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THE FRICK COLLECTION

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FRICK ACQUIRES UNIQUE SÈVRES PORCELAIN VASE AND AN IMPORTANT RENAISSANCE DRAWING



Vase Japon, 1774, Royal Manufactory of Sèvres, France, painted and gilded hard-paste porcelain with silver-gilt mounts, The Frick Collection; photo: Michael Bodycomb

The Frick's Board of Trustees announces the acquisition of two objects that will enhance the museum's holdings in areas that interested founder Henry Clay Frick at the end of his life: eighteenth-century French porcelain and Italian Renaissance drawings. A rare and beautiful vase created at the Royal Manufactory of Sèvres has been acquired in honor of Anne L. Poulet, who retired at the end of September after serving as Director for eight years. The vase, a partial purchase by the Frick and a partial gift from Alexis and Nicolas Kugel, is the first piece of hard-paste porcelain from the Royal Manufactory of Sèvres to enter the Collection. It complements the museum's substantial Sèvres

holdings made with the earlier soft-paste formula, objects obtained by Mr. Frick from the dealer Joseph Duveen. This latest acquisition is particularly appropriate given the interest of Director Emerita Anne Poulet in eighteenth-century French decorative arts. The vase will be displayed this winter alongside selections from a promised gift of hard-paste Meissen porcelain objects in the new Portico Gallery for Decorative Arts and Sculpture, which opens to the public on December 13. Also entering the collection is an important Italian Renaissance by drawing the Sieneese artist Domenico Beccafumi (1486–1551), a two-sided sheet given to the Frick by Trustee Barbara G. Fleischman in honor of Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator Colin B. Bailey.



Domenico Beccafumi (1486–1551), *Head of a Man*, ca. 1512–14, red chalk on paper, 8 ¼ x 5 ¼ inches; Verso: *Sketch for the Façade of the Palazzo Borghesi, Siena: Seated Putti*, pen and brown ink and black chalk, gift to The Frick Collection from Mrs. Barbara Fleischman in honor of Colin B. Bailey; photo: Michael Bodycomb

RICHLY MOUNTED VASE BASED ON AN ANCIENT CHINESE MODEL

Despite its name, the *Vase Japon* is a French interpretation of a Chinese *Yu* (or *Hu*) vase from the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220). Examples of this type of baluster-shaped vessel survive in bronze and earthenware.

Documents from the Sèvres archives indicate that the Frick vase was made in 1774 along with two others of the same size, shape, and decoration. Each bears the mark of the gilder-painter Jean-Armand Fallot, who was active at Sèvres between 1765 and 1790. Of the three, however, only the Frick vase is adorned with an elaborate silver-gilt handle and chain, which, like its shape and surface pattern, were directly inspired by the Chinese model. The mounts bear the mark of Charles Ouizille (1744–1830), who worked extensively for the French court throughout the 1770s and 1780s and became Marie-Antoinette’s favorite jeweler. He created exquisite gold mounts for the queen’s rare and precious collections of hard-stone vases and cups.

The shape and decoration of the *Vase Japon* derive from a woodblock print reproduced in a forty-volume catalogue of the vast Chinese imperial collections (a record compiled at the behest of the Qianlong Emperor who reigned 1735–1796). Included are entries for more than fifteen hundred ancient bronze objects—primarily ritual vessels, but also mirrors, lamps, and weapons—each accompanied by a brief description of its size and origin. Sometime during the 1770s, Father Joseph Amiot, a Jesuit missionary working in Peking, sent a copy of this catalogue to Henri Bertin in Paris. Bertin was France’s secretary of state and had recently been appointed the *commissaire du roi* at the Sèvres manufactory, an administrative position he held until 1780. In addition to being a politician and a businessman, Bertin was an art collector with a profound interest in China and Chinese art, and he likely played a key creative role in the production of this piece.

The *Vase Japon* is exceptional in that Sèvres did not typically produce objects based directly on antique prototypes. It differs markedly from the manufactory’s Chinoiserie production, the decorations of which evoke a fanciful vision of China and the Far East as imagined by artists such as François Boucher. The *Vase Japon* represents an early attempt by the Sèvres manufactory to produce something more authentic, patterned after an ancient Chinese model. Such a distinctly antiquarian approach was not widely adopted by makers of French ceramics until the early nineteenth century.

Adds Associate Curator of Decorative Arts Charlotte Vignon, “This unusual piece of recently discovered porcelain exemplifies the technical and artistic excellence reached at the Royal Manufactory of Sèvres in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. It not only complements the French porcelain purchased by Henry Clay Frick more than one hundred years ago, but it also creates an interesting dialogue with the important collection of porcelain from the German Meissen Factory that has been pledged to the Frick by Henry Arnhold. This group of objects includes many made explicitly after Japanese, Chinese, and Korean forms, and we look forward to presenting a selection of them together with the *Vase Japon* this winter in the new Portico Gallery for Decorative Arts and Sculpture.”

AN ARRESTING AND ETHEREAL DRAWING COMPLEMENTS FRICK'S SELECTIONS BY PISANELLO, TITIAN, AND TIEPOLO

This double-sided drawing is very likely an early work by Domenico Beccafumi, recognized as one of the greatest draftsmen of the Cinquecento. The recto displays a red-chalk study of a head of a man, turned to the left in three-quarter view, gazing upwards with an open mouth, in an expression of expectancy. With skillful and precise hatching the artist rendered the features of the face, leaving the white of the paper in reserve for the highlights. Although the profile and nose are established by single, uncorrected lines, the back of the figure's head dissolves in a halo of hatching at right. Through his deft handling of the chalk medium, which was deliberately applied with a light touch, the artist evokes the effect of glowing, perhaps divine light, as the figure's soulful countenance suggests a moment of spiritual transcendence. Beccafumi, who undertook civic and private commissions throughout his career, is best known for his religious scenes. It has been suggested that the drawing may be a study for a beggar in the predella panel from the *Communion of Saint Catherine* altarpiece (ca. 1513–15, Pinacoteca nazionale di Siena), one of the artist's most important early commissions. However, the frequency with which the upturned head appears in Beccafumi's work speaks strongly against assigning the drawing to a particular project. The verso of the sheet displays a swiftly drawn pen-and-ink sketch of the façade of a building, identified as the Palazzo Borghesi in Siena. From 1512–14, directly following his return from his first visit to Rome, Beccafumi designed and executed a complex program of painted and incised plaster decoration for the façade that included classicized, armored figures, monumental putti, and pilasters in the form of classical columns. Although the palazzo still stands, Beccafumi's façade has long vanished, yet its design is known through a detailed description in Vasari's *Lives* and an important presentation drawing of the left half of the plan in the collection of the British Museum. In the pen-and-ink sketch on the verso of the present drawing, the artist represents the full façade, which is oriented horizontally to the sheet.

The divergent character of the drawings on the opposing sides of the sheet speaks strongly to the multi-faceted nature of Beccafumi's oeuvre. The classical, analytical strands of his work, arising from his knowledge of Roman art and seen in the Palazzo Borghesi sketch, stand in contrast to the lyrical sensibility that infuses his religious scenes, as well as the chalk head study. Although the whereabouts of the sheet for most of its history is unknown, it is certain that it once belonged to a bound sketchbook, which came to light in London in the 1920s and was assigned to Beccafumi by 1935. After entering a series of private collections, including that of Coghlan Briscoe, a former director of the National Gallery, Dublin, it was acquired in 1959 by Thomas Agnew's, which disbound the sketchbook and sold the individual sheets in 1965. Many of the sketchbook drawings have since entered important public collections, including the Rijksmuseum, Fondation Custodia, the Fitzwilliam Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Morgan Library and Museum. Some of the individual figure studies from the sketchbook have been reassigned to other artists, such as Alessandro Casolani, a follower of Beccafumi. The present double-sided drawing, however, may be an autograph work by the master, given the similarity of the expression and pose

of the head study to other securely attributed drawings by the artist, as well as the connection of the Palazzo Borghesi sketch to one of Beccafumi's known commissions.

Comments Curator Denise Allen, "This striking and significant drawing augments the Frick's excellent but limited group of Italian drawings, which include works by Pisanello, Titian, and Tiepolo, and complements works by other Sieneese artists in the collection, such as Duccio, Barna da Siena, and Vecchietta. The Beccafumi drawing appears to have been little seen since the 1960s, making it an exciting re-discovery and welcome addition to our holdings. Furthermore, up to now it has been known only through small, black and white illustrations, which can not reveal the subtlety of the handling of the red chalk and the beauty of its color."

ABOUT THE FRICK COLLECTION AND FRICK ART REFERENCE LIBRARY

Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919), the coke and steel industrialist, philanthropist, and art collector, left his New York residence and his remarkable collection of Western paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts to the public "for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a gallery of art, [and] of encouraging and developing the study of fine arts and of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects." Designed and built for Mr. Frick in 1913 and 1914 by Thomas Hastings of Carrère and Hastings, the mansion provides a grand domestic setting reminiscent of the noble houses of Europe for the masterworks from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century that it contains. Of special note are paintings by Bellini, Constable, Corot, Fragonard, Gainsborough, Goya, El Greco, Holbein, Ingres, Manet, Monet, Rembrandt, Renoir, Titian, Turner, Velázquez, Vermeer, Whistler, and other masters. Mr. Frick's superb examples of French eighteenth-century furniture, Italian Renaissance bronzes, and Limoges enamels bring a special ambiance to the galleries, while the interior and exterior gardens and the amenities created since the founder's time in the 1930s and 1970s contribute to the serenity of the visitor's experience. Renowned for its exhibitions and for its highly regarded concert series and lectures, The Frick Collection also operates the Frick Art Reference Library, founded by Henry Clay Frick's daughter, Helen Clay Frick, located in an adjoining building at 10 East 71st Street. Both a research library and a photo archive, the Frick Art Reference Library is one of the world's great repositories of documents for the study of Western art. It has served the international art world for more than seventy-five years.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: 212.288.0700

Web site: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

Where: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue.

Hours: open six days a week: 10am to 6pm on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 11am to 5pm on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (11am to 5pm) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day

Admission: \$18; senior citizens \$15; students \$10; "pay as you wish" on Sundays from 11am to 1pm

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection.

Timed tickets required for the fall 2011 Picasso exhibition. For further information, consult the Frick website.

Subway: #6 local (on Lexington Avenue) to 68th Street station; **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

Tour Information: included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide Audio Tour of the permanent collection. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Museum Shop: the shop is open the same days as the Museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

Group Visits: Please call 212. 288.0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is published regularly and is available upon request.

#186, October 24, 2011

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