

Artist and collector Steve Miller

MILLER: Finding A Link Between Art and Science

FROM PAGE B1

Using that connection as a focal point, Mr. Miller created a series of paintings. The artwork combines expressionistic renderings of pottery with computer-style notes or snatches of handwritten formulas with washes of color. Many works feature imprints of cables used in the high-tech machinery found at Brookhaven National Lab.

"My art has always been about ways to the view the world through a technological lens," Mr. Miller said. "At Brookhaven, the scientists are doing experiments to find out about the birth of matter and the universe. This pottery goes back to the early days of mankind. I think the artwork is about time and how we're still searching for ways to make sense of our world."

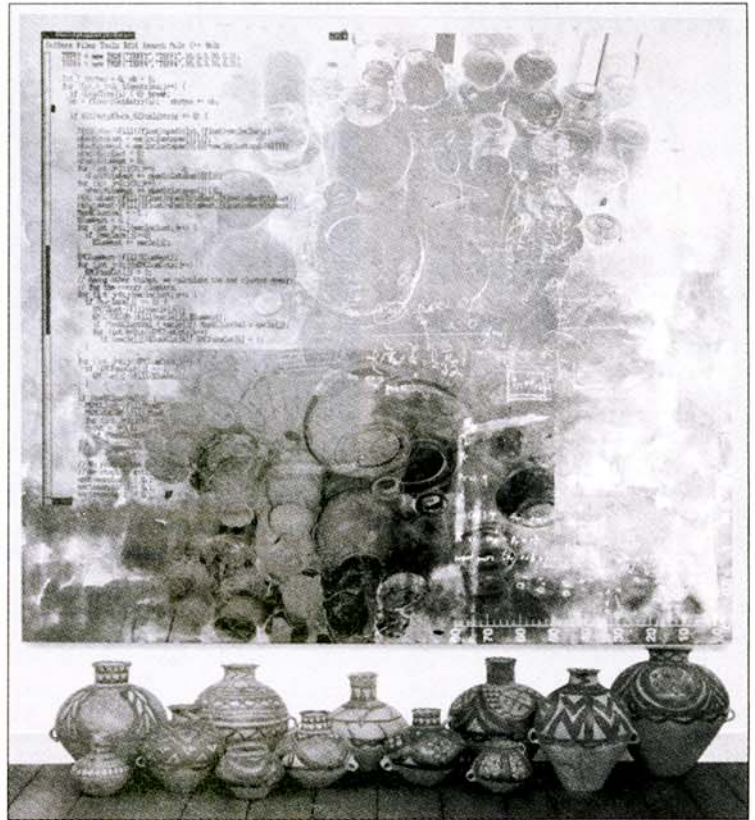
Three paintings from the series are currently on display as part of the "Finders Keepers" exhibition at the Parrish Art Museum in Southampton. (See separate story). Nearby are representative pieces from Mr. Miller's Neolithic Chinese pottery collection. The pieces on view date from 5000 BC to around 500 BC.

Mr. Miller became enamored of the primitive pottery while teaching in Hong Kong. Amazed by their vast reach back in time, their abundance in Hong Kong flea markets and their low cost, he soon found himself a collector.

"It's amazing that for under \$100 I could buy something that was created in 2000 BC," he said during an interview at his Sagaponack studio. "I wasn't sure if it was really legitimate or not, but there was something about them that I liked. If they weren't real, so what? It's \$25. There are worse things you could do with your money."

Mr. Miller returned to the states and continued to collect at flea markets in Manhattan. He also had some of the larger pieces scientifically tested, which proved that they dated back at least 2000 years. For most pieces, spending the money to test for date of creation isn't cost effective, he said.

Instead, he bases his decision on whether to buy on instinct and probability. He has extensively



Steve Miller's "Maximum Clusters" is on display behind some ancient vessels in his collection at the Parrish Art Museum.

Finding Link Between Art And Science

Ancient objects are inspiration for artist

By Pat Rogers

For most collectors, seeking and acquiring objects is the whole point: that's where the fun is.

But in Steve Miller's case, collecting one art form inspired another. He decided to take his collection obsession a step further by trying to find the link between his interest in the ancient Chinese pottery he collects and the cutting edge science that's the muse for his artwork.

The Sagaponack artist pondered the question for almost a year before he made a connection. Practical vessels created from 5000 BC to 200 BC were a way to help our ancestors harness the world and make sense of it, he said. The pursuit of science concerned with the origins of the earth has the same aim.

"Scientists are concerned about the nature of matter and these are the first objects made by man or woman," Mr. Miller said of his collected pottery. "To put them in context, they used the technology of their time to make things to make their lives better and to help understand their world. By making cups, they could understand water. They could understand how matter could be shaped and other things."

researched Chinese history, looked over similar collections, scoured books and talked to others on the subject. Through his research, Mr. Miller knows how to identify legitimate root marks, the textures that commonly appear on pottery from 5000 to 200 BC in China and to look for other clues to see if he's found treasure or a close facsimile.

"I learned about the history of China through pottery," Mr. Miller said. "I focused on the different dynasties and learned about them through the pottery."

Before collecting Chinese pottery, he had collected Native American pottery dating to around 1000 to 1200 AD. But it was the sheer antiquity and an unknown quality about the Chinese pottery that grabbed him and wouldn't let go.

"They radiate a special kind of energy," he said. "There's something there that's really special."

It's likely that Mr. Miller was inspired to take a scientific look at the ancient pottery after years of drawing his inspiration from the world of science. His artwork has fused his creative vision with research into genetics, biology,

micro-biology and physics. He has made use of X-rays, MRIs and computer images to create abstract art. He uses a computer to enhance images before silk screening them onto canvas and applying paint.

One of Mr. Miller's recent series deals with the origin of matter. His latest series is concerned with proteomics and bioinformatics, created in collaboration with chemistry Nobel Prize winner Rod MacKinnon. Dr. MacKinnon won the prize for his work on the movement of charged ions across a cell membrane.

Mr. Miller's work has been exhibited around the globe, including Paris, London, Tokyo, Vienna, and Seoul. He has exhibited in Germany, France, Austria, the Czech Republic and others. In the United States, he has shown his work in Manhattan, Brooklyn, other parts of New York, Connecticut, Vermont, Texas, Massachusetts and more.

Locally, his work has been shown at the Sara Nightingale Gallery and at the Hampton Road Gallery in an exhibit curated by Graham Leader. Information is available and images can be seen at his website, www.stevemiller.com.