



Majolica Matters!

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE MAJOLICA INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY
www.majolicasociety.com

Winter 2004



Make your 2004 Convention reservations, TODAY!

2004 MIS Annual Meeting, Orlando, Florida

Plans are underway to offer society members a convention program full of interest to all majolica enthusiasts. Several society members, including author and Antique Road Show appraiser Nicholas Dawes (see Dawes article) have already agreed to share slides of their collections and their experiences in collecting majolica with those attending the convention. The program is being designed to allow members ample opportunity to become better acquainted with one another and with dealer members who will be exhibiting at Majolica Heaven. London majolica dealer and authority Nic Boston (see Boston article) is our after-dinner speaker for our Saturday evening gala banquet. And for the finale, doors will open for the greatest majolica show and sale on earth, **Majolica Heaven**, at 10:00 am on Sunday, May 2nd.

The Marriott Downtown is set up to accept reservations and have asked that we use their **800-574-3160 number to make reservations to get the society room rates**. The group rate is (\$99.00 per night with an optional upgrade to the two concierge floors for an extra \$20.00). Concierge floor rooms and king-size beds are on a first-come, first-serve basis. The room **block will be held until March 31 and will be extended if rooms are available**, but we need to strongly encourage reservations with the hotel and with the society (registration form enclosed) to be in by **March 30** for the best convention rates! The hotel will also honor the group rate for 3 days prior to or after the convention on a space-available basis for those who want to extend their stay to take in more of the Orlando attractions. The hotel invites you to

call their concierge for help in organizing your extended stay while in the Orlando area.

Orlando excitement beckons to us all -- so fill out your MIS convention reservation form today and call the hotel to make your lodging arrangements!

Looking forward to seeing you there,
LeRoy Davis
Annual Meeting Chairman



We're having a majolica party! Don't skip Orlando!

Why Orlando

By Jerry Leberfeld

Orlando is one of the world's favorite convention and vacation locations. This translates into fine hotels and restaurants and amazing assortment of entertaining venues. An international airport offers frequent flights with reasonable airfares. Our Society chose Orlando for this years meeting for these plus other reasons.

What do Majolica collectors and Orlando have in common? Some of us love our pottery with nautical themes and should probably visit Sea World - Animal Kingdom for those of us who collect creatures. When whimsy is your thing I might suggest the Magic Kingdom. Now I am going to let you in on some little

known secrets of the Orlando area. Our hotel is located in historic downtown within walking distance to beautiful Lake Eola, offering America's only Gondola boat ride. This romantic or funny experience will be a special treat.

Also, a place to stroll -Thornton Park with lovely small & unique shops. The Orlando Museum is having a special exhibit of Dale Chihuly's fascinating glass sculptures in his largest presentation ever in the world. I've seen a prior exhibit at the Norton Museum of Palm Beach which was fabulous, a must not miss. If you still have energy left take a short drive to Winter Park visiting some antique shops & malls along the way ending up at the famous Morse museum of American Art. If you have more ambition, we will supply a list of all the antique shops in the Orlando Area including Mt. Dora. How does that sound so far? I'm getting excited!

Maybe you just want to hang out at the pool with your Majolica buddies or make new ones and exchange photos, not of your grandchildren! Only our new acquisitions! Spend time with our feature speakers, the two Nics, (no.K), Dawes & Boston. They have more Majolica knowledge than we could ever absorb.

Great friends, great food, great meeting and it all concludes in Majolica Heaven. See you in Orlando.

Douglas Morgan's Painting, "China Hutch"

"China Hutch" is an interior scene by Morgan that appeared in "Art & Antiques" in 2003. For color he loaded his hutch with fabulous majolica.

<http://www.douglasmorganart.com>



Nicholas M. Dawes, Friday 4/30/04, Orlando



Nicholas M. Dawes grew up in the county of Shropshire, a few miles from the Staffordshire potteries and began dealing antiques as a teenager. "My father and I would make regular buying forays in the Potteries when I was about fifteen, looking to fill up a van with "bric-a-brac", Dawes reminisces. At that

time (the late sixties) Majolica was within the broad range of Victorian ceramics, considered too "late" to be of interest or value by collectors or dealers, so pieces regularly traded at prices modern collectors would find enviable if not laughable.

"I began to see a majolica market developing when I emigrated to the United States in 1979," comments Dawes. Between 1979 and 1983 Dawes worked in the New York City Auction industry, becoming the head of the Ceramics Department at Phillips Fine Art Auctioneers in 1980. In 1983 Dawes became an independent dealer specializing in the works of Rene Lalique, which had become an interest during his years at Phillips. He published a book on the subject for Crown in 1986, and the commercial success of this work prompted his editor at Crown to suggest he write a second book. The editor dangled the concept of Majolica, which was becoming popular and had not been well documented in books at the time. "I liked this idea very much. It gave me an opportunity to expand a personal interest in the subject, to express my enlightened views on Victorian ceramics, and arrange an extended research trip in my old stomping ground in England", Dawes remembers. He shrewdly purchased a significant collection of Majolica while writing the book, including the magnificently painted Prometheus vase, which Bonhams sold in 1989 for a then world record of 60,000 pounds. His book, *Majolica*, illustrating the vase, was published in 1989 and is now considered a standard reference book on the subject.

From 1983 Dawes organized auctions of Lalique glass (in the spring) and Victorian Majolica (in the fall) at William Doyle Galleries in New York. These proved highly successful and the Majolica auctions led to

Dawes' being invited to serve as an expert consultant at Sotheby's, where he handled the extraordinary collection of Majolica offered as a single bonus sale in 1997. Dawes joined Sotheby's full time after the auction as vice president of special projects. His responsibilities included appraising the decorative arts (with a significant majolica collection), from the estate of Elizabeth Whitney. The estate collection was successfully sold by Sotheby's in 1999.

Dawes left Sotheby's in 1999 to concentrate on his own auctions, which he since organized with David Rago Auctions in Lambertville, NJ. His annual Lalique sales are the biggest of their type anywhere in the world. He is also responsible for the sale of Majolica held at least twice annually, helping to establish the successful '333' Estate Auction Company.

Nicholas Dawes is returning to the annual MIS convention as the speaker on Friday night and will address the audience on his personal relationship with Majolica. A few copies of his out-of-print book of 1989, and copies of past auction catalogues will be made available.

AND THE PITCHER MAKES THREE by Gabrielle Ehrenthal

We were 30 and 32 respectively. Between us we had a full time household and two full time jobs, but when the opportunity arose to move out of an 'apartment building' into a private house, we felt 'we made it'. The upper level of a two family house, still not our own, but a totally different environment to what we were used to. The access to a private garden, two bathrooms and a proper dining room to boot – what luxury!



For those persons living outside of a large city, this concept is probably very foreign, but for us having been raised in the city – and not just any city but in the crowded metropolis of New York, this move seemed certainly upward.



After rearranging the furniture, rugs and hanging pictures, Michael decided we needed some rest and He needed an escape, or I would have him fix everything on that first weekend. So, off we went to an old favorite little hideaway in wonderful New Hope, Pennsylvania. Adjacent to Lambertville, New Jersey the two towns host many antique shops and co-ops, lovely restaurants and in season, regional theatre.

Being February, the weather was lousy but our hearts were soaring, when we went antiquing in search of Kodak cameras (the collection de-jour at the time). Undaunted by the rain and mud we made our way to many a shop, one of which at the time bore the name of Blue Barn Antiques. They dealt mostly with jewelry and a few pieces of furniture, but in true form of an avid collector, no shop shall be excluded!

Towards the back of a large cupboard which was being used to display jewelry, I noticed this very colorful ceramic jardinière, which I thought would look beautiful at the center of our new dining room table, which was a hand me down from our parents. The sales lady took it out and we examined it for cracks and chips.

Although an antiques collector, I was never interested in ceramics, however there was something in the coloring, the shine and smoothness under my fingertips of this piece, which was mesmerizing. We knew the piece to be 20th century, and the fact the words 'Made in France' appeared on the bottom only reinforced our opinion, but the sales person was not to be budged from the price of \$100, which in 1982 seemed exorbitant. Nevertheless, in his usual

generous and gallant mode, Michael insisted on buying it for me as a house-warming present.

Once in the car I sat there gently rubbing it as if it was Aladdin's lamp, all the way to the hotel. I felt terribly guilty at having spent the money on what at the time seemed a frivolous item, but somehow simultaneously I felt very happy.

The next day, another rainy gloomy day, we decided to visit the remaining few shops that escaped us previously, on our way home. Surrounded by mostly country collectibles, my attention was drawn to this realistic Corn-shaped pitcher, which to me looked very similar in texture and feel, as the new jardinière we bought the previous day. While cradling it in my arms, I continued through the shop and found yet another small reddish/brown pitcher decorated on either side with a small yellow and red flower. The prices marked were \$25 and \$15 respectively – more within my budget, but what are they? Upon mentioning the fact that they were 'very worn' (never having heard of crackling and crazing), the elderly gentleman at the counter very kindly reduced the prices to \$20 and \$10 and referred to the pieces as Majolica: a brand new word in our vocabulary and an expensive 'virus' we cannot cure 21 years later.

Thus began the quest for More of these lovely, colorful, humorous, expensive and breakable "Chachkes" which are now members of our family. The hunt through every antiques fair and show, local or overseas continued and shortly, to our delight and shock (at never having taken notice before) we discovered the booth of Charlie Washburne. I was delighted at the opportunity to be surrounded by so many of these wonderful pieces all at once. We had found Majolica pieces strewn through at general dealers, but all Charlie had was Majolica. I was so terrified at the prices marked on the pieces that I never spoke to him. Not at that show, or the show after and even the following show. Little did I know what a gentle soul he is and what a boundless fountain of knowledge!

The moment eventually did arrive when Michael engaged him in conversation, thus marking the true starting point of our former collection.



Yes I said former collection, but that is a story for another time.

Editor Comments: *Michael and Gabrielle Ehrental will be one of the Saturday speakers at our annual convention in Orlando.*

Warning - From Roberta McDonnell



Roberta McDonnell was so bummed at having missed last year's Convention that she decided to paint her house George Jones pink. If you're not up to facing the disappointment of missing Convention, don't delay making your reservation. You might wind up as frantic as Roberta.



2004 Annual meeting destination Orlando, Florida

"Hot" Majolica Tile

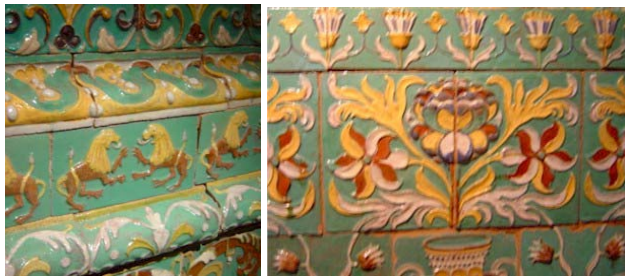
By John Weld

When I was in Moscow, in 2003, a friend took me to the Novodevichy Convent (New Convent of the Maidens), a cluster of 16 sparkling domes behind turreted walls, and containing Moscow's (if not the world's) most prestigious cemetery.



While I was there I saw this awesome majolica heater, probably from about 1690! It was so spectacular think these photos should go into the newsletter.

Regards, John Weld



The following was gathered from various Novodevichy Web Sites: *The Novodevichy Convent, formerly known as the Convent of the Smolensk Icon of Our Lady, was founded by the Grand Prince Vasili, III in 1524 to commemorate the return of the city of Smolensk to Russian control. The convent, built as a fortress in the bend of the Moscow River, became an important component of the capital's southern defense belt. Peter the Great's half-sister Sofia took particular interest in the convent. Under her direction the wonderful bell tower in the Moscow Baroque style was built. It is 232 feet tall, which at that time was the highest bell-tower in Moscow, next to the Ivan the Great Bell Tower.*



Novodevichy Convent, Moscow, Russia

The Smolensk Cathedral (1524-25) is the oldest building on the monastery grounds. The Cathedral of the Assumption in the Kremlin was this cathedral's prototype. Designed by Aristotle Fioravente, the construction of this monastery church architecturally demonstrated the importance of Moscow to the State. The imitation of the Kremlin Cathedral is evident in the similar division of the walls into vertical sections, in the architecture frieze with colonnades, and in the cathedral's five domes. But this imitation is only superficial. The exterior of this cathedral has a more soaring; dramatic structure, and the interior pillars are square in plan, which increases the number of the soaring lines. The frescoes and icons of the 16th and 17th centuries have been preserved to this day. The smaller church, to the left and built on the wall with the thin red columns topped with golden cupolas, is one of the two gate churches in the monastery.

This peaceful sixteenth century convent offers an oasis of quiet in the middle of Moscow. Its pond is said to have inspired Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. Napoleon's troops tried to blow it up, but the nuns who blew out the fuses saved it. The convent itself was originally popular with noblewomen, who would often retire here, but it was also used as a prison for rebellious royals, including Peter the Great's half-sister and his first wife. Today, its cemetery is the final resting place of Chekhov, Eisenstein, Gogol, Khrushchev, Kropotkin, Mayakovsky, Prokofiev, Stanislavsky and Shostakovich.



Orlando awaits us all!

The Issue of Frogs

Some questions are so small we may never know their answers. For instance, where did the idea of the frog on melon pitcher come from? It seems to have erupted like a new virus, a popular majolica theme used by Minton, an anonymous, probably French (Sarreguemines?) company and others. Modern Bordallo pieces still employ the motif, and judging from their ubiquity, they seem to maintain their popularity.



On one of the many, many snow/ice days we have enjoyed this winter, I browsed through our books, determined to answer the question. (It was a cursory search and if readers have examples of earlier models, I would be very happy to see them.) My journey made me become aware of the silence of the frogs, you might say, because there simply didn't seem to be any examples of frogs in British pottery predating Majolica. That quickly led to a perusal of our limited library in Continental ceramics, which revealed the same phenomenon. Feeling the threat of a looming ecological crisis, I went to my art history books and began plowing through pages of bronzes done over the centuries. I suspected that frogs have been on earth at least as long as artists, so the search proceeded backward, chasing the newest-old frog in western art.



First we have to recognize this: there are two elements in the frog-on-melon search. One, of course, is the issue of frogs. The other is the use of animals in useful wares. That, at least, has a tradition in English, and to a lesser extent, continental European ceramics.



Duck sauceboats are soft-paste porcelain, decorated in enamel colors. Longton Hall, c. 1775. (A Collectors'

History of British Porcelain, John and Margaret Cushion, Antique Collectors' Club, Ltd., 1992, p. 66).



Cow creamer, made by Lowestoft in Norfolk circa 1770-80 (9.1 cm.). Decorated with a sponged manganese, and the eyes outlined in underglaze blue. (A Collector's History of British Porcelain, John and Margaret Cushion, Antique Collectors' Club Ltd., 1992, p.152)

This is the earliest earthenware example I could find of an animal's body being used as a vessel. It is a molded salt-glazed teapot, made in Staffordshire, about 1745. (A Collector's History of English Pottery, Griselda Lewis, Antique Collectors' Club, 1987, 1992. p. 75) Griselda Lewis says, "Salt-glazed teapots were often made in the most fantastic shapes: houses, camels, and even pecten shells." (Lewis, p. 73)



I think it's interesting that the naiveté and innocence of the Lowestoft creamer contrasts with the relative sophistication of the camel teapot, which actually predates it.



Figural teapots were popular on the Continent, as well. This Meissen squirrel teapot (1735-40) (5 1/2 " H) was modeled by J.J. Kandler, one of the most influential animal sculptors to work in ceramics in the 18th Century. He is most well known for his many models of birds, but his output was prodigious and of exceptional quality.

Paul Comolera made a similar squirrel for Choisy-le-Roi a hundred years later, but it was not a vessel, only a figure. (Sotheby's, British and European Ceramics, Olympia London 3 July 2003. Lot73.)

By 1810, cow creamers had become quite common, such as this example of a Pearlware cream jug and cover. 6”L.

Somewhat later, circa 1820-30, came along this Staffordshire Pearlware Bear-baiting jug and cover. The bear sits with a dog between its paws. (Sotheby’s, British Ceramics, Olympia London, 2 July 2002, lot 22.)



IN WHICH THE FROG ARRIVES

Finally, after breezing through 300 years of art history, I found two Renaissance frogs in 16th Century sculpture.

This little bronze inkwell is attributed to Il Riccio (Andrea Briosco, ca. 1460-1532), a Renaissance Paduan sculptor, who, like most of his contemporaries, made monumental religious sculptures. Il Riccio is especially remembered for his small bronzes, often done in an ancient Roman style, celebrating the naturalism of scientific observation. This is an early example of a frog’s body being used as a vessel, and the last that I could find until the Victorian Majolica period.



This little frog (1570-1590) may have been designed for one of the grottoes that Bernard Palissy and his workshop built around France. Palissy’s fascination with the natural world could have been an expression of his aim to find God in the flora and fauna he found around him. (Bernard Palissy, In Search of Earthly Paradise, Leonard M. Amico; Flammarion, Paris- New York, 1996, p.68.) As he rejected the teachings of the Medieval Church, he turned increasingly to direct observation (and casting) of nature for his artistic models. In this way, Amico asserts, Palissy hoped to unearth the Divine order of the natural world.



Thus, he presaged the rigorous intellectual analysis of anatomical truth that characterized the Enlightenment two hundred years later.

Attributed to Joseph Landais c. 1850-1870 Palissy Ware, Nineteenth Century French Ceramists from Avisseau to Renolou, Marshall P. Katz and Robert Lehr; Athlone Press, London and Highlands, NJ, p. 84



WHY? WELL, NO WONDER!

Were frogs so unpopular that were ignored by potters for 300 years? When did we humans decide that frogs cause warts? Or is it that they heal them? It’s all very confusing. Well, it turns out that the poor dears are heavily burdened with all kinds of symbolism. The Egyptians saw them as symbols of fertility, water and renewal. (But wasn’t one of the plagues too many frogs?) At any rate, in the next two or three millennia, their fortunes fell, reputation-wise. According to the very entertaining Frogs web site (The Exploratorium), in medieval Europe, toads were viewed as evil creatures whose blood was poisonous and whose body parts had strange powers. They were seen as the evil spirits that accompanied witches on their malicious rounds, along with cats and crows. Shakespeare in Othello, and Spenser in the Fairie Queen, both used toads to convey sexual jealousy and poisonous thoughts. The poet Milton, in Paradise Lost, has Satan appear as a toad to corrupt Eve and foster envy. (Noel Wanner, Frog Myths Across Cultures, the Frog web site.)

They were also associated with powers of transformation, as in the story of “The Frog Prince”. Maybe their bad reputation has its roots in Aesop, who marginalized them in “The Frogs Desiring a King”. It’s the story of the King Log, whom Jove sent to a community of frogs to rule according to their request. When the frogs realized that their log was no king, they began to hop up and down on it, begging for a real king. Jove complied by sending a stork, who then ate all the frogs.

The storks and frogs were still at it when Minton produced the Minton Stork walking stick stand.





Joseph Landais, Tours, 1800-1883

Even the serpent seems to have a poor opinion of the lowly frog. On the left of this platter, you can see the victim being devoured by the snake.



By 1850, frogs were appearing again. The renewed interest in biology doubtless had an impact here. Tobacco jar, attributed to Thomas Sergent. This tiny Minton frog creamer (4"H.) is exquisite in its detailing and scale.

By the 1850's, the modern era, as we recognize it now, had arrived. Part of the Victorian gestalt was the voracious consumption of all scientific knowledge. Priding themselves on their ability to think rationally, the Victorians rejected the beliefs of earlier generations as the superstitions of the ignorant. Religion still played an important role in Victorian Society, but to the "enlightened", it was tempered (or perhaps enhanced) by the thought that one would understand God more clearly if one could discover the natural laws that seemed to guide the universe. There were some offshoots of this intellectual strategy that failed to move the practitioners any closer to wisdom, including phrenology and certain medical procedures such as those detailed in the movie, "The Road to Wellville".

As Bernard Palissy, in his search for evidence of a Divine Plan, found significance in the most un-humanlike

creatures, just so there may be a resemblance to the Victorian's similar ambitions for understanding Nature. They seemed to have stumbled on a parallel fascination with amphibians and reptiles. The Victorian era was its own kind of Enlightenment, based on logic, rationality and the scrupulous attention to natural detail. There was no incongruity in the Humanist Victorian culture embracing the ecology of a pond. Knowledge was what elevated Man above the animals. At least that's how the Victorians saw it. Maybe they regarded their passion as a search for the Truth, rather than for God, but as Truth itself became a kind of Holy Grail, the distinction is insignificant.

It's interesting that at least two of the designs have endured and are still being made today. Obviously, we still find these two motifs charming. We don't attach any spiritual or historical importance to them, but the fact that they remain with us now might say something about our own attitudes toward the cosmic quest. And the frog has been redeemed.



This is a modern version of the Minton creamer, although it is larger. It is widely available in Internet sales rooms.

Likewise, this is a modern copy of the French frog-on-melon pitcher; seen at the beginning of the article. This one is so common that it can be seen regularly on eBay.



A modern Jug, Bordallo



A Victorian Bowl, Minton

The Southwest's Finest

By Roberta McDonnell

Yes it was that time again for me! Another interview, with yet another supplier of my habit. I must confess before caring anything about the interview I had to know about a lovely piece I was drawn to on his website! It is different and fresh and not too large and not too small and simply a delightful majolica specimen. It is a piece indicative of his taste and the booth I quivered in when I attended my first majolica heaven! His stock is extraordinary and you are almost sure to find a piece or two or three you have never seen before in booths or books! I will give you a hint...his initials are J.H. Yes you guessed it correctly Jerry Hayes!



Never having the pleasure of really speaking to Jerry before this evening, I immediately jumped into a very comfortable conversation and found Jerry to be as vibrant as the pottery he sells!! Anyone who can be amused by my conversation has to be an ok guy!

My immediate curiosity is as always how in the world to you wake up one morning and decide to sell majolica for a living? Do you go to bed collecting Hummels and then just wake up with great and improved taste??? Well, Jerry was once a banker, of all things,(I will certainly have more respect for bankers now!) who became an apprentice to in interior designer and ended up with a client who wanted an instant collection. This began a rampage of purchasing that somehow never stopped! With a promise not to keep it for himself (all these dealers are so controlled!!!) as this was to be his livelihood, he went from antiques, to some majolica to a majolica specialist. Jerry confided that he was not always selling the top pieces but over the years, like all of us, either collector or dealer evolved to the "best of the best". He describes himself as the "caretaker" of these nice things deriving special pleasure in finding them just the right home. He draws distinct pleasure of offering his cliental fresh pieces bought from private sales that have not had eBAY or public auction exposure. He feels the market of late has renewed excitement as he is seeing new collectors all the time as well as seeing the seasoned collectors buying aggressively (I wouldn't know anything about that!!!).

He has also confirmed my suspicion that most dealers and collectors of majolica are people of exquisite taste. His passion is architecture, fine paintings and all the wonderful "things" that make our houses the place we like to be most. Traveling from show to show over half the year, Jerry relishes his time off at home. I have the distinct

feeling this is a home I would love to tour! Why do I feel if I rang his doorbell I would have the same response I incurred when I tip toed into his booth? I can just hear myself filling the room with echoes of oohs and ahhs!!!!

Some days, I wonder, will the majolica supply ever run dry, and will we have to resort to collecting Fritz and Floyd? Well Jerry says not to worry.....majolica supply is there in private collections that gets recycled often and those of us always wondering what is just around the corner need only to contact Jerry! When asked about the appeal of French, Jerry feels some of the good makers of the French pieces have their own "unique appeal", and not just those French pieces that mimic English but some that have a distinct charm of their own. When asked about condition, Jerry thinks that declaring condition and repairs are very important in both selling and purchasing. Good minor repairs on limited and rare pieces are always acceptable and to think these pieces are always going to come around mint is sheer fantasy.

Jerry is secure in his product and feels as an American dealer he has the advantage of being in the heart of the market whereas British and French dealers have the disadvantage and expense of having to ship their product here for the American buyers. When asked about Martha Stewart's show where he presented some wonderful pieces to a huge viewing audience, Jerry found this to be a most positive and wonderful experience and Martha was a gracious hostess!!! (I know I certainly enjoyed the show!)

As a passionate collector I would like to thank Jerry for allowing me to present him to our readers and would just like to say" keep digging up those rare pieces our dreams are made of!" www.JerrySHayes.com

Decorating with Majolica/Bathroom Installment #3

By Elizabeth Kropf

When I was asked to write this series, the thing that first inspired me, was-...no, not my pathetic bathroom, but the fun of visiting a high end tile showroom with my majolica tiles in hand. I've taken it as my mission to try to mix our antique tiles with some new ones, since I think we can all imagine a look using Victorian reproductions. So, before we get on with my bathroom, here are some different looks you can try at home.

#1 "Roman Baths" here we have our American made majolica rosette tile and liner (turquoise and sienna glaze) with a deep green



granite, honey onyx, and a printed mosaic tile that looks like it's been excavated from an archeological site. This scheme definitely evokes ancient Rome (can you imagine with majolica? But it works, doesn't it?) and so would be appropriate in many architectural contexts. A note about onyx: Its beauty is due to its fragile nature- try it on a wall with low voltage lights behind. It has an incredible glow, but might crack as a countertop.

#2 "Modern Eclectic" here our little tiles are matched according to design abstractions of color and texture. The slate mosaic "matches" the majolica, but its texture provides an unexpected bit of character. I'm a little obsessed with the onyx, and here it is again in that wonderful honey. The pressed glass tile is an ironic wink at the past. Lots of stainless steel would work in this bathroom.



#3 "Over the Top Aesthetic" Oh it's too much, isn't it? But I love it! Our tiles are matched with colors and textures to evoke a luxurious and exotic feeling. I've gone ahead and added some non-tile elements, just because they work with the scheme. We have a fabric printed with traditional Japanese figures and a really unique wallpaper that I honestly believe is made from fishnet hose laminated in a rough, warm paper. There's a woven leather that might make a wonderful bench. And of course our tiles. The terra cotta colored porcelain tile would be great on the floor, maybe with a piece of slate thrown in here and there (or not). The glass mosaic would be beautiful on the walls.



Before you write me off completely, just remember that we would use the heavy patterns and rich textures only sparingly ...

So, when you are considering decorating with your majolica tiles, remember that there are a lot of different ways to approach the project. We've only skimmed the surface here. See you next time!

Nicolaus Boston – Sat. May 1, 2004, Orlando

Nicolaus Boston will be the featured speaker Saturday night at our Annual Convention in Orlando. Recently, Phil English asked him a list of questions. Here are his replies.



Small sample of Boston's monumental shop

Q. How did you get into the business?

I am a second-generation antiques dealer. My father, had an Antique shop in Islington, London, and dealt in the finest 19th century objects, furniture, bronze, marble etc. My brothers and sisters grew up surrounded by Dad's merchandise and collections. We played in them, on them, and under them.

I studied Art History; Photography and Graphic Art at college but by 18 years old had already started to work at weekends and during holidays buying and selling Antiques for my Father. It was by attending Antique auctions, markets, shops and warehouses around Great Britain that I really learnt the trade. I constantly asked questions and learnt from the most successful European Fine Art dealers and witnessed the finest, hundred thousand dollar objects being sold and secured with the shake of a hand and the wink of an eye. It was a very exciting schooling.

A customer of my Father's, a well known furniture dealer from Houston, Texas, one day asked me if on my travels I ever came across any "Majolica" Majolica..."What's a Majolica?" I thought. He pulled two photographs from his wallet. One picture was of an unmarked majolica corn pitcher and the other was of a solid green majolica leaf plate. He challenged me "For every corn pitcher you find me I'll give you \$20 and for every green plate you find me I'll give you \$10".

"It's a deal", I replied.

The year was 1980 and the Majolica market was non-existent. To my surprise it seemed like nobody else in the world except my Texan customer and I, knew what this brightly glazed Victorian ceramic was. I searched every Antique shop, mall and auction for green plates and corn pitchers and I left no stone unturned. In fact, in those days, every time you turned a stone, a corn pitcher rolled out. I learnt many years later that the corn pitchers were made by the company Adams and Bromley and their advertising slogan was "Majolica, made for the millions"! They were not lying!

Time passed by and my shipments of pitchers and plates to Houston became larger and larger. I remember one shipment in particular containing over one thousand pieces. I felt like real wholesaler, it was very exciting. Interestingly, whenever I offered my customer a piece of good quality majolica, for example, a cherub on a dolphin, a stilton dish with a cow finial, or game tureen with a bright turquoise body decorated with partridge and chicks, he shrugged his shoulders and turned them down. They were too fancy for him. What he wanted was "Dresser fodder".... country pieces to decorate kitchen hutches and shelves. That suited me perfectly, I loved "the fancy stuff" so I kept them all. With the profits of selling the "country" majolica I was able to build a collection of the "fancy stuff" for myself.

I was still living at home with my parents, brothers and sisters, everyone was getting slightly fed up having to share their home with "Nic's collection"

Majolica cherubs, huge jardinières, umbrella stands and pedestals were everywhere and gradually taking over. Space was running out. The time eventually came, the majolica had to go. On a buying trip to London, I noticed a small shop for rent in a good quality antiques mall in London's fashionable Chelsea. The rent was reasonable so I decided to lease the space and open a majolica shop with my collection. I was 19 years old and my brothers thought I was mad. I opened a few weeks later, every inch of floor and shelf space was covered with majolica. Not much happened in the first couple of weeks, except, of course, for the turned up noses and guffaw of laughter from unimpressed passers by. "Majolica ...is he mad!". In those days very few people knew what Majolica was and Victorian design was very unfashionable. However, I did not lose faith. There had to be more people who loved this ceramic fantasy as well as me. One morning a beautiful, glamorous, Lady from New York

wandered into the shop. She could not believe her eyes, a shop full of majolica. The lady excitedly informed me that she was a majolica collector and had and had over a thousand pieces!

I could not believe it, someone who loved majolica it as much as I did. We became friends immediately. Things even better when the beautiful lady bought everything in the shop...the whole, entire collection all in one go. Not a Majolica vase or cheese dish left!

Later that day, I rang my brother and told him that I had officially become a "Majolica dealer". Hey...not so mad....

Q. How far do you go to track down a piece?

Borders, Countries, Continents, latitude, longitude, the hunt for Majolica knows no limits. If Martine and myself hear about a good piece in some far flung corner of the globe, we go! The important thing is to get to that piece fast...faster than anybody else!

Over the years and mostly before our two girls, Maeve and Elizabeth were born, we have traveled thousands of miles at a moments notice to secure many special pieces. A whisper, a telephone call, a small advert in a newspaper about a forthcoming auction in Katmandu, would spring us into action, leaving the cat with a neighbor, grabbing our passports and credit cards and head for the nearest airport. Our philosophy has always been, that hopefully our keenness to travel will end up securing that great and rare object. However, in the event of things not working out, for example the piece turns out to be very restored or just too expensive, then we would have no regrets, we would always end having a great time anyway. New countries, new cities and new people, good things usually come from our spontaneous Majolica hunts. Greece, Sri Lanka, Austria, South Africa, wherever, Majolica can pop up anywhere and as a result, so can Martine and myself.

Q. The strangest customer you've ever encountered?

About twenty years ago, Martine and myself were renting a small apartment in Wimbledon. It was a cold winter. The hot water and heating system in our building was archaic and on its last legs. On one particularly bitterly cold, snowy day our old boiler gave up. Boy, was it cold! We called an emergency plumber. Plumbers in England are like gold dust and earn a fortune, especially in the depths of winter an especially when your boiler has given up. Several hours and several layers of clothes later, Tony the plumber arrived. Tony was a pleasant, chatty

chap who set about trying to crank life back into the ancient boiler which was situated in an annex next the kitchen. On our kitchen table were a few pieces of majolica (my haul for the day), a Minton monkey teapot, a George Jones sardine dish and an unmarked Stilton dish with a blossom finial. After an hour or so and several cups of tea, Tony had been successful and the boiler was working. The apartment started to warm up and Martine and myself felt brave enough to slowly unpeel our woolen layers. Pointing to George Jones sardine dish in the middle of the table, Tony said, "What's that then, I love fish, I'm a big fisherman, I never miss a weekend on the river bank". Without going into too much information, I wanted to be polite without informing him that the pieces on my kitchen table were probably worth \$5,000, I told him that the pieces was Victorian and called Majolica.

"Majolica is it" he said "And that's on majolica is it?", he said pointing to Joan Stacke's and Marilyn Karmason's book that was sitting on the other end of the table. Yes it is, I replied. "Can I have a look?" he asked. I handed him the book wondering how long this was going to take and where it was leading. I hoped he was not charging by the hour. Tony flicked through the book, smiling at its contents. He was obviously smitten.

"It's great stuff, isn't it"?

"Yes", I replied.

"I'll have to keep my eyes open out for it", "O.K." I said, good luck.

Putting the book back on the table he said, "Well, must go, nice to meet you, let me know if you if the boiler gives you any more problems. I'll pop a bill in the post". Tony left and the boiler carried on working. The cold winter passed, and the spring had sprung. April is a busy time in the London Antiques trade and I was running around, doing Majolica dealer stuff, auctions, restorers, shippers, customers etc. Trying to keep all of the balls in the air. My mobile phone rang, "Hello, Nic...It's Tony the Plumber, remember me", Tony the plumber, what does he want?

I definitely sent him a check for the work he did a few months ago. Yes, I remember you Tony, how are you? "Fine, Nic, Listen Nic, I'm in a little village just outside London, I'm fitting a central heating system", he continued, " I've just stopped outside a small antique shop and in the window is a piece of that majolica stuff, like the stuff in your kitchen".

"O.K." I replied. "What is it like?" "Well, it's a dish

and cover of some sort...a rabbit and two ducks on the top and a basket weave base...I think it's one of those game tureens things...it has a ticket on it for #500 (about \$950), is that too much? I was amazed. All those months ago, in those twenty minutes or so in my kitchen, Tony the plumber had become a majolica fan and obviously has an "eye", as we call it in the trade.

"Well Tony", I replied, "I have a couple of those tureens in stock presently so I'm not interested in buying it, but thank you so much for calling me. It's a good price perhaps you should buy it and start a majolica collection for yourself."

I was half joking but that is exactly what Tony did. He negotiated and got it for #450 (\$800). That day Tony the Plumber became a Majolica collector. Over the years has become a good customer and to date has about 100 pieces. Every now and again he pops into my Kensington Church Street shop and spends some time talking about what's new in the majolica world, what rare pieces have come onto the market and just general "majolica" chitchat. It's always good to see him. He's a nice chap. Of course, the best thing of all, is that if I ever have a plumbing problem, he's the man. It's amazing how much plumbing can be fixed for a couple George Jones chestnut plates.

Q. How can you shape a collection without big bucks?

A Majolica collection can still be put together without having to spend a fortune. Unmarked pieces can still be bought inexpensively starting at around \$50 for a chipped plate or pitcher. Middle range George Jones and Wedgwood can still be found starting at a couple of hundred dollars. Continental majolica is still undervalued. Companies such as Villeroy and Bosch, Shramberg and Schiller produced excellent quality majolica but the appreciation for these firms have not yet come to fruition.

Starting a collection is sometimes very difficult. Where do you start? So many companies, styles, themes and colours...to the beginner, majolica seems endless. So many times I have heard, "I'd love collect majolica but do not know where to start." I always think that a good place to start, for the complete majolica novice, is with the humble bread tray.

The Adams and Bromley corn bread tray, for example, is an excellent piece which still can be found for around \$300-\$500. It has strong colour and a strong design. Hung on a wall or standing on a

mantle or cabinet shelf it looks great. Once a bread tray is in a central position on a shelf, a pair of circular plates on either side compliment it beautifully. Pitchers can then be added between the plates. This will help to bring in the height difference, which will break up the regimental feel. Also try to match a colour in all pieces to bring a coherence to the pieces.

You will find that before long, your first shelf is full and a new majolica collection has been born.

When searching for your pieces always look for depth of colour because, this is often the sign of a quality manufacturer. Condition is important too but do not worry too much about a chip or a crack. Remember that majolica is a soft pottery and was used in daily life so 99% of everything that comes onto the market is either damaged or has some small amount of restoration.

Plates and pitchers can still be bought starting from \$50 or so, and decent middle range Wedgwood and George Jones start at as little as \$150. The wonderful thing about majolica is that every collection is unique and has it's own personality. Personal taste in colour, tones, themes and styles are reflected in one's collection. A collection of unmarked pieces, displayed well and put together with love and enthusiasm will often look better than a 100 piece, badly displayed, collection of high end, Minton and George Jones that has been put together purely for investment. However, the most important thing of all, whether it is chipped \$50 dollar unmarked pitcher or a \$100,000 flat iron teapot, is to buy what you like and enjoy living with.

Q. Something about your family, the crazy life you all lead?

My poor family...what can I say? Majolica dealer's daughters. Two little girls who know the golden rule only too well..."Don't Touch Daddy's 'Jolica".

I grew up around my Father's antique business and Martine grew up around her Father's monumental stone business back in Ireland. We both grew up living "above the shop" so to speak. We both feel that it was good place to grow up and gave us the basic understanding of commerce. Seeing deliveries coming and going, money changing hands and the general hubbub of day-to-day business was exciting and very interesting. No two days were ever the same.

Martine and myself like the idea of our girls

experiencing aspects of our childhood and we encourage them to be around the daily deliveries and shipments of majolica in our shop and home. We like them to meet our customers and generally feel part of our all-consuming business.

Maeve attended her first auction at Christies in London when she was a few weeks old and our two year old, Elizabeth's, most frequent request is "I come your shop in London, Daddy?" which she often does and is always well behaved...well nearly always.

We always have fun, when I return home in the evenings, unpacking new purchases from crates and cardboard boxes "Well girls, what is it?" I ask, "Minton, Minton " they shout. "No, it's not Minton....it's....it's..." I reply, "George Jones!", they scream.

Elizabeth then follows up with "your 'jolica too 'sensitive Daddy". Thank you Elizabeth...out of the mouths of babes...

Recently, the BBC, our main television broadcasters in Britain, produced a half hour programme all about majolica. I appeared several times during the programme and answered general questions about majolica. We all sat at home and watched the show. After it had finished Martine was very supportive and complimentary of my first (and probably last) television performance. I should have quit while I was ahead however I asked Maeve (our four year old) what she thought of Daddy's majolica programme?

"Well, Daddy", she replied, "lets talk about you first", "Yes, Maeve..." waiting for a compliment, "Well Daddy, I thought your hair was sticking up too much!" Thank you Maeve...out of the mouths of babes....

2004 Society Dues Process

by Jim Trout

Please check your address label on our mailing envelope. The red date such as "2004-Jul" indicates when you owe 2004 annual dues. Some members have paid ahead and won't receive any 2004 dues notice. If your label has a date that includes a "2003" then you are seriously behind on your dues and your membership is in jeopardy. Please send in your dues and thanks for your support and your help.

Bad Email Address

by Duane Matthes

We sent a "MajolicaMAIL" eMail out on March 02nd to all members that have eMail addresses. It was about several Auctions. If you didn't get that email, then MIS doesn't have your email address recorded correctly. Please eMail duane@emajolica.com with your correct email so we can correct our records and communicate with you. Thanks for your help!

Enclosures to this Newsletter:

First, there's a registration blank for the 16th annual convention in Orlando Florida. Fill it out and send it in; I know LeRoy is planning a party.

Last, there is a **2004 dues notice** for all members that need to pay dues in 2004. Some members have already paid ahead and therefore need to take no action.

If you're late on your 2003 dues you may find a **LATE dues notice that needs to be completed and returned with your 2003 and 2004 dues payments.**

Moe Wizenberg Literary Fund

The Majolica International Society has renamed the Literary Fund in honor of the late Moe Wizenberg, who was a devoted majolica enthusiast and a beloved longtime Society member. The fund was established by the Majolica International Society to promote and support the authorship of scholarly articles for publication in national design, antique and ceramics periodicals.

You can donate majolica items to be sold at the Member's Auction on Saturday morning of the MIS Annual Convention. All proceeds are tax deductible and will go directly to the fund.

Society members who prefer to make a cash donation to the Moe Wizenberg Literary Fund may do so by giving a donation to an MIS officer at the annual MIS meeting or by mailing check to:

Majolica International Society- **Moe Wizenberg Fund**
Michael Foley, Treasurer
77 Wright Street
New Bedford, MA 02740



Decidedly Disney Limericks

by Peter Rollitt

We've added something new to the 2004 convention. Since we're in the fun city of Orlando, we had a "Decidedly Disney Limericks" thought. The idea is that we should follow-up our entertaining "Majolica Melodies" with some other fun items to allow members to demonstrate their creativity and passion concerning majolica. We're inviting members to create and perform limericks or short poems about majolica to be presented at one of our meetings.

Now, if being in front of a group bothers you - then we'll have either Snow White or one of the Seven Dwarfs read your limerick to the members and guests. We need you to create a limerick of between 4 and 20 lines, then bring it to convention or if you won't be there, then just send one in. Then we'll make sure it gets read to the group.

Here is a thought starter::

**I'm Minton the majolica man
I makes pots as fast as I can
they sellin' like hot cakes
to the poor and the oil sheiks, . . .**

So, put that dwarf hat on, give it some thought and start creating! It will be a riot!

Please send your comments and material for the newsletter to:

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