

A Nineteenth-Century Sèvres Cup and Saucer

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STARTING IN 1978—long before most of her American and European colleagues—Clare Le Corbeiller began acquiring early-nineteenth-century Sèvres porcelain with the clear intention of redefining this aspect of the Metropolitan Museum's collection. In the following decades, her determined purchases established a body of material that reflects the inventiveness, technical mastery, and stylistic diversity of Sèvres porcelain produced in the years between 1800 and 1850. Among these acquisitions are some of the new forms and types of decoration that reflect the enormous creativity of the Sèvres factory during these decades and of its director, Alexandre Brongniart. Three of these objects have been published,¹ including the *vase jasmin japonais* discussed elsewhere in this publication.²

Representative of the quality and historical interest of Clare's acquisitions in this field are a Sèvres cup and saucer of 1822–23 acquired in 1993 (Figure 1). This cup and saucer are distinguished by their superbly painted decoration. Their forms serve primarily as vehicles for the elaborately detailed miniatures. This model of cup with a tall scrolling handle was known at Sèvres as a *tasse à chocolat AB*,³ the saucer that accompanies the Museum's cup was known as a *soucoupe de tasse gothique*, having been designed originally to accompany a *tasse gothique*. While these forms of cup and saucer were commonly used in tea and/or coffee services, known as *déjeuners*, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century,⁴ this particular cup and saucer were not produced as part of a *déjeuner*, and their distinctive decoration suggests that they were intended as a commemorative object rather than for use.

The cup (Figure 2) is decorated with an oval portrait of Louis, the son of Louis XV and Marie Leszczyńska. Commonly referred to as Louis de France (1729–1765), he predeceased his father and thus never assumed the throne. However, through his second marriage, to Marie-Josèphe de Saxe, Louis was the

father of three future kings of France: Louis XVI, Louis XVIII, and Charles X. The gilt band that encircles the bust-length portrait is inscribed *LOUIS Dauphin père du ROI LOUIS XVIII*. The saucer (Figure 3) is painted with a view of the royal château of Fontainebleau; an inscription below the view identifies it as *Fontainebleau, côté de la pièce d'eau*.

As is typical of the products of Sèvres, marks on the cup and saucer provide us with basic information about their manufacture. Each bears the factory stamp and the date 1822, and the saucer bears a date in gold indicating that it was gilded on September 26, 1823.⁵ The portrait of the dauphin is signed *Mme Debon*; the view of Fontainebleau is signed *Lamarre*. Very little is known about either of these painters at the Sèvres factory. It is thought that Sophie Debon was employed as a painter at the factory between 1816 and 1824⁶ and was a pupil of Marie-Victoire Jaquotot, who was active at Sèvres between 1801 and 1842.⁷ Célestin-Stanislas Lamarre, who was born in Sèvres in 1804, appears to have entered the factory in 1821 and then left to join the army in 1824.⁸ Each was a highly



Figure 1. Cup and saucer, French, Sèvres, 1823. Painted by Sophie Debon (cup) and Célestin-Stanislas Lamarre (saucer). Hard-paste porcelain, cup H. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (12.2 cm), saucer diam. 6 in. (15.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Gifts in memory of Frederick P. Victoria, 1993 (1993.276.1–2)

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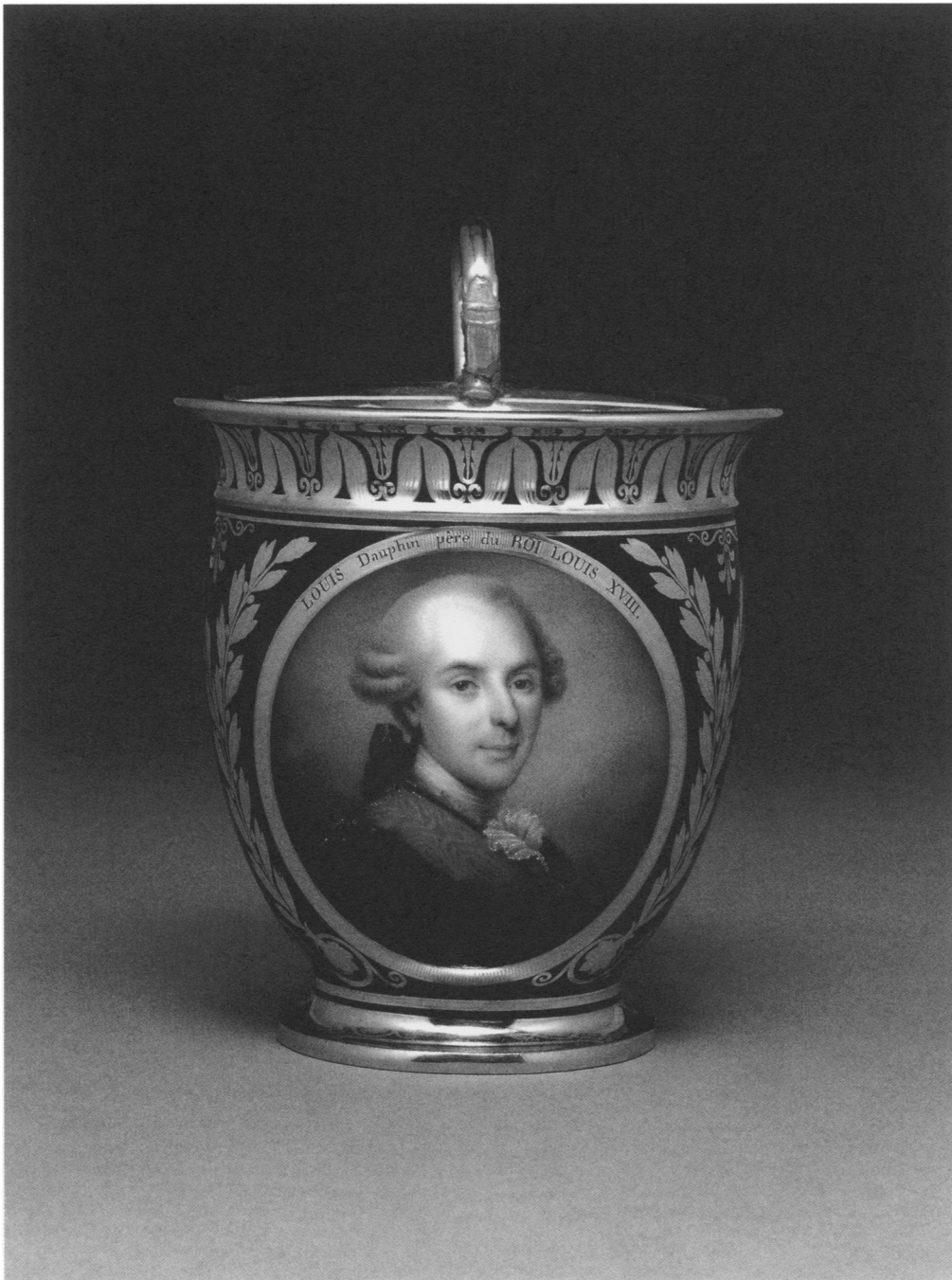


Figure 2. Cup, French, Sèvres, 1823. Painted by Sophie Debon. Hard-paste porcelain, H. 4¼ in. (12.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Gifts in memory of Frederick P. Victoria, 1993 (1993.276.1)

skilled porcelain painter, as indicated by the quality of the painting on this cup and saucer, but following typical factory procedure, each copied rather than originated the composition that he or she painted. The ways in which these compositions originated provide some insight into the genesis of decorative schemes at the factory.

The saucer depicts a view of the château of Fontainebleau that includes, from left to right, the

Louis XV wing, the Gros Pavillon, the queen mother's wing, the Galerie François-Premier wing, and the wing of the Belle Cheminée. In the middle ground are the pond and the pavilion dating from Henri IV's reign but rebuilt under Napoléon. This view of Fontainebleau painted by Lamarre copies almost exactly an oil sketch also in a round format (Figure 4) executed eight years earlier by Jean-François Robert (active at Sèvres 1806–34; 1836–43),⁹ one of the more gifted



Figure 3. Saucer, French, Sèvres, 1823. Painted by Célestin-Stanislas Lamarre. Hard-paste porcelain, diam. 6 in. (15.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Gifts in memory of Frederick P. Victoria, 1993 (1993.276.2)

and versatile painters at Sèvres. Robert's highly finished sketch of Fontainebleau was one of nine views of imperial palaces made by Robert as models for roundels intended to decorate a porcelain table conceived by Brongniart for Napoléon.¹⁰ Robert not only provided the sketches but also painted the nine views of the palaces on the table (Figure 5), which ultimately was completed in 1817 and was given to the king of Naples by Charles X in 1825.¹¹ In creating his

own compositions and then painting them on porcelain, Robert deviated from standard practice at Sèvres, which was for painters to copy models supplied to them in the form of prints, drawings, and oil sketches. Robert's contemporary Jean-Claude Develly (active at Sèvres 1813–48) was one of the few other painters at the factory who frequently both conceived and then executed his own compositions.¹² Robert's oil sketch, which remains in the archives of the factory, would



Figure 4. Jean-François Robert, *Château of Fontainebleau*, ca. 1814. Oil on canvas. Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres, Archives



Figure 5. Tabletop, French, Sèvres, 1817. Hard-paste porcelain and gilt bronze, diam. 41 1/4 in. (104.8 cm). Private collection, United States

have been made available to Lamarre, whose only changes were to add two groups of promenading figures and a small dog to the foreground.¹³

For the portrait on the cup, the source was less immediate. In 1765, the Swedish painter Alexander Roslin (1718–1795) was commissioned to make two bust-length pastel portraits of the dauphin.¹⁴ In the preceding year, he had painted the dauphin in a half-length format wearing the military uniform of the dragoons, and the success of this painting allowed him to charge 1,000 livres for each pastel portrait, as recorded in a bill submitted only in 1767.¹⁵ The pastel portraits must have proved successful as well, for an oil version on copper of one was produced at approximately the same time,¹⁶ and an engraving was executed by Jean François Gautier-Dagoty in 1770.¹⁷ The two pastels, ordered by the Bâtiments du Roi, entered the royal collections, and one of the pastels remains at Versailles today (Figure 6).¹⁸

It is almost certain that one of these two pastels served as the original source for the portrait on the cup, but only through the mediation of a project initiated at Sèvres in 1819, three years before the manufacture of the cup and saucer. In that year, Alexandre Brongniart issued a detailed order for a small porcelain coffer that would contain twenty-four porcelain miniatures.¹⁹ Most of the miniatures depicted French and other European monarchs, but various celebrated figures such as Molière, Fénelon, and Mme de

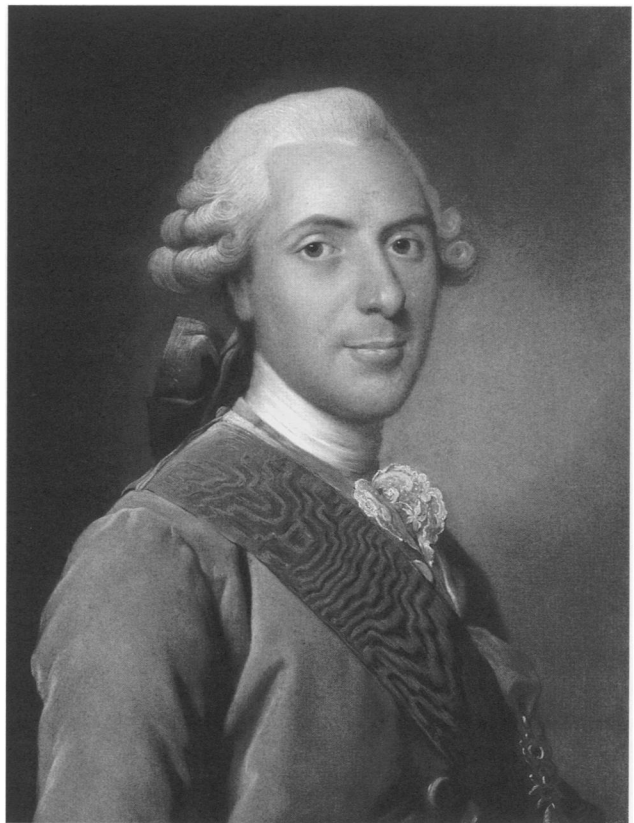


Figure 6. Alexandre Roslin (Swedish, 1718–1795). *Portrait of Louis de France*. Pastel, 22 3/4 x 19 1/4 in. (58 x 49 cm). Copyright Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, N.Y. Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France



Figure 7. Sheet of miniatures from the *Coffret de la tabatière du Roi*, French, Sèvres, 1819–20. Painted by Marie-Victoire Jaquotot (French, 1772–1855). Hard-paste porcelain. Copyright Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, N.Y. Louvre, Paris, France

Maintenon were also included. The miniatures were painted by Marie-Victoire Jaquotot, who worked not only at Sèvres but also as an independent decorator. The absence of any record of payment by the Sèvres factory to Mme Jaquotot for the miniatures has led to the suggestion that she did this project outside the factory, perhaps at her own studio.²⁰ Her specialty was copying oil paintings onto porcelain plaques, and for the twenty-four miniature portraits she used sources as diverse as Titian, Pourbus, and Vigée-Lebrun (Figure 7). The Roslin pastel of the dauphin clearly was her source for his portrait in porcelain for the *coffret de la tabatière du Roi*, as the coffer became known. The coffer (Figure 8) entered the salesroom in October 1820 and was acquired by Louis XVIII early the following month.

A close comparison of the Debon miniature, the Jaquotot miniature, and the Roslin pastel²¹ indicates that the Jaquotot miniature rather than the Roslin portrait was Debon's source. The two porcelain portraits share various details of the costume and a treatment of the background that are not found in the Roslin portrait. One can conclude that Mme Jaquotot made slight changes when she copied Roslin's pastel (and reduced the format to that of a porcelain



Figure 8. *Coffret de la tabatière du Roi*, French, Sèvres, 1819–20. Hard-paste porcelain, gilt silver, wood, velour, H.9 in. (23 cm), L. 15 in. (38 cm). Copyright Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, N.Y. Louvre, Paris, France

plaque), and that these changes were copied precisely by Mme Debon. Clearly, copying the porcelain miniature would have been simpler than copying the portrait; the reduction in scale already would have been accomplished, and the miniature could easily have been made available to the factory. In addition, it should be remembered that Mme Debon had been the pupil of Mme Jaquotot, and one can speculate that the personal connection might have facilitated this arrangement.

Borrowing the miniature from the *coffret de la tabatière du Roi* would have necessitated the involvement of the royal household, and this would suggest that the cup and saucer were produced with a royal recipient in mind. This hypothesis is strengthened by the gilt decoration, which includes stylized fleurs-de-lis and flowering lily stalks, emblems of the house of Bourbon. One would assume that the portrait of the dauphin, who had died fifty-seven years earlier and had never reigned, and the view of Fontainebleau, where he died, would have had most meaning to one of his children.²² In fact, two cups and saucers of this model with identical decoration were produced, and both were acquired

by sons of Louis de France.²³ The first cup and saucer were completed in 1823²⁴ and entered the sale room on December 23, 1823.²⁵ They were given a sale price of 500 francs and were exhibited in the Exposition des Manufactures Royales on January 1, 1824. The cup and saucer were kept by Louis XVIII for himself at the conclusion of the exhibition.²⁶

The second cup and saucer, also valued at 500 francs, entered the sale room on December 4, 1824, and were exhibited on January 1, 1825.²⁷ They were delivered by order of the new king, Charles X, to S. A. R. Mgr. Le Dauphin.²⁸ The cup and saucer purchased by the Metropolitan could have been either those acquired by Louis XVIII or those given to the new dauphin, the former duc d'Angoulême.

With their royal provenance, the cup and saucer now in New York inform us about the taste of the period while at the same time providing a perspective on the working methods at the factory. They add yet another dimension to our understanding of a factory that was actively redefining itself, exploring numerous historicist currents, and embracing technological advances.

NOTES

1. *Déjeuner culture et récolte du cacao*, 1836 (1986.281), published in Tamara Préaud, *The Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory: Alexandre Brongniart and the Triumph of Art and Industry, 1800–1847* (New Haven and London, 1997), pp. 374–75; pair of *vases gothique Fragonard*, 1844 (1992.23.1–2), published in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 50 no. 2 (Fall 1992), p. 39; *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 6th ser., vol. CXXI, 1993 (March), p. 59; Clare Le Corbeiller, "A Pair of Neo-Gothic Vases," in *Mélanges en souvenir d'Elisalex d'Albis* (Paris, 1999), pp. 146–50.
2. *Vase jasmin japonais*, 1834 (1978.373). See Tamara Préaud's article in this volume.
3. It was also known as a *tasse* "A.B." For a drawing and brief discussion of the model, see Préaud, *Brongniart*, p. 206.
4. *Ibid.*
5. The cup and saucer are each marked with interlaced Ls enclosing a fleur-de-lis and with *Sèvres/1822*, printed in blue. Painted on the bottom of the saucer is *30 m. 22* in green and *26 g bre 23* in gold. Both cup and saucer bear untranscribable incised marks.
6. Marcelle Brunet and Tamara Préaud, *Sèvres: Des origines à nos jours* (Fribourg, 1978), p. 362.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 369, and unpublished information made available by Tamara Préaud.
8. This information was kindly shared by Tamara Préaud.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Préaud, *Brongniart*, pp. 196–97. See also Alvar González-Palacios, *Il tempio del gusto*, vol. 1 (Milan, 1984), pp. 391–95.

11. Préaud, *Brongniart*, pp. 196–197.
12. One of Develly's most exceptional creations in this regard was the *Déjeuner culture et récolte du cacao* acquired by Clare Le Corbeiller for the Metropolitan; see n. 1 above.
13. Drawings and prints were frequently reused as sources of decoration at Sèvres and minor adjustments and additions were common. Robert added equestrian figures to his finished painting of Fontainebleau on the porcelain table cited previously.
14. For a thorough discussion of this pastel and related works, see Xavier Salmon, *Les Pastels* (Paris, 1997), pp. 117–21. I am grateful to M. Salmon for bringing this catalogue to my attention. See also Gunnar Lundberg, *Roslin: Liv och Verk* (Malmö, 1957), pp. 43–44, and *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français* 1926, pp. 204–5.
15. *Bulletin*, p. 205.
16. *Les artistes suédois en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Versailles, 1945), pp. 102–3, pl. XXXXVIII.
17. Lundberg, *Roslin*, p. 43.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
19. For a full discussion of the coffer, see Pierre Ennès in *Un âge d'or des arts décoratifs, 1814–1848*, exh. cat., Grand Palais, Paris (Paris, 1991), pp. 105–10. All of the information regarding the coffer in this article is derived from this source.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
21. The author made this comparison on the basis of illustrations of the Jaquotot miniature and the Roslin pastel.

22. In addition, one could argue that the inscription on the cup identifying the dauphin as the father of Louis XVIII further suggests that the cup and saucer were intended for the king.
23. I am grateful to Tamara Préaud for the discovery that two cups and saucers with this decoration were produced and for all her generous assistance.
24. Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres, Archives. Registre des travaux de peinture et dorure de 1823, Vj'30, fols. 217–18; 247. The author is indebted to the research of Tamara Préaud, who provided the archival information to Michel Meyer, from whom the Metropolitan acquired the cup and saucer. In addition, the identification of the various sources for the painted decoration on the cup and saucer were made by either by M. Meyer or Mme Préaud.
25. Ibid., Vv 1, fol. 209, no. 5.
26. Ibid., Registre des livraisons à credit, 1820–24, Vbb 6, fol. 19v.
27. Ibid., Vv 1, fol. 226, no. 25.
28. Ibid., Registre des livraisons à credit, Vbb 6, fol. 34. This information was first published by Salmon, *Pastels*, p. 119.