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THE FRICK COLLECTION

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FRICK ANNOUNCES SEVERAL IMPORTANT LOANS ON VIEW FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION



Secrétaire à abbatant, c. 1785, by Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806), oak veneered with mahogany, gilt-bronze mounts, marble, leather writing surface; private collection; photo: Michael Bodycomb

The Frick Collection is pleased to announce the extended loan of several important decorative arts objects from a remarkable private collection. Over the last three decades, an enviable collection of French and English decorative arts dating from 1675 to 1820 have been assembled, as well as paintings and Old Master drawings. Five French clocks from this collection are featured in the current special exhibition *Precision and Splendor: Clocks and Watches at The Frick Collection*, which opened in the Portico Gallery in January and will remain on view until March 2014. In addition to the clocks, four important pieces of French eighteenth-century decorative arts from this private collection are now on view in the Frick's permanent collection galleries, where they can be enjoyed by museum visitors for the next several years. They are a *secrétaire* by Royal cabinetmaker Jean-Henri Riesener, a longcase

clock by Balthazar Lieutaud, and two rare Sèvres porcelain vases.

The exhibition of clocks and watches as well as the placement of the four additional loans in the galleries has been coordinated by the Frick's Associate Curator of Decorative Arts, Charlotte Vignon.



Mantel Clock with Study and Philosophy, movement by Renacle-Nicolas Sottiau (1749–1791), figures after Simon-Louis Boizot (1743–1809), c. 1785–90, patinated and gilt bronze, marble, enameled metal, and glass; private collection; photo: Michael Bodycomb



Longcase Regulator Clock, c. 1750–55, by Balthazar Lieutaud (d. 1780), oak veneered with tulipwood and amaranth, gilt bronze, enameled metal, and glass; private collection; photo: Michael Bodycomb

The impressive longcase regulator clock displayed in the East Vestibule near the museum’s Entrance Hall was made in Paris around 1750–55, when the fashion for rococo design was at its peak. A perfect example of this highly decorative style, the clock’s shape avoids straight lines in favor of a fanciful play of curves and counter-curves, adorned by heavy gilt-bronze mounts that call to mind the branches of a tree. Although the mounts take their inspiration from nature, they are not representational but rather a pure fantasy of the rococo style. The clock is topped by the winged figure of Time, made by an unknown craftsman. The figure holds a scythe in one hand and an hourglass in the other as reminders of man’s mortality.

The case was made by Balthazar Lieutaud, who became a master cabinetmaker in 1749, only a few years before creating this piece. About a decade later, in 1767, he executed a longcase clock that was purchased by Henry Clay Frick

in 1915 and is now displayed at the foot of the Grand Staircase. It was made in the newly fashionable neoclassical style, which evolved in response to the extravagance of the rococo. This later clock is crowned by a gilt-bronze group representing Apollo riding his chariot, made by the bronzemaker Philippe Caffiéri.

The exquisite soft-paste potpourri vase on view in the Fragonard Room, shown above, was made by the Royal Manufactory of Sèvres around 1763–70. Its gilt-bronze mounts were added later, around 1785. The vase is topped by a finial composed of a cluster of berries nestled inside an acanthus-leaf cup. The support—which incorporates goats’ heads with elaborately curved horns—recalls the *Athénienne*, a type of pedestal table that was fashionable during the late eighteenth century in France and was loosely based on ancient models. The pierced metal band that separates the bowl of the vase from its cover suggests that it might have been designed to hold potpourri, a fragrant mixture of dried flowers and spices that perfumed the air of aristocratic residences during the eighteenth century. With its references to classical antiquity, it also could have been intended to evoke an incense burner, although it is unlikely that it would have been used in this way. The pendant to the lender’s vase is in the collection of Queen Elizabeth II.



Potpourri Vase and Cover, c. 1763–70, Royal Manufactory of Sèvres, painted and gilded soft-paste porcelain with gilt-bronze mounts, c. 1785; private collection; photo: Michael Bodycomb



Mounted Vase, c. 1786–88, Royal Manufactory of Sèvres, hard-paste porcelain with gilt-bronze mounts attributed to Pierre-Philippe Thomire (1751–1843); private collection; photo: Michael Bodycomb

A second vase made at the Royal Manufactory of Sèvres is illustrated at left and on the first page. Between 1786 and 1788, the Sèvres manufactory produced a dozen round and oval vases in dark blue hard-paste porcelain that were fitted with gilt-bronze mounts attributed to the renowned bronzemaker Pierre-Philippe Thomire. The oval version was commissioned in November of 1786 by Dominique Daguerre, the preeminent Parisian *marchand-mercier* (merchant of luxury goods) of the period, and thus was referred to in the factory’s records as a “vase Daguerre ovale.” The vase

exemplifies the highly sophisticated luxury items produced in France on the eve of the revolution. The symmetry of the vase recalls ancient models, as do its gilt-bronze mounts, which are in the shape of acanthus and laurel leaves, pine cones, and palmettes.

The vase is displayed in the Boucher Room atop a *secrétaire à abbatant*, also from this collection (shown on page one). The French word *secrétaire* derives from *secret*, or *secrecy*. Such pieces were created to secure private documents. When opened, the fall-front panel provides a leather-covered writing surface and reveals twelve interior drawers of varying sizes and shapes. The lower part of the cabinet (concealed by two doors) provides extra storage, as does the large drawer above the fall-front panel. The desk was made around 1785 by Jean-Henri Riesener, who was appointed cabinetmaker to the king in 1774, the year Louis XVI acceded to the throne. In 1784, when the crown was attempting to reduce its expenditures, Riesener was replaced by a younger (and less expensive) cabinetmaker. Around this time his style changed, shifting away from furniture decorated with marquetry in colorful, exotic woods to veneered mahogany as seen in this *secrétaire*.

Although this change was probably motivated by an effort to eliminate the labor-intensive marquetry work, it also reflected the new taste for simpler furniture that had been inspired by English models. The *secrétaire* epitomizes Riesener’s latest style. The splendid yet sober mahogany veneer panels are adorned with gilt-bronze mounts inspired by classical architecture: a frieze of scrolled acanthus leaves decorates the large drawer above the fall-front panel while a less ornate frieze of smaller acanthus leaves frames the desk’s side and front panels. The result is an elegant, perfectly symmetrical, and harmonious piece of furniture.

And, finally, the mantel clock featured on page one is one of the five timepieces included in the *Precision and Splendor* exhibition. It was made about 1785 to 1790 and represents Study and Philosophy after a sculpture by Simon-Louis Boizot. Classical symmetry is achieved by placing within an imaginary equilateral triangle the figure of Study on the left, Philosophy on the right, and, in the center, a column topped by a globe. The

composition is completed by the harmonious contrast between the dark patinated bronze figures, the clock's white marble column and dial, and its elaborate gilt-bronze ornamentation.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: 212.288.0700

Web site: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

Where: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue.

Hours: open six days a week: 10am to 6pm on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 11am to 5pm on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (11 a.m. to 5 p.m.) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

Admission: \$18; senior citizens \$15; students \$10; "pay as you wish" on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection.
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Subway: #6 local (on Lexington Avenue) to 68th Street station; **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

Tour Information: included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide Audio Tour of the permanent collection. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Museum Shop: the shop is open the same days as the Museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

Group Visits: Please call 212.288.0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is published regularly and is available upon request.

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