

A case of mistaken identity

The purpose of this paper is to document the research and subsequent findings with regard to a very damaged figure purchased from a dealer on eBay. (1) The damage to this figure included a completely missing left arm, a missing part-forearm and hand of the right arm, torso broken and re-stuck at the waist, head broken off at the neck and re-stuck, and, added to the damage, the white area of the upper garment over-painted and yellowed. (2) What remained of the figure is striking, beautifully modelled and characterful. Here was a piece for study and at a suitably modest price. No doubt, many readers shall have had similar experiences, but this particular tale has proven to be fruitful in understanding aspects of the factories involved.



1. A figure purchased on eBay as Niderviller, c.1780, H 14 cm, Marks: pair of interlaced 'C' in underglaze blue and red overglazed worker's mark.

The figure was described on eBay as 'a rare Niderviller Comte de Custine porcelain figure of a lady, C.1780 ... To the base is an underglaze blue interlocking C's used by the factory at that time'. Obviously, if this figure was as claimed by the vendor, he/she had done some homework on the French factory of Niderviller marks in the period of its ownership by Adam Philibert, the Comte (Count) de Custine, who purchased the factory in 1770, and held its ownership until 1793.

However, on receipt of the figure, doubt was stimulated by the marker's mark of an interlaced pair of Cs, as well as the author's inability to trace such a figure as Niderviller in the literature nor in museum collections. (3) Furthermore, the base has a distinctive red overglaze mark, which required investigation.

The overpainted upper garment or jacket, once seen in the hand, was very off-putting, and needed to be attacked forthwith. Out came the dentist kit and other scraping tools, the ugly yellowed paint was carefully scraped off to reveal the well-preserved hard-paste porcelain surface beneath. At this stage the mark sparked the idea that perhaps the figure was not Niderviller after all, and the rather French-looking lady depicted was possibly German.

Consideration of the underglaze blue mark, the pair of Cs terminated at each end in blobs is unlike the interlaced Cs used by the Niderviller factory. (3, 4) However, the characteristics of the mark on the subject figure match the mark used by the Ludwigsburg factory between 1758 and 1793, common c.1770. (5) In fact, a good example of the mark is to be found on a Ludwigsburg figure group in the Jansen Collection. (6) The investigation had reached a most encouraging stage at this point.

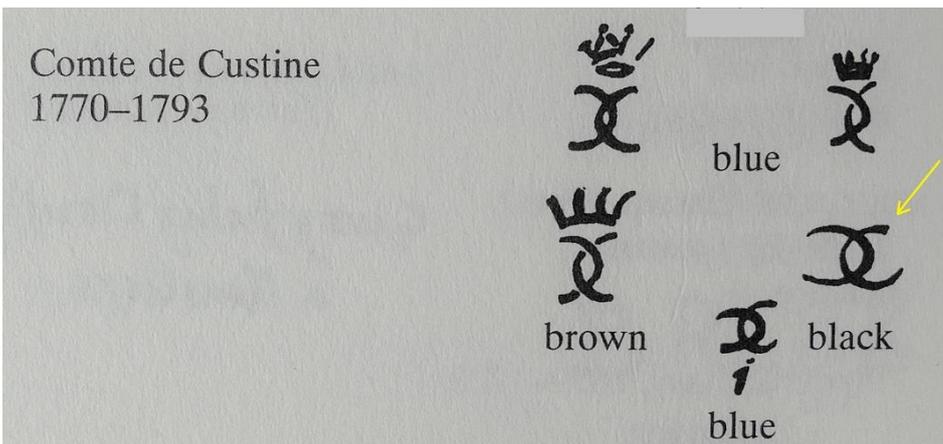


2. The figure before removal of the yellowed paint to the upper garment.

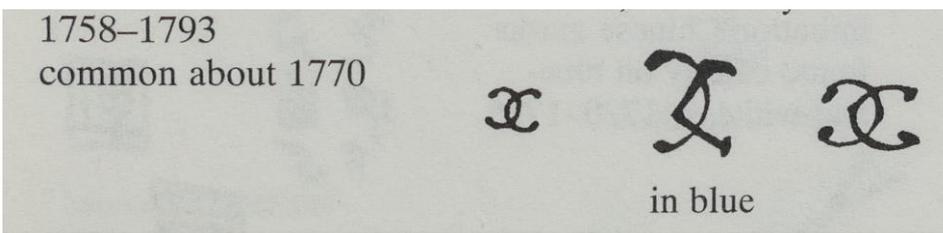


3. The base of the figure.

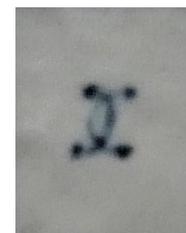
The overglaze red mark shown in (3) is recorded in Danckert ¹ as the mark of the decorator, Dominikus Christoph Sausenhofer (1727-1802) from Vienna, who worked at Ludwigsburg from 1760 to 1802, and was appointed chief colour technician in 1776 and chief decorator in 1780.²



4. Niderviller marks under the ownership of the Comte de Custine. The yellow-arrowed mark of interlaced Cs found in black rather than blue. Cushion & Honey (1996).³



5. Ludwigsburg marks in blue. Cushion & Honey (1996).⁴



6. Ludwigsburg mark on a figure Group in the Jansen Collection.⁵

A careful page through Hans Dieter Flach's *Ludwigsburger Porzellan*⁶ confirmed that the figure is in fact from the Ludwigsburg factory, and that comprehensive tome carries an image of the figure in question in her full form, which came as a surprise given just how much of this figure has proven to be missing from the subject example. (7)



7. Illustration in Flach (1997), p.557, of a Ludwigsburg figure, 'Maid serving coffee on a tray' modelled by Joseph Nees c.1760-67.

The modeller of the figure, Joseph Nees (1730-1778), was from Memmingen in Southern Germany, and worked in the Ludwigsburg manufactory as modeller from 1759 to 1767.⁷ Furthermore, the figure group bearing the blue interlaced pair of Cs mark in the Jansen Collection already referred to above (6) was also modelled by Nees.

Thus this much damaged figure represents a maid serving coffee, smartly dressed in her attire including her neat white bonnet and strikingly gilded shoes. This depiction of a very domestic event in the

life of the upper class of the time being served by their servant would have no doubt had the approval of her master.

A trawl of the internet found two further examples of the subject figure in past auctions, a single figure of a maid sold by Christie's in 2012 (8), and a manservant and maid pair sold by Lampertz of Cologne in 2017. (9) Details of the variations in decoration in each piece from the subject example include the maid's shoes – delicately gilded in the subject and Cologne auction examples, but plain black in the example sold by Christie's. Both the Christie's and the subject piece have black neck ruffs, whereas the Cologne example appears to be left in the white with a coloured edge border.



8. Ludwigsburg figure sold by Christie's, 28 November 2012, Lot 126.



9. Ludwigsburg figure pair sold by Lampertz, Cologne, the Klaus J Jacobs Collection, 16 November 2017, Lot 31.

The hope is to come across a complete example of the figure to accompany the subject example, but what remains of the latter is most pleasing and has offered the opportunity for study of the piece in a way that would not have been quite so rewarding had the details on purchase been fully and accurately given by the eBay vendor – a Worcestershire dealer.

Although this detail may only be savoured by those who have a special interest in the factories involved, the author hopes that this record of the journey of simple research is a spur to investigate pieces in the reader's collection for similar enlightening detail.

Patrick Hagglund, August 2021

Notes

¹ Danckert, Ludwig, *Dictionary of European Porcelain* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1981, reprinted 1997), pp.258-9 & 404.

² Danckert (1997), p.404.

³ Cushion, J.P. & Honey, W.B., *Handbook of Pottery and Porcelain Marks* (London: Faber & Faber, 1956, 5th Edit. 1996), p.36.

⁴ Cushion & Honey (1996), p.77.

⁵ Jansen, Reihard, *Glanz des Rokoko: Ludwigsburger Porzellan aus der Sammlung Jansen* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche, 2008), Cat. 79, p.216, and p.330.

⁶ Flach, Hans Dieter, *Ludwigsburger Porzellan: Fayence, Steingut, Kacheln, Fliesen – Ein Handbuch* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche, 1997), cat.437, p.111 and p.557.

⁷ Flach (1997), p.751.