Tile

Place of origin: Liverpool (made)

Date: ca.1771 (made)

Artist/Maker: Sadler, John, born 1720 - died 1789 (maker)
Zoffany, Johan Joseph, born 1733 - died 1810 (artist)
Dixon, John (engraver)

Materials and Techniques: Glazed earthenware

Credit Line: Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax and allocated to the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996

Museum number: S.618-1997

Gallery location: In Storage

Public access description

This tile showing David Garrick (1717-1779) as the simple-minded Abel Drugger in The Alchemist by Ben Jonson is one of a series of late 18th-century tiles of actors and actresses produced in Liverpool by John Sadler (1720-1789). Trained as a printer, Sadler experimented with transfer-printing on white glazed delftware tiles, transferring images from engraved copper plates using enamel colours fixed in low-temperature firing.

Actors and actresses could become big stars in the 18th century, when theatres, concert halls and pleasure gardens were the major forms of public entertainment. Engravers regularly produced images of paintings of the most popular performers, so the ability to reproduce engravings on ceramics was a lucrative development. Since the engravings were transfer-printed, the original images appear on the tiles in reverse.

David Garrick was recognised during his lifetime as one of the greatest actors ever in both comedy and tragedy. He was born in Hereford and made his London début in 1741. He managed the Theatre Royal Drury Lane from 1747 until 1776 and was depicted in many of his most famous roles, especially in paintings by Johann Zoffany (1733-1810). Zoffany’s 1770 painting of Garrick as Abel Drugger was reproduced as an engraving by Dixon and used by Sadler for this tile.

Descriptive line


Physical description

Square glazed cream earthenware tile, transfer-printed with a decorative border of trellis work, and symbolic theatrical objects on the right and left sides including a flaming torch, comedy and tragedy mask, and a lyre. There is a central image of David Garrick as Abel Drugger, standing, wearing an apron and knee-length breeches, looking to his right. In a ribbon ground above his head is the name: ‘MR GARRICK’, and below: ‘in the character of ABEL DRUGGER’. Decoration in underglaze brown.

Dimensions

Height: 12.6 cm, Width: 12.6 cm, Depth: 0.7 cm

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Object history note

As Abel Drugger in The Alchemist by Ben Jonson which Garrick first played at Drury Lane on 23 March 17453, for Macklin's Benefit performance.

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O117868/tile-sadler-john/