



Heaven and Earth Seen Within: Song Ceramics of China from the Robert Barron Collection

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release February 1, 2001

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Song Ceramics of China from the Robert Barron Collection

Visitors to the Elvehjem Museum of Art will soon discover, as did 9th-century poet Cao Tang, "heaven and earth within a pot" in the premier exhibition of Chinese Song-Dynasty ceramics from a private collection. Heaven and Earth Seen Within: Song Ceramics of China from the Robert Barron Collection will be on view from March 10 through May 13, 2001 in Galleries IV and V.

Long considered the sublime expression of the Chinese potter's art, Song ceramics were created as practical objects--tea bowls, cosmetic boxes and storage jars--but also as objects for contemplation. They can be divided into two groups: the understated, elegant wares of the imperial court and popular wares, characterized by bold color and design. The collection includes select examples of both types, created at some of the most important Song kilns. The Song can be divided into three historical periods: the Northern Song (960-1127), the Southern Song (1127-1279) and the Jin (1115-1234). Throughout its history, turbulent political factors significantly influenced the art and culture of the Song. Constant threats at its borders curtailed international contact and trade, leading Song artists and artisans to look inward for artistic inspiration.

Nature plays a dominant role in every facet of Song art including ceramics. Made from clay of the earth, these vessels were transformed by their glazes and decoration into objects, which recall the cycles of nature and the vastness of the universe. Glaze colors in whites, blues, greens and browns evoke the elements of the earth, and the vessels are often lobed or notched

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to mirror natural forms of melons and open blossoms. The ornamentation, when present, features motifs found in nature including birds, flowers, clouds and waves.

The Barron Collection illuminates the unique characteristics of each period and type of Song ware and illustrates the interrelationship of style, form and decoration among different kiln sites.

A fully illustrated catalogue, incorporating the latest archeological research from China, is available in the Elvehjem Museum Shop. For more information, phone 608 263-2240.

The Elvehjem Museum of Art is open Tuesdays-Fridays 9-5 pm; Saturdays and Sundays 11-5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. The museum is located at 800 University Avenue on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is accessible to wheelchairs from the Murray Street (north) entrance. Parking is available at the city of Madison's Lake Street and Frances Street ramps, university lot 46 on Lake Street between Johnson and University Avenue, university lot 47 on Johnson Street between Park and Lake streets. Evening and weekend parking is also available under Grainger Hall with entrance on Brooks Street between University Avenue and Johnson streets. The Elvehjem Museum of Art will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, 608 263-4421 (voice).

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