



Cumbrian Blue(s) and the Hanoi Mosaic Mural



Background:

Vietnam's first major public artwork, the Hanoi Mosaic Mural celebrates the 1000th Anniversary of the city's founding. In April 2010 Paul Scott travelled to Hanoi to add some of his 'Cumbrian Blue(s)' artwork to the mosaic - and in so doing returned a pattern to South East Asia.

The Red River descends from Yunnan, a mountainous region in Southern China and meanders over 600 miles before dying in Vietnam - in the beautiful Ha Long Bay. Located slightly inland, Hanoi sits on the rich river delta, protected by the Red River Dike - its origins stretching back to the eleventh century. The top of its banks have long functioned as a major transport artery and today the streets of Au Co, Tran Nhat Duat, Tran Quang Khai and Yen Phu are some of city's busiest highways. Until recently a grim graffiti strewn concrete faced

brick wall was all that lined the road - protecting the city's residents from some of the noise and pollution of Hanoi's infamous traffic, but in 2007 its facade began to undergo a fundamental change. Inspired by Antoni Gaudi's Park Güell in Barcelona, and Vietnam's long ceramic history, Artist and journalist Nguyen Thu Thuy developed the idea of a huge collaborative artwork that would transform the wall she passed each day on her way to work.

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The oriental decorative has long been assimilated into English tablewares, as the first ceramic printers assiduously copied imported painted porcelain patterns. Burleigh - the last remaining Staffordshire company still producing printed blue and white in the traditional way - is associated with the *Calico* pattern. Its deep cobalt blue iconography was lifted from South East Asian porcelain (fallen prunus blossom on cracked ice) and has become the very epitome of English chintz. Similar versions of the pattern were produced by other British factories in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - some also migrated across the North Sea to Scandinavia. Paul Scott's work investigates the confectionary nature of printed ceramic patterns - it often exploits the complex journeys they have undertaken around the

globe. In 2002 during research at the Gustavsberg Porcelain Museum in Sweden, he unearthed a number of 'Calico' type copper plates, and took a series of relief prints from them. The scanned prunus blossom design from Sweden had already journeyed through painted paper, textile, and porcelain into printed earthenwares. Traveling through continents and cultures, the pattern subtly changed each time it was remediated, Scott's printing re-worked it yet again. He decided that it was time for *Prunus with Cracked Ice* to return to South East Asia as a *Cumbrian Blue(s)* (English) contribution to the Hanoi Mosaic. Here it's appearance and decorative role would change yet again - from covering tableware to an architectural cladding.



The scanned printed engraving was digitally re-worked to fit a thirty metre length of wall and in Hanoi the artwork was printed onto large rolls of paper. Collaged together in the Mosaic Workshop on Duong Hong Ha, the print-outs formed the base plan for skilled workers to re-create giant white blossoms on a cobalt blue ground. As the artwork took form here was a joyful recognition of the pattern - it represents springtime in South East Asia.

Thousands of glazed tile biscuits were nibbled with cutters to fit the giant pixels and glued in place on the paper print. In spite of the high level of tile customisation necessary, the artwork took form remarkably quickly. On completion the mosaic was installed alongside the main highway in Hanoi, not far from the Eiffel bridge over the Red River.

Today, several years later, *Cumbrian Blue(s) Prunus on Cracked Ice/ Calico* now forms a familiar forty metre stretch of mosaic alongside the main highway in Hanoi.

Paul Scott,
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