### Remark a Bowl

#### Pottery bowls and loop display of photos

**2018**

**Pottery and its display photography**

**Changlin Fashi**

**Setzer**: Remark a Bowl

#### Pottery vessels and your daily life

Can you recall the tableware at your last meal and how it looked like? Can you accurately recall the features of the mug that you often use? With few exceptions, the vessels we use in everyday life are the objects we tend to take for granted. We tend to see them without looking at them. They are always on standby to serve us, but they only exist for functional use. Do you still remember how you were so fond of an object that you took your wallet without a second thought?

#### Pottery vessels as contemporary art

"Remark a Bowl" is not only a mere display of 1,000 white bowls. The beauty of ceramic wares has everything to do with considerations for aesthetics, materials, functions, and practicality. Besides aesthetics and practicality, "Remark a Bowl" as a contemporary ceramic installation, also attempts to present itself as conceptual and community arts. With "Living Zen" as a starting point, the work inspires the users to attend to the minute details of everyday life.

The artist duo — Wy Lee and Ryan Hui — did not resort to turning their ceramics studio into a factory assembly line to make the bowls for distribution to the participants. Instead, through single-minded focus and undoubtedly skillful throwing to include subtle ergonomic details, they created by hand remarkable vessels that differ from the ones which are mass-produced in factories.

#### A collective of markings of living in the moment

In order to allow these bowls to fulfill their mission, Wy Lee and Ryan Hui invited 1,000 volunteers to use the white bowls before sending them to exhibit. Participants were encouraged to upload photos to Instagram and Facebook using the hashtag “remarkabowl”, (or the Chinese title “集器”) There are no restrictions on how to use the bowls, no precedent to go by, and everyone's eating habits differ (some people didn't use them for eating at all). These photos give us a glimpse of the participants' wide range of lifestyles, while also highlighting the current trend in the mass culture: snap-shotting whatever we see, eat, or do, wherever and whenever. What is significant in a picture of a bowl of plain rice or a bowl of herbal tea? Why do people take seascapes or landscape shots with an empty bowl in the foreground? Why are these snapshots fun to browse? Changlin Fashi, the potter's creative partner, explained: "With photography, it is what you can't see that matters the most. The "remarkabowl" hashtag is not just a collection of gourmet or travel photos — it embodies the 1,000 participants' moments of focus. There is no "mirror image" as most photographers would have emphasised. In these photos and bowls, there are irreducible traces of the moment, each distinctive and remarkable in its own self."
"Remark a Bowl" is a collection of one thousand ceramic bowls which have experienced and carried traces of the voluntary participants’ daily living habits. Each participant was allowed to use the bowl in whatever ways for about two months, during which time time marks of their living stemming from different habits and ways of use were left on the vessels.

All things in this world happen by destiny. It has been our destiny to get to know Changlin Fashi and to have collaborated with him on "Remark a Bowl". When deciding on who to engage as our creative partner for this exhibition, both of us converged on the choice of Changlin Fashi, a well-known Buddhist master actively promoting the concept of "Living Zen". Nonetheless, at an unexpected encounter, we mentioned our conception to the Master, and a discussion followed. We found that our conceptions concurred, and within a few hours, inspirations sparked and the rough framework of our work was almost settled.

The bowls exhibited here were all hand-made by wheel-throwing. For decoration, we only coated the vessel in white slip. This decorative technique is originated from Japanese Kohiki (literally powder-sprayed) wares. It refers to the use of white slip to cover the original darker-coloured clay and gives it a white finishing. The white finishing thus achieved is brighter, with a more complex hue than if only white clay or porcelain were used at the first place. It also helps bring up the inherent characteristics of the clay underneath — the random black specks that appear on the white slip are actually mineral contents in the clay, which have risen to the surface of the white slip during the firing process. Kohiki wares’ characteristic smoothness and simplicity are well akin to a lifestyle that we enjoy.

When considering what type of vessels to be made for this project, we envisaged that our users should have more freedom when learning to co-live with this vessel. Tall and narrow cup as well as flat and wide plate were ruled out as their rather extreme shapes would restrict the ways to use them. We finally opted for the ordinary bowl shape: it can accommodate a variety of usages and is very representative of the kind of vessel that Hong Kong people use every day.

Wy Lee and Ryan Hui
Wy Lee and Ryan Hui graduated from the Academy of Visual Arts of the Hong Kong Baptist University with a Bachelor’s degree in 2016 and 2015 respectively. They co-founded their pottery workshop Toki Nashiki in 2016 and specialise in exclusively formulated glazes and production of attractive yet highly functional pottery vessels for daily use.

Changlin Fashi
Changlin Fashi is a famous photographer in Hong Kong. His conversion to Buddhism after the age of 40 has led him to new insights towards work and life. At the age of 55, he adopted his Dharma name Changlin and became devoted to monkhood, actively promoting the practices of Buddhism and "Living Zen" through different media.