

EIGHTEENTH- CENTURY PORCELAIN SCULPTURE

Artwork labels

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Eighteenth–Century Porcelain Sculpture

Porcelain sculpture may be considered the quintessential eighteenth-century European art form. In this period, porcelain was a material with enormous symbolic significance. The European mastery of true porcelain technology in Dresden in 1709 was a major scientific, technical and cultural achievement, and the new material immediately assumed a vital representational role in the many courts whose rulers sponsored porcelain factories. From the outset, some of the finest artists of the day turned their attention to this new material, exploring its sculptural potential. Arising out of the Baroque tradition of cabinet sculpture – small sculptural works intended to be handled and appreciated at close quarters – porcelain figures quickly became an important part of the culture of theatrical display by which eighteenth-century rulers enhanced their glory and demonstrated their authority. The subjects of these sculptures were often mythological and allegorical, and the visual language of theatre and dance informed much of this production. State portraits, devotional images and depictions of the aristocracy indicate the important status of the porcelain medium. Ambitious large-scale sculptures were also executed in porcelain, testing the very limits of ceramic technology to achieve extraordinary artistic effects.

Exhibition essay available at ngv.to/essay

Tabletop theatre

‘When the dessert was brought in, I thought it the most wonderful thing I ever beheld. I fancy’d myself either in a garden or at an opera.’

CHARLES HANBURY WILLIAMS,
LETTER DESCRIBING A DINNER FOR 206 GUESTS HELD BY COUNT VON BRÜHL,
4 FEBRUARY, 1748

An important early use for small-scale porcelain sculpture was to adorn the dessert table at formal court banquets. Porcelain figures were a more durable substitute for sugar sculptures which had been used for this purpose since the medieval period. Table displays were examples of the type of ephemeral theatrical spectacles that were such an important part of Baroque court culture. Their subject matter was carefully selected, calculated both to reference the occasion being celebrated and to flatter the attendees.

Here a dessert table is set as part of the celebrations for a wedding. The setting is one of Arcadian bliss: happy shepherds idle away their days in flower-filled meadows, while musicians play gentle melodies, symbolising wedded harmony. Allegorical figures representing the four seasons tell of happiness lasting a lifetime, while Venus, goddess of love, presides over all.

Backdrop image:

Jan Caspar Philips

Meal in the Town Hall of Vlissingen, 1751

(*Voorstelling van de maaltijd in het stadhuis van Vlissingen*, 1751) 1753

etching

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

RP-P-1944-2084

Top to bottom, left to right

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Pair of vases

c. 1765

porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4618A.1-2-D3

Most English porcelain factories were founded in the mid eighteenth century, just as the French Rococo style was beginning to make itself felt. The Rococo embraced fluid scrolling forms and nature-inspired asymmetry. These vases exemplify, in a manner unusual for England, how the very best Rococo design was not merely applied to an object as ornament, but shaped the entire form. The vases assume the form of a Rococo cartouche made up of swirling C and S scrolls, rendered in three-dimensions.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Elements from a dessert service

c. 1782

porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4619-D3, 4620.1-2-D3, 4621-D3, 1597.1-2-D4, 1598-D4

The dessert, a distinct meal in the context of an eighteenth-century formal banquet, was the highpoint of celebratory dining and the focus of the theatrical spectacle which accompanied such events. Extravagant and costly foods were served, including confectionary and fresh fruit. Distinctive forms of tableware were created to serve these delicacies. Making up the dessert service was a set of dishes, plates, bowls and serving pieces quite separate from the dinner service.

Frankenthal Porcelain Factory,

Frankenthal manufacturer

Germany 1755–99

Carl Gottlieb Lück modeller

Germany c. 1735–1777

Music, from the *Allegories of the arts and sciences* series

c.1776

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1940

4704-D3

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Shepherd and shepherdess

1756–60

porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1938

3812.1-2-D3

These figures of a shepherd and a shepherdess holding baskets would have functioned not only as decoration for the dessert table, but also as receptacles for sweetmeats or confectionaries forming part of the dessert meal. Pastoral images were an important genre in eighteenth-century elite entertainments. The dream of an Arcadian ideal, where rustic folk lived simple lives in harmony with each other and with nature, was an appealing fantasy for aristocrats leading lives bound by strict convention and protocol.

Mennecy Porcelain Factory, Mennecy
manufacturer
France 1734–1812

The four seasons
c. 1770
porcelain (soft-paste)

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by Mr Peter Wynne Morris, Governor, 1992
D24.1-4-1992

Bow Porcelain Works, London
manufacturer
England c. 1748–76

Venus
c. 1759–60
porcelain (soft-paste)

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by
Mrs M. E. Cutten, Founder Benefactor, 1980

D416-1980

Ludwigsburg Porcelain Factory,
Ludwigsburg, Württemberg manufacturer
Germany 1758–1824
Johann Jacob Louis modeller
Germany active 1762–72

Garland winders

c. 1762–70
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4705-D3

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer
England c. 1748–1848

Shepherd and shepherdess

1756–60
porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1938

3812.1-2-D3

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Pair of vases

c. 1765

porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4618A.1-2-D3

All the world's a stage

The range of subjects represented in eighteenth-century porcelain sculpture encompassed the whole spectrum of contemporary society. Depictions of members of various trades and professions, and of peoples from different parts of the globe were produced in large numbers by factories across Europe. These sculptures were not merely a visual catalogue of the eighteenth-century social order. Many roles featured were favourite disguises employed at aristocratic masquerades and entertainments, where playing at being members of the lower social orders functioned as an expression of power. The subjects of many of the figures are thus ambiguous: are they images of everyday life, or are they images of aristocrats engaged in role-play?

Backdrop image:

Paulus van Liender

Market square in Goch, 1737 (Marktpllein te Goch, 1737) 1760

etching

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

RP-P-OB-46.364

Back to front, left to right

Vienna Porcelain Factory, Vienna

manufacturer

Austria 1718–1864

Poultry seller

c. 1770

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

Frankenthal Porcelain Factory,

Frankenthal manufacturer

Germany 1755–99

Carl Gottlieb Lück modeller

Germany c. 1735–77

The knife grinder

c. 1772

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1940

4737-D3

Carl Gottlieb Lück was a member of a large family of talented carvers and modellers that included the skilled ivory carver Johann Christoph Ludwig Lücke, who provided models for the Meissen and Vienna factories. Carl Gottlieb worked as a modeller at Meissen before fleeing Saxony at the outbreak of the Seven Years War and gaining work as a figure sculptor at the Frankenthal Porcelain Factory. This figure of a knife-grinder is based on an engraving by Simon François Ravenet, after François Boucher, from the *Cries of Paris* series, 1737, depicting the tradespeople of Paris. The *Cries of Paris* was a popular source for masquerade costumes.

Vienna Porcelain Factory, Vienna
manufacturer
Austria 1718–1864

The baker
c. 1770
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4448B-D3

Meissen Porcelain Factory, Meissen

manufacturer

Germany est. 1710

Johann Joachim Kändler modeller

Germany 1706–75

Beggar woman

c. 1741

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4459-D3

The depiction of beggars was a particularly popular subject for artists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was a common subject for Baroque cabinet sculpture. The grotesque and absurd were considered the natural contrast to courtly grandeur during the Baroque age, and depictions of beggars were often intended to highlight the generosity and moral uprightness of the ruling elite who supported the unfortunates through charity. Here the ironic contrast between the beggar woman's impoverished state and the precious porcelain from which she was modelled would not have been lost on a cultivated eighteenth-century audience.

Frankenthal Porcelain Factory, **Frankenthal** manufacturer

Germany 1755–99

Johann Wilhelm Lanz modeller

Germany active 1765–71

Drunken peasant

1755–59

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1940

4703-D3

The Frankenthal Porcelain Factory was founded by Paul Antoine Hannong of the famous family of faience manufacturers. Hannong succeeded in making hard-paste porcelain at his factory in Strasbourg in 1751 but moved the works to Frankenthal, in the Palatinate, because of the royal privilege on porcelain making in France held by Vincennes. In 1761 the factory was sold to the Elector Palatine Charles Theodore of Sulzbach. Frankenthal was second only to Meissen in figure-making in the German lands. Johann Wilhelm Lanz was a talented sculptor from Strasbourg who worked as chief modeller at Frankenthal from around 1755–61.

Frankenthal Porcelain Factory, **Frankenthal** manufacturer

Germany 1755–99

Johann Wilhelm Lanz modeller

Germany active 1765–71

Drunken peasant

1755–59

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1940

4703-D3

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Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Nun

c.1752

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

Members of Roman Catholic religious orders were represented in porcelain by a number of German factories. More intriguing is the fact that, despite Catholic religious orders being banned in Protestant England since the sixteenth century, a large number of English factories, including Chelsea, Bow, Derby, Longton Hall and Plymouth, produced figures of monks and nuns. English anti-Catholic sentiment saw monks and nuns transformed into objects of ridicule and, in the eighteenth century, these roles were favourite masquerade disguises.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

African man and woman, figure group

c. 1765

porcelain (soft-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection.
Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942

437-D4

The presence of African people had been a marker of exoticism and luxury in Western European households since the sixteenth century, and depictions of the ‘blackamoor’ were commonplace in European art. In the eighteenth century, approximately 10,000 Africans are estimated to have been living in England, most working as unpaid domestic staff, or, in other words, as slaves. The figures in this Bow group, based upon earlier Meissen models by Kändler and Eberlein, wear Ottoman Turkish-inspired costumes; slaves of African origin were also common in the Ottoman Empire. African domestic servants in England were also sometimes dressed in exoticising costume.

Meissen Porcelain Factory, Meissen

manufacturer

Germany est. 1710

Peter Reinicke modeller

Germany 1715–68

Chinoiserie group

c. 1750

porcelain (hard-paste)

Private collection, Brisbane

This figure group, showing a woman and children playing with an exotic parrot, is one from a series of Chinoiserie groups produced by Reinicke after engravings by Gabriel Huquier inspired by tapestry designs of François Boucher. These groups represent some of the earliest porcelain Chinoiseries to turn away from the depiction of Chinese subjects as Baroque grotesques to instead depict China as an empire governed by philosophy and the rule of law, whose inhabitants are elegant men and women engaged in refined pursuits.

Doccia Porcelain Factory, Doccia

manufacturer

Italy 1745–1896

Shepherd and shepherdess

c. 1770

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

3845-D3

The Doccia Porcelain Factory was founded outside Florence by Marchese Carlo Ginori in 1745, and from the outset, sculpture was an important part of its output. A series of ambitious large-scale sculptural works was produced under the factory's chief modeller Gaspero Bruschi, as well as smaller-scale sculptures suitable for table decoration. Doccia was unique among early porcelain factories in not copying figures directly from Meissen, but instead turning to the local Florentine tradition of Baroque sculpture. Many Doccia figures, such as this pastoral group, are painted in a characteristic manner employing a stippling technique which highlights surface modelling and produces effects of great subtlety.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Thames waterman

1753–55

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

The Thames watermen ferried people on and across the river Thames in London. This figure of a waterman wears a Doggett coat, which prominently features a large circular Doggett's badge on the left shoulder. The Doggett coat and badge are prizes awarded to the winner of the annual rowing competition held on the Thames, instituted in 1715 by the Irish actor Thomas Doggett, in honour of the accession of George I of the House of Hanover to the English throne. The race, the oldest rowing race in the world, is still held today.

Sources and inspirations

A number of earlier sculptural traditions influenced the development of sculpture in European porcelain. Small-scale cabinet sculpture, or *Kleinplastik*, was already an important Baroque art form. Frequently displaying very fine detail, these sculptures were intended to be handled by the viewer and inspected at close quarters. They were executed in materials such as ivory, boxwood and precious metals. Porcelain votive images, especially Chinese white Dehua figures, imported into Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, demonstrated the possibilities of porcelain as a sculptural medium.

Top to bottom, left to right

Alessandro Algardi

Italy 1598–1654

Flagellation group

c. 1635–40

silver, painted wood

Felton Bequest, 1974

D49.a-d-1974

Alessandro Algardi was one of the most important sculptors of the Roman Baroque and a leading rival of the great Gianlorenzo Bernini. This flagellation group, one of the most popular of all seventeenth-century Baroque devotional images, exists in numerous examples. It is a superb example of cabinet sculpture, or *Kleinplastik*, a genre that found Algardi at his most personal, inventive and expressive. The small scale, refined detail and precious material combine to create a sculptural image perfectly suited to concentrated devotional meditation. A version of this sculpture was produced in hard-paste porcelain by the Ginori factory at Doccia in the 1750s.

Francis van Bossuit (attributed to)

the Netherlands 1635–92

Venus and Adonis, relief

late 17th century

ivory

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939

4114-D3

Ivory was a medium much favoured by Baroque sculptors. It was costly and technically demanding, but produced works that, while small in scale, frequently possessed minute detail and great subtlety. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries many ivory carvers were attached to princely courts. This facilitated the easy movement of some ivory carvers into the field of porcelain modelling, as was the case with Johann Christoph Ludwig Lücke who provided models to the Meissen, Fürstenberg and Vienna factories. This relief, possibly by the Antwerp-trained Francis van Bossuit, exemplifies the sensuous evocation of flesh and drapery that could be achieved by a master ivory carver.

CHINESE

Guanyin

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period 1662–1722
porcelain (*Dehua* ware)

Gift of H. W. Kent, 1938

3733-D3

The Dehua kilns in Fujian province, China, were famed for their white porcelain, frequently referred to in Europe as *blanc de Chine*. A large part of the kilns' output was sculpture, especially religious figures. These included images of Guanyin, Budai, Luohan and other popular Chinese deities. Such figures became extremely popular in late seventeenth-century Europe. Augustus the Strong of Saxony assembled a large collection of imported Dehua votive figures, and these provided early inspiration to the Meissen factory where they were copied in high-fired red stoneware, as well as the early white Böttger porcelain body.

Baroque Chinoiserie

Many early European porcelain sculptures took direct inspiration from imported Chinese porcelain figures. A great number of these Chinese imports were votive figures, including images of popular Chinese deities, produced in white porcelain at the Dehua kilns in Fujian province. These Dehua figures inspired a range of imitations in Europe. To begin with the copies relied quite closely on the imported models; however, over time, direct imitation of Chinese models was abandoned and replaced by Chinoiserie, European fantasies about China. Many of these early European figures assumed a grotesque character, contributing to an image of China as a land of strange and curious idols.

Backdrop image:

Bernard Picart

Chinese gods, 1728

etching and engraving

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

RP-P-1911-3280

Top to bottom, left to right

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Agostino Carlini modeller

Italy/England 1713–90

Chinoiserie group

1752–55

porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1938

3811-D3

This Chinoiserie group from the early years of the Derby factory exemplifies how inspiration from Chinese models was subsumed into wholly European imagery. This figure group is one of a series of five allegories of the senses; here, hearing is being represented by a Chinese woman playing a lyre for a young boy. The porcelain medium (although here not true porcelain but European soft-paste porcelain) and the white colour are the only tenuous connections to authentic Chinese art; every other aspect of this group, including the costumes, facial features and allegorical subject, is European in conception.

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London

manufacturer

England c. 1744–69

Guanyin

1750–52

porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2010

2010.11

Porcelain sculpture is rare in the earliest period of the Chelsea factory's production. This figure of Guanyin by Chelsea is a very close copy of a Chinese Dehua original; indeed, it is possible that it is based upon a mould taken from an imported Chinese original. Similar models were also produced slightly later at the Derby and Longton Hall factories.

Chantilly Porcelain Factory, Chantilly

manufacturer
France c. 1730–92

Chinese figure

1735–45
porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of Mr Peter Wynne Morris, Governor, 1997

1997.326

This soft-paste figure by the Chantilly Porcelain Factory depicts a bearded oriental man sitting crossed-legged on the back of a monstrous sea creature with a snarling, dragon-like head, a scaled body and fish tail. The work is covered in the typical white tin glaze of the early years of the Chantilly factory's production, the glaze pooling slightly in the sculpture's crevices. Although inspired by imported Chinese white Dehua sculptures, the figure is clearly a product of a European artist's fantasy, as the fabulous beast suggests.

Saint-Cloud Porcelain Factory, Saint-Cloud manufacturer

France 1666–1766

Pair of Chinese figures

c. 1730
porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Mr Peter Wynne Morris, Governor, 1995

1995.27.1-2

Soft-paste porcelain Chinoiserie figures were already being produced at Saint Cloud by 1730. Unlike the Meissen factory where Chinese Dehua examples were often faithfully copied, Saint Cloud figures rarely correspond to known Chinese models. This pair belongs to a group of examples all characterised by a highly stylised, rounded simplicity of form. The ultimate inspiration for these figures is found in Chinese sculpture in ivory and soapstone, which in turn inspired *blanc de chine* figures: the simple block-like modelling and the linear fall of drapery are characteristics shared by models in all of these media.

Portraiture

European porcelain was very quickly pressed into service as a medium for the production of official portraiture by court manufactories. The Meissen factory produced a number of portraits of Augustus the Strong, ruler of Saxony and Poland, as well as the factory's founder. Meissen porcelain was proof of the scientific, technological and cultural achievements of Saxony, and as such was the perfect medium in which to execute official images that proclaimed the glory of Augustus and his reign. Other European state factories followed suit, producing portrait images which exploited porcelain's symbolic associations to project the dignity and authority of the sitters.

Top to bottom, left to right

Volkstedt Porcelain Factory, Volkstedt
manufacturer
Germany est. 1760

Johann Friedrich Prince of
Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, plaque
c. 1780
porcelain (hard-paste)

Presented in memory of Mrs L. May by her family, 1988

D6-1988

Johann Friedrich von Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt inherited the principality of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt in 1744 at the age of twenty-three. A promoter of Enlightenment ideals, Johann Friedrich founded an extensive public library in Rudolstadt and supported the local gymnasium. In 1760 he granted a license for a porcelain factory to Georg Heinrich Macheleid. Johann Friedrich acted as the factory's director. This portrait plaque is one of a series of portraits of the prince and his family executed by the factory. The likeness is after a formal portrait by the Thuringian artist Johann Ernst Heinsius.

Meissen Porcelain Factory, Meissen

manufacturer

Germany est. 1710

Johann Joachim Kretzschmar modeller

Germany active 1712–40

Augustus the Strong Elector of Saxony and King of Poland

1714–25

porcelain (hard-paste)

Everard Studley Miller Bequest, 1975

D143-1975

This small-scale portrait figure of Augustus the Strong is both the first portrait to be produced in Meissen porcelain (here the early Böttger porcelain body), as well as the first Meissen porcelain figure that is an original invention, rather than a copy of an Asian model. The figure was modelled by Johann Joachim Kretzschmar, a pupil of Balthasar Permoser, who would later be appointed court sculptor in Dresden. The figure of Augustus in the dress of a Roman emperor, the attire worn for his coronation as King of Poland, was part of a projected chess set, never completed.

Sèvres Porcelain Factory, Sèvres

manufacturer

France est. 1756

Josse-François-Joseph Le Riche

modeller

France 1741–c. 1812

Augustin Pajou (after)

René Descartes

1782–1800

porcelain (hard-paste, biscuit)

Everard Studley Miller Bequest, 1962

448-D5

In 1776 the comte d'Angiviller, directeur général des Bâtiments to Louis XVI, commissioned from leading French sculptors a series of marble sculptures of great figures from French history, intended to adorn the Grande Galerie of the Palais de Louvre. The Sèvres factory produced biscuit-porcelain versions of twenty-three of the twenty-seven portrait sculptures eventually completed. These included Pajou's portrait of the great seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes. The first set of twenty-three figures produced was acquired by Louis XVI for his personal library at Versailles. The unglazed biscuit-porcelain emulates the surface appearance of marble, lending the portrait figures a monumental, classicising quality.

Vincennes Porcelain Factory, Paris

manufacturer

France 1740–56

Dog

c. 1753

porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of
The Wynne Morris Collection, Governor, 1983

D16-1983

Porcelain models of dogs were probably being produced at Vincennes by about 1750; a general inventory taken in October 1752 indicates 263 dogs were in stock, from a whole series of models available at the factory saleroom. Among these, the inventory makes mention of '*chiens de Mad. de Belfond*' ('dogs of Madame de Belfond') – probably Mme de Bellefond, granddaughter of the governor of the Chateau of Vincennes, the Marquis du Châtelet. It is quite possible that this sensitively rendered figure of a long-haired lap dog is a portrait of a favourite pet.

Devotion

The founder of the Meissen factory, Augustus the Strong of Saxony, had converted to Roman Catholicism in 1697 in order to become eligible to assume the throne of Poland. The symbolic importance of porcelain at the Saxon court meant that it was employed to produce images intended for Catholic private devotion, as well as complete altar services for Catholic chapels. This practice was imitated by other court manufactories across Catholic Europe. Rarer was the production of porcelain devotional images in Protestant countries. The dignity of the intended function of such objects is a measure of the contemporary prestige of the porcelain medium.

Top to bottom, left to right

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London

manufacturer

England c. 1744–69

Joseph Willems modeller

Flanders c. 1715–66

Pietà

c. 1761

porcelain (soft-paste), gilt metal

Private collection, Melbourne

These porcelain images of the *Pietà* by the London Chelsea Porcelain Factory represent two of the three known examples of this rare sculpture. The group's modeller Joseph Willems took the great *Pietà* by Nicholas Coustou above the high altar in Notre Dame de Paris as his inspiration. An explicitly Roman Catholic image, the *Pietà* was an unusual subject for the Chelsea factory, as the practice of Roman Catholicism was technically still illegal in eighteenth-century Protestant England. These sophisticated and dramatic sculptures were almost certainly produced for use by English Roman Catholic aristocrats, who privately maintained loyalty to their ancestral religion.

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London

manufacturer

England c. 1744–69

Joseph Willems modeller

Flanders c. 1715–66

Pietà

c. 1761

porcelain (soft-paste)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of the Alcoa Foundation, Governor, 1989

D2-1989

The decoration of these two versions of the *Pietà* group serves to heighten their Catholic devotional symbolism. The nearby polychrome version of the image includes graphic depiction of Christ's bleeding wounds, a Eucharistic reference, while the vignette of the entombment on the base is surrounded by the *arma Christi*, or instruments of the passion, in tooled gilt. The *arma Christi* were a focus of Catholic devotional meditation. The base of this white version bears a tooled-gilt image of the Lamb of God along with an inscription quoting Revelation 13:8, yet another Eucharistic reference.

Sculptors

In the eighteenth century the prestige and symbolic importance of the newly mastered porcelain medium attracted many academically trained sculptors, among them some of the finest European artists of the period. Many of the leading modellers of the great European porcelain factories also held appointments as court sculptors.

Backdrop image:

Sculptor's studio from Diderot et D'Alembert, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers ...*, Suppl. Planches, Paris, 1778, Gravure et Sculpture

Top to bottom, left to right

Capodimonte Porcelain Factory, Naples

manufacturer

Italy 1743–59

Giuseppe Gricci modeller

Italy 1719–20–1770

Goffredo at the tomb of Dudone

c. 1745–50

porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1991

D4-1991

Born and trained in Florence, the sculptor Giuseppe Gricci's teachers are unknown, although his work in a sophisticated, late Baroque manner shows influences of the great German sculptor Balthasar Permoser, and of Giuseppe Bruschi, modeller at the Ginori porcelain factory at Doccia. Gricci moved to Naples in 1738 where he was appointed court sculptor to King Charles VII. He was chief modeller first at the Royal Capodimonte porcelain factory in Naples, and then, when Charles assumed the throne of Spain and transferred his court to Madrid, at the Spanish Buen Retiro porcelain factory. This ambitious group depicts an episode from Tasso's epic poem *Gerusalemme Liberata* (*Jerusalem Delivered*) (1581).

Sèvres Porcelain Factory, Sèvres

manufacturer

France est. 1756

Étienne-Maurice Falconet modeller

France 1716–91

Charles-Nicolas Cochin (after) engraver

François Boucher(after) tapestry

designer

The magic lantern, figure group

La lanterne magique

1757 modelled, 1757–60 manufactured

porcelain (biscuit, soft-paste)

Purchased with funds donated by Peter and Ivanka Canet, 2015

2015.48

Étienne-Maurice Falconet was one of the greatest French sculptors to work in the Rococo manner. A student of Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, in 1757 Falconet was appointed director of the sculpture atelier of the new *Manufacture royale de porcelaine* at Sèvres, a position he would hold until 1766. Falconet brought new life to the production of small-scale sculptures in unglazed, soft-paste biscuit porcelain, producing elegant models inspired by the *peinture du roi* François Boucher. Versions of this particular group were also produced at the English Derby factory and the Italian Doccia factory.

Meissen Porcelain Factory, Meissen

manufacturer

Germany est. 1710

Johann Joachim Kändler modeller

Germany 1706–75

The coppersmith

c. 1750

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4478-D3

Johann Joachim Kändler trained with the court sculptor Benjamin Thomä in Dresden. In 1731 Kändler was appointed court sculptor to Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, and in 1733 he was appointed chief modeller at the Meissen factory. Kändler is arguably the greatest sculptor in the history of Western ceramics. His work manages to combine the sophistication and power of monumental sculpture with an animation and wit suitable to the porcelain medium. His work at Meissen effectively established the parameters for eighteenth-century porcelain sculpture, and his models were widely copied at porcelain factories across Europe.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Agostino Carlini modeller

Italy/England 1713–90

Allegories of the senses of taste and smell

1752–55

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

Agostino Carlini was a Genoese-trained sculptor employed as a decorative woodcarver by Willem IV in The Hague between 1749 and 1751, before arriving in England in around 1752 where he remained for the rest of his life. He was a founding member of the Royal Academy in 1768. While much of his work in England was in marble, including funerary monuments, a bust of George III, and architectural sculpture, it is now believed he supplied carved wood models for the Derby porcelain factory, during the manufactory's early period under the management of Andrew Planché. These figures are two from a set of five representing the senses.

Neudeck Porcelain Factory, Neudeck manufacturer

Germany 1747–61

Franz Anton Bustelli modeller

Switzerland/Germany 1723–63

The watcher at the fountain

c. 1756

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

3823-D3

While Kändler of Meissen was the greatest and most innovative porcelain sculptor of the eighteenth century, the most individual modeller working in porcelain was undoubtedly Franz Anton Bustelli, a brilliant artist of Italian extraction about whom little is known, who worked for the Bavarian court porcelain factory of Neudeck (later Nymphenburg) from 1754 until his death in 1763. Bustelli's work is distinguished by his use of closely observed and sensitively rendered naturalistic detail in combination with extremely elegant and contorted poses, angular treatment of drapery and wildly asymmetrical, abstract Rococo bases and ornament.

Allegory

Allegory, the representation of abstract concepts by pictorial means, occurs frequently in Baroque art, and this is reflected in the subjects of many eighteenth-century porcelain sculptures. Allegorical figures were produced by nearly every European porcelain factory. Figures were often produced in series, representing such notions as the five senses, the four continents, or the arts and sciences. The four seasons were a particularly popular subject. The ability to readily recognise and read the subject of allegorical sculptures was deemed a mark of the viewer's education. Allegorical subjects were also popular forms of masquerade disguise.

Top to bottom, left to right

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Justice

c. 1760

porcelain (soft-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection.
Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942

392-D4

This figure depicts Justice, one of the cardinal virtues, personified as a woman in Classical dress bearing a sword, representing her power, and scales, showing her sense of balance. Her blindfold is emblematic of her impartiality.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Time clipping the wings of love

c. 1765–70

porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4494-D3

Father Time, surrounded by his attributes, including the scythe and the hour glass, wields a pair of shears with which he cruelly clips the wings of struggling Love. This rather pessimistic reflection on the effect of time's passage on human affections is probably based upon an undated mezzotint by James MacArdell, after a painting by Anthony van Dyck.

Bristol Porcelain Factory, Bristol

manufacturer

England 1770–81

Pierre Stéphan (attributed to) modeller

Switzerland active 1760–98

The four seasons

1772–81

porcelain (hard-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection.
Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942

427.1-4-D4

This extremely rare set of figures representing the four seasons was executed in hard-paste porcelain by the short-lived Bristol porcelain factory. The Neoclassical style of the later eighteenth century makes itself felt here. The figures are clothed in Classical robes and each wears the signs of the zodiac on a belt. The French modeller Pierre Stéphan worked for the Tournai factory in the Austrian Netherlands before moving to William Duesbury's Derby factory in 1770. While working for Duesbury he also appears to have submitted models to Richard Champion, director of the Bristol Porcelain Factory. Stéphan also later supplied models for Wedgwood.

Classical mythology

The conceit of depicting rulers as Classical gods and heroes dates back to the Renaissance and became particularly important during the Baroque era. Louis XIV of France, the Sun King, had himself depicted as the god Apollo, while Augustus the Strong of Saxony had himself represented as the hero Hercules. Gods and heroes from Classical mythology were popular costumes for court masquerades, and porcelain sculptures of mythological characters frequently adorned the dessert tables of formal banquets where they made flattering reference to the noble guests.

Backdrop image:

Mathäus Küsel

Banquet of the Gods 1668

from Antonio Cesti, *Il pomo d'oro: Festa teatrale rappresentata in Vienna*, Matteo Cosmerovio, Vienna,

1668, pl. 3

etching

Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (1375-410)

Top to bottom, left to right

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Jupiter

1752–55

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

Jupiter, or Zeus, king of the gods, is here depicted riding the eagle which was one of his attributes, and wielding the thunderbolts which were his divine weapon. This Bow porcelain figure was almost certainly based upon an ivory by Balthasar Permoser, c. 1690–94, the great German Baroque sculptor and master of Meissen modeller Kändler's teacher Thomä.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Mercury

c. 1765–70

porcelain (soft-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection.
Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942

444-D4

Mercury (the Greek Hermes) was the son of Jupiter and Maia, daughter of the Titan Atlas. He was Jupiter's messenger. His father gifted him a round helmet to protect him from the rain, winged sandals to speed him on his journeys, and a staff of office, the caduceus, entwined with two serpents. Mercury became associated with merchants and trade, and here he is depicted with bales of goods and a bag of coins.

Höchst Porcelain Factory, Höchst manufacturer

Germany 1746–96

Johann Peter Melchior modeller

Germany 1742–1825

Daphnis

c. 1771

porcelain

Felton Bequest, 1944

4814-D3

Daphnis was a shepherd from Sicily, son of Hermes and a nymph, who is said to have invented pastoral poetry. His mother was said to have exposed him under a laurel tree (Daphne), where he was found by shepherds and named after the tree under which he was found. He is usually depicted as a beautiful youth, as in this figure by Melchior.

Kloster Veilsdorf Porcelain Factory, **Kloster Veilsdorf manufacturer**

Germany 1760–95

Wenzel Neu modeller

Germany c. 1707–74

Ludwig Daniel Heyd modeller

Germany 1722–1801

Vulcan

c. 1775

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

3846-D3

The factory at Kloster Veilsdorf was near Hildburghausen, the seat of the Dukes of Sachsen- Hildburghausen, in Thuringia, in present day northern Germany. It was founded in 1759, but did not achieve commercial production until 1763, when Niklas Paul the Younger brought his father's knowledge of porcelain production from the factory at Fürstenburg. From the outset, the factory produced porcelain sculpture of high quality with fine decoration. This figure of the god Vulcan is one from a series of sixteen Classical gods modelled by the sculptor Ludwig Heyd under the guidance of Wenzel Neu, probably based upon engravings after Montfauçon.

Höchst Porcelain Factory, Höchst manufacturer

Germany 1746–96

Johann Peter Melchior modeller

Germany 1742–1825

Venus

c. 1771

porcelain

Felton Bequest, 1944

4813-D3

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Europa and the bull

c. 1765–70

porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1956

1592-D4

In Classical mythology Europa was the first queen of Crete. The king of the gods, Zeus, formed a passion for Europa and determined to ravish her. He transformed himself into a white bull, in which form he carried Europa off from the home of her father, taking her across the sea to Crete. In this dynamically modelled Derby figure, the oddly diminutive white bull appears too sweet and docile to have presented much threat to the imposing Europa.

Images of the child

The depiction of children in allegorical roles is a tradition in Western art dating back to the Renaissance. The child, as *putto* (a chubby, sometimes winged, nude infant), was often associated with the idea of direct and untempered impulses and emotions. In the eighteenth century this tradition took on new vitality, with young children being depicted in the guise of Classical gods and allegorical figures, sometimes with satirical intent. At the same time the Enlightenment promoted new ideas about the nature of childhood, and these are also found manifested in porcelain sculpture. The notion that children should be nurtured in an atmosphere of love, allowing them to grow into morally responsible adults, rather than be physically disciplined to break their will and instil obedience, was a revolution in the conception of childhood.

Top to bottom, left to right

Höchst Porcelain Factory, Höchst manufacturer

Germany 1746–96

Johann Peter Melchior modeller

Germany 1742–1825

Slumber disturbed

c. 1770

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1944

4815-D3

The sculptor Johann Peter Melchior was one of the most accomplished porcelain modellers of the eighteenth century. He worked for the Höchst, Frankenthal and Nymphenburg factories and also held the post of court sculptor to the Elector of Mainz. Although he worked in a wide range of genres, Melchior is best known for his sensitive depiction of children. A father of seven, his models are characterised by close observation from life and a genuine sense of warmth and compassion for his young subjects. In particular, his depictions of children absorbed in their games are full of tenderness. Such intimate, empathetic images broke new ground in European art.

Höchst Porcelain Factory, Höchst manufacturer

Germany 1746–96

Johann Peter Melchior modeller

Germany 1742–1825

The sleeper crowned

c. 1775

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1944

4816-D3

This group and the nearby *Slumber disturbed* were conceived as a pair, and perfectly illustrate the brilliance of Melchior as a sculptor and the refinement of decoration achieved by the Höchst factory. Both groups depict children engaged in teasing games with a sleeping companion. But these depictions of childhood innocence also carry an undercurrent of sublimated sexuality. The little girl in *Slumber disturbed* is, as her pulled up feet suggest, about to awaken, while the pet dog in *The sleeper crowned* can refer to female sexual arousal; both groups suggest the brink of an awakening from innocence into the world of adult sexuality.

Neudeck Porcelain Factory, Neudeck manufacturer

Germany 1747–61

Franz Anton Bustelli modeller

Switzerland/Germnay 1723–63

Autumn

c. 1760

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4644-D3

Fulda Porcelain Factory, Fulda
manufacturer
Germany 1764–89

Winter, from The four seasons
c. 1765–70
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1944

4817A-D3

This allegory of winter and the nearby group representing autumn are from an extremely rare set of figures representing the four seasons by the shortlived Fulda factory, founded in 1764 by the Prince Bishop Heinrich VIII von Bibra. The factory closed in 1789 following the Bishop's death. Winter is here depicted as a *putto* in the guise of an alchemist. Porcelain was closely associated with the imagery and language of alchemy. The secret of porcelain production was mastered in Dresden by the alchemist Böttger and the porcelain formula was referred to as the *Arcanum*, a technical alchemical term.

Fulda Porcelain Factory, Fulda

manufacturer

Germany 1764–89

Autumn, from The four seasons

c. 1765–70

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1944

4817B-D3

The *putto* depicted in this allegory of autumn is of the so-called Baroque *putto moderno* type: infants clearly too young to undertake the tasks they are engaged in, but who, because of their age, move the beholder to tender-heartedness and compassion. This Baroque convention, inspired by the *putti* of Titian's *Feast of Venus*, 1518–19, continued to be exploited by artists for much of the eighteenth century.

Nymphenburg Porcelain Factory, Munich manufacturer

Germany est. 1761

Franz Anton Bustelli modeller

Switzerland/Germany 1723–63

Putto as Venus, from the Gods of Ovid series

1770s

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4557-D3

Playfully modelled by Franz Anton Bustelli, this figure of a *putto* as the goddess Venus is one from a series of twenty-six such figures of deities from Classical mythology. Venus is shown holding a burning heart and a torch while she tramples upon a sword and shield – the fires of love defeating war and conflict. Bustelli's depiction of deities as smiling children toying with their traditional emblems does not conjure thoughts of omnipotent divine power, but rather of joyful celebration here on earth.

The *Commedia dell'arte*

Commedia dell'arte was a satirical theatrical form characterised by simple plots and improvised dialogue enacted by a cast of colourful stock characters that emerged in northern Italy in the fifteenth century and rapidly gained popularity throughout Europe. Some troupes were favoured at foreign courts, especially in France and Germany, where images from the *commedia* became a favourite theme for artists. In the eighteenth century, porcelain figures depicting characters from the Italian *commedia dell'arte* were extremely popular. The various characters that comprised a typical Italian comedy troupe were instantly recognisable to the audience because of their distinctive costumes and exaggerated mannerisms, and these details of costume and gesture provided engaging subject matter for porcelain modellers. *Commedia* costumes also became popular disguises for court masquerades.

Backdrop image:

Jacques Callot

Frontispiece c. 1621,

from the *Dances of Sfessania (Balli di Sfessania)* series c. 1621

etching with engraving

Felton Bequest, 1958

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

3804.1-4

Top to bottom, left to right

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

The Doctor

c. 1752

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

The character of the Doctor, often more specifically 'Dr Boloardo', was reputedly a professor of medicine from the university of Bologna who was in reality a pompous ignoramus and womaniser. This model by the Bow factory is copied from a Meissen original created by Peter Reinicke in 1744 for the so-called Duke of Weissenfels series of *commedia* figures. Reinicke based his figure on an engraved illustration by François Joullain in Louis Riccoboni's *Histoire du Théâtre Italien* published in Paris in 1728–30.

Kloster Veilsdorf Porcelain Factory, Kloster Veilsdorf manufacturer

Germany 1760–95

Wenzel Neu modeller

Germany c. 1707–74

Harlequin

c. 1764–65

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

3825-D3

The factory at Kloster Veilsdorf was established a few kilometres away from the court theatre by the younger brother of the Duke of Sachsen-Hildburghausen. Wenzel Neu was *modelmeister* at the factory from 1763–67. The set of ten figures from the *commedia dell'arte* are believed to be some of his earliest creations. The figures are taken from a set of drawings by Johann Jacob Schübler which had been engraved by Johann Balthasar Probst and published in Augsburg in 1729. In this figure, Harlequin, the wily servant character of the *commedia*, is shown wearing the characteristic chevron-decorated clothing which developed from an original heavily patched costume.

For Kids

This figure of a man wearing a bright and colourful costume is named Harlequin. He was a type of clown very popular in eighteenth-century Europe. Harlequin would perform funny dances and tell clever jokes to make the audience laugh.

There is another figure of Harlequin elsewhere in this exhibition. He is playing bagpipes and is hiding among a bunch of porcelain flowers. Can you find him?

Mennecey Porcelain Factory, Mennecey manufacturer France 1734–1812

Bust of an actor 1750–60 porcelain (soft-paste)

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by Mr Peter Wynne Morris, Governor, 1998
1998.46

The Mennecey inventories show a large production of figures, including representations of characters from the *commedia dell'arte*. It remains difficult to identify the particular character depicted by this bust with any certainty, although the moustache, hat and cloak are associated with the *commedia* role of the Capitano, or his later Neapolitan variant, Scaramouche. The ruffled collar, an item of dress which was utterly archaic in the eighteenth century, is a clear marker of a theatrical costume. It can not only be seen on *commedia* figures but also on many other figure types, and may serve to indicate that their subjects are masqueraders.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Scapino

1750–52

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

Scapino comes from Bergamo and is a rake who cultivates an elegant appearance in order to impress women. He wears his money pouch conspicuously, but is in fact a cheapskate who guards his money closely. Like the nearby figure of the Doctor, this Bow model is based upon an earlier Meissen figure by Peter Reinicke after an engraving by François Joullain from the 1720s.

Meissen Porcelain Factory, Meissen manufacturer

Germany est. 1710

Johann Joachim Kändler modeller

Germany 1706–75

Scaramouche and Columbine

c. 1740

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4460-D3

Columbine, a servant figure in the *commedia*, is a flirtatious coquette, quick-witted and a master of repartee. Scaramouche is a crafty servant and a rogue. Here they flirt with one another, Scaramouche with his arm around Columbine's shoulder, she with her arm around Scaramouche's waist. The bird in the birdcage in Columbine's hand may not only be a reference to her name (little dove), but also a sexual reference: in eighteenth-century art the bird and birdcage can be references to, respectively, male and female genitalia.

Intimate encounters

Eighteenth-century Rococo art, especially as exemplified in the work of its leading exponent, François Boucher, saw the reinvention of the pastoral, a form of idealised landscape populated by shepherds and shepherdesses enacting scenes of erotic and sentimental love. Dressed in fine silks and ribbons, these rustics betray not a trace of dirt or any signs of rural labour. The pastoral was closely tied to contemporary theatre and presented a fantasy world which must have held great appeal to an aristocracy constrained by court ritual and protocol. This dream of a carefree life lived in harmony with nature, along with its playful eroticism, was also reflected in contemporary porcelain sculpture.

Top to bottom, left to right

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London

manufacturer

England c. 1744–69

Joseph Willems modeller

Flanders c. 1715–66

Masqueraders, pair of figures

c. 1758–60

porcelain (soft-paste)

Collection of Mr Kenneth Reed AM, Sydney

This pair of figures in rustic dress depicts masked and costumed masquerade participants. When compared to the nearby figures of Liberty and Matrimony, these masqueraders bear similar attributes emblematic of male (birds) and female (birdcage) genitalia, but here the gender of the bearers is reversed: the man holds the cage, the woman the basket of birds. This suggestion of ambiguous gender roles is probably intentional. In the eighteenth century, masquerade had many critics who saw these public events, with all of the participants disguised, as encouraging of illicit sexual behaviours, including prostitution and homosexuality.

Höchst Porcelain Factory, Höchst manufacturer Germany 1746–96

The fortune teller c. 1750 porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1944

4809-D3

This amusing figure group is direct in its erotic content. An elegantly dressed couple have stopped to consult a fortune teller. As the fortune teller distracts the young lady with a palm-reading, her companion employs a mirror to surreptitiously admire her bosom. The humorous episode, with its lighthearted erotic imagery, suggests a scene from the theatre.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Liberty and Matrimony

c. 1765

porcelain (soft-paste)

Gift of John H. Connell, 1929

3089.1-2-D3

The subjects of these figures in rustic dress are traditionally identified as personifications of Liberty and Matrimony. The birdcage held by the woman is understood to represent the social constraints of marriage, while the nest containing baby birds held by the man represents the freedom of the unwedded state. There is, however, a more explicitly erotic content to the imagery of these figures. In European art, since at least the seventeenth century, the birdcage and the bird had been understood to symbolise, respectively, the female and male genitalia.

Ludwigsburg Porcelain Factory,
Ludwigsburg, Württemberg manufacturer
Germany 1758–1824

Johann William Götz modeller
Germany 1732–62

Winter, from The four seasons

c. 1760

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1940

4468-D3

This delightful figure group exemplifies how rich the iconography of porcelain sculpture can be. The pair of musicians in rustic costume is one from a set of four groups emblematic of the seasons – a common variant of this group includes a brazier on the ground beside the couple, identifying them as representing winter. These groups would have together formed a table centrepiece. The couple perform a musical duet, the young woman singing to the accompaniment of the hurdy-gurdy. Such music-making symbolises a harmonious relationship. The woman's lap dog symbolises loyalty, but also potential sexual excitement – a little warmth in the midst of winter.

The language of gesture

Eighteenth-century porcelain sculpture frequently records details of the language of dance and gesture so central to Baroque court culture. Control of the body and its movements was a discipline rigorously studied by all members of the nobility from childhood. Dancing masters played one of the most important roles in an aristocratic education. They taught not only formal dance, but also the arts of deportment and elegant gesture. Refined body language distinguished a noble from the lower orders of society. The stance, carriage of the head and position of the arms seen in many porcelain figures reflect this sophisticated gestural code, often indicating to us that, whatever the details of the costume being worn, the subject of the figure is a member of the nobility.

Top to bottom, left to right

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Italian farmer

c. 1760

porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4493-D3

This figure depicts a young man holding a cockerel while wearing clothing typical of a peasant farmer. The figure by the English Derby factory is a copy of an original modelled at Meissen by the sculptors Kändler and Reinicke. A version was also produced at the Italian Ginori factory at Doccia. Although the young man sports a rustic outfit, the set of his feet, the upward turn of his head gazing off to the side and the overall elegance of his pose suggests we are not looking here at a rural labourer, but at an aristocrat in masquerade costume.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Masquerader

c. 1765

porcelain (soft-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection.
Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942

469-D4

The early eighteenth-century *Fêtes galantes* of Antoine Watteau had a profound impact on the visual imagery associated with masquerade and courtly entertainment. This figure is probably based upon an engraving of Watteau's *L'indifferent* of 1729. The same engraved image of an elegant costumed dancer provided the source for an earlier Meissen figure by Kändler which is sometimes identified as Beltrame from the *commedia dell'arte* (improvised masked theatre). The theatrical character of the present figure is made clear by the presence of the masquerade mask at the figure's feet. The studied position of the arms and feet derive from formal dance gestures.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Dancing gentleman

c. 1770

porcelain (soft-paste)

Presented by Frederick Gonnerman Dalgety Esq., 1862

501-D1M

This elegant gentleman captured in a formal dance pose would originally have been accompanied by a female figure. The position of his arms, with his left arm extended and holding his hat, indicates that he is in the middle of making a formal greeting to his companion as part of the commencement of a dance.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Ranelagh dancers

1756–60

porcelain (soft-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection.
Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942

455.1-2-D4

This pair of elegant dancers in theatrical costume is traditionally associated with entertainments of the mid eighteenth century held in the pleasure gardens of Ranelagh, Chelsea, on the outskirts of London. These public pleasure gardens, accessible by entrance fee, were a favourite haunt of London's elites and regularly the site of public masquerades. A Rococo rotunda in the centre of the gardens provided a venue for musical entertainments. The elegant stances and gestures of this pair reflect the formal deportment which signalled social rank, important in the context of masquerades where disguise allowed people of different classes to mix.

Music and dance

Music and dance were important aspects of eighteenth-century court life, and this is reflected in porcelain sculpture of the period. Music was an essential accompaniment to celebrations and festivities, and the ability to sing and play a musical instrument was a vital courtly accomplishment. Dance too was central to much court entertainment. Many formal dances associated with the court were in fact rustic in origin, and folk dance continued to influence more formal dance traditions throughout the eighteenth century. Depictions of rustic dance, common in art since the Renaissance, enjoyed great currency in the eighteenth century, encouraged in part by the elegant pastorals of Antoine Watteau and his followers. Such images of dance could also hold subtle erotic content – the joy of dance's rhythmic movements spoke of other sensual pleasures.

Backdrop image:

Simon Fokke

Ball for the princes of Europe (Bal der Europese vorsten) 1742

etching and engraving

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

RP-P-OB-67.666

Top to bottom, left to right

Chelsea-Derby, London manufacturer

England 1770–84

Pair of dancers

c. 1770

porcelain (soft-paste)

Anonymous Bequest, 1980

D50-1980

It has been suggested that this group of a young woman and man engaged in a rustic dance may be related to a Sèvres biscuit porcelain group modelled in c. 1765 by Falconet entitled *The German Dance*. A number of Sèvres groups were copied or reinterpreted by the Derby factory. However, a more likely inspiration for the composition may be Jean-Baptiste Pater's painting *La Danse* of 1738.

Höchst Porcelain Factory, Höchst manufacturer

Germany 1746–96

Johannes Zeschinger decorator

Germany active 1748–53

Shepherdess

c. 1750

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1944

4810-D3

This rare figure by the Höchst Porcelain Factory is based upon a Meissen model created by Kändler in c. 1750. The base of the figure bears the 'IZ' mark of the decorator Johannes Zeschinger. The figure depicts a woman dressed as a shepherd playing a recorder. This instrument was extremely popular in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was played as both a solo and ensemble instrument and held an important place in both operatic and instrumental repertoire where it had pastoral and erotic connotations.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Tyrolean Dancers

c. 1754

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

This highly successful figure group enjoyed great popularity in the mid eighteenth century. This example by the Bow factory is after the original Meissen group depicting Harlequin dancing with Columbine modelled by Eberlein and revised by Kändler in c. 1743. Versions of this figure group were also produced at Chelsea and Derby. There also exist examples made in China in the 1740s for the export trade to Europe. Created to be read in the round, the group bristles with energy, successfully conveying the spinning whirl of the dancers.

Mennecy Porcelain Factory, Mennecy

manufacturer
France 1734–1812

Musicians

c. 1760

porcelain (soft-paste)

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by Mr Peter Wynne Morris, Governor, 1994
D6-1994

This figure group depicting a boy playing the flute and a girl playing a musette (a form of bagpipe with rustic associations) is one of at least three different pairs of child musicians made at Mennecy by the same clearly accomplished, but as yet unidentified, modeller. The figures recall the chubby-faced children in the François Boucher–inspired models of Blondeau and Falconet for the Vincennes and Sèvres factories in the 1750s. The composition of the group, with the children facing each other at different heights and with spiralling striations around the base, is unusual and highly effective, creating a sense of circular movement, animating the group.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Pair of dancers

1760–65

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

These Bow figures depicting a rustic couple in dance poses are closely related to a pair of c. 1760 Meissen figures in the manner of Kändler. The distinctive costumes worn by the figures suggest they are intended to represent Dutch peasants.

Höchst Porcelain Factory, Höchst manufacturer

Germany 1746–96

Laurentius Russinger modeller

Germany 1739–1810

The musicians

c. 1753

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1944

4812-D3

This delightful figure group depicts a pastoral scene of Arcadian bliss. A shepherd plays a tune on a recorder, accompanied by a companion playing a musette (a form of bagpipe with rustic associations) and a shepherdess playing a zither. This making of harmonious music by three friends suggests a more general harmony in life and the world at large. Although ostensibly peasants, the richly adorned costumes worn by all three suggest that here we are witness to courtiers at play.

What is sculpture?

A clear-cut distinction between sculptural images as works of art and functional objects with sculptural form did not exist for much of the eighteenth century. The characteristics often associated with sculpture – autonomy, creative freedom, aesthetic intent – can be found in eighteenth-century porcelain works which are clearly functional. These objects suggest that sculpture can be understood not only in terms of autonomous figural form but also as a quality that informs spatial practices as a whole, thereby embracing ‘decorative arts’ as sculptural modes of expression.

Top to bottom, left to right

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Watch stand

c. 1758

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

This watch stand is of the same form as four other Bow examples which have musical scores and trophies as their main decoration. Three of these make specific reference to Georg Frederick Handel and the date 1759, presumably indicating their production as commemoratives following Handel's death on 14 April 1759. This watch stand has no reference to Handel, and was thus either a forerunner to the 'Handel' cases, or a contemporary or slightly later special commission with floral, in place of musical, decoration. The basic form of the watch stand was almost certainly taken from earlier Meissen cases modelled by Eberlein and Kändler.

Doccia Porcelain Factory, Doccia

manufacturer

Italy 1735–1896

Cane handle

c. 1770

porcelain (hard-paste)

Gift of Mr J. Palmer, 1990

D1-1990

This porcelain sculpture of the head of a Turkish man was intended to form the handle of a walking cane, an essential item of dress for an elegant eighteenth-century gentleman. Porcelain cane handles were made by all the major porcelain factories. Such porcelain accessories, along with seals, needlecases and snuffboxes, were highly fashionable in the mid eighteenth century and reflected the taste and discernment of their owners. They were often given as gifts or love tokens.

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London

manufacturer

England c. 1744–69

Toby Fillpott, seal

c. 1760

porcelain (soft-paste), metal, glass, gilt

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by Mrs M. E. Cutten, Founder Benefactor, from the collection of her father, Dr S. A. Ewing, 1980 D418-1980

Toby Fillpot is a character from eighteenth-century English popular culture renowned for his drinking prowess. His name first appeared in print in the song 'The Brown Jug', published in 1761 by the Reverend Francis Fawkes, although the character is probably of earlier origin; he is sometimes identified with Edward 'Toby' King who died in 1726. Toby is depicted in early eighteenth-century costume, including a tricorne hat, grasping a tankard of ale. He gives his name to the figural 'Toby' jug popular in eighteenth-century England. Here the image of Toby forms the handle to a seal.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Turkish woman, salt

c. 1765

porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1956

1604-D4

This salt by the Bow Porcelain Works is a free copy of a Chelsea model displayed nearby, which in turn was inspired by a Meissen original. The Bow version adds a cluster of seashells as a support for the scallop-shell shaped salt receptacle. Shells were a common motif employed on eighteenth-century salts, because of the association between salt and the sea.

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London

manufacturer

England c. 1744–69

Turkish woman, salt

c. 1755

porcelain (soft-paste)

Anonymous Bequest, 1980

D32-1980

Sometimes identified as a sweetmeat dish, this figure of a woman in Turkish costume holding a shell-shaped bowl was likely intended to hold salt for the dinner table. A male version of the model forms a companion. The models are copied from Meissen examples modelled by Reinicke or Kändler in c. 1746-50. The Meissen originals, with deeper basket-shaped receptacles instead of scallop shells, may have been intended as sweetmeat dishes.

Meissen Porcelain Factory, Meissen
manufacturer

Germany est. 1710

Johann Joachim Kändler modeller

Germany 1706–75

Johann Friedrich Eberlein modeller

Germany 1695–1749

Sèvres Porcelain Factory, Sèvres
manufacturer

France est. 1756

Mennecy Porcelain Factory, Seine-et-Oise manufacturer

France 1734–1812

France, Paris manufacturer

**Harlequin and Tyrolean woman,
pair of candelabra**

c.1745 (Meissen figures), 1756–60, (candelabra)
porcelain (hard-paste), porcelain (soft-paste), brass, steel,
gilt, other materials

Collection of Mr Kenneth Reed AM, Sydney

continued overleaf ...

Harlequin and Tyrolean woman, pair of candelabra

c.1745 (Meissen figures), 1756–60, (candelabra)
porcelain (hard-paste), porcelain (soft-paste), brass, steel,
gilt, other materials

Luxe objects created by *marchand merciers* – dealers in luxury wares who commissioned or obtained rare and precious goods and had them assembled into desirable *objets d'art* – comprised an important class of eighteenth-century French work of art. These candelabra were created by mounting Meissen porcelain figures of characters from the *commedia dell'arte* in gilt-bronze armatures supporting candle nozzles and porcelain flowers. The resulting works are at once visually extravagant, with great sculptural presence, and functional.

All the world's a stage

The range of subjects represented in eighteenth-century porcelain sculpture encompassed the whole spectrum of contemporary society. Depictions of members of various trades and professions, and of peoples from different parts of the globe were produced in large numbers by factories across Europe. These sculptures were not merely a visual catalogue of the eighteenth-century social order. Many roles featured were favourite disguises employed at aristocratic masquerades and entertainments, where playing at being members of the lower social orders functioned as an expression of power. The subjects of many of the figures are thus ambiguous: are they images of everyday life, or are they images of aristocrats engaged in role-play?

Backdrop image:

Paulus van Liender

Market square in Goch, 1737 (Marktpllein te Goch, 1737) 1760

etching

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam RP-P-OB-46.364

For Kids

The figures in this display represent people with all sorts of different jobs or professions. How many professions can you recognise?

Top to bottom, left to right

Meissen Porcelain Factory, Meissen

manufacturer

Germany est. 1710

Peter Reinicke modeller

Germany 1715–68

Chinoiserie group

c. 1750

porcelain (hard-paste)

Private collection, Brisbane

This figure group, showing a woman and children playing with an exotic parrot, is one from a series of Chinoiserie groups produced by Reinicke after engravings by Gabriel Huquier inspired by tapestry designs of François Boucher. These groups represent some of the earliest porcelain Chinoiseries to turn away from the depiction of Chinese subjects as Baroque grotesques to instead depict China as an empire governed by philosophy and the rule of law, whose inhabitants are elegant men and women engaged in refined pursuits.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

African man and woman, figure group

c. 1765

porcelain (soft-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection.

Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942

437-D4

The presence of African people had been a marker of exoticism and luxury in Western European households since the sixteenth century, and depictions of the ‘blackamoor’ were commonplace in European art. In the eighteenth century, approximately 10,000 Africans are estimated to have been living in England, most working as unpaid domestic staff, or, in other words, as slaves. The figures in this Bow group, based upon earlier Meissen models by Kändler and Eberlein, wear Ottoman Turkish-inspired costumes; slaves of African origin were also common in the Ottoman Empire. African domestic servants in England were also sometimes dressed in exoticising costume.

Meissen Porcelain Factory, Meissen

manufacturer

Germany est. 1710

Johann Friedrich Eberlein modeller

Germany 1695–1749

Peter Reinicke modeller

Germany 1715–68

Circassian woman

c. 1745–50 modelled, c. 1750 manufactured
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4551-D3

The eighteenth-century fashion for the exotic saw depictions of foreign peoples become a popular subject for porcelain sculptures. Europeans were particularly intrigued by images of people from the Near and Far East. This figure depicts a Circassian woman from the lands of the Ottoman Empire. A visit by the Ottoman ambassador to Paris in 1721 fuelled enthusiasm for Turkish culture in Europe, and Turkish dress became a popular masquerade costume. The resulting *Turqueries* reflected European fantasy about the Ottoman world more than reality. Inspired by tales of the harem, European images of Turkish people, especially women, often bore erotic connotations.

Vienna Porcelain Factory, Vienna
manufacturer
Austria 1718–1864

The baker
c. 1770
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4448B-D3

Vienna Porcelain Factory, Vienna
manufacturer
Austria 1718–1864

Poultry seller
c. 1770
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

Meissen Porcelain Factory, Meissen

manufacturer

Germany est. 1710

Johann Joachim Kändler modeller

Germany 1706–75

Beggar woman

c. 1741

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4459-D3

The depiction of beggars was a particularly popular subject for artists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was a common subject for Baroque cabinet sculpture. The grotesque and absurd were considered the natural contrast to courtly grandeur during the Baroque age, and depictions of beggars were often intended to highlight the generosity and moral uprightness of the ruling elite who supported the unfortunates through charity. Here the ironic contrast between the beggar woman's impoverished state and the precious porcelain from which she was modelled would not have been lost on a cultivated eighteenth-century audience.

Frankenthal Porcelain Factory, **Frankenthal** manufacturer

Germany 1755–99

Johann Wilhelm Lanz modeller

Germany active 1765–71

Drunken peasant

1755–59

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1940

4703-D3

The Frankenthal Porcelain Factory was founded by Paul Antoine Hannong of the famous family of faience manufacturers. Hannong succeeded in making hard-paste porcelain at his factory in Strasbourg in 1751 but moved the works to Frankenthal, in the Palatinate, because of the royal privilege on porcelain making in France held by Vincennes. In 1761 the factory was sold to the Elector Palatine Charles Theodore of Sulzbach. Frankenthal was second only to Meissen in figure-making in the German lands. Johann Wilhelm Lanz was a talented sculptor from Strasbourg who worked as chief modeller at Frankenthal from around 1755–61.

Frankenthal Porcelain Factory,

Frankenthal manufacturer

Germany 1755–99

Carl Gottlieb Lück modeller

Germany c. 1735–77

The knife grinder

c. 1772

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1940

4737-D3

Carl Gottlieb Lück was a member of a large family of talented carvers and modellers that included the skilled ivory carver Johann Christoph Ludwig Lücke, who provided models for the Meissen and Vienna factories. Carl Gottlieb worked as a modeller at Meissen before fleeing Saxony at the outbreak of the Seven Years War and gaining work as a figure sculptor at the Frankenthal Porcelain Factory. This figure of a knife-grinder is based on an engraving by Simon François Ravenet, after François Boucher, from the *Cries of Paris* series, 1737, depicting the tradespeople of Paris. The *Cries of Paris* was a popular source for masquerade costumes.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

Pair of dwarfs

c. 1785

porcelain (soft-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection.
Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942

440.1-2-D4

This pair of figures draws its ultimate inspiration from a series of grotesque depictions of dwarfs by the seventeenth-century French engraver Jacques Callot. These porcelain figures are sometimes referred to as Mansion House dwarfs, through their association with the real-life dwarfs, father and son, who in Tudor times were said to have been employed to stand outside the Mansion House in the City of London wearing advertisements attached to their large hats. Porcelain adaptations of Callot's dwarf engravings were also produced at Meissen, Mennecey and Chelsea. Costumes resembling Callot's dwarfs became popular masquerade disguises.

Doccia Porcelain Factory, Doccia

manufacturer

Italy 1745–1896

Shepherd and shepherdess

c. 1770

porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

3845-D3

The Doccia Porcelain Factory was founded outside Florence by Marchese Carlo Ginori in 1745, and from the outset, sculpture was an important part of its output. A series of ambitious large-scale sculptural works was produced under the factory's chief modeller Gaspero Bruschi, as well as smaller-scale sculptures suitable for table decoration. Doccia was unique among early porcelain factories in not copying figures directly from Meissen, but instead turning to the local Florentine tradition of Baroque sculpture. Many Doccia figures, such as this pastoral group, are painted in a characteristic manner employing a stippling technique which highlights surface modelling and produces effects of great subtlety.

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London

manufacturer

England c. 1744–69

Haymaker

c. 1765

porcelain (soft-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection.
Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942

449-D4

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Nun

c.1752

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

Members of Roman Catholic religious orders were represented in porcelain by a number of German factories. More intriguing is the fact that, despite Catholic religious orders being banned in Protestant England since the sixteenth century, a large number of English factories, including Chelsea, Bow, Derby, Longton Hall and Plymouth, produced figures of monks and nuns. English anti-Catholic sentiment saw monks and nuns transformed into objects of ridicule and, in the eighteenth century, these roles were favourite masquerade disguises.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Thames waterman

1753–55

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

The Thames watermen ferried people on and across the river Thames in London. This figure of a waterman wears a Doggett coat, which prominently features a large circular Doggett's badge on the left shoulder. The Doggett coat and badge are prizes awarded to the winner of the annual rowing competition held on the Thames, instituted in 1715 by the Irish actor Thomas Doggett, in honour of the accession of George I of the House of Hanover to the English throne. The race, the oldest rowing race in the world, is still held today.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

The stocking mender

c. 1775

porcelain (soft-paste)

Gift of an anonymous donor, 2006

2006.387

This figure group depicts a stocking mender as she attends to the stocking of a well-dressed cavalier. The group is, however, given an explicitly erotic frisson by the gesture of the gentleman, who reaches down to caress the serving woman's face. The sculpture is based on a biscuit porcelain model sculpted by Étienne-Maurice Falconet and produced at the Sèvres factory in c. 1756.

The London stage

A phenomenon particular to the English porcelain factories in the mid eighteenth century was the production of portrait figures of popular actors from the London stage, in roles for which they were famous at the time. These works provide interesting insight into the developing role of celebrity in eighteenth-century England, as well as the place of porcelain as a medium for the production and circulation of popular imagery. Successful actors such as David Garrick well understood the importance of self-representation and encouraged the dissemination of their portraits.

Backdrop image:

Jan Punt

Adolf van der Laan

Theatre with stage scenery: the new garden (Schouwburg met toneeldecor: De Nieuwe Tuin)

1760–65

etching and engraving

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam RP-P-OB-103.418

Top to bottom, left to right

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Kitty Clive and Henry Woodward

c. 1750

porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1938

3804A.1-2-D3

These portrait figures show the actors Kitty Clive and Henry Woodward in the roles of the Fine Lady and the Fine Gentleman from the 1749 Drury Lane production of David Garrick's play *Lethe*. The fine lady, Mrs Riot, exemplifies the dissipated woman of fashion, while the fine gentleman is a Grand Tourist who lives only for amusement and lies in bed all day, rising to dress extravagantly in the evening. The figure of Clive is based on a 1750 engraving by Charles Mosley after a watercolour by Worlidge, while Woodward is based upon a mezzotint by MacArdell after a drawing by Hayman.

Derby Porcelain, Derby manufacturer

England c. 1748–1848

David Garrick as Tancred

c. 1765

porcelain (soft-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection.
Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942

472-D4

This figure depicts the actor David Garrick in the role of Tancred from James Thomson's *Tancred and Sigismunda* (1745), a play based on John Dryden's translation of a tale from Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Garrick created the role of Tancred at Drury Lane on 18 March 1745 and played the part twenty-three times over the next few years. Oddly, Garrick wears a Hungarian Hussar's uniform, and a number of contemporary portraits feature the same costume. The intention must be to show Tancred's exotic 'Eastern' origin. The writer Thomson was a Scottish poet and playwright, best remembered as the author of the lyrics 'Rule, Britannia!' set to music by Thomas Arne.

Chelsea-Derby, London manufacturer
England 1770–84

A sailor and his lass, pair of figures

c. 1790

porcelain (soft-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection.
Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942

463.1-2-D4

This pair of figures depicts a sailor and a courtesan. The sailor holds out a handful of gold coins while the woman gestures suggestively for him to follow her. It has been suggested that the figures are portraits of the actors Henry Woodward and Nancy Dawson, possibly in roles connected with Gray's ballad 'The Farewell of Sweet William to Black-eyed Susan'. Dawson found fame as a dancer in 1759, dancing a hornpipe in John Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, one of the most successful London stage works of the eighteenth century.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

James Quinn as Falstaff

1748–50

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

This figure appears to be inspired by Francis Hayman's c. 1742 painting for the Vauxhall Gardens in London showing the actor James Quinn in the role of Falstaff in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1*, a part which Quinn played from 1721 to 1750. It is said that Quinn abandoned playing the role after 1750 due to his losing his teeth. In this regard we may note that this early portrait figure by the London Bow factory depicts Quinn with a mouthful of very clearly delineated teeth.

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

David Garrick as Archer

c. 1750

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

David Garrick was the most famous English stage actor of the mid eighteenth century. He was also a playwright, theatre manager and producer, and influenced nearly all aspects of eighteenth-century theatrical practice. Garrick promoted a realistic style of acting and introduced reforms into production practice which transformed the Drury Lane theatre, of which he was part owner, into one of the leading theatres in Europe. He is depicted here in the role of Archer in a production of George Farquhar's comedy *Beaux' Strategem* (1707).

Bow Porcelain Works, London

manufacturer

England c. 1748–76

Pair of sphinxes

1748–50

porcelain (soft-paste)

Private collection, Melbourne

The female faces of this pair of sphinxes have been interpreted as portraits of, on the left, the London stage actor Kitty Clive, and on the right, her rival Peg Woffington. The two actors are reported to have not been able to stand each other. The unknown modeller of these figures, by portraying the pair as sphinxes, thus betrays a pointed sense of humour.