

JAMES GILES LONDON STUDIO



In the 1770's independent firms, such as James Giles of London, decorated some Worcester Porcelain. The Huguenot descendant, James Giles (1718 - 1780) decorated elegant porcelain supplied direct from Dr. Wall's Worcester factory at his studio in Berwick Street, Soho. From 1767 he had a formal agreement with Worcester to supply him with unfinished wares to decorate. The Meissen crossed swords mark and cobalt blue backgrounds were added at the factory before the porcelain was glazed and despatched to London.

Giles hired a showroom in the Art Museum in Cockspur Street (now the corner of Trafalgar Square) near the artistic community of St.Martins Lane where furniture designer, Thomas Chippendale, had his workshop.

Giles decorated and sold fashionable porcelain in Meissen, Sevres and Chinese styles, often in direct competition with the Worcester factory. He employed several painters from the Chelsea factory following its closure in 1768 and advertised the copying and adaption of Chelsea designs as a speciality. Giles did not only decorate Worcester blanks. He also decorated glass and Derby, Bow, Chelsea and Chinese porcelain.

Certain types of decoration are usually associated with the Giles workshop, Broadly painted, imaginary birds in fantastic landscapes are today referred to as Exotic, Fabulous, Dishevelled, Aggressive or Agitated. These bizarre creatures were derived from French Rococo design and also appear on carved furniture, embroidery, wallpaper and plasterwork of the period. Monochrome landscapes in pink or green, thickly applied and chased cisle gilding, pink scale grounds, dainty flower painting and carefully painted sliced fruit are also typical of the Giles studio.

Porcelain decorated in the Giles's studio is difficult to distinguish from pieces decorated at Dr.Wall's Worcester factory. Four plates and two tea canisters owned by a descendant of Giles are the first clues to help us identify Giles decoration. Flowers, birds and figures on these pieces can also be found on other porcelain items, indicating that they too were probably decorated by Giles.

In 1774 Mr.Christie sold the stock of Giles's workshop. The catalogue of the sale provides us with a list of Giles's wares and more clues to their identification.

James Giles decorated porcelain and glass for some of the most influential figures of the day including, Clive of India, Princess Amelia, Richard Sheridan, The Duke of Richmond, Lord Viscount Palmerston, The Duke of Marlborough, The Envoy of Morocco and The Earl Fitzwilliam.

Giles's agreement with Worcester was terminated in 1771, although he continued to decorate Worcester porcelain until the closure of his studio in 1776.

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