

THE RETURN OF CERAMIC PRODUCTS TO A NEW ERA

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Abstract. Long ignored, and even downright despised, ceramics are regaining the hearts and kitchens of a younger generation that is increasingly sensitive to beautiful things made by craftsmen. On the shelves of small decoration boutiques or in the tableware section of department stores, in workshops dedicated to its manufacture, this ancestral material is regaining its status as king of the table. Plates, teapots, pitchers and even vases or flower pots, our entire decor is captivated by its authentic airs, its singular irregularity, its handmade charm.

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Introduction. The handmade is the particularity of this return to grace. This renewed passion for ceramics does not only embody the return to hype of an authentic material. This renaissance on our tables is accompanied by a growing interest in crafts in accordance with an eco-responsible decoration. The explanation? It is multiple. At a time when technology is disrupting all our consumption patterns, some are choosing to return to the origins, to the pleasure of the handmade and the serenity that it brings as much to the one who makes the object as to the one who contemplates it. Let's recall the facts. Ancient and timeless, ceramics are one of the first materials used by man. In Greek, its name means clay. Born from the art of fire, ceramics is above all a technique that designates all objects made of earth and which have undergone an irreversible physical transformation during high-temperature firing. Ceramics have very different characteristics depending on the nature of their components and their firing temperature. It thus has several categories: stoneware, porcelain, pottery, etc.

Long considered by historians as a cultural marker or as an everyday object, it has been able to permeate multiple styles (Japanese, rustic, modern, Scandinavian) and eras[1]. Ours seems to reconnect with it for this art of living that it instinctively carries within it. We will call it slowlife, artisanal or DIY, no matter the idea is always ultimately the same: a poetry of everyday life, a search for singularity, a desire to consume better or to manufacture better. Major decoration brands as well as unknown artisans or those in the process of making a name for themselves have chosen to work with this precious material. Malleable at will, with it the possibilities are endless, each artist can create a signature, an identifiable style. Each person who adopts it can create a unique, trendy but at the same time timeless decoration.



Figure 1.

Like a real desire to give pride of place to pretty little everyday things, ceramics are more trendy than ever. Today, ceramics is no longer just a niche activity reserved for dusty workshops. It has emerged as an icon of a contemporary lifestyle, one that dreams of slowing down and reconnecting with essentials. In big cities, pottery workshops are packed, from Clay Atelier in the 11th arrondissement to Sola in the 6th, which recently opened[2]. These places, teaching you how to make tomorrow's tableware, seem to be conquering the capital little by little, welcoming enthusiasts eager to feel this raw material that appears to be the new remedy against Parisian stress. This return to craftsmanship seems to express more

than a trend: it reveals a thirst for reconnection, personal creativity, and skill mastery, a kind of "hand yoga" for those seeking serenity. In response to an increasingly dematerialized society, ceramics seems to offer a tangible escape, a refuge in the age of the immaterial. It may also be about adding a human touch to what we own. After all, what could be more satisfying than saying one's new skirt is "home-made" when asked about its origin? In this same search for meaning, ceramics become an act of resistance, a response to the disposable world. The Covid pandemic likely accelerated this movement for many, as Seth Rogen described back then in his interview on Q with Tom Power. At the crossroads of vintage and slow-life trends, it attracts a generation that values uniqueness. Clay, a universal raw material, thus becomes the symbol of an artisanal revival that challenges modern frenzy. Buying a piece of ceramic is a conscious choice, a way to vote for a more rooted, mindful future, where each item will ultimately have a story to tell. Whether this remains a fleeting trend or becomes a lasting habit reflecting our consumption mindset remains to be seen[3]. Ceramic adapts perfectly to both indoor and outdoor installations. Just as metal sheets react with oxygen to form rusty, aged surfaces, so too porcelain slabs reproduce the oxidised metallic effect in a gritty yet elegant industrial style. Every aspect reveals obsessive attention to detail throughout the production process, from the colors to the exquisitely-balanced shade variations, from copper and rusty reflections through to bronze tones. Wood-look ceramic surfaces likewise take on the same variations in color. Inspired by a return to woodworking as a noble form of art and craftsmanship, they come in the contemporary pale tones of caramel, honey and raw oak as well as the darker classic shades of chestnut and walnut. The cutting process enables modules to be produced in many different combinations and elegant geometric patterns for the most sophisticated layouts. The extraordinary dimensions of the large-size slabs reflect the sheer power of the material, available in 6 mm thick panels with side lengths of up to 3 meters or more and extra-thick versions (2 cm and 3 cm) that guarantee the maximum reliability for indoor and

outdoor applications. All of these qualities derive from the unique characteristics of ceramic. It is resistant to scratching and abrasion, to mold and fungi, to staining, chemicals and UV radiation; it has high slip-resistance and is hygienic, low-maintenance and easy to clean. As for stylistic trends, the industrial look explores the world of recycled materials and combinations of stone and metal, incorporating these two natural elements into the ceramic surface and adopting an antiquing and scratching process to create a product that will lend distinctive aesthetic appeal to any space[4].

Today's ceramic products dialogue with the world of architecture. Concrete-effect tiles in particular are highly innovative solutions that stand out for their perfectly silky, monochromatic surfaces and pleasant, uniform touch, ideal for spaces embracing a metropolitan look. Alongside artificial materials, tiles with a natural stone effect continue to be very popular, drawing inspiration in terms of their aesthetics and texture from basalts, sedimentary stones, slates and limestone. The result is a new ceramic material with vibrant energy available in every color shade and texture.

Conclusion

Finally, ceramic draws from tradition in its reinterpretation of terrazzo and agglomerate tiles with their precious stone and mineral inclusions, their glittering, sandy speckles on cementitious bases. The retro style lends a timeless atmosphere to even the most contemporary spaces. Marble-effect ceramic tiles, one of the most enduring and fashionable of all ceramic trends, continue to undergo aesthetic research in a quest for elegance and harmony in large spaces. They stand out for their astonishing graphic realism and attention to detail in terms of colors, veins, fossil inclusions and crystal fragments. The mirror-polished surfaces guarantee exceptional qualities of resistance, strength and ease of cleaning while accentuating every detail of the different types of marble, from the classic statuario through to arabesque, breccia and black. And in the most sophisticated versions, they are transformed into precious stones such as geodes, onyx, alabasters and agates.

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