

# Reviews

## ***Majolica Mania : Transatlantic Pottery in England and the United States, 1850–1915***

Susan Weber, Eleanor Hughes, Catherine Arbutnott, Jo Briggs, Earl Martin and Laura Microulis (eds)  
Bard Graduate Center, 2021, \$300 hb



*Majolica Mania* is a weighty tome with over 1000 pages and 1200 illustrations in the three-volume publication. It accompanies the exhibition of the same name, and more than a dozen authors contribute to an authoritative discussion of the vibrant, highly modelled earthenware that was developed in the mid-19th century and came to be known as majolica.

Volume 1 provides an updated and fascinating account of the introduction and development of the new ceramic which was launched at the Great Exhibition of 1851, where it was greeted with great acclaim. Its continued success in international exhibitions is admirably charted along with discussions of design origins, production challenges and marketing techniques. Most fascinating is an assessment of the rise and fall of majolica's popularity both in the marketplace and with the arbiters of taste: it was acclaimed, then derided, and finally rehabilitated. The discussion concludes with a revealing glimpse of majolica's changing fortunes in museum collections.

The second volume is the largest of the three and is a substantive compendium examining the work of major British manufacturers. Appropriately, the first three chapters discuss the Minton factory, where majolica was first produced. Herbert Minton, Colin

Minton Campbell and Léon Arnoux led the factory during much of the 19th century and there is a comprehensive discussion of how their artistic and commercial aspirations were fulfilled. With Minton's superiority established, two chapters are then devoted to Wedgwood where majolica production began in 1855, eventually becoming integral to the success of the company in the late 19th century.

From the 1860s many more potters recognised the growing market for this colourful earthenware and the following eleven chapters of the volume each discuss an individual Staffordshire majolica producer with a final chapter highlighting a few of the lesser-known makers. The generous number of illustrations from factory pattern and shape books, together with engravings from contemporary exhibition catalogues, original photographs of displays in exhibitions, and advertising ephemera are used to great effect throughout this volume and are especially valuable when linked directly with the splendid images of extant wares.

The third volume documents the American majolica industry. It opens with a discussion of the immigration of Staffordshire potters who hoped for better wages and living conditions in the United States. From the late 1870s American factories accepted the challenge of providing ceramics for home consumption, and majolica production was introduced to meet demands. New and expanded histories of major American producers provide the final six chapters of the volume.

Earlier monographs on majolica, were smaller in scope and size, and reflected the knowledge and experience of one author. Although the continuity of a single voice has its advantages, the collaboration of authors in *Majolica Mania* brings depth and scholarship to many more aspects of the subject than previous publications. There is much new information from both sides of the Atlantic. It is difficult to overestimate the value of having such a range of productions within one publication. There is some overlap, particularly in the discussion of the early development of majolica, but that simply serves to set every chapter in the same context. The reader can move backwards and forwards with ease through the excel-

lent texts and images to compare the work of the various potteries.

Is there anything that could have been added? Perhaps a technical section on the chemistry of majolica would be useful, but that may be just my particular interest. And while there are some smaller manufacturers who don't get a mention, there is nothing I would be willing to lose to see them included.

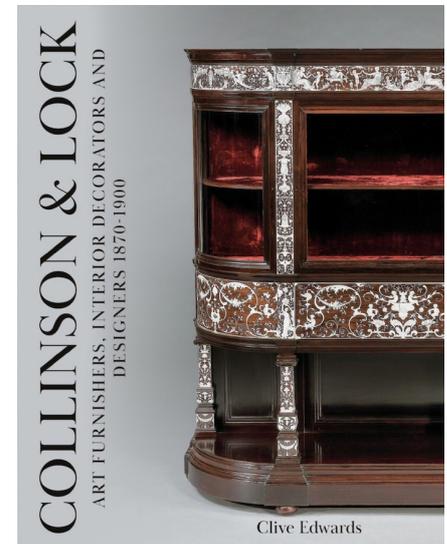
You may well be convinced that it is a book you should have on your shelf by dipping into a few chapters available on the *Majolica Mania* website at [exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/majolica-mania/](http://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/majolica-mania/) or visiting the *Majolica Mania* exhibition, Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, 8 October 2022 – 29 January 2023.

Patricia Halfpenny

## ***Collinson & Lock: Art Furnishers, Interior Decorators and Designers, 1870–1900***

Clive Edwards

Matador, 2022, £45 hb



The London firm of cabinetmakers, furnishers and decorators Collinson & Lock, active from 1870 to 1897, is probably best remembered for forging a distinctive style within the Aesthetic and Queen Anne Movements. They executed, to very high standards, furniture designed by leading architects including E.W. Godwin and Bruce J. Talbert and, from the 1880s, elegant ivory and rosewood marquetry furniture designed by Stephen Webb.