

## DresserFest 2017

Between 30 June and 2 July 2017, DresserFest 2017 took place in Middlesbrough.

Organised by The Christopher Dresser Society and Teesside University, the event saw participants from around the world enjoy a programme of talks, exhibitions and other events, all celebrating Christopher Dresser.

### Programme

#### June 30<sup>th</sup>

##### Selling Exhibition

Venue Teesside University, Constantine Gallery  
4.00- 6.00 Private View

##### Welcome meal

6.30- 8.30 The Smeltery,  
Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art

#### July 1<sup>st</sup>

##### Symposium: *Christopher Dresser, Japonism and the Victorian World of Goods*

Venue T 1.10, The Curve, Teesside University, Middlesbrough, TS1 3BA

9.15 Arrival, Registration, Tea and Coffee.

10.00 Welcome: Paul Denison/ Gill Moore- Christopher Dresser Society

10.15 **Keynote Speaker - Widar Halen**, Director of Design and Decorative Arts at the National Museum in Oslo

*Christopher Dresser and the Anglo-Japanese style.*

11.20 **Zoe Hendon** - Head of Collections, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture (MoDA)  
MoDA Collections Centre

*Handwork rendered expeditious: the Rottmann-Silver stencil venture of the 1890s.*

12.00 **Lunch- Buffet Lunch Provided**

1.00 **Jane McQuitty- Alberta College of Art and Design**  
*Christopher Dresser, Models and Contacts: The Perry diaspora in North America*

1.45 **Clive Manison – Collector and Scholar of English Glass**  
*Matsu-no-Kee – Japanese Influences in the design of Stevens and Williams Glass.*

2.30 Tea and Coffee.

3.00 **Massimiliano Papini, PhD Student, Northumbria University**

*Transcultural Exchanges between the North East of England and Japan, 1862-1923: visual and material culture in relation to the Anglo-Japanese interaction.*

- 3.45**            **Paul Denison, Principal Lecturer, Teesside University**  
*Conventional Wisdom: Christopher Dresser, Owen Jones and the Mystery of Goodall Playing Cards*
- 4.15**            **Plenary /close**

## July 2<sup>nd</sup>

### **Selling Exhibition**

Venue            Teesside University, Constantine Gallery - 10.00am -4.00pm

### **Family Fun day** Music, Craft Activities, Dresser's Birthday Cake

Venue            Dorman Museum – Free Event- no booking required- All day

### **Exhibition** Tokyo to the Tees: Middlesbrough and Japan 1877-1939 – All day

Venue            Dorman Museum- Free Event- no booking required

### **Gallery Tour**

Venue            Dresser Gallery, Permanent Collection , Dorman Museum  
10.00 am

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## **Symposium Abstracts**

### **Widar Halen**

*Christopher Dresser and the Anglo-Japanese style.*

Christopher Dresser (1834-1904) was a leading figure in the Japonism movement or the so-called Anglo-Japanese style. He studied Japanese art as a student at the Government School of Design in the 1850s, and he was one of the first designers to respond seriously to Japanese art even before its first comprehensive presentation at the International Exhibition in 1862. His continuous efforts to promote Japanese art and influences in the mainstream of Western design culminated in his visit to Japan in 1876-77. This was the first tour of the country by a European designer, and his recollections, published under the title *Japan, its Architecture, Art and Art-Manufactures* (1882), provided one of the most thorough treatments of the subject and became a vital impetus to the Japonism movement in Europe and in the USA. Dresser encouraged the study of a variety of styles, but his lifelong interest in Japanese art permeated all aspects of his designs from furniture to metalwork, textiles, wallpapers, glass and ceramics. Particularly that of the Linthorpe Art Pottery, which was founded in 1879 upon his advice and with Dresser as artistic director. Linthorpe art pottery gave concrete form to Dresser's belief that art can transmute the commonest materials into things of beauty. Contemporary commentaries in fact compared Linthorpe Art Pottery to Japanese ceramics, and the similarities were so striking that some of the Linthorpe samples traded in Japan found their way back to Britain as Japanese ware. Even though Japanese art was well known to Dresser

before his visit, his return to Britain coincided with an outpouring of minimal, sleek ceramic, glass and metal-ware pieces, which are among his most important works.

### Biography

Widar Halen gained a DPhil from Oxford on *Christopher Dresser and the Cult of Japan* in 1989 and published the first monograph about Dresser in 1990 (Phaidon) new edition 1993. He is currently Director of Design and Decorative Arts at the National Museum in Oslo, and a renowned scholar of Christopher Dresser's work in Japan. His catalogue *Christopher Dresser and Japan*, which accompanied a travelling Dresser exhibition in Japan in 2002, is an abundant source of images and interpretation of how Dresser understood and reinterpreted the decorative arts of Japan.

### Jane McQuitty

*Christopher Dresser, Models and Contacts: The Perry Diaspora in North America.*

The question of models and contacts in Christopher Dresser's family circle that might have given him the confidence to espouse the certainty that upward paths for ``sons of toil`` lay in industry gets little attention. "Who are the Perrys?" looks at in-laws as a possible source of this confidence. "Three Sons, Launching in North America," surveys the careers of three sons who emigrated to North America under a model that seems very much a tribute to the Perry start in life. Research sources are simple, Family Search, a free family tree service offered by the Mormon Church, a few newspaper archiving sites, particularly Old Fulton Postcards in the USA and The Trove in Australia, correspondence regarding probate grants, and some email correspondence with descendants. If there are patchy areas in this history it does not mean they cannot be filled in; this project is only a start in knowing more.

### Biography

Jane McQuitty is a Doctoral Student with the Faculty of Environmental Design at University of Calgary and lecturer with the School of Critical + Creative Studies, Alberta College of Art and Design, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. She likes to think of herself as a member of the suburban peoples of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Her interest in Christopher Dresser began with the question of his theory of botany and its role in the formal qualities of Dr Dresser's floral design and developed into an interest in the designer's family context as little was known about Dresser sons who immigrated to North America.

### Massimiliano Papini

*Transcultural Exchanges between the North East of England and Japan, 1862-1923: visual and material culture in relation to the Anglo-Japanese interaction.*

In 1896, the major Japanese shipping company Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK) chose Middlesbrough as his unique loading port in England. Thank to this decision, it was created a direct line between Japan and Middlesbrough. Moreover, a local industrialist - Waynman Dixon - was appointed as Honorary Japanese Consul in Britain, one of the few in the United

Kingdom at that time. Starting from this political and economic agreement, this paper aims to analyse the previous contacts that led to that crucial decision by NYK, but also the reflection over the local material culture, in particular the diffusion of Japanese objects in wealthy families' residences, for collecting and decorative purpose. Using auction house sales catalogues as primary sources, I will be able to discuss how much diffuse was the appreciation of Japanese articles among members of the "upper class" in Middlesbrough and Cleveland area; focusing in particular on the Pease family of Darlington.

### Biography

Massimiliano's interests were built upon his previous studies regarding European Japonisme, especially on art dealers that imported Japanese art products into Europe. His PhD research is entitled "Transcultural Exchanges between the North East of England and Japan, 1862-1923: visual and material culture in relation to the Anglo-Japanese interaction" and aims to clarify the pivotal role of North East England in the longstanding relationship between Japan and the United Kingdom, looking through the impact of the Japanese products and aesthetic on the North-Eastern material culture in the late 19th and beginning of 20th century. Trained as a traditional art historian, he received a MA in History of East Asian Art (School of Oriental and African Studies, 2015) and another MA in History of Art (University of Florence, 2016); He is now a full-time PhD student at Northumbria University, supervised by Dr Elizabeth Kramer.

### D. C. Manison

#### *Matsu-no-Kee – from Design Registration to Finished Glass*

A design registered on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1884 by Stevens and Williams of Brierly Hill was subsequently marketed by them under a Japanese name; it shows the clearest evidence of being directly inspired by the representations of the foliage of pine trees in Japanese woodblock prints. In the period during which the Design Registration was valid, John Northwood, who worked for Stevens & Williams as Art Director, registered a patent which was important not only for the production of the glass designs the subject of the registration, but also of a great deal of other decorated glassware which also shows Japanese influence. The use of the Japanese term applied to such glassware continues to this day, though its meaning is now misunderstood.

Many of Stevens & Williams records were given to the Broadfield House Glass Museum, and are available for consultation by appointment. Photographs have been made of the relevant entries, and an analysis of these shows that in the week before the registration was granted, 88 designs had already been entered, and within the period of a month more than 110 designs were entered in the Description Book. Over the three year period of validity of the Design Registration about 250 designs were created, though the great majority of these were at the beginning of the period of validity of the Design Registration. The last identifiable design was entered in Vol. 9 of the Description Books on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1885; by this time another form of decoration, also with some Japanese influences in its conception was in production. Evidence of Japanese influences in the decoration of the rims of the pieces is also discussed.

### Biography

After taking a Law degree at Oxford, Clive was called to the Bar at the end of 1971. After three years in the Army, serving in Germany, he began working for the Commission of the European Communities. After leaving the Commission's service, he took the opportunity to study Japanese, and follow up a long-term interest in the culture and art of that country.

Clive has been collecting glass seriously for fifteen years; and it was a chance observation of a Japanese term in an auction catalogue that led him to investigate in depth the influence of Japanese art upon the decoration of glassware. The movement called "Japonisme" has been studied in considerable depth, particularly where the fine arts

## Zoë Hendon

*Handwork rendered expeditious: the Rottmann-Silver stencil venture of the 1890s.*

This paper will examine a series of stencilled wall coverings produced in the 1890s as a result of collaboration between businessman Alexander Rottmann and designer Arthur Silver. These products were inspired by a collection of around Japanese stencils ('katagami'), acquired by the Silver Studio as design reference in the 1880s or 90s. The katagami stencils, and archival evidence of the Rottmann-Silver stencil venture, now form part of the Silver Studio Collection at the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture.

Alexander Rottmann and Arthur Silver had already worked together by the time they set up their joint venture: the Silver Studio had supplied a number of designs to Rottmann for his 'Japanese leather papers', made at his factory in Yokohama (Wailliez 2016). As Suga notes, Japanese leather papers represent a kind of hybrid product, perceived as authentically Western by the Japanese, and authentically Japanese by Westerners (Suga 2006). The Rottmann-Silver stencil venture seems to have been an extension of this earlier collaboration, using similar techniques and aimed at a similar market. It therefore represents an interesting example of the dissemination of Japanese design ideas within British homes. The Rottmann-Silver stenciled wallpapers were described in the promotional material as Japanese, though they were almost certainly made in London. However, their selling point was not their typically Japanese appearance; they generally feature large-scale stylized Art Nouveau motifs and were praised for having adapted Japanese techniques for Western tastes.

This paper will explore the ways in which Japanese-influenced techniques made certain products more affordable through the use of semi-industrialized processes, and argue that this presented a challenge to Western notions of craft, workmanship, art and labour. It will draw on the evidence of the Rottmann-Silver stencilled wall-coverings themselves, along with archival records and contemporary press cuttings that gives clues to the project's reception in the late 1890s; and which illuminate wider themes about the influence of Japanese design ideals in the last years of the nineteenth century.

Suga, Y., 2006. Designed Authenticity: Japanese Leather paper and inter/national representation. Historical Research on the Production and Distribution of Japanese Leather Paper in Japan, Europe and America, Tokyo

Wailliez, W., 2016. Japanese leather paper or kinkarakawakami: an overview from the 17th century to the Japonist hangings by Rottmann & Co. Wallpaper History Review, 7, pp.60–65

## Biography

Zoë Hendon is Head of Collections at the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture (MoDA), Middlesex University. Her specific area of research is the Silver Studio Collection, which includes wallpaper, textiles and designs dating from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. She is particularly interested in the influence of Japan on the Silver

Studio's output in the 1890s, and is currently heading a research project entitled "Katagami in Practice: Japanese Stencils in the Art School", funded by Arts Council England.

More generally, Zoë's research is concerned with the history of design collections in the context of art and design higher education in the UK; she is a member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Design History*, with responsibility for the "Archives, Collections and Curatorship" section.

## **Paul Denison**

### *Conventional Wisdom: Christopher Dresser, Owen Jones and the Mystery of Goodall Playing Cards*

The question of what Dresser did or did not design, based on primary archival evidence, or more speculatively, on stylish attribution, is in itself an interesting field of study. Depending on the audience for such debates, (academics, collectors and dealers) such debates will inevitably find varied take-up and varying degrees of consensus. The research and case study here identifies some of the quandaries attached to the discussion of evidence and attribution.

It is well-known that Owen Jones carried out a series of designs for the stationary company De la Rue. His 70 or so designs for playing cards were extremely popular, and the attachment of his name to this popular Victorian past-time, will have created dividends for the company. Many of the designs for cards bear similarities to plates in the *Grammar of Ornament* and evidence Jones's capacity for 'conventionalised representation' of ornamental motifs and devices. It is also well-known that a very young Christopher Dresser completed some of the plates for Jones's 'Grammar'. It is possible and likely that Dresser knew of the De La Rue connection and understood the potential for his own career development.

This study takes as its starting point a collection of images of playing cards known to be by the main competitors of De La Rue, Chas. Goodall and Sons. Amongst hundreds of Goodall designs for the late Victorian period, are many which mimic the De La Rue inventory and others which strike out in their own direction. These cards demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of conventionalized botanical rendering and many bear well-known later Dresser motifs and devices ( many of which he and Jones borrowed from historical sources).

Whilst this paper does not seek to identify Dresser as the designer of these cards, it does offer up a case study for the understanding and interpretation of historical evidence, when the paper-trail is very thin.

## **Biography**

Paul graduated with a degree in Modern Languages and European studies from LSU College in Southampton in 1983. Having developed personal interests in the History of Design, he started his own business dealing in 19th and 20th century design objects. Since 1992 Paul has been a Design History tutor at Teesside University. Paul's teaching experience ranges over some 20 years. He recently helped to form (and is co-Chair of) the Christopher Dresser Society, in recognition of the contribution of the renowned Victorian designer to the History of Middlesbrough.

