

Acquisitions

The pick of the V&A's new purchases

Supersize Ming

McDonalds #1

Artist: Li Lihong

Date: 2007

Materials: underglaze cobalt blue decorated porcelain

Dimensions: 42x38x12cm

Location: Gallery 145, opening 2009

This ceramic work entitled *McDonalds #1* was recently acquired from Shanghai-based artist and designer Li Lihong. He was born in 1974 in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, a city that has been synonymous with porcelain production for almost 1,000 years.

Now a teacher at the Shanghai Institute of Visual Art, Li's working background is in commercial design and advertising, however he is also known as an eminent artist. This piece demonstrates the coming together of his experience in commercial design and the strong influence of growing up in a centre of traditional Chinese ceramic culture. It is from a series of works which take the form of the famous McDonald's "golden arches", one of the most recognised brand emblems in the world and an acknowledged symbol of globalised consumerism. Li juxtaposes the iconic form with traditional Chinese ceramic decorative motifs and techniques; in this case, sinuous dragons in bright cobalt blue are painted under the glaze. Through the careful combination of themes, style and format, the artist opens up a dialogue about how traditional culture interacts with modern life in an increasingly globalised society.

Li has exhibited widely in China as well as in other Asian countries and is highly regarded in the field of Chinese contemporary design. *McDonalds #1* will form part of a display addressing globalism and ceramics, featuring contemporary work from around the world in the new ceramics galleries. The first phase of the new galleries will open in 2009. *Anna Wu*



The art of ceramics

Godwin vases

Designer: Edward William Godwin (1833-1886)

Materials: cream slip over red earthenware, sgraffito decorated

Date: c.1877

Location: soon to be displayed in the British Galleries

These vases are the only known surviving examples of three-dimensional ceramics designed by E W Godwin, the progressive architect, designer, writer and interior decorator. For many, his work epitomises British aestheticism, with its clean lines inspired by Japanese forms.

One vase depicts a side table (a similar table is in the V&A's collection), and beside it, in mock-Greek style, is the word "Kawphyrite" (copyright), a reference to the plagiarism of

Godwin's furniture pieces around this time.

He was interested in the relationship between ceramics and furniture, and many of his designs centre around the interaction between the two to create rich interiors. The undersides of the vases are signed with Godwin's initials, E.W.G., and the initials W.W., which probably refer to the furniture manufacturer William Watt, with whom he worked. Irregular in shape, witty and creatively decorated, they typify the eccentricity of the nineteenth-century art pottery style which aimed to place the "artist" at the centre of production and revive traditional techniques, such as slipware.

The vases were purchased with the assistance of The Art Fund from 'The Best of British: Design from the 19th and 20th Centuries, The Selling Exhibition', Sotheby's, 14-20 March, in association with Paul Reeves. *Sonia Solicari*

"Godwin's work epitomises British aestheticism, with its clean lines inspired by Japanese forms"

Facing page: *McDonalds #1* by Li Lihong, 2007. Above: two earthenware vases designed by E W Godwin, c.1877. Both © V&A Images