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Beautiful and eminently useful, stonewares produced in the German-speaking lands from the Middle Ages onward were highly valued for their durability and suitability for a range of domestic and social uses. Widely traded throughout Europe, they were also among the first European ceramics to reach colonial North America. During the Renaissance the addition of brilliant salt glazes_s well as relief imagery that communicated with the user_raised the status of these wares. Later examples introduced abstract floral or geometric decorations and more unusual, original forms, which retained broad cultural significance.

About ninety fine stoneware pieces from the Philadelphia Museum of Art and a promised private collection testify here to the success, artful decoration, and fascinating variety of this medium. Jack Hinton describes the developments in stoneware through these notable examples, and beautiful color images bring their details vividly to life.