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Good News!: 3D Printing Is Beginning to Really Influence the Ceramic Arts World, as Shapeways Has Seen

by Michelle Matisons | Mar 28, 2016 | 3D Design, 3D Printed Art, 3D Printing, 3D Printing Materials |



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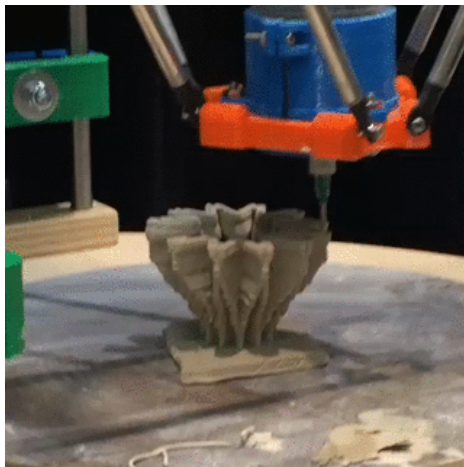
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You may not realize it, but it's highly likely that you are surrounded by ceramic materials right now. Everything from bricks, pipes, floors and roof tiles to your tableware can be made from ceramic material: and this extends way beyond the common associations we have with that high school pottery class you were forced to endure. Defined as an "inorganic nonmetallic, solid material comprised of metal, non-metal and metallic atoms," the ceramic material has also had quite a large impact in its own ceramic arts field.



In fact, a national organization, the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) mission is dedicated to using programs, exhibitions, publications, and conferences to educate people about ceramic arts. The recent [50th annual NCECA conference](#) took place in Kansas City from March 16-19, 2016. With a "Makers, Mentors, and Milestones" theme, the conference included the new directions for 3D printed ceramics, and this placed the [Shapeways Porcelain Team on display there](#) as well.

Now, because ceramic arts places a large emphasis on hand-crafting techniques

historically, the good news for 3D printed ceramics is that people seemed quite open and interested in learning more about new ceramic-making technologies. Ceramic printing techniques on display included FDM mold making, clay extrusion, powder-based ceramic printing, and [Shapeways'](#) unique porcelain printing method. All of these techniques were exhibited at the first-of-its-kind for the conference [Clay Fab Lab](#) — which was spearheaded by West Virginia University's [Shoji Satake](#). This Fab Lab exhibited different ceramic printing processes used by five different US universities.

The Shapeways blog ponders what it means for 3D printing and ceramics that the NCECA featured the technology for the first time at its national conference:



"The presence of digital fabrication methods at NCECA reflects how fast an overall paradigm shift is in full swing for the ceramicists' maker community. While technology will never replace handmade traditions, it is a new tool that allows for exploration of unique shapes and ideas to come to life in this wonderful medium."



Clay extruded pot with hand-pinched detailing at the top by Bryan Czibesz [Image: Shapeways]

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The perception that technology is not in opposition to the amazing centuries-long tradition of hand-crafted ceramics is refreshing. I even personally have to check myself at times when I realize a supposedly quaint industry, like the awesome hand-crafted pottery one, is being transformed. What I have said about fashion and jewelry design I am also prepared to say about the ceramic arts.


When you see what can be made by 3D printing technology, such as intricately detailed designs, without the painstaking weeks and months long handwork required, you may agree as well.

Shapeways announced its porcelain 3D printing material back in November 2014, with the full release in September 2015. The idea that the hand-crafted can coexist with the machine-made is a good one, and I look forward to seeing all of the amazing artwork to be gleaned from this marrying of tradition with emerging technology. Discuss in the [Shapeways Porcelain 3D Printing at NCECA forum](#) over at 3DPB.com.



Bryan Czibez and Richard Burkett with their 3D printed ceramic work [Image: Shapeways]

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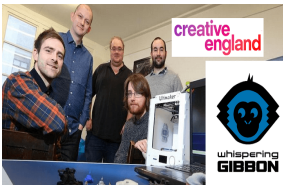
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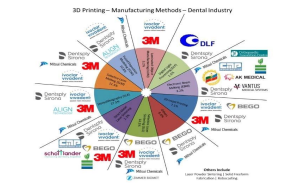
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