

## Variegated Agate

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Josiah Wedgwood's partnership with Thomas Whieldon from 1754 to 1759 created an environment that produced a wide variety of styles. It was in this workshop that Wedgwood and Whieldon worked on their variegated and agate ware. Wedgwood kept account of his trials in a journal, which quoted, "The suite of Experiments was begun in Fenton Hall."

It is evident in Wedgwood's pottery that classical and Egyptian styles were strong influences in both application and aesthetics. The variegated ware was an imitation of natural and precious stones dating back to ancient Egypt. Wedgwood's wares during this era of production refer to commonly imitated stones: tortoiseshells, porphyry, and agates.

During the Wedgwood-Whieldon partnership, two strategies in creating variegated ware were practiced. The first was Whieldon's method, surface-agate, in which he began with a cream-coloured body, then applied tinted slips to the body. Once the colored clays were applied, they were combed or sponged to create the allure of natural stones. The second method, employed by Wedgwood, was a solid-agate. Tinted batches of clay were mixed together in the way that natural stones would appear and then pressed into two molds. The molds, being halves, were then brought together and carefully blended, producing a seamless piece.

The Wedgwood agate ware continued to be produced long after his first partnership, well into the mid-twentieth century. Josiah created solid agate pieces during the Wedgwood-Bentley partnership in the eighteenth century, the marble

and tortoiseshell imitation lasted into the nineteenth century, surface agate production was halted at the turn of the twentieth century, and porphyry imitation was made until the 1960s.