Cigarette box - Cymric

Object: Cigarette box

Place of origin: Birmingham (made)
London (retailed)

Date: 1903-1904 (hallmarked)

Artist/Maker: Archibald Knox, born 1864 - died 1933 (designer)
W. H. Haseler (maker)
Liberty & Co. Ltd. (retailer)

Materials and Techniques: Silver, with cedarwood lining, embossed and inlaid with opal matrix

Museum number: M.15-1970

Gallery location: British Galleries, Room 125, Edwin and Susan Davies Gallery, case 8

Public access description
Object Type
This box was intended to store either cigarettes or cigars and was part of the range of designs produced by Archibald Knox for Liberty’s ‘Cymric’ range of silverware and jewellery. Design & Designing
Knox’s designs owe much to the immediate precedents offered by the British Arts and Crafts movement and the work of C. R. Ashbee and his Guild of Handicraft in particular. The characteristics shared by the designs produced by Knox and Ashbee include expanses of plain metal, concentrated fluid ornament and monochrome enamel work. Ashbee was to complain later that Liberty’s straightforwardly plagiarised his ideas and principles but in this he was wrong. Liberty metalwork was altogether richer, more assured and self-confident than the work of the Guild of Handicraft. Knox and his colleagues whether they be his fellow designers at the Silver Studio or the Liberty management who gave their undoubted support, had moved the Arts and Crafts stylistic principles one stage further forward and in so doing, had created a distinctive British version of Art Nouveau. Materials & Making
It has been suggested that the shallow crispness of the raised decoration on this box may have been achieved by die stamping rather than embossing by hand.

Descriptive line
Silver inlaid with opals, Birmingham 1903-4, mark of Liberty and Company (Cymric) Ltd.

Physical description
Silver casket of rectangular form, cedarwood lining with two interior partitions. The front half of the hinged lid is embossed with an interlacing design which runs down over the front of the body and on to the front half of each side. The lid set with a large opal in a heart shaped mount. Smaller cabochon opals in the front and on each side. Knox’s Celtic ornamentation was so crisply defined that most of his designs might have been die-struck.

Dimensions
Height: 11.8 cm, Width: 21.4 cm, Depth: 12.2 cm

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Object history note

Historical context note
Mrs Wren purchased the casket from Liberty and Company in 1953,

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O78452/cymric-cigarette-box-archibald-knox/