



Photo : Gérard Jonca / Sèvres – Manufacture et Musée nationaux

SÈVRES - THE EXCEPTIONAL *VAISSEAU À MÂT*

Sèvres has taken up a new challenge well suited to its world-renowned search for perfection. The Manufacture has daringly decided to once again produce one of the most extravagant and emblematic works ever created at the factory: the famous *vaisseau à mât* (“masted ship”). It is presented at the Sèvres Gallery in Paris from 19 April to 8 June 2019.

Proud of its long history, of its unique skills and expertise, Sèvres is producing a new edition of an extraordinary work from its 18th-century repertoire. Four years of technical research on the vase’s specific shape and colours were necessary to successfully perform this technical feat drawing upon a great variety of specialized skills employed in the 27 workshops at the Manufacture, in particular those dedicated to plaster moulding, small-scale casting and adornment. While the original plaster model has been preserved all these many years at Sèvres, it alone does not suffice to produce a new edition. It was also necessary to rediscover forgotten skills and invent new techniques, while relying on the dexterity of the Manufacture’s talented artisans, in order to once again create this exceptional ceramic object.

Acquired by Madame de Pompadour on 1759 and a second one on 1760, the colours and motifs of this work – also called the *vaisseau à pot-pourri* (“pot-pourri vessel”) – were in harmony with the sumptuous interiors designed as veritable works of art for the marquise. A delightful object of everyday use, this vase was the central mantelpiece ornament at the Hôtel d’Evreux, today’s Elysée Palace. During the 18th century, it served as a perfume diffuser.

Of the twelve vases of varying motifs and colors produced between 1757 and 1764 at the Manufacture de Sèvres, only ten *vaisseaux à mât* have survived to this day. These prestigious ceramic works are part of the world’s finest collections: the Wallace Collection, London – Waddesdon Manor, the United Kingdom – the Royal Collection, Buckingham Palace – the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Frick Collection, New York – the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore – the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles and the Louvre, Paris.

In the Rococo style popular at the time, its shape created in 1757 by the “Goldsmith to the King” Jean-Claude Duplessis evokes the precious-metal vessels that adorned the royal tables. The openwork lid and body allow for the diffusion of perfume.

This one-of-a-kind work born during the Age of Enlightenment has lost none of its original force.

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