

The Society of Decorative Art Curators

Newsletter Spring/Summer 2013



Rhi Palmer balances concrete on stacked porcelain bowls © Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery

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From the Editor



Kirsty Hartsiotis

You may have been wondering what SODAC was up to, as unfortunately we were unable to put out a newsletter in the autumn last year due to staffing difficulties.

We are back with a cracking issue, and you'll notice that we have made a change: we are now in full colour! We hope that you enjoy seeing our pictures as they were meant to be shown. We think it

Welcome to the Spring and Summer edition of the SODAC newsletter.

makes a big difference—we hope you do too.

Thank you so much to our contributors. SODAC continues to be a place to share knowledge, advice and news on the decorative arts and craft collections.

In this issue you will find an article looking at working with students in higher education—illustrating the growing synergy between museums and universities in all areas of museum work, from expertise to student shows. We also look at some new work done on piqué snuff boxes at the Wallace Collection for a new catalogue, and an article on a day of subversive ceramics at the Holburne Museum. To finish there is a review of a ma-

jor new decorative arts gallery at the V&A—one close to my own heart, the furniture gallery.

Meanwhile, a number of projects are expected to be completed this year: the reopening of the Higgins Art Gallery & Museum in Bedford—have a look at their blog to see where they are up to—my own Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, and No. 1 Royal Crescent, Bath.

We'll be looking at these new spaces in future issues, along with your articles! Next newsletter will be due out in October, and I am happy to accept submissions at any time between now and the middle of September.

Textile Society Museum, Archive and Conservation Award

The Society offers awards of up to £5,000 for a textile related project within the museum, archive or conservation sector. The Award is designed to support textile related projects within a museum, archive, or conservation studio for exhibition, publication or conservation and will help achieve greater awareness and access for the public. The next round of awards will be made in the summer of 2013. The deadline for applications is 1 June.

Last year's bursary was awarded to the Holburne Museum, Bath for their current exhibition by Catalan artist Joan Sallas, *Folded Beauty: the forgotten art of folded linen*. The exhibition runs to 28 April. The exhibition celebrates the ancient art of linen napkin folding in the UK for the first time, and will tour to Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire from 22 May to 27 October. In 2011 the award was given to Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery for *Lost in Lace*, and to the William Morris Gallery.

To apply for the award, visit the Textile Society's website: www.textilesociety.org. There are also awards for student bursaries, and a professional development award, which is open to textile professionals.



John Sallas's work on display at the Holburne Museum © Holburne Museum

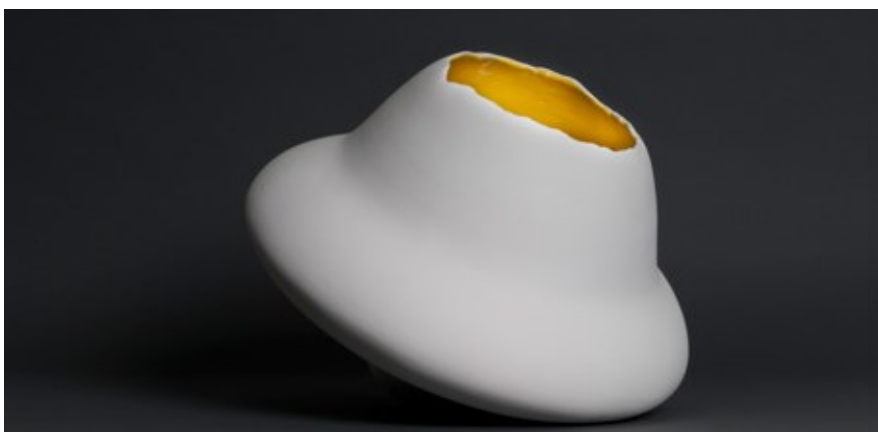
No 1 Royal Crescent opens Servant's Wing



No 1, Royal Crescent in Bath has opened the doors to its Servant's Wing of the house as part of its continuing restoration and refurbishment of the Geor-

gian building and interiors. The house has been reunited with its original service wing, and visitors can see how this building has been restored and returned to its 18th century design. As well as the restoration, museum facilities have been inserted into a space that was originally open courtyard behind a curtain wall that faces out onto Royal Victoria Park. Included in the re-opening is a new exhibition in the new Andrew Brownsword Gallery, *Home Truths: Georgian Living Unlocked* which showcases 18th century objects from the museum's collection which have played a part in shaping how we run our own homes today. The rest of No 1 is due to reopen in the summer.

COLLECT 2013



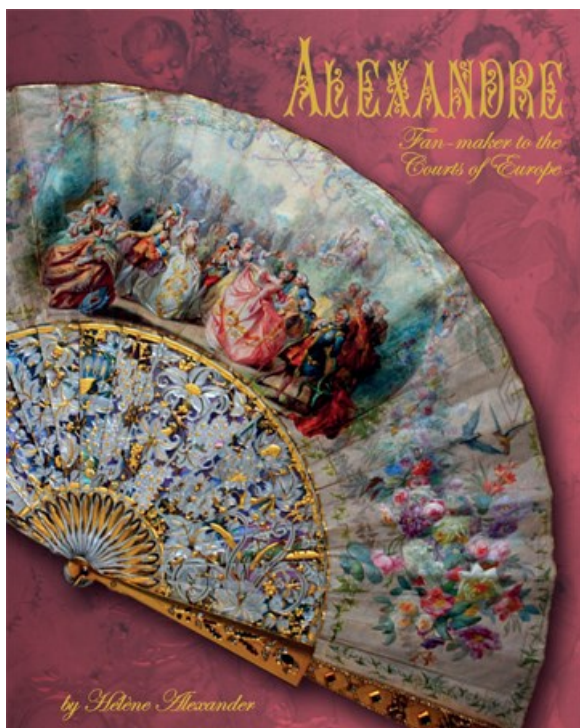
Yellow, Maria Akesson, 2011 © Gert Germeraad

The international fair for craft celebrates its 10th year this year at the Saatchi Gallery in London. COLLECT brings together an international selection of galleries, this year ranging from blås&knåda from Sweden and Adrian Sassoon from the UK, to Hanart TZ Gallery from China and Galerie Rosemarie Jäger from Germany. A 2013 highlight will be a room dedicated to contemporary glassware, and the Project Space returns

for the third year in order to present concept-led work by individual artists. Eleven artists working across a range of disciplines will all present new work made specifically for the Project Space.

2013 also marks the final year of Art Fund Collect, the programme which funds contemporary art curators to purchase works of contemporary craft at COLLECT.

New Publication: Fan Museum, Greenwich



The Director of the Fan Museum, H el ene Alexander, has recently brought out this lavishly illustrated book focusing on the oeuvre of celebrated fan maker, F elix Alexandre (b.1823). Alexandre was active in an age when the art of fan-making reached a glorious apogee, and this publication follows an exhibition in late 2011 at The Fan Museum. This exhibition brought together, for the first time, an array of exquisite fans from the maison of Alexandre, including loans from Royal Collections. Carousels of figures, putti, flowers; *montures* of sumptuously carved ivory, engraved mother of pearl and lavish gilding – even the most cursory glance at an Alexandre fan reveals an era of enormous affluence where emperors and royalty were the celebrities of the day.

The book, *Alexandre: Fan Maker to the Courts of Europe* by H el ene Alexander, retails for £25.00.

V&A to open textile centre in Kensington

In October 2013 the V&A will open the new Clothworkers' Centre based at Blythe House in Kensington Olympia. This centre will provide world-class facilities for the care, study and enjoyment of the V&A's extensive textiles and fashion collections. It will bring the collections together under one roof for the first time.

Designed by Haworth Tompkins Architects, it will provide a spacious new public study room, a seminar room, upgraded conservation studios and modern, custom-built storage offering visitors and researchers increased access and improved facilities to study and enjoy this important collection. The main entrance of Blythe House will also be reinstated to create a more welcoming street presence with a new reception area for all visitors to the V&A archives.

The Clothworkers' Centre is being made possible thanks to a generous lead grant from the Clothworkers' Foundation with further support from many others.



Matteau evening dress, 1996 (Les Femmes collection) © Vivienne Westwood, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

New Acquisition: Temple Newsam, Leeds



Temple Newsam in Leeds has recently acquired Lady Muncaster's workbox. This item, made of ebony inlaid with silver, is particularly significant as an exceptionally fine and complete example of a Regency workbox, with all the requirements for an elite woman's needlework, one of the most highly esteemed of female accomplishments.

The inlay was carried out by Charles Reily and George Storer, and was made for the marriage of Frances Catherine Ramsden, who married the 3rd Baron Muncaster in 1828. Frances was the granddaughter of the last Viscount

and Viscountess of Temple Newsam, and a frequent visitor to the house as a child and as a married woman.

The workbox is on display at Temple Newsam with a small selection of recent acquisitions including an exceptional Elizabethan silver gilt cup and cover, 1578 by the royal goldsmith Affabel Partridge, formerly in the Pierpont Morgan Collection; a rare silver rococo shell basket by Phillips Garden, 1758; and a fine Grecian day-bed, c. 1804, possibly by Chippendale the Younger and formerly in the Library at Newby Hall.

New Acquisition: Court Barn Museum, Chipping Campden

Court Barn Museum has recently acquired a silver goblet, designed by Robert Welch (1929-2000), commemorating the 900th anniversary of the founding of the White Tower at the Tower of London in 1078. Made in silver gilt, it was commissioned by HM Government in a limited edition of 50.

Each goblet was hand raised and finished by the silversmith John Limbrey, who worked with Welch; Welch remarked that: 'It was just as well that 1978 was not a busy year in the Campden workshop'.

Welch's design for the goblet emphasised the historical background of the Tower of London. The lobed base was inspired by a medieval chalice and the Gothic lettering was directly taken from the medieval Studley Bowl (one of the earliest existing pieces of English domestic silver).

Welch believed in the importance of good design in everyday life and the role that design could play in supporting traditional craftsmanship. This piece with its simple elegance and contemporary feel represents his attempt to show that it was possible to produce a worthwhile and honest commemorative piece.

The acquisition was made possible by grants from The Art Fund and the V&A Purchase Grant Fund.



The Decorative Arts and Higher Education – a case study



UCF Students on a tour of the China Connection Gallery

Over the past 4 years, collaborative work with local Higher Education (HE) providers and Plymouth City Art Gallery & Museum's Decorative Art collection has gone from the odd guided tour and collaborative display, to a sustained and regular cycle of projects.

With a growing emphasis in HE towards practical application of skills for students and elements of work-based learning, the museum found that it could offer the ideal opportunity for students in the modules entitled 'external design brief'. Acting as a client and setting a brief for students enabled the museum to offer interesting projects which ultimately formed part of a final course mark. Most importantly from a curatorial point of view, these projects were embedded firmly in the collections.

This way of working developed at Plymouth initially with Plymouth College of Art (PCA) and then with other arts courses at the University of Plymouth and Uni-

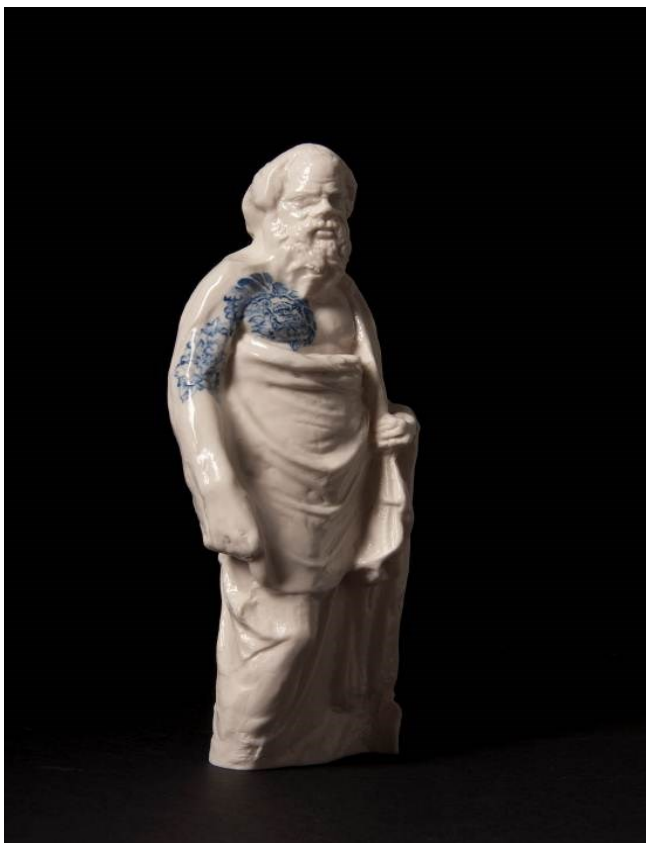
versity College Falmouth (UCF). The projects produced some really fascinating work based on the collections and not only engaged students but have also resulted in more engaging displays for visitors too.

The following is a case study of one of these projects carried out in 2012 with Third Year Contemporary Craft students at University College Falmouth. The case study will explore how the project unfolded and will discuss

some of the outcomes, to proffer a way of working with HE students that is mutually beneficial and easily embedded within museum and collection programmes.

Inspired by *Sinopticon*

In 2012, PCMAG hosted an exhibition entitled *Sinopticon: Contemporary Chinoiserie in Contemporary Art*. It was a multi-site exhibition hosted across the city at sites including the Plymouth Arts Centre and the National Trust's Saltram House. The exhibition simultaneously offered the opportunity to encourage more people to look at the historic collections and so the Museum's China Connection Gallery (displaying Chinese export porcelain and the influence on English porcelain) provided the perfect focus.



China Ink by Ashley Thompson

As a result, students were set a brief to respond both to the themes of the exhibition but also, and site-specifically, to the China Connection Gallery. Students visited the museum and were given a tour of the collections with a talk as an introduction to their brief. Staff also attended interim presentations at UCF to provide feedback and pose questions with the aim of getting students to think about their creative practice and experience a working dialogue with a museum curator.

Between UCF and museum staff, 12 students from the year were selected to present at the Museum. Keeping to the external design brief format, the presentations were framed as formal 'pitches' to a panel of museum staff including the Exhibitions Officer, Dec Art Curator and the external Curator of Sinopticon. This method enabled students to develop skills of talking about their work and how to present concepts as well as gaining the experience of presenting to a panel, something they will likely be

required to do as creative practitioners in their future careers. From 12 students, 6 were shortlisted to have their work displayed in the Museum which was installed for the duration of the Sinopticon exhibition.

Working in Response to the Collections.

The range and depth of responses to the collection during the brief was wide ranging and a fascinating insight into the collection. It helped curatorial staff to understand what aspects of the collection were most popular amongst students and what aspects inspired students working in the contemporary crafts. It also helped to challenge current curatorial approaches to the collection, highlighting objects and themes that were of interest but that had perhaps previously been neglected.

For example, student Ashley Thompson chose to explore English porcelain figures, combining this with his own interest in contemporary culture, graffiti and tattoo art. Although not selected for display, the potential of this type of work to engage a new audience with the porcelain collection was clear and opened up thinking about the possibilities of new and different interpretation in the gallery.

Another interesting aspect was the variety of media incorporated into the student responses – a benefit of working with students across the contemporary crafts and not just in a single discipline. To this effect, we saw glass, woodwork and jewellery introduced into a ceramics gallery. The fact that these pieces were so tightly linked to a brief and that students had made them specifically for key areas in the gallery meant that they worked seamlessly and engaged visitors to look at the historic collections again in a new way.

A short questionnaire enabled the museum to gain feedback from the students about their experiences. This has provided encouraging support for the ongoing partnership between HE courses and the Decorative Arts.

Outcomes

Students build on and develop their own creative and artistic practice.

All the students questioned felt that the brief challenged or stretched their practice in some way. 70% of students felt that the brief offered them the opportunity to experiment with new methods or materials. For some, this was an opportunity to work in a different medium to their normal practice eg: jewellery makers experimented with enamel and ceramists with glass. Asked if they would continue to work on ideas generated from the museum brief, over half the students agreed, saying they would use the techniques and concepts they had learned. For example Rebekah Lockley's interest in Neolithic Chinese pottery and tripod forms has been extended beyond this project to her new work, recently displayed in a graduate show at the Devon Guild of Craftsmen.



Hannah Batsone's necklace referenced the darker side of trade with China and the Opium wars.

Students consider wider aspects of working in the creative sector

The brief gave students the opportunity to get a taste of what working life beyond their course could be like in a competitive sector where clients often have specific ideas about commissions. The museum acted as the client which gave students active experience of working to someone else's brief and to someone else's timescale, outside of the University environment.

It also gave students the chance to consider audiences: who the audience for their work would be, who the audience for the museum is, and how they might reconcile the two to produce a work that answers the brief, but is also uniquely by their hand. Even for those students who didn't perhaps ever reconcile this problem, the discussions and experience were beneficial and raised a wider awareness of how to work with external partners. Asked what skills they learned, one student stated 'how to manage myself in a tight environment such as that at the museum and making sure the audience will be concentrating on the right subject.'

Beyond working to a brief, students also gained experience of working with museum professionals. This not only included curatorial staff through discussing ideas and concepts, but also conservation staff in terms of how work could potentially be installed. This made students consider scale and how the work would be displayed e.g. *could* it be drilled to the back of the case, *could* items on display be moved or temporarily taken out?

Finally, it also made students consider how they presented their work, not only verbally in the presentations, but in writing. The selected 6 students were asked to write a label of no more than 50 words explaining their concept for display in the Museum. This proved quite a challenge to students but is yet another skill that they can take on and use in future projects.

Students benefit as practitioners

For those students selected to have their work dis-

played in the museum, the contribution of this to their CV and to their experience is clear. Hopefully the recognition given by the students at the museum increased their confidence and perhaps helped them to raise their own profile in the sector. Three students were recently shown at the Devon Guild of Craftsmen's 'Get Fresh' exhibition, showcasing recent graduates whilst Mayumi Yamashita's work *A Presage* was picked up by Crafts Magazine and her work the title image in 'The Graduates' section (Crafts Magazine, May/June 2012 p69.)

The museum provides an inspiration

One of the main ambitions for the museum is to become a 'go to' resource for local HE providers and students, to show the museum collections as a source of inspiration for future makers. These sorts of projects certainly raise an awareness of museum collections amongst students and hopefully contribute towards the museum's aims in the long term.

During evaluation, over half of students said that as a result of the project they would be more likely to look to museums and collections as research tools or for inspiration in the future: 'I'm interested in historical elements so the museum will continue to inspire me in the future.' Having the opportunity for staff feedback and dialogue with students also helped to give an idea of a museum's role and how they operate: 'It helped me understand more of what museums do and how they're important.'

The Future of HE projects

Although no evaluation of the impact on student projects on the visiting public has been carried out to date, anecdotal evidence from staff in the galleries indicate that the work is very popular. It has introduced changing displays into a hitherto largely static permanent gallery and staff and visitors alike are very interested in hearing about the next student project to be displayed in the museum. Visitor evalu-



A Presage by Mayumi Yamashita on display in the gallery

ation is certainly an area that will be explored more thoroughly in the future.

The continuation of HE projects within the Decorative Arts has seen them constantly extended, refined and improved over the years. With museum staff growing in confidence about how to manage projects and what can be achieved, more ambitious work can be realised. For example, this year's project with UCF will shortly see the temporary installation of new seating in the gallery as well as a sound installation. Future plans include looking at students responding to some of the historic properties in the Arts and Heritage Service .

Continuing with and improving projects has not only helped to embed the museum as a regular source of projects for HE providers but has also contributed to deeper relationships as a whole across other departments in the museum. Members of staff from across

the Curatorial and Education teams now regularly set projects for HE courses – e.g. working with Education students from the University of Plymouth to develop and create new resources for the galleries or setting architectural students a brief to design a model for a new museum extension.

Conversely, it has also seen the Decorative Arts extend to play a role in briefs with students in different disciplines. For example, University of Plymouth English students have worked to produce alternative labels in the China Connection gallery utilising poetry and creative writing techniques. Graphic design students were set a brief to design a poster to promote a new commission by Clare Twomey in the Museum; one student's design was so successful it was actually used on the promotional leaflet and posters for the commission.

Ensuring the right outcomes

Hopefully the evidence cited above stands testament to the benefits to collections that working with Higher Education can provide. A key aspect to the success of such projects is that they have to be mutually beneficial. Ultimately the brief needs to be carefully chosen to suit the museum and its collections and enough time given to a project to make it a success. However, at the same time, students also need to benefit from the experience and what has been proved on many occasions is the importance of feedback from museum staff; why people's work was selected above others and what could be done to improve. The most effective projects are strictly timetabled to provide deadlines for students with regards to presentations and final products. This too, is all part of the brief which gives students the experience of working with an external partner whilst at the same time, keeping staff time to a pre-arranged commitment.



Bryony Maple's cast glass teapot shipwreck displayed next to porcelain salvaged from the Nan-king Cargo

Plymouth has found that working with students in such a way creates easily manageable project that not only offers different ways of looking at the Decorative Art collections but also ends with new and engaging displays in the museum. Students gain experience of working with external partners and the museum can offer them a platform to display their work, while, at the same time giving them experience and practice at wider skills of presentation and working in creative dialogue. Ultimately, this model offers students a way of meaningfully engaging with Decorative Art collections which will hopefully provide inspiration for future generations of makers.

Alison Cooper
Curator of Decorative Art
Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery

A Piqué Snuff Box in the Wallace Collection



Fig. 1: *Bête à Ballon*, 1740-1750

The Wallace Collection's forthcoming catalogue on gold boxes by Charles Truman (1) provides the opportunity to look afresh at some of the piqué items in the collection, which ranges from jewellery, cutlery, to a writing set and snuffboxes.

Piqué was a particular favourite of the Sir Richard Wallace – the inheritor of a collection passed down through four generations of his family – although only three boxes survive in the collection today, he owned 13 in 1872 (2).

Piqué is the technical method of inserting gold, silver or bronze pins (*piqué à point*) or strips (*piqué pose* or *piqué coulé*) or sheet metal (*piqué l'incrusté*) into warmed turtle shell or ivory. The term derives from the French *piquer* meaning to prick. The principal method for making piqué is to warm the shell – usually from a hawksbill turtle found in the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean – with olive oil or boiling

water, and massage it until malleable. The shell is a natural plastic, and when warmed can then be moulded, and the metal pins inserted. As the shell cools it constricts and tightens around the pins. As turtle shell is heated it becomes darker. To avoid this effort was taken not to over-heat it, which required great skill. For this reason lighter, or “blonde” turtle shell was prized over its darker counterpart.

This exquisite *Bête à Ballon*, or ball-shaped snuffbox dates to between 1740 and 1750 (fig. 1). In fig. 2, it is possible

to see some gold strips have been lost, although this does allow us to see that the precise shape of the gold decoration gouged out of the turtle shell.

This box is made using dark turtle shell and has no inside lining. This enables the full mottled pattern of the turtle shell to be seen when the object is held to



Fig. 2: Detail of *Bête à Ballon*

the light. It is decorated with superb craftsmanship using a mixture of *piqué a point*, *piqué posé* and also *piqué incrusté*. The box features a very delicate diamond shaped or “diaper work” pattern surrounding an acanthus-like leaf decoration on the lid and an asymmetrical shell-like design on the bottom. These are all interspersed with swags and scrolls of gold.

This shape of box was popular in the 18th century and examples exist in other collections. For instance, the Royal Collection a very similar piece, also made of dark turtle shell, with comparable



Fig. 3: Card box

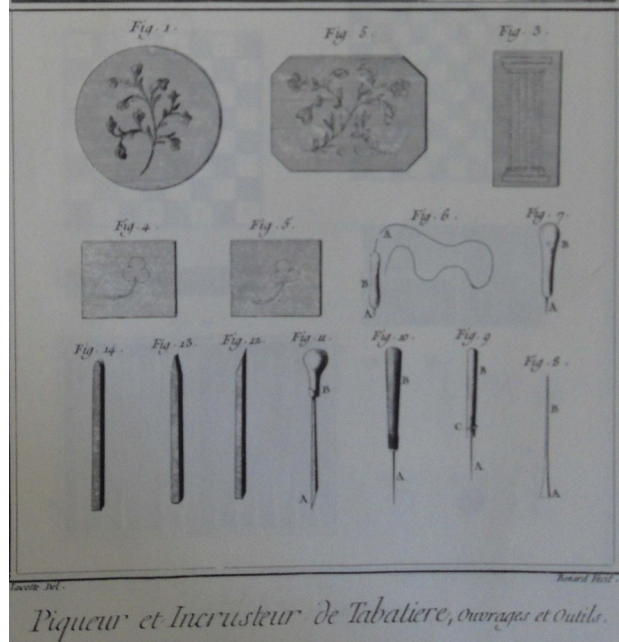
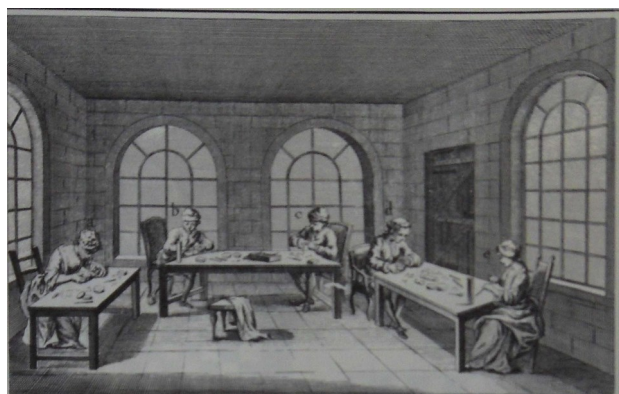


Fig. 4: Diderot's *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*

rococo scrolls and diaper work, and a strikingly similar thumb piece and hinge (3). While this shape is usually found in turtle shell, there is also an unusual box in the Victoria and Albert Museum's Gilbert Collection which is the same shape but made out of agate of around 1740 (4).

In his research for the forthcoming gold box catalogue, Mr Truman has identified a couple of possible design sources for the pattern on the box's lid. One is Genoese silk dating to between 1730 and 1750, now in the V&A's collection (5), and the other is some red flock wallpaper dating to the 1730s also in the V&A (6). Design sources for *piqué* items are seldom mentioned, however, and there is surely scope for more research into the origins of the patterns these objects bear.

One avenue worth exploring might be the shipments of Meissen porcelain given as gifts between prominent families in Saxony and Italy in the 18th century. The two regions were linked by royal marriage in 1738, increasing the likelihood that Meissen objects

would have been displayed in Naples around this time. The Meissen factory had access to prints and designs from Asia, and if Meissen pieces were in circulation in Naples in the 18th century, they could have inspired piqué pieces such as a blonde card box of around 1740, now displayed in the Wallace Collection, which is decorated with chinoiserie scenes (fig. 3).

Diderot's *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* not only defines the term piqué but also shows (fig. 4) an image of a piqué work shop, and tools used (7).

The image

shows the workers needed a lot

of natural light – unsurprisingly given the intricate nature of the work. Some of the workers are women. It could be argued that the work suited women, as their hands were smaller, or because they were more accustomed to sewing and therefore more used to delicate work.

Horn and turtle shell products were not new to the 18th century. The Romans are described by Pliny as owning furniture veneered with turtle shell, which was considered very luxurious. Pliny even names the inventor of this method of decoration as Corvilius

Pollio (8).

The Huguenot medallist and engraver John Obrisset (who came from France to London in 1691), was one craftsman who used horn and turtle shell in his products. Another was the French cabinet maker to the King, André Charles Boulle (1642-1732) - who is known to have held a copy of Pliny's *Natural History* (9).



Fig. 5: Detail of signature of Gennaro Sarao, 'Sarao Fecit Neapoli'.

However, who actually invented the technique of piqué is still unknown. A handful of Neopolitan craftsmen such as Della Torre, Laurentini, and Gennaro Sarao are known, as signatures have been found on pieces made by them.

Signatures how-

ever, are very rare, perhaps because the objects are often too small and often too covered in decoration to place one. The Wallace Collection is fortunate to have a signed piqué inkstand by the craftsman Gennaro Sarao (fig. 5).

Naples was the great centre of production of piqué items, although examples from France, Britain and Germany also exist. In Naples, the craftsmen there were known as "*tortugai*". Although the technique flourished under the Bourbon court, Neapolitan records show that as early as 1683 the Duke of Gravina

paid 3 ducats for a *'tabacchera di tartaruca chi-odettata'* (10) (snuffbox of nailed turtle). This suggests that Naples was already a centre of production of luxury items made from decorated turtle shell by the time the Bourbons arrived (11).

Items made from piqué tended to be small and portable. This is conceivably due in part to the 18th century visitors to Naples on their grand tour bringing back these items as souvenirs. Because very little of the Naples archives survive, we can only get glimpses of the trade through visitor's letters and the occasional inventory. Robert Adam, for example, in a trip to Naples in 1755 bought three *'..very handsome snuff-boxes of yellow and black tortoise-shell (12) studded with gold...'* (13)

This type of tourism continued into the 19th century when piqué had a revival in popularity. Author Clara Erskine Clement Waters wrote in 1894: *'...The tortoise-shell industry is almost a specialty of Naples; at least, the finest of this work is made here and in great quantities. The wages paid the tortoise-shell workers are*

better than formerly, although the frightful rooms — at the top of the fondaci in order to get light — where these beautiful objects are made, are totally unfit for human habitants. The exquisite lorgnettes, combs, brooches and other articles are produced by a veritably outrageous "sweating system"' (14). This quote sadly does not go onto explain why they were unfit for humans, or indeed what the sweating system was.

It is interesting to note that two other boxes in the Wallace Collection (fig 6 and front cover) use panels of piqué within a gold frame, much like the use of lacquer or micromosaic plaques.

This points to either the re-use of a larger, broken down, piqué object, or that panels of piqué were bought to be inserted either by the goldsmith or the individual who commissioned the piece. This subject has not been extensively researched, but could teach us much about the production and consumption of piqué.

When examining this *Bôte a Ballon* it is easy to see why piqué was so popular in the 18th century, and why there was a revival of interest at the time Sir Richard Wallace was collecting. Not only is it pleasing to the eye but also inspires an appreciation for the intense labour and craftsmanship that went into making it and for the flexible qualities for turtle shell itself.

Carmen Holdsworth
Curatorial Assistant
Wallace Collection



Fig. 6: Piqué box in the Wallace Collection

Note:

All Wallace Collection images supplied by the kind permission of the Trustees of the Wallace Collection.

The Wallace Collection of Gold Boxes by Charles Truman is out in Summer 2013.

Endnotes

1. *Catalogue of Gold Boxes in the Wallace Collection* by Charles Truman (Wallace Collection Catalogues: 2013 forthcoming)
2. *The History of Collecting and Display of Gold Boxes and objects of vertu in the Wallace Collection*, by Rebecca Wallis, in the *Catalogue of Gold Boxes in the Wallace Collection*.
3. Royal Collection number : RCIN 22047
4. Gilbert Collection number: LOAN:GILBERT.1036-2008
5. *Baroque and Rococo silks*, Peter Thornton, London, 1965. Plate 114, pp149, 194, 1922 referenced in *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Gold Boxes*.
6. Victoria and Albert Museum number E.3594-1922 referenced in *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Gold Boxes*. Information supplied by Clare Brown of the Department of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion, Victoria & Albert Museum.
7. *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Denis Diderot, 1751-1775.
8. *On Horn and Tortoiseshell* from 'Transactions of the Society, Instituted at London, for the Encouragement of Arts Manufacturers, and Commerce, p347, Vol 52, Part II (1838-1839) pp334-349. JSTOR.
9. Thanks to Mia Jackson for this information.
10. *L'arte della tartaruga a Napoli nel Settecento* by Luciana Arbace, from *L'arte della tartaruga: le opere dei Musei napoletani e la donazione Sbriziolo-De Felice: Napoli, Museo Duca di Martina nella Villa Floridiana* exhibition catalogue 11 Dec 1994 – 20 April 1995. p23
11. *L'arte della tartaruga a Napoli nel Settecento* by Luciana Arbace, from *L'arte della tartaruga: le opere dei Musei napoletani e la donazione Sbriziolo-De Felice: Napoli, Museo Duca di Martina nella Villa Floridiana* exhibition catalogue 11 Dec 1994 – 20 April 1995. p23
12. It is important to note that the term "Tortoise shell" was used interchangeably with "Turtle Shell", since the material actually came from a sea turtle and not the land tortoise we now only use the term "Turtle Shell".
13. *Robert Adam and his circle*, John Flemming, London, p157, 1962
14. *Naples: the city of Parthenope and its environs* by Clara Erskine Clement Waters, p224, 1894

Subversive Ceramics: a symposium at the Holburne Museum



Facing page: *Road Kill*. 1997. 200 prostrate terracotta dogs. © Bita Fayyazi

What do we mean by the label subversive? Are today's ceramicists using subversive themes or tropes to explore our world and cultures? Is it possible to call any art or craft subversive in today's post-modern society? On 9 November 2012 the Holburne Museum, Bath, hosted a symposium dedicated to subversive ceramics to answer some of these questions and explore the practice of artists and makers who use subversive themes in their works. The symposium was aimed primarily at practitioners, and there were a large body of students from Cardiff's School of Art and Design at the event.

The day, 'Subversive Ceramics' accompanied a display by the Dutch ceramic artist Bouke de Vries, *War and Pieces*, which was on display in what has become the Holburne's contemporary craft space: the table in the Ballroom. This piece, on display until December last year, was inspired by the extravagant sugar sculptures of the 17th and 18th centuries, and the huge banquets held on the eve of battles.

The day began with presentations from Dr Jo Dahn from Bath Spa University and James Beighton from mima, Middlesborough. Both offered interpretations

on what defined the 'subversive' in ceramics.

Dahn discussed the political dimensions of subversive art, how it was transformative to the social order, but could be subtle and non-belligerent. This probably isn't always the case, and if subversive art needs to shock in some way, and most of the speakers seemed to feel that this was necessary, then it increases the likelihood of aggression. The example she showed, however, was very non-aggressive: to do otherwise would not have been fitting for the subject. In 2010

Stephen Dixon, a maker well-known

for his political and social comment, began work on a series of heads of political prisoners of conscience, starting with Aung San Suu Kyi. The surface of the work is broken up, almost into tectonic plates, but the delicacy of the medium still reflects the romanticism around the Burmese leader. Dixon wants us to see the work as both entire and fragmented, and hopes that as the viewer must piece it together themselves, they will become engaged both with the piece and also with the subject.

Beighton suggested that a number of key factors fed into subversive art, and illustrated the first: context. Even something that has no subversive agenda by the artist could function subversively in the right – or wrong – setting. He showed an example of fairly traditional studio ceramics looking subversive (or out of place?) at the Frieze art show 2012.

Although we now are open to political content in art, Beighton drew our attention to one of the late 20th century's most shocking works of art: *Myra* by Marcus Harvey, 1995, and suggested that works like this have encouraged our ability to accept politicised, subversive work.

He went on to discuss three areas that lend themselves to subversion in ceramics – and in the wider art world: the body, domesticity and fragility. The pieces chosen seemed to show that context and understanding make a big difference in the works success as a subversive piece. Scale, fragmentary states, decay: all these things undermine the idea that ceramics are decorative and domestic, as seen in the mima show *Possibilities and Losses* featuring Clare Twomey and Neil Brownsword, amongst others. But their protests against the destruction of the British ceramics industry may be a subtle subversion for the public. More obvious, especially within its cultural context, is Ai Weiwei breaking or changing ancient Chinese vessels in his piece *Dropping the Urn*.

Dr Claudia Clare introduced the differentiation between subversive and satire. She suggested that satire has an intention to entertain as well as ridicule, and thus through this quality of entertainment – spectacle – in today's art world much of what we might term subversive is in fact satire. She mentioned Justin Novak's delicate *Disfigurine* series, and suggested that these works did not fully conform to her criteria for subversion. Novak says of the work, '...the figurine has historically represented the dominant culture's norms and ideals, the disfigurines speak of the damage inflicted by those very same expectations.'¹ Although the images of these figurines harming themselves with scissors are shocking, Clare suggested that with the delicacy of execution and by the distancing motif of mounting on decorative plinths they also pander to the very concerns they are trying to address.

As a counter to that Clare showed an example of a piece that she considered to be truly subversive. For me, it was the piece that had the greatest impact of the day. It had a highly politicised message within its native culture, but the piece made a powerful impact on the audience at the Symposium. The artist was Bita Fayyazi, and the piece, *Road Kill*, 1997. Clare told us that Fayyazi collected the corpses of dogs knocked down by cars in her native Iran, stored them in her freezer, and then cast the dogs as terracotta sculp-

tures. She then placed them back in public spaces and filmed people's responses. She also buried the real dogs with an Islamic ceremony. Clare explained that in Iran dogs are considered unclean, and have little value in society. Most contentious was the burial of the dogs with the ceremony. Fayyazi made her comments on her society with a very real threat of harm or imprisonment. Another example made by Paul Scott later in the day, of Ai Weiwei, showed the very real dangers of creating subversive art. A debate could be had on how to make art truly subversive in a culture that considers itself to be liberal and open to free speech. This issue may suggest why these works from states considered repressive in the West are more shocking – and potentially more powerful – than works produced in, for example, Britain commenting on British issues.

The afternoon session began with Moira Vincentelli's appraisal of the potters, mostly – but not only – female, creating pottery in the Pueblo culture of South West America, and how, from out of constructed tradition bound up by both the tourist and the collecting trades a new subversive slant to the work has taken hold amongst the artists.

The final two presentations were by makers themselves, first Paul Scott, and then Bouke de Vries himself. Paul Scott looked at the use of kitsch in art to make subversive and/or political/social statements. He looked first at how art can go in a full circle from art to kitsch then back to art again. Looking at Gainsborough's *The Blue Boy*, he drew a line from the original work to reproductions on pot lids in the 19th century and many other commercial reproductions. He looked at Howard Kottler's *Blue Boy* plate series: for example *Would Blue Boy* which shows a decal print of the Blue Boy with a decal print of wood grain superimposed over the top. He suggested that the Blue Boy's status as a 'gay icon' allowed Kottler to explore his own relationship with his homosexuality. He then showed a piece by Leonard Fowlem that expands on that theme, *Famille Verte with Blue Boy in Closet* which also subverts the ceramic tradition by being made of 'rubbish' – a cheap piece of slip cast



War and Pieces, 2012, mixed media by Bouke de Vries at the Holburne Museum © Photograph Karen Wallis

earthenware mounted with a 'junk shop garniture'. Although these pieces are subversive, particularly of the status of art, they are only accessible to a cognoscenti who already understand the references, and have thus have, to greater or lesser extents, bought into the contemporary art world.

He then went on to discuss the pervasive influence of willow pattern and other blue and white designs such as Wild Rose, on contemporary ceramicists, including himself. Scott's own series have tackled controversial topics. With his Cumbrian Blue(s) series he has explored the impact of nuclear power on the land and landscape, shockingly shown the results of the foot and mouth crisis in 2001 and commemorated the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery with a series referencing the cockle pickers who died in Morecambe Bay in 2004 – the suggestion being, of course, that slavery still continues today. He explained how he had put the prints of a drowned willow pattern onto a tea service, as the workers who died came from an area of China that produced tea. The patterns were put on older porcelain from the

early 19th century, referencing the time of the abolition in 1807.

Scott intends his pieces to be controversial and potentially subversive, but he admitted he wasn't sure what to make of the fact that Sellafeld power station has a set of that series sitting proudly in the plant. Is it still subversive if it is co-opted by those who have been targeted? Ceramics, though have multiple meanings as items to be used as well as being art objects – does this give them the opportunity to be more subversive? He then went on to say that he was proud to live and work in a place

where he can create subversive works: as Ai Weiwei can't.

The last presentation was from Bouke de Vries. He concentrated on giving us a resume of his practice leading up the creation of *War and Pieces*, his largest piece to date. De Vries started as, and remains, a conservator, and this has affected his whole way of working. He started making art from the broken pieces left in his workshop. He felt it was sacrilege to throw them away, so decided instead to create new pieces, using his conservation techniques to explode the pieces rather than repair.

De Vries has explored subversive or shocking subject matter in his work – for example his Safe Sex series using Phallic ducks, or Leda and the Swan re-enacted with a plastic doll and a Chinese ceramic duck. Other pieces like *Binge Drinker*, 2009 explore contemporary issues, but might be termed satire by Dr Clare as they are unfailingly amusing as well as shocking. Of his Chairman Mao series, he says he was '... inspired by the harrowing biography of Mao Zedong by Jung Chang and John Holliday. My Mao series uses 1960s

Cultural Revolution cult-of-personality porcelain busts and statues. I made thousands of hand-made porcelain skulls to represent the nameless millions who died because of his whims. It's interesting to learn that at the height of the Cultural Revolution there were more busts and portraits of Mao than there were people in China.²

Subversive from a curatorial point of view is his *Bow Selector* piece on display at Pallant House, Chichester until 30 June 2013. De Vries worked with the gallery's collection of Bow china to create the installation on the stairwell, but he also took one piece, already broken but still accessioned, and transformed it into a new work. What is the work now? Is it a Bouke de Vries, or is it still the piece of Bow that was accessioned? If many of the subversive pieces we saw over the day were challenging to the ceramics tradition, then this piece was uniquely challenging to museum professionals.

War and Pieces itself was an ambitious piece for de Vries, and he acknowledged that it was somewhat subversive of his own practice. For such a large piece he had to actually break pottery to use in the finished piece, as opposed to using already broken pieces. It was clear that this had disturbed him. The piece itself was inspired by the atom bomb cake made for a military party commemorating the unit that had done the atom bomb testing after WW2, but instead a flurry of ceramic and 'sugar' warriors battle it out. Subversive? I personally wasn't sure, but from observing people interacting with the piece in the gallery the reactions I sensed were not shock but delight, surprise and a sense of intrigue in the complex forms that made up the piece.

The day finished with a lively plenary session in which the nature of subversive was discussed by the practitioners present. Maybe not everything we saw that day was subversive – and no doubt there were many subversive potters out there who were not mentioned – but the day certainly showed that the idea of subversive ceramics, and of using ceramics to express a message, creates debate and provokes reactions. It is exciting to see craft tackling the issues



War and Pieces by Bouke de Vries, 2012 at the Holburne Museum (detail) © Photograph Tim Higgins

that make up our lives and, on occasion, delving into the political sphere. Not just ceramics though – when's the next meeting on subversive craft, as there are textile designers, metalworkers, jewellers, glass-makers and all the other crafts who are tackling these issues too.

Kirsty Hartsiotis
Curator of Decorative Arts
Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum

Endnotes:

1. <http://www.justinovak.com>
2. Pryor, John-Paul *Interview with Bouke De Vries*, October 8, 2010 <http://www.anothermag.com/>

Review

The Dr Susan Weber Gallery: A new furniture gallery at the V&A

The impressive renewal of the V&A continues with the opening in November 2012 of the museum's first ever gallery devoted specifically to the subject of furniture. The gallery has been conjured out of a long tunnel-like space that was previously a ceramics gallery, perhaps in the process contributing to the stack-'em-high warehousing of ceramics in the adjacent recently refurbished galleries but if so a justifiable sacrifice.

The design of the gallery is understated but effective and appropriate, a blend of off-white walls and contrasting dark wood plinths, columns and architraves. It is coherent and clear, avoiding the temptation of being too showy, of seeming to try a little too hard. The lighting is well balanced and – to me as pleasing as anything – there is, in contrast to some of the museum's other materials galleries, no surfeit of glass between viewer and the great majority of the objects. Texture, structure, detail, three-dimensionality are so much easier to appreciate and there is simply so much more pleasure to be had in viewing the objects. The con-

sistent whine of alarms triggered by the over-curious is on balance a price worth paying.

An emphasis on the practical and the visual underpins the whole gallery. There is much about materials and techniques, form and function, rather less about the place of furniture within architecture or about the functioning of the furniture business. There is, of course, plenty to learn about these elsewhere, such as in the British Galleries, and this approach gives the gallery an admirable clarity of purpose.

The visitor is greeted on entry to the gallery by a large elaborately carved mahogany armchair, an object whose functional use is immediately apparent and familiar but which through its oversize scale suggests the ritual, symbolic, presentational power of furniture. This is the Master's Chair designed for and supplied to the Joiners' Company in 1754 by Edward Newman, an object whose layers of interest and significance are revealed on the adjacent touchscreen. This shows constructional details, the Chippendale design that informs it, the inscribed brass plaque that records its commission, an Isaac Cruikshank print of 1809 showing a similar chair in use at a meeting of the Common Council at the Guildhall – thus setting the tone admirably for the rest of the gallery.



The Dr Susan Weber Gallery, Victoria and Albert Museum © Victoria and Albert Museum

The spine of the gallery is a series of groups representing 'the basic types of furniture' in a seven-century chronological sequence, an effective approach borrowed from the ceramics galleries that progresses from a mid-14th-century casket carved and painted with



Recreation of section of commode made by Dan Mifsud, next to the original commode by Mathieu-Guillaume Cramer, Paris, about 1770-1775 © author's own

scenes from the story of Tristan and Isolde to Boris Dennler's *Wooden Heap* drawer unit of 2012 described below. One virtue of this approach is that it makes visible the back of items, an enlightening perspective that, for example, reveals the rather crude construction underlying the flashy japanned and silvered façade of a japanned cabinet-on-stand of about 1690 to 1700 from Hardwick Grange in Shropshire.

Such uncovering of deception, revealing the secrets behind tricks that make furniture look the way it does, is a strong recurrent theme of the gallery. Traditional veneering and hidden dovetails sit in a continuum that extends to such recent innovations as 3D -'printed' resin, robotic manufacture and – the newest piece in the gallery – Swiss designer Boris Dennler's deceptive *Wooden Heap* drawer unit which looks like piled sticks of wood but is actually a set of six identical manufactured drawer units that have walnut blocks glued onto them and are stackable in different configurations.

This all works to demystify furniture, to reveal aspects that expert curators know and study and make inferences from but which are normally left unseen and unexplained to the average museum visitor. Even the ritziest pieces become accessible when we

are shown how they are put together and why they are made the way they are. The use of floating-panel construction for strength, lightness and to allow for expansion and contraction of the wood is perhaps relatively familiar, but less so and therefore particularly interesting is the series of pegged tenon joints that create the complex curved back of a seventeenth-century Chinese *huali*-wood armchair. These insights are all the fruit of the curatorial and conservation research processes but this hard-earned and essential expertise is lightly worn and shared in an engaging, intelligent manner.

Particularly effective in this respect is the Parisian commode of about 1770 to 1775 by Mathieu-Guillaume Cramer shown alongside a recreation of a section of its oak carcass 'exploded' to demonstrate its joints and construction. Made in-house by Dan Mifsud, the recreation's only inauthentic note is perhaps the lovingly high quality of its finish. The touchscreen labelling of the piece is a good example of how well this works, offering through photographs and other images a curator's eye-view of the object – a diagram showing the construction of a drawer, a back view showing the floating-panel construction, a close-up of the gilt bronze apron mount and the nails

that fix it in place, a detail of the marquetry, another detail showing the stamps *CRAMER* for the maker and the authorising stamp *JME* of the Jurande des Menuisiers Ébénistes. A further good example is Arlington Conservation's recreation of a chair from Houghton Hall cut away to reveal the complex structure of its upholstery, shown alongside one of the original chairs of about 1725 to 1730, probably by Thomas Roberts.

The two long sides of the gallery divide into sections devoted on the one hand to techniques of construction and decoration and on the other to small interleaved 'capsule' displays exploring significant figures in the history of furniture, from Thomas Chippendale and George Brookshaw to Frank Lloyd Wright and Eileen Gray. The latter are opportunities to expand on the social history of the trade, design and workshop practices, contexts of commissioning and use.

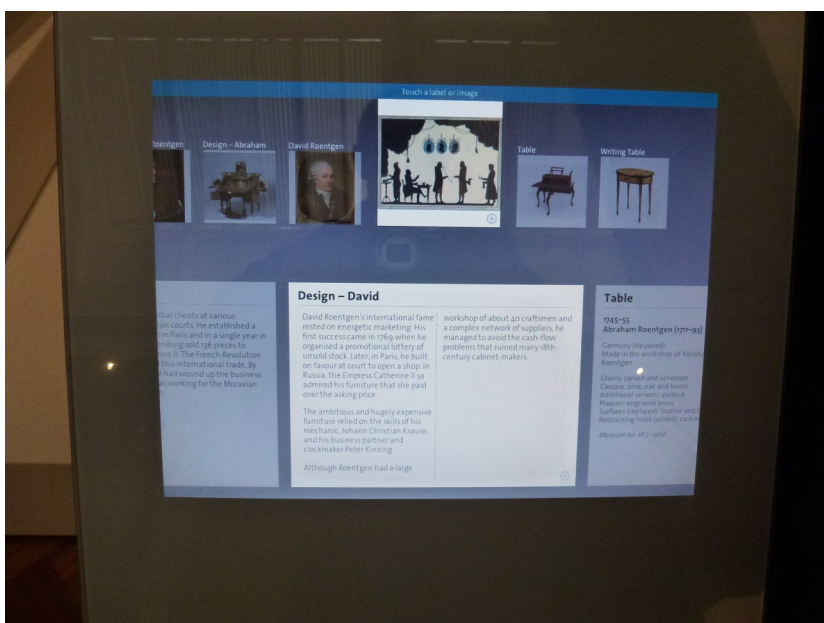
The first of the technical sections look at joinery and cabinet-making, with a small case of relevant tools and a film showing the making of an angled tenon joint. An imaginative and effective loan from the British Museum, an Egyptian New Kingdom chair leg (about 1550 to 1070 BC) with a mortise-and-tenon joint and the remains of a pegged seat rail, eloquently makes the point that all basic joinery techniques

were in use as early as about 1200 BC.

These technical sections cut across time and material in interesting and often surprising ways. In 'Cutting Sheet', for example, the point is made that plywood was far from a 20th-century invention, exemplified in a chair made in about 1760 possibly by William and John Linnell with an open trellis back cut out from a sheet plied in three layers, a telling comparison with the Josef Hoffmann adjustable armchair of about 1908 with pierced plywood sides and back. The same section develops the point with examples in other materials such as sheet glass, cardboard and high-density polyethylene board.

Another technical section explains moulding processes, from wood to papier mâché to plastics and including the deceptive 'pseudo-wood' known as composition or 'compo'. Other sections cover stone decoration, veneering, marquetry and inlay, carving (ranging from a hideously accomplished 'Bombay blackwood' chair of about 1870 from west India to a scorched oak block seat by Jim Partridge and Liz Walmsley), turning, upholstery, gilding and silvering, digital manufacture, cladding and mounting, lacquer and japanning, painted and graphic decoration. This amounts to a great deal of fascinating, visually stimulating information that will surely bear many repeated visits.

The innovative interpretation in the gallery merits particular mention, given that there are no traditional printed labels and all information about objects is provided digitally via touchscreens. Those who worry about the dependability of technology will find some justification for their suspicions – I noticed one frozen screen, for example, and there are a few design issues such as the irritation when exploring the explanation of chair upholstery of having to switch backwards and forwards between the helpful numbered diagram and the key to it, which is on a different page. These are, however, minor quibbles and overall the system is a bold triumph. It allows the use of images



Example of touchscreen labelling, Dr Susan Weber Gallery © author's own

showing objects from various angles inside and out, such as the underside of Abraham Roentgen's mechanical writing and card table pierced with holes to let air out when the spring-loaded desk section is pushed down. There is a mass of such layered information, from images showing objects *in situ* or in use to exploration of design, workshop and business practices. With a main image identifying each object and a 'frieze' of images allowing easy movement to adjacent objects or themes, the system is easy to navigate. Text can be readily enlarged and – crucially – there is lavish provision of touchscreens to ensure ready access to information

for all when the gallery is busy. This is an ideal to aspire to and perhaps shows digital interpretation coming of age. The *caveat* has to be that it's great if you can afford it, not simply the generous supply of hardware but the time and resources required to create the wealth of material that justifies this approach.

Other interpretation includes the use of short audio commentaries in the small displays about major figures in furniture. Here, museum curators and invited outsiders, such as architect and designer David Adjaye on Frank Lloyd Wright, provide short well-scripted audio commentaries that bring life, variety and personal enthusiasm to the interpretation. The only downside here was the problems with fuzzy sound that I experienced with two handsets.

In the centre of the gallery stand two materials tables, large horizontal touchscreens incorporating an interactive plan of the gallery and touch-sensitive material samples (ebony, leather, PVC and so on) that when touched and as if by magic conjure up a sequence of informative pages on the table top.

Finally, as I had hoped beforehand, there is gallery seating that is not simply imaginative and attractive but also an experiential learning experience, in the form of designer Gitta Gschwendtner's engagingly



Gitta Gschwendtner, *Chair Bench*, 2012 © author's own

surreal U-shaped *Chair Bench* (2012). This is a visual puzzle comprising copies of six different historical chair designs with backs and corresponding legs jumbled up. It's also a chance to consider the functional and formal merits of the designs. Wish as I might for Frank Lloyd Wright's chair to be the most comfortable, it was the Windsor chair that won hands down.

If the V&A's furniture gallery is a milestone for simply existing at all, it is so for other reasons too. For me it is a model of intelligent, appropriate and unforced use of interpretative technology. Perhaps more importantly, in an age in which academic curatorship is under siege from those who seem to doubt its convertibility into meaningful, high-quality, accessible visitor experiences, it achieves just such an experience by relying not on the glamour of 'masterpieces' but on the intrinsic interest and merits of in-depth collection-based expertise. My congratulations to all involved.

Andrew Renton
Head of Applied Art,
Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales

What's on @ Amgueddfa Cymru—National Museum Wales



Julian Stair's new exhibition of monumental vessels, *Quietus: the Vessel, Death and the Human Body* is on from the 6 April to the 7 July at National Museum Cardiff.

Julian Stair is one of the world's most acclaimed ceramicists. This major solo exhibition explores the containment of the human body after death. It features a collection of Stair's very beautiful funerary vessels, from cinerary jars to monumental life-size sarcophagi.

Drawing upon the symbolic language of ceramic vessels, it offers an alternative means of engaging with this challenging subject.

In May and June there will be a series of talks on Friday lunchtimes relating to the exhibition from Andrew Renton, Cardiff's Head of Applied Art, James Beighton, Senior Curator at mima and from the artist himself. See the website www.museumwales.ac.uk for details.

Quietus is a touring exhibition in collaboration with mima: Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, where it showed last year. It will later be touring to Winchester Cathedral.

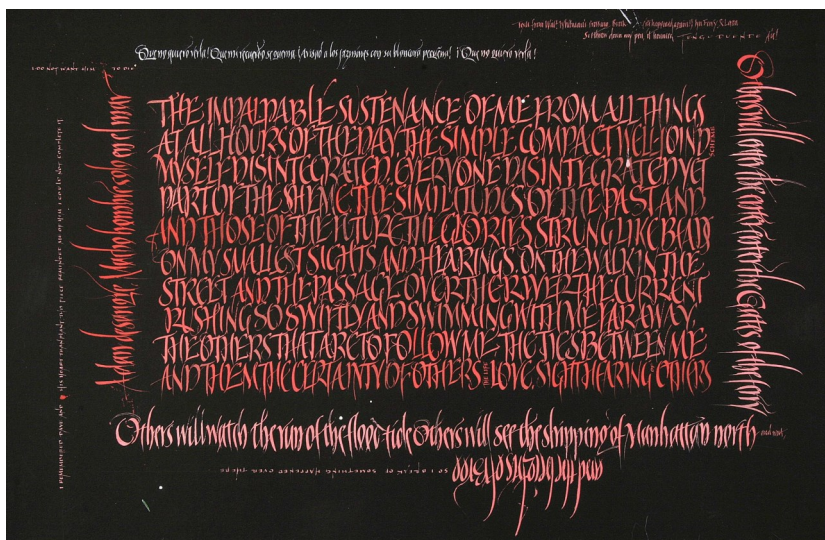
Find out more at www.museumwales.ac.uk

What's On @ Crafts Study Centre, Farnham

Internationally recognised calligraphers Ann Hechle and Ewan Clayton (pictured) draw on the ground breaking work of Edward Johnston, CBE, and his protégé Irene Wellington in their inspiring new exhibition *Head, Hand, Heart: reflections on a practice*. The exhibition runs until 18 May 2013 at the Crafts Study Centre in Farnham, Surrey and will feature work from all four artists.

Using the Crafts Study Centre's calligraphy collections as a point of reference Ann Hechle and Ewan Clayton reflect on the lives and work of these pioneers and discover how various aspects of their practice are present - and transformed - within their own work today. "We are seeking to reveal some elements of the creative process and how the work of Johnston and Wellington influence today's leading calligraphers," explained Jean Vacher, Curator. An artist's talk will be held as part of the exhibition Wednesday 10 April 2013 from 5.30 to 7.00 p.m. It will feature a conversation between Ann Hechle and Ewan Clayton introduced by Curator Jean Vacher.

Find out more at www.csc.ucreative.ac.uk



What's On: Listings

Decorative Art Exhibitions around the UK April 2013—September 2013

London

Design Museum *Extraordinary Stories about Ordinary Things* until 2015

Fan Museum, Greenwich *The Fan in Europe 1800-1850* until 12 May

Fashion and Textile Museum

Kaffe Fassett: A Life in Colour 22 March—29 June

Zandra Rhodes Unseen 12 July—31 August

The Glamour of Bellville Sassoon 20 September—11 January

The Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green

A Treasured Collection until 1 September

War Games 25 May—2 March 2014

Sir John Soane's Museum *Marking the Line: Ceramics and Architecture* until 27 April

V&A

Treasures of the Royal Courts until 14 July

David Bowie is 23 March—11 August

Sky Arts Ignition—Memory Palace 18 June—20 October

Club to Catwalk: London Fashion in the 1980s 10 July—16 February

Masterpieces of Italian Majolica until 6 May

Michael Lloyd Twelve Vessels until 7 July

The Wallace Collection *The Westminster Treasure* until 28 April

William De Morgan Centre *Mrs Stirling and Old Battersea House* 1 May—29 June

William Morris Gallery *The Art of Embroidery: Nicola Jarvis and May Morris* 6 July—22 September

South West

Fashion Museum, Bath

Fifty Fabulous Frocks throughout 2013

Laura Ashley: The Romantic Heroine 13 July—26 August

Holburne Museum, Bath

Folded Beauty: Masterpieces in Linen by John Sallas until 28 April

Coppiced Wood: New Work by Junko Mori 6 July—8 September

No. 1 Royal Crescent, Bath *Home Truths: Georgian Living Unlocked*

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery *Stitching and Thinking* until 7 April

Leach Pottery, St. Ives *Heart, Head, Hand* throughout 2013

Newlyn Art Gallery *Rituals are Tellers of Us* 4 May—29 June

Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery

Plymouth Porcelain: A New Collection by Clare Twomey

Gordon Baldwin: Objects for a Landscape until 11 May

Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro *Philip Booth Et In Arcadia Ego* 16 June—29 September

Burton Art Gallery & Museum, Bideford *Michael Brennand Wood: Forever Changes* until 19 April

Russell Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth *50/50 Inspired by Japan Mosaics, Textiles and Paper* 1 April—15 September

Museum in the Park, Stroud *Stroud International Textile Festival* 27 April—26 May

South and East

Pallant House Museum, Chichester *Bouke de Vries: Bow Selector* until 30 June

Stained Glass Museum, Ely *From the Stacks: Hidden Treasures from the Collections* until 28 April

Crafts Study Centre, Farnham

Making Connection until 27 July

Head, Hand, Heart: reflections on a practice until 18 May

Raw Craft: fine thinking in contemporary furniture 28 May—13 July

Wardown Park Museum, Luton *Amulets by Basketry Plus* until 28 April

Norwich Castle Museum *Magic Worlds: Fantasy, Illusion and Enchantment* until 14 April

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich *The First Moderns: Art Nouveau, from Nature to Abstraction* until 30 September

Peterborough Museum *La Belle Epoque: Edwardian Fashion 1900-1914* until 6 May

Reading Museum *Greek Pottery* until 8 September

Central Museum, Southend-on-Sea *Shoe Heaven* until 29 June

Midlands

Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire

Sacred Stitches: Ecclesiastical Textiles in the Rothschild Collection until 27 October

Philippa Lawrence - Darning the Land: Sewn from May

Fantasy from the Fire: Sixteenth-century Maiolica in the Waddesdon Collection until 27 October

Folded Beauty: masterpieces in linen by Joan Sallas from June

Court Barn Museum, Chipping Campden *Winchcombe Pottery: Britain's Most Famous Craft Pottery* 4 July—22 September

Broadfield Glass Museum, Dudley

Collectomania until 9 June

Just Desserts 29 June—23 February 2014

Northampton Museum & Art Gallery *Once is an Accident Twice is a Revolution* until 14 April

Nottingham Castle *Light and Line: Polly Binns and Anne Morrell* 11 May—7 July

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford *Tales in the Round: Manju Netsuke* 30 April—1 September

Rugby Art Gallery & Museum *Rugby Collection 2013* until 15 June

Bilston Craft Gallery, Wolverhampton

Craftsense until 1 September

Storytelling: Once Upon a Time in the Midlands 25 May—24 August

North East

The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle *Material Remains: Diana Winkfield* until 2 June

Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead *Jerwood Makers Open 2012* until 6 July

Lotherton Hall, Leeds *Dressed for Battle* until 31 January 2014

Millennium Gallery, Sheffield *Designed to Shine—100 Years of Stainless Steel* until 13 October

York St Mary's Julian Stair 10 May—7 July

North West

Bolton Museum *Constance Howarth: the Life and Work of a Bolton Fashion Designer* until 7 April

Blackwell: The Arts and Crafts House, Keswick

New Glass until 12 May

Bodil Manz 24 May—1 September

Sudeley House, Liverpool *20th Century Chic* throughout 2013

Tate Liverpool *Glam! the Performance of Style* until 12 May

Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool *Mrs Tinne's Wardrobe: A Liverpool Lady's Clothes, 1910—1940* throughout 2013

Manchester Art Gallery *Karl Fritsch Jewellery* until 23 June

Gallery of Costume, Manchester *Knitted Elegance: Creative Fashion since the 1950s* until 2 June

Gallery Oldham *Worn to be Wild* 27 April—13 July

Hat Works, Stockport *Redesigning Fashion: How to Change the World in Style* until 7 July

Scotland

Aberdeen Art Gallery *Fashioning a Century* until 11 May

National Museum, Edinburgh *Amazing Amber* 10 May—8 September

Museum of Childhood, Edinburgh *Tea Time!*

Museum of Edinburgh *Silver of the Stars* 12 April—21 September

Perth Museum & Art Gallery *Hats and Headgear* until 16 November

Wales

Ceramics Collection, Aberystwyth *Parallel Lives: Couples who Make Pottery* until 21 April

National Museum, Cardiff

Julian Stair: Quietus 6 April—7 July

Shirley Jones: Thirty years of the Red Hen Press 20 April—30 June

Swansea Museum *Ewenny Pottery* until 2 June