

The image shows a highly detailed, ornate golden mirror frame. The top section features a large, symmetrical crest with a central shield, flanked by two figures and topped with a crown. The crest is surrounded by intricate scrollwork and floral motifs. Below the crest, the frame is decorated with a wide band of repeating floral and foliate patterns. The mirror itself is visible in the center, reflecting the crest and the surrounding decorations. The overall style is characteristic of 18th-century Baroque or Rococo design.

Count Fabian Wrede's Mirror

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Étienne Bouhot (1780–1862), *View of the Pavillon de Bellechasse on rue Saint-Dominique in Paris*, 1823. Oil on canvas, 55.5 x 47 cm. Purchase: the Hedda and N. D. Qvist Fund. Nationalmuseum, NM 7434.

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(In the Breach of Decorum: Painting between Altar and Gallery, Fig. 19, p. 173).

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Count Fabian Wrede's Mirror

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With funding from the Axel Hirsch Fund, the Nationalmuseum has acquired a mirror that is one of the most magnificent examples of Swedish Baroque (Fig. 1). Its provenance is unusually well documented, from the 1690s to the present.

Count Fabian Wrede (1641–1712), who commissioned the mirror, was a highly placed civil servant who enjoyed the full confidence of Karl XI of Sweden. Following a career as county governor of Viborg, he had helped to prepare for the radical reduction of the land holdings of the nobility that began in 1680. At the Riksdag (Parliament) of 1682, Wrede was speaker of the House of Nobility. In 1685 he was appointed royal councillor and put in charge of three key “colleges” or offices of central government. One of Wrede’s chief political concerns was to develop trade and industry in a more mercantilist direction. He was soon made a count and became one of the richest men in Sweden. Politically, though, his fortunes declined, after he had tried to argue the case for a more defensive military policy, in opposition to Karl XII. In 1711, Wrede was forced to resign almost all his offices.

The mirror which Wrede ordered has an ornately carved giltwood frame, with strapwork, acanthus, cornucopias, bunches of grapes and flowers. Inset into the frame is mirror glass engraved with scattered flowers. The crest features the coat of arms of the Wrede family, engraved by an assured hand. The mirror is not signed, but can be attributed to the workshop of



Fig. 1 Burchardt Precht (1651–1738), *Mirror with the Coat of Arms of Wrede*, c. 1700. Gilt wood, engraved glass, 195 x 110 cm. Purchase: the Axel Hirsch Fund. Nationalmuseum, NMK 114/2017.

Burchardt Precht (1651–1738) on account of its design, which stylistically is comparable to other pieces from that source. Precht was Stockholm's leading wood carver at this time and received numerous royal and ecclesiastical commissions, often in collaboration with the court architect, Nicodemus Tessin the Younger. Born in Bremen and trained in Hamburg, he arrived in Stockholm in the 1670s. His workshop produced carved furniture, picture frames and funeral escutcheons for the court and the nobility. It also rented out furniture for special occasions. It is possible that Precht was able to polish and silver glass, hence the references to him in the literature as the first Swedish mirror maker. High-quality plate glass for mirrors could not be manufactured in the country, but had to be imported.¹ When new glassworks, such as Kungsholms glasbruk in Stockholm (1676–1815) or Henrikstorp in Skåne (1691–1762), were set up, there was always a hope that they would be able to make plate glass, as the demand for glass for windows was considerable.

Decorative engraving of glass was a new possibility now emerging in Stockholm. The technique had been revived in Europe in the early 17th century, and craftspeople with the necessary skills were sought after throughout the continent. Individual engravers came to Stockholm for short periods from the 1650s to the 1680s, staying for just a few years before moving on. A few glasses in various Swedish collections can be linked to them.² Once Kristoffer Elstermann established himself in Stockholm in the 1690s, however, engraving became a regular feature of Swedish glass art. The first time Elstermann's name appears in the accounts is in 1691, when, as a commission for Queen Dowager Hedvig Eleonora, he produced a window above the altar in the new chapel of the Castle of Tre Kronor (Three Crowns) in Stockholm.³

Elstermann had his own workshop and undertook commissions for Kungsholms glasbruk. He skilfully engraved a variety of

motifs, well suited to the surface and the shape of the objects in question. He was a major influence in Swedish engraving right up to his death in 1721. During this time, the quality of engraved glass from Kungsholms glasbruk was its peak. Elstermann used a wide range of motifs, which were to form a basis for the work of engravers in Sweden for over a hundred years. As late as the 1810s, his designs appeared on champagne glasses made at Sölje glasbruk in Värmland.⁴

The engraved panels in the frame of this large (195 cm high) mirror have the same type of scattered flowers as was used on glasses from tKungsholms glasbruk. The coat of arms in the crest is executed with an assurance typical of Elstermann's work. It is thus highly likely that the mirror glass was engraved by him, although the glass itself was probably imported.

Over time, Burchardt Precht steadily streamlined his mirror making. Cast pewter mouldings replaced carved wood and the decoration of the glass was painted in white rather than engraved. The mirror acquired by the Museum shows no signs of these simplifications, however, indicating that it can be dated to the 1690s.

The part Wrede himself played in determining the appearance of the mirror should not be underestimated. His close connection to the court and the latest trends, such as Precht's carved giltwood furniture and the new technique of decorative engraving of glass, were influential factors. Wrede had the financial resources to commission a mirror, and his interest in trade is reflected in the cornucopias in its crest. The count's mercantilist thinking was presumably also part of the reason why, as far as possible, he was keen for the mirror to be produced in Sweden.

The unusually well-documented provenance of this piece includes written records from Count Fabian Wrede, who commissioned it, via his daughter Sophia, who had the mirror as part of her dowry when she married Erik Axelsson Sparre in

1707.⁵ It subsequently passed by descent until it was acquired by the Nationalmuseum, via Bukowskis, from Säbylund Manor in the province of Närke.⁶

Notes:

1. Johan Knutsson, *Möbelkonsten*, Signums svenska konsthistoria, Lund 1997, p. 245.
2. Micael Erntell, *Glaskonsten*, Signums svenska konsthistoria, Lund 1997, pp. 503–505.
3. Heribert Seitz, *Glaset förr och nu*, Stockholm 1936, pp. 56–60.
4. Erntell 1997, p. 507.
5. Sophia Wrede's dowry 1707, De la Gardieska arkivet, Släktarkiven, Wrede 11, Handskriftsvolym, Lund University Library.
6. *Slott och herresäten i Sverige, Närke, Säbylund*, Allhems förlag 1969, p. 215.