

WEDGWOOD

A STORY OF CREATION & INNOVATION



WEDGWOOD

A STORY OF
CREATION & INNOVATION

PUSTAKA PERDANA



1011984

PRINCIPAL TEXTS BY GAYE BLAKE-ROBERTS, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY
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RIZZOLI
NEW YORK

New York Paris London Milan



JASPER WARE 20TH CENTURY, WEDGWOOD. A selection of jasper ware in twentieth-century colours.

Royal Blue Jasper was first evolved in 1953 to celebrate the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and was used for a relatively short production run at that time. The colour was again revived in 1977 for certain items for the Silver Jubilee (the 25th anniversary of her accession to the throne). Royal Blue Jasper was again revived in 1989, but at this stage the colour was a "dip" as opposed to a "solid" nature.

Grey Jasper was first put into production in 1991, but discontinued shortly thereafter.

Sage Green Jasper was put into production in 1955 and phased out in the 1980s.

Terracotta Jasper (which looked more like a dark salmon pink), was in production for a short period in 1957.

Lilac Jasper was reintroduced around 1960, and had a relatively short production period of around three years. It was again reintroduced into production in 1981 but again experienced only a short revival.

Portland Blue Jasper was first introduced into production in 1972 for a relatively short production run, and was again revived in 1992.

Pink Jasper was introduced in 1982.

Taupe Jasper was introduced in 1983.

Teal Jasper was introduced in 1984. Primrose Jasper first appears in 1976, but was used only for a relatively small number of items, including the "Prunus" and "Bamboo" ranges.

Black (and White) Jasper has experienced several revivals—it appears to have been reintroduced into production around 1962 but was phased out by around 1977, except for certain "collector's" items.

Olive Green Jasper was developed at the old Etruria factory site, between 1920 and 1930.

Crimson Jasper "dip" was first manufactured circa 1910, and again between 1925 and 1932. This particular colour variation for Jasper was introduced under the auspices of Harry Barnard and Bert Bentley.

First published in the United States of America
by Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.
300 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010
www.rizzoliusa.com

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FOR RIZZOLI INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

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The Editor would like to thank Ulrik Garde Due, Mariusz Skronski, Gaye Blake-Roberts, Alice Rawsthorn, Zoë Ryan, Rebekah Whitfield-Lyne, Jacob Wildschjødtz, Nicole Irizarry, Elina Asanti, Julie Lysbo, Stefanie Brückler, Natalie Bergh, Michelle Richards, Jodie Sanders, Eva Ziegler, Rebecca Klarner, Lucy Lead, and Tracey Barker.

Printed in Italy

2017 2018 2019 2020 2021/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Library of Congress Control Number: 2017933725
ISBN: 9780847860104

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INTRODUCTION

BY ALICE RAWSTHORN

On 11 June 1811, Jane Austen wrote a letter to her sister Cassandra describing a recent delivery to their home. “On Monday I had the pleasure of receiving, unpacking, and approving our Wedgwood ware,” she recounted, adding that a Wedgwood breakfast service was on its way. “I hope it will come by the Waggon tomorrow; it is certainly what we want and I long to know what it is like.”¹

It is impossible not to be charmed by the idea of Austen, who was months away from the publication of *Sense and Sensibility* after years of rejections from publishers, eagerly awaiting the arrival of her new Wedgwood items. What else would we expect to find on the table of so eloquent a chronicler of English society? Or on her characters’ tables?

Wedgwood’s appeal has been rooted in its Englishness and in the pleasure that its impeccably made, exquisitely decorated products have given to customers like Jane Austen since its founder, Josiah Wedgwood, opened his first pottery works in 1759. Yet the story of Wedgwood’s enduring success is more complex. Josiah’s remarkable personal qualities and the values he instilled so deeply into his company, have continued to define it, and to seem as desirable as they did in the late 1700s.

Josiah’s rise from an impecunious childhood as the youngest son of a struggling Staffordshire potter into fame and wealth as one of the world’s most admired industrialists is beautifully described by Gaye Blake-Roberts in her introductory essay. It is not exactly a rags-to-riches tale, given that a prosperous uncle, John Wedgwood, helped Josiah financially and he received a substantial dowry after marrying his adored cousin Sally in 1764. Yet Josiah’s formal education was sparse, and he was apprenticed as a potter at fourteen. Sally’s father was so suspicious of the “poor relation” wooing his daughter that he insisted on waiting until Josiah had established his business before agreeing to their marriage. By then, Sally was twenty-nine, and Josiah had ridden twenty miles to visit her every other Sunday for years.

It is always heartening to know that people have earned success through diligence, ingenuity, and determination: as Henry Ford did after starting out in the automotive industry as an apprentice machinist, and Steve Jobs having tinkered with computers in his parents’ garage with his high school friend Steve Wozniak. Like them, Josiah worked relentlessly, undaunted by personal tragedies: from the amputation of his lower leg, to the deaths of his son and daughter. He routinely toiled into the night in his laboratory developing new materials and production techniques. Distressed though he was when Sally fell seriously ill in 1772, Josiah took her for a rest cure not to Buxton, as her doctor had suggested, but Bath, where he planned to open a store.

Josiah also panders to our fondness for industrialists who have mastered their trades. His experiments yielded spectacular innovations for Wedgwood, and won him a fellowship of the Royal Society, an honour reserved for the most eminent scientists of the age. Yet his apprenticeship gave him such a thorough understanding of ceramics production that his employees dreaded impromptu inspections by “Owd Woodenleg,” as they called him.² In this respect, Josiah resembled the running coach Bill Bowerman, who co-founded Nike after of years tinkering with his athletes’ shoes, but he was also blessed with the entrepreneurial flair of Nike’s other co-founder, the accountant Phil Knight.

Courageous, shrewd, and never complacent, Josiah took huge risks at Wedgwood. He lobbied hard for the 1765 commission to design a tea service for Queen Charlotte that established potters had rejected for fear of public failure. Josiah also accepted the challenge of making the magnificent Frog Service for Catherine the Great in 1773, knowing that it would be immensely prestigious, but barely profitable. The age of consumerism had scarcely begun, yet he instinctively understood the need to seduce his customers with change and spectacle. “Or rarity soon grows stale,” as he put it.³ Adept at anticipating changes in fashion, he persuaded George Stubbs, John Flaxman, and many other artists to design for Wedgwood,

as well as the architects Robert Adam and William Chambers. He even permitted socialites, like Lady Diana Beauclerk and Lady Elizabeth Templetown, to paint patterns for his pots, aware of their promotional value as well as their artistic talent.

Collaboration is now considered critically important in business, and Josiah was an early champion. He forged firm friendships as well as profitable alliances with business partners, including the merchant Thomas Bentley and engineer James Watt. His membership in the Lunar Society, a group of like-minded manufacturers, engineers, and scientists who met at each full moon, provided a rich source of commercial inspiration, as well as intellectual stimulus and camaraderie.

Josiah was equally prescient in the scale of his ambition for Wedgwood. He was as assiduous in registering patents for his innovations as ambitious tech companies are today. As well as campaigning for new roads and canals to be built to transport his fragile goods, he invested heavily in them. In doing so, Josiah demonstrated a visionary understanding of design, not simply as a stylistic tool, but in its current role as a strategic discipline that can be applied in many different contexts.

Equally, if not more admirable at a time when we are acutely aware of the social and environmental impact of industry, are Josiah's ethics. Knowing that Wedgwood's reputation rested on the quality of its products, he paid his employees well, and trained them rigorously. When he built a new production facility in Etruria, he constructed housing and schools for his workers and their families in the nearby Etruria Village. Like Port Sunlight, the model village built for Unilever's factory workers in northern England in the early 1900s, Etruria was an early exercise in corporate social responsibility.

A fierce critic of child labour, Josiah was fervently opposed to slavery. He commissioned Wedgwood's top modeler, William Hackwood, to design a medallion for the anti-slavery campaign in 1787, and gave them away for free. In doing so, he embedded his political beliefs in his work as unequivocally as the designer Stella McCartney champions ethical fashion and Tesla's founder Elon Musk clean energy.

Josiah died in 1795, but his influence on Wedgwood has endured over the centuries. You can see it in Wedgwood's collaborations with the pioneering industrial designer Christopher Dresser during the late 1800s, and the architect Keith Murray in the mid-1900s. There are also echoes of Josiah's strategic use of design and his ethics in Wedgwood's bold decision to build a factory and village on a pretty, but smartly located rural site at Barlaston, six miles from Etruria, in the late 1930s. The new factory was another technical coup for Wedgwood, as the first in the industry to use electrically powered kilns, making it cleaner and safer for the workforce. To this day, it has the calm, purposeful air of Hermès leather factories in France and Swiss watchmaking workshops, and Josiah's legacy is manifested in the pride taken by Wedgwood's employees in making the beautiful products that bear his name.

¹ "On Monday I had the pleasure . . ." Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 6 June 1811. Morgan Library, New York.

² "Owd Woodenleg," Brian Dolan, *Josiah Wedgwood: Entrepreneur to the Enlightenment*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), p. 308.

³ "Or rarity soon grows stale," Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 31 May 1767. Wedgwood Manuscript Number E25-18149.

Wedgwood was a Protean potter, scientist, humanitarian, philosopher and industrialist. He understood the power of design and the lure of the market. He deserves proper attention and his ceramics deserve proper respect. This book gives both. It is a triumph. —EDMUND DE WAAL, OBE

Gaye Blake-Roberts is the doyenne of Wedgwood scholarship and this magnificent enterprise enormously widens our view of the great potter-entrepreneur. —A. N. WILSON

A wonderful tribute to Wedgwood's remarkable achievements over the centuries, from its foundation as one of the inventors of design in the modern sense, to its continuing support of creativity. —DEYAN SUDIIC, OBE

