

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue: **Paul Scott's Sampler Jug #10, Shelburne & Sugar**

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Figure 1: Paul Scott, *Sampler Jug No. 10, Shelburne & Sugar*, from “Cumbrian Blue(s), New American Scenery” series, 2024.

Introduction

The contemporary transferwares of British ceramic artist Paul Scott call to mind the old Victorian wedding rhyme: “Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.” In Scott’s case, the “old” is the eighteenth-century technique of transfer printing on ceramics; the “new” is the imagery and incisive commentary on contemporary social and political issues that he weaves so deftly into his work; the “borrowed” refers to the historical patterns and borders he repurposes and reframes; and the “blue”

is, quite literally, the cobalt pigment so closely associated with historic British transferwares popular with the American market. By blending the old with the new, the traditional with the inventive, and the serious with the playful, Scott’s work resonates deeply with Shelburne Museum’s curatorial ethos—making history relatable through the stories embedded in objects from the past and today alike.

It is fitting, then, that in 2023 Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vermont, commissioned Scott to create one of his large sampler jugs to honor museum founder, Electra Havemeyer

Webb (1888–1960), the institution’s history, and some of its most iconic collection objects. To immerse himself in the unique complexity of Shelburne Museum, Scott traveled from his home and studio in Cumbria, England, to Vermont, where he spent a week exploring the museum’s 39 buildings and vast holdings of approximately 150,000 objects. He delved into archival materials and stayed at Mrs. Webb’s Vermont country home, the Brick House, where he experienced firsthand the origins of her “chock-a-block” aesthetic—a hallmark reflected in the jug’s final design.

Standing 15 inches tall, 14 inches in diameter (including its handle), and 11¾ inches across at its base, *Sampler Jug #10, Shelburne & Sugar*, is a profusion of patterns “harvested” from historical transferwares combined with imagery of important Museum collections objects (Figures 1A and 1B). The jug is a print collage under pearlware glaze with platinum lustre. In 2019, supported by a fabrication grant from the Alturas Foundation, Paul Scott collaborated with shape designer and product developer Ed Bentley to create a new large-scale jug form inspired by three historical examples. The jug was slip-cast and bisque-fired at Ceramics By Design, a small factory in Longton, Staffordshire. The pearlware glaze was then applied and fired in Scott’s studio in Cumbria, England, followed by the careful collaging of transfer prints (decals) before a final in-glaze firing to fuse the imagery seamlessly into the glazed surface

Completed in spring of 2024, the bespoke jug became both the literal and figurative centerpiece of a temporary exhibition *Confected, Borrowed, & Blue: Transferware by Paul Scott* (on view from May 11 – October 20, 2024), pairing the artist’s contemporary works with selections from Shelburne’s historic American scene transferware collection (Figure 2). Displayed in the Museum’s Variety Unit ceramics gallery, the exhibition was organized thematically, each case dedicated to important American political and social issues of the past and present.

A Base Ingredient:

Sugar and Shelburne Museum

Three detailed views of Paul Scott’s jug are shown in Figures 3A, 3B, and 3C. There are 26 components imaged on the jug. A detailed key to the various components follows this article. Scott designed the jug’s narrative to unfold in chronological sequence, beginning at its base with references to the source of the inherited fortune that underwrote Mrs. Webb’s collecting. Her father, Henry Osborne “H.O.” Havemeyer



Figure 2: *Confected, Borrowed & Blue: Transferware by Paul Scott at Shelburne Museum, 2024.*

(1847–1907)—a third-generation sugar refiner and industrialist known as “The Sugar King”—presided over the American Sugar Refining Company, or “U.S. Sugar Trust,” which at its height controlled nearly 98 percent of the nation’s refined sugar market. Although the Havemeyer family did

not directly own enslaved individuals, the raw sugar their refineries processed was historically cultivated by enslaved African-Caribbean laborers and their descendants. In later years, the company’s monopolistic practices and market manipulation contributed to wage suppression and



Figures 3A, 3B, 3C: Paul Scott, *Sampler Jug No. 10, Shelburne & Sugar*, from “Cumbrian Blue(s), New American Scenery” series (details), 2024.



Figure 4A: View of Paul Scott's *Sampler Jug # 10*, *Shelburne & Sugar Jug* on display in Shelburne Museum's Jug Room Gallery, 2025.



Figure 4B: View into Shelburne Museum's Jug Room Gallery.

unsafe labor conditions.

In an era increasingly attuned to social justice, environmental responsibility, and public health, the sugar industry's legacy continues to invite critical reflection—its historic ties to slavery, environmental degradation, and the health effects of excessive sugar consumption remain deeply relevant. Through this thoughtful and provocative work, Scott both celebrates Electra Havemeyer Webb's enduring vision for Shelburne Museum and invites contemplation of the complicated histories intertwined with cultural philanthropy and artistic patronage.

The Source of Inspiration

Founded in 1947 by Electra Havemeyer Webb (1888–1960), Shelburne Museum is a remarkable treasure trove of American art and design spanning from the eighteenth century to the present day. Set on 45 acres in Vermont's bucolic Champlain Valley, the Museum comprises 39 distinctive structures, 25 of which are historic buildings

relocated to the site. Its holdings of roughly 150,000 objects encompass fine, folk, and decorative arts; miniature circus models; wildfowl decoys; horse-drawn vehicles; and the landlocked 220-foot steamboat Ticonderoga.

Shelburne Museum's collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ceramics includes a rich array of English and American pottery, displayed throughout the domestic interiors of its historic homes and in the ceramics galleries housed in the Variety Unit. Among these are more than 250 examples of transferware decorated with American scenes in a range of colors. The most significant of these are featured in the Jug Room, which also contains an extraordinary group of 13 mammoth-scale ceramic jugs (trade signs) (Figures 4A and 4B). More than half of these monumental vessels are adorned with as many as three dozen different transferware scenes—including Paul Scott's *Sampler Jug #10*, *Shelburne & Sugar*. ❖

Special Thanks

The author would like to thank Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, the Metropolitan Museum of Arts' Andrew W. and Lulu C. Wang Curator of American Decorative Arts, and Shelburne Museum Trustee, for graciously donating the funds to commission this jug.

Photo Credits

1A , 1B: Transfer print collage on pearlware with platinum lustre, 15 x 14 x 11 3/4 in. Collection of Shelburne Museum, museum purchase, commissioned from the artist with a generous gift of Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen. 2024-2. John Polak Photography.

2: Photography by Andy Duback.

3A, 3B, 3C: Transfer print collage on pearlware with platinum lustre, 15 x 14 x 11 3/4 in. Collection of Shelburne Museum, museum purchase, commissioned from the artist with a generous gift of Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen. 2024-2. John Polak Photography.

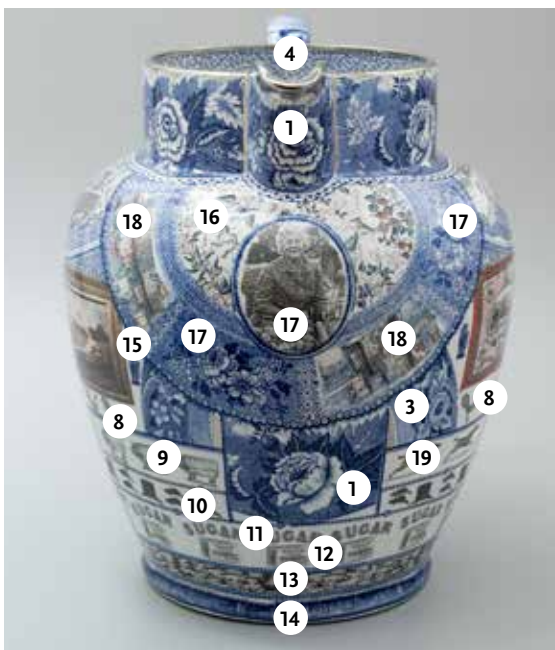
4A, 4B: Photo courtesy of the author.

COMPONENT KEY

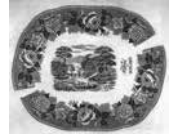
Cumbrian Blue(s), New American Scenery (Sampler Jug No: 10), Shelburne & Sugar

Commissioned to coincide with the exhibition *Confected, Borrowed & Blue: Transferware by Paul Scott*, in the Variety Unit at Shelburne Museum, May 11–October 20, 2024. The artwork, which currently resides in the building's Mammoth Jug Room, references the extensive collection of Staffordshire transferwares, and many other objects within the Shelburne Museum collection.

The artwork not only celebrates Electra Havemeyer Webb's vision in creating a much loved institution with rich, diverse, and extensive collections but it also directly references the source of the wealth that enabled the Museum's establishment and acquisitions. Patterns on the lower part of the jug form directly acknowledge the foundational importance of the sugar trade to the Havemeyer family's wealth and Mrs. Webb's inheritance.



1. Wild Rose border pattern, harvested from the Rörstrand archive (Sweden) in 2005, printed from a copper plate engraving of a pattern to be used on a casserole. Adapted for use as part of the *Vindsäter* tableware set made between 1935-1947. Digitally reworked (Paul Scott 2022)



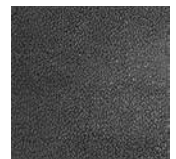
2. *Arctic Scenery* border pattern, harvested from an original transferware plate, ca.1850, and digitally re-worked, (Paul Scott 2019).



3. Transferware border pattern by Joseph Stubbs ca.1830. Harvested from an original tissue print in the Prints & Drawings Department in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and digitally re-worked, (Paul Scott 2019).



4. Sheet pattern harvested from the Spode Museum Trust Archive, England, printed from a copper plate engraving by Paul Holdway, and digitally reworked (Paul Scott 2022).



5. Transferware border pattern from a design in the Spode Museum Trust Archive, England, printed from a copper plate engraving by Paul Holdway. The Spode pattern variously known as *Brosley, Heritage & Queen Charlotte* was an adaptation of the classic *Fitzhugh* border used on Chinese export porcelain bearing the Eagle insignia of the Society of the Cincinnati. Reworked pattern by Artist in 2020 as part of a commission for a new teaware set, (*The Gardens of Lyra*) for department store Fortnum & Mason produced by Spode in Staffordshire, England.



6. Covered Bridge entrance, from a drawing of the Shelburne site by Edward Sanborn, used as a visitor guide.



7. Corot's *La bacchante à la panthère*, in the Shelburne Museum collection.



8. Rooster weathervane in the Shelburne Museum Collection.



9. Pig weathervane in the Shelburne Museum collection.



10. Top hats and beavers, graphics harvested from the Museum's hat boxes.





11. SUGAR text harvested from children's transferware bowl, *Sugar How it Grows*.



12. Havemeyer, Domino sugar cube boxes.



13. Graphic adapted from an antique photograph of a mountain of American Bison bones/skulls. Bone Char/Black was used to filter sugar.



14. Originally adapted from an illustration in Thomas Clarkson's book *The history of the rise, progress, and accomplishment of the abolition of the African slave-trade by the British Parliament* (London, 1808), for Cockle Pickers' Tea Service, an artwork made by Artist to commemorate the bicentenary of the British abolition of the slave trade. The artwork also commemorated the deaths of Chinese cockle pickers in Morecambe Bay.¹ In this instance the pattern acts to acknowledge the foundational importance of the sugar trade and enslavement to the Havemeyer family's wealth, and thus Shelburne Museum's existence.



15. *Heart in Hand*, graphic, symbolic of charity, given from the heart. Friendship.



16. Design adapted from the wallpaper pattern in the Mammoth Jug Room



17. Electra Havemeyer Webb. The last photograph taken before she died in 1960. She had spent the day with her family apple picking.



18. Hat boxes in the Museum's collection



19. Horse weathervane in the Shelburne Museum Collection.



20. *The Burial of Cock Robin* children's handkerchief from the Shelburne Museum collection.



21. *Ticonderoga and the Train*, from a drawing of the Shelburne site by Edward Sanborn, used as a visitor guide.



22. Ship's Prow Figure, from the Shelburne Museum collection.



23. Transfer print depicting *Cape Coast Castle, On The Gold Coast*, transferware platter by Enoch Wood & Sons, ca. 1830. The reference acts to acknowledge the foundational importance of the sugar trade and enslavement to the Havemeyer family's wealth.



24. A young Electra Havemeyer Webb.



25. Mermaid weathervane in the Shelburne Museum collection.



26. Painted Chalkware Dog *Appollo* in the Shelburne Museum Brick House collection.

