

THE BEAUTY OF VESSELS

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ABSTRACT

Finding beauty in ordinary objects excites me. In each still life, I use ordinary vessels as my subject matter. I paint them in oil in a classical and traditional style. I use ceramic vessels in Oriental and simple design because they help to create a feeling of quietness and peace. By incorporating Western techniques and Oriental style objects, I want my work to contain both Asian and Western beauty. I paint ordinary ceramic vessels that are metaphors for people. I think that the process of making a ceramic vessel is analogous to the growing stages of human characteristics. Making a beautiful ceramic vessel requires time for each step to build the piece. I believe that people also need time to develop their own characteristics and to become mature. I use vessels as if they contain the inner beauty of people, and the vessels symbolize objects that are capable of receiving and pouring out love. I attempt to capture and emphasize the beauty of each object with color and details in paintings of intimate scale; it is my goal to make viewers feel that my works are as special and personal as precious and cherished jewelry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Description.....	2
Research.....	8
Methodology.....	12
Conclusion.....	16
Works Cited.....	20
Appendix.....	21

INTRODUCTION

In my first semester of the graduate program, I focused on a single vessel to depict the different shapes and characteristics of vessels. I used ceramic vessels as a figurative element, and I depicted the vessels as if they represent the inner side of people. In my work, I painted each object in similar compositions, colors, sizes, and moods. I composed each object in an isolated and empty atmosphere to emphasize the object. My first series of six, *Creamer I*, *Creamer II*, *A Teapot*, *Porcelain I*, *Porcelain II*, and *Porcelain III*, are painted in a simple and quiet atmosphere. After I finished these six paintings, I started a series of three titled *Celadon Porcelain* in the same composition and size. However, my mentor, Darlene Campbell suggested that I explore different ideas instead of continuing the same style.

At the beginning of the second semester, I struggled to find new ideas, and I began to search works by contemporary artists, such as Martha Alf, Duane Keiser, and Morandi, who also painted still lifes. After I studied these artists, I created a new painting that is composed with grouped figures. I continually tried to create a similar mood, but I began to add more narrative or personal story to my work. In *Tea cups* (Fig. 17), the various vessels represent people whom I encounter everyday and a small tea cup reveals my inner qualities.

As a result, even though, I selected vessels in simple styles, and painted them like antique objects by using traditional and classical art techniques in the beginning of my graduate program, I was able to modify my painting styles with the advice of my mentors and further researches. As I developed more series, I wanted my work to contain both

classical and contemporary qualities by changing the colors of background and foreground, and adding more objects to communicate my personal narrative more clearly.

DESCRIPTION

Creamer I, Creamer II, and a Teapot

During the first semester of my graduate program, I painted three white vessels so as to depict their existence in a nebulous space with a dark atmosphere and a general feeling of stillness. To achieve simplicity, I chose objects that have a simple curved body, and I painted them on six by nine inch wood panels. I tried to emphasize the object with a dramatic light source in a dark background.

In choosing a dark atmosphere, I was inspired by a famous Broadway musical called *Forty Second Street*. I was motivated by the strong spotlight and interesting shapes of the shadows as they fell over the main female character. I tried to use dramatic stage lighting effects on my still lifes to make simple objects more special. In my works *Creamer I* (Fig. 1), *Creamers II* (Fig. 2), and *a Teapot* (Fig. 3), the warm light illuminates the vessels, and they shine in the dark atmosphere.

I used intense lights, shone on the right sides of the objects, and the focused lighting created the desired dramatic shapes and shadows. The shadows from the vessels fell on the wall and the table, and, in doing so, the shadows create other intangible representations of the object itself. The shadows are important in creating appropriate emptiness in the space. During the beginning stage of these three paintings, the shadows were much darker than in the final pieces. It was challenging to paint subtle shadows in a

high contrast background. The shadows were competing with the objects, and I had to repaint them many times until I resolved the problem.

In my work, a horizontal line divides the overall space. To emphasize the ethereal quality of my paintings, nearly two thirds of each panel consists of background while the foreground comprises only the table on which the vessels sits, and the vessel itself – commands merely one third of the panel’s space.

The vessels were painted from an eye-level perspective and a profile view. I was inspired by the profile view of Vermeer’s female figure painting: *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter* (Fig. 4). In my paintings, the white creamers and a teapot are sitting atop stacked plates in a seemingly quiet mood. In *Creamer I* (Fig. 1), I added a blue plate, and I used yellow ochre color plates in *A Teapot* (Fig. 3). The different color plates add some variations between the simple and white objects. The reflection on the glossy wooden table makes the objects look like they are floating on the water. I used the shadows as metaphors for complex inner sides of human personality, and the reflection suggests the intimacy that people can feel after they get to know each other.

Porcelain I, Porcelain II, Porcelain III

The porcelain series consists of three pitchers that were painted on small square-shaped wood panels. As the bright sunlight shines through the window on an ordinary day, the light illuminates the vessels from the left side. In choosing the objects, I considered shapes, colors, and patterns. In *Creamer I* (Fig. 1), *Creamer II* (Fig. 2), and *A Teapot* (Fig.3) series, I focused on contrasting simple lined vessels to the dark background. For my subsequent *Porcelain I* (Fig. 5), *Porcelain II* (Fig. 6), and *Porcelain*

III (Fig. 7) series, I kept this simplicity by focusing on a single object with adequate space in the backgrounds. I selected objects with curved shapes, colors, and details because I wanted to express more movements in comparison to the first three series. Also, I used a natural light source in the brighter background in order to create paintings in neutral colors. The shadows in the series are softer than those in *Creamer I* (Fig. 1), *Creamer II* (Fig. 2), and the *Teapot* (Fig. 3). I created shadows only in the foregrounds rather than in the backgrounds, because I wanted to create quiet mood.

In *Porcelain I* (Fig. 5), the object has blue color on two thirds of its body. The stacks of plates have details with gold color on the edges. The bottom plate has waved shape on the edges, and it adds a delicate feeling on my work. In *Porcelain II* (Fig. 6), I selected an object that has a blue flower pattern on its body. The pitcher with details of flower patterns, which is supported by three stacks of plates, looks like a delicate person who is being treated in a special way. As I developed the subsequent series, I painted *Porcelain III* (Fig. 7), which has more colors and delicate details. As a result, those delicate and fragile porcelains looked precious and beautiful, symbolizing mature people who have developed beautiful inner minds. I believe that if people have a beautiful inner being, the outer beauty follows naturally.

The three pitchers have similar compositions to those in *Creamer I* (Fig. 1), *Creamer II* (Fig. 2), and a *Teapot* (Fig. 3) because I used eye-level perspective and horizontally divided spaces. I composed a single object on each piece to emphasize a single character, using a strong horizontal line on the surface of a wooden table as the line divides the composition. I composed the first two porcelains in the center composition

because I wanted to focus on the object that has its own unique and strong characteristics. After I finished my two pitcher series, I began to think about the relationship between the object and the space. I wanted my artworks to preserve the beauty in space in the last series. My *Porcelain III* (Fig. 7) was influenced by the works of Wilhelm Hammershøi. I was inspired by his painting *Interior: with Piano and Woman in Black* (Fig. 8). I admired the simple and quiet mood of his works. After I saw Hammershøi's paintings, I moved the object to the far left to suggest a feeling of more space. I believe that the composition of the third pitcher worked better in creating a feeling of stillness.

I painted the background using warm yellowish color with several layers of paint. I used a dark brown table in the foreground because I wanted to suggest an aged and antique feeling. I was influenced by the Dutch Artist Jan Vermeer, and it was my goal to work in a similar traditional style. The pitchers are facing the light that shines from the left side of the panel. They have slightly curved and pointed mouths, narrow necks, and beautifully curved shape of bodies and handles. Their curved lines look like a female figure in a profile view who is standing and looking out of a window, and are inspired by Vermeer's *The Milkmaid* (Fig. 9).

Celadon Porcelain I, II, III

My *Celadon Porcelain* series were studies to experiment on different methods of creating moods by using simple and Oriental style objects. The compositions and the sizes of the wood panels were the same as those in last series'. By choosing objects that have more elegant patterns with curved bodies, I tried to create work that has feelings of calmness, and elegance. I also wished to evoke antiquity, so I used traditional green

celadon and placed them on a brown table. The green color of celadon pitchers is reminiscent of old traditional Korean chinaware. Also, I have seen a lot of dark brown furniture in historical Western films. Furthermore, I tried to make the object look old by studying Vermeer's still life paintings. The porcelains have slight differences in shapes and patterns. The oriental patterns on the body help to give a feeling of delicacy. I painted the background in bright white color because of the strong influence from a contemporary artist named Duane Keiser. He composed a white cup on a white background (Fig. 13), and his simple white color looked very contemporary. After I studied his work, I wanted to combine traditional and contemporary styles in my work. Therefore, I chose the white background to give a fresher feeling while the object suggests age.

Tea Cups I (Fig. 17)

After painting a series of single objects in similar styles and sizes, I figured out that I needed to move onto another level. During the second semester midterm critique, my mentors, Professors Darlene Campbell and Perin Mahler, gave me some suggestions to put more objects in grouped forms to give more variations in the composition. Also, the viewers will have a better understanding of my concepts and ideas if I put a personal narrative story, which could make my work more interesting. To keep simplicity in my paintings, the empty space plays an important role. On a long linear wood panel, 24 by 6 inches, a group of tea cups are sitting on a right side in the painting. The various sizes and shapes of teacups are arranged in an irregular manner. On the far left side, a jade color tea cup is sitting upside down, apart from the rest of the cups. This composition

suggests isolation of a character who has a closed mind. It is a cup that cannot contain anything, and the liquid will run down if someone tries to pour water into it. The distance between the grouped objects and the jade color tea cup suggests distance between a person, such as myself, and other people. It reminds me of when I had a hard time after I immigrated to the United States, because I was a closed-minded and isolated person during the initial years. The choice of neutral colors for the vessels, backgrounds, and foregrounds helps the viewers to feel quietness. It is always challenging to set up a new still lifes to maintain appropriate simplicity with adequate scales for objects and panel sizes. Therefore, the background is divided by several lines to avoid an empty feeling that requires more objects or more complicated composition. It is my goal to make viewers feel that my small paintings are as spacious and influential as large paintings through the use of appropriate empty spaces and simplicity.

Green and Red

During my final critique in second semester, my advisor, Professor Mahler recommended me to try at least one painting with new or different ideas in comparison to my other recent series. In these two new paintings, *Green* and *Red*, I used primary colors as backgrounds, and I painted on 12 by 12 inch panels. Also, I selected objects that have more vivid colors. Since I wanted to give both abstract and classical feelings in one painting, I have changed the composition; I painted stacked vessels in realistic style, and bright background with less contrast to make them look flat. I continually tried to leave some space between the objects in order to create similar quiet, isolated, and peaceful moods. I painted these two series in similar compositions, but I tried two different

background colors such as red and green. As I selected the colors, I was inspired by Korean traditional costume, known as a *hanbok*. When a woman gets married, she wears a *hanbok* and visits her husband's family after the honeymoon. Traditionally, she wears a *hanbok* that is designed as a long, red skirt with a green top. Symbolically, the stacked vessels suggest various life experiences that contribute to her maturity. Each vessel with different memories or relationships with other people made her become a strong person, and these experiences will help her to have a new relationship with her husband and new family members. The small and beautiful vase on top represents the bride, who is now ready to begin her new life with her husband.

RESEARCH

My graduate works were influenced by many master artists, contemporary artists, fellow students, mentors, and other arts, like film and music. They have helped my art work by helping me accomplish better compositions, colors, techniques, styles, moods, and size. My mentors, Darlene Campbell and Betty Shelton, supported my work by sharing many ideas and helped me discover other artists. They helped me improve my skill by commenting on my weak technical problems. During my first semester of the MFA program, my advisor was Brad Coleman. He asked many challenging questions about the content, philosophy, and style of my artwork. His comments and questions were very helpful in figuring out my themes and philosophy, and I began to answer those questions as I developed my work.

While I was working on my series of paintings, my goal was to achieve a similar classical style and quality work as Jan Vermeer's great 17th century figure paintings.

Arthur Wheelock, the author of *Vermeer*, says that “he concentrated on the theme of a single figure, alone and immersed in thought, in what must be one of the most beautiful series of images ever created” (80). While I was working on my earlier series, *Creamers* and *Porcelains*, I was strongly influenced by two of Vermeer’s paintings: *The Milkmaid* (Fig. 9) and *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter* (Fig. 4). In those two paintings, he composed both female figures in the center of the composition. One figure is composed in a front view, and the other figure is composed in a profile view. I adopted Vermeer’s centered composition to emphasize the importance of the objects.

While I was working on the *Creamer* (Fig. 1 & 2) series, I struggled to paint heavy shadows with high contrast in the backgrounds. My mentor, Darlene suggested that I tone down the surface of the backgrounds, and study other artist’s works. It was hard to fix the problem, so I began to search Vermeer’s painting to resolve how to paint shadow naturally. I found another Vermeer painting called *The Milkmaid* (Fig. 9). He handled the shadows very softly, and the transition of the value seemed very natural. Therefore, I began to look at his work while I was painting my backgrounds, and the heavy shadows and the hard edges improved. After resolving the problem, I put a copy of Vermeer’s painting next to my easel while I was painting. I kept comparing my work with his paintings whenever I struggled in certain areas.

As I continually searched for artists who painted single objects, I found a book on the Dutch artist Vilhelm Hammershøi. He painted interior paintings similar to Vermeer’s with a single female figure. “He was inspired by seventeenth-century genre paintings and early nineteenth-century Danish arts” (Kramer 6). In his works, I found the similar

moods that I have in my work. I admired the simplicity and silence in his works and wanted to achieve a similar quiet mood. I sought out his paintings to find interesting compositions and inspiration for my series. I liked his simple subject matter: his repetitive single figure, and simple compositions in an ordinary house interior. In *Tea cups* (Fig. 17) and subsequent series, I composed some tea cups that I have previously used in other works. I thought that it would be more interesting if the same objects appear in a series of paintings. The works that I created can then be different stories of the same person. Also, in a continued series, the objects are related to one another.

I saw Hammershøi's *Interior: with Piano and Woman in Black* (Fig. 8). He composed the figure on the left side of the canvas, and I began to think about the relation between the objects and the space. I adopted his composition in *Porcelain III* (Fig. 7) and in my third series, *Celadon Porcelain I* (Fig. 10), *Celadon Porcelain II* (Fig. 11), and *Celadon Porcelain III* (Fig. 12). I liked having more space around the object, which gives a feeling of silence and peace.

When I was working on my *Celadon Porcelain* series, Professor Campbell suggested I look at Martha Alf's still life paintings. In her *Pear Series III #4* (Fig. 14), Alf composed the objects by using daylight from a nearby window. I liked the stillness in her paintings, which was similar to the one that I wanted to create in my work. Suzanne Muchnic, the author of *Martha Alf*, says, "Alf changes backgrounds considerably to suggest a mysterious light source and she alters placement of the fruit to intensify psychological tension" (28). In her *Pear* series, I noticed her very soft and simple shadows. Her strong values on each object grabbed my attention. After studying her

works, I began to sketch some ideas of grouping objects for the subsequent series. In *Tea Cups I*, *Tea Cups II*, & *Tea Cups III* (Fig. 17, 18, 19), I composed small tea cups in a group with windows in the background. I used cool natural light combined with artificial lights.

In *Tea Cup II* (Fig. 18), Professor Betty Shelton suggested me to look at Andrew Wyeth's paintings because my window background with simple landscapes and sheer fabric looked similar to his work *Wind from the Sea* (Fig. 22). His quiet, delicate, and sensible mood was very similar to the mood that I wanted to create in my work. In the series, the value of my light is in medium tone, and I have very few highlights; as a result, it is very similar to his work titled *Ground Hog Day* (Fig. 19). His work encouraged me to use less sunlight, and I learned that I could still create successful artwork without strong light.

During the first semester, the colors of my work were strongly influenced by Vermeer's paintings. In *The Milkmaid* (Fig. 9), "[Vermeer] uses strong and earthy colors such as the yellows, blues, greens, and reds" (Wheelock 66). I used a similar mixture of earth colors to achieve a feeling of age and tradition. I also paint landscapes in plein air. Camille Corot is my favorite landscape painter. I was encouraged to paint from natural light after I studied his works. While I was working on my first series, I did not like using artificial light, which casts a strong yellowish color on the objects. I began to look at Corot's works because I liked his neutral color palettes. I wanted similar color effects as Corot; therefore, I began to use natural light for my *Porcelain* series (Fig. 5, 6, & 7) and the subsequent series.

Professor Campbell helped me to discover another contemporary artist named Duane Keiser, who paints single objects in intimate scales. I was inspired by his *Tea cup with Strawberry* still life painting. He composed a white tea cup on a white background, and the variation of white color was beautifully depicted (Fig. 13). His white background gave me a feeling of freshness, and his work looked very contemporary. After I studied his painting, I wanted to add contemporary style to my work by selecting the white background, but I also wanted to keep the feeling of oldness and a traditional look by painting the vessels like antique objects. I sought out traditional artists who also painted their background with white color, and I found a similar color background in Vermeer's *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter* (Fig. 4). A female figure stands in front of the white wall, which is painted beautifully with subtle variations of warm and cool colors. So I attempted to compose the objects on lighter color or white background for my subsequent series: *Porcelain I, II, III*, (Fig. 5,6, & 7) and *Celadon Porcelain I, II, III* (Fig. 10, 11, &12).

METHODOLOGY

Finding beauty in ordinary objects excites me. Also, it is interesting to find something unique in people who seem ordinary at first. Several years ago, I thought that people whom I met or passed by were very ordinary. However, as I grew older, I learned that if I spend more time and communicate more with people, I would find that each person is very special because they have unique characteristics.

I select simple mundane vessels that people use or see in everyday life. In my work, I paint vessels that are inexpensive and ordinary. Ceramic vessels with simple styles, shapes, and neutral colors help me to create a quiet and peaceful mood.

These vessels are metaphors for people. I use vessels as my main objects of painting because it is quite interesting to find some similarities between vessels and people. First, there are various kinds of vessels in different designs, styles, and uses. I think that people have these differences, too; there are so many people who have different features, interests, dreams, hopes, and purposes in life. In my *Creamers*, *Porcelains*, and *Celadon Porcelain* series, I painted a single vessel in each work to depict different characteristics that the object contains such as shapes, colors, and details. Secondly, some vessels that I used in my paintings were ceramics. Making a ceramic piece requires four processes: designing a vessel with clay, firing the clay, glazing, and firing again. The processes of making ceramic wares reminded me of a growth process: childhood, adolescence, middle age, and old age. The steps that are required in making ceramics seemed familiar in comparison to the stages of building a personality. In my *Tea Cups I*, *Tea Cups II*, & *Tea Cups III* (Fig. 17, 18, & 19) series and subsequent series, I added more narratives in contrast to my earlier work. I tried to reveal images of people who grow as mature by various relationships between people: a person who is isolating oneself from a group, a person who is trying to communicate with other people, and a person who has a good relationship with people in a community. Thirdly, ceramic wares are fragile because they are easy to break if I drop them on the hard ground. People are weak and

fragile in need of care and love from other people. So I used vessels to convey a message that people need to contain and pour out love from the inside of their vessels.

In my art, the vessels portray different human characteristics filled with spirits and thoughts. For example, in *Porcelain III* (Fig. 7), a pitcher is composed in a profile view. The pitcher is a container for liquid, and is also a metaphor for the body of a person who contains love or kindness. I believe that the countenance is the embodiment of the inner state of a person. My work generally focuses on both the outer and inner beauty of the objects, and I want to suggest what people should contain in their own vessels. The various concealed interiors of the vessels suggest the complex human nature we have inside ourselves. I believe that it is very important to love and to understand in keeping a good relation between people; therefore, I use vessels as symbols with the capacity for receiving and pouring out love. Throughout my work, I hope not only to investigate differences, but also to promote understanding. Furthermore, I think that if people contain inner beauty in their vessels, then it will transfer to others who are around them.

I am influenced by 19th century artists such as Johannes Vermeer, and Camille Corot because I prefer a classical and traditional style in my art. I used the traditional oil painting technique because I wanted to give a classical feeling similar to those master artists. While I was working on my underpainting, I used similar earth tone color as his *Rome: The Convent of Sant'Onofrio, on the Janiculum* (Fig. 15). I used burnt sienna, burnt umber, and ultramarine blue. In my *Tea Cups I, Tea Cups II, & Tea Cups III*, (Fig. 17, 18, 19) I began with those color paints in the beginning, and I added more color in thin layers after I developed the underpainting. I was inspired by his beautiful neutral

color landscape paintings such as *View of the Port of La Rochelle* (Fig. 16), and I tried to achieve similar neutral color in my work.

As I developed this series of paintings, I became attracted to Oriental style vessels. In my work, my goal was to give the impressions of calmness, quietness, oldness, and peacefulness. While I was searching for vessels for my series, I bought some Korean celadon porcelains, teapots, and tea cups. The vessels were simple in style with few details of their own. When I look at vessels made in Oriental style, I can feel comfort, tranquility, and classical feelings from their neat designs, neutral colors, soft curves and shapes. I used those vessels that already contained simple and quiet characteristics, and I tried to achieve similar impressions in my work. At the same time, it was my intention to depict Oriental beauty through the classical western art style and techniques.

My first series, *Creamer I* (Fig. 1), *Creamer II* (Fig. 2), and *A Teapot* (Fig. 3) was a good study in finding what style I wanted to approach for next series. For the first series, I selected and composed the object in a simple style because I wanted to give a feeling of a quiet and peacefulness. However, the dark atmosphere created a lonely mood. I wanted to keep experimenting with more space around the object, but I wanted to create a mood that was less heavy than the first series. I selected porcelains that had more curved shapes on their bodies with some colorful patterns on them. I attempted to express the feeling of elegance and tradition while emphasizing outer beauty. While I was shopping to find vessels for my next series, I found some tea cups and teapots in

Oriental styles. They were great objects in expressing a mood of calm and peacefulness, and I became attached to the simple ceramic vessels in Oriental style.

The relation between the object and space plays an important role in my art. In each painting, the shadow plays an important role in balancing with the space. In my first series, *Creamer I* (Fig. 1), *Creamer II* (Fig. 2), and *a Teapot* (Fig. 3), I set objects on the right side of the panels so I could paint the shadows of the vessels on the left side of the space. An object will grab attention from the viewers, and their eyes will move around toward the shadow on the foreground, background, and the object. I used shadows repeatedly in each painting. The shadow represents another image of the object. Putting in soft dark shadows, suggests the inner side of complex human characteristics that are invisible. In the first series, I painted shadows that resembled the objects in clear shapes. However, as I continued the next series, I simplified the shapes of shadow instead of showing the exact contour. Also, I painted shadows softer and lighter in value to give the feeling of a soft glow.

I usually got vessels that are ordinary and inexpensive for my objects. I selected an object that I would like to use for my paintings, and began to set up vessels on a table next to a window. During the daytime, I took lots of photographs by using my digital camera in different angles and compositions. After I took photos, I studied various compositions, sizes, and cropped images using Photoshop. I selected the best compositions from photographs, and I began to sketch, working from observation.

After I was done with the sketches, I directly began underpainting on a wood panel. I used oil paints on small wood panels. The *Creamer I* (Fig. 1), *Creamer II* (Fig.

2) and a *Teapot* (Fig. 3) series are six inches by six inches, and the *Porcelain* (Fig. 5,6, & 7) and *Celadon Porcelain* (Fig. 10, 11, 12) series are six inches by eight inches. At first, I coat gesso on the board about four to five layers thick. When the board has completely dried, I sand the surface until it becomes smooth. I mix yellow ochre and raw umber oil paints to cover the surface. Next, I begin the underpainting, which is a very important process in the beginning of my work because it provides a great value when I begin with color. In the beginning of the underpainting process, I used burnt sienna, burnt umber, raw umber, and ultramarine blue in studying dark value. After the dark value study, I used titanium white in depicting the lightest area. The process of underpainting usually takes about two weeks. I usually worked on two to three paintings at the same time. When the underpainting was done, I begin to work in color that I usually apply in thin layers paint many times.

CONCLUSION

Over the last two years, my paintings have improved in content, composition, and style. Also, themes and techniques for my work have changed since I began my MFA program. I used strong yellow and dark brown colors under artificial light for my first project. As I started my second series, *Porcelain*, I began to use natural light on my still life set up. In my subsequent series, my color palette consisted of neutral and cool colors by changing the light source and backgrounds. Inspired by the works of Jan Vermeer and Vilhelm Hammershøi, and other contemporary artists, I wanted to incorporate similar contemporary, classical and traditional techniques and styles into my work.

By selecting ceramic vessels in simple style and carefully composing them in space, I wanted my work to have more space and evoke quiet or peaceful feelings. In my earlier series, I limited myself in selecting the colors for the objects and the backgrounds to create similar quiet moods and neutral colors. However, I learned that I could create similar moods even if I use vibrant colors like red or bright green after I experimented on my *Green* (Fig. 20) and *Red* (Fig. 21) paintings. I did not expect that the bright colors would blend well with the neutral color objects. I found they created beautiful reflections on the objects, and I enjoyed working with different color palettes. I will experiment with different colors of backgrounds or objects to create similar moods in my future work.

I continually painted three more single object series in similar styles and sizes during my second semester because my goal was to make my repeated style work with different objects, so the series could make an interesting presentation when I hung them next to one another. However, I learned that this graduate program is also a precious time to explore more with different ideas. My mentor and advisor suggested me to group the objects in new ways, use different sizes of panels, and use different backgrounds and techniques for my paintings. I believe that my second semester was an important time to move onto the next level. I realized that my paintings became more interesting after I used different ideas such as colors, composition, and added narrative. Furthermore, after I studied works of the contemporary artists and sought advice from my instructors, I gained more insights to upgrade my paintings.

At first, it was hard for me to invent new ways and upgrade my techniques after painting nine similar pieces. I began to focus more on the relationship between the object and the space for better composition, and I feel that small changes in compositing objects in the space brought improvement to my painting style. While I was working on *Tea Cups I*, *Tea Cups II*, & *Tea Cups III*, (Fig. 17, 18, 19) the slightly different arrangements and distance between tea cups created more interesting composition. I learned that a small difference in composition could create a big difference in paintings. In those series, I composed cups in stacks, upside down, and oriented in different directions on the table. They were symbolizing many people who are different. In my later series, I used grouped objects to emphasize a single character instead of composing an object itself. I realized that sometimes it is more effective to use indirect ways to explain and convey my messages. I became more open minded as an artist to explore different methods after I finished the *Tea Cups I*, *Tea Cups II*, & *Tea Cups III* (Fig. 17, 18, 19) series.

The vessels were used as a metaphor for people, and for the *Tea Cups* series and subsequent series, I began to add narratives to my work. While I was working on my graduate paintings, I thought about my personal relationships with people. I believe that there are so many differences and I still need more time to become mature as a person and as an artist. I believe that people are very interesting subject matter to study, and I would love to study more about people who have different thoughts, and live different lives. I hope to include differences and understanding about people in my work, and I want my viewers to feel my feelings towards people in similar way.

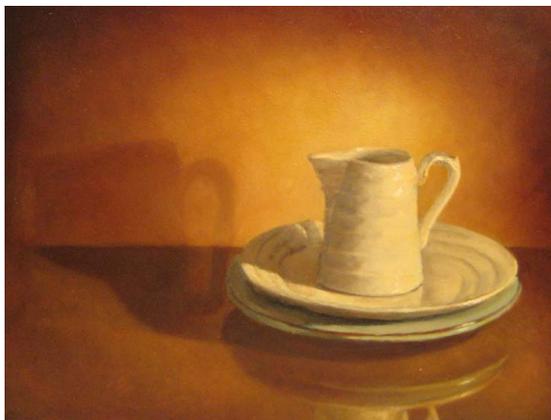
During the last two years of my graduate program, I believe that my work has improved a lot by experimenting with new ideas, adapting ideas from my mentors' advice, and different perspectives or comments from fellow students. Through the graduate program, I learned how to speak about my artwork. During the critiques, my mentors or fellow students asked me questions about my artwork, and there were some questions that I could not answer right away. I spent times to find out answers while I was working on my paintings, and the questions helped me to strengthen my artwork. I believe that the time I have spent has been important in helping me to become a strong artist.

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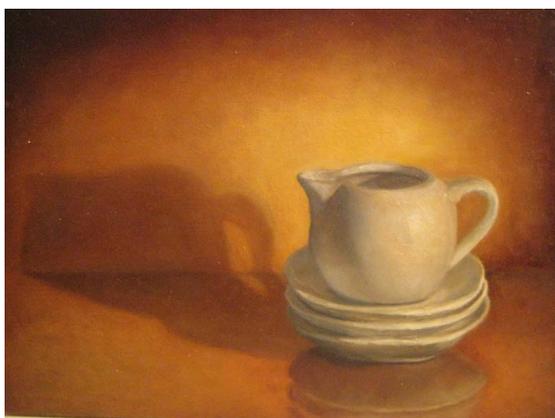
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APPENDIX

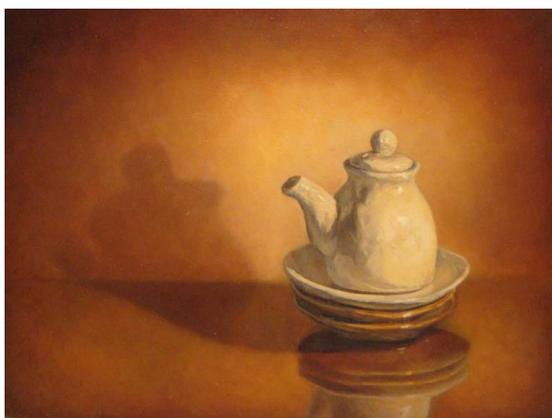
1. Fig. 1, *Creamer I*, 2009. 6"x8", Oil on Wood panel



2. Fig. 2, *Creamer II*, 2009. 6"x8", Oil on Wood panel



3. Fig. 3, a Teapot, 2009. 6"x8", Oil on wood panel



4. Fig. 4, Vermeer, *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter*, 1662-64. 18 1/4"x15 3/8", Oil on canvas.



5. Fig. 5, *Porcelain I*, 2009. 6"x6", Oil on wood panel.



6. Fig. 6, *Porcelain II*, 2009. 6"x6", Oil on wood panel.



7. Fig. 7, *Porcelain III*, 2009. 6"x6", Oil on wood panel.



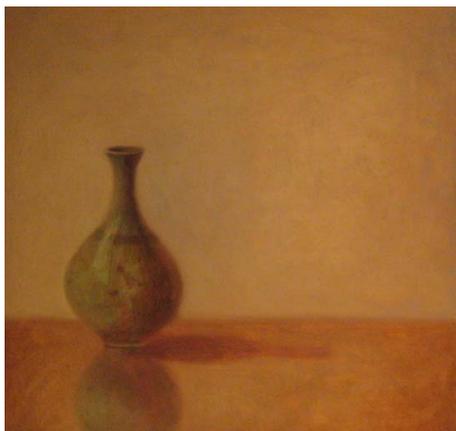
8. Fig. 8, Hammershøi, *Interior: with Piano and Woman in Black*, 1901. 63x52.5 cm, Oil on canvas.



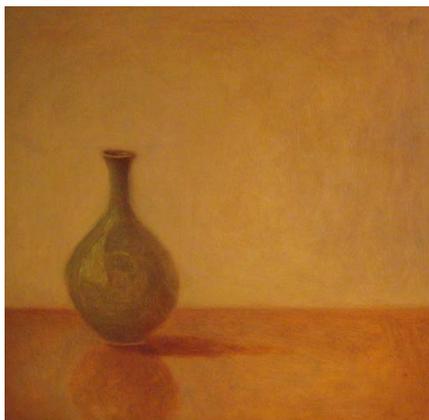
9. Fig. 9, Vermeer, *The Milkmaid*, 1658-60. 17 7/8"x16 1/8", Oil on canvas.



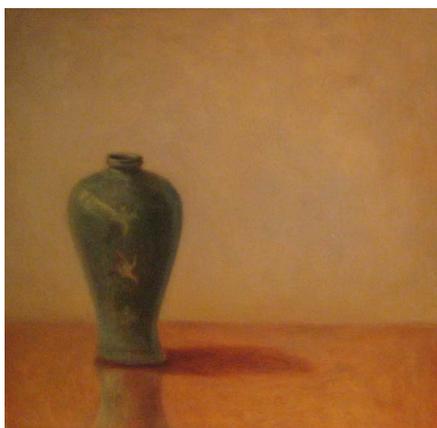
Fig. 10, *Celadon Porcelain I*, 2009. 6"x6", Oil on wood panel.



10. Fig. 11, *Celadon Porcelain II*, 2009. 6"x6", Oil on wood panel.



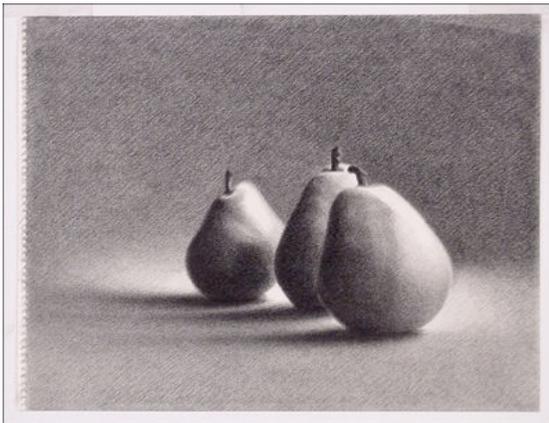
11. Fig. 12, *Celadon Porcelain III*, 2009. 6"x6", Oil on wood panel.



12. Fig. 13, Duane Keiser's small painting. (no information about title, size, medium)



13. Fig. 14, Martha Alf, *Pear series III #4*



14. Fig. 15, Corot, *Rome: The Convent of Saint'Onofrio, on the Janiculum*, 1826.
9"x 3", Oil on paper mounted on canvas.



15. Fig. 16, Corot, *View of the Port of La Rochelle* . (no information about size, year, and medium)



16. Fig. 17, *Tea Cups I*, 2009. 24"x6", oil on wood panel



17. Fig. 18, *Tea Cups II*, 2010. 11"x14", oil on wood panel



18. Fig. 19, *Tea Cups III*, 2010. 11"x14", oil on wood panel



19. Fig. 20, *Green*, 2010. 12"x12", oil on wood panel



20. Fig. 21, *Red*, 2010. 12"x12", oil on wood panel



21. Fig. 22, Andrew Wyeth, *Wind from the Sea*, 1947. 19" x28", Tempera

