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# Koopman Rare Art

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## Director's Choice – Timo Koopman A Zoomorphic Collection

Stumbling on such a whimsical menagerie so full of life and character as this group of drinking vessels is what makes this business such a pleasure. Finding so many original, rare forms of novelty Victoriana makes this a truly exciting opportunity for the collector.

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Our zoomorphic collection is my Director's Choice this week and highlights the competitive, often difficult environment the Victorian silversmith, designer and retailer found themselves in at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It also explores developments in the techniques when working with the two mediums of glass and

silver and how the success of the novel by Lewis Carroll gripped the nation and drove fashion at the same time.

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### Zoomorphic Claret Jugs



John Tenniel's illustration of the Dodo in "A Caucus Race and a Long Tale". An illustration from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

Perhaps the most eccentric and novel of the silver mounted claret jugs, produced by the Victorians, were the animals. The origin of these is commonly credited to Alexander Crichton, a silversmith of relatively obscure background whose earliest recorded work, a condiment set, hallmarked in London (1873-4), and retailed by Hamilton, Crichton & Co., goldsmiths of 41 George Street, Edinburgh. By 1880, Crichton had formed a partnership with John Curry and was trading as Crichton & Curry from premises at 45 Rathborne Place, Oxford Street, London, where they were listed as "designers, modellers and silversmiths".



As early as the 1860s, the firm of Charles & George Fox had produced a claret jug made entirely of silver in the form of a Griffin. The jug demonstrated the interest in medieval art and design among British artists and craftworkers at the end of the 19th century, and the way designs were transferred to different materials.

Its form is believed to have come from a porcelain chocolate pot made in Vienna between 1744 and 1749. This pot can be found in the V & A Museum no. C.7&A-1968. This in turn was derived from a 12th-century metal aquamanile – a vessel used for washing hands, named from the Latin 'aqua' (water) and 'manus' (hand) – in the Kunstshistorisches Museum in Vienna. A closely related aquamanile in the form of a griffin is also in the V&A.

The inspiration for the animals is credited by many to have come from Sir John Tenniel's illustrations for Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland' (1865) and 'Alice Through the Looking Glass' (1872). Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is an 1865 English children's novel by Lewis Carroll, a mathematics don at Oxford University. It details the story of a girl named Alice who falls through a rabbit hole into a fantasy world of anthropomorphic creatures. The artist John Tenniel provided 42 wood-engraved illustrations for the book.

A search through the records at the Patent Office held in the National Archives for the years 1881 and 1882 reveals the following entries:

08/16/81	Crichton & Curry	Owl Jug	367237	BT 43/63	Glass
09/22/81	Crichton & Curry	Walrus	37040	BT 43/50	Metal
10/01/81	Crichton & Curry	Duck	370786 Class 1	BT 43/50	Metal
10/01/81	Crichton & Curry	Drake	370787 Class 1	BT 43/50	Metal
11/04/81	S. Mordan & Co.	Eagle	372729	BT 43/50	Metal
12/03/81	Crichton & Curry	Parrot	374238	BT 43/50	Metal
12/22/81	W. Leuchers & Son	Crow	375007 Class 1	BT 43/50	Metal
02/01/82	Henry Lewis	Dodo	376601	BT 43	Metal

02/18/82	Henry Lewis	Carp	377320	BR 43/51 Metal
03/07/82	Henry Lewis	Otter	378062 Class 1	BT 43/51 Metal
03/11/82	Frederick Wich Co.	Bull	378199	BT 43/51 Metal
04/26/82	Crichton & Curry	Penguin	379944	BT 43/51 Metal
09/05/82	Dove & Harvey	Monkey	385935	BT 43/52 Metal
10/27/82	S. Mordan & Co.	Pheasant	389007	BT 43/53 Metal
12/19/82	Crichton & Curry	Cockatoo	391622	BT 43/53 Metal
12/28/82	Walter Thornhill Co.	Crocodile	392018 Class 1	BT 43/53 Metal (&Glass)

The first design, the owl was entered in the glass category. All the subsequent designs were entered under metal with the exception of the crocodile the last entry, which was registered for both metal and glass. Perhaps the designers felt the features expressed through the silverwork were the key to protecting the artistic nature of the model. The Designs Act of 1842 gave protection for just three years to the designer preventing anyone else from using the model.

Interestingly, the animals retailed by Henry Lewis in the list above bear the hallmark of the maker and designer Alexander Crichton. So many of the businesses for luxury goods were short-lived and it would seem Mr Lewis had the foresight to see that Mr Crichton & Curry would not survive long which would explain why the designs for the Dodo, the Carp and the Otter were patented by himself, the retailer?



The Patent for the design of a crow by William Lechaurs for 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1881 (Date E)

What is clear is how competitive the retail environment must have been between the leading London shops. Within three months of a good idea coming to the market, the competition was registering their own animals. Retailers went to great lengths to differentiate and enhance their merchandise. Some models were decorated with enamel paint to further increase the realism of the object. Sometimes the glass was finely engraved to simulate feathers or skin. This is clearly seen with our William Leuchars

Crow.





Currently in the Koopman Rare Art Collection

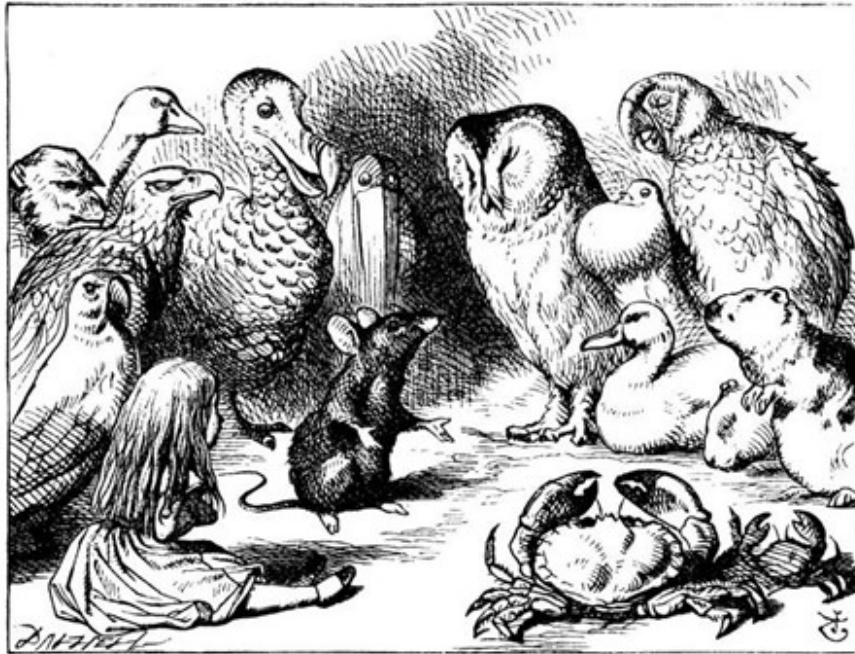
**A Victorian model of a crow**

London, 1882

By William Leuchars

Other techniques included acid etching the glass bodies to create a frosted finish. The Carp that Crichton produced in 1881 had fish scales realistically cut into the glass body.

As fast and as furious as this fashion grew, it disappeared, at least for the high-quality silver mounted jugs made in England. A harsh recession engulfed England in the 1880s we see the demise marking the end of the brief fashion for the animal jugs. Crichton & Curry notably fell victim and by December 1886 were declared bankrupt owing some £1,846 to their creditors. A few manufacturers continued to make the occasional piece, such as Frederick Edmonds (see later) with a drake from Crichton's moulds dating to 1892 and Richard Hodd continued to produce his monkey to as late as 1904. Asprey's continued with their cockatoo and crocodile in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



'They were indeed a queer-looking party that assembled on the bank'.

From Sir John Tenniel's Classic Illustrations of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

In some ways, the animal jugs marked a new relationship between the glass manufacturer and the silversmith. They combined their skills and with the evolution of new techniques, particularly with moulded glass, produced an object that was not complete until the two crafts were combined. Previously each craft was able to manufacture similar items drawing on skills exclusive to their own craft. The silversmith could engrave, emboss, or chase on a solid silver body, while the glass blower could substitute silver mounts and handles with glass ones. With the animals it was different. A solid silver Otter by Crichton, one of the few solid silver animal jugs known from this period, does not have the same effect as the one combining glass with silver. Perhaps it is the fragility of the glass that reinforces the refreshing naivety of the object. Certainly, the fragility of these jugs explains in large part their scarcity today. So few have survived which makes finding a collection and variety of such high calibre examples extremely rare and terribly exciting.

The firm of Dove & Harvey registered the design for a monkey claret jug in September 1882, giving their address as 31 Hatton Garden. This address (or 30 & 31 Hatton Garden) was also the premises of manufacturing silversmiths Richard Hodd & Son. John Culme records a Richard Hodd & Son silver-mounted monkey claret jug of 1882, suggesting that they were the makers of the form from the very beginning. With this example of 1893 and another known one by the firm in 1904, the continuing popularity of the design is evident.



**A Victorian Novelty Monkey Claret Jug**

London, 1892

By Richard Hodd

Realistically modelled seated on his hind legs with glass body, the hinged head with glass eyes.



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**A Victorian Silver & Glass 'Eagle' Jug**

London, 1882

By Sampson Mordan

**Sampson Mordan**

Mordan (1770-1843), was apprentice and assistant of the mechanic John Bramah, established his own business in 1815. The first patent for a "metal pencil with an internal mechanism for propelling the graphite 'lead' shaft forward during use" was obtained in 1822 (his co-inventor was John Isaac Hawkins).

In 1823 Mordan bought out the rights of Hawkins, entering his first mark as "smallworker" in London Assay Office on 9 June 1823 (SM oblong). In 1824 he entered in partnership with Gabriel Riddle, registering a new mark (SM.GR) in London Assay Office.

The partnership with Riddle was dissolved in 1836 and he continued the business as S. Mordan & Co. Sampson Mordan died in 1843 and the business was taken over by his sons Sampson (Jr) and Augustus. They were later joined by Edmund George Johnson and Zachariah Watkins who retired in 1879.



After the death of Sampson Mordan (Jr) his share of the business passed to his brother Augustus, joined as partner in 1890 by Harry Lambert Symonds.

Sampson Mordan & Co was present at the 1851 London Great Exhibition and at the 1922 and 1929 British Industries Fair.



In the Koopman Rare Art Collection

**A Victorian Rooster Claret Jug**

London, 1882

By Sampson Mordan and Co





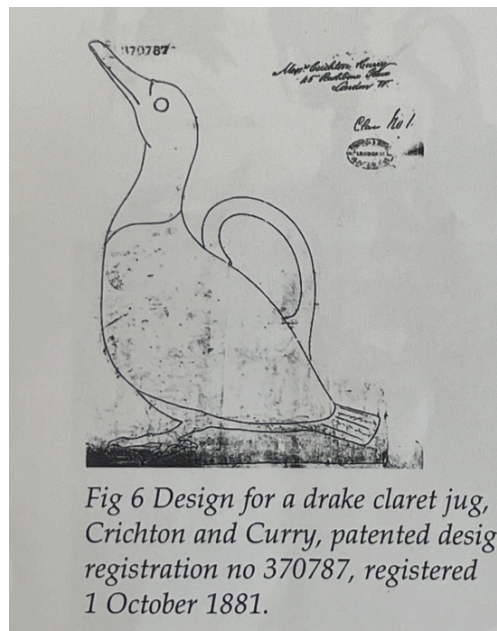
Part of the Koopman Rare Art Collection

**A Victorian 'Drake' claret jug**

London, 1892

By Frederick Edmonds

This was one of the most popular and successful of all the Crichton and Curry designs and here we see Frederick Edmonds copying and retailing the design in 1892.



### **Crichton & Curry**

Alexander Crichton was the father of figural claret jugs, who almost single-handedly launched the craze in the early 1880s. John Culme has found a first mention of Crichton in 1870, when he entered an embossed cup into the Society of Arts Exhibition, an early testament to his skills. He entered marks by himself in 1872 and 1875, and an early production was retailed by Hamilton, Crichton & Co. of Edinburgh, suggesting a possible family connection. A pair of silver-gilt shields of 1878 depicted "A Midsummer Night's Dream", after designs by Sir Noel Paton, showing his engagement with the fantastic.

In 1880 he went into partnership with Charles John Curry, who hailed from a family of silversmiths and spent seven years apprenticeship as a modeller and chaser with Edward Barnard & Sons. Describing themselves as designers, modellers, and silversmiths, they are recorded as "Crichton & Curry", 45 Rathbone Place, off Oxford Street, on October 14, 1880. Less than a year later, they registered their first figural design, an owl-form jug, on August 16, 1881. This was followed in quick succession by the Walrus on September 22, the Duck and the Drake on October 1, and the Parrot on December 3, all of 1881.

Several of the figural claret jugs of the following year, 1882, bear Crichton's maker's mark but the retailer's mark of Henry Lewis, of 172 New Bond Street. The new registered designs of 1882 were done in Lewis' name as well, the Dodo of February 1, the Carp of February 18, and the Otter of March 7th, but the known examples all have the maker's mark of Alexander Crichton.

Crichton & Curry would register two more designs for figural jugs, the Penguin of April 26, 1882, and the Cockatoo of December 19; perhaps this change represents a falling out with Henry Lewis. However, losing their primary wholesale purchaser would have been risky in the depressed economy of the early 1880s, and by 1882 other firms had jumped onto the bandwagon of figural jugs, causing competition in the novelty market. Crichton would create a bear-form honeypot to the designs of sculptor Sir Joseph Boehm in 1883, to be given as a gift to the Royal Academy, but the partnership was dissolved by October 1884, and Crichton declared bankruptcy in December. However short-lived his business, Alexander Crichton left a legacy of creativity and craftsmanship that has far outlived him.

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### Past Examples of Claret Jugs at Koopman Rare Art

The inventiveness of the Victorian silversmith was fuelled by demand. Here is an extraordinary example  
Koopman Rare Art had in their Collection in 2001



**A Victorian Silver-Mounted Rhinoceros Claret Jug**

London, 1878

By Henry William Dee

The Firm of Henry William Dee is a perfect example of the close working lives of the Victorian silversmith.

This interesting firm, usually listed as working jewellers or wholesale working jewellers, appears to have been established c. 1827 by Thomas William Dee (c.1792-1869) and John Fargues at 8 Sherrard Street, Golden Square, Soho. Fargues seems to have left the partnership c.1851 after which T.W. Dee continued

at first alone at 8 Sherrard Street and from c.1854 with Henry William Dee trading as Thomas William Dee & Son. Another of T.W. Dee's sons, Louis Dee joined c. 1859 after which the business was restyled Thomas William Dee & Sons. Their address was changed in 1862 to 8 Sherwood Street, Golden Square. The firm's name was changed to H.W. and L. Dee following T.W. Dee's retirement on 31st March 1867 at which time they were described as jewellers and silversmiths, H.W. Dee retired. Louis Dee thereafter remained in control of the business until his death aged 52 on 23rd August 1884, leaving an estate of £36, 681 17 8d. In his will he left instructions that the patterns and tools in his custody relating to 'collar and badge work' be offered at a nominal £3 to James Mortimer Garrard of R. and S. Garrard & Co. He also mentioned his designer, Thomas Reeves; his clerks, Thomas Barys Jenkins and Richard Eve; and his friends, Henry Cannon senior, an engraver of 95 St. George's Road, Camberwell, and Alfred Clark, the retail goldsmith and jeweller of Old Bond Street, W. Dee's business was assigned, on 22nd December 1884 to Leuchar's & Son, dressing case makers, stationers and silversmiths of 38 and 39 Piccadilly, W, who were in turn assigned to Asprey & Co on 2nd August 1888.



The above pair of claret jugs were part of the Koopman Rare Art Collection in 2008: "THE WALRUS & THE CARPENTER", two associated Victorian novelty claret jugs, respectively mark of William Leuchars overstriking another, London, 1881 and mark of Henry William Curry, London, 1886,

Here the overstruck mark clearly shows the retailer Leuchars using Henry William Curry to make the claret jugs after the original design of his business partner Alexander Crichton.





The Walrus, the Carpenter and the Oysters, by Sir John Tenniel from the Victoria and Albert Museum

The design for the Walrus is one of the very first figural claret jug designs, being recorded by Alexander Crichton at the Public Record Office (number 370401) on September 22, 1881. The known examples mostly bear hallmarks for 1882, including the male and female "walrus" jugs in the collection at Brodick Castle (National Trust for Scotland).

The model even made it across the Atlantic; the blockbuster 1886 auction of the Collection of Mary Jane Morgan included a "Claret Jug, shape of walrus, crystal glass body" (lot 704).





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