In the early eighteenth century, there was a great passion in England for Chinese porcelain, fueled by the newly adopted oriental custom of tea drinking, which by mid-century was enjoyed by gentleman and laborer alike. The English East India Company imported large quantities of "china" vessels, especially tea services, along with other exotic items such as lacquers, fabrics, and tea. Although it is believed that as many as sixty million porcelains had reached the West by the year 1800, English demand was not satisfied by oriental imports. A large market remained for an enterprising English firm.

The Worcester factory was, from its inception, a strong competitor in this lucrative market, at first producing pieces that imitated Chinese blue-and-white, famille verte (green family) and famille rose (pink family) porcelains. Worcester adapted many Chinese patterns, copied Chinese marks, and even tinted its glaze with cobalt to approximate the bluish-white of the Chinese porcelain paste. The original name of the factory, the Worcester Tonquin Manufacture, after the Chinese port of Tonquin, from which much porcelain was shipped, was part of a marketing strategy to associate Worcester with oriental potteries. An advertisement in the Gentleman’s Magazine of 1763 actually compared Worcester directly with its imported competition: "a good body, scarce inferior to that of Eastern China, it is equally tough and its glazing never cracks or scales off."

All porcelain is composed of some mixture of white clay with various types of ground stone (or, sometimes, ground bone or glass), which is shaped, then fired at high temperatures. While the chemical composition of Worcester porcelain was not a true copy of Chinese hard-paste porcelain, the Worcester formula was a successful soft-paste imitation because it contained soapstone (steatite), a kind of talc. When combined with powdered calcined flint and china clay, the soapstone produced a stronger body with a much higher resistance to thermal shock than other soft-paste porcelains manufactured by Worcester's competitors, Chelsea, Derby, and Bow. Worcester's soapstone mixture not only protected the ware in the firing, but was also particularly well suited for tea services, since it prevented vessels from shattering when quickly heated and could better retain the warmth of brewing tea.

Formed in June of 1751, Worcester is the only one of seven eighteenth-century English porcelain works that is still in operation. It was founded by fifteen business partners, rather than by royalty or sovereign rulers, as were most continental factories. Among the most important shareholders were Dr. John Wall (1708-1776), William Davis (d. 1783), the brothers Richard and Josiah Holdship, and Edward Cave (1691-1754). The earliest years of the factory production (1751-76), have been named the "Dr. Wall period," after the prominent Worcester physician who was one of the more active proprietors. Dr. Wall must have been instrumental in the affairs of the factory; the wares from the period named for him are of the highest quality, and a falling-off of standards in some wares occurred after his death in 1776. While Dr. Wall traditionally has been credited with inventing Worcester's porcelain formula, it is now generally believed that the recipe originated in a nearby factory at Bristol. Early in 1752, the Worcester investors bought the Benjamin Lund and William Miller Bristol factory, and used its stock, molds, equipment, and probably its porcelain formula. This early reliance on another factory's operation may explain why Worcester was able to achieve so high a standard of quality from its onset.
The Early Period:  
1750s

Wares from the first two years are often indistinguishable from Lund’s Bristol porcelains. Examples from the earliest period (1751-55) are prized for their subtle form, the delicacy and simplicity of their palette, their gray to creamy paste, and their rich, unctuous glazes. Crisply potted, their shapes were inspired by Chinese and Japanese examples, or, in the case of tureens, teapots, and sauceboats, by European Rococo silver. These shapes were often purely decorative, and some of the less practical were often purely decorative, with some of the finest molding in Crisply potted, their shapes were inspired by Chinese and Japanese examples, or, in the case of tureens, teapots, and sauceboats, by European Rococo silver. These shapes were often purely decorative, and some of the less practical were often purely decorative, with some of the finest molding in

The beautifully potted and painted butter tub in the *famille verte* palette (no. 2).

Worcester blue-and-white patterns were of the finest quality produced in Europe, and are prized among collectors for the clarity of their underglaze patterns. This clarity was achieved by applying and firing cobalt oxide (the blue decoration) after the initial firing of the ware, but before application of the glaze. This second of three firings fixed the design, preventing it from running in the high-temperature, final firing of the glaze. Some rare examples are found in the Maier collection: a rare Bristol/Worcester teapot of 1751-1752 (no. 16) with the characteristically delicate light blue palette of the early period, and the earliest tureen of the factory, dating from about 1753 to 1755, one of four known examples, with some of the finest molding in

During these years, Worcester produced luxuriant flower and vegetal patterns adapted from the Meissen and Chelsea factories. Several pieces in the exhibition (nos. 19, 21, 23) are painted in this style, which is attributed to James Rogers, a decorator who worked at Worcester, although it is uncertain whether Rogers painted floral patterns. By the late 1750s, vases, teapots, and especially leaf-molded wares were also influenced by Meissen, perhaps through English copies from Chelsea. Various types of tactile molded wares were produced with crisply molded decoration. “The Blind Earl” relief pattern is among the most popular, usually executed in polychrome enamels, but rarely in under-glaze blue-and-white (no. 12). Its name allegedly derives from the Earl of Coventry, who lost his sight in a hunting accident, but this event took place well after the pattern was first produced. A more rare relief design is a leaf-shaped dish with lilac-purple *en camée* decoration based on Aesop’s fable of “The Fox and the Grapes,” possibly painted by James Rogers (no. 25).

Oriental Patterns:  
1765 to 1775

Japanese-inspired patterns of this period shifted from simplified Kakiemon designs, with minimal surface decoration, to unique, more sumptuous variations of them. The “Orange Japan” pattern on a rosewater bottle (no. 31) is an example of a simple Kakiemon plant pattern combined with elaborately painted and gilded orange panels suggestive of Imari patterns. Kakiemon designs were also combined with plain or blue-scale mazarine grounds, as in the unusual pair of hexagonal vases (no. 37).

Richly brocaded Japanese designs, inspired by textiles, covering the entire surface of the vessel were also popular. Traditionally called Imari wares, after the Japanese port from which they were shipped, these are now more correctly termed Arita wares, after the city where they were produced. The Maier collection contains some exquisite examples from this
The entries that include an accession number were recent gifts of Kenneth J. Maier, M.D., to The Art Institute of Chicago. Those without accession numbers belong to the Maier Collection and are among his promised gifts to the museum.

**Case I: The Early Period: 1750s**

1. Molded Tureen, 1753/55
   *Turquoise Panel Group pattern in underglaze blue*
   *Marks: (workman’s mark)* in underglaze blue

2. Molded Butter Tub, 1753/54
   *Chinoiserie-styled landscape in famille verte palette*

3. Molded Tea Bowl, Coffee Can, and Saucer, 1755/58
   *Stag Hunt pattern*

4. Molded Coffee Cup, c. 1755
   *Long Eliza pattern; Oriental decoration*

5. Molded Sauceboat, c. 1752-53
   *Bird in oriental landscape in famille verte palette*

6. Molded Tea Bowl and Saucer, c. 1755
   *Bird and flowers in famille verte palette*

7. Molded Tureen and Stand, 1753/54
   *Banded Hedge pattern; pale-yellow ground*

8. Mug, c. 1755
   *Puce oriental landscape in reserve; pale-yellow ground*

9. Teapot, 1754/55
   *Banded Hedge pattern*

10. Octagonal Tea Bowl and Saucer, 1752/55
    *Chinese decoration*
    *Mark: (workman’s mark)* in overglaze iron-red enamel

11. Sauceboat, c. 1753
    *Woman holding fan in oriental garden; oriental landscape*
    *1986.348*

12. Pair of Molded Plates, c. 1765
    *Blind Earl pattern in underglaze blue*
    *Mark: (open crescent)* in underglaze blue

13. Chocolate Cup, c. 1752
    *Oriental landscape in underglaze blue*

14. Molded Creamboat, 1752/55
    *Floral decoration in underglaze blue (inside rim)*
    *Mark: (workman’s mark)* in underglaze blue

15. Mug, c. 1758
    *Nesting Crane pattern in underglaze blue*
    *Mark: (workman’s mark)* in underglaze blue

16. Molded Teapot, 1752/54
    *Captive Bird pattern in underglaze blue*
    *Mark: (workman’s marks)* in underglaze blue

**Case II: (1755-1765)**

17. Molded Chestnut Basket and Stand, c. 1765
    *Painted and applied floral decoration*
    *1990.180.17a-c*

18. Molded Dessert Basket, c. 1765-70
    *Painted and applied floral decoration; crampstock handles*
    *1990.180.10*

19. Mug, c. 1755-60
    *“James Rogers style” flowers; Beckoning Chinsaman pattern*

20. Slop Bowl, c. 1760
    *Orchid pattern*

21. Fingerbowl and Stand, c. 1758-60
    *“James Rogers style” flowers*

22. Reticulated Centerbowl, c. 1768-70
    *Polychrome enamel floral sprays; yellow ground exterior*
    *1990.180.8*

23. Bell Shape Mug, c. 1758-62
    *“James Rogers style” flowers*

24. Pair of Molded Sauceboats, c. 1765-75
    *Polychrome enamel floral sprays in reserves; bright-yellow ground*

25. Molded Leaf Dish, 1756/60
    *Fox and the Grapes pattern; en camaisque lilac-purple*
    *Possibly painted by James Rogers*

26. Molded Teabowl and Saucer; Coffee Cup, c. 1756-58
    *Chinoiserie decoration; en camaisque lilac-purple*

**Case III: Oriental Decoration (1765-1775)**

27. Teapot and Cover, c. 1770
    *Imari Brocade pattern in green*
    *1990.180.10a-b*

28. Coffee Cup and Saucer, c. 1765
    *Bengal Tiger pattern*
    *Mark: (fretted square)* in underglaze blue*
    *1990.180.47a-b*

29. Pair of Plates, c. 1770
    *Cranes pattern*

30. Fluted Dish, c. 1770-72
    *Bishop Summer pattern*
    *Mark: (open crescent)* in overglaze gold

31. Rosewater Bottle, c. 1770
    *Orange Japan pattern*

32. Coffee Cup and Saucer, c. 1765
    *Chinoiserie vignette in reserve; iron-red scale ground*

33. Plate, c. 1765-70
    *Carp pattern*

34. Plate, c. 1770
    *Old Mosaic Japan pattern*
    *Mark: (fretted square)* in underglaze blue*
    *1990.180.27*

35. Plate, c. 1770
    *Imari Brocade pattern*
    *Mark: (anchor)* in underglaze blue

36. Covered Two-Handled Baluster-Form Vase, c. 1770
    *Phoenix pattern*
    *Mark: Chinese (fretted square)* in underglaze blue

37. Pair of Covered Hexagonal Jars, c. 1770
    *Phoenix pattern*
    *Mark: Chinese (fretted square)* in underglaze blue

38. Lozenge-Shaped Dessert Dish, c. 1770
    *Parcellion pattern*
    *1990.180.13*

**Case IV: Factory Masterpieces (1765-1775)**

39. Molded Dolphin Sweetmeat Stand, c. 1768
    *Polychrome enamel with “agitated birds” and gilding*

40. Molded Junket Dish, c. 1760-65
    *Polychrome enamel floral sprays*
    *1990.180.30*

41. Molded and Pierced Diamond-Shaped Dish, c. 1775
    *Polychrome enamel with floral sprays and gilding*

42. Figure of a Gardener, c. 1768-70
    *Probably modeled by Monsieur Thibault*
    *Polychrome enamel and gilding*

43. Molded Sweetmeat Stand or Treble Salt, c. 1765
    *Polychrome enamel with floral sprays*

44. Molded Junket Dish, c. 1768
    *Polychrome enamel insects and flowers; underglaze blue scale scrollwork and gilding*
    *Mark: Chinese (fretted square)* in underglaze blue*

45. Molded Dolphin Sweetmeat Stand, c. 1765-70
    *Sweetmeat Rose pattern in underglaze blue*
    *Mark: (open crescent)* in underglaze blue
55. Spoon Tray, c. 1767-75
Painted in the London workshop of James Giles
Naturalistic yellow bird on a branch
Mark: (hatched crescent) in underglaze blue

56. Glass Goblet, c. 1765
Gilded in the London workshop of James Giles

57. Basket, c. 1768
Painted by Jefferyes Hamett O'Neale
Woolf and the Crow pattern in polychrome enamel; marigold blue border and gilding
Mark: (fretted square) in underglaze blue

58. Tea Bowl, Coffee Cup, and Saucer, c. 1767-68
Decorated in the London workshop of James Giles
Watteau-style figures; prussian-blue ground and gilding

59. Tea Cup, Coffee Cup, and Saucer, c. 1775-80
Wall armorial pattern
Mark: (open crescent) in underglaze blue

60. Platter, c. 1770-75
Probably decorated in the London workshop of James Giles
The Warwick Calmady armorial pattern

61. Plate and Pair of Wine Coolers, c. 1789-90
Duke of Clarence thistle armorial pattern
Mark: (crescent) “Flight” in script, and (crescent) in underglaze blue

62. Lobed Oval Dish, c. 1785
Bastock-Rich armorial pattern
Mark: (open crescent) in underglaze blue

63. Dish, c. 1775-78
Floral pattern from the Duke of Gloucester Service
Mark: (crescent) in underglaze gold

64. Cider Jug, Potted 1754/56, decorated 1757/61
King of Prussia pattern, transfer-printed in overglaze jet enamel
No factory mark; print marked “RH Worcester”

65. Molded Cabbage-Leaf Mask Jug, c. 1775/80
Fox Hunt pattern, transfer-printed in underglaze blue
Mark: (hatched crescent) in underglaze blue

66. Molded Cabbage-Leaf Mask Jug, c. 1765
Painted overglaze transfer print: Milking Scene no. 1, Milkmaids, and Rustic Lovers patterns
1990.180.12

67. Pair of Baluster-Form Beakers, c. 1770-75
Polychrome enamel exotic birds; marigold blue ground and gilding
Mark: (fretted square) in underglaze blue

68. Tea Bowl and Saucer, c. 1770
Feuille de Choux (cabbage leaf) pattern
1990.180.29a-b

69. Pair of Ice Cups, c. 1775
Probably decorated in the London workshop of James Giles
Feuille de Choux (cabbage leaf) pattern

70. Molded Cabbage-Leaf Mask Jug, c. 1765-70
Polychrome enamel floral sprays and gilding
1986.3447

71. Covered Butter Tub, c. 1770-75
Probably decorated in the London workshop of James Giles
Bleu celeste ground and gilding

72. Plate, c. 1780
Dry blue floral spray in center, with intertwined ribbons and swags, and gilding

73. Tea Cup, Coffee Cup, and Saucer, c. 1775
Polychrome enamel fruit and floral sprays, and gilding
Mark: (open crescent) in underglaze blue

74. Teapot, c. 1770-75
Polychrome fruit pattern in reserve; marigold blue ground with gilding
Mark: (crescent) in underglaze blue

75. Reticulated Oval Basket (one of a pair), c. 1770-75
Painted, molded, and applied flowers; blue scale ground and gilding
1990.180.6

76. Covered Sugar Bowl, c. 1775-80
Polychrome fruit pattern in reserve; marigold blue ground with gilding
Mark: (fretted square) in underglaze blue

77. Covered Sugar Bowl, c. 1775-80
Polychrome fruit pattern in reserve; marigold blue ground with gilding
Mark: (fretted square) in underglaze blue

78. Molded Crock or Bough Pot, c. 1765-70
Polychrome enamel exotic birds; blue scale ground and gilding
Mark: (fretted square) in underglaze blue

79. Two-Handled Cup and Saucer, c. 1768
Watteau-style Chinese musicians; blue scale ground and gilding
Mark: (fretted square) in underglaze blue

80. Mug, c. 1765-75
Polychrome enamel exotic birds; pea-green ground and gilding

81. Footed Fruit Dish, c. 1775-80
Variant of Earl Marney pattern

82. Dish, c. 1770
Earl Marney pattern
1990.180.48

83. Plate, c. 1768-72
Marchioness of Huntly pattern

84. Toddy or Ice Cup, c. 1770-75
Hop Trellis pattern
Mark: (open crescent) in underglaze blue
1986.3449
period: a dish in the “Pavilion” pattern (no. 38) and several unusual examples in the “brocade” pattern (nos. 27, 34, 35). The highly prized Ko-Irnari, or early Imari patterns, were also produced, such as the elegant “Crane” pattern (no. 29). The fine quality of these Dr. Wall period examples suggest that they were costly and highly prized.

**Masterpieces of Factory: 1765-1775**

Figural sculpture and three-dimensional sculptured pieces were rarely produced at Worcester, but the Maier collection has several noteworthy examples, such as the figure of the gardener (no. 42) and three sweetmeat stands (nos. 39, 43, 45). Sculpture is a great achievement in Worcester porcelain, because the soapstone formula of the paste did not lend itself to the firing of sculpture or large vessels. Worcester produced only seven or eight known figural models, and these are thought to have been the work of the Bow repairer, Monsieur Thibaud.

The late 1760s witnessed a change in decorative style, as well as a new color technology that resulted in a wide range of ground colors. Branching out from the yellows, Worcester embraced a variety of greens (pea, French, and sea), a scarlet called claret, and some blues (mazarine, powder, and sky), giving the factory a broader range of grounds than any of its English competitors.

These ground colors, combined with elaborate designs that covered the surface of the porcelain, were fashionable for services, replacing the earlier fashion for intricately molded and delicately painted forms. Elaborately molded forms were generally reserved for use as serving dishes, and often were painted with the finest quality painting. Two juncture dishes in the Maier collection (nos. 40, 44) are outstanding examples. Colored grounds, patterns, and forms were inspired by the Sévres or Chelsea factories. A dish from the Duke of Gloucester service (no. 63) reflects the influence of Chelsea and was one of the finest of the Worcester fruit patterns.

To compete with Chelsea and outside decorators, Worcester advertised in 1768 that it had hired “the best painters from Chelsea.” Work by the three artists known to have signed their painting on the Dr. Wall porcelain, however, Jefferies Hamett O’Neale (no. 57), Fidèle Duvivier, and John Donaldson, is now believed to have been executed through a freelance arrangement, probably in the London workshop of James Giles.

Derby, and Chinese-export porcelain, as well as glass (no. 56). Giles’s workshop was advertised as “the enamelling branch” of the Worcester factory, and his work is among the more ambitious and prestigious polychrome decoration produced by the factory. The identification of Giles-decorated ware is based on four plates and two tea caddies, owned by descendants of Giles (the Grubbe family), and on a Christie’s sale catalogue from March of 1774 of “Part of the STOCK in TRADE of Mr. JAMES GILES, CHINAMAN AND ENAMELER.” Some of the motifs on the so-called Grubbe examples include a certain style of cut fruit decoration, a spray of auriculas, a tulip with divergent petals, and tiny floral sprigs (often carmine), and two types of gilding: a thin, plain variety, and a thickly applied type, burnished and chased in the manner of Sévres. Freely composed flower sprays with asymmetrical compositions characterize the floral patterns. Among the Maier examples are an unusual fable-decorated punch bowl (no. 49) and a beautifully painted plate with sliced fruit and flower decoration framed by a pink scale border (no. 52). A richly gilded powder blue ground coffee cup, teabowl, and saucer (no. 58) with European figures in the style of the French painter Jean Antoine Watteau from the “Lord Dudley” service was decorated in the Giles work shop and can be contrasted with a blue scale, two-handled cup (no. 79) decorated at the factory.

**Sévres Patterns: 1767-1780**

The inspiration of Sévres permeated works from the late 1760s into the 1770s and were popular into the nineteenth century. Dark cobalt blue grounds, either in plain or two-toned scale patterns, became a trademark of the Worcester factory. Solid blue grounds, called “mazarine” at Worcester, were produced from about 1767. These copied the bleu lapis grounds of Sévres, but they had already been introduced into England at Chelsea in the late 1750s. While scale borders were ultimately derived from Meissen “Mosaik” borders, Worcester painters were

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**Dish, 1775/78**

Exh. no. 63
often eclectic, combining these with Sèvres-styled floral swags (no. 75), Japanese Kakemon patterns (no. 37), or brilliantly painted multicolored exotic birds set within softly painted landscapes. The finest of these paintings is found on ornamental forms, such as hexagonal jars or baluster form vases (no. 67). In the 1770s, Sèvres patterns were directly copied, like the feuille-de-chou (no. 68) or the elaborate mazarine blue ground with a pebble-like gilded pattern, called caillouté at Sèvres (nos. 36, 76). Variations of such Sèvres designs as the “hop trellis” pattern (nos. 82, 84) were also produced.

**Worcester Transfer Prints: 1757-1780**

Worcester was renowned for the high quality and clarity of its transfer prints. Transfer printing entailed inking a heated, engraved copper plate and transferring the engraved design onto a moistened paper, which was then pressed onto the ware, leaving the desired imprint. This method revolutionized ceramic decoration, allowing elaborate patterns to be applied quickly and more economically. The technique was probably first used on Battersea enamels, but it was perfected for usage on porcelain by Robert Hancock, who worked briefly at Bow and then at Worcester from 1756/57 to 1775. An overglaze process for a brownish-black ink (called “jet enamelled”) was developed by Hancock in about 1757, and his first print was the ever popular “King of Prussia” pattern, shown here on a cider jug (no. 64). Transfer prints could also be used as a stencil for painting:

- a yellow cabbage-leaf mask jug in the exhibition (no. 66) is painted in polychrome enamels over a transfer-printed pattern.

**Worcester Armorials**

After Dr. Wall died in 1776, Worcester was managed by another of the original proprietors, William Davis, during whose tenure the factory’s achievements declined. After Davis’s death, a yellow cabbage-leaf mask jug in the exhibition (no. 66) is painted in polychrome enamels over a transfer-printed pattern.

- Martin Barr became a partner in 1792, and the subsequent periods, from c. 1792 to c. 1840, were under the direction of Flight and Barr and members of the Barr family. The wares produced during these periods are beyond the scope of the current exhibition. In 1862, the firm became The Worcester Royal Porcelain Company, Ltd. under which name it continues to manufacture porcelain today.

Worcester porcelain was plagiarized by many rival firms in soft-paste and hard-paste porcelain as well as earthenware, and was even copied by the Chinese, complete with the factory’s marks. Unlike many European factories, there is no one standard mark to identify Worcester porcelain, and many pieces are unmarked. The most commonly found marks are the crescent, the initial “W”, and the fretted square. Thus, a knowledge of the paste, glaze, and patterns is essential in the connoisseurship of this long-lived factory.

**About the Exhibition**

The present exhibition of about eighty Worcester porcelains celebrates Dr. Maier’s recent large gift of Worcester to the Art Institute and includes selections of his promised gifts. The exhibition is on view from September 27, 1990 through January 6, 1991, in Gallery 141. Dr. Maier, a Chicago-area radiologist, has formed an outstanding porcelain collection, consisting primarily of Worcester and Sèvres, as a memorial to his parents, Joseph and Theresa Maier. Over the years, Dr. Maier has generously presented to the Art Institute major examples of Meissen, Sèvres, and Worcester that are currently on display in the European Decorative Arts Galleries in the Rice Building.

**Credits**

This exhibition was organized by Rita E. McCarthy, with the assistance of Olivia White. Special thanks are extended to Dr. Maier and to Ian B. Wardroppe, and for the work of Mickie Silverstein, Tony Sigel, William Gross, Marilyn Conrad, and Karen Johnson.

This brochure would not have been possible without the gracious financial assistance of The Antiquarian Society of The Art Institute of Chicago.

**Suggested Readings**


