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Cast Iron From Central Europe 1800-1850

NEW YORK CITY - The first exhibition in the United States to explore the largely forgotten art of Central European cast iron opens at the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts on May 26 and continues

through August 7. It highlights over 200 decorative cast-iron objects borrowed from important museums and private collections in Europe and the United States. Featured is a surprising array of articles for the home, including candlesticks, clocks, desk accessories, furniture, incense burners, and sewing implements; and more personal items, like perfume bot-

tle holders, combs, fans, buttons and jewelry. Monumental works in cast iron, such as bridges and buildings, are considered to be the engineering and architectural marvels of the early industrial age. Over-

Nineteenth Century. The region was rich in coal and iron needed by the foundries, which had adopted English advances in the casting process. The Prussian and Austrian governments supported the foundries as a

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shadowed by these achievements and long neglected by scholars and art historians, however, are the ornamental objects that comprise this exhibition. Central Europe - which today includes much of Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, and Hungary - was the center of this decorative cast iron industry in the first half of the

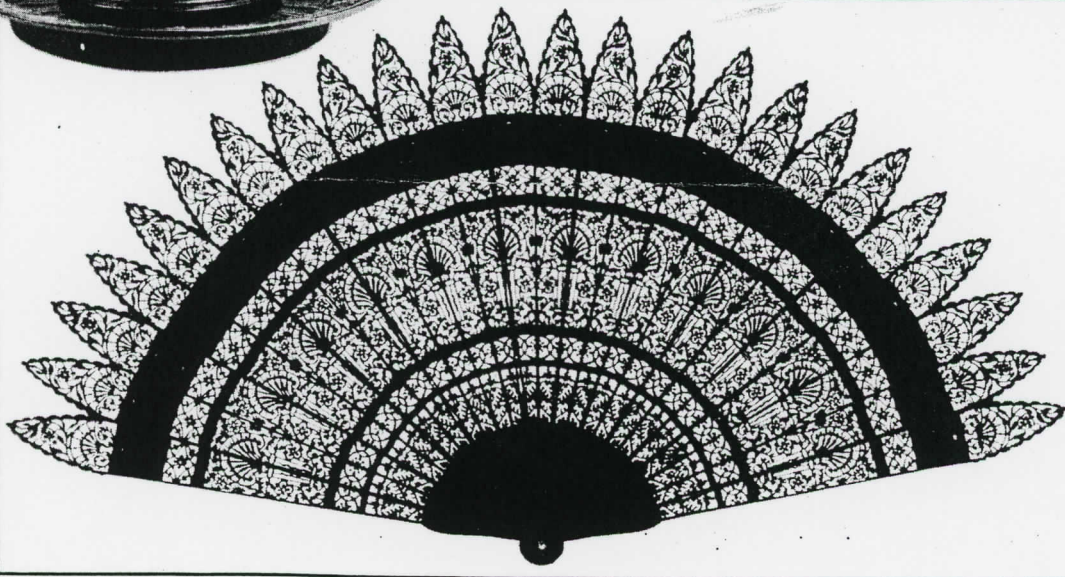
means of stimulating their countries' economies. The serial method of casting iron produced quantities of reasonably priced, high-quality goods that greatly appealed to the growing middle class in the Biedermeier Age.

The understated black patina and formal simplicity of cast-iron objects reflected

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Watch holder. Cast iron; 12 by 10 1/4 by 2 1/4 inches. The Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Ala.

Brise fan, Ilsenburg/Harz, mid-Nineteenth Century. Cast steel, silk ribbon, gold; 7 1/2 by 10 1/4 inches. MAK - Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna.





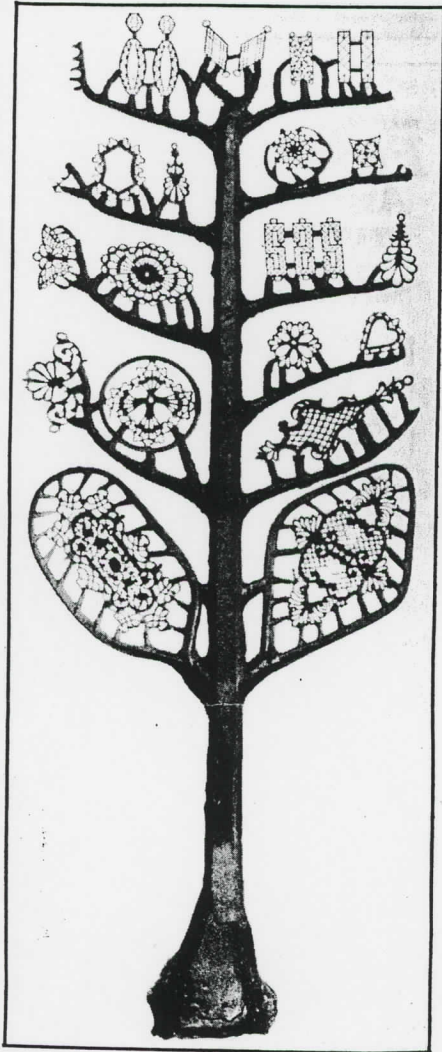
Cast Iron From Central Europe

(Continued from page one)

the taste of the era. By decorating rooms at the New Palace in Potsdam with cast iron, King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia (1770-1840; r. 1797-1840) helped make cast iron a fashionable material. When Berlin's preeminent architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841) produced designs to be cast in iron, the quality of cast-iron objects was elevated to the highest level. Schinkel's work is included in the exhibition, along with work by other significant

Covered box. Cast and sheet iron; 8¼ by 7 by 4¼ inches. The Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Ala., gift of American Cast Iron Pipe Company.

Casting tree, Vienna, 1831-1849. Joseph Glanz Foundry. Cast iron; 13 by 4¾ inches. Technical Museum, Vienna.



Watch holder. Cast iron, 8¼ by 5¾ by 2½ inches. The Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Ala., gift of American Cast Iron Pipe Company.



230 Decorative Cast-Iron Objects From American and European Museums

artists of the period.

Patriotism played an important role in the development of the Prussian cast iron industry. Much of the early cast-iron jewelry, for example, resulted from Prussian resistance efforts during the Napoleonic wars. Women

were urged to donate their gold jewelry to help finance the military. In exchange they received cast-iron pieces inscribed "I gave gold for iron."

Examples from all the major iron foundries active in Central Europe, including the

three Prussian Royal Ironworks, are represented in the exhibition. Several "New Year's Plaques" issued by the ironworks at the end of each year to commemorate their achievements are on view. Of the more than 90 pieces from MAK - Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, one of the most exceptional is a delicate folding fan of steel filigree threaded with silk ribbon.

Among the items from the Technical Museum in Vienna is a rare casting tree which reveals the process used to make earrings, brooches, and other works requiring consummate delicacy.

On display are 80 selections from the Birmingham Museum of Art's cast-iron collection, one of the largest and finest holdings in the world. The exhibition is augmented by a working model of a blast furnace to demonstrate the casting of iron, paintings and engravings of the iron foundries, and Nineteenth Century portraits of fashionable women wearing cast-iron jewelry.

"Cast Iron from Central Europe: 1800-1850" was organized by The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts and MAK - Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna. Dr Elisabeth Schmutzmeier, curator of metalwork and the Wiener Werkstatte Archive at MAK - Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, and Bard Center dean Derek Ostergard were the project's curators. Mr Ostergard also edited the illustrated exhibition catalogue. The publication examines the achievements of the cast-iron industry and the complex cultural, technological, and political relationships between Central Europe, Prussia, and England at the birth of the Industrial Age. Kenneth Barkin,

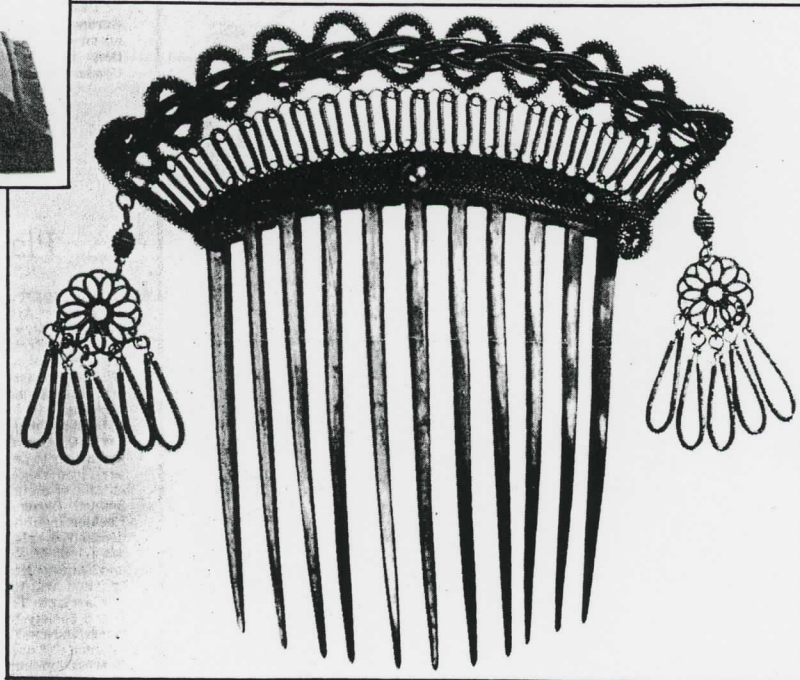


Candlestick, 1810-1820. Cast iron, brass; 12 1/4 by 4 1/4 by 4 1/4 inches. The Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Ala. Gift of the American Cast Iron Pipe Company.

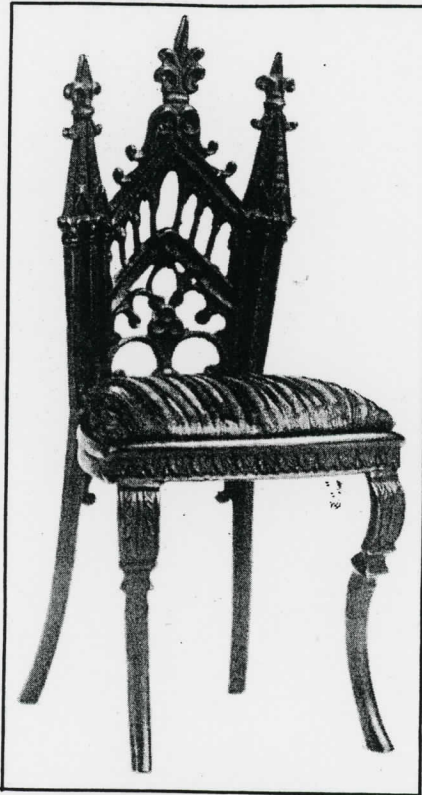
Bust of Queen Luise, Christian Daniel Rauch, circa 1816-1818. Cast iron; 12 3/4 by 5 1/4 by 4 1/4 inches. The Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Ala., gift of American Cast Iron Pipe Company.

Bard Graduate
Center For
Studies in the
Decorative Arts

Hair comb, 1830-40. Steel wire, horn; 4 1/2 inches by 4 3/4 inches. MAK - Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna.



Cast Iron From Central Europe



Pin cushion, circa 1840-50. Cast iron, cardboard, cotton padding, textile; 5 by 1 by 2¼ inches. The Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Ala., gift of American Cast Iron Pipe Company.

Helmut Borsch-Supan, Leon Botstein and Elisabeth Schmuttermeyer contributed to the catalogue.

"Cast Iron from Central Europe: 1800-1850" is part of an on-going series of exhibitions hosted by The Bard Graduate Center which high-

lights the decorative arts of the first half of the Nineteenth Century. The Gallery, located at 18 West 86th Street in Manhattan, is open Tuesday through Sunday, 11 am-5 pm; and Thursday, 11 am-8:30 pm. It is closed on Monday.

Symposium

Planned For May 26

NEW YORK CITY - The Bard Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts is presenting a day-long symposium on Thursday, May 26, to explore issues raised by the exhibition, "Cast Iron From Central Europe, 1800-1850."

Preeminent scholars from Europe and the United States will offer papers exploring the achievements in the industry and the art of iron casting in Britain, Central Europe and North America.

After opening remarks by Susan Weber Soros, director, and Derek Ostergard, dean, of the Bard Center, the program will be given over to presentations by John Challen, curator of technology, Ironbridge Gorge Museum; Elisabeth Schmuttermeyer, curator of metalwork, MAK-Austrian Museum of Applied Arts; Samuel Beizer, chairman, Department of Jewelry Design, Fashion Institute of Technology; F. Brydying Adams, curator of decorative arts, Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Ala.; Jean M. Burks, adjunct professor, Bard Graduate Center; and Tamnis Kane Groft, chief curator, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, N.Y.

"Cast Iron: The Artistry of an Industry, 1750-1850" will be held at the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, 15 West 86th Street, in New York. Registration begins at 8:30 am. Tickets are \$55 each (\$25 each for students), or \$60 (\$30 students) at the door. Reservations may be made by telephoning 212/721-4245 or 212/721-5857.