



Vägskäl 2015



Crossroads 2015
Cultural meeting with China

JINGDEZHEN
The Capital of Porcelain



Crossroad 2015

Art Exhibition - A Cultural meeting in Leksand

Meeting with China: JINGDEZHEN — The Capital of Porcelain

The Crossroad in Leksand project was launched in 1997, and has become a meeting place for art creators all over the world. It contains exhibitions, workshops and culture evenings with film screenings, dance shows, lectures, music performances and poetry readings. The purpose of the project is to shine a light on new and different art expressions — both locally and internationally — and make connections between different traditions and promote the cross-pollination of different genres. Over the last 18 years, we have enjoyed an amazing cooperation with Swedish and international artists, and more than 620 exhibitors have been showcased in Leksand and in other locations in Sweden and Europe.

This year's theme is JINGDEZHEN — The Capital of Porcelain

China has a tradition of manufacturing clayware and ceramics for over 10,000 years, and the first porcelain was manufactured in the 7th century during the Tang dynasty. Porcelain was first brought to Europe by the explorer Marco Polo in the 14th century, and fundamentally changed European customs and trends during the 16th and 17th century. China manufactured porcelain for export purposes to Europe, and Ostindiska Kompaniet shipped large quantities to Sweden and the rest of Europe throughout the late 18th and early 19th century. Chinese porcelain has always been coveted, and it was even nicknamed "the white gold". Porcelain from China is both beautiful and practical, and has earned its place in royal palaces as well as the dining rooms of regular households.

During this year's edition of the Crossroad project, we present 4 Chinese and 18 Swedish ceramics workers who have been inspired by Jingdezhen: The Mecca of Porcelain. And we are also showcasing a few objects from collections containing Chinese and European porcelain. Our aim is to use lectures, workshops, guided tours, discussions and tea ceremonies to turn Leksand into a "porcelain crazy" meeting place.

We would like to thank all of the artists and other people who have helped out with the production of the exhibition, and we would especially like to thank Mats Svensson and Leksand Folk High School for their excellent cooperation. Commissioner: Jovica Marceta

LEKSANDS KULTURHUS 3/10 - 14/11 2015
RÖHSSKA MUSEET - Gotheburg, autumn 2016

JINGDEZHEN - The Capital of Porcelain

Students and teachers from Leksand Folk High School's ceramics courses have currently made three trips to Jingdezhen in China, where they have worked together with the non-profit organization The Pottery Workshop. They rented a studio space and used interpreters to work with local crafts people and teachers for 4 weeks. Today these trips are included in the ceramic courses at Leksand Folk High School.

BACKGROUND

The Chinese city of Jingdezhen has been a porcelain manufacturer for over a thousand years. It all started in 1004 A.D. when Emperor Zhenzong of the Song dynasty demanded that the small town Changnan should manufacture porcelain for the Imperial Court. Each item was to be stamped with "Jing de" — the name of the government at the time — which in turn led to the city changing its name to "Jingdezhen". The rise of the imperial kilns led to an influx of artists and skilful crafts people from the northern parts of China, and Jingdezhen quickly developed into a hotspot for craftsmanship and ceramic innovation. The city has manufactured porcelain for the Imperial Court during the Sung, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. Over time the porcelain — also known as "the white gold" — became coveted by other countries, and the extensive export led to the establishment of the world's first industrial city.

THE PORCELAIN MATERIAL

Jingdezhen had amazing geological conditions, since there was an abundance of "porcelain stone". The stones were crushed into a powder by water-powered wooden hammers, which was then sedimented via a system of dams. This enabled them to single out the very finest particles for their porcelain paste. This material differed from clay, as the mica gave it very high plasticity and transparency. But despite the mica being different, it was still similar to clay seeing as it also contained microscopic ultraflat surfaces that could be formed like clay with the use of water. The porcelain material was developed during the Yuan dynasty when "porcelain stone" was mixed with kaolin from "Mount Gaolin" nearby. This new material was even easier to handle and could withstand temperatures that far exceeded 1,300 degrees Celsius. Furthermore, it was whiter and harder than any other porcelain material in existence. However, there was a lot of wastage due the many difficulties surrounding exact kiln atmospheres and temperatures in



the giant wood furnaces. Some sources claim that only 15% of the production was within an acceptable standard, and that the remaining 85% was discarded.

THE CRAFTSMANSHIP

Throughout the history of the city, every part of the production has been handled by specialized artisans. It has been said that each item has been handled by up to 70 different people in the production process. One person kneads the clay, with another doing his or her specialized task such as throwing, trimming, painting, glazing, burning etc. One of the reasons for this may have been to keep the intricacies of each production step a secret. This way, nobody had an overview of the entire process. China's current economic growth has led to a surge in demand for large ceramic tiles and thrown pots in both public and private settings. This has led to new developments in artisanal manufacturing of ceramic tiles in sizes of up to 6 square metres and pots using up to a tonne of porcelain clay. What makes Jingdezhen's craftsmanship unique is the fact that the techniques have been refined for centuries, without making any changes to the composition of the materials.

THE CITY OF JINGDEZHEN TODAY

Today the city of Jingdezhen — which essentially is built on a mixture of earth and porcelain shards — offers a dynamic combination of new and old traditions. Old blocks are constantly being demolished, giving way to modern high-rises. New entrepreneurs have moved into the old abandoned and previously state-owned ceramics factories, where they are producing everything from moulded utility goods and sculptures to thrown masterpieces. Just about every street in the city contains workshops and galleries. China has a large interest in porcelain, and the demand is huge! Many young ceramics artists sell their work via Taobao, which is the Chinese equivalent to Gumtree. About 300,000 of the 1.5 million citizens in the province have work that is porcelain related. This includes everything with a connection to the production of porcelain, such as manufacturers of brushes, glazes, tools, kilns and decals, and also packaging and transportation services. 15,000 students attend the "Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute", and the ever-growing city remains the world's leading porcelain producer to this day.

Mats Svensson
Ceramics artist and teacher
at Leksand Folk High School





The most prolific part of the artisanal manufacturing of porcelain in Jingdezhen is the ability to manufacture really large objects where two or more artists work together. These works include thrown table slabs, large bowls or giant pots made from several assembled thrown sections. Even the lamp posts are made of porcelain, and consist of thrown sections that have been hand-painted with cobalt-blue pigment.

The entire outdoor environment has been influenced by the porcelain industry, and a lot of crafts people work outdoors. Jingdezhen is the world's largest manufacturer of artisanal ceramic tiles, which can be up to 6 square metres large and are decorated with cobalt-blue pigment or vivid enamel colours. And everywhere you look you can see almost complete or completely finished porcelain wares being transported all over the city.



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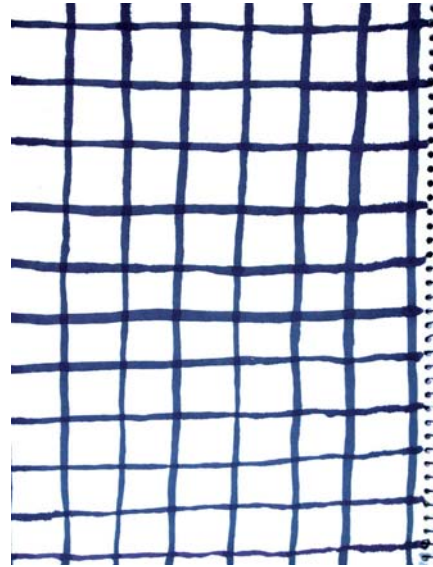
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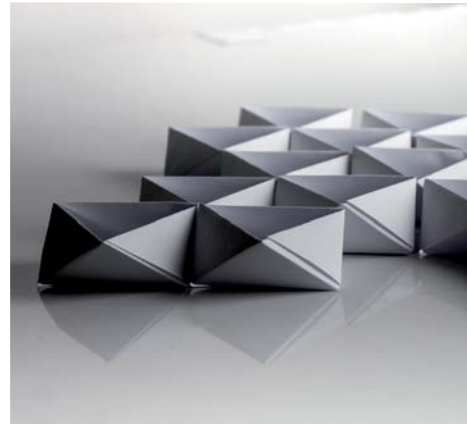
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BJÖRN GREMNER

Björn is an expert in East Indian porcelain and art objects from Japan and China. 1971 Björn started the antique shop AntikWest in Gothenburg and has had exhibitions around the world. He is an expert in the television program "Antikrundan" since the start 1989.

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ANDERS STÅHL

Anders is a painter, graphic artist, Vice President of the Chinese Calligraphy Institute in Changchun and suffer from "porcelain sickness" "porslinssjuk". He has a collection of primarily Ming objects, but also from other periods. He finds the objects at auctions, garage sales, travels and by other collectors.

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Photographs: Mats Svensson, Malin Jansson, Malin Wijk
Lay out: Jovica Marceta

We would like to thank the following:
All exhibiting artist, Leksand Folk High School,
Länskonst Dalarna, Leksands Sparbank, The Pottery
Workshop in Jingdezhen and everyone else who has
contributed to the production of the exhibition.



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