

# Sydney Opera House thimbles

When you think of Sydney in terms of its landmarks, does the Sydney Opera House spring to mind? With its iconic shape, designed by the Danish architect Jørn Utzon, it has become the most recognised Australian "building".

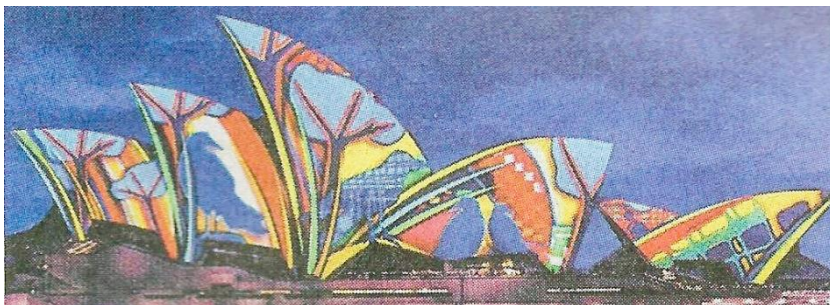
From 24th March 2014 the Sydney Opera House shape will be a registered trademark. This has been taken out by the Opera House Trust and its shape will be trademarked - its logo and image are already trademarks. It will be the first building fully trademarked in Australia. It will no longer be appropriate to use the image for commercial purposes or part of a brand. According to an article in *The Australian* on 25 January 2014, it's "souvenir shops beware". The only outlet for souvenirs featuring the Sydney Opera House will be merchandise made for the Opera House Trust.

How does this affect thimble collectors? There were thimbles with the image of the Sydney Opera House produced during the 1980s, which was the decade when the most collectable thimbles appeared in Australia. It may be the sort of thematic thimble collection that could appeal and there would now be a finite number to look for. Who would now produce thimbles using a trademarked image?

Having produced the book *Thimbles of Australia* in 1998 I am familiar with these SOH image thimbles and I thought it worthwhile reproducing them here. There may be dozens more but these would only be of the type on Taiwanese blanks (none seen to date) or firehydrants of which I have only included a few, more as an example of the type.

Of the under thirty examples of SOH thimbles, only two were commissioned for the Sydney Opera House shop. You may notice that these thimbles also feature the other Sydney icon: the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Some were produced after the publication of *Thimbles of Australia*.

I have grouped the thimbles in the order that they appear in my book (ie by what they are made of). As I don't own all of these thimbles, if you have better or clearer photos, please share.



Sydney Opera House – *Songlines 2016* | Sailing into Sydney Harbour at dawn March 2020



**Zygmunt Libucha**  
Brisbane  
sterling silver  
1980s



**Birchcroft**  
fine bone china  
Pan Arts of Sydney commissioned these  
thimbles for Sydney's Sesquicentenary  
(1847-1992)  
late 1990s  
part of Pan Arts Collectables Australia  
Series No. 28  
1992



**Birchcroft**  
fine bone china



**Caverswall**

England  
china

from Capital cities of Australia set  
features NSW's waratah on the verso  
1980s



**Connoisseur / Sterling  
Classic**

china

Worcester

handpainted pewter on fine bone  
china

limited to 5000 pieces  
designed by Neil Davis



**Cottage Thimbles**

fine bone china

part of their 'Landmarks' series



**Pan Arts Collectables**

bone china

Australia Series No. 35

produced when Sydney won Olympics,  
using the Olympic colours  
1990s



**Pan Arts Collectables**

bone china

Australia Series No. 20

1980s



**Pan Arts Collectables**

bone china

Australia Series No. 40-41 (not lettered  
on thimbles)

pair of similar thimbles

Left: Australia celebrates the Millennium  
Right: Sydney celebrates 2000  
2000



**Pan Arts Collectables**

bone china

Special Series No. 1 (not lettered on thimbles)  
commissioned by the Opera House shop  
mid 1980s



**Ken Parry**

bone china

part of Pan Arts Collectables Australia Series No. 5  
mid 1980s



**Sutherland China**

England  
china

To commemorate the Australian  
Bicentenary and the Visit of the Prince &  
Princess of Wales  
commissioned by Scotland Direct/The  
Thimble Guild  
1988



**Wedgwood**

England  
jasperware  
2000s



England  
china



Sydney Opera House  
40<sup>th</sup> anniversary (2013)  
unmarked china



unmarked china



Taiwanese blank



Taiwanese blank



metal badge on china  
The new millennium 2000  
limited edition of 2000



various firehydrants



**Crummles Enamels**  
England  
enamel and brass  
commissioned by the Opera House shop  
1980s?



cloisonné (enamel and brass)  
Chinese  
2000s



**Exquisite Creations**  
England  
pewter  
the lettering is on the body of the  
thimbles  
1980s



**Stephen Frost of Warwick**  
**Models**  
England  
pewter  
1980s



**Pan Arts Pewter**  
Sydney  
pewter  
1989-1990s



**Riccardo's Pewter**

Sydney  
pewter

some examples show cross-hatching to show the roof tiles  
1980s



**Wales Association of Pewter Works (WAPW)**

handpainted and plain pewter  
the lettering is under the icon

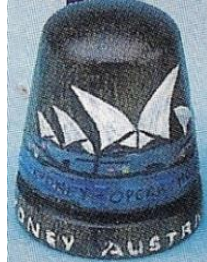


**Robert Herron**

Tasmania

handpainted blackwood  
Joanna Wigzell

2000



**Robert Herron**

Tasmania

handpainted Joanna Wigzell  
sold thru Gimbels in Maine USA

2001



**Keith Adams & Peter Grossman**

Port Macquarie and Sydney  
commissioned by Pan Arts, Sydney  
handpainted wooden top hats  
three-dimensional silver with opal atop  
1980s?



**Indonesian**

handpainted in dot-painting  
2000s



**Malcolm Walter**

South Australia

German crystal with sterling  
silver

1990s



aluminium?

## References

Susan Jean Gowan - *Thimbles of Australia*. 1998

## Contributors

Ros Forster | Denise Jenkins-Welsh Thimble Society | Nicola Kissane

This listing of Sydney Opera House thimbles does not purport to be complete or accurate in all aspects. Rather it invites comment and contribution to add to our knowledge. My thanks to the contributors.

EMAIL [thimbleselect@bigpond.com](mailto:thimbleselect@bigpond.com) TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

© Sue Gowan

January 2014