

Highlighted Impurities

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My artwork "Highlighted Impurities" explores the themes of surrealism, traditional Japanese art, and Kintsugi. The main meaning behind this piece is that no matter how broken something is, it is still beautiful. Like the broken shards of my fish highlighted with gold, showing the beautiful history behind it, much like scars you have on your body. The fish explores the traditional Japanese art of Kintsugi, explained below.

My piece shows my passion for traditional Japanese culture, represented through the small Japanese town, and the catfish. I thoroughly enjoy the Japanese style, the patterns, colours, symbols, and its background.

The idea of the catfish started just as something surreal, but I decided to base it on the Japanese God Namazu (Onamazu). Namazu is the giant catfish of Japanese mythology, who is responsible for creating earthquakes. The creature was thought to live under the earth, and when it swam through the underwater seas and rivers, it caused an earthquake. My little town was much inspired by the artist Cyrus Wong, a miniature artist who creates tiny, intricate, realistic pieces. These usually consist of small towns, cities, individual buildings, shops and stalls.

The texture of the buildings comes from the beautiful balsa wood grain. These buildings are coloured with ink, some of which has been diluted to make each one unique. The intense navy-blue colour of the catfish enhances the piece, adding contrast between the fish and the town. The shape of the fish is natural and organic. The buildings are coloured naturally but take on a geometric appearance.

The composition was important, having the head and tail separated from the body to extend the idea of kintsugi, and making the impurities stand out. The town is then placed on the body of the fish. All of this together creates an eye-catching piece, with the concept of kintsugi adding context.

I came across many obstacles through the process of completing my piece, the first of which was the size of my fish. Starting with the head and tail attached, it wouldn't fit in the kiln resulting in the separated head and tail, relating to the obvious impurities with no attempt to hide them, like kintsugi. Originally, the catfish was lying on its side, which became very difficult with such delicate clay. During the glaze firing the glaze cracked, and I took this opportunity to make these stand out with the Kintsugi process. Working so delicately with tiny pieces of wood and super glue was a tedious, long process, but in the end, I am very satisfied with the result.

KINTSUGI



Kintsugi is the unique and traditional Japanese art of repairing broken, chipped, and cracked pottery. It means quite literally golden (Kin) repair (Tsugi) and involves repairing ceramics, traditionally with lacquer and gold. This leaves a special gold seam where the cracks once were, highlighting its impurities. The Japanese believe that these impurities are a part of its history, and should be seen as something beautiful, and not something to hide.