

Cultural Inspiration and Design Innovation Research on the Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl

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Abstract

The Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl holds a pivotal position in the history of Chinese ceramics and is the pinnacle of Yue Kiln's Secret Color Porcelain, containing profound cultural heritage and rich artistic value. Meanwhile, this secret colored porcelain is a product of the collision and fusion of diverse cultures, and its inherent meaning goes far beyond the cultural relics themselves, attracting the attention of relevant scholars for a long time. This article intends to analyze the Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl from the aspects of shape, form, glaze color, and craftsmanship, and explore its cultural origins, in order to provide some inspiration for contemporary ceramic art design.

Keywords

Secret colored porcelain lotus bowl, cultural exchange, cultural inspiration, design innovation.

1. Introduction

We need to explore the ideological concepts, humanistic spirit, and moral norms of excellent traditional Chinese culture, integrate artistic creativity with Chinese cultural values, combine Chinese aesthetic spirit with contemporary aesthetic pursuit, and activate the vitality of Chinese culture.

The Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl is a typical product of cultural exchange. Craftsmen skillfully integrate artistic creativity with Chinese culture, creating a rare treasure in this secret color porcelain. The academic discussion on secret color porcelain has not stopped to this day. The main focus of current researchers is on its craftsmanship, culture, and artistic value. Based on this, this article delves deeper into the cultural inspiration behind the secret colored porcelain lotus bowl from the perspectives of historical literature, cultural integration, and firing techniques, in order to provide some inspiration for modern ceramic art design.

2. Overview of Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl

2.1. Archaeological basis

Since the Ming Dynasty, under the dual influence of natural and human factors, the Yunyan Temple Pagoda in Huqiu, Suzhou has gradually tilted towards the northwest direction. However, its sleeve structure effectively prevents the deformation of the tower body, creating a miracle of the tower body remaining steadfast for thousands of years. In 1956, the Suzhou Municipal Government began reinforcement and restoration work on the Yunyan Temple Pagoda in Huqiu, Suzhou. During the restoration process, workers accidentally discovered a hidden interlayer chamber inside the tower. Cultural relics archaeologists used pliers to remove the lotus bowl from the hidden chamber of the pagoda, and the Yue kiln lotus porcelain bowl, which had been buried in the ancient pagoda for thousands of years, was brought back to

the world. However, there was not enough evidence at the time to prove that this was a secret colored porcelain, so at the beginning of its discovery, archaeologists analyzed that the lotus bowl was only a masterpiece of celadon. After 1995, the Yue kiln celadon lotus bowl was renamed as the secret porcelain lotus bowl. In 1987, researchers discovered a stone tablet in the underground palace of Famen Temple with a "clothing tent" engraved on it. The inscription detailed the list of offerings, including mentioning the secret color of porcelain. "The secret color of porcelain" has since appeared in the public's view, providing detailed information for the identification of secret color porcelain. Therefore, we have determined that the lotus bowl is not ordinary celadon, but a rare secret colored porcelain. October 1971. The Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl was selected for the "National Excavated Cultural Relics Exhibition" proposed by Mr. Guo Moruo and approved by Premier Zhou Enlai. In 1972, the Foreign Language Publishing House included the bowl in the multilingual catalog of unearthed cultural relics in New China. In 2013, the Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl was included in the "Third Batch of Prohibited Exhibition Cultural Relics Catalogue", and this cultural relic is also one of the three national treasures of Suzhou Museum, quietly showcasing the beauty of secret colors to the world.

2.2. Porcelain origin

There are records of secret colored porcelain in the "Yuyao County Annals" of Jiajing. The Yue Kiln in Shanglinhu, Zhejiang is one of the most famous celadon kilns in ancient China. It has exquisite porcelain making skills and a long history of creation and firing, dating back to the late Eastern Han Dynasty. It began to take shape during the Three Kingdoms period and flourished after the mid Tang Dynasty. In the late Tang Dynasty, it reached its peak, declined in the late Northern Song Dynasty, and disappeared in the Southern Song Dynasty. From 2015 to 2017, the Zhejiang Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology and the Cixi City Cultural Relics Management Committee conducted archaeological investigations on the Yue kiln site. During this period, researchers discovered the Housi'ao site in Shanglin Lake. Some secret colored porcelain has been excavated in this site. These artifacts are very similar to the secret colored porcelain unearthed in the underground palace of Famen Temple during the Tang Dynasty [11]. Through this discovery, it further confirms the records of secret colors in ancient literature and provides a precise attribution to the origin of late Tang and early Five Dynasties secret colored porcelain unearthed in various regions. Archaeological excavators and porcelain enthusiasts discovered the words "Xiang Lang" and "Xiang Zao" on the caskets and porcelain pieces at the Housi'ao kiln site, which strongly proves that the Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl is a product of the Housi'ao Secret Color Porcelain kiln site.

2.3. Era background

In the early Tang Dynasty, the Yue kiln in the south was already well-known, with many literati and scholars praising the blue porcelain of the Yue kiln in poetry and ancient books. In Pi Rixiu's "Cha Zhong Za Yong · Cha Ou", it is said that "Xing Ke and Yue people can both make exquisite porcelain. It is as round as the moon's soul falling, and as light as the clouds rising." In Lu Yu's "Tea Classic" during the late Tang Dynasty, it is praised for the exquisite and unparalleled beauty of Yue kiln porcelain, which includes "bowls in Yue Zhou, Dingzhou, Wuzhou, Yuezhou, Shouzhou, and Hongzhou."

The prosperous period of Yue kiln can be traced back to the Five Dynasties. At that time, kiln craftsmen used magical and exquisite ideas and exquisite craftsmanship to produce countless uniquely shaped, decorated, and glazed porcelain, which was highly favored by literati and literati. In the poem "Tribute to the Secret Color of Tea Pots" by Xu Yan, it is mentioned that "the green and auspicious colors are new, and Tao Cheng was the first to receive tribute to my lord. He skillfully plucked out the bright moon to dye the spring water, gently swirled the thin ice to fill the green clouds. The ancient mirror broke through the moss and served as a mat, and

the tender lotus was exposed to the other river. The bamboo leaves and mash in Zhongshan had just begun to bloom, and his illness was truly remarkable." It can be seen that at that time, the exquisite beauty of secret colored porcelain was highly praised by skilled craftsmen and literati, giving it a poetic and picturesque atmosphere.

In the Song Dynasty, it was discovered that the term "secret color" also began to appear in ancient literature. As recorded in the "Gaozhai Manlu", "Today, people use secret colored porcelain. It is said that the Qian family had a national day, and Yue state burned it as a tribute, which cannot be used by officials or commoners. Therefore, it is said that the secret colored porcelain is used.". In his contemporary work "Yuan Zhai Bi Heng", Ye also wrote: "The secret color kiln ware was said to have been burned by the Qian family in Yue Zhou during the national day, and was not allowed to be used by officials or commoners, hence the saying" secret color ". Secret colored porcelain was once an exclusive tribute of the royal family, and others were not allowed to use it, which also indicates another meaning of "secret color" - high status.

3. The formal beauty of the secret colored porcelain lotus bowl

3.1. The Beauty of Form

The overall shape of the Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl resembles a blooming lotus flower. There are three layers of relief lotus flowers on the outer wall of the bowl, and two layers at the bottom of the inner wall and handle, resembling a hibiscus, with a total of seven layers of petals. The lotus pattern is round and stretching, simple and elegant, with smooth lines and strong decorative properties. It cleverly combines with the lotus shape of the porcelain itself, fully showcasing the natural form of lotus and enriching the decorative art of porcelain. It is unique in craftsmanship, with soft lines, giving people a sense of elegance and dustiness.

3.2. The Beauty of Glaze Color

The firing process of secret colored porcelain is different from ordinary Yue kiln celadon. Mysterious porcelain is more refined than ordinary Yue kiln celadon in terms of raw material selection and processing technology. In terms of glaze, most ancient Chinese celadon glaze layers focused on glossiness, while from the Tang Dynasty onwards, Yue kilns began to focus on enhancing the jade texture of the glaze layer. By thickening the glaze layer to a certain extent, the influence of impurities in the gray matrix on the color of the glaze surface is masked, while improving the refractive index, transparency, and brightness of the secret colored celadon glaze layer [13]. The secret colored porcelain lotus bowl glaze is made with a green color, crystal clear and moist glaze, bright and fresh color tone, pure color, elegant as jade, clear as water, soft and elegant, and exquisite and transparent. "Like ice like jade, without water like water" is its characteristic, implying that the body material of the secret colored porcelain is delicate like ice, and the glaze is as crystal clear as jade. "Without water like water" refers to when looking down, there is no water in the bowl, but there seems to be always a pool of clear water in it.

4. The Cultural Origin of the Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl

4.1. The cultural integration of Buddhism and art:

Buddhism was introduced during the Han Dynasty and experienced significant development during the long period of exclusion, struggle, and integration with Confucianism and Taoism. It also flourished during the Sui and Tang dynasties, and Chinese Buddhist culture gradually declined during the Song and Yuan dynasties. However, during the Five Dynasties period, many dynasties in China issued edicts to ban Buddhism, which happened to be an important transitional period. During this period, Southern Tang, Western Shu, Wu and Yue, among the ten southern countries, actively promoted Buddhism, especially Wu and Yue, located in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. They lasted for more than 70 years and were dedicated to promoting

Buddhism. The preferences and willpower of rulers are often the most powerful driving force for the formation of culture. Therefore, Buddhism was very popular in the Wu region during the Five Dynasties and early Song dynasties. The Tiger Hill Pagoda is located in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, which was under the jurisdiction of Wu and Yue at that time. It is the only surviving Five Dynasties architecture today. The tower's body design style typical represents the architecture of the Tang and Song dynasties, and is a large Buddhist building with a long history, unique shape, and exquisite decoration.

"I am a Shaman, in a turbid world, like a lotus flower, not polluted." In Buddhism, Buddha is like a lotus, and lotus is like Buddha. The Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl is like a blooming lotus flower, which has symbolized nobility, auspiciousness, peace, simplicity, brightness, Pure Land, and rebirth since ancient times. It has also been endowed with mysterious religious colors and is widely used in fields such as Buddha seats, sculpture, and painting. It can be seen that the designer of the Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl, Xiang Shi, is not only an outstanding artist, but also a devout Buddhist believer. Therefore, the Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl is not only a highly spiritual artwork, but also a perfect combination of Buddhism and art in terms of craftsmanship.

4.2. Confucianism on the Unity of Heaven and Man

Celadon is not only a symbol of Chinese culture, but also internalized as an expression of character by literati. Yue kiln celadon was highly praised in the Jiangnan region during the late Tang Dynasty. Its elegant style complemented the solemn atmosphere of Confucianism, reflecting a rich and peaceful demeanor. These celadon works, like the ripples of Shengshi Pinghe's scenery, are stranded in the long shadows of ancient civilizations. The geology of the Jiangnan region is rich, and under the blue sky and clear sky, it is full of vitality. Celadon, on the other hand, is infused with its unique style amidst the swaying green vines. Standing in the mountains of Jiangnanhai, leaning against the railing, contemplating a thousand years of thought, the secluded valley, the melancholic origin, under the influence of the peaceful green charm of the autumn moon and the blue pond, suddenly the spring breeze dissipates and spreads. The Yue kiln Shanglin Lake secret colored porcelain is also a carrier of cultural return, tracing its origins and highlighting the profound moral and ritual background of Confucianism in Chinese civilization.

The glaze color of celadon originates from nature and is in line with the values of pursuing natural harmony in Chinese culture. This light green and elegant glaze style perfectly conforms to the aesthetic standards of literati who prioritize natural beauty and exquisite carving. For example, in Lu Guimeng's poem "The Secret Colors of the Yue Ware," he compared the glaze color of secret colored porcelain to the emerald color of mountain peaks. This natural color complements the traditional Chinese personality. The traditional Chinese ideology originally believed that humans and all things are born with goodness as the foundation, and in Confucianism, reason dominates life. "Ren" is the active and resilient cultivation and establishment of a life rich in emotions and meaning in a world that does not originally care about emotions and meanings. This kind of kindness, benevolence, peace, and gentleness has become a common inner character followed by both northern and southern cultures, and also coincides with the implicit, calm, natural, simple, harmonious, and resilient connotations expressed by the glaze color of the secret porcelain lotus bowl.

4.3. Technical exchange

The successive opening of the Maritime Silk Road, the Yunnan Burma India Road, and the Tubo Nibla Road has led to large-scale and all-round interaction and exchange between China and foreign countries. Faced with the impact of foreign cultures, Chinese civilization has gone global with an open and inclusive attitude. During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, "Feng Youyi belonged to the Yellow Gate and entered the sea along with the applicants. The market was

filled with bright pearls, precious stones, and precious stones, all of which were mixed with gold." The nobles at that time were extremely fond of Western glass, and glass products from the Western Regions were popular in China. Chinese made glass, due to limitations in raw materials and technology, was far inferior in quality and craftsmanship compared to foreign glass. Therefore, there is a strong demand for Western glass products. During the Han Dynasty around BC, Chinese merchants first arrived in Sri Lanka, which was the center of glass manufacturing. With the absorption and improvement of glass manufacturing technology, China's porcelain industry has also borrowed from glass processing technology. Low temperature lead glazed pottery began to emerge in the northern region, and domestically produced glass at the same time was a formula with high lead content, with a production temperature of about 900 degrees Celsius. The firing temperature of low-temperature lead glazed pottery in the north is also within this range, indicating that the production of low-temperature lead glaze on northern pottery is closely related to the production process of glassware. In the early and middle period of the Eastern Han Dynasty, the Shangyu area in Zhejiang Province began to imitate low-temperature glazed pottery from the north, and soon applied the technique of full glazed pottery to the production of primitive celadon. However, due to the firing temperature of primitive celadon being around 1200 degrees, low-temperature lead glaze is not suitable for it. Therefore, when making primitive celadon, the mature southern high-temperature calcium glaze from the Shang Dynasty is still needed. It was on this basis that mature celadon from the mid to late Eastern Han Dynasty attempted to continuously adjust the control of furnace temperature, ultimately forming the secret color porcelain of "winning the green color of Qianfeng".

5. Enlightenment on Modern Ceramic Art Design

Cultural exchange promotes design innovation, and the integration of Buddhism and art, Confucianism, the unity of heaven and man, foreign culture, and other factors have created the exquisite Five Dynasties Secret Color Porcelain Lotus Bowl. Craftsmen cleverly integrate artistic creativity with Chinese culture, not only focusing on the development of technology, but also improving the artistic level of porcelain. In the collision of modern Western design culture, the development and innovation of modern Chinese design must firmly oppose the phenomenon of blindly copying regardless of national conditions, adhere to traditional Chinese culture, emphasize the preservation and promotion of the Chinese spirit, and continuously progress while maintaining its own cultural traditions.

In the context of global cultural exchange, ethnic culture is an important component of the infectious world art stage. Therefore, design must possess ethnic characteristics in order to gain wider recognition and influence. We should have a correct understanding of the national character of design culture, actively absorb excellent elements from Western design concepts, learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses, and pay attention to the inheritance of traditional culture. Modern Chinese design should combine with the development of Chinese culture, fully consider the national conditions, and critically absorb various favorable factors in order to form designs with Chinese characteristics.

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