

Kintsugi Metaphor: "Mending Broken Pottery With Gold" What Can We Learn From a Broken Ceramic Vessel?

Kintsugi, as the practice is known, gives new life to damaged or aging ceramic objects by celebrating their frailty and history. One can consider how we might live a kintsugi life, finding value in the cracks, missing pieces and chips - whether it's the scars showing how we have lived, finding new purpose through aging and loss, see the beauty of 'imperfection' and love ourselves, family and friends despite flaws.



Rebirth

The translation from Japanese of *kintsugi* means "golden joinery" or, "to patch with gold". This technique transforms broken ceramic or china vessels into beautiful works of art. Using the gold effect with lacquer or epoxy to enhance breaks, sometimes attaching contrasting shards from different ceramic items, gives new life in an aesthetically pleasing way and is a unique method to repair broken pottery. Note that the kintsugi pot you have received is not made with real gold but the effect is almost identical.

More about kintsugi: *Kintsugi* is said to have originated in the 15th century when a Japanese shogun broke a favorite tea bowl and sent it back to China to be fixed. But the repair job, which was done with metal staples (being the standard for repair at that time), detracted from the beauty of the bowl, so the shogun enlisted Japanese craftsmen to come up with a more aesthetically pleasing solution. *Kintsugi* was born.



Although the ancient *kintsugi* repair made it appear as though the original piece was mended with gold, the original process was essentially a form of lacquer art. Broken pieces were glued back together using urushi lacquer, derived from the sap of the Chinese lacquer tree. The final layer of Urushi was covered with fine gold powder. There was a "toxic" part to the ancient process which came from the Urushi oil, found in very high amounts in the tree's sap, which is the ingredient that's responsible for forming the dense and highly durable lacquer once dried. Fortunately, once the Urushi dried and hardened, the toxic effects of the urushiol oil are essentially nullified, making the lacquer ware safe to handle. Today, thanks to modern polymer technology, *kintsugi* style repair can be accomplished with state of the art materials that are stronger and have greater longevity than the traditional lacquer methodology. Real gold powder can be used but due the price of gold, it is cost prohibitive for most customers.



How to maintain the kintsugi repaired item

This item was restored with "cold" materials, meaning, it was not re-fired in a kiln. To keep the restoration quality intact for years, it is recommended to not wash, not use for liquids and not use with food – the restored item is for display only. If cleaning is required, you can use damp soft cloth applied gently without scrubbing. Avoid direct sun to prevent colors from fading or temperatures above 150 degrees Fahrenheit.