A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF ITALIAN MAJOLICA OF
THE RENAISSANCE

A Thesis Presented for the
Degree of Master of Arts
by
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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1947

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of terms used</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of remainder of the thesis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. GENERAL HISTORY</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origins of types of ware</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origins of Italian Development</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early works of Italian majolica</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later works</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. HISTORY OF THE MAIN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Marches</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuscany</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman States</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umbria</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venetian Cities</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neapolitan Cities</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan and Lodi</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. TECHNICAL DISCUSSION</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and forming</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glazes</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorative treatment</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilns</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. SUMMARY</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the fifteenth century the rise of the plastic arts was prompted by the need of the reawakened man to provide a lavish display of wealth and luxury. This resulted in the production and success of the brilliant, picturesque pottery called Italian majolica. Traditional ceramic methods of centuries past were transformed by art and science into the technical achievements of the age. The potter of the Renaissance became a man of mark with the nobles contending with each other to procure the exclusive services of some gifted majolist. Majolica was esteemed as a gift of priceless value which was often sent by political opportunists to monarchs and powerful nobles. It was also the conventional deed to express ones esteem for a certain lady.

I. THE PROBLEM

It was the purpose of this study to make a general survey of the development of Italian majolica as it assumed its place in the art of the fifteenth century, and as it more rapidly declined. An attempt has been made to present concisely the historical and some of the technical aspects of this type of ceramics.

Italian majolica has been the subject of numerous studies, yet the whole picture has seldom been presented. Its importance in the intermediate period of ceramic styles has often been stressed, but beyond this general recognition of its worth, few authors agree. Majolica is always described in the general histories of ceramics. The description is necessarily inadequate and in addition its placement with the other types makes difficult the discovery of the pertinent facts. There is a great need, therefore, for a summation of the sources with a sufficient evaluation to weed out the false statements and prejudices.
Too much importance has been given to the classification of the pieces as to cities and artists, a classification resulting in an immaterial emphasis on minor details. Each piece has been labelled, and this label has been used as the scale of value. It would be better if more attention would be spent on the reasons for such developments and on the problems confronting the workers.

A study of this type should point out the possible modern application that can be made. The present day artist can benefit from the past and use this knowledge to further his appreciation and his own standards.

Majolica was an early development in Italy, and its manufacture has continued to the present day. In consequence of this, certain limitations were necessary in this paper. A special emphasis will be given to the earlier works as examples of a more truly ceramic art according to current standards. This does not mean, however, that the later wares of the Renaissance will be ignored. The works of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries are considered the representatives of the periods of the total development, yet mention will be made of the more modern pieces. In conclusion, a comparison will be presented between our own use of the majolica technique and that of the first types.

Many people seeing a previous ceramic period attempt to reproduce the ware technically, including the glaze, the clay body, and the design. There can be no definite achievement in such reproductions. For this reason, emphasis will be placed on the actual history and the technical aspects of majolica ware. The pottery created by the author in the general Italian majolica style will be glazed and decorated in a similar way, but it will not be coated with an enamel specifically calculated to resemble the former wares. The decoration will be applied in a free manner trying to give some of the spirit of the earlier works.
II. DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS USED

In general, the technical terms used in this study are not given meanings peculiar to the writer. To facilitate the understanding of the general ceramic phraseology, definitions have occasionally been incorporated into the text.

The term, majolica, follows the accepted usage. It is a porous pottery which after drying and firing is coated with a stanniferous enamel. This covering is a combination of tin ashes and a fusible substance. The unfired glaze is painted in different designs with dyes consisting of metallic oxides.1 Lustres may be used also. As used here the term will, therefore, refer to a class of earthenware coated with an opaque tin glaze or enamel upon which was painted a decoration.

In naming the place of manufacture of this pottery, such words as the Italian, "bottega", the French, "fabrique", and "atelier", and the English, "studio", will be employed. Their reference will be to the shop in which all phases of ceramic production takes place.

The word, enamel, is used to connote an opaque coating in contrast to a transparent or translucent glaze.2 A tin enamel refers to a glaze whose general composition consists of glass, lead oxide, and tin oxide.

Lustres are also important to the majolist. This ancient art was


revived in the latter part of the fifteenth century to further enhance the beauty of the wares. Lustre is the result of the reduction of a metallic compound which has been painted on the exterior of the piece. The special firing resulted in a metallic sheen or iridescence.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

As the emphasis of this study is placed on the historical development and the technique of the Italian potter, the remainder of the work is devoted to this. In achieving this purpose, the actual investigation conducted by the able art historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth century serves as a sound basis for the study. This is covered in the second chapter which also includes a chronological survey of the literature on the subject.

The third chapter is devoted to the general history dealing with the proposed origins of the enamels, lustres, and the pottery itself. Important developments associated with majolica, such as messa-majolica and the works of Luca Della Robbia may be found under this title.

With this background material in mind, a more detailed outline of the regional development can be suggested. Chapter IV is concerned with the production of majolica associated with specific sections and cities including the characteristics and the famous artists of each area.

The technical discussion treats the various steps and materials used by the potter. The actual creation of the ware is shown in Chapter V touching upon the clay, its composition and preparation, the glaze, the decorative treatment as to designs and application, and the kilns. Certain production procedures which were in popular use by the Renaissance craftsman, are elaborated in an attempt to picture the problems and reasons for the results. The methods employed are compared with the
present day practices in a parallel situation, the small pottery.

A summary of the importance of the ware and its modern influences completes the historical and technical aspects of the thesis. In conclusion it has seemed advisable to present a critical evaluation of majolica drawn in part from authorities in the field, contemporary ceramicists and artists, and in part from the personal opinion of the author.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature on the different phases of Italian majolica is extensive. Included in it are several books written during the High Renaissance. One important among them is the work of Cavaliere Cipriano Piccolpasso who describes the various activities of the potter with great accuracy. However, his manuscript, The Three Books of the Potter's Art, was not published until 1857 and was thought to have more value archaeologically than technically.

Another similar and contemporary work was the Pirotechnia by a Sienese nobleman, Vannuccio Beringuccio, written in 1540. He writes of the actual processes of manufacturing in great detail and is often referred to by Piccolpasso.

About the earliest work known to the nineteenth century was the prejudiced monograph on the majolica of Pesaro and the surrounding district by Passeri. This came out in 1752 and was soon proved to have too many mis-statements to be of any real worth. Passeri was a classical and geological researcher who was fanatically loyal to his native town of Pesaro, a prejudice which without any authentic proof led him to claim all sorts of fantastic discoveries for his city.

It was in 1859, that a renewed interest in the Italian works arose due to the excavations of several Italians. Some more successful studies appeared at this time, The Catalogue of the Correr Museum in Venice presented an earnest attempt to outline the general history of the art and to include a certain amount of classification. This was the work of the curator, Lazari, who was a pioneer in the field of Italian ceramics. His system of treating majolica was followed by
others as M. Darcel in his *Catalogue des Faences Pientes* published in Paris in 1864.

A similar movement lead by such able historians as J. C. Robinson, Henry Wallis, and Drury E. Fortnum evidenced itself in England at this time, and is reflected in the interest in majolica shown by the Victoria and Albert Museum. Much of the English research was sponsored by this institution.

The most interesting and colorful source on majolica is *The Three Books on the Potter's Art* by Cavaliere Cipriano Piccolpasso. This is considered today the most complete picture of the fabrique of the fifteenth century. While not preemtently important for its technical exactness, it nonetheless contains invaluable data on the making of this ceramics and includes as well a lively and accurate account of the times.

Piccolpasso was born and lived in the town of Castel-durante which was itself an active center of majolica manufacture. His brother was a potter, and Piccolpasso had constant access to many pottery workshops. This gave him a chance to study the technique firsthand. It has been generally conceded, however, that Piccolpasso was not a ceramist himself, but an observer only. This deduction is based on certain of his statements which reveal an ignorance of the potter's art.¹ We know that he was a commandant of the citidel of Perugia and was later sent to survey the fortifications of Umbria and the Adriatic Coast. These activities showed his interest in military engineering, which seems to us a far cry from the ceramic arts, though the Renaissance would not

have recognized any incompatibility. This was all accomplished after the writing of his famed treatise which was dated 1548.

The first book of the manuscript covers the ware in the raw state, describing the manner of obtaining and preparing the clay, forms of the wares, the potter's wheel, plaster molds, and the various types of tools. Glazes and pigments are detailedly discussed in the second section; the third book is devoted to the process of painting, glazing, and firing. The book closes with a series of sample designs in the manner of the centers in Urbino. Piccolpasso's treatise is well-illustrated with sketches picturing the various pieces of equipment so necessary to the potter. This familiarizes the reader with the general production but says nothing of the history of the ware.

The history of majolica was found in later works. One of the recognized authorities on this art was Drury Fortnum who wrote the small volume, Majolica, tabulating the results of an intensive survey of the available Italian manuscripts and the extant examples. It was Fortnum who disproved the theories of Passeri, particularly the one concerning the Bacini of Pisa. Passeri had claimed that these bowls had been placed in the walls of the Pisan churches as representatives of the spoils of their triumph at the island of Majorca. This statement was generally believed until Fortnum pointed out the rather obvious facts leading to an entirely different conclusion. This established the Englishman as a chief authority in the field of Italian majolica. He followed his early study with several other books covering various phases of the development.

Henry Wallis also wrote extensively on this subject. He was the author of numerous detailed studies as Oak-Leaf Jars, The Oriental Influence of the Ceramic Art of the Italian Renaissance, and A Study in

the History of Early Italian Majolica. His works were always well-illustrated and documented.

Other similar volumes on the ware were Solon's The History and Description of Italian Majolica and Beckwith's Majolica and Faience. These authors were dealing almost exclusively with the historical aspects of the class although some technical material was included. Also a rich source of information is offered by the abundance of articles found in different fine arts periodicals, among them, International Studio, The Connoisseur, The Architectural Record, and The Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Art historians dealing with this subject have at their command numerous civil documents from the Italian cities during the Renaissance - deeds, permits, decrees. These gave added information about the various potters and their studios and laws governing them. Also numerous letters have come to light concerning orders placed by the nobility for gifts and personal use. Most of the sources quoted above have made full use of these records in their attempt to give an authentic picture.

The list of writings is quite extensive but there is also an abundance of the actual wares to aid the historian. Nearly every museum has several pieces of Italian majolica. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London has an excellent collection as a result of the sponsored research on the subject. An exhaustive catalogue of the pieces included in the museum's collection has been compiled by Bernard Rackham. This offers an unusual opportunity to study illustrations of the pots, as every pot in the museum is included. The Columbus Gallery of Fine arts has several pieces of the later phases. The earlier works are admirably represented in the Schiff collection in the Metropolitan
Museum of Art in New York. Many of the pieces are still in Italy
either a part of a collection or in the possession of private in-
dividuals.

All and all a rather complete picture can be drawn from the
available sources. Each new work fitting into the pattern clarifies
points which were previously hazy. The different writings stressed
the various aspects in order that the ground might be completely covered.
Naturally there was overlapping, yet the dominant idea differed in
each writer. The regional development was best described by Solon;
although Beckwith touched upon it. Perhaps the best general history
was the Fortnum work. The individual periods, decorations, sources of
designs, etc. were treated in the numerous articles. For techniques,
Piccolpasso remains among the leaders. Many of his facts have been
proven false but the book contains enough truth to convey more clearly
and accurately than later writers, the story of the potter's actual
work and ideas.

However the wealth of recognized books on the subject often merely
confuse the issue. As in the study of any past art, the investigator
presents his case as he holds it to be true, but several investigators
may differ considerably on the same subject. This brings up numerous
inaccuracies which are left to be worked out by the later students of
the Renaissance.

The authenticity of the pieces is also a difficult problem, since
this type of ware is still being produced in certain parts of Italy
today. There modern pieces often suggest some new idea to the researcher
that could not be substantiated by an examination of the older ware.
This presence of modern imitations may very easily cause the inclusion
of false ideas that limit the truth of such studies. In addition, the
modern pieces are frequently difficult to differentiate from the Renaissance ware as the same clays, similar colorants, and similar designs are used. The solution of the problem of authenticity in a market flooded by reproductions rests on an aesthetic decision. Arrived at through familiarity with the art and acute sensibility Mr. Solon, the English authority, says in this connection: "I believe that a truly genuine specimen exhibits a boldness and an accuracy of design which, coupled with the intense brightness of the colors, are not seen in a spurious piece."³ Obviously this is not an impersonal criticism, but the responsiveness of a trained eye to the elements of originality that are inherent in the genuine, and escape the imitation. Yet it is primarily on this basis that the ultimate decision about authenticity must be made. Any study, therefore, which helps to familiarize us with the Italian majolica may facilitate the development of such a trained responsiveness and hence clean up the questions which still confuse the problems of identification.

CHAPTER III
GENERAL HISTORY

Glance at any piece of Italian majolica, and you will be able to note their evident similarity to wares of oriental and classical origin. It has been universally recognised that the Italian ceramic production of this type was the outgrowth of the Near Eastern style. Numerous theories have been advanced as to the way this came about. The most reasonable pointed to the Hispano-Moresque's influence, but others claimed that it was brought to Italy by exiled Moorish craftsmen, or perhaps developed directly from imports.

Before further developing the possible origins of the Italian wares, let us review the type of pottery classed as majolica. It has been defined not by the shape or by the clay, but by the enamel covering and the decorative style and technique. The word, enamel, was used to connote an opaque coating in contrast to the transparent or translucent glaze. This opacity was the result of the addition of tin to the composition, which usually contained some type of glass and the oxide of lead. Metallic oxides such as cobalt or copper provided the polychromatic decoration.

I. ORIGINS OF TYPE OF WARE

The use of this type of glaze was not a discovery of the Italians of the fourteenth century or even of the Moorish craftsmen. It was a time-honored glaze employed by the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and the Assyrians. Stanniferous enamels were used in the polychromatic friezes and in other tile decoration of the Assyrian palaces of Nimrod and Darius. Whether or not it was from these ancients that the art of enameling was learned, it is not known; but it was the Arabs and Persian potters of the surrounding territory.

who brought this art to the Western European world. Persian faience
was carried into Medieval Egypt by the conquering hordes of the Prophet,
and there it was incorporated into the already highly developed ceramics of
that country. From Egypt, across the African desert, the style made its way
to Spain. It is not known when this art appeared in Spain, but that it
was derived from the early Eastern culture was shown by the similarity to
the glaze and the metallic lustres found on the tiles and pots of tenth
century Persia. It was thought to be highly developed by the year 1154
as the Arabic geographer, Edrisi, mentioned the praiseworthy golden pottery
of Calatayed in Aragon in that year.

Theoretically the technique travelled then from Spain to Italy. The
method of crossing was another case of conjecture, and all authors seemed
to have their own ideas. The most popular seemed to be that the wares im-
ported from Spain and surrounding neighborhoods impressed the Italian
craftsmen and led them to experiment themselves or to send scouts to the
Spanish factories to ferret out their secrets. The knowledge of the part
played by tin was undoubtedly recognized quite early, but the scarcity of
the metal made it too rare for common application.

There are many who contend that the outside influences were negligible,
holding that majolica was a natural growth among the local ceramicists.
There was a possibility that the Romans employed such a glaze in some of
their wares. If this were true, it could be reasonable that the secret
was kept alive by remote artisans. One can see the haziness clouding
the origin of majolica ware, every author pushing his own particular theory

2 W. Gorden Trywhitt, "The Glowing Lustreware of Spain", International
Studio, LXXIV (December, 1936) p. 47.
3 Ibid. p. 47.
forward. However, these contentions are presented for their interest rather than in an attempt at clarifying their true value.

II. ORIGINS OF ITALIAN DEVELOPMENT

The field of ceramic development in Italy was very old, dating as far back as the Etruscans. Between the fall of the civilization of the Romans and the coming of the Renaissance, the history of the pottery of Italy must remain a blank page, but it is safe to assume that some forms besides the utilitarian terracotta vessels and bricks were used. At least a solid creative and technical background evidenced itself, and majolica ware was the great outgrowth of this, refreshed as it was with the ideas of the Near East. All the slow, deliberate steps forward reached a peak during the Renaissance and were at their height in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

An important forerunner, similar to Italian majolica and termed mezza-majolica, was common from the thirteenth century through the later periods. Many of the procedures of majolica originated in this former development. Majolica was directly drawn from the shapes and designs of this classification. The mezza-majolica was an earthenware body, covered with an engobe (a slip of fine white clay), and glazed with a glassy lead glaze. The general effect was the same as in majolica but the texture of the pieces was different, the enamel being more matt and often more subtle in the later works. The transparent lead glaze gave no opportunity for a gradation of the decorative color. The design was cut in the engobe revealing the native clay for contrast. This method of decoration, called "sgraffito", lent its name to this type of ware also. Other decorations

were painted on the glaze in manganese, a process later used by the majolists. This class was a great influence on the real majolica, but it was also an art in itself and remained in demand after the ateliers of the majolists were highly developed. The shapes were the same; the designs similar; only the method of decoration and the type of glaze distinguished the two.

Some of the best of the messa-majolica were the numerous bowls placed in the walls of the churches of Pisa. The writer, Passeri, claimed that these dishes, "bacini", were part of the spoils of the Pisan victory at Majorca in 1115. They were believed to be pieces of a Hispano-Moresque origin, and a possible source of majolica development in this area. However, this has all been disproved by Drury Fortnum, who states that the whole technique points to local manufacture. The 'bacini', however, were some of the evidences of the part the potter played in the decoration of the churches erected between the late twelfth century and 1450, when the 'bacini' disappear. The colored earthenware discs appear in such churches as San Pietro in Orado and Santa Cecilia in Pisa, San Michael at Pavia, and the Romanesque churches of Bologna. This messa-majolica cannot be termed the earliest forms of majolica, but it does hold the place of the first of the purely decorative types of wares which were thoroughly exploited by the later craftsmen.

The term, majolica, was a derivative of the name of the Balearic Island, Majorca. This island, under the control of the Moors, was a center of the large export trade in whiteware decorated with a gold lustre. The title was first used in the fifteenth century describing the lustred ware

5 Ibid.
6 Ibid. p.8.
7 Ibid. p.20.
PP. 21-2
of Spain which was shipped to Italy by way of this island. Gradually the name became associated with the similar type of Italian ceramic products. The sixteenth century Italian writer, Piccolpasso, used the expression only in connection with the lustre ware of the period created at Gubbio. The pieces without lustre, he called by specific names governed by the shape. Though the term was first applied in the Italian work to a dish signed by Maestro Giogio of Gubbio. The title gained general usage before the end of the High Renaissance.

From Italy pieces of majolica were exported to all parts of the world where various descriptive terms were used. Similar wares in France became 'faience', named after the great Italian ceramic center, Faenza. The Italian ware was referred to a Phaphael ware in England, because of the pictorial decorations employed. The Delft ceramics of Northern Europe were also actually majolica.

In Italy, history has always awarded the honor of the discovery of tin enamel to Luca Della Robbia. The full credit for the discovery cannot be attributed to him, however, as tin enamels were an ancient art, as has been stated. Enamelled pottery was known to the Egyptians, Assyrians, Greeks, and also to the Italians of the Middle Ages. This was shown by the writings of the monk, Theophilus, a treatise, "Maravita Preciosa", written by Pietro del Bono, and the use of enamelled plates in the facades and frises of early Medieval churches.8 Twenty years before Luca perfected his glaze, one Bicci di Lorenzo modelled and glazed a group in a fashion similar to Della Robbia's. However, though chance potters used this type of glaze, it was Luca Della Robbia who brought the process into general manufacture again. It is thought that Luca got his idea either from the sight of

numerous pieces of Spanish pottery or from contacts with some foreign workers. From these suggestions, he developed a workable and enhancing glaze. The first terra-cotta piece executed by Luca Della Robbia was dated 1438. It was one of the first in this technique which while not identical to majolica, was the step that brought the production of majolica wares into being.

Luca Della Robbia lived through eighty years of the fifteenth century. He was taught to read and write and to do some arithmetic. The great piety of his family is later shown in his works. According to Vasari, Luca was apprenticed to Lorenzo di Ser Giovanni, the best goldsmith in the city of Florence. This gave him a mastery over detail and a capacity for high finish. At the age of fifteen Luca journeyed to Rimini with a group of young sculptors to make some figures for the tomb of Sigismundo Malatesta. He became a sculptor of Florence at this time. During the early period of his life, Luca Della Robbia executed many important and beautiful pieces of sculpture in marble and bronze. He worked on the decoration of the bronze dooms of the Sacristy of Santa Maria del Fiori and the beautiful Cantoria for the Duomo.

About this time Luca turned to the clay medium. The need to coat the reliefs for preservation caused him to start experiments in the art of enameling. Vasari describes his labors saying:

"By dint of many experiments he discovered a method of protecting it from the injury of time, for he found that he could render such works practically imperishable by covering the clay with a glaze made of tin, litharge, antimony, and other materials baked in the fire in a specially constructed furnace."10

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10 Ibid., p. 31.
His first works were simply white, but a light blue and several yellows developed later. The glasses had a transparent quality due to thin application. One of his early uses of ceramics in connection with more structural work was in the tomb for the Bishop of Fiesole, Benozzo Federighi, in the church of San Francesco e Paolo. The sarcophagus was decorated with enamelled tiles, painted with flowers and fruits. His early reliefs used scrolls, birds, masks, Renaissance ornaments, and fruits and flowers naturalistically molded. A favored color arrangement of Della Robbia was a figure of pure white against a background of blue or green. Any accessories were also in the two colors. The works became more highly developed as time went on, especially with the coming of his nephew, Andrea Della Robbia, into the studio.

The Detroit Institute of Art has a lovely Madonna and Child done by Della Robbia. (Plate I) A pure white mother and child are simply and naturally posed. The only relief from the stark white was the addition of the colored border pattern of the pair's robes, the hair, and the halos. This piece is typical of the works of Luca Della Robbia.

The process developed by this Florentine was a simple one. The terra-cotta was biscuited, that is, fired once, then coated with a stanniferous enamel. The glaze could be either white or colored by the addition of metallic oxides. The difference between these pieces of Della Robbia and the true majolica is explained by the glazing of the two types. The pieces of Luca depended on the sculptured relief for the design while a majolica piece depended on the over-glaze painting with the oxides. The terra-cotta has the opaque glaze mechanically  

PLATE I

Madonna and Child
Luca Della Robbia

Detroit Institute of Arts

Body: Earthen ware

Glaze: White enamel
applied over the status or bas-relief while the majolists practised a fuller knowledge of the effects of their glaze plus the decorative treatment of painting the metallic colors on the glaze.

Luca Della Robbia had organised a very active atelier where numerous younger members of the family went into training. His nephew, Andrea, carried on the production of the enamelled reliefs on a larger scale and also extended its application to various architectural uses. The over production of the bottega caused the work to loose a personal quality so characteristic of the work of Luca. Andrea's work was heavier in design and over-decorated. Some of the best known pieces by Andrea were a series of medalions with reliefs of infants in white against a blue ground. These were set in the front of the fondling's hospital in Florence. A greater variety of forms and colors were developed as the work became more commercialised. By the end of the career of Andrea all semblance of the original fineness had disappeared, and the material was pushed far beyond its bounds. The sons of Andrea continued the atelier attempting unbelievable tasks.

III  EARLY MAJOLICA

Majolica itself developed in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, but it gained its highest technical perfection in the sixteenth century. The location of the wares before 1470 was problematical as the ware was not marked or identified in any way. Yet the earlier pottery was distinctively Italian. The majolica falls easily into four stylistic groupings as follows:¹³

1. Romanesque: 1390-1410
2. Oriental-Spanish: 1400-1470
3. Gothic-Renaissance: 1470-1560
4. High Renaissance: after 1560

This is a good division of the few centuries during which majolica became an accomplished art.

Fragments of the early works have been found, but the common pottery of the Middle Ages was usually an earthenware, utilitarian shape with little embellishment. There was a rich source of tin-enamel ware of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century found in the various churches. These churches were lavishly decorated with gilt and intricately carved walls, and with all this decoration the floors could not be plain. Here the majolist came into his own. The marble mosaics used by the Romans as floor decoration could no longer be obtained so that the tiles of the ceramicist were used as a rich substitute. These pavements remain today in fairly good state of preservation due to their placement in the private chapels little used by the passing crowd.

The oldest majolica pavement approximately dated at 1440 was that in the church of San Giovanni a Carbonara in Naples. (Plate II) It adorned the floor of the chapel containing the tomb of the Grand Seneschal and favorite of Queen Joanna II. The tiles appeared in both square and hexagonal shapes and are coated with coarse white tin enamel. The Oriental type design was painted in dark blue with touches of green and purple. Flowers, animals, grotesque profiles of men and women, the Gothic 'M', and the rampant lion, a symbol of the Grand Seneschal's family, the Caraccio, were boldly yet simply used by the master craftsman. It is thought that imported Moorish artists might be responsible for the work as the Spanish method is used in the setting of the tiles, and there

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PLATE II

Tiles from San Giovanni a Carbonari
Naples, 1440

British Museum

Body: Native Clay

Glaze: Coarse White Enamel

Colors: Dark Blue with touches of green and purple.
FIG. 1.—TILES FROM SAN GIOVANNI À CARBONARI.

British Museum.
was a decidedly Moorish and Spanish character to the designs.\(^{15}\) The Spanish plan in setting tiles in a pavement placed the hexagonal tiles around the square making octagonal pieces which all fitted together - the same principle as the old-fashion patchwork quilt.

Numerous other examples of these tile pavements were found scattered throughout Italy. These were all of a later date than the one at San Giovanni a Carbonara. The Mezzatosta Chapel at Viterbo had one of these typical polychromatic floors with dark blue being the predominating color. The designs of these tiles have become more Italian in character showing the short span when the strictly Oriental motifs were employed.

The pavement formerly located in the convent of San Paulo at Parma was one of the most important of this type of majolica. It pointed to the future developments of the ware but still keeping the rather naive approach to the decoration. There was a different approach to the decorative subjects, the main designs becoming more pictorial. This floor does not bear a date but it has been placed at about 1482. The tiles are uniform in shape, all square, and are of an unusual size, 7 1/2 inches square. The well-ordered scheme was arranged having certain central points which were tiles using isolated subjects, for example, an allegorical scene as the Judgment of Paris, or more often a portrait of some benefactor of the convent.\(^ {16}\) The tiles were painted by a practised hand, but the colors were still the characteristic ones of the earlier works - the dark blues with touches of light green and purple tints.

\(^{15}\) Ibid. p.30.  
\(^{16}\) Ibid. p.31.
Actual ware has also been found in limited quantities. The earliest group often called 'Orvieto Ware' was based on the finds made at the excavations about the town of Orvieto. Similar wares were being produced at Florence, Siena, Faenza, Ferrara, and Rome also. Typical forms were jugs, dishes, and bowls with or without handles. The designs began simply but as the artist gains more confidence he used a broader expanse of color and bolder designs. Numerous pieces of the potters of Florence have been found and were characterized by the design outlined in the purple of manganese and painted a clear green. This was commonly known as "Green Florentine".17 (Plate III) Any figures appearing on the pieces were clothed in the costume of the time and were drawn, with no perspective, against a background entirely covered with leafage. "Blue Impasto Ware" was also an early type and was best represented by the pieces made in Florence. This type was characterized by the low-relief effected by the thick application of the fluo ornamentation and was especially impressive due to the vigorous color and the strong and pure color.18 The conventional designs of the animals often appear with devices on their backs. These were very reminiscent of the Near Eastern Textiles, a hold-over of the older influences. The enamels of these early wares were not duplicated in the later works. That was one of the possible ways to identify the fifteenth century pieces. The glaze was hard and opaque with an additional quality given by the thickness and extreme whiteness of the covering. The later glazes became more highly commercialized, the quality slipping, as the amount of the rare tin oxide was shaded.

18 Ibid., p. 12.
PLATE III

Florentine Majolica Jar
First Half of XV Century

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Body: Dark Red Clay

Glaze: Opaque White Enamel

Colors: Green outlined with purple
Malolica Jar
Italian, Florentine
First Half of XV Century

The Metropolitan Museum of Art.  Collotype by Max Jaffé, Vienna, Austria.
Many of the Florentine pieces were decorated with the lion of the House of Anjou at Naples. This was the result of the large amount exported to the southern region by these potters. The South was living in greater elegance and luxury than the North, and there was created a greater need for the works of the majolists. The Florentine artisans took advantage of this situation, securing the patronage of the Neapolitan nobility while the aristocracy of Florence was still mainly interested in foreign works.

IV. LATER WORKS

The first dated piece was made in 1489. This was the turning point of the art. From this time on the influence of the Italian Renaissance became more prevalent, the Near Eastern character fading from the works entirely. After 1500, there was a great increase in the range of color - unusual ochre, green, and yellow shades being used. The artist became technically confident, and no process or decoration was too difficult. In the designs the influence of the contemporary graphic arts was more and more apparent. German woodcuts were favored subjects, especially those of Albrecht Durer. Many of the Italian painters worked as designers for the numerous ateliers. Raphael supposedly made a series of such sketches for the pottery painters.

The development of lustre painting, an important part of the later majolica production, can be attributed to several individuals. The secret was not known until the end of the fifteenth century so that it was a late invention in majolica manufacture. The knowledge was thought

to have been obtained from a Sienese potter, Galgano de Belforte, who in 1514 went to Spain and worked in Spanish ceramics. This Sienese could have secured the secret there. The greatest exponent of lustre work was Maestro Giorgio of Gubbio. Pieces were sent Gubbio to be lustred from numerous neighboring centers. Maestro Giorgio developed two types of iridescence—a ruby and a gold. He worked from 1518 to 1541. One of his students carried on his work, another famous majolica painter, Francesco Lanto. Another popular lustre was the "Madreperla" (Mother-of-Pearl) which was brought over from Spain. It first appeared in Italy at Pesaro and Deruta early in the sixteenth century.

The later developments stressed the individual artist as in the other phases of Renaissance art. The various ceramic centers vied with one another over the popular artists or over some professional secret. The high cost and the higher artistic quality kept the ware from being cheaply reproduced. This fact was probably responsible for the length of the popularity, and the perfection of the works created. The vessels were only used for specific decorative purposes, as a compote to grace a dresser or the center of a banqueting table. Individual plates and bowls were popular gifts to express the great esteem of the giver.

It was not until the last era of the Renaissance that the Italian majolica became decidedly decadent, but then it was only following the trend of the time. No limits were placed on the artists, yet the majolist was forced to produce ware to please the whims of his patrons. The same general production methods were followed throughout Italy, the decoration being the individualistic feature. As time progressed, the

20 Henry Wallis, Oak Leaf Jars (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1903) p. XXIV.
styles intermingled, but then the wares were signed by name, date, and location.

As said above the later wares were more the work of one artist. It was during this period that the great majolica painters were working. Such men as Maestro Giorgio and Francesco Xanto were as famous as many of their contemporary painters and sculptors. These leaders had ateliers where students were trained in the art, producing many imitations of the masters' styles.

Several sections of Italy did not found their own majolica manufacturies until late in the Renaissance. Many of these continued to produce long after the initial cause had disappeared. New markets were discovered apart from the nobility of their native country. Many of these later developments as exemplified by the potteries at Milan and Venice were still active in the eighteenth century.

In the last century there has been a revival of interest in the older Italian styles, and an attempt has been made to recreate the techniques of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These designs have been converted to use in modern factory production loosing some of the spontaneity which made even the most baroque piece have some charm. However, some of the earlier pieces have also been adapted and have been produced with some of the old freshness. This may have been due to the shapes of the earlier works. The fourteenth and early fifteenth century tin enamels were simply designed and often useful shapes, but with the sixteenth century the more complicated forms were avocated.

Little more can be said of the history without going into the more detailed background and the individual characteristics of the various places producing Italian majolica.
CHAPTER IV

HISTORY OF THE MAIN DEVELOPMENTS

The story of Italian majolica would not be complete without some discussion of the individual centers. These were in competition with one another much as rival business' are today. Spies were planted in the pottery of the town which had developed some special techniques, and large sums were put out by the patrons of the ateliers to obtain gifted painters.

I. THE MARCHES

One of the first centers of production was Faenza in the region of the Marches. (Plate IV) This was an important center early in the fifteenth century. The two facts found to support the antiquity of the site were the number of fragments unearthed in the soil of the town and a few tile pavements anti-dating most of the other known specimens.¹ The early commercial importance of the products of Faenza was gained when few rival wares of the Italian type were being made. This regularly established trade with the European markets gave rise to the term "faience" which referred to this Italian product.

The extensive excavations directed by Professor Argnani have brought to light many pieces of archaic Etruscan work and some early majolica ware. On the site of the Pallazzo Manfredi, built by Astorgio I, who was lord of the city in 1379, were found some white-ware jugs. These jugs were crudely painted in manganese and copper using the design of the shield of Astorgio Manfredi. This device was assumed in 1393 and was used only by Astorgio. Among the lot was found a pot glazed with a thin

PLATE IV

Dish from Faenze
Casa Pirotta, c. 1525

The Holy Family, after Michelangelo

British Museum
PAENZA.

Fig. 14.—Dish. The Holy Family, after Michael Angelo, marked with a Cross. Casa Pirotta, c. 1525.

British Museum.
coat of stanniferous enamel. This does not prove that Faenza produced
the earlier enameled ware, but it does establish the great age of the
city's ceramic production.

1147 was the date of the tile pavement found in the Basilica of San
Petronia at Bologna, and it showed a complete technical development.
The characteristics of this ware were the depth and brilliancy of the color
and the free decorative effect achieved. Credit for this pavement has
been given to the artists of the Bettini factory who inscribed their names
upon a section of the work. The individual artists' names appeared,
and it was interested to note that many of the painters were women. The
tiles were units in themselves - each one with its own design yet the
whole was united by the blending of the colors.

The town records of Faenza yielded little information as to the
conduct of trade and the conditions of the potters. Numerous deeds
appeared but little else. There was no mention of the Bettini Bottega
until later registers.

The majolica produced here by various studios had specific
characteristics. Wide borders using grotesque figures were common
in the designs. The potteries produced large amounts of drug pots
which were decorated in compartments. A favored type was "sopra-bianco"
or white on a pale pink ground. The figures of the Faenza ware were
outlined simply yet with formality. A yellow lustre was never adopted,
although some lustred wares were made. During the sixteenth century a
popular form of decoration was a blue design on a yellow ground.

According to Piccolpasso another family operating an atelier
in Faenza was that of M. Vergilo. Their works were distinguished by
the use of a particular red.

2 M. L. Solon, A History and Description of Italian Majolica,
A painter, Baldassare Manara, was also active at Faenza. There were two painters by this name and two definite styles were produced. It was Baldassare Manara I that had been one of the first to introduce the idea of embellishing the majolica with copies of engravings.

Gregorio Zuccoli wrote in 1522 of the city, "Faenza has brought the art of majolica to the high degree of excellence for which it is known all over the world." 3

Other cities in this section with active majolica manufactories were Forli, Rimini, and Ravenna. Some authorities claimed that there were majolica works at Forli in the fourteenth century, but it is difficult to establish this definitely due to the influence of nearby Faenza.

II. TUSCANY

Arguments have been presented as to whether Cafaggiolo ever existed as a pottery center. The Tuscan city was located on the road to Bologne about twelve miles from Florence. It was here that Cosimo d'Medici established his favorite castle. The pottery works were situated in some part of this country home of the Medici, and the patronage of the family governed the style produced. The manufactory was established in the fifteenth century. The oldest dated pieces were two plates, inscribed with the dates 1507 and 1509.

A truly superior type of ware was the only possible result due to the prevailing atmosphere of the court of Lorenzo and Pier Francesco. (Plate V) This was one of the most heavily subsidized bottega, until 1568, when the Medici suddenly withdrew their patronage. The majolica of Cafaggiolo was very distinctive. The glaze was rich, even, and purely white. A very dark

3. Ibid, p. 64.
PLATE V

Caffaggiolo Majolica
C. 1515

A Majolist painting a plate

Size: Diameter 9 1/4 inches

Colors: Subject in polychrome on a blue ground

Victoria and Albert Museum
CAFAGGILO.

Fig. 20.—A Majolist painting a plate. Subject in polychrome on a blue ground.

Victoria and Albert Museum.
Cobalt blue was used as a background color. A bright yellow, an orange of brilliant but opaque quality, a peculiarly liquid and semi-transparent copper-green were also found. Another characteristic pigment was an opaque, bright Indian red. The method of application by a coarse brush was often employed and was a distinctive feature of the ware.

At Cafaggiolo, the luxuriant taste of the Medici dominated the style—great bowls and dishes with the arms of the Medicin popes were used as decoration. Classical themes were also popular—such as Hercules, Cupids, the Triumph of Justice, etc. By the sixteenth century the full harmony of colors was appearing, but after the removal of the Medici support the fabrique lost all importance.

Numerous artists were found here. The Filippo family was firmly established as was the Ridolfi. Later pieces were signed by individual artists, for example Giacomo Ridolfi, Lays Ridolfi, Flaminio Fontana, and Pietro da Cortona.

One of the pieces in the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts exhibits the characteristic features of the late Cafaggiolo ware. It is dated the sixteenth century. The arms of the Medici pope, Clement VII, appears in the center surrounded by a blue line border on white enamel. The design is also worked out with a golden lustre.

Florence and Siena also had well-known majolica bottegas in this district. The work of Florence was almost all associated with the Della Robbia atelier, although numerous early fifteenth century pieces have been attributed to this city. Siena produced many pavements of maiolica decorated with polychromatic designs of mythological animals, classical designs, and heraldry, such as were found in the pavements of the Petrucci Palace. An inventory of a Sienese majolist, Giovor Battista di Lucca, written in 1520, gives an idea of the raw materials and the
production list of an average fabrique. Listed were one-hundred-fifty finished pieces, a large stock of ornamental tiles, and over four-hundred unfinished pieces, a total greater than would be found in the art-pottery shop of today. The pieces from Siena were known for their exquisite finish. They excelled in the vigorous ornamental designs of the early Renaissance ware.

III. THE ROMAN STATES

Deruta, with such towns as Fabriano, Foligno, and Rome, furnished the supply of majolica for the States of the Church. As the pottery was made especially for the Roman market it was allowed to enter the city duty free. Deruta was a small village situated on the left bank of the Tiber, a short distance from Perugia on the road to Orvieto. The river Tiber offered a means of transport of the ware to Rome and other cities.

It will be noticed throughout the discussion of the various majolica centers that the largest ones are located in small towns accessible to urban centers (Deruta to Rome, Cafaggiolo to Florence). Fire hazards of the kiln made it necessary to build the fabrique away from the crowded cities. In Siena a whole street of pottery works were forced to abandon their sites for this reason.

Deruta early gained the knowledge of the secrets of tin-enamels used by the Moorish potters. The perfect similarity of the technique directly links the ware with that of Valencia and Malaga in Spain. The early works were not marked or dated, the earliest dated piece not appearing until 1501. These early workers did not borrow ideas from their Italian competitors nor were the wares of Deruta imitated. (Plate VI)

4. Ibid., p. 93.
PLATE VI

Dish from Deruta
C. 1520
Cavaliers in Combat in the Center

National Gallery of Art, Widener Collection
The records of the town have been carefully studied by H. L. Solon in an attempt to establish the date of the early era. This could not be done, but numerous documents appeared concerning the potter's craft.

"1488 October 9. - Agreement between two potters of Deruta and a merchant of Perugia, settling the conditions of the purchase of 'three loads of fine terra-cotta articles', works that they make themselves, as masters of the art."

"1521. January 24. - The Prior and officers of the Confraternity of Saint Anthony of Deruta pledge themselves to pay to the rector of the Saint Anthony church at Perugia a yearly tribute of thirty-two pieces of majolica painted with the arms of the said rector."

The early wares retained their primitive simplicity in color and design. A light blue pigment and a few yellow touches coupled with a yellow lustre were the only means at the disposal of the potter. The works reached a high peak in the large platters bearing several types of simple decoration. Body and glaze remained the same, as the art developed; it was still oriental ware although Italian designs were used. Embossed pieces were another popular type of Deruta. The bas-reliefs were formed in plaster molds and placed against a white ground. Blues were shaded in and finally a mother-of-pearl lustre was applied.

It was not until the arrival of the itinerant potters that a new style and new pigments were introduced, and the Deruta ware became confused and complex. The designs lost their simplicity, and the copied prints were employed. Unless a piece was marked with the phrase "fata in Deruta" it is easily confused with the productions of Faenza, Gubbio, or Castel-Durante.

IV. URBINO

The duchy of Urbino was intimately connected with the history of

5. Ibid., p. 100.
Renaissance ceramic art. Many generations of the Sforza family fostered and encouraged the art of the majolists. Guidobaldo II, Duke of Urbino, used to make presents of majolica service to contemporary princes and friends. Vasari mentions one given to the Emperor Charles V. One also was sent to Philip II of Spain. The importance given to the majolist gave rise to many fabriques in the cities and towns of Urbino, the main centers being Pesaro, Gubbio, Castel Durante, Urbino, and Città di Castello.

Pesaro has been the center of a great controversy which began with Passeri's exaggerated statements about the majolica development. Fortnum took up the opposing cry disproving most of the earlier author's ideas. This has cast many shadows upon the ware of Pesaro, covering all the earlier works with doubt. One of the city's documents prohibiting the entrance and sale of foreign pottery with the exception of jars for oil and wine is interesting as it shows through the pompous phraseology, the esteem held for the art. This was recorded in 1486 - "An whereas the practice of the art of vase-making is of great antiquity in the aforesaid city, and was there brought to a higher degree of perfection than in any other part of Italy; this art being, moreover, still extensively practised at Pesaro, where it wins the admiration of our own and all foreign countries."6 There is not one piece made before the sixteenth century which can be definitely attributed to Pesaro's manufacture. The first inscribed and dated example refers to the year 1540. From this time on the specimens become plentiful. The potter has become proud of his town and never fails to assign the work to Pesaro. After the death of Guidobaldo II in 1572, the fabriques began to decline, and by the end of the 17th century Pesaro factories were ruined.

6. Ibid., p. 113.
A single potter continued to produce but his works were of an inferior quality.

The Pesaro ware was not a distinct type but was recognisable from certain techniques. The early works had yellow lustres with a blue outline and border. The figures were drawn in an archaic style; the surrounding decoration often being Persian in style. Many of the works had portraits with scrolls inscribed with the name of the persons to whom it was dedicated. Also the donors' name often appeared. Among the masters at Pesaro were Maestro Gironimo and Maestro Baldassa. Some of the best works were from the bottega of Maestro Gironimo. Typical decorative subjects were roaring lions, equestrian figures, and classical figures, all of which were surrounded by ornamental borders.

One of the chief centers was Urbino which was located in one of the most picturesque sections of Umbria. The establishment of the city's majolica works was due in great part to the support of Duke Guidobaldo della Rovere. Its immediate success was brought about perhaps by the selection of the factory's talented artists gathered from nearby centers. This was a city of individual artists. Names were very much emphasised, and the character of the ware was determined by the painter. By 1520 a group of artists from Castel Durante were firmly established at Urbino and were producing ware in the character associated with this town. Some of the more famous were Simon Mariani, Federigo di Giannatoni, and Francesco Lanto. The bottega of one Guido Durrantino, famed in the first half of the sixteenth century was commissioned by the constable of France to make a service for Anne de Montmorency, decorated with the arms of the constable. One of the greatest majolica painters was Nicola Pellipario who signed his work by the name Fontana, establishing a whole family of gifted painters and devices of Isabella d'Este. The
PLATE VII

Plateau from Urbino
Orazio Fontana

Sixteenth Century

Victoria and Albert Museum
URBINO.

Fig. 43.—PLATEAU BY ORAZIO PONTANA

Victoria and Albert Museum.
outline of his figures are carefully drawn displaying his ability as a
draftsman. It is in this type of work, however, that the shape itself
looses its importance - the decorative picture absorbs the attention.
It is the same trend that took place in the Grecian ware, which asserted
the supremacy of the ornamentation over shape. The followers of
Fontana also bear famous names. - Francesco Ianto, Grazio Fontana, and
Alfonso Patonassi. These students later migrated to Gubbio to work
under the great lustre artist, Maestro Giorgio. (Plate VII)

Francesco Ianto was active in Urbino from 1530 to 1542. He
painted after the designs of Raphael and his contemporaries. Although
he did not adhere to the original, the change from the flat surface to
the curved shape was not a success. The plate, "The Death of Cleopatra",
in the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts was done by Ianto in 1540. The
piece is dated and bears the following inscription, "Anthony alive, lived
I know, for him dead, I die." The use of a phrase to establish the keynote
of the painted scene was a common device used by these artists. The
pigments are garish, showing the use of brilliant oranges and yellows.
There were no lustres. A service sent to Philip II of Spain was painted
by Grazio Fontana, who also supplied the complete set of drug pots for
the medicinal dispensary of the Duke of Urbino.

"The mere name of Gubbio evokes in the mind of the majolica lover
visions of prismatic opalescence and rainbow-like irradiations."7 This
art of lustring represented the great expression of Gubbio. Many of the
wares were imported in the raw state, as the form was unimportant.
The richness of the metallic tints served to furnish the character to the
ware. A variety of tints were employed varying from bluish purple to
ruby red, from golden yellow to emerald green. (Plate VIII)

7. Ibid., p. 117.
PLATE VIII

Plate from Gubbio

Metallic Lustres: Golden and Ruby

Maestro Giorgio, 1527

Plate with a recling river-god taken from Raffaello's "Judgment of Paris".
Fig. 33.—PLATE WITH A RECLINING RIVER-GOD, TAKEN FROM RAFFAELLE'S "JUDGMENT OF PARIS." ON THE REVERSE, BANDS OF YELLOW LUSTRES, SCHOLIA, AND INSCRIPTION IN RUBY LUSTRE, MS. GIORGIO, 1527.
The leader of the art was Maestro Giorgio Andreoli. Giorgio was not a native of Gubbio but was granted citizenship in 1498. He was of noble stock in Favia and took up pottery-making as it would not lower him socially. Giorgio was a favorite of Guidobaldo II, who appointed him the governor of the Gubbio fortress. Numerous terra-cotta pieces in the Della Robbia style were attributed to him. It was not until 1515 that the Maestro became a painter of elaborate trophies, arabesques, and figure subjects. A plate representing the sacrifice of Abraham (1515) enhanced with a ruby lustre was the first work of the master. His works can be authenticated either by the mark or by the lustre. The lustred ware was signed by the name of the fabrique. Giorgio copied the forms of Deruta but later produced designs of his own. He also added lustres to already painted wares from Urbino, Castel Durante, and Faenza. After 1532 the work was by his successors using his signature as a trade-mark. Maestro Giorgio's last piece was dated 1537. He opened his atelier to all talented majolists who wished to work with him. Such men as Francesco Xanto and Orazio Fontana from Urbino, Baldassare Manara from Faenza, and Nicole da Urbino of Castel Durante took advantage of the invitation. The bottega of Giorgio was the only development of Gubbio. The fabrique was prosperous as long as it was under the patronage of the Duke, and as long as there was a demand for superior ware. After 1551 things began to change for the worse, and the factory was extinct by 1576, the secret of fine lustres disappearing with it.

Next to Faenza the most prolific center of production was Castel Durante. This was also the scence of the literary work by Piccolpasso, The Three Books of the Potter's Art, written in 1550. Castel Durante is a small town near Urbino, established in 1284 by a French bishop, Guillaume Durand. The bishop built a fortress overlooking the Metauro River which
was called Castel Durante. Among the company housed in the fortress was
several potters.\footnote{Ibid., p. 125.} Nine potters were at work in 1490, but it is not
known whether their wares were lead glazed or tin enamels. The first
true majolica piece was dated 1508, a plate featuring the arts of Pope
Julius II on a blue ground.\footnote{Chaffus, \textit{New Ceramic Gallery} (London: Reeves & Turner, 1906)
Vol. 1, p. 73.} Other early examples were the pharmacy
Company, 1877), p. 58.} Duke Guidobaldo II
patronised this center also and by the middle of the sixteenth century
thirteen factories were at work in the town.

The site was very favorable for ceramic development due to the
fine clays found nearby. Two types were used – a bluish colored clay
for throwing pots, "catestrina", and a finer perfectly white used
for engobe.\footnote{M. L. Solon, \textit{A History and Description of Italian Majolica}
(London: Cassel and Company, 1907), p. 129.} Lustrees were rarely used. The wares of Castel Durante
were recognized by the pale, buff-colored body and the richness of the
glaze. The plates were rarely decorated on the back, but like those
of Urbino and Pesaro were generally drawn with yellow on the subject
pieces and grey-white on those using the grotesque. The colors were
pale but harmonious. A distinguishing mark of the fabrique according
to some was the olive tint used for flesh tones. Broadly treated grotesques,
trophies of arms, musical instruments, and books were often painted in
greenish-gray on a blue ground. These were favored subjects of ornamentsa-
tion. Medalions, containing portraits or fanciful heads were used in
general scheme also. Some of the plates were reminiscent of the modern abstract painting although there was a tiffness and a carefully planned appearance to the designs. The Fontana family was also active here, but without the fame connected with the name at Urbino.

V. VENETIAN CITIES

Piccolpasso spoke of a large manufactory at Venice but all early majolic here is suspected. The finest vessels produced in foreign countries were imported here so that there was little demand for superior wares of local production. The earliest work was dated in 1540. At this time Maestro Lodovico was making distinctive ware strongly influenced by Near Eastern pottery and Chinese porcelains. He was active from 1546-1568. The work was painted blue on an enamel tinted a pale grayish-blue produced under the influence of the white and blue oriental ware. Majolists began to flock to Venice as the trend for improved art here was rising as the star fell in the cities of the south. By 1550 Venetian ware had acquired widespread renown. During the next century all connection with the old majolica style was severed, giving way to the heavy reliefs and inappropriate landscapes. No attempt was made to emulate the brilliant colorists of the Venetian painters. This second development was known by the ungainly shapes. All symmetry of proportion and grace of outline disappeared. The potters tried to imitate the vessels of hammered copper. Novelty was the order of day, and it was the majolica of Venice that lead the invasion of roccoco and decadent styles of later

Italian production. Other cities working in this region were Verona, Padua, and Bassano.

VI. NEapolitan States

The development of majolica in the Neapolitan States took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Here in Naples, Castelli, Palermo, and Carreto were produced wares resulting from the infiltration of ideas from the North. A popular piece made in Naples was a pure faience, caryatid-handled vase, carefully decorated. 14

At Castelli, near Naples, ware was supposedly produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth century but no examples have been identified. The later period of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, however, provided many pieces. The pottery was characterized by the particular shapes employed. Two of the most common were flat, shallow plates with narrow rims, and tall conical-shaped drinking cups. The decoration consisted of figures or landscapes in yellow and blue.

VII MILAN AND LODI

Majolica produced in a different spirit was made at Milan and Lodi. This ware was made in imitation of the Chinese porcelains imported into the cities. This type was not prevalent, however, until the eighteenth century. The first successful fabricque was opened by Felice Clerici in 1745. 15 He did copies of Rouen and Moustiers faience which were themselves


influenced by the earlier Italian works. From the bottega of Rubati, founded in 1760, a lightness and a soft greyish bloom was given to the enamel. With the discovery of the secret of porcelain the two Milan fabrique withdrew from the competition after producing for forty-five years.

Lodi was about twenty miles from Milan and the early pottery made here ranks with Faenza and Gubbio. It is very rare. Masters went from this center to such places as Savona and Pesaro to teach their art. In the eighteenth century there were six potteries producing a type inappropriately called "Old Lodi" ware, which had been started by the Ferretti studio.

There were many other important centers but they all seemed to follow the general pattern of their district due to the similarity of materials. Except for coloring agents, materials were not imported in most cases but were local products. The importance shifted from community to community as a new idea became popular, a condition similar to that prevailing in this country among the commercial potters.

16. Ibid., p. 70.
THE PRODUCTION PROCEDURE

The technical process of pottery is a mechanical one and has little actual bearing on the beauty of the piece itself. It must be realised that perfected technique alone does not create a great piece of ceramics. The potter must, however, master the mechanics of his craft in order to rise above it and achieve his aesthetic purpose.

I. PREPARATION AND FORMING

The starting point of all ceramics is the clay. All clay is a variation of the ideal composition termed kaolin, having a chemical formula of \( \text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O} \). Most native clay contains impurities upsetting this ideal. The clay found in Italy was an argillaceous earth called by Beringuccio "cretta."\(^1\) The body of majolica is a plastic clay mixed with a limy, sandy clay to produce a workable body which will throw easily but will finish with little warping and no cracking. Some Sévres' chemists analysed the body of majolica by removing the enamel and testing the raw baked clay. The compositions of the ware and that of Luca Della Robbia were determined as shown below:\(^2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Italian Majolica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silica</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alumina</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lime</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Magnesia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iron</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carbonic acid and loss</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

2. Faience of Luca Della Robbia

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silica</td>
<td>49.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumina</td>
<td>15.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lime</td>
<td>24.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesia</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbonic acid and loss</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a great similarity between the two types leading us to believe that little actual doctoring of the native clay was tried.

The bodies fired from a drab reddish color to a pale buff or a white for fine wares. The lighter firing clays were to be desired and were used in most of the majolica pieces.

The potteries were always built at a well-tried clay deposit. The clays were used in the natural state, no attempt being made to modify the faults. At times, however, fine clays of other districts would be imported by the local potters in order to secure a finer finish. The clay of the Sienese potters was celebrated. Orders were found in the records of numerous potteries signifying the use of the Siena earth.

There were two generally accepted methods for the preparation of the clay, depending on the source of the materials. In urbino the argillaceous earth was gathered from river deposits. Piccolpasso deals with this process in great detail. The hillier regions mined their clay from the pure deposits found there.

The river method depended largely on the deposits left after the spring floods had subsided. Some potters left the mud to dry in the sun while others would place the clay to dry in pits specially hollowed in the ground for this purpose. These pits were about three or four feet deep and became the storage bins for the pottery's supply of raw material.
When the hills were the producers of the body, pits were dug in series of a determined size. Channels would join the pits to allow the water containing the clay particles to flow freely from one pit to the next. It was necessary that the series be made on an incline to facilitate the movement of the liquid. The rains provided the water; the walls of the pits, the clay; and the flow from one hole to the next, the purification process. When the rains were over and the sun had dried the holes, fine grains of clay would be found along the sides.3

These were primitive methods but clay had been prepared similarly for centuries. In fact, our methods today still hinge on these processes.

Then the clay was dried, stored, ready for the potter's demand. This dried dust was then further prepared before it was used in the actual pot-making. The earth was resoaked and screened through sieves of various degrees of fineness. These were of different types, two of the most common being perforated leather or coarse wide-meshed cloths.4 This fine clay was again stored in large biscued containers until needed. This last storage was an essential part of the preparation of the clay, known as aging. Before the clay could actually be shaped; the impurities were removed by beating the body with an iron rod.

As the majolica ware was made commercially, the methods of shaping were determined largely by the ease of production. The perfectly rounded

4. Ibid., p. 9.
pieces were made on the potter's wheel. The wheel was an ancient device discovered by the Persians or the Egyptians about 1700 B.C. The Italian wheel of the Renaissance period had many improvements over the ancient one, but the principle was identical. It was constructed from wood or iron and wood combination. An iron rod was used as an axle supporting the source of power and the actual throwing surface. Power was supplied by a broad wheel kept in balance at the lower section of the upright. The wheel was weighted on the assumption that the heavier the wheel provided faster motion. In some cases the power wheel was clamped to a projecting edge of the upright leg to prevent jolting. A smaller wooden disc was placed at the other extremity to be used as the throwing head.5 (Plate IX)

The large wheel was put in motion by one foot, and a lump of clay was placed on the head of the wheel ready to be shaped. This process was called throwing. The clay was pressed between the two hands of the potter to center the lump and then to create the piece. The circular motion enabled the trained potter to fashion any symmetrical shape. All pieces except handles, covers and asymmetricals were made by this method. Many vases were thrown in several parts and were later welded together either while still green (clay in the unfired state) or put together with glaze before the final fire.

Throwing pots on the wheel took a great deal of skill and years of training and practice. A potter had to develop perfect co-ordination to enable him to keep the wheel moving at a steady pace.

Ibid., p. 15.
PLATE IX

The Potter's Wheel

from

Piccolpasso's *The Three Books of the Potter's Art*
THE POTTER'S WHEEL

PARTS OF WHEEL
A - SEAT
B - HAND REST
C - WHEEL STICK
D - WHEEL HEAD
E - FOOT REST
F - FLY WHEEL
G - IRON PIECE
without needlessly moving his body above the hips. Steady hands were essential to make an evenly walled and rounded form.

The thrower used numerous tools made of wood to aid in the centering and shaping. These carefully shaped and sanded tools were known as "sticks" or "ribs". Such aids did not originate with the Italian potters, but similar forms had been used since pottery began. A rib identical to the Italian tool is today an essential part of the equipment of a modern craftsman. (Plate I)

When the piece became firm, it was reversed, and the bottom or foot of the pot was cut. Iron tools were used for this procedure of cutting away the excess clay and finishing the base. These tools were shaped in such a way to suit the need of the turner. This enabled the worker to fashion any type of foot with little effort. (Plate I)

Due to the slowness of the handbuilding process, this method was not a practical one for the average ceramic shop. Too much depended on a large output. However, those shapes which could not be made on the wheel had to be hand-built. The various extra parts of the ware for example, the handles, were usually formed by hand. Often these handles were made double, that is, two single strips were placed side by side and welded together by a roll of clay laid along the junction. This procedure was followed in most of the earlier jars. Also off-center shapes employed the hand method.

Mass production of certain shapes were facilitated by the use of plaster molds. Piccolpasso referred his readers to Beringuccio's Pirotechnia, after his brief resume of the process. The plaster used was not our

PLATE I
The Potter's Tools
From
Piccolpasso's
The Three Books of the Potter's Art
"STICKS"  
WOODEN TOOLS  

TOOLS  

"IRONS"  
METAL TURNING TOOLS
convenient Plaster of Paris which was not developed until 1740. The potter of Renaissance Italy had to supply his own plaster which meant burning gypsum to the right degree. Today this is a carefully controlled process so that the plaster can be of variable setting times. The powder was well pounded and screened to remove the impurities and lumps. This was soaked in warm water and stirred by hand. This addition of water causes the plaster to recrystallize into a set mass which had absorptive properties due to the pore space provided by the evaporation of the added water. The stirring retards the setting allowing the moldmaker time to make the shape. Instead of pouring plaster around the shape to be molded as is commonly done today, it was thrown on a dummy of fresh clay. This process was probably similar to our waste molds used by sculptors. The clay was removed from the harden plaster, precautions being taken to guard against injury to the mold. Small bowls, lids, and some handles were made by this method.

When these variously made pieces of raw clay were thoroughly dried, they were ready for the first firing which was known as the biscuit firing. All pottery went through this fire no matter what its end use would be. The majolica would be more carefully treated but would be in the same kiln as the everyday utensils.

Various shapes were employed by the majolist yet there was not a great deal of originality. The ware followed the classical shapes used by generations of potters. Many of the forms were inspired by either Greek or Persian types. Piccolpasso gives an excellent classified list of the different objects and their particular uses. Some of the

8. Ibid., p. 22.
more popular forms were:

- **Scudelle, Scudellini** - Large and small shallow bowls with low bases, with or without brims.
- **Boccali, Fogliette** - Large and small jugs, with or without a spout.
- **Bacili** - Deep bowl-shaped dishes
- **Flaschi** - Flasks for wine, vinegar, and water
- **Piole** - Vials or cruettes for oil, vinegar, and water
- **Albarelli** - Drug-pots and jars for medicines
- **Lettovari, Unguenti** - Pots for ointments, pomades, etc.
- **Tassoni, Confettieri** - Bowls for sweetmeats
- **Piatti Stratti o Piani** - Flat plates
- **Piatti Con Fondo** - Plates with sunken centers
- **Tondi** - Wide-bordered plates
- **Saliere** - Circular salt-cellars
- **Vasi da Due Corpi** - Doubled bodied vases

The two majolica plates in the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts are examples of two types - the 'Piatti Stratti o Piani' and the 'Piatti con Fondo'.

There were numerous other shapes such as inkwells, candelabras, figures in the round, and beads for necklaces. Occasionally pieces have been which have cleverly contrived compartments, seemingly lacking outlets, conceived for the amusement or the mystification of the receiver.  

The most common majolica shape in collections today is the Albarello or the drug pot. The name was derived from bamboo containers which oriental merchants used for shipping.

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9. Ibid., p. 10.


albarello, the apothecary soon took it to serve as containers of their materials. These especially designed jars presented a particularly good field for additional study, because of the names of the strange mixtures and the symbolic decoration used. The symbols were often the crest of the specific pharmaceutical laboratories for which they were manufactured. The snake also was frequently used being the emblem of medical skill. The labels were in abbreviated Latin, as for example, a label for a compound of honey might read "Aq. Melis" or that of a delicate confection, "Zucaro Violata". The alchemists worked out glazes with which to make these pots proof against the most potent acids. The albarelli present the strange stories of the realm of alchemy and give a glimpse into the faith in the curative powers of various concoctions. These jars do not often have handles. The practical designer made a shape that could be easily grasped, doing away with the need of the handle. This saved much space on the shelves and also cut down on the breakage. The size of the drug pots has been attributed to the generous doses administered. The world's finest collection of this form is found at the Musee Fialom of the Paris Faculty of Pharmacy. There are over five-hundred examples which were collected by the founder, M. Fialom.

II. GLAZES

Majolica was glazed with a stanniferous enamel or at times a lead glaze. The lead glaze had lead as an opacifier which did not result in as milky an appearance. This glaze was used on the householdware and on the mezza-majolica as made at Castello. The finer majolica was coated with a thick application of an opaque, milk-white glaze with

12. Ibid., p. 69.
a glassy surface. This contained a percentage of tin oxide which was a comparatively rare material in Italy.

M. Piot quotes a receipt for a typical majolica glaze in his *Margarita Preciosa* written in 1330, "We find, when tin and lead are calcined and fused together by fire, they are converted into a glass; as they (potters) do when they glaze earthen vessels." This is evidence of the long use of tin glaze in Italy. The description fits the types of glazes still used in the sixteenth century as described by Piccolpasso.

The white opaque glaze employed as its base a fusible compound known as 'marsacotta'. Marsacotta was defined as a silicate of potash made by fusing sand with wine lees (tartar which is essentially an acid potassium tartrate). The tartar was obtained from the sides of well-dried wine-casks, a certain amount of fermentation always remaining there for the potter. These lees were burned until a fine white ash was obtained. This was also used in the lead glazes.

Along with the lees, sand was needed for the 'marsacotta'. The best sand was found at San Giovanni in Tuscany. It was white, heavy, bright, and clean. A less pure sand was taken from a lake near Perugia. In some sections flints were used as a substitute. The composition of a common 'marsacotta' was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sand</th>
<th>30 lbs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wine Lees</td>
<td>12 lbs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These two ingredients were mixed together on a clean floor, the lumps being crushed with a smooth stone. The dry mixture was stored in jugs until the time of firing.

Tin was not native to the country but was imported from other parts of the world. The common source was Flanders in the Low Countries.

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The tin was prepared in a reverberatory furnace - the calcination process. This furnace had one section for the fuel and another trough for the tin which was always accompanied by a certain percentage of lead. The flames of the fire would hit the vaulted ceiling and reflect into the chamber containing the tin. When this became white ashes, the tin was ready for storage in the crooks.

"Tin for Milky White (pound weights)"

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tin</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Various colorants were used with the glazes. These were carefully stored after preparation, to guard against dust and impurities. This was essential, for these potters strove for perfection and a few grains of impurities could mar a piece. Some of the materials used were: Calcined (burned copper, "Ramina"; tin oxide or antimony; iron oxide, "Ferrocio"; and impure cobalt oxide, "Zaffre"; and manganese. These materials produced greens, blues, yellows, and purples. The iron oxide was obtained by scraping the rust from the anchors of the ships and heating it in one of the kilns. The different centers of majolica manufacture used their own formulae many of which were recorded by Piccolpasso. The main centers used compositions figured in pounds as follows:

Urbino

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marsacotta</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sand</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lees</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Ibid., p. 35.
16. Ibid., pp. 32, 33, 34.
the mill in Urbino was formed by two circular rocks, one set in a barrel and the other suspended by an iron rod passing through a wooden scaffold. When the two came together, a circular movement
was applied. This grinder was turned by water power, animal, or man. The material was protected by loose boards placed over barrel opening. The pigments for the decoration of the wares were made from these colorants. The pigments were compounds of natural materials - cobalt, copper, iron, and manganese. They were prepared either on a painter's porphyry or in a mortar. The mortar was a hollowed rock in which was placed the rough pigment; a stone the width of the grinder's palm was used to pulverize the contents. When the color was the consistency of an ointment, it was ready for the painter. A large sieve was placed on two battens (wooden rods), and the pigment was screened into a wooden bowl. This was the final check of the purity.

The application for the glaze was an art in itself. The covering must be the desired thickness and must be evenly distributed for the proper reaction in the fire. The biscuit ware was taken from the kiln, dusted carefully, and put with the similar types. The duster was usually the tail of a fox or that of a horse. Then the glazes for the various types were prepared. These were hand-stirred the consistency being judged by whether the hand remained coated with glaze when it was removed from the croak. Small test bowls were plunged into the pan of glaze and quickly withdrawn. The glaze was scraped off to test the thickness. The mixture was then adjusted until the pieces were properly coated. All the low wares were dipped into the tub of glaze, while others had the glaze poured over them. The insides of the pieces were also poured; that is, the glaze was poured into the vase and thrown out rapidly. The air pressure forced the glaze to cover the whole interior. The pieces were wiped clean

18. Ibid., p. 57.
20. Ibid., p. 60.
of any excess, patched, and passed to the decorator.

III. DECORATIVE TREATMENT

Very few of the products of the majolica fabrique were left entirely white. The pieces were painted with pigments over the unfired glaze, and some were later lustred. The pottery painter was a seated artist, supporting the ware by the knees. There is a majolica plate in the Victoria and Albert Museum which illustrates this painting process. (Plate V)

Two kinds of bristles were used in the brushes, goats' hair and asses' hair. These brushes were carefully constructed using only the smooth, soft, and straight hairs. Different widths were made so that the painter would have the needed brush for every type of line.

Referring to Piccolpasso, we learned that particular colors were used for the different elements of the pictorial designs. Several special colors listed were:

"For sketching the design

| Yellow 2 | 2 |
| Zaffre 0.5 | 1.5 |

| Yellow 2 | | 2 |
| White | | |
| Pigment 2 | 3 |

To simulate wood or reddish highways

| Yellow 1 | 2 |
| White | |

| Yellow 2 | |

To simulate meadows and small trees

| Light 1 |
| Yellow |
| Copper 2 |

To simulate hair

| Light |
| Yellow 2 |
| Orange |
| Yellow 1=21 |

The numbers referred to proportional amounts. All these pigments

21. Ibid., p. 63.
mixed by the potter could be lightened or darkened as the painter desired. When the design had been painted, a thin coat of marzasotta was applied; this would keep the colors from running and spiling the pattern.  

The designs were freely brushed on the area, but the actual idea did not necessarily originate with the pottery painter. The painter’s room of the shop was decorated with sketches of designs to furnish ideas to the uninspired artist.  

The early designs were conventional in character and were often adapted from the pottery of the Near East, and Spain. The common patterns were interlaced strapwork, an arabesque of Eastern origin, trophies, emblems, grotesque human figures, monsters, masks, foliage, and fruits.  

The trophies were especially popular in the bottegas of Urbino; the arabesque, of Venice, and the oak-leaf, of Florence. The increase importance of the Renaissance painter and engraver opened a rich, new, source of decorative material for the majolist. The figure design on Italian majolica developing from the other creative fields were not very inventive, but the painters were skillful in adapting the existing designs to their medium. When the technique of the engraver could not be followed, the potter set up formulae for such things as rock painting and scenery. This utilisation of contemporary prints was widespread, being practised in all  

the major centers after 1500. The illustrated subject, historical or legendary, played an important part in the development and received a distinctive treatment. The story of Amdis de Gaulle, illustrations for Petrarch's "Trionfi", Tarocchi playing cards, Mantegna's engravings, classical themes by Jacapo, formal ornament by Nicolette da Modena were popular themes. Many of these designs were part of a treasury of designs which were circulated around the different shops. Patrons desired one type of design so that these patterns became classified as to their future owner, for example, patron saints for the holy man; cupids or a lovely lady for the lover; classical scenes for the great families, and patrons of the classical revival.

Some relief decoration was used. This was modeled from the bronze plaques which were becoming very popular at this period. Some of the most famous of these majolica pieces were modeled after the plaque of the Madonna and Child by Giovanni da Pisa.

Another decorative treatment was carried out on the finished wares - the art of lustring. This was developed almost exclusively at Gubbio with some pieces from Pesaro and Deruta. It was brought into use by Maestro Giorgio and Francesco Xanto of Gubbio from the sketchy methods traditionally followed in Italy. Passeri asserted that Giorgio brought the ruby lustre to Gubbio from Pesaro, or Giorgio got the lustre from another artist. As the ruby lustre color appeared in Pesaro before the fifteenth century and did not reappear in Gubbio until some twenty years later, some truth is given to the theory of

25. Ibid., p. 70.
27. Ibid., p. 44.
The lustred pottery of Italy appeared in three colors — ruby, silver, and gold. Certain parts of the designs were filled in with lustre mixture. The lustred wares were classified by the outstanding features as: pearly lustre frequently bearing painted portraits — Early Pesaro and Deruta ware; 2. Gubbio ware before Maestro Giorgio; 3. Gubbio ware after 1519 which was signed by the master. The various shades of the lustres were one means of dating the wares. The earlier wares were more extravagant in the use of silver making the lustres more iridescent, while in the later periods heavier purplish shades predominated due to the overuse of copper. The mixture of the colors were completely secret and seem to us strange concoctions. For example:

|Majolica Red (lustre) | 3 | 6
| Red Earth | 1 | 0
| Calcined Copper | 2 | 3
| Ferretto of Spain | 0 | 3
| Cinnabar | 0 | 3

Mixed with a calcined silver 3.34
Mixed with red vinegar to a consistency right for painting.30

The ware was fired to normal vitrification, then the outlets to the kiln were plugged. It was fired in actual contact with the flames and smoke in a special kiln. The process was such an important secret that it was known by only limited numbers of workmen. With the kiln closed, gorse branches or a similar type of growth sprinkled with turpentine were thrown into the fire. The thick poisonous smoke resulting was the active agent for developing the metallic lustres from the reduced oxides of copper and silver. "Carbon rising in the

29. Ibid., p. 48.
form of smoke coming in contact with the heated surface of metallic deposits causes them to throw off their salts, leaving a metaliferous residuum." At the right moment this remetalization had to be halted, and the kiln sealed. A sooty scum covered the piece when it was removed from the kiln. The brilliancy was restored by scraping and polishing the piece with wood ashes, by soaking it in a tub of washing lye, or by soaking it in plain soap and water. The lustre design itself was applied by a feather dipped in the solution.

IV. THE KILN

"Amongst all things sought after in this art keeping clean the colours! and having a good eye for the fire seemed to be of great importance." How true this was as the beauty of the pieces was indeed dependent on the pure colors and a good fire. It was small wonder that great care was given to the kiln stacking and firing. There were three types of kilns used by the Italian potter, the reverberatory kiln used for the calcination of the tin which has already been discussed, the regular kiln (Plate XII), and the kiln used for lustring.

The regular kiln used for bisque and glazed wares was the largest of the three. It had a square firing compartment that was three ells broad, five ells high, two and one-half ells deep. (An ell is equal to about twenty-seven inches). This chamber was covered

PLATE XI

The Kiln

from

Piccolpasso's

The Three Books of the Potter's Art
THE KILN

A - SPY HOLES
B - AIR VENTS
C - FIRE CHAMBER
D - FUEL MOUTH
with a flattened vault. The kiln rested in a pit with the fireplace and firing chamber projecting above. A combination of bricks and stone cemented with mortar were used in the construction.

Placing the ware in the kiln (stacking) required a precise knowledge of the fire and the kiln. Usually the kilns were loaded with the various types of materials from the pounded raw pigments to the glazed and painted ware. The pounded colors were placed in the firing chamber first saving the choicest positions for the fine pieces. The glazed forms were placed in a protective clay covering called saggars which were made of a mixture of red and white clay. Various sizes were made to accommodate the different shapes. They were perforated at regular intervals to allow even heat distribution. Glazed pieces were placed on some type of stilt to raise the foot, preventing the fusing of the pieces to one another or to the kiln. Most of the pots were placed in single saggars which were in turn stacked from the floor to the ceiling. When the kiln was completely filled, the entrance was closed with bits of bricks and sealed with a material called ‘sciabione’ which was a type of earth used for making mortar. The air vents were sealed with tiles or small dishes making everything ready for the fire.

"When all this had been done, prayers are offered to God with all the heart thanking him always for what he gives, fire is brought, care being taken to observe the state of the moon, because this is of great importance, and I have heard from those who are old in the art and of some experience that if the firing happens to take place at the waning of the moon, the fire lacks brightness in the same manner as the moon its brilliance."34 The fire was lit using a soft dry

wood that would burn slowly. A slow fire was maintained for about four hours, then the fire was increased for eleven hours. The condition of the pieces was checked by unsealing the spyhole and checking the glassiness of the ware. As the potter began with an invocation to God, he also recognized the divine hand in the firing itself. The potter rationalized the failures in the kiln as the work of God; "Often heartbroken by the failures of a firing for which all recognized rules had been faithfully observed, the master is reduced to acknowledge that heavenly influence governs the fate of pottery as well as the fortunes of man."35

The lustre kiln was constructed differently having fewer air vents and only one mouth. The ware was loaded from above and the heat stoked from the mouth. The firing lasted only about three hours or until the pieces began to show some brightness. The kiln was allowed to cool rapidly to bring out the lustre quality.

Other majolica types produced in Europe as faience, Delft, were fired differently from this Italian ware. The Italian majolica was fired twice - the biscuit and the glaze while the European faience was fired three times.36 The pottery was biscuited, then glazed, and then finally the painted decoration was fused. The end product was dissimilar in the color due to this method. This way did not require the great skill required of the Italian pottery painter as the Italian was not able to erase a line once the pigment was in place while the Europeans could wash the color off at will.

The Italian techniques were time-honored and are still followed today. There are numerous tricks characteristic of the majolica production, but the general procedure is the same. Our potter's wheel has been changed little. At times more adequately designed, at times electrified, it follows the same fundamental principle. The kilns are identical except for the fuel, and in many places where gas or electricity is not available, wood is still employed. Gorse branches have given way to more artificial means of securing a lustre as the use of moth balls or a brunson burner introduced into a closed kiln.

Our alterations, when they exist, cannot be thought of as improvements. Mechanical skills cannot substitute for aesthetic sensibility.
CHAPTER VI

THE SUMMATION

It has been pointed out that the early wares were the result of the commerce with Spain and the Near East. These late fourteenth and early fifteenth century pieces follow the Moorish types of decorative motifs and their techniques. However, this foreign influence soon was replaced by typical Renaissance expressions which were the natural consequence of the feverish rebirth of the interest in Greek and Roman culture. The development of majolica followed the same trends as the other arts — starting with a simplicity that became more and more daring until all sense of the limitations of the medium were lost, and concluding in the decadent phase of the ware which appears in the sixteenth century. Finally, as the wealth of Italy disappeared, so vanished the elaborate wares made for the nobles extravagantly furnished villas.

The majolica ware of Italy was not an utilitarian pottery, but rather something more decorative, enhancing the palace of some wealthy noble or merchant. This very fact of non-functionalism limited the number of owners and placed the potter in a specific situation. He had to produce elaborate pieces designed for the tastes of the upper classes in order to succeed. If he tried to follow his own dictates and the dictates of the clay itself, he could easily fail. Portraits, trophies, and heraldry were popular designs which were used to satisfy the buyer's ego. All this lent personal glorification and was considered an important sign of good artistic taste on the part of the noble.

The history of the Renaissance Italy was not directly influenced by Italian majolica, but the ware was thought to have played an important part in cementing relations between powerful neighbors. There were

probably many instances of bribes in the form of majolica sets used to pacify an enemy or bring about a helpful alliance. A letter from Lorenzo d' Medici to Roberto Malatesta thanking him for a present of decorated pottery which might have been an offering of good will and friendship with some gain in mind. Lorenzo the Magnificent wrote, "They please me entirely by their perfection and variety, being quite novelties in these parts, and are valued more than if of silver, the donor's arms serving daily to recall their origin."²

The originality of the ceramic production of the individual centers was noted in the early wares. It has been seen, though, as the classical movement became stronger, less attention was given to the individuality of the pottery. The common use of the successful engravings of the various masters brought a sameness throughout the sixteenth century work. Perhaps it was better to have this type of design and form which was definitely Italian in character rather than the Moorish dominated works, yet the later pieces loose the freshness we enjoy in the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

Much of this type of ware is still in production at the present time carrying on the traditions of the older potters. Too often, though, it is the traditions established in the sixteenth century which are adhered to. The Italian craftsman needs to step forward and to stop staring into the past. From the shambles of a defeated and bombed Italy, maybe a new spirit will be instilled into the products following the Renaissance technique using it as a springboard for stronger less imitative work. As it is their persistent imitation is retroactive; all the good accomplished

by the earlier works is being destroyed by the copiest of the present
day. Any modern department store or china shop has its supply of Italian
ware featuring the gaudy Della Robbia imitations and the ochre colored
scenic pieces. There can be found some of these which have simplified
the Renaissance forms to match the present demand for a functional ware,
but usually this has not been considered.

The pictured Deruta ware (Plate XII) is an example of one of the better
of the more recent works. These Deruta pieces made in the nineteenth
century, follow the early traditions of the ceramic center of the Roman area.
The designs painted in cobalt blues are those of the oriental type,
characteristic of the early fifteenth century production of the
city.

The methods of forming and firing used in the fourteenth
fifteenth, and sixteenth century were the same and were always used. Only
in the decorative treatment was an actual change seen. It can be
noted also that the methods used in the twentieth century are practically
identical to those of the fifteenth, which had been taken from a more
ancient culture springing from the Near East.

By the sixteenth century the secrets so carefully guarded in the
earlier days were commonly applied facts, and no longer protected. This
was the natural result of the itinerant potters who worked at one place,
then another, gleaning information at each shop. It was the same
circumstances which brought the English methods of machine weaving to
America when the closely guarded mechanical loom was carried here by a
dissatisfied worker. The ruby lustre of Gubbio was one of the few de-
sirable and distinctive characteristics which was not reproduced at the
other centers or continued after the death of its originator.
PLATE XII

Nineteenth Century Deruta Pieces
The majolica development can be followed in the inventions and the improvements of the ware as in all other arts of the period. As the potter became more adept at handling his material, he experimented more and depended upon his imagination to help create a piece similar to the Chinese vases or the Hispano-Moresque albarelli. From the clay native to the local centers the potter would fashion his ceramic shapes. Very rarely was this clay doctored to make it more dense, plastic, or lighter in color. The pink, buff, grey-white, or red clay was fired and was ready for the final handling - glazing and decorating. The technical development was well illustrated in the increased palette of the sixteenth century. In the beginning the artist had only his basic colors from the oxides of copper, cobalt, and manganese. From this developed combinations of new pigment materials until gradually the range of colors equalled that of the painter.

The passage of time has mellowed the Italian wares but a common point of sympathy with the modern thinking has been reached. Today it is hard to see beyond the functional aspects of the craft. A sculptural design becomes an ashtray or a container and a pot is used for beans, cookies, or flowers. Anything which does not adhere to this standard is usually dismissed as without any merit. It is impossible to do this. The majolica of Italy developed to supply a definite need created by the living conditions of that time. The same situation has happened today, our extreme demand for total functionalism in the crafts is the result of our culture.

A word must be said in defense of this pottery of which the greatest achievement was the superb technique brought to a point never duplicated. It is hard to comprehend that the ceramic artist took
the designs of Raphael and Mantegna and sketched them on a curved surface freely and boldly with inerasable lines. That took great skill and much practice.

The actual shapes have been forgotten in the modern studios, but the method is still followed in a much simpler form. Although the so-called art pottery of the current production uses the majolica technique of oxides and enamels, few could attain the mastery of free pottery painting as done by the Italian majolist. Much Swedish and American majolica is produced which in design returns to the freshness and the flowing line seen in the earlier Italian wares. There are no 'albarelli' or 'bacini', but there are interlacing strapwork, the arabesque, and simple conventionalized animals.

It is the study of the majolica technique, the style of design, and the stanniferous enamel itself, which is valuable to the practising ceramist of today. This brings up the problem of what findings in this classification have been established throughout the whole study. What has the study to offer to the modern potter? We look to the ancient Egyptians, the Persians, and the Chinese for the beautiful shapes and designs, but for the ideas and new methods of glazing and decoration, all types must be considered. This is the main role of Italian majolica although there is also a wealth of pottery design in the early pieces which are well worth careful study.

It has been said that majolica reflected the era during which it was produced. Even so, it is hard to reconcile oneself to a Fontana plateau from Urbino when there are the earlier Florentine wares to gaze upon. These earlier wares are beautiful examples of the
ceramic art while the later works show only highly developed craftsmanship. The early works have life, vigor, and color yet the designs and the forms are one. There was no overbalancing the scales one way or another. As soon as the majolica becomes a surface for the copies of the painting and engraving art, the spontaneity disappears leaving a cold, carefully executed piece. The shapes themselves change and become the forms of the metal-worker, not plastic as a ceramic piece should be.

To illustrate this point further, consider the narrow mouthed Florentine jar of the early fifteenth century (Plate III) in comparison to one of the plateaus painted by Orsizio Fontana of Urbino. (Plate VII) The most obvious difference was the method of applying the pattern to the shape. Fontana disregarded the platter form altogether, completely covering the surface with several classical scenes connected with grotesques. The many sections serve to destroy the feeling of the whole, sharpening the actual shape. The Florentine jar was a complete unit with the pattern in harmony with the form. This jar was decorated by an artist who does not place the design as a thing separate from the form. His hand outlines the design making it grow from the pot itself. Whether it was in a coat of arms or in some mythological animal, he shows a strength of drawing never surpassed in the later more colorful pieces. The color of the earlier work also seems to us in keeping with the ceramic medium - the subtle greens and browns against the white enamel. The raw clay is exposed as another effective color note. The garish color of the platter was an imitation of that of the classicist painter of the century. Again, the Florentine piece was an object that
could be easily held, while the plateau, taking into consideration
the size, would be awkward to hold and use.

It has been brought out in the chapter on general history that
the early pieces were few and not always definitely identified. In
many cases they were held as the crude beginnings of a greater ex-
pression of beauty whereas today they seem to us the peak. Now it
is the later pieces, in which the technique reaches a height not follow-
ed by conception, that are relegated to inferior positions, and the
early ware greatly admired. Incompatible with our aesthetic judgment,
is the very idea of covering the clay form with a Raphael painting.
Neither the painting or the shape was intended for such an end, and
they should not have been brought together.

Looking to some of the authorities on Italian majolica a marked
change in opinion can be noted between the nineteenth and twentieth
century critics. Solon says in reference to the sixteenth century pro-
duction, "We find that, within the previous thirty years, the manu-
facture had been firmly established; nay, that within a few years
afterward it had reached a point it was never to surpass." The
writings of Beckwith also seemed to give the impression of the beauty
of the later works over the fifteenth century wares. He cites in one
section, "Beautiful as are many specimens of European and Oriental
porcelain, the Italian majolica of the sixteenth century frequently
surpasses them in lively and harmonious effect." This author
advocates the use of such types of pottery in home decoration remarking

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3. M. L. Solon, A Description and History of Italian Majolica
4. Arthur Beckwith, Majolica and Faience (New York: D.
Appleton and Company, 1877), p. 11.
as follows:

“If the Italians of the sixteenth century could afford to have superb pottery of excellent designs, manufactured for their family use and for presents, rather than for sale, and to which we are indebted for much that is beautiful in this department, there seems no good reason why any household of the nineteenth century should be destitute of the family circle, and diffusing at all times a pleasing and refining influence.”

This of course was a reasonable statement in the height of the Victorian age during which this treatise was written. One more interesting statement concerning the value of later works was written by Abbe Passeri in 1758. “The inferior part of man will be in favor of Eastern porcelain, but the rational and intellectual will guide him to majolica.” This was all representative of the past centuries' selection of the Italian pottery. This can be contrasted today by a general preference for the "quattrocento" primitives by such modern critics as W. B. Honey, C. Louise Avery, and Bernard Rackham.

The only arguments in favor of the High Renaissance works were that they beautifully used an unbelievable range of ceramic colors. It is difficult to visualize the painstaking care which went into one majolica plateau. The artist painted the scene on a rough surface with pigments which did not reveal their post-fire color. The potter had to know what each stroke would do without being able to follow the design's color progress. For example, cobalt blue, copper green, and manganese colors were all black in the raw state. It took great skill to overcome this obstacle as these later craftsmen did. Another difficulty

5. Ibid., p. 12.
6. Ibid., p. 9.
was the permanency of the drawing. Once the oxide was painted on the glaze the only method of erasing was reglazing. The color soaked into the powdery coating becoming apart of the glaze itself.

However, twentieth century aesthetic judgment gives great emphasis to the respect for the medium and here Italian majolica disappoints us. The craftsmen were blind to the shapes naturally taken by thrown clay or they lacked the taste to sort the pleasing form from the clever. As was often the case when a potter became technically skilled, he was obsessed with the tricky or unusual. The more he attempted the further he strayed from his true objective. This flood of experimental shapes became the goal and inevitably eccentricity was confused with originality. Their shapes reviled the clay medium according to our standards, but the shapes are thrown and have some plastic quality due to the handling of the clay first-hand. However the painted engravings cannot be justified by modern standards. In almost no cases were the results as pleasing or as good in the present sense as other developments or the earlier wares.

This brief study brings out many additional interesting problems which cannot be discussed in detail here. The mezza-majolica which developed prior to the majolica wares was a vital link between the ancient and the Renaissance works. This style also featured a type of decoration frequently employed by potters in studios today. The importance of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century ware cannot be over stressed. It has not been carefully studied here as a general survey had to move forward, yet here was found the best of the whole production of Italian majolica. The more technical aspects of this art was another factor which could not be considered carefully in the scope of this study.
The author's ceramic works pictured in this study followed the techniques of the old Italians and attempted to instill the Italian spirit into the designs. The colors and motifs of the early works were inspected and then converted to these newer shapes. The coating was a common transparent glaze made opaque by the addition of tin oxide. The coloring agents used were the oxides of cobalt, copper, and manganese, along with crozal yellow stain. These pigments were mixed with water to a flowing consistency and applied with a brush. Here the methods differed. The skilled Italians mixed their pigments with glaze allowing for a more shaded palette. In these works no previous drawings were made, the designs being applied with a freely used brush. An additional coat of glaze was later added to hold the patterns in place. The ware was fired at a normal firing temperature of Cone 04 or 1940 degrees Fahrenheit. The final fire lasted for approximately ten hours. This was done in a modern electric kiln which did away with the need for the protective saggars as used by the Renaissance potter.

All and all Italian majolica represents an interesting ceramic development which foretold the later European styles. It is regrettable that the High Renaissance pieces are the ones most often seen in the galleries. This pictures Italian majolica as a stilted, garishly painted ware expressive of the later Renaissance period alone. In reality the earlier examples exhibit an art which was timeless, ranking with the Persians and Chinese. It is this that makes the ceramic art of majolica a worthy study. Also, as may be readily seen, the richness of the life and color, of the culture and inventiveness, characterizing the Renaissance, was reflected by this ware. To know the story of majolica is to recapture the spirit of the Renaissance and the trends it followed.
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PLATE XIII

Caflaggiolo Bowl
C. 1500
National Gallery of Art
Widener Collection
PLATE XIV

Majolica Dish from Siena

c. 1500

Artist: Maestro Benedetto

National Gallery of Art

Widener Collection
PLATE XV

Large Dish from Deruta
c. 1520
National Gallery of Art
Widener Collection
PLATE XVI

Majolica Plate
Deruta, Lustred at Gubbio
About 1515–1625
Malolica Plate
Italian, Deruta, Lustred at Gubbio
About 1515—1525
PLATE XVII

Dish from Deruta
Large dish with the arms of Pope Leo X in the center
Deruta, about 1530

National Gallery of Art
Widener Collection
PLATE XVIII

Large Vase and Bowl
Large Vase: green and yellow on a white glaze
Bowl: green, yellow, and blue on white
PLATE XIX

Group of Majolica Pieces
Bowl: blue, green, brown, and yellow on a white glaze
Small Plate: green, brown, blue, and yellow on a white glaze
Saucer: green and yellow on a white glaze
PLATE XX

Three Majolica Pitchers
Large Size: decorated in yellow, green, and brown
Medium Size: decorated in green, yellow, and brown
Small Size: decorated in blue, yellow and green
PLATE XXX

Majolica Styled Dinnerware
Dinner Plate: yellow and green on white glaze
Small Salad Bowl: yellow and green on white glaze