

SILVER

MASTERPIECES
OF DELFT
SILVER
1590-1800

Press Release
Delft, 5 December 2019

MASTERPIECES OF DELFT SILVER AT THE MUSEUM PRINSENHOF DELFT

From 27 March through 23 August 2020, the Museum Prinsenhof Delft will present an extensive overview of Delft silver from the 17th and 18th centuries. Entitled *Silver, Masterpieces of Delft silver 1590-1800*, the exhibition will comprise 80 of the finest objects from the period when Delft silversmiths flourished: showpieces like nautilus cups, drinking bowls and unique table ornaments from the 17th century, and also showpieces for tea and dining ceremonies, and precious 18th century toilet services. Highlights from the museum's own leading collection of silver will be supplemented with exceptional pieces on loan from both foreign and Dutch collections. For the first time in 50 years, it will be possible to admire a comprehensive overview of the silver of Delft, the city that was one of the leading producers of fine silver in the Low Countries in the early 17th century. The contemporary exhibition design by interior architects Evelyne Merckx and Abbie Steinhauser immerses visitors in a spectacle of silver.

Delft masterpieces

In 1572, during the Dutch Revolt (1568-1648), William the Silent fled to Delft. The consequences for Delft were significant. In William's wake, a number of leading silversmiths came to Delft from Antwerp. After all, where the court was, the commissions were, too. The strictly organised guild of Delft silversmiths could now produce work of the highest quality. From the late 16th century through the middle of the 17th century, absolute masterpieces were made in Delft. Pre-eminent masters like father and son Nicolaes and Adriaen de Grebber created splendid goblets, nautilus cups and table ornaments for the elite. These silver masterpieces were the centrepieces of magnificent receptions. In the 18th century, silversmiths like Cornelis van Dijck and Dirk van de Goorberg supplied the *beau monde* of Delft with the highest quality silver after the latest European fashion. The wine coolers,

candlesticks, tureens, bread baskets and also cutlery and servers ensured a glittering reception for the guests. A representative overview of these triumphs of Delft silversmiths will now be exhibited at the Museum Prinsenhof Delft for the first time since 1957. The objects come from, among others, the Rijksmuseum, the Ashmolean (Oxford), the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and prominent private collections.

At the heart: social function

Silver has been marking important events in life, giving meaning to the social flux and connecting generations to each other, up to the present day. The social function of the objects on display will be at the heart of the exhibition. Why were these works produced? Why was the Dutch bourgeoisie willing to spend so much on these showpieces? What were they trying to express with them, and how did this initiate the unprecedented flourishing of the craft in Delft? The exhibition will provide answers to all of these questions, on the basis of four themes: showing off, receiving, connecting and celebrating. Ample attention will also be paid to the production process and the quality of a number of masterpieces. The art of planishing, for example, will be looked at and simultaneously, the artistry of certain objects. In a short film, owners of silver discuss the important role these silver objects play within their families. Visitors will thus be challenged to consider the (emotional) value of silver.

Events

During the course of the exhibition, lectures, (open) guided tours and a silver-polishing day are being planned, among other things. The Museum Prinsenhof Delft will also organise an open house for residents of Delft in which the museum, inspired by the 17th and 18th centuries' receptions, will engage in a dialogue with the residents. From February 2020, the full programme can be found at www.prinsenhof-delft.nl.

About the Museum Prinsenhof Delft

Objects permanently on display at the Museum Prinsenhof Delft are based on three defining themes: William the Silent, Delft Blue and Delft Masters. The museum illustrates how these three themes connect with each other and how, together, they contribute to the image of the Netherlands. On the basis of exhibitions and varied programmes, the museum continues to tell new sides of the story. The exhibition on Delft silver is in keeping with the theme of the Delft Masters.

NOTE TO THE EDITOR

The press viewing will take place on Thursday, 26 March 2020, from 10.30 to 12.30. Please notify us in advance of your participation at press-prinsenhof@delft.nl.

Press information & images:

http://bit.ly/Silver_Press

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