



San Francisco Ceramic Circle

An Affiliate of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

October 2016

P.O. Box 15163, San Francisco, CA 94115-0163

www.patricianantiques.com/sfcc.html

SFCC OCTOBER LECTURE

Sunday, October 30, 2016

9:45 a.m. – Theater opens

10:25 a.m. – Program begins

Florence Gould Theater, Legion of Honor

The Sèvres porcelain factory in the eighteenth century: its artists and its patrons

John Whitehead

Leading dealer in and scholar of French ceramics, London



Jean-Claude Duplessis (c. 1695-1774) and Charles-Nicolas Dodin (1734-1803),
at the Sèvres Porcelain Factory, France

'Ship' Pot-Pourri (*Pot-pourri à vaisseau*), c. 1760

Soft-paste porcelain, height 37 cm.

Musée du Louvre, Paris (Photo © RMN Musée du Louvre: Thierry Olivier)

About the lecture: To complement the Legion's loan display from the collection of Gustavo Serriñá, the talk will provide an overview of 18th-century French porcelain. It will emphasize pioneering artists and royal sponsorship at Vincennes and Sèvres.

About the speaker: John Whitehead is an esteemed dealer in French 18th century works of art, especially Sèvres porcelain. His landmark publication is *The French Interior in the Eighteenth Century* (1992). His research-article topics include the *marchands-merciers* of 18th century Paris, the porcelain collections of the Grand Dauphin and the Regent, William Beckford's lacquer, Japanese lacquer and French furniture, and Sèvres-related subjects. He is a long-time officer of the French Porcelain Society.

Mini-exhibit: Please bring 18th-century porcelain, and French ceramics of all periods.

UPCOMING SFCC TALKS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12: Gould Theater, Legion of Honor. SFCC and the American Decorative Arts Forum are co-hosting a two-lecture presentation by **Dennis Carr**, Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. **10:30 a.m. – Noon**, "Made in the Americas: The New World Discovers Asia." **1:00 – 2:30 p.m.**, "Chinoiserie in the Colonial Americas: Style and Substance."

Dennis Carr organized the MFA's critically acclaimed exhibition "Made in the Americas: The New World Discovers Asia," now on view at the Winterthur Museum in Delaware. The show includes landmark Chinese export porcelain and spectacular pottery from Puebla, Mexico. The Puebla workshops created a unique style by blending European traditions with motifs from Chinese porcelain that was shipped across the Pacific and through Mexico to Spain.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15: Gould Theater. **Patricia Knight**, scholar, lecturer, and SFCC member, "The Liverpool Herculaneum Factory, 1796-1840: How Two Herculaneum Porcelain Tea Services Came from New England to California."

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19: Gould Theater. **Richard Shaw**, ceramic sculptor, will discuss his work with special reference to his residency at the Sèvres porcelain factory.

SUNDAY, MARCH 19: Gould Theater. **Jeff Ruda**, professor emeritus at UC Davis, "Minton Ceramics and the 'Japan Craze' in Victorian Britain."

SUNDAY, APRIL 9: Gould Theater. **Paul Arthur**, author of *French Art Nouveau Ceramics, an Illustrated Dictionary*, Paris, 2015, "Auguste Rodin and the Sèvres Porcelain Factory." (In conjunction with the Rodin Centennial Exhibition.)

SUNDAY, MAY 21: Gould Theater. **Camille Leprince**, author of *La Faïence Baroque Française et les Jardins de Le Nôtre*, Paris, 2015, "French Ceramics in the Age of Louis XIV."

Opportunity Calls!

The study room adjacent to the Porcelain Gallery in the Legion of Honor houses SFCC's ceramics reference library. We are now recruiting a new team of volunteers to open the library to SFCC members and the general public. We propose shifts of two hours, once a month per person. There may be both weekday and weekend options. This is a great way to help, without the time commitment of Board membership. Since the librarians register as FAMSF volunteers, they become true Legion of Honor insiders. Please email Jeff Ruda (jhruda@prodigy.net) or speak with him at a Sunday lecture.



The San Francisco Fall Antiques Show October 27-30, 2016, Festival Pavilion at Fort Mason

This year, SFCC's Cultural Partnership with the San Francisco Fall Antiques Show brings **complimentary tickets** for SFCC members, available online. Use your browser to find the San Francisco Fall Antiques Show home page. Click on the link "purchase tickets." That takes you to the eventbrite.com page for the show. Click the green link for "tickets." At the top of the window that opens, click "enter promotional code" and enter "SFCeramicCircle" before you select your ticket(s). Also, look into the SFFAS lecture program.

OCTOBER LECTURE PREVIEW: SOFT-PASTE PORCELAIN IN FRANCE

Before Meissen broke the code for true, "hard-paste" porcelain around 1709, Europeans assumed that Chinese porcelain was translucent because powdered glass was mixed with the clay. The ceramics they made were soft in a couple of ways. The pieces often sagged or broke during firing, and they could shatter on contact with hot liquids. On the upside, the results are soft optically: the ceramic body and its transparent lead glaze diffuse light, in contrast with the crisper look of true porcelain.

The factory of Louis Poterat in Rouen (1673-96) made the first French soft-paste. It was a purer white (i.e. less yellow) than any formula till the mid-1700s. Poterat controlled the firing well enough to allow finely detailed European decorations, even though the blue-and-white coloring followed Chinese export porcelain.



Louis Poterat workshop (active 1673-96), Rouen
Mustard pot with the arms of Asselin de Villequiers, c. 1680
Soft-paste porcelain with metal rim, height about 3 inches
Sèvres – Cité de la céramique (Photo: SFCC)



Unknown workshop, probably in Jingdezhen
Plate in European style with Bacchus & vines, 18th century
Hard-paste porcelain, diameter about 7 inches
Muse nazionale d'arte orientale, Rome (Photo: SFCC)

Unlike Poterat, three follow-ups achieved substantial production: the factories at Saint-Cloud (c. 1693-1766), Menecy (c. 1720-73), and Chantilly (c. 1730-92). Saint-Cloud used sand rather than ground glass to make a warm-toned but attractive ceramic; the Legion of Honor shows early examples. After about 1730, Saint-Cloud introduced over-glaze enamel colors. Menecy imitated Saint-Cloud, but Chantilly was subsidized by a royal

prince and achieved artistic distinction. Chantilly's initial body fired dark, so it was covered with a high-quality tin-glaze even purer white than that on the best faience. Chantilly was especially successful in the Kakiemon style borrowed from Japan and from Meissen imitations of Japanese wares.



Factory of the prince de Condé, Chantilly
Saucer (ho-ho bird pattern), c. 1735-45
 Soft-paste porcelain, height about 3 inches
FAMSF, Legion of Honor (Photo: FAMSF)

The preeminent factory, however, was founded in the disused royal chateau of Vincennes in 1740. After five years of trial and error, the factory achieved a beautifully white ceramic body and a royal privilege to work in the style of Meissen. Soon afterwards the factory hired the silversmith Jean-Claude Duplessis (1699-1774) as artistic director. By the early 1750s, Duplessis's elegant and novel shapes took design leadership from Meissen, he had pushed the staff to achieve distinctive enamel colors, and Louis XV stepped in as lead patron. The factory moved to Sèvres in 1756.

Vincennes soft-paste is sometimes richly decorated. However, just as often the decoration was understated to show off Duplessis's shapes and the beauty of the ceramic itself—as in the Legion's large tureen set (*pot à oille*) from 1754-55 (SFCC May 2016 Newsletter). At Sèvres after 1756, the factory added even more remarkable enamel colors and emphasized its incomparable painting skills. Hard-paste porcelain was not an option because France seemed to have no domestic source of kaolin clay, the essential component of true porcelain. In 1768, kaolin was found near Limoges. It took several years to perfect a hard-paste formula, and through the 1770s and '80s Sèvres gradually shifted towards hard-paste production.



Jean-Claude Duplessis (c. 1695-1774)
 and **Charles-Nicolas Dodin (1734-1803)**,
 at the Sèvres Porcelain Factory, France
Detail: 'Ship' Pot-Pourri
 (*Pot-pourri à vaisseau*), c. 1760
 Soft-paste porcelain, height 37 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris
 (Photo: Versailles.passion.wordpress.com)