

THE AESTHETICS OF REPAIR: CERAMIC RESTORATION IN THE MING AND QING DYNASTIES AND ITS CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Ceramic restoration in the Ming and Qing dynasties exemplified by Juci (metal-staple repair) couples' technique with aesthetics and advances a cultural view that accepts imperfection, continuity, and ethical renewal through visible mending. **Objective:** To examine the craft procedures and aesthetic features of Juci in the Ming–Qing period, to develop practice-based artworks derived from these findings, and to analyze how this knowledge can be applied to contemporary cultural transformation. **Methods:** A qualitative approach integrates literature review, field investigation, comparative analysis, and practice-based experimentation. The practice-based component is evidenced through the author's ceramic artwork Rupture and Rebirth, in which crack lines, metal-staple imagery, and visible joining are transformed into contemporary visual language. **Results:** Juci converts fractures into geometric and symbolic paths that enact the principle “broken but preserved, repaired without deception.” Through both historical analysis and the author's creative experiment, the study demonstrates how visible repair can generate new forms of order, memory, material contrast, and cultural meaning. **Conclusion:** By connecting historical technique, aesthetic interpretation, and practice-based creation, this study formulates an “aesthetics of repair” that advances heritage protection and supports contemporary cultural renewal.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ceramics have long operated as a central vehicle of Chinese cultural identity (Cahill, 2023)^[2] bearing layered historical, technical, and aesthetic significance. In traditional life, broken vessels were seldom discarded; they were repaired to extend use. This habit reflected an ethic of material restraint and an aesthetic that valued continuity and trace. Out of this milieu emerged Juci the metal-staple technique which matured as a refined expression of craftsmanship and moral thought.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368–1912) porcelain production reached unprecedented scale. The consolidation of imperial kiln systems in Jingdezhen and other hubs underwritten by political stability and economic expansion dramatically raised production (Monkhhouse, 2021)^[5]. As porcelain operated both as utilitarian ware and as collectible art, demand grew for repair methods that safeguarded use while honoring appearance. Among ordinary households, limited resources and a culture of cherishing possessions favored repair over replacement, granting objects a “second life.” Juci and related methods thus circulated widely and were transmitted across regions.

Restoration is not only a matter of technique; it is also a form of cultural inheritance. The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and China’s 2021 Opinions on strengthening ICH protection both treat traditional craftsmanship as a foundation for cultural confidence and sustainable development (General Office of the CPC Central Committee & General Office of the State Council, 2021).^[4]

This study’s significance is threefold. Academically, it enriches research on ceramic restoration and clarifies the place of an “aesthetics of repair” in Chinese art history. Culturally, it demonstrates how the philosophy of breakage and repair articulates foundational Eastern aesthetic principles and strengthens cultural identity. Practically, it proposes pathways for revitalizing intangible heritage by integrating traditional craft into contemporary design and artistic practice. Taken together, the study casts Juci as a living conduit between historical workmanship and current cultural renewal.

2. OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the craft procedures and aesthetic features of Juci traditional metal-staple ceramic repair during the Ming and Qing dynasties;
2. To develop and experiment with practice-based ceramic artworks based on knowledge derived from the literature review, historical cases, and field investigation;
3. To analyze and apply the new knowledge generated from literature review and practice-based research to the contemporary cultural transformation of Juci.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review maps scholarship on Juci (metal-staple ceramic repair) along three lines historical formation in China, craft and materials, and East Asian aesthetic context and closes by identifying the specific gap this study addresses. The aim is not to add new sources but to weigh what existing work explains well

and where it remains thin.

1. Historical Studies of Ceramic Repair

Most accounts locate the beginnings of repair practice in the Song–Yuan era, when itinerant artisans (jujiang) moved among towns fixing porcelain and stoneware (Nan & He, 2023)^[6] Scholars typically read this rise alongside the expansion of urban handicrafts and a strengthened ethic of material thrift. By the Ming–Qing period, with Jingdezhen and other kiln centers at their height, Juci had become both routine technique and cultural habit, embedded in everyday ethics and object attitudes (Nan & He, 2023)^[6]

Demand existed in both courtly and popular domains. Shan (2021)^[7] notes that the Qing court repaired damaged wares with gilded copper or silver staples an alignment of utility and refinement. Monkhouse (2021)^[5] places Juci within the long history of porcelain, relating repair to social hierarchy and the specialization of artisanal labor. Collectively, these works document who repaired, where, and under what institutional conditions. What they discuss less fully is how the act of mending itself came to bear aesthetic and philosophical meanings an interpretive layer often left implicit.

2. Technical and Material Research on Juci Craftsmanship

Technical research has clarified the canonical sequence paired-hole drilling, staple fabrication, hammering, and sealing thereby making the functional logic and precision of Ming–Qing Juci legible (Xie, 2020)^[10] Tool histories (e.g., the jingang zuan or diamond drill) and metallurgical distinctions among iron, copper, silver, and gold staples demonstrate a principle of “choosing technique to fit the object’s value and stress profile” (Xie, 2017)^[9]

Regional studies further reveal localized schools and guild practices in provinces such as Shanxi, Shandong, and Jiangxi, each cultivating particular drilling patterns, staple profiles, and stylistic conventions transmitted via master–apprentice lineages. Yet the documentary and archaeological record largely stops at visible procedure. Underexplored are the tacit, situated decisions that shape outcomes: where exactly to drill, how to set staple spacing, when to allow the scar to remain legible as part of the object’s beauty. These matters rhythm, timing, symbolic gesture constitute the craft’s “practical aesthetics,” but receive limited theorization. Building on the existing technical base, the present study therefore treats Juci as a technique–art–ethos nexus rather than as procedure alone.

3. Cultural and Aesthetic Context of Repair in East Asia

Beyond technique, Juci resonates with East Asian aesthetic themes of incompleteness, temporality, and restraint. Cahill (2023)^[2] observes that seventeenth-century Chinese visual culture shows a Confucian–Daoist inclination toward transformation and measure an outlook congenial to the ethics of visible repair. Butler’s (2004)^[11] reflections on vulnerability and woundedness supply a vocabulary for an ethics that acknowledges, rather than conceals, impermanence. Comparative studies often match the Japanese ideal of wabi-sabi simplicity, transience, imperfect form with the Chinese canque zhi mei (beauty of the incomplete), both rooted in humility and temporal awareness. From this perspective, De Waal (2020)^[3] reads Juci and Kintsugi as parallel arts that convert fracture into symbol and formal renewal. While such comparisons are productive, much of the literature remains at the level of analogy. What is still needed

are object-level readings that return to specific repairs and concrete steps to explain why a given intervention takes a particular shape and how that shape acquires aesthetic force.

4 Synthesis and Gap

Taken together, the field now has solid baselines for historical context, technical description, and cross-cultural framing. What is less integrated is the chain of explanation linking them: technical choices are rarely followed through to their aesthetic and ethical consequences; comparative claims are seldom brought back to the exigencies of workshop practice. The transformation of Juci from utilitarian fix to legible cultural sign and its contemporary redeployment in art and design remains under-theorized.

Addressing this gap, the present study proposes a unified reading that places process decisions, formal outcomes, and aesthetic–ethical meanings on the same plane. In doing so, it clarifies how the visibility of repair functions as an aesthetic strategy and cultural expression and how this strategy can inform current agendas in cultural regeneration and the revitalization of intangible heritage.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework reads Juci (metal-staple ceramic repair) as a joined aesthetic–philosophical system in which material procedure, cultural signification, and ethical reflection meet. It is organized around four dimensions material, temporal, aesthetic, and symbolic offering a composite lens for the multifaceted character of Juci. Table 1 lays out these four strands and shows how craft operations crystallize philosophical commitments while gaining contemporary cultural traction. In short, the model treats Juci as a dynamic continuum: from workmanship to aesthetic form, from cultural philosophy to present-day reinterpretation.

Table 1

Conceptual framework of Juci as an aesthetic and philosophical system

Dimension	Core Concept	Philosophical Reference	Contemporary Relevance
Material	Metal–ceramic contrast	Daoist yin–yang balance	Inspires cross-material design and craft innovation
Temporal	Visible traces of repair	Confucian continuity; Buddhist impermanence	Engages with memory, trauma, and healing in art
Aesthetic	Beauty of imperfection (canque zhi mei)	Wabi-sabi and Chinese simplicity aesthetics	Expands global appreciation of imperfection
Symbolic	Narrative of endurance and reunion	Human–object emotional connection	Represents resilience and renewal in cultural practice

5. METHODOLOGY

1. Population and Sample

The study population includes traditional Juci artisans, ceramic conservators, museum restoration specialists, and contemporary artists who repair or reimagine ceramics. The sample comprises: nationally and provincially recognized Juci inheritors active in regions such as Shanxi, Shandong, and Jingdezhen; museum and private holdings of Ming–Qing repaired porcelain; and contemporary ceramicists incorporating Juci motifs in their practice. Juxtaposing historical objects with living practitioners allows Juci to be examined not only as a legacy technique but as a craft that continues to operate in the present.

2. Variables

Two principal variables guide the analysis. (1) Historical variable: technical development, craft sequences, modes of transmission, and socio-cultural context for Juci in the Ming and Qing periods. (2) Aesthetic variable: philosophical and artistic dimensions valued imperfection, material contrast, and symbolic meaning and their rearticulation within contemporary cultural and artistic settings.

3. Research Scope

Temporal scope: from the Ming–Qing era (1368–1912) to the present, tracing Juci’s shift from utilitarian fix to artistic–cultural form. Thematic scope: (1) technical and material evolution; (2) aesthetic and symbolic implications; and (3) reinterpretation and transformation in modern design and art. Taken together, these angles position Juci within broader conversations on craftsmanship, heritage safeguarding, and sustainable artistic development.

4. Research Tools

To analyze and apply the new knowledge generated from literature review and practice-based research to the contemporary cultural transformation of Juci.

5. Data Collection

Data were assembled through four linked stages: (1) Literature Review: collection and analysis of historical sources, image archives, and theoretical writing to ground the framework in aesthetics and cultural theory; (2) Field Investigation: site visits and interviews with Juci artisans, conservators, and scholars in key regions to document present practice and lines of transmission; (3) Comparative Study: examination of cognate repair traditions in East Asia and the West to identify shared principles and Juci’s distinctive aesthetic logic; (4) Practice-Based Experimentation: creation and documentation of the author’s ceramic work Rupture and Rebirth, employing crack imagery, visible joining, and metal-staple symbolism to test the expressive and conceptual potential of Juci in contemporary art. Together these stages constitute an integrated methodology historical inquiry, empirical observation, and creative testing through which Juci is approached as both technique and evolving cultural practice that continues to generate new meanings today.

6. RESULTS

1. Historical Evolution and Technical Characteristics

1.1 Origins and Flourishing during the Ming and Qing Dynasties

The lineage of Juci (metal-staple ceramic repair) reaches back to the Song and Yuan. Written records and pictorial evidence suggest that by the Song (960–1279), itinerant jujiang were already active in urban markets repairing broken ware. A well-known scene in *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (Qingming Shanghe Tu) shows a street artisan at work, offering an early visual witness to the practice. By the Yuan (1271–1368), staple repair had consolidated as a recognizable folk occupation and customary trade.

Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912) developments brought full maturation. The expansion of imperial porcelain and the ubiquity of ceramics across elite and popular settings greatly amplified demand for restoration. During the prosperous reigns of Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong (1680s–1790s), handicraft industries thrived, and Juci became common across society (Nan & He, 2023)^[6] Archival traces and surviving objects indicate that even within the imperial court, damaged vessels were repaired with refined means gilded copper mounts or silver inlays (Shan, 2021)^[7] Although technically distinct from folk practice, these court methods shared a core premise: restore use while sustaining visual harmony. In this way, Juci moved beyond pragmatic household remedy to a craft of cultural and aesthetic consequence. Whether performed by palace artisans or traveling craftsmen, the act of mending broken porcelain enacted a long-standing ethos that preferred continuity to replacement and sought beauty within the very process of repair.

1.2 Technical Development and Modes of Transmission

Across the Ming–Qing centuries, Juci became increasingly standardized and professional through repeated practice. Knowledge passed primarily through master–apprentice relations, yielding stable guild structures and local schools. A typical workflow included aligning and fitting fragments, drilling paired micro-holes along the fracture, fabricating metal staples, inserting and hammering them in place, and sealing the seams. Among the implements, the diamond drill and the staple itself were decisive. Using a hand-driven drill, craftsmen produced symmetrical perforations on either side of the crack, then set the legs of a copper or iron staple and tapped them tight to “suture” the body. Iron and copper were the usual choices for everyday ware, while gold or silver appeared later on refined and imperial pieces, joining precision with elegance (Figure 1). To accommodate vessel scale and contour, repairers prepared varied specifications “flat staples,” “bean-shaped staples,” and “grain staples” for forms ranging from storage jars to delicate cups. Success turned on tactile judgment: hole depth and spacing had to be exact too deep risked fracture, too shallow failed to anchor.

Figure 1

Qianlong-period Blue-and-White Vase with Entwined Lotus Design



Source: Palace Museum. (n.d.). *Qianlong-period Blue-and-White Vase with Entwined Lotus Design*.

This reliance on dexterity and embodied knowledge gave Juci its distinctive artisanal signature and reflected China's craft tradition of apprenticeship and experiential learning. After the late Qing, industrial adhesives and cheaper porcelain reduced demand, and the trade waned; even so, lineages persisted locally and later entered the register of intangible cultural heritage. In contemporary practice, inheritors keep the classical methods while experimenting with decorative and expressive adaptations Juci-inflected artworks that join aesthetic exploration with cultural revival thus renewing the technique and reaffirming its enduring value.

1.3 Socio-Cultural Context

The flourishing of Juci in the Ming–Qing era rested on convergent political, economic, and cultural conditions. Politically, strong central governance and prolonged stability favored handicraft growth. The imperial emphasis on porcelain especially the establishment of official kilns at Jingdezhen produced unprecedented quantities of ceramic ware; the inevitable breakage created steady demand for repair. Economically, commercial centers such as Jiangnan prospered, and porcelain became an everyday necessity in urban households. Compared with buying new, hiring an itinerant repairer to mend a bowl or vase was economical; low cost and practical efficacy made Juci familiar in towns and rural markets alike. Culturally, literati discourse endorsed wuyouqing (affective bonds between people and things) and xiwuaixiu (cherishing and preserving objects). Objects were thought to carry memory and sentiment; even when damaged, they merited care rather than disposal. This humanistic stance lifted Juci from mere utility to a practice invested with moral and aesthetic meaning. From the late Ming onward, appreciation for a “beauty of imperfection” grew among scholar-officials, who often prized fragments or repaired pieces for their traces

of time. By mid-Qing, increased contact with Japan and the West diversified taste and sharpened sensitivity to transience, further normalizing imperfection as beauty. The influence of Japanese wabi-sabi reinforced the reading of repair marks as poetic signs of passing and resilience. A celebrated case is the Southern Song Longquan celadon bowl nicknamed Ma Huang Ban (“Horsefly’s Obstacle”), mended in Ming China with six iron staples before traveling to Japan; tea masters treasured it as a chawan of singular character, its cracks and staples esteemed as embodiments of wabi-sabi philosophy (Figure 2). This case shows that the repaired trace is not only a technical result, but also a cultural sign through which damage is transformed into memory and aesthetic value.

Figure 2

Ma Longquan celadon bowl, Longquan Kiln, Southern Song Dynasty



Source: Tokyo National Museum. (n.d.). *Ma Longquan celadon bowl, Longquan Kiln, Southern Song Dynasty*.^[8]

2. Aesthetic Philosophy and Contemporary Transformation of Juci

Addressing the second research objective, this section examines the aesthetic philosophy and contemporary transformation of Juci, showing how core ideas beauty of imperfection, temporality, material contrast, and symbolic repair are re-read in modern art and cultural practice.

2.1 The Beauty of Cracks and the Philosophy of Imperfection

Juci’s most distinctive value lies in its embrace of canque zhi mei beauty found in the incomplete. Rather than hiding damage, the repair highlights it: metal staples are deliberately set along the fracture so that what once counted as flaw becomes an organizing visual element. These bright intervals punctuate the surface, establishing rhythms that disclose the object’s life history. Breakage is not an ending; through repair, the vessel acquires renewed vitality, embodying the paradoxical pairing of loss and return. This sensibility draws on a longer Eastern wisdom that allows harmony to emerge from incompleteness. Chinese aesthetics values the mutual arising of void and fullness and the expressive force of omission akin to the “resonant blankness” in ink painting. In this register, cracks and joins become narrative scars, quiet records of time and touch. Each staple both strengthens the fault line and conserves the felt relation between artisan and owner, giving form to the ethic of “broken yet kept; fractured yet renewed.” The kinship with the Japanese aesthetic of wabi-sabi is evident: impermanence, incompleteness, and the dignity

of aging are accepted rather than concealed. Like kintsugi, which mends with gold lacquer, Juci turns harm into value, bringing tragedy and transcendence into the same frame. Through this alchemy of making, the vessel becomes more than a utensil; it becomes a meditation on beauty's persistence within fragility and on the coexistence of sorrow and hope.

2.2 Time and Memory

Juci also renders the poetics of time visible. Every crack and staple functions as a temporal and mnemonic sign, testifying to injury and recovery and turning the piece into a compact archive of endurance. In Chinese culture, things are entangled with feeling; the adage “when the object is harmed, the heart grieves” marks that bond. Repair therefore restores more than form it repairs continuity of sentiment, allowing attachments to survive the accident. Writers often speak of a “second life” for repaired ceramics. The crack narrates rupture; the staple marks the moment of return. In this sense, Juci preserves the beauty of duration, enabling viewers to “touch” history through surface scars and to sense the meeting of material decay with human persistence. Contemporary artists draw on this legacy to address memory, trauma, and healing. By importing Juci-like motifs into installations and sculptural assemblages, they externalize remembrance, translating personal and collective breaks into visible structures. Thus, Juci offers a philosophy of time that faces impermanence without denial, presenting endurance and regeneration as alternate figures of permanence.

2.3 Material Contrast and Visual Tension

Juci's visual force rests in material counterpoint. The cool hardness of iron, copper, or tin stands against the fine, lustrous glaze of porcelain. Where traditional wares are prized for smoothness and restraint, exposed staples with their raw metallic sheen interrupt the field like deliberate punctuation. The geometric alignment of these elements disturbs the vessel's original continuity yet, through disciplined workmanship, restores a different balance and order (Figure 3). Here, metal functions not only as a means of structural reinforcement, but also as a visible element that reorganizes the ceramic surface.

Figure 3

Iron and Copper Staples Used in Ceramic Repair



Source: Photographed by the author

Artisans often intensified this effect by engraving floral or geometric patterns on the staple heads, turning function into ornament. On some meticulously restored pieces, dense arrays of tiny staples *mi jiu* create dotted constellations that further enrich the surface. The interplay recalls the Daoist pairing of yin and yang: hard/soft, light/dark, cold/warm held in dynamic equipoise. This dialectic of contrast now stimulates cross-material design. Contemporary ceramicists combine shards with resin, steel wire, or cast metal to foreground harmony within heterogeneity, extending Juci's spirit beyond the workshop. In such work, every crack retains the memory of a former wound, while every metal join asserts a renewed order together composing a stable image of coherence made from difference.

4. Narrativity and Symbolism

The process and traces of Juci repair carry a distinct narrative charge. Each drilled hole and driven staple marks an act of care, a decision for renewal. For an owner, the restored vessel holds both the shock of breakage and the relief of survival; the repaired state becomes a material chronicle of endurance and return. Hence Juci objects often acquire personified meanings vessels that have “lived through hardship and kept going.” Within traditional culture, staple forms accrued symbolic associations. Plum-blossom staples recalling the winter flower signified perseverance and purity; paired staples suggested concord and reunion; linear runs were at times read as auspicious “blessings” or “longevity marks” (Figure 4). Such readings show how repair traces exceed utility to act as cultural codes. Juci thus operates as a visual metaphor of “reunion after fracture,” a compact narrative of rebirth through adversity and healing after trauma.

Figure 4

Examples of Ming–Qing Juci staple types and layout patterns



Source: Photographed by the author

This metaphor remains potent in contemporary art. Many artists work with broken ceramics and conspicuous join lines to think through social wounding, psychological healing, and the remaking of identity. As Judith Butler notes in reflecting on the “politics of wounds,” the visibility of injury and its repair frames how communities recognize and respond to suffering. In this sense, Juci’s “visible restoration” becomes a

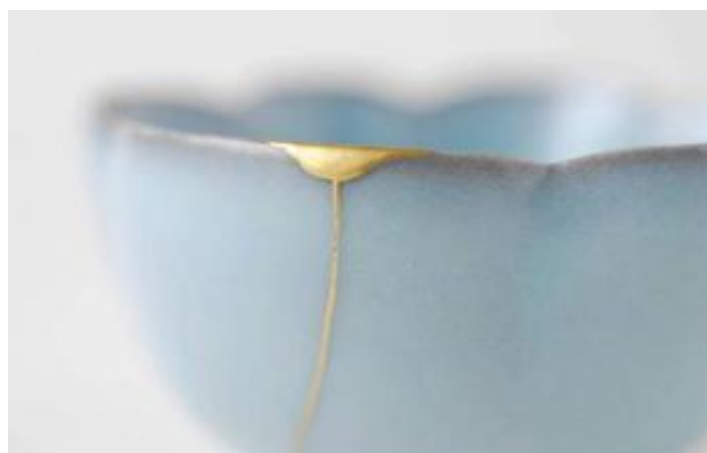
narrative conduit, turning repaired things into emblems of resilience, fellow feeling, and hope. Ultimately, in cultural terms, Juci moves beyond material fix to a deep metaphor of persistence and renewal. It translates fragility into meaning, reminding us that healing of objects or selves does not erase scars; it affirms life as it continues through them.

5. Cross-Cultural Integration and Aesthetic Recognition

The aesthetics of Juci (metal-staple repair) extends beyond Chinese contexts and resonates globally. A noted instance is the Ma Huang Ban tea bowl, mended in China with six iron staples and later cherished in Japan within chanoyu. Read through wabi-sabi, its visible joints embodied appreciation for imperfection and impermanence. Likewise, in eighteenth–nineteenth-century Europe, riveting repairs metal staples closing porcelain fractures were widespread. Aristocratic collectors developed a taste for Chinese pieces repaired in this manner, treating them as curiosities: attitudes toward imperfection differed, yet the appeal of repair’s beauty proved shared. In modern times, the Japanese technique of kintsugi mending with gold lacquer has become a global metaphor for resilience and renewal. Compared with kintsugi’s refined subtlety, Chinese Juci offers a more forthright, unadorned statement of fracture and return, giving it a distinct voice in contemporary art discourse (Figure 5). Many Western artists, influenced by these Eastern practices, now employ repair as both aesthetic device and conceptual armature. Among them, Edmund de Waal has pursued this dialogue with particular clarity. In *Some Winter Pots* (De Waal, 2020)^[3] he combines porcelain with lead, metal, and ceramic fragments, weaving the symbolism of Chinese Juci and Japanese kintsugi into a contemporary sculptural language (Figure 6). Here, visible repair becomes a figure for memory, loss, and healing: the crack signals trauma and incompleteness; the mend signals acceptance and renewal. This example indicates how the logic of visible repair can move beyond restoration and become a contemporary language for articulating memory, loss, and regeneration.

Figure 5

Contemporary Kintsugi Technique



Source: <https://www.163.com/dy/article/IMH254EA05531JP4.html>

Figure 6

de Waal, E. (2020). *Some winter pots* [Exhibition work]

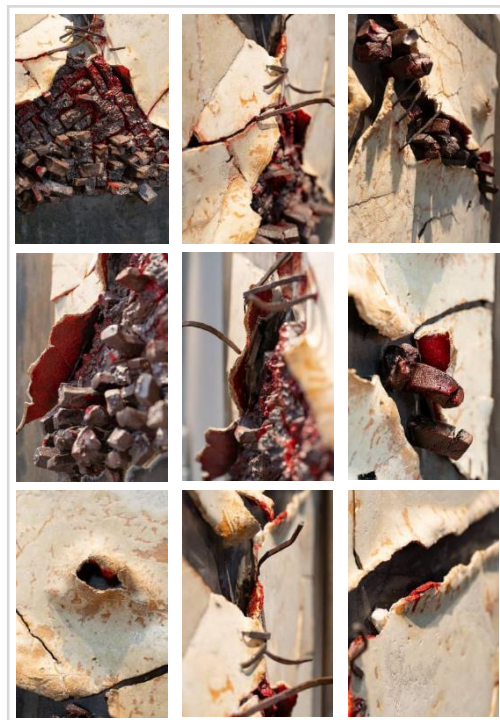


Source: From *Some winter pots*, by E. de Waal, 2020, Gagosian (<https://gagosian.com>). Copyright 2020 by Edmund de Waal.

Such cross-cultural work suggests that the philosophy embodied in Juci has developed into a widely legible artistic language. Through reinterpretation and inventive adaptation, the ancient spirit of repair and renewal thrives in current practice, cultivating global recognition of the beauty of imperfection and affirming the ongoing relevance of Chinese craftsmanship within world culture. In the author's practice-based artwork *Rupture and Rebirth*, this aesthetic logic is further tested through contemporary ceramic creation (Figure 7). The work does not reproduce Juci as a traditional repair technique, but translates its core principles visible fracture, metal-like joining marks, and the coexistence of damage and renewal into a contemporary visual structure. In theoretical terms, this practice shows that Juci is not only a historical craft method, but also a cultural framework through which rupture can be reorganized into form, memory, and symbolic resilience (Figure 8).

Figure 7

Rupture and Rebirth series [Ceramic, metal, and mixed media artwork].



Source: Created by the author.

Figure 8

Rupture and Rebirth series, detail [Ceramic, metal, and mixed media artwork].



Source: Created by the author.

7. DISCUSSIONS

Taken together, the findings show that Juci (metal-staple ceramic repair) is not just a set of procedures but a meeting point of hand skill, aesthetic judgment, cultural sign, and creative transformation. Instead of hiding damage, Juci turns the crack into structure meaning is built from the scar and thereby advances a logic of “preserving by way of imperfection.” The author’s practice-based experiment further confirms that this logic can be translated into contemporary ceramic creation, where fracture, joining, and visible repair become formal and symbolic resources. This reading aligns with research on Chinese craft that links manual practice to moral disposition and everyday ethics (Xie, 2017^[9]; Xie, 2020)^[10]

The evidence also places Juci’s maturation within the Ming–Qing climate of political stability and artisanal prosperity. Court workshops and itinerant repairers, though differently organized, jointly shaped the look and value of repair. In this respect the results support Nan and He (2023)^[6] account of prosperity moving in step with a moral economy of thrift and endurance. What the present study adds is an interpretive frame: Juci coheres as an aesthetic–philosophical formation grounded in Confucian perseverance, Daoist harmony in incompleteness, and Buddhist acceptance of impermanence not merely as a catalogue of methods.

Comparison with Japan’s kintsugi remains useful but only up to a point. Where kintsugi seeks transfiguration through precious matter (gold), Juci insists on honest visibility. The plainness of the staple reads as a specifically Chinese ethic of measure and authenticity. That stance sits uneasily with Western conservation ideals that favor seamless reintegration; Juci, by contrast, safeguards trace and continuity and treats the repair as part of what the object means.

In the present, Juci speaks to sustainability debates and to contemporary artistic practice. Reuse and renewal mirror circular-economy thinking yet carry a humanistic register often absent from policy language. The practice-based artwork discussed in this study demonstrates that visible repair can move from historical object to creative method: it allows rupture to remain legible while generating a new visual and cultural order. Contemporary artists have also reworked the aesthetics of the visible join, echoing Butler’s (2004)^[11] “politics of wounds,” where making injury legible becomes an ethical gesture of acknowledgment and care. In short, Juci mediates between the material and the symbolic, tradition and experiment, and keeps open a dialogue between survival of things and renewal of spirit.

8. ORIGINALITY AND BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

Recasting Juci as a cultural system. The study moves Juci beyond “technique” to a system in which technology, aesthetic choice, and moral philosophy operate together. Framed this way, Juci enters discussions of cultural sustainability rather than remaining a niche topic of craft history.

Re-siting the comparative debate. Setting Juci beside kintsugi and Western restoration, the analysis centers Chinese perspectives in global talk about an “aesthetics of imperfection.” Repair is shown to be both material reconstruction and spiritual reorientation, with Juci offering a distinct path that privileges frankness over embellishment.

Testing through practice. The author's practice-based artwork Rupture and Rebirth demonstrates how traditional repair principles can be rethought in contemporary art and design. This pragmatic strand turns inherited know-how into conceptual resource and visible evidence, bridging intangible tradition with present-day creativity.

Collectively, these moves widen the conversation in art, design, and heritage studies: Juci functions as a model of resilience, showing how historical craftsmanship can still organize sustainable aesthetics and enable cross-cultural understanding.

9. RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implications of the Study

Traditional crafts should be treated as living cultural systems, not static relics. Juci shows how embodied know-how and hand repair can inform design ethics, sustainability strategies, and the pursuit of “emotional durability” in the things we make and keep. As a pedagogical and curatorial device, visible repair can cultivate literacy in imperfection, empathy, and environmental responsibility across art, design, and heritage education.

2. Recommendations for Future Research

Interdisciplinary designs linking aesthetics, anthropology, and materials science are needed to probe Juci's symbolic, ethical, and technical dimensions and their bearing on cultural sustainability. Comparative inquiries across East Asia and farther afield should track how visible-repair traditions evolve under globalization and digital fabrication, clarifying both the universality and the adaptability of repair aesthetics in contemporary practice.

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