

## Russian Porcelain & Glass Notes Using SFP Framework

### *Some Main Ideas about Russian Porcelain and Glass*

- *Russia is at first looking to the West for inspiration, and then over time becomes more comfortable making a place for its own Russian type of ornament/style*
  - *Imperial patronage is important for support, style, and output of the factories*
  - *Porcelain and glass are tools in a ruler's theater of self-presentation*
  - *Porcelain and glass are mainly used as part of dining rituals.*
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### **Porcelain's Style**

#### **What do these objects' appearance reveal about the people who made and used them?**

- Tableware was made of silver/gold...then made in porcelain, using some of same shapes
- A wide range of styles over time
  - First copied Western styles, then made a place for Russian ornament
  - Sometimes influenced by Sevres and rococo
  - Sometimes influenced by classical: Roman, Etruscan with Pompeii motifs
  - Gothic Service—like stained glass windows of cathedral, Gothic revival
  - Russian-style uses pre-Petrine motifs
  - Military themed: Cuirassier Guards Regiment Svc (1856)
- Both simple & elaborate table ware decorations: for everyday use as well as use at banquets
- Some objects are unique to Russia
  - Porcelain eggs—speak to Easter rituals
    - Tsar gives to staff, public, tsar's family; Alex III (1881-94) began putting his cipher on them
- Paintings: reflect what was in people's "mind," what they were thinking about, value, and find important
  - Symbols of power/state---double-headed eagle; ciphers
  - Landscape or cityscapes: first Italian scenes (West-looking), and then scenes of St. P—over time came to value Russian-specific land/cityscapes
  - Old Russian ornament--Russia culture has value just like Western culture
  - Military themes---soldiers and their officers, remember Napoleonic War victories
- Post: liked classical, gilded style of 1800-30s, blended well with her French collection

**Porcelain's Function**  
**What purpose did it serve? Literally? Figuratively? Who used it?**

- Who used?
  - Mainly Imperial rulers, and their family and court, but some production for middle-class (like statuettes, military plates)
- Literally.....
  - Dining
    - Table ware
      - Imperial dinner/dessert services that were plain for everyday use, as well as ornate for grand dining
        - Some made for a specific palace/home: Cottage Service
      - Imperial ceremonial events include banquets, coronations, marriages (dowries, and for sons too)
        - Order Services---saint's feast day celebration
      - Tea sets---drinking with a few people
      - Orlov Service---part of morning toilette---shaving/tooth care
    - Statuettes, figures of Russian people: table centerpiece
  - For Display
    - Vases
      - a movable art gallery (featured detailed copies of paintings)
      - to furnish palaces, or for international exhibitions
    - Military plates---for dessert or display/cabinet pieces, souvenirs
    - Statuettes, figures of Russian people
      - for middle-class drawing rooms and studies
      - of peasantry; ethnic groups; city street occupations
  - Gifts
    - Table wares and vases----for marriages of Grand Dukes and Duchesses, for emperor
    - Easter eggs
    - Vases: gifts to foreigners and Russians
    - Statuettes, figures of Russian people: diplomatic gifts
- Symbolically.....
  - Prop in the "theater of self-presentation"
    - Shows a nation thinking about itself, creating an identity
    - Porcelain sends a message to and is propaganda for the diner
      - Table services---meant to show sophistication, wealth, state power, national pride, legitimacy to rule
  - Large-scale grandeur is appreciated: our palaces are grandly-appointed, our vases big
  - Importance of military: plates show national pride because of victories in Nap. Wars
  - Vastness of empire: many different types of ethnic figures, peasants and city people
- Post as collector:
  - Used on her dining table (table wares---plates, cups/saucers, tea sets, some serving dishes)
  - Used in displays (vases, plates)
  - Similar to how she used Sevres (although her Sevres is from earlier-- 1700s mainly)
  - Her moment to "come into her own as collector:" she appreciated its quality
  - Began collecting during 1937-38 in USSR and on trips (nucleus only); continued after returned to US; late 1960s Rosso gift

***Porcelain's Production***  
***How was it made? Who made it?***

- In 1700s: European powers are fiercely competitive, like modern space race, to develop the formula for true porcelain, and set up own state manufactory
- Imperial Porcelain Factory (IPF) founded in 1744 by Elizabeth (daughter of Peter)
  - Founded not long after hard-paste made in Europe (1709 Meissen); 1738 Vincennes-Sevres factory began; 1746 Russia has formula for hard-paste, IPF only ever made hard-paste porc.
- Factory changed names over time, but imperial porcelain factory is still around today
- Primary audience: to supply the court---its history is linked to the rulers; tsar ordered and tsar set the tone
- Imperial patronage of IPF ebbs and flows over time---economic crises, for instance, affect the management and quality of the factory
- Learned from the West (techniques/decorations)---brought in foreigners, then Russians went abroad to learn, participated and learned from international exhibitions (mid-1800s-early 1900s)
- Used print sources for landscape scenes/figures
- Imperial Porcelain Factory had competitors in private Russian companies---e.g. Gardner
- Collaborative effort: painters, potters, designers, chemists, gilders, transfer printing.
- Many of those who worked at IPF were serfs.
- Vases are made in sections
- Technological advances affect production: examples include underglaze, steam engine, transfer painting
- IPF made new services, but also produced additions to existing services (breakage at banquets)
- National and international expositions beginning in the 1800s spread word about IPF and exposed them to new styles and technologies

### ***Glass's Style***

#### ***What do these objects' appearance reveal about the people who made and used them?***

- Looking to West for decoration, wanted Western-style luxury goods
  - Influencers of decoration (and technique) are not only France, but Bohemia, Saxony, and England
- First pieces are mostly colorless goblets that are engraved
- Decoration/forms become diverse:
  - Decorations include:
    - portraits of rulers, initials of ruler, florals, landscapes, inscriptions, Napoleonic War heroes/events, new St P buildings
  - Gilding
  - Painted enamel ornamentation: Banqueting Service, Cottage Service
  - Sparkle: cutting and polishing (esp. influence of new steam engine tech.), catch the light of candles on a table during dining
  - Revival of pre-Petrine, Old Russia style---interlaced, Old Slavic aphorisms
  - 2 colors of cased glass
  - Colored glass goes in and out and back in vogue---Lomonosov is scientist who works out colored glass formulas
  - Milk glass, on which you can paint in multi-color

**Glass's Function**  
**What purpose did it serve? Literally? Figuratively? Who used it?**

- Who for? Imperial court is dominant audience, but also middle-class (over time)
- Literally.....
  - Drinking vessels
    - Lots of shapes/functions: goblets, glasses, tumblers, flutes, etc.
    - Oldest pieces are big ceremonial goblets to toast ruler's health
    - Glass starts to appear as toasting vessels and then becomes a more regular part of court dinners
    - New wines and drinks are introduced, and new shapes are too
    - Glass services compliment/are used with porcelain services
      - Cottage Service (1829/30s) is first time glass service made specifically to coordinate with porc. service
      - Add sparkle on table!
    - Vodka bottles
  - Gifts
    - Table wares for marriages of Grand Dukes and Duchesses
  - For Display/Furnishings
    - Goblets (oldest pieces) prized for display like silver
    - To furnish palace interiors .....large vases, candelabra, chandeliers, mirrors
    - For cabinet display...Napoleonic Wars pieces
    - Tokens of love/friendship, among middle-class....cups with Cupid
- Symbolically....
  - Prop in the "theater of self-presentation"
    - In ceremonial imperial dining: part of visual spectacle (dazzle and overwhelm), a symbol of political power
      - Display refined taste and gain respect of foreign observers and own court
      - Assert right to rule---Cottage Service's "faith, tsar, fatherland" motto
      - Empress Elizabeth—understood spectacle can support political power, order big order of glass for court, "proto-service"
    - Commemoration and celebration of national achievements/patriotism
      - Napoleonic drinking vessels—heroes/events of Napoleonic Wars
      - Glass ware with images of newly-erected structures in St P
      - Use of Russian style, pre-Petrine ornament---state of Russian patriotism
- Post as collector
  - Hillwood's glass collection---450 pieces from 1690-1917
  - Prior to 1937 NO interest in glass
  - Began collecting during 1937-38 while in USSR, but only small number of pieces are purchased while there
  - Two uses: table wares (compliments her Russian porcelain) & for display (large vase in entry hall; breakfast room chandelier)

***Glass's Production***  
***How was it made? Who made it?***

- First glass in Russia was imported and Russian-made was of poor quality
- Russian imperial glassworks changes over time
  - Iamburg Glassworks (1710), St. Petersburg Glassworks (1738, Empress Anna), Potemkin Glassworks (during Cath the Great), finally Imperial Glassworks (after Potemkin dies), merges with Porcelain Factory
  - Imperial glassworks fluctuates between state-run and independent
- Had private competitors....Orlov glassworks; Bakhmetev
- National and international expositions beginning in the 1800s: help spread new decorative techniques and innovative styles
- Many of those who worked at the Russian imperial glass works were serfs.
- Affected by national/world events: Freeing serfs in 1861 meant labor costs went up; WWI/Rev. brought history of Imperial Glassworks to an end, but still Russian glass factories functioning
- Glass changed because of changes in: imperial patronage, new technologies or new audiences
- Techniques/technologies
  - Engraving
  - Colored glass
  - Transfer printing
  - Cased glass---2 layers and cut away
  - Gilding
  - Lead glass (vs. soda-lime which is weaker)
  - Painting images in enamels on glass
  - Steam-powered lathes—can produce thicker and heavier vessels whose walls are deep enough for deep cutting