

A RARE KOLOMAN MOSER WIENER WERKSTÄTTE MATCH SAFE

By Neil Shapiro

Take a few minutes and do an internet search for examples of a Koloman Moser (1868-1918) silver match safe and you will not find any examples.

You will find cigarette boxes, flower stands, candle holders, hanging lamps, a condiment basket, servers, tea pots, trays, etc. but no match safes. Yet, the Wiener Werkstätte, (1903-1932) which Moser helped found along with Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956) created a wide range of utilitarian silver articles adhering to their concepts of artistic license and freedom from mass production.

Initially the Werkstätte created small functional metalwork objects often with a repeating grid of squares. This type of design is usually credited to Hoffmann and is the most common form of early Werkstätte silver objects. It is rare to find the stylized floral work of Moser in silver and even rarer to find it on a match safe, as Hoffmann's design work dominated the early Werkstätte metal objects.

The marks on this match safes are below:



The first mark beginning on the right side of the bezel is the WW monogram of the Werkstätte. It is followed by the rose mark, registered in 1903 and used to symbolize the Werkstätte. Next is the mark for 800 silver purity followed by one of Moser's personal marks (partially rubbed) that incorporated his initials.

The WW mark as it appears on this match safe was only used between the years 1903 and 1905. After that this mark took on a rectangular shape.



The design on the safe features the European marsh thistle which is found throughout Europe in swampy, marshy areas.

Moser placed the thistle to the far right of the body of the safe and rather than leave empty space to the left filled it with long, interlocking, stylized bands of flat leaves that run into the lid creating a continuous whole composition. Moser, influenced by Japanese art, had created a graphic, ornamental, linear and planar surface; using some aspects of Japanese design, but left a small empty space at the bottom of the design to either allow space for a monogram or to emphasize the verticality of the thistle.

This a small, lovely, and rare example of a silver match safe from an early period in the Weiner Werkstätte history.

