



Kändler's early contribution to Müller-Frei

The sale of the Müller-Frei collection of paintings and decorative arts held by Koller (25% buyer's premium) in Zurich on June 16 included two early 18th century Meissen figure groups that outstripped their estimates, writes Anne Crane.

Both early 'crinoline' designs by Johann Joachim Kändler (1706-75), they were formerly in the collection of Baron Maurice de Rothschild, selling subsequently at auction at Christie's in 1977.

One, a 6in (15.5cm) high group from c.1737, depicts a lady in a large crinoline dress seated holding a pug dog. A man kneels to kiss her hand while her gaze is directed to a figure of Gottfried Schindler, the jester at the court of Augustus the Strong who was in the service of Meissen patron Count Bruhl at the time this group was created. Schindler is shown dressed in the uniform of a hussar and playing an instrument known as a *musette de cour* (a form of bagpipes with goatskin bellows).

The group, which had a crack to the base and some restoration and minor losses, was estimated to make around SFr50,000-70,000 but ended up selling for SFr175,000 (£147,060).

The second group, dated to c.1736, measures 5in (13cm) high and depicts a couple embracing, the man with one hand resting on a large birdcage. There was some restoration to the arms and legs and also the hem of the dress, but again the estimate of Sfr40,000-60,000 was outstripped with the hammer falling at SFr95,000 (£79,830).



Top: Meissen group of lovers with a bird cage – **SFr95,000 (£79,830)** at Koller.

Above: Meissen crinoline group – **SFr175,000 (£147,060)**.

Heaven for the 9th circle of hell

Pictured right is the catalogue cover lot of a dedicated ceramics auction held in Milan on July 1 by Wannenes (30/25/22% buyer's premium) and titled The Grazia Biscontini Ugolini collection – fine ceramics from two private collections.

The 150-odd lots comprised mostly maiolica and other Italian earthenwares from the Renaissance to the 20th century.

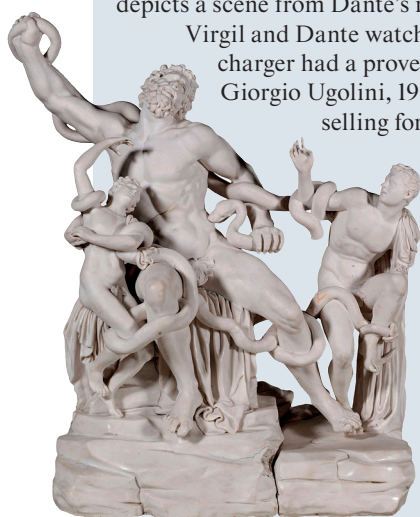
This 11in (28cm) diameter istoriato charger dated 1531 to the reverse was decorated at Urbino and lustred at Gubbio in the Andreoli workshop. The decoration, probably by the artist known as painter of the Apollo basin, depicts a scene from Dante's ninth circle of hell, showing

Virgil and Dante watching Count Ugolino and the Archbishop Ruggieri. The charger had a provenance to the Galerie Riccardi in Florence and then to Giorgio Ugolini, 1950. Estimated to make €50,000-80,000, it ended up selling for **€100,000 (£90,910)**.

Another highlight was a late 18th century Naples factory biscuit group depicting the Laocoon, the famous ancient marble statue excavated in Rome, pictured left. The substantial 20 x 15in (52 x 38cm) group modelled by Filippo Tagliolini after the antique, c.1785, is one of only a handful known: one is in the Museo Civico Gaetano Filangieri, Naples, while another sold for £32,000 at Bonhams in London in December 2018.

This example, which has some minor firing losses and restoration, sold just over the upper estimate at **£30,000 (£27,720)**.

£1 = SFr 1.19/€1.10



Copeland goes supersize

Large, bold and decorative, transfer-printed pottery footbaths have an appeal that goes beyond collectors of 19th century ceramics.

A favourite with interior decorators, they command sums way above the modest outlay required to own most Victorian toilet wares. This agate ware example, above, which came up for sale at Mendip Auction Rooms (15% buyer's premium) in Somerset on June 13, carried the mark for the Copeland & Garrett partnership that ran from 1833-47. Despite a chip and a crack to the base, it improved on a guide of £80-120 to sell via thesaleroom.com at **£1700**.

The Copeland factory in its various guises is perhaps most familiar as the maker of some of the best-known blue and white transfer printed designs such as Indian Sports, Caramanian, Tower and the remarkably long-lived Italian (launched in 1816 and still made today).

Offered at the May 20-21 sale at Fieldings (24% buyer's premium) in Stourbridge was one of the largest pieces made by the factory: a 19in (47cm) high Chinese style hexagonal garden or conservatory seat (right) decorated in an all-over romantic pastoral landscape pattern and bordered by wild roses.

Estimated at a modest £150-250, the piece sparked an intense online bidding battle between two collectors determined to secure this piece.

The final selling price was **£1850**.



Seipel's full Danse Macabre

Pictured here are five from a near-complete set of 41 polychrome terracotta figures of the Danse Macabre offered by Lempertz (25% buyer's premium) in Cologne on May 30. They are typical of the work of Anton Sohn (1769-1841), who settled in Zizenhausen near Stockach in 1799.

As documented in *Das Weltbild der Zizenhausener Figuren* (1984) by Wilfried Seipel, some 746 different models and moulds by Sohn have been identified, some of them still made by family members into the 20th century.

These 6in (15cm) figures on the theme of death were from a set first made c.1822. They were inspired by prints published in 1623 by Matthäus Merian the Elder, which in turn are based on the scenes painted on the cemetery walls of the Dominican Abbey in Basel.

Single figures are not uncommon, but this was an unusually extensive group: only the figure of a usurer was missing from the complete set of 42. The figure of the noblewoman was badly broken, and others showed glued repairs, but most retained the original paper labels that were glued around the bases of Sohn's figures.

Last sold at Lempertz back in 1931 and in a Belgian collection ever since, they were estimated at €4000-6000 but did rather better, bringing **€30,000 (£27,720)**.

