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LE SECRET DES COULEURS

THE SECRET OF COLOURS

Though we have become accustomed to perceiving endless shades of color applied to all kinds of surfaces—from billboards to comic books, from prints to photographs—we must keep in mind that it wasn't always so. In ceramics as in cinema, color is the result of research and experimentation, sometimes long and monotonous, and often a source of unprecedented inspiration.

This volume tells a story as wild as it is intriguing—the story of this research into color for Chinese and French porcelain. It analyzes two key moments of this tale, both characterized by the desire to broaden the selection of nuances that could be used on porcelain: the end of the eighteenth century in China and the nineteenth century in France.

The first part of the volume investigates the development of opaque glazes for use on porcelain and copper during the eighteenth century by exploring Alfred Baur's vast collection of imperial ceramics, the Canton glazes of the Zubov Foundation, and the export porcelain from the Ariana Museum in Geneva. The second part begins in France, in the nineteenth century, at the Sèvres factory, and then traces the steps of the various journeys to China to bring back samples of color, analyze them chemically, and attempt to reproduce them. It ends with the experiments conducted by the French artist Fance Franck (1927–2008) on "sacrificial red."

The last section of the book is devoted to the present, examining the work on color carried out by the Austrian ceramist Thomas Bohle (born in 1958).