



San Francisco Ceramic Circle

An Affiliate of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

February 2016

P.O. Box 15163, San Francisco, CA 94115-0163

www.patricianantiques.com/sfcc.html



Detail: Large dish with *Psyche's Father Consulting the Oracle*
Faenza, after an engraving by the Master of the Die, after an engraving by Agostino Veneziano
Tin-glazed earthenware (maiolica), c. 1550-1570
San Francisco, FAMSF, gift of Jakob Goldschmidt (SFCC staff photo)

SFCC FEBRUARY LECTURE

Sunday, February 14, 2016

9:45 a.m. – Theater opens

10:25 a.m. – Program begins

Florence Gould Theater, Legion of Honor

Raphael, Engraving, and the Art of Maiolica

Jeffrey Ruda

Professor Emeritus of Art History
University of California, Davis

About the lecture: The current loan exhibition of Raphael's *Portrait of a Lady with a Unicorn* relates to the Legion of Honor's Renaissance graphics and maiolica. The talk will show how the *Lady with a Unicorn* parallels Raphael's innovations in printmaking, which in turn served a new fashion for pictorial ceramics. The talk is co-sponsored by the Achenbach Graphic Arts Council and will be followed by a display in the Achenbach study room open to SFCC and AGAC members. SFCC members should r.s.v.p. to jhruda@prodigy.net, or by mail to our P.O. box (see above).

About the speaker: Jeff Ruda taught Renaissance art and chaired the Art History program at UC Davis, where he is still active in the graduate faculty. He now serves as president of the SFCC.

Mini-exhibit: Please bring Renaissance ceramics (we hope!) from any country, and Italian ceramics of all periods.

SFCC MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

If you haven't sent in your membership form, please do so now! Membership dues help to pay for guest lecturers and for our social events. Paid members are eligible for the private show of Renaissance engravings in the Achenbach study room after the February 14 lecture.

SFCC LECTURES, MARCH - MAY 2016

SUNDAY, MARCH 27. Charlotte Jacob-Hanson, independent scholar and lecturer, *In the Footsteps of Fidelle Duvivier: The French-English Connection*.

SUNDAY, APRIL 17. Loren Zeller, President, Transferware Collector's Club, *The Influence of Jean Pillement on 18th- and 19th-Century Ceramic Designs*.

SUNDAY, MAY 22. Justin Racanello, London, leading dealer in Italian ceramics, *Italian Lustre Glazes: Renaissance Maiolica and the 19th-Century Rediscovery*.

FEBRUARY LECTURE BACKGROUND: ITALIAN MAIOLICA

Just after 1500, Italian potters introduced a brilliant novelty: finely naturalistic, brilliantly colored ceramic pictures. There was nothing like them anywhere else in the world. The competitive drive behind this new medium typified the mash-up of business with artistry that we call the Renaissance.

Before the late 1300s, Italians used the old technique of blending finely ground silicates and various trace materials with lead oxide to make a vitreous seal on pottery, keeping liquids in or out. Lead glazes are translucent and shiny and can take on a few colors. However, the colors run when fired and don't hold detailed painting.

Cafaggiolo, near Florence, Italy
Dish with a porcelain painter, c. 1510
Tin-glazed earthenware, diameter 23.9 cm
London, Victoria & Albert Museum (SFCC staff photo)





Islamic potters had long since added tin oxide to the mix, to make a white glaze that holds colors in place, and they won a large upscale market in Italy. The name *maiolica* comes from this trade, somehow. The Italians had no good native tin and couldn't begin to compete until their trade networks brought home Cornish tin (and Asian cobalt) in the late 1300s. From the late 1300s to the mid-1400s, Italian tin-glazed wares—now called “archaic” maiolica—were bold and handsome, with steadily improved potting skills. They established a local market alongside cheaper lead-glazed production, which actually never stopped.

Orvieto or Siena, Italy

Jug with a bird and abstract decoration, late 1300s

Tin-glazed earthenware, painted with copper and manganese oxides

Paris, musée du Louvre (SFCC staff photo)

Pesaro, Italy

**Dish with a virgin combing the mane of a unicorn, probably c. 1486-88,
from the service for King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary**

Tin-glazed earthenware, diameter 47.9 cm

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (museum photo)

From the mid-1400s, the Italians accelerated their gains in glaze chemistry and firing to add new colors and to refine their decorative schemes, quickly entering the international luxury market.

Figures and scenes became more elaborate, but they were still subordinate to the overall design of each ceramic object.



Even at their peak, in the early to mid-1500s, Italian pictorial ('historiated') ceramics were only one strain of maiolica production. Expensive and tricky, metallic "lustre" glazes were effective with bold designs, both of figures and of abstract ornament. Complex shapes lent themselves better to ornamental patterns than to pictures. There were very free riffs on rarely seen but treasured Chinese blue-and-white porcelain. Production was more widespread than for any of Italy's other arts and crafts, with at least 15 major sites from Venice to Naples. Many of them had some kind of distinctive design or technique, but the painters moved around so much that unsigned pieces may be difficult to place.



Deruta, Italy

Dish with female figure and love slogan, c. 1520-25

Tin-glazed earthenware with lustre glaze, diameter 40 cm
San Francisco, FAMSF, Gift of Jakob Goldschmidt (museum photo)

Urbino, Italy

Flask with stopper, c. 1560

Tin-glazed earthenware, height 30.8 cm

San Francisco, FAMSF, Gift of Mr. & Mrs. E. John Magnin (museum photo)



Faenza, Italy

Large jar "alla porcellana" (in Chinese style), c. 1510

Tin-glazed earthenware

Brno, Czech Republic, Museum of Applied Arts (SFCC staff photo)

