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The Exceptional Grandeur of Small Objects: Paul Scott's Ceramics

L'exceptionnelle grandeur des petits objets : la céramique de Paul Scott

Christine Reynier

- 1 Paul Scott's art features as an exception in today's artistic landscape where art is often commodified, as Jeff Koon's or Damien Hirst's works are¹ and where British artists such as Antony Gormley tend to produce monumental works, as is the case with, for instance, "Another Place", in Crosby Bay. Paul Scott, on the contrary, makes small objects: blue and white teacups, plates and dishes in glazed ceramic.
- 2 Little known in France, Paul Scott, a British ceramist based in the Lake district, has begun to make a name for himself in Britain and other countries such as Canada, Denmark or Norway, where several exhibitions of his artworks have been organised since the early 1990s. Like most of his contemporaries, he is a very self-conscious artist who comments abundantly on his own work on his website and in conferences, and he also publishes books on ceramics,² which leaves little room for critics.³ However, because his small objects have the power to move the viewer, they deserve to be commented upon. Using some of Scott's own commentaries and putting them at a distance, I will try to understand why his work is so moving. I first mean to investigate Paul Scott's unique dialogue with artists and practices of the past and the present, and to show how the ceramist engages with current environmental, social and political issues. I will then argue that by choosing to design tableware, Paul Scott places his art at the centre of a network connecting human beings and other living beings, devising a way-of-being-with-the-world, a way of inhabiting it and an art of living where ethical, environmental, political and aesthetic concerns come together.

Recycling

- 3 As the title of the 2015-2016 installation in Stoke-on-Trent suggests, "Confected, Borrowed and Blue..."⁴, Scott's art is, first and foremost, based on borrowing. He

borrowed his technique, his material and his pattern(s) from others. As far as his technique is concerned, Scott works with clay, “the most ancient of crafts” (114), as Arnold Bennett writes in *Anna of the Five Towns*, the most “vibrant matter”, according to Jane Bennett’s recent work, but he renews the traditional ceramic process by borrowing from an industrial one, printmaking. In Britain, Scott is a pioneer in the art of combining ceramic with print, two distinct disciplines for a long while. Indeed, printed tableware has been produced since 1816 by the English pottery industry, thriving on the technique of underglaze blue transfer printing initially developed by Josiah Spode in Stoke-on-Trent in the late eighteenth century; but as an industrial process, printing on ceramic was refused by the academies of fine art. As Scott writes in *Ceramics and Print*,⁵ “in Britain, contemporary practice was defined by the studio pottery movement. As an early twentieth-century invention, this was born out of the Arts & Crafts movement and was fundamentally opposed to industrial process. Printing was never part of its lexicon” (7). Bernard Leach, the “father of British studio pottery”, was particularly dismissive of the vulgarity of print and believed, as he shows in *A Potter’s Book* (1940), in painted pottery.⁶ It is only in the 1990s that “printing had become recognised as ‘an integral part of current studio practice’” (7). Scott mentions the sense of excitement one gets when opening the kiln door and images are revealed (6), images which in his case are almost always blue and white, as in Spode’s iconic blue Italian range,⁷ but with a specific shade of blue he named after his native county, Cumbrian blue. This specific technique means that Scott’s work can be both singular, as in handicraft, and serial, as in industrial production, but, as he himself asserts, “the series are usually of up to five pieces – never more than ten. Each object is individually titled, signed and given a unique number. This is usually a combination of the number of the object placed in the kiln and its date – but sometimes the numbering is more random” (Scott’s website).

- 4 Another original feature of Scott’s art is that as a ceramist, he retrieves old material, old chipped plates and cups, valuable bone china or ordinary ones, and transforms them into his own works of art – fragile ceramic objects evincing the fragility of porcelain, glass and ceramics.⁸ While this is not done in his field, as he explains in *Ceramics and Print*, Scott claims re-use and recycling as a valuable practice in ceramics as it is in other art forms; he values the “cracks, blooms and chips” which are supposed to devalue an object in the world of ceramics since, for him, these flaws “evidence the object’s history”;⁹ he resorts to collage, patching, assembling or superimposition. An emblematic example is his *Spode Works Closed*, a set of five plates (2011).¹⁰ In 2009, Scott visited the closed Spode works in Stoke-on-Trent and was allowed to take away some abandoned tableware, “industrial remnants” in his own words, that he “played” with, firing some and vitrifying particles of dust, “evidence of abandonment”.¹¹ He created plates showing the closed factories by superimposing on the original Blue Italian pattern of the plate in-glaze screen-prints of the gate of the closed factory.¹² Scott thus achieves a spectral effect in keeping with the theme of the closed factory, now a ghost of itself¹³ and offers an elegiac homage to disappearing manufacturing skills.
- 5 Scott also borrows his motifs and patterns from various artists and periods. He appropriates the Willow Pattern, which was designed in Stoke-on-Trent at the end of the 18th century and so often used afterwards on British earthenware; this familiar pattern, with its bridge, pagodas, trees and birds, “originally made to imitate Chinese porcelain wares, [...] has been seen in the West to represent all things Oriental –

landscapes from China and Japan” (Scott’s website) and exotic, so much so that what had first been inspired by hand-painted blue-and-white Chinese wares was in turn copied by Chinese potters.¹⁴ Scott uses the Willow Pattern repeatedly to connect the past and the present, grounding himself in a long tradition of cultural transfer between the East and the West while renewing it.¹⁵ The British ceramist also occasionally hints at contemporary artwork. For instance, in *Cow. After Damien Hirst with kintsugi* (2014),¹⁶ Paul Scott obviously refers to Damien Hirst’s *Mother and Child Divided* (1993),¹⁷ adopting the idea of the bisected cow but using a 19th-century cow creamer instead of resorting to an actual cow (and calf) preserved in formaldehyde solution.

- 6 In that respect, we could say that Scott’s art is not particularly original. Re-using and recycling the motifs of others is a common enough practice in contemporary art that Damien Hirst himself staged with great excess and humour in his Venetian installation in Palazzo Grassi, “Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable” (2017).¹⁸ However, Scott turns his borrowings into personal and singular acts of commitment, meeting once again the tradition of *chinoiserie*, which was also “critical ornament”, according to Sloboda.¹⁹ Recycling is not limited to nostalgic mourning and commemoration, as we can feel it is in *Spode Works Closed*, or to aesthetic homage as in *Cow. After Damien Hirst*. Most of Scott’s artwork comes in fact as a critical response to our contemporary world.

A committed form of art

- 7 The motifs that Scott chooses often broach topical issues, of an ecological, social or political nature. Sensitive to current environmental issues, Scott produces works which deal with pollution, animals or climate change. The dangers of nuclear plants are exposed in *A Millennium Willow for Sellafield (or Plutonium for ever... well 24 millennia anyway)* (2000) through a reworking of the Willow Pattern.²⁰ Conversely, *Watchtree n°2* (2003) suggests how an environment-friendly wind farm can turn a pastoral landscape into a surveillance-like area where the windmills seem to watch the sheep;²¹ the wind mills act as a baring device that defamiliarizes the pastoral landscape and makes the viewer see that Old England is definitely a myth.
- 8 Animal ethics are broached in a work mentioned earlier, *Cow. After Damien Hirst with kintsugi* (2014), where the transposition from a cow (and calf) to a cow creamer may first seem humorous but may also be construed as a way to censor Hirst and his tampering with animals. The addition of the words “with kintsugi” in the title is significant: it hints on the one hand at his technique which, like the ancestral Japanese one, consists in repairing a cracked object with gold, thus emphasising rather than hiding the crack—here, on the tail of the cow; and on the other hand, it hints at his desire to foreground the dynamic process of patching and healing humble matter – which is given a second life in the process – rather than the spectacular and lethal preserving of arrested life. It displays both an ethical care for the animals, resonating with current ecological issues and debates about the suffering of animals, and a respectful care for the crockery of former times.
- 9 The most striking and interesting work on that theme is probably *Fukushima* (2015).²² Scott bought a Japanese Willow Pattern plate on eBay which “arrived in pieces”; he took a piece of a nineteenth-century English Willow Pattern plate, erased the print, printed a representation of Hokusai’s *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (woodblock print, circa 1829-1833) and inserted it into the broken Japanese plate that he pieced together

and patched with gold while adding the chimneys of a nuclear power plant in the background of the landscape.²³ Through collage, erasure and printmaking, he turned Hokusai's *Great Wave* into a representation of the tidal wave that wrecked the power plant, and the conventional oriental Willow motif into a representation of the 2011 tsunami and the nuclear disaster that ensued in Japan. He thus gives new life and new meaning to former artworks. We could add that what makes this artwork so compelling is the way it performs, through its very fragmentation, the destruction climate change and nuclear power plants can bring about while asserting the power of art to resist through creative intermedial exchanges that transcend centuries as well as to plaster, as it were, the cracks or "wounds".

- 10 Social issues are tackled by Scott with a similar critical acuity. Such is the case in *The Cockle Pickers Tea Service* (2007).²⁴ This set is complete with blue and white tea pot, cups and saucers, rimmed with gold; it is an elegant emblem of the refinement of the British way of life, more exactly, of the refinement of a certain social class – the middle or upper class – that could afford such a tea set. On the blue rim of the plate, against a background that borrows from the Willow Pattern, cockles appear. We could at first read them as a mere additional decorative motif. However, Scott himself writes that they are a reference to twenty-one illegal Chinese immigrants who were drowned in Morecambe Bay on February 5, 2004, while picking cockles.²⁵ The cockles are the only images reminding the viewer of the cockle pickers' tragic fate; they appear as metonymies of their trade, of what they were reduced to on British soil where they were dispossessed of all identity. The sea on the bottom half of the plate, has invaded the bay; the rocks, which are half submerged, point at the unusual height of the water; the scenery serves as an allusion to the cockle pickers drowning and the whole set suggests that Scott's art is not a representational but an allusive form of art. The tea set thus comes as a sort of gift to the cockle pickers; it commemorates their anonymous lives while denouncing the way in which contemporary (British) society or "brutal gang masters"²⁶ use and abuse illegal immigrants, exploit their destitution to the point of dispossessing them of their own lives, using them and throwing them away as if they were mere commodities.
- 11 Such a tragedy suggests how slavery, which has supposedly been abolished, endures in a different form. Indeed, the tea set was made in 2007 to commemorate Britain's abolition of the slave trade 200 years before.²⁷ The tea cup especially, with its print of the emblematic engraving of a slave that initially illustrated Thomas Clarkson's book on the history of the abolition of the slave trade,²⁸ hints at the connection between the cockle pickers and former slaves; it also suggests connections between the methods of today's Britain and the former British empire, which resorted to slavery in the Caribbean for the exploitation of sugar cane and the production of the sugar the British would ultimately put in their cups of tea. Finally, it anchors Scott's own work in the wake of Wedgwood's anti-slavery ceramics, since, as Scott notes, "in 1787 Josiah Wedgwood, one of the leading ceramic industrialists of the time, began production of what was to become a series of anti-slavery ceramics. Jasperware cameos featured the image of a kneeling black male slave in chains surrounded by the legend "*Am I not a slave [sic] and a brother?*"²⁹ We could also suggest that the very hybridization of Scott's artwork, which consists here of his own work, in-glaze decal collages, on an eighteenth-century pearlware cup, Royal Copenhagen porcelain saucers, Royal Worcester bone china teapot and sugar bowl, and a porcelain tea caddy by Jane Smith, takes on a symbolic meaning, and becomes a statement in favour of social and cultural

hybridization within Britain, a plea for the acceptance of immigrants from other countries and cultures.

- 12 Finally, political issues feature large in Scott's work, as can be seen in *A Willow for Ai Weiwei*,³⁰ a blue and white plate with the iconic Willow Pattern, complete with bridge, willows, swallows and pagoda. It looks like an old plate but is not.³¹ We may wonder if Paul Scott has simply bought this plate and put his own signature on it. What is striking though is that the landscape is empty of any human figure except for a solitary stylised one on the bridge that can be seen, in the act of dropping a vase into the river. It is an allusion to Weiwei's breaking of a fine antique Chinese vase, a symbolic act of rebellion against a coercive political regime by the Chinese political dissident and visual artist who was imprisoned for a while and suffered "immense psychological pressure".³² According to Scott himself, "All the figures in *A Willow for Ai Weiwei* have been erased, alluding to the disappearing artist and his friends. Where Weiwei might have been can be seen as a white silhouette in the centre of the bridge as he drops a Han dynasty urn (a reference to one of his earlier artworks)"³³ – namely, *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, dating back to 1995, three black and white prints that can be seen in the Royal Academy of Arts in London.³⁴ Ai Weiwei appears as a small detail that only attentive viewers will notice. As Daniel Arasse has shown, the detail not only gives its meaning to a painting, but it turns it into an event: "the detail takes the painting and the viewer aback, shatters them and puts them into a state of significant syncope".³⁵ Here, in Scott's ceramic plate, the detail conveys the affective and critical reach of the artwork, its moving plea for the respect of human rights and the freedom of the artist. Furthermore, as in *Fukushima*, Scott's artwork takes on a performative dimension, reproducing as it were Weiwei's disruptive act, erasing motifs from the original plate, tampering with a work of art just as the Chinese artist broke an antique art object: the detail added by Scott also serves as a *mise en abyme* of this artistic act.
- 13 The topics Scott deals with are numerous and may seem both eclectic and somewhat opportunistic. Could he be trading on these various forms of tragedy, using them because he knows the viewer cannot help empathising with the victims? Is it a way for him to sell his work easily while buying himself – and the viewer – a clean conscience? Or is it somewhat sacrilegious to ask such questions when the beauty of his artwork can affect one so deeply? Looking back at his artwork and its apparent eclecticism may provide an answer.

An art of relationality

- 14 The first obvious connecting thread between Scott's various artworks is the type of objects he produces: Scott always makes cups, plates and dishes, that is, tableware. These objects are meant to be looked at, not used; they are luxury objects, artworks and the motifs imprinted on them are meant to raise our political or ecological consciousness. However, the objects are also plates and cups, that is, ordinary objects meant for everyday use, for eating and drinking. What I would like to argue is that the medium used by Scott and the themes he selects are connected; the apparent eclecticism of his artwork becomes deeply significant when appraised with the specific medium he resorts to, that is, tableware.
- 15 Through the tea sets or plates he designs and the wide sample of motifs they display, Scott seems to suggest that what we put in our cups and plates is closely linked with

living beings: the refugee who picks the cockles that we can buy and eat and who has taken the place of the fettered slave of old who helped produce the sugar we put in our cups of tea; the animal which gave the meat we may put in our plate, etc. His art connects to the non-human as well as the human and points at the interdependence of food and the world at large. Scott's art can thus be construed as an art of relationality where eating and the living are inextricably intertwined just as ecology, politics and aesthetics are.

- 16 Through relationality, Scott shows that the world is nourishment in a literal and figurative sense. He seems to organise his art around the very metaphor Jacques Derrida used and illuminated in "Il faut bien manger ou le calcul du sujet", published in 1989. In this interview with Jean-Luc Nancy, Derrida shows that even if such philosophers as Heidegger or Levinas go against a traditional perception of humanism, they still defend profoundly anthropocentric positions: "Do we have a responsibility toward the living in general? The answer is still 'no'" (255-287; 278). Derrida highlights "the sacrificial structure" of such discourses: "The 'Thou shalt not kill' [...] has never been understood in the Judeo-Christian tradition, nor apparently by Levinas, as a 'Thou shalt not put to death the living in general'. [...] The other, such as this can be thought according to the imperative of ethical transcendence, is indeed the other man: man as other, the other as man" (279).
- 17 Understanding the other as the living rather than the human being would lead to another question: what is the best way of relating to the other? According to Derrida, the answer is in the eating: indeed, eating is a form of respect for the other and a form of hospitality. Derrida writes: "'One must eat well' does not mean above all taking in and grasping in itself, but *learning* and *giving* to eat, learning to-give-the-other-to-eat. One never eats entirely on one's own: this constitutes the rule underlying the statement, 'One must eat well'. It is a rule offering infinite hospitality" (282-283). The question is not whether we should eat animal or vegetable, but since we have to eat, how well we can eat. We have to eat means learning to eat and giving to eat, in a literal sense or in a symbolic sense (i.e., learning to think and feel, and providing intellectual and emotional nourishment). Paul Scott's artwork seems to take up Derrida's question and to provide an artistic answer in tune with the philosopher's. His tableware relentlessly raises our consciousness about how to relate to the other, celebrated as human and non-human, while providing both intellectual and emotional or aesthetic nourishment. He thus develops an art of nourishment which is also an art of living.
- 18 Because of the special relationship to the world it displays, Scott's art takes on an ethical and a political dimension. To make clay artwork is a way of reminding us of our own materiality, of how close we are to the earth, the soil and matter, and every creature that lives on it or from it. To make clay artwork can therefore be construed as a way of being, a way of inhabiting the world, in the etymological sense of the word,³⁶ of cohabiting with animals, plants and human beings, of being in contact with the other/s (defined in a larger sense than simply as "humans"): it means adopting an ethical posture. Scott places human beings within a world shared by all, animals, vegetables and matter; in other words, he places human beings within (not above) a common world, thus giving a political dimension to his art, highlighting equality, respect and hospitality.
- 19 As Corinne Pelluchon claims in *Nourishment*, where she takes up Derrida's argument and expatiates on it, defending what she calls "a phenomenology of nourishment",

“[o]ur responsibility in relation to other human beings and to other living beings is engaged each time we eat, whether we are fully conscious of this or not. Eating connects us to other beings, human and non-human, to the circuits of production and of exchange, to the means of transportation. To eat is to dispute any separation between the disciplines, and to position oneself within existence, to be at once in the domains of ethics and of politics” (16).

- 20 Pelluchon shows that when one talks of nourishment, one takes into account the body of the subject, our materiality, as well as what connects human beings to the other species, the animals and plants. Such a phenomenology, which considers what we live on not as “resources” but as “nourishments” and thus goes further than any philosophy of the environment, questions the conventional binary nature/culture, articulates our existence with ecology and points at the interdependence of human life both with its environment and the other living beings.³⁷ Scott adopts such a posture, an ethical position and a way of being with the other which extends beyond our relationships with other human beings. He does it in ceramic artworks which are both inordinately brittle and frangible and of a compelling beauty; their paradoxical nature thus acts as a metonymic image of the vulnerability and resilience of our lives, of the life of the earth, and of art. His objects thus acquire a vitality of their own or “thing-power”, in Jane Bennett’s words, and turn into things.

Conclusion

- 21 Paul Scott’s art appears in the end as a relational and deeply committed art, firmly anchored in today’s world, as well as an oxymoronic form of art that is both humble and extremely refined and wide-ranging: it not only displays the grandeur of small things, as other contemporary ceramic artists do, but develops an art of nourishment which is also an art of living. In *Ceramics and Print*, Scott points at the mediating role printed tableware played in the past: “In the early 19th century, printed tableware formed part of the ‘new media’ of the age, democratising imagery, and disseminating pictures and landscapes that were once the preserve of the wealthy” (5). Today, Scott can be said to use the tableware he creates as a mediating device too, not anymore to democratise imagery but to raise the awareness of the viewers who go and see his installations in various museums of the world. More generally, his artwork can be seen as a statement on the vulnerability of art and its power of resilience.

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NOTES

1. On this subject, see, for example, Annie Le Brun.
2. See Paul Scott's website (all links accessed 10th Oct. 2020).
3. To my knowledge, very few critics have written on Scott; one article has been referenced so far: see Ruth Pavey.
4. The installation was organised in The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery in Stoke-on-Trent, one of Arnold Bennett's five towns, the historical heart of the potteries.
5. *Ceramics and Print* is now a reference book about printmaking and ceramic processes.
6. Scott tested Leach's doctrine in his series *A Willow After Leach*, reinterpreting Leach's painted tile.
7. Spode's Blue Italian range was launched in 1816.
8. On fragility in contemporary art, see Sven Ehmann, Sonja Commentz, Robert Klanten and S. Grilli (eds).
9. See The Scottish Gallery.
10. See Spode Works Closed.
11. See The Scottish Gallery.
12. In Paul Scott's own words, "Some plain bone china plates were cleaned up and used as the vehicle for a series of in-glaze screen-prints depicting the factory in its death throws (sic)", The Scottish Gallery.
13. Spode is now part of Portmeirion Group's factory. In 2012 the Spode Works Visitor Centre opened as part of the historic Spode factory.

14. For a detailed history of the Willow pattern, one of the many Chinese designs produced in Staffordshire, see Robert Copeland, which gives a detailed account of the introduction of the pattern by Josiah Spode; or David Drakard and Paul Holdway.
15. On this subject, see Jennifer Chen, Julie Emerson and Mimi Gardner Gate, *Porcelain Stories: from China to Europe*, which explores the beginnings of porcelain in China, the circulation of this new commodity in Asia, the Middle East and Europe and how it led to the creation of porcelain in the West. About the craze for chinoiserie in the eighteenth century, see Stacey Sloboda, which shows how chinoiserie participated in the global consumer culture of the time while providing critical comments on it.
16. See Cow. After Damien Hirst with kintsugi.
17. Mother and Child Divided is a floor-based sculpture comprising four glass-walled tanks, containing the two halves of a cow and calf, each bisected and preserved in formaldehyde solution.
18. See "Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable".
19. See note 15.
20. See Paul Scott's website. In the leaflet of the exhibition, Jo Dahn writes: "the billing doves of the Willow Pattern become pigeons. In 1998 all the pigeons within ten miles of Sellafield were culled. They had been roosting in the power station, and tests showed that they carried radioactivity into the surrounding area" (12).
21. In the leaflet of the exhibition, Jo Dahn provides another explanation: "At first glance the rather unlovely image seems to show a typical rural scene, albeit with the modern-day addition of a wind farm. But this is actually next door to the burial ground where lie the bodies of infected [with foot and mouth disease] cattle, sheep and pigs" (16).
22. See Fukushima.
23. Scott relates this in the following words: "I bought the Willow Pattern plate (made in Japan c. 1965) on eBay. The seller posted it off to me packed only in a Jiffy bag. Unsurprisingly the piece arrived in pieces. [...] In the end I collaged an erased piece of an old English Willow Pattern platter (c.1840) into the scene. I erased the original print on this to take an in-glaze print after Katsushika Hokusai's woodblock print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (c.1830)" (Scott's website).
24. See The Cockle Pickers Tea Service.
25. See Paul Scott's own account.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Paul Scott writes: "Made in 2007 to commemorate 200 years since Britain enacted a law to outlaw the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The artwork references the original African victims, whilst also remembering twenty-one Chinese cockle pickers drowned in Morecambe Bay, Lancashire, in 2004. These people were contemporary slaves. A reminder that the slave trade is still alive in the twenty-first century" (See The Cockle Pickers Tea Service).
28. Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (1808).
29. The quote from Josiah Wedgwood is of course "Am I not a man and a brother?" (See Paul Scott's website).
30. See A Willow for Ai Weiwei.
31. "I bought the Willow Pattern plate (made in Japan c.1965) on eBay" (See Paul Scott's website).
32. See A Willow for Ai Weiwei.
33. *Ibid.*
34. See Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn, 1995. Three black and white prints. 58 3/10 × 47 3/5 in./148 × 121 cm. Royal Academy of Arts, London.
35. My translation. Daniel Arasse writes: « le détail "interdit" le tableau et le spectateur, les disloque et les met en état de syncope signifiante » (387).

36. “‘To inhabit’ comes from the Latin *habitare*, which signifies dwelling, having this or that manner of being (*habituari*), this or that habit” (Pelluchon 6).

37. Pelluchon writes: “we thus pass from a philosophy of the subject to an ontology, which follows from the description of the fundamental structures of the human existent in interaction with his or her milieu and with other existents” (5); she adds: “To speak of nourishment goes beyond the dualism of nature and culture. It does not allow us to go on conceiving of nature as a resource that has no other value than an instrumental one” (10).

ABSTRACTS

Little known in France, Paul Scott has begun to make a name for himself in Britain and other countries such as Canada, Denmark or Norway, where several exhibitions of his artworks have been organised since the early 1990s. His is a humble art or craft – ceramics. Paul Scott makes blue and white teacups, plates and dishes in glazed ceramic, drawing on traditional patterns and decorative techniques, recycling and updating them to comment on our contemporary society. This paper deals with the uniqueness and originality of Paul Scott's art. It both means to investigate Paul Scott's unique dialogue with artists and practices of the past and the present, and to show how the ceramist reveals the exceptional grandeur of small objects. I will argue that by choosing to design tableware – plates and dishes, initially meant for food – Paul Scott places his art at the centre of a network connecting human beings and other living beings, devising a way-of-being-with-the-world, a way of inhabiting it and an art of living where ethical, environmental, political and aesthetic concerns come together. Corinne Pelluchon's phenomenology, as developed in *Nourishments*, which comes in the wake of Derrida's work, helps to illuminate Paul Scott's relational conception of the subject and his deeply committed art, firmly anchored in today's world.

Peu connu en France, Paul Scott a commencé à se faire un nom en Grande-Bretagne et dans d'autres pays comme le Canada, le Danemark et la Norvège où plusieurs expositions de ses œuvres ont été organisées depuis le début des années 1990. Son art, celui de la céramique, est un art humble. Paul Scott fait des tasses, des assiettes et des plats bleus et blancs en céramique émaillée, s'inspirant de motifs et de techniques décoratives traditionnels, les recyclant et les adaptant pour offrir un commentaire sur notre société contemporaine. Cet article se penche sur le caractère unique et original de l'art de Paul Scott. Il entend explorer le dialogue spécifique que Paul Scott mène avec des artistes et des pratiques du passé et du présent, et montrer comment le céramiste révèle l'exceptionnelle grandeur des petits objets. Son objectif est de montrer qu'en choisissant de concevoir de la vaisselle – des assiettes et des plats, au départ destinés à recevoir de la nourriture –, Paul Scott place son art au centre d'un réseau qui relie les êtres humains et les autres êtres vivants, créant ainsi une manière d'être-au-monde, de l'habiter et un art de vivre où les préoccupations éthiques, environnementales, politiques et esthétiques se rejoignent. La phénoménologie de Corinne Pelluchon, telle que développée dans *Les Nourritures*, qui s'inscrit dans le sillage du travail de Derrida, est ici convoquée pour illuminer la conception relationnelle du sujet que transmet l'art de Paul Scott ainsi que son engagement profond et son ancrage dans le monde d'aujourd'hui.

INDEX

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