



Tray Collages



Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s), Wildflowers (after Tom Petty) No:2. Collage, cut details from assorted transferwares, with sliced clay pipe and gold leaf, 38cm x 28.5 cm. Paul Scott 2016.

Recent works have involved the use of (edited) print trays to house selected remnants of our industrial past. In my home we have an old print drawer once used for type blocks in which we place small mementos of journeys, places and people, it has become a domestic repository of memories. The tray itself is also a remnant, a memory of the print media revolution which helped facilitate the industrial age and enable the democratisation of imagery.

I work with ready made forms, white-ware plates, old tableware from antique/junk shops and e-Bay. I print on them, cut them up and collage with them. I enjoy using old objects because they have already had a life and their surfaces carry something of their stories. Transferware, Staffordshire's great gift to the world melded the technology of the paper printer with vitreous melted cobalt blues to create mystical, exotic images on a domestic affordable scale. I harvest details from old, cracked and broken wares and give them new lives and meanings in collages that meld historical detail with contemporary fragments of my own printed ceramics.

My tray collages composed as artworks were originally developed in response to museum commission briefs, they enabled me to create narratives and associations in a structured framework.



Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s), Ruin No:3. Collage, cut details from assorted transferware plates, with gold leaf in re-purposed print tray, 370mm x 295mm. Paul Scott 2016

Ruins No:3:

Printed nineteenth century tablewares readily appropriated engraved illustrations. In true Gilpinesque style many classic patterns feature Italianate ruins or exotic confections readily associated with the Middle or Far East.

In the twenty-first century the romantic ruin is still with us, but it has been updated by the actual devastation and destruction wrought by our industrial decline and Middle Eastern wars. In *Ruins No:3* I allude to the contemporary world. I have collaged assorted nineteenth and twentieth century transferware details alongside fragments of my own ceramics. These include

details from the *Willow* pattern, *Spode's Italian*, middle eastern titled wares, *Woods Castle* series in pink, produced as a response to re-awakened interest in the pastoral and country idyll after the First World War. Contemporary insertions include a low flying jet, and a detail (bottom left) from *Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s)*, *Spode Works Closed*, *Shops Closed*. 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 tablewares. I also took photographs of the derelict site. It was a sad poignant experience. I well remember 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,¹ later with Paul Holdway and Trevor Druose in the engraving department as I researched my book *Ceramics and Print*. In 2003 during practice based investigations² 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.



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.

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

² Arts Council funded.

After the visit in July 2009 I made a series of artworks from the collected tableware. Some salvaged 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. Five large bone china plates featured images of the abandoned factory (photographed July 2009) filtered through the classic *Italian* pattern. The border pattern was formed from the old entrance and the sign above it. *Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) - Spode Works Shops Closed* featured a close up sign of the main gate with its notice about the closed shops. The unique set of plates was acquired by the Potteries Museum in 2011. The *Ruins* collage detail features a detail of the *Shops Closed* test print on a broken salvaged Spode plate.

Willow in a Box:



Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s), Willow in a Box. Sliced early 19th century Willow pattern pearlware bowl with gold leaf set in re-purposed print tray, 29.5cm x 37 cm. Paul Scott 2016.

In my very early career I naively submitted my work for selection to contemporary craft organisations for exhibition or membership (after all working with ceramics automatically assigned you as a craftsperson or potter). My printed objects were almost always rejected or dismissed with the observation that the work simply did not 'address the form'. This was hardly surprising as my focus was always with image and pattern. I eventually ended my quest for acceptance by establishment organisations and resolved to pursue a distinct artistic journey on my own. Over the years, I have however irregularly returned to the matter of 'the form' producing 'cut out' trees, scenery or vignettes. In other work with flat printed cups and bowls variously soda, salt, wood fired I overtly examined the language of ceramics as well as its obsession with domestic form.

Most recently I have returned to the thorny issue of the three dimensional form in *Willow in a Box*. Here I have sliced up a large early nineteenth century cracked willow pattern bowl and assembled it in a box. The process of cutting and re-assembling was illuminating for me, enabling me to process an object that has lain unused in my studio for several years. In its new form, in quite startling clarity, small compartments reveal the bowl's patterned surface forcing us to look again at an object whose generic presence is now so familiar to us as a sort of 'cultural wallpaper'. The device of cutting and placing detail in small compartments provides a methodology for processing and understanding printed forms. In presenting them in a quite new light the collage enables us to see them very differently.

Wildflowers (after Tom Petty) No:2:

The second in a series of works after Tom Petty's *Wildflowers* song. In 2014 I was invited to take part in an exhibition curated by textile artist Michael Brennand-Wood. The single work had to 'reference the three classic musical storage formats pre digital, the 12" Vinyl or Album, a 7" Single or a 4.5" CD in size'. The subject of the work was to 'reference an Album or particular track/song. It could be popular, classic, iconic or wilfully obscure, in any media or combination of media.' The original work was CD sized and took the form of a small mosaic.

Wildflowers was an album that I listened to a lot when my daughter Ellen was very small. As such it is associated with many happy memories.

*You belong among the wildflowers
You belong in a boat out at sea
Sail away, kill off the hours
You belong somewhere you feel free
Run away, find you a lover*

Go away somewhere all bright and new
I have seen no other
Who compares with you
You belong among the wildflowers
You belong in a boat out at sea
You belong with your love on your arm
You belong somewhere you feel free
Run away, go find a lover
Run away, let your heart be your guide
You deserve the deepest of cover
You belong in that home by and by
You belong among the wildflowers
You belong somewhere close to me
Far away from your trouble and worry
You belong somewhere you feel free
You belong somewhere you feel free

The collage boxes represent another articulation of *Cumbrian Blue(s)* artwork.

Paul Scott
August 2016



www.cumbrianblues.com