



## Cumbrian Blue(s) Spode Works Closed



### Background:

In July 2009 I was given permission to visit the closed Spode Works in Stoke. Whilst there I was allowed to collect and take away a small quantity of abandoned tableware. I also took photographs of the derelict site. It was a sad poignant experience. I well remember the site as a thriving working factory and recall my meetings over the years. These included with Robert Copeland (great great grandson of Josiah Spode's original business partner) author of a classic books on Spode,<sup>1</sup> later with Paul Holdway and Trevor Druose in the engraving department as I researched my book *Ceramics and Print*. In 2003 during practice based investigations<sup>2</sup> in print archives at the Spode Museum Trust. I recall the 'connoisseur tour', buying white-ware and seconds to work on. Although these research periods in Spode were relatively fleeting, they were memorable.

After the visit in July 2009 I made a series of artworks from the collected tableware. Many of the found plates were covered with unknown dried substances (presumably once liquids), some were mouldy and others simply dusty. I began to explore how I could use these industrial remnants, at first simply firing the coated pieces to see what happened. Some of them disintegrated in the kiln into razor sharp shards. In others the dust or mould simply vanished, burnt away in the kiln, but on some forms the dust particles -

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<sup>1</sup> Copeland, R., *Spode's Willow Pattern and other designs after the Chinese*. Studio Vista, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Arts Council funded.

maybe glaze or ceramic pigments, rust fallen from factory roof beams, or copper from electrical fittings - have fused in the glaze, vitrified evidence of abandonment.

**Artwork:**

Some plain bone china plates were cleaned up and used as the vehicle for a series of in-glaze screen-prints depicting the factory in its death throws.

The first pieces made as a result of the visit were first exhibited as an installation at the Potteries Museum as part of the first British Ceramics Biennial in the autumn of 2009. On their return to my studio the individual pieces making up the installation have been gradually reworked - mainly with the addition of gold lustre.



*Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed.* In-glaze decal on Spode's Italian porcelain casserole dish (39cm x 30cm x 7cm) salvaged from kiln area (marked *Made in Czech Republic*). Paul Scott 2009/10. Collection of the V&A 2011.

Five large bone china plates feature images of the abandoned factory (photographed July 2009) filtered through the classic *Italian* pattern. The border pattern is formed from the main gates and the sign above them. They include the following:



*Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed, Factory.* In-glaze decal on Spode bone china plate salvaged from the old Spode Factory. Potteries Museum and Art Gallery collection



*Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed, Engraving Workshop.* In-glaze decal on Spode bone china plate salvaged from the old Spode Factory. Potteries Museum and Art Gallery collection





*Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed, Murray Curvex.* In-glaze decal on Spode bone china plate salvaged from the old Spode Factory. Potteries Museum and Art Gallery collection



*Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed, Kiln.* In-glaze decal on Spode bone china plate salvaged from the old Spode Factory. Potteries Museum and Art Gallery collection



*Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Shops Closed.* In-glaze decal on Spode bone china plate salvaged from the old Spode Factory. Potteries Museum and Art Gallery collection.

This unique set of plates was acquired by the Potteries Museum in 2011.



Main gates to the Spode factory

Most of the other objects are from the famous *Italian* pattern so associated with Spode, or the *Willow* pattern.

Casseroles: Back-stamps on casseroles indicate that the last factory outputs were cosmopolitan - including from the Czech Republic and Portugal.



*Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed.* In-glaze decal on Spode's *Italian* porcelain casserole dish (30cm x 23cm x 7cm) salvaged from kiln area (marked *Made in Portugal*), 2009/10. RISD Art Museum Collection (USA)



One of two casseroles: *Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed, Kiln.* In-glaze decal on Spode's *Italian* porcelain casserole dish (39cm x 30cm x 7cm) salvaged from kiln area. (marked *Made in Czech Republic*) Paul Scott 2009/10. National Museum Art Architecture and Design, Oslo, (Norway), Boston Museum of Fine Art (USA)

One small porcelain soup bowl - shows two printed labels in melted cobalt blue. paper labels found on objects in the factory indicating their origin - in China.



*Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed, Tienshan/Xyinye Pattern (05/10/09/09). In-glaze decal collage and gold lustre on Chinese porcelain soup bowl collected from abandoned Spode factory 15/07/09. Paul Scott 2010. Bury Art Museum Collection (Contemporary Art Society purchase).*

At the dawning of the age of print, Spode's innovative printed landscape patterns on ceramics created an iconic ceramic genre. Its decline in the new digital era is characteristic of our age, not restricted to Stoke on Trent, but replicated in many towns and cities across Britain, Europe and North America. *Spode Works Closed* is a commemorative for Spode, and for the wider loss of manufacturing, skills and knowledge which have continued to haemorrhage away.

**Work Still Available:**

A number of objects from this series is still available for sale. These include an extra *Spode Shops Closed* print which was also applied to a salvaged Spode bone china plate.





Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Shops Closed. In-glaze decal on Spode bone china plate salvaged from the old Spode Factory, 30cm dia.



Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed. In-glaze decal on salvaged Italian small bone china bowl with unknown factory coating fused into the glaze, 16cm dia.





Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed. In-glaze decal on salvaged broken Willow bone china plate, dia 30cm, 2010-2016. Work in progress (will be Kinstugied).



Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed. In-glaze decal on salvaged bone china platter and ladle. Dust from the factory roof and floor are fused into the glaze, 42cmx32cmx10cm, 2010-2012.



Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed. In-glaze decal on cracked Spode's Italian porcelain casserole dish (39cm x 30cm x 7cm) salvaged from kiln area (marked *Made in Czech Republic*). Paul Scott 2009/10.



Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed. In-glaze decal on cracked Spode's Italian porcelain casserole dish (39cm x 30cm x 7cm) salvaged from kiln area (marked *Made in Czech Republic*) 2015 -2106. In progress - will be glued and kinstugied.



*Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed. In-glaze decal on Milkmaid sampler plate found in the design/testing area of the old Spode Factory. 2012*



*Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed. In-glaze decal on sampler plate found in the design/testing area of the old Spode Factory, 2012.*





Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Closed. In-glaze decal on pink Willow sampler plate found in the design/testing area of the old Spode Factory, 2014.

Paul Scott April 2016



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