

PRESS RELEASE

from

THE FRICK COLLECTION

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EXCLUSIVE SHOWING OF AN IMPORTANT COLLECTION OF EARLY MEISSEN PORCELAIN

March 25, 2008, through June 29, 2008



Teapot and Cover, Meissen porcelain, c. 1725–30, 1995.325; total, H: 6" (15.2 cm); without cover, to tip of handle, H: 5 3/8" (13.7 cm), The Arnhold Collection. Photo: Maggie Nimkin

Although the formula for manufacturing true porcelain was developed in China by the sixth century, it remained a consuming mystery in the West until its discovery in 1708 by alchemist Johann Friedrich Böttger (1682–1719) under the patronage of August II (1670–1733), elector of Saxony and king of Poland. In 1710, the king established a royal manufactory outside of Dresden in the town of Meissen, and the porcelain created there has been known by that name ever since. Early Meissen porcelain and its decoration remained experimental into the 1740s. Examples from this period are particularly rare and have always been highly sought after. **This spring, The Frick Collection will present a selection of Meissen porcelain from The Arnhold Collection, one of the greatest private holdings of early Meissen assembled in the**

twentieth century. Although well-known to specialists, this remarkable collection has never before been the subject of a major public exhibition, and a selection of approximately 100 examples will be shown exclusively at the Frick. The exhibition is also the museum's first on Meissen porcelain, which was not collected by founder Henry Clay Frick, who focused instead on Chinese porcelain and objects from the French Sèvres manufactory. Never before has an illustrated and scholarly book been published on this important collection, and a much-needed volume is being produced by Dan Giles, Ltd. ***The Arnhold Collection of Meissen Porcelain, 1710–50*** was organized for The Frick Collection by Director Anne L. Poulet and Guest Curator Maureen Cassidy-Geiger. The exhibition is made possible, in part, by the generous support of the Arnhold Foundation.



Nicolas de Largillière, French (1656-1746). *Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland*, ca. 1714-1715. Oil on canvas, 57 1/2 x 45 1/2 inches (146.1 x 115.6 cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: Nelson Trust. 54-35.

The Arnhold Collection was formed in two phases and in two cities. It was established in Dresden between 1926 and 1935 by Lisa (née Mattersdorff; 1890–1972) and Heinrich Arnhold (1885–1935) with a focus on tablewares and vases and objects of royal or noteworthy provenance. Lisa Arnhold emigrated to the United States, and the collection was brought over in 1940. Under their son Henry, it has continued to develop in New York, following his parents’ interests, while also expanding in scope over the decades to reflect a broader range of objects produced by the manufactory in its early years. Comments Anne L. Poulet, Director of The Frick Collection, “For many years, I have had the good fortune to know Henry Arnhold and his family’s important Meissen holdings. Henry has offered colleagues and scholars access to the works by appointment, as Mr. Frick did with his own collection before this museum opened. Now, with our major exhibition and the accompanying book, a much broader public will have the opportunity to view these exquisite porcelain treasures. Visitors will enjoy a cross-section of the manufactory’s early production, while contemplating a family’s collecting history, a subject particularly suited to the Frick.”

A FAMILY COLLECTION ESTABLISHED IN PRE-WAR DRESDEN

Heinrich Arnhold, trained as a lawyer and a member of a powerful banking family in Dresden, and his wife, who had studied medicine, were married in 1914 and became deeply involved in the cultural and intellectual life of the city. With friends in the world of contemporary architecture and design, they came to love German Expressionism and formed a significant collection of paintings and sculpture by Oskar Kokoschka, Käthe Kollwitz, Ernst Barlach, and Emil Nolde. In addition, they eventually acquired more than five hundred works on paper. Their interest in collecting porcelain may have stemmed, in part, from the fact that Heinrich served on the boards of thirteen



Cruet and Mustard Pot, Meissen porcelain, 1737–39, modeled by Johann Joachim Kändler, 1933.253; H: 7" (17.8 cm); 1933.254; H: 7 ½" (19.1 cm). The Arnhold Collection. Photo: Maggie Nimkin

porcelain and ceramic firms with which his bank was affiliated. He and Lisa began by making a few tentative purchases of porcelain, which they later sold, before deciding to focus on the acquisition of pieces from the early period at Meissen, choosing, almost exclusively, wares and vases rather than figures. The collection grew to include large vases, pieces from table services, and tea, coffee, and chocolate services. An example of Lisa and Heinrich’s purchases is the *Cruet and Mustard Pot*, at left, modeled in 1737 by Johann Joachim Kändler (1706–1775), one of the most skilled sculptors working at Meissen during the early period.

Kändler was named court sculptor at Meissen in 1731 and master sculptor in 1733.

These charming vessels in the shape of fanciful Chinese figures riding roosters were created as part of a centerpiece originally commissioned by Heinrich, Count von Brühl (1700–1763), Prime Minister at the court of Saxony, who was one of the most enthusiastic early patrons of the Meissen factory. Founded by Augustus II, the porcelain manufactory at Meissen was one of the many brilliant artistic and architectural creations sponsored by the king who made Dresden a major cultural center in the early eighteenth century, as well as one of the most beautiful baroque cities in Europe. Augustus II—called Augustus the Strong because of his legendary physical strength, an attribute in evidence in Nicolas de Largillière’s celebrated portrait of the king, included in the Frick exhibition through a generous loan by the Nelson-Atkins Museum—reigned from 1694 until 1733, and, during this time, one of his passions was collecting Chinese and Japanese porcelain imported to Europe by Dutch merchants. In order to house

this enormous collection, in 1717 he commissioned his favorite architect, Matthäus Daniel Pöppelmann (1662–1737), to transform a palace on the Elbe River. Eventually called the Japanese Palace and destined only for the display of porcelain, not as a residence, the building continued to be enlarged to accommodate new acquisitions—including Meissen porcelain—until Augustus’s death.

When Augustus II ascended the throne, the method for making true porcelain was not yet known in Europe. Although there had been many attempts to discover the formula, the correct ingredients eluded ceramicists throughout the Continent. In 1701, Augustus II enlisted the services of Johann-Friedrich Böttger, a brilliant young man trained as a pharmacist but who was known primarily as an alchemist; purportedly, he had succeeded in changing base metals into gold. Bringing Böttger to Dresden, Augustus II imprisoned him, insisting that he produce the promised gold. By 1706, Böttger—still a prisoner—was collaborating with other scientists, namely Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus (1651–1708), experimenting with ceramics that could be fired at high temperatures. To the king’s delight, in 1708, Böttger discovered the formula for making both red stoneware (called red porcelain) and white porcelain, which resulted in his release from captivity along with increased support and rewards from the king leading to the founding of the Royal Porcelain Manufactory at Meissen in 1710, which still exists as a state industry. Böttger was named the first director of the factory, and he and his employees were required to keep the formula for porcelain a secret on pain of imprisonment or death.

The early years at Meissen were exciting times of experimentation, not only with the formula for porcelain but also with shapes and decoration. Initially, many of the works produced were direct imitations of Japanese and Chinese objects in Augustus II’s famous collection. Others had European forms incorporating Asian decorative motifs. Because initially the manufactory had difficulty firing enamel colors, most of the wares were white or else were painted or gilded after firing. Böttger also had perfected a red stoneware, akin to Chinese Yixing ware, that could be fired at very high temperatures and that was sufficiently hard to be engraved, cut, and polished. Henry Arnhold’s collection is particularly rich in red stoneware objects produced at Meissen between 1710 and 1713. A handsome example from the first years of the factory is the *Coffeepot with Cover* which has a European form decorated with prunus blossoms in relief. The elaborate cartouche was made to be engraved with the royal owner’s armorials, but in this case it has been left blank.



Coffeepot with Cover, Meissen stoneware, c. 1710–13, 2001.449; H: 6 1/9" (15.5 cm), The Arnhold Collection. Photo: Maggie Nimkin



Great Bustard, Meissen porcelain, 1732, modeled by Johann Gottlieb Kirchner, 1935.248; H: 33" (83.8 cm), The Arnhold Collection. Photo: Maggie Nimkin

One of the most ambitious projects undertaken at Meissen was a porcelain menagerie of lifesize animals and birds conceived as interior decoration for the king’s Japanese Palace. Several hundred were required though less than 300 were successfully fired before the project was abandoned. A superb example known as the *Great Bustard* was a gift to Heinrich Arnhold in 1935. The figure was designed by Johann Gottlieb Kirchner (1706–after 1737), the director of the modeling studio at Meissen in the early 1730s. The bird

stands with its head gracefully bent back over its wing and is supported by a tree trunk covered with oak branches, leaves, and acorns. To mold and fire a figure of this size was a technical tour de force. Most of the sculptures, as with this one, have a number of firing cracks produced in the kiln. The surface has a clear glaze over which unfired oil colors were applied. The colors on most of the sculptures, including the *Great Bustard*, were later removed.

Among the most popular Chinese porcelains exported to Europe were those with a cobalt-blue painted decoration under the glaze. A decidedly royal taste, many imitations were made at Meissen in the early years. A fine example in the Arnhold Collection is the *Vase and Cover*, with a floral decoration and a lizard applied around the neck, copying Asian prototypes (see catalogue cover on page one). This vase is listed in the inventory of the Japanese Palace and was one of eight made for the king. The taste for kakiemon and blue-and-white wares from Japan was also strong. In 1730, Augustus II commissioned the Meissen factory to make one hundred “birdcage” vases, for the decoration of the Japanese Palace. Copies of an unusual Japanese export confection, these pieces (at right) have a trumpet-shaped form with elephant-head handles and a base surrounded by a wire cage meant to contain porcelain birds on the modeled rock outcroppings and branches. Twenty-one of the Meissen vases were ready for firing in 1731, although it is not known how many were made altogether. The pair acquired by Henry Arnhold in 2000 are extremely rare survivors of this extraordinary series and derive from the collection of the kings of Italy.



One of a Pair of Birdcage Vases, Meissen porcelain, after 1730, 2000.416; 20 1/4" (51.4 cm), The Arnhold Collection. Photo: Maggie Nimkin

SCOPE OF COLLECTION EXPANDS UNDER HENRY ARNHOLD



Pantalone and Columbine, Meissen porcelain, c. 1740, modeled by Johann Joachim Kändler, 1736–38; 2006.582; H: 6 5/8 in. (17 cm), The Arnhold Collection. Photo: Maggie Nimkin

Although Henry Arnhold has generally followed his parents’ collecting preference for vases and wares, in recent years he has acquired several significant figural groups made at Meissen. Beginning in the mid-1730s, the factory produced a series of figures from the Italian commedia dell’arte, most of which were modeled by the master sculptor Kändler and often based on prints. The group of *Pantalone and Columbine* has a theatrical quality, with the figures seemingly in centrifugal movement as Pantalone strides forward, his head turned toward Columbine, her hand on her hip and skirts flying (at left). The group demonstrates the mastery achieved at the Meissen manufactory by the 1730s, not only in modeling but also in painting using a broad palette of overglaze enamel colors. Serving the demands

of the king and the court, diplomatic gifts of Meissen porcelain brought this distinctive European porcelain to the attention of royal collectors and connoisseurs outside Saxony, and a marketplace developed as well, particularly in France, with the marchands-merciers ordering figures and wares to satisfy local tastes. The charming *Mounted Figural Group* of a bearded Chinese man accompanied by a disproportionately large exotic bird, lemons, berries, and a flower (at right) may have been executed for export to



Mounted Figural Group, Meissen porcelain, c. 1728–30, model attributed to George Fritzsche, gilt-bronze mounts, probably French, 2005.558; H: 6" (15.2 cm); L: 9 3/4" (24.7 cm), The Arnhold Collection. Photo: Maggie Nimkin

France, where the Chantilly porcelain manufactory soon would begin to produce groups in the same taste. The fact that the porcelain group is mounted on a French gilt-bronze base reinforces this supposition. Although the model for the group is not known, it may have been inspired by a Chinese sculpture in the king's collection.



Teapot, Meissen porcelain, c. 1725–30, decoration attributed to Ignaz Preissler, c. 1725–30; 2001.468; H: 4" (10.2 cm), The Arnhold Collection Photo: Maggie Nimkin

Many Meissen wares were acquired as blanks by independent artists, known today as *Hausmaler* (house painters), who, working outside the factory, painted and gilded them for the market. The Arnhold Collection is particularly rich in examples of works by these independent artists, many of whom have distinct styles and are known by name. The *Teapot* at left, with its accomplished decoration of a continuous seascape with large ships and a foreground bordered with trees, is painted in a distinct palette of iron red and black that is the hallmark of the independent painter Ignaz Preissler (1676–1741). Master of a technique known as *schwartzlot*, Preissler was commissioned to paint wares by wealthy clients in Bohemia and Silesia. The technique consisted of applying a thin, translucent area of black or iron red paint on the surface of the porcelain, then scratching the design

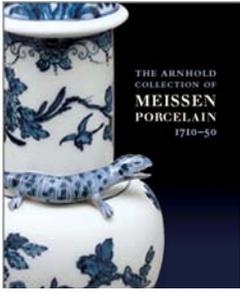
through it with a needle before firing, achieving a highly refined image. In 1720, the porcelain painter Johann Gregorius Höroldt (1696–1775) was brought to Meissen from Vienna. He became director and chief painter at the factory and introduced a wide variety of overglaze polychrome enamels, developing a style of painted decoration copied from engravings that included chinoiserie figures, scenes of battle, harbors, hunting, and pastoral subjects as well as fruits and flowers. The Arnhold Collection has a number of fine objects decorated by Höroldt, among them the magnificent *Mounted Tankard* (bottom right). Here, the artist has depicted a chinoiserie version of a quack doctor on stage before a rapt audience, while two of his assistants work the crowd, selling potions and pulling teeth. The scene is painted in a cartouche outlined in underglaze blue and is framed by a delicate iron red-and-gold filigree design. Höroldt remained as chief painter at Meissen until his retirement in 1765, and it was under his leadership that the polychrome enamel objects for which the factory is best known today were made. His rival at Meissen was Kändler, who worked until his death in 1775 and whose inventive sculptures and figural groups were equally important in giving the factory its unique identity.

In adding to the collection of his parents, Henry Arnhold continues to follow their taste and preferences in many ways. For example, he shares their appreciation for works by the *Hausmaler*, significantly increasing the representation of the independent Dutch and German decorators and deepened the holdings of gold-decorated wares from Augsburg and other specialist workshops. He expanded the range of the collection by adding objects painted by such Meissen artists as Adam Friedrich von Löwenfinck. He took a new direction, however, in acquiring significant blue-and-white objects commissioned by Augustus II for the Japanese Palace, just as he did in acquiring fifteen cabinet and dessert figures in 2006. The result is a rich and profoundly personal collection of exquisite objects from the early, innovative period at Meissen.



Mounted Tankard, Meissen porcelain, c.1723–34, decoration attributed to Johann Gregorius Höroldt, c. 1723–24, mounted in Augsburg, c. 1725, 2004.526; with lid, H: 7 ¼" (18.5 cm), The Arnhold Collection. Photo: Maggie Nimkin

FIRST ILLUSTRATED AND SCHOLARLY PUBLICATION



The first illustrated and scholarly publication on the collection, with more than 1,060 color and 15 black-and-white images, will accompany the exhibition and includes entries by the exhibition's guest curator, **Maureen Cassidy-Geiger**, curator of the Arnhold Collection.

The book features an introduction by **Henry Arnhold**, which offers a personal account of his family as art patrons in Dresden and how the porcelain collection was created. **Sebastian Kuhn**, a leading expert on European ceramics and former Director of the European Ceramics and Glass Department, Sotheby's, London, contributes an essay tracing the wider trends in collecting European porcelain between 1900 and 1960 in Europe and America. An essay by **Heike Biedermann**, curator at the Gemälde Galerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, looks at the Arnholds as collectors of modern art in Dresden from the year of their marriage in 1914 until 1935. The catalogue, published by Dan Giles Ltd., will be available (800 pages; softcover, \$65; and hardcover, \$275.00) in the Museum Shop of the Frick, on the institution's Web site (www.frick.org), and by phone (212) 288-0700.

FREE PUBLIC LECTURE *(SEATING FOR LECTURES IS LIMITED AND UNRESERVED)*

Date: Wednesday, April 2, 2008, 6:00 p.m.
Speaker: Maureen Cassidy-Geiger, Curator, The Arnhold Collection of Meissen Porcelain
Title: *Porcelain Pleasures and Royal Treasures: Meissen Porcelain, c. 1710–50*

Into the early eighteenth century, Asian porcelain was a fragile and valuable curiosity, greatly prized for its whiteness and translucency and worthy of the *Kunstkammern*, or art cabinets, of royalty. The formula for creating this material eluded European ceramists until the founding of the Royal Porcelain Manufactory at Meissen, outside Dresden, in 1710. This lecture, presented by the guest curator of the Frick's special exhibition, will explore the manufactory's early production and how it set the standards and trends for the European porcelain industry that followed in its wake.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: (212) 288-0700

Website: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

Where: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue.

Hours: open six days a week: 10am to 6pm on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 11am to 5pm on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (11am to 5pm) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

Admission: \$15; senior citizens \$10; students \$5; "pay as you wish" on Sundays from 11am to 1pm

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection, and those under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult.

Subway: #6 local (on Lexington Avenue) to 68th Street station; **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

Tour Information: included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide INFORM® Audio Tour of the permanent collection, provided by Acoustiguide. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Museum Shop: the shop is open the same days as the Museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

Group Visits: Please call (212) 288-0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is published regularly and is available upon request.

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