

HIGH-IMPACT KITCHEN RENOVATIONS

How to Create a
Bathroom
Retreat

VICTORIAN HOMES

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with a
Vintage heart

11 Tips:
Hosting a
Family Reunion

From Minton to
Wedgwood:
Majolica

Silver-Screen

Mad About Majolica

Victorians cherished this richly colored earthenware.

BY DONNA PULESE-MURPHY • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF TRILOGY ANTIQUES



These lovely blue majolica pieces, all produced by George Jones of England, include a Holdcroft tea tray topped with a Wedgwood spooner and apple blossom teapot, a lily of the valley jardiniere, a basketweave and apple blossom pitcher, and an apple blossom plate and English stand.

*Majolica themes were seemingly endless:
botany and horticulture, zoology and
ornithology, marine biology and Conchology.*



A Victorian home was truly a thing of beauty. The reason is simple—Victorians surrounded themselves with countless *objets d'art* that took on many forms and had utilitarian purposes as well. Victorian majolica, fine Italian glazed earthenware that is richly colored and highly sculpted, was highly coveted. Victorians relished in its diverse shapes, colors, uses and exaltation of nature. And perhaps they also delighted in having a little taste of Italian Renaissance-inspired artistry in their homes.

The Glory Days of Majolica

First introduced by Majorcan merchants in 14th-century Italy, majolica had a Hispano-Moresque style that captured the fertile spirit and creativity fostered during the Renaissance. The low-fired, tin-glazed earthenware achieves its vivid colors when decorated with colorful metallic opaque glazes. Its unique coloration is further enhanced by myriad shapes and uses.

Herbert Minton, the celebrated British ceramicist, was so enamored by it that he revived the artform. He created strange and wonderful “imitation majolica” or “Victorian majolica” pieces that he presented at the Crystal Palace, site of the Great Exhibition of 1851. His company’s mélange of majolica ranged from the most demure plate to a large, highly sculpted garden fountain and three-dimensional figural forms from the bird and animal kingdom.

Minton was not alone in designing new



Any majolica collector looking for whimsical pieces would be delighted to own these three figural pitchers. Proud Rooster is made by St. Clement, France; Squirrel with Nut and Rabbit with Carrot are made by Orchies, France.



This League of Nations table setting, which features an American pond lily punch bowl in the center, has many different countries of origin represented with a canine theme: a German hunting dog bottle, a French dog head, a marmalade server, an English melon tea set, an English basketweave and floral basket, an American dog platter, an Austrian dog with a pipe striker and an Austrian dog pulling a cart.

For animal lovers who collect objects with dog themes, this dog and bone platter, made by Arsenal Pottery, Trenton, New Jersey, would beautifully garnish any table.



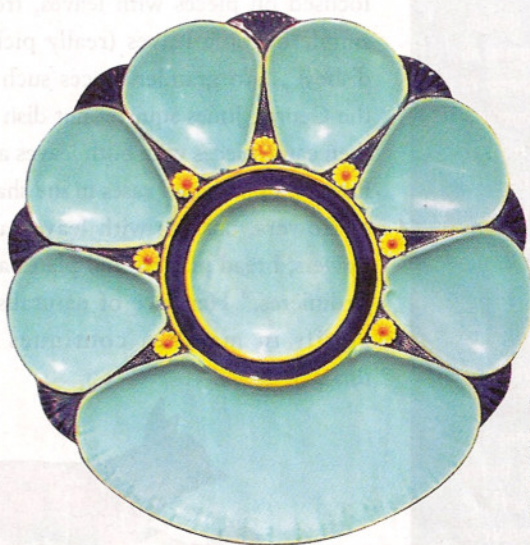
Victorian majolica. Other important manufacturers included George Jones, Joseph Holdcroft, W.T. Copeland, Samuel Lear, James Wadle and, of course, Wedgwood from England; Sarregumines, Luneville, St. Clement, Massier and Choisey-le-Roi from France; Griffen, Smith and Hill, Eureka, James Carr and George Morley from America; and Villeroy and Boch from Germany.

It is important to note that much of Victorian majolica is not marked, but there are certain identifying characteristics that can be discerned with the help of an expert. For example, modern remakes are generally lighter and less skillfully colored than original antique pieces. French pieces, for example, tended to be teal blue or deep red in coloration, and the British developed a broader palette of jewel tones, including emerald green, turquoise, sapphire, pink and yellow. For assistance in finding an expert in this genre, Wanda Matthes, owner of Trilogy Antiques and an expert and collector of majolica in her own right, suggests visiting The Majolica International Society Web site at www.majolicasociety.com.

Victorian majolica themes were seemingly endless: botany and horticulture, zoology and ornithology, marine biology and Conchology, as described in the book *Majolica* by Marilyn Karmason and Joan B. Stacke. It was not unusual to see leaves, shells, fruits, vegetables, animals or birds depicted on a piece of majolica, but it didn't end there—Renaissance motifs such as lions, rams and mythological figures also made their way into the majolica menagerie. The Oriental influence that so intrigued Victorians also appeared in majolica in the guise of monkeys, elephants, birds, bamboo and fans.



Griffen Smith and Hill, from Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, crafted this magnificent pond lily punch bowl with wonderfully detailed and colored ornamentation.



The dreamy blue tonal quality and unusual shape of this oyster plate, made by Minton and Company, could stand alone as its own work of art.



Made by the celebrated ceramicist Minton and Company of England, this extraordinary Triple Putti with Basket Centerpiece features three cherubs at play.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

J.R. Burrows & Company Takes a Look Through Glass Curtains

BY NANCY A. RUHLING

Aleta, a lace curtain from J.R. Burrows & Co., brings beauty to the window and the feel of the outdoors in with its fiddlehead fern design. Elaborate window treatments may command all the attention, but John Burrows, proprietor of the Massachusetts-based textile, wallpaper and carpet company that bears his name, reminds homeowners that sometimes simple is best. For a lighter look, owners of Victorian homes are putting glass curtains in their windows for privacy and prettiness. Suspended from petite brass rods, these short lace curtains, which get their name because they are hung close to the glass pane, may stand-alone or be paired with long laces.

"This is a great look for smaller homes and cottages, and for summer, when the heavy draperies are put in storage," Burrows says.

J.R. Burrows & Company carries a variety of cotton lace panels, including Aleta, which features a dense fiddlehead fern design that lets in light but provides privacy. The c. 1890 pattern is a replica of one found in a home in Newton, Massachusetts. "It was being used as a door panel," Burrows says, adding that that's another good use for glass curtains. "And it survived more than 100 years. It was so fragile that the homeowner couldn't move it, so it was photocopied, and we sent it to England to be copied."

Glass curtains may be hung on spring rods, available at hardware stores, but for the full vintage effect, Burrows recommends the brass café rods sold by Rejuvenation (see http://www.rejuvenation.com/typepageCafe%20Rod%20Sets/templates/houseparts_group.html). Aleta is available in white or ecru, each of which would have been equally popular during the 19th century. For more information, see Burrows.com, which also includes hanging tips from a Victorian style guide.

COLLECTIONS

The Collecting Glaze

With pieces that are so rich in color and diverse in design, collectors are in for a rare treat when they begin their search for that lovely, whimsical piece of majolica to decorate a table or a larger, impressive piece that serves as a focal point in a hallway.

Matthes describes her own personal journey into the wonderful world of majolica. "My collection first focused on pieces with leaves, from simple begonia leaves (really pickle dishes) ... to grander pieces such as the George Jones squirrel nut dish ... then came pieces with both leaves and flowers. I purchased vases in the shape of flowers, baskets with leaves and flowers, bread platters and plates and jardinières." Her love of naturalistic motifs in majolica continues to this day.

Majolica has a vast range of prices, some quite affordable. Matthes says you can still find majolica pieces at flea markets for around \$50 but that most items of high quality—meaning a good mold with a pleasing design and in good condition—will be more than \$100. For rarer, highly-sought-after pieces, one could expect to pay up to six figures. For more common pieces—such as plates, platters, pitchers and other decorative items—there are plenty of affordable pieces available.

As for condition, since majolica is soft and porous, it has a fragile quality. So condition will play a part on price, but collectors are often willing to overlook minor chips and damages if it means acquiring a rare item that suits their fancy. Majolica's silky brilliance will make any home seem like a grand palazzo. ❧

Photos courtesy of Trilogy Antiques.
Group shots are by Nancy
Vanlandingham Photography.
Individual shots are by Duane Matthes.



This fox game dish, made by Minton and Company, pays tribute to one of the prominent sporting games favored by Victorians.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MAJOLICA

Dealer:
Trilogy Antiques, Wanda and
Duane Matthes,
www.emajolica.com, (972) 599-
1914 or info@emajolica.com.

Book:
*Majolica: A Complete History and
Illustrated Survey* by Marilyn Kar-

mason and Joan B. Stacke, publ.
Harry N. Abrams, 2002, ISBN-10:
0810935953.

Association:
Majolica International
Society, PMB 103, 1275
First Avenue, New York, New York
10021. www.majolicasociety.com.