

## DECORATION

From "Orna ment and its Application"

Lewis F. Day

The commonest fault in decoration is the endeavor to go too far. Most artists want to do more than the conditions allow. The personality of the artist must be taken into consideration when dealing with this question. One man may like more richness but he may be equally well restrained. Some people work so differently from others, that we cannot lay down any rules. There would be too many changes. The one rule which we can have to stabilize us is to make the use and handiness of the object mark its beauty. The manner of making and the material used show the way of appropriate design, stopping at the point where it is natural to stop. It is natural that supplementary processes called in to aid may supplant the original process. This must be guarded against.

The manner of making primitive pots is by throwing. As the potter makes artistic shapes by this manner we are apt to wonder if there ever was an ugly shape made. But an ugly pot has passed through many stages in the making. The potter is unwilling to stop and overdoes the thing, ruining all its beauty. There is no monotony in wheel work. It gives all the variety and true form that an artist need desire. We must, however, know the limitations of throwing. The old Greek vases are the result of after processes akin to turning. They were trimmed down at a half dry condition. The clay should be done in a wet or plastic shape and this seems to be out of its class. If the vases have been worked over, they should be done mechanically from the first. A true artist takes into consideration the kind of clay he has and the kind of shape he wants to produce. For instance, he would not make a delightfully graceful vase out of a very coarse clay. Everything must be harmonious. He shouldn't try to hide the marks of his tools. These marks show sincerity and tools skillfully used and akin to the material, have a decorative feature.

The Greeks produced forms in earthenware, which were more proper to metal. They have not so much earned our admiration as potters but as masters of form. If lightness is the plan then one should employ a light material.

The color of clay is commonly muddy and its texture gritty. These shortcomings are both remedied by the simple process of coating the coarse body with a finer and more beautiful color clay. A keen workman loses no hint that his

material may give him. An accident, such as the cracking of a glaze puts him on a new track. If he can make sure the reason for the cracking he has discovered a new process of decoration.

Variety in color is found by scratching through the outer coat of fine white clay into the darker body below and this process is called "sgraffito".

A glaze of transparent color gives itself occasion for pattern. The thickness gives you a variety of color; the thicker the glaze is the darker the color. The simplest and most characteristic means of decorating is by slip painting. Slip decoration may be dabbed on crudely or craftily built up and developed; it is all characteristically slip. "Spontaneous execution is there generally applicable. In other words, do not fuss over a design." "If it is well done when it is done, then it is best done quickly."

~~High~~ A pot painted gets that wet quality which you wish you could keep in water color. Most colored glazes fade out at temperature. ~~Therefore the colorless glaze which needs greater temperature is fired first and then the colorful glazes are put on and fired at the right temperature for them to retain their color.~~

An artist, therefore, must be limited and use the means to give him what he wants. He must know his material and its limitations thoroughly and regulate his work accordingly.