Table spoon

Place of origin: Lisbon (city) (made)

Date: 1813-1816 (made)

Artist/Maker: Sequeira, Domingos António de, born 1768 - died 1836 (designer)

Materials and Techniques: Silver

Credit Line: Purchased with the assistance of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and Art Fund

Museum number: WM.180-1997

Gallery location: Europe 1600-1815, Room 1, case CA8

Public access description

This spoon is part of a silver service intended to glorify and celebrate the joint victories of Britain, Spain and Portugal against the French in the Peninsular War of 1808–14. To the Portuguese, this was a war of independence and the silver service was their great gift to the man who had ensured the war’s success, Arthur Wellesley (1769–1852), the first Duke of Wellington.

The service, known as the Baixela da Victoria, was designed and executed under the control of Domingos António de Sequeira, painter to the Portuguese court. As far as is known, Sequeira had never designed anything in silver before receiving the commission and designed only two pieces subsequently. However, the service reflects the Neo-classical style that characterised his painting.

By 1813 production was in full swing, partly in Sequeira’s own house and partly in neighbouring workshops. The bullion was supplied by the Portuguese Mint, which obtained it by melting down coins. Progress on the project can be followed in detail through Sequeira’s designs and the Portuguese State Archives, documenting such practical problems as the call-up for military service of the craftsmen. In September 1816 the service, costing £27,000, was finally shipped to Britain. Interestingly, Wellington acquired additional items from the London goldsmiths Garrard to adapt the service to British dining practices.

The spoon bears the Wellesley crest surmounted by a ducal coronet within the orders of the Garter, the Golden Fleece, the Grand Order of the Bath and the Grã-Cruz da Ordem Militar da Torre e Espada.

Descriptive line

Silver table spoon, 'Portuguese Service', designed by Domingos António de Sequeira, made in Lisbon, 1813-1816

Physical description

Silver table spoon with reeded handle; bears the Wellesley crest surmounted by a ducal coronet within the orders of the Garter, the Golden Fleece, the Grand Order of the Bath and the Grã-Cruz da Ordem Militar da Torre e Espada.

Dimensions

Length: 8.5 in

Museum number

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Object history note

This silver service was intended to glorify the Triple Alliance between Britain, Spain and Portugal and to celebrate their joint Victories against the French between 1808 and 1814. To the Portuguese, the Peninsular War was a war of Independence and this was their great gift to the man who had ensured its survival, the first Duke of Wellington.

The service was designed and executed under the control of Domingos Antonio de Sequeira (1768 - 1837), court painter to Dona Maria I. As far as is known, Sequeira had never designed anything in silver before receiving the commission for the service and designed only two pieces of silver subsequently. Sequeira remained loyal to his constitutional principles and after Dom Jaoa VI abandoned the Constitution in 1823 he left Portugal and eventually settled in Rome where he died. His work is at its most creative and original during the Peninsular War.

Although plans for the production of the service were well advanced by March 1811 the actual date when the decision was taken to present the service is unknown. The earliest evidence for Sequeira's involvement is a drawing dated 29th April 1812. By 1813 production was in full swing, partly in Sequeira's own house and partly in neighbouring workshops which had been specially rented. The bullion was supplied by the mint which obtained it by melting down coins. Progress on the project can be documented in detail by through the State Archives and Sequeira's designs. The artist kept running into practical problems such as the call-up for military service of his craftsmen. In September, 1816 the service was finally shipped to Britain. The total cost of the service was about £27,000. Interestingly, the Duke acquired additional items from Garrard so that the service met British dining practices.

[From justification for acquisition by Timothy Stevens, 31/03/1995]
URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O116210/table-spoon-sequeira-domingos-antonio/