Harpsichord

Place of origin: Antwerp (made)

Date: 1639 (made)

Artist/Maker: Ruckers, Ioannes, born 1578 - died 1642 (maker)

Materials and Techniques: Planed, joined and painted wooden (poplar?) case with planed and partly painted spruce soundboard, with gilt lead rose.

Credit Line: Given to the Museum by Messrs Kirckman & Sons

Museum number: 1739-1869

Gallery location: In Storage

Public access description

Ioannes Ruckers (1578-1642) was the most important member of the Ruckers family of Antwerp, Europe's leading dynasty of harpsichord builders from about 1580 to 1650. In 1766 King George III (reigned 1720–1820) replaced this instrument with one made by Jacob Kirckman (1710–1792), whose harpsichords were by then the most sought-after owing to the devices he introduced to vary their volume. Thereafter this harpsichord languished in the Kirckman factory. It was damaged in a fire there in 1855, since which time it has lacked its keys and jacks.

Descriptive line

Harpsichord, Flemish (Antwerp), poplar(?) case and spruce soundboard, by Ioannes Ruckers, 1639

Physical description

Harpsichord with painted floral soundboard, missing its keys, strings and jacks. There is no stand.

'The outside of the case, presumably of poplar, is painted black with rather stiff garlands of flowers and leaves in two sorts of gilding. The interior of the lid is painted green and decorated with rococo scrollwork and putti, all in a greenish-yellow monochrome, apparently executed during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. The interior of the harpsichord and the keyboard surround are crudely painted with black and white arabesques to resemble vaguely the Antwerp block-printed papers commonly used to decorate seventeenth-century Flemish harpsichords and virginals. The soundboard of spruce is decorated in gouache with flowers, fruit, birds and arabesques, and contains the maker's rose as a trade mark: a winged figure holding a harp and supporting the initials I.R.


Dimensions

Length: 173.1 cm, Width: 78.5 cm, Height: 21.2 cm

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Object history note

This instrument was formerly the property of George III (reigned 1760 - 1820), who replaced it in 1766 with a harpsichord made by Jacob Kirckman. The instrument was damaged in a fire in the Kirckman factory in 1855, and given to the South Kensington Museum in 1869.

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O169994/harpsichord-ruckers-ioannes/