



The Della Robbia Pottery: From Renaissance to Regent Street

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The catalogue accompanies the exhibition, From Renaissance to Regent Street, at the Williamson Art Gallery & Museum in Birkenhead. The Williamson holds the world's largest collection of work from the Della Robbia Pottery, founded in 1894 by Harold Rathbone. Inspired by his experiences in Italy and by his contact with the work of the Tuscan sculptor, Luca Della Robbia, Rathbone developed a type of pottery that was unique to his factory. Employing local craftsmen and women and using local materials, the Della Robbia Pottery issued a distinctive set of ceramic products that included presentation vases, architectural panels and other household items in the final years of the nineteenth century. This work considers the different models of approaching creativity, aesthetics and critical value at the Della Robbia Pottery in the following ways: it examines the impact of Anglo-Italian cultural exchanges at the end of the nineteenth century upon the formation of the Della Robbia Pottery; it discusses the impact of art tourism and cosmopolitan experience upon Rathbone's manufacturing and commercial life; it reveals some of the influences upon Rathbone's distinctive approach to the design and manufacture of the pottery; and it considers the place of the Pottery within wider Arts and Crafts' artistic schemes that held a commitment to social responsibility.

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