

“All that glisters.....”

Some of my readers may have visited the lovely exhibition and sale at Stockspring Antiques in June 2017, entitled “Inspired by Blanc de Chine”.

One piece caught my eye – a Doccia cup, with its accompanying saucer, the cup decorated with a bas-relief scene of “The Triumph of Bacchus”.



Courtesy of Stockspring Antiques 2017

The first Italian company to produce porcelain was founded in Venice in 1720.

In 1737 the Marquis Carlo-Ginori founded the second at Doccia in Tuscany, near Florence.

From the beginning many of the Ginori pieces were sculptural, modelled from pieces drawn from the Medici collections and copies made from groups modelled in bronze.

This bas-relief might well have been from such a source.

The cup and saucer at the Stockspring Antiques exhibition is dated c.1760-1770, and the source mentioned by the catalogues is from “Metamorphoses d’Ovid” by Antoine Banier 1732.



Courtesy of Stockspring Antiques 2017

I really liked this piece but unfortunately the price was beyond my means and it had to stay on the shelf for some other lucky collector. I was however one of those memorable pieces in that it was a beautiful white porcelain and the sort of decoration that stays in the mind.

About two years later, wandering round another fair, looking at porcelain among other things, my eye lighted on a white cup on the stand of a dealer I didn't know particularly well. But, the cup looked remarkably familiar. After a bit of discussion with the dealer, and parting with not a lot of money, I came away with the cup.



Private Collection

Described on the Invoice as Italian soft paste, and given no more definite maker or any date, I was happy to investigate as I thought that I might just have found something interesting.



For a start, it's not soft paste of course. A visit to the V&A and a troll through their pictures on the computer in the ceramics gallery led me to some other pieces with comparable moulding and Doccia as a likely maker. Even better!

I could see no marks on the cup base, even with a decent torch, so next step in the quest was a visit to Errol Manners. This was very interesting as he of course has resources for examining pieces under different light sources. We found that the cup has a crowned 'N' faintly impressed on the base. Errol explained about the manufacturers 'trick' of trying to pass off other Italian porcelain as Capodimonte, in somewhat the same way as some of the English factories implied a Meissen origin by adding the crossed swords mark to their pieces.

By the end of my visit to Errol I had learned a lot, but came away with a cup which, while neither Capodimonte nor early Doccia is still an interesting piece.

The final decision is that it is most likely late 19th Century or possibly even early 20th Century Doccia. (Mentioning it to John Mallet at an ECC meeting and telling him about the crowned 'N', his comment was "Oh dear, Betsy, you've got a fake!")

The Doccia manufactory certainly does still use patterns and modelling from their 18th Century stock as does Meissen. One can buy a 'Swan service' piece easily for a few Euros from the Museum shop and I regularly use a Doccia coffee mug painted in the original style, bought in Florence not that long ago.

An interesting find at that fair.....but "all that glisters....."

Stockspring Antiques exhibition pictures and information reproduced with their permission.

My thanks to Errol Manners for much information and help.

Betsy Wilkie December 2020