



The Henriot Pottery, Quimper

Rob Who is Henriot?

Isabelle Henriot was the second man who came here. The first one was Jean-Baptiste Bousquet, the creator, in 1690 and after came Henriot on the other side. And that was the first building for Jean-Baptiste Bousquet, and the second one, just behind, was for Henriot, who had another style with another way to paint flowers. It was two styles completely different, but now the most famous is Henriot's, so we are..... our name is "Henriot."

Rob What is the difference between "faïence" and "porcelain"?

Isabelle Porcelain. The difference is the earth, the clay that we use. In faïence we use, not a special clay, but in porcelain we have to add kaolin. Do you know that?

Rob Yes, kaolin, it's the same word in English.

Isabelle It's thinner, porcelain is thinner and here in Brittany, in Quimper, we make faïence. And, we, we are going to walk around and I will show you it's all hand-made here. It's very important for us. Now, we do the shape, we do the mould for all, and we make all here in Quimper. So plates and bowls are made here in this ... and we use that. The clay and other for the plaster mould. And we are going to put each ... each plate is done like this. Oops.

Jeff The disk of clay is place is placed on the mould ...

Isabelle That's it.

Jeff The wheel turns ...

Isabelle And I'm going to flatten it. And after I put the calibre, this little wood pieces on the back of the clay... oops... it's very hard to do ... I'm just showing quickly... it's hard. That's it. And you've got the back of the plate.

Jeff So that's a wood-former to make the base of the plate, yes.

Isabelle And I cut the clay, just to have the right size of the plate you see. And now it's done. We let it dry.

Rob Maybe that's why you were in the shop.

Isabelle That's it!

Rob Excuse me.

Isabelle They're all doing very well, but not me.

Elaine? These are all the old moulds?

Isabelle Yes, the old moulds. but ...

Jeff There are racks and racks and racks of old moulds.

Isabelle Most of them are used, here is the place where the man who do the mould, the plaster mould is going to work. Those two are the first... this one is the first made. So, we are going to use this one to reproduce ...

Elaine? How old is that?

Isabelle One hundred and fifty years.

Elaine? Wow. What a past. ... That's extraordinary. That's extraordinary.

Jeff How do you know where everything is? There seems so much and there doesn't seem to be ...

Isabelle I think that the man who is working here, who's called Christophe, know every, every mould. You can say, "oh you want a little tiny creamer, I can see it over there." Yeah, he knows his place.

This is the main place to be here in the manufacture. It's a workshop where people are painting, because everybody want to see that. Have you seen the way they paint?

Jeff Very, very delicate.

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Isabelle That's it. And quickly. They can do a plate in 20 minute. Can you imagine? Changing colours and all that... in 20 minute.

Rob So is there a design team somewhere in the factory that just creates these moulds?

Isabelle No, I will say it's our boss and the one you saw in the workshop. She's the teacher, in fact, and she's going to learn to each new painter how to do the works. We take four years here to be completely trained, yeah, because it's a very special way to paint and to paint on faïence. So it take four years and even to know the colour, because the colour are made by metallic oxide: cobalt, copper, iron, manganese... all that is used for the colour. So, it's, uh, it's very special. Here, when you are painting the sea, it's pink. Can you imagine? You have to, to imagine what it is going to do after that. But, it's completely pink.

Jeff After it's fired, it goes blue.

Isabelle Yes, it's blue after firing. But we have a special way to mix them. Each company, each, each manufacture... Sèvres, Rouen, Nevers, Quimper... have its way to mix the mineral to have their real blue. Quimper has special blue, Sèvres another one, so we have our recette. That's why you can't take photo, because it's secret, secret.

Rob And that's what makes Quimper pottery, faïence collectable and valuable.

Isabelle Yes, yes. It's very special.

Rob Will every piece leave the factory with a signature?

Isabelle Yes. Because the painter is going to sign each pieces with their brush on the back. You see? The flowers on the face and on the back they put the signature of Henriot, Quimper and those two letters are the name of the painter.

Elaine? I noticed.

Isabelle The initial.

Elaine? It's beautiful.

Isabelle It is very important. A piece is going to be done to the beginning and the end by the same lady.

Jeff Um, so the numbers of people -- you have more artists than you have people making ...

Isabelle Yes, of course ... because it takes less time to do this kind of things -- the shape, the form -- than doing the painting, I think.

Jeff All the jobs are very special.

Isabelle Yes.

Jeff And they all need an apprenticeship.

Isabelle Of course. We have five school in France, specially for ceramic, so you learn how to do the plaster mould, how to do the calibre... over there in the round... for the round pieces... it's a special job too. And they learn glazing. They learn painting. All those person come from those schools. Now, I will say, because in the past you were learning here, because your uncle or your mother was here. It's different now.

Jeff If it takes one of the artists four years to become ... what happens to their work during those four years?

Isabelle Ah, we are going to sell it in the shop as "trainer's artist" in our "second choice". We have a part "second choice", because, of course, times to times we are going to, to have a wrong piece... not the right colour or not the right shape or I don't know. So, we can sell those pieces in "second choice" and the "trainer," because we only have one, one-by-one, because it's a lot of work to train to these new painters the way to do the "Quimper touch".

Jeff So, just one?

Isabelle Just one at the moment.

Jeff Just one at a time.

Isabelle And at the end of the year, she will be a completely painters, so next year I hope we have another one.

Elaine Is it normally women?

Isabelle Yes, it's true. That's the same. In the past, we used to have mens, but when the war came, they all gone for the war, so womens came here and we think that they are quite -- how do you say that, "habile"?

Rob More precise?

Isabelle Yes, precise, I would say that.

Elaine So, the delicate touch?

Isabelle That's it. And that's what we need in "Quimper touch".

Elaine And do you do tours here every day?

Isabelle Yes, we are doing tours every days.

Jeff In different languages?

Isabelle In the summer, yes. You can have it in French, English, Spanish, ...

Jeff Breton?

Isabelle Breton? I, uh, that's in the winter ... for our special guests.

