

ANTIQUES & COLLECTING

Five COLLECTORS share their passions (from p100), the history of the HUMBLE butter mould (p107), plus EXPERT advice (p110 & p111)



China specialist Willa Latham has a cabinet dedicated to work by Henry Daniel (1765–1841), her favourite manufacturer, and the only maker whose ceramics she collects.

Find out more from page 100.



Meet the collectors

When does a hobby turn into an obsession? From jelly moulds and porcelain to taxidermy, garden tools and typewriters, Ellie Tennant meets five passionate collectors who are addicted to amassing antiques

1 Willa Latham, porcelain dealer:

English porcelain

'My grandmother had a house full of antiques, so I sort of inhaled them subconsciously while I was growing up, absorbing the sense of quality and beauty they embodied. I trained as a classical violinist then worked as an accountant in the charity sector. But, one morning about three and a half years ago, I woke up and announced to my husband: "I'm going to collect antique porcelain".

'Although I buy and sell porcelain professionally now too, personally, I only collect tableware by Stoke-on-Trent manufacturer Henry Daniel (1765–1841). It's always wonderful to find a dusty and unloved piece in an auction, then wash it and reveal its beauty. I have a whole cabinet full of his work and, if I had more space, I'd buy more, but I live in a small flat!

'He was a genius when it came to colours and painted designs. He came from a family of colour makers who made enamels for the porcelain and china industries. He came up with hues that nobody else was making, such as a stunning jade that you can't even really describe in words. He employed really talented painters and the flower decorations on his pieces have a freedom to them that's very rare to find. He made fine shapes too – his teacup handles perfectly suit my hands. ▽



Willa Latham, porcelain dealer at Gentle Rattle of China, @gentlerattleofchina on Instagram. **RIGHT** Green teacup, made by Henry Daniel c1825 – one of the pretty teacups from Willa's amazing collection.

'Henry Daniel only made porcelain for 24 years. He worked for Spode as head of decoration before he set up his own factory with his son, Richard, taking most of his painters with him in agreement with Spode, an unusually amicable parting! It shows how much he was respected and also how large the market was. Richard worked with him (the factory became H&R Daniel) until Henry died. Sadly, the business didn't last long under Richard's leadership.

'My favourite service is kept on the top shelf. It was painted for H&R Daniel by William Pollard - the 'Van Gogh' of porcelain painting. He painted flowers with such elegance and his use of colour is so delicate. He didn't go for big impressive blooms, instead, he chose humble flowers such as dog roses and cornflowers.

'I love the stories behind each piece. I have a library here. A lot of factories copied each other, accomplished artists often got poached by other firms and most items are not marked, so you need a lot of books if you want to know your stuff. I use the cups sometimes, but the one thing Daniel wasn't very good at was the components of porcelain, so it's very fragile. Luckily, my experience as a musician means I'm used to handling expensive violins, so I'm very careful.'

gentlerattleofchina.com



2 Martin Rowson, cartoonist:

Taxidermy

'Natural history has fascinated me from an early age. I've been a member and a fellow of the Zoological Society of London since I was 18 and I've been a trustee since I was 33 (I'm now almost 62.) If I had my way, I'd fill the house with exotic fauna - alive - but it would be rather dangerous, and illegal. So, instead, I like the idea of living in something that looks a bit like a museum.

'It all started in my late 20s when I bought a mongoose and a cobra (quite a common pose for taxidermists) for £5. I got it as a gag to give to a couple I knew as a visual metaphor for their marriage. But I kept it, then slowly acquired more.

'I went to the sale of the stock of Eton College Natural History Museum in 1996 and bought a stuffed vulture by mistake because I forgot to take my hand down. I also bought a piece of basking shark skin, which was given to

the museum by Gavin Maxwell, author of *Ring of Bright Water*. It's a genuine literary icon - a part of the basking shark that he and his pet otter ate.

'A friend of mine went to an auction of surplus stock from the Passmore Edwards Museum (which had been closed down) and he got me a wolf for £240. I picked her up in our Volvo Estate and, every time we overtook somebody on the motorway, they nearly crashed. She's very useful at Halloween and puts the wind up people who come to read the gas meter. My family says she's tatty and probably full of beetles, but I could never get rid of her. I love her very much.

'My collection is not completist. It's just made up of things I like. I have a one-eared fox (a cleaner dropped it), a wild boar's head I found in a junk shop in Normandy for about £5, a mammoth's tooth and a whale vertebrae, which was given to me by a friend of mine who was a curator at London Zoo. He also gave me a hyena head that he found in a skip there. I'm a public atheist, so I've turned it into a blasphemous tableau - a surrealist installation with the hyena and my school confirmation crucifix. A gull roosts on top of my archive and I have a model of a human skeleton on a deckchair in the back garden. I have to control myself otherwise I get over-excited. I got close to buying a stuffed American bison on one occasion - he was about 7.5ft tall and 9ft long - but I realised I had nowhere to put him. I was tempted by a rearing African lion once, too, but my wife said: "It's him or me".

'I recognise that it's slightly creepy having dead creatures around but I didn't kill them and it's more insulting to do what people with taxidermy collections were advised to do in the 1990s and burn everything. These creatures have been memorialised and it is respectful to preserve them I think, because they bring joy and they're educational, too.' martinrowson.com



Willa's cabinet is filled with her favourite Henry Daniel pieces. **RIGHT** Coyote on the wall of the studio where Martin draws his satirical cartoons.

