

# Pieces that never lose their lustre



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## Prices for glazed Art Pottery are soaring skywards, says Vivienne Milburn

**T**HE APPEAL of lustrous glazed Art Pottery in auctions has never been so great. An important potter working during the Art Pottery period was William Friend De Morgan (1839-1917). He produced designs for Morris & Co. during 1863 to 1872 and his influences were mainly Medieval Persian designs. He started his career working in stained glass, the affects of which can be

seen in the luminous glazes associated with his work. His designs very often incorporate fantastical animals, birds and fish as well as galleons with billowing sails.

The influence of Hispano-Moresque and Iznik type designs led de Morgan to experiment with glazes and he had a breakthrough when he discovered the technique of producing a glaze with a lustrous finish. This, however,

did not guarantee financial success and at the time he said: "All my life I have been trying to make beautiful things - and now that I can make them, no one wants them." His glazing recipes were a closely guarded secret and unfortunately when he died, he took a great deal of his glazing knowledge with him.

Ironically, his work is now ferociously contested when it appears at auction and a 'Sunset and Moonlight' large dish, decorated with a border of silver lustre leaping fish on a midnight blue ground and the centre with three men in a boat being set upon by the most fantastical sea monster I ever saw, made £17,000 in a specialist auction recently. The charger (a large dish) was made during the Fulham Period (1888-1898) and decorated by Charles Passenger, who worked with his brother Fred for William De Morgan during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Another interesting item I came across was a William De Morgan tile. I had originally been asked to a client's house to value a copper kettle that stood on the tile, among other things. She was pleased to hear that her kettle was worth £30 - but delighted to discover that the tile was worth £750!

Another outstanding potter of the new era is William Moorcroft, who also had the good fortune to be working during the Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau period and it is the flowing organic forms and methods of glazing and decorating in a kaleidoscope of colours that are so sought after today.



A fantastical William De Morgan lustre dish that made £17,000 in a recent auction. His glazing recipes were a closely guarded secret and when he died he took a great deal of his glazing knowledge with him. Picture courtesy of Accredited Sworders

## Antiques



A pair of Moorcroft 'Eventide' pattern vases, decorated with orange trees and a red sky, which made £5,100 in a Decorative Art & Design auction. Picture courtesy of Accredited Sworders

William Moorcroft (1872-1945) led the Art Pottery Department at MacIntyre & Co, in Burslem, Staffordshire, from the late 19th Century. His early wares were what is known as 'Aurelian' and have a Japanese influence, which was most popular at the time. They were usually printed in underglaze blue, enamelled in red and gilded. This is perhaps not the most popular type of Moorcroft on the market at the moment, but a pair of vases will still make up to £1,000. He then went on to develop what is known as 'Florian' ware, perhaps the most desirable of British Art Nouveau ceramics. During this time he developed his technique for 'tubeline' decoration – fine lines of slip applied to the surface; these enclosures can then be filled with coloured glazes.

Moorcroft produced a lot of blue and light blue Florian wares; however, it does tend to be the more well defined designs which are especially popular with collectors today. Marks on Moorcroft are invariably printed, sometimes impressed 'Moorcroft', and also very often have the signature 'W Moorcroft'.

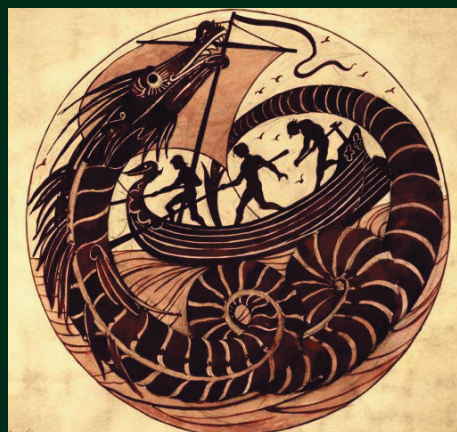
A Moorcroft vase I sold recently for a client had been relegated to the wood shed, as it was not to her taste. I can only say that she was extremely lucky that it had not been

cracked or chipped while in the shed. However, she did have the foresight to ask me if it was of any interest while I was doing an insurance valuation on her home contents. The vase was worth in the region of £600-800 and, after she had recovered her composure, she decided it would probably be best to let me include it in a specialist sale on her behalf. It finally went for £850.

William Moorcroft had started his career working for MacIntyre & Co but, as his talents became evident, he started his own range of ware as 'Moorcroft MacIntyre' and later on he

produced designs only in his own name. Later design pieces can be equally desirable to collectors and patterns are always from naturalistic influence and include anemones, orchids, hibiscus and poppies.

As an antiques valuer and auctioneer, I am always interested to hear from clients with interesting collections of items. If you are interested in selling items or require a valuation for probate or insurance purposes, whether it be a single item or the complete house contents, contact me on 0114 2830292, 01629 640210 or 07870 238788. [vivienne@viviennemilburn.co.uk](mailto:vivienne@viviennemilburn.co.uk)



The design for this dish is at the Victoria and Albert Museum; it is by Charles Passenger who worked for William de Morgan during the late 19th Century



The marks on these vases show the impressed Moorcroft mark and the typical scrawl of a signature in green