

## *Thesaurus Fine Arts, Inc.*

301 Occidental Ave. S., Seattle, WA 98104  
Tel (206) 223-0606 • Fax (206) 223-0136

### Ceramics Dating

The generally accepted method of dating ceramic articles today is the TL (Thermoluminescence) test, not expert opinion. Given sufficient thickness, this test yields roughly conclusive results for pottery articles 100 per cent of the time, for porcelain articles about two-thirds of the time. An article having been re-heated, exposed to very bright light, or drilled with too high a speed will reduce the age of the article.

Having examined so many tested articles over the years, I am perhaps the best man on earth judging whether an article will pass the TL test with naked eyes. My betting average is roughly as follows. With quick examination, what I say is authentic will be tested positive 70 per cent of the time; with elaborate examination, what I say is authentic will be tested positive 90 per cent of the time—if the article is before Ming. In a recent batch of 11 articles, which I had elaborately examined before TL testing, 10 are confirmed authentic.

But there are two problems. First, different TL labs sometime yield different results—how and where the sample is taken and how the test is conducted apparently matters. Second, rare but not so unusual, some articles which I firmly believe, e.g., belonging to Tang (1200 years ago) are tested to yield only 300 years. However, an article tested to have 200 or more years has a significant market value.

There are no articles at Thesaurus that are knowingly fake; although some of them I am not certain. However, I have given most of the articles only quick examinations. An article TL tested positive typically commands a considerably higher price, because if an auction house takes it, with a little luck it may bring a very high price. Generally, therefore, the better buy is the untested articles.

Steve Cheung  
Advisor