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ALL FIRED UP

An Exhibition of Ceramic Masterpieces

**September 17th
to November 20th, 2010**

Lake Country Museum
11255 Okanagan Centre Road West
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All Fired Up: An Exhibition of Ceramic Masterpieces is the inspiration of Lake Country Museum Curator Dan Bruce.

Porcelain is a ceramic material made by heating clay in a kiln to temperatures between 1,200 °C and 1,400 °C. The strength and translucence of porcelain comes from the formation of glass and the silicate mineral mullite at high temperatures. True porcelain contains kaolin, a fine white clay, and petuntse, a rock containing mica or feldspar, which fuse at a high temperature to form natural glass. Porcelain derives its name from the Italian *porcellana*, because of its resemblance to the translucent surface of a shell.

The following are brief descriptions and historical background of some of the items on exhibition.

Staffordshire Vase, circa 1845

The Highland hunter, his hound, and a pheasant complete the scene, with the flowers or foliage in the vase overhanging the trio.

Local, private collection



This form of pottery was popular in England in the 1800s. The Staffordshire Potteries is a generic term for the industrial area encompassing the six towns that now make up Stoke on Trent in Staffordshire, England. The Staffordshire potteries became a centre of ceramic production in the 17th century due to the local availability of clay, salt, lead and coal. Hundreds of companies produced decorative or industrial items.

Prince of Wales Ice Pail, 1930

Irish Belleek porcelain was developed in the mid 1800s, when John Caldwell Bloomfield inherited his father's estate in what is now Northern Ireland. Seeking to provide employment for his tenants who had been affected by the potato famine, he ordered a geological survey of his land. On finding that the area was rich in the minerals feldspar, kaolin, flint, clay and shale, Bloomfield went into partnership to set up a pottery business. The Belleek Pottery Works Company Ltd produces porcelain that is characterised by its thinness and slightly iridescent surface.

The Prince of Wales Ice Pail was one of the most expensive items ever produced by Belleek. Intricate and detailed, the lid depicts a cherub blowing a conch shell while riding on the back of a dolphin with three horses emerging from a roiling sea. The rim of the pail is fashioned porcelain that looks like coral. The side panels feature cherubs and dolphins in various poses, amid bullrushes, shells, and flowing water below. The pedestal base features three mermaids holding a shell that forms the base of the pail itself.

Courtesy of the Greater Vernon Museum and Archives





Glazed ceramic tile, mid-19th century England

The pattern of the tile shows the Rose of England in the centre, with the Thistle of Scotland and the Shamrock of Ireland surrounding.

Lake Country Museum permanent collection



Greyhounds, circa 1880

Bisque porcelain is unglazed, white ceramic ware that has been fired but not glazed.

Courtesy of the Fintry Estate

Black Pottery, contemporary

Dona Rosa de Nieto, of San Bartolo Coyotepec, Oaxaca, Mexico, discovered a technique for making decorative black pottery from local clay. The burnished effect is created by a short firing time in an underground kiln and a surface polishing treatment using quartz.

The owl and pot below are contemporary pieces; the pot made by Dona Rosa Nieto in the mid-1900s. The owl candle holder was made by Dona Rosa's son, Valente, one of thousands commissioned by the Owl Rexall Drug Company.

Local, private collection



Moche Water Container, circa 250 - 300 AD

This red and white painted clay container was made by the Moche, or Mochica people, who flourished in northern Peru from about 100 to 800 AD.

Moche pottery is some of the most varied in the world, using molds to form shapes that can be reproduced. Traditional ceramic art uses a palette relying primarily on red and white, fineline painting, fully modeled clay, and realistic figures.

Courtesy of the Kelonna Museums



Hopi Pot, contemporary

Made by Anita Polacca, the Hopi Pot from the Southwestern United States has a traditional Rainbird design. To create this utilitarian pot, she has used a traditional method of firing over a sheep dung fire.

Courtesy of Randy Nagel





18th century Chinese porcelain

Courtesy of Ken Witzke

Porcelain originated in China, where increasingly refined techniques during the Tang led to exports to the Islamic world, where it was highly prized. Early porcelain of this type includes the tri-color glazed porcelain, or sancai wares. Porcelain items of the type that we know today were produced during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties, and by the seventeenth century was being exported to Europe.

The Meissen Factory in Germany was the first in Europe to manufacture porcelain. Meissen china is a hard-paste porcelain that was developed in 1708 by Ehrenfried von Tschirnhaus and Johann Friedrich Bottger. Johann Bottger, at 18 years of age, was an alchemist attempting to create gold from base metals. Bottger was imprisoned in Dresden by Augustus the Strong, the elector of Saxony, who wanted to keep the secrets of alchemy to himself. Bottger carried on fruitless experiments while under house arrest and, despite desperate attempts to escape, he was always captured. Eventually a Dresden scientist, Ehrenfried Walter von Tschirnhaus obtained his release. Tschirnhaus had spent the previous twenty years attempting to discover the secret of true porcelain and had made some progress, but not sufficient to produce wares on a reliable basis. Recognising Bottger's talent, he suggested that they join forces and concentrate on the more realistic quest rather than the alchemist's hopeless pursuit of gold.

Germany's Meissen porcelain originally used locally found alabaster as a flux - a substance that facilitates the fusion of glaze to fired clay, instead of feldspar and silica.

Bone 'china', using ash from charred bones as a flux, was created in England around 1750, and England still produces nearly all of the world's bone china.

Limoges in France began producing its china using a fine white kaolin clay found only in one region of France.

Much of the French and the English porcelain of the 18th century is of the artificial kind using powdered glass. Porcelain of this kind is known as soft-paste porcelain. It is less hard than true porcelain and can be cut with a file, and it is fired at 1200°C rather than 1450°C.



Minton of Stoke, Staffordshire Platter in Chinese Marine pattern, England, circa 1830

Courtesy of the Fintry Estate