

Nereid Sweetmeat Stand Fact Sheet

Object:

Nereid (mermaid) Sweetmeat Stand from the Swan Service

Artist:

Modeled by Johann Joachim Kaendler and Johann Friedrich Eberlein

Date:

1737-1741

Medium:

White porcelain with enamel colors and gold leaf

Size:

14-3/4" (37.5 cm)

Acquisition History:

The Nereid was acquired by Museum associate director Otto Wittmann in 1956 from a New York art dealer (Rosenberg and Stiebel, now Stiebel Ltd.) along with two Swan Service plates. It has consistently been on view and has been prominently featured in TMA and other publications including: Toledo Museum News (1960); German language publications in 1977 and 1980; Toledo Treasures (1995); cover of the Journal of the American Medical Association (1998); Toledo Museum of Art Map and Guide (2005); Toledo Museum of Art Masterworks (2009). As is now known, the piece was held by generations of the von Brühl family until it was placed in the Museum of Applied Art Dresden (now known as the Dresden State Art Collection) on long-term loan in 1920.

Background:

In 1937, Count Heinrich von Brühl, later Prime Minister and Minister of Culture of Saxony, commissioned a table service from the Meissen Porcelain Manufactory, which was under his authority, for his private and official celebrations. The Swan Service features water creatures, both real and mythological, and gets its name from the pair of swans in low relief depicted on each plate. The master modeler of the Meissen factory, J.J. Kaendler, and his assistants created a set of about 2,200 pieces to serve 100 guests. Each piece carries the coats-of-arms of von Brühl and his Polish Duchess wife. The archival records of the Meissen manufactory indicate that originally four Nereid stands were modeled from the mold. The sensuous mermaid would have held candied fruit or confections in her shell dish.

Significance of the Work:

The Swan Service remains one of the most celebrated achievements in European porcelain because of its unprecedented size and beauty. Only about 200 pieces survive, scattered in collections around the world. Of the four Nereids, the whereabouts of only two are currently known. A heavily damaged Nereid is in a museum in Berlin. The Nereid that has been in TMA's collection for the past 55 years, and prior to that in Dresden, is the only known intact Nereid.