

1st item of the day: The Potteries Museum in Stoke-on-Trent

21 Oct 2016

We bypassed all of the other sections in the museum and headed directly to the pottery display. Before entering Dave gave us a brief introduction to the main influences on 20th and 21st century studio pottery which were on the one hand referencing the Oriental traditions for Japan, China and similar places and on the other the European traditions based on Modernism.

This museum has a very good historical selection of pottery, with a bias towards pots made in and around Stoke. There may be many pieces of pottery that don't appeal to us individually but it gives a good overview over the style and history of English pottery making and there is lots to be learnt from by looking at them.

I thought the displays illustrating the history of surface decorations were interesting. They paired some of the tools used for different surface decorations with sample pieces of pottery.



Here we have a set of engraver's tools from the early 20th century and examples of Over-glaze and Under-glaze printing from ca 1775 to mid 19th century.



This display is showing the tools and examples used in Under-glaze, In-glaze and Over-glaze painting. The examples shown range from no. 60 maiolica plate made about 1520 in Urbino, Italy to the no. 58 jug made by Emma Bridgewater in Stoke about 1990.



The last display in this case shows examples of gilding. The tools shown here are from 1934. The earliest examples here is the little teapot made ca 1760 in Stafford.

There were so many pots of quality to look at that one cannot take them all in at once. Here are a few that stood out for me:



Vase by Anne Potts ca 1934-6



Tall Vase by Jacqui Atkins (I think)

I like the simplicity but considered shapes of both of these vases, which leave space for such strong contrasting decorations. Ann Potts' vase is inspired by Chinese Cizhou ware. The decorations are achieved by carving into the blue slip exposing the light clay body below. The tall vase reminds me very much of African patterns seen in baskets.



Large vase by William de Morgan 1880s. Charger decorated by Charles Passenger for the William de Morgan Pottery ca 1898-1911.

These are very classic shapes – very usual by Arts & Crafts pottery – but they are heavily decorated with classic mythical creatures. I really appreciate the ‘tidiness’ and precision of the surface decorations, which are very smooth. They shimmer with the lustre quality of the finish.



Both Vases made at the Royal Copenhagen Porcelain Factory ca 1900.

Again these are very shiny and smooth and use lustres. However, the decorations aren't as tight as the de Morgan wares. These are much freer and expressive and remind me of oriental ink artwork, which was very en vogue during that time.



Bowl by Lucie Rie.



Lidded box by Sheila Casson.

There is not much I can add to the appreciation of Lucie Rie's work that hasn't been said before. I love the restraint colour palate and her use of sgraffito in the dark blue areas. There is a beautiful balance between the wide thin flare of the rim and the narrowness of the foot.

I really like the tactile quality that this piece seems to have with its matt glaze and rounded corners. The interrupted lines on the lid create a real tension against the fluidity of its line.



Two pots left and centre by Chris Jenkins and on left by Karen Bunting.

Of these I prefer Chris Jenkins' pots with their very limited colour palate and matt finish. The geometric lines are beautiful and considered and don't overwhelm the pot's shape.