rim stacking in the kiln.

### Dish

Stoneware with cream slip, translucent green and iron-black underglaze, D. 21.5 cm, 16th century, Kalong, Thailand

The Ming dynasty blue-and-white wares dominated the ceramic trade with the West. In their own effort, Thai potters began creating export wares featuring decoration in underglaze iron-black, with a specialty in covered boxes, pouring vessels, and bowls.







### Large Bowl

Stoneware with translucent green and iron-black underglaze, D. 28.5 cm  
15th century, Si Satchanalai, Ko Noi kiln, Thailand



### Pedestal Dish

Stoneware with translucent green and iron-black underglaze, H. 17.3 x D. 27.5 cm  
15th century, Sukhothai, Thailand

Interior shown above, profile to the right.  
Pedestal dishes of this quality, while not rare are uncommon.







### Dish

Stoneware with green and white glaze, D. 28 cm  
16th century, Myanmar (Burma)

Burmese green-and-white wares imitated Chinese blue-and-white wares. The glazing technique is different in that the green is an overglaze on top of the white glaze, whereas the Chinese blue is underglazed then covered in a translucent glaze.

Some of the first known pieces were excavated at Tak, a burial site discovered in northern Thailand about 1984. The above example was bought by Bluett (London) from the famous collector Fredrick Knight, and later sold in 1987 at a height of interest in Southeast Asian ceramics. It is consistent with a number of published pieces and is an excellent example of Burmese green-and-white ware. Provenance courtesy Dominic Jellinick.

JANUARY 2019 EXHIBITION



# PASSION FOR FORM

Selections of Southeast Asian Art from the MacLean Collection



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# PASSION FOR FORM

Selections of Southeast Asian Art from the MacLean Collection

"Passion for Form" was the title for the first public touring exhibition of some of the Southeast Asian treasures in the MacLean Collection in 2008. Southeast Asian pottery, bronze and sculpture have long fascinated the MacLean family. It was at an antiques shop in Bangkok, during a business trip more than forty years ago, that Barry MacLean purchased this unusually shaped blackware vessel that sparked a collecting odyssey.

Mr. MacLean soon began to study the people who created these objects of earth, metal and stone from the cultures of Ban Chiang, Dong Son, Cham, Khmer and other civilizations – each with its own distinctive style of pottery, bronze and sculpture. The types of materials used, the evolution of decorative motifs and methods of manufacture were all captivating, but it was always shape and form combined with the patina of age that drew the MacLeans to particular objects.

The ambition behind the MacLean Collection has been to seek the best and most unique examples that can be displayed and investigated, thus ultimately contributing to the knowledge of students, scholars and connoisseurs. The values of continued learning and the pursuit of knowledge were values given to the MacLean family by their parents and is passed on to their children and grandchildren. That seeking of "knowledge for knowledge's sake" continues through this collection. This exhibition of the MacLean Collection outside of its home on the north shore of Chicago is intended to help students of all ages learn more about the beauty and development processes of these designed objects. The MacLean Collection is intended to help future students and scholars learn about the extraordinarily skilled people that lived in Southeast Asia over the past four thousand years.



The blackware vessel that sparked a decades-long passion.



Photography: © MacLean Collection





### **Black-ware Vessel**

Earthenware, H. 48 cm  
500 BCE - 400 CE, LopBuri, Thailand

This two-tiered jar rests on a raised unadorned footring while the rest of the vessel is covered in animated curvilinear forms that were incised and impressed before firing.



### **Two-tiered Painted Vessel**

Painted Earthenware, H. 31.5  
ca. 300 BCE–300 CE, Late Ban Chiang Culture, Thailand

Located in today's northeastern Thailand, the Ban Chiang cultural tradition is best known for the unique painted and unpainted earthenware dating from the third millennium BCE to the third century CE. Earthenware with painted rather than incised geometric and curvilinear decorations date to the late Ban Chiang culture. This vessel has a wide flaring mouth and robust full body. Its appealing designs incorporate interlocking long triangles, net patterns and a pattern of elongated S-shapes with ballooning ends. Ban Chiang pottery vessels primarily functioned as burial objects.





### Animal Bell

Bronze, H. 14 cm  
ca. 300 BCE–300 CE, Cambodia

Bronze bells worn by animals were made in a wide range of shapes and sizes throughout Southeast Asia. Instead of clappers, round bronze pellets were put inside to make sounds specific to the domesticated animal wearing them. This animal bell is covered in the compressed cord design found on the large anklets over which are two opposing elongated heads and horns of a water buffalo.



### Anklets

Bronze, H. 19 x D. 25.5 cm  
3rd–6th century, Cambodia

These massive bronze cuff anklets weigh more than 24 pounds each. Found in Battambang, Cambodia. The decoration is of cord spirals in an S-configuration. The S-configuration is a popular motif found on bronze bells and pottery jars in the early cultures of today's Thailand and Cambodia.





### **Shrine with Buddhist Trinity**

Bronze, H. 47 cm

ca. 12th century, Thailand

This Buddha triad altarpiece was cast with three images of Buddha each seated in the lotus position with hands in mediation and earth-touching gestures. The setting of stepped pedestal supported by nine lions and arches ending in snake head terminals and temple pilasters holding up the tri-lobed niche represent the architectural style favored by Khmer rulers. The trinity is encircled by an aureole of stylized flames, surmounted by leafy branches of the Bo tree rising to a peak, an icon symbolizing Buddha's enlightenment.



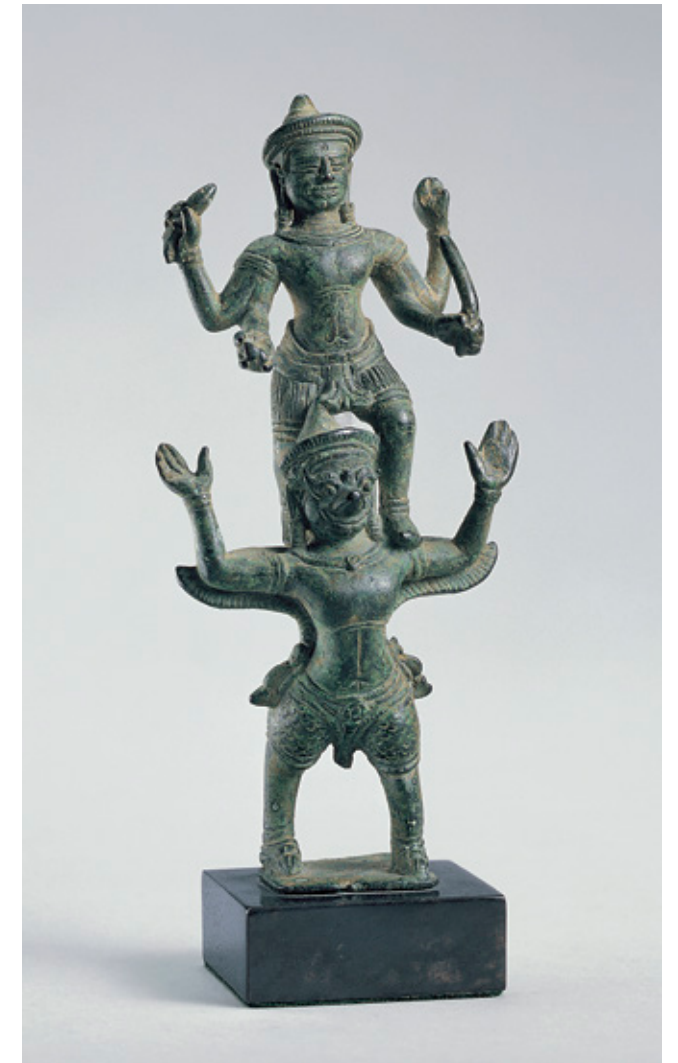




### Vishnu on Garuda

Bronze, H. 11.5 cm  
12th-13th century, Cambodia

This bronze finial originally surmounted a Khmer battle standard. The Hindu god Vishnu stands atop the mythical divine half bird half human deity Garuda. Garuda, a remover of obstacles in religious attainment, is shown standing with one foot forward, arms and wings raised in an animated pose ready for battle. Vishnu stands with four arms holding his attributes of a wheel of law (*chakra*), a mace, and a conch shell. His lower proper right hand shows the gift-bestowing gesture. He too stands with his left leg forward in a pose ready to spring into action.



### Standing Crowned and Jeweled Buddha

Bronze, H. 35.3 cm  
Late 12th century, Thailand

The slender body of this standing crowned and jeweled Buddha helps date it to the late twelfth-century. The Buddha and body halo (*mandorla*) supported on the backs of two mythical water creatures (*makura*) were cast separately and joined together by pins in the back of the halo. The smiling Buddha stands with both hands in protection and reassurance gestures (*abhaya mudra*).





### Elephant Bell

Bronze, H. 22 cm  
12th century, Cambodia

This elephant bell, has a shape characteristic of the Khmer period, centered in today's Cambodia. This bell has a large bronze pellet inside that rolls over the four fancy curvilinear striking plates along the bottom of the bell. The two prominent flanges help push the bell out while the elephant walks preventing it from getting caught and abrading the thick folds of skin on the elephant's neck.



### Palanquin Hooks

Bronze, H. 22 cm  
12th–13th century, Thailand

These bronze hooks served the functional and decorative needs of the Khmer court during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as fittings for palanquin and chariots. Originally a wooden shaft would have suspended the hook and held garlands and decorative textiles. Densely packed with imagery, each hook shows a crowned and winged heavenly being on either side flying above a protective snake (*naga*). The heavenly beings hold up the torsos and heads of a part human and part bird deity (*Garuda*), on one side and a lion (*singha*), on the other. Supported on the shoulders of the Garuda and singha is a lotus shaped roof of a Buddhist shrine.





### Hu

Glazed Stoneware, H. 26 cm  
1st-3rd century, Vietnam, Giao Chi period

During the millennium from the first to the tenth century, Chinese influence continuously expanded and contracted into northern Vietnam. Immediately following the period known as the Han-Viet, when bronze was used for ritual vessels, pottery examples based on the shapes of bronze counterparts were produced. Here the elongated sloping foot, the slightly compressed body and thicker neck with a wider mouth are based on Chinese shapes but are ultimately uniquely Vietnamese in style. This stoneware *Hu* vessel also follows the use of Chinese materials and technologies, such as stoneware and ash glaze techniques.

### Covered Hu with Chain Handle

Bronze, H. 31 cm  
2nd century, Dong Son Culture, Vietnam

Cast in the second century in northern Vietnam, this *Hu* demonstrates the Han-Viet characteristics of adaption from a Chinese bronze wine container called a *Hu*. The body proportions differ from Chinese counterparts with an elongated sloping foot, the slightly compressed body, the thicker neck with a wider mouth and its attached lid. The double dragon-head handle with chain attachments and stacked ring decorations are also a variation found on Chinese *Hu* of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE).







### Covered Situla

Bronze, H. 27 cm

2nd Century, Dong Son Culture, Vietnam

Bronze vessels made during the Dong Son period were cast in the same single-pour lost-wax processes used in making drums. This covered situla represents a hybrid form of Chinese bronze *zun* shaped vessel featuring a tall cylindrical body, two *taotie* mask handles, and three bear legs. Chinese bronzes of this type are half the height and have no lid. The relief decorations are also unique to Dong Son bronze vessels. The three registers of decoration, are divided by two wide, double-ring bands. From top to bottom, the decorations are interlocking lozenges, boats with festooned shamens, animals, fish, and a procession of animals. The domed lid is decorated with a quatre-foil motif in the center where the ring handle is attached with alternating lozenges and concentric saw-tooth patterned rings.



### Drum

Bronze, H. 23 x D. 28 cm

1st century BCE, Dong Son Culture, Vietnam

Bronze drums are the most characteristically representative artifacts of the Dong Son culture. They are believed to have represented symbols of legitimacy and authority presented to regional political entities. Cast using a unique single-pour, lost-wax process, this drum carries the decorative motifs typical of Dong Son drums, such as multi-pointed sunbursts in the center of the tympanum. This drum has an eight-pointed example in the center of the tympanum, surrounded by alternating bands of saw tooth patterns, birds, and beaded designs. In addition, the side of the drum has boats carrying shamens wearing spectacular feather headdresses.





### Seated Buddha

Wood, H. 81.2 cm

19th century, Shan States, Myanmar

This wooden Buddha, covered by a matt-finished lacquer, is seated on a flat throne in the lotus position. His right hand reaches downward, palm inward and touches or reaches toward the earth in the earth-touching gesture (*Bhumisparsa mudra*). This gesture depicts the moment of enlightenment and the Buddha's victory over the deity of death (*Mara*). This form of the Buddha has long been widely venerated in the Myanmar region.