

LANGFORDS

Antique & Contemporary Silver

Novelty silver chicken-in-a-basket

Berthold Müller

Sold



REF: 2332

Height: 105 mm (4.13")

Width: 135 mm (5.31")

Depth: 105 mm (4.13")

Weight: 338 g

Description

Unusual silver dish and cover in the form of a hen nesting on a woven basket. Both the base and cover are hand chased and finely detailed to show crisp basketweave pattern and feathering.

In the late 19th century, the British government passed legislation to tax luxury goods from abroad; a move seen as a protectionist measure. Items such as silver model animals, birds, furniture miniatures and nefs (ships) were very popular at the time and being imported mostly from Holland and Germany, but for the purposes of taxation were considered without function and subject to this new tax.

To avoid these punitive import taxes, silversmiths produced model animals and birds whose heads could be removed, thus deeming them useful, functional containers. Similarly, model ships were designed so that the superstructure's top half could be removed and the wheeled hulls could be used as bowls. In this way silver articles were re-classified as practical objects, and therefore so escaped the luxury tax.