

Jackson Pollock on Glass

Clockwise from the porringer.

Handled porringer, c. 1670-1700, diameter 5¼", London, England. Cobalt-blue-stained tin-glazed earthenware (delftware), in the form of a bowl with applied pierced, lobulated tab handle, and spattered with white enamel decoration.

Rolling pin, c. 1810, length 15⁷/₈", English. Free-blown green glass with spiral white enamel threading.

Pocket flask, c. 1810, length 6⁷/₈", English. Free-blown dark olive-green glass compressed flask with spattered white enamel. 2.2 cm. diameter blowpipe pontil mark.

Large handled jug, c. 1810, height 10¹/₈", English. Free-blown green glass vessel with wide neck, onion body, the rim and applied handle sparsely decorated with white enamel. 2.9 cm. diameter blowpipe pontil mark.

Handled pitcher, c. 1810, height 5¹/₈", English. Free-blown dark green glass vessel with tooled spout, onion body, and applied handle streaked and spotted with white enamel decoration. 3.8 cm. diameter blowpipe pontil mark.



TECHNOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY: These objects are examples of early 19th century splashed glass and it leads one to wonder what the original inspiration for splashed white decoration on dark glass might have been. It might have been the circa 1680-1700 cobalt-blue tin-glazed earthenware (delftware) splashed with white tin pigment produced in the south London region of either Southwark or Lambeth, though widely removed in time by a century. An example of this pottery is the illustrated bright blue porringer. At the beginning of the 18th century London potters were copying a French tin-glazed earthenware termed *Bleu de Nevers*, which was produced at Nevers, France from 1630 onward. This type of pottery was also termed *bleu persan* presumably in recognition of the blue pigments of the Middle East utilized for centuries in both ceramic and glass production. In the 14th century, prior to the discovery of local sources, China obtained its cobalt-blue from Persia for its famous blue and white porcelain. Although the origins are uncertain, splashed glass production began in Bristol, England at the beginning of the 19th century.

The Nailsea Glassworks at Bristol, England became operative in 1788 producing cylinder window glass and bottles, the bread and butter of any glasshouse. Around 1800 it began to produce the wares for which it is now famous—thick dark-green (“black”) glass hollowware, spattered or splashed with white enamel. The wares remained popular to c. 1840 by which time they were superseded by more complex and refined enameled wares of varying colors. The early white spotted wares tend to be rather crude. This lends some credence to the idea that they were “end of day” or “off-hand pieces” made by gaffers and apprentices as gifts for friends and relatives or for personal use. Nailsea was not the only factory producing these wares. Research indicates there were at least six British glasshouses making similar products during the first half of the 19th century, including the Alloa Glassworks in Edinburgh, Scotland. Except for a very few sealed bottles or those with a local history, attribution to a given glasshouse is not possible, and so “Nailsea-type” is the designated description.

Unlike the usual hollowware production, which was dominated with wine/utility bottles, the Nailsea-type was predominately jugs, pitchers, flasks, decanters and whimses. These whimses, included rolling pins, which were largely decorative, hung on a wall, and perhaps used only once or twice a year on a special occasion. Ironically, these country pieces required more time and skill to produce than the usual hollowware which by the early 19th century were largely blown into a metal mold. Enameled Nailsea wares were largely free-blown, and the enamel subsequently marvered, rolled or splattered on. An unusual detail, present on all three illustrated vessels, is the blowpipe pontil scar. After 1650 this is the rarest pontil type seen in England; yet, it appears on the majority of Nailsea-type illustrated in the literature. This technique was apparently utilized without regard to place of manufacture, including Alloa of Scotland.

Bibliography:

Roger Dumbrell, *Understanding Antique Wine Bottles*, Antique Collectors' Club, 1983, pgs. 124-127.

Willy Van den Bossche, *Antique Glass Bottles Their History and Evolution (1500-1850)*, Antique Collectors' Club, 1988, pgs. 100-102.

New England Begins: The Seventeenth Century, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1982, Vol. II, p. 240 for a description of an almost identical porringer with Massachusetts history

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