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The Nature of Majolica

Something about Majolica caused its creators to break out in rashes of frogs and mushrooms. A richly colored, heavy weight clay pottery that is coated with enamel, ornamented with paints and finally glazed. The name derived from the Spanish Island of Majolica where it first originated. Later, they were also crafted in Italy and France. The pieces that today's collectors particularly covet are quirky Victorian English wares awash in mosses, water lilies, ducks, herons, and reeds. And twigs, boughs, and shoots, and it's possible to own a bird's nest, willow baskets, grapevines, and even a tree trunk or two. On the whole, if you collect this earthenware, you'll almost certainly be a dedicated nature lover. Majolica plates, pitchers, saltcellars, and garden seats are rendered in lustrous ochers and chocolates, with more brilliant hues glinting from surprising spots. You'll find the full panoply of greens as well blue greens, olives, kellys, hunters, and poisons in the usual leaves, lichens, and shoots, with green woodpeckers and dragonflies hiding among them.

English advises potential first-time purchasers to seek out pieces that are both beautiful and useful. But functional never means dull. Majolica's brilliant glazes, startling interiors in jaw-dropping pinks and turquoises, and glassy, cobalt blue details are sumptuous and regal yet somehow fun.



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