

# 2024: MAJOR ACQUISITIONS THANKS TO THE SOCIÉTÉ DES AMIS DE VERSAILLES

Versailles, 29 November 2024  
Press release

In 2024, the Palace of Versailles acquired precious works and art objects linked to its history, thanks to the *Société des Amis de Versailles*. As part of this re-furnishing policy, an exceptional fire screen delivered to Louis XVI, two rare Sèvres porcelain plates, a dressing table that once belonged to Madame Victoire, and a portrait of Madame de Pompadour are now on display for the public.

## AN INDISPENSABLE SUPPORT FROM THE SOCIÉTÉ DES AMIS DE VERSAILLES

Today, the support of the *Société des Amis de Versailles* is essential for the conservation and enrichment of the historical and cultural heritage of the Palace of Versailles. Thanks to their contributions, many works and objects have been restored to their original places within the Palace or have enhanced its collection. These acquisitions help preserve and pass on the authenticity and grandeur of Versailles to future generations. Through their dedication and commitment, the *Société des Amis de Versailles* plays a key role in the preservation and promotion of this national treasure.

### THE FIRE SCREEN FROM THE KING'S CORNER ROOM

In 1784, Marc-Antoine Thierry de Ville-d'Avray, appointed Intendant of the Royal Furniture Repository, initiated a policy of renewing the royal furnishings at Versailles. By 1786, the King's corner room was outfitted with a modern ensemble comprising six chairs, a bergère, two office armchairs, and a fire screen, crafted by Boulard, Chany and Chatard. While most of this furniture was sold off during the French Revolution and subsequently lost, the fire screen is the sole surviving piece.

Its acquisition by the Palace of Versailles represents a significant enrichment of the collection, allowing for the reconstitution of the original furnishings of the King's corner room, a central room in the King's private apartments.

This screen also reflects Louis XVI's personal taste, as it follows a design he favored for his gaming room.

*The Société des Amis de Versailles made this acquisition possible thanks to the generous support of its members.*



Fireplace Screen, Jean-Baptiste Boulard, Louis-François Chatard, 1786  
© Château de Versailles, Dist. RMN © Christophe Fouin



The Fireplace Screen Restored to the Corner Room of  
the King's Private Apartment  
© Château de Versailles / C. Fouin

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## A PORTRAIT OF MADAME DE POMPADOUR BY FRANÇOIS-HUBERT DROUAIS

This recently acquired portrait of Madame de Pompadour, made possible by the *Société des Amis de Versailles*, is one of the finest variations of the famous full-length portrait by François-Hubert Drouais, housed in the National Gallery in London. Painted shortly before the Marquise's death in 1764, the work showcases Drouais' exceptional talent, widely praised in his time for the precision with which he captured his subject's features. At the age of 41, Madame de Pompadour was no longer the mistress of Louis XV but remained one of his closest confidantes and an influential figure at Court. Likely painted in her apartments at Versailles, she is depicted wearing a lace *fanchon*, an elegant headpiece typically associated with mature women, and seated at her embroidery frame, a symbol of feminine virtue.

When the full-length portrait of Madame de Pompadour was unveiled in 1764, it was met with great enthusiasm. Contemporary observers praised its striking likeness and the richness of its composition. Around the same time, François-Hubert Drouais conceived a bust-length variation, characterized by smaller dimensions, such as the hands concealed with a fur muff. This more intimate format, easier to reproduce, led to multiple versions, unlike the full-length portrait. Approximately fifteen such bust variations have been documented, including the recently acquired example by the Palace of Versailles. This particular version stands out as one of the finest interpretations of the original full-length portrait, capturing both the elegance and presence of Madame de Pompadour with exceptional finesse.

Portrait of Madame de Pompadour, François-Hubert Drouais, circa 1764, huile sur toile © Château de Versailles, Dist. RMN / © Christophe Fouin



Plates of the "Jardin" service of Madame Victoire, Manufacture royale de Sèvres, 1785, soft-paste porcelain © Château de Versailles, Dist. RMN © Christophe Fouin

## TWO RARE PLATES BELONGING TO MADAME VICTOIRE

This pair of soft-paste porcelain, adorned with a pastoral design featuring roses, cornflowers, and golden scrollwork, originates from the "Jardin" service created by the Manufacture royale de Sèvres in 1785. Purchased by Madame Victoire during an exhibition at Versailles, the dessert service originally consisted of 81 pieces and was intended for intimate dining occasions. A rare detail: the preparatory drawing for this design has been preserved in the model register of the Manufacture de Sèvres. Today, only a few pieces from this royal service are known to exist, including a plate dated 1785 held by the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. In 1787, the Manufacture adapted this pattern with slight variations for a service sold to the Danish ambassador Otto Blome.

Madame Victoire, born in 1733 at Versailles, was the fifth daughter of Louis XV and Marie Leszczyńska. Never married, she maintained close relationships with Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. At the end of the Ancien Régime, she resided at the Palace of Versailles with her sisters Sophie and Adélaïde. During the early stages of the French Revolution, she fled to Paris and later emigrated to Italy, where she passed away in Trieste in 1799.

A connoisseur of Sèvres porcelain like her father, Madame Victoire owned several services, including the "Jardin" service, distinguished by its charming floral bouquets typical of the period.

*This acquisition was made possible through the generosity of Count Édouard de Royère.*

## A DRESSING TABLE OF MADAME VICTOIRE

This dressing table is attributed to the cabinetmaker Étienne Levasseur, whose simple style is characteristic of the late 1780s. It features five drawers and a tripartite top with a central mirror and side panels. Two elements help precisely identify its provenance: the fire mark *BV* surmounted by the royal crown, stamped on some furniture from the Château de Bellevue – the residence of the daughters of Louis XV, *Mesdames*, since 1775 – and a handwritten label dated 1791, indicating the location of the piece within the Château : "*In 1791 / Dressing table from the Dressing Room / of Md. Victoire*".

The furniture by Étienne Levasseur, which furnished the private rooms of the Château de Bellevue just before the Revolution, was supplied through the Darnault Brothers, merchants with whom *Mesdames* had acquired prestigious furniture as early as the 1780s. Notably, they obtained lacquered Japanese pieces stamped by Martin Carlin.

The dressing table will be placed in Madame Victoire's private drawing room; where other Levasseur pieces, veneered with mahogany and originating from Bellevue, are now conserved.

*This acquisition was made possible through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Xavier Guénant, Mr. Philippe Maire, Mr. and Mrs. Simon de Monicault, and Mr. and Mrs. Yves Vandewalle.*



*Dressing table of Madame Victoire at the Château de Bellevue, Etienne Levasseur, circa 1785 - 1790, oak, mahogany, gilded bronze, mirror*  
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## ABOUT THE SOCIÉTÉ DES AMIS DE VERSAILLES

Founded in 1907 to address the dilapidated state of the Palace of Versailles and Trianon, the *Société des Amis de Versailles* has been recognised as a public utility since 1913. With over 5,000 members and the support of numerous patrons, the *Société* has been working passionately and enthusiastically for more than a century on the restoration, beautification, and promotion of the Palace and the Versailles estate.

Currently, the *Société des Amis de Versailles* is conducting a fundraising campaign for the acquisition of a stool belonging to the Countess of Artois, which will eventually be displayed at the Palace.

[www.amisdeversailles.com](http://www.amisdeversailles.com)

## THE ACQUISITION POLICY OF THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES

As a national museum, the Palace of Versailles is dedicated to enriching public collections through the acquisition of cultural assets on behalf of the estate. Purchases, donations, and bequests enable the museum to acquire works and objects that illuminate the existing collection, complement its narrative, and fill gaps. The areas of focus are diverse and include an extraordinary collection of portraits that showcases the "glories of France" across all fields, making Versailles a "French National Portrait Gallery".

Furthermore, the Palace of Versailles follows a proactive policy aimed at re-furnishing its interiors. Research conducted by the conservation department helps identify Versailles furniture, and whenever possible, the Palace strives to acquire and display these pieces in settings that closely resemble the condition of the former royal residence.