**Biot Slipped and Glazed Provençal Earthenware**

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**Other Names**

common earthenware with slip and glaze from Biot, coarse pinkish buff fabric yellow glazed ware; Biot ware.

**Technical Definition**

Earthenware with slip and glaze from Biot is a ceramic made from a kaolinitic refractory clay, from the same geological origin as that of Vallauris, firm and plastic, permitting manufacture of large thick-walled jars (Fig. 92). It differs in the specific and non-cooking uses that the Biot potters used it for.

**Paste**

The paste has a heterogeneous texture, pink or light beige in color, hard (5-7 on Mohs scale), and grainy to the touch. It contains many sub-rounded inclusions (1-3 mm) of quartz, mica, kaolin (white), manganese (brown) and iron (red). Once fired, the unslipped and unglazed exterior surface is light beige.

**Glaze**

The clear yellow lead glaze covers the interior of containers and the top of the smoothed neck. From the 17th century onward, these areas were first coated in a white slip <with glaze on top>.

**Decoration**

Potters' marks stamped on jars are rare after the 18th century. Drips of green, or more rarely, yellow glaze may appear on the body incidentally, from simultaneous firing with other objects glazed with copper or iron oxide (such as floor and roofing tiles?)(Fig. 92). The midpoint of jar walls was often reinforced by added pinched bands of clay.

**Forms**

The repertoire is made up of non-culinary utilitarian forms: jar, laundry basin and grape pot (FIG. 93), a small conical container with a thick wall, initially identified as a sugar pot, which in reality made it possible to preserve fresh grapes until Christmas.

**Production Methods**

The large containers (jars and vats) were coil-built, ring by ring, and assembled by paddling and smoothing; the grape pots were wheel-thrown. After drying to leather-hard, the container was slipped and then coated in a dipped or sprinkled lead glaze. The glaze or “varnish,” a term from the southern Mediterranean defining a lead glaze that has been used in texts since the Middle Ages, was made from a mixture sand and lead sulfide (aquilfoux, a word of Arabic origin), ground very fine in a mill and then suspended in water.

After drying a second time, the length of which was determined according to the size of the container, vessels were stacked and loaded onto kiln shelves. The largest jars were placed at the bottom of the kiln. An oxidizing single-fire process reached a temperature of around 800-880°C.

**Provenance**

Biot, in eastern Provence (Alpes-Maritimes) (Fig. 94).

**Dating**

Craftsmen from Italy came to occupy the Biot area in 1470. By the 16th century, texts and archaeology provide evidence for jars being produced for oil in Provence. The oldest vessels are dated and marked with artisan stamps. By the end of the 17th century and into the 18th century, 32 workshops were recorded in the village and many jars were shipped through the port of Antibes to Marseille and the ports of the west. These Biot jars, transported onboard ships, had many other functions and were used to preserve water, dry goods, and preserved goods. After arriving safely, they began second lives in the water storage houses of the French Caribbean, such as that of Château Dubuc in Martinique dating to the 18th century. The production of jars continued until the 20th century and they were widely distributed via colonial trade as evidenced by cultural heritage and archaeological surveys on land, and cargo lost overboard or in shipwrecks. The grape pot, a unique Biot product, does not seem to appear before the 18th century (FIG. 93). It was recorded by J. Petrucci in Canada, in Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, and at the Palais de l’Intendant in Quebec, burned in 1726.

**References**

Abel et Amouric 1991; Amouric et Serra 2013; Amouric et Vallauri 2005; Amouric, Argueyrolles et Vallauri 2006; Amouric, Richez et Vallauri 1999; Amouric, Vallauri et Vayssettes 2008; Barton 1981; Durbec 1949; Gauvin 1995; Gusset 1978; L’Hour 2014; Mari 1996; Moussette 1981; Niellon et Moussette 1985