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Stylistic features of Western ceramics in the first quarter of the 21st century

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Abstract. This study aimed to present and offer a comparative analysis of ceramic artworks – primarily porcelain – produced by Western artists in the first quarter of the 21st century, with a focus on identifying common stylistic features. The research methodology incorporated classification, art-historical analysis (including figurative-stylistic and formal approaches), and comparative analysis. The inductive method was applied to examine specific elements and details of the selected ceramic works. A historical and cultural perspective made it possible to trace changes in both the formal qualities of the pieces and the evolving consciousness of the artists and porcelain manufacturers who produced them. The article features artistic works created by prominent ceramic artists from Western Europe and North America during the specified period. The analysis of pieces by G. Locatelli, A. Reyley, M.R. Fischer, and V. Hegarty, among others – mainly crafted in porcelain – revealed recurring and comparable stylistic traits among artists working on different continents. A notable inclination towards the deconstruction of surface and form emerged as a defining characteristic of this period, echoing developments in early 20th-century painting. Destruction and fragmentation have stood out as dominant themes in the early 21st century. The artist served as a chronicler of history, inscribing it into material form. The tendency towards destruction was not only affirmed but also preserved by the oldest porcelain manufacturers in Europe: the Meissen Porcelain Manufactory, Augarten in Vienna, and the Royal Porcelain Manufactory in Berlin. Founded during the period when porcelain was regarded as “white gold”, these institutions provide their facilities and technological resources to showcase the spirit of a new age. This shift reflects not only an awareness of contemporary trends but an acceptance of the realities they express – destruction and anti-form. For the first time, a comparative analysis has been conducted, identifying shared stylistic features in the ceramic works of Western artists from the first quarter of the 21st century, some of which have been presented by Europe's most renowned porcelain manufactories. The practical value of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the theoretical shaping of a new, major artistic style. The comparative approach and resulting conclusions may be of use to research institutions in the development of scholarly and methodological resources, academic curricula, and lecture courses on the history of stylistic developments and contemporary decorative and applied arts

Keywords: ceramic works; porcelain; Chris Antemann; Graziano Locatelli; Annette Messenger; Anselm Reyle; Michael R.-Fischer

INTRODUCTION

Decorative and applied arts, as a branch of art, respond to changes in eras, tastes, and trends. The study of artistic styles enables a deeper understanding and appreciation of the “spirit of the age” not only in architecture but also in everyday objects. By observing characteristic details, colours, and forms, and by understanding the historical context, specialists can attribute artworks and determine the century in which an object was created or which the artist was trying

to recreate. Recording contemporary forms and popular colours is a necessary component of an expert catalogue for future researchers. Considering that a major style develops over decades and spans multiple countries, contemporary art historians should make efforts to document as comprehensively as possible the artistic explorations of artists in various materials and across different regions, taking into account national influences.

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Ukrainian researchers have focused on studying the activities of major manufacturers and the work of individual figures within the country. Researchers O. Korus & M. Kozak (2023) detailed the history of the porcelain industry in Polonne, incorporating new archival materials, and presented an expanded database of biographies of sculptors who worked at the Polonne Artistic Ceramics Factory in Ukraine. O. Korus (2024) explored the biographies of specific Ukrainian porcelain artists, highlighting the diversity of their creative output and introducing these artists to the global community. Simultaneously, L. Karpinska-Romaniuk & T. Sazonova (2024) dedicated a monograph to the artist O. Zhnykrup. Both studies complement each other, providing a detailed account of the artistic contributions of a 20th-century Ukrainian porcelain artist and offering valuable information for collectors.

L. Karpinska-Romaniuk (2023), having gathered archival materials and drawing on the recollections of contemporaries, published a study dedicated to the activities of the Korosten Porcelain Factory, its craftspeople, and their products. Ukrainian porcelain researcher O. Shkolna (2022) also focused on a 20th-century artist whose designs were implemented in production at the aforementioned factory – A. Zhdanova. The author emphasised that the artist's works can be identified by her distinctive artistic style and signature. The contemporary Ukrainian artist of the 20th and 21st centuries, Ye. Ovcharyk is the subject of an article by M. Lampeka (2022), which highlighted the ceramic artist's originality, echoes of folk art, and national connections. S. Volska (2019) also wrote about Ye. Ovcharyk, a Ternopil artist seen as a bearer of Ukrainian traditions and distinctiveness, in conference proceedings.

The aforementioned Ukrainian porcelain researchers, despite having a significant collection of materials on Ukrainian ceramic artists, have not compared them or drawn parallels with foreign artists of the 20th century to understand commonalities and differences within the described time period. The emphasis has primarily been on a thorough cataloguing of the works of individual figures. Western ceramic explorations of the 21st century remain outside the scope of interest for the Ukrainian art historical community. A significant body of contemporary literature focuses on Eastern porcelain. The leading figures in the study of porcelain are not only adding new archival information in their latest research but are also examining porcelain from fresh perspectives. For example, the historian of East Asian culture, K. Chen (2023) has presented a new way of looking at ceramic vessels – as tools of global empires and a form of visual propaganda for ruling dynasties.

Analysis of Western porcelain production in recent decades has often been carried out by the craftspeople themselves, as seen in the research of B. Hunt (2003), as well as by academics who have dedicated

monographs to individual artists, such as G. Adamson *et al.* (2022). Artists' websites have also served as an important source of information, showcasing and describing their latest projects, for instance, Valerie Hegarty (n.d.). Similarly, Graziano Locatelli (n.d.) actively promotes his own work and is open to contact and discussion about his creative explorations. In contrast, the professional website of Michael R.-Fischer (n.d.) functions more like a business card and does not fully represent the scope of the artist's activities.

In the contemporary art world, the artist is no longer just a practitioner but also a theorist, capable not only of describing the creative process, which has often been overlooked by art historians but also of explaining the artistic intention without unnecessary additional layers of interpretation. New technological processes in ceramic production, as well as improved recipes for clays and glazes, which were detailed by P. Lane (2003), have also received attention. The book by M. Graves *et al.* (2023) presented ceramics as an artefact. The work not only described the art history of clay objects, materials, and manufacturing methods but also made comparisons and traced the characteristic features of works by artists from different continents. The study covered a highly relevant topic – the art of Africa; it described the 2019 Munich exhibition where curators presented a collection of African ceramics within the context of global design rather than as specifically African objects. This kind of analysis positively influences the understanding of current trends.

Just as the reflections of mid-20th-century French “postmodernist” philosophers were summarised by American scholars, today, it is American researchers who focus on data collection, analysis, and the creation of certain generalisations. The emphasis is largely placed on the commercial aspect, specifically the audience of collectors, which leads to the selection and analysis of the most investment-worthy items, as observed in the research of P. Atterbury *et al.* (1999) and D. Akimov (2024). For instance, G.R. Brown (2009), an elected member of the International Academy of Ceramics in Geneva and a Professor at Kansas State University, made his own selection from 8,000 works and conducted an analytical description of 500 contemporary ceramic sculptures.

This study aimed to present contemporary European (German, Italian, French) and American ceramic artists and their works, to trace common stylistic features characteristic of these objects, and to investigate current trends in the products of the first quarter of the 21st century. One of the main objectives of the research was to initiate discussion and conduct a comparative analysis of decorative and applied arts, specifically ceramic works, from the first quarter of the 21st century from Western European and American countries, where, according to E. Gombrich (2024), artists are not held back by the weight of tradition.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research methods, aligned with the aim and objectives, involved drawing upon a broad range of scientific frameworks. The methodology included classification, art historical analysis (covering imagery, style, and form), and comparative analysis. To conduct this research, the author undertook a series of trips, which are periodically necessary for any scholar working in the field of art history to understand contemporary trends and changes. During a visit to the National Ceramics Museum in Sèvres (France) in the early 2000s, attention was drawn to the particular features of the exhibited works by contemporary ceramic artists. The exhibition did not have an overarching title, but the characteristic design elements and stylistic features indicated a certain ideological direction.

During a visit to the first European porcelain manufacturer in Meissen (Germany) and its museum in 2018, attention was paid to the nature of the exhibited works. The works of Chris Antemann, Anselm Reyle, and Arlene Shechet, created in the first quarter of the 21st century, revealed common features in the expression of certain emotional and stylistic motifs when subjected to comparative analysis. The use of the historical-cultural method allowed for analogies to be drawn with artistic processes of past centuries, as well as for tracing key changes in the forms of artworks, the creative approach of artists, and the activities of porcelain manufacturers. The contextual method facilitated a deeper understanding of the artists' vision within the contemporary cultural environment.

Further visits to ceramics museums in Berlin (Royal Porcelain Factory, KPM), Vienna (Imperial Porcelain Manufactory, Augarten), and other European cities in the 2020s allowed for a comparative analysis, comparing the work of different artists in varying geographical locations but within the same time frame. Photo documentation of all objects and sub-

sequent work with archival materials aided further research. The systematic method and the method of classification helped to comprehensively organise the ceramic objects into groups according to the objectives of this study. The biographical method, along with observation and modelling, was used for a better understanding and portrayal of 21st-century artists. The stylistic features of the porcelain pieces were determined using figurative-stylistic and formal analyses of the works, as well as methods of abstraction and deduction. Based on general information about art styles, attention was focused on fragments, details, and colour palettes that might indicate common features potentially characteristic of the emergence of a new artistic style or movement. The method of observation and logical conclusions helped to trace the key trends shaping contemporary art.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For centuries, humans have been creating ceramic objects for both religious rituals and purely practical use. The European discovery of the secret to porcelain paste initiated a new stage in the ceramic process and expanded the material basis for creating highly artistic objects. Just as it did three hundred years ago, Europe's first porcelain factory in Meissen continues to operate and present new ideas and explorations by contemporary artists. It was the 2018 exhibition at the Porcelain Museum in Meissen (Germany) and the contemporary works displayed there that inspired the author to analyse the activities of ceramic artists in the early 21st century. At the 2018 exhibition, the Meissen porcelain manufacturer presented an art object made from a large quantity of damaged porcelain tableware (Fig. 1). Vessels of the same design, bearing the Meissen factory mark, were piled one upon another, giving the impression of factory rejects being displayed to the visitor.



Figure 1. Untitled, 2011

Source: author's photo, art object by A. Reyle (2025)

A similar “construction” can be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, where, in the section on the history and technology of ceramic production, 17th-century Dutch earthenware plates are displayed which, during the firing process, fell and fused together into a single object. Such pieces are presented as manufacturing waste or flawed items (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Kiln waster. Netherlands, Delft, 1655-1670.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Source: author's photo

The work displayed in the Meissen Porcelain Museum is not a factory defect but rather an artwork created in 2011 by the renowned German artist A. Reyle (2025) in collaboration with the Meissen manufactory (Reyle – Meissen). A. Reyle (born 1970) works with various materials, and his conceptual approach is sought after by numerous well-known manufacturers of decorative and interior design items, as well as clothing and accessory brands. The piece exhibited in the Meissen Museum was also noted by the Gagosian Gallery in Athens, where it was displayed at the end of 2011 (Gagosian Gallery, 2011). The theme of decline as an inevitable stage of cultural development can be traced in both the classical forms of the first European porcelain tableware and the architecture of Ancient Greece. Despite the fact that porcelain production continues to function and create new forms, the artist, through the lens of their own artistic interpretation, records the general trends of the time. In this context, the material component plays a secondary role, while the conceptual content and symbolic meaning come to the forefront. The demonstration of the work in Athens acquired particular semantic weight, although the porcelain sculpture itself was not created specifically for that space. Professional gallery owners sensed the prevailing trends of the time, successfully selecting relevant works, among which was the porcelain “sculpture”.

A. George (2017) draws attention to the specific characteristics of the artist's work, noting that many of A. Reyle's utilitarian pieces cannot actually fulfil their

functional purpose because each one has a deliberate flaw, such as a crack or gap, so obvious that it places these objects within the realm of art. The artist himself emphasises that art always tells something about the time in which it was created (Hanschke, 2021). Alongside A. Reyle, the exhibition in Meissen also featured several works by female artists: Chris Antemann (n.d.) and A. Shechet *et al.* (2015). The work of American ceramic artist A. Shechet echoes the piece by A. Reyle but is not as bold: the artist uses the form of a classic Meissen vase from previous centuries and decorates it with damaged, broken elements of tableware and other layers of indeterminate shape (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Huge Vase Blue. Meissen, 2013
Source: author's photo

By hand-painting the created object, the artist begins to position it as a transformation of ordinary utilitarian items into an element of luxury (Shechet *et al.*, 2015). The author of this article, as an art historian, uses this example, analyses the context, and draws parallels with other works from this period. A. Carlini (2012) highlighted that some artists create works subconsciously, which moves into the realm of empirical research methods. The porcelain sculpture by Chris Antemann (n.d.) had completely different forms: it presented groups of nude and semi-nude figures at a banquet table, characteristic of the artist's work (Fig. 4).

As J. Pasquier (2021) noted, the cult of the image that defines a century is a valuable indicator of mentality, tastes, and lifestyle. This involves a certain poetics and, at the same time, amorality, decadent aestheticism, and a “fin de siècle” feeling that expresses an apocalyptic sense of the end of a phase of civilisation, something already encountered in world history a century ago, before the start of the First World War (Wilson & Lack, 2016). Around this same time, at the beginning of the 20th century, a flourishing of “ceramic destruction” also occurred in the work of the Italian artist G. Locatelli (born 1977). In 2005, the artist first turned to ceramic tiles, work which effectively became his

hallmark (Fig. 5). G. Locatelli's ceramic works of the 2010s are characterised by the concept of destruction as an artistic device, expressed through the deformation of the surface and the fragmentation of form. His practice begins with the deconstruction of a conventional

wall laid with ceramic tiles, continues with depictions of the earth's crust fracturing, and culminates in a series of ceramic portraits. In this context, destruction acts not only as a physical process but also as a metaphor for the breakdown of staticity, ideals, and idols.



Figure 4. Feast and Folly (from different angles). Meissen, 2015

Source: author's photo



Figure 5. Inquietudine, 2005

Source: from Graziano Locatelli (n.d.)

The ceramic portrait of Giordano Bruno (2019), created using a surface cracking technique, visually recreates the process of decay, creating the illusion of inevitable tile crumbling (Fig. 6). However, within the context of contemporary art, to which G. Locatelli aligns himself, the primary role is played not by the material but by the conceptual content. In his work, Graziano Locatelli (n.d.) has not only managed to convey his own artistic intention but also to interpret one of G. Bruno's philosophical ideas about monads, which do not disappear but merely change their configuration through processes of connection and disconnection. In this context, the first quarter of the 21st century emerges as a period of disconnection.

G. Locatelli's ceramic works with fractures conceptually echo the work of Italian artist Lucio Fontana, who, as early as the second half of the 20th century, used slashes and holes to open up new dimensions in his works (Crispoliti & Barbero, 2023). His approach did not serve as an act of completion but, on the contrary, symbolised infinity and the extension of space beyond the canvas. Similar principles can be traced in contemporary ceramic art. If, at the beginning of the 21st century, G. Locatelli's works show an attempt to "break through" the density of the material, then in the 2010s, the destruction becomes more radical – the form disintegrates, focusing attention on the processes of deconstruction and decay (Fig. 7).



Figure 6. Giordano Bruno, 2019

Source: from Graziano Locatelli (n.d.)



Figure 7. Fratture ricomposte 1, 2013

Source: from Graziano Locatelli (n.d.)

The artist himself compares this to a mosaic, from whose elements a new reality will be born. Towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century, a “rebirth” does indeed occur, and a new series of works emerges with the addition of wood as an element of life (Fig. 8). Creation through destruction is a necessary process of evolution.



Figure 8. Broken 1, 2019

Source: from Graziano Locatelli (n.d.)

Contemporary artists sense the instability and fragility of the early 21st century, acknowledging the inevitability of destruction. However, Graziano Locatelli (n.d.), influenced by Eastern philosophy, sees the possibility of rebirth and the restoration of wholeness. His work draws on the principles of the Japanese art of kintsugi, in which fragments form a new aesthetic, and imperfection becomes part of beauty. Traditional Japanese restoration uses lacquer based on natural tree sap, whereas, in the Italian artist’s works, nature also acts as a unifying element, symbolising the ability of life to grow even through cracks and chaos.

Turning to the oldest European porcelain manufacturers, it is worth noting that in the exhibition hall of the Royal Porcelain Factory in Berlin in 2023, amongst works from the first quarter of the 21st century, a porcelain object from 2007 by German designer Michael Rautenberg Fischer (born 1941) was displayed (Communal Gallery Berlin, n.d.). The piece consists of interconnected, plastically deformed porcelain elements arranged on a stepped pedestal (Fig. 9). Regular, geometric, symbolic steps lead to a completely informal central composition. In the decorative and applied arts, even among such classic manufacturers, conceptualism is beginning to prevail, requiring the artist’s commentary.



Figure 9. Fontana di Orso. Berlin, 2007

Source: author’s photo

Michael R.-Fischer (n.d.), in the first decade of the 21st century, created objects that echoed the works of other artists, exploring the theme of destruction and transformation. The title of his works (of which several were created), *Gebrochenes Wies*, which translates from German as *Broken White*, reflects the concept of his art. Broken fragments of white porcelain are assembled into static objects, one version of which, in its form, resembles a ship (Fig. 10). However, this is merely the viewer’s interpretation, who, relying on established visual codes, seeks to recognise the familiar within the chaos of fragments. While 19th-century art celebrated

the romance of ruins, modernity appears as a radical destruction of familiar forms. The collected fragments record the first quarter of the 21st century, reflecting its fragmented and unstable nature.



Figure 10. Gebrochenes Wies. Berlin, 2008
Source: from Michael R. Fischer (n.d.)

“Cracked portraits” made from ceramics also appeared in the works of Valerie Hegarty (born 1967) towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Her series of portraits of George Washington, from 2017-2018, demonstrated the transience and destruction of everything: people, ideals, and materials (Fig. 11).



Figure 11. George Washington, Cracked. USA, 2018
Source: from Valerie Hegarty (n.d.)

In 2018, the artist presented a series of glazed ceramic works on the theme of *vanitas*: *Dead Tulips with Roots*, *Bloom and Gloom*, and *Dead Dutch Flowers*, featuring colourful, glazed ceramic flowers that appeared to have withered in a vase. The work *Broken Rosebush* resembles a ceramic jigsaw puzzle and presents pieces of a once unified object assembled on a single surface. The buds and flowers are still whole, but the branches and roots are torn apart; even if reassembled, a true revival of what was is no longer possible. These “melting flowers” can be compared to the sculptural works of

N. Azevedo (2025), who, in the early 2000s, displayed a series of human figures made of ice melting before the eyes of viewers in various cities around the world.

The theme of the fleeting nature of existence at the beginning of the 21st century was also reflected in the work of ceramic artists who presented their pieces in 2018 at an exhibition in the Manufacture and National Ceramics Museum in Sèvres. Indeed, the works presented by Myriam Mechita (n.d.), created in 2010, consist of porcelain skulls placed on glazed ceramic tree trunks, devoid of branches and leaves. In one piece, a skull is pierced by classic plates from the Sèvres Royal Manufactory. This same theme continues on the decorative vases of the aforementioned manufacturer: in 2021, three female artists (Ulla von Brandenburg, Hélène Delprat, and Annette Messenger) collaborated on a project to create and decorate Sèvres pieces. Referring to Gothic and Romanticism, “the devil is in the details”, noted C. Bois-Martin (2022) in his article, thereby confirming this general outline of the prevailing moods in artistic circles of the first quarter of the 21st century. On the white monumental vase known as the *Grand Charpin* by A. Messenger (2021), two skulls are depicted in “classic”, porcelain-characteristic cobalt colours, joined together in the form of a heart, underscoring the paradoxes of modernity that humanity had already witnessed a century prior.

In the works of French artists working with porcelain, historical roots are very noticeable: Rococo and Mannerism lend a certain restraint to both the craftspeople and their creations. The emotional component is present, but it is more philosophical and not as “explosive” as seen in German and Italian artists, who already had a turbulent historical context underpinning their work. The principles of “destruction” are also very interesting to observe in Sèvres’ functional tableware, which, by its very purpose, did not give artists much room for creative manoeuvring. However, the graphic lines that “destroy” the surface do not create optical illusions – they are rather “straightforward” and simply symbolically cut and divide the tableware into sections. As an example, the artist François Morellet (1926-2016) presented a design on a plate in 2011 consisting of straight lines. The work, titled *Angel Wings*, was not simply black graphic lines intersecting at right angles on a white plate – it was a copy of a stained-glass window created by the artist, which in turn was inspired by the acute angle at the tip of an angel’s wing (Cernogora, 2020b). The philosophical interpretation of an angle as a dead end could fit into the destructive concept of early 21st-century art proposed by this research. One confirmation of the reflection of emotions and the spirit of the time in decorative and applied arts is the work of Annabelle d’Huart. This renowned artist, who presented the largest porcelain dinner service created by a woman for the Sèvres manufactory (Suire, 2021) – *Atlantis* (1996-2006) – is also interesting to study for

another of her works. The Ruhlmann Cup, a tribute to the form's creator, Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann, comprised a pair (cup and saucer) with a design specifically created by the artist in 2005 (d'Huart, n.d.). In addition to the restrained colour decoration, thin, almost pencil-drawn lines are depicted on the white porcelain, creating the effect of cracks. What was previously concealed and considered a flaw or damage is brought to the surface, emphasised, and imitated. A. d'Huart compared the decoration of the Atlantis service to tectonic faults, reminiscent of the fragility of the earth (Suire, 2021), and this idea is also conveyed in the Ruhlmann set. According to A. Elkann (2018), the artist was aware of the fragility, impermanence, and vulnerability of the times and consciously conveyed this in her porcelain works.

The tendency towards destruction is a characteristic feature of art in the first quarter of the 21st century, but it takes on a new meaning, distinct from Gustav Metzger's "auto-destructive art" (Stiles, 2023), which was based on the ideas of action art, similar to the practices of Yves Klein. Contemporary destruction manifests more as a subconscious transformation with a negative connotation, reflecting a pull towards a black hole, a motif that has repeatedly appeared in art history. A. Reyle noted that his art resembles a film set where the works act as a backdrop, and humanity effectively creates this background of destruction, being its driving force. The dynamics of change in this process can be traced, for example, in the work of Michael R. Fischer (n.d.), who, after creating destructive compositions, turned to porcelain objects resembling interwoven threads. This is not an attempt to grasp "nothingness" or define the limits of emptiness, but rather a reflection of entanglement, indicating the impossibility of predicting the further development of artistic trends. The processes of contemporary art are too fleeting to be summarised or systematised; instead, only their recording within individual artistic practices remains possible.

The renowned Imperial Porcelain Manufactory in Vienna (Augarten), which has been operating for three hundred years and observing the changing styles and tastes (Augarten Porzellanmanufaktur Wien, 2024), installed a festive Christmas tree in its museum hall for the 2023-2024 holiday season, made from fragments of snow-white tableware bearing the manufactory's mark (Fig. 12). This could be called "porcelain Impressionism" – a recording of a moment and its feeling, conveyed through ceramic "dots". The "white gold" of the 18th century now plays a completely different function in the 21st.

The results of the conducted research were selectively presented at an international scientific conference (Reshetnova, 2023), marking the beginning of its discussion within the academic community. The topic presented for discussion is new within art history circles, as it encompasses contemporary ceramic art and a wide geographical area. Ukrainian art historians, as noted above, have mostly focused on Ukrainian artists

with the aim of education and promotion. V. Strilets *et al.* (2021) addressed the analysis of the development of the material environment of the late 20th and early 21st centuries but focused on furniture design rather than ceramics. In their conclusions, the scholars provided rather generalised characteristics, noting that the design of decorative and applied arts (in the authors' case, furniture) should be considered directly in the context of the material environment, which reflects their own view and is characteristic of any period.



Figure 12. Porcelain Christmas Tree. Augarten, 2023
Source: author's photo

The author's research on foreign artists has largely considered them within the context of their involvement in projects and collaborations with leading European manufacturers: those in Meissen, Vienna, Berlin, and Sèvres. Discussions, or rather announcements, took place in the mass media before and after the completion of these projects (the 2010s). The name of C. Antemann, following her collaboration with the Meissen manufactory, remained relevant in professional art historical discourse and was featured in publications by leading experts (Archer, 2014; Lutyens, 2018), as well as at exhibition events where her works were displayed within the Meissen context.

Notably, the curators of the *Homo Faber* Event, organised by the Michelangelo Foundation in Venice, D. Cameo (former director of the National Manufactory of Sèvres) and F. Bodet (former curator of contemporary collections at the National Ceramics Museum in Sèvres), commenting on their selection of exhibitors, emphasised the demonstration of different approaches to contemporary ceramic production (*Homo Faber* biennial & The virtuosos of porcelain, 2022). However, their aim was not to trace the stylistic features of the works but rather to identify commonalities and

differences between European and Asian (primarily Japanese) art. Antemann's characteristic compositions, which can be interpreted as "destructive bacchanalia" or, in E. King's (2022) definition, "fragmented absurd fantasy", are commissioned for museum collections.

In research concerning the most famous European manufacturers (which currently have their own museums or exhibition spaces), there is a greater tendency to focus on history and new attributions of pieces from past centuries. The work of contemporary artists, much like most of the news in lives, is captured as a flash and quickly replaced by the next piece of fresh information. Renowned researchers, on the other hand, work in a more conservative vein and primarily with archives. For example, one of the latest publications by A. Szkurlat (2024), known for her monograph on porcelain and faience production in Kořets, is dedicated to Meissen porcelain and presents the manufactory's pieces in the museum collection of Warsaw Castle. The work is largely a catalogue with a comprehensive, almost inventory-like description of the objects. The researcher analysed individual depictions on the tableware and their origins. All the described items belong to previous centuries, but the researcher's work demonstrates professional cataloguing of porcelain objects, which is extremely necessary to do with the works of contemporary artists.

Contemporary exhibitions held at the Meissen Porcelain Museum are presented primarily informatively, as notes with brief commentaries, as indicated on the official Meissen Porcelain Museum website (2025), as well as on the online pages of the artists they collaborate with. A. Reyle (2025) provides exclusively illustrations without commentary or discussion, as confirmation of his collaborative work with the first German porcelain manufacturer. In his biographical information, as one of his latest monographs, the artist listed a gallery catalogue edited by the French art dealer and owner of the contemporary art gallery Opera Gallery – G. Dyan & J. Lahmi (2024). This highlighted the need for professional review and the insufficient amount of analysis. In November 2025, the Meissen Porcelain Foundation (Meissen Porzellan-Stiftung) planned a symposium, meeting, and discussion of the activities of the 18th-century artist J.G. Höroldt, who, in his time, developed a range of new enamel colours used for porcelain painting and gathered talented craftspeople around him, rather than contemporary artists.

Regarding 21st-century French artistic figures, the article by J. Cernogora (2020a), in describing new acquisitions of contemporary ceramics (identified as being from 1945 onwards) at the National Ceramics Museum in Sèvres, mentions a significant number of contemporary artists. However, only a few sentences provide information about the artists and a brief description of their works donated to the museum. J. Cernogora (2020a) also dedicated short articles to specific

objects and artists of the early 21st century (F. Morellet, D. Montmollin, and others), in which a description of the works can be traced, but not a comparative analysis with artists from other countries.

The Viennese Augarten manufactory, excluding retrospective works and new attributions, is not examined in recent academic research from the perspective of searching for, creating, and analysing new forms, but primarily from a market, and marketing viewpoint. In the study by G. Bruckberger *et al.* (2023), the factory is considered solely as a successful brand, with the authors emphasising the role of "place", which plays an important role for consumers as it symbolically maintains a connection with past traditions. Philosophical perspectives on the "destruction" trend identified in the author's research can be traced in many works dedicated to the engagement with destruction by G. Metzger and his followers (Stiles, 2023). This theme, which was observed in the content and form of decorative and applied objects, is relevant in academic circles, where there is a renewed return to and engagement with the "destructive" thoughts and actions of figures from the last century. Researcher O. Şerban (2023) from the Centre for the History of Philosophical Ideas at the University of Bucharest, in her analysis of the metaphorical "liquid modernity", mentioned the sculptor M. Valdés, who also worked with broken porcelain. The scholar's research can be used as additional background for the analysis of the stylistic features of decorative and applied objects, but the author of this study sees more radical changes in forms, which are a prerequisite for a new stage and new philosophical reflections. In summarising the aforementioned, it is worth emphasising that the question of the stylistic features of Western porcelain in the 21st century requires further, broader discussion.

CONCLUSIONS

To analyse the stylistic features of ceramic works from the first quarter of the 21st century, the works of artists who collaborated with historically significant porcelain manufacturers were selected – the Meissen Porcelain Manufactory, the former royal porcelain manufacturers of Berlin and Sèvres, and the Imperial Porcelain Manufactory of Vienna (Augarten). After an initial narrowing of the selection and a comparative analysis, the range of artists studied and the geography of their work were gradually expanded. Thus, the works of Chris Antemann, Graziano Locatelli, Annette Messenger, Myriam Mechita, François Morellet, Anselm Reyle, Michael R.-Fischer, Valerie Hegarty, Arlene Shechet, and Annabelle d'Huart were considered. The research included both small-scale sculptures and ordinary functional tableware.

As a result of the conducted research, it was possible to identify features characteristic of the first quarter of the 21st century, which are reflected in specific

objects and generally in the work of the analysed artists. The tendency towards “destruction” is a characteristic sign of the times, evident in deliberately damaged pieces or the symbolism embedded in the decoration or form of objects. Common features of stillness and balance have been identified across all the selected works, even in cases of deliberate destruction and the absence of recognisable form; a division into graphic, asymmetrical elements that still retain a notional foundation and the basis upon which they were established, and an internal artistic connection. Thus, the ceramic works of the first quarter of the 21st century reflect a process of destroying previous wholeness, deconstructing and breaking down established forms, which simultaneously opens up space for future explorations. The important question remains as to which direction art will take: will a radical rejection of traditions in the spirit of Dadaism, with an orientation towards new technologies and means of expression, prevail, or there will be a stage of “restoration” – a return to familiar forms and materials through the understanding and rebuilding of what has been lost.

Prospects for further research could focus on comparing the works of ceramic artists with the creations of sculptors using other materials, which would allow for the identification of commonalities and differences in approaches to shaping form. In particular, studying the theme of destruction in decorative and applied works made from various materials could become an important area of research. At the same time, art historians must record contemporary artistic explorations in order to form a palette of a major style in the future, reflecting the evolution of the plastic arts.

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Стилістичні особливості західної кераміки першої чверті ХХІ ст.

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Анотація. Мета роботи полягала у презентації та компаративному аналізі керамічних творів (в основному – з порцеляни), виготовлених західними авторами у першій чверті ХХІ ст., та у виявленні спільних характерних стилістичних особливостей. Методологія дослідження включала класифікацію, мистецтвознавчий (образно-стилістичний і формальний) та порівняльний аналізи. При розгляді окремих елементів і деталей, представлених керамічних виробів, використовувався метод індукції. Історико-культурний метод дослідження допоміг простежити зміни, які відбулися у формах виробів та у свідомості митців й порцелянових мануфактур, які їх презентують. У статті представлено художні твори першої чверті ХХІ ст. відомих майстрів керамістів Західної Європи та Америки. Аналізуючи роботи Г. Локателлі, А. Райле, М.Р. Фішер, В. Хегарті та ін., виготовлені переважно з порцеляни, було простежено типові й подібні стилістичні особливості в працях авторів, які знаходились на різних континентах. Потяг до знищення площини та форми – ключова прикмета цього часового проміжку, яка апелювала до першої половини ХХ ст. у живописі. Руйнація – характерна ознака початку ХХІ століття. Митець – як фіксатор історії, викарбовував її у матеріалі. Тенденцію до знищення затвердили й музеєфікували найстаріші порцелянові виробництва Європи: порцелянова мануфактура у Майсені, Аугартен у Відні, Королівська порцелянова мануфактура у Берліні. Підприємства, засновані у період, коли порцеляна вважалася «білим золотом», надали свої площі й технологічні потужності для презентації віянь нової епохи. Все це свідчило про розуміння та головне – прийняття тенденцій часу, які презентують його реалії – деструкцію та антиформу. Вперше зроблено порівняльний аналіз та простежено спільні стилістичні риси у керамічних роботах західних майстрів першої чверті ХХІ ст., частину з яких було презентовано найвідомішими фарфоровими мануфактурами Європи. Практична цінність дослідження полягала у можливості використання його результатів для теоретичного формування нового великого мистецького стилю. Порівняльний аналіз та висновки можуть бути використані науково-дослідними установами для формування науково-методичних посібників, навчальних програм та лекційних курсів з історії проблем стилів та сучасного декоративного-прикладного мистецтва

Ключові слова: керамічні вироби; фарфор; Кріс Антеманн; Граціано Локателлі; Аннет Мессаже; Ансельм Райле; Міхаель Р. Фішер