



Three Gorges, After the Dam 3



The Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze river in China is the largest hydroelectric dam in the world. It stretches nearly a mile across and towers 575 feet above the world's third longest river. Its reservoir stretches over 350 miles upstream and forced the displacement of close to 1.9 million people. Construction began in 1994 and was scheduled to take 20 years and over \$24 billion to complete. The controversial project has already had immense environmental impact.

The Willow Pattern was designed in Stoke on Trent for industrial mass production. It represents an archetypal English view of the oriental, and the exotic; originally alluding to the expensive, hand-painted landscapes on imported Chinese porcelain. It seemed an appropriate image to use in a work, which concerns the drowning of vast tracts of Chinese landscape, for dubious economic and environmental benefit.

The work uses an antique *Willow Pattern* plate made around 1840. I have erased most of the pattern and decorative design, re-glazing the form and replacing the generic design with the floodwaters of the Three Gorges Dam. Wrapping decals over the form often produces creases and 'imperfections' in the print but these are part of the language of printed ceramics. Close examination of antique printed wares will almost always reveal the hand of the original decorator - in the case of this platter the cut of the border pattern at the top right of the plate, made when the tissue print was applied over one hundred and fifty years ago .

This is one of the third series of The Three Gorges print/plate and are made using antique tablewares. The previous two series (of five artworks) were made on oval and round bone china plates. This features one of the tourist boats that now ply their trade across the new lake. It could be inferred that the object is one of an edition (I only ever do at most ten prints)... however in the case of works on old tablewares - prints are seldom put onto the same form, so the notion of an edition is pretty flexible. Whatever, the series are usually of up to five pieces - never more than ten. Each object is individually titled, signed and given a unique number. This is usually a combination of the number of the object placed in the kiln and its date - but sometimes the numbering is more random.

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