



THE FRENCH PORCELAIN SOCIETY



President: Dame Rosalind Savill, DBE, CBE, FSA, FBA

Chairman: Errol Manners

Spring 2009



Members of the French Porcelain Society at Firle Place

Firstly, I am sure that you will all join me in congratulating our President, Rosalind Savill, on her richly-deserved appointment as Dame Commander of the British Empire for service to the Arts in the New Years Honours list.

After such an eventful autumn in the world, the summer now seems an age ago when so many of us were gathered in London. As ever the June events were a highlight of the ceramic year when the Wallace Collection welcomed us again for our AGM and annual dinner sponsored by Christie's. It was a particular pleasure to have Antoine d'Albis, an FPS founder and stalwart, lecture us on recent attempts to recreate some of the ground colours of Sèvres on soft-paste porcelain. Many of us then enjoyed the exhibition 'Chinese Whispers' at Brighton, where we were given a most stimulating tour by the Keepers Stella Beddoe and David Beevers who curated it and had collected together so many truly remarkable objects. This was followed by lunch at Firle Place and, thanks to the kindness of Viscount Gage, privileged access to the superb collection of Sèvres porcelain over which our President, Rosalind Savill, delivered a master class assisted by Deborah Gage.

The autumn lectures, the first series organised by Patricia Ferguson, started with Jonathan Marsden on 'The International taste for French bronzes', based on his contribution to the ground-breaking exhibition in the Louvre and was followed by Phillip Mansell on

'The Court in France from Louis XVI to Napoleon III'. These were hugely well received and it was particularly gratifying to have welcomed numerous members of other decorative arts societies to share them with us. For the December meeting, members were encouraged to bring pieces from their collections to be discussed in a festive and enjoyable forum. We look forward to the series resuming in January.

Another important development was the completely new website expertly masterminded by Kate Henson; we now have a much improved and more flexible site which will continue to expand.

We have been overwhelmed by the positive response to the Naples trip planned for April. This promises to be an artistic feast on many levels. Faced with so many members eager to participate Nette Megens and Sonja Djenadija have bravely agreed to try to increase the numbers that can come to the maximum that we feel is practical to minimise the inevitable disappointment of those who cannot be accommodated.

Behind the scenes, plans are forging ahead for the symposium in honour of Tamara Préaud. Joanna Gwilt, assisted by Kate Henson, is orchestrating an event that has the makings of a memorable occasion. With best wishes for the New Year

Errol Manners

Committee Members of the French Porcelain Society 2009

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Please send news of events, acquisitions, discoveries etc. to:

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It is with great pleasure that we announce the launch of the new French Porcelain Society website.

Due to several unforeseen hitches we have a new website address as follows:

<http://www.thefrenchporcelainsociety.com/>

We apologise that the website is currently slightly biased towards the Sèvres Manufactory. This is because the nature of the website only allows for specific formats of images and Sèvres images were at that point more readily available. We are hoping to diversify over the coming months.

We would like to thank the Royal Collection, the Wallace Collection, the British Museum and Adrian Sassoon for their wonderful images.

We would also like to thank Richard Duke for his expertise in building the site and for being highly instrumental in the design process.

Members can access the 'members' part of the site in exactly the same way as before. Anyone unable to access this part of the site should contact me at kate@deborahgage.com and I will be happy to answer any questions and help in any way I can.

We do hope you find this site useful and I also hope to hear from anyone who would like to contribute postings or with information on forthcoming events within the world of French porcelain.

*Kate Henson
Website Coordinator*

Lecture series

29 January 2009: Cyrille Froissart, Expert: 'Rouen Porcelain'

26 February 2009: Kit Maxwell, Victoria and Albert Museum: 'Objects of Luxury: 18th-century French Porcelain' – an exhibition opening in October 2009.'

An additional speaker to be confirmed.

26 March 2009: Ann Eatwell, Victoria and Albert Museum: 'Thé à la Mode: Tea drinking in France'

All are welcome to join the speaker at a local restaurant following the lecture. If you are planning to attend the dinner, please contact the organizer, Patricia Ferguson, at least 3 days before the event (patricia.ferguson@earthlink.net (07708 099114)).

*The Annual General Meeting and Dinner
will take place on Friday 12th of June
2009
at The Wallace Collection*

*The Annual Summer Outing
will take place on Monday 15th of June
and will include a trip to Audley End,
Saffron Walden and the Fitzwilliam
Museum, Cambridge*

more details to follow

Obituary

Pierre Ennès nous a quitté le 10 juillet 2008. Il est mort à Athènes où il vivait depuis son départ à la retraite. Il avait 61 ans.

Nous le savions malade, mais nous n'en avons pas été moins attristés. Pierre possédait une culture infinie, concernant aussi bien les périodes anciennes que le temps présent. Il reconnaissait la beauté là où elle se trouve, sans limitation culturelle, il pouvait collectionner aussi bien la production de porcelaine de Chine contemporaine, dont il voyait bien la qualité intrinsèque, que l'art des siècles passés.

Il était entré dans les musées en 1978 avec pour spécialité l'art islamique, mais il avait été affecté au département des Objets d'Art du musée du Louvre, où lui furent confiées les collections de céramique et de verre. Grand travailleur sous une fausse apparence de dilettante, il couvrait aussi savamment la faïence hispano-mauresque que la majolique et la verrerie de la Renaissance. Son plus grand titre de gloire est d'avoir proposé au conservateur général chargé de la direction du département, Daniel Alcouffe, le choix des vases de la manufacture royale de Sèvres qui furent acquis sur ses indications. Il a publié l'ensemble de la collection en 1997 à l'occasion de l'exposition de celle-ci, sous le titre *Un défi au goût*. Par la suite, il n'a pas cessé d'étudier la porcelaine de Sèvres jusqu'en 2006 avec la publication de *De Vincennes à Sèvres, l'année 1756*. Ses méthodes de travail y sont perceptibles: dans un style d'écriture très personnel, il va droit à l'analyse stylistique la plus fine, notant comme au passage les renseignements fournis par les archives dont il avait une compréhension et une connaissance sans pareilles. Ainsi, bien que fils d'une Anglaise, il concevait l'histoire de l'art à la manière française, comme une problématique fondée sur une documentation la plus importante possible. Sa bibliographie est imposante : on peut citer son étude du Service



des Arts industriels pour le Journal du Fine Arts de Boston, toutes ses publications liées au département des Objets d'Art.

Après une quinzaine d'années passées au musée du Louvre, il fut affecté au musée de la Renaissance-Château d'Ecouen. Simulant un sorte de détachement à l'égard de la majolique, il travailla sur les arts de la table, sur la faïence fine de Saint-Porchaire et la collection de verreries du musée.

Sa dernière affectation fut au musée national de Céramique, Sèvres. Il y multiplia les travaux savants, étudiant aussi bien les céramistes du XXe siècle, de Capron à Derval, que la porcelaine de Sèvres, nous l'avons dit.

Sa disparition nous prive d'un merveilleux ami et d'un grand savant, nous sommes en deuil.

Antoinette Faj-Hallé
Conservateur général du Patrimoine,
chargé du musée national de Céramique, Sèvres

Obituary



Helen Gardiner died a few days after her 70th birthday, on July 22, 2008, just over two months after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She was the co-founder of the George R. Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art in Toronto, a passionate collector of ceramics, an important philanthropist, a lady of great charm, generosity and intelligence, and a dear friend to many members of the French Porcelain Society.

George and Helen Gardiner were ideal partners as collectors: George was an astute businessman with an eye for value and investment, while Helen was a connoisseur with a superb eye. Helen's love affair with ceramics began when she went to London in 1978 to take a Works of Art course at Christie's. While in London, and later, she met key dealers and specialists, but above all she credited Pietro Raffo and Bob Williams with nurturing her love of ceramics. Bob Williams invited her frequently to lunch in the basement of Winifred Williams' Bury Street shop, always placing a "mystery" item on the table for her to examine and dissect. "Bob taught me how to really look at things," she later said. These lessons helped her to evolve as a collector with a well-trained and discerning eye for quality and beauty, which she was to use for the rest of her life.

The Gardiner Museum was opened in 1984 as a showcase for their collection of European and ancient American ceramics, and quickly evolved as a centre for ceramic collection, study and education. After George Gardiner's death in 1997, Helen's role expanded at the museum and she blossomed as she became an important patron of the arts. She was Chair of the Gardiner Museum board of trustees and served until 1999, then becoming Vice Chair and Honorary Chair. She was a passionate advocate and supporter of the museum, and spearheaded the campaign to raise funds for the museum's expansion and transformation; the lovely new Gardiner Museum is her great legacy. At the same time she began to collect again personally, but with a long-term goal of building a collection that would one day enhance the museum's collections. She chose to focus on early French soft-paste porcelain and her small but choice collection came to her beloved museum on her death.

Helen Gardiner made an indelible impression on Canadian cultural life, and through her work at the Gardiner Museum made an extraordinary contribution to the ceramics community. She is deeply missed by all who know and love the museum, and by all who knew and loved her.

Meredith Chilton



One of the many gifts from the Gardiners: A rare Vincennes Arrosoir (watering can), 1753. G84.1.3

Study Day at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, on French Porcelain, held by the Oxford Ceramics Group

A French porcelain study day was held on the 4th of October at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

Speaking on Saint-Cloud, Mia Jackson described the development of the factory from the receipt of a royal privilege to produce faience and imitate soft-paste porcelain in 1664, to its gradual decline in the face of foreign and domestic competition. In the wake of continued enthusiasm for imported porcelain, the pursuit of soft-paste porcelain at Saint-Cloud continued under the Chicaneau family and later Henri Trou and Barbe Coudray. The factory's situation between Paris and Versailles and its proximity to the duc d'Orléans' château, as well as Colbert's mercantilist policies, no doubt encouraged courtly trade, although the factory also catered to a broader market. The receipt of a royal privilege to produce porcelain in 1702 confirmed the factory's achievements in producing both useful and decorative wares. Rare early pieces were decorated with underglaze blue designs after Du Cerceau, while the factory also produced *Blanc de Chine* and pieces decorated with Berainesque designs, overglaze polychrome decoration and later a yellow ground colour.

Errol Manners explored the rise of the 'Princely Enterprise of Chantilly', founded by Cicaire Cirou in around 1730. In common with other Parisian porcelain producers, there were familial connections with Saint-Cloud. The Chantilly factory developed under the patronage of Louis IV Henri Joseph de Bourbon-Condé, prince de Condé, an active patron and avid collector of porcelain, who even provided access to his library for employees. The ground colour of Chantilly porcelain was not sufficiently white to support Japanese - and Meissen-inspired Kakiemon patterns, leading to the use of tin glaze to create a purer white surface. The factory looked to rococo silver shapes for some of its designs. The influence of Chantilly extended to the English factories of Chelsea, Worcester and Bow, however the factory entered into a time of crisis following the death of the prince de Condé in 1740 and the subsequent departure of key workers to Vincennes.

Aileen Dawson discussed Mennecy porcelain busts, figures and groups. The direct successor of a factory at Villeroy, Mennecy was established by François Barbin as a porcelain and faience manufactory. It was in production from about 1750, producing for an elite clientele. Establishing a chronology is somewhat problematic due to the limited survival of archival information, the relative superficiality of excavations, and the fact that marks were not standardised. Some pieces were unglazed, others glazed or glazed and painted, and the beautiful clarity of the body is best demonstrated in the biscuit figures. Thematically, the factory's output ranged from mythological figures, to exotic peoples and birds, animals, and figures from contemporary life, and Mennecy also specialised in snuffboxes and cane handles.

Rosalind Savill gave a lively account of the development of the Vincennes and Sèvres factories, whose advancement was facilitated by royal privileges and the influential involvement of Madame de Pompadour. The factory was even awarded a privilege for gilding before they had discovered the secret of the technique. The extensive patronage of Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour, who spent the incredible sum of the equivalent today of one million pounds on porcelain flowers alone prior to 1751, resulted in the outright purchase of the factory by the King in 1759. The designer Jean-Claude Duplessis was of critical importance to the factory, conceiving many of the most elaborate rococo designs. Renowned for its variety of ground colours, the Sèvres manufactory was not without technical difficulties; pieces had to be fired up to twelve times, and elaborate painting and gilding hid blemishes in paste or ground colour.

The handling session which followed the lectures provided a rare opportunity to appreciate at close range the differences in consistency, ground colour, and decoration between porcelain produced at the different French factories. The French porcelain study day was an illuminating and engaging account of the development of eighteenth-century porcelain production in France.

*Catrin Jones
Courtauld Institute of Art*

FPS Brighton and Firle report

Our summer outing took us to the south coast to see the exhibition 'Chinese Whispers, Chinoiserie in Britain 1650-1930' held at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery and Royal Pavilion.

We were met by the Keepers and curators of the exhibition Stella Beddoe and David Beevers, who took us through and explained its structure. Although focussing on Chinoiserie in Britain, the French influence was a constant theme in each period and we were delighted to see such great masterpieces of French porcelain as the pair of black-ground vases with gold and platinum decoration and spectacular mounts on loan from the Royal Collection and one of the triumphs of French *chinoiserie* goldsmiths' work in the *surtout de table* by Claude Ballin of 1747, from a private collection that few of us had seen before.

This was followed by a tour of the Royal Pavilion, undoubtedly the most ambitious and triumphant example of *chinoiserie* in England and we were able to see some of the great French furniture currently back on loan from Buckingham Palace.

Deborah Gage then greeted us at Firle Place where we lunched in the kitchen before being given a tour of the house. Our President, Rosalind Savill, took us through the great collection of Sèvres porcelain collected by the fifth earl which Viscount Gage had allowed us to take out of the cases for close inspection. The service wares were crowned by the superbly painted Melbourne service, and most spectacular of all, the series of vases culminating in the pair of *chinoiserie vase à dauphins* of 1763 painted by Charles-Nicholas Dodin.

Sated and stimulated we left for London through the Sussex downs and with a detour through Lewes.



New Acquisition: Woburn Abbey



The Duke and Duchess of Bedford and the Trustees of the Bedford Estates are delighted that the missing *mortier* from their Bedford Gift Service, which came up for sale in Lyons in October 2007, has now been returned home to rejoin its companion, the *jatte à ponche*. They wish to extend their grateful thanks to David Peters and Bernard Dragesco for researching and confirming the identity of this item and also again to Bernard Dragesco for organising and successfully bidding for this item on their behalf.



The Bedford Gift Service was presented to Gertrude, wife of the 4th Duke of Bedford, in 1763 when her husband was British Ambassador to the Court of Versailles.



New Acquisition: The Detroit Institute of Arts

This highly imaginative tea and coffee service, comprising fourteen pieces inspired by Chinese models, is an aesthetic and technical tour de force of porcelain design, craftsmanship, and decoration. Made at the Sèvres manufactory between 1842 and 1843, the service is distinguished by its double-walled, openwork construction, brilliance of color, and refined hand-painted compositions, with several of the pieces painted by Pierre Huard, then, one of the manufactory's most successful artists. The service consists of a footed tray (*porte-jatte*), coffeepot, teapot, sugar bowl (fitted with a cover), waste bowl, milk pitcher, and four cups and saucers. The handles and lips take the shape of bamboo stems.

The *Déjeuner Chinois Reticulé* was first conceived in 1831 by Hyacinthe Régnier, one of Sèvres' chief modelers, and put into production by 1832. The skills of three individuals were required to create each form: a thrower to make the interior body; a worker to mold the exterior layer (on which openwork patterns were outlined by incisions in the mold), attach it to the

interior body, and add the handles (which were molded separately); and lastly, a cutter to create the openwork patterns in the outer skin. From surviving drawings, it appears the designs of these pieces were based on actual Chinese porcelain sold at auction by the Parisian dealer F. Sallé in 1826.

Perhaps the most exotic if not the most technically innovative service produced at Sèvres, the *Déjeuner Chinois Reticulé* was highly sought after. Queen Marie-Amélie, wife of French king Louis-Philippe, purchased at least seven sets, as they became available between 1835 and 1843, for both her personal use and as diplomatic gifts. In 1841 Louis-Philippe presented a set to Mohammed 'Ali, the Viceroy of Egypt, as part of ongoing diplomatic relations between France and Egypt. Records indicate that the DIA set was delivered to Louis, duc de Nemours, the son of Louis-Philippe and Marie-Amélie, on October 14, 1845. It is one of only three complete sets to survive, and the one in the best condition. Later simpler variants were produced in the 1860s and 1890s.

The tea and coffee service was purchased in memory of Tracey Albainy, former associate curator of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Detroit Institute of Arts from 1993 to 2000.

Alan P. Darr, Walter B. Ford II Curator of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, The Detroit Institute of Arts



Sèvres Manufactory, French, designed by Hyacinthe Régnier, painted by Pierre Huard; Tea and Coffee Service (Déjeuner Chinois Réticulé), 1842 – 43; hard-paste porcelain with enamel decoration and gilding.

Museum Purchase in memory of Tracey Albainy with a gift from Gordon L. and Linda A. Stewart, and the J. DeGrimme Memorial Fund, Joseph H. Parsons Fund, Ralph H. Booth Bequest Fund, Edgar A. V. Jacobsen Acquisition Fund, gift of K. T. Keller by exchange, and donations from Gilbert B. & Lila Silverman, John Stroh & Vivian Day, Bonnie & Bob Larson, Anthony L. Soave, Peter & Tina Barnet, Dr. & Mrs. Gerhardt A. Hein, Hervé Aaron, Graham W.J. Beal, Maggie Boleyn, Antonia Boström, Dr. Alan P. Darr & Mrs. Mollie Fletcher, Dr. Theodore & Mrs. Diana Golden, Dr. & Mrs. Reginald Harnett, Armin Allen, Henry S. & Charissa B. David, Gina & Herbert Granger, Jennifer Moldwin Gustafson, Barbara Heller, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph L. Hudson, Jr., Mary Hughes, Julian & Ruth Lefkowitz, Iva Lisikewycz, George & Elaine Keyes, Paul F. Palace, Jr. & Pam Watson-Palace, Michele Rambour, Charlotte Robson, Donald Ross, Nancy Sojka, Victor Tahill, Curl Tutag, MaryAnn Wilkinson, Gillian Wilson, Maria Santangelo Brown, Andrew L. Camden & Gayle Shaw Camden, Claudia Crable, Christina & Antoine d'Albis, Aileen Dawson, Dr. Heather Eckert, Jacquelin Eckhous, John & Bonita Fike, Carol Forsythe, Paul Micio, Mary Lee Obryan, Jim & Adrienne Rudolph, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Wasson, Brian Gallagher & Terry Prince, Rose Ann Comstock, Kimberly K. Dziurman, Shirley Mopper, Mr. & Mrs. Leonard Rynski, Michele Ryce-Elliott, Michelle Smith, Irma Stevens, Ms. Audrey Zupmore.

Acc. No. 2008.15.1-14

New Acquisition: The British Museum



Plate, hard-paste porcelain, Sèvres, decorated by Jean-Charles Develly, 1835

Painted with a scene showing the warrior Boucicaut (1326-1421) capturing Beirut in Syria in the reign of King Charles VI of France (1368-1422)

Diameter: 23.7cm.

Reg. no. 2007,8036.1

The dashing warrior in full armour gesturing towards a castle beyond fleeing troops is enclosed by a richly gilt 'frame' in which appears his name: Boucicaut. Around the border is further rich and elaborate decoration of pennons within gothic arches alternating with shields inscribed in gold "Gloire, Generosité, Valeur, Constance, Fidelité, Loyauté, Vertu, Dieu, Le Roi, Les Dames, Honneur, Amour" (Glory, Generosity, Valour, Constancy, Fidelity, Loyalty, Virtue, God, The King, The Ladies, Honour, Love). A roll-call indeed of medieval chivalric ideals. The plate is part of the 'service de la chevalerie', a gloriously historicist production dating from 1835. A drawing by Develly for the decoration of an ice pail for this service was published by Tamara Préaud in D. Ostergard ed., *The Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory, Alexandre Brongniart and the Triumph of Art and Industry, 1800-1847*, New Haven and London, 1997, no. 71.

The plate is exhibited in Gallery 47, British Museum

Sherds of Sèvres Porcelain Discovered at James Madison's Virginia Home

In the spring of 2007, archaeologists at President James Madison's lifelong home of Montpelier, located near Orange, Va., uncovered several sherds of an unidentified porcelain pattern. Montpelier's curatorial staff identified the sherds as matching an extant Sèvres dinner plate associated with the Madison family. According to Madison family tradition, the service had belonged to Marie-Antoinette and was purchased in France for James and Dolley Madison.

With the assistance of John Whitehead, Montpelier learned that — despite the Madison family legend — the plate was not part of Marie-Antoinette's *Service riche en couleurs et riche en or*, but was actually produced by Sèvres for the Duc de Duras, Emmanuel-Felicité de Durfort (1715-1789). In fact, Duras ordered the 24-piece service from Sèvres in 1786 and ordered six additional plates in 1789.

Following Duras' death in 1789, the service was sold as part of his estate. The auction catalog identifies the service as Lot 48, but a copy of the catalog with the buyer's name in manuscript has not yet and may never be located. It is possible that a Madison acquaintance, or even an agent, acquired the porcelain while in Paris. Several of Madison's contemporaries, including James Monroe, Thomas Jefferson, and Gouverneur Morris, spent time in France, but research has failed to establish whether any of them attended the sale. The most likely scenario is that a Madison friend purchased the plates from a shop or agent who attended the sale.

Recently, a Madison descendent donated an extant Sèvres plate from the set to Montpelier. A second plate from the same set was loaned to North Carolina's Greensboro Historical Museum by another member of the same family. Two other pieces, believed to have



Courtesy of Melba Myers, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Thanks to Montpelier's recent archaeological discovery, porcelain scholars can now see how Sèvres porcelain is affected by 200 years of burial. The sherds were recovered from a midden dating to the Madisons' retirement period (1817-1836). The image illustrates how the gilt has completely worn away. The paint has been nearly obliterated and all that is visible is the outline of the plate's intricate decorations.

Madison provenance (even though no documentation exists to support this hypothesis), are included in Boston's Museum of Fine Arts collection. And finally, two plates identified as part of this research are believed to be in Virginia; however their present whereabouts are unknown.

The 2007 archaeological discovery provided a wealth of information since the year mark, painter's mark and gilder's mark were present on the sherds. Using the first volume of David Peters' book, the various painters and gilders who worked on the service have been identified. The archaeological specimen has the gilder's mark of "L.F", the mark of Andre Joseph Foinet, or "La France." This same gilder's mark is also on the plate at Greensboro Historical Museum, as well as one of the plates from the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. These last two plates also have "ii" as the year mark suggesting that they represent the original 1786 purchase. These plates also have three dots above the gilder's mark, the identifiable painter's mark of Jean Baptiste Tandart, one of the good regular flower painters at Sèvres.

The intact plate donated to Montpelier and the second plate at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, have a gold "D" gilder's mark and the painter's mark of La Roche, another talented flower painter at Sèvres, who annoyingly was normally in the habit of omitting date-letters.

The archaeological specimen is the only plate among the examples discussed to have the comet-like painter's

mark of Choisy. The commonality of the identifying marks across the various examples discussed seem to confirm that pieces from both the initial order in 1786 and the later 1789 order made their way to Montpelier and were owned by James and Dolley Madison.

While we now know that the plates never belonged to Marie-Antoinette, the Madison family believed they did. Several surviving contemporary accounts of visitors and family members describe the Madison porcelain plates as being owned by Marie-Antoinette. We now believe this was simply a misattribution given the similarity of the Sèvres service made for Duras and the 1784 service made for the queen. Additional research is underway to learn how James and Dolley Madison acquired these plates and the relationship of the other extant plates.

Grant Quertermous is the Lead Object Researcher at James Madison's Montpelier. If you have questions or comments about this research project, please contact him by email at gquertermous@montpelier.org. He would like to thank John Whitehead for his assistance during this research project.

Note: For the Marie-Antoinette service, see David Peters, *Sèvres plates and services of the eighteenth century*, Little Berkhamsted, 2005, service 84-10. For the Duras service, our thanks to David Peters for kindly providing advance information from the revised edition of his book, to appear in 2009. It now turns out that Duras purchased not one service, but two with similar decoration, so that service 86-11 and artists' list 67 will be updated.



Courtesy of The Montpelier Foundation

THE MARCHANDS-MERCIERS: “Makers of nothing, sellers of everything”

A Review by Susie Brooke of an exhibition held at Waddesdon Manor from April to October 2008

This exhibition, curated by Selma Schwartz, was conceived to complement another exhibition situated upstairs in the drawings room: “All that Glitters: Shopping in Paris in the 18th century”, the culmination of a 3-year, Leverhulme Trust funded research project to catalogue the 4 volumes of French 18th-century trade cards, most of which are completely unknown, but many of which relate to the products of the *marchands-merciers*. The catalogue is now available on-line, through the Waddesdon website (www.waddesdon.org.uk).

As the description, defined in a 1723 directory of tradesmen suggests, the guild of Parisian mercers (shopkeepers) established in the 15th century was banned from manufacturing products to sell. They were, however, permitted to amalgamate and augment goods obtained from different workshops. Reflecting and promoting the fashionable styles of chinoiserie, rococo and neo-classicism, *marchands-merciers* created innovative products, combining materials and objects from various craftsmen and sources in order to cater for an ever sophisticated clientele whose taste for luxurious objects and novelty increased as the 18th century unfolded. Court patronage gave the *marchand-mercier* further opportunities to blend his role of purveyor of *objets d'art* with that of the 18th century equivalent of an interior decorator. Influencing the fashions of the day, by the middle of the 18th century their shops were concentrated around the rue Saint-Honoré. Two of the most famous *marchands-merciers* were Lazare Duvaux and Simon-Philippe Poirier, whose shop, *La Couronne d'or*, provided many *objets d'art* for Madame de Pompadour and Louis XV.

The exhibition included a fine selection of Chinese celadon and imported Japanese lacquer-ware, fitted by the *marchands-merciers* with opulent gilt-bronze mounts. Several of these had been dismantled to show how exotic oriental products were imported and transformed into distinctly French objects of luxury. A pair of crackle-glazed *pot pourri* celadon vases, Qing dynasty, 2nd quarter of the 18th century, with gilt-bronze mounts c.1745-1749, demonstrated how a circular bowl, cut across at the rim and base, was inverted over another bowl to form the cover. The openwork gilt-bronze structure joining the two sizes around the central circumference allowed the fragrance of aromatic leaves and petals inside to dissipate into the air. The gilt-bronze mounts, finely sculpted with scrolling foliage in the rococo style, bear the crowned C, a tax mark employed in France



1a



1b



1c

between 1745 and 1749 on any alloy containing copper, suggesting that the pieces were mounted during that time. (figs. 1a 1b & 1c). By comparison, nearby a similar design made in soft-paste Sèvres porcelain with a plain green ground, also mounted in gilt-bronze, referred to the simple monochrome shapes and plain ground colours of green, violet and blue, emulating those of Chinese porcelain, specifically commissioned from the Sèvres manufactory by the *marchands-merciers* from 1767 to economically complement and respond to the demand for the fashionable and expensive Chinese imports. (fig. 2)



2

A pair of Chinese celadon porcelain carp mounted as ewers, c.1725-1750 provided a perfect example of the *rocaille* adapted to embellish imported Chinese porcelain. The lustrous gilt-bronze rockwork and reeds at the base of each ewer, together with the seaweed handles, complement the watery green colour of these purely decorative pieces and refer to the realm of the carp who appear to be leaping up from the waves. In the background a reproduction of *the baron de Besenval in his salon de compagnie*, c.1791 by Henri-Pierre Danloux, gave the viewer a rare glimpse into the cabinet of a French 18th-century collector. Above the seated baron a Chinese celadon carp similar to those described above had pride of place on the chimneypiece. (figs.3a and 3b)



A further pair of elaborately mounted ewers c.1750, Qing dynasty, provided yet another flamboyant example of the harmony achieved by the *marchands-merciers* in bringing together different elements of luxury in order to entice their wealthy clientele. (fig.4)

There were many objects incorporating Sèvres porcelain. A chest of drawers with 90

lozenge-shaped plaques, made by the *ébéniste*, Bernard II Van Risemburgh between 1758 and 1760, initiated the fashion for inserting porcelain plaques into furniture. Simon-Philippe Poirier, responding to complaints from clients regarding the premature fading of the highly coloured pictorial marquetry on their furniture, was the first to develop this idea. Pieces of porcelain for which the dealer usually received a 9% discount, were commissioned from the Sèvres manufactory to fit furniture designs.



4

A small table c.1790 (from the Grey Drawing Room), (fig.5a) made of oak and tulipwood by an unknown cabinetmaker, incorporates soft-paste Sèvres porcelain plaques decorated with bouquets and flower baskets on a white ground by Edmé-François Bouillat, one of the Sèvres manufactory's best flower painters. The plaques are outlined with a frieze of *bleu céleste* with dotted gilding by the pointillist, Henry-François Vincent. (fig.5b)



Three other tables of this type are known, made to a design devised by the *marchand-mercier* Dominique Daguerre, partner and later successor of Simon-Philippe Poirier. These three tables commissioned by Daguerre were made by the *ébéniste*, Martin Carlin in the early 1780s. In October 1789, Marie Antoinette entrusted the most cherished objects from her collections, including one of these tables, to Daguerre, her favourite *marchand-mercier*. This table, given to Daguerre for safe-keeping, forms a tentative link to a table now in the Wallace Collection which is thought may be the one that belonged to the queen. On this Wallace Collection table, the friezes decorating the Sèvres plaques are outlined with fine lines of harebells with a central pattern of cornflowers and campion, relating to Marie Antoinette's great love of wildflowers. (fig.5c)



5c

The Waddesdon table was made five years after Carlin's death. Unlike Carlin's tables there is no access to the interior of this piece. As with similar pieces of furniture, originally the surrounding wood veneer was stained with vivid colours to match those of the porcelain. An elegant system fixes the mounts from the interior, so that no screws are visible from the front. In a display case nearby a plaque from the rear of the table still

retains the manufactory's original price label. The plaque for the top of the table was the most expensive, at 120 *livres*, the two side plaques cost 48 *livres* each and the ones on the front and back were 72 *livres* each. (fig. 5d). A square Sèvres plaque c.1763 with a green ground colour came from a *bureau plat* (in the Tower Room) and is inscribed with the name Poirier, the *marchand-mercier* most associated with commissioning plaques from Sèvres for incorporation into furniture. In 1770 alone he bought 1,400 examples of different sized plaques. (fig. 5d)



There were several inkstands on display, including one rare and elegant version known as an *écritoire Poirier* c.1770. Made in soft-paste Sèvres porcelain, the gilt bronze mount incorporates a candle holder. Painted with pink *centifolia* roses on a white ground by the painter, Edmé-François Bouillat, the shape of the porcelain is outlined with garlands of myrtle. The decoration is an example of a pattern, which under the name of *rozes et myrthes*, was also applied to large dinner and dessert services. One service of this pattern, bearing date letters for 1773 and subsequent years, is at Woburn Abbey. Four *écritoires* of this design were sold in 1770-71 to Poirier for 48 or 60 *livres* each. On 18 October, 1770 Poirier delivered a similar inkstand described as '*un petit écritoire à main en porcelaine de France à petits barbeaux et bordure haut et bas, montée en bronze doré d'or moulu*' to Madame du Barry for 192 *livres*. He purchased the porcelain for 48-60 *livres*; the justified difference in price accounting not only for his profit but for the gilt-bronze mounts, not normally provided by the Sèvres manufactory. (fig. 6)



Two square plaques c.1763 and 1766 in soft-paste porcelain, from a writing desk made by Martin Carlin and decorated by the flower painter and gilder, Guillaume Noël, came from a drawer-front on display nearby. Differing details in the gilding of these plaques reveal that for this piece of furniture, two separate sets have been combined. Although plaques made to order

for the *marchands-merciers* were shaped to fit a specific piece of furniture, plaques from earlier pieces were often re-used. This is indicated on these plaques by the roughly cut corners and the opening for the keyhole. The exhibit also included the lock, key and fixings from the drawer-front, made from brass, steel and gilt-bronze. These would have been made specifically for this piece by the *serrurier*, or locksmith. The gilt-bronze mount that holds the porcelain plaques in place, using small screws and decorative rosettes, was made by craftsmen from two separate guilds: the bronze casters (*fondeurs-ciseleurs*) and gilders (*ciseleurs-doreurs*). (fig. 7)



Poirier was also responsible for an inkstand design of which the earliest known example is dated 1761, now in the Wallace Collection (fig. 8).



One of these designs, c.1765, was on display (from the West Gallery). Made of oak and mounted with gilt-bronze, it incorporates 12 soft-paste Sèvres plaques painted by Dominique Joffroy. From July 1764, plaques made for this style of inkstand were called *plaques d'écritoire*. Poirier sold one of these with a similar decoration to Madame du Barry for 360 *livres*, the plaques having cost him 126 *livres*. Sometimes this type of inkstand was sold with a *bureau plat* incorporating matching plaques. In order to show the construction of the piece, twelve plaques from a similar inkstand c.1765, also painted by Dominique Joffroy, had been dismantled and set out nearby. (fig. 9)



word *haut* is painted in blue on the back of each. The cornucopia of fruit refers to the abundant month of June and the fruits of love, while the cupids, the flame and the heart shaped shield light-heartedly allude to Venus the goddess of love. One of the first examples was sold to Madame du Barry, mistress of Louis XV, in December 1769 for 1,056 *livres*. The plaques cost less than 170 *livres*.

The exhibit of a siphon barometer, c.1769-70, from the workshop of the *horloger* and *opticien* Claude-Siméon Passemant (d.1769), who made scientific instruments, reflected the novelty engendered when the sun was eclipsed by the planet Venus, which occurred on 3 June, 1769; an event that would not happen again for 105 years. Poirier capitalised on the great surge of interest in astrology the event generated by creating barometers decorated with astrological instruments, sometimes combined with thermometers and occasionally accompanied by a separate matching clock. The gilt-bronze and Sèvres porcelain case which forms the mount for the barometer is suspended from a simple heart shaped shield by a looped ribbon knotted and entwined round the frame of an oval Sèvres soft-paste porcelain plaque directly above the barometer's white enamel dial. The plaque's frame is formed by ribboned extensions emanating from a pair of addorsed cornucopia which cross above the dial. Each of these are composed of three spreading, fluted anthemion fronds, out of which tumble pears, grapes, apples, vine and laurel leaves. Below the dial, on either side of a trapezoidal-shaped plaque, hang swags of laurel. Both plaques are painted with a green ground and a gold band round the reserve. On the top plaque, a winged *putto* (Cupid) is seated on a cloud clutching a telescope. On the lower plaque the

The Sèvres manufactory also sold much smaller plaques to *marchands-merciers* and goldsmiths. Until 1759 however, these small plaques were exclusively purchased by Lazare Duvaux who mounted them up as *tabatières* (snuffboxes). In December 1755, Louis XV bought boxes totalling 1,344 *livres* to give as New Year gifts. One of the choicest exhibits was the oval snuffbox thought to have been made for Madame de Pompadour in 1758. The box incorporates six plaques of Sèvres soft-paste porcelain with a green ground. Mounted *à cage*, chased with interlaced foliage in two-coloured gold, the sides are divided by four Corinthian columns. (fig.10a) The plaque on the lid has a reserve painted with two spaniel dogs which corresponds to a painting by Jean-Jacques Bachelier representing the two pet dogs of Madame de Pompadour, Iñes and Mimi, which was exhibited in the Salon of 1759. On the box, Iñes, the dog on the left, has on its collar three tiny white blobs arranged in a triangle on a blue ground, which may represent the three towers of the Marquise's coat of arms.



putto sits within a landscape, a flame issuing from his head, while he holds a divider with which he is taking measurements on an armillary sphere marked along the equator. A Gregorian reflecting telescope is at his feet. The plaques are neither signed nor dated, however the

The plaque on the base has a reserve painted with a pink and grey parrot and a sulphur-crested cockatoo, after a painting by Bachelier of one of Madame de Pompadour's aviaries which was originally an over door at Choisy and is now in the Muséum d'Histoire Natural. (fig.10b) The original was shown in the Salon of 1761 as one of four canvases representing the four continents and this panel depicts America. On the sides of the box four further plaques show exotic birds which include two golden pheasants also from the Marquise's aviaries. This box may be the one purchased by Madame de Pompadour in September 1758 for 1,360 *livres*. It is thought that her brother, the Marquis de Marigny had the box re-mounted by Louis Roucel (c.1772-3) after her death.

The brilliant concept of combining Meissen figures and Vincennes flowers with elaborate gilt bronze mounts stemmed from the *marchands-merciers*' never-ending quest for novelty. Lazare Duvaux is credited with establishing the idea and his ledgers record many elaborate wall-lights and chandeliers embellished with Vincennes flowers, with the exact varieties specified. By mounting flowers on metal stems, *marchands-merciers* were able to create arrangements of artificial bouquets in vases, as well as supplying clocks and wall-lights fitted with both figures and flowers. Louis XV is said to have spent more than 8,000 *livres* on porcelain flowers for his residences in 1750 and they were adored by Madame de Pompadour who purchased hundreds, sometimes placing them in the flower borders at her château of Bellevue.

The spectacular centrepiece of the exhibition consisted of a pair of wall-lights, c.1750-1755, from the set of four, permanently on display in the Green Boudoir. Made of gilt-bronze, each one supports a Meissen hard-paste porcelain figure representing characters from the Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*, attributed to J.J. Kaendler, and a spray of Vincennes soft-paste porcelain flowers. (fig.11)



11

Louis XV bought a similar pair from Lazare Duvaux with porcelain figures depicting the four elements, in December 1753 and on 28 December, 1750; Madame de Pompadour bought a pair for Bellevue costing 204 and 195 *livres*, purchasing another for 195 *livres* on 25 November, 1752.

In the foreground a mid 18th-century clock (also from the Green Boudoir), possibly made by the *maître horloger* Louis Jolin, is mounted in gilt-bronze, and again incorporates a Meissen figure by Kaendler with a wide



12

selection of Vincennes flowers. The two winged *putti* are later additions, perhaps necessitated by damage to some of the original fragile components. (fig.12) In 1749, the Dauphine, sent a Vincennes vase overflowing with flowers, combined with figures, to her father, August III of Poland, elector of Saxony, owner of the Meissen factory. This magnificent gift was aimed at impressing the Saxon court with the superior capabilities of French porcelain manufacture. Duvaux re-modelled a clock with “*quatre figures de Saxe représentant des bergers et bergères*” in July 1751.

Enhancing this exhibit was a ravishing collection of over one hundred Vincennes flowers on loan from a private collection, which were artistically arranged in a glorious mass around the gilt-bronze base of the clock. (fig.13) The most prevalent species of porcelain flowers produced by the manufactory from 1745 onwards – nearly all of them represented in this exhibit – were roses; *centifolia*, *provence*, *alba* and *damascena*, *anemone pavonina semi-plena*, *dianthus* (border carnations), *ranunculus*, *primula auricula* and *polyantha*, *lilium candidum*, *althaea rosea*, *polianthes tuberosa*, *scabiosa caucasica*, *narcissi poeticus* and *jonquilla*, the *compositae* family; daisies, *chrysanthemum*, *marigold* and *helianthus* (sunflower), *centaurea cyanus* (cornflower), *matthiola* (stock), Rembrandt tulips, *papaver somniferum*, *paeonia officinalis* and *lactiflora*, *jasminum officinale*, *stephanotis floribunda*, *convolvulus*, *gardenia jasminoides* and *citrus* blossom; both orange and lemon. These popular flowers of the 17th and 18th centuries all grew in *Le Jardin de la Fleuriste*, part of *Le Jardin de la Nouvelle Ménagerie*, near the hot-houses of tender plants in Louis XV's famous botanical garden at Trianon, created from 1747, and were later recorded in the carved panelling within *Le Petit Trianon* by the sculptor, Honoré Guibert. Flowers were sourced by *ébénistes* and artists, such as Jean-Jacques Bachelier (*directeur artistique* at Vincennes and Sèvres 1748/51-1793), from many engravings of the Dutch and Flemish schools of the late 17th and early 18th centuries and from Louis Tessier's *Le Livre des Principes de Fleurs*. In addition, ongoing accurately illustrated botanical volumes or *florilegium* were compiled to record the classification of over 2000 plant species by Bernard de Jussieu, who was aided by Carl Linnaeus, in setting out the King's botanical garden. After the porcelain manufactory's move to Sèvres, sculptors and painters were also able to copy freshly picked specimens, which grew in the surrounding gardens. Looking closely at the exquisite flowers on display, it was tempting to speculate as to the species of flowers filled or sprayed with hot perfumed oil by Madame de Pompadour, who reportedly arrayed a selection in one of her greenhouses to lighten the mood of her royal lover on a dull winter's day!



This informative exhibition ended upstairs in the Drawings Room, where the exhibition; “All that Glitters: Shopping in Paris in the 18th century” displayed a selection of silk brocade fabrics, ribbons, delicate lace and small items of stylish clothing, all arranged as they would have been within an 18th century boutique. Among the displays of trade cards, shop-fronts and designs for *objets d’art*, there was a reproduction of a label for *la maison du confiserie; Figaro Pastilles*, c.1784, which formed an appropriate background to a glass dome of sugar paste orange blossom flanked by a pair of Sèvres biscuit gardeners c.1755, sculpted by Claude-Louis Suzanne after François Boucher; *Le jardinière au plantoir* and *La jardinière au vase* (fig. 14).



All objects in the exhibition, apart from the Vincennes flowers, were drawn from the permanent collections at Waddesdon Manor.

With special thanks to curator, Rachel Boak for the massed flower photograph.

Selective bibliography includes material and 9 photographs from exhibition text, Catalogues from The James de Rothschild Collection, The Waddesdon Manor Companion Guide, Catalogues from The Wallace Collection, Pierre de Nolhac; Les Trianons, Paris Archives Nationale. The remaining photographs were taken by the author.

Susan Brooke

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This Sèvres *chocolatière* is said to have been made for Madame
Victoire (daughter of King Louis XV) in 1786 and is at the Musée
National Adrien-Bubouché in Limoges.



Sèvres *chocolatière*, 1781, purchased by Prince Yusupov,
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