Art In History

Basic Lesson Plan

EDU013
Ottoman Empire
Iznik Vase
1299 - 1923
Iznik Vase: A Brief History
1299–1923

Art in History’s replica is an example of an Ottoman vase. The Ottoman Empire covered the region of modern-day Turkey and the surrounding area, lasting from 1299–1923. Their vast territory and diverse culture led to distinctive art styles. The arts flourished under the Ottomans because of patronage from the Turkish court. They developed architecture, ceramics, jewelry, tile-making, paper marbling, carpets, embroidery, calligraphy, and manuscripts.

Ceramic production was highly valued among the Ottomans. The Turkish pottery of the city of Iznik supplied the court with luxurious vessels and tiles. This pottery is noted for its attention to detail. With imperial sponsorship there was enough money to allow the artisans to experiment with colors and techniques, reaching a high level of quality.

Ottoman ceramic techniques were used to produce bowls, plates, lamps, cups, jugs, vases, and tiles. Tiles were commonly used in mosques and the royal palace. Red earthenware was also common in Iznik, but later replaced by white pottery made from silica, glass, and clay. Colored glaze consisted of blue, turquoise, green, red, purple, gray, and black.

Turkish designs are influenced by Chinese and Persian motifs. Each intricate pattern is a part of a larger whole, expressing a balance of pure color, line and rhythm. Dense floral designs and landscapes are rendered with spiky-leafed trees, fruits, vegetables, birds, and animals. The creatures painted in plant designs are reminiscent of traditional Chinese patterns. Other designs include branches, vines, clouds, pearls, panthers, and dragons. Styles of calligraphy are often seen with tulips, carnations, roses and hyacinths.

Iznik pottery is one of the most notable and renowned arts of the Ottoman period. The decline of Iznik pottery has been linked with the decline in Ottoman power. The reduction in imperial demand affected the Iznik economy, and by the mid-17th century most knowledge of their techniques had been lost. Ottoman art like this can be seen at the British Museum, the Israel Museum, and the Turkish Islamic Arts Museum. More information about Iznik pottery from this time period can be found in libraries and online.
The Ottoman Empire: A Brief History
1299–1923

Geography of the Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire, often called the Turkish Empire, existed from 1299 until 1923. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Empire covered portions of three continents: Asia, Europe, and Africa. At this time, the Ottoman Empire was one of the world’s strongest empires, both politically and militarily. The Ottoman Empire began in Anatolia. Anatolia was located in what is today Turkey. Anatolia was situated between Southeast Europe and the Middle East, and it bordered the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Black Seas. Whoever gained control of this land had great influence over the trade and militaristic operations of Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. For that reason, Anatolia was and still is one of the most strategic regions in the world.

Osman I

The Byzantine Empire occupied much of Anatolia before the rise of the Ottoman Empire. An Anatolian Turk named Osman I was gaining power by 1299. Osman I had established a Muslim state in Anatolia. His Western name was Othman, and his followers came to be called Ottomans. Although there were Ottoman groups prior to Osman I, he was the first ruler to declare independence and is credited with founding the Ottoman Empire.

Osman I gained power and influence within the lands he inherited from his father and the areas surrounding the Byzantine Empire. Osman and his forces began acquiring many neighboring cities and states. By 1326, Osman I had expanded his small Muslim state to include regions that he had purchased, those that he formed allies with, and territories that he conquered. The lands under Osman’s control became known as the Ottoman Empire, which rapidly grew in the early 1300’s while the Byzantine Empire was declining.

In the first few decades of the 1300’s, the Ottomans conquered many more lands within the proximity of Anatolia. One reason for the success of the Ottomans was the use of gunpowder. Guns and cannon replaced the use of bows. These military advances gave the Ottoman soldiers a great advantage over the regions they conquered. The use of the military was a key strategy of the Ottoman government. As the Empire expanded, regions were brought under Ottoman control, rather than being destroyed.
After a quarter of a century, the Ottomans had taken control of large portions of Asia Minor and forced the Byzantines to relinquish power over much of their lands. An example of Ottoman dominance occurred in 1326 when they conquered Bursa, a walled Byzantine city of great importance to trade and the fortification of Northwest Anatolia. Osman I made the city of Bursa the capital of his empire. The Ottoman continued to expand their empire and prestige further into surrounding territories.

The second ruler of the Ottoman Empire was Orkhan I. Orkhan was the son of Osman. He was the first ruler to use the title “sultan.” By 1331, the Ottomans had captured Andrianople, a key city to the Byzantine Empire. In 1360, Murad I took the helm of the Ottoman Empire. Murad I was the third official Ottoman ruler. Under his leadership the empire defeated Serbia at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. Also during his reign, the Ottoman Empire acquired lands in Europe’s Balkan regions and territory in Southern Anatolia. For the next half century the Ottoman Empire continued to grow in size, but mainly focused on solidifying the empire’s already acquired lands.

By 1402, Ottoman expansion had slowed. At the Battle of Ankara, Timur the Lame, often known as Tamerlane, crushed the Ottoman army. Timur was from the Central Asian region of Samarkand. His forces destroyed the city of Baghdad and managed to stop the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. When Timur decided to move his forces east into China, the Ottoman Empire once again began its efforts to expand.

**Mehmed the Conquerer**

Mehmed II became the sultan of the Ottoman Empire in 1451. Although young, he had a great military mind and was well respected by the military. In 1453, Mehmed turned his attention to the Byzantine capital of Constantinople. Constantinople was no longer the large center of the Byzantine Empire, but it did control the Bosporus Strait. This is the waterway that connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea and the Balkan region. Constantinople was an extremely strategic and valuable location. The city and its surrounding areas were crucial to large movements of people and materials, namely troops and war supplies. Traders, merchants, immigrants, and millions of ordinary citizens also made the trek through Constantinople.

Mehmed spent seven weeks attacking Constantinople. Eventually, his forces were able to break through the city’s wall. He renamed the city Istanbul. This action was the final blow to the Byzantine Empire, which collapsed shortly after the fall of Constantinople. After his success at
defeating Constantinople, and the Byzantine Empire, Memhed became known as Memhed the Conquerer.

Selim I and Suleyman

In 1512, Mehmed’s grandson became the sultan of the Ottoman Empire. His name was Selim I. Selim continued to conquer territories and expand the Empire. In 1514, he conquered the Safavids of Persia. Then he moved into Palestine and Syria. Next, he pushed into North Africa and took control of Egypt. He also captured the cities of Mecca and Medina—the holiest cities in Islam.

The Empire reached its pinnacle during the mid 1500’s under Suleyman when it became a major world power, controlling territories on three continents that stretched from Northwest Africa to Europe and then onto the Arabian Peninsula. Suleyman, who was Selim’s son, became the Ottoman sultan in 1520. In 1526, Suleyman moved the Ottoman forces into Hungary and Austria. By 1535, Baghdad was under Ottoman control. Suleyman is often known as Suleyman the Magnificent because of the cultural achievements that took place during his reign.

During his 46 year reign, Suleyman built one of the largest and strongest empires in the world. To govern such a large territory, Suleyman created a code of laws. These laws simplified the tax system and created a system of civil and criminal laws. For this reason, he was also known as Suleyman the Lawgiver. To keep peace between so many different cultural and religious groups, Suleyman allowed each region to govern itself. Freedom of religion was allowed, as prescribed under Islamic law. Christians and Jews could worship as they pleased.

The Decline of the Ottoman Empire

From the 1570’s onward, the Ottoman Empire slowly declined. Many of its territories became independent or parts of other nations. The Empire never regained the glory it had during the reign of Suleyman. The centuries that followed brought a slow decline in power and prestige. The Ottoman Empire continued to exist until 1918 when the Allied Powers of World War I defeated the nation of Turkey. The last sultan of the Ottoman Empire was Mehmed VI Vahdettin, who reigned from 1918–1922. On October 23, 1923, the Republic of Turkey was formed.
Art and Culture

There were many cultural achievements during Suleyman’s reign. He supported the study of poetry, history, music, geography, and architecture. The Mosque of Suleyman was built by Sinan, one of the best architects of the time. Literature also flourished, as did painting. Writings and artwork represented a blending of cultures from around the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottomans excelled in various aspects of society and culture, including education, government, literature, and art. Social issues were often incorporated into Turkish literature, especially poetry. Turkish art included ceramics, fabrics, metal-works, tiles, and much more. Geometric designs, along with nature portrayals were commonly used in artwork ranging from grand architectural structures to smaller pottery objects. Art was typically based on Islamic beliefs with many grand paintings decorating the empire’s mosques. Ottoman artwork was usually brilliant in color and predominantly displayed.

Architecture was extremely important, and this fact is most evident in the holy mosques whose ceilings soared toward the skies with numerous windows allowing light to illuminate the revered structure. Large wooden structures such as doors and podiums were engraved with elaborate images. Carpets were also very popular in the Ottoman Empire. These rugs were usually made of silk or wool and were adorned with sophisticated designs. Many Ottoman rulers were patrons of the arts, and they instilled a sense of pride into the hearts of their countrymen playing a part in continuing unity among the empire.
MAP 1: The Ottoman Empire at its Greatest Extent
SAMPLE MOTIFS

Front  Side

Back  Side
Finished Examples
A, B
Flower and Plant Designs
A, B
Bird Figures and Plant Designs

A, B, C
Flower Designs and Geometric Patterns
Design and Motif Codes

A. The designs of early Iznik pottery resembled those of Chinese porcelain. New forms and designs were produced based on Ottoman culture. Iznik plates, bowls, vases, lamps, and other items were decorated with scrollwork and floral designs. This style began to change, with the incorporation of interlaced patterns, Chinese cloud bands, human and animal figures, and ship motifs. Turquoise was introduced to the traditional Iznik palette of blue and white, and the colors of mauve, purple, green, and red were added later.

B. A wide range of flowers, pomegranates, artichokes and tree motifs occur in the compositions of this period. Pieces were also decorated with hyacinths, tulips, carnations, roses, and stylized floral scrollwork. Iznik motifs include symmetrical designs of leaves, flowers, and fruits, along with abstract motifs based on natural forms. It is believed that floral motifs were primarily used because Islamic religion did not allow representational human figures in art. Iznik pottery is primarily decorative.

C. Overlapping shapes, geometric patterns, and designs consisting of spots and stripes were also common.
STEP-BY-STEP PAINTING DIRECTIONS
(students can work in small groups)

I. APPLY THE BASE COLOR
1. Shake up the colored stains. Pour a small amount of FRENCH VANILLA stain onto the palette. Use the sponge to give the vase a light coat of FRENCH VANILLA stain so the replica is uniform in color. Allow this base coat to dry a few minutes before moving on. NOTE: It is better to apply two lighter coats than heavier applications. If too much stain is used, the pottery will take longer to dry.

2. When the vase is dry, students may write their name on the bottom.

II. PENCIL SKETCH DESIGNS ON THE VASE
1. Using a pencil and paper, students should draw their designs. Next, they may begin drawing their designs onto the replica. NOTE: Remind students before they begin drawing to SKETCH LIGHTLY on their pottery. Pencil lines are easily erased as long as they are lightly drawn. Pencil lines will be a map, or guide, for applying the stains. Designs should be checked for accuracy before any painting begins.

2. Have the class practice using their brushes by painting thin lines on paper before they actually begin painting on their piece. This should ensure the desired results. If students create an area that must be re-done, the paint may be removed quickly before it has dried.

III. PAINT ON THE VASE
After students have finished sketching designs on their vase, they are ready to paint. Have cups of water for the students so they may clean their brush between colors. NOTE: To create a thin paint line dip brush in water first then in paint. This will liquefy resulting in a more fluid flow of paint.

1. Use the BURNT UMBER, GRASS GREEN, ULTRAMARINE, and MUSTARD stain to paint the drawn motifs. The BURNT UMBER stain should be used primarily for outlines. Paint with slow strokes in order to achieve a smooth and flowing line.

2. Students may add areas of “wash” in various places of the decoration. A “wash” is a term for paint that has been thinned with water, giving it a “watercolor” effect when used. NOTE: fix any mistakes and remove excess water with paper towels.

3. Students may mix a small amount of BURNT UMBER stain into some MUSTARD stain to make BROWN. This color may be used in certain areas of the motif.

4. Use the FRENCH VANILLA stain to cover any mistakes. Add finishing touches and apply colored stains as needed. Allow the vase to dry completely.