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Preface

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Preface

Helen Goethals

- 1 This issue of *Miranda* is divided into two parts, a division which, paradoxically, brings together the three disciplines which in France are taught under the heading of English Studies: linguistics, literature and cultural studies. In the fields of literature and cultural studies, there has been a marked increase in scholarly awareness of the cultural importance of the visual arts, such as painting, photography and film, but so far very little attention has been paid to the field of ceramics. The arrival in Toulouse of visiting professor Dr. Penny Collet of La Trobe University (Bendigo), a specialist in art education and curator of the F.M. Courtis Collection of Australian art, provided a pretext to make some modest amends for the neglect of this particular aspect of English visual culture.
- 2 *Celebrating Ceramics* was originally the title of an international conference organized by Laurence Roussillon-Constanty and Helen Goethals in Toulouse in March 2011. The conference was held at the Musée Georges-Labit, which houses the elegant and eclectic collections of the nineteenth-century French dandy and traveller, Georges Labit (1862-1899). The unusual Moorish architecture of the museum, with its well-stocked library and tropical garden, provided an appropriately Orientalist setting for a conference focused on ceramics in the English-speaking world.
- 3 Conferences can make things happen that other meetings cannot. Those who were there in March were able to exchange ideas, not least those that sprung from the specially-tailored tour of the ceramic collection in the Georges-Labit museum and from the privileged visit of the workshop of Sylvian Meschia, an internationally acclaimed ceramist who works in the Toulouse region. But when, as here, such ideas are recast into articles for peer-reviewed publication, fresh insights and new connections occur.
- 4 Not all the papers from the conference were selected to appear as articles: some await publication, perhaps in a future issue of *Miranda*. Nor are all the articles featured here based on papers given at the original conference. Two specialists of the historical world of the English collector were unable to attend the conference, and we are delighted that what they would have liked to say on the day can now join some of the original papers in a virtual world of shared knowledge. We are also proud to be able to include in this

issue of *Miranda*, a review of *Magpies, Squirrels and Thieves: How the Victorians Collected the World*. The author, Jacqueline Yallop, was called away from the conference at the last minute, in order to go to London to launch the book in question.

- 5 From spoken exchange to published article, these wide-ranging papers will, we hope, create a new and ongoing interest in the practice and products of the ceramic arts, and a better understanding of their place in the history and literature of the English-speaking world.

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