



Conservation of Ceramics

Condition and treatment report

Conservator: Jamie Rigsby	Date allocated 08/10/2018
Object Blue Powder Wilton Ware Plate with Asian Garden Scene	
Treatment start date 22/10/2018	Treatment completion date 01/12/2018

Image of object on acceptance



Figure 1, Front of Plate



Figure 2, Verso of plate

Dimensions: D: 22.5 cm x H: 2 cm

Description of Object

The object is a fine white earthenware plate with a stylised Asian garden scene. The background is a two-tone mottled blue with a gold and polychrome enamel design. The slightly scalloped rim of the plate is gold. The blue glaze is on the front of the plate only, the back is white.

The mark, on the centre back of the plate, is stamped in an ochre colour. The upper part of the mark is obscured but is believed to be 'A. G. H. J.,' for A. G. Harley Jones. The words 'Stoke-on-Trent,' 'Wilton Ware,' and 'Painted by Hand' can be seen (Figure 3).



Figure 3, showing the maker's mark

Upon further research, it was determined that A. G. Harley Jones owned the Wilton Ware factory from 1904-1934. In 1920, Horace Wain, the head designer from Carlton Ware, joined Wilton Ware and brought with him his distinctive 'blue powder' technique for making glazes, as well as his fascination with the Orient. The blue powder background is reminiscent of 18th century Chinese styles from the Jingdezhen region. Horace Wain continued using the blue powder technique in his new position, and there is much similarity in the designs being sold by both houses at that time (Martin, 2018).

Much like the popularity of chinoiserie and Chinese export ceramics in the 18th century, the 1920s and 1930s saw a resurgence of 'Orientalism' in fashion and home wares. Earlier china patterns, 'Asiatic Pheasant' for example, were being mass-produced and sold in mail order catalogues, such as Sears-Roebuck in the United States. Wilton Ware, with the help of Horace Wain, developed new patterns that strongly resembled earlier designs. Wilton Ware closed in 1934. It is estimated that the blue plate was manufactured sometime between 1920-1934 (Martin, 2018).

Condition on acceptance

The plate is broken into four pieces. One long break diagonally bisects the centre of the plate with two smaller pieces at the upper left rim. There is surface dirt with fingerprints and residue to the centre back. The clay fabric is bright white with no visible surface dirt, indicating new breaks. The two larger pieces have a clean break with minimal losses. There is a 1.25cm crack in the glaze on the back of one of the large pieces, but the crack does not

appear to go through the body or the front glaze. The two rim pieces have more losses along the front of the break edges in the blue powder glaze (Figure 4), but almost none to the back. The pieces appear to fit together well with no torsion.



Figure 4, showing losses at the edge of the break

Treatment Proposal

The plate should be tested for solvent sensitivity and then manually cleaned with cotton wool swabs and water, avoiding the break edges. The break edges could be bonded with a 50:50 solution of Paraloid B-72¹ in acetone and secured with cellophane tape² and allowed to cure. Care should be taken to avoid applying tape to gold areas. The plate could then be filled with Flügger³ and smoothed with water to the appropriate depth. The fill could be retouched with Golden Acrylic paints⁴ and finished to match the surrounding areas.

Treatment agreed and carried out

Acetone was brushed along the edges of the plate with a sable brush to slow the cure time of the Paraloid B-72 solution. The 50% B-72 solution in acetone was then applied with a sable brush. The pieces were fitted together and secured in place using cellophane tape, but

¹ *Paraloid® B-72*: Ethyl methacrylate (70%) and Methyl acrylate (30%) copolymer; Tg 40C; IR 1.479-1.489; manufactured by Rohm & Haas. Glass transition temperature: 40 C. Soluble in toluene, xylene, acetone, carbon tetrachloride, MEK, others.

² *Scotch Magic Tape*: A semi-transparent pressure-sensitive tape. Cellulose acetate substrate with an acrylate adhesive. Made by 3M and available from any stationary store.

³ *Flügger Acrylic Putty*: A trademark for a white acrylic paste composed of butyl methacrylate and calcium carbonate. Flügger Acrylic Putty has minimal shrinkage on drying. pH in solution is approximately 9.0.

⁴ *Golden Acrylics*: 100% acrylic emulsion paints.

care was taken not to apply the tape to areas of gold paint or enamel. Excess adhesive was cleared with a sharp scalpel blade. The adhesive was allowed to cure for several days.

The tape was removed, and the breaks checked for alignment. The reconstruction was successful, and the breaks showed no indication of slipping or misalignment. Flügger was used to fill the losses to the plate and was applied with a spatula. The fills to the front of the plate were not tinted before application because the area would require many different colours to match the mottled blue background of the plate. However, the fills to the back of the plate were made of Flügger tinted with powdered pigments to better match the back of the plate as they would require less retouching. The fills were allowed to cure for several days. Additional Flügger was added to low areas and allowed to cure for several more days. The fills were then smoothed with Micromesh⁵ 2400-12000 grit. The fills were retouched with a sable brush and Golden Acrylic paint and varnish. See Figure 5 and 6 below for after treatment photographs.



Figure 5, Front of plate after treatment

⁵ *Micromesh*: A cloth-backed abrasive in grades 1500 through 12,000. Grades 1500 to 6000 are silicon carbide crystals on a cloth backing, while grades 8,000 and 12,000 are aluminum oxide crystals on a cloth backing.



Figure 6, Back of plate after treatment

Recommended continuing care

The plate should be kept in climate-controlled conditions of approximately 15-23° C with relative humidity between 45-55%. Dusting should be done with a soft, lint-free cloth. The plate is not suitable for use and should not come into contact with liquids or food.

References

Websites

Martin, Helen (2018) *Carlton Ware* [online] www.antique67.com/articles.php?article=75 (accessed 12/10/2018)