

Highlights Release

Tuesday 15 November 2016

The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Galleries

Opening 16th November 2016

vam.ac.uk | @V_and_A

Hunting cup with sleeping dog, Venice, Italy, 1480–90



This gilded silver hunting cup features a sleeping dog curled-up in its centre – symbolizing the end of the chase. The cup combines gothic motifs with Renaissance-style flower garlands. This stylistic fusion was typical of Venetian objects of the late 15th century.

Silver-gilt casting bottle, London, England, 1553-54



This gilded silver Tudor casting bottle is incredibly rare. It was probably used to sprinkle scented rosewater on hands at the end of a meal. The embossed floral decoration is taken from ornament prints published in Germany in the 1540s. It was a personal accessory worn by a wealthy, fashion-conscious owner.

Cup in the form of a falcon, Ulm, Germany, about 1600



Drinking vessels in the form of owls and other birds of prey were particularly popular in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries. The body of the cup is made from a coconut shell, adorned with gilded silver details and semi-precious stones. The hinged wings can be moved up and down to mimic the flap of the falcon's wings. It is attributed to the workshop of Samuel or Hans Kässborer (active 1600–10).

Pomander for scent, probably England, 1600–10



The term pomander is derived from the French ‘pomme ambre’, meaning ‘amber apple’. This refers to the practice of infusing fruit with vinegar and other aromatic substances. Pomanders were items of personal jewellery and were usually hung at the waist or around the neck to protect the wearer from ‘pestylente ayers’ (disease). The hinged compartments of this gilded silver pomander open like segments of an orange, decorated with floral engravings, perhaps to evoke its contents.

Pair of late Elizabethan tankards, London, England, 1602–03



These gilded silver Elizabethan tankards are extremely rare – only one other pair from the period is known to exist today. Tankards (mugs with hinged covers) were common in England in the late 16th century. This pair were probably made by London goldsmith John Bottomley (active 1597–1602), and are decorated with Elizabethan strap work and foliage. They show little sign of wear, suggesting that they were acquired for display rather than use.

Nef (ship), Regensburg, Germany, about 1610



This dazzling gold spouted vessel teems with life as crew members clamber the rigging, officers dine under a roofed cabin crowned with a seated monkey, and lizards crawl about the base and inner bowl. The spout suggests this was a container for liquid. Nefs date back to medieval France, but reached their peak in the late 17th century at Louis XIV’s court. They were the most exclusive ornament of the banquet used only by the monarch or host.

South American gold cup recovered from shipwreck, probably Peru, 1670–1730



This gold cup was recovered in 1985 from an 18th century shipwreck found off the Florida coast. It was possibly part of the cargo on one of King Philip V’s fleet of ships transporting South American treasures to Spain. It was hit by a terrible hurricane and sunk in 1715. The object has been preserved underwater for nearly 350 years, but centuries of exposure to sand have dulled its gold surface to a matt texture. Gold plate from this period is exceptionally rare; it was typically melted down and refashioned according to changing tastes.

Christening gift from George II, London, England, 1731



This silver covered vessel made by Huguenot goldsmith, Edward Feline, was King George II's christening gift to his goddaughter Lady Emilia Lennox (1731–1814). From the 16th century British monarchs traditionally gave two-handled cups to their godchildren. This is formed as a tureen following French fashion, and is both precious and useful. It was acquired in 2014 by the Gilbert Trust and is displayed for the first time in the V&A's newly-reopened Gilbert Galleries.

Coffee or hot water pot, stand and lamp, London, England, 1743–44



In 1685, the Catholic French king Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, which granted civil and religious rights to Huguenots (French Protestants). As a result, thousands of Huguenots were forced to leave France. Many were craftspeople who settled in London, bringing their technical skills with them. They created ornamental motifs and sculptural forms in the latest fashion. This dramatic silver set was made by Paul de Lamerie (1688–1751), the son of a Huguenot. Born in Holland, de Lamerie came to London as a child in the 1690s. He opened his own workshop in 1713 and was appointed goldsmith to George I in 1716.

Snuffbox with Apollo, sunburst and scrolls, Paris, France, 1753–54



In the 18th century, precious boxes used to hold snuff (powdered tobacco) or small sweets became a must-have accessory for fashionable men and women. This delicate enamelled gold and diamond box was made in Paris by Jean-François Breton (active 1737–91). The figure represents Apollo, the Greek sun god associated with wisdom, prophecy, medicine and the arts. The Rococo composition is based on a design by French artist François Boucher.

Snuffbox in the shape of a letter, Germany, c. 1755



Snuffboxes decorated as letters were a signature product of the Meissen porcelain factory in Germany. They could be personalised with messages, such as the French inscription on this box, which translates to: 'To the most faithful, wherever she is found'. The inside lid depicts a historic 17th century view of London with St Olaf's church in the foreground, Old London Bridge and the Tower of London seen from the south bank of the river Thames. It also includes the old Gothic St Paul's Cathedral, which was destroyed in the Great Fire of London, 1666.

Snuffbox with miniature of John, 1st Earl of Spencer, London, England, 1755



The Gilbert Collection includes over 70 enamel portrait miniatures made between the 17th and 19th centuries capturing famous faces from Charles I to George Washington, Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, and the infamous Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. This miniature of John, 1st Earl of Spencer by the Swiss-French artist, Jean Etienne Liotard was painted as one of a pair of portraits to celebrate John's betrothal to Georgiana

Poyntz. The miniature of Georgiana mysteriously disappeared from Switzerland's Musée de l'Horlogerie et de l'Emallerie in 2002, and has not been seen since.

Snuffbox with diamond flowers, Paris, France, 1755–56



Paris was the centre of gold box production in Europe in the 18th century. The French court drove the demand for cutting-edge, exquisite creations that reflected changing styles. Boxes needed to be as individual as their owners, while providing enough snuff and talking points for long days at court. This box, richly decorated with rubies, diamonds and gold, was

made by the workshop of Jean Ducrollay (1710–87). Ducrollay was one of the most esteemed gold box makers in Paris and is recorded in the royal inventories as making boxes for the court of Louis XV.

Snuffbox with maps of the Seven Years' War, Berlin, Germany, c. 1757-8



This box is an example of political propaganda used during the Seven Years' War (1756-63) to showcase Prussia's triumphs on the battlefield. Depicted inside is a map of the disputed sovereignty of Silesia, which triggered the conflict. The duchy had become Prussian territory during the War of Austrian Succession (1740-48) when Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, defeated Empress Maria Theresa of Austria. All major European

powers became involved and colonial interests outside Europe led to an escalation of the war into what might be considered the first global conflict. This box is currently on display in the V&A's Europe 1600-1815 galleries.

Box in the shape of an egg, Paris, France, 1764-5



Egg-shaped boxes were particularly popular in the late 18th century. This example – a rarity for the Sèvres royal porcelain factory in France – may have been made for an English customer.

Frederick the Great's chrysoprase table snuffbox, Berlin, Germany, about 1765



Frederick II was known as Frederick the Great. Under his rule, Prussia became one of the dominant powers of Europe. A lover of the arts, he carried a precious snuffbox with him at all times – one even saved his life by deflecting a bullet in 1759. The green stone chrysoprase was one of his favourites. It was mined in Silesia, the first territory he conquered in 1740. Towards the end of his life, specimens of chrysoprase, jewels and boxes were brought to his sickbed for comfort. This box is one of five such boxes in the Gilbert Collection, the largest group of boxes from Frederick's collection outside Germany. A video of one of these boxes is available on the V&A website.

Basket-shaped snuffbox, St Petersburg, Russia, about 1775



When closed, this petite box fits perfectly in the palm of a hand. At first glance, it resembles a humble wicker basket – albeit one painted in enamel on gold. In contrast, when opened, the inside reveals an elaborately painted *trompe l'oeil* of colourful fruit and vegetables.

Snuffbox with King Louis XV hunting scene, Paris, France, 1777-79



This box depicts a curious incident during one of Louis XV's court hunts. In the royal forest of Compiègne in June 1740, a stag, pursued by the King of France, sought refuge on the thatched roof of a cottage. The stag remained there until the master of the hunt cut the roof from underneath him. The box is reputed to have belonged to Louis XV.

Kiev Monastery Gates, Kiev, Ukraine, about 1784



These magnificent silver gilt and iron gates were commissioned by Catherine the Great of Russia. Made for an Orthodox church in a monastery in Kiev, the relief panels depict scenes from the life of Christ, including the Annunciation of his birth. Gates such as these would usually stand at the centre of the *iconostasis* (wall of icons) where they separate the nave from the sanctuary, becoming the focal point of the church. These gates were previously owned by media tycoon, William Randolph Hearst, before they were acquired by Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert.

Musical automaton snuffbox with dancer on a slack-rope, Geneva, Switzerland, c. 1785



On the top of this ingenious automaton box, a girl dances on a tightrope accompanied by a musical carillon. The decoration of the base can be read as a celebration of music, as musical instruments are venerated as a trophy framed in a temple-like setting. Rope dancers were a common sight at fairs and a popular motif in the late 18th century. A video of the automaton in motion is available on the V&A Youtube channel.

Snuffbox with scenes from Roman history, Paris, France, 1789–90s



As the ancient Roman cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were excavated, the classical styles rediscovered there inspired changes in decorative art. Subsequently, Neo-classicism replaced rococo as the dominant style. Classical architectural decoration including swags, rosettes and pilasters, as well as famous scenes from Roman history adorned precious boxes. This gold and enamel snuffbox shows the family of the Roman military leader Coriolanus begging him not to attack Rome.

Triumphal-arch clock made for Napoleon I, Rome, Italy about 1804



The Venetian sculptor Antonio Canova chose a triumphal clock of this design, as well as a set of two glass and marble vases, as Coronation gifts for Pope Pius VII to present to Napoleon Bonaparte in 1804. Above the clock dial stands a gilded-bronze trophy of arms and armour. Similar trophies are depicted in micromosaics made by Giacomo Raffaelli. Impressed by the work of Raffaelli, Napoleon persuaded him to set up a workshop near the Imperial Court in Milan.

'Egyptomania' tea urn with sphinxes and palmettes, London, England, 1805–06



Influenced by Napoleon's campaign in North Africa in 1798, this gilded silver tea urn is decorated with sphinxes and palmettes. It is a product of Egyptomania – the name given to the European obsession for all things Egyptian in the early 19th century. The design is attributed to the French artist Jean-Jacques Boileau, who worked in England from 1787. This type of ornament was included in a 'grand service' made for the Prince Regent and shows how courtiers followed his lead, purchasing luxury goods in the same fashionable style.

Queen of Naples Tiara, Naples or Florence, Italy, ca. 1808



This gold tiara is set with four lapis lazuli plaques inset with shells and pearls in *pietre dure* mosaic. It is part of a set including a matching comb, necklace and earrings that once belonged to Caroline Murat, Queen of Naples (1782-1839).

Enamel portrait miniature of George Washington, England, 1825



Instead of painting from life, enamellers often copied well-known oil paintings, such as this of American general and first US president George Washington (1732-99). This gave members of the public the opportunity to own an image of a public figure. It was made by Henry Bone, Henry Bone (1755–1834), after a painting by Gilbert Stuart (1755–1828). Bone inscribed on the reverse how difficult the firing was, noting that the enamel ‘cracked in the fifth fire’.

Circular table with Flora of the Two Sicilies, Rome, Italy, ca.1850



In 1850, the Russian Tsar Nicholas I commissioned the Italian craftsman Michelangelo Barberi to create this micromosaic table top. The term ‘micromosaic’ describes mosaics made of the smallest glass pieces. This painstakingly detailed technique was developed in Rome during the 18th century to create portable miniature mosaics that looked like paintings. This table top was possibly made to commemorate the meeting of his daughter Olga with her husband in Sicily. Olga’s face appears in the centre, surrounded by six Sicilian and Neapolitan landscapes from Pompeii, Naples, Paestum, Taormina, Palermo and Tindari.

Bracelet, Rome, Italy, c. 1870



This gold and micromosaic bracelet is based on Guido Reni’s celebrated ceiling in the Pallavicini-Rospigliosi Palace in Rome. It depicts Aurora, goddess of the dawn, heralding the morning and the chariot of the sun.

Swan centrepiece, London, England, 1985



This life-size naturalistic sculpture of a mute swan was made by Asprey & Co. plc as a table centrepiece for Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert. From the Greek myth of *Leda and the Swan* to Wagner’s opera *Lohengrin*, swans have long been immortalised in art and literature and as a symbol of marriage.

This centrepiece was inspired by an 18th century swan automaton by James Cox at the Bowes Museum in County Durham.

For further PRESS information about *The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Galleries* please contact Laura Mitchell in the V&A press office on +44 (0) 20 7942 2503 or email l.mitchell@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

A selection of press images are available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk