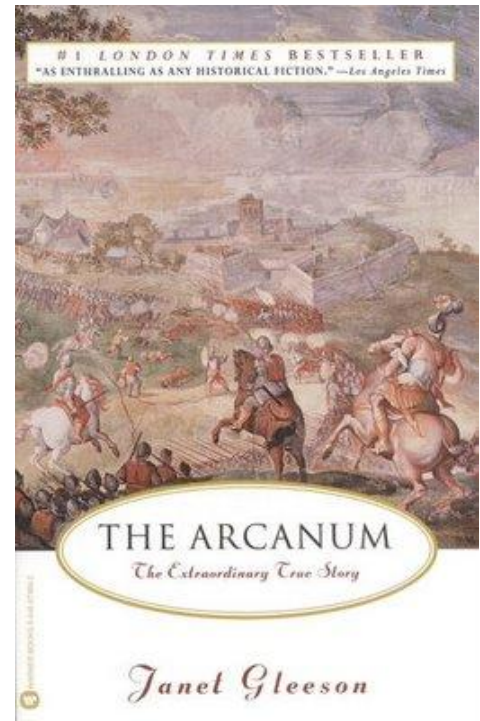


Reading Guide:

The Arcanum:

The Extraordinary True Story

Janet Gleeson (1998)



1. Were the primary sources that introduced each chapter helpful? Interesting? Do they further emphasize the culture and environment that Meissen was born of?
2. At the beginning of the book, Gleeson names three men as the key figures in the development of porcelain in Europe and the Meissen Factory: Johann Frederick Böttger, Johann Gregor Herold, and Johann Joachim Kaendler. Why are they important to the story of Meissen, and do you think any individual is more vital to Meissen's story than another?
3. Gleeson's book structure identifies two major protagonists and two major antagonists. Who are they? Why are they important in the development of Meissen?
4. Secrecy and deception are two major themes in *The Arcanum*. Why do you think they ran hand in hand with the development of porcelain?
5. Throughout *The Arcanum*, there are many examples of individuals that were treated terribly in order to produce porcelain. Why do you think this abuse happened? Why was it tolerated?
6. The development of Meissen porcelain is riddled with rivalry. Böttger vs. his assistants, Herold vs. Kaendler. Why did this happen, did it hinder or help the porcelain development?
7. In the text, Augustus the Strong is compared to Louis XIV. From what information you have on Augustus, do you think this is a fair comparison? Why or why not?

About Janet Gleeson

Janet Gleeson lives in Dorset, England. She has a degree in Art History and English, and worked for Sotheby's and Bonham's Auctioneers. She also was the art and antiques correspondent for House and Garden and an editor for Reed Books.

Biographical information courtesy of Simon & Schuster and www.fantasticfiction.co.uk.

Also by Janet Gleeson

If you liked *The Arcanum*, you may also like:

- ***Privilege and Scandal: The Remarkable Life of Harriet Spencer, Sister of Georgiana (2007)*** | A revealing look at 18th century English history and many of its famous figures through the eyes of the sister of the Duchess of Devonshire.
- ***Millionaire: The Philander, Gambler, and Duelist Who Invented Modern Finance (2000)*** | The story of John Law, a Scotsman who invented paper money and destroyed the French economy.
- ***The Thief Taker: A Novel (2006)*** | A historical fiction mystery involving 18th-century London and a stolen silver wine cooler.
- ***The Grenadillo Box: A Novel (2004)*** | A historical fiction mystery involving a journeyman to Thomas Chippendale.
- ***The Serpent in the Garden: A Novel (2005)*** | A historical fiction mystery surrounding an 18th-century artist and a lost necklace.

Other related texts:

- ***A History of the World in 100 Objects***, Neil MacGregor (2011) | A history of objects that have left their mark on the world.
- ***The Magic Circle of Rudolf II: Alchemy and Astrology in Renaissance Prague***, Peter Marshall (2006) | Rudolf II employed scientists to figure out the secrets of the world, including the Philosopher's Stone.
- ***Clara's Grand Tour: Travels with a Rhinoceros in Eighteenth-Century Europe***, Glynis Ridley (2005) | In the mid-18th century a Dutch sea captain toured an India rhinoceros through the courts and villages of Europe, stopping by places like the Meissen Porcelain Factory.
- ***The Disappearing Spoon: And Other True Tales of Madness, Love, and the History of the World from the Periodic Table of the Elements***, Sam Kean (2010) | The discovery of elements like gold and carbon, and the stories of the scientists that discovered them.