

Abstract

This thesis, cross disciplinary in Fine Art and Anthropology, was inspired by my first visit in 1994 to the historic kiln site at Ban Ko Noi in central northern Thailand, where I met the Australian Don Hein, the chief archaeologist. The old kiln mounds that were littered with uncountable shards affected me profoundly as an artist and as a potter. At Ko Noi too there were contemporary potters, for Hein had re-introduced stoneware to this farming hamlet in 1985. The thesis explores these productions, and documents Hein's importance.

The evidence for a tenure, methods of production, and influences for the historical ceramics are investigated. While there is a consensus that glazed stoneware began by the 13th, and was finished around the end of the 16th century, I propose that there was unglazed stoneware made from very early times. Then glazed stoneware was gradually introduced during the 10th century as social rather than technological change.

There is also an assumption that Chinese and/or northern Thai technology pervaded kiln, clay and glaze technology, but I present an argument that development was largely indigenous to Ko Noi. A specialised production model is developed to describe both the old and new potters, and to indicate that as part time small scale potter farmers they had much in common. I avoid the use of the term industry, and propose that production, which remained craft based, did not ever evolve to full time.

Material culture, the relationship between people and objects, forms the link between artistic practice and social science. Works of art were produced over six exhibitions and a semester as artist in residence at the University of Chiang Mai. The shard inspires this art: the point where the relationship breaks down and possession becomes artefact, the present becomes past, and the human presence signalled by its absence.

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