

# DESIGN & DECORATING

LOVE STORY

## A Jasperware Jones

A grandma's unglazed stoneware seeds a collector's passion

BY MIEKE TEN HAVE

**M**Y DESIGN taste might well be termed granny chic. It includes a penchant for chintz, toile and Wedgwood—specifically jasperware, as opposed to their bone china. My obsession with the matte ceramic and its usually white reliefs dates to childhood visits with my grandmother in Boston. In the corners of her federal-style dining room stood scrolled-shell cupboards filled with Meissen-china figurines, Limoges snuff boxes and Necco wafer-hued jasperware that looked like talismans left by the Easter Bunny: urns, cameos, and tea sets in dusty rose, lilac and celadon.

Thus began my affair with the unglazed stoneware that Josiah Wedgwood invented in the 1770s, named for its resemblance in hardness to the mineral jasper, and capitalizing on the European fascination with Neoclassicism that erupted after archeologists unearthed

Pompeii and Herculaneum. As Tricia Foley, author of "At Home with Wedgwood," said, "People were bringing back artifacts from Greece and Italy. Rather than plunder, Josiah Wedgwood replicated." Intricate molds depicted Greek and Roman myths and muses, and the Wedgwood factory (and later other English and European companies) produced on a mass scale, which is why you

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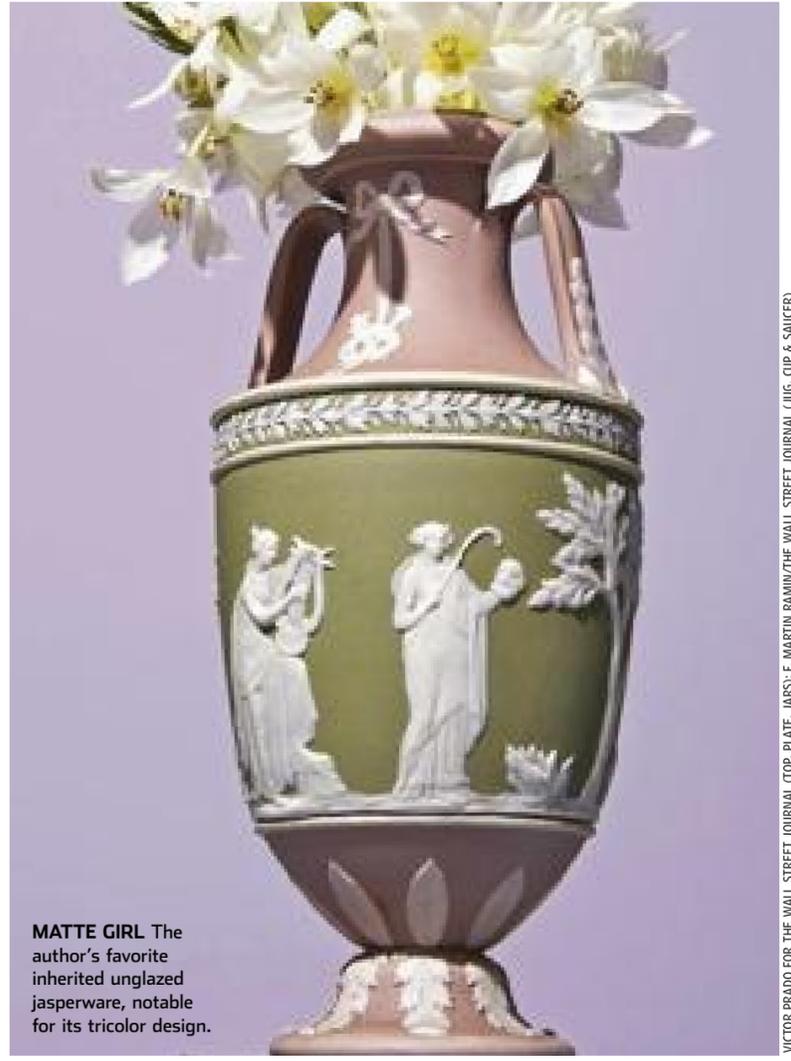
can find jasperware in fine, and not so fine, antique stores across the U.S.

When my grandmother died, the collection amassed with my mother in mind came to me instead. "You've always had fancy old-lady taste," my mother, whose ceramic preferences incline toward naïve American lusterware, quipped at the time. Since then, I've plucked tea sets from shabby

antique-shop vitrines in Arizona. (\$250 for a cobalt-blue service) and haggled over cake plates (under \$50 each) with toothless Mainers at flea markets. Though I've bought non-Wedgwood jasperware, I find the original producer's the most refined and pleasing. And I don't buy online, because it lacks the thrill of the chase.

In terms of value and history, "the less writing on the bottom, the older it is," said Alan Kaplan of New York dealer Leo Kaplan. Number and letter codes began in the 1860s and country-of-origin markings around 1900. Tri- and multicolor pieces are rare and can be valued at many thousands of dollars. But Wedgwood still produces jasperware, and for a small sum one can begin collecting.

My china cabinet may be a ringer for a nonagenarian's, but nothing is too precious to use. For a recent dinner party I used jasperware creamers to hold tealights and de-lidded sugar bowls as vases. My girlfriend studied my tablecape and dubbed its style "granny gone rogue." Fine by me.



**MATTE GIRL** The author's favorite inherited unglazed jasperware, notable for its tricolor design.

VICTOR PRADO FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (TOP, PLATE, JARS); F. MARTIN RAMM/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (JUG, CUP & SAUCER)

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◀ Wedgwood Crimson Jasperware Covered Jug, 8½ inches tall, \$3,450, raun-antiques.com



◀ Wedgwood Jasperware Ginger Jar, 4 inches tall, \$56, Replacements, 800-737-5223



◀ Wedgwood Tricolor Jasperware Tobacco Jar from My Endless Attic, 4½ inches tall, \$75, rubylane.com

Jasperware Dancing Hours Teacup and Saucer, TK inches tall, \$1,450 for 6 assorted, Wedgwood, 877-720-3486

