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# INOVATIONS IN STYLE AND TECHNOLOGY – BROTHERS SCHÜTZ CERAMICS FACTORY AND ART NOUVEAU

## Abstract

In the second half of the 19th century, the decorative structures, derived from historical styles, were very popular in today's Slovenia. They still dominated in the last decade of the century, even if at that time in other countries art nouveau features prevailed. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, art nouveau elements very slowly started to infiltrate existent forms and ornaments of arts and crafts in today's Slovenia. The progress did not reach all the fields – for instance, it nearly totally avoided glass industry and was underdeveloped in metal working.

A different example is Slovenian leading ceramics factory, namely Brothers Schütz Ceramics Factory in Liboje near Celje. The factory was renowned in the scope of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as the producer of fashionable table vessels and other ambitiously designed wares. In the field of design it collaborated with Austrian Museum for Art and Industry (today MAK). Schütz ceramics factory was well known also for technical innovations and for development of decorative structures. In Slovenia, it was also the first to start using new Art Nouveau floral ornaments and new decorative techniques, thus significantly changing its production program and technology. Because of that, this is a good example for the illustration of production, creativity and implementation of ornamental elements from nature in Slovenia.



1. Tabouret, National Museum of Slovenia, inv. no. N 8347 (Photo: Tomaž Lauko)

## Introduction

In the second half of the 19th century, the decorative structures, derived from historical styles, were very popular in today's Slovenia. They still dominated in the last decade of the century, even if at that time in other countries art nouveau features prevailed. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, art nouveau elements very slowly started to infiltrate existent forms and ornaments of arts and crafts in today's Slovenia (Kos, Žargi, 1991). The progress did not reach all the fields – for instance, it nearly totally avoided glass industry and was underdeveloped in metal working. A different example is Slovenian leading ceramics factory, the Brothers Schütz Ceramics Factory in Liboje near Celje.

The most important ceramics factory in Slovenia, important also in the scope of Austro-Hungarian empire, was established in 1870 by Schütz family, namely by Ludwig Richard Schütz and his father, Karl Schütz (Fugger-Germadnik) as a branch of the Schütz ceramics factory in Olomucany bei Blansko (Moravia, now Czech republic).

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Ludwig Schütz was very much interested in improving the quality of the products. In order to achieve the best results, he established tight connections with Austrian Museum for Art and Industry and its Art and Crafts school as early as the 1870s. The teachers and professors at the school and museum curators were also the designers and some of them actually painted the Schütz semi-products.



**2. Decorative plate, National Museum of Slovenia, inv. no. N 8383 (Photo: Tomaž Lauko).**

In 1876, at the Austrian museum's Christmas exhibition, the Schütz ceramics received great attention and praise. The designs for the objects exposed were made by Professors Josef Storck and Ludwig Sturm (Kos 2005). The museum's deputy director Jacob von Falke stressed in his report on the exhibition that Schütz ceramics is well worth every praise being the same quality as the best ceramics artifacts in history (Kos 2005). Afterwards, 16 objects were decorated by the professors of the Arts and crafts school in Vienna. The decoration based on Slavic (Moravian) folk flower and fruit motifs. The artifacts were painted by brush on opaque black glaze.

The success was probably the main reason for the donation of these objects to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London by Austrian archduke Rainier in 1876. The donation was highly recommended by George Wallis, V & A museum's curator and connoisseur (Kos 2005). They are still in the V&A's ceramics collection.



**3. Cachepot, National Museum of Slovenia, inv. no. N 8716 (Photo: Tomaž Lauko)**



**4. Schütz ceramics in Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Photo credit and copyright: Victoria & Albert Museum).**

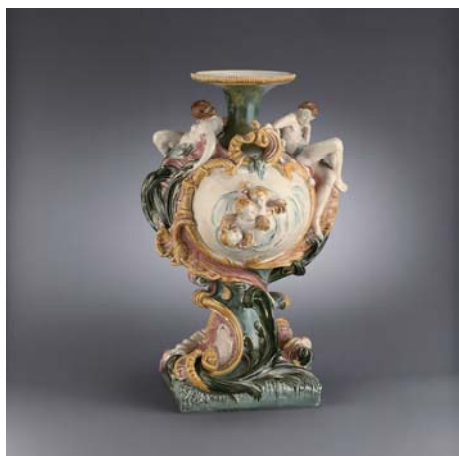
One of the important designers for Schütz was August Kühne. In 1877, he was an assistant at the Sculptural Department of the Applied Arts School in Vienna. He became the head of Design department in the same year. In 1884, he became full professor (Kos, Žargi, 1991). Besides Kühne, August Mitek and Bruno Emmel (the latter was a teacher at the Ceramics School in Znam / Znoimo) were also working

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with the models. Josef Bauer, a graduate from the Academy of fine Arts in Vienna, was appointed painter at the Schütz factory (Fugger Germadnik ). He also worked at Austrian Museum for Art and industry's laboratory and was teaching at the Arts and Crafts school in Zagreb. He owned a private school for ceramics painting. He was, by Jacob von Falke's opinion, the best ceramics painter in Austria.

In 1890, the only owner of Liboje factory became Ludwig Schütz. As chemist by profession, he was very eager to include the newest technological inventions in the production. Thus he managed to even improve the quality of products. In the catalogue, there are around four hundred items being produced at that time. Among them, the cachepots, decorative wall plates, pitchers and others are the most significant. Besides colored, also ivory glaze became fashionable.

Besides colored and ivory glazes, they used the new technique, developed at the Chemical and technical testing laboratory of the Austrian Museum by Franz Kosch, the head of the Laboratory. He was the last chemist of the Vienna Imperial porcelain factory (closed in 1864). In the same year, he became Head of Chemical and technical testing laboratory at the Austrian museum. In 1871, he promoted his own invention, namely the usage of lithographic gold- or email print on porcelain, creamware, glass and email. He also experimented with special ceramics colors, named after him (the Kosch' colors). He developed the enamels (the so-called Pâte emaille) in 1876, and a year after that the first series of majolica colors. Unlike



5. Vase, National Museum of Slovenia, inv. no. N 21083 (Photo: Tomaž Lauko)

the ordinary ceramics colors that were powdered, Kosch's colors were distributed in tubes, ready for use. The technique was the same as in oil painting, namely impasto application.

The Schütz factory had a licence for production of Kosch's majolica colors, and also the enamels. The inventor tested the merchandize and approved the quality himself. The colors were shipped to all ceramics departments of the Austrian art and crafts schools (Kos 2005).

In 1883, the factory featured its own painting atelier. The production program comprised besides table vessels also jardinières, decorative plaques, flower pot stands, and special assets, as chairs, for instance (Fugger Germadnik, 2009).

At the industrial and crafts exhibitions all over the Austro-Hungarian empire, they were awarded prizes for quality and design. They were also prized at many international exhibitions, for instance at Vienna world fair in 1873.

The Schütz ceramics from the last third of the 19th century shows typical forms and decoration, characteristic for historicism. The designers included Italian renaissance motifs, based on Della Robbia Family majolica, German 16<sup>th</sup> century stoneware, Arabic and Chinese ornaments. Most of all, they combined baroque and rococo elements into new decorative structures. The relief shaped artifacts were painted with bright colored glazes.

The art nouveau style of decoration was not as popular as historical features. There are some art nouveau shaped vessels, especially vases (elongated, with floral ornaments), but by far not so many as one expected in comparison with other ceramics and porcelain factories in Austro-

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Hungary. Besides them, decorative plates were painted with flowers. Also desert services with stemmed bowl or plate, and desert plates were among Schütz art nouveau products. The most popular floral ornaments were water lilies, poppies, thistles, cyclamens, and sunflowers.



**6. Footed tray with dessert plates, National Museum of Slovenia, inv. no. N 8757 (Photo: Tomaž Lauko).**

They were combined and formed in a new, different way, with complicated intertwining lines. The technique of decoration was the same as before: the most of the vessels were formed in relief moulds and after drying painted with Kosch's colored glazes. The colors are vivid, very bright, but also monochrome or very light colored objects exist .

Nevertheless the total amount of the artifacts in art nouveau style was relatively small, they are very important for Slovenian ceramics production. Schütz ceramics factory was well known for technical innovations and for development of decorative structures. In Slovenia, it was also the first to start using new Art Nouveau floral ornaments and new decorative techniques, thus significantly changing its production program. Because of that, this is a good example for the illustration of production, creativity and implementation of ornamental elements from nature in Slovenia.



**7. Decorative plate, National Museum of Slovenia, inv. no. N 8250 (Photo: Tomaž Lauko).**



**8. Decorative plate, National Museum of Slovenia, inv. no. N 8809 (Photo: Tomaž Lauko).**

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