

Wedgwood

ARTISTS AND INDUSTRY

INTERACTIVE GUIDE



6 April – 24 August 2025
Perc Tucker Regional Gallery



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INTERACTIVE GUIDE

ABOUT WEDGWOOD

Wedgwood is one of the most recognisable names in ceramics today. For over 260 years, the company has led the way with its influential manufacturing advances, clever marketing and creative collaborations with top artists and designers. From pioneering partnerships to the introduction of new clays, ceramic glazes and shapes, in each era Wedgwood has embraced the latest in design and technology.

Founded in 1759 by Josiah Wedgwood (1730–95), the name ‘Wedgwood’ has come to stand for something far beyond the striking blue and white of the company’s iconic Jasperware. Josiah Wedgwood had a remarkable ability to set trends and capitalise on market opportunities, leading the company to global renown.

Wedgwood redefined art and industry with its craft, innovation and storytelling, overcoming challenges and changes in taste to remain in production today. In *Wedgwood: Artists and Industry* at Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, the story of Wedgwood is told through the artists and industry that underpinned the company’s success from the 18th century to now.

EXPLORING WEDGWOOD

Jasperware

A matte, unglazed stoneware seen in many colours but is mostly known for the distinctive blue colour referred to as “Wedgwood Blue”. It is often decorated with white bas-relief figures. This is one of Wedgwood’s most famous products.



Image: Lotus Paint Box Set, Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, 1785-90.

Photo courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Queen’s Ware

A cream-coloured earthenware developed by Josiah Wedgwood in the 18th Century. Originally known as Creamware, Josiah I sent a creamware tea set and a range of samples to Queen Charlotte who was so pleased with the ceramics that she gave her name and patronage to the manufacturer.



Image: Teapot, Queen’s Ware, Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, 1762-65.

Photo courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Black Basalt

A fine-grained, dense stoneware, known for its deep black colour, that was used by Wedgwood in items such as medallions, urns and busts.



Image: First Day’s Vase, Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, 1769.

Photo courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Bone China

Bone china is a durable, lightweight and elegant material that is most commonly used for the creation of tableware. Bone china is made from china clay, china stone and bone ash (made from animal bones). Bone china became highly popular, leading to its production by a large number of pottery manufacturers across Britain.



Image: Cup and saucer, ‘Tasse à “Chocolat Américaine”, ‘Campanula’ shape, designed by Paul Follot, Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, ca.1923.

Photo courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Image: First Edition copy of the Portland Vase, Josiah Wedgwood and sons, 1790-94
Photo courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London

DECORATION AND DESIGN

Wedgwood is renowned for its innovative use of decoration and design, inspired by classical and historical artworks and patterns. Wedgwood uses a range of techniques to decorate their ceramics, the most notable being sprigging. Sprigs are small, moulded, decorative elements that are applied to a ceramic surface before firing, creating a raised relief effect. Wedgwood mastered the use of sprigging, particularly in Jasperware, where intricate designs such as figures, floral motifs and classical scenes were carefully attached to coloured backgrounds.

The First Edition copy of the Portland Vase [left] is one of Wedgwood's most iconic ceramic designs and demonstrates the skilful use of sprig moulding using white sprigs on jasperware.

Look through the exhibition and list 5 things that have been applied to ceramics as sprigs.

What is the sprig?

(Look closely at the details - what shapes, patterns, or figures can you see?)

Where is it placed on the ceramic piece?

(e.g in the centre, around the rim, near the base)

How does it add to the design?

(e.g decorative, storytelling, texture.)

- | | | |
|----------|-------|-------|
| 1. _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. _____ | _____ | _____ |

ACTIVITY 1

In the space below, design your own decorative sprig that could be added to a ceramic piece. Consider motifs such as plants, patterns, classical figures, geometric shapes, animals, or something personal to you!

As you design your sprig, consider:

How big will your sprig be? Will you sculpt it by hand, or make a mould? How will you attach it to your pottery?

Write a few words about your design. What inspired you about this design? Does it have a special meaning or story for you?



Image: Lobster Salad Bowl with Serving Utensils, Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, 1883-86. Photo courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London

NOVELTY, SHAPE, AND FUNCTIONALITY

When rival manufacturer Minton unveiled a new type of vibrantly-glazed pottery known as majolica at Britain's Great Exhibition of 1851, it became an international sensation. Combining bold colour with whimsical forms, majolica was a technical achievement with visual impact. In the spirit of Josiah's early glaze experiments, Wedgwood developed its own version.

Wedgwood modellers showed off their skills by crafting novelty tableware with increasingly elaborate and quirky designs, such as *The Lobster Salad Bowl with Serving Utensils* [left] which appealed to British tastes for the exotic and eccentric. These majolica pieces are often unusual shapes but still function as useable everyday items.

See what other examples of novelty tableware you can find in the exhibition and consider how Wedgwood has maintained the functionality of the pieces.

ACTIVITY 2

Design your own novelty piece of tableware. In your design, consider what makes it novelty, the shape, and also its functionality. For example, if you design a jug, make sure it can be filled with liquid that can also be easily poured out. If you design a bowl, ensure it can be used functionally to hold food. Draw your design in the space provided below.

GLOSSARY:

Clay: Clay is a natural, fine-grained material composed of materials such as silica and alumina. When mixed with water, clay becomes pliable and easy to shape into various forms. By firing clay at high temperatures, it then hardens into a solid material. Different types of clay – such as earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain – vary in composition, firing temperatures and techniques, textures, and finish.

Ceramic: Ceramic is the material formed when clay has been fired to high temperatures, making it permanently hard.

Glaze: Glaze is a glassy coating that can be applied to ceramics. It can enhance a ceramic's appearance, durability, and functionality. Glazes are added before the final firing, where they melt and fuse to the ceramic surface, forming a smooth finish that can be shiny or matte.

Kiln: A kiln is a high-temperature oven or furnace used to fire ceramics. They come in various types, including electric, gas, and wood-fired kilns, each of which can affect the final appearance of a ceramic piece. A kiln can reach temperatures exceeding 1300°C.

Relief: Relief refers to a raised or sculpted design that stands out from the surface of a ceramic piece. This can involve carving or adding decorative elements to pottery to create depth.

Slab: A slab is a portion of clay that has been evenly rolled and flattened. Slab building can involve cutting, shaping, moulding, and joining slabs to construct ceramic pieces.

Slip: Slip is a liquid mixture of clay and water. It is used for many purposes including decorating, casting, and joining pieces of clay together.

Sprigs/Sprigging: Sprigging, or sprig decoration, is a technique for decorating ceramics. Small, low-relief, shapes (that can be hand formed, or moulded) are applied to the surface of a ceramic piece before firing. These raised decorations create a relief effect on the pottery, adding texture and details.

Wedging: The process of preparing clay for shaping by removing air bubbles that may be trapped in the clay. Wedging can help prevent later cracking or weakness in the final ceramic.

CREATION PROCESS

A ceramic object can be made in many different ways. While we are probably all familiar with making hand-built works, only some of us will know how to throw a pot on the wheel, cast liquid clay with a plaster of Paris mould, or use a press mould. All of these processes will create a basic form, something that can be further manipulated and decorated with clay ornaments before firing.

Various types of Wedgwood are produced through distinct methods, each of which offers insights into the craftsmanship. For instance, the below process outlines how a Wedgwood bone china decorative plate is created.

1

Jigger

A bat of clay is placed on a revolving mould which shapes the front of the plate. The mould is used in conjunction with a shaped profile which forms the shape of the back of the plate. The excess clay is removed.

2

Sponging

Seam marks in the moulding process are removed, excess clay is cut away and the surface is sponged and smoothed by hand before the piece is ready to be fired.

3

Glazing & Firing

Once fired, a fine mist of glaze is sprayed onto the piece. Excess glaze is wiped from the foot of the piece before firing again. At this stage, white pieces are complete.

4

Pattern Decorating

Print designs are applied either by meticulous hand painting or via lithographed designs carefully transferred onto the piece before a third firing.

5

Prestige Raising & Enamelling

Further decoration is applied by hand. Liquid gold is carefully applied to the surface to create a relief. Different colours can also be applied, creating enamelled designs.

6

Selection

The finished piece is checked, with only perfect pieces selected for shipment. The selected Wedgwood plates are ready to grace tables worldwide!

GET INVOLVED IN

Wedgwood

ARTISTS AND
INDUSTRY

GUIDED TOURS

Guided tours are available for school and community groups on Tuesdays - Fridays.

To book your gallery tour please head to our website and complete the booking form.

Please note: Bookings are high during this period. We will try and accommodate your preferred date but may need to offer alternative dates and times based on availability.

WORKSHOPS & PROGRAMS

There will be a number of workshops and programs on offer during *Wedgwood: Artists & Industry*. Keep an eye on What's On Townsville, Facebook, or Instagram to find out more!

Townsville City Council acknowledges the **Wulgurukaba** of **Gurambilbarra** and **Yunbenun, Bindal, Gugu Badhun** and **Nywaigi** as the Traditional Owners of this land. We pay our respects to their cultures, their ancestors and their Elders – past and present – and all future generations.

Image Front Cover:
Minerva's Helmet,
Josiah Wedgwood and sons, 1885
Photo courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London

SOCIAL MEDIA

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 townsville.qld.gov.au/wedgwood

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 [What's On Townsville](#)

Perc Tucker Regional Gallery
Cnr Denham and Flinders St
Townsville QLD 4810

Opening times:
Tue – Fri 10am – 5pm
Sat – Sun 10am – 1pm
Closed Mondays and public holidays

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