

*The Object of Ornament: European Design, 1480-1800*, April 12, 2002-July 7, 2002

This exhibition arose from a collaboration between participants in a Brown University art history seminar of Fall 2001 and curators from three departments at the RISD Museum: Costume and Textiles; Decorative Arts; and Prints, Drawings, and Photographs. Studying each department's resources in the area of European ornament, the group examined how the work of artisans in materials such as wood, metal, fiber, and ceramics responded to and participated in the inventions of designers who drew patterns for prints.

Highly detailed and finely wrought, ornament prints were widespread throughout Europe during the early modern period (late 15th through the 18th century). In studying prints together with decorative arts and textiles, it becomes evident that any relatively portable object could disseminate patterns and ideas.

A profusion of ornament in daily life (or the plain and dreary lack of it) advertised social values and publicly demonstrated taste, education, and experience, as well as wealth. Ornament literally shaped the patterns of European life and identity during the slow change from a subsistence to a consumer economy. The object of ornament became, in fact, the production of ever more hybrid, luxurious, and imaginative versions of itself.

## CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

### **A Feast for the Eyes**

Most objects of everyday life received decorative treatment, including those used for consumption of food and medicine. Containers for beverages and spices imported for the East and the New World were adorned with motifs suggesting fantasy, travel and adventure. The medicinal uses of herbs depicted in elaborately illustrated texts were also a rich source of decoration. Sweets molded in the shape of religious icons or almanacs decorated with images of grape-harvesting demonstrate how Christian festivals metaphorically linked food with the passage of time and with religious practice. Decorative prints often referred to the symbolic properties of food, using fruits and vegetables to represent the changing seasons.

# RISD MUSEUM

Italian

*Pestle*, 1680

Bronze

Bequest of Miss Ellen D. Sharpe 54.147.20

Mortars and pestles were basic tools common to all levels of society. They appear in a number of Renaissance depictions of pharmacies along with the stereotypical figure of Pestapepe, the miserable wretch whose job was grinding medicines in the pharmacy. This mortar and pestle, decorated with faces, garlands, birds, and the inscription "Amor Vincit Omnia" ("Love Conquers All"), is significantly smaller and more highly decorated than those seen in such paintings. It was probably intended for use in a wealthy household that could afford imported spices, such as pepper from the Moluccas or "Spice Islands."



Johann Gregorius Höroldt, German, 1696 - 1775

Meissen Porcelain Manufactory, German, 1710-present

*Teapot*, ca. 1725

Porcelain with enamels, glaze, and gilding

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sigmund J. Katz 53.184



Italian

*Mortar*, 1680

Bronze

Bequest of Miss Ellen D. Sharpe 54.147.9

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German; English

*Tigerware Jug*, 1579-1580

Stoneware with salt glaze (German) and gilded silver mounts (English)  
Museum Works of Art Fund 47.625

During the early modern period, beer and wine were a much greater part of everyday meals -- for people of all ages -- than they are today, providing calories and drink when water may not have been clean.



Italian

*Jug*

Lead-glazed earthenware

Gift of Mrs. E. A. Hall 94.028



Pieter van der Heyden, Netherlandish, ca. 1530-ca. 1575

Pieter Bruegel I, Flemish, b. 1525-1530, d. 1569

Hieronymous Cock, Netherlandish, ca. 1510-1570

*The Fat Kitchen*, 1563

Engraving on medium weight cream laid paper

Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.1030



In the sixteenth century a meager kitchen was an object of scorn, and the couplet beneath the *Thin Kitchen* reads, "Where Lean-Fellow stirs the pot, there is poor feasting. I am running to the fat kitchen with a happy heart." This malnourishment, symbolized by the drooping bagpipes hanging on the right wall, contrasts with the obese figures gorging themselves in the *Fat Kitchen*. Even their pets are gluttonous, and the caption reads, "Go away Lean-Fellow, hence, hungry though you are. This is fat kitchen, you don't belong here." In the lower left corner, the publisher's initials are carved onto a pastry mold similar to the one on display, and van der Heyden has carved his own initials into a mortar and pestle like the one on exhibit.

# RISD MUSEUM

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German; Portuguese; Spanish

*Marzipan Mold*, 1500-1700

Carved wood, possibly walnut

Mary B. Jackson Fund 42.280



This mold was used for making shaped sugar paste or marzipan. Sweet foods molded into amusing shapes were referred to as *sotelties*, meaning subtlety or wit, and were intended for courtly amusement and entertainment. *Sotelties* could be in the shape of anything from people to gloves (as on the reverse side of the mold). Strictly speaking, *sotelties* were only seen on special occasions and were intended for large banquets or feasts. It is therefore likely that this mold was used to make a *soteltie* celebrating the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, as revealed by the Virgin's youthful looks, the sun's rays surrounding her body, and the crescent moon on which she stands.

# RISD MUSEUM

German

Jakob Meydenbach

*Asparagus (Sparagus)*, 1491 edition of Jacob Meydenbach's *Garden of Health (Hortus Sanitatis)*, (Book) *Hortus Sanitatis*, 1491

Woodcut with hand coloring on paper

Museum Works of Art Fund 43.023

This print is taken from a reprinted edition of Jacob Meydenbach's botanical encyclopedia, which was printed in Mainz, Germany in 1491. The original text was in Latin and listed every possible kind of flora and fauna that could affect health. Each chapter began with a woodcut of the subject followed by its Latin name, chapter number, and a brief yet detailed description of its parts, uses and preparation. In addition to providing scientific information, these prints could also be a source of ornamental designs.



Johann Gregorius Höroldt, German, 1696 - 1775

Meissen Porcelain Manufactory, German, 1710-present

*Tea Caddy*, ca. 1725

Porcelain with enamels, glaze, and gilding

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sigmund J. Katz 53.183

The mania for tea and porcelain, both originating in the Far East, went hand in hand. Wooden or pewter cups, the more usual option for serving beverages in the West, destroyed the taste of tea, made it difficult to drink the beverage at the proper temperature, and were generally considered inelegant. Wealthy individuals therefore preferred to take their tea in fine porcelain, such as this Meissen ware. The first manufacturer of true porcelain in Europe, during its early years the Meissen factory produced wares inspired by Chinese porcelains and textiles.





# RISD MUSEUM

German

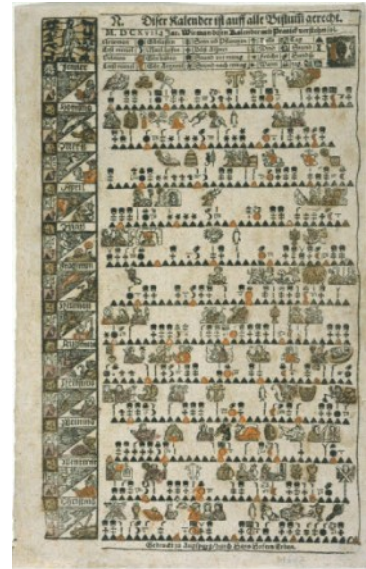
Hans Hofer, German, 1540 - 1617

*Farmer's Calendar*, 1617

Woodcut with hand coloring on paper

Museum Works of Art Fund 52.286

This hand-colored woodblock print was designed for popular use, and its bright hues would have enlivened homes that may have had little other decoration. Its illustrations helped to mark important days, making it easier to interpret, particularly for those who could not read. Sundays are noted by orange triangles, while major Christian feast days are marked by images of relevant saints or other symbols. The calendar also marks the moon's cycles and recommends good days for planting. On the left side of the sheet, images illustrating appropriate activities for each month accompany the names of the months themselves.



## Fashioning Identity

In early modern Europe, clothing and accessories were closely tied to identity. Sumptuary laws restricted the amount and types of luxury goods that could be worn by each social class and profession, formalizing the status of materials like gold and velvet already conferred because of their cost. Personal adornment was also a key vehicle for decorative motifs. As the most mobile form of ornament, the designs and patterns on clothing and accessories were transmitted and transformed as their wearers traveled about.

Italian

*Textile*, 1500s

Gift of Richard Greenleaf 48.268

After its development in the sixteenth century, lace quickly became an important, even indispensable, part of aristocratic attire. Lace denoted luxury, as it was time-consuming and difficult to make and was restricted to the upper classes by sumptuary laws. The fragment is an example of *reticella*, a lace made by removing threads from linen cloth and replacing them with intricate needlework patterns. The rosette-like pattern seen here is characteristic of early *reticella*.



# RISD MUSEUM

Italian

*Pendant, 1600s*

Silver; Stone

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.730

Pendant crosses became rather sizeable in the fifteenth century, due to changes in fashion that promoted the wearing of such objects outside of one's clothing rather than tucked underneath it. Both men and women wore cross pendants, whose materials conveyed status and wealth as well as piety. This pendant is made of gilt, a substitute for gold, and may have been worn by a person of lesser rank.



Italian

*Hand warmer, ca. 1580*

Brass (alloy)

Museum Works of Art Fund 49.313

Smartly constructed, yet highly practical, this hinged sphere contains a well for hot coal/oil and a wick, suspended in a gimbal to prevent spillage, while distributing heat to the engraved surface. Handwarmers were a common accessory for church services and other outings done in cold weather.



English

*Box, 1700s*

Enamel; metal

Gift of Elizabeth Hazard and Mrs. Edward W. McVitty 60.044.19

Although believed to have medicinal benefits, snuff, a form of tobacco, was prized more as a symbol of affluence than for its effects. Extravagant lords and ladies coordinated a snuffbox to each outfit, and by 1800 twelve distinct steps of snuff taking were known throughout Europe. These included rapping the snuff box and presenting it to company, before finally "snuffing by precision with both nostrils, without any grimace," and closing the snuff box with a flourish.



# RISD MUSEUM

English

*Box*, 1700s

enamel; copper

Gift of Elizabeth Hazard and Mrs. Edward W. McVitty 60.044.82

An 18th century form of makeup, patches of black velvet gummed to the face, neck or breasts imitating natural "beauty marks" was a favorite mode of self-expression for men and women. Guidelines for wearing patches ensured that all of society knew, for example, that a heart by one's lip indicated a coquette and that a patch on the left cheek signified Whig sympathies.



English

*Box*, 1700s

Enamel on metal

Gift of Elizabeth Hazard and Mrs. Edward W. McVitty 60.044.16

An 18th century form of makeup, patches of black velvet gummed to the face, neck or breasts imitating natural "beauty marks" was a favorite mode of self-expression for men and women. Guidelines for wearing patches ensured that all of society knew, for example, that a heart by one's lip indicated a coquette and that a patch on the left cheek signified Whig sympathies.



German

*Book cover*, 1500-1550

Silver with niello and gilding

Gift of Messrs. E. & A. Silberman 34.016

The medallions and borders on this book cover, as well as the ridges on its spine, are \*niello\* work. They were made by incising the images of animals, leaves, and wispy feathers into silver, then filling the hollows with a darker metal alloy. The rest of the cover is filigree, created by cutting silver into thin strips, then winding the strips into vine-like patterns.





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Spanish

*Rapier*, ca. 1680

wire

Gift of George Henry Warren, Jr. 58.094.5

The rapier is a sword with a long, thin blade, particularly popular in 17th century Spain and used primarily for thrusting. The blade is marked by its place of manufacture, "Ihn Solingen," one of the foremost producers of sword blades at the time. By the late sixteenth century the rapier was part of every day civilian dress and sumptuary law dictated that gentlemen wear a sword in public. Seen as a costume accessory, weaponry designs became highly embellished. This rapier's hilt is chiseled with interlace ornament, similar to the pattern seen in the *Sixth Knot*.



Italian

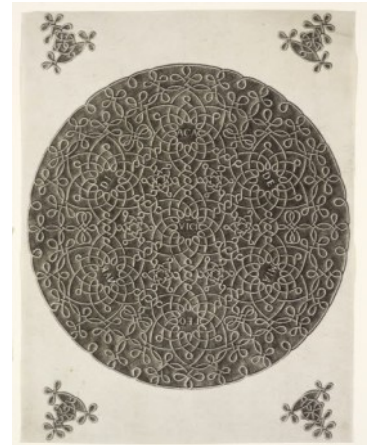
Leonardo da Vinci, Italian, 1452-1519

*Knot Pattern (The Fifth Knot)*, ca. 1495-1498

Engraving on cream laid paper

Museum Works of Art Fund 47.666

This rare engraving, inscribed at the center "ACADEMIA LEONARDI VI[N]CI," is one of a set of six similarly intricate circular patterns attributed to an otherwise unknown "Academy of Leonardo da Vinci," which likely referred to an informal gathering of artists and intellectuals at the court of Milan. For Renaissance theorists, the circle represented natural law and the harmony of the cosmos; therefore, the engraving's interlace design also reflected the master's treatment of art as a science, worthy of academic inquiry.



Italian

*Textile fragment*, Late 1500s - Early 1600s

Silk

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 06.312

In early modern Europe, wearing luxurious Chinese and Italian silks displayed both wealth and sophistication. The Ming dynasty Chinese textile is a tapestry weave called *kesi*. Primarily characterized by its fluid figural compositions, *kesi* was often used to decorate robes, wall hangings and book covers. In this piece of *kesi*, the phoenix and peony are auspicious symbols. Europeans were fascinated by the beauty of these figural motifs, but were generally far less interested in their meaning, as can be seen in the formal pattern of peacocks and lions on this Italian velvet dating from the late sixteenth to early seventeenth century.



# RISD MUSEUM

American

*Textile fragment*, 1368-1644

Silk and metallic thread

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 16.007

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English

*Étui*, 1740-1750

Pinchbeck metal (alloy of copper and zinc), gilt

Gift of Sylvia Rossman Galkin 72.176

While highly useful, *étui* were also a means to show off elaborate decorative work. The loop at the top of the kit suggests that it could have hung very visibly from the chatelaine hook at a woman's waist.



Johann Andreas Pfeffel I, German, 1674-1748

Friedrich Jakob Morisson, Austrian, fl. 1693-1697

*Plate 7 from Unterschiedliche neue Inventionen von Geschmuckh, Zierathen und Galanterien (Various New Inventions for Jewelry, Ornaments, and Trinkets), Unterschiedliche Neue Inventionen von Geschmuckh..., ca. 1700*

Engraving

Anonymous gift 47.772.7



Prints of design and ornament such as this one provided patterns for objects such as book covers and jewelry. The title page for this series

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of ornamental prints clearly advertised the upscale, international market the publisher had in mind.

Italian

*Textile Fragment*, 1450-1500

Silk velvet (cut wrap pile) voided and brocaded with silver gilt filé with bouclé details

Museum Appropriation Fund 30.002

Velvet was an item of extreme luxury in early modern Europe, and rich weaves with real gold thread and deep silk pile clothed many important figures. This fragment is notable for its bold pomegranate design, which is inspired by free-flowing, asymmetrical Asian motifs.



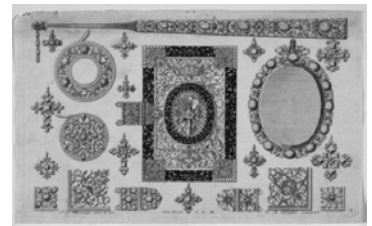
Johann Andreas Pfeffel I, German, 1674-1748

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*Plate 3 from Unterschiedliche neue Inventionen von Geschmuckh, Zierathen und Galanterien (Various New Inventions for Jewelry, Ornaments, and Trinkets), Unterschiedliche Neue Inventionen von Geschmuckh..., ca. 1700*

Engraving

Anonymous gift 47.772.3



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Wenceslaus Hollar, Bohemian, 1607-1677

*The Four Seasons*, 1641

Etching

Gift of Henry D. Sharpe 49.079

## Hosting and Boasting

The display of material possessions was a tangible representation of a family's lineage, personal accomplishments, and social status. Luxurious materials, exotic patterns, and quality craftsmanship all expressed wealth and sophistication. Coveted objects were displayed so that guests could view them while dining, sipping tea, or playing cards.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Italian, 1720-1778

*Plate 32: Chimneypiece in the Egyptian style, from Diverse Maniere d'Adornare i Cammini... (Diverse ways of Ornamenting Chimneypieces...), 1769*

Etching on cream laid paper

Gift of Mr. Elisha C. Durfee 63.066.32



Piranesi created this fireplace print as part of a series of unusual chimney pieces and other design prints. In his words, "An artist... must not content himself with copying faithfully the ancients, but studying their works he ought to show himself of an inventive, and, I had almost said, of a creating Genius; And by prudently combining the Grecian, the Tuscan, and the Egyptian together, he ought to open himself a road to the finding out of new ornaments and new manners." Other artists and artisans would have used such books to plan projects.

Virgilius Solis the elder, German, 1514-1562

*King of Lions, Playing Cards, mid 1500s*

Engraving

Gift of Miss Ellen D. Sharpe 49.161.13



After 1420, playing cards became an important part of the print market in Europe. These cards would have been affixed to a sturdy backing, either wood or paper, to make them functional. The printmaker, Virgil Solis, titled the suits according to traditional German symbols, though a different animal marks each suit. Here, for instance, lions represent the suit of diamonds (*Schelen* or *Schellen*).



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Virgilius Solis the elder, German, 1514-1562  
*Queen of Lions, Playing Cards*, mid 1500s  
Engraving  
Gift of Miss Ellen D. Sharpe 49.161.12



Virgilius Solis the elder, German, 1514-1562  
*Jack of Lions, Playing Cards*, mid 1500s  
Engraving  
Gift of Miss Ellen D. Sharpe 49.161.11



Virgilius Solis the elder, German, 1514-1562  
*Lions VII, Playing Cards*, mid 1500s  
Engraving  
Gift of Miss Ellen D. Sharpe 49.161.7





# RISD MUSEUM

Virgilius Solis the elder, German, 1514-1562  
*Lions VIII, Playing Cards* mid 1500s  
Engraving  
Gift of Miss Ellen D. Sharpe 49.161.8



Virgilius Solis the elder, German, 1514-1562  
*Lions X, Playing Cards*, mid 1500s  
Engraving  
Gift of Miss Ellen D. Sharpe 49.161.10



Worcester Porcelain Company, English, 1751- present  
*Teapot*, ca. 1770  
Porcelain with underglaze blue, glaze, overglaze enamel, and gilding  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sigmund J. Katz 57.198.1

During the eighteenth century tea sets were not only containers for a prized beverage from the East, but were also themselves exotic objects. This set, decorated with chrysanthemums, a Japanese imperial emblem, is enameled over the glaze in the *Imari* palette of red, gold and green.



# RISD MUSEUM

Virgilius Solis the elder, German, 1514-1562  
*Lions IX, Playing Cards*, mid 1500s  
 Engraving  
 Gift of Miss Ellen D. Sharpe 49.161.9



Jeanne Deny, French, 1749-after 1815  
 Jean Baptiste Pillement, French, 1728-1808  
 Charles Leviez  
*Cahier de Six Baraques Chinoises*, 1770  
 Etching  
 Museum Works of Art Fund 50.234.4



Jean-Baptiste Pillement, the artist who created the drawing for this print, was considered to be one of the finest designers of chinoiserie engraving during the rococo period. Pillement's designs appealed to audiences all over Europe. Visualizing the Orient as a whimsical place devoted to luxury and play, he depicted dainty, weightless figures balancing on the tips of their toes and whole structures supported by a few twigs. The compactness of Pillement's scenes allowed them to be easily used to decorate a wide array of objects, from painted chairs to marquetry, porcelain and textiles.

British  
*Stumpwork picture*, 1650-1674  
 Silk and linen  
 Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 42.290



Framed embroidery was a fashionable item of wall decoration in seventeenth century England. Stumpwork, which usually featured exotic flora and fauna, combined the English passion for gardens with an interest in eastern design themes. This example can be interpreted as an iconographic message in which each flower represents a virtue and each animal represents one of the senses. For example, the rose symbolizes beauty and the honeysuckle symbolizes faithfulness. These designs, found in pattern books and prints, were

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both delightful and instructive to a young woman nearing the age of marriage. Embroidery bespoke the amount of leisure time at the disposal of a wealthy young woman, and needlework was also considered to be the best way to keep idle female hands occupied.

Girolamo Campagna, Italian, 1549-1625

*Door Knocker*, ca. 1570-1599

Bronze

Museum Works of Art Fund 55.091

In the late Renaissance, elite Italian sculptors such as Campagna expanded their repertoire of monumental works and began to make elaborate, high-end household objects like candlesticks, salt cellars, and doorknockers for upper-class clients. This knocker is meant to impress visitors with the status of a family even before they entered the home. Its ornamentation probably refers to the family's coat of arms; the double-headed eagle is a symbol of power and was the emblem of the Holy Roman Empire, which was in control of parts of Italy in the 16th century. Two fish hold up a gorgon's head, which was a traditional symbol used to ward away evil from a home or temple.



English

*Tea Caddy*, ca. 1740-1750

Burled walnut, walnut veneer, brass inlay

Gift of the Estate of W. Phelps Warren 85.075.13

In the eighteenth century tea was such a valuable commodity that it was kept in a locked box, or tea caddy, to which only the mistress of the house would have a key. The intricacies of this tea caddy, including its hidden lock and secret, spring-loaded compartments, testify to the preciousness of its contents. The lock, in the shape of an asymmetrical cartouche, and the mechanical lock catch are typical of brass inlaid furniture of the mid-eighteenth century. The style of these elements on this particular piece associate it with the work of the English cabinetmaker John Channon.

# RISD MUSEUM

Worcester Porcelain Company, English, 1751- present

*Teacup*, ca. 1770

Porcelain with underglaze blue, glaze, overglaze enamel, and gilding

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sigmund J. Katz 57.198.27

During the eighteenth century tea sets were not only containers for a prized beverage from the East, but were also themselves exotic objects. This set, decorated with chrysanthemums, a Japanese imperial emblem, is enameled over the glaze in the *Imari* palette of red, gold and green.



Worcester Porcelain Company, English, 1751- present

*Saucer*, ca. 1770

Porcelain with underglaze blue, glaze, overglaze enamel, and gilding

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sigmund J. Katz 57.198.13



Louis Marin Bonnet, French, 1736-1793

Petitpierre Freres & Cie., French, 1760 - 1791

*Panurge in the the Isle of Lanterns*, ca. 1785

Cotton; plain weave, copperplate printed

Gift of Mrs. Constance Wharton Smith 58.165.54

Chinoiserie designs were much in demand during the 18th-century vogue for cotton or linen textiles that were block or copperplate printed with floral or narrative motifs. These were used as expensive wall coverings and bed hangings to achieve a *décor à la chinoise* by French royalty and by other wealthy Europeans. The design on this toile shows vignettes from a European opera based on exotic themes. Such performances, enormously popular throughout the period, usually involved simple plots with actors dressed in elaborate costumes, though to be the garb of the elite of the East.



English

*Charger*, mid 1700s

Tin-glazed earthenware; underglazing

Anonymous gift 1995.078.3

The exotic images, high-quality workmanship, and rarity of porcelain ignited a European obsession with oriental ceramics beginning in the 16th century. Prized for its simultaneous delicacy and strength, porcelain was a precious luxury, especially since Europeans didn't





# RISD MUSEUM

know the secret of its manufacture until 1711. European manufacturers were driven to create imitations, such as this tin-glazed earthenware charger, in order to satisfy the high demand.

Chinese  
*Plate*, 1780  
Porcelain with underglaze blue and enamels  
Bequest of Mrs. Hope Brown Russell 09.422

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Andreas Blytt, Norwegian, 1754-1825  
*Incense burner*, ca. 1795  
Silver  
Bequest of Mrs. Hope Brown Russell 09.719

This incense burner is a European adaptation of eastern ornament, combining the exotic palm tree with neoclassical motifs such as wreaths and lion masks. Blytt's clever design made the experience of burning incense pleasing not only to the nose but also to the eye, as smoke rose from the vase at the bottom and exited out the top between the leaves.



## Learning Curves

As global exploration opened new geographic horizons, so too did intellectual horizons widen and education become more important. Increasingly prosperous clientele demanded printed pictures and texts not only to learn about ideas from antiquity, but also to learn about architecture, design, and ornamentation and to stay abreast of current trends. Both objects used for study, such as desks, and objects of study, such as prints, became increasingly luxurious.



# RISD MUSEUM

Albrecht Dürer, German, 1471-1528

*Portrait of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 1526  
engraving

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.1131

Dürer was widely regarded as the greatest German scholar of the Renaissance and man of exceptional learning. He immersed himself not only in art, but also in theology and in the "new learning" of humanism. He was a great admirer of his fellow humanist, Erasmus, who upon receiving this portrait remarked that it did not look at all like him. This is not surprising, as the engraving was based solely on a sketch Dürer had made six years earlier. Tellingly, part of the Greek inscription says of Erasmus, "His writings will present a better picture."



Lucas van Leyden, Netherlandish, ca. 1494-1533

*Panel of Ornament with Two Sirens*, 1528

Engraving on paper

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth, Jr. 50.325

Van Leyden drew his inspiration for these designs from the work of Italian printmakers, but projected his own sense of creative fantasy into them.



English

*Medallions Representing Personifications of Four of the Seven the Liberal Arts: Arithmetic*, 1625-1675

Silk satin weave embroidered with silk, metallic-wrapped yarn, and metal coils (satin stitch, laid-and-couched work)

Museum Works of Art Fund 51.141



# RISD MUSEUM

English

*Medallions Representing Personifications of Four of the Seven the Liberal Arts: Geometry, 1625-1675*

Silk satin weave embroidered with silk, metallic-wrapped yarn, and metal coils (satin stitch, laid-and-couched work)

Museum Works of Art Fund 51.140

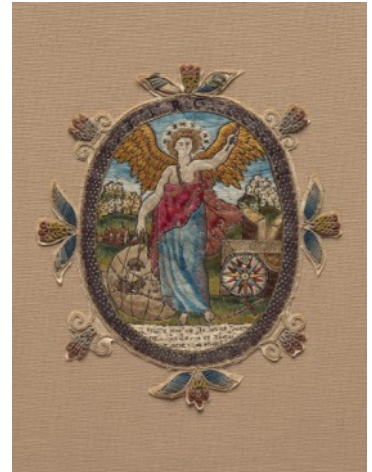


English

*Medallions Representing Personifications of Four of the Seven the Liberal Arts: Astronomy, 1625-1675*

Silk satin weave embroidered with silk, metallic-wrapped yarn, and metal coils (satin stitch, laid-and-couched work)

Museum Works of Art Fund 51.139



Peter Flötner, German, ca. 1485-1546

*Grotesque Ornament, 1546*

woodcut

Gift of Henry D. Sharpe 48.124

Grotesque ornament prints influenced the work of printmakers and artisans, and also provided erudite individuals with bizarre and cleverly arranged elements for contemplation. The excavation of Nero's *Domus Area* (Golden House) in Rome in the 1480s and 90s unveiled unusual motifs to artists, who quickly disseminated them through architectural decoration and prints. In this whimsical woodcut of 1546, Plotner, who was also a cabinetmaker, showed his pride in his woodworking abilities by signing the print with his initials and with the tools of his trade, a hammer and chisel.



# RISD MUSEUM

English

*Medallions Representing Personifications of Four of the Seven the Liberal Arts: Rhetoric, 1625-1675*

Silk satin weave embroidered with silk, metallic-wrapped yarn, and metal coils (satin stitch, laid-and-couched work)

Museum Works of Art Fund 51.142



Lucas van Leyden, Netherlandish, ca. 1494-1533

*Ornament with Two Sphinxes and a Winged Man, 1528*

Engraving on light weight cream laid paper

Gift of Murray S. Danforth, Jr. 50.324



Van Leyden drew his inspiration for these designs from the work of Italian printmakers, but projected his own sense of creative fantasy into them.

Virgilius Solis the elder, German, 1514-1562

*Ettlicher Gutter Conterfectischer Laubwerck Art, 1553*

Engraving

Gift of Murray S. Danforth, Jr. 50.322



Virgil Solis regularly borrowed figures and compositions from German and Italian masters, and in turn, artisans often used prints such as this one as models for object decoration. The scrolling and foliated vines in this print are a form of *\*rinceaux\**, a motif used since antiquity for ornamenting a variety of forms from furniture to architecture.

Boas Ulrich, German, 1550-1623

*Woman's Writing Box, ca. 1590*

Probably ebony, silver, brass, moss agate, gilding

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 48.409

This ostentatiously luxurious yet mechanically practical woman's writing box is an example of the sort of decorative production that accompanied the new emphasis on women's literacy. The actual writing surface, hidden in the molded base beneath the drop-front of the box, pulls out completely, while the inkwells nest inside in the top of the box. The allegorical figures on the inside front panel suggest a relationship between learning and morality. Justice is flanked on the



# RISD MUSEUM

left by Diana, the champion of chastity, and on the right by Acteon, who was punished for spying on her as she bathed. Indicative of ambivalent attitudes towards female virtue, the medallion on the inside of the box's drop-front shows the blacksmith Vulcan with his consort, the amorous Venus who cuckolded him.

Wenceslaus Hollar, Bohemian, 1607-1677

*Muscarum Scaraboreorum Vermiumque Varie Figure & Formae ... ex Collectione Arundelian*, 1646

Etching

Museum Membership Fund 70.089

These insect prints, which Hollar derived from drawings he made from his patron's private collection of insects, embody the printmaker's visual approach to learning about the natural world.



Johann Jacob Schübler, German, 1689-1742

Johann August Corvinus, German, 1682-1738

Jacob Andreas Fridrich the Younger, German, 1714-1779

Georg Lichtenstecher, 1700-1780

Johann Georg Pintz, 1697-1768

Johann Balthazar Probst, German, 1673-1750

Johann Matthias Steudlin, 18th century

Jeremias Wolff

*JOHANN JACOB SCHUBLERS ERSTE (--ZWANTIGSTE) AUSGAB (ERSTE (-VIERTE) AUSS GABE DES ZWEYTEN THEILS) SEINES VORHABENDEN,*  
ca. 1735

Engraving on paper

Mary B. Jackson Fund 47.026

Schübler, originally a mathematician, later turned to designing home furnishings for the German-speaking market.



# RISD MUSEUM

Johann Jacob Schübler, German, 1689-1742

*Design for a Corner Desk and Chair*, early 1700s

Graphite and pen and ink on heavy wove paper

Museum purchase: gift of Westcote H. Chesebrough, Mrs. Murray S. Danforth, Mrs. Davenport West, by exchange, and bequest of Martha B. Lisle, by exchange 84.165.1

Schübler, originally a mathematician, later turned to designing home furnishings for the German-speaking market.



German

*Writing Desk (Schreibtisch)*, ca. 1590

Walnut, burlled walnut, ebonized walnut, satinwood, pear wood, and pine with iron

Anonymous gift 75.023

Richly decorated cabinets like this one evolved from simple writing desks. They were used for keeping prints, souvenirs, and curiosities in addition to correspondence. For the intellectually inclined, amassing these collections was as important an activity as reading or writing. The wrangelschrank is itself a precious possession -- its beauty and high-quality craftsmanship made it a very luxurious object.

