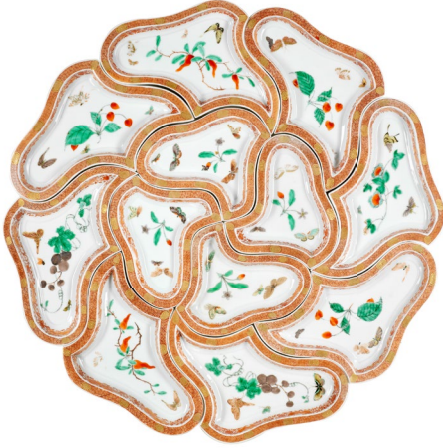


The Flowering of Long Life and Health

12-Piece Segmented Plate with Design of Flowers, Fruits, Butterflies and Moths

Jingdezhen kilns



Jingdezhen kilns. *12-Piece Segmented Plate with Design of Flowers, Fruits, Butterflies and Moths*. c. 1713. Porcelain with overglaze enamel and gold decoration. 1 x 20 in. (diameter) (2.6 x 51 cm). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Amy Gould and Matthew Polk, Gibson Island, Maryland, BMA 2014.166

Looking closely at this flower-like object, you may notice that it has two layers of what could be petals (12 in total) that swirl in a counter-clockwise direction. Each segment of the object has a red border that may look solid from a distance but, with closer examination, is actually a patterned design. Inside the segments are images of flowers, butterflies, fruits, and moths. If one looks even closer, it may become clear that there is a sliver of space between a few of the segments. The object is not one object at all, but a set of dishes that keeps food and its flavors separate, and together forms a dazzling flower.

This is clearly no ordinary set of plates. It was made for the 60th birthday of the Kangxi Emperor of China, which was celebrated in elaborate fashion with a banquet on April 12, 1713. The festivities around the Emperor's birthday were not simply a matter of marking the occasion of the ruler's birth. The Emperor was responsible for the rituals that maintained peace and prosperity, and so his longevity and robust health were critical to China's health and harmony.

Porcelain dishes were made especially for this occasion—some were used for serving and others were presented to important guests. It is possible that this elaborately decorated dish was used at the celebration and may have contained small portions of delicacies, such as steamed chicken, deer's tail, or roast pig.

Decorative elements on the plate include the borders of each segment, which are covered with numerous (10,000) red wan characters (which can mean "great" or "many"), on which is the occasional gold longevity symbol, appropriate for this event celebrating the Emperor's long life and good health. Just inside the border, the dish is rimmed with intertwined red dragons.

The *12-Piece Segmented Plate* was crafted in Jingdezhen, the kiln city that operated for centuries as the site for the manufacturing of porcelain for emperors. Kilns in Jingdezhen are still producing ceramics today.

Classroom Activity

Invite students to look examine the *12-Piece Segmented Plate with Design of Flowers, Fruits, Butterflies and Moths* and individually write down descriptive words about the plate for five minutes. Ask students to share their descriptive words with the class and, as they share, offer relevant information about the object. As a design challenge, have students research different kinds of segmented dishes—those for serving or from which people might eat directly. (For example, a microwave dinner tray or a bento box.) Ask them to share what they have found and then, in small groups, have them design a new kind of segmented serving or eating dish for a specific audience and/or occasion.

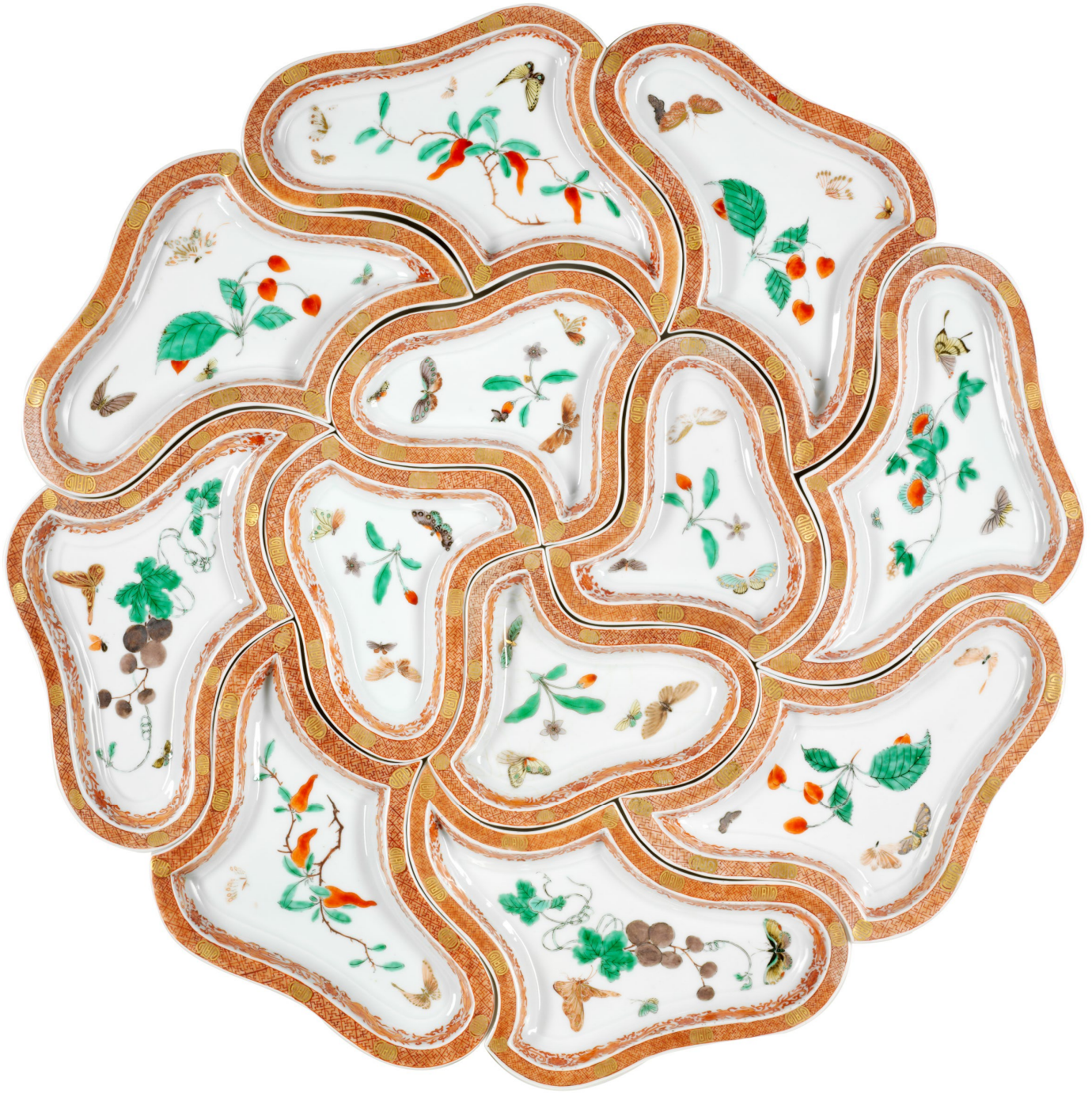


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