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Johann Georg Hann,  
*A rare Viennese silver wine cooler, 1792*

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JOHANN GEORG HANN

(Vienna, active late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, d. 1812)

*A RARE VIENNESE SILVER WINE COOLER, 1792*

Silver, parcel-gilt.

height 32 cm; diameter at rim 25 cm.; diameter of foot 23 cm.

12<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.; 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.; 9 1/16 in.

Engraved on the underside of the foot with an early weight or inventory inscription, reading:

*M 18 : Loth 6 : 2.*

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## Provenance

Private collection Vienna, by 1992.

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## Bibliography of reference

Waltraud Neuwirth, *Wiener Silber / Viennese Silver: Namens- und Firmenpunzen 1781–1866 / Makers' and Company Marks 1781–1866*, Vienna 2002.

W. Koeppel, *Vienna Circa 1780: An Imperial Silver Service Rediscovered*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 13 April - 7 November 2010; Liechtenstein Museum, Vienna, 2 December 2010 - 26 April 2011, New York and New Haven 2010.

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The present wine cooler is a remarkably rare survival of late eighteenth-century Viennese silver, made in 1792 by Johann Georg Hann, one of the leading goldsmiths working in Vienna in the generation after Ignaz Joseph Würth.<sup>1</sup> Hann is recorded as a Viennese master from 1780 and died in 1812. His surviving *œuvre* remains small, yet the documented works that can be securely associated with him place him within the highest level of Austrian neoclassical silver production. His celebrated *Tureen on stand* of 1794, now in the Princely Collections of Liechtenstein, offers the most important comparison: a work conceived on a courtly scale, with comparable confidence in sculptural ornament, polished architectural articulation and rich relief decoration (fig. 1).

The present cooler belongs to the culture of aristocratic dining in Vienna at the end of the *ancien régime*, when silver plate served both a practical and representational function. Vessels of this type were used to cool wine or bottles at table, yet their artistic ambition places them firmly within the ceremonial language of princely service.<sup>2</sup> Late eighteenth-century Vienna, long overshadowed in modern scholarship by Paris, produced silver of a remarkably high order. Its finest goldsmiths worked with an acute awareness of French neoclassicism, while retaining a distinct Viennese taste.<sup>3</sup>

The form is a *campana*-shaped vase on a circular spreading foot, with a gilt interior and a broad, projecting rim. The body rises from a fluted knop and foot, the lower section articulated by a band of Vitruvian scrolls above a burnished convex zone. The central frieze is the principal field of ornament. Here Hann has set opposed felines, probably tigers, among scrolling vine tendrils, vine leaves and grape clusters. The motif is especially appropriate to a wine cooler: the imagery of the vine, with its fruit and twisting growth, alludes directly to the vessel's function, while the animals introduce an exoticising note. Their bodies are absorbed into the rhythm of the foliage rather than treated as isolated heraldic beasts, giving the frieze a continuous movement around the circumference of the vessel. Above this relief band, the shoulder is separated by plain burnished mouldings, which sharpen the transition between the sculptural centre and the upper register. The neck is decorated with repeated arched panels enclosing stylised vegetal forms. The handles are composed as high, scrolling supports, rising from acanthus-like mounts and curling outwards beneath the rim. The underside and foot show further refinement, with radiating flutes

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<sup>1</sup> For Johann Georg Hann, see Wolfram Koeppe, *Vienna Circa 1780: An Imperial Silver Service Rediscovered*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 13 April–7 November 2010; Liechtenstein Museum, Vienna, 2 December 2010–26 April 2011, New York and New Haven, 2010, p. 79

<sup>2</sup> On the role of silver dining services within eighteenth-century court ceremony, see Koeppe 2010, pp. viii–ix and pp. 2–9.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding Vienna as a major centre of neoclassical goldsmiths' work, and on the relation between Viennese silver and French neoclassical models, see Koeppe 2010, pp. 18–26. For the Würth dynasty and the development of Viennese neoclassical silver, see *ibid.*, pp. 13–17 and 26–35.

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and a rhombuses-patterned border, the latter a geometric counterpoint to the naturalism of the vine frieze.

The cooler should be understood against the background of the great Viennese silver services of the 1770s and 1780s, above all the Second Sachsen-Teschen Service made by Ignaz Joseph Würth for Duke Albert Casimir of Sachsen-Teschen and Archduchess Marie Christine.<sup>4</sup> That service, which included wine coolers, tureens, dishes, salts, candlesticks, candelabra and extensive tableware, demonstrates the scale and sophistication of Habsburg silver production in these decades. Its rediscovery, exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2010 and subsequent presentation in Vienna brought renewed scholarly attention to a field in which relatively few major survivals remain (see, for instance, this wine cooler by Würth at the MET fig. 2).

The rarity is structural: silver services were vulnerable to changes of taste, financial pressure and wartime melting - especially during the revolutionary and Napoleonic period - their material value often overriding their artistic and dynastic significance. Hann's wine cooler shows the persistence of the Würthian idiom, while anticipating the more emphatic monumentality of the Empire period. The present cooler is a rare document of a moment when Vienna stood among the principal European centres of goldsmiths' work, producing objects that could rival the best Parisian production in technical assurance and ambition.

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<sup>4</sup> The Second Sachsen-Teschen Service was made in Vienna from about 1779 to 1782 by Ignaz Joseph Würth for Duke Albert Casimir of Sachsen-Teschen and Archduchess Marie Christine of Austria, and originally comprised hundreds of objects, including wine coolers, tureens, dishes with cloches, saltcellars, candlesticks, candelabra, serving implements, plates and flatware.

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Fig. 1. Johann Georg Hann, *Tureen on stand*, Vienna, 1794, silver, 51 × 59 × 50 cm overall, LIECHTENSTEIN. The Princely Collections, Vaduz–Vienna

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Fig. 2. Ignaz Joseph Würth, *Wine cooler (one of a pair)*, Vienna, marked 1781, silver, 30.3 × 25.1 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

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