

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

As a librarian who is passionate about reading, I'd love to share these titles that relate to this topic
Kristina Olsson *The shell*

[For other Australian thimble topics see](#)

Australian advertising thimbles

Australian modern sterling silver thimble and sewing tools makers 1973-2014

Australian modern sterling silver thimble and sewing tool makers 1950-2019

Australia's Elfin thimbles



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
40th 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

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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.

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