REVIEW

Claude Lemaitre and Roger Verdier, Terres Vernissées & Grès de France du XIVe au XXe siècle, Centre d'Etude de l'Objet d'Art et du Mobilier, Paris, 1984. 196 pp;150 FF from C.E.O.E.M., 10 rue Thénard, 75005 Paris.

This is the catalogue for an exhibition held at Saint-Nectaire (Puy-de-Dome) in the summer of 1984. Copiously illustrated with 272 photographs of individual objects, it attempts to show the chronological, geographical and functional range of pottery made throughout France from 1300 to the present. The structure of presentation, which mirrors the exhibition itself, is in terms of the differing contexts in which pottery is used. These are divided into four groupings. First, the house itself, including bricks, floor tiles, roof furniture etc. Then domestic life, sub-divided into the fireside, kitchen, cellar, table, personal hygiene, comfort, house decoration, and a range of other domestic activities. The third grouping, professional life, includes ceramics designed for rural activities, manufacturing industry, transport and advertising. The fourth, social life, covers religious activities, festivals, birthdays, commemorations, holiday souvenirs, games and education. This sociological organisation is backed up by systematic, clear descriptions of the objects and a careful assessment of production centre and date. At the end there is an excellent glossary, a good bibliography and an index of production sites referred to in the main text.

The format is A4, offset litho text and half-tones in soft card covers and black tape binding. The text is type-written in a long line and rather annoying italic face. The half-tones have reproduced fairly well on average, but the range of quality of the original photographs and the necessity to have five or six on each page has meant that some are very pale and some very dark. This volume is vital reading for anyone interested in either French rural pottery production or the uses of pottery and the enormous range of forms which go with them.

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