

The German Ostrich



If you like the sinuous curves of Art Nouveau or the stream-lined glamour of Art deco then you'll love the decorative silver-plated pieces made available by German company WMF in the first half of the 20th century.



1920's silver-plated vase, WMF



Silver-plated Christening cup c. 1918

The Württembergische Metallwarenfabrik in *Geislingen an der Steige* began production in 1853 and by the early 1900's was the largest exporter of silver-plated tableware in the world. For me the astonishing thing about WMF is that, although the company produced extraordinary and beautifully crafted decorative items they were also pioneers in utilitarian kitchen equipment: from early coffee machines (c.1880) to pressure cookers (1927) to sugar shakers WMF had its eye on the modern kitchen whilst never losing sight of exquisite style.



Superb art deco silver-plated vases with
Egyptian design c. 1925

The first thirty years of the 20th century were without doubt the ‘golden years’ of WMF: gorgeous - and now iconic - designs were applied to vases, cutlery, coffee services. The extreme self-confidence of WMF was epitomised in 1913 by their production of a full-scale copy of Ghiberti’s ‘Gates of Paradise’; it was not of bronze as the Florentine original but of copper gilt.



The Ostrich mark on WMF from 1880 to the early 20th century is always a thrill to spot! Why an ostrich? It is thought that founder Daniel Straub’s name, similar to the German word for Ostrich, gave rise to this memorable logo.



WMF coffee service c.1920