Chalice - with painted enamel panels depicting Saint Sophie

Metalwork Collection

Accession Nr.:	4694
Artist/Maker:	Szilassy, János (1702 - 1782)
Place of production:	Lőcse (Levoča)
Inscription:	jelzetlen
Materials:	painted enamel; silver-gilt
Techniques:	cast; chased
Dimensions:	height: 28,7 cm opening diameter: 9,5 cm base diameter: 16,8 cm weight: 877,9 g

The base of this chalice is divided into six ogee-arched lobes, and is decorated with repoussé floral, shell, and scale motifs. There are also three cartouches that hold enamel paintings with undulating edges similar to a sexfoil shape. Glass gemstones of differing colors, enamel flowers of varying shapes and colors, and three enamel angels have been mounted between the paintings. The upper, stem-like section of the base is covered in three motifs comprised of snail shells and leaves. The chalice's asymmetrical node is composed of rocaille and volute decorations and rests on a small sphere. The calix of the chalice has repoussé motifs similar to those on the base and holds four enamel paintings with rounded corners. Between these paintings there are enamel angels sitting under baldachins as well as glass gemstones and flowers. The ornamental enamels have been heavily damaged in several places.

There is an inscription of donation made up of stamped capital letters on the back of one of the enamel paintings on the inner side of the base, which reads, "D[OMI]NA / SOPHIA NYITRAI / FIERI CVRAVIT PRO / ECCLAE[SI]A FRA[N]CIS[CANO]RVM / MIN[ORUM] CONVENTV[A]/LIVM AGRI-/ENSIVM 1777". From this, it is clear that the chalice was made in 1777 for the Minorite church in Eger. The name of the donor, Lady Zsófia Nyitrai, is known from the history of this church dedicated in the honor of Saint Anthony of Padua. In 1775, she also had the side altar dedicated to Saint Anne erected according to the Latin donation inscription on the stipes (cf. Dercsényi Dezső – Voit Pál eds.: Heves megye műemlékei II [Monuments of Heves County II]. Budapest, 1972, 248, fig. 228). The iconography of the altar can help in determining the subjects of the enamels on the chalice as well. The altarpiece portrays Saints Joachim, Anne, and the Virgin Mary as a child, while the sculptures on the two sides presumably depict Saint Joseph, the later spouse of the Blessed Virgin, and a Jewish high priest, in all likelihood Zecharia, the father of Saint John the Baptist. These same figures in the same arrangement can also be seen on the three enamel paintings of the calix. The predella painting of the altar depicts the patron saint of the donor, Sophia. There is an old woman on one of the enamel paintings located on the base of the chalice, while in the other two we can see a girl sitting on a cloud in one and two girls facing one another on the other. The figures in the latter have a sword and a palm leaf, symbols of martyrdom. Based on this, it is quite clear that alongside the patron of the donor, they placed her three daughters, Faith, Hope, and Charity on the chalice, and all indications are that it was commissioned for this altar.

There is no stamp on the chalice, but based on its style and the enamel paintings, it can be clearly linked to the workshop of János Szilassy in Lőcse (Levoča, Slovakia), where numerous similar items were made during its long period of operation.

by Szilveszter Terdik

Literature

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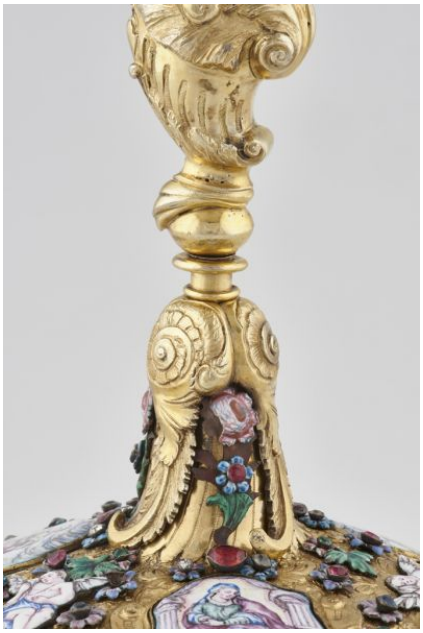






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