

'Wally' Grotesque Bird

By Martin Brothers
Signed and dated 1913

A *Wally* Bird, of salt-glazed stoneware, with detachable head. The glaze is a rich dark brown. The term *Wally* was coined when brother Wallace designed his first bird. It stands on a turned ebonized wooden base.

Height : 19.5 cms

Marks : Signed *R.W Martin & Bro London & Southal* and dated 1913 to collar and body of the bird.

References : Dan Klein & Margaret Bishop, *Decorative Art 1880-1980*, Phaidon/Christie's Oxford, 1986, pgs. 18,28,29.



Ex Wikipedia :

The **Martin Brothers** were pottery manufacturers in London. The four brothers (Wallace, Walter, Charles and Edwin) produced a distinctive type of stoneware pottery from the 1870s through to the First World War, with a little work being produced through to 1923 when their pottery closed. The Martinware Pottery (1873-1923) is a good example of a Art & Crafts art pottery, and the output included both illustrative and sculptural work. They were best known for their bird sculptures and bowls, vessels decorated with sea creatures, and tiles, fashioned in a whimsical but highly skilful style.

The Pottery was started in Fulham in 1873 by Robert Wallace Martin (1843–1923), who had trained as a sculptor. In 1877 the business was moved to Havelock Road, Southall, Middlesex, where it remained and several of the brothers were ultimately buried in the cemetery along the road. Walter Fraser Martin (1857-1912) supplied the technical expertise, specializing in coloured glazes and became the firm's specialist on the wheel; Edwin Bruce Martin (1860-1915) was the thrower and decorator whose work included most of the fish and flower designs; and Charles Douglas Martin (1846 - 1910) managed the shop.

They worked mainly with a salt-glaze stoneware, a high-temperature firing method where salt was thrown into the kiln, in order to fuse with the clay and give a surface which could be glassy or matt depending on the conditions of each firing. Whereas many stoneware glazes obscure the body itself, the salt-glaze method served to highlight the impressed and incised decoration on the surface of their pots. The colours included browns, greens, greys and blues, and this subdued palette is distinctive of Martinware.

Robert Wallace Martin, the oldest brother, had worked for a while for the architectural sculptor J. B. Phillips of Vauxhall Bridge Road, and later took drawing classes at the nearby Lambeth School of Art. Walter and Edwin Martin also studied there, and both worked for a time at the Royal Doulton Pottery, also in Lambeth.

Martinware pottery may be found in various ceramic collections. A wide range of their work may be seen in the Hull Grundy Collection at Pitshanger Manor, Ealing. A small selection is on show in the Norwich Castle museum. The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery exhibits examples of Martinware in its Art Pottery cases. An exhibition of Martinware was also on display at the Cuming Museum, London until August 31, 2013. There is an exhibition at Standen (National Trust) on the Martin Brothers from 1 August - 30 October 2016.

The chancel arch in Ayot St Peter's Church in Hertfordshire, is the only commission by the Martin Brothers for a church.

Wally Birds were made in sizes ranging from a couple of centimetres to about 50 centimetres. Those made to look like judges or monks are even more desirable.

Wally Birds were originally marketed as tobacco jars.

BURR & MUIR

Cape Town 27-21-4181269

Partners : Geoff Burr & Graham Muir