



Ch'ing-pai ewer

Date

c. 960-1127

Primary Maker

Unknown artist, Chinese

Medium

Stoneware with white glaze

Description

The aesthetic effect of this simple vessel—an ewer that may have once been used as a pitcher for serving tea or warmed wine—lies in its pale glaze, elegant spout, and strapped handle. This ewer is of a type known as Qingbai, an asynchronous name meaning pale blue-green and white in reference to the particular color that resulted from glazing in the production of these ceramic wares. Glazed ceramics such as this ewer enjoyed widespread popularity from the tenth through the fourteenth century and have been found in sites across China and as exports abroad, including in Iran and Southeast Asia. The application of glazes on stoneware dates as early as the closing centuries of the first millennium BCE, and the use of glazes that resulted in brilliant colors following the process of firing in the kiln would remain a persistent feature of ceramic production in the centuries that followed. While functional pouring vessels such as this ewer feature a variety of decorative interventions throughout the history of Chinese ceramic

production, ceramics in the Song period (960 – 1279 CE) were also valued for their simplicity of form and embellishment. Arathi Menon, Assistant Professor of Art History, Hamilton College, 2022 The ceramics of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), such as this vessel, are remarkable in their refinement, seeming spontaneity, and technical mastery. Unlike other eras, when perfection was the ideal, simplicity was celebrated during the Song; vessels such as this ewer, with its basic shape, strap handle, and uneven application of glaze at the base, revealing the natural stoneware, are typical. The ewer's pale celadon glaze derived its color from iron and titanium oxide, which, when exposed to heat and oxygen during the firing process, underwent a color change. Different kilns produced slightly different colors. The spread of tea drinking during the Tang dynasty (618–906/7) helped bring celadon ware, which had been invented during the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), back into favor. Prior to the Tang, although many individuals drank tea, it was considered a regional custom limited to southern China. With the increase in tea's popularity came new customs and rituals involving its consumption, which, in turn, required a variety of associated vessels. The ewer is one of four Song-dynasty vessels recently donated to the Wellin Museum of Art by Michael C. Lang, Class of 1967. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017)

Dimensions

Overall: 8 5/16 x 4 1/8 x 4 11/16 in. (21.1 x 10.5 x 11.9 cm)