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Ewins, Neil (2013) UK Ceramic Manufacturing strategies, marketing and design in response to globalization c1990-2010. In: Design and Mobility: The Twenty-Second Annual Parsons/Cooper-Hewitt Graduate Student Symposium on the Decorative Arts and Design, 22 -23 Apr 2013, Theresa Lang Community and Student Center, Arnhold Hall, 55 West 13th Street, 2nd floor, New York. (Submitted)

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**Neil Ewins.**

**Copy of paper to be delivered at Parsons, The New School of Design, New York on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2013, for their 22nd Annual Parsons/Cooper-Hewitt symposium on the Decorative Arts and Design.**

**The Presentation of this paper will be accompanied by Powerpoint imagery.**

**Conference theme 'Mobility and Design'.**

**Sub-categories of Conference: Globalization and the mobility of cultural products.**

**Paper title: UK ceramic manufacturing strategies, marketing and design, in response to globalization c1990-2010.**

Since the 1990s, ceramic exports from the Far East have surged, and UK ceramic brands have increasingly utilized cheap labour abroad, known as outsourcing. Much of the more recent behaviour of the UK ceramic industry is a reflection of globalization. Western industries have been described increasingly as 'post Fordist' (Amin (ed), 1994), and to many writers the impact of globalization creates deterritorialization (King (ed), 1991, p.6; Tomlinson, 1999, p.106-49). Taking their cue from Baudrillard, Lash and Urry's analysis of 'global sociology' argued that 'Objects are emptied out both of meaning (and are postmodern) and material content (and are thus post-industrial)'. In theory, it becomes the role of advertising to attach imagery and meaning to the product (1994, p.14-5). Clearly, globalization has been widely discussed and considered. A whole edition of *Design Issues* examined the implications of globalization, considering the possibilities of cross-cultural design and homogenization (Fiss (ed), 2009).

However, is it straightforward for all industries and commodities to adapt to the implications of globalization? This paper parallels a study by Respicio concerning the Nishijin textile tradition of Japan. Respicio explored issues raised by a craft orientated 'industry' undergoing shifts in production to cheaper places of manufacture (2007). The UK ceramic industry also has a distinctive regional identity and heritage particularly in Staffordshire, and significantly, on occasion, collectable dimensions. By using oral evidence of ceramic manufacturers, a ceramic designer and a retailer, this paper sets out to examine some of the challenges created by the growth of globalization.

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Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire (often called The Potteries) has been central to the UK ceramic industry for centuries. As late as the 1980s, it was calculated that 83% of the employment involved in the UK pottery industry was still based in the Stoke-on-Trent area (Imrie, 1989, p.6). In addition, previous definitions of design have also paid homage to the pottery industry as being iconic of British nationhood. Before the implications of globalization were apparent, one writer observed in the 1980s:

‘British design: Burberry raincoats, floral interior fabrics, Jaguars, Shetland pullovers, Dunhill lighters, and Wedgwood pottery. Tradition, respectability and quality’ (Huygen, 1989, p.15).

Clichés as these may be, it is noticeable how tradition and quality have been used to describe the characteristics of British design, and this interpretation does not entirely focus on surface decoration. Indeed, in the past, ceramic UK backstamps, catalogues and packaging have all drawn attention to local heritage and craft skills. For instance, a 1978 Wedgwood jasper ware vase, with its original packaging, states on the box ‘of Etruria / Wedgwood / Made in / England / Barlaston’ (Fig. 1-2).

In addition, on a Royal Doulton cup and saucer with a pattern name of ‘Juno’, designed in 1988 (Fig. 3-4), the box packaging boldly stated, ‘Since 1815, The Gift of Imagination, Burslem, England.’ An enclosed pamphlet explains the advantageous qualities of Doulton’s china, and that the firm had been making tableware for over a century. The backstamp on the ‘Juno’ range indicated below the heraldic symbols that it was ‘Made in England’. Therefore, perhaps it could be argued that previous UK ceramic marketing strategies have made the mobility of this cultural product harder to adapt to the changes instigated by globalization. Nevertheless, as Royal Doulton embraced outsourcing to the Far East their marketing strategies changed, and this is discussed below.

Paradoxically, surface pattern designs and UK ceramic bodies are a reflection of various cultural and stylistic tendencies, many of which can be traced back to the influence of China and the Far East. As the sociologist, Les Back, observed when regarding the ‘Englishness’ of a cup of tea, it is in reality far more a reflection of imperialism, than something distinctly British (Jenks (ed), 1998, p.69).

In 1991, the UK’s largest proportion of imported porcelain tableware came from Germany. By the end of the 1990s it was widely recognized that Chinese imports were having a major impact on European markets. The Staffordshire press clearly recognized that ceramics with Far Eastern origins were cheap and often anonymous, particularly when sold through supermarkets. Globalization theories describe a mode of behaviour

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called 'deterritorialization'. To Tomlinson, the word draws attention to changes in the 'place-culture relationship' (1999, p.106). This view may be applied to imported ceramics from the Far East since it was pointed out in the Staffordshire press that:

'...like in other areas of consumer goods, the backstamp is starting to mean less as companies spread themselves amid the sweep of globalization. A shop assistant explained: "It's because most if not all families around here have links either with Royal Doulton and Wedgwood or the Potteries. People elsewhere don't care so much where it is made just as long as it looks good" ' (*The Sentinel*, 19/11/2003).

Speeded-up design, repositioning of brands, factory closures and firms offering greater bespoke services have often been the usual responses to Far Eastern competition. However, the most widespread trend has been outsourcing production. Locally, outsourcing was a highly emotive issue because of job cuts in the Potteries, which then drew attention to issues of a loss of craft skills, potential quality issues, and whether the issue of the 'place of origin' was relevant to the consumer. Not surprisingly, the application of outsourcing has provoked fundamental questions as to whether shifting UK ceramic production to the Far East would result in a loss of integrity.

Alternatively, the view was expressed that Staffordshire could be the centre of design, and not manufacturing. Thus, two theories emerged due to the impact of the Far East. Either way, these views have impacted on marketing, and even design. It was reported that in 'the 1980s and 1990s (and perhaps earlier)', 'medium ranking firms' were importing undecorated ware from Pakistan, Korea, and China (Rowley, 1998, p.27). In addition, Royal Doulton announced in 1995 the development of a manufacturing venture in Indonesia. A revealing comment in 1995, by Wedgwood's new Chief Executive, Brian Patterson (formerly of Waterford), was that 'we can no longer assume that Potteries in the UK is the only place to manufacture ceramics.' It was a question of delivering 'value-for-money.' The ways to reduce costs were either through new technology, or 'sourcing from low cost manufacturing areas', or both of these methods. Wedgwood was in the process of repositioning itself as a brand (*Tableware International*, August 1995, Vol.25, No.7).

One tendency has been to focus on the Staffordshire brand name, avoiding references to 'place of origin' on the backstamp, and to use only the detachable label or the packaging to indicate a Far Eastern or Asian place of manufacture (Fig. 5-7).

Interestingly, Wedgwood's 'Home' range, discussed in the press from June 1994, and launched in 1995, was manufactured in Portugal (*The Sentinel*, 17/6/1994). It is important to note that when Wedgwood first outsourced its porcelain 'Home' collection to Vista Alegre in 1995, the range was clearly backstamped 'Wedgwood... made in

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Portugal', but the company used a detachable label approach when sourcing production in Indonesia (See Fig. 8-9).

The detachable label approach was typical of a number of Staffordshire brands outsourcing to the Far East. However, Wayne Nutbeen, Chief Executive of Royal Doulton, was quoted in the local newspaper as stating:

'It [the Doulton brand] will also outsource more products from plants in India, Bangladesh, China and Thailand – part of a strategy that has made Royal Doulton a “model” for other firms to follow. Mr.Nutbeen explained this was because it had been reinvented as a sales-led company marketing high-branded goods under the names of Minton, Royal Doulton and Royal Albert – rather than a manufacturer.' (*The Sentinel*, 18/9/2004).

A Royal Albert surface pattern called 'Ruby Lace' of 2002, in the 'Old Country Roses' range, had a detachable label that declared the brand to be part of the Doulton group, but manufactured in Indonesia (Fig.10-12). Style-wise with the gilt rim, and gilding on top of the handle, it is reminiscent of designs from the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

The emphasis was increasingly on lifestyle and branding, although the results of this opinion could be rather incongruous. In 2009 Wedgwood introduced a range to celebrate 250 years of business. Fig.13-14 shows a Wedgwood bone china mug in this range, decorated with the different backstamps used by the company, some of which incorporate the phrase 'Made in England'. It reaffirms an infatuation with the backstamp in many quarters of the Staffordshire ceramic industry. The actual backstamp on the base of the mug uses the phrase 'An English Classic...since 1759', and the cardboard box pays homage to Wedgwood's blue jasper ware. However, the label on the box states that it was made in Indonesia (Fig. 15-16). In fact, an article in the Staffordshire press entitled 'Stamping out the origins' referred to an assumption that 'The recipient of the gift will also most likely dispose of the packaging before placing the figurine on their mantelpiece or whatever' (*The Sentinel*, 2/11/2003).

The next outsourcing example exists where the Staffordshire brand name and 'England' are provided within the indelible backstamp, but the detachable label, or the packaging indicates a Far Eastern place of manufacture. In the manner of Lash and Urry's view, the marketing (or backstamp) creates links with the UK. The word 'England' has in these circumstances come to signify the origin of the brand, rather than place of production. A Johnson Brothers' cup and saucer demonstrates this trend. The printed backstamp reads 'Johnson Bros England 1883' (the year the firm was founded), but the detachable label indicates that it was actually manufactured in China (Fig. 17-18).

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A third, but more unusual trend, is for Staffordshire brands, such as Churchill China, to declare in the indelible backstamp that the product was 'Made in China' (Fig.19-21) A fourth trend has been a shift from stating 'Made in England' to 'Designed in England' to reinforce UK links, without any indication of place of manufacture on detachable labels or packaging (Fig.22). By association, these ceramic examples are still attempting to benefit from connections to England. However, Anthony Wood, Chairman of Arthur Wood & Sons of Longport, took a more cynical view. Consumers would only confuse 'designed' with actual place of manufacture:

'A common sight is that of 'Designed in England' which is a deliberate attempt to mislead customers into thinking that it is made here, although it could be made anywhere.' (*The Sentinel*, 15/4/2002).

A fifth approach is to declare 'Decorated in England' which is a reflection of UK firms using imported white-ware, normally from the Far East. Finally, the sixth trend can be a more ambiguous approach whereby one Staffordshire company called, 'Rose of England China', stated on their packaging that mugs were 'Made in England', whilst the mugs themselves are individually marked 'Rose of England, Made in China' (Figure 23-24).

Whilst it is perhaps theoretically possible to move ceramic production to anywhere in the world (Carroll et al., 2002), claims, such as 'Made in England', can no longer be made. Changes in the organization of the UK industry were not imperceptible when considering actual marketing, and overall they have implications on both consumers and manufacturers. When the actual origins of UK ceramic brands became decidedly unclear, theoretically, this had an impact on manufacturers who were still producing in the UK. Alternatively, when detachable labels or the packaging indicated that the UK ceramic brand was outsourced, it raised the issue of how consumers responded to these changes.

The view of Wedgwood's marketing director, Robin Ritchie, was quoted as:

'If you ask a customer, they would prefer it to be made in England, but it's not an important part of the purchase. We have done considerable research to check this. The reassurance of the Wedgwood name is good enough for the consumer.'  
(*Tableware International*, March 1995, Vol.25. No.2).

When *Tableware International* published an article concerning the 'country of origin' debate, opinions of UK ceramic retailers veered towards the 'place of manufacture' having limited importance to the consumer (*Tableware International*, May/June 2008, Issue 3, Vol. 130). Likewise, and corresponding to Churchill China's use of an indelible backstamp reading 'Made in China' on certain ceramic ranges, a representative of this Staffordshire company, when asked whether people (retailers and consumers) were

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genuinely interested in the 'Made in England' or 'Made in Stoke-on-Trent' backstamp, the Churchill representative replied:

'Much less than you would expect in my personal opinion. I am wearing a Marks & Spencer's suit. I haven't a clue where it is made. If you get value out of something, it delivers what you need...I think people care less about country of origin...' (Interview 1).

The analogy of ceramics with clothes was interesting, and was repeated by other manufacturers interviewed. If there was any sense of the consumer buying UK ceramics on the basis of their being made in Staffordshire, it would only be determined by the age group concerned:

'I think, if you talk to someone at 50, 60, 70 and 80, I think you are probably right. But certainly, when you think of people in their 20s and 30s, they're living in a global world, the internet... I suppose it is closest to perfect competition than anything else isn't it, because they know everything - they have so much information...' (Interview 1).

The Churchill representative made an interesting distinction between the attitudes of different age groups. Individuals in their 20s and 30s were defined as more global, whereas the older generation were not. Younger consumers had been presented with more choice through the internet, and this is in line with some writers' notions of a 'global village' that has been influenced by electronic communications (McLuhan, 1962; Waters, 2006, p.12-14). These views are also more in accordance with Gabriel and Lang's definition of postmodern consumers who no longer search for the 'authentic' (2006, p.88).

However, as part of this research, an interview was undertaken with a retailer in a department store in the north of England, selling Wedgwood and other brands connected to this group. Whilst the interview with the Wedgwood retailer confirmed various shifts in demand, what this retailer added to the debate revealed the difficulty of convincing consumers that outsourced ceramics were as desirable as English-made Wedgwood. With regard to shifts in production abroad the seller replied:

'Yes, I think as a company, I think, it was thought they wouldn't. But, I think they under-estimated the customer, and I think the customer is bothered where things are made...' (Interview 2).

A central problem described by this retailer was the perception of Wedgwood's value. Prestigious UK ceramic products continued to be retailed at high prices, but because they were manufactured outside the UK, the consumer perceived them as essentially the 'same' as the proliferation of cheap Far Eastern ceramic goods found in supermarkets. It appears, then, that consumers were not oblivious to the detachable labels used to indicate actual place of production. Globalization theories do not appear



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to have readily addressed how the new place of production would be devoid of any meaning. Problems seem to have arisen when prestigious UK ceramic manufacturers have attempted to infer that their product is still of high-value even though manufacturing takes place in districts associated with cheap labour.

Does this reaction to outsourcing (albeit to a high-status, heritage brand) explain why some other UK ceramic manufacturers have continued production in the UK? In the case of the UK ceramic industry, new backstamps and surface pattern designs have also emerged that appear to reinforce the fact that some production has continued in the Potteries. Interestingly, not all companies have capitulated to outsourcing to the Far East. Emma Bridgewater, a firm based at Hanley, Staffordshire, has attracted the attention of *Crafts* magazine, because it relates the 'Britishness' of its products to the fact that, 'every piece is hand-made in Stoke-on-Trent, and Bridgewater herself has doggedly refused to outsource production overseas' (Qureshi, 2010, p.14). Hervas-Oliver et al.'s analysis of 'regional resilience' has even asserted that Emma Bridgewater and Portmeirion (also based in Staffordshire) have 'generally succeeded' because of competitive design and marketing that 'strongly associate' the product to the region (2011, p.383). This parallels other interpretations of globalization that foresee local, regional cultures, heritage, identity and continuity becoming re-valued (Corner and Harvey (ed), 1991, p.24-6).

In spite of the Bridgewater backstamp reading 'Hand made in Stoke-on-Trent', when husband and Co-Director of Emma Bridgewater was interviewed, his somewhat surprising attitude regarding place of manufacture was that:

'I think it is a huge bonus. I don't think it is what drives it: indeed it is very difficult to actually explain to people that we produce it here, and how handmade it is, in spite of videos, catalogues and books and everything else in the world. It is not the principal thing. We would sell the same amount if it were made in China...' (Interview 3).

Bridgewater has rarely bought in designs from outside, one example being the 'Hellebore' pattern by Mary Fedden, in the mid 1990s, which was considered to be a strong seller. However, unlike other sizeable Staffordshire firms they have avoided celebrity collaborations. Typically Bridgewater offers a diverse range of surface patterns, often using traditional techniques of decoration, on just a limited range of body shapes (Fig. 25). A semiotic analysis would imply that the randomly placed sponged motifs or painted designs signify hand skills, reinforcing the notion that more traditional manufacturing continues in Staffordshire. A further analysis of Bridgewater backstamps shows the use of the phrase 'Hand Made in Stoke-on-Trent, England', strengthening the association with the region (Fig.26). This was introduced in 2010,

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when previously only 'Hand Made in England' was used (*The Sentinel*, 21/12/2009). In addition, the enamelled initials of the decorators' link into another 'heritage' aspect of the English ceramic industry.

In reality, maintaining production in Stoke-on-Trent stems from Bridgewater's desire to create jobs in the UK. Similarly, a Staffordshire firm called Royal Stafford Tableware has created backstamps that emphasize the Potteries, and surface-pattern designs including the phrase 'Made in Britain'. Their 'Britannia range' of c2009 incorporated images of Britannia, designs with a crown, and the statement 'Made in Britain' (Fig.27-28).

Unusually, the ceramic design itself communicates to the consumer where it was made. This would be something of an anachronism prior to the impact of outsourcing, and here it can be argued that the impact of the Far East has influenced surface pattern design. Theoretically, this strategy engages or appeals to the consumer wishing to buy something that is British-made, and in so doing supporting the Staffordshire Potteries. In addition, the backstamp includes the phrase 'Made in the Heart of the Potteries', reinforcing the fact that it is definitely made in the UK.

Thus, these features appear to support the notion that perception is a factor in explaining why some manufacturers have maintained production in the UK. Royal Stafford Tableware designs relate to the Evans, Jamal and Foxall observation that there is still such a thing as an 'Ethnocentric' consumer (2006, p.209-10).

However, the Managing Director of Royal Stafford Tableware, when interviewed, established that the motivation for continuing production in the UK stemmed from maintaining design and manufacturing agility issues, rather than a perceived consumer demand (Interview 4). The Managing Director argued that within the world of ceramics, markets still required different designs. Paradoxically, he referred to the similarity between the GAP fashion windows of New York and London, but an indication from the interview was that taste differences still existed within the ceramic industry in the 2000s. Apparently, a design by Eva Zeisel in the 'Classic Century' range was still selling at Crate and Barrel (Fig. 29-30). It was one of their top five best selling designs, and had been for over ten years, whereas it lasted two years at John Lewis in the UK, with just modest sales.

The interpretation of Royal Stafford Tableware's backstamps and the surface designs might be that the Managing Director had recognized a niche market for ceramics still manufactured in Staffordshire. But, the designs had developed the other way round; this manufacturer had decided that it was currently more desirable to produce in

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Staffordshire. Only then, was it explored whether it would be possible to capitalize on this situation, through the marketing and design.

As part of this research, Hugh Saunders, a tableware designer for Royal Doulton was interviewed to establish actual experience of designing in Burslem where manufacturing was taking place. Saunders designed for Royal Doulton from 1970 until 1998, and then for the company on a freelance basis until 2000 (Fig.31). He estimated that in total he produced 73 surface pattern designs for Royal Doulton and Minton. Minton of Stoke became part of Royal Doulton in 1968 (Niblett, 1990, p.70). Prior to outsourcing, the evidence is that Saunders had a thorough knowledge of the market, and knew whether the design had been well received. However, when Royal Doulton began to outsource production to the Far East and Pacific Rim, and then went on to develop their own manufacturing facility in Indonesia in 1995, the design process was presented in more fragmented terms. For example, on one occasion, a tableware pattern designed by Saunders was outsourced to Thailand, and there was vagueness as to what had happened to the design (Interview 5). Although Saunders had a photograph of the design from his archive, he did not know the actual pattern name. When questioned he replied:

‘That I don’t know. No, I don’t think...I have got a picture of one of my prototypes, but I don’t think the brochures, or anything ever came back to the UK, so I don’t think we were aware, and it was never sold in the UK, and so I was never aware of what it was called in the end’ (Interview 5).

Apparently, then, there was a lack of awareness of whether it had been a commercially successful design (Fig. 32).

There is an implicit irony based on the evidence of Saunders. Inevitably, with shifts in manufacturing abroad (as Lash and Urry predicted), the design-side becomes more of a central activity. Based on this change, Lash and Urry add that the nature of research and development for clothes, shoes, furniture etc., had increasingly become more aesthetic in nature (1994, p.15). However, based on the evidence of Saunders it does not necessarily create the most efficient way of developing design in the ceramic industry. Saunders referred to instances of where there were interpretation issues, since he recalled how in the early stages of outsourcing to Thailand, designs were physically taken out by a Royal Doulton employee, but not by anyone in the design team. Consequently:

‘I had the odd phone call from someone in Thailand as to how did this thing...bit of the pattern fit round there, or where should have it gone etc, etc’ (Interview 5).

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None of the design team ever visited the actual factories where Doulton began outsourcing, and because of this:

‘No we didn’t ...as I say, slightly unfortunate, as I say, because you used to get these phone calls from somebody in Thailand, from another part of the company and you would think, why didn’t they send us. Goodness...[we could have] done it all without any problems, but I don’t know why, but we didn’t get sent’ (Interview 5).

Although some UK ceramic examples from the 2000s might accentuate that they were still producing in Staffordshire, interviews showed how the manufacturers responsible for these products were not be entirely convinced of the value of ‘place of origin’ to consumer perception. The reason for this may be that, on many levels, manufacturers understand that aspects of the industry are constructs. For example, it is perhaps not widely appreciated that not all of Emma Bridgewater’s ceramic products are made at their Hanley factory. Some misconceptions have often evolved, in both a modern and historical sense. A similar point was made when in 2009 an entire edition of *Design Issues* was devoted to ‘Design in a Global Context: envisioning postcolonial and transnational possibilities’. One article by Rovine discussed problems with making distinctions between what was ‘traditional’ African, or Western colonial clothing (Fiss (ed) 2009, p.47).

Nevertheless, some manufacturers cater for the collecting market. An example of how the collecting dimension can still make a difference to the behaviour of manufacturers is suggested by Caverswall China of Fenton, a specialist manufacturer of bone china and limited editions, established in 1973 (Fig.32). The owner and Managing Director acquired a Royal Warrant in 2008 (*The Sentinel*, 19/12/2007). An example of Caverswall commemorative production is a small dish with printed decoration and gilt edging, designed for Prince William’s wedding. This was a limited edition with a hand-written number and a backstamp incorporating the Prince of Wales’ feathers (Fig.33-34).

Out of curiosity, the Managing Director of Caverswall had obtained white-ware from Korea to examine the quality. He described some of the samples as being ‘really nice’, indicating that the debate about the ‘quality’ of Far Eastern ceramics had significantly moved on since the earlier concerns expressed in the press. When the Managing Director was asked whether the commemorative-side of collectable ceramics had resolutely remained sensitive, the reply was:

‘Absolutely. You are dead right with that word – they are very sensitive. And they would react quite violently if you were doing commemorative ware and it was white- ware blanks made abroad. They really want everything there. There is a made in England thing...’ (Interview 6).

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The fact is there has not been a unilateral decline of the UK ceramic industry since a large number of companies still exist, producing in the vicinity of Stoke-on-Trent. Many of the volume producers of tableware have gone, but if the ceramic manufacturer is involved in producing the collectable and commemorative category of ceramics, place of production can still be considered to be relevant. The production of collectable ceramics does not align with Lash and Urry's broad assumption that meaning can simply be added to the product wherever it was manufactured. In more recent times, the phrase 'regional resilience' has been applied to the consequences of globalization (Kitson et al., 2004). According to Hassink there is not a straightforward renewal of western industries, but more often, adjusting, adapting and transformation (2010). Paralleling this suggestion, Paul and Judith Bishop founded the New English of Barlaston, in 2009, aimed at the bespoke collectable and limited edition end of the market (Fig.35-36). Likewise, Tony Young, Peter Holland and John Bromley established The Figurine Collective in November 2009, and all their manufacturing takes place in Stoke (Fig.37-38). To emphasize this, the firm uses a 'World Capital of Ceramics, Stoke-on-Trent' backstamp, being championed by the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership (*The Sentinel*, 16/11/2009). Young had been the Product Development Director at Compton and Woodhouse (a company that specialized in selling ceramic collectables), whereas Holland and Bromley had worked as sculptors for Royal Worcester and Coalport. It was reported that the company was established in response to Royal Doulton's shift of figurine production to the Far East. Typically, a Royal Doulton figurine called 'Diana' used the 'Designed in England' approach on the backstamp, while the detachable label and packaging indicated the actual place of manufacture was Thailand (Fig. 39-40).

In an interview with Tony Young of The Figurine Collective, he recalled that Pascoe in the USA used to sell new Royal Doulton figurines, but because 'no-one in America wants new Doulton figurines from the Far East', they have now developed a strand of their business dealing in second-hand Doulton figurines (Interview 7). Young reported that people who had given up collecting English branded figurines because they were no longer made in the UK, had renewed their focus on Stoke production, and he had received comments such as 'now I can collect again' (Interview 7). Ironically, Baudrillard's earlier observations in *The System of Objects* of the late 1960s, discussed the market for antiques, and also considered the desire to collect generally. Baudrillard suggested that here there was a greater propensity to search for 'authenticity, craftsmanship, hand-made products, native pottery...' and current research indicates that this tendency still persists (1996, p.75).

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Theoretically, UK ceramic collectables remain problematic when faced with the impact of globalization, but even tableware can be subject to concerns about where it is manufactured. Spode's 'Blue Italian' design has been in continuous production since 1816 until Spode fell into administration in 2008 (*The Sentinel*, 3/8/2009). Spode increased outsourcing in the mid 2000s, and their 'Blue Italian' pattern was produced in China and Malaysia (*The Sentinel*, 3/8/2009). Spode went into receivership and a company called Portmeirion purchased their 'Blue Italian' design, much of it to be manufactured again in Stoke-on-Trent. When Portmeirion was approached, their marketing team pointed out that perception issues had been involved:

'The decision to manufacture at our factory in Stoke-on-Trent is based on: how important the 'made in England' backstamp is to the consumer (or potential consumer) of a range – which can vary by international market... [and] The 'made in England' backstamp is important to some consumers and we remain proud that we are a successful factory in the heart of The Potteries working to full capacity...' (Interview 8).

This view encapsulates some of the existing paradoxes faced by the UK ceramic industry. It infers that some commodities do not make a seamless transition into becoming truly globalized, as the pathway can be less clear, and more uneven. Tableware may be subject to the same authenticity debate found when discussing collectables, but it depends on whether the actual design has a distinctive heritage. What can be peculiar to the collectable or ornamental items, may also apply to tableware design. Portmeirion distinguishes between the Chinese and Stoke production on the backstamp and on detachable labels. Two examples acquired directly from Portmeirion demonstrate this point. The first example was manufactured in Staffordshire (Fig.41-42). The other 'Blue Italian' example acquired from Portmeirion was produced in China, is not permanently marked 'made in China' (Fig. 43-44).

## **Conclusion**

Appadurai has argued 'the complexity of the current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics which have barely begun to theorize' (Featherstone (ed), 1990, p.180). Overall, this individual case study highlights the value of recording actual attitudes in a period of rapid change, and demonstrates that even when examining an industry in isolation, generalizations should be avoided since approaches and attitudes can be contradictory. Commodities that might be revered or coveted, coupled with a certain romance for where and how certain products were produced, pose problematic questions for the mobility of products, such as UK ceramics. When interviewing certain manufacturers the 'Made in England' backstamp was considered important for attracting consumers that are

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paradoxically from their newer, growing export markets now developing in the Far East.

**Neil Ewins, April 2013.**

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#### **Interview**

Interview 1: Churchill China, Tuntstall. Interview with Managing Director of Dining.

Interview 2: Wedgwood seller, department store, north of England.

Interview 3: Emma Bridgewater, Hanley. Interview with Co-Director.

Interview 4: Royal Stafford Tableware, Burslem. Interview with Managing Director.

Interview 5: Royal Doulton designer.

Interview 6: Caverswall China. Interview with Managing Director.

Interview 7: The Figurine Collective. Interview with Co-Director.

Interview 8: Email reply from Marketing Team, Portmeirion.