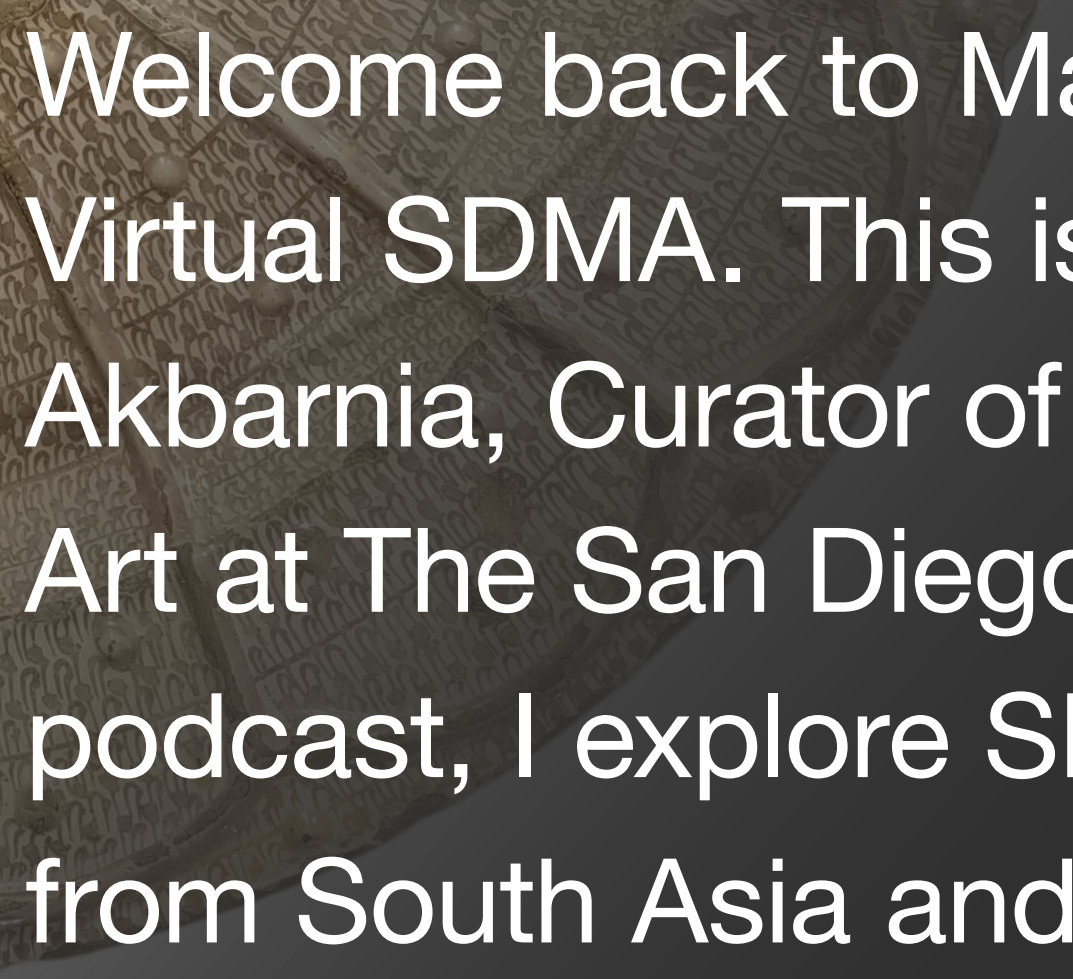


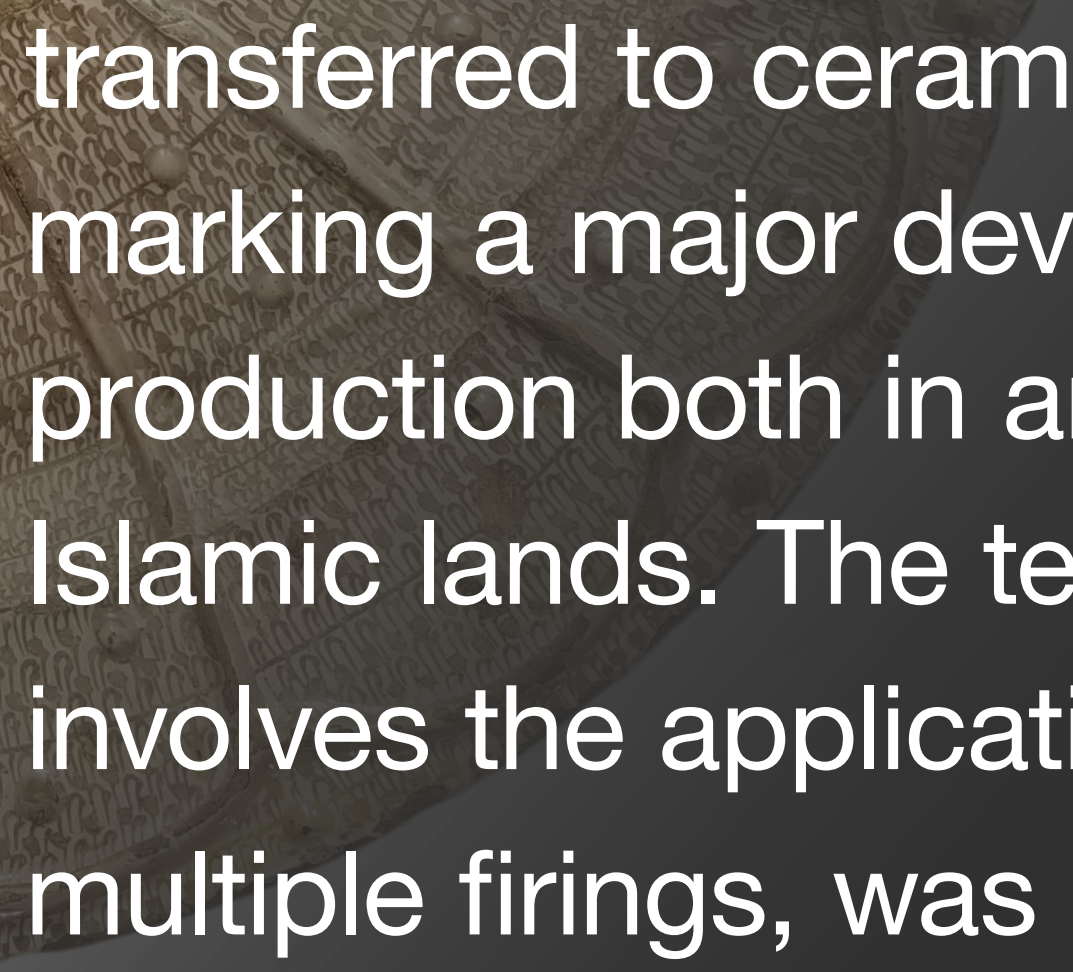
MASTERPIECE
MINUTE





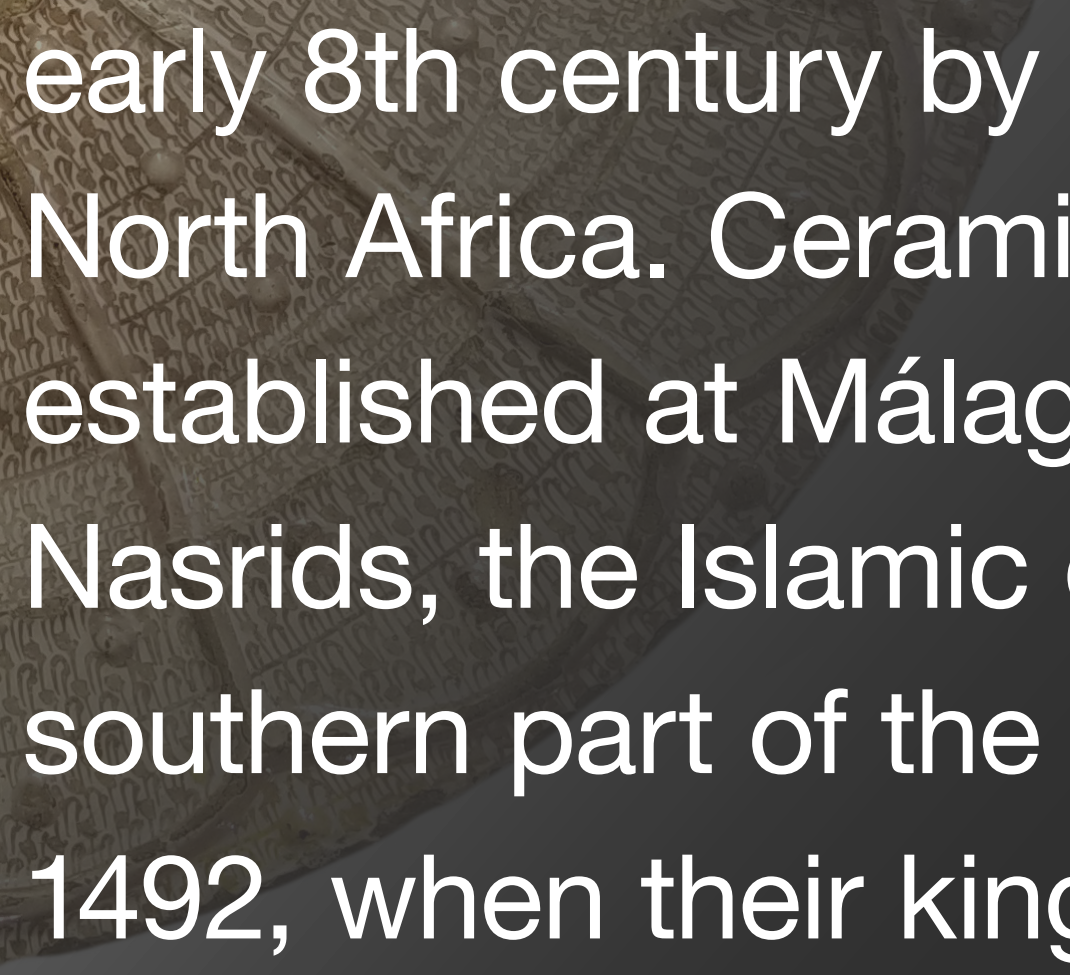
Welcome back to Masterpiece Minute at Virtual SDMA. This is your host, Ladan Akbarnia, Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art at The San Diego Museum of Art. In this podcast, I explore SDMA's collections of art from South Asia and the Islamic world, which at one time included Spain, a topic we will explore today. Drop in every week to pick up a new mini talk led by SDMA curators or their guests, spotlighting works of art from the Museum's collection.

The glittering appearance of this large dish produced in 16th-century Spain comes from the application of luster, a decorative glazing technique originating in the medieval Islamic World. First developed for glassmaking by Arab potters in Egypt, the luster technique



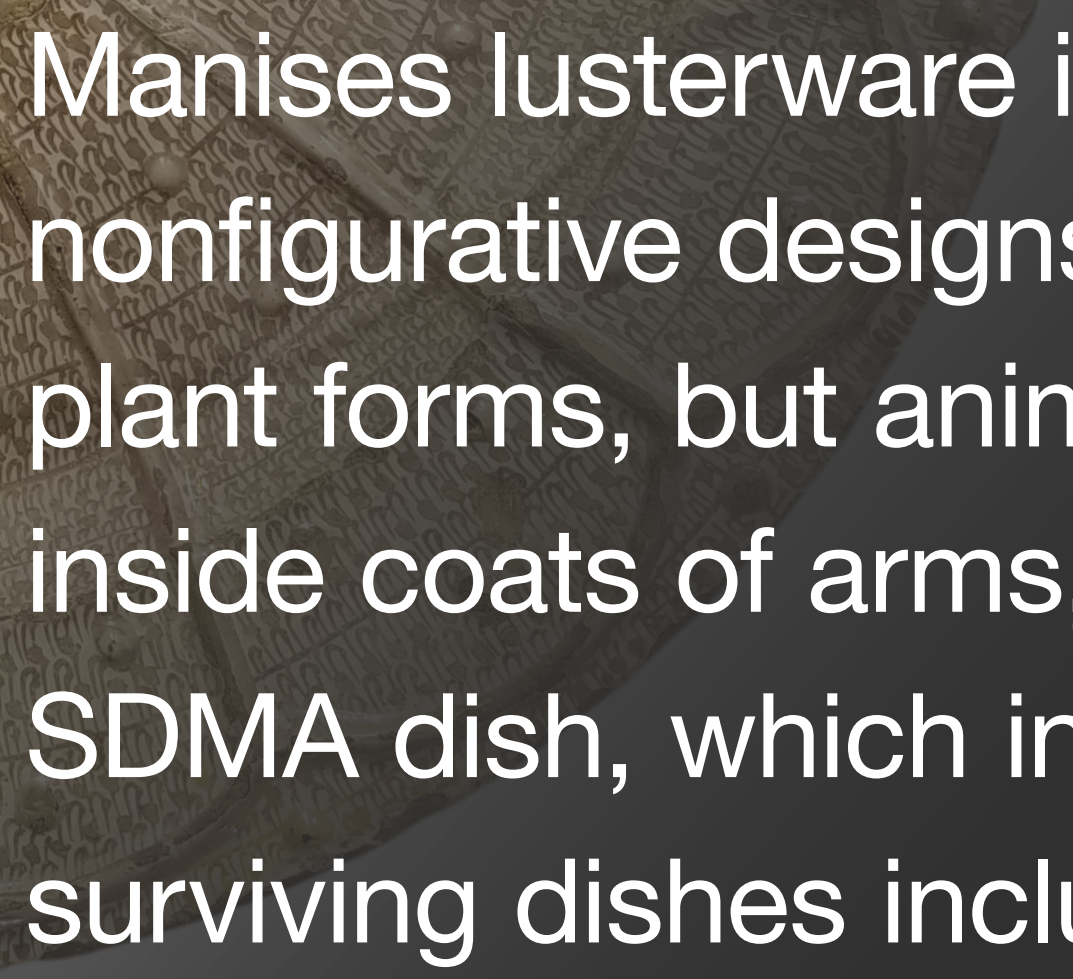
transferred to ceramics in 9th-century Iraq, marking a major development in ceramics production both in and beyond the central Islamic lands. The technical process, which involves the application of metallic oxides and multiple firings, was a trade secret passed down through generations of craftsmen. This practice limited its production to certain sites, but also enabled scholars to trace its spread from Iraq back to Egypt in the 10th century and subsequently to Iran, Syria, and Spain, as well as to other parts of Europe.

Luster production flourished between the 14th and 16th centuries as part of a thriving ceramic industry throughout the Iberian Peninsula, which includes modern Spain and Portugal. Islam had been introduced to the region in the



early 8th century by Arabs and Berbers from North Africa. Ceramic production became established at Málaga under the reign of the Nasrids, the Islamic dynasty that ruled the southern part of the peninsula from 1232 until 1492, when their kingdom in Granada was conquered by Ferdinand and Isabella.

Serving both local and export markets, the ceramic industry spread from Málaga to other regional centers in Spain. The Valencian town of Manises gained repute for its production of fine luster-painted ceramics inspired by Islamic traditions. Most of these wares were made by Muslim craftsmen living under Christian rule, known as *Mudéjar* after an Arabic word meaning “tamed,” although Christian potters also participated in the industry.



Manises lusterware is distinguished by largely nonfigurative designs composed of abstract plant forms, but animal figures may appear inside coats of arms, such as in the case of the SDMA dish, which includes an eagle. Several surviving dishes include punctured holes in the rim like the ones above the eagle's head on our dish, suggesting that these wares were also enjoyed as display pieces when not in use.

Such fine lusterwares are known to have been made for the Church or for private devotion, but many were commissioned by prominent and wealthy members of Iberian society in the 15th century. Several surviving pieces bearing Heraldic emblems associated with Italian elites suggest that Italians formed the largest export market for Manises lusterwares outside Spain,

at least until Italian potters began making their own versions with preferred local styles. Italian merchants also contributed to the movement of Manises ceramics around the Mediterranean, including to Fustat in Egypt, where fragments have been found, datable to between 1350 and 1500. Excavations of late medieval London also reveal evidence of the import of Málaga and Manises lusterwares to England. Although the market declined after the 16th century, Manises potters continued local production up to the late 18th century.

Thank you for listening. This has been Ladan on Masterpiece Minute at Virtual SDMA!

