

## The Cow in a Meadow Series



Living in rural Cumbria, where not so long ago, five milking herds of cows would walk past my home twice a day, it is perhaps unsurprising that I should make these artworks which reflect my immediate surroundings. The fabrication of these works is though also linked to my research into landscape patterns on ceramics...

The Cow in a Meadow series of works developed out of investigations into printed pastoral landscapes on ceramics and their relationship to depictions in other media (painting, prints etc.). In mapping the historical journey of images through paintings to prints on textiles, wallpaper and ceramics it became clear that the narrative was also inextricably linked to contemporary literature and ideas of what constitutes 'landscape'.

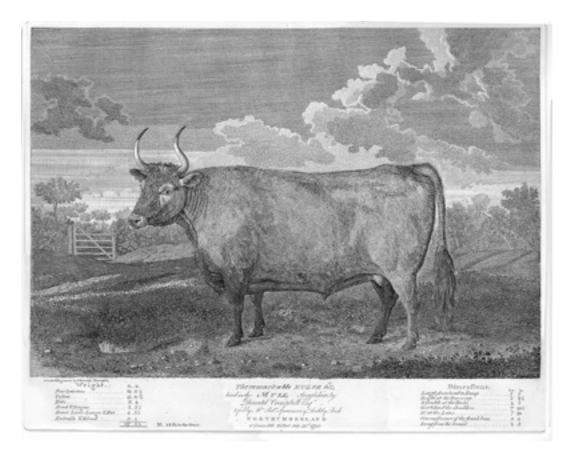
William Gilpin's eighteenth century travel books and his development of the concept of *The Picturesque* ('a term expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty, which is agreeable in a picture') had a lasting impact on the way landscape is viewed (even today). Exemplified by *Observations on the River Wye* published in 1782, his books were illustrated with aquatints (by his nephew William Sawrey Gilpin) based on his own drawings. Nancy Siegel noted that 'not only did Gilpin spread interest in the landscape views of actual sites, but his travels provided a means for potters to create defined series based on location or theme'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Gilpin, W., (1781) An Essay on Prints, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Blamire, London.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Siegel, N., (2003) Along the Juniata Thomas Cole and the dissemination of American Landscape Imagery p.81, University Washington Press.

Gilpin was also quite specific about compositional ideals, the structure of topographies (fore middle and background) and even makes mention of cattle in the landscape:

In adorning your sketch, a figure, or two may be introduced with propriety. By figures I mean moving objects, as wagons, and boats, as well as cattle, and men. But they should be introduced sparingly. In profusion they are affected. Their chief use is, to mark a road — to break a piece of foreground — to point out the horizon in a seaview — or to carry off the distance of retiring water by the contrast of a dark sail, not quite so distant, placed before it.<sup>3</sup>



The Remarkable Kyloe Ox, Thomas Bewick, copper plate engraving, 1790. (image courtesy of the The Bewick Society)

A contemporary, the esteemed wood engraver and author Thomas Bewick, produced a series of images of sheep and cattle for his book *The History of Quadrupeds*. He also made several detailed copper plate engravings of prize wining cattle. The *Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s)*, *Cow in a Meadow* series was initially produced as a response to these engravings. At the time when I was also examining the compositional structures of works, the notion of 'ground' being a plate or tile and the structurally vertical (trees, figures, cows, buildings) represented by sculptural forms.

Amy Gogarty has also observed that the works are quite not as innocent as they seem: By layering a romantic eighteenth-century graphic of a tree against a realistically rendered power plant, [Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) Sellafield) or posing cows, complete with genetic identification tags and monstrously engorged udders on a delicate bed of printed forage, [Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) Cow in a Meadow,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Gilpin, William (1794) Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; And On Sketching Landscape, To Which Is Added A Poem, On Landscape Painting p. 77

vignette] Scott forces us to acknowledge the degree to which we repress, naturalize or simply fail to notice the ubiquitous presence of industry and capital in our midst. He makes us recognize the degree to which we are prepared to rationalize and compromise our awareness in order to preserve our fantasy intact. Although subtle, these works critique and expose ideological fallacies, making them the most political work possible.<sup>4</sup>

Paul Scott November 2013.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Gogarty, Amy, from Confected Landscapes and Contemporary Vignettes in <u>Ceramics Art and Perception</u> No: 75, 2009 p. 56.