

ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ МУЗЕОЛОГИИ

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The actor-network theory of B. Latur and porcelain services of classicism: the relevance of a museological discussion

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In this article an attempt is made to tell about the actor-network theory of the French sociologist B. Latur in application to the history of the creation and existence of ceremonial services of the second half of the 18th century. For demonstration of separate provisions of the theory of Latur, the most known porcelain and faience services of the German, French, English and Russian manufactories from the era of early and strict classicism were chosen. The author tells about the transition of motives and forms from the Sevres “Service with cameos” and the “Berlin” service to Russian “Arabeskovy”, “Kabinetsky”, “The Dowry” and other services. The article mentions the silver services executed by the Parisian masters J.-N. Roettiers, R.-J. Auguste, etc., for the brothers Orlov, who helped Catherine II to occupy the throne, and also silver services for deputies of the new provinces founded by the Russian empress. The history of the creation of services illustrates a continuous chain of administrative reforms, military conflicts, political and personal events and also changes in artistic taste. By means of the ceremonial objects on which ware was carried for ceremonial lunches, the European monarchs not only subtly affected style and fashion in Russia, but also skillfully played politics. While Catherine II accepted gifts and made large orders for European and domestic production, she successfully engaged with her closest partners in diplomacy and economy, waged information war, and made dynastic plans. Many facts specified in the article prove that Bruno Latur’s concept about the active impact of things on social and political relations is confirmed in practice. Latur’s approach to studying material monuments, artifacts, and decorative arts is demanded by the modern science of history of art.

Keywords: Bruno Latur, actor-network theory, arts and crafts, porcelain, services, Catherine II, material culture, method.

A multitude of approaches to studying ancient finds, artifacts and works of old and new art have been developed in modern archeology, history of art, philosophy of science and museology.

In Russian science, a whole school has appeared bringing together those, truly interested in seeking solutions and demonstrating thoughtful attitudes to the study of the world of things. Georgi Knabe defined his way of studying objects as the “probe method”, which is well expressed in his following words:

... a thing as it is, as a physical object, is unable to convey anything about the inner world of the person who has to do with it. A story appears only there, where there is evidence of feelings this person has put into this thing and where, thus, his emotional and psychological attitude toward it may be exteriorized and, as a result, his historically significant emotional-psychological type may be revealed¹. He proceeds: “The sociological nature of a domestic object gives us a probe deeply inserted into the social subconscious, into those depths of everyday life where the human texture of historical processes is straightforwardly revealed².

The well-known Russian historian of antique art Lyudmila Akimova in her many publications on the material world of ancient Greeks and Romans justly notes that “monuments of Antique literature and art open before us an absolutely different picture of the being of things”, and that papers concerning the history of things in ancient times regretfully “display, quite often, a modern view of this history, a view that has taken shape at the turn of the 20th century”³.

During the past decades, Western scholars have long stopped concerning this issue only in regard to archeological findings and Antique collections. The actively developing research in the sphere of material culture, museology, social and other liberal sciences, which deal directly with this topic, has resulted in the appearance of new interesting concepts. One of them belongs to Susan Pearce, Professor Emeritus of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, who has developed a step-by-step method of studying material monuments. Pearce holds that an object has initial meaning, function and significance and for a historian, archeologist or a museum curator it is enough just to guess this meaning⁴. Other scholars suggest that each object gives meaning to external subjects and that an object may have a multitude of stories, made up by those who look at it with fancy or curiosity. This opinion regarding objects of art was held by André Malraux, a French novelist, philosopher and France’s Minister of Cultural Affairs during the post-war decades. It is also shared by Gaynor Kavanagh⁵ and Edwina Taborsky⁶. The Dutch museologist Peter van Mensch also maintains that objects have no initial value and that the meaning of an object changes at the moment of its withdrawal from the ordinary world and placement in a museum⁷. Professor Lourajane Smith from Australia has a somewhat similar point of view⁸.

¹ Knabe, 1986. P. 260.

² Ibid. P. 284.

³ Akimova, 1994. P. 53.

⁴ Ananiev, 2013. P. 129.

⁵ Kavanagh, 1999.

⁶ Taborsky, 1982; Taborsky, 1990; Ananiev, 2016.

⁷ Mensch, 2014.

⁸ Smith, 2013.

Nowadays, it often happens that countries and nations announce their special civilizational role, modeling, with the help of an interpretation of the meaning of material evidence, the kind of history they would like to see as official. That is precisely why such a free approach to the interpretation of the meaning of objects is fraught with a certain danger, which further increases as an active information war is unfolding. That is why it is so important to discuss approaches to the study of material historical evidence.

Lately, scholars in Russia have become interested in the scholarly position of the French philosopher and sociologist of science Bruno Latour (b. 1947, Burgundy) and author of such books as *Laboratory Life* (1979), *Pasteurization of France* (1984), *Science in Operation* (1987) and *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991). Together with sociologist John Lo and Michel Callon, professor of sociology at the Paris School of Mines and a famous researchers in the field of science and technology, Bruno Latour is one of the founders of the actor-network theory (ANT). In the works of these scholars of the second half of the 1980s,

all kinds of nonhumans — microbes, scallops, stones and boats — presented themselves to the social theory in a new light⁹. From the point of view of the actor-network theory, objects (archeological findings, domestic items, artworks, living organisms, technical devices and structures) are viewed as acting units of social relations. Not humans, or groups of humans, or communities of humans, but communities of nonhumans began to be regarded as agents interacting with the social medium. The assertion that anything that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor or, in the case if it yet lacks a figuration, an actant¹⁰.

The definition of the actor-network theory was finalized in 1999. Its revolutionizing impact was that it overthrew the tyranny of the social and drew attention to material objects; and it also “ascribed to objects a status equal to that of humans in doing things”¹¹. A social activity is

over or delegated to other types of actors capable of transferring the activity further on <...> kettles “boil water”, knives “cut meat”, baskets “carry groceries”, hammers “hit” nails, banisters “do not allow” children to fall, locks “lock” premises from uninvited guests, soap “washes away” dirt, curricula “list” classes, price tags “help” people in their calculations, etc. ...»¹². “This, of course, does not mean that such actors “determine” the activity, that the basket “is the reason” for the groceries being delivered or that hammers “make” one drive in a nail. However, all this «means that between causality in the full sense of the world and absolute non-existence there may exist a multitude of metaphysical halftones. Objects may not only “determine” human activity or serve as its “background”, but also let, allow, provide, promote, permit, offer, influence, prevent, make possible, obstruct, etc.¹³

No matter how Latour’s theory is interpreted, its essence regarding the study of an object is so that in order to acknowledge an object as a cultural monument, the initial rationale for its appearance needs to be sought by thoroughly examining its social ties. The author of this article decided to observe Latour’s ideas using the example of services

⁹ Latur, 2014. P. 23.

¹⁰ Ibid. P. 24.

¹¹ Erofeeva, 2015.

¹² Latur, 2014. P. 24.

¹³ Ibid.

of the Classicism period she has been studying for the past 15 years as an art historian. We assumed that the social role of porcelain services of the 18th century, when European and Russian porcelain had just discovered and was valued as gold, cannot have a lesser resonance than the social role of scallops, colonies of corals, stones or ships. The actor-network theory, which is rather a method than a theory, prompted us to once again and with a new interest look at the circumstances under which services of the second half of the 18th century were produced and have existed. Following is a tentative list of about 20 such services we have included in our statistics:

- Hunting (*Okhotnichy*) service of Count Grigori Orlov. Saxony, Meissen porcelain factory. Ordered in 1766 by Catherine II. Gatchina Palace.
- Toilet (*Tualetny*) service of Count Grigori Orlov. Russia, Imperial porcelain factory (hereafter IPF), designed by Gavriil Kozlov, painted by A. I. Cherny. Late 1760s. SHM.
- Orlov (*Orlovsky*) service, France, Paris, Jacques-Nicolas Roettiers (1736–1788). 1772–1773. Silver. The State Hermitage Museum (hereinafter SHM).
- The Husk-Service. England, the Etruria Works of Josiah Wedgwood, decorating studio in Chelsea. 1770. Faience. Peterhof.
- Berlin service of Frederick the Great. 1770–1772. Berlin royal manufactory. Porcelain. SHM.
- Service with Cameos. France, the Royal porcelain manufactory in Sèvres. 1778–1779. SHM.
- Service with a Green Frog. England, J. Wedgwood factory 1773–1774. Faience. SHM.
- Four Order (*Ordenskiye*) services (of St. Andrew the Apostle; of St. Blessed Grand Duke Alexander Nevsky; of St. Soldier and Great Martyr Georgi; and of St. Duke Vladimir Equal to the Apostles). Francis Jacob Gardner factory, Verbilki near Moscow. 1777–1785. Porcelain. Most of the objects are at the State Russian Museum (hereinafter — SRM). St. Petersburg.
- Viceroy (*Namestnicheskiye*) silver services for viceroys in Russian provinces (Ekaterinoslavsky, 1776–1777; Nizhegorodsky, 1778–1779; Kazansky, 1779–1780 and etq.; together 13 services). Paris, France, master Robert-Joseph Auguste. The Paris workshops have not executed the order in full during the lifetime of Catherine II, and under Paul I the services were melted, however part of the objects has survived and is in the collections of SHM and the Kremlin Armory.
- Arabesque (*Arabeskovy*) service. IPF, models by Jean-Dominique Rachette. 1784. SRM.
- Yacht (*Yakhtensky*) service. IPF, models by J.-D. Rachett. 1785–1787. SHM.
- The Cabinet (*Kabinetsky*) service. IPF, models by J.-D. Rachett. 1793–1801. SHM and other museums of St. Petersburg.
- Four services made at IPF for the dowries of four daughters of Emperor Paul I. The service for Great Duchesses Aleksandra Pavlovna was created in 1795; for Elena Pavlovna in 1797–1799; for Ekaterina Pavlovna and Maria Pavlovna in 1799–1802. SHM and other museums of St. Petersburg.
- Toilet (*Tualetny*) service of Empress Maria Fyodorovna. IPF, 1801–1803. Pavlovsk Palace.
- The Italian Fortresses (*Ital'yanskiye kreposti*) service. IPF, 1799. Gatchina Palace.

We may notice that the above-listed ceremonial dinner services include silver ones, the shapes of which were often used in porcelain production.

B. Latour writes, substantially to the following effect that “because of the variability and proceduality of the existence of originating ties, the sociologist has access, as a rule, not even to these ties, but to the traces these disappeared ties leave”¹⁴. Thus, he defines sociology “not as a ‘science about the social’, but as a tracking of traces”¹⁵. B. Latour argues: “If there are no traces, objects do not provide the observer with any information and do not make any noticeable impact on other agents. When they keep quiet, they are no longer actors: they literally cannot be taken into account. <...> When printed out questionnaires are filled out they forever remain in the archives no longer associated with human intentions until they are once again revived by some historian. ... that is why special techniques are needed to make them [objects] speak...”¹⁶

The French scholar writes that “even the most routine, traditional and silent implementations stop being taken for granted when they are approached by users rendered ignorant and clumsy by distance — distance in time as in archaeology, distance in space as in ethnology, distance in skills as in learning”¹⁷.

In our case, the former advantage is true. Services fell out of use specifically because the ideas behind them became obsolete. It became awkward to use the Order services after the end of the reign of Paul I — they appeared archaic just as the veterans of the Russo-Turkish wars in their worn out uniforms.

Latour points out that “when objects have receded into the background for good, it is always possible — but more difficult — to bring them back to light by using archives, documents, memoirs, museum collections, etc.”¹⁸ “Finally,” writes Latour, “no matter what decision we select, field research under ANT has shown that objects are not studied not because of a data shortage, but because of a lack of will to do so”¹⁹.

In another of his books, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour focuses on the concept of the “hard fact” in science, i.e., the necessity of scholars to be supported not by weak arguments, but by some serious obstacle. He wrote: “Microbes can serve as an example of such a point of view. After their appearance as an element of reality, hygienists could fight not on all boundaries, but only at certain points of access. Instead of a battle on all fronts — instead of gathering information about the link between the disease rate and airing, the condition of buildings, weather, heredity, etc., — it became possible to concentrate on the war with one malicious enemy — microbes”²⁰.

Likewise, in the study of services there is no need for historians to linger around insignificant issues related to the change of the representability of the object and the hardly noticeable alterations of the style. On the contrary, the researcher needs to establish what events had taken place during the given time and what people were involved and know about the secrets of the royal court and the political circumstances — in this case any oth-

¹⁴ Polonskaya, 2012.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Latur, 2014. P. 27.

¹⁷ Ibid. P. 28.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Latur, 2006. P. 34–35.

er manipulations with objects will become needless. When detected, hard facts “become literally indispensable”²¹, which means they cannot be bypassed.

In such a manner, we shall attempt to analyze the porcelain services of Russian Classicism, which we may define as vivid traces linking us with the facts. The hard fact of the beginning of the reign of Catherine II was her illegal ascent to the throne, which has been indicated by her many gifts to her aids in this ascent. Her favorite, Count Grigori Orlov, received more awards than the others. During the first awarding immediately after the enthronement, the Orlov brothers — Grigori, Alexei and Fyodor — received a silver service manufactured in St. Petersburg and titled “Three Times More than the Usual” (instead of the usual 126 pieces that made up services granted to other loyal subjects by the young empress, this one consisted of 279 pieces)²².

The second service the Empress presented to Count Orlov was the Hunting service intended for his country house in Gatchina not far from St. Petersburg. It was ordered in 1766 from the Meissen porcelain factory. Many missing items from this service were later replaced by IPF masters. This service was to grant the newly appointed count a feeling of being equal to those for whom a royal hunt was a standard 18th century entertainment. At the end of the 1760s, the Toilet service for Grigori Orlov was made at IPF (designed by Gavriil Kozlov and painted by A. I. Cherny). It included nearly three hundred different items, which was also an expression of special respect to this representative of the new aristocracy²³.

Catherine II ordered the last service for Grigori Orlov — the Orlov service made of silver (1770–1774) — in Paris, from Louis XV Court Jeweler Jacques-Nicolas Roettiers (1736–1788) and his son. Some of its items were created by Louis-Joseph Lehendrick and P. Sharve²⁴. It is believed that by that time Catherine had interest in her favorite, their relationship was coming to an end, but the empress wished to the part on good terms and for this purpose the magnificent gift was executed.

We shall cite another place from Latour that is worth quoting: “When a bicycle hits a stone, this is not a social phenomenon. However, when a bicyclist rides through a STOP sign it becomes social. <...> when a hammer drives in a nail there is nothing social in this, but when the image of the hammer is crossed with the image of a sickle, the hammer is transferred to the social sphere, since it becomes part of the ‘symbolic order’. <...>”²⁵. By the same token, a service becomes a social phenomenon if “surtout de table” (from French — a table decoration of the desert part of a service) contains an image of the ruler, which became a novelty in the porcelain art of the mid–18th century, in particular, in the large figural sets of the Meissen porcelain factory.

The “porcelain” idea was undoubtedly turned into a social phenomenon when the image of Catherine II surrounded by her entourage appeared for the first time on the desert part of the service. In 1772, the Berlin service of Frederick the Great arrived in Russia. Its desert part showed the Russian Empress seated in the center of a multi-figure composition, which was, for the first time in the history of foreign porcelain production,

²¹ Ibid. P. 35.

²² Lopato, 2010.

²³ Kudriyavzeva T. V., 1984. P. 23–26; Kudriyavzeva T. V., 2003. P. 36.

²⁴ Kudriyavzeva A., 1995. P. 215; Frolova (intr., comp.), 1995. P. 49. Cat. 43, 44.

²⁵ Latur, 2014. P. 29.

a demonstration of the high status of the Russian Empress²⁶; besides that, this work of art had caused a great stir on the European porcelain market.

According to modern German sources on this service, in 1770–1772 the Royal porcelain manufactory in Berlin was commissioned by Catherine II to produce a porcelain set for the desert part in the form of a rising with a gazebo on it and the figure of the Russian Empress and her courtiers. This became possible due to the Empress's new policy of rapprochement between Russia and Prussia after the defeat of Saxony in the Seven Years War (1756–1763)²⁷. Russian art historians suggest that the Berlin desert service was given as a gift to Catherine II by Frederick II King of Prussia in 1772 as part of a supposed exchange of presents between the two monarchs to mark their political alliance of 1764²⁸; they also extended it for another 10 years. The fact of cash payments was an important detail in this game. It was to spite Frederick II in 1763, that Catherine II outbids him for the collection of 225 paintings she purchases from Johann Ernest Gotskovsky. As the well-known Russian museologist Tamara Yureneva wrote, in this respect: "Catherine II could not deny herself the pleasure of matching strength with one of the most famous European art collectors, offending the King of Prussia and showing to advantage the financial status of Russia, whose treasury, in truth, was affected during the war not less than that of Prussia's"²⁹.

The simultaneous expansion of porcelain production in several West European countries and Russia in the middle and second half of the 18th century caused concern about who will be the best and, consequently, about advertising. From the very beginning of the production of "white gold", a "porcelain war" was waged in Europe. In the 1760s, the rivalry of economics based on the porcelain branch reaches a new level. In addition, Saxony, having lost both the Seven Years War and its political and economic influence in Europe, is worried about the drop of porcelain sales to Russia and the activities of its competitor, Prussia, in this area. Saxony wanted Meissen to remain the leader of porcelain production. In response to Frederick II "porcelain" activities, a commercial project was developed in Meissen for Russia — in 1772–1774, the famous sculptors of models Johann Kaendler and Michel Acier fulfilled the order of the Russian royal court by creating forty-two mythological groups. In 1776, this lot of porcelain arrived in St. Petersburg and was placed in the Waterslide Pavilion in Oranienbaum³⁰. The fact that the set was taken to the residence where the Great Duchess Catherine once lived with her husband, the future Emperor Peter III, whom she loathed, shows that Meissen had failed to achieve its goal. Its mythological groups could not compete with the Berlin "triumph" of Catherine II. Meissen's production had left the highest point of the pedestal probably because Saxony ceased to play an important role at the European political forum.

Managing directors overseeing the Royal porcelain manufactory in Sèvres had probably been closely watching their competitors, because at this very time the "Russian Parnassus" (early 1770s, SHM), an allegorical composition glorifying the Russian ruler and made of biscuit was delivered from Paris.

²⁶ It is authentically known that the composition of the central part was thought up by the king of Prussia Frederick II, and the famous sculptor Friedrich Elias Meyer molded (worked for Royal porcelain manufactory in Berlin from 1761 to 1788).

²⁷ Burg, 2004. P. 20–21.

²⁸ Kazakova, 2009. P. 73.

²⁹ Yureneva, 2004. P. 164.

³⁰ Burg, 2004. P. 21. Cat. 167–192.

These are good examples of the political and economic games played around porcelain services.

A short while later, but before the creation of the Arabesque service, traces were left in the “service” story by the situation connected with the preparation and fulfillment of the “Greek Project” aimed at strengthening the martial spirit of the subjects. In 1777–1785, at the famous factory of Francis Gardner in Verbilki near Moscow, four Order services were manufactured on commission from the Russian Empress. With their original Early-Classical design, they glorified the most venerated and canonized warriors and commanders (see above list). Natalya Simpovskaya, Doctor of Art History and a well-known expert in the history of porcelain, has established that the Gardner Factory truthfully repeated the forms of the items from Frederick II’s dessert part³¹.

The Arabesque service produced in 1784 by IPF celebrated Russia’s victory in the First Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774. The service was completed in 1784, one year following the accession of the Crimea, and its design did not imply military prowess too directly. Here we observe a political precedent that has not become irrelevant up to date. Nine figures surround the figure of Catherine II placed in the center of a pedestal. Around her are porcelain groups “Crimea or Taurida Under the Reign of Catherine II” and “Georgia Under the Protection of Russia” that symbolize Catherine’s main territorial conquests. The groups “Army Force” and “Navy Force” signify Russia’s new might on land and sea. The remaining groups demonstrate the empress’s virtues: “Reign”, “Justice”, “Generosity” and “Philanthropy”³².

By that time, ceremonial services became a means of propaganda and political proclamations during official dinners. The program of «surround de table» of the Arabesque service executed at IPF under the guidance of Jean-Dominique Rachette was developed, as is thought to be, by the famous Russian poet G. R. Derzhavin and the renowned architect N. A. Lvov³³, both of whom were high-ranking officials and, in a certain sense, ideologists of the rule of Catherine II. Though the sculpture part of the service can be solely credited to Rachette and, most likely, draws upon Meissen’s figurine style, the design of the dinner part of the Arabesque service is, to a large degree, an imitation of the Cameo service (Sevres, 1778–1779), which Catherine II ordered specially for her favorite Grigori Potemkin. The Cameo service gave start to a whole chain of imitations in the production of Russian tableware for royal and high-society dinners. This was a special set, even for the Sevres manufactory. Catherine used this luxurious gift to thank and inspire the future founder of Russian southern provinces and her associate and supporter in all her political pursuits and in her idea to expand Russia, which evolved in 1777–1778 as the “Greek Project”.

Another service similar to the Arabesque service was the Yacht service, intended for the lead ship of a regatta, on which Catherine II in 1787 travelled to the southern dominions of the Russian Empire, thus evoking indignation in Europe and Istanbul that soon resulted in the Second Russo-Turkish War (1787–1791).

The end of this Russo-Turkish war was marked by another of Catherine II orders to IPF — a huge service consisting of over 1,000 pieces for Chancellor of Russia Count Alexander Bezborodko (1747–1799). The death of Prince Grigori Potemkin-Tavrichesky

³¹ Sipovskaya, 1998. P. 19.

³² The most detailed description: Wolf, 1906. P. 80–83.

³³ Karpova, 1999. P. 4–5; Bagdasarova, 2011. P. 105.

on October 5 (16 new style), 1791, on the eve of the conclusion of peace with Turkey, had made Catherine II quite nervous and she was grateful to Bezborodko for conducting negotiations with a plenipotentiary of the grand vizir Yusuf Pasha that resulted in the Peace Treaty of Jassy being signed on December 29 (January 9, 1792 new style), 1791.

The title of this service does not contain the name of Bezborodko, it is known as the Cabinet service, which is a consequence of intrigues. After the death of Potemkin, the successful 44-year-old diplomat Bezborodko was driven away from the throne by the last favorites of Catherine II — Alexander Dmitriyev-Mamonov and Platon Zubov. The service got its name from spending many years unused in the storerooms of the Cabinet of the Imperial Court. Catherine II died in 1796 and Bezborodko died in 1799 without receiving the royal gift.

It is interesting that services were granted as awards mostly to favorites and commoners who had made speedy careers under Catherine II: Grigori and Alexei Orlovs, Grigori Potemkin and Alexander Bezborodko — they all represented the new aristocracy that had successfully climbed the social stairway. By the end of the 18th century, services cease being only awards, the time of favorites passes and in the family of Great Duke Pavel his daughters and granddaughters of Catherine II are growing up.

For them, using the ready molds of the Cabinet service and in the same make up and using almost the same manner of painting the rims and landscapes, the Dowry services (see above list) were produced at IPF. The table adornments of the services included, according to different sources, from 21 to 26 figures: nine muses surrounded the porcelain Temple of Apollo³⁴; the “surtout de table” of each service included a figurine of Catherine II; and part of the service groups were made after Antiquity sculptures. Archive documents enumerate a “Large Antique group from *Herculanus* [Herculaneum] present selling love [Woman selling cupids]”; “a group of The *Andobrandino* [Aldobrandini] Wedding”; “Love Overcomes Force figure”; “Antique Venice figure”; “Faunas figure”; “Mercury figure”; “Cupid in the Clouds”³⁵. Three groups — “Love Overcomes Force”, “Mercury figure” and “Aldobrandini Wedding” were based on ancient frescoes. Created initially for the «surtout de table» of the service intended for Count Bezborodko, they were used for the Dowry services for the four daughters of Paul I. The dowry services demonstrated artistic tastes in Russia, whose high society was captivated by Antiquity, matched the highest European standards and that the daughters of Paul I were among the most prestigious brides of Europe, which soon became a reality. Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna (1786–1859) soon became the wife of Herzogtum Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, Grand Duchess Anna Pavlovna (1795–1865) adorned the throne of the Netherlands, and Ekaterina Pavlovna (1788–1819) became the Queen of Württemberg.

If we return to B. Latour’s initial statements, we shall see that our brief review clearly indicates that while studying porcelain sets of the second half of the 18th century it does not seem exactly right to focus only on the interpretation of characters, sources of ornaments or styles. Although stylistic approaches had changed in accordance with the cultural and political situation or in connection with the disfavor or rise of historical figures,

³⁴ Kudriyavzeva, 2003. P. 69.

³⁵ “About the table and dessert service ordered from the local state porcelain plant to the count Bezborodko in 25 000 rubles under the Decree of 1793 of July of the 9th day”. *Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA)*. F. 468. Op. 37. D. 64 (1793 god).

we need to know the reason that motivated the creation of precisely such objects of art, i.e., the “hard fact” concealed in the fine intricacies of political or personal circumstances.

From the very beginning of Catherine II reign, we observe traces in the form of porcelain monuments signifying the highest social status of certain favorites or denoting certain areas of Russia’s domestic and foreign policy of the time of her rule. Our story has shown that the design of the services of the period of Catherine II, the themes of the drawings and the allegorical figures of the “surtout de table” not only conveyed to the guests at the table stories about past and present events as old archives or things from a wardrobe. Services composed history, projected it to the future — they performed a direct activity and delegated it to the next actor — according to the actor-network theory. Objects, with the active participation of the researcher, have a possibility to express themselves, which fully corroborates Latour’s commentary that objects may be studied, but may not be studied and in this case nothing can be done better than “grant the actor space for self-expression”³⁶.

Among the Russian services of the time of Catherine II and Paul I, we will not find even one that would not motivate for action, would not contain an energetic message or would be created simply for the sake of pleasure and beauty. The services fulfilled an important awarding function and also played a propagandistic and advertising role. They were signs of a monarch’s sympathy, a special mark, and in other cases an indication of a political alliance. With their help battles were waged, intrigues were spun, acts of capitulation were signed, recovered territories were acknowledged and the hearts of favorites and prospective European bridegrooms were won.

In conclusion we shall quote B. Latour:

As humble slaves, they [objects] live in the background of the social, carrying out all the main work, but they are never allowed to be introduced as such. <...> Objects seem to have been cursed: they go on sleeping, as slaves in a spellbound castle. However, as they are freed of charms, they start, stretch and mumble something incomprehensible. They begin to swarm, tugging at other — human — actors, awakening them from their dogmatic sleep³⁷.

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³⁶ Latour, 2014. P. 49.

³⁷ Ibid. P. 25.

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Акторно-сетевая теория Б. Латура и фарфоровые сервизы классицизма: об актуальности музееологической дискуссии

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В статье предпринята попытка рассказать об акторно-сетевой теории французского социолога Б. Латура в применении ее к истории создания и бытования столовых сервизов второй половины XVIII столетия. Для демонстрации отдельных положений теории Латура были выбраны наиболее известные фарфоровые и фаянсовые сервизы немецких, французских, английских и русских мануфактур эпохи раннего и строгого классицизма. Автор рассказывает о переходе мотивов и форм от севрского «Сервиза с камнями» и «Берлинского» сервиза Фридриха II к русским «Арабесковому», «Кабинетскому», «Приданным» и другим сервизам. В статье упоминаются серебряные сервизы, выполненные для братьев Орловых, способствовавших восхождению Екатерины II на трон, и для наместников новых, основанных русской императрицей губерний парижскими мастерами Ж.-Н. Ретье, Р.-Ж. Огюстом и др. История создания сервизов иллюстрирует непрерывную цепь административных реформ, военных конфликтов, политических и личных обстоятельств, а также перемену художественного вкуса, зависящего от многих факторов. С помощью церемониальных предметов, к которым можно отнести посуду для парадных обедов, европейские монархи не только тонко влияли на стиль и моду в России, но и искусно вели политическую игру. Со своей стороны, принимая дары, делая крупные заказы иностранным и отечественным производствам, Екатерина II успешно направляла свою дипломатию на европейских монархов — ее стратегических и экономических партнеров, вела информационную войну, строила династические планы. Многочисленные факты, указанные в статье, доказывают, что концепция Б. Латура об активном воздействии вещей на социальные и политические отношения подтверждается на практике, а придуманный им подход к изучению материальных памятников, артефактов, произведений декоративно-прикладного искусства востребован современной искусствоведческой наукой.

Ключевые слова: Бруно Латур, акторно-сетевая теория, декоративно-прикладное искусство, фарфор, сервизы, Екатерина II, материальная культура, метод.

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