

## THE AESTHETICS OF DECORATIVE SURFACES IN CONTEMPORARY CERAMICS

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to identifying the aesthetics of decorative ceramic surfaces in contemporary ceramics. Research Methodology: To achieve the study's objectives, the descriptive analytical approach was followed. By reviewing the previous concepts, it becomes clear that modern artistic techniques and expressive tools have a significant impact in endowing ceramic formations with aesthetic characteristics and values, and artistic enrichment that contributes to the introduction of various types of expressive artistic values for glazes. The study results identified: The use of artistic values is not merely complementary to the ceramic form, but rather an important and fundamental focus for highlighting its various expressive and aesthetic values, and use of color values in ever-evolving glazes and the extraction of their characteristics achieves the expressive and aesthetic features of the structure of ceramic works.

### Chapter One / Research Methodology

#### Research Problem:

The research problem, around which the study revolves, is to highlight the artistic and expressive features of the artistic values of decorative ceramic surfaces and emphasize the importance of artistic values in influencing the aesthetic outcomes of the structure of ceramic forms. Therefore, the research problem can be defined in the following questions:

How can the structure of decorative ceramic forms be enriched by adding artistic elements to ceramic surfaces? To what extent does the contemporary artist combine his creativity and artistic and expressive techniques to produce art of high artistic value?

Research Objective: To identify the aesthetics of decorative ceramic surfaces in contemporary ceramics.

#### Research Importance:

The importance of the research is determined by the following points:

- Understanding the concepts of artistic values of glass surfaces to obtain artistic formative expressions for the surface structure of decorative ceramic objects.

#### Terminology:

##### Aesthetics: (AESTHETICISM)

It is mentioned in the (Encyclopædia Britannica - William Benton Edition) as:

The theoretical study of the types of art. It is concerned with understanding beauty and investigating its effects in art and nature.

It is unique in studying the aesthetic phenomenon and its significance in human life, in terms of investigating:

- Works of art of all kinds, describing, analyzing, and comparing them.
- Human behavior and experience in their orientation toward beauty.

Aesthetics focuses its attention on uncovering the truths specific to the arts and working to disseminate them. (Benton: Aesthetics, pp. 5-9)

#### Research Methodology:

To achieve the study's objectives, the descriptive analytical approach was followed.

## Chapter Two / Section One

### The Artistic Values of Ceramic Glazes

The characteristic of diversity gives artwork richness, leads to constant movement of the eye, and gives it a sense of satisfaction and pleasure. It reveals new relationships and associations that arouse interest. Diversity may be a difference in the type of shape, color, or texture (Norton, 1965, p. 113). From these, diverse artistic color values can be derived, and their characteristics can be highlighted through technical treatment methods. Decorative surfaces are characterized by richness and diversity, whether in their oxides or through the added ceramic pigments. This is what we perceive on ceramic surfaces, represented by the values of color harmony to achieve the reciprocal relationship between content and form, as it is a vital issue in the fields of art and non-art alike (Fischer, 1985, p. 117). In addition to their function in the compositional structure, formal elements and vocabulary play an aesthetic role, linked to the placement of elements on the surface of the artwork and their mutual relationships with the adjacent elements, which achieve various artistic aesthetic values (values of unity, diversity, rhythm, balance, proportion, movement, harmony, contrast). ...and symmetry), which results from organizing the relationships between the elements on the surface of the artwork (Shawfi, 2001, p. 224), and they appear combined and united in all artistic practices, and represent the main aesthetic goal that the artist tries to achieve in a way that reflects the aesthetic and functional purpose of the work. However, content and form are related to each other in a dialectical interaction (Fischer, 1985, p. 195), as the artwork moves away from or approaches artistic perfection or beauty to the extent that its parts are linked in such a way (Shawfi, 2001), and in view of these values, they must be considered intertwined and interconnected values, as they work together without separation.

### Section Two: Elements of Artistic Values Constituting Ceramic Works

#### 1. Values of Unity

Unity, coherence, or composition is the harmony of parts and the synergy of functions, such that all elements of the artwork are in an internal, interconnected connection to create a unity that has the value of the sum of those elements. Unity is one of the formative values that cannot be achieved by following artistic laws and rules. Rather, the artist's sense plays a role in its completion. Rules, however, merely guide further experimentation and research to develop sensitivity and creativity. The value of unity is achieved through the relationships of proportion and relationship between the components of the artwork, based on two main factors: the relationship of part to part and the relationship of part to whole. The artist's treatment of three-dimensional forms, such as vessels, differs from that of flat, two-dimensional forms. Each part of the form is connected to the next, maintaining continuity as the viewer's eye moves around the work, creating a sense of comfort and harmony (Abdel Halim et al., 1994).

#### 2. Values of Diversity:

The quality of diversity gives artwork richness and leads to constant eye movement. It reveals new relationships and associations that arouse interest. Diversity may be a difference in shape, color, texture, or direction. It may also take the form of a contrast between one form and another, or it may be a variation in the thickness of lines and spaces, as in Figure (1) // <https://www.pinterest.com>, such that it has a basic plan upon which unity is based in guiding the eye to the primary motive (Norton, 1965). Diversity is achieved by changing the positions of the units in relation to each other. In the field of ceramics, specifically glass surfaces, we find them characterized by richness and

diversity, whether in colors or the values of color harmony between "harmony, contrast, and complementarity."

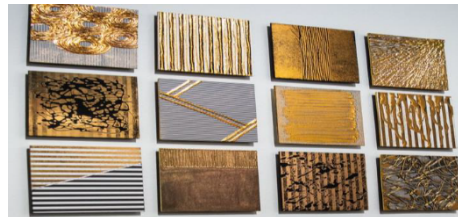


Figure (1)

The value of diversity is revealed through contrast, and the intensity of the light reflected off the surfaces of materials and the forms of their reflections reveal the material's sensory qualities in terms of hardness, softness, and heaviness.

### 3. Rhythmic Values:

Rhythm is the refined, repetitive organization of movement, and relies on repetition within a single form. Even when the form remains constant, its axis of repetition at various intervals produces diversity and richness in the perception of form. Rhythms are manifested through the use of sequences in which the graduated volumes are traced by freely flowing linear curves or by regular repetitions in linear relationships that define the rhythm, as show in Figure (2).



Figure (2)

Rhythmic types include: monotonous rhythm, non-monotonous rhythm, free rhythm, and contrasting/increasing rhythm.

### 4. Kinetic Values:

Movement is a characteristic of good artwork. Artistic images can be either static or moving. Static movement is usually based on architectural and geometric forms, while moving ones are represented by elements and units that are inherently moving. (Abdel Halim et al., 1994)

Movement value is important in ceramic artworks, given their steady, regular rhythm. Rhythm becomes more complex when it is interspersed with multiple movements, even if they are in different directions, as in Figure (3) [pinterest.com](#).

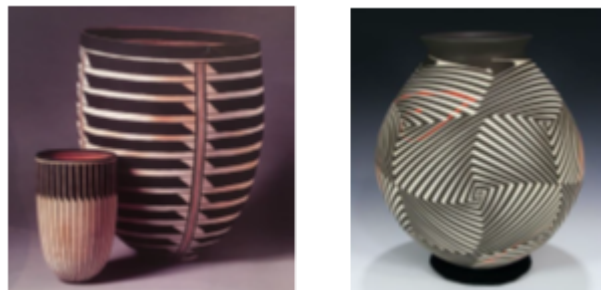


Figure (3)

### 5. Values of Balance:

Balance is an important and essential element of good design. Balance is defined as achieving a balance between all the components of an artwork. It is an idea based on the balance between opposing forces. This balance can be achieved through a set of

rules, enabling the artist to achieve it using a deep sense of the artwork's organization and integration. There is symmetrical balance, which consists of two equal elements at an equal distance from a central point, and asymmetrical balance, which consists of unequal elements at unequal distances from the center. Balance in design is achieved when there is a balance of reciprocal shapes, a balance of color energies, a balance of kinetic energies, and a balance of the basic axes in the design system (Norton, 1965, p. 115), as in Figure (4) [pinterest.com](#). These factors demonstrate that balance, in various ways, arouses anticipation in the viewer and motivates them to move from one subject to another in the artwork.

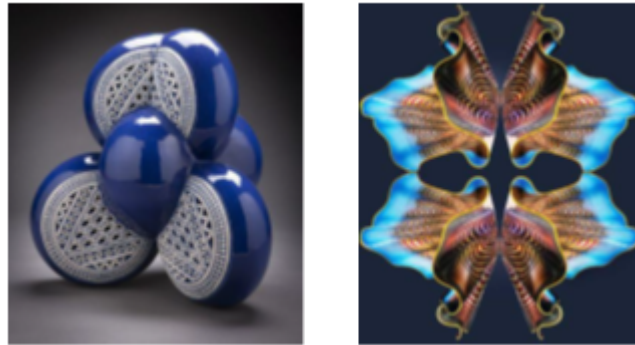


Figure (4)

#### 6. Values of Harmony:

Harmony between elements can occur through compatibility or contrast, whether in colors or shapes. Color contrast results in changing spaces and sizes by creating shadow and light, or through color complementarity and contrast (Omran, 2020, p. 263). Compatibility occurs between similar sizes, proportional shapes, and harmonious color combinations. Values of color harmony can be achieved through color compatibility, color contrast, and color complementarity.

1. Color harmony: This occurs between adjacent colors on the color wheel or as a result of mixing one color with another. The resulting color creates harmony between the two mixed colors. The color is classified into its light or subdued shades. Types of harmony (Shawfi, 2001) or color harmony include:

- Harmony between related colors: mixing (red, yellow, orange).
- Harmony of complementary colors, such as the colors opposite each other on the color wheel (green with red).
- Harmony between colors derived from a single origin. For example, the origin of red and its various shades of value (light or dark) are in harmony.

2. Color contrast: Contrasts are used in a juxtaposition. The faster the transition from white to black, the closer it is to a state of contrast. To perceive shapes and colors, difference is necessary, as contrast leads to modifying the content and idea of the ceramic form. Color has been defined by three meanings: the essence of color, the value, and saturation (Omran, 2020, p. 256). The contrast of pure color (the essence of color), the contrast of cool and warm, and the complementary contrast in adjacent colors depend on the difference in color origins and the proportion between the different colored spaces.

3. Color complementarity: The rule of color complementarity is that every two colors opposite each other on the color wheel are complementary, such as red, which is opposite green. Green complements red because it contains the three primary colors, as illustrated in Figure (5) (Peterson, 2011, p. 106).



Figure (5)

### 7- Symmetry

Is the symmetry of the upper and lower halves of the work, or its right and left sides. The artwork is composed of identical units, as in (6) pinterest.com. Opinions differ regarding the artistic values of ceramic works characterized by symmetry. Some see symmetry as a rhythm and comfort for the eye and the paint, while some critics find it beautiful, while others criticize its value and worth. Symmetry is considered one of the artistic factors of the equations of balance (Abdul Halim,1994). Sometimes, symmetry becomes one of the main requirements in the color design of a ceramic piece. Conversely, asymmetry is often one of the demands and desires of the potter, which has been successfully applied in the field of ceramics.



Figure (6)

From the above, we find that the compositional units and elements are the artistic values that comprise the artwork and highlight its beauty. Concepts related to artistic values can be utilized and applied to glazes in the field of ceramics. These values can be utilized to achieve various color characteristics, including color harmony, contrast, integration, and consistency. Rhythmic values are achieved through ceramic glazes due to their rich color and high application capabilities. These values are achieved through coloration, repetition, and symmetry of spaces, and the diversity of periods and units of spaces and lines up and down, enlargement and reduction, and regular and irregular repetition. These rhythmic values can also be achieved through other values, namely kinetic values. All of these values can be achieved by glazes within a framework of unity, diversity, and balance, whether in shapes or colors, provided the appropriate atmosphere and tools are available.

### Section Three: The Color Characteristic of Ceramic Forms

Color phenomena are evident as one of the forms of artistic expression, as they are among the most important values influencing the ceramics industry, particularly in the representation of artworks. It is important to note the underlying relationship between color and shape, as well as the suggestive power of the color of ceramic objects that can support the meaning of the shape. The choice of color may support the meaning emanating from the shape, or it may completely change it, or disrupt it and give a

negative effect on the recipient, such as discomfort and lack of sympathy. The artist may intend this performative expression to create a different aesthetic effect. The subject of the artwork is often confused in the minds of some with the formal composition that the artist creates, as it is one of his creations in artistic forms. The colors, values, surface values, and other qualities of materials inspire the artist to innovate, pushing him to re-process the material or discover a new color in artistic production to express new meanings that satisfy his innovative artistic sense (<https://ar.m.wikibooks.org/wiki>). The perception of color is linked to expressions and a certain feeling that evokes memories. Potters give colors meanings and connotations, as the apparent values of color overlap with its representational and emotional value in the executed artwork (Abdul Halim, 1994, p. 4). The elements that can be actually measured are opaque and luminous color. No artwork is devoid of these elements. They are called physically measurable elements, because modern science and technology have provided humans with various devices to measure the purity and intensity of color, and the amount and intensity of light (Abdullah, 2015). The aesthetic value of colors in artwork is not limited to the mere perception of color separately, but rather to its being intertwined and interactive. Color in ceramics is composed of mineral oxides, providing solutions. The aesthetics of ceramic forms with their various compositions, applications, and effects. Paint gives the forms a smooth, non-porous surface that is easy to clean and forms a protective layer for the decorations beneath the paint. Color is one of the most important aesthetic aspects, as it is the product of the relationships created by the artwork. Understanding the nature of color helps in its greater use. Just as color has the ability to raise, reveal, strengthen, and complete the aesthetic value of the ceramic form, it also has the same power to violate and weaken the aesthetic value of the form. Therefore, color is an important means of expression, sensation, and perception. It helps in estimating distances, the shape, and size of objects (Omran, 2020). Colors have psychological and emotional connotations for individuals, and their use in artistic and visual expression reflects this feeling. There are cheerful colors, calm colors, etc. Color cannot be seen without being seen. Colors are described as cold and sometimes warm. Since ancient times, colors have acquired symbolic meanings that vary according to the images and situations. The beauty of color in artwork in general, and in the ceramic field in particular, depends on the interaction between its perception by the eye as a direct sensory value and its contemplation. As a moral value that combines psychological, mental, and rhetorical elements) /<https://ar.m.wikibooks.org/wiki>.

From a technical perspective, glazes acquire diversity, contrasts, and relationships through the introduction of color, through which other structural elements in the form are perceived. The use of spaces, lines, and color effects results in a type of dialogue between warm (advanced) and cool (recessionary) colors, characterized by depth and movement. The state of color contrast between white and black can be transformed into a state of harmony through continuous, gradual steps to create the illusion of movement. Graduation and color contrast play a major role in changing spaces and sizes, achieved through color, shade and light, or through the integration and contrast of colors (Omran, 2020, p. 263). Through the interactions of color spaces, the ceramic piece is given a beautiful appearance.

#### Section Four: Artistic Values and Their Philosophical Implications

Value is what ought to be, according to Aristotle, "not what actually exists." According to the American philosopher John Dewey, value does not appear in what we actually desire, but in what we ought to desire (Matar, 1989, p. 13).

Critics and philosophers have differed in their definitions of the nature of aesthetic values and their standards, as well as in their interpretations of values. Researchers in the field of art have addressed the definition of aesthetic values, specifically in the visual arts, under the terms aesthetic values, artistic values, artistic foundations, and aesthetic and artistic relationships. These are all synonymous terms with the same meaning, even if their names differ. Artistic values are a term that essentially refers to the values contained in the formal relationships in a work of art. The artwork consists of a group of elements that are linked in a composition that contributes to the distinctive aesthetics of the design. To judge this composition, there must be justifications that point to the elements of its composition and their interrelationships, so that it becomes more sensitive to everything abundantly contained in the work. Since the term "values" is used in many artistic fields, the technical meanings of value have varied according to the field studied and the view from its various aspects. Researchers in the field of visual arts have defined it as "expressing the artistic relationships between artistic elements. The aesthetic values of a work of art consist of unity, rhythm, balance, and harmony, including agreement, contrast, and concord (Al-Shall, 1984, p. 19). The linguistic meaning of aesthetics is to beautify something by making it beautiful and adorning it. To beautify something is to consider it beautiful. As for the meaning of beauty in philosophy, a quality is noticed and inspires joy and satisfaction in the soul. Aesthetics is a science that investigates the meaning of beauty in terms of its concept, essence, standards, and purposes (Mustafa et al., 1985, p. 136). The aesthetics of something mean that beauty in it is an essential reality and the ultimate goal of its purpose. It only exists to be beautiful. All fine arts are built on this meaning in all their expressive and formative forms. A work of art is a complex subject that includes sensory, imaginative, and intellectual elements. It is a language and a design. For example, the art of photography may be dominated by sensory and formal values, such as a specific arrangement of colors, lines, and elements that give it value and beauty (Matar, 1989). Beauty, as Herbert Read defines it, is "the unity of the formal relationships between things perceived by our senses." He adds that art is an attempt to create pleasing forms that satisfy our sense of beauty when we savor the unity and harmony of the formal relationships between our sensory perceptions. George Santayana defines beauty as a positive value stemming from nature, and it is a pleasure that he considers a quality of the thing itself (Al-Sabbagh, 2001, p. 47). It is a type of value, and he re-establishes the relationship of art to utility, as he believes that there are specific cases in which our knowledge of utility or benefit is included within our sense of beauty. Beauty is embodied in our lives in thousands of ways and means. It is present in the world of thought and art. Literature is highlighted by the arts of prose and poetry, and it also appears in the rhythm of music and in the touches of the photographer. It depicts reality in its vitality and movement, enabling the recipient to sense the value of innovation and beauty that emerges in the harmony of lines and colors.

In aesthetic perception, we must pay attention to the sensory characteristics of artistic objects, such as sound, color, or surface, rather than to what is associated with them. Aesthetic perception is a direct perception that does not extend beyond the artwork to the meanings that are attached to it (Matar, 1989, p. 74). We find that the attributes of beauty in ceramic art are closely linked between form and mass. Through color and its techniques, the chromatic beauty of the form is emphasized. Color may come from the colors of the clay itself or through the combination of the different materials and raw materials of the glaze. Furthermore, some different firing techniques produce other colors and multiple color effects, giving the ceramic piece a captivating appearance.

Color is currently considered one of the axes of creativity in the field of ceramics (Abdullah, 2015, p. 163).

Philosophical aesthetic concepts have varied among philosophers, critics, writers, and artists regarding the natural characteristic of beauty and its relationship to the physical. With art, nature and the standards that govern them, the concept of beauty varies according to cultures and civilizations.

Some of the philosophers' and artists' views on these philosophies include:

Plato affirms that beauty is something sublime and existing, like truth, goodness, the beauty of nature, and the beauty of art, and that each of them has common qualities. Eric Newton believes that "beauty in a work of art is a basic quality and a proportion that we read into it when the work of art fulfills its communicative message," while A. F. Garrett: "The person who obtains the greatest share of the beauty of the greatest number of things in nature is the one who enjoys the greatest share of taste." J. Delville believes that "the universe is a collection of harmony and is nothing but beauty itself. The harmony of color, shape, or singing, as well as the various aspects of nature, all have relationships from which beauty emanates." Herbert Read believes that "beauty is the unity that plays its role and creates relationships with organization and regulation, and it is the thing hidden behind things" (Al-Shall, 2000). The potter can benefit from seeing nature with a conscious vision in its shapes, colors, and surface textures of things in it, in addition to balance, harmony, and studying the parts and their values, spaces, relationships, and colors, "because they contain aesthetic secrets that are like a rich grammar for the potter when he shapes, colors, and draws, taking into account the law of the material and its subjection to artistic formation. All this diversity and richness works to produce diverse color textures that add countless aesthetic values to the ceramic forms" (Al-Shall, 2000, p. 55). The artist has become the potter expresses what is inside him through the various ceramic materials and its different techniques. He was not satisfied with his materials, but rather developed them and freed the ceramic work from most of the restrictions of the old rational logic. There became diversity in form, content, methods of expression and place of display. This is in line with the views of the scientist (Einstein) when he gave words and numbers to the universal principle when he said, "The only constant thing is change." (Ahmed, 2017, p. 492) Ceramics emerged from a mere utilitarian function and began to reflect a new aesthetic dimension. The aesthetics of traditional ceramics and the aesthetics of modern art merged, forming together a modern ceramics with its own nature and philosophy. One of its most important characteristics is to be innovative and unconventional. Function in modern ceramics has replaced aesthetic utility with the expressive aspect, so the expressive formative value has become the basic function of modern ceramics, and the ceramic artist has his own destination. The artwork is no longer merely a functional work, but rather he has begun to experiment with different materials and techniques. Therefore, the researcher believes that technique controls the form in the final implementation. In other words, through technique, aesthetic results can be achieved that are not taken into account spontaneously or intentionally, which increases the level of aesthetic values of the form by using a specific type of techniques, experimentation, and color and tactile treatments of surfaces or artistic elements.

Chapter Three / Research Procedures

Sample No. 1

Name: Owl Pitcher

Year: 1955

Material: White glazed porcelain

Dimensions: Not precisely defined

Place: Produced in the Madurat workshop in Vallauris, France

Work Analysis



Work Analysis

This pitcher embodies the owl, transforming a functional vessel into a living artistic sculpture. The owl's beak forms the spout of the pitcher, while the handles form its wings, demonstrating Picasso's mastery of integrating form and function. The work highlights Picasso's style of transforming everyday objects into artistic masterpieces, giving the vessel a personal and vibrant character. The owl is considered a symbol of wisdom in many cultures, and Picasso used it in this work to express his artistic vision. The drawing on the pitcher displays a balance between simplicity and complexity, combining the elements of line and dot to reveal the subtle details to the viewer. Color is considered an element of the composition of the entire artwork, providing clarity and rhythm.

Sample No. 2

Name: Joan Miró

Work Title: Woman and Bird

Date of Completion: 1982-1983

Material: Ceramic and mosaic on a concrete frame

Height: 22 m

Location: Joan Miró Park, Barcelona, Spain



### Work Analysis

The work is a large abstract sculpture depicting a woman and a bird, a recurring theme in Miró's works. He uses simple symbols and basic elements to express larger concepts. The shape of the work resembles a female figure with details suggestive of a woman's body, crowned by a bird or hat-like figure, opening the way for symbolic interpretations of the relationship between man and nature, or woman and the soul. It belongs to the surrealist style, but it also bears the symbolic abstract character that distinguishes the artist's style. The bright colors (red, blue, yellow, and black) and bold lines give the artwork a childlike and visual energy that reflects his influence from primitive and instinctive art. The woman represents fertility, the earth, and creation, while the bird represents freedom, dreams, or the spiritual side. The vertical composition of the artwork symbolizes ascension or the connection between earth and sky, or between body and soul. Colour is considered the basic foundation that contributes to revealing the beauty of the artwork, and upon which the potter relies. It is considered an aesthetic necessity for ceramic works, through which ideas are revealed, in addition to increasing the attraction of attention, giving a feeling and influencing emotions through its psychological and physiological effects, along with the aesthetic value it, adds.

Sample No. 3

Name: José Llorens

Title: The Disc

Year: 1956

Material: Porcelain

Dimensions: Diameter 36.5 cm

Provenance: Auctioned at Sotheby's in 2017



### Work Analysis

This work embodies the fruitful collaboration between Catalan ceramist José Llorens and another artist. It combines traditional ceramic techniques with surrealist symbolism. It features a circular design symbolizing the sun or moon, using artistic elements to suggest this shape. It uses colors typical of Catalan folk art, in addition to abstract symbols that reflect visual art. It demonstrates his ability to innovate. He was also drawn to experimenting with color and texture through various techniques, presenting his ceramic creations that reflect aesthetic and expressive values, focusing on both color and texture. The technical approach used in an artwork is one of the most important factors influencing the aesthetic and functional values in ceramic design. What occurs in the structure of the form is that obsession that drives the transition to more abbreviated forms, so that the artist tries to preserve the artistic product, which we often find formulated in organizational relationships of formal foundations and elements that simulate a new reality that carries within it important symbols and connotations in shaping the artwork.

Chapter Four / Study Results

By reviewing the previous concepts, it becomes clear that modern artistic techniques and expressive tools have a significant impact in endowing ceramic formations with aesthetic characteristics and values, and artistic enrichment that contributes to the introduction of various types of expressive artistic values for glazes. The study results identified:

- 1- The use of artistic values is not merely complementary to the ceramic form, but rather an important and fundamental focus for highlighting its various expressive and aesthetic values.
- 2- The use of color values in ever-evolving glazes and the extraction of their characteristics achieves the expressive and aesthetic features of the structure of ceramic works.
- 3- The ceramic aesthetics of contemporary artists' works are linked to unconventional and traditional artistic experimentation, as represented by the works of Picasso and Miró, with a level of innovation and creativity in the field of contemporary ceramics, combining their creativity with artistic and expressive techniques to produce ceramics of high artistic value.
- 4- Ceramics has transcended its mere utilitarian function and has come to reflect a new aesthetic dimension, merging the aesthetics of traditional ceramics with the aesthetics of modern art, forming a modern ceramic with its own unique nature and philosophy.

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