



How to Paint Wood Grain effect on Porcelain

by Val Naber 3/18

Wood texture is found everywhere. It's a warm, comforting texture with a lot of interesting characteristics. And, it can be fun to paint if you know how. There are many different wood grain textures and colors. They're all different shades, shapes and have variation in line and texture. Some have knots in them while others have grains that are barely visible. So, there is really no right or wrong, just what looks good to the artist.

Keeping it simple, start by getting yourself reference material. Study it and come up with 3 shades of some woody colors like burnt umber, raw sienna, and yellow. You will need 3 brushes, one for a wash and 2 for finer lines and open medium.

Clean your porcelain then mask out what won't be woodgrain. Now, lay down a color foundation in the color of your choice. You could fire your piece at this point or work wet in wet if you are comfortable with that. The bulk of the woodgrain painting can be done in one fire if you use an open medium. The second fire can be to add depth.

Now you will lay in the woodgrain lines. These vary greatly by wood species. They are usually a different texture than the background, they are darker but not the darkest. They can be wavy, straight, very irregular, with or without the knots, centered around dark knots, you name it, look at reference material. Draw these in with a medium to dark color using a liner brush. You can texture the lines by using short, swift brush strokes instead of one long line. One thing to keep in mind is that many grains actually resemble tiny feathers. Very fine lines are often offshoots of a bolder line. You can create these by using a mop brush and a light touch.

Now that you have your blueprint, it's time to make it look realistic. All we need to do is follow what we've already drawn! Taking dark pigment, trace over the grains. Don't worry about making them perfect because wood isn't perfect. In fact, it will feel more realistic if your lines vary in thickness, length and don't all match.

You can add interest by using rolled up plastic wrap to create line, by splattering paint to create wormholes, by adding faded color to resemble old paint, by creating boards with dark cracks between them like barn siding, by taking a hard-bristled brush held perpendicular to create texture. Use your creativity and try some different material and see what you get.