



New American Scenery & Visitors

The visitor, the stranger, the foreigner in a new land, encountering things that are both very familiar and yet disorienting....

I follow a tradition, a long line of visitors to America who've written about and depicted the country.

Early American transferwares imported from Staffordshire were conected by adapting popular book illustrations and repurposing them for tableware designs...

Of the British pottery manufacturers, Adams, Ridgway and Stephenson, actually traveled around the United States themselves. Stephenson employed artists to paint selected views. John Ridgway (Potter of the Cauldron Place Works, Shelton, Staffordshire) arrived in Boston in 1822, then traveled through New England, New York, Philadelphia, Washington and Baltimore sketching and composing for a new set of transferwares himself. These were subsequently released as Ridgway's *Beauties of America*.

Between 1811 and 1813 Pavel P. Svin'in, a Russian secretary and translator, traveled in America. He subsequently wrote a book about his experiences illustrated by reproductions of the watercolour paintings he made during his travels.¹ These illustrations were then adapted by British pottery engravers and re-purposed as pictorial transferware designs, subsequently exported to America. This Russian book was key in the process of spreading images of the United States to Europe, then in turn, the remediated images returned on ceramics eventually to become part of Americana, part of American culture.

Thomas Cole, the greatest American landscape painter of his generation was originally from the north of England... His first attempts at drawing 'were made from cups and saucers, from them I rose to copying prints and from copying prints to making originals'.² The inference is that Cole started drawing by copying transferwares...

In the twentieth century, Claire Leighton an English engraver and illustrator made her home in America. As well as designing a set of plates for Wedgwood depicting 'New England

¹ Svin'in, Pavel, Swoboda, Marina, Whisenhunt, William Benton, *A Russian Paints America The Travels of Pavel P. Svin'in, 1811 - 1813.*, McGill; Queens University Press, Montreal, 2008.

² Letter from Thomas Cole to William Dunlap, quoted in *Along the Juniata Thomas Cole and the Dissemination of American Landscape Imagery*, Siegel, Nancy. Juniata Museum of Art/University of Washington Press 2003 p 29

Industries' she also wrote and illustrated books about her American experiences and impressions, including the slim tome *Growing New Roots: An Essay with Fourteen Wood Engravings*.³

Leighton's plates were late Wedgwood designs, for from the late nineteenth century until the 1950's, the engraving workshop in Barlaston functioned as an American transferware picture production line, sending huge shipments of engraved pictorial confections commissioned by agents in Boston and New York for Universities, colleges & societies... In the early twentieth century, Rowland Marsellus and Jon Roth also imported huge quantities of dark blue Staffordshire transferwares... These souvenir wares were characterised by a central design showing a building or scene, with several other related views in cartouches around the rolled edges.. they portray a narrow, settler, colonial & often fictional version of history. Souvenir forms were typically commissioned and sold through prominent department stores in US cities...

Another visitor was the Chinese artist Chiang Yee, who was exiled in London in 1933. He documented his early travels in Britain, illustrating his narratives in a charming 'eastern' style. His first book, *The Silent Traveller, A Chinese Artist in Lakeland* was an immediate success on its first publication in 1937, selling out several reprints in a matter of months. As a travel author he became hugely popular for his fresh insights, observations and illustrations. Later Yee also traveled to, then settled in, the United States writing and illustrating his *Silent Traveller in New York*⁴ and other about his times in Boston & San Francisco⁵.

I follow a tradition of artists traveling and depicting places that are not home, and also of English transferwares that depict North America. *New American Scenery* references and updates the original wares made by British factories, but in doing so it depicts/commemorates more diverse histories and landscapes. Like Svin'in, Leighton, Yee, Adams and Stephenson my work is a personal response to being & traveling in America. I've also used original source materials, engraved book illustrations and material from ceramic print archives, collaged with altered photographs harvested from today's new media sources, Instagram and the web. *Fleurs.de.sel's New York* series is a perfect exemplar of this process.

In the time of Corona Virus borders have become a nationalistic insurance against the spread of infection, and politicians of the right have railed against permeable borders for all but the wealthy... In the digital world however the globe has never been so small and accessible... Instagram images from all over the planet update minute by minute on your iPhone, providing intimate glimpses of life and landscapes from all parts in the palm of your hand.

Paul Scott 19/02/21

³ Book Club of California, 1976, an edition of 500 copies.

⁴ Yee, Chiang, *The Silent Traveler in New York*, Methuen & Co. Ltd, London (1950)

⁵ Yee, Chiang, *The Silent Traveler in Boston*, Methuen & Co. Ltd, London (1960)