
Koopman Rare Art

Director's Choice - Timo Koopman

An Exquisite Cased Set of 18th Century Tea Caddies

Currently (7th-14th March), we are exhibiting at TEFAF Maastricht. This week, I want to highlight an exceptional set of cased Tea Caddies; I hope they will give you an idea of the calibre of objects we have brought with us to TEFAF.



An Exquisite Cased Set of 18th Century Tea Caddies

London, 1753

Maker's mark of Edward Aldridge & John Stamper (overstriking Peter Archambo and Peter Meure)

Weight: 63 oz (1,946 g)

For a comparison, but missing their coat-of-arms, see English Silver in the Museums of Fine Arts Boston p. 166 item. 99

This complete set of tea equipage is so astonishing in its quality, design, and condition that it is an easy Director's Choice. The word 'caddy' derives from the Malay kati, meaning approximately 1½ pounds. The cost of tea during the late 17th century was high (40s per pound in 1664, and 50s from Thomas Garway in 1665), but by no means so high as it became when heavily taxed in the 18th

century. The first form of the caddy (or 'cannister' as it was called in the 17th century) was either copied from or emulated by the Chinese porcelain examples. In the eyes of the silversmith the high cost of tea justified the workmanship he generously lavished upon the caddy.

These beautiful caddies are executed in the chinoiserie rococo style. They are of bombe outline and square section, the decoration being cast and chased with considerable three-dimensional effect. The finish is jewel like. On one face, a figure in Chinese costume fishes above a waterfall yet under an asymmetrical arch. To one side stands a vase of flowers on a tripod, the other has another character merging from scrolls and architectural cornices whilst above him appears another with a parasol. The opposite face is the same but within its principal arch is engraved the coat-of-arms of Fitz-Herbert. The other two sides are chased with a man of stature, being shielded by another carrying a parasol.

The whole set with their original eight teaspoons and a pair of sugar tongs, unmarked, circa 1753.

The single banded case bearing hallmarks to the hinges for 1805.



Chinoiserie, from 'chinois' the French for Chinese, was a style inspired by art and design from China, Japan and other Asian countries considered to be exotic in Europe during the 18th century. At its height in Britain from 1750 to 1765, the vivid interest of the Europeans for the chinoiserie included a repertoire of long tailed ho-ho birds, strutting figures, fountains, warriors, and flowers.

Chinoiserie silver (“Japan” or “Japonian”) and its design sources, makers and chasers is perhaps best summed up by Philippa Glanville in her essay ‘English 17th Century Chinoiserie Silver’. The sources for the various figures and backgrounds in chinoiserie chasing are many and include illustrated travel books, Chinese porcelain, Indian cottons and Oriental lacquer work. Philippa Glanville has also pointed out how the Restoration theatre encouraged the interest in exotic design from the Far East.

By 1670, these visual elements were embedded in London artisans’ designs fuelled by the collectors’ appetite for the eastern decorative arts. Extremely characteristic of the chinoiserie style of the late 1600s is the eccentric treatment of perspective, in which figures float on small clumps of grass or rocky outcrops, disposed with no relationship to any baseline or horizon.

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All works shown, unless otherwise indicated, are available to view and purchase in our gallery located in 12 Dover Street, London, W1S 4LL

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