Istoriato plate - the scene of Mercury, Herse és Aglauros

Ceramics and Glass Collection

Accession Nr.:	4412
Artist/Maker:	Durantino, Guido
Materials:	clay
Techniques:	polychrome painting; thrown; tin-glazed
Dimensions:	diameter: 27 cm height: 4 cm

The *istoriato* bowl illustrates an Ovid story, but also bears the coats of arms of Nikolaus Rabenhaupt von Suche and his wife Genoveva Lamparter, daughter of the Chancellor of Wurttemberg, Gregor Lamparter. There are four istoriato bowls with this coat of arms in the Museum of Applied Arts, and another six are known of: two in Vienna, one in Hamburg (Museum fur Kunst und Gewerbe), one in the Pringsheim Collection in Munich, one in the William A. Clark Collection (Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington) and one in the British Museum, London.

The beautiful painting of Mercury and king Cecrops' daughters sets this bowl apart from the other Budapest pieces. Mercury had spied the beautiful maidens as he flew over the groves of Lyceus as they made their way to Minerva's shrine with baskets of sacrificial flowers and fruits. Mercury immediately fell in love with Herse – this is a better-known scene from the story. The bowl shows a more rarely-illustrated scene from later in the story. Coming down to earth, with a winged helmet on his head and his caduceus snake-staff in his hand, Mercury speaks to Aglauros in front of the house of the Cecrops' daughters – Aglauros, Herse and Pandrosos – asking her to intercede with Herse. The scene takes place in a walled garden, and to the right, the beautiful Herse glances at the youth from a Renaissance loggia. The story of the love of Mercury and Herse comes from the book *Battus – The Envy* in Ovid's Metamorphoses. The bowl shows another episode in Battus' story: on the left, beyond the wall of the garden, there is a male figure on a high plinth, and above him, half-covered, flies the figure of Mercury. Battus was witness to Mercury stealing a herd of sheep and drove them away, and broke his promise by betraying him, in revenge for which Mercury turned him into a stone. The painting of the figures shows a thorough knowledge of anatomy, and the painter used highlights to achieve depth. In the background of this Mannerist picture is a highly detailed representation of a town, with castle, towers and dome.

Literature

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