



Contemporary maiolica
by Mary Elisabeth Salisbury

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
Montana State University
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Abstract:

In the 1970's I was seduced by a Japanese pot. Like many people working in clay, I was first drawn to the ceramics of Japan and China. The smooth, serene aesthetic influenced my work for many years. However, as my work progressed I realized that, while I admired the Eastern pots and still carry the influences of the style and techniques, there was no personal historical reference for me. In investigating the ceramic history of Europe, I found maiolica. Traditional maiolica is a lead glazed earthenware with an opaque tin oxide surface that creates a white background for the potter/painter to embellish. My present work in clay involves the exploration and reinterpretation of traditional maiolica techniques. I want the viewer to be intimate with my work: both color and whimsical imagery encourage this interaction.

I am a collector of color and shape. Having been raised in Alaska where the contrast between light (23 hours per day in June) and darkness (21 hours per day in December) is immense, I reacted to the cold, dark, white winters by surrounding myself with color. I devoted my summers to growing plants and drying flowers that festooned my environment with color and made my house a nest of objects. The plethora of objects that now occupy my home and studio include rocks, toys, shells, pots, books, and silly salt and pepper shakers - all pieces of my life. Many of these things have a humorous, droll or sardonic edge.

The functional aspect of a vessel is vitally important to me. I have altered the maiolica glaze I use so that it does not contain lead which is toxic. This affords greater functionality of my ware and still provides for a broad range of color that lies within the earthenware temperature range. I continue to expand my personal vocabulary of form and ornamentation within the boundaries of functional ware.

When my pots are wet I push them around to alter the surface profiles. Sometimes I add clay leaves or branch forms or carve into the surface to accentuate specific shapes. These manipulations, illustrated in the series of platters, allow me to integrate the form of the pot with the painted glaze surface. This integration of form and surface is far more interesting to me than throwing production ware covered with stagnant decoration.

As I work with clay I think of the clay surface as skin. The surface stretches as my fingers poke and prod the clay to define the growing internal volume. The parts of the vessel, the handles, lips and feet, are exaggerated to animate the forms. Bulging bellies and jaunty spouts characterize the teapot series. I see these pots as individual personalities, yet united in their themes and functions.

When applying color and motif, I respond to objects that decorate my home and studio. My glaze palette creates an engaging surface by accentuating the twists and natural syncopations that are part of these pots.

My pots can be humorous, sensual or serious. I want my pots not only to attract the interest of the viewer, but also to do their jobs: pour, contain, serve and stand securely. The challenge of incorporating the many variables of form into a vessel that also functions, is what keeps me searching

for that perfect pot. I want my pots to be fondled, picked up, caressed and still make food look good.

CONTEMPORARY MAIOLICA

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Fine Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

May 1992

N378
Sa39

APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Mary Elisabeth Salisbury

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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Signature Mary Elisabeth Salih
Date 11 May 1972

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

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LIST OF SLIDES

1. Eggplants on Yellow
14"D x 3"H
earthenware, 1992
front view
2. Eggplants on Yellow
14"D x 3"H
earthenware
back view
3. Grape Teapot
13"H x 8"W x 6 1/2"D
earthenware, 1992
4. Eggplant Teapot
12"H x 9"W x 6 1/2"D
earthenware, 1992
5. Yellow Wax Bean Teapot
14"H x 10"W x 8"D
earthenware, 1992
6. Persimmon Teapot
12"H x 10 1/2"H x 8 1/2"D
earthenware, 1992
7. Violet Fruit Teapot
12"H x 12"W x 6"D
earthenware, 1992
8. Wisteria Teapot
11"H x 7 1/2"W x 5 1/2"D
earthenware, 1992
9. Banana Platter
15"D x 2"H, front
earthenware, 1992
10. Banana Platter
back view
11. Leaf Platter
15 1/2"D x 3 1/2"H
earthenware, 1992

12. Avocado Platter
16"D x 4"H
earthenware, 1992
13. Banana Teapot
13"H x 10"W x 8"D
earthenware, 1992

5-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware



Yellow Bean Teapot
14"H X 10"W X 8"D

4-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware



Eggplant Teapot
12"H X 9"W X 6.5"D

3-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware



Grape Teapot
13"H X 8"W X 6.5"D

Eggplants on yellow
14" dia. X 3" high



2-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware, back

Eggplants on yellow
14" dia. X 3" high



1-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware, front

10-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware, back



Banana Platter
15" dia. X 2" high

9-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware, front



Banana Platter
15" dia. X 2" high

8-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware



Wisteria Teapot
11"H X 7.5"W X 5.5"

7-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware



Violet Fruit Teapot
12"H X 12"W X 6"D

6-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware



Persimmon Teapot
12"Hx10.5"Wx8.5"D

13-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware



Banana Teapot
13"Hx10"Wx8"D 3333

Avacado Platter
16" dia. X 4" High



12-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware

11-L.Salisbury 1992
earthenware



Leaf Platter
15.5" dia. X 3.5"















