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LUSTER PLATE (BACK), HISPANO-MORESQUE,
FIRST HALF OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.
Gift of The Founders Society, 1942.

A HISPANO-MORESQUE LUSTER PLATE

THE COLLECTION of Mohammedan art has received, as a gift of the Founders Society, a very fine specimen of Hispano-Moresque luster pottery¹. The large plate is covered with designs all in gold changing from rose red to ruby, with only one strong accent of blue. The ornament of the inside is strictly geometrical. A central roundel frames an octagonal star, formed of two superimposed squares. The one above shows fourpetaled flowers in compartments formed by crossing lines; the corners of the lower square are filled with a small design of dots and lines, the spandrels contain conventional floral tendrils. From the roundel alternating bands of cross-hatching and interlocked spur shapes radiate, in six sections, towards and across the wide flat rim. A heavy rope, twisted of blue and yellow, marks the break of the design. On the outside, reaching almost from edge to edge, a crane steps to the left, on a field covered with feathery flowers in oval frames of slender tendrils. Spirals and groups of dots fill the interstices.

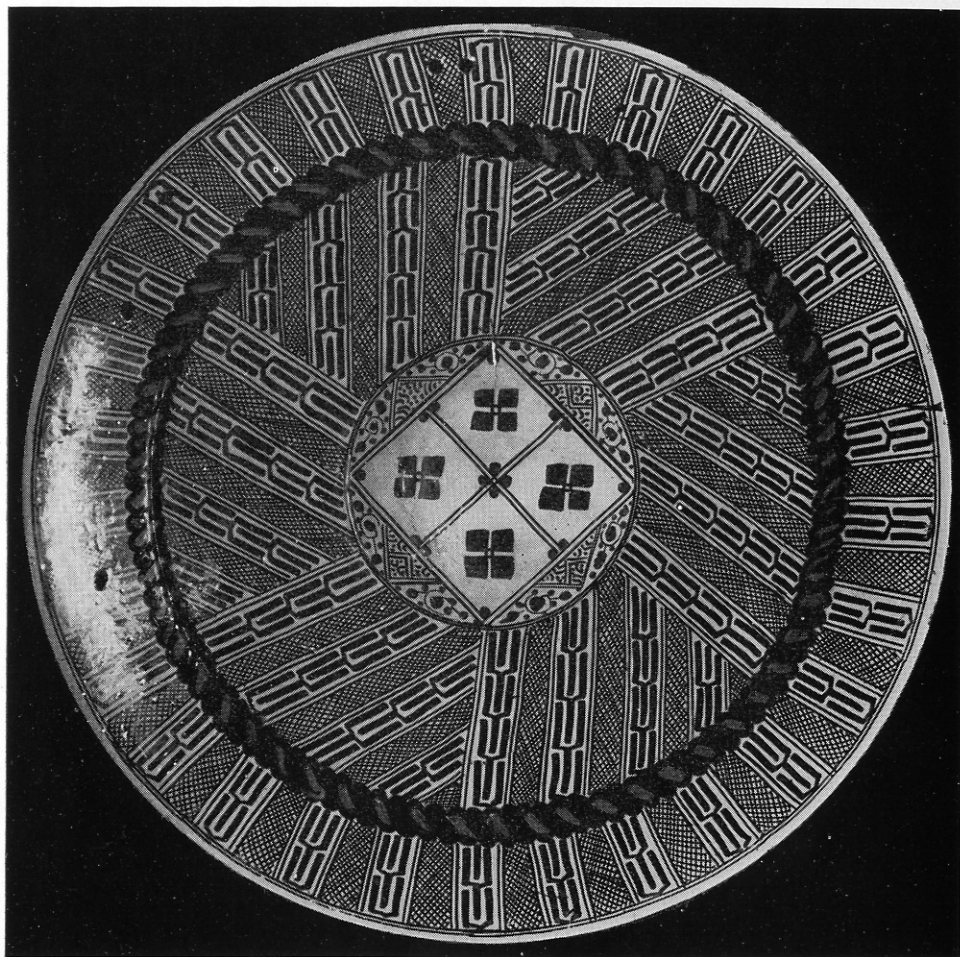
The thin walls of the large plate of buff clay rise from the flat circular base, with the transition from wall to rim marked by a slight ridge on the inner surface. In the wet clay the potter pierced two holes near the rim, so that the vessel could be suspended by a cord. After a first firing the tin enamel glaze was applied and fired; the dark clay gives the thin coating a rosy tint. Then the decorator added his design, it is said "with a feather." The luster paint was fired in a muffled kiln, the reverse with the bird placed upmost. On the spur-patterned obverse there are a few spots of unglazed clay marks made by the supports. The technique of luster paint required great care and was kept secret in certain Moorish families and potters' shops. If the heat was too strong, the luster was burnt and became a dull brownish yellow.

Luster technique was brought to Spain in the ninth century from Mesopotamia, by way of North Africa. There, in the mosque of Sidi 'Oqba at Kairawan, the mihrab is decorated with luster tiles imported, according to literary sources, from the residence of Harun al-Rashid by one of the amirs of the Aghlabid dynasty. The earliest absolutely certain notice concerning the manufacture of gold lustered earthenware in Spain is found in Idrisi's "Description of Africa and Spain" written about 1150. Of the city of Calatayud in Aragonia he says: "Here they make gilded pottery dishes and these are sent to far away places." Malaga, as a center of production of luster ware, is first mentioned by Ibn Sa'id about 1250, together with Murcia and Almeria which however are better known for their silk weaving. The fame of Malaga grew rapidly, all through the fourteenth century she is praised for her "gilded pottery, unequalled elsewhere." Ahmed el 'Omari in 1337, Ibn Batuta and Ibn al Hatib, both about 1350, know of no other center of production of luster ware in Spain.

When, in 1238, Valencia was taken back from the Moors by King James I of Aragon, the kingdom had a long record of fine pottery making. Pliny (XXXV, 12) mentions the red jasper ware of Saguntum, the present Murviedro, where twelve hundred potters worked the fine clay. While no information is extant concerning similar activity during the Visigothic and Moorish period, yet the fact that, in 1251, King James granted a special charter to the Moorish potters of Jatiba proves that the craft must have been maintained during those centuries. Luster ware was not

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made before the fourteenth century when it was introduced by potters from Malaga. To the very end of the fifteenth century, the golden ware of Valencia is called "obra" or "tierra" de Malica, Maleca, Maliqua, etc. All through the fifteenth century there is much documentary evidence that Valencian lusterware was coveted purely for its decorative, non-utilitarian quality. The inventories of King René and the Dukes of Burgundy mention dishes of *terre de Valence* exhibited on dressers, side by side with specimens of goldsmiths craft, and repeatedly Valencian luster ware is permitted free entry by foreign ports, because it did not compete with the local pottery.



LUSTER PLATE (FRONT), HISPANO-MOESQUE,
FIRST HALF OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.
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That luster ware was made, not in the city of Valencia, but at nearby Manises, is proved by a letter written on November 26, 1454, by Maria, consort of Alfonso V of Aragon, to Don Pedro Buyl. The queen wishes to place a large order of luster ceramic and explains that she addresses her request to the Lord of Manises because he is "at the fountain of manufacture." Already in 1383 Fray Francisco Eximenes praises the "bellesa de la obra de Manises daurada," (the beauty of gilded Manises ware), which "painted in masterly fashion, enamors everyone so much that the pope and cardinals and the princes of the world obtain it by special favor and are astonished that of plain earth such excellent and noble work can be made."

The simple form of the present plate with the rim hardly marked, and the ornamental designs belong to the early style of the first half of the fifteenth century. The feathery flower, framed by its slender stalk, shows remotely its lineage from Samarra luster ware. A bowl in the Metropolitan Museum of Art² has "a large palmette of feathery leaves within a cone-shaped compartment." The haughtily stepping crane has its kindred among the many birds of early Islamic Persian and Mesopotamian painted pottery. The device of two superimposed squares forming an octagonal star is purely Mohammedan. A pattern of triple spur bands occurs on the fragment of a large vase, "Moorish, probably Malaga, about the middle of the fourteenth century," in the collection of the Hispanic Society of America³. Bands of spur shapes alternating with bands of cross hatching are found in Valencia ware of the first half of the fifteenth century. It is a rather retrogressive pattern, evolved from a Grenadine type⁴ with conventional Arabic characters with similar disposition in sections of the field. A dish in the Victoria and Albert Museum⁵, with the arms of Queen Maria (1416-1458), is practically a companion piece of the present plate. But the division of the field is not quite correct and the blue rope which so beautifully connects body and rim is absent. While the dish may possibly have been part of the luster ware ordered by the queen in 1454, we feel justified in assigning a somewhat earlier date to the plate.

The golden pottery of Valencia continued to be made in the sixteenth century in a more and more decadent way. The enamel glaze became coarse and yellow, the metallic luster brownish. After having worked for their Christian overlords for nearly four hundred years, the Moors in the kingdom of Valencia were expelled by order of Philip III. One hundred and thirty-four thousand Moriscos were deported to Africa, the potters of Manises and ten other villages were among the first to be exiled. A contingent of twenty thousand took ship at the Grao of Valencia on October 3, 1609. Thus, through the stupidity of a bigoted monarch, one of the finest crafts of medieval Spain came to an untoward end.

ADELE COULIN WEIBEL.

¹Accession Number 42.100. Pottery, luster painted on tin glaze. Diameter: 17¾ inches. Gift of the Founders Society, 1942.

²M. S. Dimand, *A Handbook of Mohammedan Decorative Arts*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art 1930, p. 154, fig. 91.

³E. A. Barber, *Hispano-Moresque Pottery*. The Hispanic Society of America, 1915, pp. 39-40, Plate I.

⁴A. Van de Put, *Hispano-Moresque Ware of the XV Century*. London, 1904. Plate I.

⁵Ibid. Plate VIII.

A BRONZE IMAGE OF VISNU

DURING THE reign of Jayavarman VII (1182-1201 A. D.) the religion of Cambodia experienced an official change and re-orientation. Mahāyāna Buddhism received the sanction of the King, the cults of Viṣṇu and Śiva were absorbed in the Buddhist revival, and the ritual worship of the King in Lingam form (Devarāja) was trans-



VISNU, CAMBODIAN, LATE TWELFTH CENTURY.
Gift of The Founders Society, 1941

formed to worship of the King as an earthly manifestation of the all-important Buddhist deity, Lokeśvara. These remarkable transformations were materialized in the great architectural monument in Angkor Thom, the Bayon. This structure was not merely a palace or a temple, but a stone diagram embodying the concept of universe according to the prevailing theology. Like an image it performed a primary intellectual and theological purpose in which other functions were absorbed and to which they were of secondary importance.

From this interesting period comes a bronze image of Viṣṇu¹, one of a hoard of seven bronze images (four Buddhist, two Vaiṣṇavite and one undetermined), all now in American collections, and bearing the imprint of the new religious orientation. The seven bronzes were evidently buried at the same time for they have the same patination, heavily encrusted and lumpy, light green with occasional spots

of blue and rust. The careful burial would indicate that the group was not of haphazard make-up, but that the figures were considered to complement one another. Because of their late date and because they come from Bien hoa at the eastern limits of the Khmer Kingdom, it would seem possible that the images were buried for purposes of safety when the waves of Siamese invasion reached the heart of Cambodia, Angkor, in the fifteenth century.

Viṣṇu, the Preserver, was especially important in the twelfth century; most of the reliefs at Angkor Vat are of Vaiṣṇavite subjects. Our image has the usual marks of a Brahmanical deity: high dressed hair (*jatā mukuta*), the third eye in the forehead. The four arms of the god are explained by theological necessity, not by naturalistic appearance. They are necessary to hold the attributes which designate the deity and are intellectual symbols of his powers. This image of Viṣṇu carries the usual attributes: lotus bud (*padma*) discus (*cakra*), conch shell (*śankha*), and mace (*gada*). The benevolent nature of Viṣṇu is expressed here in formal, but understandable terms.

SHERMAN E. LEE.

¹Accession Number 41.82. Bronze. Height: 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Gift of the Founders Society, General Membership Funds, 1941.

A bronze figure of Lakṣmī, the consort of Viṣṇu, from this hoard is in the collection of the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Further information may be found in an article by the present writer, "A Cambodian Bronze Hoard," in a forthcoming issue of *Art in America*.

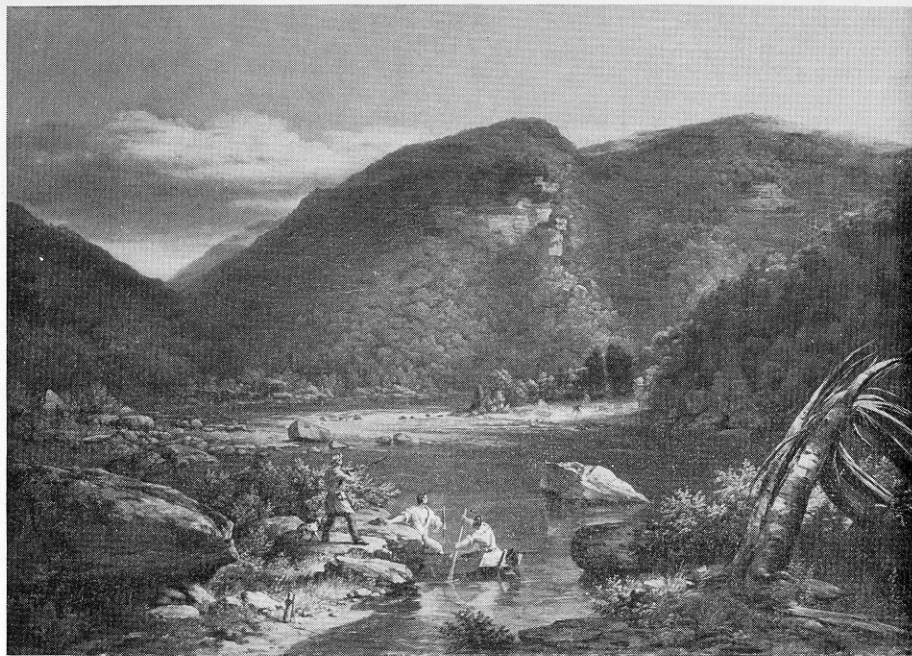
THE CROW'S NEST BY WORTHINGTON WHITTREDGE

CHANGES OF fashion in art are often, as I was saying last month, quite irrational. That is perhaps the explanation of the fact that today only a few students seem to remember the name of Worthington Whittredge. One rarely happens upon a painting by him today. Perhaps there are not a great many. But each picture I have seen, has been fixed in some quiet way in my memory, so that the sum of these rather infrequent impressions is of a most interesting and personal American landscape painter.

He was born at Springfield, Ohio, in 1820 and is thus one of the first artists contributed to American painting by the new states west of the Alleghenies, which were then just emerging from the pioneer stages of settlement. In a brief autobiography (published in the Brooklyn Museum *Journal* for 1942) Whittredge gives a vivid picture of his frontier memories of the multitude of wild birds and animals which surrounded his boyhood; and he earned his first money by fur trapping. But the instinct for art is basic in human nature. Even upon the frontier, where education was of the rudest and the arts unknown, this boy had a longing to be an artist. At about the age of twenty he found his way to Cincinnati, where he learned the rudiments of the craft of colors and did some portraits; but he soon discovered his bent toward landscape. In 1849 he went abroad to study and spent ten years at Düsseldorf and Rome. After his return he settled in New York. The most important of his subsequent sketching trips was a journey to the Rocky Mountains in 1865-66, in the company of General Pope.

A landscape called *The Crow's Nest*, painted in Cincinnati in 1848, was recently given to the museum by Mr. and Mrs. William D. Biggers. According to the tradition of the donors, it was originally one of a pair of landscapes which a gentleman of Cincinnati commissioned in order to help the young artist.

Its subject is the frontier life which was then just passing away in southern Ohio. The scene is one of the West Virginia rivers which flows into the



THE CROW'S NEST BY WORTHINGTON WHITTREDGE,
AMERICAN, 1820-1910.

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William D. Biggers, 1941.

Ohio River above Cincinnati. Three hunters landing from a roughly-built boat, seize their rifles at the sight of some deer in a clearing across the stream; but the deer have also sighted the hunters and race toward the forest, their white tails flashing. A projecting ledge of one of the rugged hills above is apparently the source of the picture's name. The style of this early work is less developed than in Whittredge's mature period but it already shows the qualities that were to be the basis of his later achievement — a sense of the life of nature, a feeling for the character of a scene or of an hour of the day, and a sensitive perception of effects of light and air. This picture is of interest also as part of the pictorial record of the frontier life of this region and as a document of the rise of the arts in the early days of the Middle West.¹

E. P. RICHARDSON.

¹Accession Number 41.12. Canvas. Height: 39¾ inches; Width: 56 inches. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William D. Biggers, 1941.

Signed on a rock in the lower left: *T. W. Whittredge, 1848*. He later dropped the first initial.

JUNIOR EXPLORERS

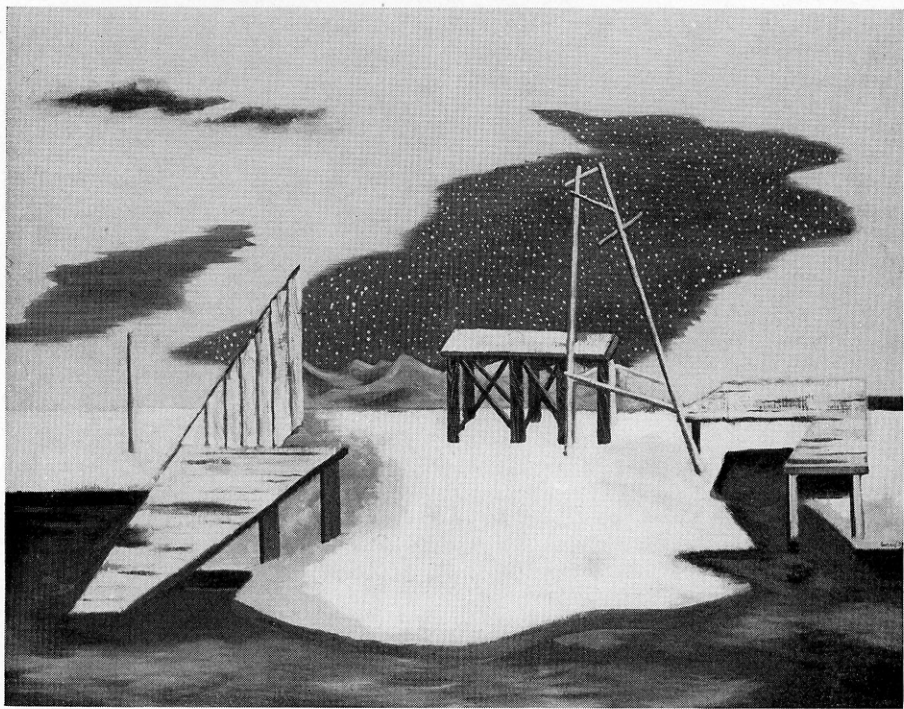
LAST YEAR the museum started a club for the benefit of the children and relatives of members of the Museum Founders Society. It proved highly successful and will be continued in two groups which will meet every Saturday morning at eleven o'clock: one in the Museum and one at the Russel A. Alger Branch Museum, 32 Lake Shore Road.

The club is designed to provide children with the opportunity of discovering for themselves the meaning of our museum collection. Although Mrs. Gnau will supervise the museum club and Mrs. Heath will direct the Alger Branch club, the children not only are in charge of their meetings but select the topics which interest them most. Last year the club selected Pan-American art as their topic and at their suggestion had an exhibit in June of their maps, reconstructions, models, and drawings of Guatemala and Peru. On several occasions they conducted classes of children through the museum gallery of American Indian art.

Membership and admittance is free to members' children and this year they may bring one friend who is not a member. The first meetings will be held on Saturday, January 16 at 11:00 a. m. Mrs. Gnau will talk on "An Egyptian Mummy" at the museum. Mrs. Heath will talk on "Lost Cities of the Andes" at Alger House.

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR MUSEUM?

A NEW SERIES of gallery talks on the museum collection has been started for the benefit of service men and newcomers to Detroit. Every Tuesday evening at 7:30 p. m. and every Sunday at 4:00 p. m. the educational department will give a general tour of the collection with emphasis on outstanding objects and recent accessions to the collection.



THE SNOW CLOUD BY JEAN LURÇAT,
FRENCH, CONTEMPORARY.

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edsel B. Ford, 1942.