

# Minis Magnified

issue no.7 Friday, September 10, 2010

## FAMILLE VERTE

Location: Exploring the World Gallery

The collection at The Mini Time Machine Museum can seem delightfully overwhelming, with each house and room box painstakingly filled with luscious details. Guests are often charmed to find new elements upon repeat visits, frequently in pieces they have gazed at many times before.

Although it may seem like it, your eyes are not always playing tricks on you. Just as our resident fairy Caitlin is constantly moving about the museum, so does our founder, Pat Arnell, mischievously adding new touches to our beloved collection. These new acquisitions give a living, breathing dynamic to our permanent collection, ensuring our visitors that, just like it's full scale counterpart, the miniature world is constantly expanding.

One of our newest acquisitions is the "Famille Verte" Lidded Jar with 24 KT Gilt-Silver Mount, a collaborative piece by famed silversmith Pete Acquisto and renowned ceramicist Henny Staring-Egberts. This miniature jar is a replica of one of a pair in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, CA. "Famille Verte" is a term introduced in the second half of the 19th century by the French ceramic expert Jacquemart. The name refers to the green (verte) tone of the Chinese porcelain, which was originally produced in the Jingdeshen district, starting in the 18th century. Mounted Famille Verte is rare, adding to the uniqueness of this miniaturized version. The height of the original piece is 16 inches; ours measures just over one inch, in the 1:12 scale.

The process of mounting porcelain with precious metals dates from the early 12th century. Vases, bowls, jars and beer jugs were among the most popular to adorn. Usually the mounting provided added functionality, such as a hinged lid or handle, as well as added beauty. Famille Verte porcelain was not mounted with precious metals until the late 18th century, and was done so rarely. Famille Verte porcelain, unlike Famille Rose porcelain, which is more commonly found in Europe, is a uniquely Chinese creation, lacking any European design influences. The design elements are almost always depicting wood engravings from the period in which it was produced.

When looking at the piece, you will notice that the designs have been painted in vertical panels, divided by two thin lines. The images include magpies, butterflies and dragonflies, complimented by lotus blossoms, roses, chrysanthemums, magnolias and bamboo. These finely painted decorations were created using an overglazing technique, just as the originals. As described by the artist, Henny Staring-Egberts:

*"The lid is encircled around its lower edge by a flanged molding. The cylindrical part has been mounted, top and bottom, with moldings of gilt-silver, the lower one being gadrooned. It is surmounted by a finial in the form of a cluster of berries in a foliate cup, resting on a gadrooned base. The mount of the foot of the jar is linked to that of the rim at each side by pierced and scrolled strapwork, surmounted by a shell with a female mask at the center. It has a drop handle descending from the shell."*



Only ten of these miniature replicas were produced. Pat Arnell purchased the lidded jar about a month ago at the recent NAME convention, after having been contacted by the artists. After having been acquired by the museum, the exciting part was finding the right home for the piece in our collection.

"I tried it out first in the Cheshire Regency," said Pat. "But it seemed to get lost in the hallway." She needed to find a place that would appropriately showcase such a beautiful rarity. Her solution was perfect: you will find this Famille Verte lidded jar on the steps of A Touch of Class Regent Street, by Bob Bernhard (1996). This miniature shop features many other fine replicas by the likes of Eugene Kupjack and Jim Irish, making our new acquisition feel right at home. A Touch of Class is located in our Exploring the World Gallery, directly across from the Load of Mischief Pub.

### Sources

Mounted Oriental Porcelain in the J. Paul Getty Museum. Gillian Wilson, 2000.

Chinese Kangxi Famille Verte Porcelain Catalogue. Guest & Gray, 2010.