Voetbeker

Clear beaker with applied folded blown foot

handblown glass beaker

Fig 1 Completed VoetBeaker

About the Object:

This object is a simple glass beaker with a blown folded foot.

About the Original style:

The original Beaker is a popular style in the early 1500's and from many areas. This example is from the Netherlands.

Narrower waisted conical beaker often had armorials painted on them, but this example is clear.

Fig 2. Voetbeaker

Technique: The process on making a beaker in this shape is fairly straight forward. The initial gather of glass is made into a hollow conical arrowhead shape on the blowpipe. An assistant will bring another very hot bubble of glass shaped like teardrop, this second bubble is dropped on the first form, and cut with scissors. The cut part is pulled away with tweezers, and a ring in the bubble is chilled. Once the ring is chilled enough, the ring is supported and the tail is cracked off with slight hit. These leaves a hole in the end of the applied bubble. The end of the bubble is flattened, and then with the jacks, the flattened part is pressed against the side as it is guided/stretched into the foot shape. After the foot is shaped, a solid rod (Pontil) with a small amount of hot glass on the end is attached to the bottom of the foot in the center. Another ring on piece is chilled, nearest the end of the pipe, and with a slight hit, it cracks off, leaving the piece on the end of the Pontil. The new open end is shaped with the jacks to the final profile. A slight rap on the Pontil will let the piece break off at the attachment point. The evidence left in the center of the bottom of the cup is called a Pontil Mark. Careful, it may be sharp. The entire time the piece is being made, it had to be reheated often (in the reheating chamber) to ensure that no part of the beaker got below a 1000 degrees, which would cause parts to crack during the process. Some of the parts of the beaker were applied at temperatures close to 1900 degrees. The piece is then placed in the lehr to anneal.

Material: The formula of the glass is most assuredly different from the glass used in period. Glasshouses made their glass from the raw materials, and each house would have a favored formula, and a favored source of materials. Formulas might even change as styles (or gaffers) dictated. Since the glass formula is visually indiscernible , attempting to match an exact glass composition would add nothing to the end result.

Workmanship: I'm pleased with the proportions and overall how close to the shape this piece looks to the original. I am remarkably pleased with the thickness of the glass in my piece as compared the original. The glassblowers of the time were not dabblers, nor artists, they were skilled workers making every day usable product. They would spend a large chunk of their lives working in this one craft. Glassblowing, is not a craft that is easy to pickup, nor practice without significant investment. The thickness on the original (pictured on the first page) is 2.9mm at the lip. Mine is under 2mm. This compares favorably with other glass from the era which often have thicknesses just under 2mm, and as thin as 1.5 mm.

Footnotes:

1.Robert J. Charleston "Glass Furnaces Through the Ages" *Journal of Glass Studies*, Vol 20, 1978, pg 30

Fig 1. Photograph of my completed VoetBeaker

Fig 2. from Harold E. Henkes "Glas Zonder Glans" Rotterdam Papers, 1994, Item 24.5

The item is the personal collection of Mr Henkes. Dated around 1500.

Fig 3. from Robert J. Charleston "Glass Furnaces Through the Ages" *Journal of Glass Studies*, Vol 20, 1978, pg 22

Fig 4. Photograph of my personal tools

Comments/feedback: