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PORCELAIN

**UNIQUE MEISSEN ELEPHANT CANDLESTICK
FOR THE TABLE OF COUNT BRÜHL
A MASTERPIECE BY KAENDLER FOR THE UNTIL TODAY
ALMOST UNKNOWN FIRST LARGE SERVICE OF COUNT BRÜHL**



Model by Johann Joachim Kaendler, June 1733

Meissen 1733

Underglazed blue swords mark

27 cm high

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Provenance

Count Brühl (Legacy List of Heinrich Graf von Brühl from 1765, exhibition catalogue Swan Service 2000 p. 248 Pos. 1); Collection Joseph Epstein, Berlin (Lichthof exhibition Berlin 1904); Coll. Siegfried Ducret (1962 no. 119); his daughter Rosmarie Schmidt-Ducret

Kaendler created the Elephant Candlestick as early as June 1733, two years after he started work in Meissen (June 1731) and four months after his nomination as model master (February 1733). The winged, fire-breathing dragon that rises above the pedestal — formed by three elephant heads with their trunks — and wraps itself around the candlestick is the purest expression of Baroque delight in exotic worlds and a testimony to the creative power of the young model master. Kaendler described the candelabra — as always— vividly and plastically in his work report of June 1733 (Pietsch 2002 p. 19, no. 3):

“3. einen Leuchter pousirt, deßen Postament bestehet in Drey Elephanten köpffen, die Rüssel sind an Statt der Beine, Oben auf dem Postament befindet sich Ein Drache welcher sich um einen Ast windet, spey et Feuer aus und hält die Tille im Rachen.”

Ducret dated the chandelier earlier to 1725–30, which made it very difficult to determine the modeller. He attributed it to Johann Christoph von Lücke or Johann Gottlieb Kirchner (but this was before the publication of Kaendler’s work records by Pietsch in 2002). The Elephant Candlestick is similar in construction to the Kirchner’s Dolphin Candlestick of 1727 (Rijksmuseum no. 52 inv. no. BK-1976-50 see illustration here below; Coll. Carl Heuer, Frankfurt = KFS 61/1963 title = Christie’s 7.5.1973 no. 130 = Sotheby’s 21.10.1975 no. 155 and 26.11.1985 no. 290 = Koller 22.3.2018 no. 1073).



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But it is even more inspired by the Japanese tripod chandeliers (22 cm high) from the heyday of Japanese Kakiemon Porcelain, 1675–90 (Impey: Porcelain for Palaces no. 142). The Meissen copies from 1730 also have a height of 22 cm and their composition (bamboo branch on three fantastic animal heads) certainly served Kaendler as a model. The same applies to the enamel decoration of these candlesticks. *



Tripod candlestick of Japanese Kakiemon porcelain, 2nd half of the 17th century
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; inv.no. EA1993.17

* Coll. Kramarsky (Christie's 30.10.1993 no. 24) with caduceus mark = Hoym/Lemaire affair, 1730. The Parisian merchant Lemaire brought the Japanese tripod to Meissen to have it copied for the Parisian luxury market.

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On the other hand, our candlestick was Kaendler's model for his famous large ten-armed Elephant Chandelier of 90 cm height from the Schneider Collection (Lustheim Palace, Bavarian National Museum Rückert 1966 no. 712 colour plate XXI; Schommers no. 133) and the Berlin Museum of Decorative Arts (Bursche no. 240).



Ten-armed elephant candelabrum in the Schneider Collection, Lustheim Palace

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Our candlestick is unique. Originally, two one-armed candlesticks were intended for Count Brühl's first large service, the "Service mit dem Aste" (see below the list of Count Brühl's legacy from 1765), although the remaining of the second one is unknown.

There was a second, very similar candlestick in the Epstein Collection (which was also shown in the Lichthof exhibition), but its painting dates from the 19th century. It also lacks the identifying feature to attribute it to the "Service with Branch". As we will explain below, this is the motif "Three Friends in Winter" (= the Service with Branch), which is discreetly painted in the three small cartouches between the elephant heads.

On June 28, 2021, our candlestick was examined by Dr. Lutz at the Curt-Engelhorn Centre for Archaeometry - an institute of the Reiss-Engelhorn Museums, Mannheim - using the XRF method: Clear result, 18th century, no chromium in the green, no bismuth in the gold.

THE ELEPHANT CANDLESTICK AS PART OF COUNT BRÜHL'S FIRST LARGE SERVICE

The Elephant Candlestick was made for Count Brühl. It was part of his first table service — even before the Swan Service and the "Brühl'sche Allerlei". Kaendler's work record does not name the commissioner. What is known, however, is Brühl's first order as the newly appointed head of the Meissen Manufactory. It is dated April 30, 1733 (see below) and contains the order for the "*soon possible completion of the table service*". [*"bald möglichen Complet[tierung des] Taffelservices."*]

This entry undoubtedly refers to the first, complete service commissioned by Brühl. Thanks to our candlestick, we are able — for the first time — to determine, identify and date this service.

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The starting point for this is Kaendler's work record of our Elephant Candlestick from June 1733, which (although already quoted) we repeat here (Pietsch p. 19 no. 3):

„3. einen Leuchter pousirt, deßen Postament bestehet in Drey Elephanten köpffen, die Rüssel sind an Statt der Beine, Oben auf dem Postament befindet sich Ein Drache welcher sich um einen Ast windet, speyret Feuer aus und hält die Tille im Rachen.“

“3. made a candlestick, the base of which is made of elephant's heads, which are trunks instead of legs, on top of the base is a dragon, which winds itself around a branch, breathes fire and holds the spout in its maw.”



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The first large service of Count Brühl, which has been little researched to date, is listed in the archive documents with the name “**Service mit dem Aste**” (“**Service with Branch**”). We can find it on position no. 1 in:

- the “*Inventarium über das sämtliche Porcelain in Sr. des Herrn Premier-Ministre Reichsgrafen von Brühl Exzellece Conditorey*” of 1753
- and also in the extensive porcelain chapter (cap. XII; see also Swan Service Cat. p. 247) of Brühl’s legacy list of 1765.

Despite its immense size (approx. 2,000 parts incl. the dessert service, but without the figures,, see Schwarm-Tomisch p. 130; Kunze-Köllensperger in Cat. Schwanservice 2000 p. 232; Weber II p. 238 fn. 9), little is known about the Service with Branch, whose size approaches that of the Swan Service and the “Brühl’sche Allerlei”. Rückert (1966 p. 17) correctly dated it to 1733, but without giving any references and without specifying which service is in question. Berling (1900 p. 49 Fig. 46 u. p. 52) was the first to publish it, but did not recognise that it was the first service of Count Brühl.

That our Elephant Candlestick was part of this service can be clearly proven by means of (1.) the archive entry and (2.) the decoration:

1. In Count Brühl’s legacy list of 1765 we read as follows.

(Cat. Swan Service pp. 237–269 here p. 267 f. Cap. 12 Pos. 1):

*“1000 Thaler, ein komplettes porcelainernes Tafelservice **mit dem Aste**, gemalt, und bestehend aus: ...*

zwey einfachen Leuchtern so auf Eleffantenköpfen stehen”

*“1000 Thaler, a complete porcelain table service, **painted with the Branch**, and consisting of: ...*

two simple candlesticks standing on elephant heads”

From the comparison with the other chandeliers (listed here), “simple” means a one-armed candlestick with a spout. In terms of time and design, the inventory entry could at best be reminiscent of the tripod chandeliers mentioned above, which were made in 1730 in the course of the Hoym/Lemaire affair. However, the tripods, which also had one arm and three feet, were never made with elephant heads, but with the three heads of the mythical *Shi Shi* animal, in

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accordance with the original Kakiemon model (see illustration above and M. Fitzki “Kakiemon Porcelain” fig. 47 pp. 53 and 160). **The “*simple candlesticks standing on elephant heads*” can only mean our example.**

2. Furthermore, the enamel decoration on our Elephant Candlestick provides further clear evidence that it belongs to Brühl’s Service with Branch. The three small cartouches between the elephant heads do not bear Brühl’s coat of arms (as one would have expected), but show a detail from the motif “Three Friends in Winter” — and this is the “Service with Branch” as Julia Weber (II p. 237 f.) has identified it as such (see illustration).



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DATING

After we were able to clearly assign our candlestick to Brühl's Service with Branch, we are also able to date the service for the first time.

As mentioned above, Brühl's very first order concerning a service of his own dates from April 30, 1733 (Schwarm-Tomisch loc. cit. p. 129 fn. 56; Weber II p. 66): In addition to the service intended for the Swedish court, "certain" pieces should also be fired for Brühl:

“demjenigen (Tafelservice), so des Herrn Geheimten Rath von Brühl Exzellenz verlangen, bei allen Bränden gewisse Stücke mit zum Gutbrennen und ferner zur Malerei genommen werden, daß also hierunter keine Zeit verabsäümet wird, diesen beyden Taffelservice sobald mögl. complet und zur Perfektion zu bringen.”

“concerning the (table service), His Excellency the Privy Councillor von Brühl orders that certain pieces shall be taken for firing and painting, so that no time is missed for this, to have these two dinner services complete and perfect as soon as possible.”

Brühl's service is not specified in this order. However, it can be attributed to the Service with Branch, which Kaendler worked on in 1733— as we now know thanks to our Elephant Candlestick and the work record.*

The first 55 pieces (plates, tureens, saladiers, bowls) were delivered to Brühl on August 17, 1733 (Schwarm-Tomisch l.c. p. 129 fn. 56). The Elephant Candlestick will not have been included in this delivery, as the time span June – August is too short for such an elaborately crafted masterpiece.

* Julia Weber (vol. II p. 66) assumes that Brühl's first order was for porcelain with the Lambrequin decoration. However, the wording of the order to which she refers — *“mit blauem Grund und ausgezackten Rande mit vielem Golde”* — does not apply to its extent in toto, but explicitly probably only to “one” bowl, as Schwarm-Tomisch (cat. Schwanenservice p. 129) has made clear. Since Weber also dates the “Service with Branch” too late with *“1734 at the earliest or even later”* (vol. II p. 238), it could not have been considered by her at all. Another argument against the Lambrequin service is that so far not a single early piece from 1733 or before has been found. The five plates marked “C” from Brühl's “Conditorei” (Coll. Schneider, Lustheim Palace, Weber II nos. 49–53) all bear the press number “20” and can thus be dated after 1739. The fact that Brühl's first order of 1733 refers to the Service with Branch is, thanks to our Elephant Candlestick — which according to the archive entry was part of this service and was demonstrably made in June 1733 — conclusive in every respect and thus evident.

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THE DECORATION

The motif of the “Service with Branch” goes back to Japanese models. It’s called “Three Friends in Winter”, consisting of Pinus, Bamboo and Prunus, which also grow green in winter. They promise happiness and long life (Weber II p. 237).

The motif existed in two variants, with brushwood bundles (N-88-W) or so called “air rocks” (N-89-W). Brühl opted for the first variant. In Meissen, the décor was copied at the end of 1729, beginning of 1730 at the request of the Parisian porcelain dealer Lemaire on the basis of the Japanese originals from the collections of Augustus the Strong. In the inventory of the Japanese Palace on the “Alt Indianschie Porcelaine” it is written as follows (Bolz Keramos 88 /1980 p. 93 u. 89; Weber p. 237):

“No 88 Vier Assietten mit etwas gemuschltem braunen Rande, inwendig mit Bäumen Vögeln und Blumen gemahlt, 1 ¹/₄ Zoll (= 2,9 cm) tief 8 Zoll (= 18,8 cm) in diam, N-88-□”

Höroldt describes the “Assietten” in his list of painting models and in his invoices (which were not paid for a long time) as “*gemuschelte Confect Schaalen - No. 88*” (Boltz p. 93). We find them under this designation in the documents published by Boltz (see below). Boltz (p. 77) was able to identify the motif of both variants on the basis of two dishes from the Collection King Umberto of Italy (Christie’s Geneva 7.6.1968 no. 48 N-88 and no. 49 N-89).



The two variants of “Three Friends in Winter”: on the left with bundles of brushwood, on the right with the so-called green “air rocks” (Weber II nos. 225 and 229).

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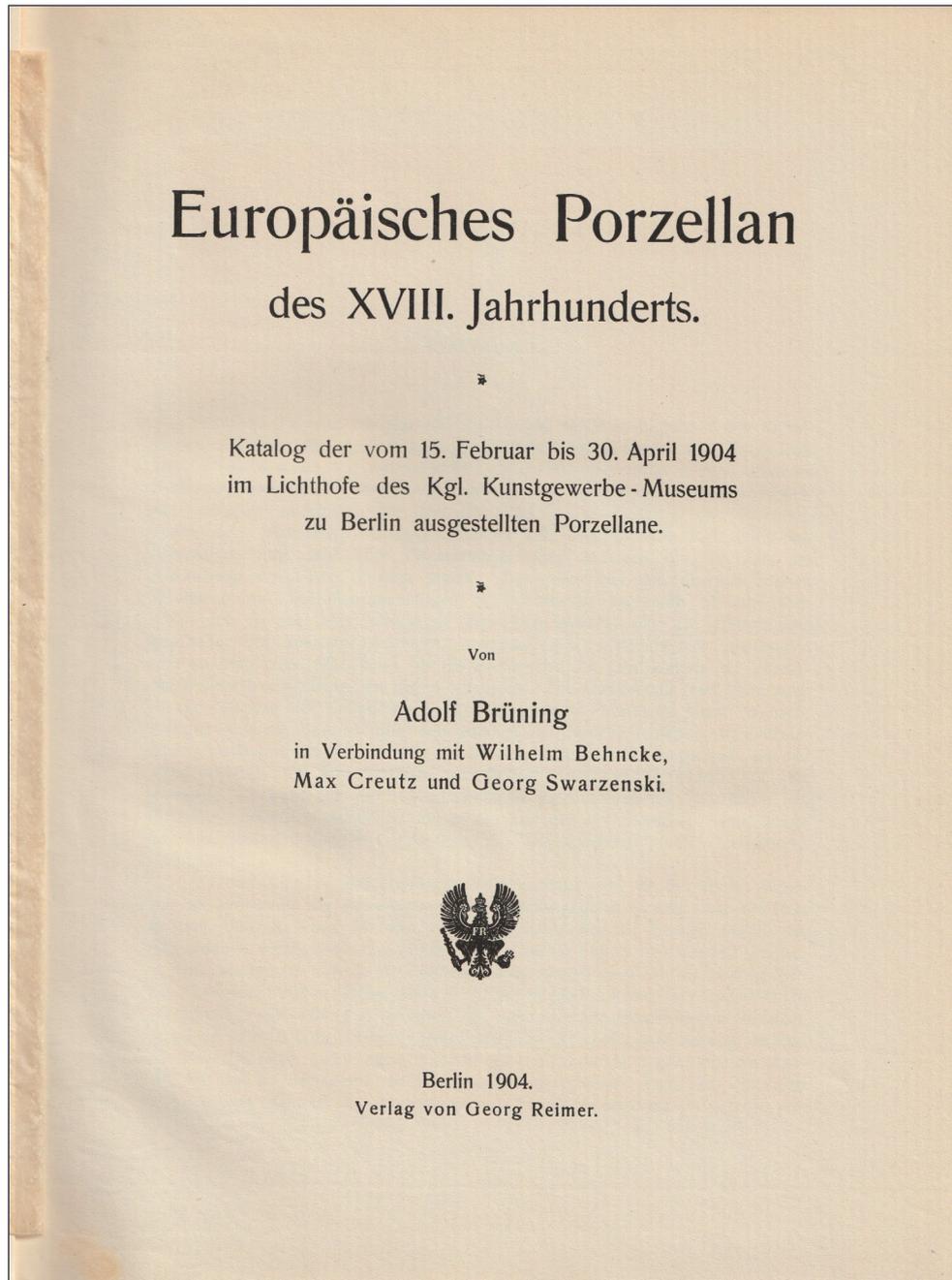
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**APPENDIX: COPIES OF THE EXHIBITION CATALOGUE OF
THE LICHTHOF EXHIBITION AT THE KGL. KUNSTGEWERBE
MUSEUM BERLIN, 1904**



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VI.



308

Leuchter, Meissen.

Besitzer: Herr J. Epstein.

reichte. — Hohe weibliche Tugend mit körperlichen Reizen vereint, knüpften ein neues Band zu frohen Aussichten. — Heil dem Vater der in stiller Einsamkeit biedere Töchter dem Vaterlande und den Gatten erzog! ich nenne seinen Namen mit Ehrfurcht und Dank.“ — Zwischen den Kapitalen Eierstab mit Pfeilspitzen in gold. Ränder, Griff und Architekturteile vergoldet oder gold gehöht. An der Seite des Griffes Girlande in radiertem Golde. Auf dem Mittelfeld der Untertasse in bunten Farben Monogramm A. H., aus Blumen gebildet. Darunter zwei Blumenzweige, durch ein Band zusammengebunden. Auf dem Band steht: „Malherbe Baverko.“ Auf dem Rande Girlanden und Eierstab mit Pfeilspitzen in gold. Ränder vergoldet.

Tasse: 11,5 cm hoch, 6,5 cm breit.
Untertasse: 2,6 cm hoch, 12,7 cm breit.
Besitzer: A. Benvenuti.

Marke: Schwerter mit Stern, 4 und zwei Punkten; eingekratzt: 35 H 30. um 1800.

307. **Tasse und Untertasse** in Biskuit mit Goldornament, in der Art der Wedgwoodarbeiten mit Reliefs belegt. Tassenwand durch goldgehöhten Rundstab in eine untere gewölbte und obere gerade Hälfte geteilt. Der goldgehöhte Henkel über den Rand emporsteigend, auf seinem Rücken vom Rande aufsteigendes Akanthusblatt mit Perlen auf der Rippe. Untertassenrand schräg ansteigend. Auf der oberen Hälfte der Tasse in Relief: auf fortlaufendem Erdsoclel zwischen Bäumen sitzend, drei antike Gestalten mit Schriftröhle, Leier, Urne und Dreifuss; drei ähnliche Gestalten mit Altar, Götterbild, Dreifuss und Trophäe, sowie Ganymed, den Adler tränkend, auf dem inneren Rande der Untertasse. Auf dem Boden der Untertasse Rundstab mit Akanthusspitzen in Relief. An den Rändern und auf den Profilen feine, zum Teil radierte Goldornamente, auf dem Boden beider Stücke Rosette, auf der unteren Hälfte der Tasse Stabornament in gold.

Tasse: 4,5 cm hoch, 7,5 cm Durchmesser.
Untertasse: 2,8 cm hoch, 13,7 cm Durchmesser.
Besitzerin: Frau R. Goldschmidt.

Marke: eingekratzt: Schwerter in einem Dreieck, K, B, in gold 99. um 1800.

308. **Leuchter**, auf drei Elefantenköpfen als Füßen ruhend. Zwischen den Köpfen dreieckige Kartuschen. Als Schaft: Drache sich um einen Baumstamm windend, im Rachen die von Flammen umloderte Tülle. Bunte Malerei mit Gold. Elefantenköpfe weiss mit etwas blau und rot, in den Feldern der Kartuschen Bambus und Päonie. (Imaridekor.) Auf dem oberen Rande der Kartusche feines Goldornament. Drache bunt gefleckt, mit lüster und gold. Flammen bunt. Am Rande der Tülle Goldornament. Im Brande schiefgezogen.

27 cm hoch.
Besitzer: J. Epstein.

Marke: Schwerter. um 1730.

309. **Leuchter**. Modell wie 308. Elefantenköpfe grau mit rot. Kartusche mit reichem Goldornament. In den Feldern Blumenkorb. Drache buntgestreift. Flammen goldgehöht. Tüllenrand mit Goldornament.

26,5 cm hoch.
Besitzer: J. Epstein.

Marke: Schwerter. Mitte 18. Jahrhundert.

310. **Teekanne** in Form eines Hahnes, in Anlehnung an ostasiatische Formen. Kopf zurückgewandt. Der Schweif dient als Griff. Am Halse Loch als Ausguss. Auf dem Deckel Hund. Kopf, Flügel, Schwanz und Beine bunt