

My Ceramic Doppelgangers

This Paper will attempt to demonstrate the enduring appeal of pieces of both porcelain and pottery made in the same styles or patterns of the originals.

All have been made and purchased within the last twenty or so years but all hark back to early to mid-eighteenth century. One is even earlier, so let's start there.



This is a very ordinary mug bought in the museum shop at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The pattern was what attracted me to this one. It's a version of the "Two Quail Pattern" in Kakiemon style, which seems to have originated, as porcelain decoration, possibly in Japan in the 17th century, although quails had figured in Chinese art painted on scrolls in the 12th century. It has appeared on early Arita porcelain around 1700. Since then it has moved through Chinese decoration in underglaze blue, 18th century European at Meissen in the Kakiemon style, 18th century English at Bow and Chelsea, and also Dutch and many other European factories.

A comprehensive survey of the "Two Quail Pattern" is that of the book by Dr Chris Girton of a few years ago which accompanied an exhibition of pieces showing the range and diversity of this pattern. Returning to my modern "made last week" mug, I find it slightly ironic that while the maker's website claims that their products feature English designers, all of their fine china and bone china pieces are made in the Far East. The quails have flown home!

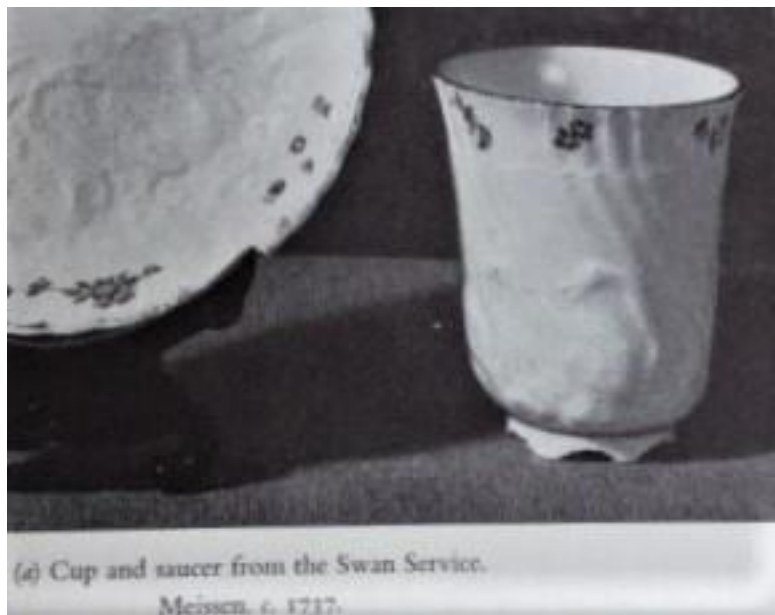
Continuing in the 17th century, we come to Portuguese faience.



Again, it was the painting on this mug that caught my eye several years ago in Lisbon. Indeed, I bought several pieces of this attractive medieval-style pattern. I believe the original 17th century ware comes from the Coimbra region of Portugal. All of my pieces claim to be hand painted and all have the name of the painter on the base. Some years ago I visited an exhibition which included in the display some of the original pieces of this faience. There are obviously variations in the pattern but the original decorators clearly had a sense of humour, painting squirrels and rabbits climbing and jumping among leaves, flowers and rocks. The ancient Roman remains of the town of Conimbriga are near the present-day vibrant city of Coimbra. This possibly explains the name "ceramica Conimbriga" painted on each piece of my set.

The area has forests of pine and chestnut, so with a faience painter's imagination, the leaves in the patterns could perhaps be chestnut, with the occasional pine tree. The browns and greens of a dusty landscape make for attractive wares.

Next among my “made last week” copies of originals has to be my collection of Meissen, both porcelain and Bottger porcelain and red stoneware.



The porcelain coffee cup is a direct moulding of one of the wonderful Count von Bruhl ‘Swan Service’. August the Strong having died in 1733, he was succeeded by his son Augustus III. The new king had much less interest in porcelain than his father had. Beyond providing luxury goods for the dinner table and for diplomatic gifts, he was not much interested and quite happy to hand over the running of the works to others. Heinrich, Count von Bruhl, became the director and the enormous dinner service was commissioned for his own use.

The young Kaendler, who was encouraged in his artistic work by von Bruhl, modelled this service which extended to 2200 pieces and took four years to complete. Pieces of the service do appear at auction from time to time and command high prices. My coffee cup and saucer, while relatively expensive, does NOT come at that level! Indeed, the assistant in the museum shop the wondered why I did not want to buy a coffee set and not simply one cup and saucer. The fact that the moulds are still being made and used today does give one a feel for the luxury goods of the past.

The Bottger red stoneware saucer with a small white teabowl of (I think) Bottger porcelain was another interesting find in the Meissen museum shop on my last visit there about five years ago.



Soon after arriving in Meissen in the very early 1700s, Bottger spent a great deal of time testing all sorts of materials available to him. He eventually produced some fine red stoneware which was a completely new material. It was much finer than the stoneware that had been produced for a long time in the German potteries, but it wasn't the porcelain he was seeking.



Unfortunately for Bottger, war with Sweden intervened and it was some time before his attempts at porcelain could be continued. When he was able to restart his experiments he produced more of the fine red ware and my saucer is an example of this beautiful material. It is smooth and with a finish that is not dependent on an applied glaze. In his search for the recipe for porcelain, Bottger eventually focussed on kaolin found in a mine at Colditz. This he mixed in varying proportions with other ingredients till he found the recipe that produced a pure white translucent product. This was in 1708/9 and in January 1710 Augustus set out a Royal Proclamation announcing the foundation of his new Royal Porcelain Manufactory.

My white porcellaneous cup and the saucer both have a moulded decoration of rose leaves and small flowers. I'd suggest that the cup's decoration is slip-cast, while the saucer I think is press moulded. The cup has underglaze blue crossed swords and the red ware mark is incised crossed swords. Like the 'Swan' coffee cup, it just makes one feel still in touch with the workers of past centuries who produced such goods without the availability of the equipment that present day workers would consider essential.

Next up on my list is this cream jug in "Porcelain de Paris".



This piece and several other dishes and plates were bought over a number of years on holidays in France, with the aim of making up a part-dinner service. At that point I was definitely not a collector of antique porcelain. I just liked the pattern but I must admit the date of 1773 on the backstamp intrigued me, Besides the Porcelain de Paris stamp and crossed arrow shafts, each piece is also marked "Limoges" in underglaze blue. When I started to think about writing this paper I decided if I was going to include the French one, then I really had to see if I could find an original maker. I know Limoges is a major centre for porcelain production because of the availability of suitable clay deposits there, but the Paris back stamp on my pieces is clearly intended as the main indicator of its manufacture while Limoges is much smaller and fainter underneath.

I started hunting through “Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century French Porcelain” by George Savage, There I found that numerous small porcelain works were in business in Paris in the latter half of the eighteenth century, so I was pleased when I eventually found one under the name of “Fabrique de la Courtille”. This factory was founded by Jean-Baptiste Locre de Roissy, a potter from Leipzig, in 1773. My pieces have this date (fonde 1773). Further in Savage’s narrative on this factory he states that the factory was taken over by Pouyat of Limoges about 1800. The Paris factory apparently made good quality figures on a considerable scale, a few closely imitating Meissen. My dinner service pieces now have a home and a pattern history back to the eighteenth century.

Last on this list of modern copies are several pieces of Doccia porcelain.



My first venture into writing during Lockdown was my “not quite what it seems” Doccia/Capodimonte cup. This time it really is Doccia. I bought this cup and saucer and side plate in the Richard-Ginori shop in Florence. The back stamp has the date 1735, the year the factory was founded at Doccia near Florence by the Marchese Carlo Ginori. The company remained under the control of the Ginori family until 1896 when it was incorporated with the Societa Ceramica Richard of Milan under the name of Richard Ginori.

To continue my attempt to show that the moulds, patterns and styles of the original eighteenth century are still being used, I found a picture in Arthur Lane's "Italian Porcelain" of the exact moulding of my plate.



This one dates to 1760/70 and has a coloured pattern while mine is pure white, but the moulding appears identical.

When I visited the Florence shop that day, I was interested to see that they had a display board near the door with examples of most of their "historic" handles for cups, dishes, tureens etc. My cup handle with its double scroll matches one of those historic handles.

It has been an interesting exercise finding originals for my modern, and in most cases, used cups, mugs and plates.

References: The Two Quail Pattern: 300 Years of Design in Porcelain: a History of the Pattern and a Catalogue of Porcelain Factories from the East and the West - Dr Chris Girton - Louvic Publications 2004;

The Arcanum: The Extraordinary True Story - Janet Gleeson - Transworld Publishers Ltd 1998;

Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century French Porcelain - George Savage - Spring Books 1969;

Italian Porcelain (Monographs on Pottery & Porcelain) - Arthur Lane - Faber & Faber 1954;

Handbook of Pottery & Porcelain Marks – J P Cushion and W B Honey - Faber & Faber 1986;

And, Wikipedia (for Conimbriga)

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