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Hair Pin Turns, Bridges, Remorse and Wild Roses

Paul Scott

This book examines the remarkable persistence of a material genre in a digital age. In their day, early printed tablewares formed part of the new media of their time, acting to democratize imagery that in previous generations had been the preserve of the few. Whilst printed ceramic wares – 'transferware' – eventually depicted an array of subject matters, early designs were landscape based, and these have remained the most significant iconography associated with the genre. It is this aspect that has persisted and is the focus of this book.

Transferwares assimilated and disseminated the constructs of landscape imagery by remediating artistic representations that had already travelled from painting to book illustration. They were culturally significant, playing an important role in the democratization of imagery, as well as in overt and subtler political campaigning. Over time their potency was diluted by the development of new media, photography, film and the digital, until they finally evolved into multicoloured kitsch.

In examining the artistic appropriation of transferware, text and visual essay consider the genre in its widest technical sense. For serious collectors, its golden age lasted from 1780 to around 1880, but printed landscapes on tableware have continued to be produced ever since. The genre includes a remarkable range of wares, from fine delicate bat prints to the classic melted blue semiotic, the multicoloured, lustred and digital. Today alongside a commercial resurgence in printed ceramics, of 'traditional' classic forms as well as technically sophisticated digital wares, artistic appropriation is also significant – and the focus of this book.

Different Perspectives

Textual essays examine differing aspects of the transferware genre. In 'Politics and Meaning in Transferware' Dr Jo Dahn evokes the notion of a 'period eye' to draw the reader back to the early nineteenth century, to help us understand the way in which printed transferwares were originally used and viewed. In doing so, she illuminates the significant cultural charge they carried and helps us to gain an insight into a nineteenth-century mind. Inger Helene Stemshaug examines the journeys of images and wares across the North Sea between Norway and the North East of England in the same era. Peder Valle examines specific ways in which the blue-and-white semiotic become embedded in our cultural consciousness, whilst Knut Astrup Bull and Jorunn Veiteberg show how exploitation of the genre by contemporary artists plays with the ongoing familiarity of these objects and draws on wider movements in the visual arts.

The central visual essay creates an alternative narrative by melding historical objects with the contemporary. Many of the artworks use existent material – upcycled eBay or junk shop purchases, reworked by erasure or addition and given a new life.

Shifting Identity

In a 2014 television documentary series for British TV company Channel 4, the artist Grayson Perry under-
took a series of portraits of individuals whose identities were in the process of obvious or dramatic change. Perry himself also made a self-portrait that took the form of a pictogram map of a city. The cartographical device was drawn from Ebstorf’s medieval mappa mundi (an idealized representation of the known world). This combines imagery, text and cartography to chart the encyclopaedic knowledge of the world around 1250, covering theology, geography, biology, secular history, religion, myths and bestiaries.

Perry has used a similar device before in other works – *Map of Nowhere, Map of Truths and Beliefs, Map of an Englishman*. This new self-portrait map (an etching) depicts the streets and buildings of an imagined city with surrounding countryside. Place names include *Sad Puberty, Lingering Doubt, Contemplation, Grand Visions, My Ultimate Dream*. At its centre there is an empty fenced park space, but for a small figure kicking a can along the road. Perry’s conclusion is that identity is always changing and is constantly different, depending on who is engaging with the individual.

The identity or character of transferware is also never fixed. It has developed, shifted and changed with ages and viewers. Although clearly valued by significant portions of society in their heyday, until recently transferwares have been little collected and are generally poorly documented. Enthusiasts and private collectors have generated most of the serious literature in the field. At the beginning of the twenty-first century however, over two hundred years after introduction, things do appear to be changing. This book has developed from a curated exhibition at the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo, and in early 2015, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London launches a major exhibition of British transferware. The genre’s re-evaluation is under way.

Serious collectors view transferware with knowledge that filters away the coarsely made or poorly printed, they seek out the finest, the rare and valuable. In *Horizon*, however, valued museum pieces sit alongside eBay bargains and the souvenir plate (from personal ‘unofficial’ collections) with the classic import-

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**Fig. 1** Paul Scott, *Scott's Cumbrian Butterflies* (2014). Sliced, collaged transferware plates, ca 1820–40, with gold leaf, 26.6 x 29.1 cm. Paul Scott Collection.
ed Chinese porcelain. Here identity and provenance are important but the curation of images and text in this book sets out to question our value systems, it invites us to look at a group of objects with new eyes. Iconography which travels – images journey from China, to Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle, over the sea to Norway, North America and Australia. Follow boats, ships, bridges, mountains, trees, hunters, cows and buildings – temples and power stations through souvenir plates, pastoral landscapes and politically loaded border designs.

Artistic Appropriation

The shifting identity and meanings associated with transferware are perfect for artistic appropriation. Many artists featured in this book are attracted to the unfashionable and unofficial characteristics of the wares as well as being philosophically drawn to the notion of reuse and upcycling.

In a video for Gestalten, John Stezaker talks about today's super saturation of images, and asserts that we have already have enough without the need for any more. By creating collages from forgotten photographs and postcards, Stezaker's work exploits the 'obsolescence of images'. He adds layers, cuts, removes and obscures, but in so doing he creates 'new' material – he reawakens and confers on the reused a new life. There is also much of this going on in the work featured in Horizon. As well as the literal reuse of physical material there is also the reanimation of forgotten or familiarized imagery.

Horizons and Dematerialization

In the digital world, horizons are forever expanding – if the will to see is there. Access to extraordinary historical material is now available at the touch of a finger. Today the US based Transferware Collectors Club hosts a comprehensive website, which is steadily accruing knowledge through its pattern database. In October 2014 together with the Northern Ceramic Society it launched a new online exhibition with comprehensive background material on transferware – Printed British Pottery and Porcelain. In the Netherlands, the complete Sphinx/Ragout tableware factory archives can be studied in the Limburg Centre for Social History, but even more remarkably, digitized they form part of the Memory of the Netherlands website where everything can be accessed online.

Fig. 2 John Stezaker, Mask XLVII (2007). Collage, 25 x 20 cm. Image courtesy of the artist and The Approach, London.

When a phone also functions as a radio, music player, compass, bookstore, alarm clock and much
more, one aspect of the digital age is a dematerialization of (what were) everyday objects. Nevertheless many physical forms do remain important (it’s difficult to eat a meal off an iPhone). Perhaps the resurgence in transferware is linked to its earlier role as part of the new media of its age. In its role as a disseminator of imagery it shares a key function with the iPhone and iPad. Artistic appropriation of the genre necessarily deals with clear, graphic messages and meanings. They are perfectly distributed in new form through the ether.

Duchess, Detroit, Dogs and Dragons

Over the past fifteen years I have been involved in research into a number of ceramic print archives around Europe. Most recently I spent time in the Spode Museum Trust. Copeland/Spode pioneered the development of transfer technologies and its unique collection goes back over two hundred years. Its practice-based archives were (very loosely) alphabetically organized. The following text is based upon the de facto labelling of the printing plate storage pens at the original factory. This text represents the pattern names once used by Spode. It is supplemented by the addition of pattern names from Egersund, Gustavberg and Lidköping where I have also worked. The segueing, which has the characteristic of nonsense poetry, is loosely based on the pen system. It has been slightly refined to assist textual flow.
HORIZON: LANDSCAPE, TRANSFER
WARE, CONFECTION AND COLLAGE

Paul Scott and Silke Naibach


004  Willow pattern, Patterson (Newcastle upon Tyne, England), 1800s. Transfer print on earthenware plate, 23.5 cm diam. Private collection.
007. Chinese pattern, Egersund (Norway), ca 1867. Print from copper template, 44.2 x 35.5 cm. The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo.

010_ Nomad Patterns, Livia Marin (UK/Chile), 2012. Ceramic, resin, transfer print, glaze. 42 x 26 x 10 cm.
'The feeling of culture shock is familiar experience for many. The term "a fish out of water" is an analogy often used to describe these mixed emotions. The Swimmers drawing series plays with the idea that we are the fish, always finding our way through our greater culture.'

BRENDA TANG, SEPTEMBER 2014
012. *The Swimmers*, Brendan Tang (Canada), 2012. Digital drawing, 44.3 x 20.5 cm.


108. Scott’s Cumbrian Blue(s) – Cow in a Meadow (after Thomas Bewick). Paul Scott (UK), 2009.
Assemblage/Vignette – Meadow – Rörstrand Swedish Grace. Inlaid decals and gold lustre on porcelain plate (design Louise Adelborg) 06/15/04/08 with Crooklands Cow No.2, 33 x 26 x 15 cm. Paul Scott Collection.
In 2001 an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease devastated farming communities in Britain. Animals were rounded up in fields and killed, before being piled up in corners awaiting disposal. Burning cattle pyres were a very common sight (and smell) in the border country between England and Scotland. In spite of constant government assurances that this was perfectly safe and the best way of disposing of diseased cattle, some critics blamed the palls of choking black smoke for spreading the disease. The health of those living downwind of pyres was also a subject of medical concern and research. Photographers John Darwell, Nick May and Murdo Macleod recorded and responded to the horrific scenes in images that are still shocking today.

111. Cattle at Netherplace farm in the town of Lockerbie are culled and burned on the farm – a response to the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, Scotland. 4 March 2001. Photograph by Murdo Macleod (GB).
Foot and Mouth No:5 caused controversy when it was first exhibited; the image of burning cows on a bone china platter (made from calcined ox bone) ... for roast beef (?) shocked in a different way than the images seen daily on television and in newspapers.
026. Scott’s Cumbrian Bluets — Fukushima.