



STATE OF CERAMICS

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Ceramics in Relationship to *Color as Traveler*:
how color crosses geographic, geologic, and cultural boundaries

a discussion guide by Désirée Coral

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Topic:

Color is far more than the physical reflection of light on a surface: color is material. How much do we know about the colors that have landed in our ceramics studios? What are their original sources? Which materials are local and which are imported? What are their narrative trajectories? The colors incorporated into/onto ceramic objects can frequently be traced back to geologically formed non-renewable resources, which then journey via human hand through time and across geographies.

Referencing stories about elements such as cobalt, iron, chrome, or copper, this State of Ceramics conversation will delve into the relationship between color, culture, and the environment, and consider the ways in which a personal and political understanding of color can complicate and enhance an otherwise technical and aesthetic approach. The histories of color in ceramic objects reveal our movement, dependence, and impact upon the earth, and our interconnectedness as humans. What will color reveal about us and our practices in the future?

Suggested Readings (all available for download at www.a-bprojects.com):

What is Local? Looking at Ceramic Production in the Peruvian Highlands and Beyond

Author: Isabelle Druc

Language: English

Excerpt: "...into the concept of chaîne opératoire, originally defined for the lithic industry by Andre Leroi-Gourhan (1964, 1988:225). This concept relates to the steps of a product's transformation from the raw material(s) to the final object, as processes embedded in a sociocultural environment. It helps identify technological traditions and ceramic production styles and has been extensively used for the Andean context by Guillermo De La Fuente (2011a, 2011b)." --Isabelle Druc

The Crane and The Nopal: Aztec Memory and Chinese Imagery in Talavera Poblana

Author: Juliana Fagua Arias

Language: English

Excerpt: "The Mexican tradition of Talavera Poblana originated with the Spanish migration to the Americas in the early 16th century. Immigrants brought ceramics from cities like Talavera de la Reina and Valencia, which were strongly influenced by Islamic tin-glazed pottery. In the Americas, these Hispano-Muslim styles merged with the blue-and-white Chinese porcelain coming from Asia via the Spanish colony of the Philippines. Although initially banned from entering the pottery guild in Puebla, Native American ceramicists became part of the Talavera workshops, introducing Aztec imagery. From this cross-cultural fusion the "crane and nopal motif" was born. " --Juliana Fagua Arias

Allpa Mama: Relaciones Sociedad-Naturaleza, Procesos Sociales Y Agencialidad

Authors: Anna Premauer, Natalia Valdivieso

Language: Spanish

Excerpt: "Una cerámica no se puede realizar sin las aya rumi -piedras para pulir- que provienen de la cuenca media del Curaray y sin los pilchis -hachuelas para dar forma- que se consiguen en la parte alta de la cuenca del Bobonaza. Su pintura no tendría tanta profundidad en sus capas de color sin los tres pigmentos (imagen 4) pucallpa que es el rojo y el que se encuentra en mayor cantidad, yanalallpa el negro y ruyajallpa el blanco –ambos muy escasos-. Finalmente, una cerámica no resistiría al tiempo y no mantendría su brillo sin el shilquillu, una resina para impermeabilizar que proviene del Copataza. Todos estos materiales son conseguidos por las mujeres ceramistas aún cuando ellas vivan en un lugar muy apartado. Una de las maneras más comunes de conseguirlos es por medio de los desplazamientos estacionales que realizan con sus familias de la cuenca baja a la alta y viceversa; añadiéndole hoy en día sus viajes al Puyo. En estos desplazamientos intercambian o les compran materiales a sus parientes o a otras mujeres ceramistas."

--Premauer y Valdivieso

Questions for Discussion:

Raw Material Knowledge & Studio Practices

As ceramic makers who often purchase industrialized and packaged materials, do we know where our materials come from? Where do the bright and marvelous colors of our ceramics originate? Do we know which materials are local and which are imported?

What influences our choices when selecting materials?

What are the conditions for labor, mining, production and distribution of raw materials? For example, how does gold luster wind up in those tiny jars?

What is our relationship to waste materials?

How do we cultivate and internalize a conversation about material conditions? How can a ceramics practice have a low environmental impact or be eco-friendly?

Localities and Cultural Exchange

Should we consider only using local raw materials?

Can staying local be isolating?

How has the historic exchange of materials across geographies effected the exchange of culture across those same boundaries?

In some cases, using only local materials might be good for the environment, but what are the ramifications for future cultures or the future of cultural sharing?

[How] is cultural exchange or cultural sharing different than appropriation?

How do we define what is 'local' in a globalized society?

From Technical to Political

How does understanding the historic trajectory of colors complicate or enhance an otherwise technical or aesthetic approach to making and decorating?

If all color has a history of travel and boundary-crossing, does this mean all color is political?

If all color is political in nature, are all objects infused or decorated with those colors also political?

Does deep material knowledge create an inevitable merging of technical and conceptual?

Reference Images:



Gourd-Shaped Bottle with Deer and Crane in Landscape, mid-16th century, China. Porcelain painted in cobalt blue under clear glaze (Jingdezhen ware). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund and Anonymous Gift, 1965 MET Museum



Ming-Style Blue and White Jar with Bird on Cactus, c. 1700, México. Tin-glazed earthenware. Hispanic Society of America, Museum Acquisition Fund, 2008, LE2254. MET Museum.



Chicasiu Mucagua, Cashew Festival Drinking Bowl, Alegria Canelos, America, South : Ecuador : Pastaza, Puyo, Curaray, 1985 - 1986 CE - Canelos Quichua part of the collection Illinois University



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