Table cover - with allegories of the continents and four elements

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.:	13349
Place of production:	Upper Lusatia
Materials:	linen; silk yarn
Techniques:	damask weaving
Dimensions:	length: 114 cm width: 89 cm

The tablecloth represents the allegories of Heaven and Earth its decoration is characterised by the richness of the patterns, the elaborate drawing and weaving both of the ornamental parts and the figures. In the centre is Apollo in a cloud, sitting on a standing lion, playing a lute – a symbol for the sun. He is surrounded by the figures and signs of the horoscope – Ram, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Lion, Virgin, Scales, Scorpion, Archer, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces – and, also placed on a cloud, the planets. The crowned figure of Jupiter sits on an eagle, holding a sceptre and with lightning in his hand Saturn holds a scythe in his right and a child in his left hand Mars in armour sits on a canon, holding a sword and a spear Diana wears a coronet with a moon crescent, holding a bow and arrow with dogs at her feet Mercury sits on a bale, wearing a winged hat and sandals, holding a stick Venus, with a star coronet on her head, holds an arrow two doves sit beside her.

The lattice rococo bordure changes at the corners, where the allegories of the four continents appear, with their names written below, in a small rococo cartouche: EUROPA: The crowned figure of Maria Theresia, holding a sceptre and an orb. The rocaille ornaments surrounding her join in an eagle figure at the top, the double-headed eagle of Austria, with an escutcheon, a sceptre and a sword. ASIA: A sultan wearing a turban, holding a sceptre, with a moon crescent at the top of the frame. AFRICA: A half-naked female figure, holding an umbrella, with a monkey and a globe beside her. Above the woman is a sun among quivers and arrows. AMERICA: An Indian figure dressed in feathers, sitting on a crocodile, holding a bow and arrows, with a demon in a cartouche above him. The middle of each side shows the symbols of the four elements, with the names written below them in small cartouches similar to those under the four continents IGNIS: – fire: Hephaistos among canons and armour in a ruined stone gate, with a hammer and tongs. AER: – air: Juno with a peacock and a feather fan the symbols of the south and north wind in the right upper and left bottom side of the scene the birds of the air fly above her head. AQUA: – water: Neptune with his trident in the middle of a richly decorated fountain, with a sea-god behind him. TERRA: – earth: Demeter and Persephone in the middle of a garden full of trees, flowers and fruits. The tablecloth was made by Saxon weavers, who were settled in Silesia after the first Silesian war between Prussia and Austria, that is, after 1742. The most famous centres of the damask weaver's trade were in Greiffenberg, Schmiedeberg and Hirschberg. It was here, that the bordure enframing a centre picture became popular in the 18th century, replacing the usual, one-way repetition of a pattern. This way of arranging decoration later spread all over Europe. The patterns follow the "Ornamentstichs" of the age, and are very close in style to the cut glasses made in Silesia (the centre of glass-blowing was also in Hirschberg, which was famous for its damask weaving trade).

Unfortunately, only a few names of pattern drawers have survived. Braun- Ronsdorf attributes the drawing of the tablecloth described above the Heinrich Ollbrich. Pieces identical with the exhibited one can be found in the Krefeld Gewebesammlung and in Hamburg in the Kunstgewerbemuseum. An interesting feature of the Hamburg tablecloth is that it has an additional narrow border, showing the date of the Peace of Teschen 1779, and the names and countries of the rulers of that time. In this very simple way, the tablecloth was converted to one commemorating "Peace".

Literature

- Szerk.: Szilágyi András, Péter Márta: *Barokk és rokokó. Az európai iparművészet stíluskorszakai*. Iparművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 1990. - Nr. 6.40. (László Emőke)
- Szerk.: Jakabffy Imre: Gebbildamaste aus Sachsen und Schlesien. *Ars Decorativa 4*, 1976. Iparművészeti múzeum, Budapest, 1976. - 69-85:74-76. (László Emőke)

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