



BAY HIPSLEY

ABOVE: *Pilgrim Flask*, Faenza, 1480; 13" high. Rare in both form and decoration, this piece has a center bearing an unusual waterwheel design and edges embellished with carefully painted peacock-feather motifs. Cyril Humphris, London.

OPPOSITE: *Coppa Amatoria*, painted by Nicola Pellipario, Castel Durante, circa 1530; 9" in diameter. Created by one of the masters of maiolica painting, a portrait of a young woman is flanked by two scrolls bearing her name. Christie's, London.

DURING THE RENAISSANCE, when a young nobleman of the house of Medici or della Rovere wished to court his beloved, he turned, not to gemstones, but to the artistry of the potter. He realized that a richly colored maiolica vessel known as a *coppa d'amore*, emblazoned with a pierced heart and filled with sweetmeats, could say more about the nobility

of his intentions than any jewel.

That so important a mission could be entrusted to a vessel formed of humble clay reveals much about the development of the tin-glazed earthenware known in Italy as *maiolica*. At the close of the Middle Ages, clay was considered to be a base material, and the earthenwares made of it were often crude, shunned by the well-born

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