

Contemporary Korean porcelain vase – Cheomjang 160606

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V&A Museum number: FE. 106-2016 (left 1)

Gallery location: Korea, Room 47g, case 2

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This group of eye-catching porcelains is displayed in the “Korean Gallery” at V&A Museum. They are all created in 2016 by a Korean artist Yun Jucheol, who is based in Goyang near to the capital of South Korea, Seoul.¹ The first one on the left is almost round with a rim on the top, thus it is 20cm high and 17cm wide. As the other two objects, the attractiveness of this orange glazed one is its spiky surface with countless pointy peaks and each one has a gold coloured top. How is the surface formed and what is the philosophy behind the design?

The technique Yun uses is named “Cheomjang”, which means decorating with pointed parts (“尖装” in Chinese original meaning).² It is a combination of modern technology and traditional Korean techniques, derived from the gwiyal method (the slip-brushed technique³) while making buncheon ware. It involves application of white slip onto the surface of the darker stoneware body using a brush made of animal hair. In Yun’s case, diluted clay is brushed onto the surface which is left drying for a long period of time. This is repeated for as many

times as possible until protrusions appear, depending on the soil viscosity and sedimentation (Figure 1). In addition, the brushing movement itself is not a simple repetitive and mechanical action, but rather an experimentation of instant brush strokes with varying pressure and direction to sense the natural speed and energy.⁴



Figure 1 Yun Jucheol is in the process of applying “Chemjang” technique.³

Buncheong wares appeared in the early Joseon dynasty and flourished until mid-16th century⁴. The use of white slip under the glaze as a signature decoration for Buncheong ware is originated from Goryeo celadon inlay technique (sangam).^{5,6} Buncheong ware was mass-produced with all forms across the entire Korea and used as everyday objects regardless of people’s social class.⁷ “Bunjang” is the general term for Buncheong ware decoration method that includes several different techniques, i.e. sangam (inlaid), inhwa (stamping), bakji (sagroffito or reserved inlay), umgak (johwa or incised technique), cheolhwa (underglaze iron-brown painting), gwiyal (brushed slip) and deombeong (dipping).⁴

Gwiyal is a popular Buncheong technique that Yun’s idea is rooted in (Figure 2). This type of Buncheong ware from a first look may appear coarse and unfinished. However, the unintentional brushwork patterns create the contrast between the grey surface and white slip, thus providing spontaneity, comparable with abstract and expressive paintings.^{4,7} This is the real charm behind the rough appearance for Buncheong ware, which makes it distinguished from other Korean ceramics, such as celadon and white ware.

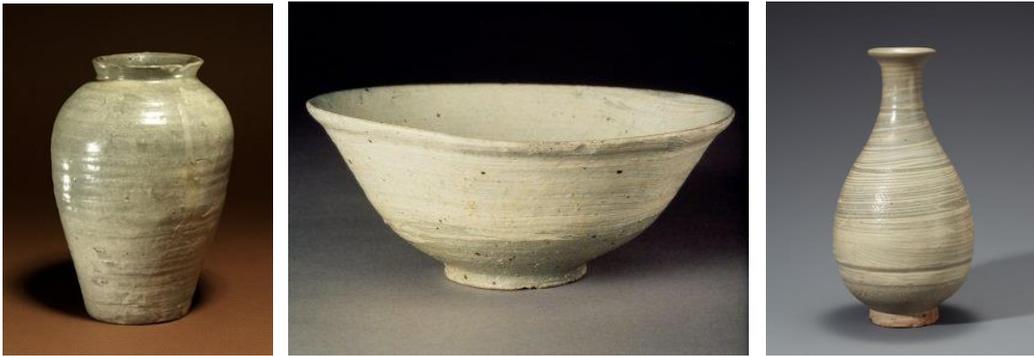


Figure 2 Buncheong ware using gwiyal technique from museums: (Left 1) Jar, British Museum, Museum number 1888,1221.3, donated by William George Aston in 1888⁸; (Left 2) Bowl, Brooklyn Museum, Accession number 82.173, gift of Bernice and Robert Dickes⁹; (Left 3) Bottle, National Museum of Korea, Accession Number Sinsu 10569¹⁰

Jun's works for some people may remind of sea urchins, but for some others may resemble scientifically presented biological matters, such as virus (Figure 3). By understanding the traditions of Korean ceramic technique, one is able to truly appreciate the sophistication and beauty of this modern design.



Figure 3 Other Jun's similar works from Lloyd Choi Gallery, London¹¹: (Left 1) Cheomjang vessel 170316 2014, Porcelain, English gold, translucent glaze 19 x 18 x 18cm; (Left 2) Cheomjang vessel 170501 2017, Porcelain, English gold, translucent glaze 19 x 18 x 18cm; Cheomjang Moon Jar 2018, Porcelain, English gold, translucent glaze 32 x 30 x 20cm

Bibliography:

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