



MEDIA CONTACT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

Of Cottages and Castles: The Art of California Faience

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William Bragdon and Chauncey Thomas for California Faience, *Tile with Stylized California Poppies*, 1920–1930. Earthenware, 5 1/8 inches diameter. Private Collection.

Pasadena, CA — The Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) is proud to present *Of Cottages and Castles: The Art of California Faience*, the first survey of one of the longest enduring art potteries in California. The studio's distinctive works were born out of a partnership between two former college classmates, William Bragdon and Chauncey Thomas, in Berkeley in 1913. Consisting of more than 120 works, the exhibition presents the full range of the company's decorative tiles, vessels, lamps, and sculptures.

California Faience produced pottery in a variety of styles, including Arts and Crafts, Art Deco, and Moderne, and experimented with and perfected many types of glazing, including variations on matte, bright (shiny), and crystalline. Firmly grounded in the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement, all works were done by hand; the only concession to industrial process was the use of slip casting for their wide array of forms, which still required significant handwork. The two men personally carried out all aspects of design and manufacture themselves. Their operation was always small with a handful of additional artists creating wares throughout the years, including Beniamino Bufano, Thomas Gotham, and many women artists, such as Margaret Clayes, Adele Chase, and Marion Martin.

The exhibition includes stunning tiles from the company's most prestigious project, the commission by architect Julia Morgan for a complete environment of tiles for William Randolph Hearst's palatial home and grounds in San Simeon. Morgan likely had seen the shop's tile display at the Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915, and beginning in 1920, over a period of about ten years, nearly 100,000 tiles were hand-pressed and glazed for the "Hearst Castle" commission.

As the commission drew to a close and the Great Depression began, the studio was able to survive because of a willingness to adapt to shifting taste and open its doors to artists of all stripes. Although it continued to produce art pottery and tiles, the demand had decreased significantly, and in the 1940s and 50s a vast figurine industry blossomed. Bragdon dismissed figurines as "cutesy," but nonetheless California Faience produced high-quality figurines during this time. The studio also appealed to young artists and students, encouraging a new generation by offering them clay and glaze as well as the opportunity to work in the studio and fire wares for a tiny fee, creating an uplifting and affirming place for artists in a dire time.

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While World War II briefly boosted the pottery industry, the ensuing years brought a flood of cheap ceramic imports from Europe and Asia. The California potteries could not compete, and one by one they closed their doors, including California Faience, which ceased production in 1959, but by that time they had secured a lasting legacy through their creation of beautiful art pottery.

Of Cottages and Castles: The Art of California Faience is organized by the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento.



FAR LEFT

Julia Morgan for California Faience, *Tile with Winged Seahorse*, 1920-1925. Earthenware, 7 ½ x 7 ⅛ inches. Private Collection.

LEFT

Thomas B. Gotham for West Coast Porcelain Manufacturers, *Vase*, 1924-1927. Porcelain, 10 x 6 ½ inches. Private Collection.

Museum Information

MISSION

The mission of the Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) is to present the breadth of California art and design through exhibitions that explore the cultural dynamics and influences that are unique to California.

HOURS

Open Wednesday–Sunday, 12:00–5:00pm; third Thursday of each month, 5:00–8:00pm; closed Mondays, Tuesdays, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day.

ADMISSION

\$7 for adults, \$5 for seniors and students; free for PMCA members and children under 12; free the first Friday of each month (12:00–5:00pm); free the third Thursday of each month (5:00–8:00pm). Access for people with disabilities is provided.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

The museum is located at 490 East Union Street. From the 210 Freeway, take the Lake Avenue exit. Go south and take a right on Union Street. From the 110 Freeway/Downtown Los Angeles, follow the freeway until its end, then take Arroyo Parkway and turn right at Colorado, then left at Oakland to get to Union Street. Parking is available at the Museum.

DOCENT TOURS AND GROUP RATES

The museum offers docent tours on the second Saturday of each month (2:00pm; free with admission). Docent tours are also available Wednesday–Friday, 12:00–5:00pm, to private groups for a fee of \$75. A non-refundable deposit of \$40 is due two weeks prior to the scheduled date. Self-guided tours for K-12 students are offered for free. We regret that we are unable to accommodate docent tours for groups larger than 35 people. Before requesting a tour, please check the exhibition calendar to see which exhibitions will be available during your visit.

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A discounted group rate of \$3 per person is available for groups of 20 or more (K-12 student groups are free). Please call to notify us at least one week in advance for these special admission rates. For any questions or to make reservations for a tour or group rate, call our Bookstore and Membership Associate, Susan Wang, at 626.568.3665 x14 or email swang@pmcaonline.org.

For more information, please call 626.568.3665 or visit pmcaonline.org.