

For Princes or Maids? - Provenance, form and value of serpentine at Skokloster castle

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Greger Sundin. For Princes or Maids? - Provenance, form and value of serpentine at Skokloster castle. 2011. hprints-00556194

HAL Id: hprints-00556194

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Preprint submitted on 15 Jan 2011

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For Princes or Maids?

Provenance, form and value of serpentine at Skokloster castle

Greger Sundin



Konstvetenskapliga institutionen vid Stockholms universitet
HT 2010

ABSTRACT

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Semester: Autumn 2010

Level: ☐ Bachelor ☒ Master (1 year) ☐ Master (2 years)
☐ Licentiate ☐ Doctoral

Skokloster castle, Sweden, houses a group of more than fifty objects in serpentine stone, acquired during the 17th century. The group is generally called Wrangels fältservis [Wrangel's field service], referring to field marshall Carl Gustaf Wrangel (1613-1676).

The, in many aspects, unresearched material is here approached through the field of material culture studies. The thesis is based on a three-partite approach towards the material, in which the first is the result of actual handling and examination of the objects, paired with a comparative analysis of similar objects regarding dating and influences. The second is a theoretical study of form and serpentine matter, and why the serpentine objects share so many form elements with metal artifacts. The third is based on inventory research and aspects of value, both monetary and cultural. The ascribed value of the group varied over time, from being used as kitchen utensils in the 17th and 18th century, to be regarded as private museum pieces in the 19th and 20th century. The various attitudes have left marks on the objects, both physical (as in level of attention given to repairs etc.) and in inventory matter (as in location and descriptive detail), which can be studied and reveal information otherwise unaccessible.

Keywords: Serpentine, Skokloster castle, baroque, material culture, form, transference, value, status, Zöblitz, Carl Gustaf Wrangel, applied art.

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Figure 1. The seal of the Serpentine turner's guild in Zöblitz, Saxony.

Introduction

Background and aim

Skokloster castle, now a listed building and a national museum located 60 kilometres northwest of Stockholm, houses a group of circa 52[1] objects in serpentine, acquired during the 17th century. This is by far the largest group of 17th century serpentine objects that still exist as a group today, consisting of tankards, plates, various canisters, cruet stands and candlesticks. These objects are normally not on display and much of their early history is obscure. The group is generally called *Wrangels fältservis* [Wrangel's field service], referring to field marshall Carl Gustaf Wrangel (1613-1676), commissioner of Skokloster castle and a renowned military commander in the Thirty years' war. The earliest written reference is, however, the 1716 Skokloster inventory, forty years after Wrangel's death.

The main areas where serpentine was produced and used in applied arts, was in the now German province of Saxony, and foremost around the town Zöblitz.[2] Written sources referring to the serpentine craft are known from the 15th century, and the earliest known dated object is from 1590. The stone has a snakeskin-like pattern (hence the name), and was, among other things, considered to have the magical effect of neutralising poison. A more physical effect was how the porous stone cooled a contained liquid by condensation.

It was a high-status trade. August I (1526-1586), Elector of Saxony, referred to himself himself as *Serpentindrechsler* [serpentine turner], and serpentine vessels were set in exquisite silver and gold mountings by Augsburg goldsmiths. A 1665 edict stated that the rare red serpentine was reserved exclusively for the court to be used as tableware.[3] Serpentine was the concern of princes.

Even so, it was not a material only used for curiosities and splendour, especially not towards the middle of the 17th century and onwards. A wide range of domestic objects was produced with the Saxony burghers in mind.

The serpentine maker's guild in Zöblitz was at its peak 1751 with more than 70 masters, but soon after, the material became more peripheral as porcelain surpassed it in practicality and use.[4]

When first being presented the objects at Skokloster, three things immediately struck me. First, why is it called *Wrangels fältservis*? It doesn't particularly look like a singular unit, and is it even possible to trace back to Carl Gustaf Wrangel himself? Second, how come the forms of these objects in stone look so similar to objects in silver, brass and pewter? Third, why were these seemingly prestigious objects located during the first hundred odd years in the Skokloster kitchen area, to be later installed in a hall in the second floor apartments? It launches questions of value and appreciation. With this in mind, the aim of this thesis can be condensed into three main foci:

---

1 This is the number of currently present objects that can be traced back to the 1716 inventory.

2 A competing quarry opened in Limbach during the mid 18th century (Hoyer, 1995, pp. 94-96), and a variety, called precious serpentine [*Edelserpentin*], was mined in Burgenland, Austria. I do, however, in this thesis work from the premise that the objects are made in Saxony. The various stone patterns/colours paired with pewter hallmarks from Marienberg (six kilometres from Zöblitz) implies this. No technical/chemical examination in this regard has been made.

3 *Von nun ab darf der rote Serpentin nur für den Hof, für Tafelgeschirr verwendet werden*. Quoted in von Philippovich, Eugen, *Kuriositäten, Antiquitäten – Ein Handbuch für Sammler und Liebhaber*, Klinkhardt & Biermann, Braunschweig, 1966, p. 305.

4 von Philippovich, 1966. p. 305.

i. Establishing the early history of the group of serpentine objects at Skokloster castle.
ii. Discussing the adoption of form in serpentine from other materials, more specifically the period ca. 1550-1750, with the Skokloster serpentine objects as a case study.
iii. Analysing the transformation of value of serpentine within the Skokloster setting over time.

These three foci are interlinked through their concern for the *object*. Much of the early history is to be found in examining and experiencing the object, so does form, which can be explained through a material discourse and form transference. Even inventories, as originals, are objects on their own accord. Added remarks in pencil with a different handwriting tell us something (someone wanted the inventory to be up to date etc.). Furthermore, traces of wear, use and localisation can reveal how their owners valued them.

I have experienced very much generosity from the Skokloster staff in terms of access, which has resulted in an extensive photographic material. As most works on applied arts shows typical studio photographs, I have deliberately included many detail-images. This is part of an ambition to come closer to the object and the material.

Previous research and literature

On serpentine, and especially Saxon serpentine, there are a few publications of importance. The initial work on Zöblitz serpentine was Schmidt's *Geschichte der Serpentin-Industrie zu Zöblitz im sächsischen Erzgebirge* from 1868. This book was in turn the basis for the encyclopædic work of Eugen von Philippovich on curiosities from 1966, *Kuriositäten, Antiquitäten – Ein Handbuch für Sammler und Liebhaber*. Eva Maria Hoyer was the first scholar who published primary research since Schmidt, in the doctoral dissertation *Zur Materialgeschichte des sächsischen Serpentins von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts* from 1983, which was later followed by her comprehensive exhibition catalogue *Sächsischer Serpentin: ein Stein und seine Verwendung* at the Grassi Museum Leipzig 1995. It investigates serpentine production and application in Saxony, and do also discuss the Skokloster collection to some part. A few of the Skokloster pieces were lent to the exhibition and are represented in the catalogue. Five years later was the illustrated catalogue of the serpentine Collection Jahn [*Sammlung Jahn*] published, with an introductory essay by Gert-Dieter Ulferts. The essay was based on Hoyer with added notes on the Jahn collection. For readers of this thesis, I warmly recommend Hoyer and Ulferts for an in-depth study on Saxony serpentine and its production.

Some basic Skokloster in-house research has also been available to me during the work of this thesis. This has been used when applicable, after confirming its validity by either personal examination of the objects, or by finding it supported in secondary sources.

The research field of hallmarks is not a recent one, with the majority of work made during the first half of the 20th century. Swedish pewter marks and makers are listed in Albert Löfgren's *Det svenska tenngjutarehantverkets historia* from the 1930's, with additional and revised research published by Birger Bruzelli 1967 and 1978. German marks are listed in Erwin Hintze's *Die Deutschen Zinngießer und ihre Marken* from 1921.

For comparative object studies, I have used published catalogues of private or museum collections (*Rijksmuseum - Amsterdam, Victoria & Albert museum – London, Kunsthistorisches Museum – Vienna, Sammlung Jahn, The Royal Danish Kunstkammer, auction houses etc.*), and their catalogue entries. Alexander O Curle published 1926 an article on the typological development of candlesticks, which I have used to set the Skokloster candlesticks into context.

Regarding inventory research, apart from the primary sources (the handwritten inventories for Skokloster and the Brahe family now in the National Archives of Sweden), William Karlson published in the 1940's an annotated compilation of 17th century Swedish inventories, *Stå t och vardag i stormaktstidens herremanshem*. It is centered around different types of objects with examples from a rich selection of archive material. Lena Cowen Olin has written about interpreting English probate inventories from the 16th/17th century, and many of the concerns pointed out by her, such as the importance of who is doing the appraisal and underlying motifs, are definitely applicable in identifying the weaknesses in Swedish inventory study as well.

The 19th century process of refurbishing Skokloster is described by Ove Hidemark and Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark in *Eko av historien*, and I use their work to enlighten the period in which the serpentine objects were reassessed. Eva Maria Hoyer's book was published the same year as theirs, which would explain why some of her presumptions regarding Skokloster history are dated and not considering their research.

Method and limitations

The thesis is based on a three-partite approach towards the material. The first chapter is the result of the actual handling and examination of the objects, paired with a comparative analysis of similar objects regarding dating and influences. The second is a theoretical study of form and serpentine matter, and the third is based on inventory research and aspects of value, both monetary and cultural. The elements involved are thus:

Primary material: Objects made of serpentine in Skokloster castle, and present in the earliest inventory from 1716. The Skokloster castle building itself. Archival sources (especially inventories) at Riksarkivet in Stockholm [*National archives of Sweden,* abbr. RA].

Secondary material: Republished and/or interpreted inventory listings, photographs of other serpentine (and comparable) objects and previous research on said objects.

The primary material have been observed and examined on site by me, and physical aspects recorded[5]. Hallmarks were interpreted via valid literature.

In terms of dating, I have compared the objects to similar objects of known age (through inscriptions, hallmarks etc.). These are taken into consideration in the catalogue texts in chapter *Typological analysis*. Objects that were included in Hoyer, 1995, have been given a suggested date by her. These are forwarded here unless otherwise discussed.

As the Skokloster collection is limited to a specific set of serpentine objects from a specific period in time (the 17th century), the natural limitations of this thesis are set. In a wider sense, the period in focus for this thesis is 1550-1750, mainly due to the fact that existing serpentine objects dated prior the late 16th century are very rare, and that the material looses in importance in the mid-18th century.

Comparative objects in other materials can be of other dates, as form tends to survive over time. Moreover, the thesis is focused on applied arts, not figural sculptures nor architectural application. When searching for comparable objects, it is not too far fetched to look at period Swedish pewter, brass and silver artefacts. Not only was Swedish territory extended into large areas of present day Germany, but German influence on Swedish artisanal practices was also high. Journeymen[6] of the guilds had contact with each other, and techniques and models at large were shared.

[5] All objects are, for example, re-measured, and previous errors have been corrected.

[6] Note that the practice of journeymen was not developed in the Zöblitz serpentine turner's guild, since it was the only guild of its kind during the 17th century. Ulferts, Gert-Dieter, *Sächsischer Serpentin: Sammlung Jahn – Kunstsammlung zu Weimar*, G-und-H-Verlag, Berlin, 2000, p. 22.

Material culture studies

There are several theoretical angles on the Skokloster collection that would be valid. Seeing the collection as promoting capital on a cultural field in a Bourdieun sense, or analysing how the objects and material were used performatively by the 17th century man, would both be rewarding. I have, however, disregarded these theories as a standpoint in this particular case for one reason; they are not predominantly interested in the factual objects, but what the objects *represent* to a subject. My concern is primarily what the *objects* tell us, if we just listen close enough and ask the right questions. Note however, not only what they tell us about themselves, but also what they reveal about their cultural contexts and settings. Cue material culture studies (MCS).

The origin of MCS can be found in archaeology and social anthropology, used as a method when there has been no written records on the material. The foundation of MCS is the focus on what the object itself reveals, rather than to just see it as an illustration to conclusions drawn elsewhere, usually from written sources. The application of MCS in art history was pioneered by Jules David Prown, professor emeritus in art history at Harvard, mainly in a series of articles in *Winterthur Portfolio* during the 1980's. These articles were republished in the anthology *Art as evidence* 2001, where both a theoretical approach towards MCS, and actual studies can be found (mainly on North American paintings, but also on applied arts). Prown himself defines MCS as:

> Material culture is just what it says it is – namely, the manifestations of culture through material productions. And the study of material culture is the study of material to understand culture, to discover the beliefs – the values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions – of a particular community or society at a given time. The underlying premise is that human-made objects reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of the individuals who commissioned, fabricated, purchased, or used them and, by extension, the beliefs of the larger society to which these individuals belonged. Material culture is thus an object-based branch of cultural anthropology or cultural history. [...] An artifact is something that happpened in the past, but, unlike other historical events, it continues to exist in our own time.[7]

The interdisciplinary background shines through in terminology and in concepts such as *metaphors*, *the social life of things*, *object biographies* and *object life cycles*. In Scott G. Ortman's article *Conceptual metaphor in the archaeological record: Methods and example from the American southwest* from 2000, he uses a theoretical framework centred around the metaphor, borrowed from cognitive linguistics, and applies it on North American Mesa Verde pottery from ca. 1000-1300 a.d. The concept of metaphor is used in explaining why pottery was decorated with patterns originating from coiled basketry, thus claiming the metaphor *Pottery is a textile* to be a vivid notion in Mesa Verde cultural awareness. In my thesis, the implied metaphor is *Serpentine is metal*, which is discussed in chapter *Forms transferred*.

The social life of things[8] concerns the various meanings and values an object is ascribed during its existence. From having a commodity status at the shelf of the artisan's workshop, the status transforms into what need it may satisfy for the buyer. As time passes, other values adhere to the object, while the original economic value lessens in importance and will eventually even be forgotten. Sentiments of the owner can at this stage mean more to his/her valuation and appreciation of the object than any economic consideration. A decommodification would have occurred. If the object eventually would re-enter the commercial market via an auction sale for example, it would be recommodified, but with an added commodified provenance.

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7 Prown, Jules David, *Art as Evidence – Writings on Art and Material Culture*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2001, pp. 220-221.

8 See Kopytoff, Igor, »The cultural biography of things: commoditization as a process« in *The social life of things: Commodities in a cultural perspective*, Appadurai, Arjun (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006.

The concepts of *object biographies* and *life cycles* are both based on the different phases of an object in time. The trajectory is normally defined as progression through production, acquisition, consumption, and disposal. The life cycle model focuses on what is generic in the trajectory rather than any peculiarities, whereas the object biography model is more concerned with the specific object, and is by this limited to discussing objects that in some respect are unique and can be followed over time.[9] In the case of this thesis, the two models complement each other. The object life cycle concerns the serpentine objects in general, while it is possible to follow the individual Skokloster objects via an object biographical approach. Both of the models work as a theoretical underpinning throughout this thesis.

Values are not inherent in an object, but through its' various meanings to owners, inheritors, craftsmen and surrounding environment, values are assigned. The whereabouts of these objects over time, all reflect status and cultural considerations through means regular art history would not completely grasp.

The thesis is not, nor intends to be, a complete material culture analysis of the Skokloster objects, but rather an approach towards the material in which questions regarding appreciation, values, form transference and provenances can be raised. MCS is not in frequent use among Swedish art history scholars, and by using it here, I hope to somewhat promote the field among my colleagues.

Definitions and terminology

The terms "form" and "shape" are used as referring to the composite of various functional bearing elements, e.g. the form of a chair consists of legs, a seat and a back support. "Style" is used as describing the more decorative elements. The form of a chair is quite consistent though centuries, but the style varies according to form, taste, economic power etc. "Model" and "type" are used as defining a generic form *and* style of an object.

The terms "objects", "artefacts", "items" and "things" are used interchangeably throughout this work. However, "commodity" is used when the object is referred to as a commercial entity, rather than as a physical/cultural one.

In the chapter *Forms transferred*, "archetype" is used as defined in New Oxford American Dictionary, "An *archetype* is a perfect and unchanging form that existing things or people can approach but never duplicate", and not in a Jungian sense.

"Mimesis" [from μίμησις (*mimeisthai)*, to imitate], is borrowed from the field of æsthetics, and is here used in the transferred Platonic sense of imitating nature.

When referring to the different rooms at Skokloster castle, the original names for the individual rooms are used (e.g. *Geneve, Tower room*), as normally done in the different inventories. For more specific referrals, or when rooms have changed names or functions, the system established by dr. Erik Andrén in his dissertation *Skokloster – Ett slottsbygge under stormaktstiden* from 1948 is used (e.g. *3:A*, where the numeral indicates the floor level). This is the system of the digital inventory of Skokloster's castle today.

Individual Skoklster objects are referred to with their current inventory number (e.g. 3610), and the various inventories from Skokloster (1716, 1728, 1756, 1794, 1823, 1845 and 1910) are referred to by year and *pagina* [page]. The 1930 inventory is an index card system, organized by room.

[9] Dannehl, Karin, »Objects biographies – From production to consumption« in Harvey, Karen (ed.), *History and material culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 2009, pp. 124-126.

The currency used in Sweden until the *krona*-reform 1873, was the *daler* (abbreviated *D., dr, dsm* for specifying *daler silvermynt* or *dkm* for specifying *daler kopparmynt*).[10] All prices given in this thesis are *daler kopparmynt*, unless otherwise specified. There are 3 *dkm* to 1 *dsm*, and 32 *öre* to each *daler*, normally separated by a colon divider (":"). The x/32 fractions are converted into decimals when used in calculations.

Since the group of serpentine objects has been referred to as a "service" in modern time, it is in this thesis referred to as a group if not otherwise specified. This does not imply an unquestionable original affinity between the objects.

[10] With several variations over time. All abbreviation variants are used throughout this thesis in inventory citations. For a more detailed description of Swedish monetary history, see Lagerqvist, Lars O & Nathorst-Böös, Ernst, *Vad kostade det? Priser och löner från medeltid till våra dagar*, Natur och Kultur / LTs förlag, 1999 [1984].

The collection of Skokloster

This chapter concerns the serpentine objects presently in the Skokloster collection, their contextual position, and provenance issues. It is introduced with some general remarks on the material, attributions and period practises.

Material issues

The serpentine material at Skokloster displays a variation of serpentine matter - grey, green, and brown. Although the serpentine artefacts were completed in Zöblitz and close surroundings, the mountings in silver and pewter were often fitted in cities with artisans more oriented towards metalwork. Far from all mountings have hallmarks, but on the Skokloster objects, the cities represented are Marienberg, located six kilometres from Zöblitz (and secondary Stockholm marks, see 3613). Apart from indicating a Zöblitz origin, the mountings, and underlying serpentine adaptions to mounts, help in dating and determine importance in individual objects.

During this period it was generally very common to have metal and pewter mountings on other base materials. It is found on wood, glass, stone, rock crystal, faience and stoneware,[11] and the mounts (when cast) were often cast from the same moulds that were used by pewter makers for other types of objects.[12] Hall and master marks often help to date and geographically place many objects that otherwise would remain anonymous.

Since the lathe used by the serpentine turners for their work (a *Wippendrehbank*, fig. 2, or the simpler *Fitzelbank*, fig. 3, in which the turner uses a bow instead) was oscillating the piece back and forth, a protruding feature could be obtained by adjusting when to switch direction (to less than 360°) and leave material unturned.[13] This section of untreated material could later be moulded separately. As this method only allowed one of these features per turn, both a spout and a handle on opposite sides would not be possible. For the more advanced forms, freehand cutting was necessary.

Not every object was made in one piece. The table cruet-stand (3605) was, for example, made in several sections that were glued together (as visible in fig. 31). Glue was the foremost used method of joining complex stone structures where metal mounts could not be used. In Skokloster, the technique is further used on the candlesticks (3606), the spice box (3604), and the basin (3607).

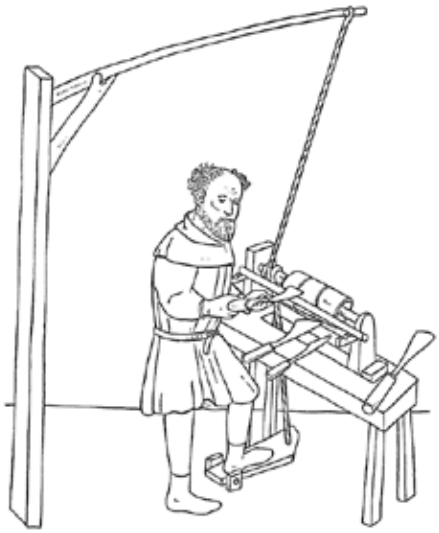


Figure 2. A Wippendrehbank.

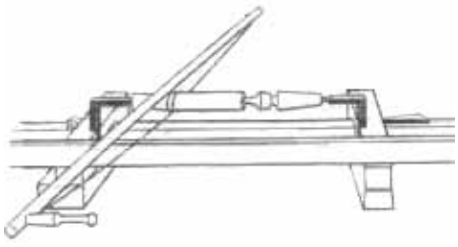


Figure 3. A Fitzelbank.

[11] For examples, see Karlson, William, *Stål och vardag i stormaktstidens herremanshem,* C.W.K. Gleerups förlag, Lund 1945, pp. 534-539.

[12] The often creative use and re-use of moulds are described in Bruzelli, Birger, *Läsning för tennvänner*, Askild & Kärnekull, 1978, pp. 108-112.

[13] Ulferts, 2000, p. 23.

Typological analysis

Plates, chargers and dishes

A set of 13 plates (3596)
Turned, gray serpentine. Middle of the 17th century. Diameter: 20 cm. Three damaged and repaired. Fig. 4.

A set of 3 plates (3597)
Turned, gray serpentine. Middle of the 17th century. Centre of mirror with two engraved concentric circles. Diameter: 21.4 cm. Fig. 7:d-f.

A plate (3598)
Turned, green serpentine with moulded rim. Third quarter of the 17th century. Diameter: 21.4 cm. Fig. 5.



Figure 4. A plate. (Inv. 3596). © Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.



Figure 5. A plate. (Inv. 3598). © Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.

The three lots of plates were originally part of a set of 23 plates listed 1716. They are similar in size and form to each other, with 3596 as the simplest and 3598 as the most advanced. They show all to some degree marks of wear and use, but it seems like a subset (independently of model) has been used extensively as revealed by scratches from knives etc. (figs. 7:a-b and 7:e). Three of these plates are also cracked and repaired. One plate even has dried food residues left on the underside of the brim (fig. 7:c).

The form is that of pewter and silver plates, with a slightly upward-tilted brim circumscribing a lower centre section. Decorations exists in three levels of detail; 3596 have a simple moulding around the brim edge, 3597 have two concentric circles scratched around the centre of the mirror and a simple mould on the underside between the brim and the mirror, 3598 has two more advanced shaped mould rims at the brim's two top edges. The latter plate is also the heaviest and least used of the plates.



Figure 6. A stack of chargers (Inv. 3600).

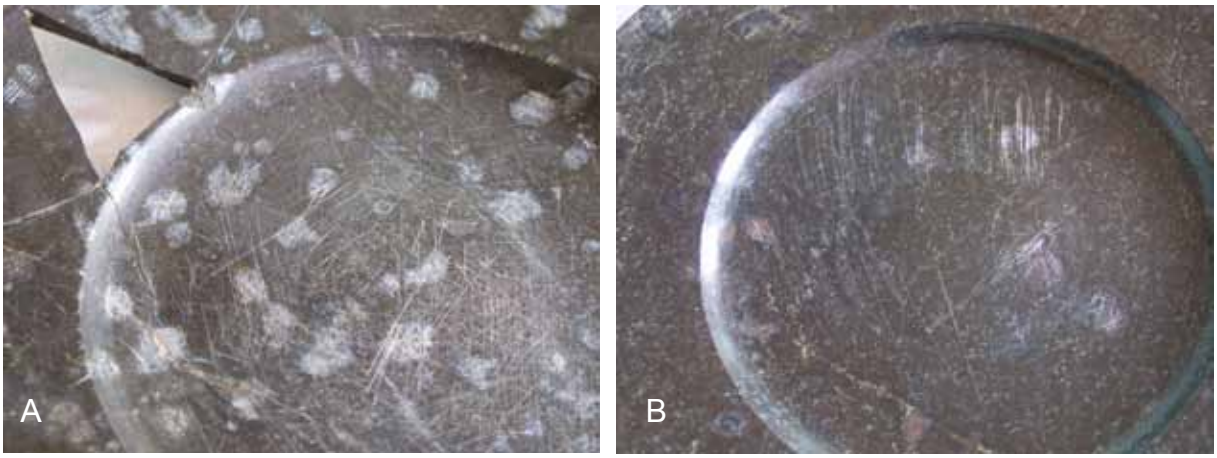
A set of 7 chargers (3599)
Turned, green serpentine. Third quarter of the 17th century. Diameter: 30.7 cm. Very similar to 3600.

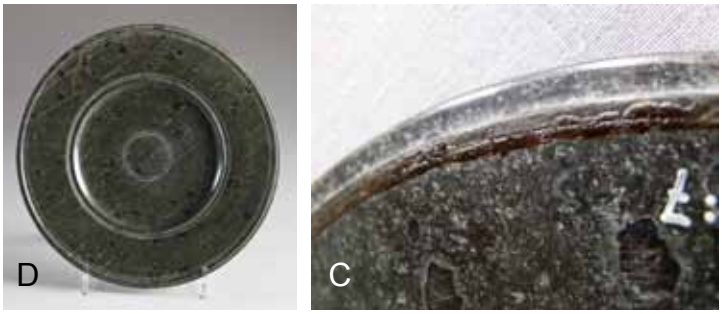
A set of 5 chargers (3600)
Turned, green serpentine. Third quarter of the 17th century. Diameter: 30.7 cm. Fig. 6. Very similar to 3599. Literature: Hoyer, 1995, cat. 98, pp. 131-132.

A set of 6 chargers (3601)
Turned, green serpentine, with moulded rims. Third quarter of the 17th century. Diameter: 30.5 cm. Fig. 8.

The wide brimmed chargers were 1716 described as *20 sth: Swarta Faat* [20 black dishes], and listed together with the washing service (3607-3608). In 1728, they were listed as *20 Serpentinfaat små à 16./: st.* [20 serpentine dishes small à 16 öre dkm each]. Why the "small" was added is unknown. They are higher valued than the set of 21 plates (3596-3598) at 8 öre dkm each, and in accordance likely larger. There are also no other chargers or dishes that would qualify as "large".

The 3601 are the more detailed, with moulded profiles on outer and inner sides of the brim and a border circumscribing the convex centre of the mirror. The 3599-3600 are plain with no decorations except a lower circular section of the mirror, which is flat. The convex mirror is typically a feature found on 16th-17th century pewter and silver plates, and to further show the metal origin, the bottom follows with a corresponding concave mirror.





Figures 7:a-c. Three plates, details. (Inv. 3596).
Figures 7:d-f. Three plates. (Inv. 3597).
Note the heavy wear from cutleries and the crude repairs. 7:d: © Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.

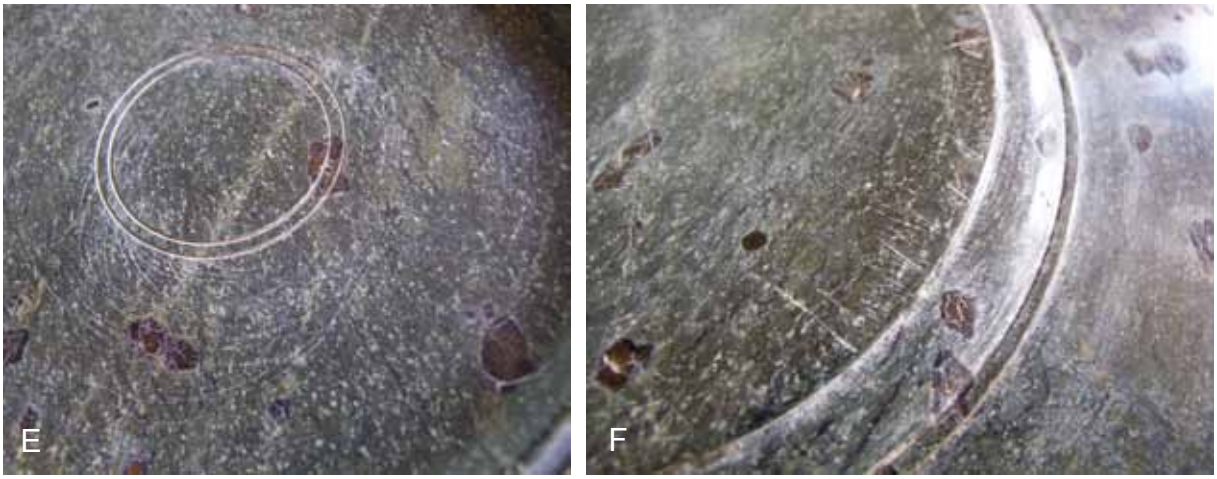




Figure 8. A charger. (Inv. 3601). © Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.

A set of 3 dishes on stand (3602)

Turned, green serpentine. Third quarter of the 17th century. Diameter: 17.5 cm, height: 5 cm. One damaged, two damaged and repaired. Figs. 9:a-c. Literature: Hoyer, 1995, cat. 111.

A set of 4 dishes on stand (3603)

Turned, green serpentine. Third quarter of the 17th century. Centre of mirror with two engraved concentric circles. Diameter: 21.5 cm, height: 5.5 cm. Two damaged and repaired. Figs. 9:d-e.

The dishes would have been used as serving dishes for meats and such, and the 1756 description as *13 Presenter Tallrickar större och mindre* [13 presentational plates larger and smaller], confirms this. The short, straight marks of a knife blade indicates cutting (fig. 9:e).

They are not particularly stabile on their stands, and seven surviving dishes out of thirteen 1716 indicates that this was a problem. In the 1823 inventory, there are nine of which one was damaged, and in 1845 they are listed as nine round *fruktskålar* [fruit bowls], with a later addition that two are missing. The current setup (3+4) was recorded 1910.

The present repairs are very coarsely made with an excessive amount of glue (figs. 9:c-d), and are probably made by the 20th century castle supervisor [*rustmästare*] Emil Nyman (employed 1910-1946).[14]

Tankards and Ewers

A washing service (3607-3608)

Turned, green serpentine. First quarter of the 17th century. Basin (3607): Diameter: 43.5 cm, height: 4.8 cm. Ewer (3608): Diameter: 10.7 cm, height: 16 cm. Figs. 10, 11:a-e. Literature: Hoyer, 1995, cat. 92, p. 129, with ill.

This washing service could possibly be a *Meisterstück* [masterpiece], made as proof of skill for being accepted into the serpentine turner's guild as a master. The guild regulations from 1665 even came

[14] Mr Bengt Kylsberg, personal communication Aug. 27, 2010; See *Skokloster under 350 år*, Bergström, Carin (ed.), Byggförlaget, Stockholm, 2004, pp. 264-267.



Figures 9:a-c. Three dishes on stand, diameter 17.5 cm. (Inv. 3602). Figures 9:d-e. Four dishes on stand, diameter 21.5 cm. (Inv. 3603). Note the major damages and crude repairs on dishes from both the groups. © 9:a - Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.

to specifically state a *Gießbecken sammt Gießkanne* [basin and ewer] as two of the preferred pieces.[15] This service predates that regulation with nearly half a century.[16]

The lack of a handle on the ewer suggests that a handle never was intended to be in serpentine, but in another material. The two parallel guides that horizontally runs around the body of the ewer provide support for attaching a handle with metal girths (similar to the silver handle on 3609). A close inspection reveals scratches inside the upper guide and along the top rim. The lower guide does not have these, and is also slightly more delicate in character (8 mm wide and profiled, compared to 10 mm. and straight, figs. 11:c and11:e). This indicates that the handle construction could have been focused on the top section. A mounting was most likely also present at the foot rim. There is a slight mismatch between the diameter of the foot rim (90 mm.), and the centre section of the basin (97 mm.) on which it stands, and since all other elements matches between the basin and the ewer, the explanation could be a missing mounting that extended the foot diameter by ca. 7 mm. That feature would also correspond well to other similar setups in which the foot is equally decorated to the handle.[17] The hollowed foot have a similar cross section as the feet of the candlestick (3606). The deposits inside the cup, as well as scratches indicate use (figs. 11:c-d).

In the 1716 inventory, the ewer is specifically listed as "…without handle" [*Kanna utan grepa*].[18] The reason for making handles separately, and often in different materials, would be the result of the technical limitations of turning (as discussed in chapter *Material issues*).

The basin is wide, thin and light, and with many delicately turned features, and the elevated centre section has a corresponding inverted form on the bottom. The brim has a large damaged section, roughly repaired with glue (figs. 11:a-b). The glued on brim studs are an early feature, mostly present around 1600.[19] At least one of them has been lost adjacent to the damage.

An oddity is the remark in the 1823 inventory; *Kannan söndrig men kan ihopsättas* [Ewer broken but can be repaired]. It is specifically the ewer, not the basin, that is broken. Beside the already lost mountings and a chip on the foot rim, it is hard too see what damage the note refers to, especially as the basin now has a major repaired damage on the brim. The remark is repeated 1845; […] *1 st. kanna (sönder)* [1 pc. ewer (broken)].

The centred-ewer-on-a-basin set-up has a long history and was popular. There are Swedish royal pewter examples from baroque to the gustavian era with very small changes in form and use over time (figs. 12 and 13:a-b). The specific ewer-form (reversed-helmet shaped body, elevated by a round socle, dominant spout and handle extending above the rim) is generally a media-independent one, and just by quickly browsing the Victoria and Albert museum collections, I found several more (see figs. 33:a-d, and chapter *Archetypes*).

A lidded tankard (3609)

Turned, green serpentine with unmarked silver mounts. Weight mark "40.L" is engraved at foot mount. Second quarter of the 17th century. Height: 25 cm, diameter: 17 cm. Figs. 14:a-c.

As with all pear shaped bodies in the Skokloster collection, the walls are of equal thickness, i.e. the inside is hollowed out resembling the outside form. The handle is mounted with girths around the body and top rim, and these follows turned guides on the *corpus*. This is similar to the previous ewer (3607). The serpentine has further a turned girth as a divider at the upper section. The silver

[15] Together with a *Doppelstück* (doublepiece, as seen on the seal, fig. 1), and a beaker. Article 19 of 57. Ulferts, 2000, p. 22; von Phillippovich, 1966, p. 305; Schmidt, Julius, *Geschichte der Serpentin-Industrie zu Zöblitz im sächsischen Erzgebirge*, Dresden, 1868, pp.19-20.

[16] For a discussion on dating this service, see Hoyer, 1995, p. 129.

[17] Compare for example Hoyer, 1995, cat. 88, illustrated p. 128.

[18] 1716: p. 329.

[19] Compare Hoyer, 1995, cat. 87, with ill.



Figure 10. A washing service. Basin diameter 43.5 cm., ewer height 16 cm (Inv. 3607-3608).
© Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.



Figure 11:a-e. A washing service. Details. Note the damages to the brim, the wear from a previous mounting (11:c), and the interior residues of the ewer.



Figure 12. A pewter washing service by Eric Pettersson Krietz, Stockholm 1770. Ewer height 16 cm. Sold June 5, 2007. © Uppsala Auktionskammare



Figure 13:a-b. A pewter basin and ewer by J. Johansson, Stockholm 1696, forming part of the Swedish Queen Hedvig Eleonora's Strömsholm service. Ewer height 14.5 cm. © Nordiska Museet.

work is unmarked and not of a particularly high standard. The centre of the lid has an engraved laurel wreath circumscribing the centre (fig. 14:c), and a piqué torus below. The handle is fastened to the girths by bolts and cut nuts. The foot rim is clad with silver, fastened with folded 'tongues' gripping the prepared rim edge. The stone foot rim is sligthly tilted inwards, which provide support for the tongues to grip. A straight profile would not do this, which together with the turned guides gives that this tankard was intended to be mounted, and not arbitrarily enhanced in later date. The foot rim follows the overall standard by being undecorated. The deposits inside the cup indicate use (fig. 14:b).

The very similar, but somewhat smaller and wider, serpentine tankard at Victoria and Albert Museum (fig. 15), is interesting with both a Swedish provenance[20] and as dated 1643. The dating proves that the form existed in the 1640's (or at the latest 1653), thus placing the Skokloster tankard in the second quarter of the 17th century. The silver-gilt mountings are unmarked at the Victoria an Albert tankard as well, but although more lavish, they are in many ways similar to the Skokloster tankard.

A lidded tankard (3610)

Turned, carved and moulded green serpentine. Handle mounted with lead rivets. Third quarter of the 17th century. Height: 21 cm, diameter: 13 cm. Figs. 16:a-e. Literature: Hoyer, 1995, p. 104, cat. 47.

This tankard is perhaps the most extraordinary crafted in the Skokloster collection. With its pear-shaped body, powerfully carved and chiselled spiral flutes (see chapter *Adapting to matter*), a moulded handle, and a serpentine lid continuing the lines of the body décor, it is a very good example of mid-century tankards. The underside of the turned foot, as well as the inside of the lid, is very delicately detailed (figs. 16:c-d). The handle is moulded separately, and attached by lead rivets (fig. 16:e). The soft lead that originally waterproofed the lower mount, has with handling loosened and rendered the tankard unable to hold liquid.

[20] It bears the arms of George Fleetwood (1603-67) and his wife Brita Gyllenstjerna (1606-53). Fleetwood fought under Gustavus Adolphus during the 30 years war, and was made commandant of Greifswald and Colberg in Pomerania 1641.



Figures 14:a-c.
A lidded tankard with silver mounts. Height 25 cm. (Inv. 3609). Note the colour changes from use inside of the body.
© 14:a - Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.



Figure 15,
A tankard with silver-gilt mountings, dated 1643.
Height 15.8 cm. (Inv. M.31-1953).
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London





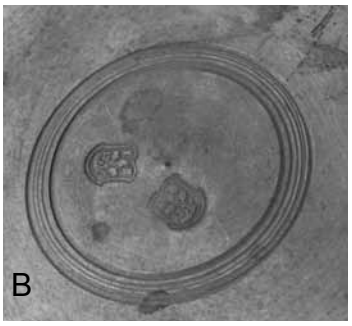






Figures 16:a-e.
A lidded tankard with moulded spiral flutes. Height 21 cm. (Inv. 3610).
© 15:a - Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.







Figures 17:a-c.
A lidded tankard with pewter mounts. Height 14.5 cm. (Inv. 3611). Note the replaced upper lead girth and the crude repair. © 17:a - Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.



Figure 18.
A lidded tankard with pewter mounts. Nuremburg. Height 14.5 cm. Sammlung Jahn, cat. 4.
© Sammlung Jahn.

A lidded tankard (3611)

Turned and faceted green serpentine with Marienberg pewter mounts, likely Jeremias Schmidt (act. ca. 1670-). Second half of the 17th century. Height 14.5 cm, diameter 14 cm. Figs. 17:a-c.

The form of this tankard is the result of a combination of facets and turning. The upper section (between the two girths) is nonagonal (nine-faceted), but the base is turned. Note that the exterior facets are not mimicked on the inside, which is round. If compared to the tankard in *Sammlung Jahn* (Jahn coll., cat 4. Nuremburg control marks. Fig. 18), it is very similar, but fitted with a pewter footrim, and with Marienberg pewter marks (fig. 17:b). The maker is likely Jeremias Schmidt, active from ca. 1670.[21]

The original top pewter girth is replaced with lead band, which could be a lead came (for fitting window panes). Machinery for producing these exists in the Skokloster workshops[22], with matching width and profiles. The lower girth is roughly repaired at the handle. The tankard is stated as *sönder* [broken] in the 1823 and 1845 inventories, so I presume the repair to be 20th century by Emil Nyman. As seen in fig. 17:c, the tankard has been in use. Since it was broken during the 19th century, the use likely occurred during the 17th/18th centuries.

Canisters

A canister (3612)

Octagonally faceted, gray serpentine with threaded pewter lid with Marienberg hallmarks, possibly Gottfried Olbricht. Second half of the 17th century. Height: 14 cm, diameter: 9 cm. Figs. 19:a-c.

The lid is stuck, and the broken lid-knob, paired with the oxidized tool marks on its side, suggests that this has been the situation for a long period of time. The force that has been used (the marks are those of a sliding pair of tongs, fig. 19:b-c) also gives that this canister was not the most treasured of artefacts. It contains some dry substance, sounding like tea leafs, when it is shaken.

[21] Hintze, Erwin, *Die Deutschen Zinngießer und ihre Marken, Band 1: Sächsische Zinngießer*, Leipzig, 1921, p. 175, no. 913.

[22] Two *blyvindor* exists, dated 1702 and 1738. Knutsson and Kylsberg, 2000 [1985], cat. 68, p. 24, ill. pl. 20.



Figures 19:a-c.
A canister with Marienberg pewter mounts. Height 14 cm. (Inv. 3612). Note the lost handle and the tool marks from attempts to open the stuck lid. © 19:a - Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.



Figures 20:a-f.
A canister with Stockholm pewter mounts by Vieth Fijthsson Drenchler. Height 20 cm. (Inv. 3613). Note the second lid and the spots of mildew inside. © 20:a - Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.



Figures 21:a-c. A brown serpentine canister with pewter mountings. Marienberg hallmarks, master unidentified. Height 29 cm. (Inv. 3614). Note the brown residues at the threads from previously spilled spirits. © 21:a - Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.

A canister (3613)

Turned and chiselled, green serpentine with double pewter lids, the larger threaded and with the master mark of Vijth Fijthsson, Stockholm, before 1686. Second half of the 17th century. Height: 20 cm, diameter: 12 cm. Figs. 20:a-f.

When opened, the canister reveals a faint smell of sherry, and the inside displays areas of mildew (fig. 20:f). This corresponds well to the term *wine flask*, which are used for this type of screw-lidded canisters when in silver.[23] They generally contained communion wine, but in this case, the use was probably more profane. The inner lid, which is not threaded, have the effect of further sealing the contents from air. The overall form is similar to the larger canister (3614), with vertical concave/convex fluting, a turned upper section followed by a crowning pewter mount. The internal form resembles the outer, with a narrow opening. The lid bears the rose master mark of Vieth Fijthsson [Drenchler], Stockholm, 1637-1686 (figs. 20:c and 23)[24], but the type of handle seems to be generic (compare to the very similar lid handle, fig. 22, dated 1705). For further discussions on Fijthsson, see chapter *Early history*.



Figure 22. Handle from a Swedish pewter wine bottle from 1705. (Inv. 133056). © Nordiska Museet.



Figure 23. The rose master mark of Vieth Fijthsson Drenchler. After Löfgren, 1933, fig. 17, p. 79.

A canister (3614)

Turned and chiselled, brown serpentine with threaded pewter lid with a brass ring and Marienberg hallmarks. Second half of the 17th century. Height: 29 cm, diameter: 16,4 cm. Figs. 21:a-c.

The inside is covered with a dark brown resin-like residue with a smell of a liqueur. The dense threading (fig. 21:b, compare with 3613, fig. 20:d) would guarantee an airtight fitting which is suitable for liquids. The deformed mounting of the brass ring on the handle

[23] *The Hallwyl collection of Silver*, E. Cassel-Pihl, K. Holmquist & M. Jansson-Lohse (eds.), Catalogue, Hallwylska Museet, Stockholm, 1999, cat. 4A. Before 1688.

[24] Independently identified as the Fijthsson master mark by Mr. Magnus Green, Nordiska museet 2007-01-24, and myself 2009-11-13. Fijthsson was among the more prominent pewter makers in Stockholm at that time, alderman of the guild of pewter makers, with several royal commissions. Löfgren, 1933, pp. 75-81; Bruzelli, 1967, p. 154 (A 86), as Vieth Fijtsson Drenchler.



Figure 24:a-d. A similar pair of green serpentine candlesticks with lead candle nozzles. Height 18-19 cm. (Inv. 3606).
© 24:a - Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.
Figure 24:e. A Venetian brass candlestick with narrow interlaced silver inlays, ca. 1550. (Inv. 558-1865).
© Victoria & Albert Museum, London.



Figure 25. A German copper-gilt candlestick, likely Nuremburg, first half of the 17th century. (R.B.K. 18902)
© Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Figure 26. A Swedish pewter candlestick by Olof Eriksson, Stockholm ca. 1660.
© Nordiska Museet, Stockholm.



Figure 27. A Swedish pewter candlestick by Vieth Fijthsson Drenchler, Stockholm ca. 1660-70.
© Nordiska Museet, Stockholm.



Figure 28. Leonardo Bassano (1558-1623), The last supper, *Church of S. Maria Formosa, Venice. Detail.*

(the result of using force to turn the lid counter clockwise), suggests that the lid has previously stuck. If the main use was to store sugary liquids, the lid could easily get stuck.

Candlesticks

A similar pair of candlesticks (3606)
Turned, green serpentine. Second half of the 17th century. Lead candle-nozzle extensions, hollowed base.
Height: 18–19 cm, base diameter: 14.3–14.8 cm. Figs. 24:a-d.
Literature: Hoyer, 1995, pp. 167-168, cat. 206.

At a brief examination, the two candlesticks appear to be a pair, but a closer inspection reveals minor differences between the stems, in the texture of the stone, and in the drilled top of the stems.

The 1756 inventory entry lists the sticks as broken [*sönd.*], while the 1823 entry states incomplete [*ofullständige*], and the 1845 entry as broken [*sönder*] again. They are presently glued between the wax-pan and the stem. The most prominent non-original features today are the lead candle nozzles (fig. 24:d). Not only do they distort the proportions of the form[25], but lead is also unsuitable as candlestick material due to the low melting point. The baluster stem is open at the top, into which a part from the detachable (previously glued) and rather crudely made nozzle extends (fig. 24:d). The cavity in the stem is too narrow to be an original candle nozzle, so there has always been top extension, possibly in pewter or in silver.

The two candlesticks are the oldest surviving serpentine candlesticks known today[26], but other 17th century Swedish inventories also list serpentine candlesticks. The auction catalogue from the Tyresö castle sale 1694 lists a pair[27], and the inventory after the death of Christina Catharina de la Gardie (1632-1704) notes a pair of *swarta Sten Liuus Stakar* [black stone candlesticks].[28] The owner of Skokloster, Abraham Brahe, did at his death possess another pair of serpentine candlesticks 1728, according to the inventory from Lyckås estate.[29] Unfortunately, none of these entries indicate any form features.

The model of the Skokloster candlesticks is of a 16th century origin, but is made with various baluster stems in a wide geographic area until the middle of the 18th century.[30] The base's combination of a *torus* between two *scotiæ* resembles the attic base of the ionic column, and the stem is of a classic baluster form. An early 17th century version is depicted on the table in the painting "The last supper" by Leonardo Bassano (1558-1623) in the Church of S. Maria Formosa, Venice (fig. 28). The Venician type had oriental influences (fig. 24:e), but there are several similar German and Swedish brass examples of this type as well (fig. 25).[31] In the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, is a Dutch silver candlestick by Thomas Boogaert, 1630[32], which although having a flatter base (working as an integrated wax-pan)has many similarities with the model. The form also has pewter applications (figs. 26, 27)[33] .

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25 Compare with metal examples given below, which all ends below the lead nozzle (figs. 24:e, 26 and 27).

26 Hoyer, 1995, p. 167.

27 Lot 1643. Karlson, 1945, p. 404.

28 Karlson, 1945, p. 404.

29 See chapter *Economic appreciation over time*, and appendix p. 43.

30 Curle, Alexander O., »Domestic candlesticks from the fourteenth to the end of the eighteenth century.« in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. LX, 1926, p. 198, fig. 9:2 and p. 190, fig. 3:3.

31 Compare with Blaauwen, A.L. den (ed.), *Koper & Brons – Onno ter Kuile,* Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1986, cat. 154.

32 Blaauwen, A.L. den, *Nederlands zilver 1580-1830*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1979, cat. 33.

33 Erixon, Sigurd, *Mässing – Svenska manufakturer och konsthantverksprodukter under 400 år*, Walter Ekstrand bokförlag, Lund, 1978 [1943], pl. 167-171.



Figures 29:a-c. A green serpentine spice stand. Height 14.5 cm. (Inv. 3604). The central salt is detachable.
© 29:a - Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.



Figure 30:a. A six-bottle cruet stand and salt cellar. Height 19 cm. (Inv. 3605). © Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.
Figure 30:b. Two of the cruets. Note the bottom sections that anchor them to the stand (normally not visible).

Miscellaneous

A spice stand (3604)

Turned, green serpentine. Third quarter of the 17th century. Height: 14.5 cm, base diameter: 20 cm. Figs. 29:a-c. Literature: Hoyer, 1995, pp. 134-135, cat. 118.

The top section is divided into six sector compartments radiating from a semi-spherical, detachable salt in the middle (fig. 29:b). The compartments held various spices, and a support along the inside of the rim indicate that they may once have been covered by a lid. The top is connected with its' stand by six balustre columns, and both the top and the stand have similar foiled rims circumscribing the round forms as a wreath, connecting them through form. The stand is turned from one piece and hollow (fig. 29:c), and supported by three ball feet. The separate parts are joined with glue.

The architectural composition is not unique for these types of table centrepieces, but compared to the rest of the serpentine objects at Skokloster, this is very much more form than function.

A six-bottle cruet stand and salt cellar (3605)

Turned, green serpentine. Third quarter of the 17th century. Height: 19 cm, diameter: 27 cm. Figs. 30:a-b, 31. Literature: Hoyer, 1995, pp. 134-135, cat. 117.

The stand is a composite construction that holds six cruets (for vinegar, oil, sugar, mustard etc.) and a salt cellar in the centre, raised by balustres. It shares the six-partite division and a central salt with the spice stand (3604), but the cruets hold liquid spices rather than dry goods. The protruding bottom section of the cruets (fig. 30:b) are set into cut-out holes in the top of the hollow base, which firmly root them to the stand. All of the cruets share a basic, round balustre form covered by a lid. Two of the cruets are only of this basic form, two have additional spouts, one has a caster top, and one lacks a finial (or has possibly never had one). They all display damages of various degrees (especially the caster). The salt cellar is elevated by five balustre columns in a similar manner as in 3604. As the salt cellar presently is loose from its columns, the glue residues are clearly visible (fig. 31), which also reveals no other method of joining than glue.



Figure 31. Detail of 3605. Note the visible glued joinings, especially between the stand and the salt cellar.

Early history

The serpentine service is commonly referred to as Wrangel's field service[34], but is it correct to associate the group with Wrangel at all?

The earliest archival recording of their existence is the 1716 inventory entry by Abraham Brahe. They are not listed in the 1676 inventory after C.G. Wrangel, which indicate that the serpentine entered the Skokloster collection during the forty-year span between these two dates. One object is of major importance to further narrow a possible dating, namely the canister (3613) with its Swedish pewter mark (figs. 20:c and 34) of Vieth Fijthsson [Drenchler] (Stockholm, 1637-1686). According to Löfgren, this mark was taken in use by Fijthsson ca. 1640 to be succeeded by a three-mark, and later by a combination-mark ca. 1675. This canister was thus in Stockholm no later than 1686 (most likely before 1675) and fitted with a pewter lid by one of the more important pewter makers in the city.

[34] The term is critically discussed in chapter *Wrangel's field service*.

Carl Gustaf Wrangel had no sons to survive into adulthood, so his daughter Margareta Juliana Wrangel (1642-1701) was the sole bequeather to Skokloster 1676. She had married count Nils Brahe II (1633-1699) 1660. Reviewing the production records for Vieth Fijthsson, there are no references to Wrangel, but there are multiple invoices dated 1670 for pewter plates, candlesticks etc. from Per Brahe II (1602-1680, uncle and guardian to Nils B.). When Per Brahe's II died 1680, his pewter coffin was commissioned from Fijthsson by Nils Brahe II (as he inherited him).[35] Thus exists a well-established professional connection between the Brahe family and Fijthsson 1670-1680. According to Löfgren, the mark was not in use after ca. 1675[36], which could leave Per Brahe II as a possible commissioner of the mounting. Since he was not associated with the Wrangel family as his nephew was, there would most likely not be Wrangel property in his care.

The natural consequence of this reasoning is to pose the question that if Per Brahe II had ordered pewter fittings for the serpentine canister, would he also had been in possession of the other serpentine objects? There is no certain way to know. Presuming that the group had been collected during a short period of time, and as the earliest known works by the pewter maker Jeremias Schmidt (the tankard 3611) are from ca. 1670, the acquirement would roughly have been made within a 1665-1675 time frame.

In her book, Eva Maria Hoyer makes a few claims regarding the Skokloster collection. First, she states the collection to be directly of Wrangel lineage (partly including the father of Carl Gustaf, Herman Wrangel (1584/87-1643)). Second, she makes the assumption that what is noted in the 1716 inventory must be Wrangel property.[37] Regarding the dating of the objects, she convincingly argues for the date of the washing service (3607-3608) to be ca. 1620, which then would be too early for C. G. Wrangel to acquire it as new. Her argument to why it then would have been acquired by Herman Wrangel is not conclusive. He had the possibility (it is even speculated that it could be gift to him from King Gustavus Adolphus), but it is nowhere supported by primary sources, as nothing is prior to 1716. The second assumption is biased towards the notion that the serpentine objects *are* Wrangel property, and that the castle turned into a memorial [*Denkmal*] where time stood still from the late 17th century onwards. As the research of Hidemark and Stavenow-Hidemark shows (see chapter *Wrangel's field service*), much has been made during later times (especially during the 19th century) to 'improve' the baroque impression the castle gives today, and many items with Brahe provenances have been added. However, Hoyer is correct in that the serpentine objects listed 1716 are left rather intact until the present day.

An alternate route to Hoyer's, is to consider the group as an actual collection, i.e. the different artefacts have various provenances and were assembled in Skokloster during the 17th century and first recorded 1716. The washing service, from the first quarter of the 17th century, is circa 50 years earlier than the Schmidt tankard, which very much widens the acquisition period. This allows for both a Wrangel and a Brahe lineage, and would explain the variety of objects. This is the route I advocate.

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35 According to an invoice dated 13 May 1670, Fijthsson fabricated 30 dishes (155 dr), 3 dozen plates (61:28 [dr]), a pair of candlesticks (8 dr) and a lidded butter box (3 dr). Another invoice dated 22 October 1670 lists 30 dishes (160 dr), 30 plates (56:8 [dr]), a bowl (10 dr) and repairing a dish and a candlestick for 1 dr. According to a contract between Fijthsson and Nils Brahe II, dated Bogesund castle 20 September 1680, Fijthsson had executed the coffin for the body of Per Brahe II for the sum of 3.000 dkm. Löfgren 1933, p. 81; RA E3315 B, *Esbjörn Hanssons räkningar 1670,* no 26, 33 & 73.

36 Löfgren, 1933, p. 79.

37 Hoyer, 1995, pp. 84-85, 129.

Aspects of form

This chapter concerns issues of form; what motivates form, how and why are forms transferred between various materials, and is matter shaped by mind or mind by matter?

Comprehension of form

Many shapes and forms are subjected to, and the consequence of, certain attributes of the material used. The strength and density of metal can allow thinner dimensions or more reflective surfaces than, for example, wood, but is on the other hand heavier and carries a higher price. Thus is a chair more appropriately made of wood than of cast iron, and a candlestick benefits from the metal's natural resistance to fire.

The materials can also be combined so that their properties are used at their best. Vital structural sections may be in metal, while more decorative elements can be sculpted in wood, creating artefacts not possible in one sole material. Glass panes in a window could be set in a lead framework (cames), so that the soft lead absorbs tensions from variations in temperature etc.

This reflects the idea that the form and style of an artefact is normally in some way coherent with the (supposed) material of which it is made. There are of course examples where an illusory effect is sought after (e.g. carved gilded wooden frames versus bronze-gilt ones), but it requires an established set of forms for a certain material to be successfully exposed to mimicry.



Figure 32. A serpentine canister, Saxony, with spiral fluting, ca. 1700. Height 19 cm. Sammlung Jahn, cat. 34. © Sammlung Jahn.

However, form is not only subject to choice of material. If we look at a plate, for example, we have practical issues to take into consideration. It doesn't have to be round, but it certainly benefits from being at least slightly concave, or with some type of border along the side, to contain the more liquid elements of a meal. The archetype would typically be constructed with a lower central section (mirror) surrounded by a brim, elevated through a hollow mould. The height of the mould would determine whether the plate is suitable for soup or sausage. If we then turn it over, we might see a concentric rim of some millimetres in height. What would that be? Is it motivated by form or function? The answer is probably similar to why there are three-legged chairs: Stability. On an earthen floor, a tripod is always stabile, while something with four supporting points isn't. In the plate example, a completely flat surface would require another completely flat support surface in order not to yield to different pressures applied from cutlery and such. Since not all tabletops have this quality (especially not in pre-industrial periods), the elevation of the plate reduces the contact area and making it more stabile. There might also be a technical approach towards stability. A reinforced mirror provides stability within the object so that it does not skew or wobble.

The function of a lid or a cover, for example, can be to keep the temperature of the contained foodstuffs/liquids, preserve it over time, keep it from vapour, or to keep it separated from various vermin. It has to have a reasonable tight fit, and often some type of grip to handle it etc. This sort of analysis can have relevance to all types of applied arts. What is the primary function, and how is this achieved by available means within a certain decorum?



Figure 33:a-d. A: French pewter ewer, ca. 1600. (M.47-1971). B: French brass ewer, early 17th century. (M.1078-1910). C: A pair of Gujarat ewers (overlaid mother-of-pearl), early 17th century. (4257-1857). D: Italian faience ewer, ca. 1560-1570. (726-1891). All images © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Adapting to matter

Although a completed artefact in serpentine may have many properties in common with a similar piece in other materials (hardness, weight, form etc.), serpentine is still a material in its own right. The mouldability of the freshly mined rock has similarities with hardwood, ivory or amber in regard to possible tool and technical approaches, and the material responds well to not only the lathe, but also to chisels in various shapes.[38] When the stone is exposed to air, the surface oxidizes and hardens. This combination of properties has given serpentine a set of forms *not* typically seen on embossed metal. For example:

i. The vertical, alternately concave/convex, gadroons (ex. 3613, 3614).
ii. The spiral fluting (ex. 3610, or fig. 32)
iii. The combination of faceted and turned elements on the same object (ex. 3611).

Vertical, or spiralled, elements are not turned, but chiselled. The special 'wave'-pattern on 3613, 3614 is made with a gouge chisel that is used alternately with the concave/convex side outward. As the metal chisels are of a fixed width, the perimeter of the serpentine object must be a multiple of that width for a successful seamless décor. Minor adjustments could naturally been made through varying the width of the ridges, but all of the examined examples have a pointed ridge. This applies to both (i) and (ii), and that would give a fixed number of possible diameters for a given set of tools. The fixed sizes also make it easier for the pewter maker to have cast moulds of suitable sizes ready for mounting.

Interestingly enough, the Skokloster tankard (3610, see above) is far more advanced. The width of the flutes varies along the form of the tankard, and being at its smallest at the top rim, they swell to accommodate the increasing perimeter of the pear-shaped body. This widening flute had to be done manually.

Surface decorations are very helpful when dating objects. The development from smooth, undecorated surfaces in the 16th century, via an increasing amount of divider elements and mounting guides around 1600-1620, to flutes and facets at the second half of the 17th century, provides waypoints by which the connoisseur navigates.

Forms transferred

In the Serpentine collection at Skokloster, there are interesting examples of forms transferred, mainly from metalwork, into the matter of serpentine. But the objects are not illusory, even though the form is similar. No one would, under normal lighting conditions, erratically regard the grey serpentine candlestick (3606) as being of silver or brass. Yet, it echoes their form perfectly. Even

[38] Serpentine has a hardness of ca. 2.5-3.5 on the Mohs scale. Price, Monica T., *The sourcebook of decorative stone*, Firefly books Ltd, New York, 2007, p. 30.

Table 1. Inventory properties of Skokloster serpentine.

Inventory	**1716**	**1728**	**1757**	**1794**	**1823**	1845	1910
Location	*Lilla Kiöket*, 1:H	*Lilla Kiöket,* 1:I/1:H[1]	*Lilla Kiöket,* 1:I/1:H	*Porcellainsköket,* 1:H	*Fateburen*, 1:X	*Geneve*, 3:A	*Tornrummet*, 4:Y[2]
Quantity	71	66	65 (59)[3]	62[4]	62	57 (53)[5]	49 (54)[6]
Inventory header	*Steenkiäril* [stoneware]	n/a	*Service af Serpentin* [serpentine service]	Serpentin	Serpentin	Serpentin	n/a
Material(s) specified	*Swaart (sten), ten* [black (stone), pewter]	*Serpentin, theen* [pewter]	*Tenn* [pewter]	*Théen* [pewter]	*Silver, tenn* [silver, pewter]	*Silfver, ten* [silver, pewter]	*Serpentin, silfver* [serpentine, silver]
No. of damaged objects[7]	1	n/a	3	n/a	10	7[8]	n/a
Stored in	n/a	n/a	n/a	*Skåp af Ebenholtz inlagt med Skylpad* [Ebony cabinet inlaid with tortoise]	n/a	Two veneered oak cabinets (Hamburger)	*Skåp* [Cabinet]
Level of inventory detail	Medium. Specifies damages.	Medium. Specifies some form.	Medium. Specifies damages.	Medium. Does not specify damages.	High. Form, mountings and conditions are specified.	High. Form, mountings and conditions are specified.	Low.
Value (tot.)	12 dkm	33:28 dkm[9]	n/a[10]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

[1] The room is jointly specified *uti lilla Kiöket och Hwalfvet derinnanföre befantz:* [In the small kitchen and the vaulted room within was:].

[2] Location in this inventory was previously unknown. The serpentine objects are listed under *Tornrummet* [the tower room] on the fourth floor. Which tower room was deducted by using the position of room 4:E (*cancellierummet*) and progressing counterclockwise.

[3] Inventory with a later addition that only 15 of 21 plates exists.

[4] Inventory with a later addition that the covered butter box was taken to *Stock:[holm] d:15 aug 1802*.

[5] Inventory with a later addition that two smaller bowls and two plates are missing.

[6] The washing service and the canisters are not listed here, but it lists four 'boxes' with pewter lids/mountings [*burk med tennlock /tennbeslag*] and a jug with silver mounts, all of unspecified materials, just below the serpentine objects.

[7] An object is considered recorded as damaged when any part of it is listed as broken [*sönder*].

[8] Three plates noted as broken 1823 are not mentioned here, but if this is due to repairs or an oversight is impossible to say.

[9] Each object's value specified individually. Summarized by the author.

[10] The 1756 inventory only partially lists values, and not for the serpentine objects.

the base is hollowed out along the curved s-line of the bell-shaped exterior (ex. figs. 24:b and 24:c). A hollow base makes perfect sense in a silver or brass candlestick, as the material itself is valuable and the exterior form of the object does not suffer. A wax-pan is necessary to avoid the hot, melted tallow or wax to trickle onto the table. The form is also motivated by the importance of stability for something that is to sustain an open flame that is potentially dangerous. The wider and heavier the base is, the better.

It is further a question of technique, as metal objects were cast or embossed, and serpentine is a mineral. Objects were turned and moulded out of monolithic blocks, *removing* matter to form a shape, rather than *adding* as in metalwork. The removal would not be a way of saving material, as the turning process reduces the material into chips of no real use. This makes the hollow base an active statement by the artisan, as the easiest way would be to let the base remain solid after the exterior form had been shaped. It could naturally be a way of removing weight, but these models were not typically mobile even when in metal. Hoyer points out that the Zöblitz serpentine turners were influenced by both the Upper Saxony pewter workshops and the Vogtland brass turners when choosing model for these candlesticks.[39]

So why is this phenomenon of form transference so evident? The idea is already present in Plato's *The Republic*, in which Socrates uses a metaphor of three beds to address the question of imitation:

> - Beds, then, are of three kinds, and there are three artists who superintend them: God, the maker of the bed, and the painter?
> - Yes, there are three of them.
> - God, whether from choice or from necessity, made one bed in nature and one only; two or more such ideal beds neither ever have been nor ever will be made by God.
> - Why is that?
> - Because even if He had made but two, a third would still appear behind them which both of them would have for their idea, and that would be the ideal bed and the two others.
> - Very true, he said.
> - God knew this, and He desired to be the real maker of a real bed, not a particular maker of a particular bed, and therefore He created a bed which is essentially and by nature one only.
> […]
> - And what shall we say of the carpenter --is not he also the maker of the bed?
> - Yes.
> - But would you call the painter a creator and maker?
> - Certainly not.
> - Yet if he is not the maker, what is he in relation to the bed?
> - I think, he said, that we may fairly designate him as the imitator of that which the others make.[40]

The three beds can be seen as the object (form), the maker and the beholder. God produces the ideal form, the craftsman executes his interpretation of it, and the painter looks at the result and tries to imitate how it appears. Transferred into this field, one might refer to the three as archetypes, mastery of matter, and mimesis.

Archetypes

The archetype would correspond to an ideal Platonic form, the bed made by God. Presume there was a set of fixed candlestick archetypes out of which an artisan had to choose, regardless of the material at hand? These archetypes could have been established via suitable forms for a specific material (e.g. silver), but once set, they became a model against which all other candlesticks were

[39] Hoyer, 1995, p. 167.

[40] Plato, *The Republic*, Benjamin Jowett (transl.), [1991], book X. The dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon.

measured and modelled (compare candlesticks, figs. 24-27). For example, the forms of silver and brass candlesticks developed independently until the end of the 17th century, when silver became the preferred material for the commissioning wealthy patrons.[41] Brass became the poor version of the wealthy silver, and was no longer a form-forerunning material in its own right. Silver forms were simulated in the less expensive brass (sometimes silverplated) for the economically limited classes.

It can be seen in other areas. The ewer form (as seen in 3608), for example, can be visualized through silver, faience, bronze, serpentine, pewter or imported Indian Gujarat ware, and often is the form more or less the same throughout a widened European cultural sphere (see figs. 33:a-d). The baluster (the alternate application of convex and concave elements along a vertical stem) is another example of a generic form element that is used regardless of medium. In the Skokloster collection, it is present both in the balustrade of the cruet stand (3605), the spice box (3604) and on the candlestick stems. But form elements are per definition only a *part* of a shape, semiotically anchoring it to a time/space context, whereas a complete archetype is far more complex. The joint elements constitute a closed entity, and the combination attains a period modus that is specific to its context in time. A baluster is, for example, just as valid as a baroque architectural balustrade as on a 1920's silver centrepiece, but it is the combination that enables the connoisseur to tell them apart.

Mastery of Matter

This is the ability of the craftsman in the Plato quote - a display of excellence. By producing an object in the guise of something else, the individual artisan claims mastery over matter, showing his independence over the various properties of the specific material. In Zöblitz, the handling of serpentine was restricted under guild regulations, so anyone involved in the process would typically have a genuine knowledge of the material.[42] A skilful refinement of the raw material would also acknowledge the guild and it's members. It would not be suitable for a distinguished master to deliver a work too unrefined. However, the 1665 guild regulations also functioned as a conservative force regarding form.[43] The 57 articles in the regulation restricted too vivid innovation, and the mastery was limited to certain forms and applications acceptable to guild decorum.

Mimesis

Imitation, vexier items, *trompe l'œil*, miniatures, and various tricks of the eye – all were very popular to the early modern man. Ever since Pliny's description of the contest between *Parrhasius* and *Zeuxis*[44], the dexterities of artists in the service of deceiving were greatly appreciated. This attitude is expressed, for example, in the late 16th century Italian marble fruits in the *kunstkammer* of Ferdinand II in Schloß Ambras, Austria,[45] or the serpentine slippers in the Royal Danish kunstkammer.[46]

There are typically two types of mimesis, of which the first could be exemplified with an analogy of sculpting marble. The marble sculpture only imitates bodily shapes and does not claim equality to bodies in general. However vivid the impression of softness in Proserpina's thigh is in the Bernini

41 Curle, 1926, pp. 201-202.

42 The first documented guild regulation, the *Bruchordnung*, in the city Zöblitz was approved 1613 by *Kurfürst* Johann Georg I. This was later revised and extended in 1665, involving many more aspects of serpentine manufacturing. Ulferts, 2000, p. 22. A master of the guild needed to master all aspects involved in the making of a serpentine object, from finding and cutting the rock to polish the surface finish. von Philippovich, 1966, p. 305.

43 Ulferts, 2000, p. 22.

44 Pliny the elder, *Naturalis Historiæ*, H Rackham (transl.), 1968[1952], HN xxxv.65-66.

45 Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Sammlungen Schloß Ambras, inv. PA 911-913. *Die Entdeckung der Natur, Naturalien in den Kunstkammern des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*. Exhibition catalogue, Siepel, Wilfried (ed.), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 2006, cat. 2.17, pp. 72-73, with ill.

46 In the Royal Copenhagen Kunstkammer from 1673, Nationalmuseum Copenhagen inv. f.170; Hoyer, 1995, p. 136.

sculpture[47], it is still cold, white, hard marble that is providing the notion. It is not supposed to be analogue to a living person (or a goddess in this case). The second type would be the serpentine version of a metal candlestick, which is just as much a candlestick as the original, although mimicking the metal form. In a platonic sense, the imitated form would thus not attain the same acclaim as original form and creativity. As the example with silver and brass candlestick models above shows (see chapter *Archetypes*), that is in some respect true.

With all of this taken into consideration, the form of serpentine can be seen as a metaphor of metal.[48] The reason the similarities exist, is that sepentine mimics the forms and styles of metalwork, not the other way around. The stone foot of a candlestick would not likely be hollow without an archetype form to mimic, and a tankard handle would not have the advanced turns of a silver handle, unless the form is inspired from a medium and tradition in which these turns are naturally present. Consequently, it can by this be established that the direction of form is from metalwork towards serpentine, and not the opposite.[49]

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47 Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Rape of Proserpina* (1621-1622), marble, Galleria Borghese, Rome.

48 For further discussion on the metaphor, see Tilley, Christopher, *Metaphor and material culture*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1999; Ortman, Scott G., »Conceptual metaphor in the archeological record: Methods and example from the American southwest«, in *American Antiquity*, No 4, vol 65, 2000, pp. 614-619, 637-638; Gosden, Chris, »Material culture and long-term change« in *Handbook of Material Culture*, Tilley, Chris et al. (eds.), SAGE Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, New Dehli, 2006, pp. 435-436.

49 This property is referred to by Ortman as *directionality* (as one of the six general properties formulating a metaphor), where metalwork would be the source and serpentine the target domain. Ortman, 2000, pp. 616-617.

Aspects of value

This chapter concerns the various aspects of value, not only economic. How have the Skokloster objects been regarded by their owners? Have they been proudly presented as important pieces in a collection, or as neglected domestic utensils, and has the approach shifted over time?

Status and setting

The status of the serpentine artefacts in the Skokloster household has varied over time. But notable is the early period placement in the kitchen along with other utensils and faience services. That is not a high status exhibition area, but rather a domestic storage facility.

Sorted under the header *Steenkiäril* [the term would widely translate into stoneware] in the 1716 inventory, the serpentine ware were listed together with faience sieves, dishes, plates, jars etc., but not specified as serpentine. The term used was *swart* [black] and occasionally *sten* [stone], as opposed to the faience/porcelain *hwit* [white] or *blått* [blue]. While not individually appraised, the serpentine group had a combined value of 12 dkm. Compared to the value of faience/stoneware in the same inventory (see chapter *Economic appreciation*), this was not an exceptionally high value.

Looking at the inventory entries from 1716 to 1910 (table 1), we can follow the different attitudes towards the material. The continuous drop in quantity, especially for the plates, implies some use. The more detailed inventories specify broken plates (with parts intact)[50], but we cannot find notes on repairs (other than indirectly). From this, it might be assumed that the repairs now made (none of the previously damaged objects are presently in that state, and no repairs/restorations are recorded in the modern museum inventory) are done between 1845 and 1967 (and likely during the first half of the 20th century, due to the crude repairs ascribed Emil Nyman).

During the decades, we can follow the locality of the objects within the domestic bottom floor of the castle. Not until somewhere between 1823-1845[51] were they resituated to *Geneve* (room 3:A) in the Brahe apartments on the third floor of Skokloster castle. Something must have triggered this promotion. The move was made by Count Magnus Brahe (see chapter *Wrangel's field service*), and the room had two Hamburger cabinets filled with porcelain, Dutch faience, glass, serpentine and terra sigillata objects etc. The walls held a portrait gallery with eminent Swedes contemporary to the count.[52] The room had no function as a serving room, nor were there any dining facilities close by, and the effect became that of a showroom.

During the gap between 1845 and 1910, another relocation occurred. Most of the serpentine is 1910 found in the tower room (4:Y), which more had the character of a curiosity cabinet. It housed architectural models of Skokloster and Gripenberg, a set of paintings of German emperors, a cabinet of plants and wood samples, architectural plans, portraits of philosophers, globes, binoculars etc. The serpentine was probably kept in the cabinet listed in the room. The room later turned into a dedicated natural cabinet[53], but the serpentine had by then been moved to *Turin* (3:R) and set into a Hamburger cabinet. The serpentine was once again in a new context - from a representational *Geneve* to a contemplative tower room to the rather simple decorated *Turin*.

Hoyer suggests the serpentine to have been stored in the same Hamburger cabinet since the 17th

[50] *3 st. flata sönderslagne Tallrikar, med sina bitar, (kunna sammansättas)* [Three flat broken plates, with their parts (can be repaired)]. 1823: p. 6.

[51] They are listed in room 1:X in the 1823 inventory, but resituated to room 3:A in the 1845 inventory. The exact time of the move itself is not known, but it was likely during the 1830's.

[52] Hidemark and Stavenow-Hidemark, 1995, p. 175.

[53] It is described in the 1930 inventory as a *Naturalie kabinett*.

century, which would be the cabinet located in *Turin* depicted in a photograph from ca. 1930.[54] She refers to it as the "*Wrangelschen »Serpentinschrank«*".[55] My investigation does not support that notion. The 1794 inventory is the first time a cabinet is mentioned in the same room as the serpentine, and none of the previous inventories list storage furniture of any kind. The 1794 cabinet is specified as made of ebony and tortoise inlays[56], only matching a cabinet presently in *Florens* (3:V).

Object biographies

As previously mentioned, an increasing amount of broken objects are found over time (table 1). Primarily, this would indicate use, but is it also possible to read it as lack of interest? Were they even were meant for eternity, or were the perishable qualities of the stone obvious for the maker/consumer from the start? Did the plates actually follow a predestined trajectory when the damaged objects were not repaired or replaced? The museum setting intervenes before that last stage of the artefact's life occurs - being disposed as waste, and elevates the artefact into a quasi-fetishized museum context.[57] The Magnus Brahe rearrangement (see chapter *Wrangel's field service*) in the 19th century had to some degree already acknowledged and enhanced many objects as 'museum pieces' even before the official museum inauguration 1967. The objects were only interesting to restore when they were elevated from consumption status to idolatry. At the same time, not much effort was put into the restoration. As seen on the images (figs. 7, 9:c-d, 11:a-b and 17:a), it is apparently the work of an amateur restorer. Today, it is interesting to see how the official photographs from the museum quite effectively hides (or at least not shows) the quite obvious damages and repairs that very much are part of the object's history (see for example figs. 9:a, 10, and 30:a).

The position for Skokloster as an administering museum is slightly out of the ordinary. All objects came in a bundle with the Swedish state purchase of the castle 1967 - from the simplest of tools to Arcimboldo's *Vertumnus* painting. No curating decisions regarding acquisitions had to be made at that stage, so the status of the pieces when acquired is not obvious. Some of the objects are occasionally put on display as parts of staged table settings, but they have not been exhibited as important objects so far.

Wrangel's field service

In 20th century references to the serpentine objects, they are referred to as *Wrangels fältservis* [Wrangel's field service]. That is a term not used in the earliest sources where they are mentioned (the 1716 inventory). Although the 1756 inventory lists them as *En Service av Serpentin* [a serpentine service], that unifying term does not follow in the subsequent inventories, nor are there any references to Wrangel in any of them.

Interestingly enough, *Wrangels fältservis* implies several things: (i) It states the personal connection with field marshal Carl Gustaf Wrangel. (ii) It defines the serpentine objects as a unified service, not acquired over time or space. (iii) It suggests it to be a suitable service to bring in the field.

Regarding (i), I have previously presented the hypothesis that the group might be of Brahe or mixed origin, rather than of Wrangel alone. In accordance, nothing proves it to have been personally affiliated with Wrangel, although being period. As of (ii), it can only at parts be considered as a service. The larger sets of plates are definitely made as units of similar size, decoration and texture, but the corpus pieces are more diverse and from both ends of the 17th century. Mountings are

54 Hoyer, 1995, pp. 84-85, with ill. Cabinet Inv. 3583.

55 For example Hoyer, 1995, p. 167.

56 *1 st. Skåp af Ebenholtz inlagt med Skylpad.* 1794: p. 32.

57 A term used by Pennell, Sara, »Mundane materiality, or, should small things still be forgotten? Material culture, micro-histories and the problem of scale« in *History and material culture*, Harvey, Karen (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 2009, p. 176.

both silver and pewter, mouldings vary in direction and profile, the stone used are from separate ores, and the inventory entries are individually listed under *Serpentin* rather than as a service (with the 1756 exception). What is obvious is the total lack of practicality in bringing a 70-piece stone service in the field, as (iii) would suggest. Not only is it heavy, but the brittle qualities of serpentine puts a question mark on whether it would survive in use for any longer period of time during the weary conditions of life in the field. I have also, to no avail, examined the possible existence of a dedicated case for these pieces.[58] The preferred material for field services at this time would have been pewter - durable and relatively lightweight.[59] A known example is the field service of Nils Brahe's II contemporary, general count Rutger von Ascheberg (1621-1693), made in pewter around 1641.[60]

If the terminology, with all of its suggestive bias, is established in the 19th century, we can supposedly assume that it is done in accordance with a historicizing *Zeitgeist*. During the period between 1823 and 1845, count Magnus Brahe had considerable refurbishments and redecorations done at Skokloster, with a clear ambition to increase the baroque 'feel' of the castle. He rearranged the furniture, acquired antique furniture from antique dealers, added panelling and repainted walls and ceilings etc.[61] Hidemark and Stavenow-Hidemark questions, however, whether the intellectual capacities of Magnus Brahe would suffice to plan and carry out the advanced work.[62] Either way, it promoted the paramount goal of glorifying the Swedish nation and its monarch in a time when the country's political importance was diminished. From a Brahe point of view, a clearer connection to a period in Swedish history when the family had played a major part was desirable when nobility regressed in favour of the *bourgeoisie*.[63] In a collection as historically important as the Skokloster repository, unsupported provenances could easily be established and were probably not very questionable to the contemporaries.

Martin Olin discusses the matter of reinventing a Swedish past (from the era of greatness) in the late 19th/early 20th century in the prologue of his doctoral thesis *Det karolinska porträttet*.[64] The presumed harsh and austere attitudes of the Swedish officers during the 17th century and the period of the caroleans, were seen as a model of courage and effectiveness for the 20th century Swede. Carl Gustaf Wrangel was a fixed star in the Carolean sky, and associations with him could naturally be sought, especially at his own castle.

A more theoretical approach to why the group was associated with Wrangel can be found in the dichotomy between the profane and the sacred.[65] As the era of greatness became a central period of the Swedish historical consciousness, objects associated with it would obtain an aura of the same greatness. They would be regarded as sacred by a national communal interest, and as

58 I have not been able to find any inventory entries indicating a case specially made for serpentine, nor are there any unspecified cases listed adjacent to the serpentine in any of the inventories.

59 Count Axel Julius de la Gardie brought with him *Een Teen Servis med Engelst Teen* [A pewter service with English pewter] to Reval 1690 as the Swedish general governor, including plates, dishes, jugs and bottles. Karlson, 1945, p. 478.

60 The complete service was kept at Vallen estate in Halland, Sweden, until the 1930's. Åberg, Alf, *Rutger von Ascheberg: Fältmarskalk och generalguvernör,* Gleerups förlag, Lund 1950, p. 240 with ill. A wide rimmed dish dated 1641 with the coat of arms of Rutger von Ascheberg can be found at Göteborgs museum, inv. GM13386.

61 Hidemark and Stavenow-Hidemark, 1995, p. 117.

62 Although suggesting a list of possible alternative names, they leave the question open. Hidemark and Stavenow-Hidemark, 1995, pp. 175-176.

63 Hidemark and Stavenow-Hidemark, 1995, pp. 171-172.

64 Olin, Martin, *Det karolinska porträttet – Ideologi, ikonografi, identitet*, Raster förlag, Stockholm, 2000, pp. 8-16.

65 Emile Durkheim discussed this issue in a religious sense, but MCS theorists have absorbed and developed his ideas. Durkheim, 1995 [1912]; Woodward, 2007, pp. 90-91.

such a desirable object to possess. The ambition to exalt objects into sacredness could function as a motivational force for setting dubious provenances.

So when does "*Wrangels fältservis"* emerge? It is given neither in the 1845, 1910 or the 1930 inventory. William Karlson uses the term uncritically in his book *Stå t och vardag i stormakttidens herremanshem* from 1945.[66] Bo Lagercrantz calls it "a clumsy service" in his book from 1968 on the history of old plates, and states that it *had erroneously been* referred to as Wrangel's field service.[67] *Erroneously* here refers to the field service concept, while the Wrangel affiliation is left unaddressed. So is the term as late as the 1930's? It very well might be, at least in print.

Economic appreciation

As for the appreciation of the serpentine group at Skokloster, the different inventories provide an interesting read. Unfortunately, only the 1716 and 1728 inventories provide monetary values, and it is only the latter that specifies individual values for each entry, but they can still be of use (see the values in table 1 and the appendix). The inflation between 1716 and 1728 was roughly 60 %[68], so with an increase in nominal value of more than 180 %, the real value increment is still more than 70 % between the two inventories.[69]

The rapid increase in values is notable in other types of objects as well, not only serpentine. A butter box in faience is 1716 jointly valued with 42 other faience/stoneware items to 8 dkm. In 1728, it is individually valued to 16 öre (a 1/2 dkm), which is considerably higher.[70] A group of twenty-four paintings had 1716 a joint value of 50 dkm, which 1728 was raised to 210 dkm[71], and a folding chair that increased its value from 4 to 10 dkm.[72]

Comparing serpentine to pewter inventory entries 1728, there is a very notable difference, especially as the objects are of similar type and use. When the serpentine tankard (3611) is valued to 1:4 dkm, two pewter tankards (one with a damaged lid) are valued to 15 dkm.[73] Seventeen plates of "common" pewter have a value of 24:16 dkm[74], while the twenty serpentine chargers (3599-3601) are jointly valued to 10 dkm. There is definitely a difference in value here, but why? Could it be that the serpentine was out of context? Pewter was locally produced with a well-known up-to-date price level for appraisers, but serpentine was parted from original acquisition prices or status.

At the time of Abraham Brahe's death 1728, the chattels from all of his estates were listed, and Skokloster is not unique in terms of serpentine. The inventory from Lyckås, owned by Abraham Brahe, also lists several items [appendix 9.1].[75] Under *Serpentin* as a separate header, is a large wash basin [*Stor skiöllje skåll*][76] for 1:28 dkm, a tea set comprising a tea pot and six cups and

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66 Karlson, 1945, p. 485.

67 Lagercrantz, Bo, *Gamla tallrikar – ur tallrikens historia*. Ica-förlaget, Västerås, 1968, p. 25.

68 The inflation during this period of the great Nordic war and Swedish numismatic turmoil, is rather difficult to calculate. Lagerqvist & Nathorst-Böös have published price level indices from 1732 (p. 26-28), which is too late for this purpose. Alternate methods are required. I have used known prices for beer from 1715 until 1730, and although subjected to variations in crops etc., it gives at least an indication of the development in prices. A *fat* (157 litres) of beer 1715 costed 28 dkm. In 1725 and 1730, the comparable price was roughly ca. 45:10 dkm (recalculated from the price of a *Kanna* (2.6 litres) beer, costing 24 öre km). Lagerqvist & Nathorst-Böös, 1999 [1984], pp. 22, 29, 77-78.

69 33.875/(12x1.6) ≈ 1.76, a 76 % increase.

70 1716: p. 330, *Smör Ask med Låck*. 1728: p.365, *En låg smörask*.

71 1716: Södra rundelen, *24 sth Schillerier åtskillig slag*. 1728: 23 individually specified and valued paintings.

72 1716: *Lähnstol med rödt Kläde att ligga uti*. 1728: *En gammall röd sängstohl att fälla ned*.

73 1728: p. 360. *2ne driksKannor en med söndrigt låck om 15*.

74 1728: p. 360. *17 st. tallrikar gement theen 1 ltt 4 ½.*

75 RA:E7477, p. 485.

76 Does possibly translates to "large finger bowl", but the size and value indicates something more grand.

saucers for a total of 7:28 dkm, two candlesticks for 4 dkm, and a salt for 18 öre dkm. The basin seems somewhat economically equivalent to the Skokloster basin (which together with the ewer was valued to 2 dkm). The tea set seems, on the other hand, by this comparison to be valued rather high. Each cup with saucer is with 1 dkm equally valued to the Skokloster spice box on stand. The most notable difference between the two inventories is however the candlesticks values. While the Skokloster lists a butter box, a water jug and two candlesticks at a joint value of 1:4 dkm, the two candlesticks alone at Lyckås have a value of 4 dkm. The Lyckås values are generally higher than Skokloster, without any apparent reason, but since the Lyckås objects hasn't remained *in situ*, it is not easy to determine what other variables that are at play. Size, models, type of stone and individual differences between appraisers, can all result in justifiable differences in values. One hypothesis is that the smaller amount of objects at Lyckås increases the status of the ones that exist, thus assigning them a higher economic value.

Serpentine was not extremely rare in Sweden during this period, and existed in other Swedish collections. The 1688 inventory of Makalös castle (with Brahe affiliation)[77] in the central of Stockholm, lists serpentine bottles and jugs together with faience ware; *3 st gråå steenflaskor à 4 D st* [Three grey stone bottles at 4 daler each], *3 st dito mindre à 2 D st* [Three ditto smaller at 2 daler each] and *2 st dito Kannor med låk à 3 D st* [Two ditto covered Jugs at 3 daler each].[78] When Charlotta Maria Stenbock married Axel Lewenhaupt 1686, she brought with her four silver lidded serpentine canisters, and one with a pewter lid, to her new husband. She had also inherited six plates the same year from her mother, Christina de la Gardie.[79] The 1666 inventory from Lidö[80], lists six serpentine tankards and more than ten canisters without lids, and Mariedal's castle had a pair of tankards 1691.[81] The 17th century amounts are, however, not completely comparable to the 18th century values at Skokloster.

[77] Makalös castle, owned and built by the de la Gardie family, was previously inhabited by Ebba Brahe (1596-1674, cousin to Per Brahe II). In 1688, it had been returned to the state through the reduction.

[78] The inventory quoted in Axel-Nilsson, Göran, *Makalös – Fältherren greve Jakob De la Gardies hus i Stockholm*, Stockholms kommun, Stockholm, 1984, p. 271.

[79] Karlson, 1945, pp. 485, 537.

[80] An estate previously in the Brahe family as well (sold by Margareta Brahe (1603-1669) in 1664).

[81] Karlson, 1945, pp. 530, 537.

Discussion

When setting out on this project, my main goal was to put a spotlight on a group of very interesting objects that exist outside the regular museum display, but still is very much a part of both a Skokloster and a Swedish baroque history. The odd naming and provenance guesses, the forms analogous to metalwork, and a parallel set of own forms etc., made me want to see how much of these unknowns that could be illuminated.

The high status position for serpentine that Hoyer implies in her book is not really applicable to the domestic Skokloster setting, especially not before Magnus Brahe. The Skokloster serpentine was not exhibited in a *kunstkammer* setting, nor in the representational apartments of the upper floors. The mountings are, when existing, in pewter or, in one case, unmarked silver. According to wear and damages, they were in use rather than just exhibited, and latter days' repairs are definitely not made with piety. When economically appraised, the Skokloster serpentine were dramatically below comparable pewter objects. Furthermore, they were not unique in Sweden at the time, which many contemporary inventories show. These entries indicate a similar domestic location, together with faience and stoneware. Their uniqueness lies rather in their existence today as a group.

We must naturally bear in mind that the study of serpentine in a collection such as Skokloster's, is somewhat problematic. There are reasons to why the collection has survived to modern times, and attempts to extrapolate results into generalizations of 17th century serpentine objects are hazardous. This collection is extraordinary just by having survived, as opposed to the absolute majority of produced serpentine goods, which are now lost. At the same time may we as 21st century spectators affix a luxury aura to them that would perhaps surprise the 17th century consumer. Are they luxury goods or not, were they made for princes or maids? This thesis has aimed to illuminate the not so luxurious circumstances serpentine objects have existed under during history.

After analysing the Skokloster objects, they reveal themselves as being made over more than half a century, from the first quarter of the 17th century until after ca. 1670. This makes the notion of the entire group being a service fallacious, even though sub-groups definitely are. The various ages and level of craftsmanship indicate various acquisition dates, and since there are provenances from both Wrangel and Brahe for other objects at Skokloster before the first inventory 1716. My conclusion is that it is probably most correct to describe the group as a 17th century collection of serpentine, which has since 1716 been held together with the aid of heritage legislation and later with an affectionate look back at yesteryear.[82]

The main concern for the credibility of the derived conclusions in this thesis is how much the objects are to be trusted. Much of the Brahe affiliation and reasoning regarding some acquisition dates etc. are based on the Fijthsson mark on the canister (3613). The mark is placed on the inside of the larger lid, a lid that is not fixed to the canister by other means than screw threads. A scenario in which this lid is not original to the pewter mounting is not too far fetched. If the original lid was lost or damaged and a suitable spare was found in the Fijthsson lid, it would also result in the present situation. Models and sizes were, as



Figure 34. The inside of the Fijthsson lid with his master rose mark. Note the vertical cracks along the perimeter.

[82] The Skokloster status as an entailed estate prohibited any division of inheritance etc.

shown, interchangeable. Inventories give no guidance, and in the current museum inventory, the possibility is not even considered. Returning to the factual lid, vertical cracks on the side can be observed (fig. 34) which could be the result of a forced expansion of the perimeter (as in screwing the lid onto a slightly too large thread). I would not consider the cracks evidence, but it can be wise to at least keep it in mind.

What I wanted to achieve in chapter *Aspects of form* was to reach an understanding of how and why the serpentine objects appear as they do in terms of form. Apart from forms specific to serpentine matter, many are universal regarding material application. They do, however, originate from dealing with specific properties of a certain material. The three-partite model of archetypes, mastery of matter and mimesis can be a way to deconstruct obvious similarities between objects, and to some extent grasp the underlying mechanics. The fact that inside form so closely follows outside form, is an interesting aspect of serpentine application not previously addressed. It further nourishes the notion of serpentine as a plastic material with properties and application similar to those of metal.

I would like, at some point, to further develop the idea of serpentine being a metaphor of metal. A full analysis, however, lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

What I also have shown, is that the use of the term *Wrangels fältservis* does not have a long history, at least not in written sources. It is more related to aspects of value than of early provenance, as discussed in chapter *Wrangel's field service*.

An issue of using inventories as basis for interpreting contemporary views on objects, is how much they are to be trusted. As pointed out by Cowen Orlin, economic values are subjective and are given by different persons of different capacities at different times.[83] We cannot tell what has been left out, and for what reason. They cannot uncritically be used for comparisons or to fictionally recreate a furnished house.[84]

However, inventories still reveal information of use to us. In terms of monetary values, there is a vast general increase between the 1716 and 1728 values. Not only serpentine, but paintings, faience and pewter all had dramatically increased recorded values. These two Skokloster inventories were both made for Abraham Brahe. The former was set up prior to his second wedding 1716, and the latter after his death 1728. Is this of importance? Instead of looking at it as a massive elevation of value 1728, could it rather have been a conscious underestimation 1716. Was there a reason to keep values low?

The great reduction, initiated during Charles XI reign in the last quarter of the 17th century, had a major impact on both Nils Brahe and the estate of Carl Gustaf Wrangel. Nils Brahe had to, for his own and Per Brahe's part, forfeit the enormous sum of ca. 431.000 dsm.[85] C.G. Wrangel's debt to the state aggregated 343.000 dsm, and the inherited Brahe/Wrangel portion was a quarter of that amount. These debts were settled over time, but the last Brahe bill was issued 1711, and Wrangel debts were still due during the 1710's.[86] Abraham Brahe had perhaps by this an economic incitement to understate his wealth, and while being still alive, he also had a possibility to do so by influencing the appraisal.

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83 Pennell, 2009, pp.176-177; Cowen Orlin, Lena, »Fictions of the early modern English probate inventory« in *The culture of capital: Property, cities, and knowledge in early modern England*, Turner, Henry S. (ed.), Routledge, London, 2002, pp.54-56.

84 Cowen Orlin, 2002, p. 72-73.

85 Blomdahl, Rune, *Förmyndarräfstens ekonomiska resultat*, Almqvist & Wiksell, Stockholm, 1973, pp. 23-26.

86 Blomdahl, 1973, pp. 26, 74-75.

While working on this thesis, the objects have been my primary concern. The material culture approach has proven its ability to extract and handle information from objects with deficient written records. Questions of value on the basis of wear and localisation is one example, dating and terminology issues another. Very much more can be said on values and form transference in applied arts during late renaissance and baroque eras, and a more definite account for the early Skokloster serpentine provenances is yet to be written. Though, I might have entered a path that leads to a deeper understanding of the Skokloster serpentine.

Acknowledgements

I want to express my great gratitude towards my tutor Dr Mårten Snickare, Stockholm University, for constructive advise and aid, Mr Bengt Kylsberg, curator at Skokloster castle, for valuable discussions and generously sharing the collection with me, the staff of Skokloster castle for much enthusiasm and assistance, and finally Dr Maria Nöremark for much constructive feedback and friendly advise.

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Archives

The earliest inventories (1716 and 1728) have been studied in original by the author at Riksarkivet, Stockholm (Swedish National Archives). The other inventories have been studied via photocopies presently at Skokloster castle.

The pagina concerning the serpentine entries are the following:
1716: pp. 329-330; 1728: pp. 365-366; 1757: p. 47; 1794: p. 34; 1823: pp. 5-6; 1845:p 109; 1910: p. 202.

1716 – *Inventarium på Skogklosters meubler i des Kamrar och fatebur d 18 Sept. 1716*, Riksarkivet E 6103.

1728 – *Abraham Brahes boupptecknings- och arvdelningshandlingar, inventarium Skokloster*, Riksarkivet E 7477.

Riksarkivet (RA) –
E3315 – Brahesamlingen, vol 15.
E7471 – Rydboholmssamlingen – Kassaräkningar 1670-80.
E7477 – Rydboholmssamlingen – Bouppteckning efter Abraham Brahe 1728.

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	Figure(s)
After Schmidt, 1868, p. 16.	1
After Reallexikon der germanischer Altertumskunde, vol. 6, p. 166, pl. 40.	2
Origin unknown. Here quoted from http://www.drechselhuber.de/beruf.htm (2010-09-02)	3
Jens Mohr, Skokloster slott.	Cover, 4, 5, 7:d, 8, 9:a, 10, 14:a, 16:a, 17:a, 19:a, 20:a, 21:a, 24:a, 29:a, 30:a
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Nordiska museet, After Löfgren, 1933.	13:a-b, 22, 26, 27
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.	15, 24:e, 33:a-d
Roland Dreßler, Sammlung Jahn. After Ulferts, 2000.	18, 32
After Löfgren, 1933.	23
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. After Blaauwen, 1979.	25

Appendix

Skokloster Inventory 1728

Uti lilla Kiöket och Hwalfven derinnanföre befantz:

[…]	
20 Serpentinfaat små à 16./: st.	10:-
Ett wattufaat och Kanna af Serpentin	2:-
21 st. tallrickar af Serpentin á 8./. st.	5:8
13 st. Sumpper à 12./:	4:28
5 st. Kåppar infatta I en tiock steenfoot med en Zirat mitt uti	2:16
En Kryddlåda med foot och pelare mitt uti	1:-
En stoor och 3 st. smärre flaskor med theen Skrufwar	6:-
1 st. do. Kruus med theenlåck och handtag	1:4
En smörask, en wattukanna utan faat och 2ne liusestakar	1:4

Lyckås Inventory 1728

Inventory from Lyckås estate, Skärstads sn, Jönköpings län.

Serpentin		
1 st:	Stor skiöllje skåll a	1:28
1 st:	Theé kanna a	1:28
6 st:	Theé koppar med s[ina?] faat a	6._
2 st:	Liusstakar	4._
1 st:	Salltkar a	_18

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1. Wäreby, Eva: Fritidshusets årsringar. En översikt av fritidshusets arkitektoniska utveckling i Stockholmsområdet, särskilt Tynningö, från 1870-talet fram till 2000-talet. (Kand)
2. Lindgren, Tony: Utställningar och samverkan inom Stockholms konstliv åren 1998, 2008 och i ett framtidsperspektiv. En undersökning med semiotik av tillkomst och respons. (Master)
3. Lindqvist, Katarina: Måste kvinnor fortfarande vara nakna för att få komma in på museerna? En undersökning av könsrepresentationen på fem svenska konstinstitutioner. (Kand)
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8. Linnaeus, Nina: Den estetiska dimensionen i Ellen Keys pedagogiska åskådning. (Kand)
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10. Sundin, Greger: For Princes or Maids? Provenance, form and value of serpentine at Skokloster castle. (Mag)