



EARTHEWARE

MOUSTIERS

Sainte-Marie



2023

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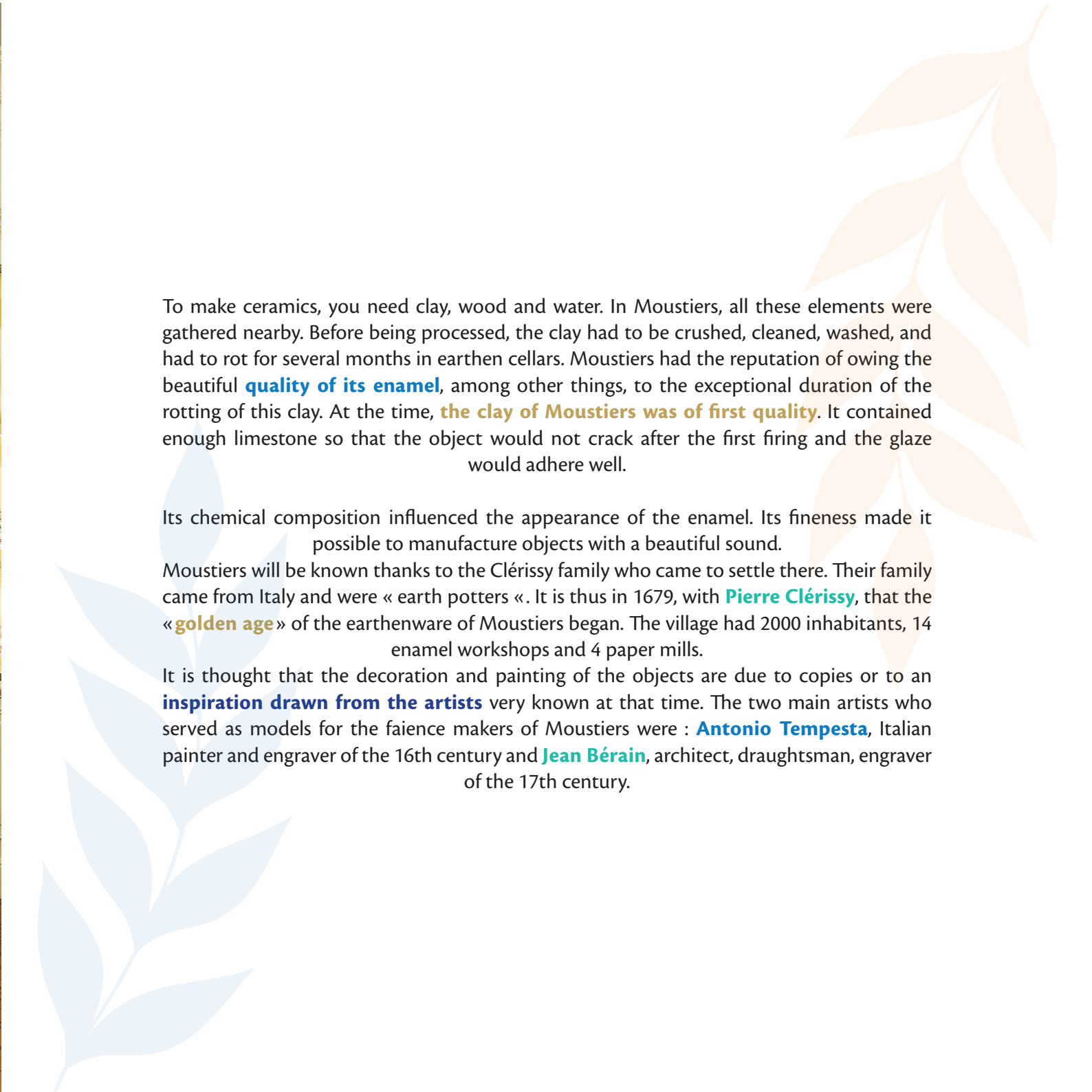
EARTHENWARE
NOWADAYS





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INTRODUCTION



To make ceramics, you need clay, wood and water. In Moustiers, all these elements were gathered nearby. Before being processed, the clay had to be crushed, cleaned, washed, and had to rot for several months in earthen cellars. Moustiers had the reputation of owing the beautiful **quality of its enamel**, among other things, to the exceptional duration of the rotting of this clay. At the time, **the clay of Moustiers was of first quality**. It contained enough limestone so that the object would not crack after the first firing and the glaze would adhere well.

Its chemical composition influenced the appearance of the enamel. Its fineness made it possible to manufacture objects with a beautiful sound.

Moustiers will be known thanks to the Clérissy family who came to settle there. Their family came from Italy and were « earth potters ». It is thus in 1679, with **Pierre Clérissy**, that the « **golden age** » of the earthenware of Moustiers began. The village had 2000 inhabitants, 14 enamel workshops and 4 paper mills.

It is thought that the decoration and painting of the objects are due to copies or to an **inspiration drawn from the artists** very known at that time. The two main artists who served as models for the faience makers of Moustiers were : **Antonio Tempesta**, Italian painter and engraver of the 16th century and **Jean Bérain**, architect, draughtsman, engraver of the 17th century.



THE ORIGINS OF EARTHENWARE

Pottery is attested in Moustiers since the **early Middle Ages**. Pierre Clérissy became the most famous of these glazed earthenware potters, by taking the step towards earthenware. He was helped by the talent of painters from Riez whose services he was able to enlist: **François Viry and his sons**.

The economic situation of the time also helped him. Indeed, as a result of the Sumptuary Edict of 1689, repeated in 1699 and 1709, France changed its taste, following the example of the Roi Soleil who had his **gold service melted down to replace it with earthenware**.

On the other hand, at the head of the bishopric of Riez, on which Moustiers depended, there were always influential men, from great families and personally appointed by the king. Pierre Clérissy and then his descendants, knew how to take advantage of these relations and influences, judging by the number of services with prestigious coat of arms, manufactured during the first half of the 18th century, by the large dishes of hunting, the fountains, oilers, sprinklers and other refined objects intended to decorate the luxurious tables.

Earthenware became so fashionable that European rulers also wanted to own large factories. The Count of Aranda, at the request of the King of Spain, was charged with hiring the best workers in the kingdom of France, to found a factory in the vicinity of Barcelona, Alcorca. **Joseph Olérys and Edouard Roux, both trained in Moustiers**, left there in 1726 for about ten years.

The 12 earthenware factories of the time brought in more money for the community than all the other factories combined. Despite this, nothing could stop the trends from changing. The reign of Louis XVI was marked by a certain love for English productions. In 1786, the Treaty of Vergennes authorized the entry into France of English productions, which were well received, in particular this white earthenware whose decoration began to be glued and no longer painted on the object, before being covered with a layer of transparent enamel: **the porcelain**.

The last earthenware workshop closed its doors in 1874 and no more earthenware was produced in Moustiers for fifty years.



MARCEL
PROVENCE
BRINGS
EARTHENWARE
BACK FROM THE
ASHES

Credit photo : OTM

Marcel Joannon, was a journalist, writer, historian, ethnologist and especially a lover of Provence ; as he adopted the name. In 1928, with the help of a few friends, he **relaunched the earthenware activity**. He also created the Academy of Moustiers, in charge of the study of earthenware and folklore of Moustiers, and then, the Museum of Earthenware. These earthenwares were decorated « Moustiers style », very often **with a bird which very quickly became the symbol of Moustiers earthenware.**

«The earthenware of Moustiers has its own distinct tone, touch it with your fingernail and you will hear a crystalline sound, a little deep, fresh, a little like Easter bells in the mountains»
Marcel Provence.





FAIENC (EARTHENWARE) MUSEUM

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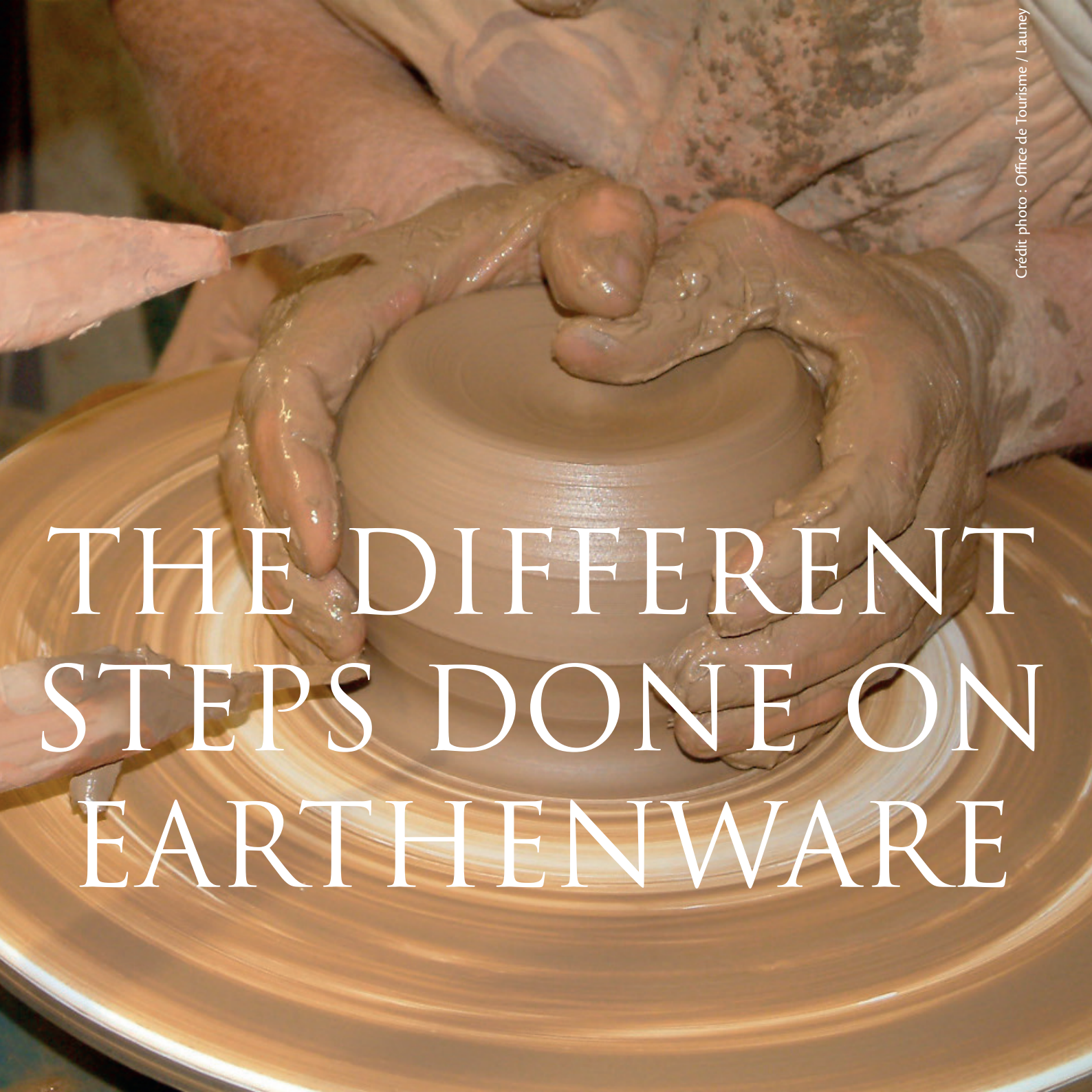
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The Museum of Faïence was inaugurated on September 15, 1929, under the impulse of Marcel Provençe and the academy of Moustiers. In 1927, there were no more active earthenware workshops. The war of 1870 as well as the industrial competition damaged this traditional art. It is Marcel Provençe himself who **rekindled the kilns** to relaunch the activity. Surrounded by confirmed ceramists, it is to him that we owe **the rebirth of earthenware in Moustiers-Sainte-Marie**.





THE DIFFERENT STEPS DONE ON EARTHENWARE

The creation is a delicate process that must be approached with the utmost care. According to the desire of the earthenware maker, here are the steps necessary for the manufacture before the decoration.

Different techniques are used to create the faïence of Moustiers :

- **THROWING** : a lump of clay is turned on a potter's wheel.
- **CASTING** : diluted clay is poured in a plaster cast.
- **MOULDING** : A flat piece of clay is pressed onto a plaster mould.
- **1ST FIRING** : The shaped object is then fired at more than 1000°C, creating the « biscuit ».
- **GLAZING** : The object is dipped in a bath of enamel, covering the « biscuit » with a fragile white powder.
- **DECORATION** : Delicate artwork is painted on the powdery enamel with a brush.
- **2ND FIRING** : The item is then fired a second time to fuse the glaze and coloured oxides.



Crédit photo : Atelier Bondil

A circular blue and white ceramic medallion, likely a decorative tile or plate, featuring a detailed hunting scene. The scene is framed by an ornate, repeating floral border. In the foreground, a large dog is sniffing the ground. To the right, two figures in classical-style clothing are seated on a horse, one holding a bird. In the middle ground, several figures are engaged in a hunt, with one figure on a horse and another on foot. A large tree with palm-like fronds stands on the left. The background shows a landscape with hills and a small bird in flight. The entire scene is rendered in a classic, detailed style characteristic of 19th-century decorative arts.

THE DIFFERENT DECORATIONS ON EARTHENWARE



BÉRAIN STYLE DECOR

This type of decoration is mainly in monochrome blue. All around a central figure, perfectly symmetrical arabesques are articulated. One can find busts or unreal animals. Jean Bérain published a number of prints to ensure the diffusion of his style. Indeed, the earthenware decorated «à la Bérain» were very numerous. He was appointed **designer of the King's Chamber** in 1711 and was so well known that nothing was done without his approval. Engraved collections of Bérain's decorations circulated from 1710 and Moustiers did not escape this movement.



HUNTING DISHES OR TEMPESTA DECOR

At the end of the 17th century and until 1730, the Clérissy family made these large hunting dishes. Their central decoration was a hunting scene, most often taken from the engravings of **Antonio Tempesta**, an Italian painter of the Renaissance whose engraved work circulated throughout Europe.



GROTESQUE DECOR

Grotesques are deformed characters that Joseph Oléry (him again) invented in Moustiers. One should not trust their name. Indeed, it comes from «grotto», the one in which the Baths of Titus were discovered in Rome during the Renaissance. The paintings of the Baths were very close to the Bérain compositions but they included «grotesque» animals. Other decorations exist of course, such as the rocaille decoration, the natural flowers, or the «Féraud style». **A visit to the Musée de la Faïence allows you to learn more about the history of Moustiers-Sainte-Marie earthenware. You can also visit earthenware workshops.**



EARTHENWARE NOWADAYS

Today in Moustiers-Sainte-Marie, you will find 8 earthenware workshops: Bondil, Soleil, Blanc Michèle, le Barri, Lallier, les Cigales, Mufraggi and Serrailier. All of them have stores in the center of the village to discover their works.

You can **visit the workshops by appointment** to learn about the steps involved in making a faïence piece. A real journey back in time and an opening of mind on the French traditional know-how. Do not hesitate to visit the museum to learn about **the origin of Moustiers-Sainte-Marie earthenware**.

Crédit photo : Office de Tourisme



Crédit photo : Office de Tourisme

L'UNION DES FAÏENCIERS DE MOUSTIERS-SAINTE-MARIE

Union des Faïenciers was founded in the middle of the 80's in order to fight against the numerous counterfeits at that time. These imitations were deteriorating the image of the art of earthenware, made entirely by hand in the town of Moustiers-Sainte-Marie. In order to protect their know-how, the faïence makers gathered in an association in order to alert the public authorities and to find a legal framework of protection and proposed various large-scale events to promote Moustiers and its ancestral art.

The association also participates in the International Exhibition of Cultural Heritage (Salon International du Patrimoine) which takes place at the Carrousel du Louvre in Paris. This show has become the reference event that brings together professionals in the field of restoration and preservation of heritage. Each year, the show honors rare and exceptional know-how and especially men and women committed to their passion. Moustiers earthenware, whose fame was at its peak throughout the French kingdom at the time of Louis XIV, is an ancestral art, still made by passionate men and women.



MOUSTIERS

Sainte-Marie

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