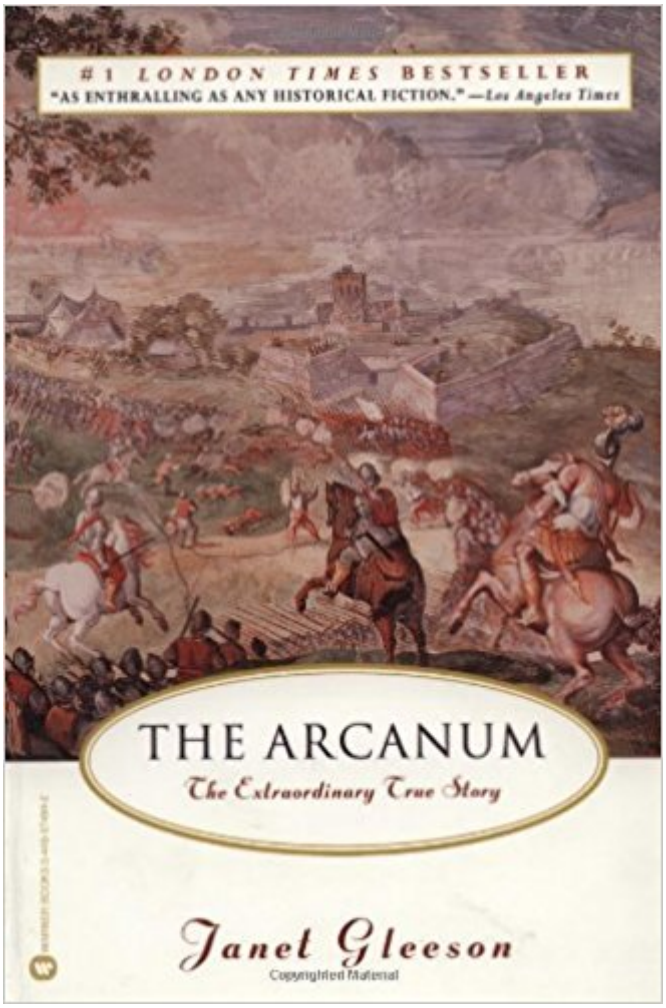
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The Arcanum: The Extraordinary True Story



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Synopsis

The #1 bestseller in England tells the story of the obsessive pursuit of the secret formula to 18th-century Europe’s most precious commodity -- fine porcelain.

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

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Customer Reviews

Since the middle ages, Western Europeans have practiced alchemy, a primitive form of chemistry, in the great hope of transforming base metal into gold. In the early 18th century, a second great secret puzzled Western Europe’s early scientists: how to make porcelain. Recently arrived from the Orient, porcelain quickly became a symbol of power, prestige, and good taste. In The Arcanum, Janet Gleeson presents an entertaining and informative account of the invention of European porcelain and the founding of the Meissen Porcelain Manufacture outside Dresden, Germany. Her narrative focuses on three individuals: Alchemist Johann Frederick BÃƒÂ¶ttger inadvertently discovered the arcanum, or secret formula, for making porcelain; Johan Gregor Herold, an ambitious artist, developed colors and patterns of unparalleled brilliance at the newly established Meissen Porcelain Manufacture; Johann Joachim Kaendler, a virtuoso sculptor, used the Meissen porcelain to invent a new art form. Interwoven with the story of Augustus the Strong, the greedy and ambitious king of the Kingdom of Saxony, who held BÃƒÂ¶ttger captive until he discovered the formula, Gleeson’s tale reads easily and maintains a high level of suspense and intrigue throughout. --Bertina Loeffler --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Who would have thought that the story of porcelain would be such a rousing tale of wealth, intrigue and outrageous greed and gluttony? In an all-but-abandoned German mountaintop castle called Albrechtsburg in the town of Meissen, a brilliant 18th-century apothecary and alchemist by the name of Johann Frederick Bottger discovered the secret for making porcelain, which was the next best thing to gold at the time in Europe. Like many other alchemists of his day, Bottger had once untruthfully claimed to have found the secret formula for turning base metals into gold. But for King Augustus of Saxony, who?smelling fortune?promptly imprisoned the young scientist, the arcanum for porcelain, or china, would have to suffice. Gleeson's lively account of how Meissen became the West's first porcelain center follows a colorful cast of characters: the lascivious Augustus; two rival decorative artists, Johann Gregor Herod and Johann Joachim Kaendler, who applied their skills as diligently against each other as they did in creating precious porcelain objects; and goldsmith Christo Konrad Hunger, a "hard-bitten profiteer" who would "happily stoop to intimidation, threats, and all manner of chicanery if it would help to fill his purse." Greed?for money, fame, porcelain or power?seems to have motivated everyone associated with Meissen, including the author's apparent favorite, "the unfortunate Bottger," whose youthful boasting and actual genius in the laboratory made it all possible. Though somewhat hastily wrapped up, this is delightful historical narrative. Major ad/ promo. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I've read this book a couple of times over the yrs. It's a good reference for the time period, and a fun book to read.

As a budding enthusiast of Meissen porcelain, I found this book enormously enjoyable and informative. Gleeson clearly and entertainingly presents the sometimes complicated and confusing story of the discovery of porcelain in the West. She vividly portrays the various characters involved in the discovery and early development of hard paste porcelain. Gleeson might not be a great writer, but I have to admit to waking up early to enjoy her book.Even is you have no interest in this area of decorative art, the story is fascinating enough in its own right to ensure a gripping and enjoyable read. Who knows, you may become a porcelain convert!

If you have ever thrilled at the beauty of fine porcelain--or better yet--IF YOU HAVE NEVER had the thrill of examining a magnificent piece of porcelain--PLEASE buy this book! The romance--the unbelievable history--wild and violent--of the search and discovery of the magic clay, is riveting! Buy

the small book illustrated here--with the dust cover an embossed photo of a Meissen snuff box. It is a wonderful gift item for all men and women on your list.

Not a Tom Clancy thriller, but as a historical story documenting an incredibly important time in European history from a very different perspective this is a fabulous book to read. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to read this book!

Totally unexpected, enjoyable and interesting read.

This book was fascinating and exposed a segment of history that I was unaware of. Very interesting and enlightening. As a potter of porcelain my interest level was sky high!

fascinating subject

Wonderful story of the invention of porcelain in the western world.

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