

A PAIR OF "VASES CHINOIS" OR "VASES A PIED DE GLOBE" (4E GRANDEUR)
PAINTED WITH CHERUBS

Figurative painting attributed to Jean-Baptiste-Etienne GENEST
SEVRES, France

Royal Manufactory of Porcelain

Circa 1770

Soft-paste porcelain

H. 33,5 cm (13 ¼ in.)

Provenance

Sir John Cust, 3rd Baronet (1718–1770), Belton House, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England.

Sir Brownlow Cust (1744-1807), Belton House, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England.

John, 2nd Baron Brownlow (1779-1853), Belton House, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England.

John Egerton-Cust, 2nd Earl Brownlow (1842–1867), Belton House, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England.

Adelbert, 3rd (and last) Earl Brownlow (1844–1921), Belton House, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England.

Adelbert Salusbury Cockayne Cust, 5th Baron Brownlow (1867–1927), Belton House, Grantham,
Lincolnshire, England.

Peregrine Cust, 6th Baron Brownlow (1899–1978), Belton House, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England.

Sale, Christie, Manson & Wood, Londres, 14 March 1929, n° 59.

Collection of Sir Robert Henry Edward Abdy (11 September 1896-17 November 1976), 5^e Baronet.

Collection of Madeleine Double (Marseille, 15 September 1869-Paris, 25 January 1970), madame René
Félix-Vigier, vicomtesse Vigier.

Sale, Palais Galliera, Paris, *collection de la vicomtesse Vigier*, 2-3 June 1970

Galerie Nicolier, Paris

Collection Christner, Dallas

Christie's, New-York, *The Christner Collection*, 9 juin 1979, n° 225.

Christie's, New-York, 1st November 1993, lot 22

Collection Jean Lupu, Paris.

The present pair is of the smallest size. Each vase is decorated with an overglaze dark blue ground color and painted in a colored oval reserve on the front with a single cherub playing in a landscape.

On one scene the putto is seating on a large drape and holding a crown of laurel on the left hand and a branch of laurel on the right hand. Lying on the ground are a helmet and a shield. Lying on the ground are a bow and a quiver of arrows, a tambourine and a wind instrument.

On the other scene, the putto is seating on the ground next a trunk, holding on his left hand a bell (?) and on his right hand a paddle. In front of him, lying on the ground are cannon balls and an ax.

The back has a white reserve of the same size and shape as that on the front, painted in polychrome with a bouquet of flowers. Both reserves are edged with a gilded frame. The blue is decorated with an elaborate gilded pattern of a spotted gold *sablé* ground incorporating *caillouté* roundels interspersed with flower-head shaped areas enclosing a motif of a large dot encircled by a ring of smaller dots known as '*oeil de perdrix*' (partridge's eye).

STUDY OF THE FORM: '*Vase à pied globe*' or '*Vase chinois*'

The "*vase à pied de globe*" was designed by Jean-Claude Duplessis around 1768. Its name refers to the lower section that is in the form of a globe stand. The term appears in the Sèvres documents once in 1769, the same year in which the first examples of vases made in this form are known (although the shape may have been introduced the previous year)¹. The model was made in three sizes, this pair being of the smallest size, which also seems to be the most common. A simplified version of the shape was introduced in about 1774.

A plaster model survives at the Sèvres manufactory with a similar silhouette but without the globe stand base and with Chinese heads at the sides. This plaster model is catalogued in an inventory of 1814 with the title *vase chinois*, however no surviving examples are known of this model with the Chinese heads. The title "*vase chinois*" also appears in the eighteenth-century documents; it is unclear, however, to which shape this term applies. The "*vase à pied de globe*" model may have been referred to by both terms in the eighteenth century and the shape was frequently described as a *vase chinois* from the nineteenth century.

Savill records 6 other pairs of the same size, *quatrième grandeur* : one pair is held at Wadsworth Atheneum (painted with a blue ground and pastoral scenes), one pair is held at the Art Institute of Chicago (painted with a blue ground and pastoral scenes), one is in the Huntington collection (painted with a turquoise blue ground and marine scenes), one pair at Boughton House (painted with a turquoise blue ground and pastoral scenes), one pair at the Wallace Collection, and one pair in the Bearsted collection, at Hupton House².

¹ Rosalind Savill, *The Wallace Collection, Catalogue of Sèvres Porcelain*, London, 1988, Vol.I, p. 363.

² *Ibidem*.

Jean-Baptiste-Etienne GENEST (painter)

Although the figures of children are very much in the style of François Boucher, no source has been identified yet. Roth explains “It is clear that Genest, who was a canvas painter before coming to Sèvres, had no need of Boucher models and created his figures independently³.”

Similar cherubs painted with martial attributes are found on a number of other vases of around the same date. See, for example, the front reserves painted on a “*vase à glands*” (cat. 92) and a “*vase à laurier*” (cat. 93) now The Huntington, San Marino. We find comparable scenes on vases in other collections including: a pair of “*vases à boulons*” at the Wallace Collection, London, and on a pair of “*vases urne antique à ornements*” at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford.

Noting specific similarities in the painted technique on the figural scenes on a group of vases including those mentioned above, Roth attributes the figurative paintings to Jean-Baptiste-Etienne Genest (active 1752-1789), the head of the painter's workshop and one of the most talented painters at the manufactory⁴.

Roth bases her theory on stylistic links between the Hartford vases and two plaques – both painted by the same hand- one being held at Rosenborg Castle, Copenhagen (n°. 23 1302). Although the plaque, offered to Christian VII king of Denmark in 1768, is not signed, we know that the figural scene depicting a military canteen was painted by Genest (see Roth, 2000, p. 151, note 19).

Genest worked at the factory from 1752 until his death in 1789 (Savill, 3, pp. 1035-37). He did not mark his pieces, because as head of the painter's workshop he did not have to account for his production in this manner. He was also responsible for providing models for the other Sèvres painters to copy, and his own paintings were in the possession of the factory (Savill, 3, pp. 1035, 1036, n°6).

³ Linda Roth, n°73, pp. 151, *French Eighteenth-Century Porcelain at the Wadsworth Atheneum museum, The J. Pierpont Morgan Collection*, Hartford, 2000.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 151-155.



Hartford, *Wadsworth Museum*, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan
inv. 1917.1087 inv. 1917.1088



Sèvres, « Vase Chinois », circa 1770

Dimensions: 18 5/8 x 7 1/4 x 6 3/4 in. (47.3 x 18.4 x 17.1 cm.)

San Marino, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens.

The Arabella D. Huntington Memorial Art Collection (inv. 27.33A).

The collection of the Huntington holds a “*vase à pied de globe*” or “*vase chinois*” of the second size, painted with the same ground, ‘*oeil de perdrix*’, and showing similar cherubs painted by Genest in a landscape. It is not clear if the Huntington vase may have been made as a pair with a similar ‘*vase à pied de globe*’ in the Gage collection at Firle Place, Sussex⁵. Although there are some differences in the gilding, the stylistic similarities leads one to speculate that our vases could have been a garniture with one or both of the larger vases such as the one from the Huntington.

⁵ The example at Firle Place is of the same size, has the same ground color and gilded decoration, and has a colored front reserve with three cherubs in a landscape, one holding a harp and the other holding a book of music inscribed Armide.



Vase « Bachelier à couronnes », Sèvres, circa 1769.

After a design by Jean-Jacques Bachelier.

Musée du Louvre, Paris.

The ground colour known as *bleu Fallot* was invented in 1764 by the Sèvres worker Jean Armand Fallot. An écuelle in the musée national de Céramique de Sèvres is dated 1764 and bears Fallot's mark.

It was sometimes covered with *œil de perdrix* or circles of dots gilding to create a modern and sumptuous surface to enhance the magnificence of the new forms of vases. The superb pair of 'vases Bachelier à couronne' painted with *fleurs incrustées* (inlaid flowers) held at the Louvre dated around 1769 is a beautiful example contemporary to our vases.

Our pair can also be linked to another vase, a "vase écritoires" so-called "Queen vase" painted around 1772, now held at Windsor castle. G. de Bellaigue links the vase from the Queen's collection to a sale in December 1772 paid in cash, '*vente au comptant*', for the sum of 960 livres. The sales archives of 1772 mentioned just above an entry for a pair of vases priced

at 720 livres. Unfortunately the pair of vases isn't precisely described but they well could have been the present vases which pattern matches well the 'Queen's vase'⁶.

By the similarities of the patterns, the paintings by Genest and the variations of their sizes and forms, the three vases (the 'Queen's vase' flanked by a pair of 'vases à globe' of 4^{ème} grandeur) would have made a superb garniture.

⁶ G. de Bellaigue, G., 2009. *French Porcelain in the Collection of Her Majesty The Queen*. 3 vols., London. The vase was first recorded at Carlton House in 1826. At this time it was mounted on a carved and gilded stand and can be identified in the account submitted by John Webb, upholsterer, in respect of work undertaken at Buckingham Palace in the March quarter of 1855. The entry reads: 'a Gros bleu & white gold china plinth for largest gros bleu sevres china vase & fixing on Do £3.' Even if production of this model at Sèvres was limited to a single example, it enjoyed in England a posthumous renown. Named 'The Queen's Vase', it was interpreted by Minton, but in a slightly smaller size. The naming of the shape by Minton as 'The Queen's Vase' was, probably, both a sales room gimmick and a form of acknowledgement of Queen Victoria's copyright.

Catalogue description of the vase by de Bellaigue: "This vase has its ground colour overlaid with an overall pattern in gold of large pastilles within circles of dots, which diminish in scale towards the bottom and top. The reserves are painted in polychrome with two putti in a landscape setting on the front, and a bunch of flowers on the back. Framing the reserves are gilded ribbed mouldings.

In the lakeside scene on the front a putto holding a harp hovers in the air astride a cloud beside another putto seated on the ground, who holds open sheets of music. Lying on the ground are a bow and a quiver of arrows, a tambourine and a wind instrument. The putto on the ground is seated on gold-coloured drapery, and pale blue drapery partly covers the clouds. The flowers on the back include roses, carnations, cornflowers, harebells, narcissi, a hollyhock, etc. Particular care has been taken with the gilding of the vase, notably in the burnishing and tooling of the bold foliate wave motif round the stem, in the blurring of the distinction between flat and relief gilding along the centre band, and in the creation of subtle ripple effects through the staggered burnishing of the gold stripes on the foot."



Sèvres, '*vase écritaire*' with *œil de perdrix* ground and cherubs, circa 1772

Soft-paste porcelain,

H. 45.5 x 38.2 x 29.5 cm

Royal Collection Trust, inv. RCIN 2288