

CORONATION YEAR GOLD COLLECTION

Asprey & Co. Ltd. 165, New Bond Street, London, W.1.

1. The Collection

Produced in 18 carat gold, all pieces have been specially designed and made, many of them by Asprey's own craftsmen working over the Company's Bond Street showrooms. The size of the collection and the fact that each piece is entirely hand-raised has, however, necessitated the assistance of other workers in the trade. Each piece carries the famous Asprey Mark.

2. Contents of the Collection

The collection comprises, first, a Coronation dessert, coffee and liqueur service in 18 carat gold. Weighing 850 ounces it includes:-

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| a) For dessert - | one oval fruit dish
two round fruit dishes
four sweet dishes
sugar dredger and cream jug in stand
pair of candelabra
eight pairs of dessert knives and forks
two gold mounted decanters
four ashtrays |
| b) For coffee - | coffee pot and tray
sugar basin and cream jug
eight coffee spoons |
| c) For liqueurs - | gold mounted crystal decanter
eight liqueur tots and salver |

Each piece carries the special Coronation Hall Mark. The set took twelve months to complete and should any future buyer wish for additional pieces, they can be made without difficulty.

In producing this set Asprey's have endeavoured to show that the hand chaser of today compares favourably with the great masters of the early 18th century among whom must be mentioned the most famous of all, Paul Lamerie.

Individual pieces on display include:-

- two 18 carat gold cigar boxes, one of which portrays Coronation scenes on a background of lapis-lazuli with a fine engraving of Westminster Abbey on the lid
- two brush sets: one in two colours of gold and the other in 18 carat gold, step pattern
- one crocodile dressing case with gold fittings
- one "book" pattern cigarette case, hand engraved, in four colours of gold
- a crocodile writing set with gold mounted inkstand and corners.

3. Objects of the Collection

To encourage the goldsmiths' craft at a very critical period of its existence in Britain and to enhance the reputation of the British goldsmith in overseas markets.

To establish that London is the centre for works of art in gold and to hand to posterity an example of the magnificent design and exquisite craftsmanship prevailing in Britain this Coronation Year.

The collection will be on show to the public in Asprey's Bond Street showrooms from April 29th: weekdays, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Saturdays 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Later it is hoped to send this collection, which experts agree is the most important display of goldware in any city for many years, around the United States.

4. Value

The export value of the whole collection is about £50,000 at today's gold rate. The dessert, coffee and liqueur set alone is worth £27,000 (export)

5. Details of Manufacture

There are a variety of crafts connected with the gold, silver

and jewellery industries. In order to produce a set such as this, the following processes are involved:-

a) First the artist makes rough sketches from which full-scale colour drawings are made of the selected design.

b) In the preparation of the gold the metal is refined, assayed and rolled into flat sheets by the bullion merchants. It is a most important process for without skill and care the gold in the finished article would develop surface flaws. The goldsmith then takes over and decides the size and thickness of gold most suitable for the article concerned. The metal is cut, placed on the forge and annealed to ruby red. In some cases the metal is polished before use.

c) Next the craftsmen proceed to hand-raise the gold into the required shape. This is done entirely by hand hammering with steel hammers. The process makes the gold very hard and it has to be annealed many times before completion. Cast decorations such as shells, feet, wire and so on are then applied to the main body. This is effected by use of a gold solder specially made to melt at a lower temperature than the gold of the article itself. Care must always be taken during this process to avoid undue distortion of the article.

d) In the pattern making clay models of the applied mounts are made, from which moulds in plaster are formed. In turn, casts in soft metal and copper are taken and worked on by the chaser. When brought to perfection, the final casts are poured in gold.

e) Next comes the chasing of applied work. Craftsmen work with fine steel chisels or cutters and hammers to decorate the piece. Great patience is required to follow the intricate design and match each piece of the set.

f) Engraving is often associated with chasing but it is a different process, the work being carried out with the use of fine steel.

cutters. The degree of skill necessary is exceptional: one slip can ruin weeks of hard work.

g) Despite the name engine-turning is carried out largely by hand. The operator of the machine, by his skill alone, makes the perfect job. Each tiny line is cut separately, the craftsmen controlling the pressure of the cutter by his thumb.

h) After the goldsmith has made the article it is in the rough state, covered with file and fire marks. The polisher removes these marks with water stone, care being taken to retain all sharp edges and keep the surface flat. The article is then applied to revolving mops on a lathe; in the first place an abrasive mop, working on until a very soft mop, with rouge, is used. The result is a perfect mirror-like finish.

i) Before the article appears for sale, it has to be Hall Marked: the year, the city, the company and the carat value are all indicated. On the bottom of each piece of the dessert set, for instance, there is Asprey's own mark, the leopard's head of the London Hall, "R" for 1953, the crown and "18" for the carat of gold and, specially for this year, the Queen's head which is the Coronation Year Hall Mark.

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The following assistance is acknowledged:-

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