

A 'gran fuoco' 'Bianco di Faenza' tin-glazed earthenware majolica salt cellar, moulded with ram head terminals and scrolls, decorated in the so-called compendiary style, the rim painted with flowers in blue, yellow and orange. Firing hole under the base. Faenza, Italy, ca. 1560.

In very good overall conditions.

Height: 4,52 in. (11,5 cm)

Width: 7,87 in. (20 cm)

Depth: 4,33 in. (11 cm)

Bibliography:

- C. Ravanelli Guidotti, *Bianchi di Faenza*, Ferrara, 1996, p.262.
- J. Giacomotti, *Catalog des majoliques des Musées Nationaux*, Paris, 1974, no. 1178, p.400.



Comparative examples:

Very closed example at MUSA: Museo del Sale di Cervia.

Two similar examples at the Museum Civico of Modena

Museo della ceramica internazionale di Faenza

V&A museum Collection, inv. no. C.26-1923

The Courtauld Institute of Art (The Courtauld Gallery)

The present salt cellar is a rare early example of so-called "white of Faenza", a production of tin-glazed ceramics that flourished between the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century in the eponymous city of Faenza. The wavy shape of the body, which appears as a cantilevered model, and the 'compendiary' style of decoration (a pictorial technique where only the essential lines of a figure are drawn) are all typical elements of this phase of Faenza majolica, which has played an enormous role in the development of ceramics in all Italian and European manufactories. The chromatic range of the decoration and the compactness of the white malt are also characteristic of this 'compendiary' style, which was to spread all over the Italian peninsula, as well as internationally, during the 17th century. The relief modelling is inspired by the forms of contemporary silverware and appears in most piece of 'white of Faenza' (see O. Ferrari / G. Scavezzi, 1981)

During the first half of the 16th century, the maiolica workshops in Faenza, already considered technically the best in Italy, slowly developed the process for a richly opaque and pure white glaze. In 1540, the merchant Pier Agostino Valladori in partnership with the maestro Francesco Mezzarisa produced the first service of 138 white glazed pieces. They had found the recipe for stabilizing white enamel – *concordare totum colorem album* – resulting from a perfect proportion of tin, earth, sand and lead at a very precise firing temperature.

This technical breakthrough coincided most fortuitously with a Papal order of 1566 forbidding the displaying of services of silver and gold, which favoured the spread of ceramics. The new demand for armorial services with a similar effect to engraved silver put the Faenza ceramic workshops at an advantage. The traditional rich polychrome istoriato style gave way to new effects possible on the polished white enamel ground. Painted decorations became lighter and more elegant, sketched in the so-called 'compendiary' (compendiario) style using a limited palette. At the same time, the workshops focused on inventing and creating new shapes in tune with metalwork originals, such as ribbed bowls, or cups with scalloped rims, fruit bowls with pierced borders, and so on.

The celebrated 'whites of Faenza' quickly came to symbolize the superior quality of Faenza ceramics, so that the neologism Faenza / Faience became the most used synonym for maiolica throughout Europe.

The *faience blanche* (French for white Faience) copied the *bianchi di Faenza*. Nevers and Lyon became centres for the popular white tin-glazed earthenware after Domenico Tardessir of Faenza set up as a potter there in 1574. *Faience blanche*, which was unaffected and utilitarian, was for common use; it supplied the basis of an extensive industry in France that lasted into the 19th Century.