

**For centuries, the items that were associated with indoor decoration were major status symbols for the rich and the higher classes. Paintings by famous artists, especially if they were portraits of**



**your own family, were sought after items. Hardwood furniture and wooden panels as well as Persian carpets all formed part of what you would expect in the houses of the upper classes and this endured for many centuries.**

Durability was very important and today we still see the remnants of long forgotten times in the artworks that they have left behind. Ceramic (clay) ornaments from various parts in the world were part of these durable products and we still find beautifully decorated pottery from long before Christ (and before Alexander the Great) in museums all over the world.

The solid and inert ceramic materials are classified into inorganic crystalline materials. Traditionally, kaolinite was used as a form of clay and nowadays the trend has moved to alumina. They last very well because they are resistant to the forces of time such as chemical attacks from caustic and acidic substances, photonic attacks (ultraviolet and other) and thermal attacks such as fire and withstand temperatures up to 1600°C. Left alone they will last very long, almost indefinitely, but they are susceptible to the forces that humans and mechanics may inflict on them. They are brittle and will break under tension and by shearing and by sufficient shock.

Several variations of decoration are found on ceramic ornaments, such as carving, glazing and paintwork. Of these, paint is probably the most likely to deteriorate due to photonic and other influences, depending on the materials that the paint was derived from. We do find vases from

before Christ in museums that have well preserved paintwork.



It is therefore safe to say that other than the fact that vases form containers and was originally devised for that reason; they have become part of the culture of most nations since history was first recorded and before. This culture has lasted until the present day.

Vases from different periods are just as popular to collect as paintings; we are all very familiar with the famous Ming Dynasty vases for example.

It comes as a big surprise to see how the age of the fake has sneaked up onto us. It is now possible to walk into a store and see a vase at a distant with all its glory and glazing, only to discover on closer inspection that the “precious” material that it has been moulded from is none other than plastic. Don’t be surprised if many sales are made with the customer none the wiser or where the customer doesn’t care.

As collectors items, everything counts again plastic.

Firstly, it is a material for mass production. Very little personal attention goes into these products and the material is relatively cheap. Does this make it cheaper in the store? Apparently not, there is nothing in the price that attracts away from ceramics. It may be cheaper on wholesale but the stores that we investigated consider it worth the markup.

Plastic may be lighter and more resilient to shock in the short term. That should make it favourable in situations where the global overall appearance is important and where mobility is required such as at exhibitions.

In the long term, plastics don't like heat, don't like ultraviolet radiation from sunlight and other sources and don't like air pollution. They become brittle and will eventually self destruct. It does depend on the type of plastic material and some may last much longer than others but only time will tell the difference. Nobody guarantees against this effect, so how will we know?

Together with contemporary appearance, timelessness and the art culture of humanity as such have also been thrown out with the bathwater. It should now, just as it had been in the past, be possible to buy a



fastly by the loss of its original function and the loss of its original form. The vase is a symbol of the diminishing culture of ornamental beauty.