The taste for *istoriato* in the history of European maiolica collecting

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Visitors to the maiolica room in the Bargello, or to the other great museums of Europe and North America, can easily get a wrong impression of the range of ceramic production in Renaissance Italy. While the day-to-day objects that formed the overwhelming majority of the production of any fifteenth- or sixteenth-century workshop were used until they broke and have rarely survived intact above ground, the elite production has been valued, kept carefully, and repaired when broken, so that it has survived in great quantities. It was, however, a very small proportion of production and it is easy to over-rate its significance to people of the time. Excavations, even in centres of elite production like Faenza, Urbino, or Cafaggiolo, have turned up very few fragments of *istoriato.* Among the drawings of maiolica designs provided by Cipriano Piccolpasso, a native of Castel Durante (a prime centre of *istoriato* production), in his *Tre Libri dell'arte del vasaio*, written and drawn about 1557, *istoriato* does not occur at all.

Because what we have is a historically-conditioned selection of what once existed, the history of collecting is an integral part of the study of Renaissance maiolica[1]. This is especially true in the case of the Bargello. The Medici collections once contained the greatest accumulation of sixteenth-century *istoriato* ever assembled and, even after dispersals (especially but not only the sale of two hundred pieces in 1797[2]), are still spectacular. Historical misconceptions have distorted our understanding of the Bargello pieces: the idea that at the core of its holdings is a service made for Guidubaldo II, Duke of Urbino, has been exposed as a myth by the rigorous scholarship of Marco Spallanzani[3].

Even though *istoriato* was a tiny proportion of actual production, it is still justifiably at the centre of scholarly and public interest in maiolica, not only because we have so much of it preserved and available to study and enjoy; but also because it provides a uniquely vivid window onto the cultural preoccupations of "The Renaissance at Home"[4]. Specifically, it gives an index of the ways in which Italian men and women of the sixteenth century absorbed the

growing interest in and knowledge of the literature of Classical Rome and Greece, which was and remains a defining feature of "Renaissance" culture.

The ceramic genre which we call *istoriato*, but which was in the Renaissance often called *a figure* or *figurato*[5], in which the whole or great part of the surface of a piece of pottery is decorated with figures or narrative subjects, developed in several centres in the years around 1500. In these same years maiolica began to be taken seriously as an art form by some of the great men and women of the time. The earliest princely commission which has come down to us bears the arms of Matthias Corvinus, the humanist King of Hungary, and his wife (since 1476) Beatrice of Aragon, daughter of the King of Naples. Four pieces of the set have survived, two of which have *istoriato* centres (fig. 1). This superlative service was almost certainly made by potters from Pesaro. A plausible hypothesis is that it was a gift from Beatrice's cousin, Camilla Sforza, regent of Pesaro between 1483 and 1489. Camilla took a particular interest in the promotion of the local artistic pottery industry: in 1486 she issued an edict to protect local producers, noting that: "*l'arte de li vasi de terra antiquamente se habbia exercitata in la dicta città et facto più bello lavoro che in terra de Italia la quale arte se fa in Pesaro in più e molte boteghe più che mai; et è laudato dicto lavoro da ciaschuno intendente per tuto Italia et fora de Italia*"[6].

How pleased Beatrice would have been with such a present is suggested by a letter written in 1486 by the Ferrarese ambassador in Budapest to Beatrice's sister, Eleanora, Duchess of Ferrara. He recommended that a gift which would please Queen Beatrice would be maiolica (in this case from Faenza, a competing maiolica centre, nearer to Ferrara): "*lavoreri di faienza di terra*", at which Beatrice "*ne farà più festa che se fusseno darzento*"[7].

This rhetorical comparison with silver, which occurs in various aristocratic contexts in the late fifteenth century, including a letter of 1490 from Lorenzo de' Medici to Galeotto Malatesta of Rimini, thanking him for a gift of pottery[8], was never literally true. At no point in the Renaissance was maiolica ever as expensive as silver[9], nor was it ever "too good to use". However, the comparison and the assumption that the viewer could apply artistic judgement to appreciate the novelty and the maker's skill, suggests how wealthy people were increasingly

interested in maiolica and regarded it as a worthy gift at the highest social levels. In this context, *istoriato* became, for about seventy years, the most prestigious kind of maiolica decoration and was commissioned by and for some of the grandest and most discriminating men, and often women, of the time. During this golden age, *istoriato*-painters like Francesco Xanto Avelli aspired to be seen as artists in their own right, adding elaborate inscriptions, seeking princely patronage, and signing and dating their work[10].

In November 1524 Isabella d'Este, widow of Francesco Gonzaga, Marquess of Mantua, received a present from her daughter Eleonora, Duchess of Urbino. In the letter sending it, Eleanora says:

> *Ho facto fare una credenza de vasi di terra, Quale la mando a v. Ex.tia per Baptista mio Credentiero pnte exibitore, per havere li maestri de questo nostro paese qualche nome di lavorar bene, et se piacerà alla ex.tia v. mi sera di contento, et lei se ne fara servire a Porto per essere cosa da villa...*[11]

The service Eleanora commissioned is undoubtedly the service with Isabella's arms and *imprese*, painted by Nicola da Urbino (fig. 2). We do not know how many pieces it originally consisted of, but twenty-three plates and one ewer survive[12]. Porto was Isabella's country villa outside Mantua; the evocative phrase *cosa da villa* suggests that Eleanora felt her mother would regard the service, which is painted predominantly with picturesque subjects from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as appropriate not so much to the official life of the court at Mantua (where decorum might have required the Marchesa to eat off silver) as to the more relaxed, informal, and feminine world of her villa; one recalls the cultured and gracious world of Castiglione's *Cortegiano*.

The letter suggests that Eleanora expected the service to be used, at least occasionally, but the surviving pieces show few signs of wear and Isabella may have treated them as something for special rather than regular use. The word *credenza* could mean both a service of pottery and a piece of furniture; one envisages pottery displayed on a sideboard, as was often done with silver; but no sixteenth-century painting showing *istoriato* maiolica displayed on a *credenza* has been

found. That eating off *istoriato* at this time could be reserved for special occasions is revealed by a letter of 1528, recording that Pope Clement VII used "*piatti di terra… depinti a figure*" only when dining with cardinals[13].

Nicola seems to have been given some liberty in selecting and treating the subjects of Isabella's service, but in subsequent decades, for the most ambitious and prestigious commissions, maiolica painters were often given specific programmes to follow. About 1547-8 Guidubaldo II, Duke of Urbino, commissioned from the painter Battista Franco a series of drawings for a service of Trojan War subjects, the outcome of which impressed Vasari:

> *Fece fare a Battista infiniti disegni, che, messi in opera in quella sorte di terra gentilissima sopra tutte l'altre d'Italia, riuscirono cosa rara… mandò il detto duca Guidobaldo una credenza doppia a Carlo Quinto imperadore, et una al cardinal Farnese, fratello di Vettoria sua consorte*[14].

By such diplomatic gifts the Dukes and Duchesses of Urbino promoted their local industry[15].

A few years later another elaborate Urbino service was made, painted in the Fontana workshop with a systematic series of subjects from the Punic Wars[16]. Some of the "Hannibal service" plates (fig. 3) have a patch in the sky where space was left for a *stemma* which was never carried out[17]. Who the original intended recipient of this service was is unknown, but at least part of it seems to have been owned by the Medici by 1588. Three trilobed basins, apparently inventoried in that year, are still in the Bargello[18], but some forty plates, most of which were apparently looted ("rescued" according to the perpetrator) from a palace of the Grand Duke in Florence during a fire in the late 17th or early 18th century, found their way to Switzerland and are now dispersed round the world.

Another large *istoriato* service, made about the same time and probably involving the same painter or painters, bears the arms of Salviati and seems also to have been made in response to a specific brief. Uniquely, the decoration consists of landscapes with few or no figures (fig. 4). The service may have been made for the marriage in 1559 of Jacopo di Alamanno Salviati to his cousin Isabella Salviati. Some forty pieces are now recorded, but its original extent was at least

178 pieces, as described in an inventory of the family palace in Florence made in 1583: *Terra d'Urbino tutta dipinta a paesi con l'arme de' Salviati.* The inventory lists four *boccaloni grandi*, four *rinfrescatoi,* twenty-four *piatti grandi,* twenty-four *scodelle ordinarie*, fifty *piattetti cupi*, forty-nine *piatti per dinanzi* and twenty-three *scodellini*[19].

People outside Italy admired this new art form and the Kings of Spain were not the only foreign potentates for whom *istoriato* maiolica was made. Services were made in Urbino in 1535, perhaps as diplomatic gifts, for two powerful men at the court of King François I of France, Anne de Montmorency[20] and Antoine Duprat[21]; while the rich merchant families of south Germany, especially the great commercial cities Augsburg and Nuremberg, ordered *istoriato* and other services with their arms[22].

In 1560-62, another spectacular diplomatic gift was made, a maiolica *credenza* based on drawings of the triumphs of Julius Caesar which Guidubaldo commissioned from Taddeo and Federigo Zuccaro. Guidubaldo sent this so-called "Spanish service" to King Philip II of Spain[23]. It was in a new style, pioneered by Orazio Fontana, in which *istoriato* was accompanied by meticulously-painted white-ground grotesques. Subsequently, white-ground grotesque superseded *istoriato* as the most prestigious and expensive form of Urbino maiolica.

Following the development from around 1540 of *bianco di Faenza*[24], foreign princes as well as wealthy Italians ordered large table services for use at court; imposing groups survive in Munich[25] and Dresden[26]. *Bianco* has rarely appealed to subsequent European collectors and, with the exception of the encyclopaedic accumulation at the Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza, is poorly represented in the world's great museums.

In the seventeenth century, partly because of the fashion for and widening availability of Chinese porcelain, there seems to have been little active collecting of maiolica through Europe, but Renaissance wares gradually shifted from the *guardaroba* to the *Kunstkammer* or onto walls. Some great art collectors, such as Queen Christina of Sweden (1616-1662)[27] and Cardinal Mazarin (1602-1661) at his palace in Paris[28], owned significant quantities.

Most of Mazarin's dishes are described in an inventory made after the Cardinal's death in 1661 as in gilt frames - some of them *à la chinoise.* Framing maiolica and hanging it on walls like pictures may be seen as a symbolic shift from regarding it as old tableware to classifying it with paintings and other works of art[29]. The earliest example of framing maiolica I have found is from a less exalted milieu: a Palermo priest in 1658 had two Urbino *istoriato* maiolica dishes in gilded frames[30]. For the following 150 years maiolica was frequently framed - and sometimes cut down to fit into frames.

From around 1700, collecting interest in maiolica began to grow in northern Europe. This was focused on *istoriato*, partly because it was widely maintained that Raphael and other artists had painted maiolica: the phrase "Raphael ware" was in general use from the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth. In May 1639, the English sculptor Nicholas Stone visited Loreto and recorded: "in the apothecary house thaire we saw divers rara potts or vases painted by the desine of Raphyel of Urbino, very curious"[31]. The English traveller Richard Lassels a few years later made a more explicit comment at Loreto - "Those famous potts which were painted by Raphael Urbin's own hand, and therefor judged by virtuosi to be of singular valew. Wittness those four onely of the four Evangelists, for which the last king of France offered as many and as great potts of pure gold. All these potts were given by a Duke of Urbin." This presumably reflects the patter of tourist guides[32].

The attribution of maiolica-painting to Raphael and other painters was particularly dear to those with maiolica to sell. The catalogue of *Signor Sterbini's Curious Collection... Lately brought from Rome, Consisting of... his exceeding fine Pieces of Roman Earthen Vases, Urn's, Dishes Plates, and Cisterns; painted by Raphael and Julio Romano, for Side-Boards, &c, in the highest and most magnificent Tast...*, a collection assembled by the Roman dealer Bernardo Sterbini, sold in London in 1733, contained over 200 pieces of maiolica, such as:

> Three Plates with Ornaments by Jo. d'Udine.
>
> Two large Dishes by Annabal Carracci.
>
> A Bath by Julio Romano, and the Graces by Raphael.

> Anphirus and his Wife, and Methabus and Camilla by Raphael.
>
> Mutius Scaevola and a History by Julio Clovio.
>
> A large and beautiful Dish, with the Nativity by Raphael, from which Mark Antonio's print is taken[33].

At the sale in London in 1740 of the collections of the painter Charles Jarvis, included under the title "Antique Enamel'd Roman Ware, painted by Raphael and his disciples" was maiolica variously attributed to Raphael, "Polydore", "Baroccio", and "Guido"[34]. A sale of *A Genuine and Capital Collection of Roman Earthenware* in London in 1757 included *"Dishes, Plates, Ewers, &c. Painted by Raphael, Benvenuto Garofalo, Julio Romano, Vasari, Paci, Roso, Perino del Vaga and others*"[35].

Sometimes enterprising dealers added spurious inscriptions to genuine wares to encourage buyers to think that they had been painted by known artists. The plate in figs 5 and 6[36], has a spurious inscription, perhaps added about 1700, stating it to have been painted by Vasari: *Per il magnifico M. Ottaviano de Medeci Giorgio Vasari fe 1530 in Urbino n. 8.*

The suggestion that Raphael had been directly involved in pottery decoration did not go undisputed. When Carlo Cesare Malvasia in his *Felsina Pittrice*, published in 1678, referred to Raphael disparagingly as *boccalaio urbinate*, a furious row ensued and Malvasia had to have the offending page reprinted[37]. In his *Voyage en Italie* (1691), François Maximilien Misson stormed that in Italy "no sooner is a dish smeared with yellow and blue, than *voilà*, it was painted by Raphael!"[38]. The French drawings connoisseur Pierre-Jean Mariette, in introducing twenty-eight pieces of maiolica (including several from the Montmorency service) from the collection of Pierre and Louis-François Crozat, sold in Paris in 1750, wrote with careful balance:

> The facts that the city of Urbino gave birth to Raphael, and that the pottery workshop established there was run for a long period by a relative of this great painter, have been enough to give rise to the confident assertion that he worked in the pottery in his youth; and on this supposition these works have acquired a high reputation. They merit it in

> some respects - the colours that embellish them have brilliance and the ground is not bad - but it does too much injustice to Raphael to put to his account painting which is as defective in drawing as that on these vessels. It is true that they sometimes represent subjects incontestably of his invention, but it is easy to see that they were not executed by him, but merely after some of his engravings. There is no need to give these faïences more than their due; but that does not prevent their having been valued, nor is it any reason they should not be valued now. They were in their time what our fine porcelains are now. They adorned the sideboards of kings and the greatest lords, and nowadays they may still have a place in the best collections[39].

The Pesarese scholar Giambattista Passeri (1694-1780), a few years later, also regarded it as a vulgar error that Raphael had himself painted maiolica[40].

Some of the oldest surviving museum collections were formed by German princes. Around 1700 over a thousand pieces of sixteenth-century maiolica were assembled by Duke Anton-Ulrich of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel; this accumulation, still virtually intact in the museum at Braunschweig, is one of the largest maiolica collections in the world[41]. An inventory dated 1721 of the Saxon royal collections at Dresden includes a quantity of maiolica, some of which is still preserved at Schloss Pillnitz[42]. Another large collection was formed by the Duke of Württemberg around 1770 and is now in Ludwigsburg[43]. The concentration of these old German collections on mid-sixteenth-century *istoriato* from Urbino, Pesaro, and Venice, probably reflects the taste and activity of Augsburg and Nuremberg merchants in the sixteenth century; it is in contrast to later-formed and more wide-ranging German collections, such as the museums in Berlin and Hamburg;.

Of greater artistic quality than any of these was the maiolica acquired in the early eighteenth century by the English connoisseur Sir Andrew Fountaine (1676-1753). This was kept at Narford Hall in Norfolk, where it was displayed in a special room (fig. 7.) and augmented by successive generations of his family. An inventory of 1835 stated that "The collection here was bought or exchanged for something else by Sr. Andrew Fountaine from Cosmo the 3d. Grand Duke of Tuscany, who parted with as much as he could of the collection made by Lorenzo di Medicis, Duke of Urbino, for the Royal collection at Florence"[44]. No archival evidence has been

found to confirm that the Fountaine collection was formed out of the Grand-Ducal collection in Florence, but many of the wares it contained, both *istoriato* and grotesque-decorated, were similar in to the collections now in the Bargello, so the story is plausible. Over 250 pieces of maiolica from the Fountaine collection, together with French Renaissance pottery and enamels, were dispersed in a sale in London in 1884[45].

Another spectacular English collection apparently formed in Florence was the collection of the Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos at Stowe, north of London. Fig. 8 shows *istoriato* maiolica fixed to a wall in an arched recess in a window bay in the Duchess's Drawing Room at Stowe, about 1845[46]. The Dukes were among the wealthiest landowners in England but their notorious extravagance led to a bankruptcy sale in 1848[47]. The sale contained over 170 pieces of "Majolica or Raffaelle ware" and the sale catalogue provided a confused indication of what was generally known about it in England at the time, as well as a suggestive indication of the source of the purchases made by the first Duke (1776-1839):

> "This beautiful *materiel*, which throughout the Continent is known as Faenza Ware… is considered one of the most precious artistic relics of that celebrated age. The ware itself is rather a common sort of potter: its celebrity arises from the fact of Raffaelle having contributed the aid of his pencil to its decoration. It is said that the great painter fell in love with the daughter of a potter; and to gain her affections, condescended to paint her father's earthenware[48]…
>
> The establishment of this fine taste in Urbino was in a great measure owing to the Duke Guidobaldo. He did not allow the painters of these vases to copy their own designs, but obliged them to execute those of the first artists, and particularly those of Raffaelle. Hence these articles are commonly known in Italy by the name of Raffaelle Ware…
>
> A large collection of vases of this kind passed into the hands of the Grand Duke of Florence, in common with other things inherited from the Duke of Urbino and specimens of them are to be seen in the Ducal Gallery, and indeed in all parts of Italy. The greater part of the collection at Stowe was purchased by the late Duke of Buckingham in Florence – to use the deceased nobleman's own words – `for an old song'. Whether this was intended to signify fifty or five hundred pounds may be

considered problematical, when the munificence of his Grace's character as a collector is remembered."[49]

Among the objects sold in the 1848 sale was a plate (figs 9, 10) described in the catalogue as "An interior, with an artist painting the Majolica Ware", which was sold to the London dealer Forrest and later passed into one of the best of nineteenth-century collections, that of Ralph Bernal, who died in 1854. At the sale after Bernal's death[50] the plate was catalogued more romanticaly as "Raffaelle himself and La Fornarina seated in the studio of an artist who is occupied in painting a plate". So described, it fetched £120 and was bought by the Museum at Marlborough House, a new institution dedicated to displaying examples of good design for the benefit of British industry, which was soon to move to South Kensington and was in 1899 renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum[51]. This plate, painted by the artist "Jacopo" at Cafaggiolo about 1510, was doubtless one of the pieces acquired by the Duke in Florence, perhaps on his visit to the city (which he did not wholly enjoy) in May-June 1829. It and some other pieces at Stowe must have been among the two hundred or so pieces of maiolica removed from the Grand-Ducal collections and sold at auction to the Florentine dealer Ciampolini on 20 May 1797. It had been listed in the *Inventario Generale della Real Galleria* in 1784:

Un tondino… in fondo turchino entrovi un Giovane sedente, che dipinge un piatto, e due figure, che osservano avanti di lui. Con cornice intagliata in parte, e dorata[52].

By 1848 the plate had been taken out of its frame.

In the years following the end of the Napoleonic wars, maiolica attracted more intensive interest in France and England and prices rose[53]. Public museums began to take a mutually competitive interest: the Louvre bought the Durand collection in 1825 and the Royal Museum in Berlin bought the fine collection of Bartholdy, Prussian consul in Rome, in 1828[54]. In Italy a few institutional collections became public museums: items belonging to the *Museo delle antichità della regia Università di Bologna* were put on display in 1810 and formed the basis of what is now the Museo Civico Medievale in that city[55]; while the beautiful group of *istoriato* assembled by the Fondazione dei Laici in Arezzo is now part of the Museo Statale d'Arte Medioevale e Moderna there[56]. The private collections of Teodoro Correr (1750-1830)[57] and Domenico Mazza (1753-1847)[58] became museums in Venice and Pesaro, but the extensive Delsette[59] and Pasolini[60] collections were dispersed. In 1884 the collection made in Paris by Alexander

Basilewsky was acquired for the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, forming the backbone of what is now one of the world's greatest collections[61].

Many Italians with inherited collections of maiolica were unable to resist the prices offered by French and English dealers: as early as 1851, the young British Museum curator Augustus Franks reported to his Trustees that "the whole of Italy has been so ransacked by foreign dealers that it is useless to expect any number of specimens to be discovered in that country"[62].

Rich English collectors of the Victorian era collected sixteenth-century maiolica with unprecedented enthusiasm and by 1860 much of the finest maiolica in existence had found its way to London[63]. The two national museums, the British Museum and what is now the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington, both began actively to collect maiolica in the early 1850s[64]. They both bought extensively at the Bernal sale in 1855 and after 1856 South Kensington acquired the collection assembled in the 1830s by Jules Soulages of Toulouse[65]. In this collecting frenzy, *istoriato* was a prime focus.

As connoisseurship developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, increasing value was put on the relatively rare *istoriato* of the early sixteenth century. Among the great Paris connoisseur-dealers of the time were Jean-Baptise Carrand and his son Louis. It is a sign of the not only of the sophisticated taste of the Carrands but more generally of the aesthetic values of the later nineteenth century that the three most beautiful examples of early-sixteenth-century *istoriato* in the Bargello[66] come not from the Medici collections but from the bequest (made *in spregio ai repubblicani e revoluzionari francesi*) of Louis Carrand on his death in 1888[67].

Another passion of Victorian collectors was the lustred *istoriato* made in the workshop of Maestro Giorgio in Gubbio. The plate in figs 11 and 12 had belonged to Giambattista Passeri in the eighteenth century; he wrote of:

> *In Pesaro appresso di me un gran piatto con due uomini, che abbracciano due donne con una vecchia in mezzo, tutte figure quasi nude con città a' piede di un monte, che*

forse è Gubbio. Dietro in color rosso è dipinto un boccaletto all'uso antico e sotto M.G. 1525[68].

After belonging to Ralph Bernal, it was acquired for £142 at his sale in 1855 for the Fountaine collection; and in the still rising market at the Fountaine sale in 1884 it fetched the considerable hammer price of £780. As an indication of the place of maiolica in the collecting world of Victorian England, these prices may be compared with the £240 paid by London's National Gallery in 1861 for one of the greatest of all fifteenth-century paintings, Piero Della Francesca's *Baptism.* The buyer of the plate in 1884, the dynamic collector George Salting, whose wealth was based on commodity-trading in Australia, bequeathed his vast collections to the Victoria and Albert Museum after his death in 1909[69].

Although the influential Goethe had acquired, particularly at the Derschau sale in 1825, a substantial collection, mainly of Urbino *istoriato*[70], it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that German private collectors again became a force in the international market[71]. When they did, under the potent influence of Wilhelm von Bode (1845-1929), Director of the Berlin Museums, collectors such as Adolf von Beckerath and Alfred Pringsheim displayed a shift of taste away from High Renaissance wares towards earlier (mainly fifteenth-century) wares. This fashion for more "primitive" wares was promoted around 1900 by artists like the English painters Henry Wallis[72] and Charles Fairfax Murray[73] and by dealers like Stefano Bardini of Florence and Alessandro Imbert of Rome[74].

Of the great private collections formed in Europe between the mid-nineteenth century and the First World War, some passed into museums, but many others were dispersed[75]. From the sales of these great British, French, and German collections, new collections were formed in the twentieth century, with American collectors dominating the market and North American museums in the USA in due course benefiting[76].

After the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and with collectors, influenced by Modernist aesthetics, shunning elaborate decoration, prices for maiolica in general and for *istoriato* in particular, fell; it remained until the 1970s relatively much cheaper than in the nineteenth century. In the third

volume of his monumental history of the art market, published in 1970, the English collector Gerald Reitlinger reflected previous decades when he wrote that "Less and less does maiolica appear to be in the smart international taste of the day"[77].

Although the entire contents of all but the very greatest of the world's best collections of maiolica might still fetch only the price of a couple of medium-sized Jackson Pollocks or Klimts, and although it seems unlikely that the high relative position of maiolica in the nineteenth-century art market will ever be recovered, the last forty years have in some degree proved Reitlinger wrong. There has been a revival in the international market for maiolica; in 2009 for the first time a piece of Italian Renaissance pottery fetched a million euros at auction.

For four centuries, maiolica, as a portable art form, tended to leave Italy into the hands of eager collectors in other countries. The last forty years have seen a reversal of this trend. Italian collectors and dealers with passion and knowledge have become prominent in the international sale-rooms and successfully repatriated many fine examples. Italian museums have reaped some fruits of this private collecting: the Contini Bonacossi collection passed to the Uffizi in 1955[78] and the De Ciccio collection went to Capodimonte in 1958[79], while the bequests of two Florentine friends, Galeazzo Cora and Angiolo Fanfani, to the Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza, in 1983 and 1989, deepened the Renaissance collections of that great centre of maiolica scholarship to rival in quality as well as breadth those of the finest collections of the world[80]. This century, parts of two recently-formed Italian private collections were acquired by the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Perugia, creating the first new world-class publicly-accessible collection of maiolica in Italy in living memory[81]. It may be hoped that in the future Italian museums will reap the benefit of this passionate *collezionismo.*

Illustration captions

1. Plate from the Corvinus service. Probably Pesaro, *c.*1483-9. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Fletcher Fund, 46.85.30.
2. Plate from the service made for Isabella d'Este, painted by Nicola da Urbino, Urbino 1524. Hockemeyer collection, Bremen.
3. Large plate from the Hannibal service. Urbino, Fontana workshop, *c.*1550-60. Private collection (Christie's, London, 24 May 2011, lot 34).
4. Large plate from the Salviati service, with a landscae. Urbino, Fontana workshop, perhaps 1559. Private collection (Christie's, London, 5 July 2004, lot 238).
5. Plate, *Achilles puts on his armour*, the central design after Battista Franco. Urbino, perhaps Fontana workshop, *c.*1555-60. British Museum, London (P and E, 1855,1201.79)
6. Back of fig 5, with a spurious later inscription attributing the painting to Vasari.
7. Photograph of part of the Fountaine collection, displayed at Narford Hall, before 1884. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
8. Watercolour of the Duchess's Drawing room at Stowe, *c.*1845; attributed to Joseph Nash (1809-78). Folkestone Library and History Resource Centre, Kent County Council. *Istoriato* maiolica from the collection of the Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos is fixed to the wall by the window.
9. Plate, *A maiolica painter at work with two clients.* Cafaggiolo, painted by "Jacopo", *c.*1510. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (bought at the Bernal sale, 1855, no. 1717-1855)
10. Back of fig. 9.
11. Lustred plate, *An Allegory of Envy*. Gubbio, workshop of Maestro Giorgio Andreoli, 1525. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Salting Bequest, no. C2200-1910).
12. Back of fig. 11.

NOTES

[1] Some of the material in the present essay is drawn from Wilson 2007, where more detailed references on some aspects are given. A concise general history of maiolica collecting in Europe is in Norman 1976, pp. 19-31; also the cogent notes in Ballardini 1933-38, I, pp. 33-35, Ravanelli Guidotti 2003, and Ravanelli Guidotti 2010. For the wider history of collecting and prices see also Reitlinger 1961-70, especially II, pp. 500-7, and III, pp. 570-3.

[2] Spallanzani 2009.

[3] Spallanzani 1979; Spallanzani 1994; Spallanzani 2010.

[4] Ajmar Wollheim and Dennis 2006; Syson and Thornton 2001.

[5] Examples of the terminology in the sixteenth century are: *a figure* (Spallanzani 1994, pp. 129, 181); *a storie* (Spallanzani 1994, pp. 187, 191); *figurati* (Negroni 1998, p. 112); *historiati* (Negroni 1998, p. 114).

[6] Berardi 1984, p. 40

[7] Wilson 1999, p. 6 and note 16.

[8.] Fusco and Corti 2006, p. 314, doc. 134, for a transcript of this document.

[9] In 1525 a Rome goldsmith charged (Holman 1997, p. 95) 30 ducats for making a large silver salt on a design by Giulio Romano, rather more than the 25 scudi quoted in correspondence of 1530 for a hundred pieces of Urbino maiolica *veramente excellentisimi et dipinti a paesi, fabuli e historie sopra tutta bellezza a gli occhi miei* (letters from Ioanfrancesco alias Il Poeta, to Gianjacopo Calandra, secretary to Federico Duke of Mantua, Vitaletti 1912, p. 7-8; quoted by Mallet 1981, p. 167). For the later sixteenth century, Spallanzani 1994, p. 134, estimates that a silver plate cost about the same as 120-180 plates of *bianco di Faenza.*

[10] Mallet 1987.

[11.] Quoted from Palvarini Gobio Casali 1987, p. 211.

[12.] For the service see Thornton and Wilson 2009, pp. 230-6. The plate here reproduced as fig. 2 is a previously unrecorded piece, which was sold at Christie,s, Paris, 17 December 2009, 1ot 50.

[13.] Spallanzani 1994, p. 129, on the use at table by the Medici of different kinds of ceramics; cf. Mallet and Dreier 1998, pp. 36-37; Thornton and Wilson 2009, no. 286.

[14] Vasari 1966-97, 5, p. 465.

[15] Wilson 2004.

[16] Drey 1991; Thornton and Wilson 2009, nos 192-3.

[17] Alternatively, it may be that a *stemma was* painted but scraped away and repainted before second firing.

[18] Conti 1971, nos 2, 8, 10. Spallanzani 1994, p. 82, suggests that these are among the four *infrescatoi a triangolo* mentioned in a Medici inventory of 1588.

[19] Brody 2000. There would seem to have been twenty-four settings. It is possible that there were originally twenty-four plates too in Isabella d'Este's service. An Urbino inventory of 1626-7 listed twenty-four *pezzi di maiolica d'Urbino historiata con figure e prospettive di diverse sorti,* which might be Isabella's service – Thornton and Wilson 2009, p. 232. For the evidence that Renaissance tableware was often provided in sets of six or twelve, or in multiples of these numbers, see Liefkes in Ajmar-Wollheim and Dennis 2006, p. 258.

[20] Crépin-Leblond and Ennès 1995., pp. 54-63; Thornton and Wilson 2009, no. 174.

[21] Crépin-Leblond and Ennès 1995, pp. 64-7.

[22] Crépin-Leblond and Ennès 1995, pp. 68-80; Szczepanek 2004; Lessmann 2004.

[23] Gere 1963; for subsequent literature, see Thornton and Wilson 2009, no. 239.

[24] Ravanelli Guidotti 1996 is a comprehensive account of *Bianco di Faenza*; also De Pompeis 2010..

[25.] For the service commissioned *c.*1576 by Albrecht V, Duke of Bavaria, see Szczepanek 2009.

[26.] For the service made for Johann Georg I, Elector of Saxony, between 1619 and 1637, see Richter 2006, nos 58-78.

[27.] For Queen Christina's maiolica, described in an inventory of 1653, see Tervarent 1957; Dahlbäck Lutteman 1981. It may have been part of war booty from Prague. While some of the maiolica now in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, may have belonged to Queen Christina, it is not known which pieces. The character of the present Stockholm collection, dominated by spectacular examples of Fontana-type grotesque-painting, resembles that of Medici collection in the Bargello.

[28.] Mazarin Inventory 2004, prints the inventory. The 32 *platz de fayence trouvez en un des Chambres aux tableaux* are listed, including one *representant Bourbon qui assiège Rome, ayant de diamètre un pied trois poulces, garny de sa bordure doré...*, which may possibly be the large plate now in the Lehman Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rasmussen 1989, no. 97; if so the somewhat smaller diameter given in the inventory may reflect the fact that the edge was covered by the frame.

[29]. Higgott 2003.

[30]. Mazzola 1993, p. 11: *un piatto grande colorito di stagno d'Urbino con la historia di Mutio ingastato in legno con cornice dorata* and *un piatto mezano colorito di stagno d'Urbino d'un sacrificio di Gentili ingastato in legno con cornici dorata.*

[31]. *The Walpole Society* 7 (1919), p. 180.

[32]. Chaney 1985, p. 215. In 1650, the Englsih diarist John Evelyn saw in the Lintläer collection in Paris "many Vasas designd by Raphael". Compare Ballardini 1933-8, I, p. 33.

[33.] Lugt 421. Sold at Mr Cock's Room, Covent Garden, 13-15 March 1733. For Sterbini, see Thornton and Wilson 2009, pp. 5-6.

[34.] *Catalogue of the most Valuable Collection of Pictures, Prints, and Drawings late of Charles Jarvis, Esq; deceased; Principal Painter to their Majesties King George I. and II... likewise... his curious Albano enamel'd Ware, in Vases, Ewers, Cisterns, Dishes, Plates, &c, painted by Raphael and his Disciples*, sold London ("at his late Dwelling-House, in Cleveland Court, St. James's"), 11 March 1740; Lugt 498. See Norman 1976, pp. 22-23.

[35] Mr Langford's Room, London, 17-18 March 1757, Lugt 950; this may be the same as Lugt 949, which Lugt states to be the collection of Lord Coleraine. At least one item from this sale, day 2, lot 58 "Sarmonetta. Abraham washing the Angel's Feet", can be identified; it is the plate now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Wilson 2004b, figs 52, 53), with a spurious inscription, *Sarmoneta F.* (for Girolamo Sicciolante da Sarmoneta).

[36] Thornton and Wilson 2009, no. 233; it probably belonged to Princess Amelia (1711-1786), daughter of King George II.

[37.] Malvasia 1678, I, p. 471. Compare the tirade by Vincenzo Vittoria (1679, printed in Vittoria 1703, pp. 36-37); also Zanotti 1705, p. 35. Compare also the edition of Malvasia published in Bologna in 1841, I, p. 337, where further details of this miniature *cause célèbre* are recounted.

[38.] Quoted from Ballardini 1933-8, I, p. 33, note 13.

[39.] Crozat Sale 1750, pp. 43-44: *Fayences faites en Italie au commencement du seiziéme siécle par Guido Durantino de la ville d'Urbin. La ville d'Urbin ayant donné naissance à Raphaël, & la Fabrique de Fayences qui y étoit établie, ayant été gouvernée pendant longtems par un des parens de ce grand Peintre, il n'en a pas fallu davantage pour faire dire avec assurance qu'il y avoit travaillé dans sa jeunesse; & sur cette supposition, ces Ouvrages ont acquis une assez grande considération. Ils le méritent à quelques égards; les Emaux qui les embellissent, ont de l'éclat; l'aprêt n'en est pas mauvais, mais c'est faire trop de tort à Raphaël que de mettre sur son compte des Peintures qui péchent autant que celles-ci par le Dessein. Aussi est-il vrai que si elles représentent quelquefois des sujets dont on ne peut lui contester l'invention, il est facile de s'appercevoir qu'elles ont été exécutées non par lui, mais seulement d'après quelques-unes de ses Estampes. Il ne faut donc pas donner à ces Fayences plus qu'il ne leur appartient; mais cela n'empêche pas qu'elles n'ayent été & qu'elles ne doivent être encore estimées. Elles ont été dans leur tems ce que sont aujourd'hui nos belles Porcelaines. Les Buffets des Rois & des plus grands Seigneurs en étoient chargés, & encore aujourdhui elles peuvent obtenir une place dans les meilleurs Cabinets.*

[40.] Passeri in Vanzolini 1879, I, pp. 39, 47, 54-55.

[41.] Lessmann 1979, pp. 11-19

[42.] Richter 2006.

[43.] Hesse 2004.

[44.] Moore 1988; Fountaine Sale 1884. See further Spallanzani 1994, p. 19.

[45.] For other eighteenth- century English collections, see Norman 1976, pp. 26-30. For Horace Walpole's ceramics at his celebrated Gothic Villa at Strawberry Hill, see Wilson 2009.

[46] Cornforth 1978, fig. 33. I thank Rebecca Stockley of Folkestone Library for the photograph.

[47] Whitfield 1973.

[48] This story, as Reino Liefkes has noted, seems to derive from fiction, a German novel by Achim von Arnim, *Raphael und seine Nachbarinnen* (1824); see von Arnim 1983.

[49] Forster 1848, p. 4. The Duke's purchases may have been made on his visit to Florence in May-June 1829: the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, which mentions no previous visit of his to Italy, states that he on this trip "proceeded to indulge his taste for collecting pictures and sundry artefacts". However, his travel diary for 1827-9 (Grenville 1862) makes no mention of purchasing maiolica.

[50] Wilson 1985; Thornton and Wilson 2009, pp. 10-11.

[51] Rackham 1940, no. 307.

[52] Conti 1969, p. 73, no. 387; see Spallanzani 2010.

[53]. The well-informed J.C. Robinson (1856, p. iv) maintained in 1856 that prices for maiolica had risen twentyfold in the previous five years.

54. Netzer 2004.

[55]. Ravanelli Guidotti 1985, pp. 17-23.

[56]. Fuchs 1993, pp. 9-15.

[57.] Romanelli *et al*. 1986.

[58.] Giardini 1996; or the website *www.museicivicipesaro.it*.

[59.] Frati 1844.

[60.] Frati 1852; Ballardini 1928; Thornton 2003; Royer 2003; Ravanelli Guidotti 2010, pp. 28-33. For Frati, Ravaneli Guidotti 2010b.

[61]. Kryzanovskaya 1990; Ivanova 2003; Ravanelli Guidotti 2003.

[62] Thornton and Wilson 2009, p. 9.

[63.] Numerous masterpieces from private collections were exhibited at South Kensington in 1862 and described by Robinson in the catalogue (Robinson 1863). Ballardini's assessment in 1933 of the supremacy of the London collections (Ballardini 1933-8, I, p. 10: *Non credo esagerato pensare che a Londra soltanto siano raccolti tanti pezzi, e sani e belli, quanti, forse, in tutti gli altri paesi insieme, purtroppo compresa l'Italia*) was surely an exaggeration by 1933, but may well have been true sixty years before.

[64.] Wilson 1985; Thornton and Wilson 2009, pp. 5-23.

[65.] Robinson 1856.

[66] Conti 1971, nos 183, 184, 185; Ecouen 2011, nos 39, 44, 85.

[67] Ravanelli Guidotti 1989.

[68] Passeri in Vanzolini 1879, I, p. 43.

[69] Rackham 1940, no.674.

[70.] Goethe's collection is preserved and partly displayed in the cases he had built for it in the Goethe-Nationalmuseum, Weimar. A catalogue of the collection by Johanna Lessmann is hoped-for soon.

[71.] Among the principal German collectors were Hainauer, Zschille, Emden, Beckerath, and Pringsheim. See Wilson in Falke 1994, III, p. 83. German museums have been less fortunate than those of some other countries in receiving major gifts from the great collectors of this period.

[72]. Wilson 2002b.

[73]. Tucker 2002.

[74]. Riccetti 2010.

[75] See the list and references in Wilson 2007, p. 22.

[76] Some are listed in Wilson, 2007, pp. 22-3.

[77] Reitlinger 1963-70, III, p. 570.

[78]. Marini 2003.

[79.] Liverani 1958; Arbace 1991.

[80.] Bojani *et al.* 1985; Ravanelli Guidotti 1990.

[81] Wilson and Sani 2006-7.