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Johann Andreas Thelott

Kunstkammer object with depiction of Joseph's interpretation of dreams

Johann Andreas Thelott (1655 - 1734)

Augsburg, ca. 1700

Figural relief in original frame

Silver, cast and chased, engraved and finally white boiled, partially gilt the border frame inset with green guilloché translucent email

The relief was finished by a so-called "white boiling" to give it a damask-like, silky appearance. In this process, the silver object is held in a glowing coal fire until the oxidation of the copper leaves a black coating on the surface, which is then removed using diluted sulphuric acid, leaving the pure, white layer of silver on the surface.

14,1 × 15,5 cm

The relief depicts the interpretation of Joseph's dream in front of the Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, in an expansive, ancient architectural setting. Joseph and his brothers are standing in front of the Pharaoh, surrounded by soldiers, interpreting his dream in which he saw seven healthy cows being engulfed by seven lean cows and seven thick ears of corn being devoured by seven thin ears of corn. Joseph interpreted this as God's plan to send the land seven years of hunger after seven years of abundance.

In order to increase the plasticity of the relief and to gain even more depth, Thelott added and soldered some parts of the material - a typical detail that we can find in a whole series of important reliefs and which reveals his great artistic talent.

Thelott's skill in chasing figurative silver reliefs brought him great fame in the early 18th century. Many of his works were commissioned by the court for diplomatic gifts, so it is conceivable that this piece was made for the Russian court.