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# Paul Scott

## New American Scenery

**Paul Scott** is a leading figure in the international field of ceramics and print. He is known for his manipulation of transfer-printed designs on factory-made domestic tablewares, which thus become vehicles for socio-political commentary. *New American Scenery* is permeated with his response to the 'American' transfer-printed tablewares that were produced in Staffordshire during the first part of the nineteenth century, exclusively for export to America. They have a common format of a central motif framed within an ornamental border and are decorated with imagery that celebrates the new republic. Scott's *New American Scenery* work often maintains the same traditional format, while his surface imagery highlights a range of contemporary themes and issues. On the reverse of each piece can be found his maker's mark, information about the printed edition to which it belongs and his signature; several pieces also offer substantial narrative accounts of the subjects depicted.



*Paul Scott: New American Scenery*, Ceramic Gallery, Aberystwyth Art Centre, Aberystwyth University, 9 July–25 September, 2022



(Above left) Forget Me Not, Extinct No: 1, Heath Hen, Carolina Parakeet, Passenger Pigeon, Xerces Blue (3). Transfer print collage on pearlware plate with Kintsugi. Paul Scott, 2020.  
(Above right) Pipelines & Peltier (4). I Transfer print collage on pearlware plate. Paul Scott 2020.

(Front and second page, the underside of the plates) Cumbrian Blue(s) *New American Scenery*, plates:

1. Souvenir of Portland Or., Black Lives Matter/5. Transfer print collage on partially erased, Staffordshire transferware souvenir plate by Rowland & Marsellus, c.1900. Paul Scott, 2020
2. Ghost Gardens of Detroit No. 2 (4). Transfer print collage on pearlware plate. Paul Scott, 2020
3. California Wildfires (2). Transfer print collage on partially erased Beauty Spots of California Staffordshire transferware souvenir plate by Rowland & Marsellus, c.1890. Paul Scott, 2020
4. Forget Me Not, Extinct No. 2, Hare Lip Sucker, Black Fin Cisco, Long Jaw Cisco, Blue Pike (4). Transfer print collage on pearlware plate. Paul Scott 2020.
5. Forget Me Not, No Human Being is Illegal, (3). Transfer print collage on pearlware plate. Paul Scott, 2020.
6. Broken Treaties, Standing Rock/1, (after Ryan Vizions, with Mega May Plenty Chief, Lakota Oyate on horseback). Transfer print collage on Crown Ducal Colonial Times, William Penn's Treaty plate, c.1950.



Paul Scott's over-sized sampler jugs were inspired by historical transfer-printed jugs in museum collections. They were slip cast in Staffordshire using a mould that was developed from his drawings and photographs. Each is decorated with a selection of motifs – in the form of print decals from the *New American Scenery* series. He has described this jug as his most resolved example because it constitutes the most comprehensive sampling of border patterns and themes developed and explored throughout the whole series. The American Eagle motif that appears in several places was taken from the Spread Eagle motif used by the Staffordshire firm of Joseph Stubbs (active c1824–36).

There is a rationale for Scott's treatment of every inch of surface. The first stage involves applying historical transfer-printed border designs as frames for selected imagery. He calls this 'creating an architecture ... I do the neck,' he says, 'I do the spout, I do the handle and then I create the spaces on the surface to infill with the graphic.'

Archival research feeds into his studio practice. The dark blue leaf border on neck, spout and handle derives from a pattern discovered in the Spode archive at Stoke on Trent. Antique copper plate engravings were converted into modern print decals, while retaining the characteristic deep blue of historical transfer-wares and the look of the originals. The broad ribbon of Oak Leaf pattern that crosses the belly of the jug is an enlarged version of an engraving executed by Paul Holdway, the last Head Engraver at the Spode factory, which closed in 2008. 'See these little lines here' Scott says of a patch of surface covered with lines and squiggles, 'they are from a trial sheet in the Spode archive, made by an apprentice .... they have never been printed before.'

Outlined in red, a portrait of incarcerated American Indian activist Leonard Peltier floats above the heart of the jug, overlaying a photograph of the Standing Rock protests in Dakota, where the construction of an oil pipeline disrupts sacred sites as well as threatening water pollution. A lone American Indian woman on horseback faces a massed rank of armed police. The pattern that frames the image was discovered in the archive at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; called 'Odessa' it irresistibly evokes the current war in Ukraine.

'This particular jug,' Paul Scott explains, 'references not only the American Indian struggles against the US government – all the broken treaties ... also the Black Lives Matter protests in Portland in 2019, Donald Trump's border wall ... the horror of migration (a small vignette shows the bodies of a father and his young daughter who drowned crossing the Rio Grande) the dehumanisation of refugees dubbed 'illegals' ... the destruction of wild landscapes ... derelict factory works in Detroit ....' (there is more, much more.)

He has spoken of his urge to redress 'subject matters and perceptions', reclaiming transferware for the twenty-first century. Every aspect of the jug is highly considered. Over the shoulder, at the top, two vignettes show fishes that became extinct in America during the twentieth century. They were lost as a result of human environmental damage and they take us back to the Standing Rock protest, water pollution and the protesters' fear of what might happen if the oil pipeline should leak or burst. ... 'Everything is linked by mental process' Paul says, 'everything is linked.'

Jo Dahn, July 2022

