

Keramik als Wertpapier

Autor(en): **Davis, Frank**

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sie zu Künstlern». Seit 1750 Rückgang durch Helbig, der sich an Graf Brühl drängte. Seit 1753 arbeitet Kändler an der Reiterstatue mit vielen Künstlern, die auf seine Rechnung arbeiten. 14 Leute Kändlers incl. Meyer gingen nach Paris.

1765

Der neue Modelleur Acier ist selbständig und untersteht nicht Kändler. Kändler ist immer noch der leistungsfähigste der Künstler.

1766

Kändler modelliert nach einer eingesandten Zeichnung den Lieblingshund der Kaiserin Katharina II. Kändler bekommt neue Aufträge aus London und Paris. Kändler stellt immer noch die meisten Gefäße her, meist nach «französischen Modellen».

1775

Am 18. Mai stirbt Kändler, nachdem er 44 Jahre lang seine ganze Schaffenskraft in den Dienst der Manufaktur gestellt hatte. S. D.

IV. Keramik als Wertpapier

Frank Davis, in «Financial Times», London 18. Juni 1956

While prices in the art market are influenced by supply and demand, unlike prices for ordinary commodities they are also influenced by fashion, and fashion is fickle. A case in point is the demand for 18th century mezzotints, superb examples of a peculiarly English craft, the finest of which can be obtained to-day for £20 or £30, whereas in the 1920's the best of them were changing hands at £200 or £300.

In ceramics the market is world-wide. The range of type and origin is enormous. On the whole fine examples are in existence but not in too great numbers to deprive the knowledgeable of the joys of the chase, which is rendered more fascinating by the existence of numerous clever fakes. However for both Far Eastern and European pottery and porcelain, there are learned societies such as the Oriental Ceramic Society, devoted to meticulous study and drawing upon a fund of scholarship unknown a couple of generations ago. Also recent admirable books upon various aspects of this vast field make it possible for the diffident amateur to steer a more or less intelligent course.

Narrow Field

It is many years since anything of consequence came out of China and buyers have to depend upon dispersals of collections already in being in this country, with occasional important contributions from America, as happened at Christie's recently with the sale of an anonymous collection of K'ang Hsi and Chien Lung pieces of the highest quality.

Speaking generally, there are two kinds of buyers in this somewhat narrow field — the erudite, serious kind who are the market's solid supporters, and the rest who like to indulge in a splash of colour by buying the later wares — that is, those of the late 17th and 18th centuries which so astonished our ancestors when they first began to reach Europe. Based upon these two pillars of erudition and popular appreciation the market remains firm, the increasing scarcity of fine things forcing it relentlessly upwards.

A pair of 18th century Chinese porcelain cranes, for example, sold in 1950 for £480, changed hands last April at Sotheby's for £1,300, while at Christie's in May a pair of powder blue vases of the same period which sold for 660 guineas in 1938 made 950 guineas, and a pair of famille noire tea bowls and saucers, decorated with flower sprays on alternating black, yellow, aubergine and green grounds made 600 guineas, as against 320 guineas previously. At the same sale no less than 4,200 guineas was paid for a pair of small figures of horsemen in black, green, white, aubergine and yellow; 1,000 guineas for a small statuette of another of the same type; 1,300 guineas for yet another.

European Ceramics

European ceramics, from the market point of view, fall into a slightly different category. As with Far Eastern works of art, sales are supported by the knowledgeable and the not so learned, but the field is far wider. In this country and on the Continent there is an enormous quantity of interesting if not always superlative work available, with innumerable possibilities of specialisation — Italian maiolica, English Delft, all the varieties put out by the rustic varieties put out by the rustic potteries of Staffordshire, the numerous German factories beginning with Meissen; Vincennes and Sèvres, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, our own Bow and Chelsea and Worcester.

Financial Possibilities

The financial possibilities are as interesting. Many years ago the late G. F. Glenny saw in a London shop window an English Delft dish painted with a ship in full sail and dated 1668. The price asked was £20; he offered £15 and compromised at £17 10s. The ship turned out to be a painting of the yacht Mary, given to Charles II at the Restoration by the Dutch Government. At his sale at Sotheby's last month this unique piece changed hands at £1,550. A collection formed almost entirely during the past ten years, that belonging to Mr. Simon Goldblatt, was sold earlier in the month in the same rooms. A pair of Chelsea figures of a boy and a girl, belonging to the very rare group known as «Girl in a Swing» figures, picked up in Paris for a few pounds, made £2,500, while — in a way even more remarkable — a Vincennes cup and saucer in Meissen tradition, also acquired for a small sum, brought £900.

Mistakes Inevitable

These are some of the substantial rewards of collecting ceramics. It is scarcely necessary to add that the inevitable

mistakes mostly go unrecorded, nor must it be supposed that such rarities are to be found down every side street. But still less should it be assumed that the diffident or impecunious beginner has no chance of acquiring something of quality at a sale of an important collection. There were, for example, 263 lots in the Goldblatt sale; the total was over £33,000, but prices ranged from the £2,500 previously mentioned down to £3. On June 8 at Christie's a collection of European porcelain sent over from Holland by the owner, the Baroness Van Zuylen Van Nyevelt — about 150 items, including much splendid Meissen — was dispersed for a total of £22,636, and another important sale, this time of Nymphenburg porcelain, the property of a South American collector, is announced for July. (Incidentally, with the removal of exchange restrictions, London is recovering its traditional position as the centre of the art market.)

All this seems to add up to an exceedingly lively and satisfactory state of affairs — goods in short supply and a sufficient number of enthusiastic buyers with money in their pockets.

Artificial Market

There is, however, just one circumstance which renders the market for European porcelain somewhat artificial and to some extent not so basically sound as that for either Chinese porcelain or European earthenware; the finest and rarest objects at almost every important sale are generally acquired by a single professional buyer against all opposition. Should he, for any reason, lose interest, it is by no means certain that the place of so determined a bidder would be filled immediately.

V. Verschiedenes aus dem Gebiete der Keramik

Bronzementierungen

There are quite a number of people, dedicated to the pursuit of the beautiful and the good, to whom the subject of this note is anathema. They hold firmly to the tenet that metal and porcelain are, by their very nature, incompatible. They assert that the two substances are, and always have been, bad neighbours.

There is something to be said for this true-blue aestheticism which derives much support from ancient Chinese opinion. It was not, however, a theory which commended itself to our ancestors — if indeed it ever occurred to them. They had no such inhibitions, and their immediate reaction to the first few pieces of Chinese ceramics they set eyes on was to do them honour by mounting them in silver or gold. No one protested until the twentieth century, when the growing knowledge of early Far Eastern earthenware and porcelain made people realize that these things were not

just curiosities to be embellished, but forms, patterns and textures existing in their own right.

Gilded Bronze

It was in the France of Louis XIV and then throughout the eighteenth century and under the Empire that this combination of two different materials was practised with such extraordinary ingenuity. The medium used was gilded bronze — ormolu — and never before or since have such pains been lavished upon a non-precious metal. When the beautiful olive-green Chinese celadons began to enter the country they were regarded, not as subjects for serious study by erudite students of ceramics, but as heaven-sent objects begging to be adorned with ormolu mounts so that they could harmonize with the prevailing mode of interior decoration, and a similar compliment was paid to the products first of Meissen and then of Sèvres.

A porcelain figure became more desirable when set upon a base of spiraling scrolls and embowered in a fanatic vegetation of ormolu, and Chinese vase, in current opinion, was given splendour by two ormolu handles. Perhaps as good an example as any of mingled grace and apparent incongruity is to be seen in the candelabrum of the illustration which, with its companion, was recently in the exhibition at the Frank Partridge Gallery — a gilt-bronze tree set upon a superbly chiselled rococo base bears flower-heads in colours of Vincennes porcelain while a cock in blanc de chine stands in the shadow of the branches.

The inventory marks on this piece and an entry in the journal of the famous purveyor to the French court Lazare Duvaux dated August 4, 1755, make it likely that it was once the property of Madame de Pompadour; certainly the quality of the ormolu is well up to the standard demanded by that extravagant and exacting lady.

Organized craft

By this time the craft had become important and was carefully organized. It had begun with ormolu mounts for furniture and gradually extended its range to include innumerable ornaments of the character of this candelabrum and such things as table candlesticks which, with us, were wholly the province of the silversmith. Later in the century Matthew Boulton at Birmingham, in addition to handles and mounts for furniture, produced some fine work in the French manner to embellish vases of Derbyshire Spar — the quartz more familiarly known as Blue John.

In Paris, in the mid-eighteenth century, the work was as highly esteemed as any of the other crafts, and demanded the collaboration of three individuals. The sculptor provided the original model. It then went to the foundry to be cast, and finally to the ciseleur-doreur for finishing. This demarcation of function was not over rigid, for sometimes the chiselling would be carried out at the foundry; but, for the finer pieces, everything depended upon the skill lavished upon them by the ciseleur-doreur, who by the