

# Decorative Arts in the Middle East

## Art Project Plan

**Project:** Iznik Plate Design

**Suggested Time:** Two to three classroom periods

**Materials Needed:** Drawing paper, compass, pencils (brushes and tempera paint OR colored markers)

**Objective:** Students will gain an understanding of Iznik ceramic wares by designing a floral plate. Throughout the process, they will explore the impact of cultural influences, gain an understanding of Iznik ceramic design, and express themselves creatively.

### **Key Vocabulary:**

Arabesque – abstract designs based on forked leaves, interlaced vines and scrolls

Interlaced – to cross on another as if woven together

Motif – the smallest unit of a pattern

Peripheral – located away from the center, the outer edge

Geometric – characterized by straight lines, triangles, circles, squares or other similar geometric forms

### **Introduction:**

In the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Iznik, Turkey was the center for ceramic production. The products were prized throughout the Middle East and Europe. Iznik wares were inspired by the blue-and-white Ming Dynasty porcelain from China. One thing this means, is that the Turks transmitted Far Eastern aesthetics in ceramics to the West. Initially, Iznik ceramicists followed Chinese models closely, in both the blue-and-white palette and decorative motifs. However, in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, Ottoman potters added naturalistic renderings of indigenous flowers, such as tulips, carnations, hyacinths, bluebells, etc. Bright tomato reds, deep blackish purples, shades of blue and green also entered the scene. General characteristics of Iznik ceramics are: **Floral Motifs, Geometric Patterns and Symmetrical Compositions.**

**Activity:** Today we are going to begin to design our own ceramic plates.

- Students will draw several thumbnail sketches of flowers
- Students will draw a floral and curvilinear design on drawing paper in a circular form
- Students will paint their design with tempera paints or color in with markers

**Visual Aids:**

- Iznik ceramic plates on this page
- Photographs or illustrations of flowers

**Summary:**

- Students will display completed artwork for class critique.
- Students will evaluate design for use of curvilinear, arabesque or floral motifs, and choice of colors.



Plate with diaper pattern, early 16<sup>th</sup> c.



Plate with 3 bunches of grapes, early 16<sup>th</sup> c.



Plate with peacock, mid-16<sup>th</sup> c.

*Teachers: Please contact Angela Williams, CSAMES Outreach Coordinator, at [aswillms@illinois.edu](mailto:aswillms@illinois.edu), for the answer key to the Arts Crossword Puzzle.*