

Yuet Tung China Works produces porcelain for export, using the *guangcai* decoration techniques. Stemmed from *fencai*, or the “famille rose” enameled porcelain of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), *guangcai* developed its unique style.

In the Qing Dynasty, foreign merchants were confined to do business in Guangzhou. Their favourite commodity was Chinese porcelain which would be carried by cargo ships for departure from Guangzhou. To reduce cost, porcelain merchants in Guangzhou sourced porcelain body from Jingdezhen of Jiangxi province and completed the decoration and firing stages in Guangzhou. These porcelain bodies were made at high temperature. Artisans then painted patterns on them and put them in kilns, firing them at low temperature. This new type of polychrome porcelain made for export trade is known as *guangcai* ware.

In a way, *guangcai* can be perceived as the synthesis of overglaze decorations. In China, the development of glazes reached a new milestone in the Qing Dynasty when *fencai* emerged as a new type of polychrome ware. In *fencai* decoration, it is possible to depict a range of colour tonalities as well as colours among which the pinkish rose glaze is the most favoured. Others include the blue glaze which resembles the sky, the green glaze which takes on the colour of grass and the black glaze. These strong colours are used together with the shimmering gold glaze to give *guangcai* an elegant and resplendent touch.

The Qing imperial ware usually came with gold decoration, employing the gold material to showcase the regality of the Qing court. Meanwhile, gold glazes were applied extensively in *guangcai* so as to imitate the imperial ware but at a low cost. One can find on *guangcai* ware medallions of various sizes and shapes. The medallion pattern was often seen on blue-and-white porcelain in the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), especially the Kraak ware made for export to Europe. It became popular in the Qing Dynasty when the main decoration and subsidiary patterns were frequently rendered in the medallion format, comparable to the feeling of looking at the scenery through the window. This was also well received by the Europeans.

The ceramics industry in Guangzhou was severely affected by political instability at the turn of the twentieth century, prompting porcelain entrepreneurs and artisans to relocate to Hong Kong. Endowed with western influence, Hong Kong was immensely suited to facilitate *guangcai*, a product of the East and West cultures, to flower.

The Tso family which has preserved the *guangcai* craft, has run porcelain business in Hong Kong through its Yuet Tung China Works for nine decades. The factory is now the only one that remains; its history demonstrates Hong Kong industry in its early days.

Sun Museum is honoured that Mr. Tso Wing Shui and Mr. Tso Chi Hung have generously lent their porcelain products of different periods to this exhibition. In the context of today's relentless pursuit of modernity, the phasing out of old industries and the decline of traditional craftsmanship, Yuet Tung China Works is an excellent witness of the efforts made by Hong Kong to preserve Chinese culture.

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