



HISTORY OF BLUE

As I began to research and read about the history of blue ceramics, I knew I would read more about the tension between Delftware and its predecessor, Chinese porcelain. What I was less expecting to read about was the inspiration and influence Islamic pottery had on Chinese porcelain and the use of blue, as well as how the discussion among these topics has evolved over the years. From cultural inspiration to cultural appropriation to more recently, material exploitation, we are at a time in history now that by adding a color to a material, we open a discussion about the past and the questions of right or wrong.

I began my semester with a short visit to Delft, where I visited the Royal Delftware Museum and participated in a tile painting workshop. The museum was, of course, filled with antique pieces from the past, ranging from the size of a teacup to an entire wall. Designs that were incredibly decorative and detailed to modern and minimal. However, from the beginning, what caught my eye was the use of inspiration and not imitation. I couldn't help but feel that if the same events were to happen today to Delftware as they did to Chinese porcelain, the movement would be stripped of importance and forgotten in time. When I look into this, it seems the biggest dividing factor is that the Dutch figured out how to imitate porcelain with the tin glaze, creating enough of a separation from Chinese porcelain over time.

The Royal Delft Museum was an interesting experience and had a lot of information to take in; however, I felt like I was missing information from the makers. The tour I took felt intended for a viewer of the history of a country—like a tourist—rather than the history of the craft. I wish I could have spoken with the makers or painters of the Delft pieces.

The workshop was a great experience with cobalt. I learned how to trace my design onto a piece, how to line a piece with cobalt, and eventually shade my drawing. I was sitting next to a woman from Philadelphia. We both kept laughing at how shaky our hands were as we tried to outline our tracings. The fine-tipped brushes were an interesting trade-off from the large flat brushes I am normally used to at school.

