

Wedgwood and the Classical Tradition from Herculaneum to Wiltshire

The Birmingham Museum of Art comprises in its Dwight and Lucille Beeson and Buten Wedgwood Collections an uncommonly large and deep documentation of the reception of classical antiquity. The BMA touts its holding as one of the largest Wedgwood collections in the world. Combining this resource with the CAMWS annual meetings can generate some interesting synergy, especially given the origins of Wedgwood's overtly neoclassical decoration in the mid-eighteenth-century discoveries of Herculaneum and Pompeii.

A panel of five fifteen-minute papers revisits the history and essence of Josiah Wedgwood's production from the reception of Herculaneum, when neo-classicism was the thing, into the early Nineteenth Century, when the firm began to move onward into Romantic fashions.

An overview of the dual collection of Wedgwood holdings in the Birmingham Museum of Art will be offered by a curator of the collection.

A paper outlining the historical backdrop of the discovery of Herculaneum reviews the timeline and establishes the milieu in which the discovery was propagated throughout Europe.

A paper treats the importance of distinguishing between the two most prominent Vesuvian towns that were brought to light in the time of Wedgwood's neo-classical development, drawing on differences between Herculaneum and Pompeii.

A paper treats the most important production of the Wedgwood firm, the Green Frog Service that was created for Catherine the Great of Russia. The author considers one fine point within the extensive service's thousands of details and reminds how the Wedgwood production and the classicism it manifests is not exclusively neo-classical.

A final paper argues for greater evaluation of Wedgwood in the study of the Classical Tradition, offering as evidence the near exclusion of Wedgwood artifacts from the *Oxford Guide*

to Classical Mythology in the Arts. The author analyzes exemplary pieces that ought to be included in the *OGCMA* in its revision and considers reasons why they were not included in the first place.

One objective of the proposed panel is to help audience members appreciate the wealth of cultural resources available to us in our host city. The added value of increased appreciation for the multifaceted appropriation of classical iconography by a successful English businessman would be reason enough to assemble this panel.