

HENRY WILLETT

A celebration of the man, his life and his ceramics collection

NATURE OF INVESTIGATION

I will be building on my previous research into Henry Willett and his Ceramics Collection at Brighton Museum to enable me to expand on my investigation to look into further suitable forms to represent Henry Willett's life



Examples of the diversity of form within the Collection



RELEVANT ARTIST

Christie Brown – particularly her work in respect of Sir John Soane and his collection

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Henry Willett was an important local figure, supporting the community in many ways. A passionate collector throughout his life, his expansive and historically important Ceramics Collection represents much of the social history of his time and it would seem fitting that a piece(s) be created to celebrate his life and achievements. Whilst immersing myself in his life, in search of a suitable creative outlet, I have been known to “cheerlead” Henry Willett who has, over the course of the year, become “real” to me. As I have learnt more about “Henry” he has become part of my life and, as with all my friends, I have become accustomed to using his christian name. I hope this provides an insight into how I work as an artist/craftsperson and explains my familiarity.

IN WHAT WAY IS IT 'NEW'?

Many artists respond to collections in a broad sense, I will be focusing entirely on Henry Willett, the man behind the Collection, and all he achieved, looking for suitable representations that will sit comfortably alongside the Collection as well as responding to the Collection

METHODS

- Study forms within the Collection to establish suitability for key aspects of Henry's life
- Create maquettes to determine suitability and feasibility
- Pursue forms in appropriate material using suitable techniques
- Establish which aspects of Henry's life should be represented
- Create illustrations and consider suitable technique to incorporate onto forms
- Research appropriate glazes/underglazes referencing the Collection
- Carry out tests on forms/glazes/underglazes etc
- Establish final pieces

PROBLEMS

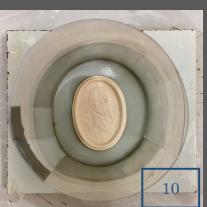
- To experiment with various forms whilst showing either a continuity between the forms (clay type, colour palette etc) and/or with the Collection
- Ensuring the most significant and locally relevant aspects of Henry Willett's life are represented

MATERIALS

- Royale Porcelain
- Plaster
- Valentine's Special Casting Porcelain
- Transparent stoneware glaze
- Amoco velvet underglaze – yellow
- BP42P St Lucia Lemon porcelain powder glaze
- Ceramic transfers

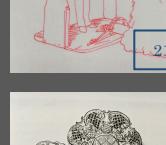
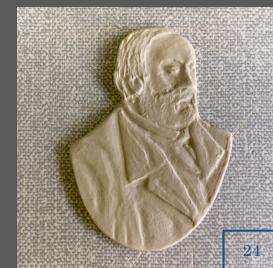
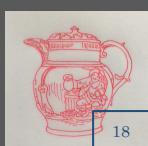
TECHNIQUES

- Throwing
- Formation of handles
- Plaster lathe
- Mouldmaking
- Plaster carving
- Reduction in scale of Henry Willett sprig
- Casting and attachment of handles and sprig
- Glazing
- Underglaze application
- Ceramic transfer application



PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS/INSPIRATIONS

Previous research led to the “Henry Willett Vessel” – inspiration primarily transpired after studying the terracotta wine cooler resulting in a porcelain vessel with classical dolphin handles, a portrait of Henry Willett on the front and items representing his collections on the back



I am contemplating whether my work will ultimately be considered as “collectibles” and whether Henry would have felt it worthy of his Collection. Lastly, I hope to give careful consideration to display and currently take my inspiration from the illustration shown of a group of Henry's pieces published in 1878 (29)

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS/INSPIRATIONS

- Small yellow cup with red illustrations (c 1800) (1)(2) displayed within the “Philanthropy” theme in the Collection – catches your eye due to vibrancy of colour and style of decoration
- Loving cups (3) – provide a “celebratory” feel to the objects
- Suitable glaze/underglaze (13)(14) – to give the objects a more contemporary feel to attract possible “collectors of today”
- Illustrations depicting key elements of Henry's life (consideration given to colour; following tests, red, as per the small yellow cup, was felt preferable to black). Selected elements:
 - Childhood (17) – Bishopstone Tidemills, fanned pear trees
 - Collections (18)(19) – ceramics and fossils
 - Business (20) – West Street Brewery
 - Founder of Brighton Museum, Gallery and Library (21) – original Museum entrance and Henry fundraising in the stocks
 - Funeral (22) – St Helen's, Hangleton and funeral procession followed by many mourners on foot
- Cup and handle forms taking inspiration from various vessels throughout the Collection (loving cups, mugs, jugs) (25)(27)
- Scale – small scale loving cups inspired by the small yellow cup, encouraging the idea of small collectibles
- Handle scale and form disproportionate/unexpected, encouraging the viewer to want to know more about the object (26)(28)
- Sprig portrait of Henry to be “hidden” within the loving cups; forms and illustrations all differ although all reference Henry's life and his Collection, his portrait is the only constant (23)(24)