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## **FRENCH BAROQUE FAIENCE AND ANDRÉ LE NÔTRE'S GARDENS<sup>1</sup>**

*In general, it is only recently that seventeenth-century baroque faience made for the French royal court has been fully appreciated. Because pottery and the art of the garden are two such distinct fields, the importance of faience in the garden designs of André Le Nôtre (1613–1700), France's most celebrated seventeenth-century landscape architect, had previously been completely overlooked. This article aims not only to demonstrate how Le Nôtre's artistic vision synthesized these two disparate fields, but also to identify where faience garden objects were made and their factory characteristics, and to reveal how the study of graphic sources and archives has allowed us to understand their use and purpose. The colorful and easily portable containers for exotic plants and trees, as decorative elements in an all-encompassing design, were a significant aspect of the fashion for jardins à la française and the use of faience garden urns, which spread to other European royal courts.*

*This essay will also provide new insight into the sumptuous French baroque faience produced for buffet dining en plein air ("in open air") during this period, when magnificent banquets were held outdoors in Le Nôtre's gardens.*

### FRENCH BAROQUE FAIENCE: AN ECLECTIC PRODUCTION

During the second half of the seventeenth century, no faience factory was directly protected and supported by the king of France Louis XIV (1638–1715, r. 1643–1715), and the main manufacturing towns were located far from Paris and Versailles; Rouen was in Normandy, and Nevers, where most of the faience (tin-glazed earthenware) was produced, was in Burgundy.

Nevertheless, French potters developed an original production of functional and decorative objects. They succeeded in producing gigantic pieces, among the most ambitious creations produced by European factories at the time. Faience was one of the most creative fields of the decorative arts in France, perfectly adapted to the different aesthetic styles of Louis XIV's Versailles: exoticism, *chinoiseries* and *turqueries*, and the colorful Italian-influenced *Baroque Versailles*. There was little faience to be found in the Palace of Versailles, and it was thought that there was no mention of it in the royal inventories until close examination was made of the delivery records of supplies for the gardens.

### *The Ceramics Industry in France during the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century*

It is necessary to remember that before the 1680s, ceramic technology in Europe had not developed beyond the production of faience, salt-glazed stoneware, and other earthenwares. Except for the Fontana workshop at the Medici court in Florence in the 1580s, no European factory was producing “porcelain” (soft-paste or hard-paste) before the very end of the seventeenth century. The French court was very receptive to diplomatic gifts coming from the East, one of the main examples being the visit of the Siamese ambassadors in 1686, who brought sumptuous offerings, including much porcelain. The main collectors at the French court were the king’s eldest brother, known at court as *Monsieur*, Duke of Orléans (1640–1701), and master gardener André Le Nôtre. Louis XIV, however, was not passionate about Asian-imported goods, preferring treasures in the Italian tradition, such as silver- or vermeil-mounted precious hard stones, glass, and the like. It was in this environment of pottery manufacturing and rare imported porcelain from China that in 1673 the faïencier Edme Poterat (1612–1687) started to experiment with the production of soft-paste porcelain in Rouen, and in the 1690s the Chicaneau and Trou families began to produce soft-paste porcelain in the Chinese manner at Saint-Cloud on a larger scale, in a factory founded by Claude Révérend in 1664 and protected by *Monsieur*.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the factory in Nevers and the many potteries in Delft in the Netherlands were the major producers of faience outside Italy. In France, the technique of tin-glazed and decorated earthenware had been imported from Italy in the sixteenth century by a group of Ligurian potters from Albisola (near Genoa) who, following glassmakers from Altare in northern Italy, established the new industry of faience manufacture. They went first to Lyon and then to Nevers, where they received the support of Louis I Gonzaga, Duke of

Mantua (1539–1595), recently married to Princess Henriette de Cleves (1542–1601), heiress of the duchy of Nevers. Eventually the Ligurian potters spread across France,<sup>2</sup> and two generations later their descendants were still supplying faience for Versailles and all the gardens of the royal residences. Versailles also was supplied with faience from Delft and Saint-Cloud by Révérend, who was the main purveyor of Delft faience in France.

### *The Trianon de Porcelaine: French Baroque Ceramics and the Taste for China*

If a singular building embodied the fashion for ceramics at the court of Louis XIV, it was the so-called *Trianon de porcelaine* (FIG. 1), which would have been more appropriately named the *Trianon de faience*, as it actually was made of faience.<sup>3</sup> This extraordinary pavilion in the Trianon gardens at Versailles was designed in 1670 by Louis Le Vau (1612–1670), the king’s chief architect. Built in a classical style, the *Trianon de porcelaine* was entirely furnished and decorated in the newly fashionable blue and white, *à la manière de la Chine* (“in the Chinese manner”). The term *porcelaine* was used to describe anything that was blue and white—stucco, wood panels, fabrics, and furniture, such as the creations of Pierre Gole (ca. 1620–1684), the king’s master furniture maker. The pavilion had a painted metal roof and many sculpted ornaments, including faience and porcelain vases and other furnishings, and the façade was clad in thousands of blue-and-white Delft-style ceramic tiles, also used on the interior. Unfortunately, the building had a very short life; it was demolished in 1686 on orders from the king, partly because the fragile ceramic tiles were disintegrating, but perhaps also because it was too closely associated with his love affair with Madame de Montespan (1640–1719), for whose delight the pavilion was created.

### *Finding Faience at Versailles: The Gardens of Trianon*

Although it was difficult to find any trace of faience inside the Palace of Versailles, large quantities of fragments were excavated, especially in the gardens of the Trianon,<sup>4</sup> all around the area where the *Trianon de porcelaine* had stood. The fragments have not yet been properly classified and have been studied only by archaeologists and not by art historians or ceramic specialists.<sup>5</sup> However, from the available and published fragments, we were able to identify the material, the location and date of their production, and their function. Surprisingly, no traces of Oriental porcelain were found, only sherds of faience that had been made mainly in Nevers between 1660 and 1700 (FIG. 2). One of the most ambitious of the surviving examples is the monumental garden urn, painted in blue and white in the Chinese

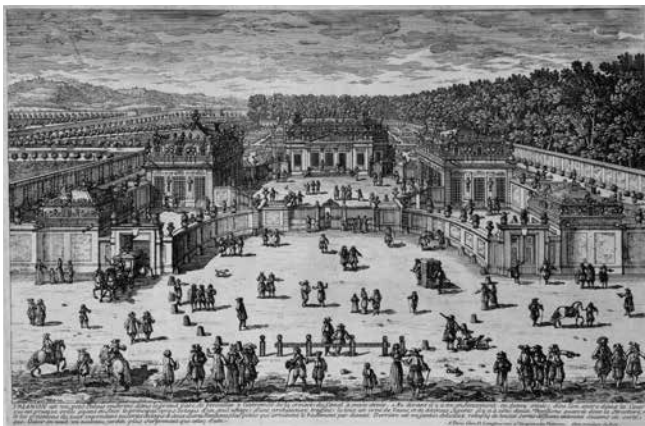


FIG. 1: *Le Trianon de porcelaine vu du côté de l'entrée* [The Trianon de porcelaine viewed from the entrance], engraving, Perelle family, 1675–1700. 7½ x 11⅞ in. (19 x 29 cm). Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France, Inv. Recueil de gravures grosseuvre 137. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Gérard Blot.

manner on a classical form with two baroque handles. Known as the “Garcia vase” after its current owner, the urn displays the French royal coat of arms, although the fleur-de-lys has been defaced, probably during the Revolution (FIG. 3).

The royal reports, *Comptes des bâtiments du Roi*, indicate that on December 4, 1665, there was a delivery of “*vases jassemains*” by the potter Nicolas Estienne (fl. mid-17th century), who owned the Ecce Homo factory in Nevers.<sup>6</sup> It was a small



FIG. 2 (LEFT): Faience sherds excavated from the Trianon Garden, Versailles, Nevers, France, ca. 1660–1675. From Jean Rosen, *La Faïence de Nevers, 1585–1900*, 2 vols. (Dijon: Faton Éditions, 2009), p. 210, fig. 295. Photo: © J. Rosen.

- 1 and 2. Twisted handles of a *vase jassemain* decorated with blue highlights (inv. VHC-C200 and 193), Nevers, 1665–1675. The handles were probably decorated in the Chinese style.
3. Neck of a vase decorated with floral motifs and palms in blue *camaïeu* (inv. VHC-C180), Delft with “Kraak” decoration, ca. 1660.
4. Plate decorated in the Chinese style in blue *camaïeu* (inv. VHC-C174), Nevers, 1665, after Delft (see plate dated 1662, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, inv. EV524)
5. Belly of a vase decorated with flowers and birds in blue *camaïeu* (inv. VHC-C94), Nevers, 1665–1675
6. Fragment of a vase decorated with animals and foliage in blue *camaïeu* (inv. BR08-DC-e19), Nevers, 1665–1675
7. Twisted handle of a *vase jassemain* painted with drops of wax from a candle on a *bleu persan* ground (inv. VHC-C190), Nevers, 1665–1675
8. Foot of a vase decorated with birds and foliage in white on a *bleu persan* ground (inv. VHC-C186), Nevers, 1665–1675

FIG. 3 (RIGHT): Monumental garden urn bearing French royal coat of arms, faience, Nevers, France, ca. 1670–1685. H. 32¼ in. (82 cm). Collection Jacques Garcia, Champs de Bataille, France. Photo: © Agence Photo F, Mathieu Ferrier.

delivery, suggesting that samples of garden vases were being shown for approval. The deliveries of garden pots, often named *vases jassemains*, became increasingly important, and were no longer handled by the potters themselves but by *marchand faïenciers*, the inevitable intermediaries between artisans and the court. The most important of these was Pierre Lemaire, whose deliveries are well recorded in the royal accounting records.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Nevers and the Production of Baroque Faience Garden Urns*

Records show that deliveries were made by factories located in Saint-Cloud<sup>8</sup> and Rouen,<sup>9</sup> but from the study of the sherds and existing pieces it would appear that most of the vases came from Nevers. The most common model, produced in various sizes, was the *vase jassemain*, which was characterized by a baluster shape, twisted handles, and holes in the bottom, indicating that it was designed to contain plants that require watering (FIG. 4).

The Nevers production, however, was eclectic and included a great variety of shapes and decoration, among them large urns and Medici vases with baroque sculptural handles (FIG. 5). Most of these vases were painted blue and white with Chinese figures or motifs in accordance with the new fashion for things Chinese: *à la manière de la Chine* or *façon d’Ollande* (“Dutch style,” meaning “Delft style,” which at this time was also largely in the Chinese taste). But other patterns were developed as well, such as the so-called *décor à la palette*, a colorful interpretation of Japanese porcelains, and *turquoise (pastorales turques)* from the Middle East, which were often mixed with classical motifs.

The most modern decoration created at Nevers was the *Bleu Persan* (“Persian Blue”), used extensively in the production of baroque garden pots. This characteristic decoration of white motifs on a rich blue ground was first classified as “*décor Persan*” by Alexandre Brongniart (1770–1847), the famous director of the Manufacture Nationale de Porcelaine at Sèvres, in his *Traité des arts céramiques* (1844). Louis Du Broc de Segange (1808–1885) similarly described the pattern as “*goût Persan*” (“in the Persian taste”) in his 1863 book on Nevers faience.<sup>10</sup> The source was Middle Eastern Safavid ceramics made in Kirman under the reign of Shah Abbas I (1571–1629), and the depth of the cobalt-blue color was an obvious reference to Persian lapis lazuli (FIG. 6). On this rich blue ground, the Nevers potters painted a variety of compositions: figurative (*chinoiseries*, *turqueries*, or pastoral scenes), floral, or other designs that were influenced by Iznik pottery and Chinese porcelain. As the Nevers pottery painters progressed in their skill and speed, they developed a more abstract design, the so-called *à la bougie*, meaning painted with



FIG. 4: Garden vases called *vases jassemains*, Faïence, Nevers, France, ca. 1660–1680. From Camille Leprince, *La Faïence baroque française et les jardins de Le Nôtre* (Paris: Feu et Talent, 2014), pp. 44–45.



FIG. 5: Garden urns or tree vases, Faïence, Nevers, France, ca. 1660–1680. From Camille Leprince, *La Faïence baroque française et les jardins de Le Nôtre* (Paris: Feu et Talent, 2014), pp. 44–45.

white drops of tin glaze to imitate drops of wax from a candle (see FIG. 12). Modern and strange-looking, this pattern was one of the most creative expressions of exoticism; it was also quicker to produce and thus easier to supply for large commissions, although objects made using this technique of enameling in white on a blue ground were much more costly than the “regular” tin-glazed pieces painted with blue *chinoiseries* on a white ground. It was a great luxury to order such large quantities of vases enameled entirely in cobalt for the gardens. Documents show, however, that André Le Nôtre was systematically supplying the court’s *jardins à la française* (“gardens in the French style”) with “porcelain” that was, in reality, faïence. It is interesting to imagine that Le Nôtre was “painting” the royal gardens with “lapis lazuli” faïence pots, just as Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (1520–1589) a century earlier in Rome intended to impress his guests with his Castelli *berretimo* (grayish blue-glazed faïence) tableware.



FIG. 6: Garden vase (*jardiniere*) with chimera handles, tin-glazed earthenware (faïence) with enamel chinoiserie decoration on a *bleu persan* ground, Nevers, France, ca. 1660–1680. H. 13<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (35.2 cm). Collection of the Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama; Gift of Robert Sistrunk, 1980.346. Photo: Sean Pathasema.

## ANDRÉ LE NÔTRE’S GARDENS AND THE USE OF FAIENCE GARDEN URNS

### *Le Nôtre and the Concept of the Jardin à la française*

André Le Nôtre was a prominent figure and the chief gardener to the French court for nearly fifty years. He created the concept of the French formal garden, the *jardin à la française*, which quickly became the standard in Europe, to be adopted by almost every Northern European court. The second half of the seventeenth century in France was also a time of great experimentation in horticulture. Indeed, Le Nôtre collaborated closely with the agronomist and gardener Jean-Baptiste de la Quintinie (1625–1688). The spread of the *jardin à la française* and the popularity of these formal gardens punctuated with various portable ornaments created a great demand for faïence flowerpots, which were seen as desirable modern accessories and therefore had to be decorated according to the latest fashion. An ideal depiction of modernity would have been *L’Hiver* (Winter) and *Le Printemps* (Spring) from the tapestry series *Les Enfants jardiniers* (Cupid gardeners), designed by the esteemed painter Charles Le Brun (1619–1690) and manufactured at the Gobelins Royal Manufactory of tapestry in Paris (FIG. 7). In *L’Hiver* the cupid gardeners are shown tending delicate plants and putting them in ceramic containers painted in blue and white in the Chinese fashion, which are then placed in delicate glass and wood cold frames. This scene encompasses various fields of experimentation: glass, ceramics, and the cultivation of precious and fragile flowers.



FIG. 7: *L’Hiver* [Winter] (detail), from the series *Les Enfants jardiniers* [Cupid gardeners], wool tapestry, after Charles le Brun (1619–1690), Gobelins Manufactory, workshop of Mozin, Paris, 1684–94. Musée Grobet Labadié, Marseille, France, GL716. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: David Giancatarina.



FIG. 8: *Marie-Anne de Bourbon, princesse de Conti, et Louis de Bourbon, comte de Vermandois*, oil on canvas, Louis Édouard Rioult (1790–1855) after Pierre Mignard (1612–1695), France, 1839. 51<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 53<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (129.7 x 136.3 cm). Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France, Inv. MV4304. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Gérard Blot. The detail shows a pink jasmine in a Nevers faience blue-and-white jasmine pot.

### *Faïence Pots: Symbols of Luxury and Modernity*

Symbols of luxury and modernity, ceramic garden containers and vases were depicted in contemporary tapestries and paintings. It was fashionable to have one's portrait painted showing either a rare and precious plant in a fancy faience pot or a lush arrangement of flowers in a stylish vase. In their portrait of 1839, Louis XIV and Mademoiselle de La Vallière's children Anne-Marie de Bourbon, Mademoiselle de Blois (1666–1739), and her brother Louis de Bourbon, comte de Vermandois (1667–1683), are posed beside a jasmine flower in a Nevers jasmine pot (*vase jassemim*) painted with blue-and-white *chinoiserie* decoration (FIG. 8).

These faience pots were highly regarded by Le Nôtre himself. In his posthumous inventory of November 4, 1686,<sup>11</sup> are mentions of *vases jassemims* described as “porcelain,” and some were even ormolu mounted. These entries show the importance Le Nôtre gave not only to exotic flowers but also to their containers.

### *The Use of Faïence Garden Urns in French Royal Orangeries*

The second half of the seventeenth century witnessed a growing interest in exotic, rare, and precious flowers (among them laurels from Alexandria, tulips, jasmine, pink jasmine, and others), and a new taste for citrus fruits such as lemons and

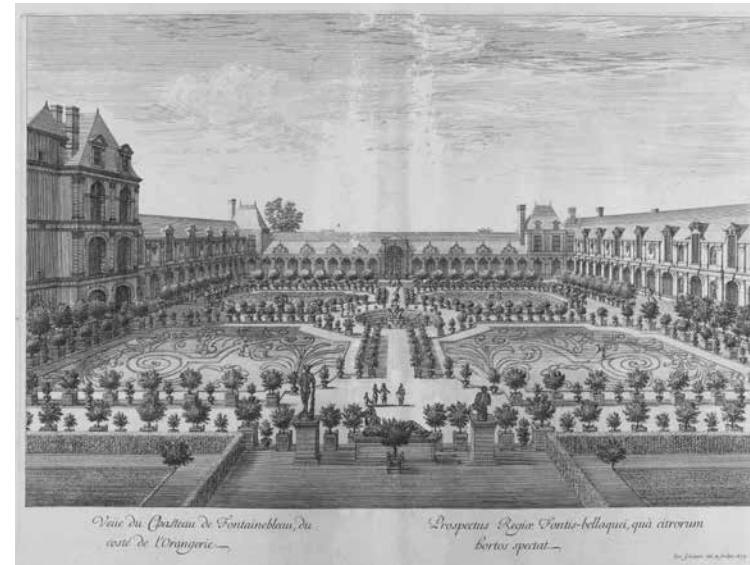


FIG. 9 (TOP): *Vue du Château de Fontainebleau du côté de l'Orangerie*, engraving, Israël Silvestre the younger (1621–1691), 1679. Château de Fontainebleau, France. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Franck Raux.

FIG. 10 (BOTTOM): *Vue cavalière du château et du parc de Saint-Cloud* [Bird's-eye view of castle and lower gardens of Saint-Cloud] (detail), oil on canvas, attributed to Étienne Allegrain (1644–1736), 1675–1677. 123<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 152 in. (314 x 386 cm). Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France, Inv. MV743. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Gérard Blot.



oranges grown in orangeries, which became fashionable among the royal courts of France, Holland, and England. The desire to acclimatize such fruits and flowers to the Northern European environment resulted in the need for portable containers made of wood, painted metal, and especially ceramics. The French royal orangeries were filled with large quantities of exotic trees displayed in ceramic containers. Indeed, *vases jassemims* were delivered for the orangery at the Château de Fontainebleau as early as 1664,<sup>12</sup> and are illustrated in an engraving by Israël Silvestre (1621–1691), which is an important document because it shows the clever display of trees potted in square wooden tubs and faience vases (FIG. 9). The abundance and meticulous arrangement of the ceramic and wood containers is immediately noticeable, large wooden boxes alternating with smaller ceramic pots on rectangular red marble (*marbre du Languedoc*) socles with a clever counterpoint of heights. The engraving shows this arrangement edging the paths bordering the four almost octagonal flower beds in which the flowers are planted to form arabesque shapes—all part of the overall pattern typical of a *jardin à la française*.

The orangery of the Château of Saint-Cloud, which was the residence of *Monsieur*, was similarly decorated. A view painted by Étienne Allegrain (1644–1736) around 1675 shows a profusion of trees in containers made of both ceramics and wood and displayed around the château, but concentrated in the orangery, where they form the garden itself (FIG. 10). At Saint-Cloud, Le Nôtre created a geometrical matrix of alternating containers of different sizes, shapes, and materials: one large wooden box alternating with three smaller ceramic vases, all of which were painted either in blue or white. The display of the containers clearly had a functional purpose as well as a decorative one.

Of all the royal family, *Monsieur* was the keenest on the latest fashions and, as previously mentioned, an important collector of Chinese porcelain. We can imagine that his collections were displayed according to the current vogue, exemplified by the interiors created by Daniel Marot (1661–1752), the French-born Dutch architect, designer, and engraver, and popularized by his engravings (*Nouvelles cheminées faites en plusieurs endroits de la Hollande et autres provinces*) depicting profusions of blue-and-white Chinese porcelain displayed according to a clever geometrical arrangement.<sup>13</sup> At Saint-Cloud, the interior design was also continued outside, a strategy that would have been considered the height of sophistication. While the faience garden urns for *Monsieur* could have been made at Nevers, it is more likely that they were produced at Saint-Cloud as he was the protector of the factory.

#### *Versailles Gardens and Bosquets*

At Versailles, faience garden urns were displayed throughout the gardens and in the bosquets (groves of trees). The study of paintings showing the different bosquets is helpful in understanding the various uses and types of vases. A view of the bosquet of the *Montagne d'Eau* at Versailles by Jean Cotelle the younger (1642–1708), painted in 1693 (FIG. 11), depicts blue-and-white “Medici” vases with twisted handles displayed on top of the trellis, similar to the Medici vase with triton handles (FIG. 12). The containers are no longer displayed on the ground but rather decorating the top of a structure that was custom-made for this particular bosquet. The painting shows that vases of this type were an indispensable part of the ornamental decor. Indeed, the combination of white and blue with the green trellis and the colorful flowers and plants provides a stunning contrast.

The display of faience vases in enormous quantities all over the gardens deeply impressed visiting guests. In his book *Les Divertissements de Versailles . . .*<sup>14</sup> (Entertainments at Versailles), dated 1674, André Félibien (1619–1695) described



FIG. 11 (LEFT): *Vue du bosquet de l'étoile ou La Montagne d'eau dans le jardins de Versailles* [View of the grove of the star or the water mountains in the gardens of Versailles], gouache on vellum, Jean Cotelle the younger (1642–1708), 1693. 17<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (45.5 x 26 cm). Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France, Inv. MV8440;INVDessin756. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Philippe Bernard.

FIG. 12 (RIGHT): Medici vase with triton handles, *bleu Persan* painted *à la bougie*, faience, Nevers, France, 1665–1685, H. 20<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (53 cm). Private collection. Photo: © Agence Photo F, Mathieu Ferrier.

the display along the canal of hundreds of “porcelain” (in fact faience) vases containing small trees. He also noted the decor in the *Bosquet du Marais*, where orange trees were potted in “porcelain” vases among a considerable quantity of flowers: “To the beauty of this place has been added thousands of enhancements, especially a large quantity of orange-tree pots and porcelain pots filled with a multitude of flowers”.<sup>15</sup> The profuse display of blue-and-white vases was a source of delight for the visitor. In her 1669 novella *La Promenade de Versailles: Dédiée au Roi* (The Walk of Versailles: Dedicated to the King), Madeleine de Scudéry (1607–1701) visits the gardens with a guest, “*la belle étrangère*” (“the beautiful stranger”). The guest praises all of the flower vases displayed along the terraces as being so beautifully arranged. She also notices that a large number of the vases were made of porcelain (meaning faience painted in blue and white with Chinese motifs) while others are made of bronze.<sup>16</sup>



FIG. 13: Monumental garden urn bearing the royal coat of arms of the queen dowager Hedwig-Eleonora of Sweden, faience, Nevers, France, ca. 1680–1690. H. 28¾ in. (73 cm). Sweden, Royal Castle of Drottningholm. Photo: © Photo: Fredrik Engberg, The Royal Court, Sweden.

#### THE DIFFUSION OF FAIENCE GARDEN URNS TO OTHER ROYAL COURTS IN EUROPE

The art of the *jardin à la française* conceived by André Le Nôtre was not exclusive to the French royal court. It was quick to spread throughout France and all across Europe. Indeed, an annotated drawing by Nicodème Tessin the younger (1654–1728), one of Le Nôtre’s followers, clearly explains the function and display of faience vases: “N.B. [on] the *plates-bandes* of lawn framing the parterre (flower bed) are displayed porcelain vases on top of red marble socles [?] where we pot either bushes, trees, or flowers according to the season.”<sup>17</sup> These precise notes taken by Tessin during his journeys in Paris are highly

significant. He was the architect to the Swedish court and was protected by Queen Hedwig-Eleonora (1636–1715), the wife and consort of King Charles X Gustav (1622–1660, r. 1654–1660) and mother and regent for their son and successor, Charles XI (1655–1697). Tessin went twice to Versailles to study French architecture and also the art of gardening. On his first visit, between 1677 and 1680, he made friends with Le Nôtre and the painter Charles Le Brun. During his second trip, in 1687, he spent most of his time with his mentor Le Nôtre. Tessin probably made this drawing during one of his visits. He was the main disseminator of the French style in Sweden, by refashioning the royal gardens of Drottningholm in the manner of Le Nôtre as *jardins à la française*. It is interesting to see how important the “porcelain” garden urns and vases were in their function not only as containers but also as ornamental elements, part of the overall design of the garden.

The Swedish royal collection holds a pair of monumental garden urns made in Nevers circa 1680–1690 (FIG. 13). It is logical that the vases were from Nevers, the center of faience production in France, and that they are painted with blue-and-white *chinoiseries* according to the latest fashion. But what makes them special is that they bear the large coat of arms of Queen Hedwig-Eleonora and are still located in situ. Stylistically they are very similar to the “Garcia vase,” as they all are monumental, in baroque shapes, and decorated with similar patterns.

#### Queen Mary: Delftware and Flowers, Another Royal Testimony to the Use of Baroque Ware Associated with Flowers

The protestant Daniel Marot was another great diffuser of the French baroque style and Le Nôtre’s concept of the *jardin à la française*. The Huguenot designer left France for the Low Countries, where he worked for William II, Prince of Orange (1726–1650), and his English wife, Princess Mary Henrietta Stuart (1631–1660). Later, particularly after William and Mary were crowned as joint monarchs of both the Netherlands and Great Britain in 1689, she became demonstrably one of the most enthusiastic royal patrons of the arts in Europe, cherishing both flowers and ceramics, and formed a major collection of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain and Dutch Delftware in her two primary residences, Het Loo in the Netherlands and Hampton Court in Britain. She spent much of her time collecting and arranging flowers (tulips, jasmines, carnations, and the like) in extraordinary Delft spouted vases provided mainly by *De Grieksche A* (The Greek A) factory under the directorship of Adrianus Kocx (d. 1701).<sup>18</sup>

At Het Loo Palace, built in 1686, the *Salle des bouquets* was the then-Princess Mary’s favorite room for creating bouquets of flowers displayed in Delft “porcelain” vases (FIG. 14). We can only imagine that the interior of the room was entirely covered with Dutch tiles (mainly Delft) and decorated in a style similar to that of the *Trianon de porcelaine* built for Madame de Montespan. After their coronation in 1689, William and Mary moved to England, where the queen ordered



FIG. 14 (LEFT): View of the *Salle des bouquets* (flower-arranging room) with Dutch Delft faience at Paleis Het Loo, Apeldoorn, Netherlands, palace completed in 1686. Photo: © Galerie Aronson, Amsterdam.

FIG. 15 (RIGHT): Great Chamber fireplace of the State Apartment at Chatsworth House, with a display of Dutch Delft flower and tree faience vases ordered by the first Duke of Devonshire from *De Grieksche A* factory, ca. 1694, Chatsworth, England. Photo: © Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

FIG. 16: *Les Fêtes de 1674, seconde journée: concerts de musique, sous une feuillée faite en forme de salon, ornée de fleurs, dans le jardin de Trianon* [Celebration of 1674, second day: musical concerts, in a room made of foliage, decorated with flowers, in the Trianon Garden], engraving, François Chauveau (1613–1676), 1675. 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (29.3 x 42 cm). Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France, Inv. GR302. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Christophe Fouin.



the construction of the most sumptuous orangery in the so-called Water Gallery at Hampton Court (1689–94). The new royal fashion for displaying flowers and exotic plants and trees in Delft vases and urns spread rapidly across the United Kingdom. Rich noblemen such as William Cavendish, fourth Earl of Devonshire (1640–1707), ordered important garden ware; in 1694, the year he was made first Duke of Devonshire, an ensemble of Delft vases, some decorated with the new duke’s coat of arms, was delivered from *De Grieksche A* factory to Chatsworth, the family’s country house in Derbyshire, which he was in the process of rebuilding in a grand manner (FIG. 15).<sup>19</sup> These large Delft vases survive at Chatsworth as rare and important examples of the international royal and aristocratic taste for “porcelain” in the context of garden design in Europe.

#### OUTDOOR ROYAL BANQUETS AND FRENCH BAROQUE FAIENCE BUFFETS

An engraving by François Chauveau (1613–1676) depicting *Les Fêtes de 1674 données par Louis XIV à Versailles* (FIG. 16), shows a temporary structure for parties and concerts decorated with rows and circles of flower pots, demonstrating also the different uses of the *vase jassemín*. Among them is a “classic” display of pots around the *margelle* (a border of grass) surrounding the fountain. The *vase jassemín* also played a key role in the interior decoration of the ephemeral structure, which would have been filled with pots placed in the foreground or on top of the ledge. These urns were used both as seasonal plant containers for landscaping and as elements in the conception of a French formal garden. Easily portable, the urns were multifunctional for indoor and outdoor festivities, adding splendor to the sumptuous wares that were produced specifically for outdoor banquets.

#### *Versailles Baroque, the So-Called Grand Genre Versailles*

King Louis XIV, finance minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683), and French artists such as Charles Le Brun aimed to proclaim Paris-Versailles as a new Rome, the new capital of the arts. The French were competing with the Italian *magnificenza* and wanted to create their own national style: *le Grand Genre*, or French Baroque. This new style was refined and disseminated by one prominent figure, Charles Le Brun. Director of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, he also directed the royal factory of Gobelins (which produced tapestries and every level of furniture for the royal households), and the *mobilier royal*, the provider of home furnishings for the king. Louis XIV appointed Le Brun not only his *Premier peintre du roi* (first painter to the king), but also his home designer, creating *modelli* for tapestries, silver, and so forth. He supervised most of the Versailles artistic program from 1661 until his death, in 1690.

As much as any of the artists and artisans in France, it was Le Brun who created the style of Louis XIV’s baroque, the so-called *Grand Genre Versailles*. The Nevers faience must be seen as a colorful and creative version of the famous *mobilier d’argent* (silver furniture), ordered by Louis XIV in 1661 and again in 1668. Nevers baroque faience suited this grand style aesthetically, and seen today it survives as important evidence of the French decorative arts of this period, the silver having been melted down by royal edict in 1689 to replenish governmental coffers depleted by the king’s war debts, with no known surviving pieces.

#### *Outdoor Banquets*

The “Sun King” Louis XIV’s goal of impressing the world with his magnificence was evident at Versailles in the luxurious interiors, such as the famous *Galerie des Glaces*, but perhaps even more so through his astonishing gardens, where spectacular and unforgettable parties were held.

The tradition of outdoor banquets takes its source from Italy. The fresco of the *Banquet of Gods and Goddesses* painted circa 1532–34 by Giulio Romano (ca. 1499–1546) in the Palazzo del Te in Mantua, illustrates the opulence of sixteenth-century outdoor banquets. In the seventeenth century, extravagant banquets in the garden continued to be a fashionable form of entertainment and hospitality. An engraving of 1668 by Carlo Fontana (1638–1714) depicts a spectacular credenza (buffet) covered completely with faience vessels placed on a temporary wooden structure set up in Cardinal Flavio Chigi’s (1631–1693) gardens in Rome (FIG. 17). At Versailles, tableware was displayed in a similar way in a bosquet or a *salle de verdure* (a room





FIG. 17 (TOP): *Prospetto di credenza* (View of a buffet), engraving from *Risposta del signor Carlo Fontana alla lettera dell'illustriss. sig. Ottavio Castiglioni . . .* (Rome: Angelo Bernabò, 1668). Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome (Vol. Misc. 1940/7), courtesy of MIBACT. Photo: Mario Setter.

FIG. 18 (BOTTOM): *Le grand divertissement due 18 juillet 1668: Louis XIV entrant dans la salle du festin élevée sur l'emplacement du bassin de Flore* [The Great Entertainment for July 18, 1668: Louis XIV entering the festival room built on top of the pond of flora], engraving, Jean Le Pautre (1618–1682) after Jean Bérain the elder (1640–1711), Paris, 1678. Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France, Inv.grav. 5792. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Christophe Fouin.

“credenza” illustrates a unique French baroque ware that combines the Italian tradition of colorful *istoriato* (decorated scenes) with new shapes. Many of the pieces of this “credenza” were from the famous Fountaine Collection formed originally in the early eighteenth century by Sir Andrew Fountaine (1676–1753). A friend of the historian Horace Walpole (1717–1797) and a man of letters, Whig politician, and collector in his own right, Fountaine collected Italian maiolica and French earthenware (Palissy and Saint-Porchaire) and faience, among other antiquities, during his Grand Tour. Could he have bought these Nevers pieces at a very early stage of his collecting career because of a possible royal provenance? All we know is that the pieces were most likely acquired in the eighteenth century and therefore only a half century after the creation of Nevers faience.

formed by greenery) on a temporary structure decorated with furnishings in tin, ormolu, silver, or ceramics. One of the most famous parties held in the Versailles gardens was the *fête* in 1668 described by André Félibien and engraved by Jean Le Pautre (1618–1682) (FIG. 18).<sup>20</sup> The engraving depicts a magnificent banquet with impressive tableware characterized by its great size and classical structured forms with baroque handles and ornaments (zoomorphic or anthropomorphic), and decorated with mythological scenes. Other anonymous drawings (FIG. 19) of the time illustrate enormous baroque wares displayed among large structures made of grass.

Several years ago I set about re-creating an arrangement for a French baroque credenza (*dressoir Versailles*) (FIG. 20), with Nevers wares that were produced around 1680 and could have been made for a party given in one of the bosquets of Versailles.

This reconstitution of a “French credenza”



FIG. 19 (LEFT): *Un des deux Buffets pour le service des Dames qui accompagnoient et qui servoient comme de Credence au Grand buffet du Roy, dans la feste donnée dans le petit Parc de Versailles. Le 18 juillet 1668* [One of the two buffets for the service of the ladies-in-waiting, which served as the buffet for the king’s Great Credenza, at the festival given in the small park at Versailles], drawing on paper, artist unknown, France, ca. 1668–1700. 26 x 19 in. (66 x 48.4 cm). Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Inv. QB-4 (1668-7-16). © BnF, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

FIG. 20 (RIGHT): Theoretical re-creation of an arrangement for a “French credenza,” baroque faience, Nevers, France, ca. 1680. From Camille Leprince, *La Faïence baroque française et les jardins de Le Nôtre* (Paris: Feu et Talent, 2014), pp. 180–81.

### Monumental and Extravagant Shapes Related to Silver: The Famous Mobilier d’argent

Throughout the history of faience production, the forms created have borne many similarities to contemporary silver, such as the famous *Mobilier d’argent*, as is evident in some engravings by Alexis Loir (1649–1713), a goldsmith and engraver to the king, who collaborated on the *Mobilier d’argent*. An engraving by Loir (FIG. 21) gives us a close approximation of what *Mobilier d’argent* looked like, and it is very similar to the faience known today. The Nevers baroque faience must be appreciated as a colorful version of the royal silver that is now completely lost.

Claude Ballin (1617–1678), the king’s goldsmith and a collaborator on the creation of the *Mobilier d’argent*, designed some garden urns intended to be produced in metal, including dragon garden urns, a bronze version of which was later (FIG. 22) and examples of which are today displayed on the *Parterres du Midi* at Versailles. It is striking to compare the dragon handle with the four ewers along the top and in the middle illustrated in the reconstitution of the *dressoir Versailles*.



FIG. 21 (ABOVE): *Dessins de brasiers dont les ornements peuvent servir aux cuvettes, tables et autres ouvrages d'orfèvrerie* [Drawings of braziers whose ornaments could serve as basins, tables, and other works in silver], engraving, Pierre Mariette II the Younger (1634–1716), Paris, printmaker Alexis Loir (1640–1713), published ca. 1690–1716. 6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (16 x 23.5 cm) to plate mark. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, E.5120-1904. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum.

FIG. 22 (LEFT): Garden vase with dragon handles, bronze, designed by Claude Ballin, displayed on the *Parterres du Midi*, Versailles. Photo: © Camille Leprince.



FIG. 23 (ABOVE): Gilt metal furnishing (modern reproduction) displayed at the *Salle de bal*, also called *Bosquet des rocailles*, Versailles. Photo: © ZohaStel.

FIG. 24 (RIGHT): Monumental baroque wine cistern, faience, Nevers, France, ca. 1680. H. 34<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (87 cm). Private collection. Photo: © Agence Photo F, Mathieu Ferrier.



An extravagant set of furnishings made of metal was created especially for the *Bosquet des rocailles* (“grove of rock work”), also called the *Salle de bal* (“ballroom”), designed by André Le Nôtre between 1680 and 1683. This bosquet, a place for entertainment, dancing, and music, was entirely equipped with these sumptuous furnishings made of gilt metal and comprising basins, candelabra, and the like (FIG. 23).

Some examples were monumental forms ornate with sculpted ornament in high relief and baroque handles formed as human heads or faces of animals such as lions (FIG. 24). Others were decorated with scenes depicting mythological themes of gods, goddesses, and children in pastoral, woodland, or river settings—a reference to Italian tradition. It is interesting to note the interaction between the gigantic baroque Nevers ware and its metal counterparts, as they were both created with the same sensibility.

#### *An Iconography in Harmony with Versailles Gardens*

The iconography of these pieces of faience is in perfect harmony with garden festivity and the allegorical universe of Versailles. The main themes were mythological, often bacchic, painted from the 1640s after sophisticated engraved sources

by artists such as Michel Dorigny (1617–1663), Nicolas Chaperon (1612–1656), François Chauveau (1613–1676), and Laurent de la Hyre (1606–1656), all of whom were followers of Simon Vouet (1590–1649) and Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665). The composition of some pieces, for example a monumental charger now at the Musée du Louvre (FIG. 25), combines recent sources, including *The Abduction of Europa* by Chauveau (published in an edition of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in the 1670s), with some earlier engravings, the illustrations by Jaspas Isaac (d. 1654) and Antoine Caron (1521–1599) for the celebrated *Image, ou Tableaux de platte-peinture de Philostrate Lemmien* (translated into French by Blaise de Vigenère and first published in 1614) (FIG. 26). It is particularly interesting to study the figures painted on the rim of the Louvre charger. If Nevers potters had access to the latest and most fashionable sources of their time, why would they have used some old-fashioned engravings? *Images, ou Tableaux de platte-peinture* was an important source for Le Brun. Indeed, he used this publication for his classes at the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture and also as a source for the sculptures in the Versailles gardens (*Petite Commande* and *Grande Commande*). By this means, the baroque faience ware of Nevers was fully integrated into the environment of the gardens, sculptures, and fountains through its shape and iconography.

French potters created a spectacular product to satisfy the need for furnishing the formal gardens of the time. Not only was the faïence of practical use, but it also provided a modern ornament in an overall scheme of exterior decoration. The French baroque faïenciers closely followed the latest fashions for porcelain and the concept of *jardins à la française*, and in its modernity this faïence held a special place at the court of Louis XIV until the end of his reign in 1715.

This ongoing research project seeks to discover more precise information about the display of faïence and porcelain at outdoor banquets and to achieve a better understanding of what the *Trianon de porcelaine* looked like.



FIG. 25 (LEFT): Charger with the Abduction of Europa, faïence with polychrome decoration, Nevers, France, ca. 1680. Diam. 22<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (58 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris, France, Guillemandet bequest, 1865, OA 2019. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Martine Beck-Coppola.

FIG. 26 (BOTTOM): 1. *L'Enlèvement d'Europe* [The Abduction of Europa], François Chauveau, engraving from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, edition Van Merlen, Paris, ca. 1670 (center). Plates from *Les Images, ou Tableaux de platte-peinture de Philostrate Lemnien*, translated by Blaise de Vigenere, illustrated by Jaspas Isaac and Antoine Caron, Paris, 1614: 2. *Olympe* (detail); 3. *Les Marescages* (The Marshes) (detail); 4. *Narcisse* (detail); 5. *Scaramandre* (detail)



NOTES

1. This article is based on my book *La Faïence baroque française et les jardins de Le Nôtre* (Paris: Feu et Talent, 2014).
2. For a comprehensive publication on Nevers faïence, see Jean Rosen, *La faïence de Nevers, 1585–1900*, 2 vols. (Dijon: Faton, 2009).
3. Annick Heitzmann, “Le Trianon de porcelaine à Versailles,” in *Kangxi Empereur de Chine, 1662–1722: La Cité interdite à Versailles*, exh. cat., Musée national du château de Versailles (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004), 167–75; Annick Heitzmann, “Trianon: La Place de la faïence dans le château de porcelaine,” *Versalia*, no. 8 (2005): 60–65.
4. Annick Heitzmann, “Trianon et Versailles: Les Vases de jardin,” in *Châteaux de Faïence: XIV<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, exh. cat., Musée Promenade de Marly-le-Roi—Louveciennes (Marly-le-Roi: Musée Promenade, 1993); Ernest Auscher, “La Céramique au château de Versailles pendant le règne de Louis XIV,” *Revue de l'histoire de Versailles et de Seine-et-Oise* 5 (1903): 81–119, 161–87.
5. Archaeological studies and archives testify that there was a considerable amount of faïence not only in the Trianon gardens, but in all the gardens of Versailles.
6. Comptes des bâtiments du Roi, December 4, 1665, expenses at Versailles (col. 85): “A ESTIENNE (Nicolas), pour des pots de faïence fournis pour mettre les jasmins qui sont à Versailles” (to Estienne [Nicolas], for faïence pots supplied to hold jasmine at Versailles), in Jules Guiffrey, *Comptes des Bâtiments du roi sous le règne de Louis XIV*, 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1881).
7. Deliveries of garden urns made by *marchand verrier faïencier* Pierre Lemaire; see *ibid.* See also Leprince, *La Faïence baroque française et les jardins de Le Nôtre*, pp. 40–43.
8. Comptes des bâtiments du Roi, June 17, 1670, for Versailles: “A REVEREND, pour les vases de fayence à mettre des orangers et des fleurs, les dits vases de la manufacture de Saint-Cloud, 3319 livres” (To Reverend, for faïence vases to hold oranges and flowers, the referenced vases manufactured at Saint-Cloud, 3319 livres).
9. Comptes des bâtiments du Roi, December 6, 1670, for Trianon, “à SAINT-ETIENNES [Poterat], pour plusieurs vases de fayence qu’il a fournis et plusieurs carreaux pour Trianon, 3299 livres” (To Saint-Etienne [Poterat], for many faïence vases supplied and many tiles for the Trianon, 3299 livres).
10. Louis Du Broc de Segange, *La Faïence, les faïenciers et les émailleurs de Nevers* (Nevers: Société nivernaise, 1863).
11. Archives Nationales, minutier centrale des notaires, MC/ET/CXVI/132, September 24, 1700, Inventaire après décès d’André Le Nôtre . . . (Inventory after the death of André Le Nôtre), Palais des Tuileries, Paris.
12. Comptes des bâtiments du Roi, June 30, 1664, for Fontainebleau (col. 950).
13. Christine Lahaussois, “Broderies murales de porcelaine,” in *De l’Immense au minuscule: La Virtuosité en céramique*, exh. cat., Musée national de céramique, Sèvres (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2008).

14. “Ce glacis borde deux contr’allées, qui d’un costé sont terminées par des palissades de charmes, & de l’autre le long du canal, par de petits arbrisseaux verts avec des pots de porcelaine d’espace en espace” (The bank bordered by two paths, which on one side ends in the fence/hedge/border of charms and the other along the canal, by the small green shrubs with the porcelain pots here and there), in André Félibien, *Les Divertissemens de Versailles donnez par le Roy a toute sa cour au retour de la conquête de la Franche-Comté en l’année MDCLXXIV (Amusements at Versailles Given by the King to his Court Following His Return from the Conquest of the Franche-Comté in the Year 1674)*, 1676.
15. “Aux beaux de ce lieu on avoit ajouté mille autres embellissemens, tant par un grand nombre d’orangers & de pots de porcelaine remplis d’une infinité de diverses fleurs.” [Mille de Scudéry], *La Promenade de Versailles: Dédée au roi [The promenade at Versailles: Dedicated to the king]* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1669).
16. “. . . loua même fort tous les vases de fleurs dont les balustrades des fossés et des terrasses sont bordées et qui sont un objet si galant et si agréable ; elle prit garde qu’une grande partie de ces vases sont de porcelaine et les autres de bronze d’un travail admirable . . .” (. . . praised strongly the flower vases with which the balustrades along the moat and the terrace are bordered and which are so gallant and agreeable; she took care that a large part of the vases were of porcelain and the others of bronze, of admirable workmanship). *Ibid.*
17. “[N]ota B[ene] que dans les plates-bandes de gazon qui font le tour du parterre il y a de distance en distance des dés de pierre ou de marbre pour poser des vases de porcelaine dessus, où l’on met ordinairement des arbrisseaux ou des fleurs dedans selon la saison.” Inscription on a *Plan d’un parterre de broderie* (“plan for a flower bed”), probably for a Parisian *hôtel particulier*, drawing on paper, Nicodème Tessin le Jeune, Paris, ca. 1687, reference image in author’s collection.
18. Kocx, whose name is variously spelled Adriaen or Adriaan Kocks, was the owner of *De Grieksche A* factory from 1686 to 1701, and enjoyed much success through royal patronage and international trade, particularly with England and France. He was succeeded by his son, Pieter Adriaensz. Kocx, from 1701 to 1703, when Pieter’s widow, Johanna van der Heul, became the owner until 1722. See Antoinette Fay-Hallé and Christine Lahaussois, *La Faïence européenne au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Le Triomphe de Delft*, exh. cat., Musée national de Céramique, Sèvres (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2003). See also Christine Lahaussois et al., *Delft—Faïence* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2008).
19. Marion S. Van Aken-Fehmers, *Delfts aardewerk: Geschiedenis van een nationaal product, Vol. 4: Vases with Spouts, Three Centuries of Splendor* (The Hague: Gemeentemuseum; Zwolle: Waanders, 2007), p. 136, cat. 2.10, quoting Chatsworth Building Accounts, 1695–1696, p. 15, and James Whildon’s Accounts, Chatsworth, 1685–1699, p. 135.
20. *Relation de la feste de Versailles du 18e juillet 1668*, report written by André Félibien in 1678 (Paris: Pierre Le Petit, 1679).