

# MEISSEN HOME®





'MORE  
**COLLECTORS**  
THAN BUYERS'

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Porcelain has potential? Old decorations for new designs? Traditional shapes and colours with new functions? Markus Hilzinger, Creative Director of MEISSEN HOME® uses the precious DNA of MEISSEN® to create new favourite pieces.

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**The MEISSEN® manufactory is renowned worldwide for producing the finest porcelain. So how do you build on that to create a modern interiors collection?**

In its 300-year history, the manufactory has produced handmade wall decorations made from porcelain, high-quality chandeliers and accessories for numerous castles and stately homes.

**The manufactory started to make furniture as early as the 19th century, not least for the World Exhibition in Chicago.**

MEISSEN® is now reconnecting to these traditions. Porcelain is an excellent material that offers numerous design and innovative possibilities.

**Over 300 years of tradition – how much creative space does an interior designer have to play with when it comes to creating something from MEISSEN® DNA?**

With this kind of tradition, there is lots of room to play with – just think of the extensive archive with numerous moulds, the sixty thousand patterns and sophisticated colour recipes. Not to mention people with high-level craftsmanship skills that cannot be found elsewhere. We are now on our third generation of porcelain painters, for example, who specialise in an Asian motif and develop the highest level of skill attainable. I see that as something to treasure, but also something that needs to be modified and modernised – it is a great challenge to interpret this tradition in a modern way while doing justice to its cultural importance at the same time.

**A listed Milan townhouse dating from the 16th century was restored to create the Villa MEISSEN®. Listed building on the one hand, Baroque heritage on the other – how much room did you actually have to manoeuvre here?**

The strict regulations governing listed buildings were one issue. It complicates a project of this size enormously but we do have previous experience of this kind of thing. For walls that we weren't allowed to change, we used boiserie panelling, i.e. wooden cladding. Precious ceiling frescoes have been restored in a painstaking manner. The dreary inner courtyard has been transformed into a charming garden. A simple corridor has become a kind of "time tunnel" thanks to the use of wall tiles that depict the Dresden Procession of Princes mural. For me, the historic Milan Villa and the roots of MEISSEN® are not straitjackets that restrict us, but an exciting complement to what we can do. It is very stimulating not to have to plan something from scratch, but instead work out new ways in which both influences can embellish a new interior.

**This has resulted in a flagship store that is no ordinary flagship store, but almost has the atmosphere of a private home. So how do you ensure that the brand identity is still expressed in a clear manner?**

The MEISSEN® signets produce great aesthetics. Swords and dragons with a basis of geometric tile structures and craquelure patterns such as those used on porcelain surfaces – the MEISSEN® symbols are used in all kinds of shapes and designs. They are present everywhere in a discreet and elegant manner. The one thing we realised above all was the huge potential to create a complete range of furnishings and enable it to be directly experienced by visitors. The brand identity is present in the high quality of the materials and their finishes. Wall tiles covered in platinum, thick hand-sewn silk rugs, drawers lined with punched leather, splendid chandeliers with delicate lithophane plates and sofa cushions with handmade piping and cords. The Villa MEISSEN® presents a contemporary collection that goes beyond what we expect of modernity. The balance and harmony of its proportions creates a unique classic rhythm.

**Given the huge pool you use in creating your objects, how did you manage to create a unifying aesthetic which ensured that the Collectibles by MEISSEN® did not turn into a mishmash of various items?**

We managed it by using a very small selection of the wealth of shapes available in the MEISSEN® archive. For the textiles, for example, we used dragons, swords, warriors and tile geometry. And from the inexhaustible palette of porcelain finishes, we decided to use seven basic colours – it's fascinating just how many possibilities arise just from playing with the materials. The dragon, for example, appears in a splendid colourful design as it did in Baroque MEISSEN®. On plain woven cloth, it gives the material a feel of the modernity of the 1960s. Our pieces of furniture are intended to be pieces that people fall in love with or collect, not run-of-the-mill designer sofas. We focus on timeless European and Asian shapes. Specific style elements such as the ebony-coloured double frame of the divan, pouffe or console table, which are set with porcelain cubes, create a link between each individual piece to form a coherent whole. And the Crossed Swords as the classic brand symbol are more than just pure decoration in this collection. For example, a mesh of large bronze swords can be seen on table tops that rest on porcelain cubes, while a sculptural sword trestle acts as the frame for a large table made from fine wood or with a hand-finished porcelain surface.

#### **So porcelain continues to play an essential role then?**

As I mentioned before – porcelain is an exciting material that has great potential insofar as interiors are concerned. This is proven by the MEISSEN® architecture collection with its decorated and sculptural structured tiles. All MEISSEN® shapes can be implemented in a contemporary manner using new and modern decorations, e.g. as lamp bases. Or the new porcelain “Cosmopolitan”, based on early 18th century designs, whose platinum décor invokes a completely modern aesthetic. And we shouldn't forget that porcelain is also interesting as a surface for furniture. But our highlight is an opulent chandelier made from “white gold”. Numerous delicate gold-covered strips of porcelain made using the lithophane technique hang down in a cascade from rings on a metal rack and bathe the room in intimate light – the simplicity, sophistication and three-dimensionality of the porcelain merge to produce something of the utmost beauty.

#### **A highly luxurious collection which taps into various style worlds. How would you describe modernity?**

It combines elements of the elegant international interior style of the 1940s to 1970s, where people knew just how to combine the simple with the elegant. Our collection provides basics for an individual living style. Just like in the fashion world, the main prerequisite is that they must be just right. It is almost the “little black dress” of sophisticated living.

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The traditions that have been handed down through the manufactory's over 300 years of history enable us to create new treasures for the present day: timeless collector's pieces for individualists.

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#### **How contemporary is this kind of exquisite luxury collection these days?**

It is more a “quiet luxury collection” and forms a wonderfully valuable contrast to a world full of stress and fast-paced design. Today, we live like modern hermits and prioritise individuality, things which can set us apart. And that is exactly why our basics become new favourite pieces. Our customers are more collectors than buyers and like to use these pieces to create their own little castle.