

## Crafts, professions of excellence

### Cold Porcelain

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From the earliest times, the human being has always used clay to make tools for hunting and for food preparation. The history of porcelain begins in China around the 3rd century A.D. It was a paste composed mainly of silicate rock (potassium, sodium, and calcium) and kaolin (pure white clay) characterised by its brightness, hardness, and translucent appearance. This precious material came later to Japan via Korea, around the 16th century, with a very important production and development. Europe tried to imitate Eastern porcelain for a long time but without results. At the beginning of the 18th century, in the German city of Meissen, an alchemist found in the excavations of a tomb a kind of white clay with high kaolin content and began the production of small objects with this clay obtaining results very similar to Chinese porcelain. In the mid-18th century, France developed a technique typically its own " French

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porcelain " with a velvety lustre and rich polychrome decorations such as flowers and birds. The history of Corn Paste begins when artisans were always looking for materials that could be mixed with white clay by lowering the cost of the raw material while having the same quality, beauty, and durability as thin porcelain, also known as Chinese porcelain. No one knows for sure, but it seems that there was in Italy, as early as the time of ancient Rome, a traditional paste, made from flour, water, and salt, known as a salt paste. With this paste, Italian artisans made small, delicate sculptures, depicting the daily life of the time that we know today as "figurines" or "rococo." The artisans were looking for durability and this " salt paste" did not meet the requirements because it was totally organic in fact it tended to deteriorate and not have durability. In other countries there are still works with this paste, in the United States, for example, dolls made with "salt dough" are very famous. Thanks to the insistence of Italian artisans to search for more and more durable and resistant materials an ideal paste was invented to model objects, without the worry that the next day they might break, replacing flour with cornstarch, removing the salt, and adding the first glue materials today called vinyl glues giving more strength and durability to the objects so they could also be coloured and given glossy or matte finishes. This is how European craftsmen arrived at the excellent malleability and durability of this paste known as " cold porcelain " because it did not need firing in high-temperature kilns like traditional porcelain. This processing technique in Europe was abandoned. Around the 1980s, in Latin American countries, particularly in Brazil, a local artisan took up the technique left by the Europeans and popularised it. Today in Brazil, it is a well-known and appreciated art form.

### ***What are the skills and expertise of professionals in this profession?***

The Craftsman in the Manufacture of Cold Porcelain Products is a professional figure with artistic skills that enable him or her to create artefacts of various kinds. He or she is familiar with the processes for producing and processing hand-crafted objects, particularly knows the techniques of creating and modeling cold porcelain paste, and accurately performs the



techniques of designing, constructing handling, and decorating products. He or she knows concerning cold porcelain, the origins, and spread of this art, and skills about the creation, manipulation, and decoration of the same porcelain. He or she knows how to design small artefacts and shape the prepared paste with respect to the design, maintaining proportions and purpose of use of the object. Knows the proper use of the various tools used for

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modelling and decorating artefacts and the art of decoration and its stages such as tracing, painting, and glazing.

### ***Which materials are used in this craft?***

Made from cornstarch/ cornflower glue and PVA (white), cold porcelain is generally mixed approximately 1-1 (1 cup cornstarch to 1 cup PVA) with a small amount of glycerin, baby oil, or facial oil or a ratio of about 2 teaspoons oil to 1 cup cornstarch. The cold porcelain mixture is made by heating the ingredients in a microwave oven or on a stove until it reaches the consistency of mashed potatoes and can be easily scooped into a ball. At this point, it is allowed to cool, then kneaded and stretched to form a smooth elastic dough. It is set aside for 1 day, and carefully wrapped before use. Cold porcelain resembles sugary pastes and fondants in its working characteristics. It is quite soft and has no sharp details, although it can be moulded into very thin sections (flower petals) with some transparency. It "curls" and undulates easily along thin edges, so for larger flower miniatures, it works well. This profession uses steel tools, scrapers, plaster knives, sandpaper, chisels, and power tools. Also, acrylic paints or leaf metals.

### ***What markets are related to this profession?***



Interior design market and jewellery. Both individuals and the public turn directly to the craftsman to create their works. For interior design and jewellery, these will be collaborations related to creating objects used in living and/or office spaces or personal ornamental objects.

### ***Where to learn the profession.***

In Italy, there are numerous courses at all levels. Still, there is no official training to be a Craftsman in the Manufacture of Cold Porcelain Products, which can accredit you to do this specific work. It is more a matter of directing one's studies towards the art world, the Academy of fine arts or any other address aimed at painting, decoration, and modelling.