

The Parkville Frame Gallery

Newsletter

2024 Newsletter #24-2 (Mar/Apr)

Note: To see our latest “Top Picks” [Click Here](#)

Subject: Ceramics

During the course of our day-to-day operations we are presented with a variety of objects to frame. We see paintings, of course, but we also see sports jerseys, military insignia, maps, family photographs, and so forth (see our [Project Gallery](#)). Surprisingly, what we typically are not asked to frame are ceramics. In this newsletter I would like to better acquaint you with ceramics. Ceramics can be framed and displayed in different ways, and they can be a lovely addition to the other artwork in your residence or business. Please join me now on a short journey into the world of ceramics.

Background

When you host a special family gathering or dinner party you probably bring out your best “china”. Have you ever thought about why we routinely use the term *china*, or *chinaware*? Probably because we usually associate our best ceramics, maybe unwittingly, with China--the country. Many other countries have a long history of making fine ceramics, countries in [Southeast Asia](#) for example, but for now let’s take a brief look at the history of Chinese ceramics. This history can get really involved, so let’s just look at some of the highlights.



Proto-celadon jar

There are three classic categories of ceramics: *earthenware*, *porcelain*, and *stoneware*. The fundamental thing that unites them all is that they are all made from refined clay. Each clay object is then heated, or “fired” at very high temperature in a kiln. When the correct amount of heat is applied the extreme temperature causes the clay to change chemically; it changes from a “plastic” state to a solid state (it hardens) and the results are permanent. The range of temperatures that the clay objects are subjected to varies. For example, earthenware is likely to be heated to a relatively low temperature range, between 700 and 1,100 degrees Celsius, whereas porcelain and stoneware must be subjected to much higher temperatures, in the [More Here](#) range of 1,100 degrees Celsius and more.

History

The history of Chinese ceramics can be traced back over ten thousand years and many different [dynasties](#). During the [Yang-shao culture](#) of the Neolithic age, [earthenware](#) with color decoration, as well as red or white-bodied ware was made. Then, in the Shang dynasty, ash-glazed ware, which is also known as [proto celadon](#) began to appear.

By the Warring States period, gray ware with or without color decoration was produced in large quantities, one of the leading examples being the large (huge actually) collection of terracotta warriors excavated from the [tomb of Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi](#).



Low-fired lead-glazed ware, primarily funerary objects, developed during the Eastern Han dynasty. Ceramics made in the Tang dynasty reveal multicultural influence in their forms and motifs. A large amount of earthenware with painted decoration and three-color-glazed figurines and dishes were also produced.

During the Northern [Song dynasty](#), Ding white [porcelain](#) characterized by an ivory glaze and the elegant carving that produces a three-dimensional effect became popular and provided considerable influence on kilns in various regions of China. During the Yuan dynasty the technique of producing blue-and-white ware was perfected, while underglaze copper-red ware using copper-oxide pigment also began to appear. Blue-and-white ware as well as [Longquan celadon](#) ware was exported from China in large quantities to the Middle and Near East and other countries.



At the beginning of the Ming dynasty imperial kilns were established in [Jingdezhen](#) city to produce ceramics to be used exclusively by the court. By the end of the Ming, and through the beginning of the Qing (pronounced Ching in English) Dynasty, ceramic production in private kilns exceeded that of the declining imperial kilns. The private kilns produced ceramic wares that suited the taste of clients outside China and Chinese ceramics were in much demand. They were transported outside China over the so-called [Silk Roads](#) and greatly benefited Chinese traders financially. We probably should visit the fascinating story of the Silk Roads in a future newsletter. Let's consider doing that.

Ceramic Societies

I included three art dealers associations in my [2024 Newsletter #24-1](#), one of which is the Private Art Dealers Association. Go [HERE](#) to see some of their ceramics. Below, in addition to the three art dealer associations, I have created a list of five international ceramics societies and their website address. I encourage you to explore these sites.

The Oxford Ceramics Group <https://www.oxfordceramicsgroup.org.uk/>

The English Ceramic Circle <https://www.englishceramiccircle.org.uk/>

The French Porcelain Society <https://www.thefrenchporcelainsociety.com/>

The Japan Society of Oriental Ceramic Studies www.toyotoji.com/en/society

The Southeast Asian Ceramic Society www.seaceramic.org.sg

On a Side Note: You might be interested to learn how much information can be learned about ceramics from ship wrecks. For example, read: [Singapore Wrecks in the Dragon's Tooth Straits](#), written by Sean Kingsley, Editor-in-Chief [Wreckwatch Magazine](#) (subscription is free).

The Southeast Asian Ceramic Society and Wreckwatch Magazine are interesting sources of information about ceramics.



A Ceramics Potpourri

I have selected four ceramic plates to inspire you. Similar examples, properly framed, and maybe even back-lighted would look great displayed in your home or business.



The magnificent Japanese plate shown above is based on earlier seventeenth-century Chinese examples. These were decorated in [underglaze](#) blue and were exported around the world. In addition, it uses enameling in a combination of colors that came to be known as “Old Japan”, and later, [Imari](#) (British Museum)

<https://www.seaceramic.org.sg/a-japanese-kabuki-play/>



This Vietnamese plate has an unglazed rim. The flat lip is decorated with a classic scroll. The [cavetto](#) molding has six stylized lotuses in a scroll. The center medallion has an elaborate peony wreath surrounded by a scalloped petal border. The outside wall has sixteen lotus panels enclosing leaf-forms. This plate can be dated roughly to the mid-15th century.

National University of Singapore Museum S1969-0067-001-0

<https://www.seaceramic.org.sg/vietnamese-ceramics-4/>



[Sèvres assiette](#) octagone from the neoclassical *Service Arabesque*, (ca. 1783-5)
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY

The French plate shown above is from a remarkable service that reflected the most up-to-date Neoclassicism of the late eighteenth century. The shape and the decoration were commissioned from architect [Louis le Masson](#) who was instructed that the service should represent "the most rigorous antique taste." The need for new forms and decorative schemes for the service delayed its production, and it remained incomplete at the outbreak of the French Revolution. Less than twenty pieces from the service Arabesque are known today.

<https://www.thefrenchporcelainsociety.com/gallery/>



Shown here is a British Staffordshire [salt glaze](#) mug, plate and cup (ca. 1770).

<https://www.oxfordceramicsgroup.org.uk/>

To gain a basic understanding of ceramics, I encourage you to watch these videos and listen to some of the Oxford Ceramics Group Zoom lectures. I think you will enjoy them.

1. An Introduction to Earthenware

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMKAvDSNfvg>

2. An Introduction to Porcelain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foVH17BOvRc>

3. An Introduction to Stoneware

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeIZ_yVqPJ8

4. Oxford Ceramics Group Lectures

[Zoom Lectures – Oxford Ceramics Group](#)

5. The Unknown Master of Restoration

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mloi-DSm0e4&ab_channel=NHKWORLD-JAPAN

Gallery News

Fillets

Fillet...or not. That is the question.

Okay, let's say you are at your favorite frame gallery (the award winning Parkville Frame Gallery, of course), and you and the designer are looking at how to best display a piece of embroidery that was handmade by your grandmother. You and the designer both agree on a simple gold frame, and a soft green linen mat board (both good choices), but you are still not quite where you want to be. Something seems to be missing.

Enter the fillet. A **fillet** is a decorative element that we sometimes add to a composition during the framing process to add emphasis to the art itself. Fillets are typically small (narrow); however, they can be larger when needed. They are usually made of wood, but they can be wrapped in fabric—such as linen. Fillets come in a variety of styles and colors.

[More on Fillets Here](#)

In the composition to the right a fillet was added between the inner edge of the mat board, and the outer edge of the artwork (known as the "sight edge"). I think we can agree that the combination of the subtle gold frame, the soft green linen mat, and the narrow gold fillet are all excellent choices that would make grandma proud. We have a full line of fillets to choose from. Let us frame your grandma's "masterpiece". We know how important it is to keep grandma happy.



[The Art Advisor](#)

Enjoy Fine Art - Well Framed