

A Sèvres Biscuit Bust of Louis XV Acquired by The Frick Collection in Memory of Guy Bauman

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WITH FUNDS GENEROUSLY CONTRIBUTED by friends of Guy Bauman, The Frick Collection has purchased in memory of its former lecturer and curatorial assistant a Sèvres bust of Louis XV on a gilded green pedestal (Figure 1). This acquisition, which joins a small but distinguished group of Sèvres porcelains,¹ represents the museum's first example of a biscuit sculpture.² This bust is one of five surviving examples of the model, and it is the only one with such a gilded pedestal.

The Frick sculpture is a soft-paste biscuit porcelain bust of Louis XV (1710–74), about 1760, on a sloping quadrangular socle fired in one with the bust. The subject, who is shown bareheaded, his flowing locks knotted at the back of the neck, looks up and slightly to his left. He is garbed as a Roman emperor, wearing an embossed cuirass beneath a fringed cloak affixed with a circular brooch on the left shoulder.

The four sides of the hollow, tapering, green-ground pedestal swell out slightly at the top and bottom; they are decorated with gilded and tooled trophies symbolizing war, architecture, music, and painting. The sloping bands of the bracket-footed base are decorated with floral sprays, as are the arched feet. The upper and lower edges of the pedestal, as well as the side panels, are banded with gilding. The top of the pedestal (Figure 2) is notched to receive a flange that is normally part of the circular base of such busts (cf. the Boston and St. Petersburg examples in note 3), but is missing here, along with the usual circular base, which may have been removed for reasons of condition. The Frick bust and pedestal have been together only since 1987.

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The Sèvres biscuit busts of Louis XV have been referred to in catalogues of notable porcelain collections, most recently—and in considerable detail—by Rosalind Savill⁴ and Aileen Dawson⁵—but heretofore they have never been the subject of an independent study. The busts of Louis XV and Marie Leczinska and the pedestal “en gaine” designed to support them are first recorded in Sèvres documents in 1759. Because Louis XV assumed total financial responsibility for the manufactory that year, it has been thought that the busts were produced in recognition of that fact. Sales records of the following year list busts and pedestals as having been sold to Madame Louise, to Madame de Pompadour, to the then-current artistic director of Sèvres, Bachelier, and to the dealers Poirier and Sprot. The model for the pedestal was still recorded in 1773.

On the basis of summary eighteenth-century descriptions, it is difficult to identify extant examples as those recorded in the Sèvres sales records. However, the Boston pair of busts with their dark blue pedestals (Figure 3) may correspond to the two with “lapis” ground bought by Sprot on October 2, 1760, and two of the four mismatched pedestals with rose and green ground colors, in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 4) and the Wallace Collection, may correspond to a pair with busts and the same ground colors sold to Madame Louise in December of the same year.⁶ Further, it is tempting to associate the pedestal of the new Frick bust with one of the pair of “pieds d'estaux en gaine” with green ground and gilding, which were sold for 72 *livres* each to Poirier in 1760,⁷ and in turn with a pair of busts referred to in a letter by the Parisian banker Bonnet, dated April 15, 1760. This letter concerned porcelain that Poirier had sent from Paris to the chief minister of the ducal court of Parma, Guillaume Dutillot, including “le portrait du Roi et de la Reine aussi en biscuit sur des petits pieds-destaux



Figure 1. Sèvres, Biscuit bust of Louis XV on a gilded pedestal, ca. 1760. Bust: H. 11.0 cm; pedestal: H. 15.3 cm. New York, The Frick Collection (photo: Richard di Liberto)

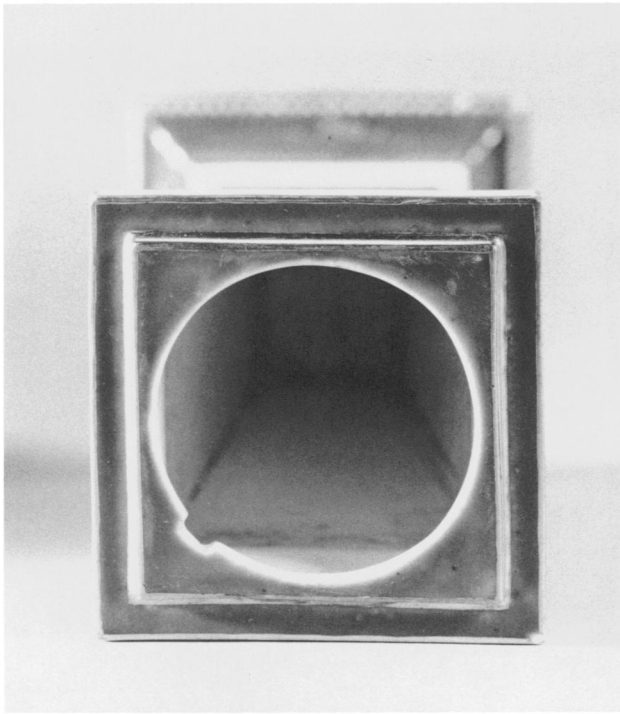


Figure 2. Detail of Figure 1 showing top surface of pedestal (photo: Richard di Liberto)



Figure 3. Sèvres, Biscuit busts of Louis XV and Marie Leczinska on gilded pedestals, probably 1760. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Bequest of R. Thornton Wilson, in memory of Florence Ellsworth Wilson (photo: Museum of Fine Arts)



Figure 4. Sèvres, Flower stands (pair) with pink and green ground colors, 1759. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1958, 58.75.92ab, 93ab

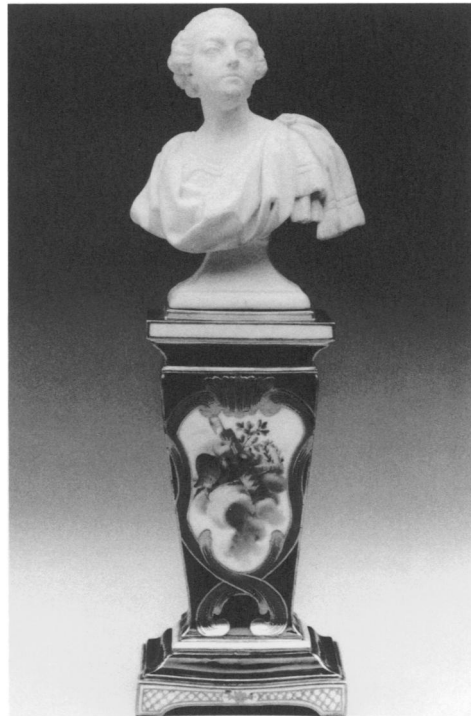


Figure 5. Sèvres, Biscuit bust of Louis XV on a gilded and painted pedestal, probably 1761. London, The British Museum, Bequest of Sir B. Eckstein, Bt., 1948 (photo courtesy the Trustees of the British Museum)



Figure 6. Detail of Figure 1 showing trophy of war (photo: Richard di Liberto)



Figure 7. Detail of Figure 1 showing trophy of architecture (photo: Richard di Liberto)

qui servent a mettre des fleurs lorsque l'on ny met pas les petites bustes.”⁸

Among extant examples, the pedestal of the Frick Collection bust is unique for its gilded and exquisitely tooled trophies. While difficult to decipher completely, the principal elements of these compositions correspond in a general way to symbolic trophies painted on numerous examples of Sèvres porcelain, notably on the trophies of the related pedestal in the British Museum. The Frick and British Museum trophies of war (Figures 6, 5), for instance, share the fasces, ax, and plumed helmet, although the London composition includes an olive branch and a laurel wreath, symbols of peace and victory. The two examples come close, however, in their evocation of architecture (Figures 7, 8), in that both include representations of a French Ionic capital. Further, the British Museum trophy of sculpture helps us read the Frick trophy of painting (Figures 9, 10), since both include a representation of Saly's familiar *Bust of a Young Girl* (Figure 11). The fourth trophy on the Frick pedestal alludes to music (Figure 12), whereas the British Museum example



Figure 8. Detail of Figure 4 showing trophy of architecture (photo courtesy the Trustees of the British Museum)



Figure 9. Detail of Figure 1 showing trophy of painting (photo: Richard di Liberto)



Figure 11. François-Jacques-Joseph Saly (1717–76), *Bust of a Young Girl*, ca. 1750. London, Victoria and Albert Museum (photo: Victoria and Albert Museum)



Figure 10. Detail of Figure 5 showing trophy of sculpture (photo courtesy the Trustees of the British Museum)

evokes geography. The most notable element shared by all the Frick and British Museum trophies is the billowing clouds that form their backgrounds: on the latter they are painted with dazzling atmospheric effect; on the former they are more three-dimensional.

According to Tamara Préaud, there are no models for any of these trophies preserved at Sèvres.⁹ The closest parallel to the pedestal, technically speaking, is the pair of flowerpots with green ground and tooled gilding once at Mentmore and



Figure 12. Detail of Figure 1 showing trophy of music (photo: Richard di Liberto)

now at Dalmeny House, Edinburgh, which Rosalind Savill associates with the two sold to the dauphine on December 30, 1758.¹⁰

The model for the bust is unknown, but it has traditionally been associated with Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne (1704–78), despite the lack of any evidence at Sèvres of his participation in the production of the bust. Of his many portrait sculptures of Louis XV, Lemoyne's lost equestrian monument of the king inaugurated at Bordeaux in 1743 (Figure 13) corresponds most clearly to the present miniature portrait. In it the monarch was similarly depicted in a cuirass à la romaine, with his neck bare, his head uncovered and thrown back, and his shoulders draped with a flowing cloak.

Dupuis's engraving after Cochin's drawing of this sculpture, which was exhibited at the Salon of 1759, may have served as a model for the unknown sculptor at Sèvres who was responsible for the biscuit bust. Despite differences between the two images (Figures 13, 14)—such as the details of the cloak and of the monarch's hair—the head of the eques-

trian monument, which was engraved by Cochin himself, and that of the Sèvres bust are strikingly similar in their renderings of the signs of age in the royal visage—the sagging lower eyelids, the heavy jowls, and the receding hairline.¹¹

A possible alternative model recently came to light in a previously unpublished miniature terracotta bust of Louis XV inscribed *Lemoine* (Figure 15). The terracotta appears to be an autograph reduction of the head and torso of Lemoyne's monument to Louis XV inaugurated at Rennes in 1754; like the Bordeaux monument, the sculpture was destroyed during the Revolution.¹² While the terracotta differs from the Sèvres bust too greatly to be regarded as its model, its similar size (10.2 cm) provides evidence of a type of model the unknown sculptor at Sèvres might have utilized. Curiously, the marks of aging that characterize both the Sèvres bust and the Bordeaux monument as engraved by Cochin are less evident in this reduction of the Rennes monument, which is later in date by almost a decade. However, when Lemoyne's model for the



Figure 13. Nicolas-Gabriel Dupuis (1698–1771) and Charles-Nicolas Cochin (1715–90), *Equestrian Statue of Louis XV* (detail). Engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1957, 57.581.68



Figure 14. View of Figure 1 from below



Figure 15. Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, *Louis XV*. Private collection

Rennes monument was exhibited at the Salon of 1751, one critic noted that “it is too bad that the head of the king does not at all resemble him perfectly.”¹³

The rarity of examples of the Sèvres biscuit busts of Louis XV, the exceptional quality of the gilding on the pedestal of the Frick Collection example, and the eerie suggestion of mortality in the miniature royal portrait together make this an appropriate acquisition in memory of a friend and colleague whose time shared with us was so brief yet so memorable.

NOTES

1. See J. A. Pope, M. Brunet, *The Frick Collection: An Illustrated Catalogue VII: Porcelains* (New York, 1974) pp. 181–351.

2. Exhibited: “Vincennes/Sèvres,” Deborah Gage (Works of Art), Ltd., London, June 7–20, 1990, no. 23 (lent by John Whitehead). Collections: sale (pedestal only), Sotheby’s, New York, Oct. 16, 1987, lot 161 (this reference was kindly communicated to the author by Tamara Préaud in a letter dated May 4, 1991); Hector Binney, London, until 1987 (bust only); John Whitehead, London (bust and pedestal); purchased from him by The Frick Collection in 1990. Literature: J. Whitehead, *Vincennes/Sèvres*, exh. checklist (London, 1990) no. 23.

3. Comparable examples: (1) Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 53.54.1964, Bequest of R. Thornton Wilson, in memory of Florence Ellsworth Wilson; biscuit bust on circular base with flange, fitted in a glazed and gilded dark blue pedestal, with companion bust of Queen Marie Leczinska (Figure 3); (2) London, British Museum, reg. no. 1948.12-3.5, Bequest of Sir B. Eckstein, Bt., 1948; biscuit bust on glazed and gilded dark blue pedestal decorated in enamel colors with trophies of architecture, sculpture, geography, and war and peace (Figure 5); (3) Sèvres, Musée National de la Céramique, MNC 10058; bust on a truncated columnar base decorated with swags, both in biscuit; (4) Saint Petersburg, Hermitage, inv. N 26512; biscuit bust on circular base with flange. Derivative examples of the bust alone in other mediums are discussed by A. Dawson in *French Porcelain in the British Museum* (forthcoming). Ms. Dawson kindly shared her draft manuscript with the author.

In this context the existence of a second model of the bust of Louis XV should be noted. In it the monarch is shown wearing armor and enveloped in a cloak bearing the star of the Order of the Saint-Esprit. Examples include one at Versailles, Musée National de Versailles et de Trianon (C. Maumené, L. d'Harcourt, *Iconographie des Rois de France* [Paris, 1931] no. 171), another at the Musée Lambinet, Versailles (no. 647), and a third, formerly in the Elizabeth Parke Firestone collection (sold, Christie's, New York, March 21, 1991, lot 148). Each has a simple, round socle base without a pedestal.

4. R. Savill, *The Wallace Collection, Catalogue of Sèvres Porcelain* (London, 1988) I, pp. 117–126.

5. Dawson, *French Porcelain in the British Museum*.

6. See C. C. Dauterman, J. Parker, E. Standen, *Decorative Art from the Samuel H. Kress Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art*

(New York, 1964) pp. 207–208; Savill, *The Wallace Collection*, I, p. 124.

7. See Savill, *The Wallace Collection*, I, p. 126 n. 11(a). This association was first proposed by John Whitehead, *Vincennes/Sèvres*, no. 23.

8. Quoted in C. Briganti, "Documents sur les arts à la Cour de Parme au XVIIIème siècle," *Antologia di Belle Arti* (Dec. 1977) p. 396 (reference pointed out by John Whitehead in a letter to the author dated Feb. 18, 1991). This document, incidentally, throws interesting light on alternative uses made of such pedestals, illustrated—as Rosalind Savill pointed out (*The Wallace Collection*, I, p. 118)—in Trière's engraving after Moreau le jeune's "*J'accepte l'heureux présage*" (no. 15 in the *Monument du Costume I* [Bocher 13501]; MMA, 33.6.29).

9. Letter to the author dated May 4, 1991.

10. Rosalind Savill pointed out this relationship to the author. See Savill, *The Wallace Collection*, I, p. 89 n. 14(e)3.

11. For the history of Dupuis's and Cochin's engraving, see P. Courteault, *La Place Royale de Bordeaux* (Paris/Bordeaux, 1923) pp. 387–391; M. Marionneau, "Correspondance de J.-B. Lemoyne et de l'Intendant de Tournay au sujet de la gravure de la statue équestre de Louis XV, érigée en 1743, sur la place Royale de Bordeaux," in *Réunion des Sociétés des Beaux-Arts des départements* (Paris, 1882) pp. 154–155; M. Roux, *Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes, Inventaire du fonds français: Graveurs du XVIIIème siècle* (Paris, 1955) VIII, p. 398, no. 155.

12. The author is grateful to Joseph Baillio for bringing to his attention this terracotta in a private collection.

13. Quoted in L. Réau, *Une Dynastie de sculpteurs au XVIIIème siècle: Les Lemoyne* (Paris, 1927) p. 78.