

## Jasperware

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Wedgwood's most triumphant experiments were those that led to the invention of Jasper. This largely, praised contribution to the realm of pottery has its origins in Wedgwood's desire to compete in the market for reproductions of Greco-Roman bas-relief.

The first mentions of this white-body experiment that would come to be known as Jasper are written in a letter from Wedgwood to Bentley in 1771. He struggled with the production of this ceramic body beginning in 1774 until its perfection in 1780. After then, it was Wedgwood's focus to produce both useful and ornamental Jasper. This white body was similar to the basalts in general properties but was capable of something that was no body in the history of pottery had known to do. Using barium sulfate, Wedgwood was able to apply color to the entire body without paints or enamel. Jasper was equipped with the qualities fit for cameos, portrait medallions, and all bas-reliefs.

The white body, Jasper, is of a porcelain-like, translucent quality that is smooth and matte in finish. It requires absolutely no glaze, for that would blur the crisp detail and definition in the bas-reliefs. One of its most unique traits as a ceramic is its capability of being polished in the same manner as gems. While Jasper can be found in various colors, the most recognized variation is the pale blue that has become known as Wedgwood Blue.

The classic Wedgwood designs aimed to emulate the elegant simplicity and grace of antique forms that, along with eighteenth century neoclassicism, became the narratives for Jasperware. John Flaxman, a chief sculptor of the time, also contributed his skills to the designing of Jasperware bas-reliefs. The primary source for Flaxman's inspiration was drawn from William Hamilton's collection of Greek vases that also influenced Encaustic ware.

Wedgwood held his Jasperware recipe in such secrecy that no two people employed by him ever had a complete understanding of how it was made.

Wedgwood's invention was subject to imitation by his competitors, but because he took such measures to keep its manufacturing ingredients a secret, its exact makeup was unknown for the rest of Wedgwood's life. It was not until after Wedgwood died that the chemical recipe for Jasper was revealed.