

Salutation from Timothy Wilson

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Guest Curator of the exhibition *TIN GLAZING AND IMAGE CULTURE*.

The MAK's Majolica Collection in Historical Context

Greetings from Oxford to Vienna! I am very sorry that a long-planned family gathering has made it impossible for me to join you.

It has been a great privilege and pleasure for me to work on this exhibition. The MAK holds the most important collection of Italian majolica in the world to have remained in great part unstudied and unpublished. The collection assembled by the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry (today's MAK) in the later nineteenth century, with the intention of providing models for art and industry, is wonderfully complemented by three older historic assemblages: from the Habsburg Kunstkammer, from Stift Neukloster, and from the Olbizzi collection from Catajo near Padua. The Vienna collections now have some unique strengths: for example, the best-documented and most dramatically forceful of Renaissance majolica-painters, Francesco Durantino, and the most interesting majolica-painter of the baroque period, Ippolito Rombaldoni, are both more spectacularly represented in Vienna than anywhere else in the world. In this exhibition, we have been able to complement the Vienna collections with majolica from other Austrian museums and, in particular, with a series of Renaissance masterpieces from the Hockemeyer collection in Bremen, generously lent by the Hockemeyer family; these have never been publicly displayed together before.

With this wonderful support, my good friend Rainald Franz and I have been able to put together here, with the valuable collaboration of Alena Volk and other colleagues, what is by far the best and most comprehensive display of Italian majolica ever seen in Austria.

This is not the place for a lecture on majolica in general, but I would ask you to bear in mind, when viewing this exhibition, of two claims that Italian Renaissance majolica has on our attention. First, more than other forms of Renaissance painting, majolica has preserved its original colouring, fired and fixed in the kiln, and gives us a vivid idea of the colourfulness of other forms of Renaissance art of which the colours have faded. Secondly, we have in *istoriato*-painting an extraordinary range of subjects, from contemporary life, love, and politics to ancient history and myth; this is a richer and more intimate range of subject matter than any paintings gallery can offer and gives us a real finger on the pulse

of sixteenth-century life and an insight into how the men and women of Renaissance Italy perceived the culture and heritage of antiquity. For this reason, the arrangement of this exhibition is partly art-historical and partly thematic.

I must apologize here that the catalogue is not ready for this opening. This is entirely due to COVID. For month after month since the first lock-down I have been hoping to come to Vienna to complete work on the cataloguing and month after month the pandemic has rendered this impossible. However, thanks to generous support from the Ceramica-Stiftung of Basel, of the Dorotheum here in Vienna, and of my friend Sam Fogg in London, the catalogue will be finished soon and published by arnoldsche Art Publishers. I am confident it will be a beautiful book: it will present the exhibition as it would have been in its most perfect form and include a few items which, for various reasons, it has not been possible to put on display here.

I regret not being with you, but hope to come to Vienna in May. For now, I hope you will appreciate this unprecedented opportunity to see a wide range of some of the most brilliantly-coloured and culturally-revealing works of Renaissance art to be seen anywhere. Above all, I hope they will give visitors pleasure.