keramiske noter 46/2017

23. årgang

Keramikkens Venner

Reviews · Besprechungen · anmeldelser · Besprechungen · Reviews

redigeret af Gunnar Jakobsen

Tin-Glazed Earthenware from the Netherlands, France & Germany, 1600-1800. By Ulla Houkjær, Designmuseum Danmark, Copenhagen, Catalogue of the Collection, vol. 8. 416 pp., 250 colour ill., notes, index, bibliography, glossary. pb. Museum Tusculum Press, Copenhagen 2016, ISBN 978-87-90786-59-5 (English edition). DKK 525; € 71.

The Designmuseum Danmark is home to Denmark's largest collection of ceramic works with over 1500 catalogue numbers and a much larger number of items. It covers the long tradition of Ceramics from early East Asian to contemporary Danish pottery including all ceramic materials and techniques.

In 2005 the author Ulla Houkjær, who is senior curator at the Designmuseum Danmark, published a catalogue raisonné on the earlier period of the history of ceramics in Europe entitled: *Tin-Glazed Earthenware from Spain, Italy and France, 1300-1750*. The new catalogue embraces the important period of European Tin-Glazed Earthenware from the Netherlands, France & Germany 1600-1800 representing 252 catalogue numbers. The catalogue starts with a detailed and well-structured table of contents, which allows the user to turn directly to a field of special interest if desired. The first part of 123 pages includes articles on techniques, history of the collection and detailed descriptions of the three geographical areas of origin in respect to the production of tin-glazed earthenware and to the collection. The second part of the catalogue offers detailed information of the single objects classified in geographical areas. The appendix includes a glossary, a selected bibliography and an index.

The introduction includes a brief summary of the development of the early history of tin-glazed earthenware as outlined in the catalogue of 2005 as a precondition for the further development of this material. A chapter on techniques, usage, and patterns of distribution is illustrated with some of the prints of Diderot & d'Alembert as well as examples of their own collection. Most of the pieces in the collection are connected to dining culture reflecting the changing eating and drinking habits and fashions in table arrangements. Also, a few words are given on inspiration and models of the decorative designs.

The history of the collection of tin-glazed earthenware in the Designmuseum Danmark (until 2011 Det Danske Kunstindustrimuseum) goes back to the early 1890s before the museum's official existence when it was still at the conceptual stage. In this earlier period mainly foreign pottery was collected while Danish and contemporary pottery were more recent purchases. It was the art historian Emil Hannover (1864-1923) who served as the museum's first chief librarian and, from 1905 until his death, its director who formed a comprehensive collection of ceramics. He wanted to illustrate the relationship of European and East Asian ceramic tradition and design. Today you would call Emil Hannover an excellent networker who knows all the leading international scholars in this field: for example Otto von Falke (Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin), Justus Brinckmann (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg), Bernard Rackham (Victoria & Albert Museum London). With his enthusiasm he was able to „infect" important supporters and donors like Camillus Nyrop, general secretary of the Industrial Association from 1876-94 and also of the major Danish agricultural and industrial exhibitions in 1888 and 1892. He substantially supported the Danish museum of art and design and donated important items to the museum's faience collection.

In the late 19th century the museum was able to acquire many of the best pieces of some famous private collections like those of J.C. Stausholm (1894) or J.W. Frohne (1910). Further important acquisitions took place in the 1940s and 1953 of the famous Collection of Ole Olsen with the help of donators like the museum's friends association and the New Carlsberg Foundation. Some outstanding pieces, mostly of German origin, of the collection of Eiler J.H. Ruge (1896-1982) were given to the museum as a donation, as well as pieces of the Cumberland Collection 1962.

The following chapters dealing with the tin-glazed earthenware from the Netherlands, France and Germany. All start with some remarks on the collection material and are followed by descriptions of the different factories outlining their characteristic qualities and also giving information on specific topics.

The collection of Dutch faiences includes 104 catalogue numbers. It primarily consists of Delftware mainly from the period 1680 to 1760. All kinds of tableware were collected, and some sets of vases, especially tulip vases. Most pieces of the Dutch collection were acquired before 1890 while the museum was at the planning stage and until 1911. The author attributes this deep interest in Dutch Delftware to a strong Dutch influence on art and culture in Denmark during the 17th and early 18th centuries when Dutch architects, painters and sculptors worked on prominent projects (castles, churches) in Denmark and Dutch Delftware was imported for wealthy citizens to a large extent.

The author gives a summary of the development of the Delft production of tin-glazed earthenware with a short description of the most important workshops including the influence of Chinese and Japanese porcelain. She points out the changes in society and altered market conditions during the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe, which were taken advantage of by the Delft potters. As a consequence they formed an important link in the inter-cultural relationship between Europe and China, which started long before during the Roman Empire. The role of the VOC as well as Chinese and Japanese exports specially designed for Europe are given a close glance as well as the different decoration patterns used in Delft deriving from these Far East imports. The cultural adaption of those influences and the ensuing mingling with European motifs – especially flowers – are given a thorough discussion, also pointing out some Dutch specialties like the tulip vases. The production of Dutch tiles is described, although the collection does only hold a few examples, among them two high-class luxury pieces: a polychrome pictorial tile panel composed of 104 tiles (cat. No. 98) and a large tile with blue European baroque decoration which presumably was part of the decoration in Hampton Court (cat. No. 97).

The collection of French tin-glazed earthenware consist of 58 pieces. 21 of them were published in 2005, 37 are the subject of this catalogue. The problem of cross-border migration of staff in the French-German area (due to political developments) with an exchange of ideas and techniques leads to problems in attributing the products to one or the other region. About 10 factories in France are represented in the collection mainly from the northern parts: Strasbourg, Rouen, Niderviller, Aprey, Sceaux, Lunéville and Marseille in the south. They belong to the later Rococo period. A short overview of the development of the French manufactories with emphasis on the Hannong production in Strasbourg is delicately illustrated by 9 details of wonderful decorations showing the many variants of flower painting during the period 1750-1785. The in- and output of influences with other manufactories especially with Germany and Scandinavia (for example the factories in Kastrup and Marieberg) is discussed, as well as technical aspects or origin of motifs like print series. Outstanding pieces like the Rouen tray (cat. No. 118) showing an imaginative Chinese panorama or a large tureen from Marseilles with delicate enamel flower decoration and handles in the shape of leopard-like animals (cat. No. 132) are highlights of this part of the collection. There are still some uncertainties about the authenticity of some of the French works. Maybe the publication of this book will lead to a solution sooner or later.

The German tin-glazed earthenware is divided into two groups: the main part of Germany from Hamburg to Augsburg with individual features of the manufactories with 50 pieces, and the coastal regions of the Baltic Sea with 60 numbers linked by their distinct style closely to Scandinavian faience production. A difficulty in distinguishing the individual Baltic manufactories derives from the fact that there has been a constant flow of workers first coming from other regions then mingling in the Baltic area leading to a „speedy dispersal of motifs and design“. (p. 90) This phenomenon is observed in the German mainland as well. Highlights of the Baltic faience production are the countless Potpourri vases in creative shapes (cat. no. 169, 172, 173, 182, 183, 199) as well as mitre-shaped punchbowls known as „bishop“ punchbowls and large faience tea and table trays (cat. no. 157, 158, 165-167, 175). The main factories represented in the collection are Schleswig, Criseby and Eckernförde, Kiel, Stockelsdorf, Stralsund, Königsberg and Reval. The author gives a thorough review of the history and distinctive decorative elements of these factories pointing out the specific highlights of the collection (for example a wall fountain from Kiel, cat. no. 174).

50 examples of faiences from the German mainland show various local features, which was the purpose of collecting them. In the early examples of the Hanau and Frankfurt production, the Chinese influence is clearly seen in forms and decoration. Other manufactories represented in the collection are Höchst, Kelsterbach, Fulda, Ansbach (with a set of 5 vases of the famille verte!, cat. No. 224), Hausmalerei from Nürnberg and Augsburg (by Wolfgang Roesler, cat. No. 226; presumably Bartholomäus Seutter, cat. No. 227-228), Bayreuth, Schrezheim, Brunswick, Hannoversch

Münden, Magdeburg, and the Berlin area. Special attention is given to some pieces which were traditionally attributed to Hamburg production since they show Hamburg‘s coat of Arms. Recent discoveries in Amsterdam suggest that those pieces were most likely produced in Lisbon for export to Hamburg (cat. No. 207-210). In the catalogue they are placed behind the early period and titled „Hamburg/Lisbon“, which is slightly irritating if you went to the catalogue straight away and didn’t read the article in the first part of the book first but the solution is given in the commentary as well.

The catalogue itself is well structured, divided into three main sections according to country of origin and specific aspects as explained in the Key to Catalogue. Each number is clearly organized, distinguishing the basic information and description from the commentary by different type and size of characters. The catalogue entries provide a number, designation of type, place of origin, and dating (the latter two being new in most cases), dimensions, marks, manufacturer, provenance, condition, mus. no., bibliography, and references to comparable pieces in various museums.

For most of the entries, one number is given per page, showing a very good photo of each piece; few objects are given more room and a second photo (most of the photos by Pernille Klemp). In order to get all the information on one page the print character, size of information, and description is quite small probably causing some difficulty for elderly readers. The commentary gives room for valuable information on different aspects concerning the piece, for example discussion of marks or signatures, origin of motifs, different attributions, and references to other pieces or its cultural-historic context. Marks and signatures are only illustrated when unusual.

The catalogue gives a well-balanced overview of the collection of „Tin-glazed Earthenware from the Netherlands, France & Germany 1600-1800“ and is a genuine source of information. In the introductory part of the book as well as in the commentaries of the catalogue the reader profits from the vast and widespread knowledge of the author Ulla Houkjær. Moreover, the book has a pleasant format (24 x 23 cm) and a good layout. It will prove a valuable source for research and should not be missed in any library dealing with ceramics or with European culture or history of trade and industry. The glossary, bibliography and index of names add to the scientific value and usefulness and make it a pleasure to work with the catalogue.

Personally, my favourite illustration showing some delicate humour by the author is placed on the back cover: the bottom side of a part of a Fulda table plateau showing five paws from below.

Frauke van der Wall
Museumsinspektør, seniorforsker ved Museum für Franken, Würzburg