



DE MORGAN

COLLECTION

PEACOCK PUNCH BOWL

1877-1904

WILLIAM DE MORGAN
RUBY LUSTRE ON
EARTHENWARE



MAKING THE PUNCH BOWL

In 1872 William De Morgan opened a pottery in Chelsea. It was from this time that he started producing bowls like this one. The bowl itself was probably bought, or would have been made by one of the potters William employed to his own design. William would have come up with the concept for this piece and drawn the elaborate and richly detailed peacock and snake design. We can tell from the 'FP' stamp on this bowl that the painting of it was completed by Fred Passenger who worked for William De Morgan as a glaze painter.

This bowl is a beautiful example of a piece of lustre pottery that William De Morgan is well known for. We can see this as the bowl appears to glimmer and change shades of red in the light. This glaze is difficult to achieve. The pottery is painted with a copper or silver oxide and this is fired in a kiln starved of oxygen at a very high temperature. There is a chemical reaction which removes the oxygen from the metal oxide glaze and leaves a metallic film on the ceramic surface.

DESIGNING THE PUNCH BOWL

The outside of this bowl is decorated with floral motifs which William De Morgan was well known for and were popular at the time he made them. Inside the bowl is the image of a peacock and a snake, entwined with more patterns of flowers and leaves. The peacock is sometimes used as a symbol of immortality as ancient cultures believed the birds beautiful feathers survived after the birds death. In Greek Mythology, the peacock is used as the symbol of Juno, the goddess of women and motherhood. The snake represents cunning and deception as it was a snake that persuaded Eve to take the apple for the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. This design of this punch bowl then, could be a subtle hint to people drinking the punch that it might make them merry at the time, but certainly won't make them immortal; that is a deception! William de Morgan was known for his use of animals and snakes and peacocks both feature regularly in his designs. He often depicted the animals in bizarre compositions and styled them to fit to the piece he made.

WHO WAS IT MADE FOR?

Because William De Morgan's pieces were all individually made, a time-consuming process, they would have been expensive to buy and sold to the richer people in society as exclusive, luxury goods. A piece like this would have been sold to middle class Victorians who would have used it to serve drinks from at dinner parties. The unusual design would have entertained the guests just as much as the party.

USING THIS OBJECT ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

- Ask children to imagine the working conditions of Fred Passenger, who was employed by William De Morgan to paint his ceramic designs. Expand on this to think about conditions of the working classes in general in the Victorian period. Write a diary entry for Fred on the day he paints this bowl.
HISTORY/PSHE/LITERACY
- Provide children with a range of animals that act as symbols in art. Ask them to make their own circular design for a bowl that tells a story using symbols.
R.S/ART
- Provide children with air-dry clay (such as fimo) and ask them to design and make their own bowl. *D.T*