Tea set - (for 6 persons) after Baron Rothschild's orchid set

Ceramics and Glass Collection

Accession Nr.:	51.1076.1-9.1-2
Artist/Maker:	Zsolnay, Júlia (1856 - 1950) / designer
Manufacturer:	Zsolnay factory (Pécs)
Date of production:	ca. 1884
Place of production:	Pécs
Inscription:	133
Materials:	porcelain-faience
Techniques:	gloss-gilded; high-fired soft-paste porcelain glaze
Dimensions:	height: 14,7 cm opening diameter: 8 cm base diameter: 8,8 cm height: 8,5 cm base diameter: 5 cm height: 10,8 cm opening diameter: 9,2 cm base diameter: 6,5 cm height: 6,5 cm opening diameter: 11,2 cm base diameter: 4,8 cm height: 2,9 cm diameter: 17,2 cm

The tea service consists of simple, ball-shaped pieces. The spout of the milk jug is more pronounced with an upturned, broad top rim and a dynamic, oval curve starting from the handle and ending in the spout. It was probably due to this delicate but sensitive shape that this piece was made of porcelain, a material more resistant to everyday use, probably on the advice of Ernst Wahliss, the Viennese merchant commissioned with the sale of Zsolnay products. This tea-set for six or twelve persons was being produced from 1874 (according to data from Teréz Zsolnay's book, Inv.No. JPM 1578-91-1584). Her memoirs provide information also on the décor of the set, designed by her sister, Júlia Zsolnay. "Júlia, although being a little bit ill, was consistently working on the orchid decoration of the coffee and tea set, she wanted to finish it by Easter. The set was ordered by the passionate orchid-collector and lover, Baron Rothschild of Vienna. He had sent an excellent illustrated book as a model, on the basis of which Juliska was able to design different flowers on each piece of the set. There are altogether fifty orchid drawings in the décor book. The set consisted of stemmed bowls, coffee and teacups, plates, pots, sugar bowls and cutlery handles of the most different shapes. It was designed for 24 persons and cost 800 forints. The decoration was mainly flowers contoured with gold against a cobalt blue base, enhancing the effect of the different shades of high-fired enamel. Unfortunately not even the smallest piece remained with us from this wonderfully delicate set. Wahliss knew how to make the public love this décor, so the plates and cups decorated with the favourite exotic flowers of Rotschild entered the household of many families. However, the several years of extreme popularity had a bad effect on the artistic standard. Only a few flawed, inferior copies have remained in the back of the warehouse but these cannot give back the beauty of the original." The painting of this set is also extraordinary. The purple-pink base is covered by a dark blue glaze, serving as a background for the orchid stems. The petals are painted with different pinks, the leaves with delicate greens. The outlines of the shaded areas of glaze are sunk in the original glaze, as well as the inner contours are outlined with gold. In the Décor Books II and II, each of the drawings with numbers 1032 - 1039 and 1056-1080 shows a different orchid stem (marking: Júlia für Rothschild Service 1883. II). Just like on the set described above, each piece is decorated with a different orchid branch. According to the design sketch in the Archives of the BMAA (Inv.No. KRTF 64/1), this set was produced again in the first few years of the 20th century. This sketch shows the drawing of orchid décor No. 1032 on a saucer, with a remark that it should also be applied on cups No. 181 and 595, and listing the numbers of the colour glazes. The design was signed by Géza Nikelszky, who had been employed by the factory from 1899.

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Literature

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