

**T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art
Activities Pamphlet: Ming and Qing
Ceramics**



**You
are
here**

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Appreciating

Ming and Qing Porcelain

Have you ever heard of Jingdezhen, the “Ceramics City of China”?

During the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911), Jingdezhen in Jiangxi Province developed into the centre of porcelain production in China.

Jingdezhen possessed a rich natural resource — high quality clay — and had inherited the skilful ceramic production techniques of the Song and Yuan dynasties. Jingdezhen specialised in producing porcelain ware for the imperial court, but it also made a great many products for sale to the general public, while a large quantity was destined for export. With the strong support of the emperors and trying to meet the vast market demand, craftsmen worked tirelessly to create new types of ceramics. As a result, a wonderful variety of porcelain ware was available, including underglaze blue porcelain and polychrome (richly colourful) ceramics.



Now,
would you like to learn
how to identify Ming
and Qing underglaze
blue porcelain?



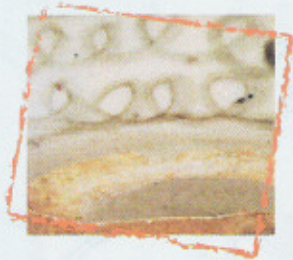
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Out of the Blue

Have you heard of underglaze blue porcelain or blue and white porcelain? They're actually the same! The blue decoration on the snow-white body imparts a sense of elegance, which was very popular among the people of these times. However, it is not easy to produce this fantastic blue porcelain ware. Porcelain-makers have to be very careful when they apply the colour pigments, controlling the exact firing time and drawing precise patterns on the body to produce successful underglaze blue porcelain.

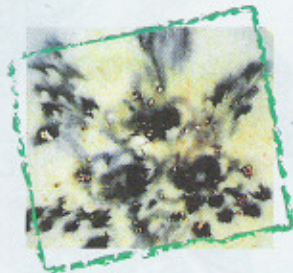
Can you identify what is good underglaze blue porcelain?

Here are some shards of underglaze blue porcelain. See if you can pick out the successful one(s)! Write down your comments in the space provided.



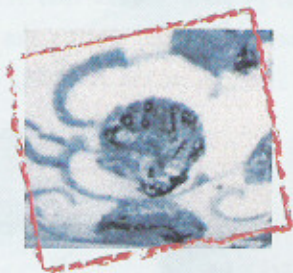
Pattern is unclear

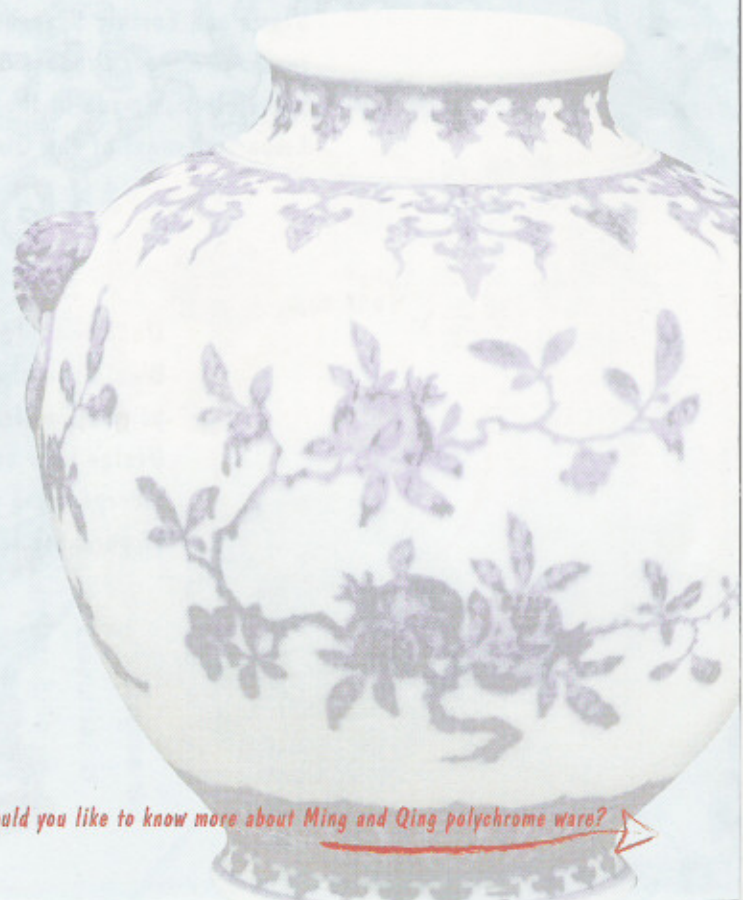
Colour is dull












Would you like to know more about Ming and Qing polychrome ware? 

What a wonderful world

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, there were plenty of wonderful developments in polychrome ware. Technical advances made it possible to use more colours and manufacture a greater variety of products. The decorations were both creative and fantastic. Try to match the following porcelain products with the right decoration!

(Hint: Go to the display case "Ming and Qing Polychrome Wares")

Doucai contrasting colours

The patterns are first outlined on the porcelain body with underglaze blue pigment and then filled in with various colours.

A



Wucai five colours

The patterns are outlined and the colours are evenly applied on the fired white glaze with red, yellow, green, purple and blue pigments.

C



Fencai famille rose colours

The patterns are first outlined and coated with a layer of glassy white enamel on the fired white porcelain to form the base design. Non-transparent colour pigments are then applied on the glazed surface. The patterns are soft and elegant, showing a gradation of colours.

E



D



B



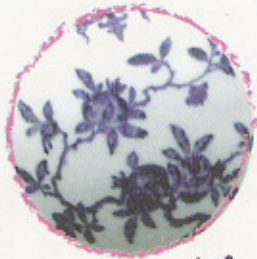
Answers
Fencai (B, E)
Doucai (C, D)
Wucai (A)



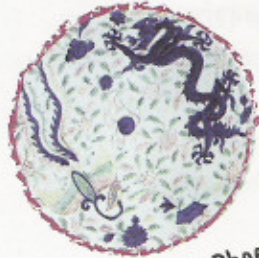
What makes the patterns or designs of Ming and Qing porcelain so special?

The Luck of the Draw?

Most of the patterns on Ming and Qing porcelain carry an auspicious meaning. Guess what special wishes are represented by these patterns!



Peaches



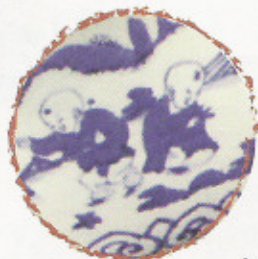
Dragon and Phoenix



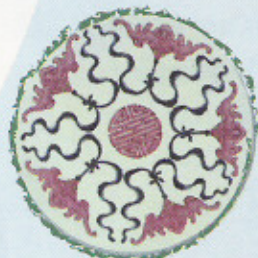
Lions playing with a brocade ball



Mandarin ducks



Children at play



Bats

A _____

This pair of ducks means that an affectionate couple will never part.

B _____

The lion is regarded as the King of the Beasts and is a symbol of power and influence; these playful lions also carry an auspicious meaning at celebrations.

C _____

Combining honour and benevolence, the dragon and the phoenix symbolise peace and prosperity. They are often used as decorations at wedding celebrations.

D _____

Called a picture of babies at play or a picture of a hundred sons, this symbolises numerous sons and happiness.

E _____

Peaches represent a wish for longevity.

F Bats

In Chinese, "bat" and "blessing" are pronounced almost the same: "fu". Five bats represent five kinds of blessings.



What do you think the inscriptions on Ming and Qing porcelain ware mean?

Answers
A) Mandarin ducks
B) Lions playing with a brocade ball
C) Dragon and Phoenix
D) Children at play
E) Peaches

Make a Date!

The seal marks that can be found on porcelain ware are collectively called the "inscription". As you may know, the inscription provides important information that helps us identify and understand an individual piece of porcelain, for example the time and place the piece was produced, or the name of the craftsman or his master or school, or the customer who commissioned the piece. Inscriptions can be carved, impressed or written on the porcelain. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, most of the inscriptions on the imperial porcelain produced in the kilns of Jingdezhen were added using underglaze blue pigment. The seal mark was usually surrounded by double circles or squares, but sometimes they didn't have any decorations at all.



Inscription by Dynasty

This kind of seal mark refers to the reign of an emperor. For example, the inscription "Da Ming Jiajing nian zhi" means that the porcelain was produced during the reign of Emperor Jiajing of the Ming dynasty.



Inscription by Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches

This kind of inscription records the date of production according to the Chinese calendar combining the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches. For example, the seal mark reading "Kangxi Dinghai Suici gu dan" means that the porcelain was made in the year of Dinghai during the reign of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing dynasty, which is 1707.



1. Your name

Design an Inscription

Would you also like to have your personal collection inscribed? Design your own inscription incorporating your name and date of purchase in the seal mark.

2. Date of Purchase



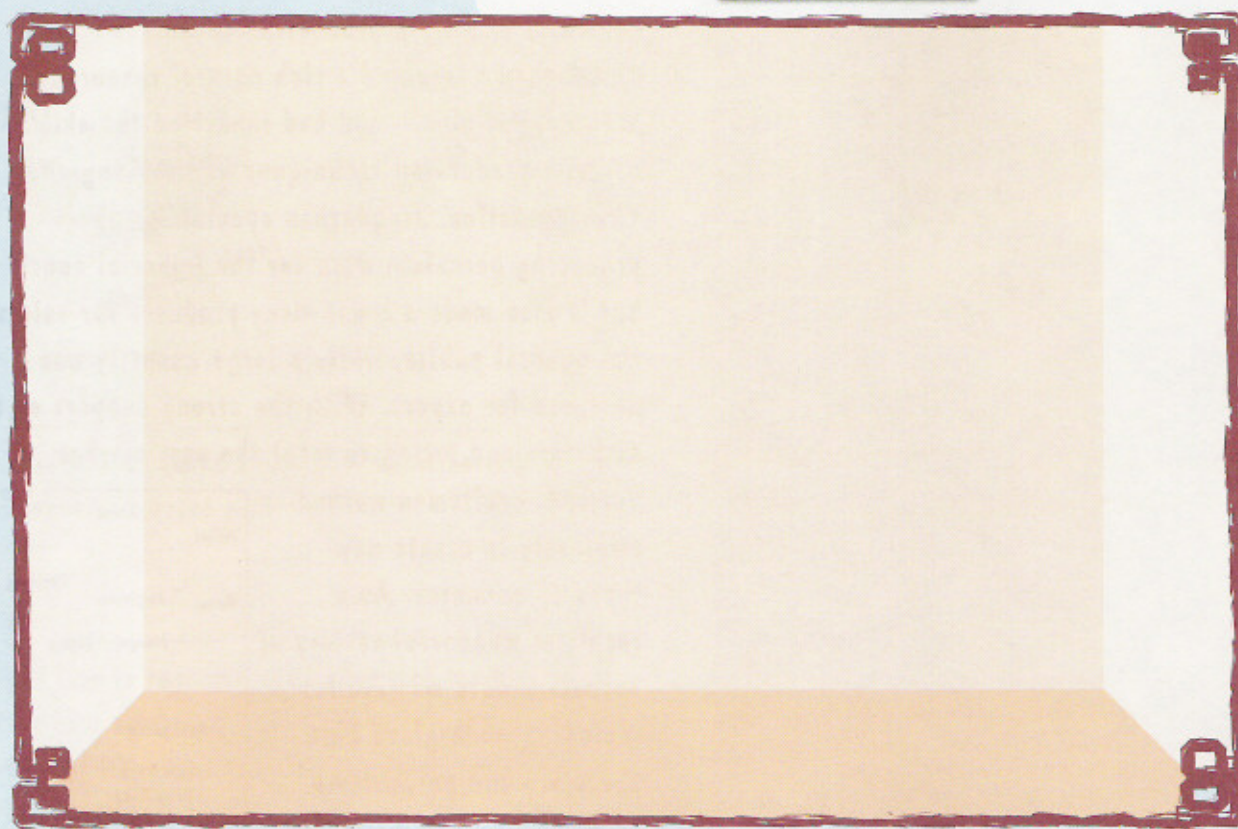
How can we present our collection of porcelain in an aesthetic way?

Set Your Stall Out

What is the most beautiful way to place a collection of porcelain in a display case? Up high? Down low? Actually, there is no fixed rule for displaying porcelain ware. First think about the size of exhibits, the space in the display case, and then use your own aesthetic instincts to rearrange the Ming underglaze blue porcelain below then design the appropriate bases for each piece!



Display Case



Congratulations!



Base

You definitely have the talent to be a Ming and Qing porcelain connoisseur. If you want to know more about the special characteristics of Ming and Qing ceramics, you can always try and find some books on Chinese history and art. And of course, it's important to keep on visiting our museum!



Bowl painted with children playing in a garden in underglaze blue



Bowl painted with ladies in a garden in underglaze blue



Candlestick with dragons pattern in underglaze blue



Jar with dragons pattern in underglaze blue



Jar with dragons and phoenixes pattern in underglaze blue



Basin with dragons and clouds decoration in underglaze blue



Jar painted with Eight Immortals in underglaze blue



Jar painted with literary gathering in underglaze blue



Square vase with two handles and painted figures in underglaze blue



Water basin with stylized trees and rocks in underglaze blue