

**NORTHCOTE POTTERY SUPPLIES
TECHNICAL TIPS AND PRODUCT INFORMATION #20**

MAIOLICA

- Maiolica is an INGLAZE technique which is traditionally fired at earthenware temperatures (1100°C).
- A fluxing colourant mixture (oxide/underglaze/stain) is applied to the surface of a glossy, white, tin glaze which is raw/unfired. Once the glaze is fired, the decoration settles into the glaze layer. It is important that the decorative colourant fluxes enough to become part of the glaze layer, but not so much that the decoration bleeds or runs. If the colourant does not flux enough, it will remain as a dry, gritty, unattractive deposit on the surface of the glaze.
- A tin or zirconium silicate based, white earthenware, gloss glaze usually forms the base material for maiolica. If you are using a powdered glaze, add 1% of bentonite to help make the glaze a little less 'friable' (fluffy or dusty) when dry. Alternately, use a brush-on glaze so that the binder 'sets' the glaze hard and forms a suitable, stable decorating surface for your painting.
- Most maiolica colours are a mixture of up to 50-70% frit (Ferro Frit 4124) and 50% oxide/underglaze /stain powder. These dry materials can be mixed with water, and or a painting medium for ease of application/suspension/stickability.
- Maiolica is a technique which requires and benefits from a methodical approach to colour formulation and firing. Extensive testing is desirable to ascertain how each of your decoration materials will behave. Keep appropriate records of what you are doing.
- Each maiolica colour requires a different formulation and its behaviour in firing will vary depending on the base glaze recipe, the glaze application thickness, the firing cycle, the maximum firing temperature, and the thickness of colour application.
- Always apply maiolica colours thinly and sparingly (they are never applied as thickly as liquid underglaze, coloured slips or glazes).
- The major faults in maiolica generally relate to the performance of colourants – sometimes they appear covered with white spots, bleed or are runny, or chrome-based colours (greens) can throw a pink halo on tin-based glazes etc. These faults can all be resolved by modifying your processes.
- Maiolica decoration benefits from the use of high quality soft brushes – especially line brushes for fine detail. Italian Renaissance painted platters are among some of the finest examples of maiolica in the world, and worth seeing in major museums if you have the opportunity. Deruta in Italy is one of the best-known towns for contemporary Italian maiolica.

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