

# Scott's take on fracking and fighter jets

**Confected, Borrowed and Blue:**

**Paul Scott**

Holburne Museum, Bath

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Reviewed by Teleri Lloyd-Jones

Entering the Ballroom of the Holburne Museum, you are met by a long table set with plates and platters. Paul Scott's ceramics are consistently on a domestic scale and form – in fact sometimes the objects began life destined for someone's home, but Scott disrupts them, using blanks from industrial sites such as Spode. Initially it may seem an inviting spread, but on closer inspection all is not as it looks.

In Scott's hands, the routine historical or patrician representation of the countryside is juxtaposed with nuclear power stations, 'fracking' and fighter jets.

One of the most satisfying moments in the show comes with an 1840 cow creamer sliced through into two parts titled *Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) – Cow*, After Damien Hirst with *Kintsugi*. It's a neat joke, if glib, but it sits next to *Foot and Mouth No.5*, a platter emblazoned with a smoking pyre of cow carcasses and the arm of a JCB digger coming into view. The *Foot and Mouth* plate, from 2001, packs a serious visual punch that's difficult to put out of your mind. Unlike many of the objects on show, there is none of the traditional stylisation, no Willow pattern, no florals, just a grainy blue-hued image. It's a good pairing, asking the viewer to consider not only their relationship with nature and art but also how tableware mediates stories in

miniature right in front of us as we eat; as we are simultaneously at our most animal and our most civilised.

Elsewhere we must crane and peer to find what we are looking for – the profile of Ai Weiwei set into a Willow pattern, the radioactive symbols in a stylised border or the cooling towers in the back of a rural idyll. Scott's most recent work includes broken plates 'repaired' in the *kintsugi* style, the fissures as startling seams of gold offering an important sense of texture to a show so seemingly dedicated to surface.

The installation also brings added value – the title panels being ceramic plaques depicting replicas of the backstamps with which Scott marks each piece. The linen cloth on which all the works rest bears a list of words – 'Fleurette, Firenze, Foxglove' – which the catalogue explains are names of tableware patterns dating back to the 18th century. As a whole, the installation is thick with the language and emblems of the tradition in which Scott works. In the Holburne's Ballroom, the work is placed in the centre of the room, with the museum's collections of *Imari* and 16th century maiolica on the walls around it, a worthwhile reminder of other international, historic ceramic traditions, and their visual codes.

These are works from the past 15 years of Scott's practice, in no explicit order, so rather than a developing hand we meet a political voice that's also a love letter to an aesthetic tradition. How much the work is meant (or indeed succeeds) as persuasive contemporary political statement, I'm not so sure. Rather, its pull is towards post-industrial elegy and material commemorator, of such past events as the death of the cocklepickers in Morecambe. *Confected, Borrowed and Blue* demonstrates Scott's skill at turning the homely tradition of blue and white transfer printing into something much more uncomfortable. Teleri Lloyd-Jones is deputy editor of *Crafts* magazine

Below left: Scott's *Cumbrian Blue(s), Garden No:2*, Staffordshire plates c.1800-40, epoxy, gold leaf, 33 x 26 cm  
Below right: Scott's *Cumbrian Blue(s), Garden No:3*, Staffordshire plate c.1820 with Chinese export porcelain c.1780, epoxy, gold leaf, 28.5 x 25 cm.  
Both by Paul Scott, 2014

