

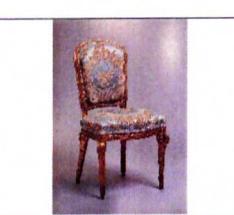
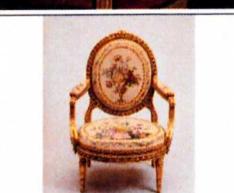
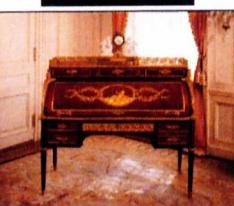
French Furniture and Tapestries

Selection from *A Taste for Splendor* (Catalogue entries 40-44; 46; 88-98)

The table below provides a quick-reference guide to the relevant catalogue entries. Continue scrolling to view the corresponding scanned pages from *A Taste for Splendor*.

Source: Odom, Anne and Liana Paredes Arend. *A Taste for Splendor: Russian Imperial and European Treasures from the Hillwood Museum*. Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 1998.

Image	Catalogue Entry	Object Name	Accession Number	Location
	40	Console Table	31.54	Dining Room
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	97	Tapestry Portrait of Catherine II	41.5	Storage
	98	Roll-top Desk (<i>bureau à cylindre</i>)	31.2	Marjorie Post's Bedroom Suite



39

Provenance: Fred Vogel, New York, 1935

1. For a discussion of the Tournai and Derby groups see Henri Nicaise, "Porcelaines de Tournai et de Chelsea-Derby," *Revue belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art*, no. 5 (1935), pp. 5-16.

2. For a biscuit group of the French four seasons see Peter Bradshaw, *Derby Porcelain Figures, 1750-1848* (London, 1990), figs. 217 and 218. See also Christie's, London, 11 March 1996, lot 37.

39 Pair of Firedogs

Paris, ca. 1750

Gilt bronze

Each H. 15 3/4 in. (40 cm), L. 21 1/2 in. (54.6 cm)

14.4.1-2

In decorating a house of distinction in eighteenth-century Paris, the design of gilt bronze firedogs was given as much consideration as the appearance of more highly visible examples of bronzework, such as wall sconces or

candelabra. At that time pairs of firedogs were placed inside the fireplace so the gilt bronze decoration concealed the wrought iron log supports. They frequently acted as vehicles for decorative sculpture, as is clearly evident here. At the outer end of each firedog sits a lion, its face turned outwards and its front legs resting on a shaped shield framed with scrolled acanthus leaves. At the other end is a small flaming urn. The bases under the lions are supported on paws combined with acanthus scrolls, which culminate in a scroll foot at the other end.

This pair exhibits parallels with a pair of firedogs at Waddesdon Manor, particularly in the shape of lions with their forepaws resting on shields.¹ The shields must have once sported the coat of arms of a previous owner. That design was later obliterated. [LPA]

Provenance: Bought in Paris; birthday gift to MMP from her three daughters, 1966

1. See Geoffrey de Bellaigue, *The James A. de Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor: Furniture, Clocks and Gilt Bronzes*, vol. 2 (Fribourg, 1974), cat. 182.

40 Console Table

Paris, ca. 1730

Gilt oak, marble

H. 32 in. (81.3 cm), W. 50 3/4 in. (129 cm), D. 24 1/2 in. (61.6 cm)

31-54

Tables elaborately carved with rococo motifs were frequently designed to be placed under a mirror, between windows, or opposite the chimneypiece. The bases of such tables, which were meant to be attached to a wall, were typically made by *menuisiers en bâtiments*, joiners who specialized in paneling. Often their designs and color schemes matched the paneling and seat furniture in the room for which the table was intended.



40

The decoration of this console table is both characteristic of the first quarter of the eighteenth century and reminiscent of the sumptuous style of the Louis XIV period. Its curved legs, carved with bold, leafy scrolls, end in winged, dragonlike creatures at the top. The customary decoration of the *noix*, a virtuoso motif incorporated into the center of the base, assumed various shapes throughout the eighteenth century. Here it takes the form of a shell, the ubiquitous motif of the Regency. The shell motif appears again in the center of the apron, where it is flanked by leafy scrolls set against a ground covered with a diaper motif. The richly veined red marble has a beveled edge with a double-bowed front (*en arc d'arbalète*) that is shaped to follow the outline.

Dragons form a prominent feature of this table. Invested with fantastic qualities, dragons fit comfortably within the elaborate decorative schemes of the rococo. Bruno Pons, in his monograph on interior decoration at Versailles and in Paris, writes that in the 1720s chimeras and dragons signified a compromise between the abstract and the figurative.¹ Indeed, the dragon was transformed from a readily recognizable symbol traditionally used in heraldry into an other-worldly creature that has become linked with the rococo. Designers such as Nicolas Pineau and François de Cuvilliés also incorporated curvilinear dragons into their interior designs.² [LPA]

Provenance: Bought through McMillen, Inc., from Rosenberg and Steibel, New York, 1955

1. See Bruno Pons, *De Paris à Versailles, 1699–1736* (Strasbourg, 1985).

2. A chimney mantel by Pineau in Charles Antoine Davilier's *Cours d'architecture* (Paris, 1738) features curvilinear dragons. See Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, 1995), p. 246, fig. 174. A project for a table by Pineau illustrated in *Les Pineaux* (Paris, 1892) has a dragon with his tail curving upward and entwining around the table leg. A similar pair of dragons also appears in Cuvilliés's designs; see Peter Jessen, *Rococo Engravings* (London, 1922), unpaginated.



41

41 Folding Stool (*pliant*)

Paris, ca. 1740

Gilt walnut

H. 16 1/4 in. (41.3 cm), W. 26 3/4 in. (68 cm), D. 19 in. (48.3 cm)

31.105.4

This stool, one of four, exemplifies the splendid decoration that rococo craftsmen could achieve even within the limited confines of a folding stool. It stands on X-shaped supports that are carved with rococo acanthus leaf scrolls around flat areas incised with cross-hatching. A carved daisy in a medallion covers a bolt at the crossing of each pair of legs. The struts at floor level, which end in leaf scrolls for feet, have a shell motif in the center. The elaborate frames with vigorous, deeply carved ornamentation were made around 1740. At present the seat is covered with cut velvet in maroon and ivory and is trimmed with ball fringe and tassels.

Tied to the solemn dictates of court etiquette, the use of *pliants* (folding stools) dates to the reign of Louis XIII.

In the presence of the king or queen, princes and princesses of the blood sat on *pliants*, while members of the court of lesser social distinction were relegated to *tabourets* (four-legged stools) or *carreaux* (pouffes).

The same model may have inspired both this set of stools and a pair of stools in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, one of which is branded with the Versailles mark. Due to their intricate carving and their function at the highest level of aristocratic life, the Hillwood *pliants* most likely were part of a similar set made for Versailles or another royal residence. In the official portrait of Louis XV by Carle Van Loo, the king stands next to a stool whose struts are remarkably similar to those of Hillwood's *pliants*.¹ [LPA]

Provenance: Bought from J. Lombardo through McMillen, Inc., New York, 1956

¹. See *Masterpieces from Versailles: Three Centuries of French Portraiture* (Washington, D.C., 1983), no. 21.

42 Commode

Piedmont, ca. 1740

Wood marquetry

H. 40 3/4 in. (103.5 cm), L. 53 1/2 in. (136 cm), D. 25 1/2 in. (64.8 cm)

33.3

Panels of veneered marquetry with a burl walnut background enliven the sides and top of this square commode. The panel on the slightly bombé front shows two troubadours, one of whom holds a large pot. All the scenes are framed by elaborate scroll cartouches that are interspersed with flowers and foliage. In the top scene within a rococo cartouche a huntsman returns to a waiting lady. Panels on the sides contain similar scenes: on the right a man sits at a table laid with a carafe of wine, a knife, bread, and cheese (fig. 66); on the left a seated man blows a trumpet and a dog stands at his knee. The front rounded corners have vertical strips of acanthus leaves between shaped bandings. These terminate in two gilt feet carved in the shape of a lion. Gilt bands of carved wood frame the commode. The remaining areas are veneered with palisander.

The companion to this commode presents different scenes on the bottom and front; the sides are the same. Lingering traces of rococo ornamentation in the design of both commodes support their dating to the mid-eighteenth century. [LPA]



Fig. 66. Detail of marquetry on right side of commode



Provenance: Royal House of Savoy (unverified); Adolph Loewy, Rome, 1946, then to his gallery in Los Angeles; French and Company, New York, 1950

43 Jewel Chest (coffre de bijoux à voyage)

Paris, ca. 1760

Wood marquetry, gilt bronze
H. 40 1/4 in. (102.2 cm), L. 25 3/4 in.
(65.4 cm), D. 19 3/4 in. (50 cm)

31.27

The *Encyclopédie* outlines several uses for small coffers in the eighteenth century. They could contain toilet articles or hold tobacco jars and serve as humidor. Some coffers have interiors fitted to accommodate their contents, while others with plain veneered interiors, such as this one, held jewels stored in their cases. Roubo, who wrote a treatise on joinery in 1774, describes this type of coffer.

There are . . . those where the interior is empty, that is to say, without garnishes; these little boxes do not serve for the ordinary but rather to guard jewels, hence the name "coffre." There are some very lavish ones, as much for the quality of the wood as for their fittings or exterior locks, which are sometimes of silver or gilt brass.¹

The form of a chest on a stand derives from the marriage coffers in which a bride kept her trousseau. By the late seventeenth century, however, these extraordinary pieces had been reduced to holding jewels and small valuables.

Two separate sections make up this jewel chest: a stand in the shape of a table with one drawer, raised on four cabriole legs; and a lidded chest with a drop front and slightly bombé sides. Both sections have elaborate gilt bronze mounts. A pattern of cube marquetry enclosed in serpentine frames creates a *trompe l'oeil* effect. One of the sides with cube marquetry in *citronnier* and *bois de violette* has been stained green.

The chest opens both at the top and side by dropping the front. Its interior



Fig. 67. Hinges on back of jewel chest

is veneered in purplewood and its hinges are silvered. Two drawers fit in the lower section. The top corners of the chest are mounted with leaf scrolls. An asymmetrical escutcheon in the shape of a floral spray decorates the front, and the sides have scrolled handles. Hinges on the back are mounted with three elaborate scrolls (fig. 67). The table has a central motif on the front consisting of a mermaid and a merman, each astride a dolphin; a shell appears between them. Scrollwork of floral motifs and acanthus leaves protects each corner of the table. The sides are decorated with shell mounts, and the feet have lion claw-and-leaf sabots.

The Hillwood coffer reflects the strong influence of the *ébénistes mechaniciens*, but it has no parallel with any chests on stands dating from the eighteenth century. Not only is it larger in size, but its mounts are also unlike any others on French furniture from that period. The combination of rococo mounts and geometric marquetry is surprising. Stylistically it could be explained either by the piece's transitional character or by the owner's particular preferences. The quality of the mounts varies greatly, with one on the table front possibly being a later addition. [LPA]

Provenance: Ramsay, Paris, 1957

Literature: *Connaissance des arts*, no. 38 (15 April 1955), p. 55, ill.

¹ M. Roubo, *L'Art du menuisier ébéniste* (Paris, 1774), p. 980. Quoted in Carl C. Dauterman, James Parker, and Edith Appleton Standen, *Decorative Art from the Samuel H. Kress Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (London, 1964), p. 126.





44

44 Pair of Armchairs (fauteuils à la reine)

Paris, ca. 1760
Walnut, tapestry
Each H. 37 in. (94 cm), W. 25 3/4 in.
(65.4 cm), D. 22 in. (56 cm)
31.62, 31.63

Beauvais tapestry panels depicting scenes from La Fontaine's "Fables" cover the seats and backs of a sofa and six armchairs that are part of a Louis XV suite of furniture. The borders of the seats, composed of floral rococo car-

touches, are set against a crimson ground. Serpentine-shaped walnut frames carved with double ribs form the legs and arms of these two chairs. Roses decorate the back, front rails, and legs.

The unambitious yet gracefully proportioned frames of these armchairs exemplify the more routine output of *menuisier* workshops. Simple, decoratively carved elements were being quickly turned out to meet the Parisian market's ever-growing demand for fashionable furniture. Unquestionably,

the most expensive part of this suite was the tapestry covers.

Jean-Baptiste Oudry, who designed the "Fables" tapestries, had been employed as a painter in the Beauvais manufactory and became its co-director in 1734. Beauvais occupied an intermediate position between the Gobelins, which worked almost exclusively for the king, and Aubusson and Felletin, which produced items for a middle-class clientele. By the mid-eighteenth century the demand had fallen for large series of tapestries depicting elevated

historical subjects. The smaller scale of rooms in new, fashionable interiors naturally required smaller tapestries. Wood paneling and mirrors further limited the need for wall hangings. Under the partnership of Nicolas Besnier and Oudry, the Beauvais manufactory responded with great success to emerging artistic and commercial trends by creating smaller sets of tapestries with pastoral and genre subjects. They could be combined in a variety of ways and were thematically linked with upholstery.

La Fontaine's "Fables" were first reproduced as tapestries in 1735 and were woven in many variations on different color grounds throughout the eighteenth century.¹ The popularity of this furniture testifies to the success of Oudry's designs and to the manufactory's effective reaction to market demands. [LPA]

Provenance: Jansen, Paris, 1928

1. Factory lists of commissions are reproduced in Jules Badin, *La Manufacture des tapisseries de Beauvais* (Paris, 1909). These lists, however, are not comprehensive. Other significant suites of seat furniture covered with scenes from La Fontaine's "Fables" include a suite for the Duke of Parma in the Quirinale in Rome (see Alvar González-Palacios, *Il Patrimonio artistico del Quirinale: Gli arredi francesi* [Milan, 1996], pp. 146–54), a set from the Leopold Double collection with gilt frames by Foliot (sold in Paris, 10 May 1881, lot 406), and another set in the Cleveland Museum of Art (illustrated in *The Catalogue of the John L. Severance Collection* [Cleveland, 1942], cats. 74–80, pl. XXI).



45

45 Card Table

England, ca. 1745–50

Mahogany, needlework, silver
H. 28 1/4 in. (71.8 cm), W. 36 in.
(91.4 cm), D. 15 3/4 in. (40 cm)

33.12

Parties involving card playing were part of the social life of the English country house during the eighteenth century, yet few of the card games would be familiar today. Upper-class men and women would often lose large sums of

money playing the fast-paced, high-stakes card game of *loo*.

For such games a light, compact card table such as this one was carried into the drawing room during an evening of gambling. When not in use, the table was folded up and stored to the side of the room or in a passageway outside.

This fold-top table with a needlepoint cover has serpentine-shaped sides and four cabriole legs of exceptional quality. The front is carved with a shell motif flanked by acanthus leaves. Each

leg is carved at the knee with scrolled acanthus leaves and ends in a claw-and-ball foot. The top unfolds to display a playing surface with its original needlework covering that depicts flowers, leaves, playing cards, and fish-shaped counters. A rounded shallow receptacle at each corner would have held a candlestick, and a smaller indentation at the center of each side was intended for a counter. [LPA]

46 Writing and Dressing Table

Paris, ca. 1760

Attributed to Jean-François Oeben (active 1751–63)
Wood marquetry, gilt bronze
H. 28½ in. (72.4 cm), L. 31½ in. (80 cm),
D. 14¼ in. (36.2 cm)

31.23

Marks: Table stamped *Boichod* under front rail; part of stamp *L U G / C* on green leather writing pad

This table is an excellent example of the high degree of sophistication achieved in French cabinetry of the mid-eighteenth century. The rectangular top with serpentine-shaped sides is supported by four cabriole legs. The legs are mounted with acanthus motifs at the knees and sabots at the bottom ends. Under the front rail is a trick lock mechanism that opens the front drawer to reveal a writing pad. This in turn lifts up and becomes a reading desk. When turned, it displays a mirror. A hinged marquetry panel on either side of the writing pad also lifts up. Under the right panel are compartments to store writing materials, and a panel in the bottom slides back to reveal a secret compartment. Under the left panel is a whole drawer that hides another secret section below.

Profuse floral marquetry, partitioned by curving, ribbonlike bands, covers the sides, back, drawer, and top (fig. 68). The central cartouche on top is decorated with several symbols of rustic life, including a rake, a watering jug, a basket of flowers, and a hoe (see fig. 53). This cartouche is topped by two floral swags, suspended from a ribbon at the top, with birds perched on them. Four cartouches covered with trelliswork surround the central section. The emblem of war on the left contains a helmet, a shield, a quiver, and a halberd. Motifs of rustic life—a straw hat, a staff, a bucket, a horn, and some flowers—fill the right one. A smaller hunting trophy at the top consists of a hunting horn, a rifle, a quiver, a dead bird, and a stag's head.

Although the stamp of Pierre Boichod appears on this table, its attribution to Jean-François Oeben seems more appropriate. Stylistically, this table

relates to a small group of tables with sliding tops that are either signed or attributed to Oeben.¹ All of the earlier related tables (1757–58) have shaped sides, while the slightly later ones (ca. 1760), such as this one, have rectilinear sides. They all share the feature of having a sliding top that, when pushed backwards, reveals a large drawer. This in turn pulls forward and is fitted with a writing pad and two side drawers. The floral and pastoral motifs of the Hillwood table suggest the involvement of a highly accomplished marqueteur, such as Oeben. It is unlikely that Boichod, a minor subcontractor, could have produced such masterful work. Moreover, these same marquetry motifs decorate other works by Oeben.²

If the Hillwood table does in fact date from the late 1750s or early 1760s, Boichod's authorship can be eliminated entirely: he did not become a cabinetmaker until 1769. Although Boichod acted as one of Oeben's suppliers and subcontractors, scant evidence supports a major collaboration. The only documented relationship between the two makers is the presence of Boichod's name on a list of Oeben's creditors at the time of Oeben's death. He owed Boichod the negligible sum of twenty-one livres.³

Oeben, the most accomplished of the *ébénistes mécaniciens*, signed few pieces. The core of his work has largely been ascribed to him through attributions based on the study of comparative works. Two facts might explain the dearth of signed pieces. First, Oeben did not receive his *maîtrise* until 1761, despite having worked for the court since 1751. Secondly, when he became *ébéniste du roi*, this privilege exempted him from having to sign his pieces, a right that he may have exerted fully. It seems possible that Oeben only began to sign with more regularity those pieces he produced from 1761, when he joined the cabinetmaker's guild, until his death two years later.

Although Boichod's signature appears on the table, that alone does not prove he was its creator. He may have later stamped the unsigned table in his capacity as a restorer, not as its maker. [LPA]

Provenance: Formerly in the collection of the Reverend Sir Philip Grey-Egerton, 1825; Joseph Duveen, 1922

Exhibitions: *Art Treasures Exhibition*, Manchester, England, 1857

1. Among the stamped tables are a table in the Louvre (see Daniel Alcouffe, *Louis XV: un moment de perfection de l'art français* [Paris, 1974], no. 423); the Metropolitan Museum of Art (see *The Jack and Belle Linsky Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* [New York, 1989], no. 128); the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu (see Gillian Wilson, *Decorative Arts in the J. Paul Getty Museum* [Malibu, Calif., 1977], nos. 68 and 69); the Residenz, Munich (see Brigitte Langer, *Die Möbel der Residenz München*, vol. 1 [Munich, 1995], p. 133); and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (see *Catalogus von Meubelen en Bemiddelingen* ['s-Grarenhage, 1952], no. 492, fig. 74a–b). Locations of attributed tables include one in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., the Musée Cognacq-Jay, Paris, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (for these three tables see André Boutémé, *Une table mécanique de la National Gallery of Art de Washington* [Brussels, 1973], nos. 128, 131, and 133); the Louvre; the Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon (see *Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Catalogue* [Lisbon, 1982], no. 685; and the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California (see Robert R. Wark, *French Decorative Art in the Huntington Collection* [San Marino, Calif., 1979], fig. 77).

2. For two *tables à coulissant* in the Louvre see *Le Mobilier du Musée du Louvre* (Dijon, 1993), nos. 53 and 54. Number 54 has similar partition ribbons, branches, flowers, birds, and trophies. The side drawers bear an almost identical spray of flowers.

3. Alexandre Pradère, in *French Furniture Makers: The Art of the Ebéniste from Louis XIV to the Revolution* (Malibu, Calif., 1989), p. 263.

Right: Fig. 68. Top of table



46





88

88 Roll-top Desk

Neuwied, ca. 1770
 Abraham Roentgen (1711–1793) and
 David Roentgen (1743–1807)
 Wood marquetry, mother-of-pearl, gilt
 bronze, steel, leather, glass
 H. 45 3/4 in. (116.2 cm), W. 42 in.
 (106.7 cm), D. 25 in. (63.5 cm)
 33.222

Various types of wood in different shades were utilized to create pictorial marquetry depicting clusters of instruments suspended from ribbons on this ingenious cylinder desk. Set off against a background of sycamore, the instruments are framed with bands of tulip-wood and formal motifs inlaid in mother-of-pearl. In the center of the roll top appears the monogram *MA* surmounted by a crown and topped by an orb and cross. The panel below features painter's tools: a palette, brushes, and an easel. A lyre, book, quill pen, and scroll fill the marquetry panel on the right side of the desk, while an inkwell, quill pen, scroll, and laurel

wreath decorate the left side. This section is banded with ormolu and a ribbon-shaped mount at the top.

Marquetry panels with musical instruments divide the lower half of the desk into three sections. The sides are inlaid with scientific motifs, most notably a globe, compass, and ruler (fig. 94). Sabots in the form of dolphins complete the desk legs.

A full range of mechanical devices opens hidden compartments and secret panels. A concealed lock in the center of the middle section releases the roll top. As the top rolls up, the writing section of the desk pulls out. Inside, the desk is fitted with pigeonholes and drawers with ivory handles and mother-of-pearl inlay. Two of the drawers can be further pulled out, but they are held in place by an accordionlike contraption. The sides of the interior are also inlaid with mother-of-pearl scrolls (fig. 93).

Each side of the writing section is fitted with a drawer that contains a bracket, candlestick, shade, and snuffer.

Fig. 93. View of open desk showing its many secret compartments

The center panel of the lower section pulls out as a drawer, and the sides swing out on hinges to reveal drawers and a strong box. The section above the roll top contains a drawer that can be pulled out by pressing a secret panel on each side. Designed to be used when standing, this writing and reading desk is covered in red leather and has a pull-up easel with an inkwell and sand sifter. At either side two drawers similar to the ones flanking the writing surface are each fitted with a bracket, candlestick, and shade, but no snuffer. The top is inlaid with a polished steel surface hinged on its back side to house a mirror that it is brought up by means of a crank on the right side of the desk (see fig. 2).

The curvilinear outline and the inventive mechanical fittings of this desk relate it to one that Abraham Roentgen made for the Elector Prince/Bishop of

Trier in 1765 (now in the Rijksmuseum). Both desks share the same distinctive pattern of geometric motifs inlaid in mother-of-pearl and ivory in a truly Germanic way. The Hillwood desk, however, must be of a slightly later date due to its less pronounced rococo lines and the neoclassical style of its ormolu mounts and marquetry motifs. Although most of the literature on this desk attributes it to David Roentgen, it could well have been a collaboration between David and his father Abraham.

An established cabinetmaker in Neuwied on the Rhine, Abraham's workshop was celebrated for the excellence of its marquetry work and for the intriguing complexity of its mechanical devices. By 1768 David had joined his father in the workshop. David absorbed the style of his father's designs so completely that it is now virtually impossible to distinguish his early work from that of his father. Besides being an extremely skilled cabinetmaker, David proved to be a masterful entrepreneur and aggressive businessman. He frequently created presentation pieces to generate commissions from European royal houses. In 1779 he set out for Paris with wagons loaded with furniture, and he was immediately received at court. Louis XVI paid a great sum for a complicated *secrétaire* and a cylinder desk as a present for the Pope. The next year Roentgen achieved the rank of master cabinetmaker in the Parisian guild. Three years later he traveled to Russia, where he made himself known to Catherine the Great. She not only bought the desk that he had specially designed for her, but she also acquired many other pieces and granted commissions that kept him busy for years.

The Roentgens' cabinetmaking workshop was considered the greatest in Europe in the late eighteenth century. Their pieces were constructed with a precision and attention to detail that was unseen elsewhere, and their artfully clever mechanical devices enticed patrons throughout Europe. Perhaps Roentgen's supreme achievement ultimately resides in his marquetry panels. The panels in this desk, and in many



Fig. 94. View of right side of desk

other pieces, were painstakingly formed with tiny pieces of contrasting woods in natural colors without resorting to engraving. This method of producing pictorial marquetry differed greatly from French methods, in which wood was stained and shading and small details were created through scorching or engraving.

Several scholars have speculated that the Hillwood desk was intended for Marie Antoinette. The cipher has been traditionally read as *MA*, and the dolphin feet have been interpreted as an allusion to the Dauphine. This proposition cannot be verified, and it is highly unlikely that the queen ever owned the desk. It does not bear a royal inventory mark, nor is it mentioned in royal documents of the *Garde Meuble*. Quite possibly Roentgen began the desk with Marie Antoinette in mind sometime around 1770, when the Austrian archduchess married the future king Louis XVI and she became Dauphine of France. Perhaps the desk was never offered to her because by the time Roentgen completed it and set out for his first trip to Paris, Marie Antoinette had been crowned queen,¹ and its style was already too old-fashioned for the French court. Another possibility is that the crown with the orb and cross belong to a German prince or an elector.² [LPA]

Provenance: Lady Ela Russell, sold Christie's, London, 20 May 1909, lot 87; Charles Wertheimer collection, London; E. M. Hodgkins, Paris, 1909; Symons Inc., New York, 1927

Literature: Simour de Ricci, *Der Stil Louis XVI* (Stuttgart, 1913), p. viii; Adolph Feulner, "Frühwerke von David Roentgen," *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, vol. 1 (n.p., 1924), pp. 291–93, pl. 13; Adolph Feulner, *Kunstgeschichte des Möbels*, 3d ed. (Berlin, 1927), fig. 629, pls. 14 and 15; Hans Huth, *Abraham und David Roentgen und Ihre Neuwieder Möbelwerkstatt* (Berlin, 1928), p. 63, pls. 14 and 15; Hans Huth, *Möbel von David Roentgen* (Darmstadt, 1955), pls. 8 and 9; Celia J. Ott, "David Roentgen," *Antiques* 77, no. 1 (January 1960), pp. 102–103; Hans Huth, *Abraham und David Roentgen, European Cabinet-Makers* (London, 1974), pp. 14 and 64–65, pls. 38–41; Dietrich Fabian, *Roentgenmöbel aus Neuwied* (Bad Neustadt, 1986), pls. 71–76; Adolph Feulner, *Kunstgeschichte des Möbels* (Frankfurt, 1980), p. 111, no. 301; Dietrich Fabian, *Abraham und David Roentgen* (Bad Neustadt, 1996), p. 51, pls. 69 and 69a

Exhibitions: *Marie Antoinette, Archiduchesse, Dauphine, et Reine*, Château de Versailles, 1955, no. 709

1. See Hans Huth, *Abraham und David Roentgen, European Cabinet-Makers* (London, 1974), pp. 14 and 64.

2. This idea was proposed by David Meyer, curator at Versailles, in a letter dated 25 March 1992, now in Hillwood's files.



89 Commode with Pastoral Marquetry

Paris, ca. 1775

Attributed to Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806)

Wood marquetry, gilt bronze, marble
H. 38 1/4 in. (97.2 cm), W. 67 1/2 in.
(171.5 cm), D. 26 3/4 in. (68 cm)
31.II

Considered the finest cabinetmaker in the Louis XVI period, Jean-Henri Riesener must have made this commode around 1774, thus making it the earlier of two such pieces at Hillwood (see cat. 90). Rectangular in shape, the commode has a projecting center with two drawers flanked by two concave panels that conceal cupboard doors and three drawers at the top. One turn of the key simultaneously unlocks the two large drawers and springs open the side doors. This ingenious locking mechanism illustrates the preference for clever mechanical devices that Riesener inherited from his master, Jean-François Oeben. Characteristic of Riesener's work is the arrangement of

the front façade, which is divided into seemingly superimposed panels with pictorial marquetry surrounded by bronze frames.

The commode is mounted with highly sculptural bronzes. At the center top on a shield supported on each side by a putto appears the head of Hercules covered with a lion's skin. A band of acanthus leaf scrolls conceals the top central drawer, and a similar frieze hides the two flanking drawers. Flattened corners bear mounts formed as draped female busts crowned with laurel leaves. At the bottom, the apron is mounted with a mask of a bearded man, which terminates in ornamental leaves. The commode's feet are covered with lion's paws in gilt bronze. Some of these bronzes, most notably the Hercules mask and the mask of a bearded man, recur in other Riesener pieces, as can be seen in Hillwood's later commode (cat. 90).

The marquetry reveals all the refinements and naturalism expected of someone trained under Oeben. The two large central drawers are ambitiously inlaid to depict a pastoral trophy composed of a pair of turtle doves, a basket of flowers, a large hat, a sheath of wheat, and a tambourine. Burl wood was used on the cupboard drawers to imitate two jasper vases laden with flowers (fig. 95).

An almost identical commode now at Windsor Castle was delivered to Louis XVI's bedchamber in Versailles in August 1774. In outline and decoration, Hillwood's commode closely resembles the Windsor piece. Since Hillwood's commode is unsigned and bears no catalogue number, it cannot be traced in inventories, and it is unlikely that it was ever part of the royal household furniture. Due to its grandeur and the quality of its design, however, it must have resulted from an important commission, perhaps one with a royal origin.

Like most cabinetmakers working in eighteenth-century Paris, Riesener was not a native Frenchman. Born in Glad-

beck, Germany, he moved to Paris when he was around twenty years old and entered the large workshop of Jean-François Oeben, a fellow German, as an apprentice. Oeben ran an active workshop in the Arsenal, a privileged enclave for artisans working under royal auspices. During his years as Oeben's apprentice, Riesener learned all the refinements of cabinetmaking, such as how to craft the exceptional pictorial and geometric marquetry that had earned his master the reputation of a skilled cabinetmaker. Riesener also profited from Oeben's instructions on fabricating mechanical devices.

Oeben died in 1763, shortly after he accepted the most important commission of his life: creating a cylinder desk for Louis XV. Riesener completed, signed, and delivered the *bureau du roi* in 1769. Considered the most significant piece of French cabinetmaking of the eighteenth century, this desk gave Riesener access to the court and brought him recognition at the highest levels of society. In 1774, after Louis XV's death and the accession of Louis XVI, Riesener was appointed *ébéniste du roi* (king's cabinetmaker). For the next ten years he enjoyed the full favor of the court and supplied it with numerous pieces of furniture for staggering sums. In addition to the king and his family, many of the great nobles at Versailles and dignitaries from abroad employed Riesener. [LPA]

Provenance: Duke of Northumberland (unverified); Edouard Jonas, Paris, 1926; Lord Duveen, late 1920s; Duveen Brothers, New York, 1963

Literature: André Theunissen, *Meubles et sièges du XVIII siècle* (Paris, 1939), pl. 51, p. 153; Henry Clouzot, *The Finest Work of Jean-Henri Riesener* (Paris, 1926); Liana Paredes Arend, "Two Commodes Attributed to Jean-Henri Riesener," *The Post*, Hillwood Studies (autumn 1994), pp. 7–12.

Fig. 95. Detail of left panel





90 Commode with Floral Marquetry

Paris, ca. 1775–80

Attributed to Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806)
Wood marquetry, gilt bronze, marble
H. 35½ in. (90.2 cm), W. 56¼ in. (143 cm); D. 22½ in. (57.2 cm)

31.10

Three shallow drawers across the top of this commode are faced with a *guilloché*-and-rosette design in gilt bronze. The rest of the front is split to accommodate two large drawers and divided vertically into three panels with pictorial marquetry. A large basket of flowers decorates the central panel that protrudes ever so slightly from the surface. Urn-shaped vases, created to look like jasper, contain flowers on the side panels. A trellis pattern enclosing acanthus quatrefoils covers the end panels. The canted forecorners are mounted with a classical bust of a bearded figure (see fig. 29). A bearded mask is situated at the center of the apron (see cat. 89), and the commode's four feet are mounted with lions' paws in ormolu.

As the later of the two commodes at Hillwood, this piece is more neoclassical in style, is comparatively toned down in shape, and has less ponderous decorative elements. While the earlier commode exhibits a curvilinear rococo plan, the front and sides of this commode are rectilinear. The use of floral marquetry still owes much to Oeben, and the side panels retain many of the characteristics seen in the earlier commode. Some of the intensity of the marquetry's original tints can be imagined from the hints of color that remain in certain areas. For example, the green shade of the wood is still noticeable in the open areas of the *guilloché* band running across the top. The mounts, particularly the *guilloché* pattern, and the vestal busts are more decisively classical. Such vestal mounts are often found in the work of the *ébéniste* Martin Carlin.¹

While this commode is still reminiscent of Riesener's earlier designs, it also hints at the next step in the development of his work. By the 1770s this

type of rich pictorial marquetry was increasingly displaced by veneers of a simpler and more geometric design. Such pictorial marquetry continued to appear in a group of more old-fashioned commodes and *secrétaires*, to which this commode belongs. Ornamented with naturalistic flower vases in marquetry, they also utilize similar classical busts as corner mounts.² The fine detail of the marquetry on the commode's sides confirms that this is indeed the work of a superb *ébéniste*. Each diamond shape is painstakingly banded with strips of amaranth and edged with extremely fine fillets of lighter wood (fig. 29). The refined proportions of this commode, the intricacy of its marquetry, the superb chiseling of its mounts, and the high quality of its construction all characterize Riesener's work and elevate his accomplishments above those of his contemporaries.

The two commodes at Hillwood exemplify the early and later stages of Riesener's first style, when he bridges his debt to Oeben and affirms his own artistic personality as the royal cabinetmaker. The earlier one is deliberately solid, masculine, and somewhat ponderous, while in comparison the later commode is lighter and more fully neoclassical in its design, revealing Queen Marie Antoinette's influence on his work.

The provenance of this commode can be traced without interruption to the beginning of the nineteenth century. It appears in the Parisian collection of Lord Hertford, the fourth Marquis of Hertford, and then in that of Sir Richard Wallace, his illegitimate son. On Sir Richard's death, the commode was inherited by his wife Lady Wallace and in turn by her residuary legatee Sir John Murray Scott.³ When Murray Scott died in 1912, he bequeathed his apartment on the rue Lafitte and its contents to Lady Sackville, who sold the collection *en bloc* to Jacques Seligman. [LPA]

Provenance: Lord Hertford; Sir Richard Wallace, 1870?; Lady Wallace, 1890; Sir John Murray Scott, 1897; Lady Sackville, 1912; Jacques Seligman, 1912?; Mrs. F. Gould; Duveen Brothers, New York, 1926

Exhibitions: National Portrait Gallery 1975, cat. 227, as "possibly by Martin Carlin"
Literature: Arend 1994, pp. 7–12

1. Pradère 1989, p. 381, notes that this model certainly belonged to the dealer Poirer. This would explain its use by Carlin, who was one of Poirer's main suppliers of furniture, and the recurrence of motifs on other cabinetmaker's work.

2. Among other related pieces are a commode in the Art Institute of Chicago (see Ian Wardropper and Lynn Springer Roberts, *European Decorative Arts in the Art Institute of Chicago* [Chicago, 1991], p. 87) and three drop-front *secrétaires*: one in the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva (see Pradère 1989, p. 301, no. 461); one in the Rothschild collection at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire (see Pierre Verlet, *Le mobilier royal français*, vol. 3 [Paris and London, 1963], no. 15a); and one in the Wallace collection, London (see Verlet 1963, no. 18a).

3. In the inventory of Lady Wallace's apartment on the rue Lafitte, taken at the time of her death, the commode is listed as "commode L XVI, bois de placage en marqueterie (corbeille et vase de fleurs) orné de bronze avec dessus marbre blanc- prisé vingt mille francs . . . 20.000." I am indebted to Peter Hughes of the Wallace collection for checking the Hertford inventories and finding this commode listed there.





91

91 Lady's Writing Table

Paris, ca. 1770

Pierre Roussel (1723–1782)

Wood marquetry, ivory,
mother-of-pearl, gilt bronze

H. 29 in. (74 cm), W. 30 1/4 in. (77 cm),
D. 17 in. (43 cm)

31.30

Marks: Stamped *Roussel* on underside of
skirt

An elaborate picture in marquetry depicting a busy harbor scene (fig. 96) complements the table's sinuous outline, bombé sides, and cabriole legs. Panels of marquetry on the front drawer and sides feature naively rendered village scenes. The table's top slides back to reveal a drawer fitted with a

writing pad of tooled leather and compartments to hold writing implements.

Similar marquetry pictures can be seen in related pieces signed by other ébénistes.¹ Such repetition of analogous scenes strongly suggests that they must have come from the same sources, namely, *marqueteurs*, or specialists in veneered pictures who supplied multiple ébénistes. They in turn would insert the marquetry pictures into their own pieces of furniture. An obvious disparity exists between the naive style of the marquetry on the table's sides and the more detailed work of the scene on the top. Naive marquetry pictures derive from similarly veneered *pietra dura* panels produced in Florence in the early seventeenth century.² The very dif-

ferent nature of these two panels suggests a second *marqueteur* was supplying pictures to the ébéniste workshop.

Pierre Roussel was elected *maître ébéniste* in 1745. He maintained a workshop in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine (rue de Charenton), the area in which cabinetmakers had traditionally established their workshops, away from the trendy Faubourg Saint-Honoré, where dealers in decorative arts were concentrated. During the 1760s Roussel's career began to prosper. From 1775 to 1780 he executed important furniture commissions for the Prince de Condé totaling ten thousand livres. The inventory taken after his death indicates that Roussel operated quite a successful shop. With three workshops, a store-room, and a display room, he also functioned as a furniture dealer. As such, he was able to apply his stamp on pieces sold at his establishment, even if they had been made by others. This inventory lists approximately two hundred fifty pieces of furniture in stock in a variety of materials, including lacquer, mahogany, and other richly figured woods.³

Roussel worked in a wide range of styles, from the height of the Louis XV style, which is best exemplified in a group of bombé-shaped commodes with floral marquetry, to the fully developed neoclassical style with its simple veneers. Apparently his most popular type of marquetry can be associated with the transitional style that is so prominently displayed in the Hillwood table. [LPA]

Provenance: Ralph Bernal collection, sold Christie and Manson, 5 March 1855, lot 4205; David Falcke, 1855; Symons, New York, 1926

¹ Similar pieces include a table in the Louvre signed *Wolff*, a table in the Frick Collection, New York, stamped *Malle*, and a table formerly in the Claude Cartier collection (sold Sotheby's Parke-Bernet, Monaco, 25–27 November 1979, lot 143) signed *Dautriche*.

² This observation was made by Theodore Dell in *The Frick Collection: An Illustrated Catalogue. Furniture and Bronzes*, vol. 5 (New York, 1992), p. 363–68.

³ See Pradère 1989, pp. 205–206.

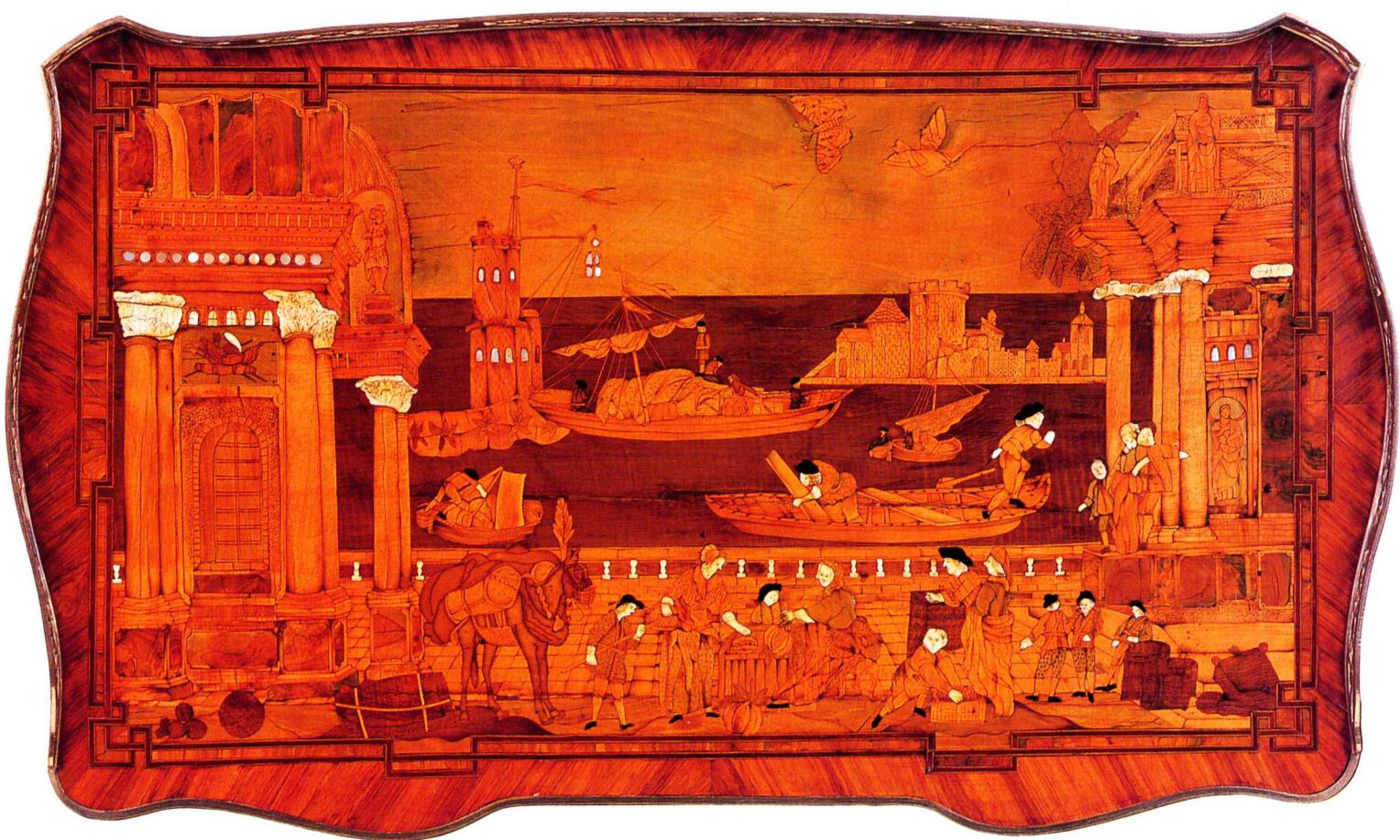


Fig. 96. Table top

Paris, ca. 1770

Pierre Macret (active 1756–87)

Wood marquetry, gilt bronze

H. 35 in. (89 cm), L. 58 1/4 in. (148 cm),

D. 24 in. (61 cm)

31.9

Marks: Stamped *Macret* on top back corners and on top right and top left drawers

Covered with a gray and white marble top, this rectangular commode has a tripartite front with a central projecting section. Three small drawers across the top are faced with vine scrolls in gilt bronze. The rest of the front section consists of two large drawers faced with three marquetry panels that have notched corners set off by marquetry frames formed of twisted foliate motifs. A landscape of classical ruins enlivens the central panel. Gallant scenes set in a garden appear on the flanking panels. These same types of scenes are repeated on each side. The faces, arms, and hands of the figures as well as some of the architectural elements are delineated in ivory. Each of the four corners is mounted with swags.

The central marquetry panel is based on a painting by Gian Paolo Pannini (1691–1765) entitled *Ruines à la*

Pyramide, now in the Musée des Beaux Arts of Valence (fig. 97). The *cappuccio* genre—a combination of imaginary elements and classical architectures—was the particular specialty of painters such as Pannini and Hubert Robert. Their work became widely recognized thanks to the many engravings that were produced after their paintings. *Marqueteurs* routinely used these engravings in the late eighteenth century as a source for their own compositions.¹ Here, the *marqueteur* followed P. F. Tardieu's engraving of Pannini's painting, but he took the liberty of changing the pyramid of Caio Cestio into a tree.

During the 1770s numerous *ébénistes* produced commodes, such as this one, in the transitional style, which bridged the Louis XV and Louis XVI periods with marquetry panels depicting classical ruins.² Although the finished pieces were stamped by different cabinetmakers, some of the pictorial panels are remarkably similar in character. One likely explanation is that a specialist *marqueteur* served as the common source for several *ébénistes* and supplied them with virtually identical marquetry panels.

In 1757 Pierre Macret received a warrant of *marchand-ébéniste privilégié du roi suivant la cour* in succession to

Jean-Pierre Latz (1691–1754?), the previous holder of the privilege. Upon Latz's death this warrant had gone to his widow, who maintained his workshop until her own death in 1756. This title granted Macret privileges to work as a cabinetmaker, even though he never received his *maîtrise*. From 1764 to 1771 he served as *fournisseur ordinaire des menus plaisirs du roi*. His business flourished to such an extent that he was able to establish himself as a *marchand-mercier* and move to the fashionable rue Saint-Honoré in 1771. Soon afterwards he gave up producing furniture in order to specialize in the sale of furnishings. In December 1774 and again in May 1775 Macret put his entire stock on sale. He retired from business in 1787.³

Macret supplied several pieces of furniture to the Marquis de Marigny in 1770. The marquis, brother of Madame de Pompadour, held the influential position of *directeur général des bâtiments* from 1751 to 1773. Marigny became a major promoter of the neoclassical style following his Grand Tour to Italy with the architect Soufflot, the engraver Cochin, and Abbé Leblanc. Their intense reaction against the rococo and their subsequent introduction of classical antiquity into French art are reflected in the classical ruins featured on the front of this commode. [LPA]

Provenance: Arnold Seligman, Paris, 1925

1. For the use of prints in marquetry see Geoffrey de Bellaigue, "Ruins in Marquetry," *Apollo* 87 (January 1968), pp. 12–21.

2. Among the most significant cabinetmakers who used marquetry panels depicting classical ruins were Louis-Noël Malle (master in 1765), André-Louis Gilbert (master in 1774), Jacques Dautriche (master in 1765), and Pierre Macret.

3. See Pradère 1989, p. 221.

Fig. 97. Gian Paolo Pannini, *Ruines à la Pyramide*, oil on canvas, ca. 1750.
Courtesy Musée des Beaux Arts, Valence





93 Standing Clock

Paris, ca. 1760

Case: Balthazar Lieutaud (d. 1780)

Mechanism: Ferdinand Berthoud (1727–1807)

Wood marquetry, gilt bronze, enamel
H. 90 in. (229 cm), W. 19½ in. (50 cm),
D. 12 in. (30.5 cm)

16.1

Marks: Case stamped *B. Lieutaud* at top
on back; dial inscribed *Ferdinand
Berthoud*

Veneered in tulipwood and kingwood, the rectangular case consists of three sections. The base is mounted on three sides with an ormolu Greek key pattern, which also runs along the sides of the case's main body. A pendulum is visible through the front glass door. An encircled serpent forms the frame for the glass covering the dial, and the clock's works are held in a square case behind it (see fig. 73). The door in turn is mounted with a laurel wreath suspended from a swag at the top and with a band of ovals and leaves with berries around the lower part. On each corner is an acanthus motif in ormolu. An urn with a laurel swag hanging from the handles stands on a square platform at the top.

The dial of the clock is inscribed *Ferdinand Berthoud*. In addition to being one of the most recognized horologists of his time and an expert in marine horology, Berthoud was known for his scientific research in timekeeping instruments and for the accuracy of his clocks' movements. In 1770 Berthoud was appointed *horloger mécanicien du roi et de la marine*, which might explain why the hands of some clocks are decorated with gold fleurs-de-lis.

Balthazar Lieutaud, a master cabinetmaker since 1749, specialized in producing clock cases. Many of his cases, fitted with Berthoud movements, are similar in their general outline but differ in their gilt bronze mounts, which were quite possibly provided by Philippe Caffiéri.¹ A version of this standing clock now in the Frick Collection in New York is signed *Caffier L'ainé 1767*. Some of the mounts on these two clocks are identical, most

notably the bronze banding around the glass door, the oval laurel wreath at the top, and the band of arches enclosing foliate branches at the bottom. The stylistic similarity between these mounts is inescapable and points to the same bronzemaker.

Philippe Caffiéri was the son of Jacques Caffiéri, the most important bronzemaker of the rococo period. Following in his father's footsteps, Philippe became an outstanding bronzemaker working in the early neoclassical idiom. His bronzes represent a radical departure from the rococo and offer a severe and uncompromising first form of neoclassicism, as evidenced by these bold, stiff mounts. [LPA]

Provenance: Prince Paar collection (unverified); Madame de Soucaret collection, 1916; Mrs. Ethel Hodgkins; French and Company, New York, 1956

Exhibitions: *Exposition d'art français du XVIIIe siècle*, Galerie Jamarin, Paris, 1916

1. Other clocks with these characteristics include one in the Frick Collection, New York, with more elaborate mounts (see Dell 1992, pp. 314–330); one in Versailles veneered in ebony (see "Ainsi se mesurant le temps des rois à Versailles!" *Connaissance des arts* [December 1959], p. 117); a very ornate version in the Palacio Real in Madrid; one in ebony with an urn at the top in the Wallace collection (see F. J. B. Watson, *Wallace Collection Catalogues: Furniture* [London, 1956], no. F271); and one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art veneered in ebony with mounts similar to the Hillwood clock (see *Jack and Belle Linsky Collection* 1989, p. 243).



94 Chair

Paris, ca. 1770
Georges Jacob (1739–1814)
Gilt wood, silk
H. 35 in. (88.9 cm), L. 19½ in. (50 cm),
D. 18 in. (47 cm)
31.94.1
Marks: Stamped *G. Jacob* under front of
seat rail



This chair, part of a suite of four chairs and two sofas, have softly shaped backs carved with a band of *guilloché* and seat rails decorated with laurel leaves and berries. The rectangular, tapering legs are carved with a ribbon design that is tied around the back and terminates in a bold volute in openwork carved at the front with an acanthus motif (fig. 98).

What is most notable, aside from the crisp quality of the carving and the lightness of the design, is the extremely refined use of two tones of gold—yellow and green (*citron*)—in the gilding. This technique was employed briefly from around 1760 to 1770. The ribbon carved around the chair legs is gilded green gold on a yellow gold ground. Acanthus leaves at the feet are applied in green gold, as are the laurel leaves of the seat frame. The precise task of gilding would have been entrusted to a *peintre doreur*. Before applying layers of paint and gold, a *repareur* would have recarved the decoration for further boldness.

Georges Jacob, considered one of the greatest chaimmakers of his time, founded a three-generation dynasty of

Fig. 98. Detail of legs



menuisiers (joiners working in solid wood). His early pieces are transitional in character, with soft, curving lines reminiscent of the rococo combined with decorative motifs that bespeak neoclassicism. From 1777 until the French Revolution in 1789, Jacob provided furniture ensembles for Louis XVI, the king's brothers the Comte de Provence and the Comte d'Artois, the Prince de Condé, and many other members of the royal court at Versailles.

Although Jacob was denounced for lack of patriotism, he managed to remain in business through the Revolution. In 1796 he transferred the workshop to his sons, Georges Jacob II and François-Honoré Desmalter, and they changed the workshop's name to Jacob Frères. After the death of his son Georges II in 1803, Jacob joined in business with his second son in their firm *Jacob-Desmalter et Cie*. They employed more than three hundred fifty workers in what was then considered an extremely large workshop. After Jacob's death in 1814, his descendants continued in the family's furniture business until 1847. [LPA]

Provenance: Samy Chalon, Paris, 1959

Exhibitions: National Portrait Gallery 1975, cat. 228

95 Swivel Chair

Paris, ca. 1785

Claude I Sené (1724–1792)

Gilt wood, leather

H. 30½ in. (77.5 cm), W. 26 in. (66 cm),
D. 22½ in. (57 cm)

31.85

Marks: Underneath, circular burned stamp with cipher of Marie Antoinette within circle surrounded with *GARDE MEUBLE DE LA REINE*; inventory number 467 branded; stamp of chairmaker Claude I Sené

The curved, barrel-like shape of this swivel chair allows the back and arms to be combined in one section. The curved armrests have a bold scroll at the top carved with an acanthus motif and at the bottom resting on a triglyph. A band of leaves and beading serves as



95

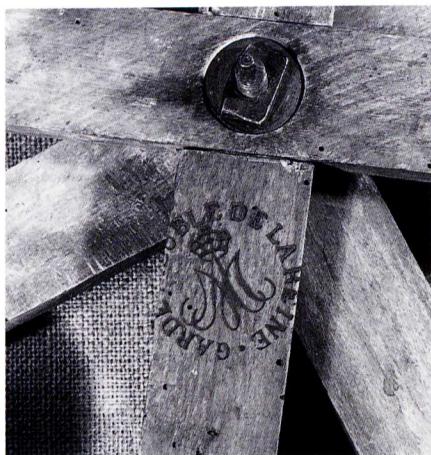


Fig. 99. Mark of *Garde Meuble de la Reine* on bottom of chair seat

decoration in between the two areas as well as on the chair's back. The circular seat, which is upholstered in leather and rotates on a central axis, is ornamented with a similar band of stylized leaves. Its base is carved with bands of beading and acanthus leaves. The four console legs feature a large acanthus leaf at each knee, and beading leads down to each foot.

Possibly designed as a dressing table chair, this handsome chair's low back and enveloping swivel seat would have facilitated powdering the hair. For practical considerations, chairs used for this purpose were often covered with caning rather than upholstery. In this instance, the leather covering is almost certainly a later addition.

The maker of this chair, Claude I Sené, received his *maîtrise* in 1743. He also was a member of an important Parisian family of *menuisiers* who received several important commissions from the royal court during the Ancien Régime. This chair might have been among them. While the *garde meuble du roi* was in charge of supplying furnishings for the state apartments and reception rooms of the royal residences, the princes and princesses of the blood had to furnish their own rooms with private funds. Consequently, their belongings are not reflected in royal inventories. In 1774, in an unprecedented move, Louis XVI offered the Petit Trianon and all its contents to his wife Marie Antoinette. Quite possibly the mark *GR* was first applied to her furnishings at that time. Ten years later

the queen's *garde meuble* was made a totally private and separate entity from that of the king. For that purpose the mark of the *Garde Meuble de la Reine* was created around her cipher *MA* (fig. 99). [LPA]

Provenance: Gift of Eleanor Barzin to MMP, ca. 1959

Literature: Jean Nicolay, *L'Art et la manière des maîtres ébénistes françaises au XVIIIe siècle*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1956), under Claude Sené, fig. H

included in a generous gift presented to Prince Henry of Prussia, brother of Frederick the Great, when he visited Paris in 1784 under the name Comte d'Oels. The estate gift consisted mainly of tapestries from the Gobelins factory.² These items were particularly appropriate for a Francophile and a patron of the arts such as Prince Henry. The Baroness d'Oberkirch wrote in her memoirs that on the prince's departure from the French capital, he lamented, "I have passed half my life in wishing to see France—I shall pass the other half in regretting it."³ Prince Henry took these gifts to Berlin, where some remained as royal property. The Gobelins tapestries for the sofas and twelve chairs are not recorded among the crown property after the death of Prince Henry of Prussia, yet they next

96 Pair of Chairs

Tapestries: Gobelins, Paris, 1784–86

Wood frames: 19th century

Gilt wood, wool, silk

Each H. 42 in. (106.7 cm), L. 29 3/4 in. (75.6 cm), D. 26 1/2 in. (67.3 cm)
31.82, 31.84

The tapestries that serve as upholstery on this suite of two canapés (fig. 100) and twelve chairs, of which these two chairs are a part, were ordered from the Gobelins factory by Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in 1784.¹ They were

Right: Fig. 101. Watercolor design by Louis Tessier for a seat in this suite

Below: Fig. 100. Canapé from the suite (31.72)





96



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appear as belonging to King Leopold of Belgium.

Louis Tessier, a noted flower painter in the second half of the eighteenth century, designed these tapestries (fig. 101). Connected through family ties to Gobelins, Tessier spent the majority of his artistic life painting floral designs for the royal tapestry and furniture workshops. His designs were engraved by Jean-Jacques Avril the Elder and Gilles Demarteau.

From 1760 to 1767 Tessier contributed a series of floral compositions as designs for Gobelins seat covers. To fit this suite of furniture, oval tapestries were created with designs of flower-filled urns, twisted ribbons, and foliate wreaths with cherries. Each seat is decorated with a cluster of large flowers within a similar twisted ribbon border and set against an off-white background. A similar set of tapestries survives at the Château de Compiègne.⁴ [LPA]

Provenance: Prince Henry of Prussia, 1784; King Leopold of Belgium (unverified); Mr. Guingle, Argentina (unverified); Washington Club, Washington, D.C.; French and Company, New York, 1951–55

Literature: *Mobilier tissé à la manufacture des Gobelins sous le règne de Louis XVI d'après les modèles de Louis Tessier, peintre du roi pour les fleurs* (Paris, n.d.); Maurice Fenaille, *Tapisseries des Gobelins*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1907), pp. 408–409

Exhibitions: Perylon Hall, New York World's Fair, 1939; French and Company, 1958, cat. 49

1. Maurice Fenaille, *Tapisseries des Gobelins*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1907), pp. 408–409;

Meubles à fleurs sur fond de soie blanche et contrepoint mard. . . . Un meuble en fleurs, fond de soie flandre, composé de douze fauteuils et deux canapés en carré à 15 a. 1G. 10 à 313 ++ l'au . . . en carré, fut livré le 31 Juillet 1785 au Prince Henri de Prusse qui voyage en France sous le nom du comte d'Oels. Le Prince Henry de Prusse reçut en même temps la teinture de Don Quixote sur fond damas cramoisi qui existe encore de les collections royales de Prusse. . . .

2. In addition to the Hillwood suite, the king presented Prince Henry with four tapestries from the "Loves of the Gods" series, six tapestries from the "Don

Quixote" series, a tapestry portrait of Henry IV woven by Cozette, a tapestry portrait of Louis XVI after Duplessis, as well as four *portières des Dieux*.

3. *Memoirs of Baroness d'Oberkirch*, vol. 3 (1852), p. 60.

4. Fenaille 1907, pp. 408–409.

russkogo obschestva, vol. 23 (St. Petersburg, 1878), p. 252.

2. Among the known French examples are one in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg (see *La France et la Russie au siècle des lumières* [Paris, 1986], no. 494, p. 348) and one in the Musée Royal d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels (see Marthe Crick-Kuntziger, *Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire de Bruxelles, Catalogue des tapisseries [XIVe au XVIIe siècle]* [Brussels, 1956], no. 114). Another that was the "property of an English dealer" was exhibited in *Trésors d'art en russie* (St. Petersburg, 1904), no. 107. One from the Zarine collection was sold in Paris at the Hôtel Drouot on 5 December 1917 (no. 76), and one from the Stroganov collection was sold at a Lepke auction in Berlin on 12 May 1931 (lot 247). It is difficult to determine whether any of these might be the one at Hillwood, especially after the tapestry was enlarged and put into a new frame.

3. See T. T. Korshunova, *Russkie shpalery, peterburgskaia shpalernaia manufaktura* (Leningrad, 1975), fig. 105 and p. 257.

97 Tapestry Portrait of Catherine II

Paris, ca. 1782

Manufacture des Gobelins

Wool, silk

H. 38½ in. (97.8 cm), W. 31½ in. (80 cm)
41.5

Based on a prototype by the Russian painter Fedor S. Rokotov, this tapestry portrait shows Catherine II in half-length facing forward with her body turned slightly to the left. Her hair is dressed with a small crown of diamonds and a wreath of laurel leaves. An ermine mantle with double-headed eagles embroidered on the outside is draped over her moiré and lace gown. She wears the chain of the Order of St. Andrew First Called and the red ribbon of the Order of St. Catherine. The star of the Order of St. Andrew is pinned to her left breast. At some point in its history the tapestry was enlarged.

Hillwood's tapestry comes from a series of portraits of Catherine woven at the Gobelins in 1782 under the direction of Pierre-François Cozette. In a letter to Baron Grimm dated 14 November 1782, the empress announced the arrival of three copies of this tapestry in St. Petersburg: "Les trois tableaux en tapisserie sont arrivés cet été, et ils sont les plus beaux du monde."¹ More than three surviving examples are attributed to the Gobelins, which indicates that several more must have been commissioned.² Russian copies woven at the Imperial Manufactory are slightly cruder in execution.³ [LPA]

Provenance: Dalva Brothers, New York, through McMillen and Company, New York, 1968

1. *Sbornik imperatorskogo istoricheskogo*



98 Roll-top Desk (*bureau à cylindre*)

Paris, ca. 1780
Conrad Mauter (1742–1810)
Mahogany, gilt bronze, leather
H. 48½ in. (123.2 cm), W. 59 in.
(149.9 cm), D. 28¾ in. (73 cm)

31.2
Marks: Stamped *C. Mauter* under right
side rail

Gilt bronze mounts form a visually pleasing contrast with the rich mahogany color of this roll-top desk. Above the cylinder is a section with three drawers and an openwork railing in a scrolled design. A low-relief oval plaque applied to the roll top depicts a reclining putto on a rocky ground, his right foot resting on a truncated Corinthian capital. The plaque is flanked by crossed sprays of laurel. The desk's curved side panels are mounted with female allegorical figures who wear plumed helmets that terminate in tapering acanthus leaves. A drawer below the roll top is faced with an openwork panel of leafy scrolls and intersecting meanders. On either side of it are two more drawers with simple lock plates in a leaf design. The desk rests on four round, straight, fluted legs that taper downwards to leafy sabots.

Conrad Mauter is one of the many cabinetmakers of German descent who worked in Paris through the French Revolution and First Empire. Prior to

this he became cabinetmaker to the Comte d'Artois, brother of Louis XVI, around 1782. Mauter's repertoire consists largely of simple mahogany pieces designed with austere lines, a reflection of the leaner spirit of the time.

Among his known works, this desk, with its richly figured mahogany veneer and its lavish decoration of gilt bronze mounts, stands out as an ambitious project. The gilt bronze helmeted figures and the prominent sprays of laurel leaves suggest the desk was intended for someone with a distinguished military career or for a member of the royal family who held a high military honorary rank. Although it cannot be ascertained whether this roll-top desk was made specifically for the Comte d'Artois, such a desk must have been an important commission meant for an illustrious patron. [LPA]

Provenance: Dalva Brothers, New York, through McMillen and Company, New York, 1965

