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**Sophie Dorothea's collection
of porcelain at the Ansbach
residence**

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Today, the mirror cabinet at the Ansbach residence is the only remaining interior in Germany decorated with Meissen porcelain figures from about 1735 to 1757. My research also includes all the porcelain in the apartments of the residence - altogether more than 250 figurines and objects which will be published in 2016.

The current appearance of this main residence of the margravate Brandenburg-Ansbach is the result of several alterations between 1709 and 1738. The margravate Ansbach and also Bayreuth had been developed since the late Middle Ages when members of the Hohenzollern family obtained the function of the counts of Nuremberg. After a short administration by Prussia around 1800, Franconia became part of the Kingdom of Bavaria in 1806. The money and the idea for a new residence – compared with the small size of the city the complex was very large – came from Christiane Charlotte of Württemberg (1694–1729) while her husband, Wilhelm Friedrich of Ansbach (1686–1723), was engaged in military projects. However, he is also the founder of the faience manufactory in Ansbach in 1710.

His son, the so called “wild margrave” Carl Wilhelm Friedrich (1712–1757, reign 1729), was a typical absolute nobleman spending much money on hunting and an extravagant court life. At the age of 17, he married the 15 year old princess Friederike Luise of Prussia (1714–1784), sister to Frederic the Great and Wilhelmine of Bayreuth (fig 1). To cut a long story short – the marriage was very unhappy.

But the new apartments at the residence – decorated between 1734 and 1745 – had been the result of French, Italian and Bavarian influences and formed the typical Ansbach Rococo.

The mirror cabinet in the private apartments of the margravine had been designed by Italian architect Leopoldo Retti (1704–1751), panels and ceiling painting by the French brothers, the sculptor Paul Amadée Biarelle and the painter Jean Adolphe Biarelle in 1740 (fig 2). The room is situated in the middle of the south wing in the first floor. Each wall in the cabinet is decorated with three mirror compartments. Opposite the window is a marble chimney with a singular carved mirror frame, flanked by two niches with marble boards on iron supports. In my opinion they came later, perhaps together with the porcelain. The classic furniture of the room are only two large consoles with marble tabletops, two small corner tables aside the window and six stools having a silk covering datable before 1774.

The four small mirrors have the same carved frames, while the two bigger ones are differently carved with harpies, dragons, birds, flower tendrils and other ornaments. The frames of the mirrors have different types of brackets: the slim ones have only three brackets in the lower section, seven in the top section in front of the mirror and a further seven brackets with outside



Figure 1. Margravine Friederike Luise of Ansbach, née Princess of Prussia (1714–1784), oil on canvas, @ Alexander Biernoth, Markgrafentmuseum, Ansbach.



Figure 2. Mirror cabinet in the Ansbach Residence, 1740, designed by Leopoldo Retti, Paul Amadée and Jean Adolphe Biarelle, @ Author.



orientation. The small brackets on the paneling between the mirrors are later additions of 1773.

The wide mirrors over the consoles have three large and two very small brackets in the lower section. On the frame, the positions are changing from inside to outside the glass of the mirror. The crest shows a carved rocaille work flanked by a pierced bracket aside. 21 objects could be placed on this design. No brackets were on the frame of the mirror over the chimney in the original design.

The first decoration on the wall brackets had not been Meissen porcelain, but perhaps oriental porcelain or faience of the Ansbach factory founded in 1710. I prefer the latter idea and, in several museum collections, I have found many small faience vases of the same boat-shaped section, but decorated in different colours and motifs.

At the Hauptstaatsarchiv in Berlin, I found what is – for the moment – the oldest inventory of the Ansbach residence, dated March 12th 1790.

On page 56, the list starts with the furniture, wall paintings and textiles of “Her Serenissimae Spiegel/Mirror Cabinet” on the second floor and ends on page 58 with the words: “Nota! Die auf denen vergoldeten Konsolen stehende Figuren von Dresdner Porcellain in gleichen das auf den Tischen stehende dergleichen Porcellain gehören Serenissimae eigen”/ „Attention! All figurines on the gilded brackets of Dresden porcelain and also the porcelain standing on the tables belong to Her Highness”.



We are talking about the Margravine Friederike Caroline of Saxony-Coburg-Saalfeld (1735–1791); here a portrait by Georg Anton Urlaub of 1772 at the Ansbach residence (fig. 3). She was married in 1754 to the Ansbach margrave Christian Friedrich Carl Alexander (1736–1806), known in his youth as Europe’s most handsome prince. The marriage was arranged by his father who tried to get financial support from the Austrian emperor when Frederik the Great stopped sending money. Of course this marriage could not become a happy one.

Carl Alexander had many affairs and only waited until the death of his wife on February 18th 1791 before leaving Ansbach for good with the English Lady Elizabeth Craven (1750–1828), who had already lived with him for some years. He died at Blenheim Castle near Speen in 1806.

In the inheritance of his wife Friederike Caroline, all the porcelain in the mirror cabinet is listed and valued - sometimes in detail (clocks for example) or generally (“24 diverse Figuren à 2fl 24x, 140 noch kleinere Figuren à 1fl / 24 diverse figurines à 2fl 24x, 140 still lesser figurines à 1fl”).¹ According to the archive material, however, it was not bought by her or her husband, but was a legacy from her mother-in-law, Alexander’s mother, Friederike Louise of Prussia, who had died in 1784. The traces go back to Berlin and two generations earlier.

On the river Spree, a *Maison de Plaisance* named Monbijou was erected by the architect Johann Friedrich Eosander von Goete (1669–1728) for the nobleman Reichsgraf Johan Kasimir Kolbe von Wartenberg (1643–1712) in 1703. The first King of Prussia,

Figure 3. Margravine Friederike Caroline of Brandenburg-Ansbach (1735–1791), née Princess of Saxony-Coburg-Saalfeld, oil on canvas, 1772, Georg Anton Urlaub (1744–1788), Ansbach Residence; © BSV (Bavarian administration of the royal palaces).

Figure 4. Portrait of Sophie Dorothea of Prussia (1687–1757), née Princess of Brunswick-Lüneburg, oil on canvas, 1737, Antoine Pesne (1683–1757), Charlottenburg Palace, Berlin, @ Wikimedia commons.



Figure 5. Monbijou Palace, Porcelain gallery (room 22) to the east, photo 1940, @ Kemper 2005, fig. 64

Frederic I, bought the house in 1710 and gave it to his daughter-in-law, Sophie Dorothea of Brunswick, as a gift for her personal use. It was her summer residence until 1740 and her favourite place to live until her death in 1757 (fig 4).² At the centre was a room with mirrors and paintings of the ladies of the court. In the yellow Chinese Room, there was a set of seven Dresden vases with a yellow ground and "Indian miniatures painting", as well as three pagodas, two canary birds and, on the consoles, several pieces of tableware from Dresden. Sophie Dorothea enlarged the small house several times, especially in 1738 and the last time in 1753–54 to form a long arrangement of pavilions and galleries.

In the inventory of 1738, the interiors of the three galleries facing the Spree river had been decorated with copper engravings and oriental blue and white porcelain. At the end of the east Porcelain gallery, there had been a so called "Dutch Kitchen"

which was changed into a porcelain-chamber in 1753/54. The most important had been two galleries with a great deal of porcelain she had acquired before her death in 1757 as we could reconstruct looking at the date of the models.

The Englishman Jonas Hanway wrote in 1750 in his travel diary: "MONBIJOU is appointed for the residence of the queen mother, who is a sister of his Majesty the King of GREAT BRITAN. This is a little palace at the Spree, the apartments of which are small, but elegantly furnished. There is a pretty gallery of blue and white China porcelain, and an apartment called the kitchen, with several rich pieces of SAXON porcelain".³

In her will, Sophie Dorothea decreed that the furniture should remain in the palace given to her son Frederic the Great. When the palace became the Hohenzollern Museum in 1877, some years later the porcelain galleries got copies of the original



consoles and wall brackets and were redecorated with porcelain from different Hohenzollern residences (fig 5). Bombed heavily in WWII, the ruins had been destroyed by the GDR in 1959.

"All things of porcelain, snuffboxes, clocks, pendules, paintings and books" – were divided between the six daughters after the death of Sophie Dorothea on 28th of July 1757. Appraisers, like Johann Ernst Gotzkowsky, formed lots of the same value between 27th February till 3rd of April 1758 which were raffled to avoid any quarrel between the sisters:

- 1: Wilhelmine (1709–1758); ∞ Margrave Friedrich of Brandenburg-Bayreuth
- 2: Friederike Luise (1714–1784, see fig. 1); ∞ Margrave Karl Wilhelm Friedrich of Brandenburg-Ansbach
- 3: Philippine Charlotte (1716–1801); ∞ 1733 Duke Karl I. of Brunswick
- 4: Sophie Dorothee Marie (1719–1765); ∞ Friedrich Wilhelm of Schwedt
- 5: Luise Ulrike von Schweden (1720–1782); ∞ Adolf Friedrich, King of Sweden
- 6: unmarried Anna Amalie (1723–1787) - Abbess of Quedlinburg (1756–1787)

As all objects were numbered and these numbers listed in different lots we know exactly which objects were given to which of the daughters. Some of the descriptions are precise, some rather summary. They came to Ansbach from Berlin during the year 1758 and were obviously decorated in the mirror cabinet where they still are today.



Thanks to a hint from Dr. Kemper in Berlin I found a lot of tableware and 46 animals of Meissen porcelain in the inventory of the Dutch Kitchen 1738, but six models, some in three examples, obviously showed men and women with a hurdy-gurdy or a bagpipe.

One of the next entries is very unusual: "Ein altes Weib mit gebrochenem Krug" / "An old woman with a broken jug".⁴ (fig 6). It reminded me on a figurine in the collection of Ansbach Porcelain on the ground floor of the residence, called the "Gotische Halle" ("Gothic Hall"). Here I found the peasant woman sitting on the floor with the broken jug on her knee. The model seems to be very rough and expressive. The woman really feels sorry and unhappy about the loss. The decoration is simple with unblended colours.

In the first inventory of the Ansbach residence in the 20th Century, it was listed as an Ansbach figure, but even the expert for this factory, Adolf Bayer, did not quote this model in his important book in 1933.

Together with "Old woman with a lyre", "Old men with a lyre" or "Old man with a bagpipe", we all know these early models as products of Meissen. They had been repaired in later years by Eberlein and Kaendler for further production; contrary to the "woman with the jug", she was never made again. In my mind, the 11 cm high figurine was modeled by Johann Gottlieb Kirchner, c. 1730–1733, and is the oldest Meissen porcelain in the collection.

Figure 6. Old woman with broken jug, model by Johann Gottlieb Kirchner, Meissen 1730–33, formerly in the Dutch kitchen of Sophie Dorothea of Prussia in Monbijou, today Gothic Hall, Ansbach Residence, @ author.

Figure 7. Canary birds with hatchlings, model Johann Joachim Kaendler, Meissen 1733, formerly mirror cabinet, Ansbach Residence, today storage, Munich Residence, @ BSV.



Figure 8. Lady with a fan, model Johann Joachim Kaendler, Meissen, December 1736, formerly in the mirror cabinet, Ansbach Residence, today in display Munich Residence, @ BSV

The next-oldest model in the inventory of Sophie Dorothea in 1738 could be a nest with two canary birds with hatchlings (fig 7).⁵ Kaendler modelled the canary group in January 1733 and August II, King of Poland, received six copies for Christmas that year on the 23rd of December. Three of them he obviously bestowed on someone, while only three came into the inventory of the Japanese Palais No. 215.⁶

The nest is not in Ansbach today. Rather, I found it at the Munich residence where it was transferred in 1865. It was on display labelled as Frankenthal Porcelain in 1912, but has been in storage for decades.

Another very famous and early Meissen model, also in Munich today, but on display in a showcase, fared better as the "Lady

with a fan" (fig 8). Together with her lost partner, a nobleman throwing a kiss to her on the hand, the couple – noted in Kaendler's work report in December 1736 – marked the beginning of a new kind of art in porcelain, the "cabinet pieces".

Placed mostly on mantles of fireplaces or small tables in private cabinets, you could see them only by invitation, but take them into your hand and look at them very closely – discover the details like the petticoat or the shoes of the lady.

The figurine was entitled in Sophie Dorothea's inventory as „Nr. 299 eine Dame mit der Evantaille 9 fl.“/“A lady with an fan” in 1758. Unfortunately she was parted from her lover, who was available obviously in more than one example. In „No. 292. 7. Stück Figuren von solche Größe, darunter einige in Schlaf-Rücken / „Seven figurines of small size, including some in morning gowns” were given to Sophie Dorothee Marie of Schwedt. The morning gown was an invention of Kaendler when he used the engraving „Le Baiser rendu” („Der erwiderte Kuss”) by Pierre Filloëul after the painting by Jean Baptiste Pater (1695–1736), published by Nicolas de Larmessin just in summer 1736. It was one of the 38 illustrations of the „Contes et nouvelles en vers” of Jean de La Fontaine.

The famous curator of the Munich Residence, Friedrich Hofmann, transferred the figurine from Ansbach to Munich in 1911 and her original provenance was lost in the last decades.

The use of inventories was a great advantage for my research of the collection. On 16th January 1791, Charles Alexander sold his Margraviate to Prussia. The royal apartments at the residence in Ansbach were never used again to live in and became a museum of their own. In 1806, the territory came into the possession of Bavaria and in the text in the inventory of 1807 we can read: “On the mirrors and the walls fixed and gilded / 150 Consoles and marble tables / Are the following figurines and Vessels of Dresden Porcelain / arranged” Some lines later follow: “17. groups, decorated and gilded, 143. bigger und smaller figurines ...”, but unfortunately not described precisely. The first inventory of the Bavarian Administration of the Royal Residences when all objects got their own number was written in 1929. All these figurines will be published in detail for the catalogue. Only some objects in the list are specified which I will now show you following the order in the documents:

Always mentioned in a separate entry was a clock case with the goddess Flora (1240), mould no. 1876, designed probably by Friedrich Elias Meyer and Johann Joachim Kaendler in 1753 (fig 9). The movement is signed “Le Roy A Paris”. According to latest research, the Flora is a work by Kaendler, while the clock case was modelled by Meyer. The decoration of the pedestal with “flying children” is close to Boucher, but not a copy of a certain work. The painting on several comparable objects seems to be made by the same artist, preferring a technique to paint with small little dots.



Together with a clock decorated with figurines of Fortuna and Saturn by Kaendler (mould. No. 1050) both cases are in the list of Queen Sophie Dorothea 1758 and the abatement list of Friederike Caroline of 1791. They had always been in this room.

"1 Gruppe mit 4 Figuren und einem Baum" / "One group with four figurines and a tree" is the next entry (fig 10). Only the "cherry harvest", modeled by Meyer and Kaendler in 1753 (mould-No. 1998) correlates with the text. Queen Sophie Dorothea and also her son, Frederic the Great, spent a lot of money as they loved having cherries on the table. The groups produced first show these rather small fruits, making a lot of work for the repairers. The model was still very popular in the 19th Century, when the fruits were made bigger and the title changed to "apple harvest" – but still having the same mould-number. The photo shows the display in the mirror cabinet which is especially suited for groups designed to be seen from all sides.



"2. große Figuren, 1 Chineser und 1 Chinesin" / 2 big figures, 1 Chinese man and 1 Chinese woman", followed by the line "2 dergleich figuren, Chineser" / 2 same figurines, Chinese". The Ansbach cabinet offers the rare chance to actually see four of these models we call "malabares" today. The first model (mould no. 764) was a lady with a fruit basket on her hip and a covered basket in her left hand (fig 11). Her attire looks extraordinary and exotic through the fur-lined gown. Eberlein modelled the "Indian lady" according to his work report in 1746, working, at the same time, on many "durchbrochene" / "pierced" pieces for the confectionary of Count Brühl.

The male counterparts, one made by Eberlein shortly before his death in 1747 (mould no. 823), was entitled correctly in Sophie Dorothea's list and is easy to identify: „Nr. 257, ein Malabar mit seiner Frau, an dem ersten ist von dem Säbel etwas abgebrochen, 35 Rthlr.“ / No. 257, "A Malabar with his wife, a piece of his saber missing on the first" (fig 12). The funniest title

Figure 9. Clock case with Flora, model probably by Friedrich Elias Meyer and Johann Joachim Kaendler, Meissen, 1753, mirror cabinet, Ansbach Residence, @ author.

Figure 10. Cherry harvest, model by Johann Joachim Kaendler and Friedrich Elias Meyer, Meissen, 1753, mirror cabinet, Ansbach residence, @ author



Figure 11. Two Malabare women, Johann Friedrich Eberlein, Meissen, 1746, mirror cabinet, Ansbach residence @ author.

Figure 12. Malabare, Johann Friedrich Eberlein, Meissen, 1746 (left) – Malabare with lute, Friedrich Elias Meyer, Meissen, 1751 (right), mirror cabinet, Ansbach residence, @ author.

Figure 13. One of six wall lights, Meissen, 1749, model by Johann Joachim Kaendler, mirror cabinet, Ansbach residence, @ author.



was given by Eugen von Mor-Sunneg⁷ to the figurine in 1895 as "Prairiejäger" / "Prairie hunter" in his very early work about the porcelain treasure in Ansbach, perhaps influenced by the German author Karl May and his novels about the Apache chief Winnetou.

The other model was made by Friedrich Elias Meyer in 1751. The sculptor from Erfurt had a job at the court of Weimar and came to Meissen June 1st 1748 to replace Eberlein who had fallen very ill. His design for the stand shows much more relief in the rococo style with gilded rocailles. The dress comprises the fur-lined gown as comparable clothing (mould no. 1523). The important difference from the work of Eberlein is the new movement in the position of the singing and playing men, showing vivid emotions.

I just will follow the lines on this page: "6. größere und 2. kleinere Armleuchter, jeder zu drei Lichtern, Von den größeren leuchtern ist einer schadhaft" / 6 bigger and 2 smaller wall lights, one of the bigger ones is damaged" (fig 13). This Rococo model is noted in the mould book as „Leuchter, von Franz: Zierrath: klein: Wand“ / "candlestick with French ornaments, small, for the wall" and, according to its mould number 1150, was designed by Kaendler in 1749. We do not know their placement at the Monbijou palace, but, in the First Gallery, there are seven windows, having six panellings in between and built in 1753/54. For the moment, no other examples of the model are known to me.



"A chocolate, a milk and a tea pot with a sugar bowl, a sugar and a tea box and a waste bowl are listed together with 5 chocolate cups and 8 coffee cups, with shields and landscapes in purple and gold". This rather unusual service is practically impossible to find in the Berlin lists as the notes are rather general for tableware. The shape is not spectacular, but the small purple camaieu landscapes like in the Christie-Miller-Service in a symmetrically cartouche with branches with and without leaves, tendrils and stylized flowers is rare. Today the service is on display in a niche in the dining room next to the ballroom (fig 14).

Also from Berlin in 1758 and in Munich today is this „box for playing card counters with four boxes and counters,“ 162. ein Marquen-Kästchen mit 4. Schaachteln und Marquen“ (fig 15).“ For the next words I have to thank the Metropolitan Museum and quote them: "The card game l'Hombre was a fashionable pastime in the 18 Century, and special boxes were created at the Meissen porcelain manufactory to hold the necessary counters. Five playing cards decorate the lid; the one on top which represents the King of Hearts is based on a French deck of cards made for the German market by Claude Valentin of Lyon about 1650/75. For the Ace of Spades, the painter used



Figure 14. Chocolate pot of a coffee, tea and chocolate service, Meissen, c. 1750–55, dining room Ansbach Residence, @ author.

Figure 15. Box for playing card counters, Meissen, model c. 1735/40, made 1750–1752, formerly mirror cabinet Ansbach residence, today storage Munich residence, @ BSV.



Figure 16. Set of five vases with the Apollo vase in the center, model by Johann Joachim Kaendler and Johann Friedrich Eberlein, Meissen, 1744/45, Reception room of the guest apartment, north wing, Ansbach residence, © author.

an original card bearing the Saxon tax stamp that was imposed on all imported playing cards between 1750 and 1752.⁸ The small flower bouquets in the lids follow the engravings of Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer (1636–1699) published in his *Livres de plusieurs corbeilles de fleurs* between 1660–1690 at Nicolas de Poilly (1627–1696) in Paris.

Going back to the beginning of Kaendler's naturalistic style in Meissen we find a set of five vases made in 1744. The central vase is a variation of the famous Apollo vase given to empress Elizabeth of Russia in this year. The left vase shows an allegory of the summer with a putto in front of cereals and different fruits like cherries. The right vase is the allegory of autumn with a wine-drinking putto and a bird picking grapes. The two outer vases are decorated with different flowers. At Ansbach, they had been separated to decorate several rooms, but I brought them together on a mantelpiece in the reception room of the guest apartment in the North wing of the residence (fig. 16). I am very happy about this reunion and also about the fact of finding them in the 1758 list of Sophie Dorothea „No. 197, ein gantz weißen Aufsatz von 5. Stück, 80. Rthl.“ / „A white set of

five vases, 80 fl“. The models “Apollo vase”, “Seasons” and “Apollo children” are also to be found in the list of the porcelain Frederic the Great brought from Meissen to Berlin in December 1745 in 52 boxes.⁹ He wanted to sell the porcelain to get money for other unpaid invoices. However, the porcelain had been in storage – the “Waarenlager” – because it was not always of first quality. This could have been the reason to use these pieces as gifts (for example to his mother) or to decorate the gallery and rooms in Sanssouci, start of construction also in 1745. Till WWII, 16 brackets in the gallery had been decorated with white vases like these; today, only one is left. Looking at some details like a broken cereal on the vase “summer” proves this. Also all vases have a glaze with a lot of orange-peel.

The most fascinating result of my research was to realize the difference between the property in official and private possession.

It is not the inventories of kings and male royals which lead to the most important historical findings in art, but the lists of the personal belongings of their consorts.

- 1 Geheimes Staatsarchiv Berlin, BPH-Rep 44-9-R5, 26. April 1791.
- 2 Thomas Kemper, Schloss Monbijou, Von der königlichen Residenz zum Hohenzollern-Museum, Nicolai Verlag Berlin 2005.
- 3 Kemper 2005, p. 68.
- 4 Kemper 2005, p. 302.
- 5 The list is obviously mixing up two models in two lines: „Ein Canarian Vogel (one canary bird) / Ein Eis-Vogel nebst einem Nest, worinnen Junge seyn (one kingfisher and a nest containing hatchlings).“ see Kemper 2005, p. 302.
- 6 Claus Boltz, 1996, S. 26.
- 7 Eugen von Mor-Sunnegg, Porzellanschatz im Rokokostil des königl. Bayer. Schlosses zu Ansbach, 30 Tafel im Lichtdruck im Groß-Folioformat / Trésor en porcelain (style rococo) du Château Royal d'Ansbach (Baviere) / Chine Treasure (rococo style) of the Royal Castle at Ansbach (Bavaria), Verlag von Max Eichinger k. b. Hofbuchhändler Ansbach (Bayern), o.J. (1895).
- 8 <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/205638?rpp=30&pg=1&ft=1974.28.134&pos=1> (28.02.2016)
- 9 Samuel Wittwer, "hat der König von Preußen die schleunige Verfertigung verschiedener Bestellungen ernstlich begehret" – Friedrich der Große und das Meißener Porzellan, in: Keramos 208, 2010, p. 23.