

HOME FURNISHINGS

Wedgwood, Cambridge University Library translate historic drawings into tableware

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The late biologist took his first expedition with the support of the founder of the homeware company. Image credit: Wedgwood

By ZACH JAMES

In its latest release, British home and lifestyle brand Wedgwood is leaning on familial ties to one of its home nation's famous historical figures.

Titled "Darwin: Voyage of the Beagle," the collection spotlights the drawings of famed English naturalist and biologist Charles Darwin from his first journey across the Atlantic on the HMS Beagle. With this drop, comprised of tea sets and mugs, Wedgwood reaffirms its connection to classical British codes and inspirations.

"Wedgwood branding targets affluent consumers who value authenticity, British heritage, and historical significance," said Allen Adamson, cofounder and managing partner of [Metaforce](#), New York.

"The collection appeals to those who appreciate luxury items with a compelling narrative, offering more than just aesthetic appeal," Mr. Adamson said. "It enables a natural dinner conversation beyond, 'Oh, this is beautiful,' that connects Wedgwood to Britain's rich cultural and scientific history."

Mr. Adamson is not affiliated with Wedgwood, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Classical luxury

Josiah Wedgwood II, the second-generation leader of the maison, was Mr. Darwin's uncle, supporting the bright mind and his ideas throughout his early life, ultimately proving instrumental to the thinker's international notoriety.

Wedgwood presents "Darwin: Voyage of the Beagle"

In the early 1930s, Mr. Darwin expressed his desire to embark on the two-year sailing expedition, with Mr. Wedgwood helping to push the biologist's father to support the extended trip Robert Darwin wanted the young man to become a doctor, following in his footsteps, viewing the voyage as a waste of time.

While aboard the HMS Beagle, Charles Darwin visited many countries, documenting the events in writings and illustrations. The collection draws from these works, curating a special selection of illustrations in close collaboration with the Cambridge University Library, which houses the Darwin archive.

"Charles Darwin likely has significant appeal to luxury clientele, especially those interested in British history, science, and

exploration.

“The collection’s items evoke a sense of historical authenticity, as if they could have been used in Darwin’s home or displayed in a prestigious institution like the British Museum.”



Wedgwood founder Josiah Wedgwood was Mr. Darwin’s grandfather. Image credit: Wedgwood

Mr. Darwin’s experiences onboard the HMS Beagle were published in the 1839 book “Voyage of the Beagle,” which the new glassware collection is named after.

The products take on the biologist’s illustrations, as well as drawings by Conrad Martens, an artist onboard the ship during the voyage, and the scribbles of Mr. Darwin’s children that were inspired by his recollection of his inaugural research journey across the Atlantic.

The art, as well as some of the scientist’s writings, appear on six three-piece tea sets, showcasing the hand-drawn coastlines, towns, flora and fauna of Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Patagonia, the Galapagos Islands and Tahiti, respectively.

Wedgwood’s latest collection is available now, with prices ranging between \$80 for an 11oz [Darwin Origins Mug](#) and \$240 for the [Darwin: Voyage of the Beagle Tahiti Teacup Saucer Plate](#).

Honoring heritage

In showcasing its recent releases, Wedgwood has leaned on its homeland’s culture and history in its marketing endeavors, with “Darwin: Voyage of the Beagle,” standing as the latest example.

Late last year, the brand did something similar, presenting its collaboration with U.K.-based skateboarding and clothing label Palace in the style of the long-running BBC television series “Antiques Roadshow” ([see story](#)).

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A post shared by Wedgwood (@wedgwood)

Other luxury brands, such as fashion brands Alexander McQueen ([see story](#)) and Dunhill ([see story](#)), have also embraced their home country's culture and classics in their marketing endeavors, proving the avenue's efficiency.

"Wedgwood's advertising strategy for the Darwin: Voyage of the Beagle' collection is a smart brand move," said Mr. Adamson.

"By linking its brand to Charles Darwin's explorations, Wedgwood reinforces its authentic British heritage," he said. "This origin story connects the brand to a significant part of British scientific and cultural history, potentially increasing its appeal to luxury consumers who value such associations.

"The use of Darwin's drawings from his famous voyage adds a unique and educational element to the collection, differentiating it in the luxury market."

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