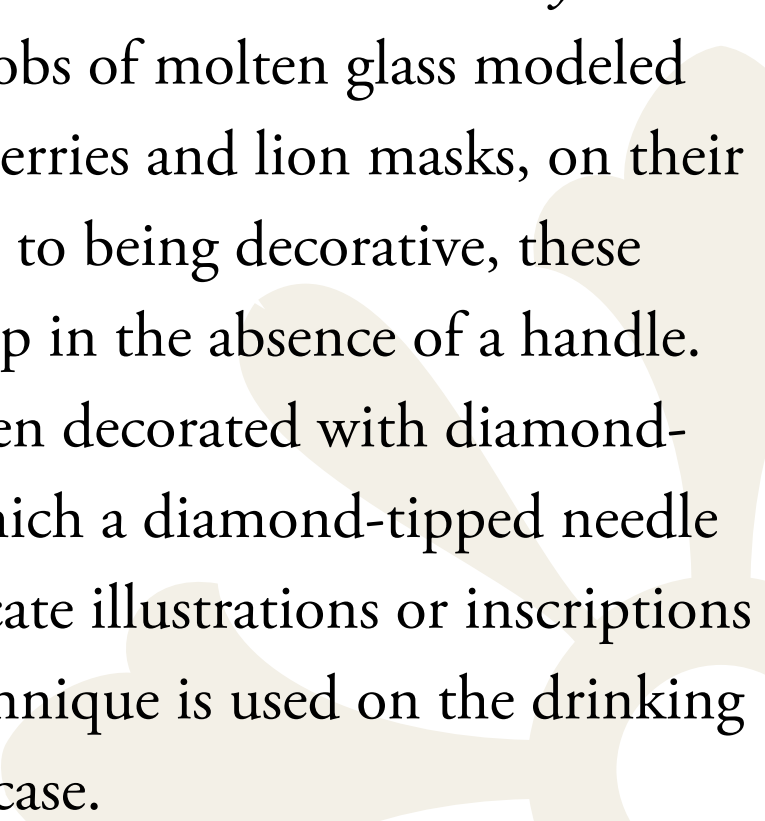


# GLASS

During the 16th and 17th centuries in England, drinking vessels made of glass became increasingly popular items at the dinner table. During this period the variety of shapes and types of drinking vessels increased significantly, with the most elaborate and desirable glass objects imported from Italy and the Netherlands, as well as Austria and Bohemia.

Venetian glass had long been considered the most luxurious and well crafted glass in all of Europe, and vessels were made in many extravagant shapes and colors. Glassmakers had been working on the island of Murano since the 12th century and were extremely secretive about their craft. Venetian glass was so popular that it was emulated by glassmakers across Europe and could be found on the tables of many noble families and the most powerful courts.

Particularly adept at creating pieces of *Facon-de-Venise*, or imitation Venetian glass, were the glassmakers of the Netherlands. Glass drinking vessels from the Netherlands were often crafted in the forms of *Römers* and *Berkemeyers* and usually had “prunts,” applied blobs of molten glass modeled into various forms such as raspberries and lion masks, on their thick, hollow stems. In addition to being decorative, these prunts helped provide a firm grip in the absence of a handle. Netherlandish glass was also often decorated with diamond-point engraving, a process in which a diamond-tipped needle was used to carefully incise delicate illustrations or inscriptions onto the glass’s surface. This technique is used on the drinking horn and winged goblet in this case.



# MAIOLICA

Maiolica, a colorful, lustrous form of tin-glazed earthenware, is first documented in Italy during the 13th century and may be named after the Mediterranean island of Majorca. Production of maiolica was developed and refined over hundreds of years until it reached its peak in terms of quality, design, colors, and manufacture during the 16th century.

Predominant colors were bright blues, golds, and greens, with later pieces also exhibiting newly developed shades such as green-yellow, against a white ground. These decorations usually depicted scenes, figures, or themes of Christian or mythological origins, examples of which can be seen in this case. Because of their elaborate designs, colorful decorations, and glassy surfaces, maiolica pieces were highly prized luxury items collected and displayed in the homes and courts of many wealthy individuals across Europe.

Seventeenth-century treatises on salads recommend that the ingredients be served on a majolica or (late in the century) porcelain charger, because vinegar in the dressing could react with metal plates.



# SILVER

Silver has, throughout history, been considered a necessary luxury because of its many unique properties. It is both lustrous and durable, and can be refashioned again and again to align with ever-changing tastes. Silver also can be converted back into coin at the owner's discretion. Furthermore, it is hygienic and sterile, and when pre-warmed, retains the heat of hot foods and sauces.

Silver was an important decorative element at banquets as a display of the host's wealth, status, and good taste. A lavish display of silver on the sideboard would serve as a not-so-subtle reminder of the host's power and influence. However, not all dinner hosts were able to afford a large collection of silver plate, so those of lesser means would frequently borrow or rent a set of silver for important occasions.



# SALTS

Salt was an expensive and esteemed condiment often displayed in a vessel made of silver, or perhaps gold or ceramic, according to the wealth of the owner. Although salt was widely available during the 16th and 17th centuries, it was expensive because of the labor-intensive process required to extract and refine it. It was also highly prized because it symbolized immortality, incorruptibility, and health. A dinner guest's social status could be discerned based on where he or she was seated in relation to a salt cellar; those of higher rank sat above the salt at the table, while those of lower rank sat below the elaborate vessel.

