

Interactive Activity Using an Artifact/Object in a Gallery

Find a cart object/artifact that fascinates you and that you think museum visitors will enjoy learning about!

Purpose: To engage adult visitors in your gallery talk or tour through inviting them to handle an artifact/object/material while they learn about the people, their culture, way of life, and beliefs.

Gallery Name: Ancient Arts of China

Docent Name: Marilee Nielsen

Cart Artifact/Object/Approved Material:

Ceramic samples. 1 hand built porcelain sample (small vase), 1 porcelain shard (samples of both in Docent Lounge); can also show white ceramic plate in interactive learning station

For terra cotta: reference the three Song – Early Ming dynasty horses in the gallery.

Gallery Artifact/Map or Visual/Concept:

Compare and contrast the differences among the ceramic samples.

Terra Cotta: Red (contains iron oxide), contains grog (sand, ground ceramics, natural material) which gives the clay body structural integrity when wet, porous unless glazed, somewhat fragile

Hand built porcelain (no glaze): White (no iron oxide), non-porous, fine texture, strong

Porcelain (Mold constructed and glazed): Thin-walled and somewhat transparent, rings when struck, non-porous, creamy white, relatively strong-especially when thin, poured into a mold from a thin, fine-bodied material.

Connection: What is the relationship between the items to be presented? Think about how they are made or used or the concept they illustrate. What do they tell you about the people, their culture, way of life, and beliefs?

Summary:

Terra Cotta: Material used to create Xi'an tomb warriors, horses, and large scale, sculptural ceramics.

Hand built Porcelain (no glaze): Used to make small, thick walled pieces. Blue and White Jar with Fish or Blue and White Compartmentalized Rectangular Box

Porcelain (mold constructed and glazed): Technologically advanced because it would be possible to duplicate the items since they would most likely be made in a mold. After approximately 1000 AD kiln technology would be advanced enough to repeatedly fire the items to 2300-2380 degrees Fahrenheit. With this technology "China" can now be produced; porcelain vases and jars can be mass produced creating a desirable market for these items. China is one of the first cultures to master this form of production in porcelain and it is sought after by the West. *Pair of Lidded Jars (Qing Dynasty)*, *Pair of Porcelain Plates*, *Blue and White Porcelain Bowl*.

Interactive activity description: Steps in presenting the activity.

1. Pass around the shard and have people look at the Thin Bodied, Non-Porous material apparent when looking at the interior edge of the shard. Pass around small vase to feel a ceramic vessel "thrown" on a wheel. Strike the two objects together to get the "ring" sound.

Sample interactive questions (2-3) for the audience:

1. Why would the mold technology and thin, strong porcelains be desirable in the West? (Light, durable, beautiful and almost glass like, make large sets of dinnerware that repeat exactly, large objects with all the same characteristics.)

Cross-cultural connections or related folk tale to engage people further:

2. Fun Fact: the **Lidded Jars** were called export porcelains since they were made for the western market. They were shipped to Europe with a unique packaging material; beans. As they sat in crates on the long journey, the beans would sprout, protecting and strengthening the interior of the jar. Evidence of these sprouts was discovered when the jars were recovered from underwater expeditions of sunken, trade ships from China traveling in the 1700-1800's.

Date approved by the Education Committee: ___ February 3, 2015 ___