

# *Exploring the Visual Beauty of Pastel Porcelain in Qing Dynasty*

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**Abstract:** The development of porcelain technology in Qing Dynasty is the sublimation of thousands of years. It has high aesthetic value and rich aesthetic connotation, and its aesthetic process develops continuously with the development of porcelain-making technology, and has roughly experienced the development process from simple to complex and then to real. Grasp the development of pastel porcelain in Qing Dynasty, analyze the beauty of form from natural beauty, social beauty, artistic beauty and technical beauty, and analyze the beauty of function from image, infectivity, utility and times.

## 1. Introduction

In Qing Dynasty, ceramic history was always closely related and combined with national history, which complemented each other, while national strength made porcelain flourish. Pastel porcelain in Qing Dynasty is a peak of the development of traditional ceramic industry culture and art market economy in Jingdezhen, China. First burned in the late Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong flourished, Jiaqing stagnated, and then burned to the late Qing Dynasty. Porcelain fired with pastel gradually became the core and another mainstream of Jingdezhen ceramic culture production in Qing Dynasty.

## 2. Development of Pastel Porcelain in Qing Dynasty

In the pastels of Kangxi period, many colors such as red, lake green, ochre, yellow, black and magenta were used to draw pictures on white glazed porcelain; The decoration is simple, the theme is often flowers and birds, Youlong, butterflies, grottoes, etc., and the space is left blank; The color is heavy, and black and red are used to sketch the ornamentation, which shows the overall outline and curve of the pattern. Because the industrial production is not mature, the grinding technology of color materials is rough, and the contact surface of the body surface has the phenomenon of peeling off color.

By the Yongzheng period, pastel porcelain had been made very well, with elegant and light colors, and had reached an unprecedented artistic level in its quality, shape, pigment, painting

techniques and other aspects. Influenced by the enamel of porcelain embryo painting and the boneless painting method of Xunnantian, Yongzheng pastel not only fully retains the strong traditional artistic charm of Chinese painting in Yongzheng period, but also fully possesses the realistic color and three-dimensional sense of western painting introduced in Yongzheng period. Most of them are painted with pastel ornamentation on white background or light color background, and pastel ornamentation patterns such as Chinese rose, Chinese flowering crabapple, Hua Die and peony are very common, and bat deer patterns with the meanings of “Fu” and “Lu” are also very common, and the technique of “crossing branches” is often adopted. In terms of subject matter and content design, due to the gradual prevalence of literati paintings in Qing Dynasty, Yongzheng porcelain pays great attention to the symbolism and implication of literati paintings, and the pictures of secular subjects such as stories between characters and anecdotes began to increase obviously.

During the Qianlong period, pastel blue-and-white porcelain ware “propagated and developed many ornamentation with pastel opening in color and pastel painting in light, such as blue painting gold opening, brocade opening, color pastel flower opening, etc ... There appeared new technologies such as hollowed-out pastel set bottle, hollowed-out pastel turning bottle, antique copper color cup, incense insert, flower block, etc.” [1]; Decorate the cover bowl of pastel gadget with gold color, so that the lotus, lotus leaf and other scenery are delicate and charming.

The production of pastel porcelain in imperial kilns of Jiaqing Dynasty in Qing Dynasty faced many economic threats, and the technological expenses for firing also decreased greatly. The production of pastel porcelain as imperial kilns turned from prosperity to decline. Because the state treasury is empty at this time and advocates frugality, “in December of Jiaqing's fourth year, the quasi-Jiujiang customs fired porcelain, and every year, 12,000 silver was spent under the surplus of this customs, about 7,200, and the remaining silver was handed over to the manufacturing office ... for inspection.” [2] After December of Jiaqing four years, the silver was cut again to 5,200, and after fifteen years of Jiaqing, the silver was cut again to 2,520. During this period, the firing of porcelain was greatly influenced, and the quality of workmanship and the quantity of fired porcelain were obviously decreased compared with those of the previous dynasties. Most of the styles and ornamentation were inherited from the previous dynasties, with bottles, statues, pots and other porcelain in the majority, which faded from the magnificence of the previous dynasties.

During Daoguang period, there were many pastel porcelain works in imperial kilns and folk kilns. There is a saying in Tao Ya: “After the middle period of Qing Dynasty, it was not as good as Kangxi because of its profundity and as beautiful as Yongzheng, but it was enough to accommodate the middle stream because it didn't hesitate to spend money. Jia (Qing) and Dao (Guang) are coming down, painters and color materials are getting worse and worse, and the most refined products are not buried. “[3] Because Daoguang Emperor loved simple and elegant things in Qing Dynasty, the pastel porcelain of Daoguang Imperial Kiln was mostly natural and simple, and it was mostly tableware, tea set, cigarette pot and other daily porcelain. The method of making porcelain, the texture of fetal glaze, and the quality of painting and ornamentation are not as good as those in Jiaqing's early days.

### **3. The Beauty of the Form of Pastel Porcelain**

#### **3.1 Natural Beauty and Social Beauty**

The exquisite, elegant, simple and beautiful atmosphere of pastel porcelain makes it more noble and meaningful, has the times and national characteristics of China's excellent traditional culture, and conveys the beautiful cultural meaning of people advocating elegance, wealth, auspiciousness and happiness at that time. From traditional ceramics, blue-and-white porcelain to modern pastel porcelain, it is the creative product of people's life practice since one thousand years of history. By

depicting, transforming and sublimating the ordinary life small things in productive labor, it shows the unique charm of diligence and wisdom of ancient Chinese working people. Pastel porcelain composed of flowers and birds, figures and other ornamentation is a true and vivid description and portrayal of figures and various animals and plants in nature, such as fish, rabbits, butterflies, birds, peony, rose, etc. At the same time, the descriptions of lotus, lotus, grass and stone, which are the auxiliary decorative patterns of flowers and birds in nature, are meticulous, and the natural beauty in the natural environment, such as the shallow fish, the muddy lotus and the rippling microwave, is drawn on the screen of pastel porcelain, showing the purest side of people's life itself.

### 3.2 Artistic Beauty and Technical Beauty

Pastel porcelain is to sketch the colors and outlines of various patterns on white porcelain first, then use glass white as a base, and then apply color. When painting, use a clean pastel pen to gently render and wash its color and outline according to the needs of the object image, so that the object image has positive, negative, leaning and turning changes in shape, and the colors of petals, other characters and clothes have changes in depth, shade and stereoscopic impression. Then put it into a kiln and bake it with fire at 600-900°C. Due to the opacifying effect of arsenic in glass white, after the glass white is blended with various pigments, the colors of various color materials change slightly or even opacified and soft, and the colors become lighter, that is, yellow color becomes yellowish, red color becomes pink, and green color becomes light green, giving people a feeling of pink and soft. It can also be used to depict hazy snow scenes. The objects are crystal clear as a whole, and the color is elegant and soft. In the style of painting, the layout of its structure and the brushwork of its color fully have the style characteristics of traditional Chinese painting; In the technique of expression, from flat filling and dyeing to light and dark dyeing.

## 4. The Functional Beauty of Pastel Porcelain

### 4.1 Imagery

The female characters in pastel porcelain “The Picture of Yongzheng Pastel Porcelain” have obvious characteristics. At that time, the social atmosphere advocated the figure of delicate ladies, with slender figure and handsome appearance, and the outline of the face was goose egg, often applied with thin powder, hanging eyes and thin eyebrows, slender and weak figure and pursuing morbid beauty. It is obviously different from Kangxi's ladies in their outstanding charm and elegance. Its background is mostly neat and clear interior furnishings, and the scenery such as pavilions and pavilions has been obviously reduced compared with the past. The characters have no sense of indomitable spirit, and the proportion has become more reasonable. The effect of character painting is almost equal to that of paper, which has a strong sense of the times and a literary atmosphere of books. Although the paintings of the characters are well drawn, “the characters are inferior to the previous generations.” [4]

### 4.2 Infectious

Pastel porcelain and other forms of artistic ornamentation are integrated, infiltrated and inclusive, reformed and innovated, and the theme often reflects the ornamentation of beauty, jubilation, peace and auspiciousness, which makes people enjoy the beautiful vision while enjoying the spirit. Therefore, pastel porcelain has been influenced by ancient Chinese court paintings and ancient Chinese literati paintings, showing the artistic characteristics of “smooth and elegant, common workmanship” and strong scroll implication. With the entry of Western missionaries into China, the

maritime economic, trade and cultural activities between China and the West are frequent, which has brought a lot of western traditional painting techniques and techniques that strive for realism. “Western style is used in China”, and still pays attention to “bone method and pen”, pursuing “artistic conception and charm”, which incorporates various colors, shades and spaces in Western painting art, making the color application of pastel porcelain change from water and glue to oil blending; The realism of characters' colors reflecting objects and spaces: emphasizing the coordination of proportion and color, paying attention to the treatment of light and shade; The creation of color and space lies in focus perspective; Absorb the artistic style of European flower decoration, describe the decoration of leaves and flowers, gold plating techniques and ruby red colors; The prevalence of Chinese opera, novels and illustrated prints; Incorporate Chinese folk embroidery art and auspicious culture.

### 4.3 Utilitarianism

During the Yongzheng period, the famille rose porcelain kilns had a meticulous division of labor, and the production was becoming more sophisticated. The market gradually expanded, and the overseas demand also soared. Both the output of the kilns and the number of craftsmen had made great technological breakthroughs, showing the development trend of mass production and process specialization. According to the Records of Fuliang County, there were two or three hundred folk kilns and hundreds of thousands of craftsmen in porcelain kilns during the reign of Yonggan, which fully demonstrated the grand occasion of porcelain making at that time. Among the large number of pastel porcelain sold overseas in Yongzheng period, the number of folk kiln porcelain is also very large. According to statistics, in the 12th year of Yongzheng alone, 400,000 pastel porcelain pieces were transported from China to Italy and the Netherlands, and 68,000 pieces were shipped from France. So far, there has been a “China fever” in all parts of Europe, and people are proud and proud that they can really own a piece of porcelain belonging to China.

### 4.4 Era

Pastel porcelain shows its own characteristics of the times according to the change of dynasties. The types of shapes have evolved from simplification to diversification. With the folk development of pastel porcelain, the shapes of pastel porcelain tableware are becoming more and more abundant and numerous; The decoration has evolved from pattern to painting, and the combination of western painting techniques and traditional Chinese painting has gradually reduced the original pattern decoration, and the painting on porcelain has become the mainstream; The theme evolves from elegance to secularization; The decorative style has evolved from beautiful to simple; The number of folk kilns has gradually increased.

## 5. Conclusion

The pastel porcelain in Qing Dynasty was initially guided by the aesthetic will of emperors, which was more stylized. The integration of post-multiculturalism makes it constantly innovate, develop and prosper. In this paper, by sorting out the evolution law of the artistic characteristics of pastel porcelain in Qing Dynasty, understanding the related knowledge of pastel porcelain production technology, painting, ornamentation, modeling, theme, etc., and mastering multiculturalism, it is found that porcelain makers in Qing Dynasty can use Chinese painting combined with western painting to integrate the arts and themes, thus promoting artists to create more pastel porcelain works with epoch significance and aesthetic value, further enhancing China's cultural self-confidence and promoting pastel porcelain art innovation.

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