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The White Road: Journey Into An Obsession



Synopsis

An intimate narrative history of porcelain, structured around five journeys through landscapes where porcelain was dreamed about, fired, refined, collected, and coveted. Extraordinary new nonfiction, a gripping blend of history and memoir, by the author of the award-winning and best-selling international sensation, *The Hare with the Amber Eyes*. In *The White Road*, best-selling author and artist Edmund de Waal gives us an intimate narrative history of his lifelong obsession with porcelain, or "white gold". A potter who has been working with porcelain for more than 40 years, de Waal describes how he set out on five journeys to places where porcelain was dreamed about, refined, collected and coveted - and that would help him understand the clay's mysterious allure. From his studio in London, he starts by travelling to three "white hills" - sites in China, Germany, and England that are key to porcelain's creation. But his search eventually takes him around the globe and reveals more than a history of cups and figurines; rather, he is forced to confront some of the darkest moments of 20th-century history. Part memoir, part history, part detective story, *The White Road* chronicles a global obsession with alchemy, art, wealth, craft, and purity. In a sweeping yet intimate style that recalls *The Hare with the Amber Eyes*, de Waal gives us a singular understanding of "the spectrum of porcelain" and the mapping of desire.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was initially drawn to *The White Road* by Edmund de Waal because I had read that it involved a man's love for ceramics, his travels and research through three countries and histories, and how the book was comparable to a meditation of sorts on his love for the ceramic

medium. While this is all that I am passionate about as well, it had occurred to me early on in this book that this read was going to be a struggle to get through. Indeed, yes, de Waal describes a true obsession and went into great description of porcelain's many diverse histories; however, I ultimately found the writing style to be a bit exhausting and drawn-out. The author has been working closely with porcelain since he was seventeen, and he continues to make porcelain vessels as his creative muse decades later. One of de Waal's dreams was to travel to the great epicenters of porcelain manufacturing. His story describes this pilgrimage as a dedication to his love for the "white gold." He pays homage to these three "white hills" in China, Germany and England and incorporates many factors into his discoveries and research. Throughout his journeys he encounters kiln sites, ceramic institutes, museums, research facilities, porcelain factories and current sculptors. He provides elaborate histories of emperors, chemists and porcelain experimentations using his extensive research of maps, photographs, memoirs, and porcelain order archives. All elements provide an extensive text that contains an abundance of knowledge on the life of porcelain. While reading this book, my thoughts and perceptions about certain things changed. I never read about the history of ceramics, but, in reading this book, I began to appreciate my young ceramic journey from a different perspective.

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