

*Delft Blue
in Motion*



Tradition + innovation = growth



Delft Blue, you simply can't avoid it in Delft, the city where this pottery, once produced as a cheap imitation of expensive Chinese porcelain, was invented and perfected. It is world famous for it. Together with Vermeer and the House of Orange, Delft Blue is one of the essential treasures of the city. It's this treasure that has made Delft so special even far beyond the borders of the Netherlands. You can find Delft Blue and its derivatives all over the city. If it isn't in the Delft Blue stores, then it's in the historic buildings in the city centre, or in objects and decorations located in public places. Delft Blue almost forms the backdrop of everyday life.

INSPIRATIONAL

For the past couple of years, Delft Blue has become very hip and trendy. Artists, interior decorators and designers love it. A modern minimalist house with a Delft Blue vase on the chimney piece is 'hot' again. Large retailers have also rediscovered Delft Blue. The shelves are filled with Delft Blue duvet covers, clothing, tableware, wallpaper and USB sticks. Over the past four hundred years, Delft Blue has become art, kitsch and

a national icon that rivals our Dutch colour and royal orange. Contemporary artists are inspired by this special blue which finds its origins in the seventeenth century and brought prosperity not only to the city of Delft, but the whole of the Netherlands. The ceramic industry was a very important industry for what was then the Republic of the United Netherlands; the international trade in pottery contributed to the Republic becoming an international powerhouse, with corresponding influence and prosperity, in the seventeenth century.



'I made Delft Blue my trademark. Initially, colleagues thought I was crazy. Then I became a trendsetter, and now my work is copied.'

Hugo Kaagman, artist

'I think it is important that the Delft Blue tradition continues, but it must have an eye to creative innovations. You should try to make connections between tradition and innovation. This is vital for the ceramic industry.'

Simone Haak,
owner Terra Gallery



ROYAL DELFT

Of the 34 potteries in Delft, there is only one remaining. Royal Delft is the oldest pottery factory in Europe. Delft Blue is still produced in the same traditional way as it was 350 years ago: ornamental earthenware and utensils which appeal to a large international public. Much of the pottery produced at that time served as simple utensils. Some

Delftware factories did however excel in the production of luxury showpieces that found their way around the world. Those who counted or wanted to count in society possessed a piece of precious Delft Blue. Many foreign museums and palaces still display Delft Blue from that period. In the nineteenth century, the popular Delftware lost its appeal with the discovery of china clay and the production of cheaper and better quality earthenware in England: Wedgewood. Royal Delft however managed to survive the recession.

WORLD FAME

By the end of the nineteenth century, the company began a new chapter in its history under the inspirational guidance of Abel Labouchere (1860-1940) and artistic adviser Adolf le Comte (1850-1921). Both had studied at the Polytechnic School, a forerunner of the modern-day Technical University of Delft. Labouchere had studied art history and architecture; Le Comte was a professor of decorative architecture. Labouchere knew how to integrate business and commercial interests with the artistic values in a unique way. Now there was an opportunity for creative innovation, and a new production process was designed that delivered a kind of pottery that could compete with the English products. But most importantly: Royal Delft experimented with the blue colour. Ultimately, these innovations led to the breakthrough of Delft Blue as we know it today. In 1883, the new product was put on the market. Sales doubled straightaway and it was the springboard for renewed global fame. In the twentieth century, the company remained a leader in innovative earthenware. Prominent artists worked in the Building Ceramics

'There is enormous interest in Delft Blue once again. We want to expand our ceramics selection to include modern earthenware tableware and ornaments. Above all, we intend to make our business a real attraction, so that Royal Delft will also attract people who don't care for Delft Blue.'

Henk Schouten,
director of Royal Delft



Department, which was set up in 1895. Half a century later Royal Delft established an Experimental Department to respond to the growing demand for more contemporary earthenware. Consequently the company developed into a knowledge centre for ceramics. It is however still the original Delft Blue which attracts 140,000 visitors, mostly foreign, to Delft every year. A visit to Royal Delft is one of the main attractions of the city.

Delft

INNOVATION

You can see traditional Delft Blue and its modern applications in various places throughout the city. Obviously, in the tourist shops and businesses specialised in selling authentic Delft Blue, but if you look closely, you'll see it on the streets, in the historical buildings, shops and homes, echoes from the time when Delft Blue on

the table or wall was just as familiar and popular as IKEA products are now. The Technical University of Delft which was a major influence for Royal Delft, thanks to Labouchere and Le Comte, is still involved in the ceramic industry. The university is the driving force behind technological innovation in the field of ceramic applications in industrial, aerospace- and medical science. These two Delft qualities – sustainable technology and handcrafted pottery – are reflected in the current motto of the city: Delft Creating History.

JINGDEZHEN

The Delft streets are increasingly adorned with modern ceramics, often playfully referring to the history of Delft pottery. It started with a Gaudi-inspired Delft Blue bench by Marianne Burgers and Chris Dagradi in the garden of Museum Het Prinsenhof and the cheerful ceramic bull by Rob Brandt on the Beestenmarkt. New highlights are the Delft Blue lampposts on St. Agatha's Square, a project completed by Dutch and Chinese artists. Recently, Delft has created a city partnership with Jingdezhen, the home of Chinese porcelain. This has resulted in

an inspiring exchange programme as well as cultural activities, such as artist-in-residence projects in Jingdezhen and Delft. In 2010, the renowned Chinese ceramicist Jackson Li was the first Chinese artist-in-residence at Royal Delft.

An historical, archaeological and contemporary exchange between the two world famous ceramic towns makes Delft even more interesting for a wider audience as a ceramic city. The programme includes: an exhibition of Delft Blue which has never been displayed before and which reflects the relationship with Jingdezhen; a contribution to the 'Haagse Sculptuur' ceramics event by the Chinese artist Wan Yan Li, who worked at Royal Delft in 2011 as artist-in-residence; and the presentation of porcelain collections from Jingdezhen and Delft Blue which shows how artists from these two cities were influenced by each other. Preparations are also being made for a World Ceramic Road that connects a number of ceramic cities in the world. The mutual inspiration between Europe and the Far East is not new. Through the centuries, there has always been cross-pollination between the West and East. Western

'At Royal Delft, people can see for themselves how traditional methods are still being used as they were hundreds of years ago. Here, people see something of their cultural heritage, their roots. This is important. You want to keep this for the future.'

Jackson Li, Chinese ceramicist

'Consumer goods have a significance that goes beyond their utilitarian character and commercial value.'

Ger Bruins, Associate Professor Aesthetics, TU Delft



'The starting point of our design is to try and interweave the history and the future of Delft'

Francine Houben,
Mecanoo Architects

BLUE, CENTRE FOR DELFTWARE

In 2012, in Museum Het Prinsenhof, *Blue, Centre for Delftware* opens its doors. Delft Blue, which is so important for the development of our city and our international reputation, will finally have its own home in the city. The centre is the showcase for what Delft has to offer in the field of contemporary and traditional earthenware, not only for foreign tourists but also for the people of Delft.

The City of Delft's interesting collection of Delft pottery is displayed here. The centre will capture the oral history of Delftware, as well as the city's glorious past, to which Delft Blue made such an important contribution. *Blue, Centre for Delftware* initiates and organises activities about Delft Blue and its heritage collections. The centre brings Delft stakeholders together in order to promote Delft as a ceramics city nationally and internationally, thereby reinforcing the global image of Delft Blue. The centre is a perfect starting point for visitors who want to get to know the city. If, after visiting Museum Het Prinsenhof, you are gripped by the story of Delft Blue, take a look at Royal Delft or go to the Vermeer Centre. There you will recognise a whitish blue porcelain bowl from Jingdezhen in a sample of Vermeer's painting 'Young woman reading a letter at an open window'.

You continue your tour with a visit to one of the Delft galleries displaying ceramic work from national and international artists or take a city tour through the town centre, following the ceramic tour which is marked with Delft Blue stones. With *Blue, Centre for Delftware*, Delft is presented nationally and internationally as a ceramic city extraordinaire. Because that's what we are. Delft Blue is in our DNA. This is why Delft was one of the founders of the Urban Network for Innovation in Ceramics (UNIC), a network of ten European ceramic cities in which Delft plays a prominent role. Not surprisingly, the UNIC Final Conference was held in Delft in 2011, where we as ceramics cities collectively reflected on our achievements and the challenges that await us.



DELFT BLUE TRAIN STATION

How can Delft better convey its ambitions than in a location where Delft unfolds in all its glory and splendour for its visitors: the train station. In 2015, Delft will have a new City Hall and a new station hall under one roof. These are adjacent to the historic city centre and within walking distance of the campus of the Technical University of Delft, which works on future developments, sustainable technologies, the promise of innovation and High Tech. All these aspects come together in a vaulted ceiling which features scenes in Delft Blue and

connects City Hall to the station hall. Using thermal storage and energy saving facades, Francine Houben of Mecanoo Architects (Delft), an internationally renowned architectural office, has designed a particularly sustainable building. Here, the traveller will feel that Delft is not only a city with a rich history but also one of technological innovation. At this crossroads, symbolic of a city that has been and still is internationally focused, Delft Blue is reflected in all its dimensions.

'Blue is the connecting factor between the factories, marketing organizations, galleries, artists, designers, scientists; in short, the stakeholders who deal with ceramics. The synergy which is created through this collaboration is the added value of Blue, Centre for Delftware.'

Milène Junius,
deputy mayor of the City of Delft





Delft Blue lampposts
Wendy Steenks, Ling Yun and Adriaan Rees



Delft Blue storage jar



Object from production range 'Kenzan'
Maaïke Roozenburg



Modern ceramic piece
Jackson Li



Contemporary Delft Blue design
Hugo Kaagman



Original storm umbrella with tulip motif vase
Senz Umbrellas



Delft Blue tulip vase
Royal Delft



Delft Blue route
Christina Linaris Coridou



Delft Blue tile
(17th century)



Delft Blue notebook
Royal Delft



Modern Delft Blue plate
Felicity Aylieff



Artist impression of station hall Delft
Mecanoo Architects



Modern vase, inspired by a 17th century tulip vase
Studio Job



Crystal glazes
Yves Lambeau



COLOFON

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DELFT BLUE PROGRAMME LEADER

Paulus van Uythoven, City of Delft

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