

Lustrous Metallic and Overglazes: Turning Ordinary into Extraordinary



Add sparkle and pizzazz to plain glazed pieces and glass with the addition of overglaze products. The term overglaze means just what it says. It's a product that goes over the top of glaze.

Once fired, many of these products give brilliant metallic coatings like OG801 Bright Gold, OG802 White Gold and OG805 Premium Gold. and OG803 Mother of Pearl. Many artists don't realize many of the unique combinations and ways to layer overglaze colors.

One of the most common metallic overglaze products is fired gold OG801, OG805. You have probably seen this material used on the edge of dishes, rims of ceramic cups or to accent designs and patterns. Many refer to it as "That little, bitty expensive bottle of gold". It is packaged in a 2-gram bottle. It does seem like a lot of money for such a small amount of product. However, that little bottle of fired gold goes a long way. Since fired gold is applied over the top of fired colour or glass. A bottle of gold could coat the edges of a couple dozen dinner plates.

While gold looks great as an opaque accent, it also has other potential uses. For normal, solid coverage, it's usually fired in a range of cone 016 to 020. It can be fired hotter to achieve a crackle pattern. Try taking it to cone 010 and see how the gold pulls apart, showing the glaze color from below.

All of these products are opaque and block out colours below them when applied and fired properly. If the products are not applied heavily enough, tones of purple or other shades may show up as streaks in the fired finish. Applying an additional coat of colour and firing usually covers up the poor coverage.

Mother of Pearl OG803 is a translucent product most commonly used in the ceramic industry over clear glaze of light colours creating an iridescent look and picking up many colours of the rainbow. Apply Mother of Pearl with a soft brush BR594 in a swirl motion to bring out a log of colour. Though Mother of Pearl is commonly seen on light colours, it's also very beautiful over fired dark glazes. Add more colour to overglazes like silver and gold by applying a coat of Mother of Pearl over the top of fired gold and firing again. (Overglazes cannot be layered without firing between each layer.

Try working over gloss and matte surfaces. Most overglazes will reflect the sheen they coat. So, if working over a gloss finish, you'll have a shiny look, and if working over matte products, you'll have more of a satin look.

Preparing the Surface

Overglazes will always go over a fired glaze or glass surface. Check to be sure the chosen glaze is overglaze compatible. This will usually be stated on the jar of most commercial colors, or in some

cases will only state it if it is not compatible. Always clean the surface to remove any residue, oil from your hands and dust. Many artists like to use a lint-free paper towel or coffee filter. It's best to use one of these items when unloading the items from the kiln after glaze firing. Also try not to handle the pieces with your bare hands. Cover the items to avoid dust accumulation if you don't plan to apply the overglaze products immediately.

Selecting the Proper Brush

Working with the proper brush is an important step not to be overlooked. Start with a new brush that has not been used with any other products. A dirty brush can contaminate an entire bottle of gold or other overglazes. Soft-bristled brushes with natural or synthetic hair usually work best. Mark the brush for future use by wrapping tape around the handle and mark with the product being used. Avoid using larger brushes than needed, as to not waste a bunch of gold in the bristles of the brush.

Since Mother of Pearl OG803 is applied in a circular, swirling motion, a deerfoot stippler is ideal. Other soft brushes in other sizes will work well. Avoid using disposable or really cheap brushes that may lose a lot of bristles during application. While the hairs will burn away, they may leave noticeable marks and ridges.

Application

Follow the instructions supplied with each product. Mother of Pearl usually works best when it's swirled on in a circular motion. Fired Gold needs one even coat application. The standard for most other solid luster colors is one, even coat application. Whenever applying more than one overglaze products to an object., leave space between the products (if you want to only do one firing) or do multiple firings.

Firing Procedures

Most overglazes products come with instructions on how to fire them. Always keep in mind to fire the hotter firings first, followed by cooler firings when applying more than one overglaze to an item. So, if the plan is to apply fired gold and Mother of Pearl, fire the gold first because it goes to a higher temperature than the Mother Of Pearl. If some items are fired too hot, they can start to burn away.