



Cumbrian Blue(s) - Wood fired Trees

Between 2007 and 2011 I undertook a series of wood firings with Nina Hole¹ and Anne Katrine von Bulow² in Denmark³ and Hungary⁴. Soda and salt glazed, wood fired trees are the results of these collaborative events.

The wood fired objects play on the methodology of production, the resultant artefact and the words and language used to describe them. They are also beautiful objects - the flash of flame or soda/salt glaze and the bleeding iron or cobalt print - expressive graphic qualities imbued by fire and process, complemented by gold splash or painted line.

Von Bulow and I explored the nature of the firing process to bring out the unique graphic qualities that salt or soda firings can imbue, but doing so without losing detail and fidelity. We found it necessary to challenge traditional firing techniques - developing our own methodologies which involved minimizing ash circulation within the kiln, more controlled, shorter reduction, and careful control of soda and salt application at high temperature.

The Scott's Cumbrian Blue(s) Willow after Bernard Leach series involved the re-interpretation of a Bernard Leach tile held in MMU Special Collections, Sir Kenneth Green Library in Manchester. Father of the studio pottery movement Leach held a disparaging view of anything involving print and ceramics. In his classic book A

¹ www.ninahole.com

² www.anekatrinevonbulow.dk

³ www.ceramic.dk

⁴ www.icshu.org

Potters Book he wrote that 'Well painted pots have a beauty of expression greater than pottery decorated with engraved transfers, stencils or rubber stamps.'

I decided to test Leach's assertion that the painted had a 'greater beauty of expression' than the printed and produced a screen-printed object based upon his original (painted) *Willow* tile. The form was soda fired in a wood kiln in part mimicking the original journey of Leach's work. Finally gold lustre was splashed onto the new form and the tree re-fired.

Now, in Manchester, viewers can for themselves consider whether the original has a greater beauty of expression than the *Cumbrian Blue(s)* re-interpretation...

Paul Scott
February 2014

