



# San Francisco Ceramic Circle

An Affiliate of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

## March 2017

P.O. Box 26773, San Francisco, CA 94126

[www.patricianantiques.com/sfcc.html](http://www.patricianantiques.com/sfcc.html)

### SFCC MARCH LECTURE

Sunday, March 19, 2017

9:45 a.m.: doors open

10:25: program begins

*Florence Gould Theater, Legion of Honor*

### *Minton Ceramics and the 'Japan Craze' in Victorian Britain*

**Jeffrey Ruda**

Professor Emeritus of Art History, UC Davis



**Minton China Works, Stoke-on-Trent**  
*Dish with Pattern G584, 1871*  
Bone china, diameter 23 cm  
Private collection (Photo: SFCC)

**About the lecture:** The Minton factories had the artistically widest-ranging output of any ceramics maker in the mid- to late 19th century. From the late 1860s to the early 1900s, Japanese forms and motifs were key factors in fashionable Western design. The lecture will explore how the Minton factories used this source material, and what role it may have played in their marketing.

**About the speaker:** Jeff Ruda taught art history at UC Davis from 1980 to 2015. He is president of the SFCC.

**Minton China Works, Stoke-on-Trent**  
*Study for Pattern G584 (detail), c. 1871*  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Stoke-on-Trent Libraries (Photo: SFCC)



## UPCOMING SFCC TALKS

**SUNDAY, APRIL 9 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday!),** Gould Theater. **Paul Arthur**, author of *French Art Nouveau Ceramics, An Illustrated Dictionary*, Paris, 2015, "When Sculpture Met the Decorative Arts: Rodin and His Ceramics," in conjunction with the Rodin Centennial Exhibition.

**THURSDAY, MAY 11,** De Young Museum. Megan O'Neil, Associate Curator, LACMA, will discuss ceramics related to Teotihuacán for the FAMSF docents and the SFCC.

**SUNDAY, MAY 21,** Gould Theater. **Camille Leprince**, author of *La Faïence Baroque Française et les Jardins de Le Nôtre*, Paris, 2015, "Use and Display of French Baroque Faïence in André Le Nôtre's Gardens."

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15,** Gould Theater. **Hans van Lemmen**, distinguished scholar of and author on ceramic tiles, "The Golden Age of Dutch Tiles, 1580-1725."

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19,** Gould Theater. **Michael Sack**, collector, author, and SFCC Board-member emeritus, "William Alexander and the Macartney Diplomatic Mission: Chinese Scenes on Transferware."



**Auguste Rodin, 1840-1917 (figures)**  
**and Albert-Ernest Carrière-Belleuse, 1824-87 (base)**  
*Pedestal of the Titans, 1878-82(?)*  
Glazed ceramic, height 39 cm  
*Musée Rodin, Paris (Photo: museum)*

## MARCH LECTURE BACKGROUND: MINTON CERAMICS



Thomas Minton set up a pottery in 1793 to make high quality but competitively priced tableware. He was both a smart businessman and a master engraver who knew the field of tableware decoration. Most early Minton patterns were fresh takes on commercially proven types, and the factory kept up with new ideas in ceramic bodies and printing techniques.

Thomas Minton's son Herbert entered the business in his teens and was running the factory well before Thomas died, in 1836. At least as smart commercially as his father,

**Thomas Minton, Stoke-on-Trent**  
*Soup Plate with pattern no. 130, c. 1805*  
Bone china

*Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art, Toronto (Photo: museum)*

Herbert Minton led a new generation who believed that excellence was both morally charged and good marketing strategy. By Herbert's death in 1858, however, standards of artistic excellence had become starkly polarized. To build Britain's largest ceramic business, Herbert pursued every approach at all but the lowest price points. This meant adding ornamental ceramics to tableware, and following divergent trends in both areas.

**John Bell, 1811-95, modeler, for Minton & Hollins**  
*Una and the Lion, modeled 1847*

Parian, height 36.8 cm

Victoria and Albert Museum, London, acquired 1865 (Photo © V&A)

Parian, first credited to the Copeland factory, is a variant of bone china that allows very precise detail and reliable firing.



From the 1830s to World War I, Rococo Revival was the most conventional taste in European decorative arts, with Renaissance Revival as second choice. There are no solid numbers, but rococo models were probably the bulk of Minton's output during this period. What changed were the alternatives, flowing from Gothic Revival to the Aesthetic Movement to Art Nouveau, and then quickly to austere early-modernist design. Different as these fads look, they share a commitment to the ornamental value of materials. Contemporary with Courbet, the most progressive British commercial designers rejected illusionism as unsuitable and even dishonest. From the 1840s to the end of the century, Minton pioneered all phases of the development.



**Louis Jahn, 1839-1911, designer & painter, for Minton & Hollins**  
*Vase & Cover with Watteau Scenes, c. 1862*

Bone china, height 50.8 cm

Victoria & Albert Museum, London, acquired 1863 (Photo © V&A)



**Léon Arnoux, 1816-1902, designer, for Minton & Hollins**  
*Bottle [Flask] with crackle glaze, c. 1862*

Porcelain, height 19.7 cm

Victoria & Albert Museum, London, acquired 1864 (Photo © V&A)



**Pierre Jeannest, 1813-57, designer, for Minton & Hollins  
Ewer & stand, c. 1862**

Lead-glazed earthenware (majolica), ewer height 71 cm  
Victoria & Albert Museum, London, acquired 1863 (Photo © V&A)

At the 1862 London International Exhibition, Minton's display included this ewer & stand, Jahn's Watteau vase, six of Arnoux's Chinese-style pieces, and Christopher Dresser's earliest ceramics.



**M.L.E. Solon, 1835-1913, decorator,  
for Minton China Works  
Flask, c. 1870-95**

Porcelain with pâte-sur-pâte decoration  
Potteries Museum, Stoke-on-Trent (Photo: SFCC)

Minton also pioneered ceramic technology, especially in two areas: tiles, and the brilliantly glazed earthenware called majolica. Herbert Minton gambled a big investment over many years to perfect machine-made, durable, yet richly colored "encaustic" tiles. These proved ideal for the mid-century Gothic Revival architectural boom. Then, while translucent lead glazing is an old ceramic technique, Minton perfected new color formulas to suit local materials and industrial production. The name majolica was misapplied from Italian maiolica, also colorful but based on opaque tin glaze; Renaissance Italians often wrote "i" in the long form we read as "j."

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of art ceramics shifted to studio work and festive dining shifted from homes toward restaurants. Minton continued to make fine tableware, though artistic leadership was no longer an issue.



**Christopher Dresser, 1834-1904, designer,  
for Minton China Works  
Vase, shape 2695, 1886**

Porcelain, height 19.4 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Photo: museum)