A Unique Plate Warmer

Anders Bengtsson
Curator, Applied Art and Design

Art Bulletin of
Nationalmuseum
Stockholm
Volume 20
The Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, is published with generous support from the Friends of the Nationalmuseum.

The Nationalmuseum collaborates with Svenska Dagbladet, Fältman & Malmén and Grand Hôtel Stockholm.

Items in the Acquisitions section are listed alphabetically by artists’ names, except in the case of applied arts items, which are listed in order of their inventory numbers. Measurements are in centimetres – Height H, Breadth B, Depth D, Length L, Width W, and Diameter Diam. – except for those of drawings and prints, which are given in millimetres.

Cover Illustration
Alexander Roslin (1718–1793), The Artist and his Wife Marie Suzanne Giroust Portraying Henrik Wilhelm Peill, 1767. Oil on canvas, 131 x 98.5 cm. Donated by the Friends of the Nationalmuseum, Sophia Giesecke Fund, Axel Hirsch Fund and Mr Stefan Persson and Mrs Denise Persson. Nationalmuseum, NM 7141.

Publisher
Magdalena Gram

Editor
Janna Herder

Editorial Committee
Mikael Ahlund, Magdalena Gram, Janna Herder, Helena Kåberg and Magnus Olausson.

Photographs
Nationalmuseum Photographic Studio/Linn Ahlgren, Erik Cornelius, Anna Danielsson, Cecilia Heisser, Bodil Karlsson, Per-Ake Persson, Sofia Persson and Hans Thorwid.

Picture Editor
Rikard Nordström

Photo Credits
© Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig (p. 14)
© The Gothenburg Museum of Art/Hossein Schatlo (p. 18)
© Malmö Art Museum/Andreas Rasmusson (p. 22)
© Wildenstein & Co., Inc., New York (p. 29)
© RMN Grand Palais/Musée du Louvre, Paris/Hervé Lewandowski (p. 30)
© The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (Fig. 4, p. 31)
© RMN Grand Palais/Musée du Louvre, Paris/René-Gabriel Ojéda (Fig. 5, p. 31)
© Guilhem Scherf (p. 32)
© Bridgeman Institute of Arts, Detroit (p. 33)
© Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris/Jean Tholance (p. 34)
© RMN Grand Palais/Musée du Louvre, Paris (p. 35)
© Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome/Mauro Coen (Figs. 6, 10 and 12, pp. 114–116)
© Mikael Traung (Fig. 7, p. 114)
© Stockholm City Museum (p. 123)
http://www.stockholmskallan.se/Soksida/Post/?n id=319
© Stockholm City Museum/Lennart af Petersens (p. 124)
© http://www.genealogi.se/component/mtree/sodermanland/eskilsta/azerethstroem_/22850?Itemid=604 (p. 125)

Every effort has been made by the publisher to credit organizations and individuals with regard to the supply of photographs. Please notify the publisher regarding corrections.

Graphic Design
BIGG

Layout
Agneta Bervokk

Translation and Language Editing
Gabriella Berggren and Martin Naylor.

Publications
Ingrid Lindell (Publications Manager), Janna Herder (Editor).

Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum is published annually and contains articles on the history and theory of art relating to the collections of the Nationalmuseum.

Nationalmuseum
Box 16176
SE–103 24 Stockholm, Sweden
www.nationalmuseum.se
© Nationalmuseum and the authors

ISSN 2001-9238
A Unique Plate Warmer

Anders Bengtsson
Curator, Applied Art and Design

Fig. 1 Rudolf Wittkopf, plate warmer, Stockholm 1709. Silver, H 12, W 20 cm. Purchase: Barbro Osher Fund. Nationalmuseum, NMK 102/2013.
The Nationalmuseum’s collection of Swedish silver from the early 18th century has acquired an addition that is probably unique, a plate warmer made by Rudolf Wittkopf in Stockholm in 1709 (Fig. 1). This is the only known preserved Swedish late-Baroque specimen of its kind, and consists of a tripod on cast feet and a removable burner with a holder for oil. The upper part of the burner has vents to allow the necessary air for the flame to burn, and the rim of the plate warmer has three volute-shaped handles to support the plate with food while being kept warm.

The new, refined table manners that were introduced in the Swedish nobility in the early 18th century emulated French society. The Nationalmuseum’s large collection of drawings includes two pictures of contemporary French réchaudes or plate warmers (Figs. 2 and 3).¹ The purpose of these pictures was to serve as models for the Swedish royal court and nobility when ordering modern silver tableware. We know from the household accounts of dowager queen Hedvig Eleonora, that this fashion-conscious royal personage bought “a silver plate hob that could also be used as a brasier” (“en silverfatsring att ock kunna bruka till fyrfat”) from the silversmith Petter Henning in 1705.² Very few pieces of royal silverware from this period are preserved. Apart from the plate warmer acquired by the Nationalmuseum there are no known Swedish examples, indicating that objects of this kind were unusual even at the time, and that only a few were made. From the late 18th century, however, there are several preserved réchauds, mainly for teapots and serving dishes, showing that they had successors. These were also produced in plainer materials such as copper and brass, and became more common in the 19th century.

The maker of the plate warmer, Rudolf Wittkopf (active as a master in Stockholm in 1687–1722) immigrated to Sweden from Germany and became one of the leading and most skilled silversmiths of the period, and his customers included the Queen Dowager of the Realm Hedvig Eleonora. He was made an alderman of the guild in 1711.³ His sons Henrik the Elder and Johan both later became master silversmiths, the former with large commissions for the royal court.

The new acquisition is a valuable addition to the Nationalmuseum’s collection of Swedish late Baroque silver, demonstrating how up-to-date the Swedish court and nobility were with contemporary, especially French, trends.

The Nationalmuseum’s purchase of Rudolf Wittkopf’s plate warmer was made possible by a generous donation from the Barbro Osher Fund.

Notes:

1. NM THC 807 and NM THC 840 respectively.