

Peart, Tony ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6367-1387 (2020) Voysey's tile designs. Glazed Expressions, 85 . pp. 3-10.

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BACK COVER

All the known tile designs by C.F.A. Voysey for Dunsmore Tiles (Catalogue entries 38-50 from 'Voysey's Tile Designs', pp.nn-nn TBD).

Contents

TBD



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Glazed Expressions

The magazine of the Tiles & Architectural Ceramics Society, is published twice a year. ISSN 0261-0329

Please send offers of contributions to GE to the TACS Glazed Expressions Editor at the above address or e-mail: glazedexpressions@tilesoc.org.uk

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Printing: Impressions Print Design 0151 651 0463

Deadline for next issue: No. 86 - 1 August 2020

Voysey's Tile Designs Tony Peart

Although C.F.A. Voysey's tiles constitute only a small proportion of his total design output, they demonstrate the essence of his design vocabulary and many of these tiles have become well-known and highly collectable. However, as this area of his professional life is relatively little documented, much confusion has arisen among curators and collectors alike over which tiles are (or are not) by Voysey. With that in mind, the primary aim of this article is to chronologically catalogue and illustrate all the known tile designs for the six companies with which he worked commencing with Maw & Co. in the late 1880s through to his final designs for Dunsmore Tiles in the 1930s.

In this article, the catalogue is broken down into sections, one for each company, the tiles being numbered sequentially. An inserted annexe contains Pilkington Tiles in the Style of Voysey. Unless otherwise stated all tiles are 6" X 6".

Maw & Co.

Voysey's first recorded tile designs were created c.1889 for the specialist tile manufacturers Maw & Co. of Jackfield, Shropshire. He was commissioned to produce designs for Maw, which were exhibited at the second New Gallery Arts and Crafts Exhibition in late 1889. Maw exhibited three major tile panels at this exhibition. During research for this article, line illustrations of each have been discovered in the January 1890 issue of The Journal of Decorative Art. [1] One panel (Figure 1), described as "Persian" in the catalogue and contemporary reviews, concerns us here. Undoubtedly the "lion's share" of this design - most likely the central panel - was designed by Lewis F Day however the exhibition catalogue also records that tiles marked "D" were designed by CFA Voysey. It is frustrating not to be able to identify those tiles within the scheme designed by Voysey but they are most likely to be found within the outer border or possibly, those at the corners of the inner panel. This appears to be Voysey's only, fleeting involvement with Maw as this was the only occasion they exhibited tiles to his design and there is no reference to the company in either Voysey's address book or his "Black Book", a chronological (if incomplete) record of his work. However, a set of four, tube-lined tiles commonly referred to as "Bird and Tree", have long been attributed to Maw and Voysey purely on stylistic grounds. On closer examination, a few tiles from this series have been found to carry a "NMT" backstamp (most are unmarked), this is for The New Marsden Tile Co. Ltd., the c.1908 re-establishment of the earlier Marsden Tile Co. of Burslem, Stokeon-Trent. There is no record of Voysey having any involvement with this company. However, they did produce many other highly 'Voseyesque' tile designs in the early 1900s. These are all the work of their young, in-house designer JG Mowbray Jeffrey, the person most likely to be responsible for the "Bird and Tree" panel. [2] Although many notable collections own examples of these tiles, evidence strongly indicates that they were not designed by Voysey nor were they manufactured by Maw. [3]



Fig. 1 - Maw & Co. "Persian" tile panel as illustrated in The Journal of Decorative Art.

J C Edwards

Although no documentary evidence survives of Voysey's professional relationship with J C Edwards, several tiles exist that can be confidently attributed to Voysey on stylistic grounds. The most commonly encountered of these is "The Demon" (Catalogue 1) a six-inch, moulded teapot stand produced in a wide range of colourways. Due to the numerous examples that survive, a large number must have been made. Voysey also designed a pair of relief-moulded, semi-stylised "Tulip and Leaf" (Catalogue 2-3) tiles intended to be displayed in a vertical arrangement within a dado or fireplace. This design would later be revised (in a more conventionalised manner) and be put into production by Pilkington's. J C Edwards were also responsible for the only known Voysey tiles executed in lustre. The pioneer ceramicist William De Morgan first introduced his lustre tiles in the late 1870s. These highly influential tiles proved popular with wealthy clients but were very expensive. By the late 1880s many other manufacturers had introduced their own, cheaper versions, primarily the firms of Maw & Co. and Craven Dunnill, (both of Jackfield, Shropshire) followed by J C Edwards. An Edwards catalogue described their lustre tiles as "Rivalling the finest Mediaeval Italian and Spanish examples, combining with the gorgeous effects of burnished metals the iridescent colours of the rainbow". Lustre tiles were most commonly used to decorate fireplaces, the metallic glazes producing pleasing effects when lit by firelight. It seems appropriate therefore that the "Demon" design was also reinterpreted as a lustre tile (Catalogue 4) by J C Edwards. The company also produced a mirrored pair of lustre tiles featuring a bird amongst scrolling garden foliage (Catalogue 5 a & b). This rhythmic design was an adaptation of a textile design that was sold to G P & J Baker Ltd. and produced as a printed cloth around 1893. [4]



Pilkington's Tile & Pottery Co. Ltd.

Voysey designed more tiles for this Manchester company than for any other he was associated with. Voysey's earliest design for Pilkington's was a pair of moulded, dust-pressed tiles titled "Tulip Tree" (Catalogue 6-7), designed to be laid in the brickwork manner (i.e. each row offset by half a tile), a panel of which were exhibited by the company at the fifth Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition in 1896 and illustrated in The Studio. [5]

Further designs followed with the company able to create a "Voysey wall" (Figure 2) as part of their ambitious display at the Exposition Universelle held in Paris in 1900. The top section of the "wall" was composed of the "Viking Ships" frieze (Catalogue 8-9) something of a misnomer as the vessels depicted are actually based on medieval galleons. Two different designs of ship were arranged amongst plain tiles whilst above them were a run of single tiles depicting distant mountains. The whole scheme being surmounted by tiles containing a single, highly stylised bird. The overall effect is reminiscent of Voysey's famous painted clock (of a similar date) and unusually in the case of Voysey's designs for Pilkington's, preliminary sketches of the galleons survive. Below these were displayed "The Labours" tiles (Catalogue 10-18) printed in blue underglaze, the set comprising a total of eight individual roundel designs on the theme of work with an associated central tile depicting a tree with cartouche inscribed "Laborate et Amate" (love work). These designs were a development of decorative elements taken from a prize certificate designed for The Home Arts and Industries Association a few years earlier. "The Labours" were Voysey's only printed tiles, a technique the factory was eager to promote as they were a little cheaper to manufacture than moulded majolica tiles and allowed the company to target a wider market, particularly the lower-middle classes. Placed at the centre of the display was "Lemon Tree" (Catalogue 19) an elaborate, mural design comprising twenty individual tiles each separately impressed set into a field of undecorated tiles. This was flanked to the left and right by the earlier "Tulip Tree" design and placed immediately below, Voysey's most playful design for the company, the pair of tiles that comprise "Fish and Leaf" (Catalogue 20-21), a subject well suited for use in swimming pools and public baths. [6] The remaining space was infilled with panels of the company's "onyx" tiles. These showcased William Burton's genius for creating rich, single colour glazes which showed subtle variations on every tile. They were described in a promotional colour brochure (Figure 8) as exhibiting "charmingly broken colour" and certainly appealed to Voysey as he used them extensively in many of the tiled fireplaces he designed for his houses. [7] A



Fig. 2 - Pilkington's "Voysey Wall" from the 1900 Exposition Universelle, Paris (courtesy The Chambers Archive, Lancaster Arts, Lancaster University).

final design was showcased elsewhere on the company stand, this was the six by threeinch "Tulip" tile (Catalogue 22) based on an earlier textile design for Turnbull & Stockdale showing tulips and birds in flight. This was available like all Voysey's impressed tiles for Pilkington's, in a confusingly wide variety of colour combinations. The Glasgow Exhibition of 1901 saw two new Voysey designs introduced on the Pilkington's stand, these were two pairs of tiles on a similar theme: "Bird and Lemon Tree" (Catalogue 23-24) and the more formalised mirrored pair that comprised "Vine and Bird" (Catalogue 25 a & b). Both were much closer in style and theme to the designs he was producing contemporaneously for both textile and wallpaper manufacturers. [8] A tile featuring a stylised tree (Catalogue 26) was registered in September 1902 and can be confidently attributed to Voysey as it is an adaptation of an earlier textile design entitled "Scutari" manufactured by GP & J Baker. [9] Judging by the large number that still survive, this must also have been Voysey's best-selling design for the company. The 1903 "Arts and Crafts" exhibition showcased a few new tile designs by Voysey. For this event select designers were allocated small booths in which to create room settings with Voysey choosing to include one of his characteristic wooden fire surrounds (Figure 4) inset with narrow six-inch by two-inch tiles. Elsewhere in the exhibition a tile panel was displayed which could have been "Tulip and Leaf" (Catalogue 27-28), as this pair of tiles carries registration numbers which date them to September 1902. [10] These were a more stylised re-working of the design originally manufactured by J C Edwards a decade or so previously. In 1908, the Austrian art journal Kunst und Kunsthandwerken in a long article devoted to Voysey, featured two new tile designs related to Pilkington's. [11] The first was a large (probably nine-inch by six-inch) impressed tile featuring hearts and swans (Catalogue 29) that was certainly manufactured by the firm. [12] The second, a handpainted tile showing a farmer ploughing (Catalogue 30), although credited to Pilkington's in the article, is now known to be a tile personally decorated by Voysey on a glazed Pilkington's "blank" joining two other Pilkington's tiles known to have been hand-painted by Voysey. [13] The first of these was also photographed for the Kunst und Kunsthandwerken article but in the event was not illustrated and shows a thatched cottage surrounded by trees (Catalogue 31), whereas the second depicts a fruit tree (Catalogue 32). [14]



Fig. 3 - Pilkington's catalogue c.1900 featuring "Onyx" glazes (courtesy The Chambers Archive, Lancaster Arts, Lancaster University)



Fig. 4 - Fireplace and tiles at the 1903 Arts and Crafts Exhibition

Voysey's tile catalogue - Pilkington's Tile & Pottery Co. Ltd.



9 10 11



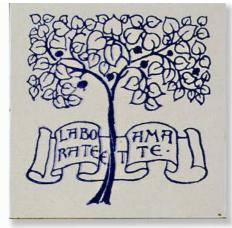
















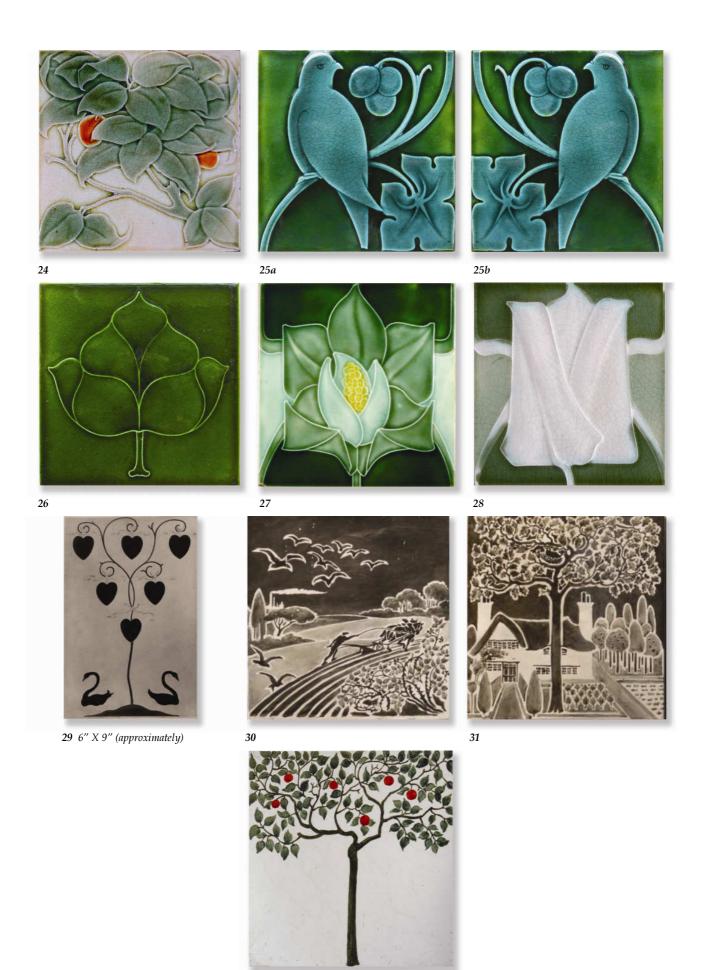








3" X 6"



Unexecuted tile designs for Pilkingtons

There are a few drawings of tiles speculatively designed with Pilkingtons in mind that exist in various public and private collections, but no examples of corresponding tiles have been recorded to date. These include: two, three by six-inch tiles depicting birds, foliage and a heart, submitted to the firm in October 1901; a design featuring a pair of mirrored birds arranged around a crown and heart and finally; an elaborate design entitled "The Ornamental Tree", depicting a lemon tree, on a pale ground. [15] Within the Chambers Archive there is also a photograph showing a full set of Voysey designed numerals, perhaps intended for use as transfer printed, ceramic house numbers. [16]

Pilkington's tiles in the style of Voysey

Other Pilkington's tiles have, from time-to-time, been attributed to Voysey purely on stylistic grounds. This is problematic as the in-house artists and particularly the firm's chief designer John Chambers (1869–1945), could produce work that can easily be mistaken for Voysey's. The same is true for F C Howells, whose fully documented tiles for the Victoria Baths Manchester are extremely "Voyseyesque". [17] This is not to say that none of the tiles within this category are by Voysey, simply that caution is required! Of the seven tiles illustrated in Annexe A it is the author's opinion that only the first four are potentially by Voysey, whereas the three "Art Nouveau" flower tiles (Annexe 5-7) are much more likely to have been designed by Chambers or Howells. "Fleur de Lys" (Annexe 1) a design first registered in September 1903 exhibits similarities with Voysey's "Tree" tile and is a motif much used elsewhere in his wallpaper and textile designs. A pair of tiles used in a frieze at Lister Drive Swimming Baths in Liverpool (Annexe 2-3) are clearly a variation of the "Fish and Leaf" design which were also used in this lavishly tiled interior. Mirrored pairs of the characteristically dynamic "leaf" design (Annexe 4), complete the scheme, being featured in the entrance hall of the building although these were first registered on 28 September 1901, a date tiles known to be designed by Howells were also registered!

Annexe: Pilkington Tiles in the Style of Voysey



Annexe 1







Annexe 2



Annexe 3



Annexe 4



Annexe 5

Annexe 6

Annexe 7

Medmenham Pottery

By the early 1900s, in the bespoke, tiled, fire surrounds he favoured for his houses, Voysey had enthusiastically adopted the use of the tactile and visual contrast that vertical bands of the narrow, single-coloured Medmenham "fillet" tiles gave when used alongside larger, smooth surfaced tiles such as Pilkington's "Onyx" range. Alongside the use of these 'stock' items, Voysey also occasionally commisioned unque pieces. At The Pastures, North Luffenham (built 1901-1902), tiled fireplaces in two of the principal rooms (Figure 5) contained heraldic designs by Voysey featuring the owner's family crest and initials. [18] Sadly, these are now lost although some of the simpler fireplaces, exploiting various combinations of undecorated Medmenham and Pilkington's tiles do remain in situ. Two further, moulded and decorated tiles designed by Voysey for Medmenham are known to exist. These may well have been produced on a limited commercial basis although rather surprisingly, both were versions of tiles concurrently in production at Pilkington's. The first, another variation on the "galleon" motif (Catalogue 33) would later serve as the basis for a bookplate designed for Robert Donat in 1929.



Fig. 5 - Bespoke Medmenham tiles depicting the Conant family arms at The Pastures.

The second is a moulded version of the "Carpenter" tile (Catalogue 34) from "The Labours" series of transfer printed tiles manufactured by Pilkington's however, it is unknown if others from this series were also produced.

Voysey's tile catalogue - Medmenham Pottery





33

34

Martin van Straaten & Co.

Voysey frequently specified van Straaten's six by two-inch, single coloured, undecorated tiles in many of his fire surrounds including those of his own home, The Orchard, Chorleywood built in 1899. When it came to undecorated, white-glazed tiles for use in either service areas, or where light and durability were at a premium, Voysey almost exclusively used van Straaten tiles, an example being Garden Corner, Chelsea Embankment (1906), The Studio noting: "The basement has been rearranged and lined throughout with van Straaten's white Dutch tiles, and light captured wherever possible." [19] To add coloured "accents" to these large fields of white, Voysey supplied van Straaten with a few decorative designs which were hand-painted onto the white, delft tiles. Three designs have been recorded to date: one depicting a bird (Catalogue 35); the other two featuring single roses (Catalogue 36-37) with examples of their use being found at The Homestead, Frinton-on-Sea (1905) and at Wilverley, Holtye Common, Sussex (1906-07). [20] It is well documented that Voysey was at his most prolific both as an architect and as a designer of pattern during the years straddling 1900 and this position is also reflected in his designs for tiles. However, as the new century progressed, all areas of his design activity (including tiles) declined as his work fell victim to changing tastes and fell out of fashion, so much so that by 1910 he had stopped designing tiles and would not do so again for over 20 years.

Voysey's tile catalogue - Martin van Straaten & Co.







35 36 37

Dunsmore Tiles

From evidence in Voysey's expense book it would appear he provided the company with designs between 1933–34, although it is not known which party made the initial approach. By the 1950s the studio was being run by Polly Brace and Gwyneth Fisher aided by two paintresses but ultimately, the venture was unable to compete with mass-produced tiles from large scale manufacturers and closed in 1964. The most well-known of Voysey's Dunsmore tiles is the "Alice in Wonderland" series (Catalogue 38-49 - Back Page) featuring twelve adaptations of characters created by Sir John Tenniel for Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Alice Through the Looking Glass. All bar one of these figures (the "White Rabbit" in waistcoat being an addition) were taken from Voysey's "Alice in Wonderland" textile design supplied to Morton Sundour Fabrics in 1930. [21] Each character was supplemented with small sprigs of Voysey's characteristic flowers or foliage to help balance the composition and, because they were stencilled, each can be found as a mirror image. The war halted all decorative ceramic production and it seems likely that manufacture of this range reached its height in the early 1950s, a few years after Voysey's death. Other designs for Dunsmore are held in the RIBA Drawings Collection of which at least one, a 4-inch "Galleon" design (Catalogue 50 - Back Page), was put into production. [22] Although currently unrecorded, it is likely that others from this series were also manufactured.

Tiles misattributed to Voysey

As previously mentioned, the Marsden Tile Co. of Burslem, Stokeon-Trent - a firm with which he had no connection - produced many tiles, including the well-known "Bird and Tree" quartet, that have frequently been attributed, purely on stylistic grounds to Voysey (Figure 6). Their designer is most likely to have been one J G Mowbray Jeffrey who must serve as a reminder that by the early 1900s, Voysey was a major influence on a generation of younger, decorative designers associated with the "New Art" movement. However, as a general rule, the work of the followers shows far less restraint than the hand of the "master" a good example being yet another Marsden "Bird and Tree" tile in the manner of Voysey (Figure 7). Alfred Meakin Ltd., another Stoke manufacturer also produced many plausible "Voyseyesque" tiles. The most commonly encountered is "Lily", a design first registered in December 1904 but clearly an "adaptation" of the lower tile in Voysey's "Fish and Leaf" pair for Pilkington's. Tiles also exist closely resembling Voysey's "Tulip and Bird" [23] woven furnishing fabric of c.1896 (for Alexander Morton & Co.) and these, quite understandably, have been attributed to Voysey. [24] However, recent research has proven they were manufactured by J W Munlieff of Utrecht to a "design" supplied by the wellknown Dutch designer, Jac. van den Bosch (1868-1948) and are therefore an example of unabashed plagiarism!



Fig. 6 - "Bird and Tree" quartet.

Summary

Although tiles only account for a small proportion of Voysey's output as a decorative designer, the specific challenges of working within this medium allowed him to simplify and refine his design vocabulary to its key elements. The stripped-down aesthetic he employed also allowed him to bring visual symbolism to the fore. In that respect, it places this aspect of his oeuvre much closer to his graphic and bookplate designs than to his wallpaper and textile designs. It should also be noted that, apart from the occasional use of those sparsely decorated tiles supplied by Martin van Straaten, Voysey did not use tiles of his own design within his houses. This is also reflected in his wallpaper and textile designs which rarely appear in those interiors for which he was directly responsible. Above all else, Voysey favoured simplicity and tranquillity, relying on such subtleties as quality of material, surface texture, tone and hue; rather than surface pattern. This achieved the restful, harmonious qualities he desired. Voysey's greatest achievement, in respect of tiles, was undoubtedly his connoisseurship, selection and inventive use of those undecorated, single-coloured "stock" tiles of varying glaze, proportion and size supplied by a handful of manufacturers. These were creatively arranged in the endlessly inventive, bespoke fire surrounds found in most of his houses. It could even be argued that Voysey the designer "with" tiles deserves to be better known than Voysey the designer "of" tiles.



Fig. 7 - Marsden tile in the "manner" of Voysey.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Richard Smith, curator of Lancaster Arts, for his patience and help in accessing the Chambers Archive at Lancaster University and to Pilkington's tile experts Angela and Barry Corbett for guiding me through this extensive collection. Chris Blanchett is a man who knows most everything about British tiles, their designers and manufacturers and has published extensively on the subject. He has patiently answered my questions and our e-mail correspondence has happily revealed some previously unrecorded Voysey tiles "lurking" in his remarkable collection. Finally, Marjolein van Zuylen brought to my attention those tiles in the Voysey manner designed by Jac. van den Bosch.

Tony Peart is a Senior Lecturer in Graphic Design and Illustration at The University of Cumbria and a Council member of The CFA Voysey Society. He has written many articles on a wide range of Voysey's design work and is keen to see any further tiles, by the manufacturers covered here, that could potentially have been designed by Voysey. Images can be sent to him at: tony.peart@outlook.com

This article is an abridged version of *Voysey's Tile Designs* which originally appeared in *The Orchard* number 8 2019 and is reproduced here with the kind permission of the publishers, The CFA Voysey Society: voyseysociety.org



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- [1] The Journal of Decorative Art, vol. 10, January 1890, pp. 13-15.
- [2] *The Artist*, vol. 30, March 1901, pp. 160-162.
- [3] Examples of these tiles are in the collection of: The Victoria & Albert Museum; The Jackfield Tile Museum; and the Crab Tree Farm collection see Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. *C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 286.
- [4] Illustrated in From East to West; Textiles from G P & J Baker. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984, p. 57.
- [5] The Studio, vol. 9, December 1896, p. 192.
- [6] A fine example being the Lister Drive Public Baths, Liverpool opened in 1904 and lavishly decorated throughout with Pilkington's tiles. The building and interiors survive but are now run as a tropical fish business.
- [7] As can be found at The Pastures, North Luffenham.
- [8] "Vine & Bird" was also supplied to the textile manufacturer Alexander Morton & Co. The design, dated October 1899, is in the collection of the V&A (E.180-1974).
- [9] From East to West; Textiles from G P & J Baker. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984, pp. 77-78.
- [10] The reverse of this tile features the registration number 397656 and the letter 'P' for Pilkington's.
- [11] Kunst und Kunsthandwerken, monatszeitschrift XI, heft 2, 1908, pp. 93-106.
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- [16] John Chambers Archive, Lancaster University.
- [17] Illustrated in Corbett, A. & C., Pilkington's Tiles 1891-2010. Manchester, 2013, p. 73.
- [18] The Studio. vol. 31, March 1904, p. 127
- [19] The Studio. vol. 42, October 1907, p. 24
- [20] A photograph of two of the tiles and a drawing of the bird are in the RIBA (BrJo/box 2/13 and SKB[458]3)
- [21] Illustrated in Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 103.
- [22] Ibid., pp. 288, 292.
- [23] Ibid., p. 128.
- [24] Ibid., p. 286.

