

Majolica Matters!

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE MAJOLICA INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

SPRING 2001

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING

Marilyn Karmason

Dallas, Texas, May 4th –6th , 2001

This year's annual meeting promises to have one of the most varied and interesting programs the Society has yet presented. Friday evening events will open with MajoliCake and Coffee. The evening's presentation, "Authors and Authorities," will be organized around members of the Society who have written books and articles about their special interests in Victorian majolica. Marilyn Karmason and Joan B. Stacke created "Majolica: A Complete History and Illustrated Survey" (Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1989). Nicholas Dawes is the author of "Majolica" (Crown Publishers, Inc. 1990) . Marshall P. Katz and Robert Lehr produced "Palissy Ware: Nineteenth Century French Ceramicists from Avisseau to Renoleau" (The Athlone Press, 1996). Mr Katz also wrote "Portugese Palissy Ware (Hudson Hills Press, 1999). Helen Cunningham has written "Majolica Figures" (Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1977). There will be both illustrated presentations and opportunity for discussion.

Saturday morning's program will open with a continental breakfast and the traditional Barter 'n'Buy. Jerry Leberfeld and Jim Trout will then deal with " Collecting and Collectors ", and each speaker will recount their personal and complex adventures in collecting , illustrating their collections with a slide presentation. On Saturday afternoon there will be guided bus tours of the Dallas antiques centers, as well as to the Dallas- Fort Worth Museums.

On Saturday evening, after cocktails and dinner, we will be treated to a presentation by John Keefe, The RosaMary Foundation Curator of Decorative Arts at the New Orleans Museum of Art. He will speak on "Grotesqueries: Form, Fantasy and Function in 19th Century European Ceramics." This title is inspired by the magnificent collection that was presented to the New Orleans Museum of Art in 1977 by Brooke Hayward Duchin. The Duchin Collection includes superb examples of French and Portugese Palissy Wares as well as English and American Majolica. Mr. Keefe's lecture will be accompanied by an extensive slide presentation. We are especially pleased that Mrs. Duchin will participate in an informal colloquium with Mr. Keefe and will contribute

her ideas about collecting and the special relationship between a donor and the recipient museum.

Sunday morning will begin with a continental breakfast followed by the business meeting of our Society. The much awaited "Majolica Heaven 2001" will open at 10:30 and continue until we are stuffed with majolica or run out of money—whichever happens first! Our favourite dealers will again be there with temptations of every description. Register now if you haven't already done so. The meeting will take place at the lovely and conveniently situated Dallas Marriott Quorum Hotel and special rates are available to members of the Society.

Notes From The Editor's Desk

Moe Wizenberg

When you live in poor little Oklahoma as I do, you learn to poke fun at Texas where everything is the biggest and the best, (which is sometimes actually true)! For a few days this May, Dallas Texas will really be the Majolica Capitol of the world , or to get into the spirit of it, the Universe. What a wonderful meeting we have scheduled as outlined in Marilyn Karmason's exposition. If you haven't decided yet do it now—come and join the party. It will be a winner.

This is the fourth issue of Majolica Matters since I and your associate editors took over the task of it's production. I am grateful for their help and for the contributions of others to the content. Articles in this issue have been submitted by Marshall Katz, Helen Cunningham, and Barbara Cunningham and others are working on articles for future issues. My deepest thanks to them and all of those who have contributed articles and ideas for Majolica Matters. Please keep your comments and suggestions coming and try your hand at writing about your collections, great finds or whatever interests you about Majolica and its era. This is your newsletter so go for it.

See you in Dallas.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Moe Wizenberg, Editor
Helen Cunningham, Associate Editor
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A LITTLE MORE HISTORY

Barbara W. McIntyre

Let's continue the story of the Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations. In 1849, when the idea of a giant national industrial exhibition began to percolate, England had been at peace since Napoleon's defeat. She was probably the most prosperous nation in the world, although there were great ghettos of poverty in her large cities and in her small villages. There had been other "shows." In 1839 there was an exhibition of Arts and Manufacturers in Leeds, which attracted close to 200,000 persons and was highly profitable. Sheffield exhibited a collection of art and manufactured goods also. There were three exhibitions in Liverpool in the 1840's, which were supported but not sponsored by the Society of the Arts.

In 1847, Prince Albert became president of the Society of the Arts and was influential in producing 3 shows of manufactured goods. The attendance at these shows grew from 20,000 in 1847 to 73,000 attendees in 1848 to 100,000 in 1849. At this time Prince Albert was only thirty years old. He still had a German accent and was not yet well accepted in royal circles. However, his quick, methodical mind was ever working on ideas for British welfare and reform.

After the 1849 show, Henry Cole, another Victorian polymath and a huge force behind Victorian architecture and design, approached Prince Albert with an idea for a much larger exhibition to open in 1851. Cole then traveled to Paris to critique the 1849 Paris Exposition. He wanted Britain to really outdo its neighbor with her exposition in 1851. It was on Cole's trip home that the idea of an "all Nations" exhibition came into his mind. It had never been done before. When Cole met with Prince Albert to discuss the proposed Somerset House location for the exhibition, Cole presented his idea of an "international show." Prince Albert enthusiastically embraced this idea, and they agreed that a larger site was needed. That day Cole visited Hyde Park and chose a location between the Knightsbridge Barracks and the Serpentine covering 16 to 20 acres, and he proposed that site to Albert the next day.

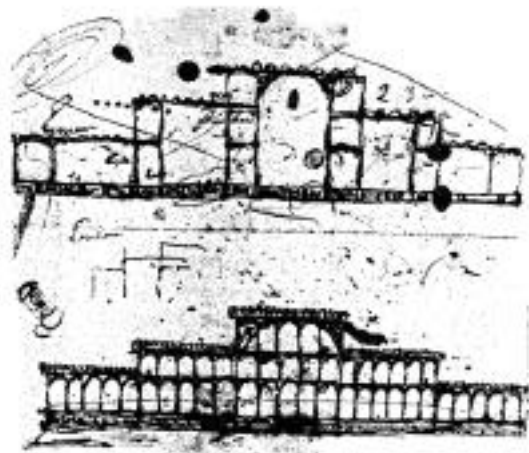
During a meeting at Buckingham Palace in June of 1848, Prince Albert spoke of this plan for a "World Exhibition." There would be four divisions: raw materials, mechanical inventions and machinery, manufactured goods, and sculpture and plastic art. At another meeting on July 14, 1849, the Prince further detailed his ideas. They were enthusiastically accepted, and Parliament established a Royal Commission in January 1850 to sponsor the exposition. This Commission established a Building Committee exactly one year before the proposed completion date.

The Royal Commission's greatest task would be to find funding for the building and maintenance of the Exhibition itself. At first they considered an offer by a prominent contractor, Messrs Munday, to finance the entire project, with Munday keeping almost all profits in exchange for their willingness to

make the initial outlay and for the risks involved. The details of this offer were changed many times and a deadline for the Commission's acceptance was February 1850. The Royal Commission sent out a four-member Executive Committee to visit the manufacturing centers of Great Britain. They found such great support at these centers from prominent businessmen and manufacturers that on January 11, 1850, the Commission negated their contract with Messrs. Munday and decided to rely on voluntary financing. In one attempt to raise funds, all the mayors in Britain were invited to a grand feast at the Mansion House where a special presentation was made by Prince Albert. It was a huge financial success.

On March 13, 1850, a building design competition was announced by the Building Committee. Although entrants were given only one month to submit their designs, approximately 233 designs were submitted. Most designs came from London, but some were from other locations on the continent. All entries were turned down, as unfeasible designs that could not be built quickly, would not be of a temporary nature and involved masonry and other materials that would be hard to work with during the winter months. The Building Committee then issued their own design combining parts of many of the submitted designs. The public ridiculed the Committee's design as hideous and impractical. Time was running out.

Once again, "the hour produced the man." Joseph Paxton, the subject of my earlier article, asked permission to submit a late design entry. Because of their rather embarrassing situation, the Building Committee granted him permission on June 11, 1850. He was given 10 days to complete his design. Paxton was on his way to Derby to attend a board meeting of the Midland Railway. At this meeting, he made his first sketch for the Crystal Palace on a piece of blotting paper. It was a grander version of his Lily House at Chatsworth.



The original blotting -paper sketch by Sir Joseph Paxton, made at Derby on 11 June 1850.

A LITTLE MORE HISTORY

Continued

After the meeting, Paxton rushed to Chadwick to complete his design. He completed it on time and submitted it to the Building Committee on June 20, 1850. They decided that if Paxton could construct the building for less money than their design, they would accept his design. Paxton immediately contracted Messrs Fox and Henderson, (building contractors, engineers and ironmasters from Smethwick), as well as Messrs Chance Brothers, glass makers from Birmingham, who were the only viable glass producers in England at the time. Within the allotted time the designs and cost estimates were presented, which came to 150,000 pounds to erect and dismantle the exhibition building. The building contractor then made an offer to reduce that cost to 79,800 pounds if they could own and recycle the materials at the end of the exhibition.

This building plan, as well as the idea of an International Exhibition, had many outspoken critics. Many felt that a structure containing so much glass would be a grave danger to attendees. Others feared the influx of so many foreigners into England. An ultra-reactionary, Colonel Charles de Laet Waldo Sibthorpe, MP for Lincoln, chose to criticize the exhibition site and design because it required the removal of a splendid grove of elm trees in Hyde Park. Paxton and Messrs Fox and Henderson silenced him by adding a barrel-vaulted transept to enclose the trees instead of removing them.

On July 15th, the Building committee advised the Commission to accept this bid and on July 20th, they did so. The Commission asked the contractors to begin at once without a Royal Charter that could not be issued until January 1851. To wait for a Royal Charter would delay the construction and lose valuable time. Even though they did not have a signed contract until October 31, 1850, Fox and Henderson forged ahead. On August 1st, they took possession of the building site and fenced in the area using heavy wooden boards, which would eventually become the building's flooring.

It took Mr. Fox seven weeks of 18-hour days to prepare the working drawings. Mr. Henderson took each drawing and oversaw the preparation of the building materials. Because of the size and nature of the structure and because of public doubt of its viability, each of the components was subjected to rigorous tests for stability and safety. Some construction experiments were quite elaborate with hundreds of workmen crowded together moving as one to simulate a crowd of visitors. The construction proceeded 24 hours a day using bonfires and torches at night and involved about 2000 workers.

I think it's time to impress you with a few construction statistics. The Crystal Palace was 1846 feet in length and 456 feet in width. That is 772,784 square feet, or 19 acres, under the roof. It was four times the area of St. Peter's in Rome and six times that of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. The total cubic contents were 33,000,000 feet. There were 2300 cast iron girders, 358 wrought iron trusses, 202 miles of sash bars, 600,000 feet of wooden planking, and 30 miles of "Paxton gutters." Paxton invented a type of wooden gutter, which allowed a 4-

man team to slide along them so that the glass could be installed on the rooflines. They also carried water from the roof glass to the hollow iron girders. All told, there were 900,000 feet of superficial or surface glass. It is thought to have constituted the entire output of glass in Great Britain that year.

By the organizational expertise of Messrs Fox and Paxton, work crews were well directed and coordinated. Materials arrived on time and were immediately directed to the correct locations. Special new machines and methods were used to cut construction time. The Crystal Palace was completed by January 1851. What an extraordinary accomplishment. Nineteen acres under glass in 20 weeks! It was quite an auspicious setting for the debut of our beloved Majolica.

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Repair and Restoration

As they say, you can't be too rich or know too many restorers. Here are a couple for your files.

Carla and Bob Benhardt of Lake St. Louis, Missouri are both majolica dealers and restorers. They will be selling as well as showing their restoration talent at Majolica Heaven. You can bring pieces in need of work to Dallas and they will take them home for service. For more information they can be contacted at 636 561 2572 or at cbee@swbell.net

New member Valerie Schleifer operates Restorations by Valerie.. Her address, not yet in the directory, is 4 Country Club Court, Livingston, NJ 07039 and she can be reached at 973 992 9270 .

Others members who do repair or restoration, please contact the Editor so that we can, over time, make a complete listing available.

MONUMENTAL PALISSY WARE

by Marshall P. Katz

The Great Exhibitions

The surest way for any 19th-century artisan to enhance his or her reputation was to participate in one or more of the great exhibitions which flourished in Europe principally between 1851 and 1900. Beginning with the 1851 Great Universal Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London until the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris, many thousands of artists from around the world competed in a variety of categories for coveted prize medals, often resulting in lucrative trade orders as well from home and abroad.

The applied and decorative arts represented a very modest segment of these global extravaganzas that lasted up to six months, attracted millions of visitors, and focused primarily on science and industry. Nevertheless, the French excelled in the luxury goods categories which relied upon individual artisanship much more than engineering and invention. The one great exception, of course, was the spectacular tower named after its architect, Gustave Eiffel, and erected for the 1889 Exposition Universelle de Paris. It remains to this day the signature work on the Parisian landscape and symbol of the "City of Lights."

A number of Palissy ceramists participated in these exhibitions winning gold, silver, and bronze medals. Not the least of these was Victor Barbizet (1809–c.1870), credited with founding the "School of Paris," and his son Achille (c.1825–1885). In 1851 they moved their workshop from Burgundy to the outskirts of Paris, and twenty-two years later (1873), increased the workshop to 16,000 square feet to accommodate their 60 employees.

By this time Victor had died leaving Achille to oversee the enterprise known as Maison Barbizet. Achille exhibited in Vienna, London, and Paris in 1873, 1874, and 1878 where he won a prestigious silver medal at the Paris Exposition Universelle besting contemporary rivals, Edouard Avisseau and Thomas-Victor Sergent, who only managed bronzes. Georges Pull was the only Palissyist in 1878 to win gold.

Larger-Than-Life

The grandeur and sheer size of the exhibitions were astounding. At the 1878 Paris Exposition there were 55,100 exhibitors, the building and grounds covered 687 acres, and more than 16,000,000 people attended. The competition to attract attention must have been overwhelming given the grandiose objects in many exhibits. These "exhibition works" were often larger-than-life, intended to draw crowds, and lavishly display artisanal skills. It is probable most were not intended for sale.



Exhibition Platter, Achille Barbizet, signed "A.B" on the back, 43 1/4" long x 31 1/2" wide x 6" high, ca. 1878, Paris, France. Collection of the author.

The three exhibition platters illustrated in this article are believed to have been exhibited by Maison Barbizet at the 1878 Paris Exposition. Each measures 43 1/4 inches by 31 1/2 inches, is six inches deep, and weighs approximately 75 pounds. Illustration 1, a large central pike surrounded by a variety of flora and fauna decorating an immense platter, bears the initials "A.B." (Achille Barbizet) painted under the glaze on the reverse. Illustration 2, a trophy-size codfish floating on a pool of water with water plants and reptiles is a similar-sized platter. It is unsigned, typical of nearly all Barbizet pieces except for some with Achille's initials. Illustration 3 is another exhibition platter sold at French auction in 1996, unsigned and attributed by the seller to the 1878 Paris Exposition. Another platter of similar proportion and design in the collec-

MONUMENTAL PALISSY WARE

continued

tion of the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Art (not illustrated), and purchased by them at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition has never been displayed (at least as of five years ago). A fifth "exhibition platter" (not illustrated) is conserved at the Musée Adrien Dubouché in Limoges, but I have not ascertained its origin.



Exhibition Platter, attribution Maison Barbizet, unsigned, 43 1/4" long x 31 1/2" wide x 6" high, ca. 1878, Paris, France. Collection of the author.



Exhibition Platter, attribution Maison Barbizet, unsigned, 43 1/4" long x 31 1/2" wide x 6" high, ca. 1878, Paris, France. Courtesy Hotel Druout.

Which of these monumental platters were displayed at the 1878 Exposition is unlikely to be proven. Barbizet's factory, which ceased production in 1880, was demolished in the mid-to-late 1880s, and production records, if any still exist, have not surfaced.

Wall Panels

While these platters are the largest I've seen by any of the Palissy ceramists, surprisingly they are not the largest works by these artists. Charles-Jean Avisseau's monumental confit dish (see "Palissy Ware," Katz and Lehr, page 51) displayed at the Musée des Beaux Arts in Tours stands nearly seven feet high, although it's composed of eleven pieces attached on top of another.

Even larger are three wall panels. The first measuring nearly 9 feet x 6 feet and entitled "La Céramique" won Georges Pull a gold medal at the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle. Two smaller Barbizet wall panels, each approximately 6 feet x 5 feet are at the Musée Adrien Dubouché and the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Art. The latter was also purchased at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, but was severely damaged many years ago and has remained in storage.

(Marshall was the winner of the MIS biggest fish of the millenium contest--easy to see why. Editor)

FRENCH OR ENGLISH? COLORING AND DENSITY PROVIDE THE CLUES.

by Helen Cunningham



Can you identify these jugs? Are they English or French? Come to the convention and find out!!

FRENCH OR ENGLISH? COLORING AND DENSITY PROVIDE THE CLUES.

by Helen Cunningham

As more and more people begin collecting Sarreguemines character jugs, the ability to distinguish Sarreguemines pieces from English copies becomes increasingly important. Many times I see jugs on ebay or in antique malls advertised as Sarreguemines. Since prices on real Sarreguemines jugs have risen to new heights in the last few years as more information about the factory has surfaced, it is essential that the beginning collector of these jugs understand how to identify the French ones from copies. The coloring and density may offer the first clues.

Prices on English jugs have not risen as rapidly or as high as the prices on the more rare examples of Sarreguemines jugs. Although in many cases the English jugs appeared on the market at relatively the same time as the French ones, they appeared in only a limited number of models. Perhaps collectors prefer the variety of faces offered by Sarreguemines, or perhaps they prefer jugs from an identifiable source. Whatever the reason, the English jugs do not enjoy the same appreciation in the marketplace.

Sarreguemines character jugs, especially the jolly fellow #3181, arrived in England toward the end of the nineteenth century following an agreement between an English liquor distributor and the Sarreguemines factory in France. English manufacturers began to take notice as the popularity of the French imports increased. By the turn of the twentieth century, factories in England and on the continent began producing models closely resembling the #3181. Although these copies have a similar charm and appeal for collectors, their origin may affect their value.

The English copies, made during the same period of production as the Sarreguemines jugs, differed in clay and coloring. Unmarked examples generally weigh more, have a denser body, and have blue-red cheeks rather than coral-colored, with white, blue, or gray skin-tones. In addition, the English character jugs consist of white interiors. In a few cases the interiors of English pieces are turquoise, but it is a dull, bluish color rather than the bright turquoise of

Sarreguemines. The English coloring lacks interest and clarity. Deep blue-reds, along with lime greens, oranges, and muddy browns appeared. A few later copies depicted a coral based coloring with very light turquoise interior rims, but they lacked the subtlety and charm of the original French pieces.

THE MATTHES TEAM

Duane and Wanda Matthes deserve our very special recognition. Duane started our Web Site about a year ago and it has been a roaring success--about 5000 visits in the first year! People doing his job are usually called webmasters but I suggest the more fitting title " Web Maestro".

He and Wanda have also contributed much to the Dallas meeting. As an additional gift to the membership they have invited us to visit their shop, Trilogy Antiques, located at 6929 Snider Plaza, at Hillcrest and Lovers Lane. They stock over 400 pieces of majolica , and during the meeting are offering an MIS 15% discount on purchases paid by cash or check. Call for more information at 214 373 0822. If you can't wait to see some of the wonderful stock go to trilogy@emajolica.com and scoop the ones who wait to get to Dallas.

CAT NIP

Jim Trout has become the justifiably proud father of a fourth Minton majolica cat.

I'm an Md but I can't explain the biology. Ask Jim for further details at the Annual Meeting. (The Editor)

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for the newsletter to:

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Deadline for the next issue of Majolica Matters
is July 1, 2001.

BUSH OPPOSES REGULATION OF MAJOLICA MARKET

Moe Wizenberg

Majolica prices are soaring and bidding wars have erupted among competitors when scarce major pieces appear at Auction (See Winter 2001 Majolica Matters for report of Sotheby's Sale of 1/21/01), and the recent problems of the Yen and the Euro have done little if anything to cool down what may be an overheated market. Administration officials have offered no comment on the crisis or the possibility of regulation to calm the market. Inactions speak louder than words and you can take it from this observer that the Bush Administration with its commitment to laissez-faire economics will not consider regulation of the Majolica market. Remember, you read it first in Majolica Matters!

Well, where does that leave most of us majolica collectors who were not there in the good old days when Minton peacocks sat under every bush at farm auctions, and George Jones was confused with Tom Jones . If we don't already have a fabulous collection of major pieces most of us are not going to get there unless uncle Frank dies and leaves us his megabucks. There are, however, all sorts of interesting ways we can find increased depth, interest and excitement in collecting at much more reasonable costs without sacrificing quality. Among the possibilities are various methods of specialization which are less challenging than, for example, collecting everything made by a manufacturer although that may be possible if ones avoids Minton, Wedgwood, George Jones etc---there are smaller manufacturers where that might be accomplished or where the limitation might be survival of pieces rather than price.

You could have a categorical collection of types of pieces such as wall pockets, cups and saucers, sconces, mustache cups, oyster plates, animals of various kinds and so on where the limitation might well be space rather than finances. If the area is too broad it could be further limited to those items from a particular country, a specific manufacturer, color, design theme and so on, but the collection would have more meaning than an unfocussed one.

Another possibility might be to focus on color variations for a specific item by a single manufacturer such as the Wedgwood salmon platter with argenta, cobalt, turquoise and yellow background, There are of course an enormous variety of colors in oyster plates by

Minton and others. The Wedgwood game tureen shown was available in the background in brown, yellow, red, and in the lovely and delicate argenta finish. The Minton Tureen appeared in a sort of Albino version as well as the normal wicker colored one. Size variations for a piece could also be a criterion --see the Autumn 2000 issue of Majolica Matters for Jim Trout's variety of honey bears from baby to grandfather.

How about majolica miniatures, and you can set your own standard, such as no dimension over 2 inches.

Sometime almost identical items were made by more than one manufacturer. The blue oriental looking frog was made by Burmanstofts, while the pink almost identical looking one was by Wardle. Doubtless there are many other examples like the crude version of the George Jones squirrel nut dish and other close approximations to beautiful original designs.

Majolica makers were, as you have probably noted, fond of reusing design elements in a variety of different pieces. I have enjoyed collecting Palissyware, probably by Thomas Sergent in which the elements of putti, horned rams heads, cow feet or other repetitive features recur and which I find fascinating for that reason.

Majolica has also had utilitarian use in combination with other materials, as handles for utensils, for picture or mirror frames, clocks holders and any of those groups would certainly make for a unique collection.

Only your imagination can limit what you would like to choose to develop as a specialty---money is less likely to be a factor than is scarcity of some of the items, but then again that only adds to the fun of the chase. Go for it! (and then write and tell us about your special majolica collection)

Illustrations on the following page are from the collection of the author.



Blue oriental style Burmanstofts'frog paired with a pink one by Wardle. Height 4 7/8".



Two unmarked palissy style jardinieres, possibly by Thomas Sergent. Both are 4 5/8 to 4 3/4 " high.



Wedgwood tureens with brown background and with Argenta finish.



Minton tureens varied in both size and color. The normally colored one is 11 5/8" long while the one with the white background is 12 3/4" long.