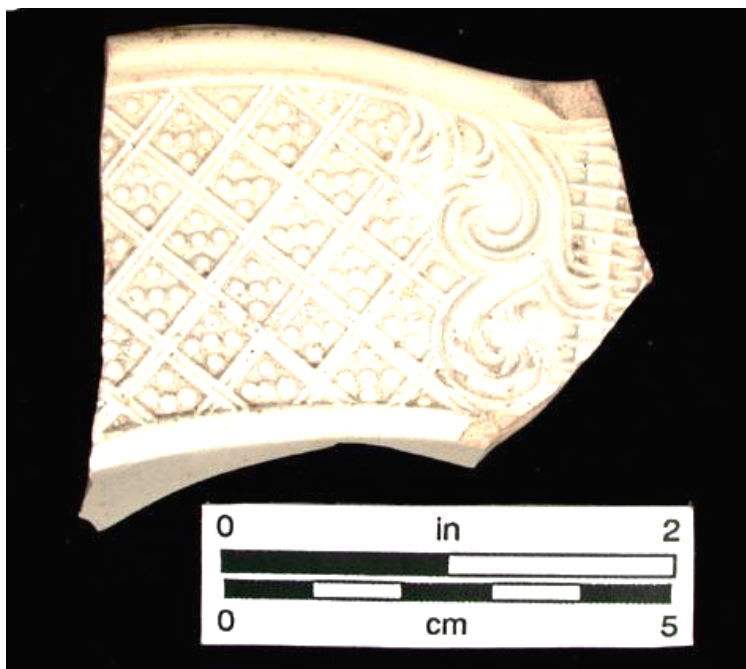




NICHOLE BODIN

CONTEXTS IN CUBAN ARCHAEOLOGY CERAMIC RESEARCH



FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY : [STONEWARE, WHITE SALT GLAZED](#)

Historical archeology in the Caribbean has linked ceramic studies with typically significant production credentials for research through the early eras of civilization. Ceramics, as material culture, represent the most enduring type of artifact within the study of archaeology, having a historical value that responds to artistic styles and their practical uses.

Research in the archaeological sites of the colonial era of the city of Havana report a great variety in the architectural application of ceramics after the analysis of thousands of specimens, allowing the Spanish origin to be classified with chronological data dating from the 16th to the XX Century. But pottery study in Cuba is still a field neglected by archaeologists, art historians, historians and architects, as the national bibliography on the matter is scarce. Archaeological excavations in Old Havana, Santiago de Cuba and Trinidad confirm the appearance of Spanish (Sevillian and Catalan), English and Mexican tiles in the first three Hispanic centuries of Cuban history.

Spanish ceramics (imposed through 379 years of colonial domination in Cuba) appear as a strong Hispanic presence in relation to ceramic materials. In the archaeological contexts dated between 1740 and 1775, only moderate finds of Flint Earthenware or White Salt-Glazed Stoneware are reported in numerous sites in the Historic Center of Havana and in the city of Trinidad.

In the 1750s, early Cream Earthenware was introduced as the Whieldon type. The metallic oxides for decoration were applied in the first firing before glazing the cream-colored body. During the second firing, the glaze melted producing a marbled coloration described as "tortoiseshell." Its colors were basically brown, green, blue and gray, or only brown and green were used. Hispanic ceramics can be grouped into groups from the time of conquest and colonization, shaped by the classification of majolica potsherds within the Moorish and Italian traditions.

By the 19th century, the Cuban market for English earthenware for decorating Havana buildings was mostly manufactured in Valencia and Catalonia. Through finds dating back to the 19th century in urban archaeological sites and colonial constructions in the cities of Havana and Matanzas, large quantities of tiles manufactured in Valencia and Onda could be found, considered the largest heritage of Spanish tiles overseas.



FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY: [WHIELDON WARE](#)

The examples of edge tiles from Old Havana demonstrate a relief decoration in the Italian Renaissance style, with geometric plant motifs and a decoration mostly in blue, green, honey and purple on a white tin background. Another type of Renaissance tile introduced in Seville in the 15th or early 16th century is the Pisano (smooth or flat tile using the oxide-on-enamel technique) decorated with Italian canons. On the other hand, in some houses such as Mercaderes No. 15, the Museum of the Arabs, Hostal “El Comendador” and the Palace of the Counts of Santovenia, the presence of Spanish ceramics of the Moorish tradition is an abundant aspect that has a transcendental in the early chronological primary contexts unaltered for four centuries that can subsequently be archaeologically mediated.

In archaeological excavations within Havana contexts, the finds of oriental porcelain appear to be linked to ceramics from the aboriginal tradition of opulent houses, where the servants did not eat or use the dishes of the owners of the house and these were used under the same roof with other luxurious silver dishes and glazed clay pots.

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FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY : [PISANO STYLE TILE](#)

By the 16th century, the city of Puebla de los Ángeles was consolidated as a ceramic industrial center. However, proximity and price were determining factors for New Spain ceramics to begin arriving in the San Cristóbal area by boat. At the moment when the pottery turnover in Spain loses its efforts and commercial presence in Havana, numerous peninsular potters settle in the New World seeking different economic horizons, bringing different cultural messages generationally. In commemoration of the 249 years since the taking of Havana by the English in 1762, the Cabinet and Museum of Archeology in Cuba presented a sample of ceramics found during archaeological work in the Historic Center with potsherds from the 18th and 19th centuries, reflecting thus the inventive quality of English potters.

This exhibition shows a known cup of Pedernal Earthenware or Salt Glazed White Stone Earthenware, dated between 1740 and 1775 and began to be produced between 1710 and 1720. Available to the less wealthy classes, this material allowed for the design of thin and highly resistant walls. (by adding calcined flint to the white clay paste), these pieces were competitive with Chinese porcelain when the custom of drinking tea was acquired. During this time, English potters and other parts of Europe developed different types of ceramics of great quality and beauty.

Most of these are found in Havana archaeological contexts in Cuban cities such as Trinidad, Cienfuegos, Camagüey, Matanzas and Santiago de Cuba. Presented in this exhibition are two most important examples of White Fine Earthenware that were manufactured between 1820 and 1900. However, historical archaeologists depend on research by 'material culture specialists' to produce guides to the types of artifacts through 'artifact studies' for identification, establishing a chronology and creating a typology of interpretation. The study of cultural matters has a long intellectual history in the social sciences, thus creating space for transdisciplinary studies that can eliminate the conservative limits that are maintained within the Academy and prevent social theory from being rigid and full of totalization. The discovery of 'anthropological matter' in field work involves the development of perspectives in the construction of social identities and community values. Interdisciplinary interests in material culture are increasing every day, particularly in the analytical perspectives that have emerged in anthropological material culture studies.