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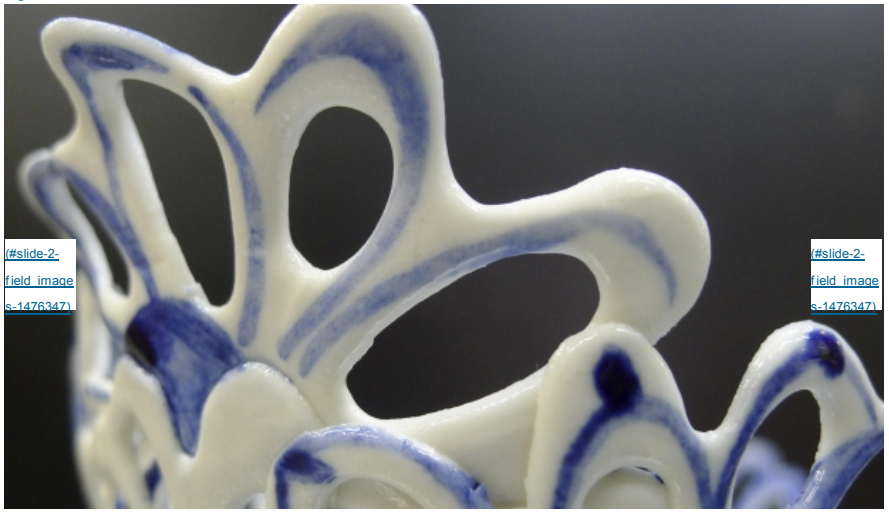
Magazines 48hrs

Picking up the pieces

Kylie Knott



A PIECE BY LEE WAI-SUM

A HERITAGE INTO THE FUTURE — HONG KONG CERAMICS — WUN YIU
Unit Gallery

"Not many people know this but the area used to be treasure trove for the industry. It's significant both culturally and historically — not just for Hong Kong but Southeast Asia," says Rachel Cheung Wai-sze of the Unit Gallery in Kowloon. The area Cheung refers to is Wun Yiu ("The Bowl Kilns") in Tai Po and the industry is porcelain making. The period was 1368-1644.

"It was during the Ming dynasty ... the area was famous for making blue and white porcelain; in fact, it was huge, producing porcelain for the domestic market as well as exporting to Southeast Asia." Cheung says the huge kilns stopped operating in 1932 when production moved to Guangdong where manufacturing costs were lower.

In 1995 and 1999 archaeological investigations at Wun Yiu found evidence of porcelain production such as clay quarrying pits, watermills, clay soaking tanks and kilns. Conservation groups have voiced concerns about the area, demanding the preservation of Wun Yiu. Despite their protests, little has been done to protect the area.

A piece by Mandy Woo.

With this in mind, a group of graduates from the BA Fine Art programme of the Hong Kong Arts School (the programme is in collaboration with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University) are working to bring the past to the present with this exhibition at the Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre in Shek Kip Mei.

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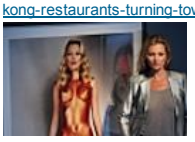

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Comprising eight artists, the project aims to promote a better understanding of the history of porcelain production in Hong Kong and to draw attention to the importance of ceramics as an art form. The group also hopes to create ceramic workshops where artists can exchange views and ceramics artworks can be shown. This exhibition is the first step towards that.

"All the artists will be interpreting porcelain in their own way, and one artist will be using paint as a medium. The artwork will use traditional methods of porcelain making and the various pieces will be given a contemporary twist and will be more sculptural.

"It's a great way for artists to express their views about this important area and for people in Hong Kong to learn more about the area's history," says Cheung.

The participating artists are Kamie Cheng, Janice Fung, Pat Kok, Lee Wai-sum, Lo Sai-keung, Maggie Wong, Mandy Woo and Tina So.

L5-23, 5/F, Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre, 30 Pak Tin Street, Shek Kip Mei, Kowloon. April 18-21, 26-27, 12.30pm-7pm. Inquiries: 9453 1626

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