

***Yūri-kinsai* Underglaze Gold Leaf**

Yūri-kinsai is a relatively new underglaze technique for ceramics in which designs are created with pieces of cut gold leaf and gold paint. It was designated an Important Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2001.

Gold has been used to decorate Japanese ceramics since the seventeenth century, but it was usually applied with overglaze techniques that leave it near the surface and vulnerable to wear over time. In the early 1960s, Ishikawa potter Takeda Aritsune (1888–1976) developed an underglaze technique for applying gold leaf and paint, which came to be known as *yūri-kinsai*. His method both protects the gold from damage and gives it a softer sheen.

The *yūri-kinsai* process begins with cutting pieces of the design out of delicate gold leaf, which is prone to tears and wrinkling if mishandled. The pieces are then carefully attached with a thin layer of glaze to a ceramic vessel previously fired with a high-temperature glaze. Additional detail work can be done with gold paint and gold powder or by scratching lines into the gold with a needlelike tool. Once the design has dried, a final layer of transparent glaze is carefully applied, and the vessel is fired at a low temperature, leaving the gold design sandwiched between several layers of glaze.

Another Ishikawa artist famous for the *yūri-kinsai* technique is Yoshita Minori (1932–), who was designated a Holder of Important Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2001.