

A dated Meissen tea-caddy in Fenton House, Hampstead (National Trust) and the inspiration for its painted decoration

In the remarkable ceramic collections in Fenton House, Hampstead, North West London is an important dated early Meissen tea-caddy and cover. (1)



1. A Meissen tea-caddy and cover, marked on base with crossed swords, 'Dresden' and '17.39.' in underglaze blue, and gilt '26.'. H 13.0 cm. Fenton House, London (National Trust ref. NT 1448102). Photo: the author.

The Höroldt-style painted decoration

This short paper examines this tea-caddy's main painted decoration to establish its inspiration, particularly with regard to the Schulz Codex and other relevant art works believed to serve as reference material for the painter-decorators of Meissen porcelain during the reign of office of Johann Gregorius Höroldt in the 1720s onwards.

Johann Gregorius Höroldt (1696-1775), the celebrated painter and enameller, worked for the Meissen factory from 1720 until his retirement in 1765, having broken his service during The Seven Years War from 1756 to 1763, fleeing to Frankfurt-am-Main and returning to Meissen for two years before his retirement. Höroldt was a major figure in the rejuvenation of the factory after the death of its first Director, Johann Friedrich Böttger, in 1719. Höroldt was instrumental in the creation of the extant body of sketches referred to as the Schulz Codex, as well as engraving six prints now acknowledged as working references for his staff in their painted decoration of Meissen porcelain in his distinctive chinoiserie style.

(2)



2. Höroldt engravings of 1726. Extant prints are in the collections of the GRASSI Museum Leipzig, and museums in Berlin, Braunschweig and Munich.¹



Schulz Codex, Sheet 15. ©GRASSI Museum, Leipzig

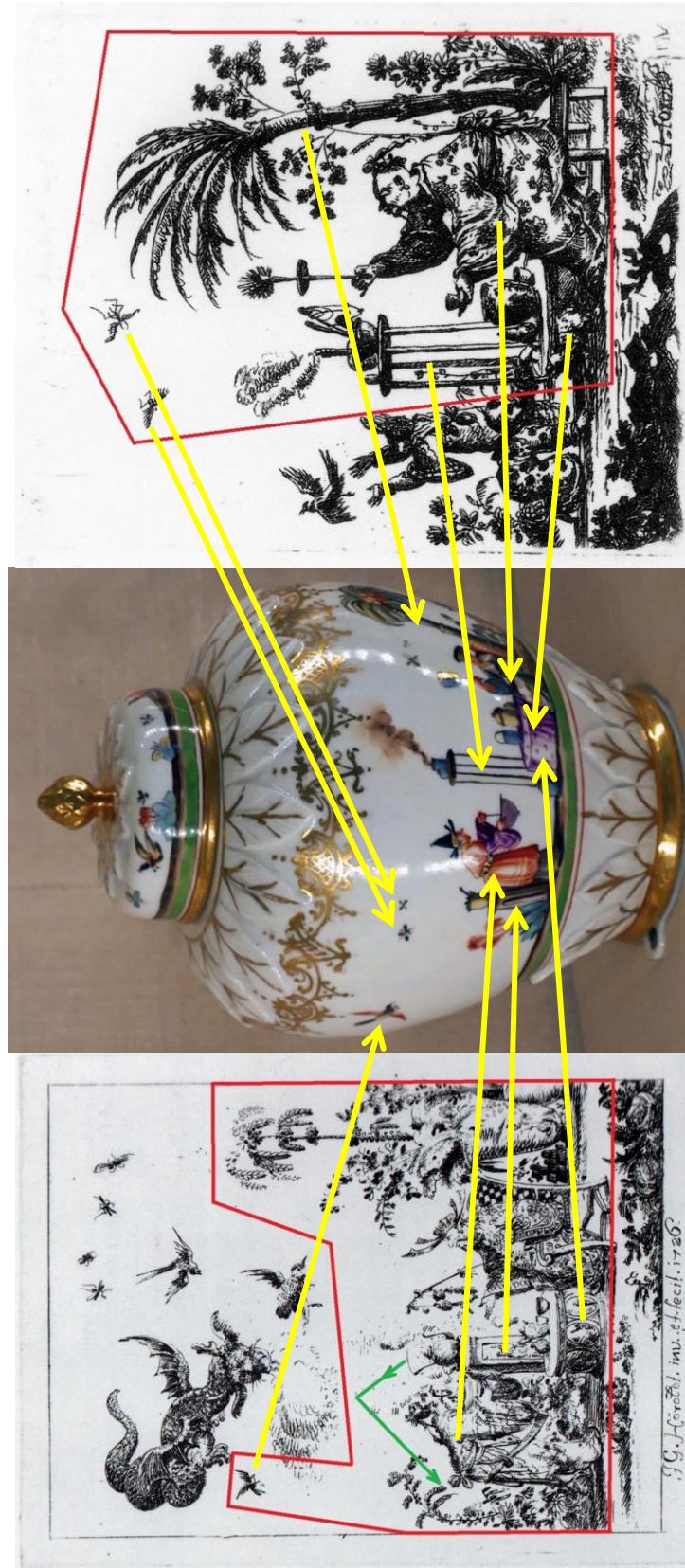
3. Schulz Codex Sheet 15. GRASSI Museum of Applied Arts, Leipzig.

A careful examination of the entire Schulz Codex did not reveal any sketches that suggested a direct comprehensive inspiration for the scene depicted on the Fenton House tea-caddy, the subject of this paper. An example from the Codex, Sheet 15, (3) contains several details that match the decoration on the tea-caddy – particularly, the scene in the upper right-hand corner of Codex Sheet 15. However, two of the Höroldt-engraved prints of 1726 have convincing scenes and details suggesting they were a direct source of inspiration for the decorative design of the painted scenes on the tea-caddy. These prints are shown in the middle of the upper row and the last print in the lower row in (2).

To demonstrate the areas and details of these prints matching the painted decoration on the tea-caddy, the author's image is placed between the two relevant prints with coloured lines and arrows aiding the explanation of this design link in the landscape illustration that followed in the painted decoration of the Fenton House tea-caddy.(4) The details of each highlighted element, human figure, bird, insect or object, do not correspond precisely, but appear to relate to one another closely enough to enable a link to be likely. This also suggests that the six engraved prints by Höroldt of 1726 were used for reference and inspiration in his studio well into the late 1730s and perhaps later.

Several of the features in the prints and the tea-caddy decoration are recurring themes and recognizable Höroldt-style chinoiserie designs. These features include birds and insects in flight, pedestals of various heights and shapes, low tables of round, square and rectangular shape, pots, crockery and utensils used in liquid refreshment preparation and consumption, possibly tea, tall thin-legged stands, figures holding variously shaped fans and sticks, various and often fantastic hat shapes, as well as trees, plants and a whole array of curious devices not easily understood. These features are to be found in the Schulz Codex also, but the overall scenic design on the tea-caddy is more comprehensively found in the two Höroldt prints as explained above and in (4).

Probable inspiration for the decoration on a Meissen tea-caddy dated on base in under-glazed blue '17.39' in the Fenton House, Hampstead collection



4. Examination of the painted decoration on part of the dated 1739 Meissen tea-caddy in the Fenton House Collection in relation to two engraved prints by Johann Gregorius Höroldt of 1726.

Key to coloured lines and arrows added to the prints and the tea-caddy image:

- Red-bordered areas in each print relevant to the tea-caddy decoration.
- Green back-arrow to indicate the pedestal relocation in the tea-caddy decoration.
- Yellow arrows indicating particular features in the prints used in the tea-caddy decoration.

The underglaze-blue marks to the base of the Meissen tea-caddy at Fenton House

The Fenton House Meissen tea-caddy is marked in underglaze blue with crossed swords, 'Dresden' and '17.39.' as well as a gilt '26.'.⁽⁵⁾ The significance of the Dresden mark is not understood, though several suggestions for it have been put forward; one such is that the tea-caddy comes from a service commissioned from a customer in that city.² Date years on early Meissen porcelain are uncommon, and the form '17.39.' is particularly so.



5. The base of the Meissen tea-caddy in the Fenton House collection. ©The National Trust.

There are, however, at least two other pairs of pieces similarly marked that strengthen the belief that the tea-caddy comes from a complete service. The British Museum has a cup and saucer so marked.³ (6) In addition, the moulded style, decoration and gilding are very similar to the Fenton House tea-caddy.



6. Meissen cup and saucer marked 'Dresden', a gilt '26.', and dated '17.39.'. ©The British Museum London (Franks.66).

The moulded style, decoration and gilding of a coffee cup and saucer sold by Christie's London on 8 July 2002 are equally similar.⁽⁷⁾ These pieces surely indicate that all three examples relate to a complete service having been produced by the Meissen factory and so marked.



7. Meissen coffee cup and saucer marked 'Dresden' and dated '17.39.'. Christie's London (sale 'A Distinguished Collection of Early Meissen Porcelain' on 8 July 2002, Lot 31).

There are other examples of pieces from the '17.39.', 'Dresden' and gilt '26.' marks of the likely complete service including a saucer sold by Christie's London on 9 July 2019 Lot 24,⁴ and a cup and saucer sold by Leonard Joel, Sydney, Australia on 23 October 2018 Lot 122.⁵ No doubt other pieces from this service are extant and will be revealed with a more in-depth study of collections and sales records.

Patrick Hagglund, January 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

¹ Behrends, Rainer, 'Zu den Radierungen von Johann Gregorius Höroldt' in Rudi, Thomas, et al, *Exotische Welten. Der Schulz-Codex und das frühe Meissener Porzellan* (Munich: Hermer Verlag, 2010), pp.56-65.

² https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-3950088?ldp_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=3950088&from=salessummary&lid=1.

³ https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_Franks-66.

⁴ <https://onlineonly.christies.com/s/meissen-porzelain-private-german-collection/meissen-porzelain-chinoiserie-saucer-24/72769>.

⁵ <https://issuu.com/leonardjoel6/docs/lj8274>.