SFCC MAY LECTURE
Sunday, May 20, 2018
9:45 a.m., doors open for social time
10:30 a.m., program begins
Gunn Theater, Legion of Honor
BAY to BREAKERS DAY!
Use 19th Avenue from the south

About the lecture: The talk examines how and when porcelain plaques began to emulate the finest oil painting on canvas. Records of the French official Salons from 1760 to 1830 offer a newly complete view of the subject. The talk also explores the spread of porcelain plaques to the rest of Europe, especially Germany.

About the speaker: A former Board member and Vice President of the SFCC, Glenn Berry has an outstanding collection of French and other Continental porcelain from the late 18th to the mid-19th centuries. A skillful documentary scholar, he last spoke to us in October 2015 about the social and political implications of Sèvres porcelain marks from the Napoleonic period to the mid-19th century. In his spare time from ceramics, he chairs the anesthesiology department of the hospital where he works.

Charles-Nicolas Dodin, 1734-1803, at the Sèvres Manufactory, France
A Resting Place of Hunters, Tableau, 1761
Soft-paste porcelain, 25.1 × 19.2 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
2018 Membership Renewals
A gentle reminder for the few of us who have still not renewed:
P.O. Box 26773, San Francisco, CA 94126

SFCC Summer Social
SATURDAY, JULY 14: SFCC Summer Social. SFCC will provide lunch at the home of Board member Kathryn Mosher in Alameda. Our next Newsletter will provide exact time and place and RSVP instructions. We will also help to coordinate car-pooling.

American Ceramic Circle Book Award
The most recent winner of the ACC Book Award is Patricia F. Ferguson, Ceramics: 400 Years of British Collecting in 100 Masterpieces, Philip Wilson Publishers, London. As described by the ACC, “This thoroughly-researched volume showcases 100 masterpieces selected from the vast collections of the National Trust….Ferguson has arranged the book, not by the conventions of material, place of origin or date, but by the time these objects began to appear in British households. In doing so, the author has created a book that is as much about history of taste, privilege, pride of possession and preservation as it is about the history and development of ceramics.”

MAY LECTURE BACKGROUND:
Painting on Porcelain
Until the 1720s, no European ceramic technique had the quality of enamels and control of firing conditions to do pictorial work comparable to easel painting. The best factories at Jingdezhen might have done, but they just didn’t paint that way.

Jingdezhen kilns, China
Plate with birthday wishes, detail, 1713(?)
Hard-paste porcelain
Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Nelson Trust purchase
(photo: SFCC)
Beginning about 1721, the artist J.G. Höroldt pushed the Meissen factory to develop an unprecedented range of colors meant to outdo Chinese porcelain. Begging the question of whether anyone wanted teacups that looked like oil paintings, Meissen made such things because they could. Novelty then created demand.

Meissen Porcelain Manufactory, Saxony
Cup and saucer with moonlight scenes, detail, c. 1725-26
Hard-paste porcelain
Collection of Malcolm Gutter, San Francisco
(photo: SFCC)

Vincennes Porcelain Manufactory, France
Cup with sample palette, 1748
Soft-paste porcelain
Sèvres - Cité de la céramique (photo: SFCC)

Meissen’s output was durable, but the enamels could not survive high temperature firing so as to fuse completely with hard-paste porcelain. They were fired separately at a lower temperature, resting on the glaze with a kind of material sharpness. Soft-paste porcelain, as developed from the 1740s at Vincennes, reversed the situation. The glassy body was unstable in firing and fragile afterward, but its lower firing temperature allowed complete fusion of the enamels with the glaze. The result was even more like easel painting than Meissen could do.
Vincennes painters generally isolated their motifs against the pure white of the porcelain, like the Chinese. By 1756, when the Royal Manufactory moved from Vincennes to Sèvres, the painters began to show atmosphere. These pictures were framed within the overall decoration of tableware or vases.

A top Sèvres artist such as C.-N. Dodin would make both original compositions and copies after work by well-known oil painters. Dodin’s 1761 plaque (page 1 above) may be the first one meant for display as an original, framed painting. Autonomous plaques were rare for decades, but Dodin’s ‘canvases’ ranged from large vases to intimate work such as the Legion’s cup and saucer after paintings—also at the Legion—by Carle Vanloo.

Charles-Nicolas Dodin, 1734-1803, painter, at the Sèvres Manufactory, France
Gobelet litron with an Allegory of Music, 1778
Soft-paste porcelain