

# Majolica Matters!

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE MAJOLICA INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2000

## MIS ANNUAL MEETING – MAY 4TH TO 6TH, 2001 Dallas, Texas

Start the planning process now to attend. The 2001 meeting will be the first at which majolica will have been celebrated in three different centuries – unless you're planning to be around for the next centennial in 2101 don't miss it.

We will, for the first time, be meeting in a centrally located area so that no one has to travel across the whole country. Dallas is a wonderful exciting city in which to meet and not only has a large number of antique shops in the city itself but some of the local highways such as 180 are lined with antique malls for miles (really). I drove through there recently and even saw one with a huge sign about 20' high reading MAJOLICA. I doubt that anyone will run out of temptations in the time available for shopping. More information will follow as available and the most current will always be available at [www.majolicasociety.com](http://www.majolicasociety.com).

## A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

*Moe Wizenberg*

The first issue of our newsletter appeared in October 1989 and I am honored to have been asked to serve as our editor in the tradition established by Dr. Howard M. Silby. I am fortunate to not only enjoy the support of the society but to also have enlisted Helen Cunningham and Deborah English as editors to help produce Majolica Matters. We are small in numbers but long on goals and hope to make this newsletter increasingly useful and interesting to you. The newsletter will not work unless you are all participants.

I would like all of the members of MIS to help in some way to direct and produce the content so that it can reflect your needs and interest. We need to hear what you would like to see, what information you would like to receive and particularly what you would like to share on these pages with other members – that can be a comment, a picture of a piece, an article, a cartoon and so on. Tell us about your collection how it has changed direction or your latest George Jones find at a tag sale! What have you liked on these pages? What would you like to see more of, and what can we stop including? Content doesn't just happen and I don't think the newsletter should simply be a forum for the editorial board or a few members. We can only grow and get better with your input – as your local charities say, "GIVE". Our first editor Dr. Silby used to threaten to put medical articles in the newsletter if no one sent him anything else to insert – I may resort to doing the same thing so if you won't do anything else tell me what disease you would like to read about.

Our editorial group is small – the exclusiveness is not by design! Please tell us if you have an area of interest and would like to join our small band and direct that area.

As those of you who were at the last annual meeting heard, Duane Matthes has done a fabulous job with [www.majolicasociety.com](http://www.majolicasociety.com) the MIS web site. It's full of great information and news unobtainable elsewhere. It has the advantages of immediacy and interaction that the newsletter can never have because of the nature of the printed page and we will be working to define the roles of and interactions between the paper and electronic publications of the society. Please tell Duane and me your vision of our future. I can be most rapidly reached at [moewize@aol.com](mailto:moewize@aol.com) and Duane at [majolica@flash.net](mailto:majolica@flash.net).

# MAJOLICA INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY TWELFTH ANNUAL MEETING

*Marilyn G. Karmason*

One hundred and four members attended the twelfth annual meeting of the Majolica International Society on the weekend of April 28 to April 30 at the Hilton Christiana Hotel in Wilmington (Newark), Delaware. A special event of the weekend was a two-hour tour on Saturday afternoon of the Winterthur Museum in which groups of five members each was led by guides of the Museum. Members were then invited to visit the home of a nearby guide/majolica collector.

Friday evening's program, "MajoliCake and Coffee," included a review of the MIS regional meetings. Mary R. (Polly) Wolbert, head of Regional Meetings, discussed the year's activities that were held in Boston, New York, Atlanta, Tulsa, and San Francisco. Melissa Bennie, the vice-president in charge of ceramics and glass at Christie's East in New York City, gave an illustrated presentation of the upcoming auction of majolica at Christi's East on May 31. This was followed by a discussion of auction philosophy and activity, in which Michael Strawser, founder of the MIS and head of Majolica Auctions, took part.

A continental breakfast and Barter n' Buy opened Saturday morning's "MajolicCollege." This featured "Collections and Collecting", viewed in the homes of three MIS members. The collections included one in which the primary interest was in plates, serving pieces, and pitchers in the asparagus design, and another in which the traditional collection was now focused on Palissy wares. The third, a nine-hundred-ninety piece collection of sanded majolica, was photographed throughout a house displaying majolica on numerous cabinets, tables, and shelves almost to the ceiling.

The last course at "MajoliCollege" was led by Duane Matthes, a systems engineer manager by profession and the husband of Wanda Matthes, a majolica dealer. Mr. Matthes described and demonstrated the newly created majolica society web site; he invited majolica enthusiasts to visit the site at [www.majolicasociety.com](http://www.majolicasociety.com).

The guest speaker at the Saturday evening dinner meeting was Professor Peter Rose, retired head of Expressive Art at the University of Brighton, England, and a collector of almost every important Victorian ceramic, including majolica. Dealing with "The Nature Room: Fantasy and Naturalism in the 19th Century Decorative Arts", Professor Rose discussed the four elements leading to the Victoriana in his "Nature Room": These are Darwinism, naturalism, anthropomorphism, and fantasy, all important to the design of the 19th century decorative arts.

After a business meeting, doors opened to MIS members at 10:30 a.m. to "Majolica Heaven", held in the Delaware Technical Community Colelge. Non-members were admitted at noon without charge. Majolica dealers present were Richard and Connie Aranosian, Newtown, PA; Jerry Hayes, Oklahoma City, OK; Mimi Kersun, Jacksonville, FL; Linda Ketterling, Toledo, OH; Nancy Kramer, Sparrows, Inc., Kensington, MD; Wilma Murray, Philadelphia, PA; Robert Ruggles, The Gilded Age Antiques, Chappaqua, NY; John C. Weld, Jr., Yarmouth Port, MA.

# CONTEMPORARY PALISSY WARE

*By Marshall P. Katz*

It is understandable that Palissy ware (named after the 16th-century French potter, Bernard Palissy), is being produced by two contemporary ceramists in France. After all, not only was this ware a French creation, but it was popular in two different centuries. Unfortunately, a number of present-day pieces have been purposefully misrepresented. Please be careful when purchasing Palissy ware, particularly from unfamiliar sources. Modern versions have even appeared in antique auctions with an incorrect or implied older attribution.

Fortunately, they have been on the market for several years, and many dealers know the difference.

Do understand these works are not reproductions, nor are they intended by their makers to be anything other than contemporary examples of Palissy ware. They are beautifully made, and may have a place in any Palissy ware collection, or as a decorative household object. I own several examples myself including a commissioned copy of one of Bernard Pallissy's most famous plates.

## **Geoffrey Luff**

Geoffrey Luff is an Englishman, both educated and now residing in France. His expertise is antique furniture restoration, and more recently, Palissy ware (which he began five years ago). He has produced about 400 works, mostly in the form of plates and platters. His technique is similar to Palissy's whereby all of the creatures and most of the other elements are cast from plaster molds made from actual animals, ferns and shells. His works are generally painstakingly detailed, decorated with a rich color palette, and extremely realistic. They are not always available due to limited production, but

are sold by one store in London (Anthony Redmile, The Furniture Cave, 533 King's Road, Chelsea, London. Telephone: 171-351-3813.)



Most plates are engraved on the front with a monogram of the letters "G.L.". An unspecified number are unmarked, but Mr. Luff estimates that at least 95% are signed. Considering the quality of his work, the pieces are not overpriced, particularly if you can purchase them directly from the artist. Large platters for example retail around \$2000 in London.



Luff resides in a difficult-to-find country town in France located about 45 minute's drive from Tours. If you can arrange for pickup when you're in France (Tours is 140 miles southwest of Paris, a 1 1/2 hour train ride), you can save at least 50% on London prices and avoid the high cost of shipping to the U.S.

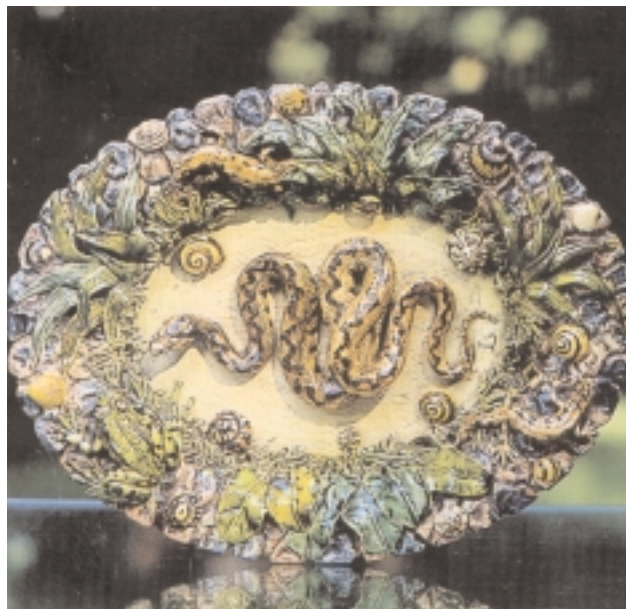
Geoffrey does not produce a catalog since all of his pieces are unique. If you're interested, you may e-mail him directly, and perhaps he can e-mail photos. His mailing and e-mail addresses are: Chateau Louy, 37140 Restigne, France. Telephone: 02 47 96 95 22. E-mail: geoffrey.luff@wanadoo.fr.

### **Christine Viennet**

Christine Viennet has been producing Palissy-type and trompe l'oeil ceramics since 1975. She was born in Norway, but later emigrated to France where she has lived ever since. Her output is quite a bit larger than Luff's, but the greater part are trompe l'oeil fruit plates which she sells in several countries including France, Japan, Belgium, and the United States. She is an exhibitor at the National Gift Show in New York, and sells her works to numerous gift shops and some department stores.



Madame Viennet lives in Beziers, France, in the heart of the Languedoc region, approximately 130 miles west of Marseilles, and 70 miles east of Toulouse. It is accessible by direct flight from Paris and other cities, or by train. If you are traveling in Provence, it is less than 100 miles east of Avignon.



Christine includes numerous works in the style of Bernard Palissy among her repertoire, but these can be more easily purchased directly from her than in stores. She does produce a color catalog containing examples of both Palissy and trompe l'oeil. All of her pieces are signed on the back. Madame Viennet does not currently have an e-mail address, but you can easily fax her and request a catalog and price list. Direct prices should be about 50% less than retail plus shipping, if applicable. Her address is Chateau de Raissac, Route de Murviel, 4500 Beziers, France. Telephone: 04 67 49 17 60. Fax: 14 67 28 51 82. She speaks and writes fluent English.

Please send your comments and material for the newsletter to:

M.J. Wizenberg  
1608 Elmhurst Avenue  
Oklahoma City, OK 73120-1218  
Phone: 405 848 4028  
Fax: 405 848 4531  
E-mail: moewize@aol.com

Deadline for the next issue of Majolica Matters is October 20th, 2000.



# MINUTES OF THE 12TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MAJOLICA INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

April 28-April 30, 2000

The 12th annual meeting took place at the Hilton Christiana Hotel in Wilmington, Delaware. 104 members attended.

The treasurer's report was given by Cheryl Smith. Please see page 10.

Change in duties: Karen Cox is to be treasurer. Cheryl Smith is to head the membership committee, with the mission to increase the MIS membership. Moe Wizenberg will be the editor of "Majolica Matters".

2001 meeting to be held in Dallas. 2002 to be held in Atlanta. Both to occur in the first week in May. There must be additional help with the annual meetings. Phil English expressed gratitude to Roberta Musser and Linda La Pointe for this year's efforts. Jim Trout will provide assistance at the 2001 meeting in Dallas. There is need for a dealer's chairman to clarify the dealer's work. Other assistance with public relations and communication, etc., is necessary.

Moe Wizenberg will request that each member send a story of his/her varied experiences with majolica, together with photographs, so that the editing and production of the newsletter will be more plausible in effort and more interesting in content. Future management considerations are (1) the method of distribution of the newsletter and (2) sharing of material with Duane Matthes via the web site. The question was raised: Will the newsletter ever come to e-mail or be on the web site? Answer: E-mail will be used, because then the newsletter could be printed on the web site, and it could also be printed at less expense. This procedure may be used also for the membership list, as the list is also expensive to mail.

Other cyberspace matters: The chat room may be used for Barter 'n Buy questions, information about pieces of majolica, group discussions, calendar events about majolica, the membership list making contacts, and sharing articles and documents.

Passwords have to be given to members. Members are to give their e-mail address to Cheryl. Additional plans are to be made by Duane, Cheryl and Jerry.

Methods of adding to the activity of meetings: Members to bring photo albums and Barter 'n Buy articles to meeting. Members to "volunteer" to take part in Saturday's "MajoliCollege". If a member is too shy to take part in a major activity, he/she could show slides and conduct a short discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Karmason, Secretary/MIS

## WHO SAYS YOU CAN'T HAVE YOUR CAKE AND ...

The July 17th 2000 issue of NEW YORKER contained an article entitled GOLD PEOPLE. It turns out that if you had invested in 1980 in gold or United States Global Gold Shares you would have lost between 70 and 85% of your investment. The better investments of the past 20 years were, among other things, real estate, comic books, AOL, the stock and bond market and MAJOLICA. I think the MIS membership should congratulate itself both for investment savvy and an eye for beauty. MW

## UNUSUAL AND NOTABLE



I am sure we have all seen the Wedgwood salmon platter in its common colors of blue or the argenta finish. This beauty measuring 25 1/2" long is in the stunning and rare yellow and was recently sold on her web site by Pam Ferrazzuti. No, the editor did not get it! Try her at [www.pamferrazzuttiantiques.com](http://www.pamferrazzuttiantiques.com) in case she finds another.

This monumental size Jardiniere was shown at the Olympia Show in London 1999 by Brittainia-Boston (Rita Smythe and Nicolaus Boston), who were kind enough to supply the photograph. It was made by Minton 1851 designed by Albert Ernest Carrier de Belleuse.



## MAJOLICA BARGAINS STILL TO BE FOUND

*Polly Wilbert, Salem, Massachusetts*

After the Society's annual meeting weekend in Delaware, I spent two days with my cousins antiquing in Pennsylvania. On Monday, May 1st, we headed for Gettysburg. After a brief visit to the battlefield (where we saw several of the cannons that my great-great grandfather invented (that's another story)), we traveled east a few miles to New Oxford, Pennsylvania, where there are many antique shops. At the second shop we visited, I noticed a pewter-lidded syrup pitcher with a soft greenish-blue majolica glaze. Of course, the case was locked and the tag was upside down so I couldn't see the price.

When the case was opened, I turned the pitcher over and saw a circular mark on the bottom. There was a faint "Benn\_\_\_\_" in the arch at the top of the circle and "Patent" in the bottom arch. A little bell said, "Baltimore pottery" to me. I looked at the price tag: It was \$35. "Well," I said, "I'll take that."

When I got to the shop's front desk with a few other things I had gathered – two carved wooden print blocks and a moss rose painted old cigar box lid in a nice little frame – I asked whether they could do any better on the prices. End result, I got the pitcher for \$30. (Hey, almost as good as Beckie Boraten's yard sale Etruscan majolica for a dollar!)

As soon as I got home, I went through my majolica reference books and found the mark for Bennet's, the Baltimore pottery and later owner of the Chesapeake Pottery -- producer of Clifton ware. The patent mark, although undated, is very likely from the mid-1880's. When I got back home, it was particularly nice to put this perfectly priced find next to some of my Griffen, Smith & Hill pieces. The pitcher's blue is almost the same color as the Etruscan glaze.

## REGIONAL MEETINGS

The Tulsa Majolica Society met on February 20th at the home of David and Teri Stone and enjoyed a hands-on preview of what David presented at our last Annual Meeting. Fifteen MIS members from Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri had an opportunity to see what is undoubtedly the largest collection anywhere of sand majolica. At the time of our annual meeting the count stood at 999 pieces and is now at well over 1000. None of us in attendance had ever seen such an abundance and variety of pieces and it was a great educational experience. We also learned not to compete with David if he's after a piece!

Please send your editor information and photos if available about our meetings so that we can encourage more regional get-togethers. You might also let Duane Matthes, our webmaster, know as you schedule them so other members who might be in your area could contact you and attend.

## MIS DEALER MEMBER TO SPEAK

John C. Weld will be a morning speaker at the September 20 Cape Cod Antique Dealers Association annual seminar at the Heritage Plantation in Sandwich, Massachusetts. His topic will be "My Fascination with Selling, Collecting, and Enjoying Majolica." John is a long-time member of the Majolica International Society and a dealer (John C. Weld Antiques) at the annual MIS Majolica Heaven! Show and sale. For more information about the seminar, which starts at 8:30 a.m and costs \$45 (which includes lunch), contact Bunny Warner, Crocker Farm, Ph: 508-428-3326.

# MAJOLICA IS THE MESSAGE

*By Moe Wizenberg*

We are all getting used to picking up magazines or papers and finding more and more mention of majolica. The June 2000 issue of *Art & Antiques* focussed on "Who's Collecting What" and had some quite pretty pictures of the majolica collections of author Judith Krantz and actress and vice chairperson of RKO Dina Merrill. Perhaps that increased interest accounts for attics being diligently searched and duplicates of previously "one of a kind" pieces appearing. It must certainly be responsible for the upward movement of majolica prices---not bad for the investor but tough on the collector! It has occurred to me that you might find useful a list of some majolica articles published in recent years so that you might find and enjoy them.

1. *Tradition Home*, June-July 2000. Pages 138-146. What a Difference a "J" Makes, by Sally Clark. History, good photographs, discusses differences between Maiolica and majolica and discusses modern fakery.
2. *Antique Week-Central Edition*-May 22, 2000. Cover plus 2 pages of photographs. Good article on American makers with photographs. Titled, *American Majolica Dazzled Fair Goers in 1876*.
3. *Antique Trader*, March 29, 2000, Volume 44, issue 13. Pages 19-22. *Majolica On Both Sides of The Atlantic*, by Marilyn Karmason. A meaty article with many fine photographs, some in color, by Jill Graham. (These comments by MW.)
4. *Easy Gardening, Family Circle*, Spring 2000. Pages 10-14. *Mad about Majolica* by Jonna M. Gallo. History, use in decorating, nice photographs.
5. *Veranda*, Winter 1999. *A Love of Majolica: Flora and Fauna*, by Linda E. Clopton. A beau-

tiful article beginning on page 208 of beautiful majolica and surroundings. Unfortunately also a lovely memorial to old MIS member, the late C.D. Ganns.

6. *Home and Antiques*, May 1998, issue 64. Pages 49-54. *Early Delights* by Judith Miller. Interesting narrative including Palissyware and photographs. Published by BBC (England).
7. *Art and Antiques*, March 1998, page 59. 100 top treasures sold in past year—picture of Monton Wine Cooler sold at Sotheby's in March 197 for \$50,600.
8. *Antiques*, August 1997, pages 178-187 and magazine cover. *Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, a Portuguese Ceramicist*, by Marshall P. Katz. The reference article on Pinheiro's masterful majolica and great photographs to prove it.
9. *Today's Collector*, March 1997, Volume 3, #5. Pages 57-93. *Majolica Mania* by Marilyn G. Karmason. History, Advice on prices, book list, information about copies. Great photographs.
10. *Country Kitchen Ideas*, Fall/Winter 1996, Pages 30-34. *Simply Mad for Majolica* by Randi Schwartz. History, buying advice, decorating with majolica, photographs. (Published by *Better Homes and Gardens Special Interest Publications*.)
11. *Ceramics Monthly*, March 1996, pages 50-54. *19th Century Portuguese Palissyware*, by Marshall P. Katz. A wonderful reference with excellent color photographs.
12. *Antiques*, April 1994, pages 582-589. *Nineteenth Century French Followers of Bernard Palissy*, by Marshall P. Katz. The story of the mid-19th century potters with mouth watering photographs.



continued

13. Carnegie Magazine, January/February 1994, pages 32-35. Nineteenth Century French Palissyware: A singular Art, by Marshall P. Katz. Excellent historical narrative and photographs.

14. Forbes, October 25, 1993, pages 238-239. What a difference a "J" makes, by Christie Brown. Many photographs from the collections of Marilyn Karmason and Joan Stacke.

15. Antiques, February 1990, pages 474-487. Victorian Majolica by Marilyn G. Karmason. Tons of information and photographs of majolica to die for. This article, if not the majolica should be in everyone's collection.

16. House & Garden, November 1989, pages 156-161. A grand Surprise by Leo Lerman. An interesting article with wonderful photographs from the collections of Marilyn Karmason and Joan Stacke.

17. Connoisseur, February 1984, pages 68-73. Down from the Attic by Lesbeth Nilson. An interesting article about the start of an early collecting and many photographs from the collection of Marilyn and Joseph Hoffman.

18. Country Living, 1984, pages 36 and 155. Majolica by Rufus Foshee. Also in the same issue, pages 88-89, Collecting Majolica. Photographs and brief narrative.

## NOTICES

BROWNE-WESTHEAD, MOORE & CO

I am researching the company of Brown-Westhead, Moore and Co with a view to publishing my findings. Would any collectors, who have examples of Brown-Westhead, Moore & Co majolica, interested in helping with photographs of their pieces please contact me on:

e-mail: [cluettb@rugbycement.co.uk](mailto:cluettb@rugbycement.co.uk)  
tele: 01788 570935

or write to:  
Robert Cluett  
41 Dyson Close  
Rugby  
Warwickshire CV21 4LG  
England

You may recall that Robert Cluett spoke at a recent MIS annual meeting about George Jones Majolica. He is the author of George Jones Ceramics 1861-1951.

## WANTED

You will note that there are no Wanted in this issue as none were received.

Please send your listings to:  
M.J. Wizenberg  
1608 Elmhurst Avenue  
Oklahoma City, OK 73120-1218

## MAJOLICA AUCTION

Michael Strawser and Majolica Auctions will be holding their Fall 2000 Majolica Auction in Hatfield, Pennsylvania on October 27 & 28. Watch for the catalog in your mail.

If you haven't been to one of these sales before you have missed a real treat.

For more information and to see some of the sale items visit Michael's web site

[www.majolicaauctions.com](http://www.majolicaauctions.com)

# MAJOLICA INTERNATINAL SOCIETY

## Statement of Revenue and Expenses

For the year ended December 31, 1999

Revenue	
Dues	\$ 12,283
Book Sales	616
Other	586
Convention receipts, less expenses (Note 3)	<u>477</u>
Total revenue	<u>14,962</u>
Expenses	
Bank charges	3
Professional fees	425
Newsletter	10,953
Office expense	2,663
Mail box rent	325
Taxes	25
Advertising	806
Public relations	<u>208</u>
Total expenses	<u>15,408</u>
Net Loss	(446)
Fund Balance, January 1, 1999	<u>23,308</u>
Fund Balance, December 31, 1999	<u>\$ 22,862</u>