

VALUE ADDED: EXPLORING PORCELAIN AND GOLD IN CERAMIC ART

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Introduction

Porcelain a white, dense, high-fired clay body that originated in China around the year 1000. Exported to Europe, it was more valued by weight than gold until the development of European porcelain in the 18th century. To this day, porcelain is prized for its beauty and durability.

Gold is a yellow metal appreciated across cultures and time for its color and luster. Extremely malleable and naturally found in a pure state, gold is an easy metal to work. A relatively rare and precious commodity, gold is still expensive. In ceramics, gold is valued for its application in ornamentation.

Value or worth is subjective in art. Scale, quantity, and price of materials are factors contributing to the value of art. Craftsmanship or expertise is another important consideration. Originality of the piece is an equally significant factor; something mass produced is less valued than a one-of-a-kind piece. The objective of this project is to add value to our artistic production through the skillful use of porcelain and gold in creating unique artworks.

Creative Goals

1. Explore the physical properties and discover the expressive potential of commercially manufactured porcelain clay bodies. Possibly adjust the clay bodies to meet the artist's particular needs. Apply and integrate clay body knowledge into the creation of original works of ceramic art made of highly valued porcelain that will engage the public in exhibitions.
2. Explore materials and discover the processes of incorporating gold in ceramic art: gold leaf, gold luster and gold decals; then apply and integrate that knowledge into the creation of original works of ceramic art with the highly valued gold surface embellishment that will engage the public in exhibitions.



Anticipated Outcomes

1. Experimental artworks using porcelain and gold geared towards exploring the material properties will allow each artist to discover how the materials can be utilized in creating original art in their personal style.
2. Fine Art Ceramics using either porcelain and/or gold will challenge each artist to incorporate their style, subject interests and skills in creating their original fine art.
3. Porcelain paper clay will be explored and possibly developed for commercial use.
4. Competition acceptance and exhibition of original artworks will engage the public.

Experimentation & Research

1. Senior Curator of European Art at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Catherine Futter led a tour of European porcelain.
2. Arvin Cruz, Ph.D., Professor of Chemistry lectured on chemical properties of gold.
3. Melanie Sherman, professional artist, presented a hands-on workshop using gold luster and decals on Chinese porcelain.
4. Chris Griffin, Curator of the Prairie Museum of Art & History led a curatorial tour of European ceramics.
5. Investigators participated in a studio residency throughout fall and winter breaks to implement research through experimentation using six clay bodies. Hand-building, throwing, and slip-casting methods paired with luster, gold-leaf, and decal application were explored.
6. Weekly meetings were held throughout the 2015-2016 academic year to introduce new materials and share research findings amongst researchers.
7. Investigators attended the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts Conference in Kansas City.

Results & Conclusion

Researchers produced fine art using the materials, and submitted finished work to The 47th Annual Smoky Hill Art Exhibition and annual FHSU Student Honors Exhibition. Several pieces were selected as part of these shows, which reflects their value in a professional setting. Researchers added material understanding and technical skills to their artistic vocabulary.

