



FRENCH ROCOCO
ÉBÉNISTERIE

IN THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM

French Rococo Ébénisterie in the J. Paul Getty Museum

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Gillian Wilson and Arlen Heginbotham

Edited and with an introduction by Anne-Lise Desmas

with Jessica Chasen, Yannick Chastang, Jan Dorscheid,
Clara von Englehardt, Philippe Halbert, Katrina Posner,
Michael Schilling, and Ron Schmidtling

J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES

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Director's Foreword

The Getty Museum's collection of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French decorative arts enjoys international renown for its exceptional quality and the prestigious provenance of many of its objects. Nourishing a sincere passion for French decorative arts, the museum's founder, J. Paul Getty, collected actively in this area from the late 1930s to his death in 1976. Gillian Wilson, whom Mr. Getty hired as the Museum's decorative arts curator in 1971, actively advised him in this endeavor, carrying his vision forward as she expanded and enriched the collection until her retirement in 2003.

This publication continues a distinguished series of books presenting the Getty's decorative arts holdings, which began with the 1977 summary catalogue of the collection (with two updated editions in 1993 and 2001). Several subsequent publications explored specific categories: Vincennes and Sèvres porcelain in 1991, clocks in 1996, tapestries and textiles in 1997, mounted Asian porcelain in 1999, and the magisterial *French Furniture and Gilt Bronzes, Baroque and Régence: Catalogue of the J. Paul Getty Museum Collection* by Gillian Wilson in 2008. The present publication on Rococo *ébénisterie* furniture (dating from the mid-1730s to about 1760) serves as a companion to the latter volume. Reflecting the increasing importance of digital access, it is the first catalogue of the Getty decorative arts collection to be published online, with a parallel print-on-demand option. We hope that this format will reach a broader audience and, through its enhanced features, facilitate exploration of these wonderful works of art.

The catalogue entries provide a thorough analysis of all twenty-eight pieces of Rococo *ébénisterie* furniture at the Getty, including their history of collecting across three centuries, from the patrons who bought or commissioned the works to their acquisition by Mr. Getty or the Museum; changing patterns of taste for refined materials such as Japanese lacquer or a preference for a certain shape or ornamental style; and the evolution in techniques of manufacture and the attempts of imitators to copy them. The introductory essays explore the formation of the *ébénisterie* collection as well as the technical study of the lacquer panels and gilt bronze mounts that are integral parts of most of the objects. A number of surprising, and often hidden, aspects of these intricately crafted objects have been revealed through this work, from complex lock systems to secret compartments and carefully matched patterns of wood grain—testaments all to the extraordinary sophistication and skill of their makers.

Sadly, *French Rococo Ébénisterie in the J. Paul Getty Museum* is a watershed publication also for being the last—and unexpectedly posthumous—that will appear by curator emerita Gillian Wilson. Gillian, who devoted nearly her entire career to the Getty Museum, was the driving force not only in the growth of the collection but also in conceiving its display, first at the Getty Villa in Malibu, inaugurated in 1974, and then at the Getty Center in Brentwood, for its opening in 1997. Throughout her career, Gillian studied the collections assiduously, publishing the European clocks and the mounted Asian porcelain, and overseeing the publications by other Getty curators of the Vincennes and Sèvres porcelain, and the tapestries and textiles. After her retirement in 2003, Gillian continued her research unabated, producing both *French Furniture and Gilt Bronzes* for the Baroque and Régence periods (2008) and finally this volume. Though these publications are the last to appear in print, furniture was Gillian's first love and abiding passion.

I extend special thanks to Anne-Lise Desmas, the Getty's senior curator of sculpture and decorative arts, for seeing the manuscript through to publication, and to all the Getty colleagues who ensured that work on this project continued while Gillian's health was declining and after her passing in November 2019. It is our honor to dedicate this volume to her memory.

Timothy Potts
Director
J. Paul Getty Museum

Glossary of Woods Used in French Furniture from the J. Paul Getty Museum Collection

In the list of materials at the beginning of each entry, woods that are marked with an asterisk have been identified by microscopic examination of their cellular anatomy. These identifications have been made by Bruce Hoadley of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst or Arlen Heginbotham of the Getty Museum. Woods without an asterisk have been tentatively identified based on their macroscopic appearance.

ENGLISH	LATIN	FRENCH
alder	<i>Alnus</i> spp.	<i>aulne</i>
amaranth (purpleheart)	<i>Peltogyne</i> spp.	<i>amarante</i>
Andaman padauk	<i>Pterocarpus dalbergioides</i>	<i>padauk d'Andaman</i>
ash	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	<i>frêne</i>
barberry	<i>Berberis</i> spp.	<i>épine-vinette</i>
bloodwood (satiné)	<i>Brosimum rubescens</i>	<i>satiné</i>
boxwood	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>buis</i>
cedar	<i>Cedrus</i> spp.	<i>cèdre</i>
cherry	<i>Prunus</i> spp.	<i>merisier</i> or <i>cerisier</i>
ebony	<i>Diospyros</i> spp.	<i>ébène</i>
<i>ferréol</i> (wamara)†	<i>Swartzia</i> sp.	<i>ferréol</i>
fir	<i>Abies</i> spp.	<i>sapin</i>
fruitwood	family <i>Rosaceae</i>	<i>tribu du pommier</i>
holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	<i>houx</i>

ENGLISH	LATIN	FRENCH
hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	<i>charme</i>
Japanese arborvitae	<i>Thuja standishii</i>	<i>thuya du Japon</i>
juniper	<i>Juniperus</i> spp.	<i>genévrier</i>
kingwood	<i>Dalbergia cearensis</i>	<i>bois de violette</i>
Macedonian pine	<i>Pinus peuce</i>	<i>pin de Macédoine</i>
mahogany	<i>Swietenia</i> spp.	<i>acajou</i>
maple	<i>Acer</i> spp.	<i>érable</i>
oak	<i>Quercus</i> spp.	<i>chêne</i>
padouk	<i>Pterocarpus</i> spp.	<i>padouk or corail</i>
pear	<i>Pyrus</i> spp.	<i>poirier</i>
poplar	<i>Populus</i> spp.	<i>peuplier</i>
rosewood	<i>Dalbergia</i> spp.	<i>palissandre</i>
red oak	<i>Quercus</i> sect. <i>Lobatae</i>	<i>chêne rouge d'Amérique</i>
service tree	<i>Sorbus domestica</i>	<i>cormier</i>
Spanish cedar	<i>Cedrela</i> spp.	<i>cèdre</i>
stone pine	<i>Pinus cembra</i>	<i>arolle or pin cembro</i>
sycamore maple	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	<i>érable sycomore or simply sycomore</i>
tulipwood	<i>Dalbergia decipularis</i>	<i>bois de rose</i>
walnut	<i>Juglans</i> spp.	<i>noyer</i>
white oak	<i>Quercus</i> sect. <i>Quercus</i>	<i>chêne</i>
white pine	<i>Pinus</i> subsect <i>strobus</i>	<i>pin blanc</i>

† There is no recognized common name in English for the unidentified species of *Swartzia* that was called *feréol* in eighteenth-century France. In modern English “wamara” is commonly used to refer to any of a number of species of *Swartzia* and was used in Wilson et al. 2008, 176–77; however, for specificity, we have chosen to use the modern French term according to Viaux-Lauquin 1997.

Contributors

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Introduction: Acquisitions History of the Rococo Ébénisterie Collection

Anne-Lise Desmas

In his first book, *History of the Oil Business of George F. and J. Paul Getty 1903–1939*, published in 1941, J. Paul Getty (1892–1976) took the opportunity to include a short, two-page chapter on his art collection. He explained that although since 1931 he had acquired only fine arts objects—with the exception of one antique rug—his lease of a large penthouse in New York City in November 1936 marked a turning point: “The apartment was furnished and included many examples of 18th-Century French and English furniture of good quality, and one 18th-Century Gobelins tapestry. I had never been particularly interested in antique furniture or in tapestries, but after living in the apartment for a few months I felt the influence of their charm.”¹

Indeed, the “charm” of such objects had a critical impact on Getty. In 1938, he began to acquire French decorative arts, including a writing table stamped with what looked like the initials “B.U.R.B.” and a “French tulipwood commode,” both bought in July of that year from the London art dealer J. M. Botibol (d. 1954). These represent his first two acquisitions of the twenty-eight pieces that now compose the French Rococo *ébénisterie* furniture collection of the Getty Museum, to which this publication is devoted. At that time, the stamp of Bernard II van Risenburgh was “an enigma to all the experts of antique furniture. Of consummate quality, skill and grace, any piece of furniture stamped with the initials B.U.R.B. is regarded as perfect of its kind. Yet the identity of this greatest cabinet-maker of all time, the enigmatic B.U.R.B., still remains a riddle.”² These lines refer to the acquisition of the writing table (cat. no. 9) pictured in *Collector’s Choice*, written by Getty and Ethel Le Vane and published in 1955, two years before the cabinetmaker was identified.³ Regarding the “French tulipwood *commode*,” as it was usually referred to (cat. no. 21), neither Getty nor Botibol knew of the existence of the two stamps of the cabinetmakers Delorme and Petit struck on the top of the carcass, which were noticed in 1971. And like many scholars until recently, they could not know that in fact this commode is a nineteenth-century assemblage of old and new parts, as demonstrated in a technical description by Arlen Heginbotham (see cat. no. 21).

In Botibol's gallery, Getty had also noticed a Louis XV *bureau plat*, which he bought two years later, in 1940 (cat. no. 10). The maker of the desk remained anonymous until 1973, when a conservation examination discovered the "B.V.R.B." stamp.

It was in 1949 that "on impulse Getty added the Oeben mechanical table to his collection,"⁴ after he had seen it at the gallery of Cameron, a dealer in London.⁵ Getty recalled its arrival at the Malibu Ranch House in December 31 in his diary and worried, "[Although it] was partly open when unpacked, I succeeded in closing it but couldn't get it to open again by turning the key" (cat. no. 19).⁶ Getty truly loved this table, as attested by film footage in which he is seen showing the piece and its functioning mechanical system to his youngest son, Timmy (1946–1958) (fig. 1). Today visitors to the Getty Center—and to the Getty website—can appreciate this elaborate system thanks to an interactive display that allows virtual manipulation of the table's compartments (<https://youtu.be/m5OxVgH-T1I> and <https://youtu.be/EblnaLMjdNg>). The film footage of Getty and his son can be viewed in the installation *J. Paul Getty Life and Legacy* at the entrance to the South Pavilion of the Getty Center (and online at https://youtu.be/_lb4e5hWj0Y [at 24 min. 10 sec.]).



Figure 1 J. Paul Getty showing his son Timmy the mechanical system of the Oeben table (cat. no. 18), Ranch House, Malibu, 1950. Still from *Getty: Life and Legacy* / Courtesy of Theodora Lynch Getty

In 1950, Getty acquired a pair of black lacquer *encoignures* by Jacques Dubois (cat. no. 12), about which he confessed, "I'd been in the market for such a pair for about fifteen years before I saw these at Partridges London. Their beauty and elegance so impressed me that I bought them—regardless of their high price—without hesitation."⁷ Unfortunately, the black lacquer had suffered from the uncontrolled climates to which the *encoignures* were exposed over the years; there is so little that remains of their original surfaces that these corner cupboards have never been on display in the Museum. Getty acquired another piece by the same cabinetmaker one year later, this time in New York from Rosenberg & Stiebel: a small red lacquer *secrétaire*, whose size remains quite atypical in Dubois's preserved oeuvre (cat. no. 13).

The year 1953 was marked by two major acquisitions of furniture by Bernard II van Risenburgh, both also from Rosenberg & Stiebel: a black lacquer commode (cat. no. 5) and a desk that is unique in its double-sided shape with two fall fronts (cat. no. 8). Getty, who had initially missed the opportunity to buy this double desk directly from the Duke of Argyll, made every effort to locate it for nearly two years before he was able to track it down. The acquisition process, recounted in *Collector's Choice*, illustrates Getty's difficulty in reconciling his search for rare pieces and good bargains with his full business schedule; it also shows his tenacity when he was interested in a particular object.⁸ It was in that year, 1953, that he created the J. Paul Getty Museum Trust. And beginning in 1954, the Ranch House in Malibu that he had owned since 1945 had galleries open to the public on a regular basis. Most of the above-mentioned objects were displayed in the Louis XV Gallery, as illustrated (fig. 2) and discussed in *The J. Paul Getty Museum Guidebook*, published in 1954.⁹



Figure 2 The Louis XV Gallery, Ranch House, Malibu, 1954.

The black lacquer commode attributed to Joseph Baumhauer (cat. no. 14) that Getty bought in 1955 was part of an acquisition of five major pieces of furniture from the collection of the mining magnate and philanthropist Sir Alfred Chester Beatty, which his friend and adviser Sir Robert Abdy took him to see.¹⁰ This happened just before a period during which Getty was focusing on furnishing his home in England, Sutton Place, near London, and he only resumed his acquisitions of Rococo *ébénisterie* pieces for the museum in 1971. In particular, he bought a large number of objects, including a writing table attributed to Joseph Baumhauer (cat. no. 15) and a pair of commodes by Van Risenburgh (cat. no. 7), at the major auction sale organized after the death of one of the richest women at the time, Mrs. Anna Thomson Dodge, widow of the automobile pioneer Horace E. Dodge, who had actively collected artworks for her Louis XVI-style mansion, Rose Terrace, outside of Detroit. In the same year he bought another Rococo piece, a small writing and

toilette table by Oeben at the auction sale of the estate of the pianist and philanthropist Martha Baird Rockefeller (cat. no. 19).

After 1972, J. Paul Getty rarely left his English home, Sutton Place, and made his decisions on the basis of photographs. The curator Gillian Wilson, who was hired in December 1971, started to advise him on French decorative arts acquisitions. At that time, in the museum installed in the Ranch House, only two galleries were devoted to decorative arts, although fourteen were already planned for them in the new Roman-style villa that was being built and was opened in 1974.¹¹ Four acquisitions of Rococo *ébénisterie* were made in 1972: two pairs of corner cupboards with the carcass and mounts attributed to Jean-Pierre Latz and their marquetry panels attributed to the workshop of Oeben, from Frank Partridge & Sons in London and French and Company in New York, respectively (cat. no. 17); a pair of black lacquer corner cupboards by Van Risenburgh, from Kraemer et Cie in Paris (cat. no. 4); and a red lacquer commode by the same cabinetmaker, sold at auction in Paris (cat. no. 6).

Before he died on June 6, 1976, J. Paul Getty approved one last Rococo *ébénisterie* acquisition: in May, he signed the invoice for a commode stamped “DF” sold by Alexander & Berendt in London. An unusual piece, it remains the only commode known among the ones by, or attributed to, this unidentified cabinetmaker that is entirely veneered with wood marquetry and has this form (cat. no. 20).

Although Getty’s will would be settled only in 1982, a certain amount of interest earned on the estate was available to the Museum, and Gillian Wilson was successful in obtaining the approval for acquisitions of decorative arts objects from the board of trustees, including two major pieces of Rococo *ébénisterie*. In 1977, from the Paris-based dealer Aveline et Cie, she acquired the long cabinet attributed to Van Risenburgh, a unique piece notable for its size and the design of its marquetry (cat. no. 1). And in 1979, she secured an artwork that J. Paul Getty would have been proud to buy: the exceptional corner cupboard by Jacques Dubois (cat. no. 11). This cupboard was among the twelve most important pieces of eighteenth-century French furniture that, on Getty’s request, the dealer Hans Stiebel (d. 1964), an expert in the field, had established, a list that also included the above-mentioned double desk by Van Risenburgh, already in Getty’s collection.¹² Confiscated by the Nazis from the collection of Baron Alphonse von Rothschild in Vienna (fig. 3), the corner cupboard was then restituted to his widow, Clarice, who had it sent to New York and sold it to Rosenberg & Stiebel and Wildenstein & Co. Eventually fully owned by the Wildenstein family, the piece was to be offered at auction in December 1977 by Sotheby Parke-Bernet in Monte Carlo as part of the Wildenstein collection of French furniture and works of art. But on November 1, the auction house published an announcement stating that “in order to preserve intact this marvelous collection . . . an art lover and connoisseur, and a great friend of France, has become the new owner.”¹³ This was Akram Ojjeh, a wealthy Saudi entrepreneur, then living in France, who confessed to journalists that he “did not lack the necessities of life,” with his ten Rolls-Royces, thirty Mercedes-Benzes, and two Boeing 707s. He had actually acquired the Wildenstein collection with the intention to furnish luxury salons aboard the liner *France* that he wanted to turn into a floating casino in Florida.¹⁴ But he did not achieve his plan, and in 1977 he decided to sell first the liner and then the collection of furniture and decorative arts. Gillian Wilson asked the trustees to consider the purchase of the corner cupboard with the highest priority, explaining that it was one of the landmarks of French

Rococo cabinetmaking.¹⁵ Referred to as the “sale of the century,” a “shower of gold,” and a “gilt-edged auction,”¹⁶ the Wildenstein-Ojeh sale broke many records, in particular because the British property magnate Sir Charles Clore (1904–1979), the Greek shipping tycoon Stavros Narchios (1909–1996), and many other collectors and art dealers bid against each other. But it was most of all the star piece of the sale, precisely the Dubois corner cupboard, that made news, not only because at that time it reached a world record price for a piece of furniture (7,600,000 French francs, then equivalent to \$U.S.1,700,000), but also because the identity of the buyer for whom the London Heim Gallery had bid was not revealed. Nonetheless, many suspected early on that this buyer was the then richest museum in the world: the Getty. In the early 1980s, the full provenance of the cupboard, a commission from Count Branicki (Polish, 1689–1771) for his castle at Białystok outside Warsaw, was discovered, rendering the piece even more important in the history of French Rococo furniture (see cat. no. 14). As a result, the Getty Museum devoted a small exhibition to the cupboard in 1992, in one of the Getty Villa galleries.



Figure 3 The Régence (or Rote) Salon of Baron Alphonse (Mayer) von Rothschild, view of the collection with the Dubois corner cupboard on the left (cat. no. 11), Theresianum Gasse 16–18, Vienna, before 1938.

In the early 1980s, after the settlement of Getty’s will, Gillian Wilson made the three last acquisitions of French Rococo *ébénisterie*. In 1983, she bought in Paris the commode attributed to Jean-Pierre Latz from Maurice Segoura (cat. no. 16) and the *cartonnier* with *bout de bureau* and clock by Van Risenburgh from a Portuguese collector through Didier Aaron (cat. no. 3), a piece that was, like the Dubois corner cupboard, confiscated by the Nazis and then fortunately restituted to its owner, in this case Baronne Miriam de Rothschild. And in 1984, a pair of cabinets bought from Kraemer et Cie in Paris (cat. no. 2) completed the already admirable ensemble of pieces by Van Risenburgh.

“The 18th century was the golden age of furniture and France ruled supreme,” Getty wrote in his small book, *Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, published in 1949.¹⁷ Some of the most refined specimens can now be found in the galleries of the Getty Museum in Brentwood, thanks to the French Rococo *ébénisterie* pieces acquired by and with the generosity of J. Paul Getty.



The twenty-eight works of French Rococo *ébénisterie* in the J. Paul Getty Museum collection are presented in this catalogue in twenty-one entries: seventeen are devoted to independent objects; four to a pair of objects, respectively; and one to two similar pairs of objects. The sequence, which keeps together pieces made or attributed to the same cabinetmaker,¹⁸ follows a loose chronological order of the objects' dates of creation, from about the mid-1730s to about 1760. The pieces by and attributed to Bernard II van Risenburgh, the cabinetmaker who is represented with the largest group of objects in the collection, are ordered by type (cabinets, *cartonnier*, corner cupboards, commodes, double desk, table, and writing table). The two objects that have been highly modified or assembled in the nineteenth century are the last entries in the catalogue. Each entry is prefaced by general information: date of manufacture; name, life dates, and title of the artist(s); dimensions; materials; and accession number. This is followed by a description of the piece(s) of furniture and a list of the marks, stamps, labels, and inscriptions. Each object or group of objects is discussed in an art historical commentary that concludes with its provenance, exhibition history, and bibliography. Conservators provide a detailed technical description of each of the pieces.

For personal reasons, Gillian Wilson could not continue her work on this collection after the summer of 2013, and she unfortunately died on November 15, 2019, just before the manuscript was delivered to Getty Publications. The final stages of the curatorial contributions to this publication were therefore carried out by the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department under my supervision. Linnea Seidling, curatorial assistant, coordinated the project. Philippe Halbert, former graduate intern in the department, wrote the catalogue entry on the two pairs of corner cupboards attributed to Latz (cat. no. 17) and the descriptions of the writing table attributed to Joseph Baumhauer (cat. no. 15) and the commode stamped “DF” (cat. no. 20). Grace Chuang, former volunteer in the department, assisted us, in particular, with the objects by Bernard II van Risenburgh, on whom she is writing her dissertation (New York University, Institute of Fine Arts). Amanda Berman, curatorial assistant, and Dulcinea Cano, senior staff assistant, provided crucial help during the last stage of preparation of the material for Getty Publications. We wish to thank Joe Godla and Gordon Hanlon, formerly of the Getty Museum, for their early work on the technical study of several objects in this catalogue; Herant Khanjian for the infrared analysis cited in cat. nos. 4, 5, 8, and 14; Heinrich Peining, of the Bayerische Schlösserverwaltung, and Cecily Grzywacz, formerly of the Getty Conservation Institute, for scientific analysis of the dyes used in the marquetry of the Oeben mechanical table (cat. no. 18); and Michael Smith and Gary Hughes of Getty Digital (formerly Museum Imaging Services) for their work on the digital restoration of the Oeben table (cat. no. 18). The manuscript greatly benefited from the expertise of Charissa Bremer-David, curator, and Jeffrey Weaver, associate curator. As much as possible, the editing process has preserved the curatorial entries as they were delivered by Wilson. However, adjustments were made when new discoveries and conclusions by conservators allowed for more precision in the

art historical commentaries. In addition, the bibliography directly related to the Getty objects has been updated to 2016, and in certain instances references have been added to the general bibliography in order to include major exhibition catalogues, museums' collection catalogues, and scholarly articles. The provenance of each object, including the supporting sources, reflects the best of our knowledge as of April 2020. I was able to check the French sources quoted in the entries against the originals in the Archives nationales in Paris and in the Archives diplomatiques of the Ministère des Affaires étrangères in La Courneuve: the original spelling was retained, but capitalization, accents, and punctuation were modernized. The historical units of measure and currency in these documents are, respectively, the *pied* (32.4 cm; 1 ft. 3/4 in.; a pied was divided into 12 *pouces*) and the *livre tournois* (divided into 20 sous, 1 sou being worth 12 deniers).

In addition to the many illustrations included in this catalogue, high-resolution views and details, zoomable and downloadable at no charge, are available on the collection pages of these objects on the Getty Museum website (<https://www.getty.edu/art/sculpture-and-decorative-arts/>). The bibliography tab on these pages is kept as current as possible to include the most recent citations of scholarly publications related to Getty objects.

Woods marked with an asterisk (*) in the list of the media for each object indicates that they have been identified by microscopic anatomy (see "Glossary").

NOTES

1. Getty 1941, 391.
2. Ethel Le Vane, in Getty and Le Vane 1955, 147. The initials "B.V.R.B" were misread as "B.U.R.B."
3. Baroli 1957.
4. Ethel Le Vane, in Getty and Le Vane 1955, 168.
5. Also in 1949, J. Paul Getty bought another table that was considered a masterpiece by B.V.R.B., whose genuine stamp is visible on the underside of the drawer. While it appears that its beautiful Sèvres porcelain plaque once belonged to a table now in the Louvre, its carcass, decorated with green varnish whose chemical components were not available in the eighteenth century and with poor-quality gilt bronze mounts, may be dated to the late nineteenth century or the early twentieth century along with an old panel inserted in the drawer. Unlike the above-mentioned commodes stamped Delorme and Petit (cat. no. 21), since this piece was published as early as 1981, it was decided not to include it in this catalogue (see, in particular, Sassoon 1981; Sassoon 1991, cat. 32, 162–65).
6. The full citation is in cat. no. 19.
7. As quoted by Ethel Le Vane, in Getty and Le Vane 1955, 151.
8. Getty and Le Vane 1955, 261–63.
9. Valentiner and Wescher 1954, esp. 12–15 and plates "Louis XV Gallery," "No. 22," and "No. 24."
10. Gillian Wilson, in Wilson et al. 2008, 2.
11. Gillian Wilson, in Wilson et al. 2008, 2.
12. As quoted by Ethel Le Vane, in Getty and Le Vane 1955, 263. The list also included another artwork in Getty's possession: the green veneered table stamped "B.V.R.B." with a Sèvres porcelain plaque mentioned in note 5 above.
13. A copy of this "important notice" was sent to the Getty Museum's director, Steven Garret, and is conserved in the object file in the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department.
14. This information on Ojje is reported in *Time*, July 9, 1979, 53.

15. Acquisition proposal conserved in the object file in the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department.
16. See *Nice-Matin*, June 27, 1979, 26; *Time*, July 9, 1979, 53, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department.
17. Getty 1949, 56.
18. A few of the eight cabinetmakers represented in this ensemble lived long after the Rococo style fell out of fashion. Consequently, they also produced extraordinary Neoclassical *ébénisterie* pieces, some of which are part of the Getty Museum collection but are not included in this catalogue (Joseph Baumhauer: 79.DA.58 and 84.DA.969; Jean-François Oeben: 71.DA.105 and 72.DA.54).

The Analysis of East Asian and European Lacquer Surfaces on Rococo Furniture

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The Rococo furniture collection at the J. Paul Getty Museum, recently reinterpreted for this publication, has benefited from more than a decade of development and scholarly research into the analysis of lacquer coatings. Nine pieces in this collection feature surfaces with Chinese or Japanese lacquer, or their European imitations, and it is this group of objects that have driven, in part, the development of a new analytical protocol for the study of these materials. Together, Museum conservators and Getty Conservation Institute scientists designed and implemented an approach using organic chemical analysis that generates reproducible data that allow for meaningful comparison. The results presented in this catalogue draw on data collected over a ten-year period that have been reexamined using the most recent improvements in spectral data processing and an expanded reference library.

UNDERSTANDING EAST ASIAN LACQUER IN THE WEST

East Asian lacquer arrived in Europe by the sixteenth century; however, knowledge of the botanical origin and physical properties of the popular yet mysterious material remained relatively unknown even well into the Rococo period. Western accounts as early as 1655 identified lacquer as a “glue called cie [*qi* in Mandarin], which sweats out of the trees,”¹ but even a basic understanding of the use of the raw material eluded Europeans, and scientific experiments failed to reveal how the cured material could be dissolved.² Not until the publication of Fr. Filippo Bonanni’s studies of Chinese lacquer in 1720, followed by Fr. Pierre d’Incarville’s work in 1760, was the transformation of the raw material into the finished lacquer object first understood in the West.³

Asian lacquer is the product of a group of trees in the family Anacardiaceae that forms a hard film through enzymatically catalyzed oxidation and polymerization.

While the botanical source of the raw material and the practice of lacquer making is now better understood,⁴ Asian lacquer remains challenging to differentiate visually from European imitations, particularly once cut into pieces and incorporated as a decorative veneer on fashionable eighteenth-century French furniture. Light-induced damage and the application of restoration varnishes can alter its appearance and further complicate accurate identification. These problems have led to misattributions of European imitation lacquer objects as Asian lacquer, and, conversely, Asian lacquer for European, in many museum collections.

ANALYSIS AT THE GETTY

In the late 2000s, a joint project between the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Conservation Institute was initiated to use chemical analysis to definitively distinguish Asian lacquer objects from their European counterparts. An innovative analytical strategy was developed that combines the previously separate fields of Asian lacquer analysis and research into European resins and oils.⁵ The resulting protocol, which relies on the instrumental technique of pyrolysis gas chromatography–mass spectrometry with thermally assisted hydrolysis and methylation (THM-py/GC-MS), uses a small sample removed from a 1 to 2 mm² area of the object. Working layer by layer with a microchisel and a stereomicroscope, the foundation, finish, and decoration layers can be separated and analyzed individually.⁶ The THM-py/GC-MS analysis separates and characterizes each of the hundreds of molecular compounds that are present in each sample. The results can be compared to a reference library (compiled at the Getty in collaboration with colleagues from around the world) of thousands of molecular compounds that are known to be associated with specific raw materials used in the production of lacquer and varnishes, both in Asia and in the West. These results, in turn, can be used to characterize the craftsman's original mixture of organic materials that were used to create the finished lacquer product.⁷

Further study of these objects with complementary instrumental techniques, including X-ray fluorescence spectrometry (XRF) and scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM-EDS), provides elemental information about the use of inorganic materials such as decorative metallic powders, pigments, and clays. Cross-section microscopy, X-radiography, and ultraviolet-induced visible fluorescence photography lend additional clues to determine the original manufacturing techniques and identify later restorations.

The analytical techniques used at the Getty not only readily distinguish European lacquer from Asian lacquer, but can often reveal the regional origin of Asian examples. Prior to recent research conducted at the Getty, the belief was widely held that Asian lacquer objects originating from Japan and China were exclusively composed of *urushi*-type lacquer (*urushi* in Japanese and *qi* in Mandarin),⁸ a valuable sap, painstakingly harvested from trees of the species *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*.⁹ However, based on research conducted for this catalogue, it is now known that two other types of less expensive lacquer were frequently mixed into Chinese and Japanese export lacquer during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: *thitsi*-type lacquer (often called Burmese lacquer), from Southeast Asian trees of the genus *Gluta*, and laccol-type lacquer (also known as Vietnamese lacquer), from trees of the species *Toxicodendron succedaneum*.¹⁰

JAPANESE LACQUER

Much of the Asian lacquer used for the decoration of French eighteenth-century furniture was taken from dismantled pieces of seventeenth-century Japanese lacquer produced for export to Europe. THM-py/GC-MS analysis of numerous examples has shown that this export lacquerware was almost always made using a combination of *urushi* and less expensive *thitsi* lacquer, as detected in the Van Risenburgh corner cupboards (cat. no. 4), the Van Risenburgh black lacquer commode (cat. no. 5), and the Baumhauer commode (cat. no. 14). It appears that Dutch demand for more Japanese lacquer objects at lower cost may have contributed to the widespread use of *thitsi* lacquer, even though it is generally considered a less desirable material for the manufacture of lacquer objects. Dutch East India Company (VOC) records confirm that *thitsi* lacquer cultivated in Cambodia, Siam, and Burma was sold by Dutch traders to the very Japanese lacquer craftsmen from whom they purchased finished wares for export to Europe.¹¹ It is now understood that seventeenth-century Japanese export lacquerwares typically have a foundation layer made of finely divided clay, bound with *thitsi* lacquer (or *thitsi* mixed with *urushi*) and drying oil, sometimes with the addition of starch or glue. This is readily apparent in the second and third foundation layers on the Baumhauer commode (cat. no. 14), which are primarily bound with *thitsi* lacquer, with a large proportion of drying oil as well as starch. Based on organic analysis, it is known that significant amounts of drying oil were typically added to the black upper lacquer layers and on occasion small amounts of so-called wood oil (exudate from trees of the genus *Dipterocarpus*), possibly present in the two Van Risenburgh corner cupboards (cat. no. 4), and gum benzoin (from several species of trees in the genus *Styrax*).¹²

CHINESE LACQUER

The Chinese export lacquer of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, in contrast, frequently is made from a laccol-type lacquer, occasionally with small proportions of *urushi* added in the upper finish layers.¹³ Laccol-type lacquer was detected in all four pieces of Chinese lacquer in the Getty Rococo collection, which includes the Dubois *secrétaire* (cat. no. 13), the two Dubois corner cupboards (cat. no. 12), and the Van Risenburgh red commode (cat. no. 6). *Toxicodendron succedaneum* trees, from which laccol-type lacquer is derived, are endemic to the region around Vietnam and southern China and therefore would have been available to craftsmen working around the southern port of Guangzhou.¹⁴ Much like Japanese export ware, Chinese export lacquer was made using a simplified process in comparison to high-quality domestic production, relying on less expensive *urushi* substitutes and the addition of considerable amounts of drying oil to reduce both the cost and the time required for production. Typical examples, as seen in a cross-section sample from the Van Risenburgh red commode (cat. no. 6), usually have two foundation layers, with a paper interlayer, applied directly to the wooden substrate. The foundations frequently use blood as a binding material; markers for what is presumably pig's blood were detected in both the Van Risenburgh red commode and the Dubois red *secrétaire*.¹⁵ The foundation is usually followed by the application of two lacquer finish layers composed of laccol, with the addition of a significant amount of drying oil (such as tung or perilla oil) and occasionally so-called cedar oil (probably derived from *Cupressus funebris*), as observed in the Van Risenburgh red commode.¹⁶

THE REUSE OF JAPANESE AND CHINESE LACQUER PANELS IN FRENCH FURNITURE

The panels of Japanese and Chinese lacquer that were used to decorate contemporary pieces of Parisian high-style furniture in the mid-eighteenth century were supplied to cabinetmakers primarily by *marchands-merciers*, who were both merchants of objets d'art and interior decorators for the fashionable elites.¹⁷ The precious panels were split and thinned by cabinetmakers so that the lacquer could be utilized in the same manner as a sheet of wood veneer. As described by the eighteenth-century cabinetmaker André-Jacob Roubo, the delicate and risky procedure required sawing the panels down the middle so that the lacquer from both faces of the original screen, chest, or cabinet could be used. This was doubtless a challenging task, even for highly skilled veneer sawyers, since the panels were often substantially wider than the tropical timbers that they sawed on a daily basis. Once the panels were split, Roubo directed that they be thinned with planes on a padded workbench. He wrote that the panels should not be thinned to less than about *une ligne* (2.26 mm) to ensure that they would retain their structural integrity. Interestingly, direct study of the Asian lacquer panels presented in this catalogue shows that they were often thinned to a substantially greater degree. Analysis of cross-section samples showed measured thicknesses of 0.75 mm on the Van Risenburgh black commode (cat. no. 5) and just over 1 mm on both the Dubois *secrétaire* (cat. no. 13) and the Van Risenburgh red commode (cat. no. 6). Manipulating such thin sheets of lacquer is especially remarkable when one notes that at these thicknesses, the wood substrate accounts for only about half the thickness of the sheet. The discrepancy between Roubo's text and the findings reported here may be explained by the fact that Roubo was writing some years later than the time when these objects were made, and in Roubo's time, the Neoclassical style was firmly established. In Neoclassical forms, lacquer panels were typically applied to flat surfaces, while the panels examined here from the Rococo period were all applied to curved surfaces, requiring the panels to be bent to conform to the substrate. It seems reasonable to believe, then, that craftsmen of the Rococo thinned their panels to the extreme in order to facilitate bending, while later craftsmen were instructed to maintain thicker panels for added stability when they were to be used without bending.¹⁸

Roubo gives further details about the delicate procedure of gluing the panels of Asian lacquer to the furniture carcasses. He instructs that the edges of the panels should generally be hidden by gilt bronze mounts. Surrounding the Asian lacquer panels, the rest of the surfaces of the furniture were to be coated with an imitation of the base color of the lacquer, achieved with European materials, to seamlessly blend the two into a unified object. This blending can be observed on all the Getty pieces, particularly on legs and corners, which would have been difficult and time consuming to veneer with pieces of Asian lacquer. The technique is particularly effective on the Van Risenburgh commode (cat. no. 5), where the Japanese lacquer cartouche at the center is complemented by, and almost indistinguishable from, the surrounding European imitation lacquer. These European lacquers became known as "japanning," likely due to the notion recorded in period accounts that "the finest [lacquer] comes from Jappan [*sic*]."¹⁹ In some cases, European imitation lacquers were also used to simulate fully decorated panels of Asian lacquer without the use of any true Chinese or Japanese lacquer veneer on an object, as can be seen in the Van Risenburgh *cartonnier* (cat. no. 3).

THE IMITATION OF CHINESE AND JAPANESE LACQUER

Europeans turned to a wide range of plant resins and oils in their attempts to imitate the materials of East Asian lacquer.²⁰ In the eighteenth century, spirit-resin varnishes, or alcohol-soluble mixtures of resins, were widely used and valued for their gloss, transparency, and quick drying times. Oil-resin varnishes were also used, particularly for dark-colored finishes or exterior applications where they were valued for their durability despite their tendency to darken. Much about the development of these European finishes was researched by the art historians Walter Holzhausen and Hans Huth, who published seminal texts on the topic in 1959 and 1971, respectively, that laid the foundation for a modern understanding of the history of lacquer workshops and the objects they produced.²¹

In eighteenth-century France, the development of European imitation lacquer was led by Jacques Dagly, who opened a workshop in Paris in 1713, bringing with him lacquer knowledge from Spa and Berlin.²² As the eighteenth century progressed, it was the prolific Martin brothers, whose family had worked as *vernisseurs* in Paris for two generations, who developed a closely guarded recipe for a superior oil-resin varnish that became known as *vernis Martin*.²³ The Martins were so successful in the use of European lacquer that by the end of the eighteenth century the term was generally used to denote any high-quality lacquer finish, whether executed by the Martins or others.²⁴

To devise an ideal European lacquer, craftsmen balanced the mechanical properties of the dried film and working properties of the liquid varnish with the cost and availability of raw materials. A coating needed to be hard enough to be polished to a high gloss but with enough flexibility to prevent cracking. Period treatises frequently recommend the use of harder resins such as sandarac from North Africa, copal from Latin America, or shellac from India combined with softer resins such as larch turpentine or colophony. Other materials, acting as plasticizers and/or solvents, were occasionally added, including camphor, elemi, and essential oils, although these were known to significantly slow the drying of the film.²⁵ The use of sandarac, likely with the addition of camphor as a plasticizer, is seen in the red lacquer of the Van Risenburgh commode (cat. no. 6). The Dubois corner cupboards (cat. no. 12) also have a period spirit-resin varnish consisting of the harder resins sandarac and shellac, with the addition of pine resin to soften and add flexibility to the coating. The use of amber has also been reported in varnishes of this period, particularly where a hard, durable surface finish was desired; however, these recipes were difficult and dangerous to prepare, requiring long periods of intense heating to fully dissolve the fossilized resin. While no amber varnishes could be definitively identified in this set of objects, oil-resin varnishes were observed on several pieces, including on the black Van Risenburgh commode (cat. no. 5), where lacquer consists of drying oil mixed with pine resin and copal.

A wide range of recipes was circulated in France in treatises by Pierre Pomet, Filippo Bonanni, André-Jacob Roubo, Jean-Félix Watin, and Le Pileur d'Apligny; however, changes in terminology over time make direct interpretation of these recipes difficult.²⁶ Many materials available to craftsmen in the Rococo period derived their names from the port cities through which they were traded. Venice turpentine, in the seventeenth century, denoted resin from *Pistacia therebintus*, or the turpentine tree, also known as Chios turpentine or Pistachio turpentine, grown on the islands of Cyprus and Chios and related to the tree *Pistacia lentiscus*, which produces mastic resin.²⁷ However, by the late eighteenth century when Watin was writing about the Martin varnish recipe, Venice turpentine was synonymous with

larch turpentine from *Picea decidua*. These issues with naming also extend to common turpentine, colophony, and rosin, described here collectively as “pine resin” coming from several different species in the genus *Pinus*. The term “copal” highlights further ambiguities in naming as it can refer to both fresh and partially fossilized resins collected from several different genera of plants, including *Daniellia*, *Guibourtia*, *Hymenaea*, and *Agathis*, known to grow throughout Asia, South and Central America, Africa, and the Pacific Islands. These copals are often grouped into types by their places of origin or trade, and possess a wide range of material properties generally linked to their degree of fossilization and chemical structure. In general, it appears that the copal available to Parisian craftsmen of the mid-eighteenth century would have been primarily fresh, or “soft,” copal, originating in South and Central America, while partially fossilized, or “hard,” copals from East Africa were first imported into Europe in the late eighteenth century. The East African hard copals, along with hard copals from New Zealand, became widely available in Europe only in the nineteenth century.²⁸

Using the same technique and sampling protocol described for Asian lacquer samples, the composition of European lacquers can be clarified and connections can begin to be made to the aforementioned historical recipes. With a single sample, an oil-resin varnish can be easily distinguished from a spirit-resin lacquer, and frequently specific ingredients, including shellac, larch turpentine, pine resin, sandarac, gum benzoin, elemi, and hard copal, can be clearly identified. This was of particular importance in the analysis of the Van Risenburgh *cartonnier* (cat. no. 3), where oil-resin varnishes likely containing pine resin were detected on the *pagodes*, *bout de bureau*, and *serre-papiers*, which were chemically distinct from the shellac-based spirit-resin varnish used on the clock.

Despite significant recent analytical developments, the complex mixtures, botanical similarities, and uncertainty surrounding historical terminology means that the Getty’s current analytical protocol has some limitations, particularly with respect to polycommenic acid-containing compounds such as sandarac, soft copal, and Baltic amber.²⁹ While many molecular markers, detectable by THM-py/GC-MS, can often lead to the precise identification of resins and oils, the results cannot yet be used to accurately estimate the relative proportions of these raw materials used to make the varnish. This makes direct comparison with recipes listed in period sources difficult.³⁰

As research into the materials of both Asian and European lacquer making continues,³¹ it is hoped that increased knowledge of historical recipes, workshop practice, and connections between *vernisseurs*, *marchands-merciers*, and *ébénistes* as well as traders and lacquer makers in East Asia will lead to a more complete understanding of furniture production and cultural exchange in the Rococo period.

NOTES

1. Martini 1655.
2. The Royal Society in London carried out scientific analysis of lacquers in 1663, and in 1690 Grand Duke Cosimo III of Tuscany commissioned Giuseppe del Papa to investigate the material; both had limited success. Kopplin 2010.
3. Bonanni 1720; Bonanni 2009; d’Incarville 1760.
4. Heckmann 2002; Kumanotani 1995; Lu and Miyakoshi 2015.

5. For European oils and resin publications, see Burmester 1983; Kumanotani 1995; Niimura et al. 1996; Niimura and Miyakoshi 2000. For developments in Asian lacquer research, see Koller and Baumer 1997; Pastorova et al. 1997; Scalarone, Lazzari, and Chiantore 2002.
6. Heginbotham et al. 2008.
7. Schilling et al. 2016.
8. Asian lacquer objects were also produced in Southeast and Southwest Asia, but for the purpose of this publication the term "Asian lacquer" is used to refer specifically to those objects and materials coming from China and Japan. Lacquer objects from the Islamic world were the first to influence the development of European lacquer, with these objects streaming into Venice and Genoa in the early sixteenth century through the established Eastern trading routes. See Kopplin 2010, 230.
9. Garner 1963.
10. The three species can be distinguished in part by their primarily polymeric unit, a substituted catechol, from which they also draw their commonly used names: *Toxicodendron vernicifluum* contains urushiol (known as *urushi*), *Toxicodendron succedaneum* contains laccol, and *Gluta usitata* and *Gluta laccifera* contain thitsiol. See Petisca et al. 2011; Heginbotham et al. 2016; Heginbotham and Schilling 2011.
11. Heginbotham and Schilling 2011.
12. Heginbotham and Schilling 2011.
13. Matsen, Petisca, and Auffret 2017.
14. Wan et al. 2007.
15. Heginbotham et al. 2016; Miklin-Kniefacz et al. 2016.
16. Heginbotham et al. 2016.
17. Sargentson 1996.
18. Roubo 1774; Roubo et al. 2013; Hagelskamp, Heginbotham, and van Duin 2014.
19. Lockyer writes in 1711 in *Account of the Trade in India* that "the finest comes from Jappan." See Lockyer 1711. "Right japan" and especially "old japan" were considered superior products, having an air of exclusivity. Quotation from Kopplin 2010, 66.
20. In addition to plant resins, shellac, an exudate from the insect *Laccifer lacca*, was also used as a component of eighteenth-century lacquers; see Webb 2000, 103.
21. Huth 1971; Holzhausen 1959.
22. Kopplin 2010, 90.
23. For a fuller discussion of the Martin family, see Czarnocka, Lindgren, and Stein 1994.
24. It is believed that the term *vernis de Martin* (as opposed to *vernis Martin*) was used in the eighteenth century to distinguish genuine lacquer produced by the Martin brothers from other imitations; see Kopplin 2010.
25. Essential oils are the volatile aromatic compounds of plant resins based on mono- and sesquiterpenoids and should not be confused with triglyceride oils and fats. Oil of spike from lavender and oil of turpentine were the most common essential oils used in the period; see Moffatt et al. 2015; Langenheim 2003; Walch 1997. Watin notes that camphor is considered a solid essential oil, and he writes that Monsieur Eller told Watin that copal is more easily dissolved in spirit of wine if the spirit is "camphorated"; see Watin 1778, 258.
26. See Pomet 1694; Bonanni 1723; Bonanni 1733; Roubo 1774; Watin 1773; Le Pileur d'Apligny 1779. Bonanni was translated into French in 1723 by A. A. J. Dezallier d'Argenville and again in 1733 by Laurent d'Houry and is therefore included in the French treatise.
27. Koller and Baumer 1997.
28. Augerson 2011; Langenheim 2003, 304–5.
29. Van Keulen 2014.

30. For example, commonly used pine resin also shares some chemical compounds with Baltic amber, sandarac, copal, and even shellac, making the precise linking of some individual compounds to specific ingredients impossible.
31. The systematic approach to the analysis of Asian and European lacquer developed at the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) allows researchers to collect reproducible data that can be used for comparison of objects and collaboration across institutions. The analytical technique has been taught to over sixty scientists and conservators through the GCI's Recent Advances in Characterizing Asian Lacquer (RAdICAL) workshop series, and the participants in turn contribute valuable data back to the system. The increased understanding of these materials helps build a network of colleagues and a set of well-studied objects to inform future research into lacquer manufacture.

Technical Note: The Use of X-Ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy (XRF) in the Technical Study of Gilt Bronze Mounts in This Catalogue

Arlen Heginbotham

Throughout this catalogue, there are numerous mentions of the analysis of gilt bronzes using energy dispersive X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF). This analytical technique can be used to characterize the elemental composition of the copper alloy casting metal from which these objects are made. Results from this analysis are used to draw conclusions about the authenticity of mounts, as well as likely dates and regions of manufacture.

Gilt bronze furniture mounts are referred to in this catalogue as “bronzes” since this is common parlance, although they are technically brasses, composed primarily of copper and zinc. They have been reproduced, re chased, and regilded for centuries, making attribution and authentication based on style and workmanship problematic.¹ Already by the last quarter of the eighteenth century Parisian cabinetmakers were replicating and reusing gilt bronze mounts and other elements of Baroque furniture from the early part of the century. Such revivals in the popularity of earlier styles have followed each other in a complex and never-ending cycle. Leaving aside what might be called “legitimate” reproductions, produced with no intent to deceive, it is clear that deceptive reproduction has occurred for centuries and continues to this day.²

Further complicating matters of attribution and authentication, the traditions of material use and methods of fabrication have been passed down through the generations with remarkable consistency. A young artisan in Paris in the nineteenth century, or even today, might receive training as a founder, chaser, or gilder and learn to use tools and techniques that would be entirely familiar to his eighteenth-century counterpart.

While studying the gilt bronzes applied to the furniture in this catalogue, we have employed a number of different methods of technical examination, all of which are important in evaluating their authenticity and quality. These methods include careful examination of chasing techniques (the tooling and finishing of the display surface), inspection of unfinished surfaces (typically on the reverse side of the mounts), X-radiography, and elemental analysis using XRF. While all of these methods are important for evaluating gilt bronzes, XRF has proven to be of particular utility.

Elemental analysis of gilt bronze objects using XRF has been a subject of systematic study at the Getty Museum for over fifteen years. XRF is a very attractive analytical choice for studying artworks as it is a nondestructive method that can provide rapid, multi-element, quantitative analysis with high sensitivity. The analytical program at the Getty has focused primarily on the composition of the base metal used for French castings; data have also been regularly collected on the composition of soldering metal,³ sheet brass (such as that used for *boulle* marquetry, hinges, and locks), and gilt bronzes from other regions, particularly England and German-speaking states.

In practice, XRF is a very difficult technique to use well, particularly for quantitative analysis. The spectra generated by XRF instruments can vary considerably from instrument to instrument, and, because of the complex interactions between X-ray photons and heterogeneous materials like historical brasses, the process of converting spectral data to accurate, precise, and reproducible quantitative measurements of composition is extremely challenging. Considerable effort has been made to ensure that the data used here (collected using five different instruments) have been collected and processed in a reliable and comparable manner.⁴

The XRF studies at the Getty have focused on the period from 1675 to the present, and thus far, the data gathered include the results of approximately 1,300 XRF analyses of discrete components belonging to approximately 250 different objects. We have attempted to study as many securely provenanced and dated objects as possible from throughout the period. To this end, over 500 of these compositional analyses (representing individual components of approximately 120 objects) of Parisian casting metal can be considered “reference material,” that is, material whose date of production in Paris is known within a period of twenty years to a high level of confidence. This relatively large data set of reference analyses has become extremely valuable as a point of reference when evaluating gilt bronzes of uncertain provenance.

The collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum contains many examples of securely authenticated French gilt bronzes of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but many fewer objects from later periods. The author has thus depended on, and benefited greatly from, the generosity of many other institutions and private individuals who have granted access to objects, particularly of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for analysis by XRF. These are Adrian Alan, Atelier Michel Jamet, Yannick Chastang, Doheney Mansion, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Institut national du Patrimoine, Kunstgewerbemuseum (Dresden), musée Carnavalet, musée des Arts décoratifs (Paris), Christopher Payne, the Preservation Society of Newport County, the (British) Royal Collection, the Foundation of Prussian Palaces and Gardens, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Waddesdon Manor, and the Wallace Collection, among others.

XRF analysis of copper alloys, as currently practiced at the J. Paul Getty Museum, returns compositional data for thirteen elements. For the purposes of discussion, these can be divided into two groups: the so-called major and minor elements. It should be noted that there is no clear consensus in the literature regarding the definition of terms such as “major,” “minor,” and “trace” for analysis of this sort, and the terms as used here are relevant only to the present context. For gilt bronzes, the concentrations of the major elements—copper, zinc, tin, and lead—serve to define the casting alloy, and they are all generally present in the casting metal in amounts of around 1% or greater by weight. They are also all elements that foundrymen, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, would have considered the fundamental components of their alloy. Thus, it is these four elements that the foundry exercised intentional control over to formulate their casting metal alloy. The additional minor elements are generally present in amounts of less than 1% and, importantly, are elements that founders normally would have had little influence over since they are essentially impurities. The relative abundance of these elements reflects the level of smelting and refining technology at the time the metal was produced, as well as the origin and nature of the ore used to produce the metal. The minor elements of interest that are detectable by standard XRF methods include (in order of atomic weight) manganese, iron, cobalt, nickel, arsenic, silver, cadmium, antimony, and bismuth.

The data compiled to date have yielded considerable insight into the working methods and materials of French *bronziers* and have proved to be of considerable utility for the evaluation and authentication of gilt bronzes in the Getty collection. Some forays have been made into sophisticated statistical and machine learning analysis of the data generated, with promising results.⁵ Some conclusions based on these methods are presented in this catalogue, and further work in this direction is anticipated. It has also become abundantly clear that meaningful interpretation of the quantitative results depends very strongly on an understanding of the history of both artistic technology and metallurgical technology. That is to say, the numbers and statistics may suggest a conclusion, but confidence in the significance and reliability of the conclusion comes only if it can be supported by other methods of technical examination informed by a familiarity with artistic tradition and technological history.

In addition to quantitative analysis of base alloys, XRF analysis can provide useful information regarding the presence and method of gilding used in the production of gilt bronze objects, though the results may not be conclusive. First of all, the detection of substantial amounts of gold can confirm, naturally, that an object has been gilded. This is not necessarily as trivial a finding as it may seem since it was not uncommon in the eighteenth century to apply durable tinted varnishes to chased and polished castings, creating the appearance of gilding for a fraction of the cost.⁶ There are instances where even an experienced eye may have difficulty telling the difference, particularly on dirty and corroded pieces. XRF analysis can also give a reasonably good indication of whether a piece has been gilded by traditional mercury amalgam gilding or by electroplating. Based on XRF analyses from reference objects, amalgam gilding generally results in a considerably thicker layer of gold than electroplating, and spectral peaks for mercury are quite clear in the spectra from amalgam gilt objects. Electroplated bronzes may, however, also show that some mercury is present, either from chemical pretreatment or, in the case of restored bronzes, as residues from an earlier amalgam gilding.

NOTES

1. De Bellaigue 1974, vol. 1, 35.
2. De Bellaigue 1974, vol. 1, 36; Jacobsen 2016. On present-day deceptive reproduction, see, e.g., Vincent Noce, “New Twist in Fake Antique Furniture Scandal Overshadows Opening of Biennale des Antiquaires in Paris,” *Art Newspaper*, September 8, 2016.
3. We have chosen to use the terms “solder” and “soldering metal” in this volume because they are familiar and correspond well with the widely used French terms “souder” and “soudure.” In this context, the terms refer to joining pieces of brass by the addition of a lower melting brass alloy that is melted into the joint. This procedure would in fact be more properly referred to in technical English terms as “brazing” and the metal used as “brazing metal.”
4. Heginbotham et al. 2011; Heginbotham et al. 2015; Heginbotham and Solé 2017; Heginbotham et al. 2019.
5. Heginbotham, Erdmann, and Hayek 2018.
6. Roubo 1774, vol. 3, 1031–33.

Catalogue



1. Cabinet

French (Paris), mid-1730s

Attributed to Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766, master before 1730)

White oak veneered with bloodwood*, cherry*, *ferréol**, and amaranth*; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron hardware, lock, and keys; *brèche d'Alep* top

H: 3 ft. 9 5/8 in., W: 15 ft. 4 1/2 in., D: 1 ft. 9 1/2 in. (115.8 × 468.6 × 54.5 cm)

77.DA.91

DESCRIPTION

The long cabinet is composed of three similar sections (fig. 1-1) placed side by side and held together with nuts and bolts (see “Technical Description” below). The outer corners of the first and third sections are rounded. Each section is fitted with two doors, with each lower frieze occupied by a long shallow drawer. The outer cabinets have a double-bowed profile, while that of the central cabinet is double bombé. The sides are flat. The top is covered by three slabs of *brèche d'Alep*, cut to conforming shape. Beneath a shallow frieze, an undulating guilloche molding studded with rosettes and cabochons runs the entire length of the cabinet.

Each of the three sections is similarly mounted (figs. 1-2 and 1-3); a description of one of these will suffice. The upper corners are set with pierced mounts, each consisting of a large cabochon, crested by a spray of leaves and surrounded by a frame of flame work studded with small cabochons. Below hangs a pendant of flower heads enclosed by elongated and interconnected C-scrolls, terminating in a short floral pendant emerging from a corolla. At the base of each corner, just above the plinth and overlapping the broad horizontal molding, is a pierced mount composed of apposed and crossing C-scrolls supporting a leafy bud above, as well as a fan of leaves surrounding a cabochon below, from which depends a leafy bud.



Figure 1-1 Left section, doors and drawer open.



Figure 1-2 Center section, three-quarter view.



Figure 1-3 Left section, three-quarter view.

The horizontal molding, cast with short acanthus leaves alternating with honeysuckle on a stippled ground, runs the entire length of the cabinet, continuing around the sides. Each door leaf is framed with a narrow molding cast with leaf tips and buds. At each of the four corners of the frame is an overlapping mount composed of large apposed C-scrolls set at the center over a stippled shield shape that carries a cabochon from which descends a leaf-covered cluster of berries. Above the cabochon is a shell-like form supporting an arrangement of flowers and leaves. The inner surfaces of the apposed C-scrolls are each lined with four smaller C-scrolls, themselves edged with shellwork. A leafy scroll attaches to the ends of the C-scrolls.

The center of the upper frame is covered by a large pierced mount consisting of apposed C-scrolls above with interlocking S-scrolls edged with flame work. The upper part of each C-scroll is set with scrolls of lobed guilloche,

and between them is a corolla crowned with leaves and branches of flowers. From the corolla depends a short branch of leaves and flowers.

The edge of the right-hand door is set with a vertical molding composed of framed cabochons on a stippled ground. The molding terminates below in a small cup of two leaves and is capped above by a small mount consisting of two short curled leaves and two cabochons. Each door carries a shield-shaped keyhole escutcheon, outlined with C-scrolls. The central cabochon, pierced with a keyhole, is surrounded by shellwork that extends into a spiral below. Each of the three lower drawers also carries a central keyhole escutcheon composed of C-scrolls surrounding shellwork, extending to either side and carrying scallop shells and terminating in small clusters of leaves. To either side of the escutcheon are pull handles, each set on a plate of radiating lobes. The surface of the knob is set with an eight-petaled rosette.

The two doors of the central section (see fig. 1-2) of the cabinet are veneered with panels of asymmetrical marquetry composed of amaranth scrolls enclosing a field of trellis formed by amaranth crossings. The squares of the trellis are filled with triangles of bloodwood, the grain arranged to form squares. The whole asymmetrical arrangement is set over a diamond of *ferréol*. The panel is framed by a broad band of amaranth, which forms a background to the large pierced central mount and the four corner mounts. The door panels of the side sections (see fig. 1-3) of the cabinet are decorated with amaranth C- and hipped S-scrolls surrounding a *ferréol* trellis framed similarly to those areas on the doors of the central section but with crossings here of bloodwood. The panel is surrounded by a triple frame of amaranth. At the center top the frame develops into a large apron, both backing and triple framing the central mounts. The remaining area of the panel is veneered with bloodwood, with the grain arranged vertically.

The outer frame of each door is double framed with amaranth, with bloodwood between. The frieze below the stone top is plainly veneered with amaranth. The same wood frames the fronts of the drawers, surrounding a field of *ferréol* cut to form chevrons. Small vertical strips of wood, set between the central and the outer sections, are veneered with *ferréol*. The sides of the cabinet (fig. 1-4) are veneered with a pomegranate-shaped central motif formed by C-scrolls of amaranth surrounding a diamond of *ferréol* and bloodwood. The panel is framed by a double border of amaranth centered by one of bloodwood. The field of the panel is veneered with *ferréol* featuring a strongly marked nonparallel waving grain in

various tones of brown. The interiors of the doors are veneered with cherry, with a frame of amaranth. The iron lock mechanism, fitted to the side of the right-hand doors of the three sections, activates a double-pronged lock and upper and lower long bolts.



Figure 1-4 Right profile.

MARKS

Inscribed “DAVAL” twice in chalk (?) on the back of the right cabinet (77.DA.91.f) (fig. 1-5). Also on the right cabinet is a paper label glued to the top of the carcass, beneath the marble slab. It is inscribed in ink, “les Clefs pour la bibliothèque.”



Figure 1-5 Back of right section, with the “DAVAL” inscription.

COMMENTARY

The cabinet is attributed to Bernard II van Risenburgh on the basis of the style of the gilt bronze mounts and the appearance of four mounts of the same model on various pieces of *ébénisterie* stamped with his initials or firmly attributed to him.¹ The six pierced upper mounts bearing large cabochons appear in the same form on the upper corners and back of a cabinet set with ten drawers, with fronts veneered with Japanese lacquer that was probably made early in Van Risenburgh’s career, between about 1730 and 1735.² Mounts of this model are also found set at the upper backs of more pronouncedly rococo pieces: a pair of commodes delivered to the Residenz in Munich between 1730 and 1732, displayed in the *Kurfürstenzimmer*, or Electoral Rooms,³ and another commode with front corner mounts of the same massive model in a private collection, formerly belonging to Baron A. von Goldschmidt-Rothschild.⁴ Ronfort, Augarde, and Langer have dated these commodes to the mid-1730s, the likely date of the Museum’s cabinet. The mounts also appear on a pair of corner cupboards dating from the 1750s in the Walters Art Museum.⁵

The gilt bronze mounts set at the corners of the six frames across the front are a larger and more elaborate form of the “cruciform” mounts found on later commodes by Van Risenburgh (see cat. nos. 5 and 6). They have been found on only one other object that can be attributed to him, a corner cupboard mounted with a shaped and framed panel of Japanese lacquer with two doors that was illustrated in *Connaissance des Arts* in 1962.⁶ The mounts centering the upper frames are not found on any other known pieces by him. The pierced mounts on the lower corners above the plinth are found in a similar position

on the pair of display cabinets in the Museum (cat. no. 2), also stamped with the maker's initials. A molding set with anthemion of the same model as that edging the upper profile of the plinth is also found, in a similar position, on a cupboard for folio volumes and an armoire (fig. 1-6) veneered with panels of Chinese red lacquer, both made for Jean-Baptiste de Machault d'Arnouville around 1755.⁷



Figure 1-6 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), Armoire, ca. 1755. Oak frame, Chinese lacquer, rosewood, kingwood, gilt bronze, 167.7 × 139.7 × 41.5 cm (66 × 55 × 16.3 in.). Versailles, Château de Versailles, OA 9599, V5090. Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY

All other aspects of this cabinet are unique in Van Risenburgh's oeuvre. Its size allows it to stand almost alone in the whole field of eighteenth-century Parisian *ébénisterie*. It is only surpassed in length by a *bibliothèque* set with panels of *première* and *contre-partie* panels of brass and tortoiseshell marquetry in the Wallace Collection.⁸ That cabinet measures 602 centimeters in length and was made by Étienne Levasseur in about 1775.

The marquetry is also of an almost unique design and must represent an early stage in Van Risenburgh's career, before his more characteristic *bois de bout* floral marquetry evolved. Trelliswork enclosed in a broad undulating band of amaranth is found on the door of an apparently unstamped corner cupboard that was sold in New York in 1941.⁹ Although the vertical profile of the

cabinet is straight and the front only slightly bombé, an early example of a rather extreme form of rococo appears on the asymmetrically decorated door panels of the central section.

The intended use of this cabinet is not clear. A paper label is glued to the top, beneath one of the marble slabs. It is inscribed in ink, "les Clefs pour la bibliothèque." The interior shelves can be adjusted to a variety of heights, suggesting that the cabinet may have been used for storing books, in addition to drawings, prints, maps, or plans, rolled or flat.

As yet the cabinet has not been found in any eighteenth-century inventory or sale. It is inscribed "DAVAL" on the back in large cursive script (fig. 1-5). Nicolas Daval was a *marchand-mercier* working in Paris from the 1780s until his retirement in 1821. He had two shops, one at 15, quai Malaquais and the other at 1, rue des Petits Augustins. At his retirement his remaining stock was sold in three sales, on December 26–29, 1821; January 28–February 2, 1822; and March 18, 1822. Daval died in 1838. A fourth sale was held on December 5–7, 1838, after his death.¹⁰

The cabinet is not found in the catalogues of those sales and must have passed through his hands at some earlier date. By 1877 it belonged to comte Henri Greffulhe.¹¹ It stood in the former hôtel de Mouchy, located at 8–10, rue d'Astorg. Greffulhe's uncle was the comte Louis d'Armaillé, a friend and adviser of Richard Wallace.¹² Greffulhe's wife, Élisabeth de Riquet de Caraman-Chimay (1860–1952), was the muse of Marcel Proust and led an art salon of great style.

PROVENANCE

Before 1838: Nicolas Daval, French, died 1838 (Paris, France); before 1877–1932: Comte Henri Greffulhe, French, 1848–1932 (8, rue d'Astorg, Paris, France), by inheritance to his wife, Élisabeth de Riquet de Caraman-Chimay, 1932;¹³ 1932–37: Élisabeth de Riquet de Caraman-Chimay, Comtesse Greffulhe, French, 1860–1952 (Paris, France), sold, *A Selected Portion of the Renowned Collection Formed by the Comte Greffulhe and Sold by Order of the Comtesse Greffulhe [. . .]*, Sotheby's, London, July 23, 1937, lot 50, to both Arnold Seligmann and Trevor and Co. for £1,400; 1937– : Arnold Seligmann & Cie, 1912–46; 1937– : and Trevor and Co.,¹⁴ 1950s: David Drey (London, England), sold to Maurice Aveline; 1950s: Maurice Aveline, French (Paris, France), sold to Antenor Patiño; ca. 1957: Antenor Patiño, Bolivian, 1896–1982 (Paris, France), sold to Aveline & Co.; 1977: Aveline & Co. (Paris, France; Geneva, Switzerland), sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1977.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Getty loan to the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago),
November 23, 1977–August 15, 1978.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Guellette 1877, 466; Reitlinger 1963, vol. 2, 426; Wilson 1978–79, 37, 39–40, no. 3; Pradère 1989a, 184–85, fig. 168; Gruber 1992, vol. 2, 377, ill.; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 18, no. 11; Ronfort, Augarde, and Langer 1995, 45, fig. 20; Wilson and Hess 2001, 8, no. 11; Cator and Pradère 2009, 61 n. 16; Pradère 2014, 59 n. 3.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The cabinet is constructed as three separate cases that are structurally identical. The cases are fabricated from white oak of middling quality with numerous knots and, in some places, narrow bands of light-colored sapwood that have not been trimmed off. The oak is primarily flat sawn into relatively narrow boards, mostly 13 cm or less, that are glued together on edge to form larger panels.

Each wooden case is assembled from seven independently constructed sections: a frame-and-panel top, two side panels in plank construction, a frame-and-panel back, two plank-constructed doors with breadboard ends, and a lower drawer case. The frame-and-panel tops are each made with three equally sized raised panels. The side-to-side rails extend to the ends of the tops, and the four short front-to-back rails are fixed between with double-pinned, haunched mortise-and-tenon joints. The pairs of pins are offset so that one pin is noticeably farther from the joint line than the other (fig. 1-7); this is true for all pinned joints in the cabinet. It also appears that the pins (and/or the drill used to cut their holes) are tapered. On one side of the 2.3-cm-thick frames, the pins measure on average just over 7 mm, while on the other side the average measurement is closer to 9 mm. The grooves for the panels extend to the ends of the long rails and are visible on the sides of each case when the upper gilt bronze moldings are removed. The three raised panels of each top section are made of between 3 and 7 pieces of varying width, butt joined together with the grain running from front to back. On the middle case, the beveled edges of the panels face downward; on the left and right cases, the bevels face up. Around the perimeter of each frame-and-panel assembly, five 3.0-cm-thick pieces of oak are glued down to the top surface with no joinery between the elements (fig. 1-8); seen from the

front, these elements form the narrow veneered frieze just below the marble tops.

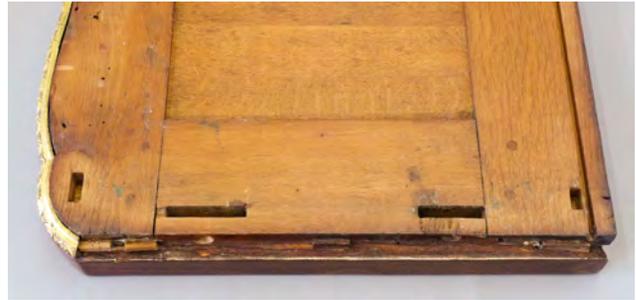


Figure 1-7 The underside of the left side cabinet top showing the offset double pinning of the mortise-and-tenon joints, the mortises for the side panel unit, and the dado for the back panels.



Figure 1-8 The top section of the right case from above. Note the five pieces of oak glued around the perimeter of the frame-and-panel element. These pieces are simply butt joined, with no additional joinery between them.

The case sides are each made of four planks about 2.3 cm thick, butt joined with the grain oriented vertically. At the front edges, additional blocks of wood have been glued to the inner face, forming pseudo-stiles. At the rear edges, the last piece of wood glued to each side panel is of double thickness, forming a stile at the rear. Each side is attached to its corresponding top and lower drawer case with a set of four loose tenons at each end, two larger tenons in the main panel and smaller tenons in the front and rear stiles (fig. 1-9). The side and rear loose tenons are placed in mortises that are open to the interior of the case.

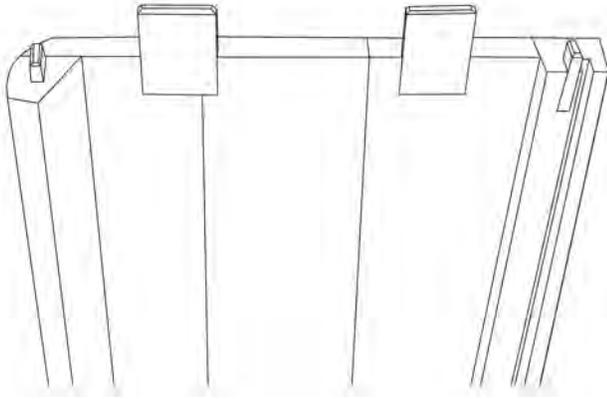


Figure 1-9 A schematic drawing of the side panel construction.

Each of the three case backs is assembled in frame-and-panel construction with four narrow, vertically oriented panels (see figs. 1-1 and 1-5). Although the panels are only about 40 cm wide, most are fabricated from four narrow boards, glued on edge without joinery. The edges of the panels are beveled along the edges on the rear sides; the sides of the panels facing the interior of the cabinet are flat across their entire surface. As on the tops, the stiles and rails are secured with double-pinned mortise-and-tenon joints with offset tapered pins. The back frame-and-panel assemblies are rabbeted along the rear edges of all four sides, forming tongues that fit into corresponding grooves in the tops, sides, and base sections.

The doors (fig. 1-10) are each constructed of eight vertical oak boards, butt joined together and capped at the top and bottom with thin horizontal battens. Each batten is fixed to the door panel with five long pegs, equally spaced along the length of the door, that pass through the battens and into the composite door panel. X-radiography shows that the holes for the pegs have been drilled with a round-tipped spoon bit, as was customary in the eighteenth century (fig. 1-11). The central fields of the door fronts are slightly raised in comparison to the areas outside the gilt bronze frames. The X-radiographs also show that this raising has been accomplished by planing down the perimeter of the doors rather than adding wood to the center field.



Figure 1-10 Inside cabinet door.

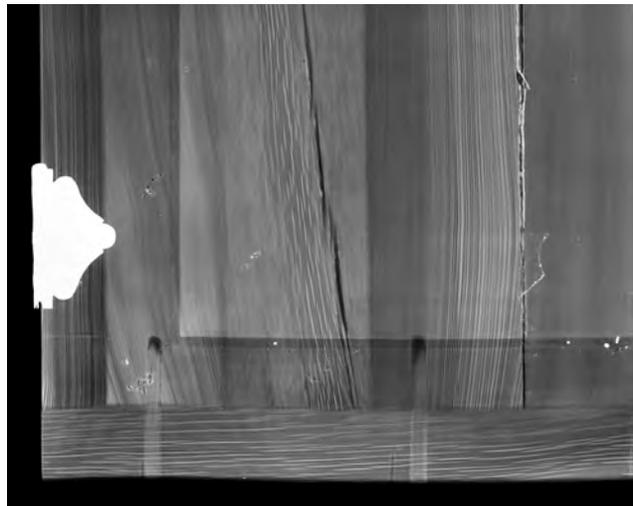


Figure 1-11 An X-radiograph of a door, showing the batten, or breadboard end, at the bottom, joined to the vertical boards with hand-shaped wooden pegs, driven into holes drilled with a round-tipped spoon bit.

The lower drawer cases, or base sections, are constructed as structurally separate units. Each base section comprises a frame-and-panel top with the rest of the case below in plank construction. The frame-and-panel tops are constructed identically to the tops of the cabinets, with the exception that the panels are rabbeted on their upper edges, making them flush with the framing

members on the upper surface. The sides and backs of each base section are made of thick, single boards of oak, joined at the rear corners with double, through dovetails. Below the drawers, spanning the front of the base sections, are single boards that are attached at each end to the base sides with a single, blind dovetail. These joints are reinforced with wooden pins, driven through the dovetails into the side boards (fig. 1-12). The front corners of the bases are made thicker with short blocks of oak glued to the inner faces of the case sides. Additional pairs of wooden pegs, driven from below, further secure these blocks to the transverse board below. Short horizontal boards of oak, running from front to back at the side of each case, serve as drawer runners. These are glued to the sides of the base and secured to the back boards with pairs of through dovetails, reinforced with wooden pegs. Narrow oak drawer guides are glued to the upper surface of the drawer runners, and heavy corner blocks are glued into the corners between the base sides and the base tops to provide a secure connection between the two elements.



Figure 1-12 The bottom of the right base section. The front bottom rails of the base are fixed to the sides with a single dovetail, reinforced with wooden pegs.

The drawers (figs. 1-13 and 1-14) are constructed of oak, with through dovetails at the rear and half-blind dovetails (covered by thin wooden blocks) at the front. The drawer bottoms are each made of four boards, butt joined, with the grain running from side to side. The bottoms are nailed into rabbets along the sides and backs of the drawers. Along the front edges, however, the drawer bottoms fully overlap the drawer fronts and are attached with glue and nails. The drawer fronts are made of two thicknesses of vertical oak board, laminated as necessary to build up the thickness necessary for their bowed forms.



Figure 1-13 Three-quarter top view of a drawer.



Figure 1-14 Three-quarter bottom view of a drawer.

This cabinet makes unusually extensive use of highly figured *ferréol* veneer. *Ferréol* is the modern French name for a thus far unidentified species of the genus *Swartzia* that has been linked by Viaux-Lauquin to the wood called “fereol” by Roubo.¹⁵ The identification of the veneer used on this cabinet as *Swartzia* sp. was made by detailed microanatomical study of thin sections from a sample taken from the bottom edge of a drawer.¹⁶ Further examination of anatomical features on the side panels was conducted without sampling, using a high magnification digital microscope; this confirmed that the side panels are almost certainly the same wood.¹⁷ Roubo describes *ferréol* as follows:

*Fereol. Ce bois croît à Cayenne, & porte le nom de celui qui l'a découvert; il se nomme aussi bois marbré: le fond de ce bois est blanc, & veiné ou tacheté de rouge. Il y a au Cabinet d'Histoire Naturelle du Jardin du Roi, du bois de fereol dont le grain est très-fin, & dont le fond est de couleur jaune foncé, avec des raies étroites de couleur brune, tirant sur le violet; c'est peut-être une nuance dans l'espece : au reste, ce bois est beau, & se travaille très-bien.*¹⁸

(Ferréol. This wood grows in Cayenne [present-day French Guiana] and bears the name of he who discovered it; it is also called marbled wood: the ground of this wood is white, veined, or mottled with red. There

is at the Office of Natural History of the King's Garden, ferréol wood, whose grain is very fine and whose ground is dark yellow in color, with narrow streaks of brown color, tending toward violet; perhaps this is a variety of the species: for the rest, this wood is beautiful, and works very well.)

The varied and diverse figure of *ferréol* noted by Roubo accords well with the veneer used here by Van Risenburgh. The log from which this veneer was cut appears to have had at least four distinct concentric zones of color and to have been flat sawn (fig. 1-15). By carefully selecting different sheets from the packet of veneer made from this log, the *ébéniste* was able to create a remarkable range of different patterns and compositions (fig. 1-16). The outermost band of the log was the sapwood, which is nearly white. Normally, sapwood is not used in ornamental veneers, but here Van Risenburgh uses it to create the distinctive bright stripes, particularly evident on the doors and drawer of the central cabinet section. These areas of striped diamonds and chevrons are composed using sheets of veneer corresponding to type 3. Just inside the sapwood of this log lay a variegated and

irregular band of quite dark, brown wood. This stripe is prominently displayed in the background fields of the sides, where four vertical bands of type 2 veneer sheets are joined, following the curvature of the grain, to form the design. The upper and lower sections of the background are book-matched, and small “arrowheads” of sapwood are carefully retained on the centerline, just above and below the cartouche border.

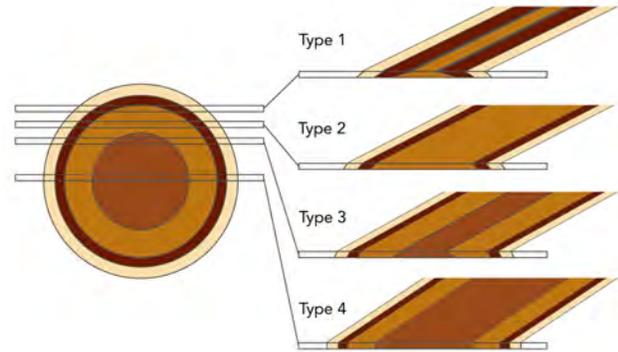


Figure 1-15 A schematic drawing of the log of *ferréol* that provided the highly varied patterns of veneer used on the cabinet.



Figure 1-16 This image shows the unusually extensive and creative use of *ferréol* on the cabinet surfaces.

Inside the dark band lay a rather wide light brown band that forms the majority of the background field on the sides. This band is also used extensively in the checkerboard pattern at the center of the side doors, relying primarily on type 2 veneer. At the center of the *ferréol* log used here lay a reddish-brown core. This rich tone is featured most prominently inside the cartouches of the cabinet sides where the diamond-matched pattern features broad, curving bands, drawn from type 4 veneer sheets.

During the original construction of the marquetry decoration of these cabinets, the individual elements were glued directly on the finished carcass, one piece after the other. Small iron nails were placed alongside some pieces of veneer to prevent them from sliding out of position during gluing and clamping. These veneer pins were removed once the glue had dried, and the next abutting piece of veneer was then glued in position. X-radiography revealed several small holes that had been caused by the placement of these veneer pins, which are now only visible in X-ray. The veneer pin holes on this cabinet are smaller and less frequent than those found on other, similar works of *ébénisterie* by Van Risenburgh, such as the display cabinets (cat. no. 2). Close examination of the surface under magnification reveals no shoulder knife marks or any distorted wood fibers around the tight curves of the veneer pieces. This implies that the veneer elements were mostly cut to size before being glued in their final position.

The gilt bronze mounts appear to be almost entirely original to the cabinet. Fourteen representative mounts, including at least one of each model, were analyzed by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy to determine the composition of their base alloy. In addition, two measurements were made of the soldering alloy used to join separately cast elements into longer runs of molding. The mounts, with one exception, were found to have compositions common in eighteenth-century Parisian casting brass, with zinc levels between 17 and 23%, tin between 0.35 and 0.75%, and lead between 0.75 and 1.5%. Furthermore, levels of impurities in the metal, such as iron, arsenic, silver, nickel, and antimony, were found to be in the normal range for mounts of the period. The mount found to be different from the others was a drawer handle backplate (second from the right) that was a copy, made in Paris in 1998 to replace a missing backplate. As is common in late twentieth-century Parisian castings, the levels of tin and iron in this backplate are significantly lower than the normal range for the eighteenth century, and impurities such as silver, arsenic, and antimony are virtually absent. The composition of the soldering metal is

very much like that of the casting metal, with the exception that the zinc level is elevated to between 31 and 34%, lowering the melting point considerably and thus facilitating the soldering process.¹⁹

The iron locks on the right-hand door of each cabinet section are particularly noteworthy. They are finely made, double-throw locks, with double bolts engaging the corresponding door to the left (a spring catch allowing the doors to be closed and latched without the key) and, in addition, long bolts running both up and down that engage the case top and bottom. All four bolts are operated by the turn of a single key, using a two-layered mechanism (fig. 1-17). The upper and lower bolts are held in place by decorative iron guides.



Figure 1-17 A lock disassembled; top left, the lock as removed from the door; top right, the upper and lower bolts removed; bottom left, the lock with the intermediate cover plate removed showing the action of the double bolt above and the spring catch at bottom; bottom right, the inner face of the intermediate cover plate with the wards for the key attached.

The cabinet sections are held together by iron nuts and bolts, two through the upper framing of the tops and two through the sides of the bottom sections. Half of the bolts are now missing, and of the remaining four, none appears to be original.

The three marble tops are made of *brèche d'Alep* and are about 2.5 cm thick. *Brèche d'Alep* is a heterogeneous calcareous stone consisting of multicolored rounded cobbles in a sand and gravel matrix that ranges in tone from beige to orange. The dominant colors of the larger cobbles are tan and cream, though numerous red, brown, and even black cobbles are found as well. Many similar limestone breccias of this type occur in varying colors throughout the Mediterranean. The stone is named for a variety sourced near Aleppo in modern Syria. The stone used on these cabinets, however, is thought to have been quarried in Le Tholonet, Bouches-du-Rhône, France.

Although the quarry is inactive now, it had been in use since ancient times.

Although there is no corresponding documentation, the color and the quality of the varnish suggests that the cabinets have been refinished recently, probably shortly before their acquisition by the Museum. No evidence could be found of the original surface preparation.

A.H., with Y.C. and R.S.

NOTES

1. For more information on Bernard II van Risenburgh, see primarily Pradère 1989a, 183–99; Baroli 1957, 56–63. See also Daniel Alcouffe, in *Louis XV . . .* 1974, 323–24.
2. See Ronfort, Augarde, and Langer 1995, 35, fig. 2. Formerly with Bernard B. Steinitz.
3. A pair: Inv. Res. Mü. M 1037, 1038. In the collection of the Bayerische Verwaltung der staatlichen Schlösser, Gärten und Seen, and on display at the Residenz München in the *Kurfürstenzimmer*. Ronfort, Augarde, and Langer 1995, 41, fig. 9. See Langer 1997. The commodes are unstamped.
4. See Ronfort, Augarde, and Langer 1995, 44, fig. 19.
5. Acc. no. 65.63–64. Randall 1970, 3, fig. 1. This pair of *encoignures* bears the stamp of Martin Étienne Lhermite, Van Risenburgh's son-in-law.
6. Jullian 1962, 42–49, fig. 6. Then in the possession of a private Parisian collection; its present whereabouts are unknown.
7. For the armoire, now at Versailles, see Meyer and Arizzoli-Clémentel 2002, vol. 2, 50–52, no. 8; *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 156–57, no. 41 (T. Wolvesperges); Pruchnicki 2013, 55 (acc. nos. V5090 and OA 9599). For the folio cupboard, now in a private collection, see *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 154–55, no. 40 (A. Pradère).
8. Hughes 1996, vol. 2, 546–52, no. 120 (acc. no. F390).
9. Parke-Bernet Galleries, *English and French XVIII Century Furniture, Parke-Bernet Galleries, May 28–29, 1941* (New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries, 1941), lot 432.
10. Cator and Pradère 2009, 60–61, esp. n. 16; M. Bonnefonds de la Vialle, commissaire-priseur, *Catalogue d'une collection d'objets d'art et de haute curiosité, December 5–7, 1838* (Paris: M. Bonnefonds de la Vialle, 1838). The fourth sale following Daval's death was held at his home at 80, rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis, Paris.
11. Guellette 1877, 466.
12. See preface to Sotheby's, *A Selected Portion of the Renowned Collection Formed by the Comte Greffulhe and Sold by Order of the Comtesse Greffulhe and of the Duc and Duchesse de Gramont, Sotheby's, July 23, 1937* (London: Sotheby's, 1937).
13. Cabinet mentioned in Guellette 1877, 466.
14. Handwritten note in a copy of the auction catalogue in the collection of the Getty Research Institute library.
15. Viaux-Lauquin 1997.
16. See "Wood identification report, 77.DA.91 Sample number 1," by Arlen Heginbotham, in the files of the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
17. See "Wood identification report, 77.DA.91 Sample numbers 2–3," by Arlen Heginbotham, in the files of the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
18. Roubo 1774, 776.
19. For a discussion of the composition and nature of soldering metal, see Heginbotham 2013, 150–65.





2. Pair of cabinets

French (Paris), ca. 1750

By Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766, master before 1730)

White oak* veneered with bloodwood*, amaranth*, and cherry* and restorations in hornbeam* and Spanish cedar;* modern wire mesh screens; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron hardware and locks

H: 4 ft. 10 5/8 in., W: 3 ft. 3 3/4 in., D: 1 ft. 7 in. (149 × 101 × 48.3 cm)

84.DA.24.1–2

DESCRIPTION

The pair of rectangular straight-sided cabinets have rounded forecorners and stand on short legs. Each is fitted with two pairs of doors, separated by a manually operated sliding shelf. The upper doors are set with panels of wire mesh, and the interior of that section contains a fixed shelf. The interior of the lower section contains two adjustable shelves (fig. 2-1). The cabinets are identical; a description of one will suffice.



Figure 2-1 Front, doors open.

The top of the cabinet, below a short, concave cornice is mounted along the front and sides with a broad gilt

bronze molding. It is cast with alternating motifs of cabochons, gadroons, and darts. At the center front the molding is clasped by a mount composed of leafy C-scrolls centered by a sweeping shell-like form that is set below another C-scroll, topped by a leafy bud.

The upper forecorners are set with pierced mounts composed of three pairs of C-scrolls. The upper pair flank an elongated oval cabochon that is surrounded by auricular work. Above, small leafy scrolls support a spray of leaves. The middle pair of C-scrolls are addorsed. They enclose an inverted corolla from which depend two leafy buds. The outer edges of the C-scrolls are set with auricular flame work that descends to form a tongue-like shape below, flanked by the lowest pair of C-scrolls edged with leafy borders. The corner mounts terminate in an arrangement of leaves.

The rounded corners of the cabinet are recessed and framed by a stepped plain gilt bronze molding that is shaped above and below. The lower forecorners of the cabinet are set with pierced mounts formed by apposed and crossing C-scrolls supporting a leafy bud above and a fan of leaves surrounding a cabochon below, ending in a pendant bud that overhangs the tip of the large pierced foot mount below. The latter is composed of two large C-scrolls. They are set with shell-like borders and enclose a whorl of leaves centered by a bud from which emerges a leafy stem that rises to contact the mount above. The upper part of the mount is composed of leafy and ribbed scrolls.

The wire-filled mesh openings of the upper doors are fitted with gilt bronze frames. Of asymmetrical design, they are composed of leafy C- and S-scrolls edged with flame work. Above, at the center, is a large curved cabochon surrounded by a tongue of flame work. At the

center below is a short arrangement of leaves above an apron of flame work bordered on its edge by further small C- and S-scrolls. The two frames are mirror images of each other. Between them runs a vertical mount that is attached to the shaped edge of the right-hand door. It is centered by a keyhole that pierces the bowl of an open shell. This is clasped by a C-scroll that carries a flame work border that descends to form a curving tail and ascends to clasp the end of the rising elongated C-scroll. It is fitted at its center with an elongated curved cabochon. The upper end of this vertical mount is set with a feather, and at the base, with rushes.

The front edge of the sliding shelf below the upper doors (fig. 2-2) is set with a gilt bronze guilloche molding, containing alternating rosettes and cabochons. The doors below are set with gilt bronze rectangular frames, each formed by a simple continuous flat molding centered by a stippled band. The four rounded corners are overlaid with mounts centered by cabochons, surrounded by auricular shellwork that extends to form “wings” on either side.



Figure 2-2 Front, slide out.

Asymmetrical mounts are set at the middle of the inside edges of the frames. The mount on the right is pierced with a keyhole. Between an S-scroll and a leafy C-scroll is a cartilaginous whorl framed by flame work that extends to form a tail. Leaves emerge at the juncture of the C-

scroll with the flame work, while the S-scroll is rimmed with cartilaginous waves. A straight vertical mount with a stippled center is attached to the edge of the right-hand door. The horizontal front and sides of the upper edge of the base are set with a broad molding composed of strapwork and leafy buds on a diapered ground. The lower profile at the front is set with short scrolled mounts, bearing leaves centered by an apron mount in the form of an arching C-scroll supporting smaller C-scrolls and topped by a short curled leaf. The mounts set along the inner profile of the short legs take the form of leafy scrolls enclosing a small pierced area of shellwork.

The cabinet is veneered with amaranth on the top, front, sliding shelf, and sides (fig. 2-3). The shelf is also decorated with double frames of bloodwood. Frames of similar shape are found on the fronts of the lower doors and on the lower halves of the sides. Above, in that area, is a large shaped frame of bloodwood. The interior of the upper section of the cabinet has been varnished reddish-brown. The edge of the single fixed shelf is veneered with amaranth. The interior surfaces of the upper doors are veneered with cherry. A shaped flat molding of cherry is held in place by screws. Its removal gives access to the edge of the metal mesh. The interior of the lower section is of plain varnished white oak. The edges of the two removable shelves are veneered with amaranth. The inner surfaces of the doors are veneered with cherry and further decorated with a frame of amaranth.



Figure 2-3 Right profile.

MARKS

Each cabinet is stamped “B.V.R.B.” on the back on the upper rail (figs. 2-4, 2-5).



Figure 2-4 On the back of the cabinet on the upper rail is stamped “B.V.R.B.” (84.DA.24.1).



Figure 2-5 On the back of the cabinet on the upper rail is stamped “B.V.R.B.” (84.DA.24.2).

COMMENTARY

The cabinets are both stamped “B.V.R.B.” for Bernard II van Risenburgh.¹ Although their design is unique in Van Risenburgh’s oeuvre, a number of the gilt bronze mounts are of the same model as examples found on other pieces stamped with his initials. The large central mount clasping the upper molding is found in the same position on the large circa 1755 armoire veneered with panels of Chinese red lacquer, from the collection of Jean-Baptiste de Machault d’Arnouville and now at Versailles (see fig. 1-6).² It is also seen on the tall *secrétaire bibliothèque* that was delivered to the Grand Trianon in 1755 (fig. 2-6).³ The upper corner mounts on the Museum’s cabinets are of the same model as those found on the *bout de bureau* at the State Hermitage Museum (fig. 15-6)⁴ that are marked with the crowned C.⁵ The pierced mounts above those on the feet of the Museum’s cabinets are also found in a similar position on the long cabinet in the Museum that is firmly attributed to this master (see cat. no. 1). Small, pierced S-shaped mounts outlining the inner profile of the short legs are also included as part of a framing mount on the doors of a pair of corner cupboards at the Walters Art Museum that also carry on their upper corners pierced mounts centered by cabochons of the same model as those repeated six times on the Museum’s long cabinet, mentioned above.⁶ These small, pierced mounts also appear at the lower corners of the outer framing mount of a lacquer commode attributed to Van Risenburgh in the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor.⁷ The attribution of the Museum’s cabinets to Van Risenburgh is strengthened by the presence of a mount of semicircular form centering the apron of the commode. It is of the same model as that found at the center of the plinth of the display cabinets.



Figure 2-6 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), Louis XV's secretary at Trianon, ca. 1755. Oak frame, rosewood, kingwood, gilt bronze, white marble, white satin, 229 × 112 × 53 cm (90 × 44 × 20.9 in.). Le Mans, Musée de Tessé, Inv. 1906.29.66. Photo: © Museums of Le Mans

Returning to the Museum's cabinets, one-half of the frames of the upper doors surrounding the asymmetrically shaped open area are of the same model as those arranged to form both sides of the frames found surrounding marquetry panels on the front of a cabinet (*meuble d'entre-deux*) that was sold by the descendants of Jean-Baptiste de Machault d'Arnouville in 1989.⁸ This cabinet is stamped "B.V.R.B.," and its mounts are struck with the crowned C.

The Museum's cabinets appear to have been intended to store *objets de curiosité* of some type. They are too deep to be used as bookcases. The sliding shelves are embellished with marquetry rather than leather or velvet, both of which are more typical conceits for surfaces used to support books. The mounts forming the keyhole escutcheons for the doors above and below are in the form of shells and unique to these pieces. They perhaps indicate that the shelves behind the wire mesh were intended to hold shells. Whatever their purpose, the

cabinets were certainly made for an extremely wealthy patron and likely eager participant in the Enlightenment.

The linear marquetry on the lower doors and the sides of the cabinets is not found on any other piece of *ébénisterie* made by Van Risenburgh. It has been suggested by Claude Sère that the cabinets were originally veneered with Asian lacquer panels and painted with European lacquer and that the recessed rounded vertical corner panels framed with simple gilt bronze moldings are typically found on pieces so decorated. Sère also suggests that the marquetry is English.⁹ No evidence for such a radical alteration has been found, but it is true that the cabinets were possibly in an English collection by the 1850s. They were probably acquired by the immensely wealthy Lord Albert Denison, first Baron Londesborough (1805–1860).¹⁰ Inherited by his son, William Henry Forster Denison (1834–1900), the first Earl, the cabinets were likely sold with Grimston Park and its contents to John Fielden Esq. (1822–1893), MP of Dobroyd Castle, near Todmorden, in 1872. At some point the cabinets were somewhat embellished. In the catalogue of the Grimston Park sale of 1962, they are described thus: "372 A SUPERB PAIR OF LOUIS XVI KINGWOOD AND ORMOLU DISPLAY CABINETS, with upper glass panels, richly decorated in *rococo fashion* with chiseled ormolu; the doors to the base with bold satyr masks amidst scrolls; and inlaid at the sides with cartouches in tulipwood, sycamore and bois satine. Each 2 ft. 3 in. wide, 4 ft. 11 in. high. The cabinets are at present mounted upon loose plinths *applique* with ormolu satyrs amidst laurelling."¹¹ They were acquired at the auction by the Parisian dealers Étienne Lévy and René Weiller, who sold them to Philippe Kraemer. Kraemer removed the glazing that was not old and replaced it with wire mesh. The satyr's masks were removed from the doors because they were of a nineteenth-century date. The plinths were not included in the sale to Kraemer and have disappeared.¹²

PROVENANCE

Ca. 1840–50 or 1851: possibly John Hobart Caradoc, second Baron Howden, Irish, 1799–1873 (Grimston Park, Tadcaster, Yorkshire, England), sold to Albert Denison, 1850 or 1851;¹³ 1850 or 1851–60: possibly Albert Denison, first Baron Londesborough, English, 1805–1860 (Grimston Park, Tadcaster, Yorkshire, England), by inheritance to his son, William Henry Forester Denison, 1860; 1860–72: possibly William Henry Forester Denison, second Baron and first Earl of Londesborough, English, 1834–1900 (Grimston Park, Tadcaster, Yorkshire, England), sold, with the contents of Grimston Park, to John Fielden, 1872;¹⁴ 1872–93: John Fielden, English, 1822–1893 (Grimston Park,

Tadcaster, Yorkshire, England), by inheritance to his nephew, Thomas Fielden, 1893; 1893–97: Thomas Fielden, English, 1854–1897 (Grimston Park, Tadcaster, Yorkshire, England), by inheritance to his son, John Fielden, 1897; 1897–1962: Captain John Fielden, English, died 1962 (Grimston Park, Tadcaster, Yorkshire, England) [sold, *The Contents of the Mansion: XVIIIe & Early XIX Century French & English Furniture*, Henry Spencer & Sons, Retford, Nottinghamshire, May 29–31, 1962, lot 372, to Étienne Lévy and René Weiller]; 1962–1960s: Étienne Lévy (Paris, France) and René Weiller (Paris, France), sold to Raymond Kraemer, 1960s;¹⁵ 1960s–1970s: Raymond Kraemer (Paris, France), transferred ownership to Kraemer et Cie, 1970s;¹⁶ 1970s–1984: Kraemer et Cie (Paris, France), sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1984.¹⁷

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wilson, Bremer-David, and Nieda 1985, 178, no. 54; Kjellberg 1989, 139; Pradère 1989a, 188, fig. 174; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 18–19, no. 12; Wilson and Hess 2001, 8, no. 12.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The two identical display cabinets are each composed of a base section, side panels, a back panel, doors, and a cornice. The cabinets are built of white oak in a manner that allows the component sections to be easily assembled and disassembled using only a screwdriver and possibly a mallet. None of the veneering crosses from one section to another, and it appears that no glue was used to assemble the sections. The cornices are constructed as independent units with five mortises (one at each corner and one at the middle of the back edge) that fit onto corresponding tenons rising from the sides and backs. These mortise-and-tenon joints are snug but not glued, and the cornices can still be easily separated today. The bases are attached to the sides and backs in an identical fashion.¹⁸ This method of construction would have considerably facilitated transportation of the cabinets and raises the possibility that they were intended to be delivered to their original owner in sections and assembled on site. The cornices are of frame-and-panel construction. Each of the side and front rails is made of two pieces of oak, stacked vertically and laminated together. At the front corners, the rails are connected with an unusual double finger joint; the upper pieces of the rails are essentially joined with their own finger joints, while the lower pieces are joined with the same joint but in alternate orientation. The side rails are joined to the back rail with unusual

dovetails in which the orientation of the joint is different for the upper and lower laminates of the side rails. In the upper rail, the pin of the dovetail is cut from the back rail, while for the lower rail, the pin is reversed and is part of the rail itself (fig. 2-7).



Figure 2-7 Back.

These cabinets were subjected to a heavy-handed restoration campaign, apparently in the late 1970s or early 1980s. The restoration seems to have involved the complete removal and subsequent regluing of the veneer on the tops and sides in order to facilitate major repairs to cracks and splits in the underlying structure. This level of restoration is increasingly rare, particularly in museum collections, because it is seen as seriously compromising the historical fabric of the object; however, it was not uncommon in Parisian workshops in the late 1970s and 1980s.

The X-ray images reveal that the cornices's top panels are actually made of two thin layers of wood (fig. 2-8). The lower layer, with the grain running front to back, appears to be original, but a cross-grain upper (hidden) layer appears to have been added during a radical, and undocumented, restoration, probably not long before the acquisition of the cabinets by the Museum. It seems probable that the original top panels shrank and cracked, leading to still-visible damage to the top veneers (fig. 2-9).

It appears that during the restoration, the tops were disassembled, the veneer was removed, and the split panels were reglued, inserting new wood strips in the areas of the cracks to compensate for shrinkage of the panels. The panels were then planed, removing half of their thickness from the upper surface, and a new layer of wood was glued on with the grain running from side to side. This cross-grain lamination was undoubtedly executed to prevent further shrinkage and cracking of the tops. After reassembly, the original veneer was relaid onto the tops. This explains why the cracks from front to back in the top veneer are slightly shifted in comparison to the cracks in the original oak panel, visible from below.



Figure 2-8 X-radiograph, and corresponding photograph, showing a multilayered cabinet top. A cross-grain is visible in the X-radiograph, revealing the presence of a hidden board between the upper veneer and the original panel, which is invisible from below.



Figure 2-9 Top.

The bases are framed by four thick horizontal rails, connected to the short leg posts with pegged mortise-and-tenon joints. The large single bottom panels, made from seven butt-joined boards with front-to-back grain orientation, are secured within grooves in these rails. Glue blocks supporting the edges of the panels were added at a later date. Several hornbeam and Spanish cedar wooden blocks have been cut and glued into the lower edge of the front rails, modifying the shape of the original profiles. The original contour can be reconstructed by inspection of the secondary wood whose backside is beveled (fig. 2-10). It is not known when this modification was executed, but most of the veneer on the front of the bases must have been replaced at the time, since it covers almost all areas of the altered profile.



Figure 2-10 Bottom.

The cabinets' sides are made as bipartite frame-and-panel constructions. The front and rear posts run the full height of the sides, and the three horizontal rails are attached to them with pegged mortise-and-tenon joints. The two panels of each side are made of three butt-joined boards with the grain oriented vertically, rabbeted along their exterior edges. The panels are fitted within grooves in the rails and posts so that their surfaces are flush with the posts and rails on the outside. The cabinets' rear corner posts also function as posts for the quadripartite back panels. A single transverse rail crosses at the center, connected to the posts with unpegged and unglued

mortise-and-tenon joints; the two vertical medial stiles are similarly attached to the transverse rail and to the cornices and bases above and below. The panels themselves are each made of three butt-joined boards with the grain oriented vertically, roughly beveled on their exterior edges.

The upper doors are hung on iron pivot hinges; the lower hinge is attached to the front corner post, and the upper hinge is fixed to the underside of the cornice so that the doors are released when the cornice is removed. The lower doors are hinged to the front corner posts with cranked brass hinges. The upper doors are constructed as a frame with mitered mortise-and-tenon joints. The window openings are currently fitted with wire mesh that is wrapped around a thicker perimeter wire and secured within a channel in the doorframe. As mentioned in the commentary, this wire mesh was added in the 1970s or early 1980s, replacing non-original glazing. Similar wire mesh appears in a pastel portrait of about 1745 signed “Bonde” at château de Thoiry (fig. 2-11), and a detailed contemporary description of the manufacture of wire mesh is given by Réaumur.¹⁹



Figure 2-11 Bonde (per the signature [unidentified French painter]), *Les enfants des Machault d'Arnouville*, ca. 1741–47. Pastel on paper, 114 × 89 cm (44.9 × 35 in.). Thoiry, Château de Thoiry. Photo: Château de Thoiry / Arthus Boutin

X-radiography of the doors reveals at least two previous generations of tack holes and broken tacks along the perimeter of the opening; however, no clear evidence is present to suggest whether the doors were originally fitted with glass or wire. An additional series of holes on the inside of the doors, also visible in the X-radiographs but now filled, running along the top and bottom, raise the possibility that the doors of this cabinet were originally fitted with silk as depicted in the Bonde pastel.

The lower doors are composed of butt-joined vertical boards secured with tongue-and-groove joints to horizontal battens at the top and bottom. Additional thin horizontal battens have been added, presumably to flatten the doors and stabilize splits, during a subsequent restoration. Based on the X-radiographs, it appears that the doors' interior veneer was first removed, then the battens were inserted and the veneer was relaid.

The sliding shelves, situated between the upper and lower door sections, are made of butt-joined boards running from side to side, with front-to-back battens on both ends. The battens are attached with tongue-and-groove joints but with the unusual addition of mortise and tenons at front and back (fig. 2-12). The boards have been modified by the addition of three front-to-back central battens that have been inlaid in the panel from below. In addition, the boards have been increased in depth by the addition of strips of oak along their back edges that are attached with glue and long wooden dowels, visible on the rear edge and in X-ray. The sliding shelves glide within grooves cut into thick oak blocks that have been glued onto the case side rails and fit into mortises cut into the front posts. The horizontal rails (or blades) above and below the shelves are mortise and tenoned into the front end of these blocks. The bottoms of the upper compartments are solid panels made of three butt-joined boards, running side to side, that are fitted along all four edges with tongue-and-groove joints.

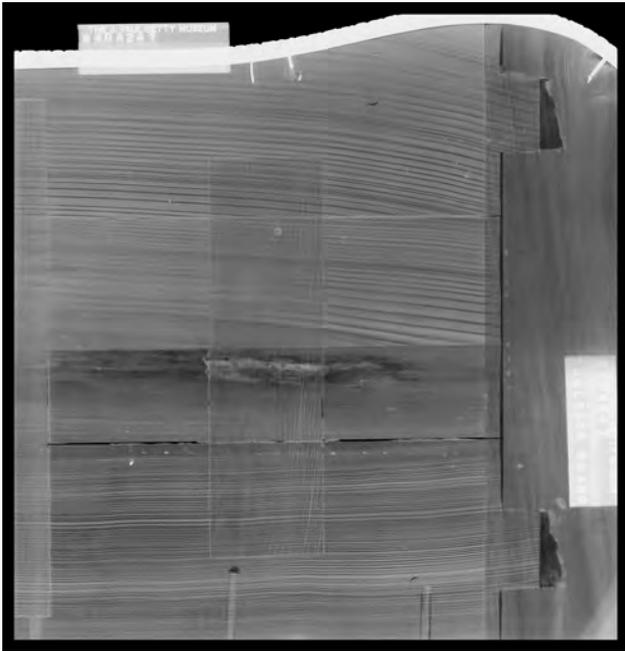


Figure 2-12 Composite of two X-radiographs showing that the sliding shelves, situated between the upper and lower door sections, are made of butt-joined boards running from side to side, with front-to-back battens on both ends. The battens are attached with both tongue-and-groove joints and mortise and tenons at the front and back.

The interiors of the upper and lower compartments are fitted with oak shelves veneered at their front edges with amaranth. These rest on wooden support slats that are screwed into the sides of the cabinets. Based on scribed lines and filled screw holes on the interior surfaces of the sides, it appears that the current shelves and side supports are not original and that there may have been as many as three shelves in both the upper and lower compartments in the past. In addition, it is likely that there was at least one vertical divider in each of the upper compartments. This is evidenced by the presence of filled sliding dovetail mortises running from front to back in the bottoms of the upper compartments.

Inlaid geometric patterns of bloodwood bands on amaranth fields are identical on both cabinets, with one exception: the upper bloodwood band on the side of 84.DA.24.1 is punctuated by a central oval element at the bottom, while the .2 cabinet band is uninterrupted.

The condition of the marquetry decoration is good. There are significant areas of replaced veneer decoration, particularly on the right side of cabinet 84.DA.24.2 and on the fronts of the bases. Careful observation in combination with X-radiography shows that the geometric marquetry decoration of these display cabinets was executed in the so-called piece-by-piece method, in which individual elements were glued directly onto the finished carcass one piece after the other. In this technique, it was

not uncommon to glue an oversized piece of veneer down to the substrate and then trim the edges after the glue had set using an inlay knife, also called a shoulder knife. The next, adjacent piece of veneer would be trimmed along its abutting edges to match the first piece, sometimes leaving the other sides roughly shaped until after it had been glued down. Fine stringing or banding would normally be finished on all sides before being glued in place. The sequence of gluing and trimming steps would be repeated, adding more pieces of veneer until the composition was complete.

The traces of the shoulder knife are often visible in the form of small, accidental cuts or as compressed and distorted wood fibers around the tight curves of the marquetry. Such evidence is found widely on these cabinets (fig. 2-13).



Figure 2-13 Detail showing the traces of shoulder knife cuts, here seen as compressed and distorted wood fibers around the tight curves of the marquetry. Such evidence is found widely on these cabinets.

The X-radiographs reveal numerous small holes beneath the marquetry resulting from the use of square veneer pins during the assembly of the marquetry. In the piece-by-piece method, veneer pins were hammered in place alongside a piece of veneer to stop it from sliding out of position during gluing and clamping. These veneer pins

were removed once the glue had dried, and the next abutting piece of veneer was then placed and glued, covering the holes from the pins. The placement of the pinholes on one side or the other of a veneer joint thus indicates the order in which the pieces of veneer were laid. On these cabinets, the craftsman clearly worked from the outside of each composition toward the inside (fig. 2-14). On the lower doors and sliding shelves the location of the veneer pin holes and the edges of the existing marquetry align well (see fig. 2-12); however, on the cabinets' sides the veneer pin holes are slightly offset (fig. 2-15). This suggests that the marquetry on the sides may have been entirely removed during a previous restoration to repair splits in the sides and reglued in a slightly different position.

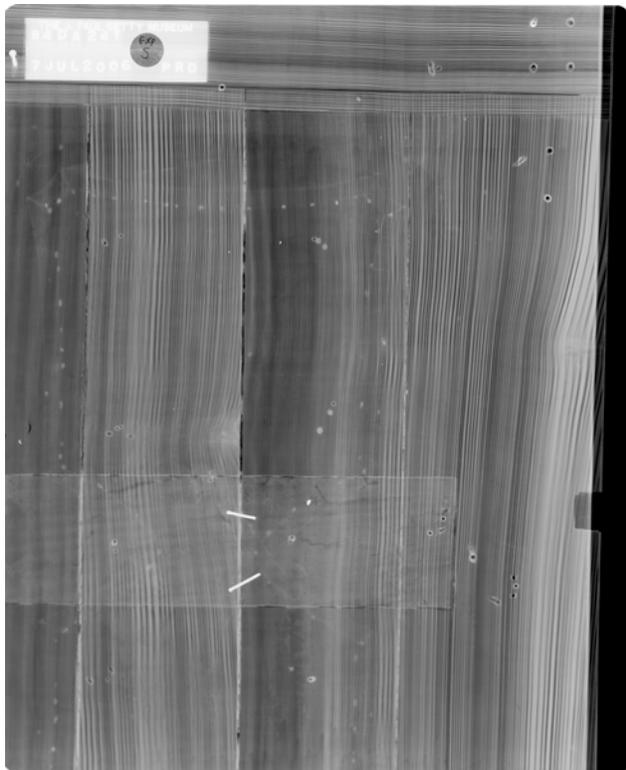


Figure 2-14 X-radiograph of the .1 lower left door. It is composed of butt-joined vertical boards secured with tongue-and-groove joints to horizontal battens at the top and bottom. Veneer pin holes align well with the inner edge of the amaranth banding, showing that the craftsman applied veneer from the perimeter toward the middle.

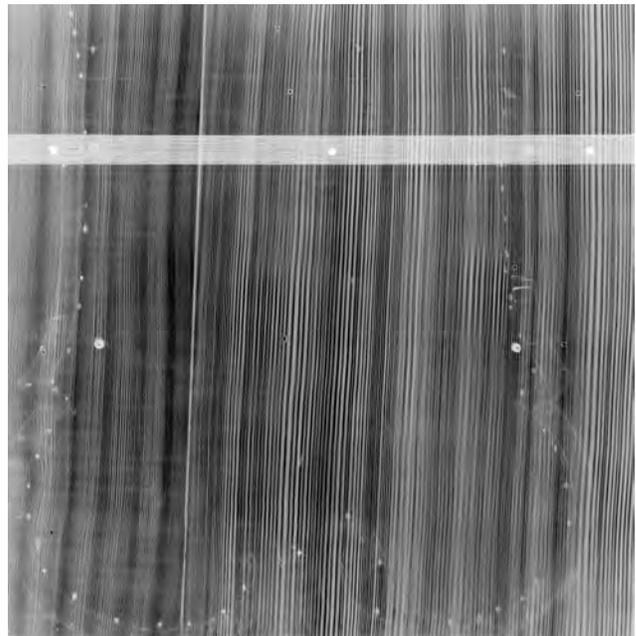


Figure 2-15 X-radiograph of one of the cabinet's sides showing that the veneer pin holes are slightly offset, suggesting the marquetry may have been removed during a previous restoration.

The overall varnish on both cabinets appears new and glossy, indicating that they were likely refinished not long before their acquisition by the Getty. Small holes from the satyr's mask mounts that were removed by Kraemer from the lower doors are visible, filled with wax. The oak surface in the upper interior is covered with period-inappropriate red-pigmented stain; the oak of the lower interior compartment is coated with a modern transparent finish. It is likely that these modifications were made during the same period as the refinishing of the exterior.

The gilt bronze mounts appear to have undergone some alterations and had some replacements. The mounts vary considerably in color and in the quality and style of their chasing. Some mounts have gilding that is slightly greenish in tone, while others are redder. In some cases, corresponding mounts on the two cabinets are chased in entirely different ways. Several mounts (including three of the corner mounts on the bottom doors and the central mount on the base of cabinet .1) are very clearly *surmoulage* copies of other mounts, as evidenced by screw holes in the original mount that are seen to be cast into the back of the *surmoulage* copy. The pierced foot mounts on the bases of both cabinets are different in design and chasing from the rest of the mounts.

Thirty-seven mounts from the cabinets were removed and analyzed by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF). Most revealed compositions that are consistent with

eighteenth-century brass composition. The alloys of the mounts that are chased differently from cabinet to cabinet do not reveal any clear differences in composition. The pierced foot mounts on the corners of the bases do appear to be fabricated from an alloy that is different from the majority of the mounts and more consistent with mid- to late nineteenth-century production. The chasing of these mounts is distinctly less refined than the mounts that are clearly Van Risenburgh models, such as the central mounts on the cornices.

As noted above, the contour of the lower edges of the bases was modified after construction, and it would appear that the gilt bronze mounts on the bases have all been replaced or added as well. The moldings running along the lower edges of the bases are poorly fitted to each other and follow the lower contour of the base imprecisely. They appear to be repurposed mounts from another object. The alloys of these mounts appear consistent with eighteenth-century production, but on cabinet .1, some of the mounts have clearly been cut and filed to modify their shape, leaving ungolded areas where material was removed. Extraneous holes in the center of the apron can be found by X-radiography, suggesting that another type of mount was formerly in this position.

As mentioned above, three of the lower doors' corner mounts appear to be twentieth-century replacements based on their low silver, antimony, and tin concentrations. These are the left side top and bottom corner mounts on the right door of cabinet .1 and the bottom right mount on the left door of cabinet .2. The chasing and color of these mounts differ from the majority of the mounts.

Detailed photography and measurement of the stamps on these cabinets (figs. 2-4 and 2-5) show that they are identical to the stamps on a corner cupboard (cat. no. 4) and the *cartonnier* (cat. no. 3).

A.H., with Y.C., C.E., and K.P.

NOTES

1. For more information on Bernard II van Risenburgh, see primarily Pradère 1989a, 183–99; Baroli 1957, 56–63. See also Daniel Alcouffe, in *Louis XV . . .* 1974, 323–24.
2. Meyer and Arizzoli-Clémentel 2002, vol. 2, 50–52, no. 8 (acc. nos. V5090 and OA 9599); *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 154–55, no. 40 (A. Pradère), and 156–57, no. 41 (T. Wolvesperges); Pruchnicki 2013, 55.
3. Pradère 1989a, 198, fig. 190. Now at the musée de Tessé, Le Mans, France (inv. no. 1906.29.66). See also *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 158–59, no. 42 (G. Mabilille).
4. Birioukova 1974, 189, no. 93. (inv. no. MB 434); Rappe 2016, 52, no. 14.
5. Verlet 1937, 22–23. An edict of Louis XV, registered with parliament on March 5, 1745, required that all works, old or new, made with copper, both in pure form or as part of an alloy, be stamped with a crowned C. This mark was canceled on February 4, 1749; therefore, objects with this stamp can be dated to between 1745 and 1749.
6. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, acc. no. 65.63,64. Randall 1970, 3, fig. 1. This pair of *encoignures* bears the stamp of Martin Étienne Lhermite, Van Risenburgh's son-in-law.
7. Acc. no. 54.56. Gift of Roscoe and Margaret Oakes.
8. Ader Picard Tajan, *Exceptionnels Groupes en bronze patiné, meuble d'entre-deux du château de Thoiry, April 15, 1989* (Paris: Ader Picard Tajan, 1989), lot B. For information on the folio cabinet, see Sorensen 1969; Lemonnier and Leperlier 1989, 30–31; *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 154–55, no. 40 (A. Pradère). This cabinet, identified in this publication as a folio cabinet on the basis of Machault d'Arnouville's 1794 probate inventory, was previously believed to be a mineral cabinet.
9. Conversation with the author, November 20, 1984. Notes in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
10. Albert Conyngham, son of the Marchioness of Conyngham, mistress of George IV, took the name Denison in 1849, according to the will of his maternal uncle William Joseph Denison of Seamer County, York, who bequeathed to him the bulk of his immense wealth, amounting to over £2,300,000. He bought the estate of Grimston Park from Sir John Hobart Caradoc, second Baron Howden (1799–1873) in 1850. The house was rebuilt in 1840 by Decimus Burton for the second Baron, who in 1832 married a Russian princess, Catherine Bagration. It seems that the house was sold with at least part of its contents to Lord Albert Denison. In the subsequent 1962 sale of the contents of Grimston Park house, a pair of "Louis Philippe" tables (lot 348, illus.), six papier-mâché chairs of the early nineteenth century (lot 363), and a dog grate (lot 417) all bore monograms and coronets of the second Baron Howden. It is rather unlikely that the baron would have acquired the cabinets. He was a military man, constantly on the move, and spent little time in Paris or indeed at Grimston Park. In 1850 Lord Albert was created Baron Londesborough of Londesborough, Yorkshire. He died at a relatively early age in 1860. See Hussey 1940a; Hussey 1940b. See cat. no. 9 for a writing table by Van Risenburgh probably owned by Lord Albert Denison.
11. Henry Spencer & Sons, *Grimston Park: The Contents of the Mansion: XVIII and Early XIX Century French and English Furniture, May 29–31, 1962* (Tadcaster: Henry Spencer & Sons, 1962), lot 372. Sold on the premises of Grimston Park, Tadcaster. The

- measurements printed in the catalogue are incorrect. Captain Fielden was the great-nephew of John Fielden.
12. Telephone conversation with the author, October 1989, note in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 13. Date of sale as 1850: Osbert Sitwell, *Left Hand Right Hand!*, vol . 1, *The Cruel Month* (London: Macmillan, 1945), 59. Date of sale as 1851: "History," Grimston Park Estate, accessed August 2, 2017, <http://www.grimstonpark.com/the-estate/the-history/>.
 14. "History," Grimston Park Estate, accessed August 2, 2017, <http://www.grimstonpark.com/the-estate/the-history/>.
 15. Correspondence with Frank Berendt, March 1984, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 16. Correspondence with Olivier Kraemer, October 1989, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 17. Correspondence with Olivier Kraemer, October 1989, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 18. There are old iron brackets screwed in place to more permanently and rigidly fix the cornices and bases in place; however, these are unlikely to be original.
 19. Pruchnicki 2013, 14 (ill.); Réaumur 1761, 66–68, pl. V.



3. *Cartonnier* with *serre-papiers*, *bout de bureau*, and clock

French (Paris), ca. 1740; clock movement and dial, 1746

Serre-papiers and *bout de bureau* by Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766, master before 1730); clock movement by Étienne II Le Noir (French, 1699–1778, master 1717); dial enameled by Jacques Decla (French, died after 1764, active by 1742); maker of the clock case unknown

White oak* and poplar* veneered with, amaranth*, cherry*, and alder* and painted with European lacquer; lacquered bronze figures, gilt bronze mounts, enameled metal clock dial; glass; brass and iron hardware and lock; restorations in mahogany*

H: 6 ft. 3 3/4 in., W: 3 ft. 4 1/2 in., D: 1 ft. 4 1/4 in. (192 × 103 × 41 cm)

83.DA.280

DESCRIPTION

The *cartonnier* is composed of three parts. Above is a clock set with four lacquered bronze figures. It rests on the upper surface of the *serre-papiers* but is not mechanically attached to it. The *serre-papiers* was originally fitted with five leather-fronted cardboard filing boxes, called *cartons*, three above and two below. It stands on short legs atop the *bout de bureau*. The sides of this shallow rectangular cabinet are set with locking doors, and the lower section of each canted front corner is scrolled and pierced.

The splayed front of the clock (fig. 3-1) is set with an elaborate arrangement of leafy C- and S-scrolls in gilt bronze that outline the profile of the clock and surround the viewing hole. The C- and S-scrolls are overlaid with shell motifs and set at either side with short bunches of leaves and flowers. Linked and overlapping leafy C-scrolls form the frame of the glass cover of the face. Above, a gilt bronze cloth carrying one tassel is laid over an elaborately gadrooned mount. On it are seated two boys. The boy on the left holds up a single palm frond in his left hand and points to it with his right. The lounging boy to the right leans on his left forearm and gazes up at the now-missing palm tree (see “Commentary” below). Both boys are clothed in black robes painted with flower heads and open fans bound with ribbons. Their robes are lined with red.



Figure 3-1 Front of the clock.

On the left shoulder of the clock case, a Chinese woman sits on a large C-scroll. Her hands cross on a tambourine that rests on her knee. Her hair is dressed in a bun from which one lock descends over her right shoulder. Her long jacket and skirt are black and painted with gold flowers, revealing a red lining. She also wears a cream-colored undershirt piped in red and gold. On the right sits a Chinese man. He holds a horn in his left hand and points to it with his right. He is mustachioed and bald. His long fur-trimmed jacket and trousers are black, painted in gold with branches of flowers. His undershirt is black, piped in red and gold.

The sides of the clock are set with broadly designed C- and S-scrolls, decorated with leaves, fluting, and shell motifs.

The front of the clock is painted with eleven simple flower heads in gold. The sides are decorated with a rising leafy branch of camellia on the left and by a stem of camellia above a branch of bamboo on the right. The plain unveneered back of the clock is painted black. It is concave and set with a hinged door that occupies most of the central area and is shaped to follow the profile of that part of the case.

The top of the *serre-papiers* is framed with a gilt bronze molding of rosette-filled guilloche. It is set on its upper front and back corners with mounts made in two sections. The lower consists of a central flat cabochon surrounded by eight petals and leaves. These rise and overlap the upper section, which takes the form of a leafy vine with berries. The foot mount is pierced, with the opening surrounded by concave gadroons clasped at either side by foliate scrolls. Above rise two bands that follow the profile of the corner. They are set below with acanthus scrolls and lined above with bands of flame work set with cabochons. The bands are joined at the center by a striated disk set with leafy buds above and below. The upper center of the front of the *serre-papiers* is set with a pierced mount consisting of foliate C- and S-scrolls, edged with flame motifs and supporting a leafy flowering plant. The mounts at the sides consist of a simple shaped frame surrounding an area of European lacquer. The upper part of this frame is composed of foliate C-scrolls topped by a bat's wing. Below this frame another band of decoration runs horizontally. It is composed of C-scrolls centered by a shell-like device below feathered wings, which extend to either side. At the lower edges of the sides of the *serre-papiers* asymmetrical mounts consist of two addorsed C-scrolls, the one on the left topped by a curled feather. At their juncture is a curved cabochon surrounded by leafy motifs. The frame of the open front of the *serre-papiers* is outlined by a plain gilt bronze molding, and the divisions between the five compartments are similarly defined.

The front of the *serre-papiers*, above the opening, shows flowering plants bearing a few red leaves among the gold. A scene on the left side of the *serre-papiers*, framed in gilt bronze, shows a rocky mound on the lower left from which grows a flowering tree carrying red fruits. Bunches of leaves and ferns grow in the ground, and a bird flies above. Above and below the framed area are arrangements of flowering plants set with grasses and some red leaves. A bird flies below. On the right side, the panel is painted with a plum tree in blossom rising from a rocky ground (fig. 3-2). A bird perches on its main branch. On the ground below is a small arrangement of leaves and ferns. The upper portion of the right side of the *serre-papiers* is painted with a sprig of flowering plum with

some red petals. At the left a bird flies. Below the frame are two branches of a pomegranate tree bearing four fruits. Two are slit open to reveal red seeds. The interiors of the compartments are painted black.



Figure 3-2 Left profile.

The upper edge of the *bout de bureau* is set with a frame of gilt bronze guilloche studded with alternating cabochons and rosettes. The upper canted corners are set with pierced mounts. The main part of each mount consists of two foliate straps separated by a flat cabochon surrounded by a cartilaginous frame. An acanthus leaf and its accompanying spike overlap the scrolled upper part of the mount. A pendant of leaves and flowers hangs below. The base of the canted corner is set with a gilt bronze bifurcated scroll that rises to form a large

acanthus leaf, set with a short spike and topped by a leafy bud.

The face of the *bout de bureau* is set with an elaborate frame (fig. 3-3) of the same design as that found surrounding the doors of the Museum's corner cupboards (see cat. no. 4). The moldings to either side of the central mounts of the upper and lower frame have been lengthened to give the frame the needed greater width. Mounts of this model, halved vertically, are found framing the doors at the sides of the bureau. The inner vertical side of the frame is formed by a plain molding. The keyhole is set between the meandering floral vine and the simple curved molding. There are no escutcheons. Above the short unmounted legs and the apron runs a broad molding of conforming shape to the base and the projecting canted corners. It is composed of strap work containing and supporting *fleurons* and buds set on a diapered ground. The apron mount, a late nineteenth-century replacement, consists of an arrangement of flowers and leafy stems held between extending leafy scrolls that follow the lower profile of the piece.



Figure 3-3 Mount detail.

The large panel on the front of the *bout de bureau* depicts, on the right, two cranes and, to the left of them, a single branching stem of azalea rising in front of a double branch of daisies. The centers of the daisies, the azalea, and some of the leaves are painted red. The ground is covered with smaller flowering plants and grasses. In the upper left a bird flies, and on the right is a large dragonfly. The left side of the *bout de bureau* illustrates a rising daisy stem carrying six flowers, two with red centers. Above fly two butterflies. The right side shows a branch of wisteria with flowers, leaves, and tendrils. Some of the single flowers on the spurs are painted red. Above fly two more butterflies. All the remaining surfaces

of the clock, *serre-papiers*, and *bout de bureau* are painted with black European lacquer.

MARKS

Clock: The dial is enameled “ETIENNE LE NOIR A PARIS,” and the movement is engraved “Etienne Le Noir A Paris.” The spring of the striking train is inscribed “Buzot 9BRE 1746,” and that of the main train, “Richard Mai 1752.” The dial plate is inscribed on the front, “Edmond de Rotchild” [sic], and on the back, “Wilson / Dec 30 1839 / Jwb Oct 82.” The dial is signed in black on its reverse “decla.1746.” There are repair marks on the front plate, “M. Journe / Le 13 Nov 1971 / a Paris / F P JOURNE DEC 1976 / a Paris / Le 23 juin 1777/B.” The nineteenth-century bell is inscribed in ink, “Le[?] Dreves / [P]aris.” Some of the gilt bronze mounts are struck with the crowned C.¹ The bottom of the clock is inscribed “R974.”

Serre-papiers: The top center of the back is stamped “B.V.R.B.,” and below this stamp is a brass plaque inscribed “Angela’s 1835.”

Bout de bureau: The back is stamped “B.V.R.B.” twice on the center of the top rail (fig. 3-4) and “E.J.CUVELLIER” on the right side of the rail (fig. 3-5). A torn piece of typed paper reading “M . . . xandrine de . . .” remains attached to the back on the upper left side.



Figure 3-4 Center of the top rail on the back of the *bout de bureau* stamped “B.V.R.B.” twice.



Figure 3-5 Stamp on the upper back of the *bout de bureau*: “E.J.CUVELLIER.”

COMMENTARY

The *serre-papiers* and the *bout de bureau* are by Bernard II van Risenburgh.² This form is rarely found among the master's surviving works. In an inventory of unfinished works drawn up in 1764, when Van Risenburgh sold his business to his son, only two *serre-papiers* are included, one described as with a clock.³ The total number of works is small because Van Risenburgh worked specifically at the order of *marchands-merciers* and not for stock or

private commissions.⁴ One other example of the same model as the lower part, or *bout de bureau*, is known to exist. It is in the State Hermitage Museum and includes a *serre-papiers* bearing the stamp of Joseph Baumhauer and the trade label of François Charles Darnault (see cat. no. 15, fig. 15-6).⁵ The mounts on the lower section are of the same model as those found on the Museum's example, with the exception of the apron mount and those at the upper forecorners and the moldings above and below. It is veneered with wave-cut marquetry on the front and with large lozenges at the sides.

A *serre-papiers* of the same model but unstamped is in the collection of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum (fig. 3-6).⁶ It is simply veneered with satinwood and amaranth, and it lacks the elaborate gilt bronze mount at the center, above the openings intended for *cartons*. A *bout de bureau* and its *serre-papiers* stamped "B.V.R.B." passed through the Paris art market in 1977.⁷ It was decorated with black and gold European lacquer. The *serre-papiers*, which bore the same mounts as the Museum's example, was lower in height and fitted with five drawers with lacquered fronts. It lacked the central mount above. The *bout de bureau* was of the same profile but lacked the lower projecting scrolls. There were no framing mounts, but the moldings above and below were of the same model. The legs and apron were not mounted with gilt bronze. Similarly, a *bout de bureau* of the same size and profile as the Museum's example was offered for sale at auction in 2006.⁸ It was stamped "B.V.R.B." and bore a *serre-papiers* that contained a clock as part of its upper structure. The movement was signed by Louis Mynüel. It, too, lacked the scrolls at the forecorners, and the *serre-papiers* was of different form. The mount with a large boss or cabochon, at the center of the lower part of the frame on the front of the Museum's *bout de bureau*, is here found on the apron.



Figure 3-6 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), *Cartonnier*, ca. 1750. Carcass in oak; veneer in amaranth and *bois satiné*, chased gilt bronze mounts, 57 × 82 × 31 cm (22.4 × 32.3 × 12.2 in.). Lisbon, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Inv. 584. © Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon Calouste Gulbenkian Museum – Founder's Collection / Photo: Catarina Gomes Ferreira

The elaborate framing mounts of the front and sides of the Museum's *bout de bureau* were also used by Van Risenburgh on a pair of corner cupboards in the Museum's collection (see cat. no. 4 and, for other occurrences, "Commentary" in that entry). The upper corners of these large mounts are very similar in design to those areas of frames placed on the front of a number of commodes stamped by Van Risenburgh.⁹ While it is extremely difficult to date works by this master, none of the mounts on these commodes bears the stamp of the crowned C and were probably made before 1745, when this stamp became obligatory. The mounts present on the front and sides of the Museum's piece would appear to be a refinement of this rather heavy design, with the addition of rococo cabochons and meandering branches of flowers and leaves.

The mounts at the forecorners of the lower part of the assemblage are more rarely found. They are seen on a commode passing through the Paris market in 1922.¹⁰ The sale catalogue does not mention a stamp, but the commode, set with ten drawers with lacquer fronts, was certainly an early work by Van Risenburgh. The clock with its bronze painted figures is not physically attached to the painted top of the *serre-papiers* below it.¹¹ It almost certainly was not made by Van Risenburgh; the mounts, which are of a slightly different color of gilding, are not of a model used by him. The European lacquer, consisting in the main of flower heads, does not relate to the design of the European lacquer on the sides of the *serre-papiers* or the main body of the piece below, nor is it painted in the same technique. It is possible that the clock was ordered

by the *marchand-mercier* Thomas Joachim Hébert, for whom Van Risenburgh worked, from some other cabinetmaker and that he then placed it on the *serre-papiers* and *bout de bureau*, which had already been made at his request. The reverse of the dial and one of the springs are dated 1746, and some mounts bear crowned Cs.

It is possible that the *serre-papiers* and the *bout de bureau* were lacquered by a member of the Martin family.¹² Freestanding *cartonniers*, as they are frequently termed, were almost always made en suite with a *bureau plat*, which would have been similarly painted or veneered and set with mounts carrying the same motifs. No such *bureau plat* that would have formed a companion to the Museum's piece is known to exist. Dominique Augarde has pointed out that such an assemblage was made for the duc de Bourbon at the château de Chantilly.¹³ His 1740 probate inventory describes the following in his *petit cabinet*: "Dans un petit cabinet en suite. [. . .] Item un bureau à écrire de vernis ancien du Japon à pieds de biches ornés de bronze doré d'or moulu et son dessus de velour [?] vert avec son serre papier aussi de vernis du Japon et une pendule dessus faite par Jullien Le Roy à Paris dans sa boîte à pagodes de vernis, le tout orné de bronze doré d'or moulu, prisez ensemble mil livres."¹⁴ The high valuation would indicate that the *serre-papiers* described here was an independent piece of furniture and not merely posed on the end of the *bureau plat*, as was sometimes the custom. Of interest here is the description of the clock case as "à pagodes de vernis."

The Martin family of lacquerers was probably responsible for the invention of the small painted bronze Chinese figures of the sort popularly referred to as *magots* in the period. These are frequently found on clocks and wall lights of a slightly earlier date and are somewhat similar to those flanking the clock.¹⁵ Entries in a 1753 inventory of the belongings of the duchesse du Maine describe clocks and wall lights decorated with "pagodes de vernis de Martin," and one such clock was listed in her *Cabinet de Chine* at the hôtel du Maine in Paris.¹⁶ An illustration in the sale catalogue of 1922 when the Museum's *cartonnier* was sold from the collection of the late Baroness Burdett-Coutts shows that the clock was then topped by a fairly large gilt bronze palm tree, the small bronze children reaching up to it. It is not known when the tree was lost. Similarly, the photograph shows that there was then no gilt bronze mount on the apron. The mount now present, which is not a Van Risenburgh model, was probably added just before the sale of the piece to the Museum in 1983.

On the back of the *bout de bureau* is a brass plaque inscribed "Angela's 1835." This certainly refers to Angela Burdett-Coutts, who was twenty-one years old in that year. She was the step-granddaughter of Harriet Beauclerk (formerly Coutts, née Mellon), Duchess of Saint Albans and her favorite. The duchess, reputedly the daughter of an Irish strolling player, had at the age of thirty-eight married the eighty-three-year-old banker Thomas Coutts in 1815. At his death seven years later she inherited his enormous wealth, making her "the richest woman in the United Kingdom."¹⁷ Burdett-Coutts took ownership of half the banking shares of her maternal grandfather, a house on Stratton Street and its contents, Holly Lodge, and Piccadilly House.¹⁸

It is possible that the Duchess of Saint Albans received the *cartonnier* not from Beauclerk but from her first husband, Coutts. Apparently he was sent by George III on confidential missions abroad and spent some months in Paris. According to Edna Healey, French aristocrats brought him their "treasures" for safekeeping, and Coutts was a close friend of Philippe Égalité, duc d'Orléans.¹⁹ Angela Burdett-Coutts, apart from amassing a large art collection, used her wealth to fund numerous philanthropic schemes and charitable activities. She was created Baroness by Queen Victoria in 1871. She married three times, the last to William Bartlett in 1881, his senior by thirty-nine years, and died in 1906.

PROVENANCE

–1751: possibly Joseph Antoine Crozat de Thugny, French, 1699–1751;²⁰ –1768: possibly Louis Jean Gaignat, French, 1697–1768, upon his death, held in trust by the estate, 1768;²¹ 1768–69: possibly Estate of Louis Jean Gaignat, French, 1697–1768 [sold, Paris, Pierre Rémy, February 14–22, 1769, lot 179, to Paul Louis de Mondran];²² 1769– : possibly Paul Louis de Mondran, French, 1734–1795; –1835: possibly Harriet Beauclerk, duchess of St. Albans, English, 1777–1837 (London, England), by gift to her step-granddaughter, Angela Burdett-Coutts, on her twenty-first birthday, 1835;²³ 1835–1906: Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts, English, 1814–1906 (London, England), by inheritance to her husband, Hon. William Bartlett Burdett-Coutts;²⁴ 1906–21: Hon. William Bartlett Burdett-Coutts MP, American, 1851–1921 (London, England), upon his death, held in trust by the estate, 1921; 1921–22: Estate of Hon. William Bartlett Burdett-Coutts MP, American, 1851–1921 (London, England) [sold, *Porcelain, Objects of Art and Decorative Furniture*, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, May 9, 1922, lot 144, for 4,200 guineas to H. J. Simmons]; 1922– : H. J. Simmons; –1941: Baronne Miriam Caroline Alexandrine de Rothschild, French, 1884–1965

(Château de Boulogne-sur-Seine, France), confiscated by the Nazis, 1941; 1941–45: in the possession of the Nazis (Jeu de Paume Nazi holding point, April 1941, transferred to the salt mines at Altaussee, Austria, June 18, 1941), recovered by the Allied Forces, 1945;²⁵ 1945–46: in the custody of the Allied Forces (Munich Central Collecting Point, Munich, Germany), repatriated to the French government, March 27, 1946, and August 23, 1946;²⁶ 1946: French government, restituted to Baronne Miriam Caroline Alexandrine de Rothschild, November 18, 1946;²⁷ 1946–65: Baronne Miriam Caroline Alexandrine de Rothschild, French, 1884–1965 (Paris, France), by inheritance to her nephew and heir, Baron Edmond Adolphe Maurice Jules Jacques de Rothschild, 1965; 1965–before 1968: Baron Edmond Adolphe Maurice Jules Jacques de Rothschild, French, 1926–1997 (Paris, France); –1968: José Ribeiro Espírito Santo Silva, Portuguese, 1895–1968 (Lausanne, Switzerland), by inheritance to his wife, Vera Lillian Morais Sarmiento Cohen Espírito Santo Silva, 1968; 1968–83: Vera Lillian Morais Sarmiento Cohen Espírito Santo Silva, Portuguese, 1904–1995 (Lausanne, Switzerland), sold through Didier Aaron et Cie to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1983.

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Wilson, Sassoon, and Bremer-David 1984, 193–97, no. 6, figs. 16a–e; Sassoon and Wilson 1986, 5, no. 10; Augarde 1987, 25; Pradère 1989a, 196, fig. 188; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 17–18, no. 10; Czarnocka, Lindgren, and Stein 1994, 67–68, fig. 9; Wilson et al. 1996, 78–85, no. 11; Wolvesperges 2000, 150, 152, fig. 74; Wilson and Hess 2001, 7, no. 10; Wolvesperges 2001, 68, 70, figs. 2a–c.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The carcass of the clock is made primarily of oak, which has been veneered both inside and outside with alder. The alder veneer serves to provide a smooth and fine-grained substrate for the European lacquer decoration. It is made of ten main sections of wood with the grain running from front to back, laminated together with simple butt joints and sawn to shape. The case front and back panels are glued to the sides and set into a dado cut at the forward and rear edges of the sides (fig. 3-7). The case bottom is set in dados cut in the front and sides of the carcass. The case back, the rear door, and the case bottom of the clock are made of mahogany. The use of mahogany for an unseen structural element would be unusual in Parisian work of the mid-eighteenth century and so may represent a later restoration and replacement.

There has been significant insect damage to the rest of the clock carcass, particularly near the bottom, which may explain the replacement. The use of mahogany for unseen structural elements was, in contrast, not uncommon in the United Kingdom, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century when mahogany was abundant and relatively inexpensive.²⁸ For example, a copy of a Boulle clock, now at Knole House, was made in England and signed and dated by Wertheimer, 1841.²⁹ This clock uses mahogany exclusively as secondary wood. As this clock has an English provenance from sometime before 1835 until sometime after 1922, it seems likely that the restoration dates to this period. The glass pane below the clock face appears to be a later addition. It is possible that this opening was originally covered with a textile as this would allow the sound of the clock's striking mechanism to be heard more clearly. Unfortunately, no evidence of the original covering material could be found without extensive intervention. The mechanism of the clock has been described at length by Richardson, Wilson, and Bremer-David.³⁰



Figure 3-7 Back.

The carcass of the *serre-papiers* is constructed primarily of solid poplar, sawn and filed to form. The use of poplar as a solid construction wood is quite uncommon in Parisian *ébénisterie*. In this case, however, the decision to

use poplar saved the craftsmen considerable time and effort. As has been noted above, an even and fine-grained wood such as alder or poplar provides a smooth surface for elements that are to be lacquered. Oak, in contrast, has a coarse surface, with very large pores and irregular bands of dense and nonabsorbent rays, making the preparation of a perfectly smooth and adherent lacquered surface more difficult. In most cases, as with the clock above, Parisian *ébénistes* chose to fabricate their structures in oak and then veneer the surfaces to be lacquered with a smooth-grained and inexpensive domestic wood. In the case of this *serre-papiers*, it would appear that the difficult task of veneering the very strongly curved inside and outside surfaces (and perhaps especially the compound curvature of the upper frieze) seemed to be more trouble than it was worth. By building in solid poplar, all the surfaces of the *serre-papiers* could be lacquered directly without further preparation. A distinct disadvantage of building in solid poplar is that it is substantially less resistant to insect attack than oak heartwood. The results can be seen when the case is radiographed (fig. 3-8).



Figure 3-8 X-radiograph of the left side of the *serre-papiers*, showing extensive insect damage to the poplar structure. The damage is partly filled with a high-density restoration putty (white in image).

The curved side panels are made of two vertical boards, butt joined and connected with dovetails to the case bottom and to the primary transverse board at the top, which forms the upper surface of the top *carton* compartments. This transverse member is made of a single massive poplar plank, and X-ray images show that it contains the pith of the tree, a cut that is generally regarded as unstable and prone to splitting. The upper section of the *serre-papiers* is attached to the main boxlike structure with simple butt joints. It consists of two side rails, back and front boards, and the top, which are assembled with no joinery other than glue. The case back

is made of two thin poplar boards, glued into a rabbet cut into the sides, top, and bottom of the main compartment.

In contrast to the *serre-papiers*, the construction of the lower case, or *bout de bureau*, is entirely of oak, veneered with alder. Van Risenburgh also chose alder veneer for the areas to receive European lacquer on the Museum's commode 65.DA.4 (see cat. no. 5). The oak used for the construction of the *bout de bureau* is of notably high quality, almost entirely quartersawn and nearly free of knots. The structure is based on four posts of the corners, which run from the floor to just below the case top. The case back is made as a two-panel frame-and-panel construction. The cross-rails are attached to the posts at top and bottom with unpinned mortise-and-tenon joints; the vertical stile running between the top and bottom rails is similarly joined. The two panels are each composed of three boards of quartersawn oak, with a simple bevel at the edges that is placed on the rear face of the panels. The front of the case is also made as a frame-and-panel construction. However, in this case the panels are held in place with tongue-and-groove joints. In addition, the panels of the front are exceptionally thick, allowing them to be planed and scraped into an oxbow contour at the front. The entire front of the case is subsequently veneered with alder, applied on a bias, presumably to stabilize the construction and prevent splitting of the underlying glue joints.

A central partition divides the inner case in half. The partition is made of five boards of quartersawn oak fixed at front and back into grooves cut in the medial styles of the case front and case back. The case front and case back assemblies are attached to one another at the sides with rails at top and bottom, which are attached with dovetails exposed at the top of the post, and sliding dovetail joints front and back at the bottom.

The case top is made as an independent frame-and-panel construction, with two panels, each composed of two boards of quartersawn oak with the grain running from side to side. The joinery for the attachment at the top is not clearly discernible, even in X-radiography, but it would appear to rely on glued tongue-and-groove joints. The front corner scrolls are each made of separate individual pieces of wood glued and screwed to the main case. The small blocks of wood below the scrolls, which support the gilt bronze moldings, are glued to the tops of the foot blocks below, and are attached with a loose tenon (visible in X-radiography) to the scrolls above (fig. 3-9).

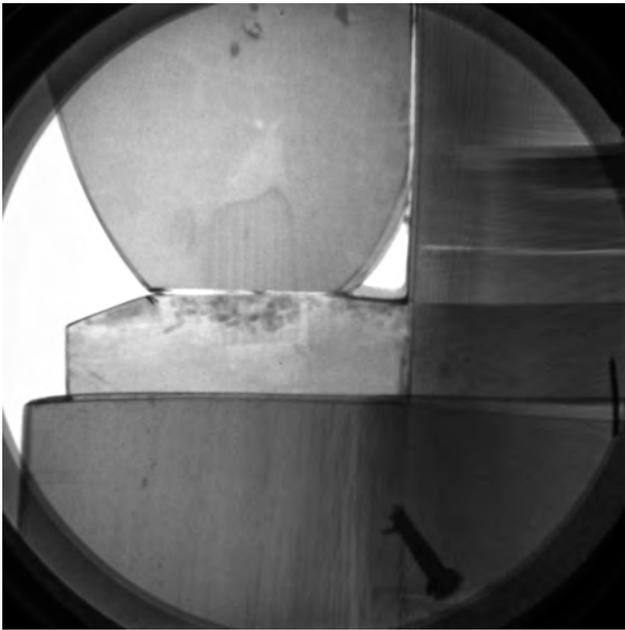


Figure 3-9 X-radiograph showing the loose tenon securing the corner scroll to the base.

The top of the lower case is veneered with alder applied on a bias. However, a C-shaped patch of veneer appears to have been laid into the top that goes directly underneath the sides and back of the *serre-papiers*. There has been extensive restoration and repainting along this veneer patch, visible most distinctly under ultraviolet illumination, though the reason for it is not entirely clear (fig. 3-10).



Figure 3-10 Top of the *bout de bureau* under ultraviolet illumination, showing the C-shaped veneer patch beneath the sides and back edge of the *serre-papiers*.

The apron of the lower case is constructed of three to four additional narrow boards of oak laminated to the underside of the main case rails. The doors are each made of three boards of quartersawn oak laminated together with breadboard ends, also of oak, attached with tongue-and-groove joints.

The decorative surfaces of the *cartonnier*, including those on the *bout de bureau*, the *serre-papiers*, the clock, and the *magots* figures, are executed entirely in European lacquer, without the incorporation of any Asian panels. The *bout de bureau* and the *serre-papiers* appear to be lacquered using the same system, applied in five primary layers excluding those of the decoration. Two layers of a yellow iron-containing clay ground, bound in a simple varnish of pine resin and drying oil, were applied to the alder or poplar substrate. These ground layers closely resemble the yellow-beige clay-based grounds used on Japanese lacquer, as opposed to the traditionally white gesso or pigmented varnish layers recommended in European period treatises.³¹ The foundation layers were then coated with two black layers of oil-resin varnish pigmented with bone black. Based on analysis by pyrolysis gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (py/GC-MS), the varnish medium of these layers is similar in composition to that of the underlying foundation layers; however, it appears to have a polycommuniterpenoid resin component in addition to drying oil and pine resin. This additional resin, likely soft copal, may have been added to give increased hardness and gloss in order to more closely imitate Asian lacquer. Filippo Bonanni, writing in the 1730s, described his own experiments to create an amber-colored varnish of this type, “similar to the Chinese one,” that was composed of Greek pitch (colophony) and linseed oil to which he added copal.³² On the *serre-papiers* and *bout de bureau*, the pigmented varnish layers were then coated with an additional transparent varnish that contained linseed oil and pine resin.³³ This system, which bears much resemblance to that used on the Van Risenburgh commode (cat. no. 5), emulates quite closely the layer structure of seventeenth-century Japanese export lacquer, substituting locally available materials for those used in Asia. This suggests that the work was carried out by a craftsman or craftsmen who had carefully studied examples of the Japanese lacquer they were attempting to imitate and who were striving to reproduce not just the appearance, but the entire manufacturing process to the best of their ability.

The raised decoration above the lacquer was created with a calcium carbonate-containing ground on which vermilion and metallic powders were applied. The decoration utilizes a wide range of metallic powders to impart several different hues to the final composition (fig. 3-11). As identified with scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM-EDS), the broad surfaces of the foliate decoration, particularly the large leaf forms, appear to have been created with a low-zinc brass likely originally created from brass leaf. Four

additional distinct metallic powders, with an average particle size of 10 to 20 microns, were used to add fine outlines and details in moderate-zinc brass, high-zinc brass, tin, and gold (fig. 3-12).

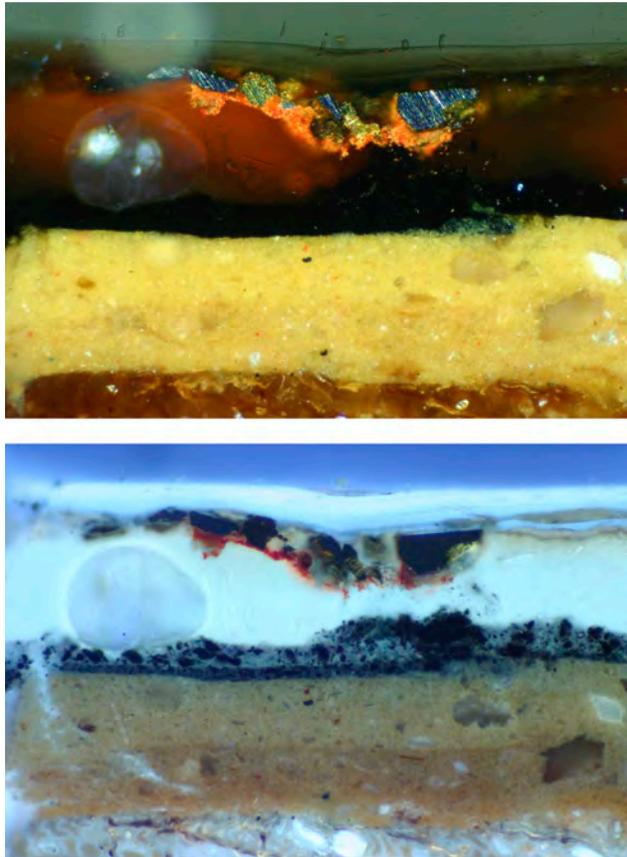


Figure 3-11 Cross-section photomicrograph in visible light (top) and in ultraviolet illumination (bottom) illustrating the layer structure of the European lacquer on the *serre-papiers*. The sample shows a mixture of gold- and silver-colored metal powders.

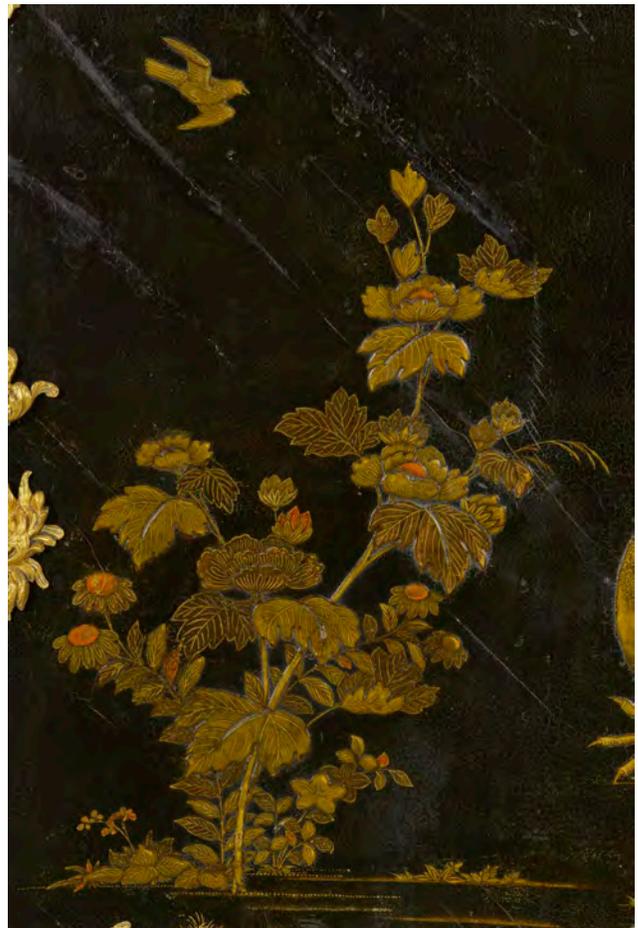


Figure 3-12 Detail of the front of the *bout de bureau*.

The interior of the compartments in the *serre-papiers* appear to have been originally executed in red European lacquer. Red pigment from this layer is visible in small areas where the overlying black paint is flaking or damaged. This red color would not have been visible when the original *cartons* were in place, but when they were removed to access their contents, the red would have evoked the brightly colored interiors of many seventeenth-century Japanese export lacquer cabinets (as do the corner cabinets by Dubois in this volume that retain their red interiors; see cat. no. 12). At some time before 1922, presumably when the original *cartons* were separated from this *serre-papiers*, the interior was painted over in black.

On the clock, the European lacquer was also applied to a substrate veneered with alder; however, the stratigraphy is entirely different from that observed on the *serre-papiers* and the *bout de bureau*. Here, the lowest layer, directly on the wood, is a heavy white gesso ground, based on calcium carbonate and bound with glue. The use of a gesso ground is typically unnecessary on fine-grained veneers. Period European treatises more frequently

recommend that a black pigmented layer be applied directly to the veneered support, although a wide range of techniques have been observed on period objects in practice.³⁴ Above the gesso layer, two black pigmented layers were applied. The first consists of finely divided lamp black, bound in shellac. Over the first black layer lies a second, more transparent layer of pigmented varnish, colored with more expensive bone or ivory black pigment. The addition of this layer was likely designed to increase the apparent depth and gloss of the surface, in order to better imitate Asian lacquer.

The quality of the lacquer on the clock and its decoration are superb; however, the material composition is somewhat surprising for the period. The use of pure shellac spirit varnish was certainly known at the time; both Stalker and Parker and Bonanni provide recipes for the creation of a “black Japan” with seedlac, spirits of wine, and black pigment. Stalker and Parker specify a preference for lamp black with a reduced amount of pigment in the upper layer similar to what is observed in the cross section from the clock (fig. 3-13). While a shellac varnish could very well have been used for a black European lacquer surface in the mid-eighteenth century, Bonanni notes that after the 1667 publication of Fr. Athanasius Kircher’s shellac varnish, “all over European people tried to improve the quality of this varnish through the addition of gums, solutions, and bitumen.”³⁵ Shellac was once believed to be the dominant resin used in European lacquer; however, modern analysis frequently detects more complicated resin mixtures,³⁶ as seen in the *bout de bureau* and *serre-papiers*. The decoration utilizes metallic powders in brass, gold, and silver to create a great variety of hues in a range of decorative techniques. Given the excellent condition of the surface, it should be considered whether the clock has been renewed or restored. Archival photographs show that the clock, with its current decoration, has accompanied the *cartonnier* since at least 1922.



Figure 3-13 Composite photomicrograph in ultraviolet illumination showing the stratigraphy of the clock, which varies significantly from the body of the *cartonnier*.

The figures that decorate the top of the clock appear to retain their original European lacquer, consisting of eight varnish layers. This lacquer is entirely different from that on the rest of the clock. First, an oil-resin undervarnish or sealer was applied to the bronze substrate, in at least two separate applications. Based on organic analysis by py/GC-MS, the composition of these layers is very similar to the varnish used in the ground and transparent layers on the *bout de bureau* and the *serre-papiers*; it is also primarily composed of drying oil and pine resin. These preparatory layers are followed by two varnish layers of similar composition, pigmented with bone black. The black layers are coated with two additional transparent layers similar to the undervarnish, followed by decoration in vermilion and gold and silver powders (fig. 3-14). A trace amount of shellac was also detected in these decoration layers that may relate to contamination from a restoration varnish or its intentional use in the layer of metallic decoration.

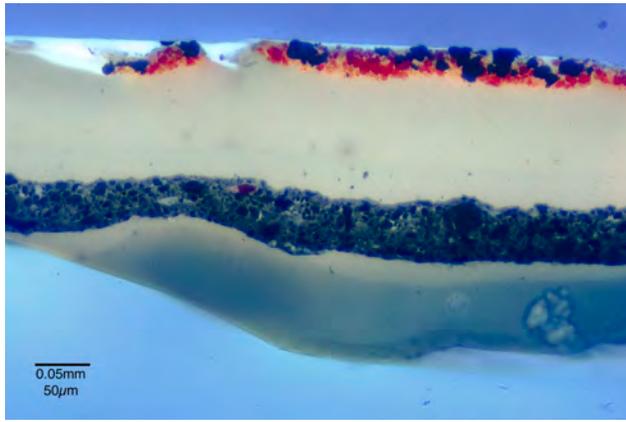


Figure 3-14 Cross-section photomicrograph in ultraviolet illumination illustrating the buildup of lacquer layers on the *pagodes* beginning with the transparent undervarnish.

While the *pagodes* as well as the *bout de bureau* and the *serre-papiers* could have been lacquered by the Martin brothers, it is not possible to confirm this attribution based on current methods of chemical analysis.³⁷ The Martin brothers are known to have used the materials seen in these samples, including pine resin, linseed oil, and copal,³⁸ but these components were in widespread use at the time and are not indicative of a unique recipe. In fact, lacquers based on pine resin and linseed oil, the two dominant materials detected in the samples from the *cartonnier* and *pagodes*, are published in Italian treatises as early as 1562.³⁹

The Martin recipe published by Jean-Félix Watin as *vernis blanc au copal* specifies the use of melted copal, linseed oil, and Venice turpentine.⁴⁰ Another English account from 1773, purporting to reveal the recipe for *vernis Martin*, calls for melted copal and amber, combined with colophony and linseed oil.⁴¹ At the time Watin was writing, Venice turpentine, named for the city through which it was traded, referred to the resin of the larch tree, *Larix decidua* (Pinaceae).⁴² Larch turpentine has been confirmed in samples from other objects in the collection but does not appear in the analysis of the *cartonnier*. This finding is complicated by the fact that larch resin and copal are notoriously difficult to detect analytically if they have been strongly heated,⁴³ and both recipes referred to here call for the resins to be melted and stirred with the oil over high heat. The resin component that was detected here is the less expensive, domestically harvested colophony, such as can be collected from a range of Pinaceae species.⁴⁴ While the failure to detect *Larix* resin or copal here does not rule out the possibility of a Martin attribution, it does not support such a conclusion.

The gilt bronze mounts on all three sections of the *cartonnier* appear to be original and to retain old mercury

gilding. The crowned C marks on the mounts of the clock are crisply and deeply struck. It is interesting to note that the bronze *pagoda* figures are also struck with crowned C marks on the bottoms of their feet. The figures were clearly struck before they were turned over to the lacquerer's studio, as the lacquer fills and partly obscures the marks (fig. 3-15). Twenty-four mounts, eight different models from each section, were removed for compositional analysis by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF). In addition, three measurements were made of the soldering alloy used to join separately cast elements. The mounts, with one exception, were found to have compositions common to eighteenth-century Parisian mounts, with zinc levels between 18 and 24%; tin, between 0.45 and 1.5%; and lead, between 0.8 and 2.0%. Levels of impurities in the metal, such as iron, arsenic, silver, nickel, and antimony, were also determined to be at usual levels for mounts of the period. The exceptional mount was, unsurprisingly, the center mount on the front of the base of the *bout de bureau*, which does not appear in the 1922 catalogue image at the time of the sale from the Burdett-Coutts collection (fig. 3-16). The brass alloy of this mount contains significantly lower levels of impurities than do eighteenth-century examples, though it is not as pure as most mounts produced in the second half of the twentieth century or the early twenty-first century. This leads to the conclusion that the mount was probably fabricated between the late nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century, though it could have been added to the *bout de bureau* at any time after 1922. This mount is also very atypical of eighteenth-century Parisian work in that the reverse side bears clear marks of the gouges used to hollow out the back side of the original wooden master model. The only other examples in this catalogue of mounts with clear gouge marks are those on the Dubois corner cabinet (see cat. no. 11), which were probably replaced in central Europe during the mid-nineteenth century.



Figure 3-15 Detail of the crowned C stamp on the foot of the *pagode* (left) and a stamp on a gilt bronze mount from the clock. The *pagode* was stamped before the application of the lacquer.



Figure 3-16 Image of the Getty *cartonnier* from the sale catalogue, *Porcelain, Objects of Art and Decorative Furniture*, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, May 9, 1922, lot 144. Private Collection. Photo: © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images

An analysis of the mount compositions by section (clock, *serre-papiers*, and *bout de bureau*) might have been expected to show that the clock mounts, by an unknown maker, were somehow different from those on the lower sections made by Van Risenburgh. In fact, the mounts of the clock and the *serre-papiers* are quite similar, while the mounts of the *bout de bureau* seem to constitute a distinguishable group as the tin levels are notably lower than those in the other sections. This suggests that the mounts of the *bout de bureau* and *serre-papiers* were not cast from the same batch of molten metal, but perhaps more important, it highlights the fact that a certain amount of uncontrolled variability in casting alloy is to be expected even from within a single workshop, and it is

not likely that differences between the production of different contemporaneous foundries can be drawn based on the study of alloys.

The central scroll mount on the front of the *serre-papiers* is not present on the Gulbenkian or Paris market versions of this model, mentioned in “Commentary” above. This mount is also unusual because it rather inexplicably obscures a passage of high-quality lacquer decoration. The alloy of the mount, however, matches that of the other mounts on the *serre-papiers*, offering no evidence that the mount is a later addition. Likewise, the quality of the chasing on this mount corresponds well with the other mounts.

As mentioned above, the framing mounts on the front of the *bout de bureau* are of the same model as those used by Van Risenburgh on his pair of corner cabinets in the Museum’s collection (see cat. no. 4), though they have been enlarged to fit the broad dimension of the *bout de bureau*. An examination of the backs of the top and bottom mounts shows clearly where sections of molding have been soldered into the middle of the mounts in order to lengthen them (fig. 3-17). The brass soldering metal used to join these and other elements is noteworthy for its highly elevated zinc levels, ranging between 33 and 37%. At these levels, the brass is almost certainly so-called spelter brass, made by adding pure zinc metal rather than by the traditional cementation process using zinc ores.⁴⁵ Zinc metal was still something of a rarity in Europe in the mid-eighteenth century and would likely have come from either England or China. Spelter brass would have been more expensive than conventional cementation brass, and its use was largely restricted to higher-quality brass products like jewelry and scientific instruments.⁴⁶ Obviously, soldering uses a very small amount of metal, so the additional cost must have been insignificant in comparison to the benefits of the significantly lower melting point of the alloy, which made it easier and safer to use. This type of spelter brass soldering metal is rarely, if ever, found on gilded bronzes before the mid-eighteenth century.



Figure 3-17 Details, front and rear, of the upper right framing mount of the front of the *bout de bureau*. The central section has been soldered in to lengthen the original, shorter mount for use on the broad front of the *bout*.

A.H., with J.C. and M.S.

NOTES

1. For more information on the clock and for images of the marks, see Wilson et al. 1996, 78–85, no. 11.
2. In the eighteenth century this form of furniture was sometimes referred to as a *bout de bureau* with its *serre-papiers*. On the other hand, the word *cartonnier* was frequently used to denote not only the *serre-papiers* but also the complete object. For clarity, the former terminology is used in this entry.
3. Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, XXVIII, 389, October 18, 1764, sale of the shop’s assets and its sublease, Bernard van Risenburgh and his wife to their son. This inventory was published in Alcouffe 1974, 323–24, and partially transcribed in Pradère 1989a, 199. According to the terminology alluded to in the previous note, it is possible that “*serre-papiers*” could describe a form that included a *bout de bureau*.
4. Pradère 1989a, 184–85.
5. See Birioukova 1974, 189 and no. 93. The *serre-papiers* is stamped “Joseph,” for Joseph Baumhauer, and it bears the trade label of Darnault. The *bout de bureau* is stamped “B.V.R.B.,” for Bernard II van Risenburgh. It was acquired by the State Hermitage Museum in 1933 from the École Stieglitz (acc. no. 434 M6). According to correspondence between the author and Tamara Rappe in December 1991, a letter of 1745 exists from Count Vorontsov to his Paris agent saying that Catherine II had taken his *serre-papiers* and that he needed to order another, indicating that this example, which originally stood in

- Catherine's palace at Oranienbaum, is the one made for Vorontsov. However, the presence of crowned Cs on its mounts indicates that the piece cannot have been made earlier than 1745. It is possible that it was sent to Saint Petersburg as soon as it was finished and immediately seized by Catherine, prompting the letter of this date. After undertaking further research, Rappe believes that the Hermitage *serre-papiers* was neither the one taken from Vorontsov by Catherine the Great nor the replacement ordered by Vorontsov but rather one delivered to the *cabinet doré* of the Palais Chinois at Oranienbaum in August 1765 by the merchant François Rembert. See Rappe 1993, esp. 206, fig. 1; see also Rappe 2016, 52, no. 14.
6. Coutinho 1999, 161, no. 13, inv. no. 584 (H: 57 x W: 82 x D: 31 cm). Purchased from B. Fabre et Fils of Paris in 1928.
 7. Ader Picard Tajan, *Objets d'art et de très bel ameublement principalement du XVIIIe siècle, March 22, 1977* (Paris: Ader Picard Tajan, 1977), lot 114 (H: 135.5 x W: 94 x D: 40 cm).
 8. Sotheby's, *A Private European Residence: French & Neoclassical Furniture, Paintings & Works on Paper, March 3, 2006* (London: Sotheby's, 2006), lot 336.
 9. For a commode of this form, veneered with Coromandel lacquer in the Sheaffer Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (inv. no. 1974.356.189), see Wolvesperges 2000, 186–87, fig. 84, where the piece is dated 1740–45. A similarly mounted commode set with end cut floral marquetry was sold at Sotheby's London on February 24, 1956, and is illustrated in Frégnac and Meuvret 1965, 78, no. 2. Another, with shaped panels of marquetry and stamped with the mark of the château de Bellevue, was sold by Couturier Nicolay at Drouot, November 18–19, 1981, no. 87. It was exhibited by the Galerie Perrin at the exhibition *De Versailles à Paris: Le destin des collections royales* held at the mairie du Ve arrondissement (exhibition catalogue of the same title, Charles 1989, 242, no. 75). Other commodes of this form, similarly mounted, have appeared at auction in New York, London, and Paris on numerous occasions in the second half of the twentieth century and in the first decade of the twenty-first.
 10. Galerie Georges Petit, *Tableaux anciens, aquarelles, dessins, gouaches, pastels, anciens et modernes, gravures, May 8, 1922* (Paris: Galerie Georges Petit, 1922), lot 260, from the collection of the marquise de Ganay. Also see Alcouffe 1995, 133, fig. 46e.
 11. See note 1 above.
 12. For information on the Martin family of lacquerers, see Wolvesperges 2000, 96–121; Forray-Carliet and Kopplin 2014.
 13. Correspondence with the author, August 16, 1994, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 14. Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, XCII, 504, February 17, 1740, probate inventory of Louis Henri de Bourbon, prince of Condé. I thank Dominique Augarde for providing this information in our correspondence; see note 13 above.
 15. On the Martin brothers' creation of such figures, see Wolvesperges 2001. See also Kisluk-Grosheide 2002.
 16. Czarnocka, Lindgren, and Stein 1994, esp. 67 n. 51. See also Lewallen 2009–10. For a similar object, see also a pair of bronze and silver figures holding baskets of sugarcane by Étienne Simon Martin and Guillaume Martin in the Museum's collection (88.DH.127).
 17. In 1827 Harriet Mellon married William Beauclerk, ninth Duke of St. Albans.
 18. For further information on the Coutts family, see Anonymous 1819, 1–16; Colby 1966a; Colby 1966b. See also Christie's, *Important Silver and Objects of Vertu, April 15, 1997* (New York: Christies, 1997), lot 280 (in the text of the sale catalogue).
 19. Healey 1978, 24.
 20. Inventory after the death of Joseph Antoine Crozat de Thugny, January 12, 1751, item 397 (Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, XXX, 320): "397. Item un serrepapier de bois de vernis de la Chine en deux corps garnis d'ornement de cuivre doré d'or moulu prisé deux cent livres cy."
 21. Sealing of the estate of Louis Jean Gagnat at his death, April 11, 1768 (Paris, Archives nationales de France, Y 13961): "Nous avons apposés nos scellés et cachets de nos armes sur les bouts et extrémités de trois bandes de papiers appliquées sur les trois tiroirs et sur le dessus de bureau dudit Sr. Gagnat étant dans ledi Cabinet lesquels tiroirs nous avons fermé avec la clef restée en nos mains."
 22. "Un Bureau de Cabinet et son serre-papier d'ancien laque, son noir à paysages & oiseaux, en or de relief encadrés d'ornements de bronze doré. Le support du serre-papier & les frises du Bureau sont vernis, fond noir, par Martin: les autres bronzes très très riches & très bien ciselés. Ce bureau a 5 pieds et demi de long, sans comprendre le serre-papier." 1,500 livres to "De Mondran."
 23. Colby 1966b.
 24. Christie, Manson & Woods, "The Collection of . . . the late Baroness Burdett-Coutts . . . Now sold by Order of the Executors of the Rt. Hon. W. Burdett-Coutts, M.P.," *Porcelain, Objects of Art and Decorative Furniture*, May 9, 1922 (London: Christie, Manson & Woods, 1922).
 25. National Archives and Record Administration (National Archives at College Park, Maryland), Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg card for R 910 (M1943 RG260 Reel 18); Koblenz (Germany), Bundesarchiv (Federal Archives), B323/280. https://www.errproject.org/jeudepaume/card_view.php?CardId=17974; <https://www.fold3.com/image/306259135>; <https://www.fold3.com/image/306259149>.
 26. Berlin, Deutsches Historisches Museum, database on Munich Central Collecting Point for Munich numbers 22082 and 22382; Koblenz (Germany), Bundesarchiv (Federal Archives), B323/625. https://www.dhm.de/datenbank/ccp/dhm_ccp_add.php?seite=6&fld_1=22382; https://www.dhm.de/datenbank/ccp/dhm_ccp

- _add.php?seite=6&fld_1=22082; <https://www.fold3.com/image/312508775>; <https://www.fold3.com/image/312508778>.
27. National Archives and Record Administration (National Archives at College Park, Maryland), Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg card for R 910 (M1943 RG260 Reel 18). https://www.rrproject.org/jeudepaume/card_view.php?CardId=17974.
 28. Bowett 2012, 119–47.
 29. The clock is published in Rowell and Burchard 2016.
 30. Richardson, Wilson, and Bremer-David 1998.
 31. Bonanni 2009, 59; Salmon et al. 1701, 889–91.
 32. Bonanni 2009, 47.
 33. Traces of shellac were also noted in the uppermost layer, likely relating to later restoration coatings.
 34. Le Hô et al. 2014.
 35. Dossie 1758, 419; Stalker and Parker 1688, 19–20; Bonanni 2009, 10–11.
 36. Huth 1971, 24; Koller et al. 1997; Koller, Schmid, and Baumer 1997; Webb 2000, 121–22; Walch 1997; Koller and Baumer 2000.
 37. Le Hô et al. 2014; Czarnocka, Lindgren, and Stein 1994.
 38. These materials were all noted in the after-death inventories noted in Le Hô et al. 2014.
 39. Fioravanti 1564.
 40. Watin 1773, 238.
 41. *Genuine Receipt* 1773.
 42. Langenheim 2003.
 43. Pitthard et al. 2011.
 44. Koller et al. 1997.
 45. Heginbotham 2013.
 46. Watson 1786.



4. Pair of corner cupboards

French (Paris), ca. 1740

By Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766, master before 1730)

White oak* veneered with amaranth*, cherry*, and sycamore maple*, set with panels of black Japanese lacquer on Japanese arborvitae*, and painted with European lacquer; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron hardware and lock; *sarrancolin* marble tops

H: 3 ft. 3 1/8 in., W: 2 ft. 10 3/4 in., D: 2 ft. 1/8 in. (99.4 × 88.3 × 61.3 cm)

72.DA.44.1–2

DESCRIPTION

Each rectangular corner cupboard has a bowed front and is supported on four short legs. The tops are of *sarrancolin* marble and are cut to conforming shape and have a molded fore edge. The facades of the corner cupboards are occupied by two doors, with the lock on the right door.

Each door carries a large mount that frames the lacquer panel with which it is veneered. The mount consists of flat interlocking C- and S-scrolls bordered by flame motifs and smaller inner C-scrolls above, a climbing plant bearing berried stems emerging from leafy corollas, and a twining branch below. The right-hand doors carry the overlapping central mounts of the lower and upper frame. The mount above consists of a central cabochon topped by five feathers, all set on a stippled ground and framed by foliate C-scrolls. Below hangs a berry-filled leaf cup. The mount at the center of the lower frame consists of a large trilobed cabochon surrounded by flame motifs and flanked by foliate scrolls.

The upper corners of the frame are set, between addorsed C-scrolls, with foliate mounts that extend toward the corners of the doors. Each consists of a leafy corolla bearing a seedpod and leafy twigs. Carrying berries and leaves, another corolla extends from below. The keyhole is surrounded by a large pierced escutcheon backed by a shaped extension of the edge of the right door. It consists of a curved cabochon held between leafy scrolls, topped by a fan or shell motif. Below hangs a pendant of corollas of diminishing size between two pierced C-scrolls that are edged with cartilaginous shellwork. The arrangement terminates in a curled leaf.

Serving as a central foot, the apron is set with a large pierced mount consisting of a central rising leafy branch flanked by large C-scrolls supported by more foliate C- and S-scrolls. The outer surfaces of the short legs are also set with pierced mounts. Each takes the form of a large C-scroll set on its outer edge with a shell-like border, all set against a vertical S-scroll. The inner edge of the foot mount consists of foliate scrolls above a double C-scroll, which together frame the inner profile of the leg.

The vertical gap between the doors is covered by a gilt bronze strip attached to the edge of the right-hand door. The edges of the strip undulate and carry a short flame motif border. The center of the strip is set with a repeating arrangement of two cabochons between small leafy twigs, all set on a rippled, shell-like ground. A simple gilt bronze molding runs horizontally above the doors and down the outer edges of the front. A wider molding runs below the doors.

The panel of lacquer on the left-hand door of .1 depicts in the foreground and the middle ground a rocky shoreline against which waves break. In the background a temple stands on a rocky mountain planted with trees and bushes. Below is a series of low buildings; two buildings with thatched roofs stand on the shore.

The scene continues, with a slight gap, on the door on the right. Waves break on a similarly rocky shore, planted with grasses, bamboo, various coniferous trees, and a shrub bearing red berries. Two pheasants are perched on the top of the highest rock. The background is empty.

The panel of lacquer on the left-hand door of .2 shows waves breaking on a hilly shore, planted with grasses and leafy shrubs. A magnolia tree spreads its branches to

either side of a dead willow. Spotted deer, a buck and a doe, stand below the tree. The background is empty.

The right-hand door illustrates waves breaking in an inlet, which is set with three low, roofed buildings backed by trees. In the middle ground a temple stands on a high rock backed by trees of various species. In front of the temple stand two stags and a doe. In the background is a higher mountain, painted with both gnarled and flowering trees.

The remaining surfaces of the facades of each corner cupboard are painted with black European lacquer. The upper friezes are outlined by frames of gold paint. Similar borders outline the entire lower sections of the corner cupboards, consisting of the feet and the aprons.

The inside surfaces of the doors are veneered with cherry and set with frames of amaranth. Each interior is fitted with two fixed shelves (fig. 4-1).



Figure 4-1 Front, doors open.

MARKS

Each cupboard is stamped “B.V.R.B.” twice on the top of the carcass (fig. 4-2).



Figure 4-2 Stamp on the top of 72.DA.44.1: “B.V.R.B.”

COMMENTARY

The corner cupboards are stamped “B.V.R.B.,” for Bernard II van Risenburgh.¹ They are of similar form and carry mounts of the same model as a number of other corner cupboards stamped with his initials or attributed to him:² a pair, stamped and veneered with end cut floral marquetry is at the Residenz, Munich;³ a pair, stamped and veneered with Coromandel lacquer, the gilt bronze mounts struck with the crowned C, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in the Wrightsman collection (fig. 4-3);⁴ a pair, unstamped and veneered with end cut floral marquetry, appeared on the art market in the 1990s.⁵



Figure 4-3 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), Corner cabinet (*encoignure*) (one of a pair), ca. 1745–49. Oak veneered with ebony and Coromandel lacquer, cherry wood, and purplewood; gilt bronze mounts; brocatelle marble top, 91.1 × 86 × 66.4 cm (35.9 × 33.9 × 26.1 in.). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1983, 1983.185.1. Photo: www.metmuseum.org, CCO

The Wrightsman pair, which can be dated to between 1745 and 1749, have bombé profiles and lack the central escutcheon mount. The mount on the central leg is a modern addition. None of the corner cupboards listed above or noted have mounts on their feet. The central mount is of the same model as that found on the aprons of a pair of corner cupboards stamped by Van Risenburgh that were formerly part of a suite that included a pair of commodes in the collection of the Museum (see cat. no. 7) but were unfortunately destroyed in Dresden during World War II.⁶ It is also found at the center of the plinth of a clock and cabinet at Waddesdon Manor. The cabinet, dated by Geoffrey de Bellaigue to about 1761–65, is stamped “B. Durand,” for Bon Durand, but bears other mounts associated with the work of Van Risenburgh; the cabinet may in fact be by Van Risenburgh but stamped by Durand as a *marchand*, or restorer.⁷ Beneath these mounts on the Museum’s cupboards, the profile of the feet and the lower edge of each cupboard are edged with gold paint. This now partly hidden decoration is also found on a pair of slightly later corner cupboards by Van Risenburgh previously in the possession of Bernard Steinitz.⁸ The large framing mounts are also found on two *bouts de bureau* by Van Risenburgh, one in the State

Hermitage in Saint Petersburg and the other in the Museum (see cat. no. 3).⁹

Van Risenburgh appears to have made only two pairs of two-door corner cupboards and a single one veneered with lacquer.¹⁰ He seems to have had a problem with the meeting of the doors, and there is a noticeable gap on the Coromandel pair of the Wrightsman collection discussed above. A larger gap between the doors of the Museum’s pieces has been masked by the application of a vertical strip of gilt bronze. This mount does not appear elsewhere in Van Risenburgh’s oeuvre and is believed to be an eighteenth-century replacement (see “Technical Description” below).

The four fine panels of Japanese export lacquer have been cut from the doors of two fairly large cabinets that were not a matched pair (see “Technical Description” below). Oliver Impey dated the lacquer to the 1650s. Documents from the Dutch East India Company record the acquisition of paired cabinets up to 1640, but none were imported between that date and 1660, when they appear again. It is of course possible that they were imported later as old lacquer by the French East Indies Company.¹¹ Filled pinholes beneath the gilt bronze framing mount can be seen clearly near the outer edge where the straps of the original hinges were positioned. Ghosts of the metal hinge tab impressed on the lacquer can also be seen (fig. 4-4). The original cabinets possessed six hinges on each door, whereas five was the normal number.¹² A lacquer cabinet on a French giltwood stand in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal is of the type that would have been provided to Van Risenburgh by a *marchand-mercier*;¹³ a similar cabinet passed through the French market in 1993.¹⁴ One of this form appears in the 1740 trade card of Gersaint, drawn by François Boucher.¹⁵ However, it seems certain that by this date Van Risenburgh would have received the four doors from the *marchand-mercier* Hébert, for whom he worked.¹⁶



Figure 4-4 Ghosts of the original metal hinge straps that once fixed this lacquer panel to a Japanese cabinet, top left corner of 72.DA.44.2.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

The J. Paul Getty Collection of French Decorative Arts, Detroit Institute of Arts (Detroit), October 3, 1972–August 31, 1973.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The carcasses of the two cabinets are made of white oak and are very nearly identical in construction. The two front corner posts run from the floor to the top of the case and are shaped from single blocks measuring approximately 5.5 cm wide x 7 cm deep in section. Above and below the doors, the posts are connected with curved, compound rails, each of which is composed of three pieces of wood. The upper portion of these compound rails is a single bow-shaped horizontal board approximately 1.5 cm thick and 17 cm deep at its widest point (fig. 4-5). In the upper rail, the transverse board is joined to the posts with single, angled dovetails; in the lower rail, it is attached with sliding dovetails that run parallel to the case sides (fig. 4-6). The lower portion of each upper and lower compound rail is formed of two blocks, joined end to end at the center, that follow the curved contour of the case front. These two blocks are approximately 4 cm thick and are glued to the underside of the transverse board. In the upper rail, the blocks are joined to each other at the center with a slip joint and joined to the posts with sliding dovetails that run parallel to the case sides; in the lower rail, the blocks appear to be glued in place only, without any joinery at either end.

PROVENANCE

–1972: Kraemer et Cie (Paris, France), sold through French and Company to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1972.¹⁷

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kjellberg 1989, 139; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 30, no. 33; Wolfesperges 2000, 263, fig. 132; Wilson and Hess 2001, 19, no. 33; Heginbotham and Schilling 2011, 94, 96, figs. 3–4, 7–8.



Figure 4-5 Top of 72.DA.44.1.



Figure 4-6 Bottom of 72.DA.44.1.

The rear leg is made from two thin vertical boards joined in an L-shape with a rabbet-and-groove joint running along their entire length. Below the level of the bottom shelf, the back leg is reinforced with a large corner block of oak. The rear leg assembly is joined to the front posts with rails at top and bottom that are attached with unpinned mortise-and-tenon joints (fig. 4-7). At the front, where the rails join the heavy posts, the tenons are single-shouldered; at the rear, the tenons are double-shouldered where they join the much thinner back leg. The rails and

posts frame a single panel on each case side. The panels are made of from three to four boards, butt joined, with the grain oriented vertically; they have been simply chamfered along the outer edges and are flat on their inner surfaces.



Figure 4-7 Left back of 72.DA.44.1.

The case tops are made in frame-and-panel construction; two side rails are attached to the front posts with single dovetails and are joined to each other at the rear with mitered half-lap joints. The side rails of the top are attached to the upper rails of the case sides with long tongue-and-groove joints. The panels of the tops are made of three boards each, butt joined, with the grain oriented parallel to the case front; they have been chamfered along the bottom edges and are flat on their upper surfaces. The triangular case bottom panels are formed of four butt-joined boards; they are held in place with tongue-and-groove joints along all three sides. The front center feet of the cabinets, as well as the corner brackets of the side feet, have been assembled simply by gluing blocks of wood to the bottom of the case to create the desired profile; this has been done without joinery.

The shelves are each made of from four to five butt-joined boards. They are loose-fitting and rest on transverse

battens that are mortise and tenoned to the front posts and nailed to the rear leg assembly.

The construction of the doors was determined with the aid of X-radiography. All the doors are constructed in a similar fashion with between five and seven vertically oriented narrow boards butt joined to each other, forming the core of the door; battens are attached at the top and bottom with tongue-and-groove joints, so-called breadboard ends. The protruding section of the right door on each cabinet, which houses the lock mechanism and is covered by the central gilded escutcheon, is a separate piece of wood with its grain oriented horizontally; this has been mortise and tenoned into the edge of the assembled door. This was presumably done for added strength.

The exterior of the cabinets has been veneered with sycamore maple wherever Japanese lacquer is not present; this veneer covers the joints of the cases, reducing the chance that the European lacquer would crack along glue lines. It also raises the surface of the cabinets to be flush with the applied Japanese lacquer panels and provides a smooth and less porous base for the subsequent lacquering. The interior of the doors has been veneered with a combination of cherry and amaranth veneers in a pattern nearly identical to that found on the interior of the doors of the Museum Van Risenburgh commode (see cat. no. 5).

The lacquer panels on the doors of the cabinets are almost certainly taken from the exterior of the front doors of two Japanese cabinets; the lacquer work can be dated stylistically to the period between about 1650 and 1660.¹⁸ An intact Japanese cabinet in the collections of Rosenborg Castle in Copenhagen likely bears a resemblance to the original source of these panels (fig. 4-8).



Figure 4-8 Intact Japanese cabinet in the collections of Rosenborg Castle. A similar cabinet was the likely source for the lacquerwork on the Museum's cabinets. Cabinet, ca. 1640–90, 69.8 × 91.1 × 50.8 cm (27.5 × 35.9 × 20 in.). Copenhagen, Royal Collections, Rosenborg Castle, EAc 229. The Royal Danish Collection, Rosenborg Castle / Photo: Peter Nørby

The lacquer decoration is executed in a wide variety of decorative techniques, including *hiramakie* (flat designs of sprinkled metal powder), *takamakie* (similar designs in relief), *nashiji* (evenly sprinkled metal flakes used as a background texture), *keuchi* (or *tsukegaki*; fine, low-relief lines of gold defining the detailed features of floral and architectural elements), and *kakiwari* (black lines on a gold ground formed by allowing the substrate to show through).¹⁹ Cross-section sampling reveals that both the Japanese panels were thinned to between 0.75 and 1.3 mm in thickness (excluding the relief decoration) and that the original wooden substrate for both cabinets is Japanese arborvitae (fig. 4-9).

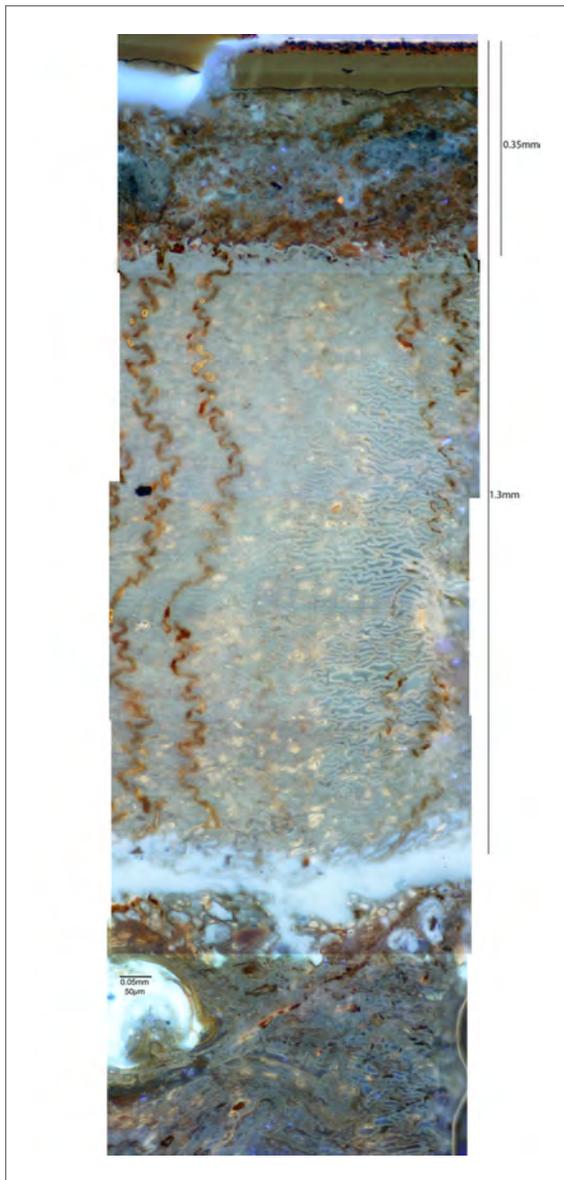


Figure 4-9 Composite cross-section photomicrograph in ultraviolet illumination showing the original Japanese lacquer and its substrate thinned down to 1.3 mm.

X-radiographs reveal patterns of nail holes along the outer edges of the panels where the original Japanese cabinet hinges were once fastened (figs. 4-10, 4-11). Careful study of the nail hole patterns shows that both Japanese cabinets had six hinges per door but that the patterns are of distinctly different shape from one to the other. This suggests that the two original Japanese cabinets were not a matched pair but rather were brought together for reuse in this pair of corner cabinets, based on their similar style and size. Several other observations confirm this postulation. For example, the lacquerwork on cabinet .2 uses a very pale greenish-gold powder, particularly in certain areas of *keuchi* detail; this color of powder, made with a high percentage of silver,²⁰ is

conspicuously absent from cabinet .1. In addition, cross-section analysis shows that the lacquer of cabinet .1 uses a black clay ground material that is not present in cabinet .2 (figs. 4-12, 4-13, 4-14). The layer structure observed on cabinet .2 resembles a relatively typical layer structure for Japanese export lacquer.²¹ This layering includes a thick ground, a thin black layer, two dark translucent lacquer layers, and decorative layers. Cabinet .1 deviates from this commonly observed structure as it has two ground layers, one black and one beige, that are separated by an intermediate layer of lacquer.



Figure 4-10 X-ray images of the doors of cabinet .1 with an overlay detailing the locations of the nail holes from the original Japanese cabinet hinges.

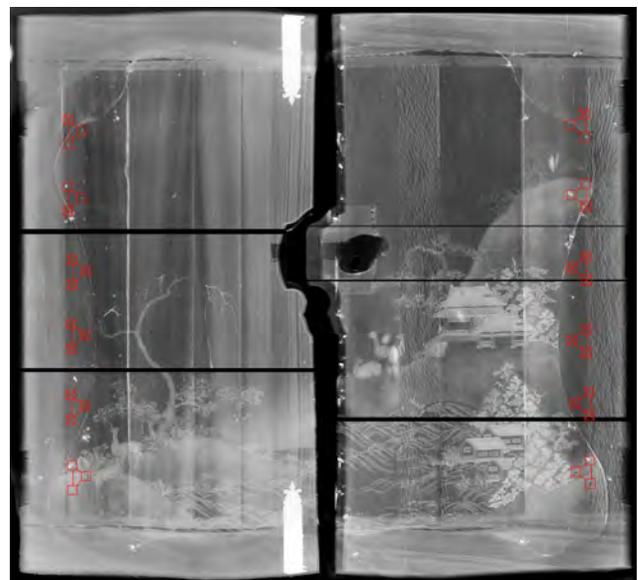


Figure 4-11 X-ray images of the doors of cabinet .2 with an overlay detailing the locations of the nail holes from the original Japanese cabinet hinges.



Figure 4-12 Cross-section photomicrograph in ultraviolet illumination showing the black clay ground used in cabinet .1.

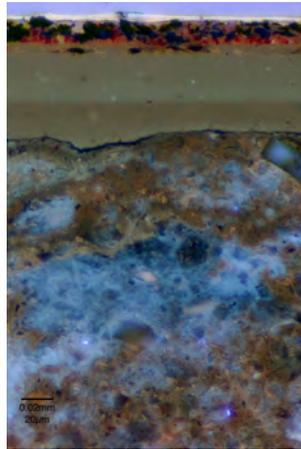


Figure 4-13 Cross-section photomicrograph in ultraviolet illumination showing the beige-colored ground used in cabinet .2.



Figure 4-14 The locations of the samples taken for comparison from the .1 (above) and .2 (below) cabinets. Sample sites are hidden behind gilt bronze mounts.

Organic analysis by Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) and pyrolysis gas

chromatography–mass spectrometry (py/GC-MS) emphasizes the differences in the Japanese cabinets, further indicating that they were not a matched pair. The black clay ground material in cabinet .1 is bound predominantly with glue with minor contributions of drying oil and lacquer, whereas the beige ground material used in cabinet .2 contains no glue and is bound primarily with drying oil and lacquer with minor amounts of starch. Unexpectedly, the ground layers from both samples appear to contain small amounts of marker compounds associated with cedar oil. These compounds have been reported in substantial amounts in many examples of southern Chinese export lacquer where they are thought to be linked to the intentional addition of distilled cedar oil derived primarily from Chinese weeping cypress (*Cupressus funebris*).²² No intentional use of cedar oil in seventeenth-century Japan has been documented to date; it may be more likely, in this case, that the source of these marker compounds may instead be in the underlying wood substrate.²³ Japanese arborvitae wood is, like Chinese weeping cypress, a member of the Cupressaceae family and is known to contain a similar range of volatile compounds. Over time, small amounts of these compounds may have migrated into the porous ground layer from the wood substrate.

The py/GC-MS analysis confirmed that the lacquer in both panels is not pure *urushi* but rather a combination of *thitsi* lacquer and *urushi* with a significant amount of drying oil mixed into all layers. *Thitsi*, imported from Southeast Asia by Dutch and Chinese traders in the seventeenth century, was significantly cheaper than domestically produced *urushi*; however, it was more viscous, softer when dry, darker, and slower to cure than the more expensive *urushi*.²⁴ The practice of adding oil to the lacquer is typical of Asian export lacquers of the period as it allowed layers to be built up more quickly and adds gloss without laborious polishing but was eschewed in high-quality Japanese domestic wares because it reduced the durability of the final product. It is possible that the transparent lacquer layers on cabinet .2 and the *takamakie* ground and lacquer layer on .1 also include small amounts of “wood oil,”²⁵ perhaps added to the *thitsi* lacquer as a diluent to improve the working properties during application or as an adulterant by unscrupulous traders.²⁶

From cross-section analysis along with further organic analysis and electron microscopy, it is also possible to garner a better understanding of the *takamakie* decoration on cabinet .1. This decorative scheme was built up in a complex series of layers applied on the lacquer surface and likely incorporates multiple campaigns of

decorations (fig. 4-15). The *takamakie* relief was created with *urushi* and *thitsi* lacquer with drying oil mixed with clay, a small amount of glue, and possibly wood oil. The layer, measuring more than 0.5 mm thick in this sample, was applied to the polished lacquer surface to create the area of relief within the landscape design. The thick ground layer was coated with a layer of lacquer pigmented with carbon black, followed by a second transparent lacquer layer onto which the spinkled decoration was created in gold and vermilion.²⁷ A second decorative campaign was applied above the *takamakie* decoration and depicts the fine foliage in lacquer mixed with vermilion and covered with gold leaf.

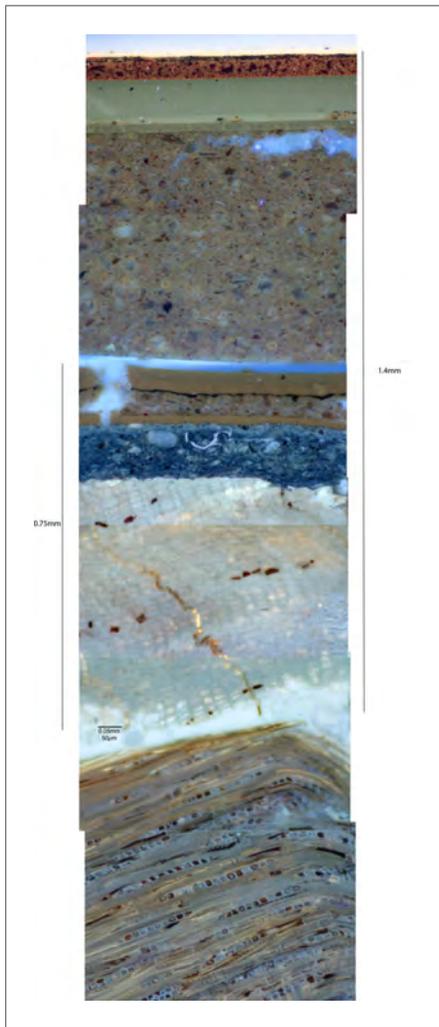


Figure 4-15 Composite photomicrograph of the Japanese lacquer on cabinet .1 featuring the complex buildup of layers to create the surface decoration. The seven layers (including the wood) composing the black background are 0.75 mm thick. The *takamakie* decoration above adds 0.65 mm of thickness in an additional six to seven layers.

The Japanese lacquer panels were overcleaned in the course of restorations prior to their acquisition by the

Museum. This caused abrasion and loss to some areas of the decoration; this damage has been largely retouched, as have several long vertical cracks, particularly in the areas of high relief. The surface has also been heavily coated with restoration varnishes, at least one of which consists of shellac (as identified by py/GC-MS and confirmed by the characteristic orange fluorescence of the surface in ultraviolet illumination) (fig. 4-16).



Figure 4-16 Left door from cabinet .1 as seen under ultraviolet illumination showing the variety of materials applied to the surface during different restoration campaigns.

The French imitation black lacquer surrounding the Asian panels has been repainted at least two times; however, the original material does seem to be present below the repainting in many areas. Organic analysis along with scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (SEM-EDS) suggests that the original French lacquer was executed in three basic steps. First, a

white chalk filler or putty containing a mixture of drying oil, resins, and glue was likely locally applied to select areas of the wood to smooth the transition between the Asian lacquer and the European veneer. The resin fraction appears to be a mixture of pine resin, shellac, gum benzoin, and a polycommunic diterpenoid resin (likely sandarac, based on its use in the layers above). While this layer appears to be a continuous ground layer when viewed in cross section, its unusual organic composition, proximity to joins, and variable thickness between samples set it apart from traditional eighteenth-century preparation techniques for European lacquer. Typically, a close-grained veneer served to provide a smooth substrate to lacquer directly, not requiring the use of a calcium carbonate ground (see Dubois corner cupboards; cat. no. 12).²⁸ Period sources indicate that a chalk putty consisting of calcium carbonate mixed with varnish could be used to cover cracks and joints in the wood.²⁹ As the sample comes from an area near where the European lacquer meets the Asian panel, it was likely necessary for the craftsman to use a filler to seamlessly merge the two in this location. Following the preparatory layer, a black paint layer was applied; this was composed of bone (or ivory) black pigment bound in a spirit-resin varnish that contains a mixture of shellac, pine resin, sandarac, larch turpentine, and a small amount of drying oil. The use of sandarac, shellac, and larch turpentine is indicative of a high-quality eighteenth-century varnish. Last, the pigmented layer was followed by one or more coats of transparent varnish with composition similar to that of the pigmented layer underneath.

The gilt bronze mounts on the cabinets appear to be largely original. The only exception seems to be the two vertical mounts on each cabinet that cover the joint between the doors, above and below the central escutcheon. These mounts do not match the others stylistically; they are slightly more greenish in tone, and they are inexpertly fitted with adjacent mounts. The alloy composition of the metal (as determined by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy [XRF]) is distinctly different from that of the other mounts, though it can still be considered typical of eighteenth-century casting brass. X-radiography reveals an additional set of filled screw holes below the vertical mounts, suggesting that there is likely to have been a different set of mounts covering the joint between the doors in the past. All of the other mounts on the commodes are finely and consistently chased and neatly fitted. The composition of the brass is very consistent between mounts and is typical of period alloys with respect to most elements; only the zinc levels are unusually high, at an average of about 25%, compared to the more usual 13 to 23%. The zinc content of all four

measured samples of soldering metal is also unusual, averaging around 36%. This almost certainly implies the use of expensive spelter brass, which was rare though not unknown in mid-eighteenth-century France.³⁰

The stone tops are 3.5 cm thick and are made of a marble (metamorphic limestone) known as *sarrancolin*; this has a multicolored brecciated pattern, with large (up to 30 cm) chunks of striated cream, and granular gray fragments in a red-to-orange smooth-textured matrix. White and tan veins cross through the breccia pattern. *Sarrancolin* marble is very similar to Marmor Chium (also known as Portasanta) from Greece. Marmor Chium, however, was mainly quarried in ancient Roman times, and only small pieces made it beyond Italy during the Renaissance. The two can be distinguished based on their fossil inclusions; *sarrancolin* often contains rudist bivalves within the gray and in the reddish matrix dating to the Cretaceous period, while Marmor Chium contains fossils of Triassic echinoderms. *Sarrancolin* marble comes from the Pyrenees Mountains, and was actively quarried in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. There are several types of *sarrancolin* marble; this is most similar to stone from the eastern slopes of the Aure Valley, near Beyrede-Jumet, in the Hautes-Pyrénées, France.

A.H., with J.C., M.S., and R.S.

NOTES

1. For more information on Bernard II van Risenburgh, see primarily Pradère 1989a, 183–99; Baroli 1957, 56–63. See also Daniel Alcouffe, in *Louis XV . . .* 1974, 323–24.
2. Other examples exist of the same size and form but lacking some or all of the mounts:
 - a. A pair sold at Sotheby's, *The Distinguished Collection of a Lady, December 9–11, 1997* (Zurich: Sotheby's, 1997), lot 315, stamped "B.V.R.B.," veneered with plain veneers and banding. The elaborate central escutcheon is present, but the framing mount is an adaptation of that found on the Museum's commode, cat. no. 5 (84 x 75 x 54 cm); ex. coll. Ernest Cronier, sold, Galerie Georges Petit, *Tableaux anciens et modernes, December 4–5, 1905* (Paris: Galerie Georges Petit, 1905), lot 145; ex. coll. Bloch-Levalois, sold, Paris, May 25–26, 1924, lot 128; sold again, Sotheby's, *Important mobilier, sculpture et objets d'art, April 16, 2013* (Paris: Sotheby's, 2013), lot 79.
 - b. A pair in the salon of the château de Champs-sur-Marne. Of the same profile and central escutcheon in end cut floral marquetry but lacking the framing mounts. Stamps unknown. Documents consulted at the archives of the Centre de Recherche Historique sur les Maîtres Ébénistes.

- c. A single corner cupboard, sold Parke-Bernet Galleries, *English and French XVIII Century Furniture, Parke-Bernet Galleries, May 28–29, 1941* (New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries, 1941), lot 432. Apparently unstamped. Same form and profile, veneered with trellis marquetry surrounded by banding and a shaped frame of wood veneer that would have served as a background to the now-missing framing mount. No mounts (3 ft. x 2 ft. 7 in.).
3. Acc. no. Res. Mü. M 23, 24 (89.5 x 76 x 53.5 cm). Langer and Ottomeyer 1995, 111–13, no. 20.
 4. Acc. no. 1983.185.1a, b, .2a, b (2 ft. 11 7/8 in. x 2 ft. 9 7/8 in. x 2 ft. 2 1/8 in.; 91 x 86 x 66.4 cm). Watson 1966, vol. 1, 170–73, nos. 100A and 100B. Now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman.
 5. Sold, Christie's, *Important Furniture, Porcelain, Clocks and Carpets, April 26, 1994* (New York: Christie's, 1994), lot 297; also sold, Christie's, *Important French Furniture, Objects of Art and Sculpture, October 26, 1994* (New York: Christie's, 1994), lot 85; and with the dealer Röbbig-München in 1996, published in their catalogue *Frühe deutsche Porzellane, Einrichtungen und Objekte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Röbbig-München, 1996), 38–39. 2 ft. 11 in. x 2 ft. 7 in. x 1 ft. 10 3/4 in. (89 x 78.7 x 58 cm).
 6. Feulner 1927, 325, fig. 277.
 7. De Bellaigue 1974, vol. 1, 186–88, no. 39.
 8. Wolvesperges 2000, 12, fig. 4.
 9. Birioukova 1974, 189, no. 93 (inv. no. MB 434). Rappe 2016, 52, no. 14.
 10. See a single double-door corner cupboard set with a shaped panel of Japanese lacquer and bearing mounts found on other pieces stamped by Van Risenburgh and securely attributed to him in Jullian 1962, 46, fig. 6. Present location unknown.
 11. Conversation with Oliver Impey, October 1992, notes in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 12. See Wolvesperges 2000, 33, fig. 15, for a pair of cabinets without stands, in their original form. Sold, Christie's, *Export Art of China and Japan, April 7, 1997* (London: Christie's, 1997), lot 164 (68.1 x 42.7 x 52.7 cm). See also a cabinet-on-stand at Rosenborg Castle, Copenhagen, for the type of model that may well have been used (fig. 4-8). The doors with six hinges each are painted with watery and rocky landscapes. See Impey and Jörg 2005, 134, fig. 269, where the cabinet is dated about 1640–90.
 13. Sargentson 1996, 80, pl. 46.
 14. Hôtel des ventes Neuilly, *Tableaux anciens et XIXe siècle, bijoux, argenterie, objets d'art et de très bel ameublement des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles, May 10, 1993* (Paris: Hôtel des ventes Neuilly, 1993), lot 85. H including stand: 131 x 72 x 47 cm.
 15. Sargentson 1996, 81, pl. 47.
 16. For a detailed account of the import of lacquer into France, the activities of the French East Indies Company, the *marchand-merciers* who bought the lacquer and the cabinetmakers who worked with it, see Wolvesperges 2000; Impey and Jörg 2005. See also Vittet 2009, 177–98.
 17. Memorandum from Frank Whitworth to Norris Bramlett, March 30, 1972, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 18. For images of related Japanese cabinets and a discussion of dating styles, see Impey and Jörg 2005.
 19. For a comprehensive discussion of Japanese lacquer techniques, see Heckmann 2002.
 20. The high silver content of this gold powder was confirmed by energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDS).
 21. See discussion in Heginbotham and Schilling 2011.
 22. Heginbotham et al. 2016, 34–35.
 23. Heginbotham and Schilling 2011, 104.
 24. Heginbotham and Schilling 2011, 104.
 25. Marker compounds for *Dipterocarpus* resin have been frequently detected in lacquer samples containing *thitsi* lacquer. Heginbotham and Schilling 2011, 99–100, provides a range of possible scenarios to account for the inclusion of wood oil in *thitsi* lacquer coatings.
 26. As reported in Heginbotham and Schilling 2011, 101, several of the layers contain marker compounds for gum benzoin. However, this set of markers was not considered conclusive enough to confirm the presence of this material at this time.
 27. Shellac markers were detected in this sample from .1 but are also observed in a trace amount in the upper layers of cabinet .2. It is unclear at this time if these materials were intentionally added to the Asian layer or rather relate to contamination from upper restoration varnishes. See RADICAL Reports 29-13 and 28-8 in the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum, for additional information on marker identification.
 28. Webb 2000, 113; Walch 1997, 34.
 29. Walch 1997, 136–37.
 30. Prior to the nineteenth century, cementation was the standard process by which zinc was added to copper to produce brass. Powdered zinc oxide or carbonate was placed in a crucible with small pieces of copper metal and charcoal and then heated in a reducing atmosphere to a temperature just below the melting point of copper. Under these conditions, the zinc was reduced and vaporized, allowing it to diffuse slowly into the surrounding copper, thus forming brass. Typically, brass produced by this method will have a zinc content of less than 33%, although higher levels have been shown to be possible. (For an excellent discussion of this topic, see Welter 2003.) The industrial production of metallic zinc, which facilitates the production of higher zinc content in brass, was developed on a limited scale in England beginning in the 1740s. However, continental production of zinc metal on a significant scale did not take place until the last years of the eighteenth century, before which time access to metallic zinc was limited to minor production in

Germany and costly importation from India and China; see Day 1990; "Zinc," in *Ullman's Encyclopedia of Industrial Chemistry*, 5th rev. ed., vol. A28, ed. Barbara Elvers, Stephen Hawkins, James F. Rounsaville, and Gail Schulz (Weinheim: VCH Verlagsgesellschaft; Deerfield Beach, FL: VCH Publishers, 1996).





5. *Commode à vantaux*

French (Paris), ca. 1737, late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century gilt bronze mounts
By Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766, master before 1730)
White oak*, veneered with alder*, set with panels of Japanese lacquer on a coniferous substrate and painted with European lacquer; veneered with cherry* and amaranth* on interior of the doors; replacement gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron hardware and lock; *sarrancolin* marble top; original silk fabric lining; and silver thread *galon* trim
H: 2 ft. 10 3/4 in., W: 4 ft. 11 3/4 in., D: 1 ft. 10 3/4 in. (88.3 × 151.9 × 57.8 cm)
65.DA.4

DESCRIPTION

Supported on two three-sided cabriole legs at the front and two five-sided legs at the back, the rectangular commode has a bowed front and serpentine sides. The front is occupied by two doors, the door on the right carrying the lock. The slab of *sarrancolin* marble is cut to conforming shape and has a molded edge. The forecorners are set with pierced corner mounts, each consisting of two parts. The upper section is composed of a pierced cartouche, the frame of which is stippled and set with C-scrolls. Above is a central rosette, flanked by flame motifs, and below the scrolls are set with guilloche studded with cabochons. These lower scrolls flank a convex, shell-like motif terminating in a leafy pendant. This element is set over the shoulders of the lower section of the mount that is also pierced. Its stippled frame is set with flame and leaf motifs, the latter clasping the winged extensions and forming a terminating pendant.

A plain molding extends down the outer edge of the leg to the foot. The front of each foot mount is shield shaped and framed on either side by C-scrolls. A flat oval cabochon surrounded by shellwork set with small oval cabochons is set on a stippled ground. A leafy bud rises above. The back of the foot mount is composed of an elongated cabochon crowned with similarly elongated gadroons.

The front of the commode is set with a gilt bronze framing mount that follows and hides the edges of the doors. It consists of a simple undulating strip molding ending in foliate scrolls. Branches of berried laurel wind along its length. A second inner gilt bronze frame follows the outline of the inserted panel of Japanese lacquer. It consists of foliate C- and S-scrolls set with short branches

of berried laurel and scrolled clasping leaves. The upper and lower C-scrolls are edged with shellwork and lined with small C-scrolls. The apron mount is centered by a trilobed, shell-like form set with alternating large and small cabochons. To either side extend stippled strips that are curved to follow the profile of the apron. They have raised borders and are set with a flamelike motif. Each is clasped below by a sort of leafy branch emerging from a corolla and terminating in a scroll of leaves. From it extend, on either side, plain moldings that follow the serpentine lower profile of the commode and continue down the inner edges of the front legs. The small lock plate escutcheon is formed by C- and S-scrolls edged with shellwork and acanthus. The framing mounts on the sides of the commode are of the same model as that on the front of the piece, with the central sections removed and the simple flat strip mounts joined.

The front is set with a shaped panel of Japanese black lacquer decorated with red, gold, and brown. In the foreground at the base of the panel and extending up its sides is a flat ground with rocky outcroppings. At the left the ground is covered with flowering shrubs and trees and a low thatched hut; a more substantial building with a curved roof appears in the upper background. To the right, above a large flowering plant, a leafless tree rises and supports two pheasants. Three fenced gardens extend into the space above. In the center of the middle ground, waves break on the rocks to either side and against the walls of a cluster of houses in the background. Four cranes fly in the sky above.

Some areas of the lacquer—the rocks, the pheasants, and the tree trunks—are raised. The areas on each side of the front bordered by the inner and outer gilt bronze frames

are decorated with European lacquer. On the left, flowering leafy vines with tendrils climb up bamboo poles that form part of a fence. On the right, a flowering plant of a different variety also bearing tendrils rises without support from a ground that is covered with shorter flowering plants of a different species and three melonlike fruits.

The left side of the commode is set with a panel of raised Japanese black lacquer featuring colors of red, gold, and greenish-brown. The cusped frame encloses a handled vase that stands on a short-legged plinth and contains an arrangement of leaves, a stem of daisies, a branch of magnolia, and a branch of an unidentified flowering shrub. The right side of the commode is set with a panel of black raised lacquer of similar shape with decorations of red, gold, greenish-brown, and brown Japanese lacquer and European lacquer applied on top. The frame encloses a handled vase on a footed plinth. The vase contains an unidentified leafy branch of flowers on the left and stems of bamboo on the right. In the center rises a leafless gnarled twig. A red butterfly has settled on the right of the supporting plinth. The remaining surfaces of the commode are painted with European black lacquer. The inner surfaces of the doors are veneered with cherry, with an inner frame of amaranth. The interior is lined with pale blue silk trimmed with silver *galon* (fig. 5-1).



Figure 5-1 Front, doors open.

MARKS

The commode is stamped “B.V.R.B.” on the upper surface of both the front legs (fig. 5-2).

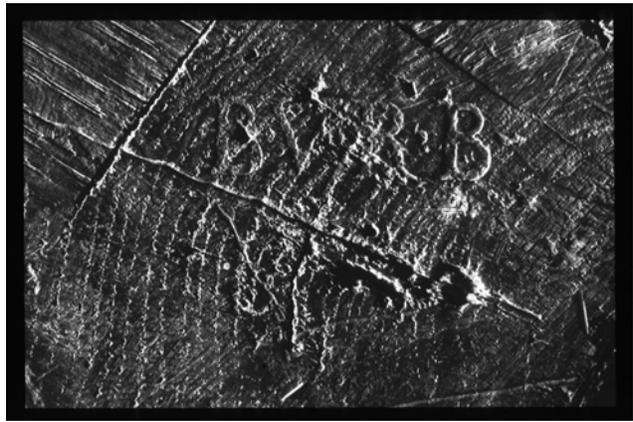


Figure 5-2 The top of the front right leg, stamped “B.V.R.B.”

COMMENTARY

The commode was made by Bernard II van Risenburgh.¹ While, with the exception of one other, the form of this *commode à vantaux* appears to be unique in Van Risenburgh’s oeuvre, gilt bronze mounts of the same model appear on a number of other commodes of various forms, all either bearing his stamp or attributed to him.² Only the mounts forming the central cartouche seem to be of a unique model, and they have been specifically designed to follow the curved outline of the panel of Japanese lacquer and to allow for the opening of the doors. The lacquer panel occupying the front of this commode seems to have been cut from the front doors of a Japanese cabinet. Both Chinese and Japanese lacquer cabinets were popular and exported from the East in the late seventeenth century, mainly by the Dutch East India Company but also the French East Indies Company.³

In the first half of the eighteenth century the *marchands-merciers* of Paris sold these cabinets in their shops. Designed by François Boucher, the 1740 trade card of Edme François Gersaint “À la Pagode” shows such an example.⁴ It was mainly from these cabinets that a supply of fine black lacquer was found to satisfy a new fashion introduced by these influential salesmen. The order for this commode was almost certainly made by the *marchand-mercier* Thomas Joachim Hébert, for whom Van Risenburgh worked until 1750.⁵ Hébert would have supplied the lacquer, and it would have been at his command that the finished commode be lined with the blue silk trimmed with silver *galon* that still survives inside the piece. This dismembering of old Japanese cabinets was newly fashionable, and a commode of similar size and model, now preserved in the Louvre,⁶ was delivered on September 26, 1737, for the use of Maria Leszczyńska, queen consort of Louis XV, in her *cabinet de*

retraite at Fontainebleau (fig. 5-3).⁷ The commode is listed in the *Journal* of the Garde-meuble de la Couronne:

Du 26 septembre 1737.

Livré [sic] par le sieur Hébert.

Pour servir dans le cabinet de retraite de la Reine à Fontainebleau

*1115. Une commode de bois de la Chine à placages, vernie façon du Japon, chantournée par devant et sur les côtes à deux tiroirs par devant fermans à clef, à dessus de marbre d'Antin, enrichie de baguettes et ornemens de cuivre doré d'or moulu; longue de 47 pouces par le derrière, sur 22 pouces de profondeur par le milieu et 32 pouces de haut.*⁸



Figure 5-3 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), *Commode*, 1737. Oak frame; fruitwood (cherry wood?) veneer; Japanese lacquer; vernis Martin; gilt bronze; Anpewter (or *sarrancolin*) marble, 85 × 127 × 61 cm (33.5 × 50 × 24 in.). Paris, Musée du Louvre, OA 11193. Photo: © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Studio Sébert / Art Resource, NY

This is the first mention of a piece of furniture decorated with lacquer in the *Journal* and also the first appearance there of the *marchand* Hébert, who went on to supply the Crown with furniture frequently set with panels of Japanese lacquer or painted with European lacquer through the early 1750s.

Because of the similarity of these two pieces it is possible to date the Museum's example to the same decade as the royal commode. The apron mounts and the feet are of the same model, as is the major part of the outer framing mounts; those of the Museum's commode are a little more elaborate in some areas. The mounts forming the central cartouche differ, as do the corner mounts. While the mounts of the inner cartouche on the Museum's commode carefully follow the profile of the Japanese lacquer panel,

those on the royal commode do not. They contain a panel of elongated horizontal format, of the sort that might have been found on the front of a trunk with a rounded lid or on top of a rectangular cabinet.⁹ Because these framing mounts are nevertheless formed in a wider cartouche, it could be argued that the Museum's more carefully designed commode is the prototype. Although the mounts have been determined to be late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century replacements, it is likely that they are copies of the original mounts (See "Technical Description" below).

Two other commodes by Van Risenburgh of this size exist. One was formerly in the Wrightsman collection,¹⁰ and the other was in the collection of the Marquess of Lansdowne.¹¹ They are both similarly mounted but decorated on the front with three panels of lacquer, the vertical seam covered by gilt bronze mounts, thus forming a tripartite front. These divisions, whether to hide the seam or outline cartouches, were novel and developed later in the century into a more extreme form by *ébénistes* such as Jean-Henri Riesener working in the neoclassical style.

PROVENANCE

–ca. 1951: René Weiller (Paris, France); –1953: Rosenberg & Stiebel, Inc. (New York, NY), sold to J. Paul Getty, 1953; 1953–65: J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976, donated to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1965.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Tales in Sprinkled Gold: Japanese Lacquer for European Collectors, J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center (Los Angeles), March 3–May 24, 2009.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wescher 1955, 118, 121–22, 128, fig. 11; Watson 1966, vol. 1, 152; Huth 1971, 91, n.p, fig. 238; Wilson 1975, 113, ill.; Alcouffe 1988, 282, 284, fig. 4; Kjellberg 1989, 139; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 25, no. 24; Wolvesperges 2000, 164–65, fig. 77; Wilson and Hess 2001, 14, no. 24; Heginbotham and Schilling 2011, 92–93, 95, figs. 1, 5; Heginbotham 2013, 152, fig. 3; *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 136–37, no. 33 (T. Wolvesperges).

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The carcass of the commode is made primarily of white oak. The four corner posts run from the floor to the top of

the case and are shaped from massive blocks measuring approximately 8.5 cm wide x 10 cm deep in section. The two front posts are made of single blocks of wood, while each of the rear posts is made of two pieces: a 6.5-cm-wide post with a 2-cm-thick board laminated to its outside edge. Each of the side panels is made of five horizontal boards, butt-joined, and is attached to the front and rear posts with tongue-and-groove joints.

The case bottom is made as a bipartite frame-and-panel construction. The front, side, and rear rails are all attached to the corner posts with horizontal sliding dovetails whose mortises run through the entire thickness of the posts (fig. 5-4); the medial rail is joined to the frame at the front and back with double-pinned mortise-and-tenon joints. The panels are each made of four butt-joined boards, with the grain oriented front to back; the edges are rabbeted at the top such that the panels are flush with the frame on the inside of the case. The curved lower edge of the case front and sides runs below the rails of the case bottom; numerous short blocks of oak have simply been glued to the bottom of the rails and carved to shape in order to create this form.



Figure 5-4 Sliding through-dovetails are used to attach the case bottom rails to the posts. The groove for the side panel attachment is visible on the inner face of the post.

The case top is also a bipartite frame-and-panel assembly with panels made from four butt-joined boards arranged with the grain running from front to back. The four perimeter rails are attached to the corner posts with single, open-faced dovetails (fig. 5-5); the medial rail is joined at the front and back with double-pinned mortise-and-tenon joints.



Figure 5-5 Top.

The case back (fig. 5-6) is made as a quadripartite frame-and-panel construction; the rear rails of the case top and case bottom assemblies act as the upper and lower rails of the back. The three medial stiles are joined to the upper and lower rails with single-pinned mortise and tenons. These tenons are single shouldered; they are the full width of the stiles and are flush with their interior face.



Figure 5-6 Back.

The interior middle shelf is made from solid oak boards assembled in “breadboard” fashion. On either end, roughly triangular battens, with the grain running front to back, are set in horizontal dadoes in the front and rear posts. The center portion of the shelf is made of two butt-joined boards, with the grain running side to side, attached to the battens with tongue-and-groove joints. The battens project about 1.5 cm to the inside of the front posts, allowing the center portion of the shelf to be inserted after the case was entirely assembled.

The doors of the commode are also constructed in breadboard fashion. X-radiography reveals that horizontal battens (approximately 5.4 cm wide) are attached at the top and bottom with tongue-and-groove joints to the main panel, which is composed of five butt-joined vertical boards.

The exterior of the commode has been veneered with alder wherever Japanese lacquer is not present; this veneering serves several functions. It covers the joints of the commode, reducing the chance that the lacquer will crack along these glue lines. In addition, the veneer raises the surface of the commode to be flush with the applied Japanese lacquer panels, and, finally, the alder is a smoother and less porous wood than the oak substrate and thus requires less surface preparation before lacquering. On the doors, the grain of the exterior veneer runs at a diagonal, from the outside upper corners toward the lower middle corners. On the case itself, the veneer grain essentially follows that of the underlying oak. For the tight, compound curves of the top outside corners of the front posts (where veneering would be very difficult) large blocks of alder have been inserted into the oak and carved to shape.

The watered blue silk lining of the commode appears to be original. It is a fine, plain weave with approximately 195 threads per inch in the warp and 120 in the weft. This has been meticulously cut and fitted to the interior of the case and is adhered with an unidentified adhesive. A silk tape of the same color has been glued across the front edge of the middle shelf; this tape is also a plain weave but is less fine, with 170 and 65 threads per inch in the warp and weft, respectively. Along the front perimeter edge of the lining there is a narrow patterned *galon* in yellow and silver (fig. 5-7). The silver threads are made from fine, flat silver wire wrapped around a yellow silk core. The warp and weft of the *galon* have approximately 120 and 60 threads per inch, respectively.

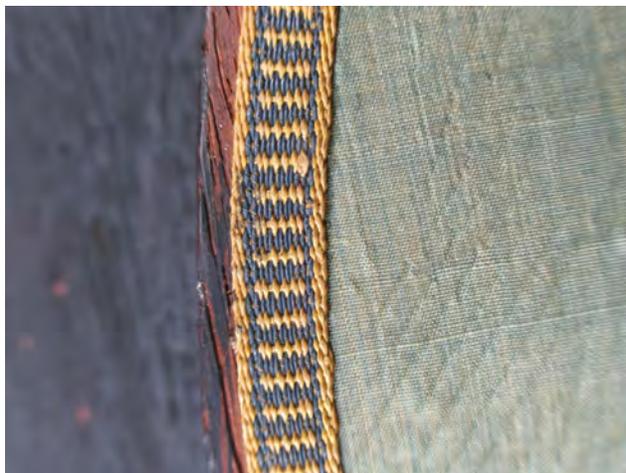


Figure 5-7 Detail of the *galon*, or trim, at the perimeter of the interior's silk lining.

The commode features four large panels of Japanese lacquer that have been applied to the front and sides of

the case. The panels on the two front doors extend out to a line just outside the raised cartouche but inside the gilded bronze frame. The fact that the seam is not covered by the mounts is unusual. These panels seem to have come from the front doors of a Japanese cabinet; the location of the original lock can be clearly seen in X-radiographs (fig. 5-8). The Japanese panels on the sides of the commode extend out to a seam under the framing mounts. They are of lesser quality and detail than those on the front, leading to speculation that they might have been taken from two different pieces of Japanese furniture; however, cross-section samples from both the front and left side panels, examined microscopically in visible light, ultraviolet light, and with the electron microscope, show that the structure and composition of the foundation layers of the lacquer are strikingly similar (figs. 5-9, 5-10). This suggests that the panels may well originate from the same piece of Japanese export lacquerware, and it is perhaps more likely that these were originally side panels with less elaborate decoration. A Japanese lacquer cabinet in the Präsidenschaftskanzlei in Vienna, also featuring a central lock and floral side panels with handles, likely represents the form of furniture from which the lacquer panels were taken (fig. 5-11). Paired holes, visible in X-radiographs above the midline of both panels, may indicate the position of the handles on the sides of the original Japanese cabinet (fig. 5-12).



Figure 5-8 Composite X-radiograph of the commode's front doors. The pattern of damage in the central area is the result of the removal of the lock that adorned the original Japanese cabinet from which the lacquer was taken.

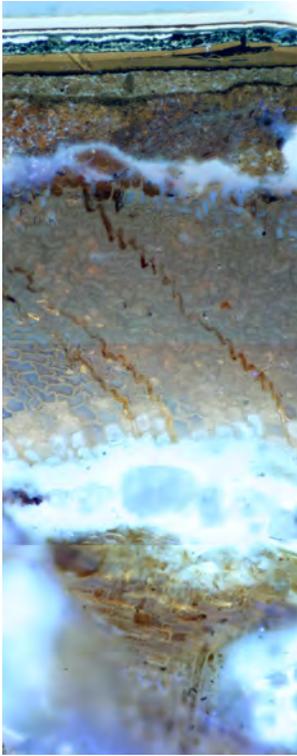


Figure 5-9 Composite cross-section photomicrograph under ultraviolet illumination showing the Japanese lacquer from the front panel.



Figure 5-10 Composite cross-section photomicrograph of a sample from the left side panel showing a layer structure similar to the front lacquer panel.



Figure 5-11 Japanese lacquer cabinet, seventeenth century. Wood, lacquer, gilded bronze, 91 × 69 × 49 cm (35.8 × 27.2 × 19.3 in.). The Imperial Furniture Collection, Vienna, Präsidentschaftskanzlein, MD 035838. © Bundesmobilienvverwaltung, Hofmobiliendepot, Möbel Museum Wien / Photo: Silvia Miklin-Kniefacz.

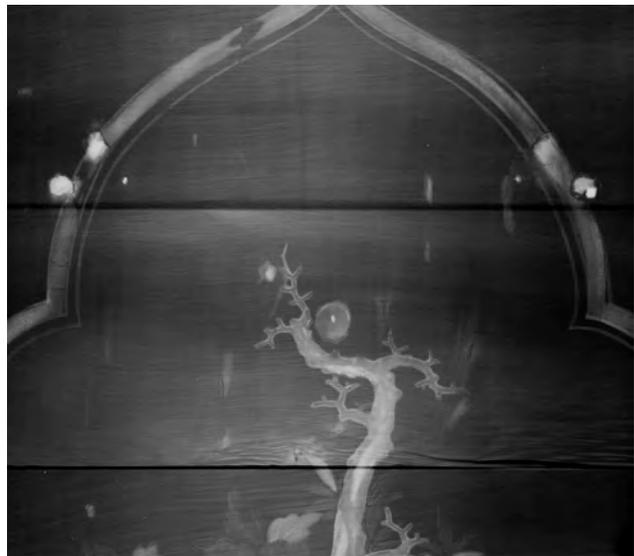


Figure 5-12 X-radiograph of the paired holes on the commode's right side (white areas overlapping the cartouche); these may indicate the position of the handles on the sides of the original Japanese cabinet.

The Japanese lacquer panels on this commode were thinned by the French craftsmen to approximately 0.75 mm in thickness, a remarkable feat. In this state, the panel could be applied to the commode's curved carcass very much like a veneer, presumably using familiar techniques. As André Jacob Roubo describes, the surface of both the lacquer and the frames would be heated, coated with hide glue, carefully covered to protect the delicate surfaces, and then clamped in place with cushions, wooden cauls, or glue presses.¹²

Based on cross-section and organic analysis,¹³ it appears that the Japanese lacquer was built up from seven base layers over which complex decorative layers have been applied. The substrate for the panel is a coniferous wood; unfortunately, the remaining material is too thin to permit a precise identification. The ground consists of four layers of predominantly clay-based material bound in *thitsi* lacquer, drying oil, and starch. The starch may relate to the addition of rice or wheat starch mentioned in the literature as a component in *mugi*- and *nori*-type foundations and fillers.¹⁴ Above the ground, a thin layer of carbon black appears, followed by a substantial layer of dark-colored, transparent lacquer consisting of a mixture

of *urushi* and *thitsi*, with the addition of a significant amount of drying oil. *Thitsi* lacquer, harvested from trees grown in Southeast Asia, made its way to Japan through the trade of the Dutch East India Company as well as Chinese merchants. This less expensive lacquer is frequently found as an admixture with *urushi*, particularly in lower lacquer layers of export lacquerware.¹⁵ A variety of decorative techniques have been used above the base layer of transparent lacquer, including *hiramakie* (flat designs of sprinkled metal powder), *takamakie* (similar designs in relief), *kirigane* (individually laid pieces of cut metal foil), and *nashiji* (evenly sprinkled metal flakes used as a background texture).¹⁶ In the case of decoration observed in the cross section, the metal powder or flakes were then covered with a layer of transparent *urushi* mixed with drying oil. The metal flakes are predominantly gold and silver, but there are significant European additions in brass and tin powders.¹⁷ The raised cartouche that surrounds the central panel is itself a European addition with the low relief likely created in lead white over a Japanese design visible in the X-radiograph (fig. 5-13).



Figure 5-13 Image and corresponding X-radiograph of the border on the front, the latter showing the radio-opaque raised cartouche extending over a now-concealed Japanese decoration with a sprinkled dot pattern.

The original French imitation lacquer surrounding the Japanese lacquer panels still survives in most areas of the front doors. It was applied in three primary layers (fig. 5-14). The first layer, applied directly to the veneered wood substrate, is a yellow clay-based ground, similar to

gilder's bole, bound in a simple varnish composed of pine resin and a drying oil, likely linseed oil. The use of this ground layer indicates a distinct choice by the European lacquerer and differs from other approaches to preparing grounds for European lacquer, which usually relied on

colored varnish applied directly to the wood or a traditional chalk and animal glue (gesso) ground. The yellow ground layer used here is uncommon among the objects examined in the Getty Rococo collection and only appears in one other object, the Van Risenburgh *cartonnier* (see cat. no. 3). In this case, the French craftsmen appear to have made a concerted attempt to imitate the entire layer structure that they would have observed through close examination of the Japanese export lacquer panels with which they were working. Without knowledge of or access to the original Japanese materials, the European craftsmen used the materials at hand, gilder's bole and oil-resin varnish, to create a warm yellow-beige foundation similar to the Japanese ground.

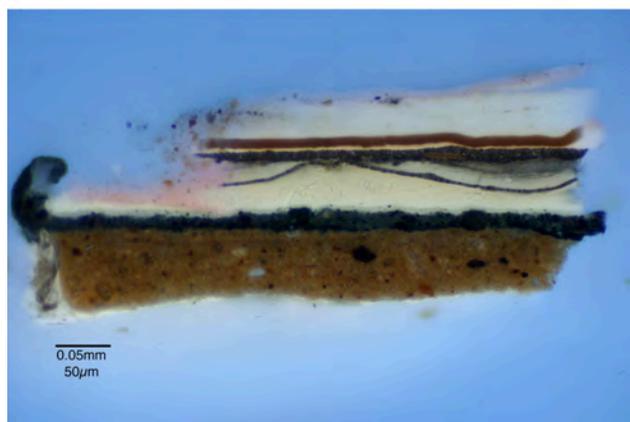
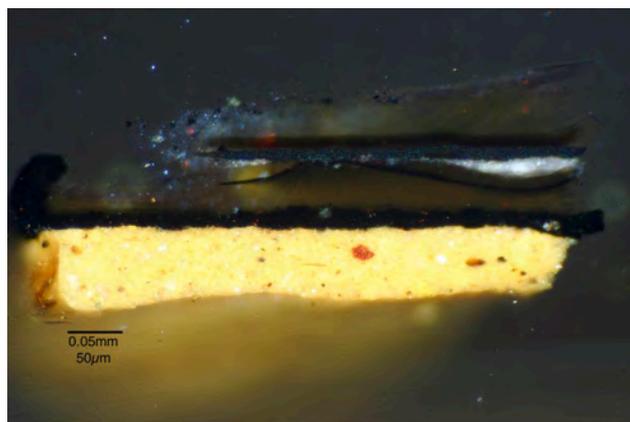


Figure 5-14 Cross-section photomicrograph of the European lacquer in visible light (top) and ultraviolet illumination (bottom) showing the layer structure of the original ground, original pigmented and transparent varnishes, and later restorations.

On top of this preparatory layer, a black ground layer was applied using bone or ivory black suspended in a varnish containing pine resin, drying oil, and soft copal that shows signs of being heated during preparation. A similar varnish recipe is described in an eighteenth-century treatise by Jean-Félix Watin as *verniss blanc au copal*, used by the famous Martin brothers.¹⁸ The Watin recipe

however, specifies the use of Venice turpentine, synonymous with larch turpentine from *Larix decidua* in the late eighteenth century, which was not detected in these samples.¹⁹ Instead, it appears that pine resin, a less expensive soft resin from trees in the Pinaceae family, was used in its place. After the application of the pigmented layer, the surface was sealed with a coating of clear varnish of composition similar to that used in the pigmented layer below. The decoration of the French lacquer relies primarily on brass and pewter metallic powders and vermilion pigment. From the ground layers through the surface decoration, this European coating shows a clear imitation of the Japanese layer structure, albeit with the use of entirely Western materials. While the original decorative French lacquer survives in good condition on the doors, the plain black legs and rails of the case appear to have been stripped and relacquered using a chalk (or possibly gypsum) ground with black lacquer above.

The Japanese lacquer panels are in good condition overall. There have been several campaigns of restoration to replace losses along vertical cracks, and in some areas, particularly on the sides, the designs have been reinforced with brass, pewter, and gold paints. Several layers of darkened restoration varnish, covering both the Asian and European lacquer, diminish the brilliance of the original work.

Seventeen representative gilded bronze mounts were removed from the commode and analyzed for bulk alloy composition by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF). The XRF results suggest very strongly that all of the mounts date to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. All of the mounts have higher than normal levels of zinc, along with very low levels of tin, silver, antimony, and iron. This combination of characteristics makes an eighteenth-century date extremely unlikely. The compositional results from these mounts were evaluated in comparison to a reference database using machine learning algorithms to generate an estimate of their date of manufacture.²⁰ This process yielded an estimated date of 1905 ± 37 years with 90% confidence.

Several other lines of evidence support the conclusion that the mounts on this commode have been replaced. The mounts were compared visually to other Van Risenburgh mounts in the Getty collection, including the corner cupboards (cat. no. 4), the *cartonnier* (cat. no. 3), the long cabinet (cat. no. 1), and the red lacquer commode (cat. no. 6). When compared directly to these mounts, this commode's mounts are significantly less finely chased. This comparison is particularly evident in comparison to

the nearly identical mounts from the red lacquer commode.²¹ In addition, there are numerous areas where what appear to be file marks from fitting the mounts as well as soldering joints between sections have actually been cast in, suggesting that the current mounts are copies of mounts that had been previously fitted to furniture. Finally, when the mounts are removed, X-radiographs reveal numerous filled holes beneath the mounts that do not correspond with the current screw holes. The fact that virtually all of the extraneous holes lie beneath the current mounts suggests that they may be faithful copies of the originals.

The marble of the top is commonly called *sarrancolin* and appears to be most similar to the variety called *Beyrede* or *Antin Sarrancolin* by Dubarry de Lassale.²² It is a highly brecciated metamorphic limestone with predominantly gray fragments in a dark red to pinkish matrix. Veins of white, cream, and yellow cross through the matrix. Within the gray limestone fragments are numerous fossil traces of rudist bivalves (fig. 5-15). The top is between 3.2 cm and 3.5 cm thick and has a molded edge consisting of a small cavetto at the top, separated by a narrow fillet from a larger ovolo at the bottom (fig. 5-16). The top has been broken along several lines and has been repaired with iron cramps and cement.

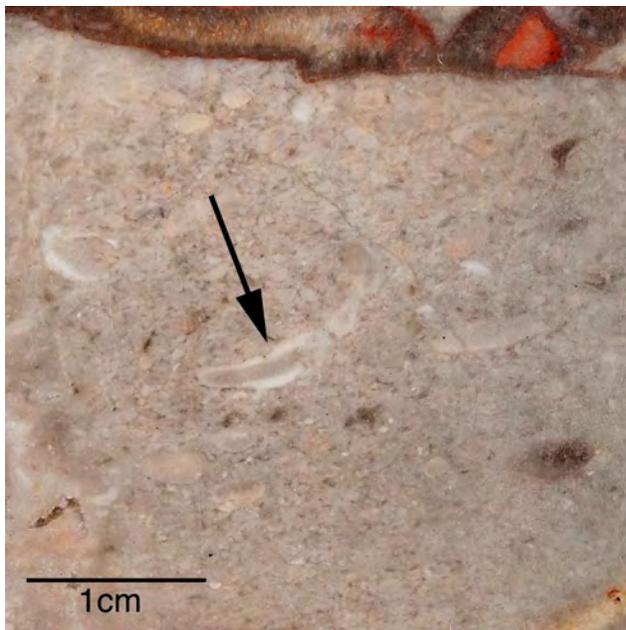


Figure 5-15 Detail of marble tabletop with rudist bivalve fossil traces.

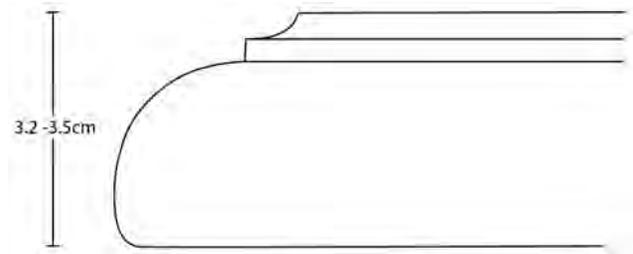


Figure 5-16 Profile of the commode's marble top.

A.H., with J.C., M.S., and R.S.

NOTES

1. For information on Bernard II van Risenburgh, see primarily Pradère 1989a, 183–99; Baroli 1957, 56–63. See also Daniel Alcouffe, in *Louis XV . . .* 1974, 323–24.
2. For a *commode à vantaux* set with ninety Sèvres porcelain plaques made in about 1760 for Élisabeth Alexandrine de Bourbon-Condé (1703–1765), known as Mademoiselle de Sens, see Pradère 1989a, 197, fig. 189; *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 166–69, no. 46 (D. Alcouffe).
3. See Impey and Jörg 2005, 294. On the larger stakes of remounting, including lacquer panels onto furniture, see Crest 2017.
4. Sargentson 1996, 81, pl. 47. The label, engraved by the comte de Caylus after François Boucher, is dated 1740. Part of the text of the label reads, “Pagodes, Vernis et Porcelaines du Japon.”
5. For information on Thomas Joachim Hébert, see Pradère 1989a, 32–33; Verlet 1958, 10–29; Vittet 2009, 177–98.
6. The commode was sold at auction in 1988, Sotheby's, *Important Mobilier, June 17, 1988* (Monaco: Sotheby's, 1988), lot 752, and acquired by the musée du Louvre (inv. OA 11193). See Alcouffe 1988; Pradère 1988; Alcouffe 1990, 142–44, no. 68; Alcouffe, Dion-Tenenbaum, and Lefébure 1993, 140–43, no. 42.
7. On the queen and her cabinet in Fontainebleau, see Lalanne 2012, 1–38.
8. Paris, Archives nationales de France, O/1/3312, fol. 92v–93r (cited by Alcouffe 1988; Pradère 1988).
9. Two examples have passed through the market. See Sotheby's, *Bel Ameublement, December 9, 1984* (Monaco: Sotheby's, 1984), lot 958; and Marc-Arthur Kohn, *August 7–12, 1997* (Cannes: Marc-Arthur Kohn, 1997), lot 1013.
10. Watson 1966, vol. 1, 151–52, no. 92. The commode was sold at Sotheby's, 1985, lot 370. See Sotheby's, *Important French Furniture, Decorations, Continental Ceramics and Carpets, November 8–9, 1985* (New York: Sotheby's, 1985).
11. Sold, Sotheby's, 1970, lot 44. H: 2 ft. 8 1/2 in., W: 4 ft. 7 in., D: 1 ft. 11 in. (82 x 140 x 58 cm). See Sotheby's, *Rugs and Tapestries, 18th-Century Clocks and Sculpture, and Important French Furniture, December 11, 1970* (London: Sotheby's, 1970). The mounts on

- this commode were struck with the crowned C stamp, enabling a date of between 1745 and 1749 to be given to the piece.
12. Roubo et al. 2013, 215.
 13. This included analysis by Fourier transform infrared microspectroscopy (FTIR), immunochemical assay (ELISA), and gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (GC-MS) along with optical and electron microscopy.
 14. Webb 2000, 26, 28; Heginbotham and Schilling 2011, 103–4.
 15. Heginbotham and Schilling 2011, 97–99.
 16. Heckmann 2002.
 17. Identification of the metal flakes was made by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) and environmental scanning electron microscopy (ESEM).
 18. Watin 1778, 237.
 19. Langenheim 2003, 322.
 20. This was done according to the methodology described in Heginbotham, Erdmann, and Hayek 2018.
 21. The mounts from the other Van Risenburgh pieces listed here were also analyzed by XRF for alloy composition and were found to be of typical composition for the eighteenth century.
 22. Dubarry de Lassale, Barco, and Bresc-Bautier 2000.





6. Commode

French (Paris), ca. 1740

By Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766, master before 1730)

White oak, set with panels of Chinese red lacquer on a coniferous substrate, and sycamore maple* painted with European lacquer; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron hardware and lock; *brèche d'Alep* top

H: 2 ft. 9 in., W: 3 ft. 9 in., D: 1 ft. 9 1/2 in. (83.8 × 114.3 × 54.9 cm)

72.DA.46

DESCRIPTION

The rectangular commode, decorated with gilt bronze mounts, has splayed convex sides, a convex front, and a serpentine lower profile. It is supported on four cabriole legs of five-sided section. It contains two drawers that possess keyholes but no mechanics or lock boxes. There is no visible horizontal division between the drawer fronts, the lower of which carries the apron. The top of *brèche d'Alep* is shaped to conform to the top of the commode, and it has a molded edge.

Each front corner is set with a pierced corner mount that consists of two parts. The upper section is composed of a pierced cartouche, the frame of which is stippled and set with C-scrolls. Above is a central rosette flanked by flame motifs, and below the scrolls are set with guilloche studded with cabochons. These lower scrolls flank a convex shell-like motif that terminates in a leafy pendant. This element is set over the shoulders of the lower section of the mount, which is also pierced. Its stippled frame is set with flame and leaf motifs, the latter clasping the winged extensions and forming a terminating pendant. A plain ribbed molding extends down the outer edge of the leg to the foot.

The two drawers are framed by a complex mount cast in a number of sections. Above, a simple undulating strip mount is set with a twisting leafy vine that carries berries. It is set at the center with a pierced escutcheon composed of three leaf-bordered C-scrolls enclosing an arrangement of five feathers. These rise from a pierced and ribbed cabochon, supported by apposed C-scrolls that flank the keyhole. The escutcheon terminates below in a pendant of three leaves and a bud.

The upper corners of the framing mount are occupied by two rising and joined C-scrolls, which are bordered on their outer edges with flame motifs and by smaller C-scrolls on their inner edges. At the junction of the scrolls a double cup of leaves containing berries rises from a small cabochon, while a pendant of three leaves and a bud hang below. Each side of the framing mount consists of a simple undulating strip mount set with a leafy vine with berries. This rises from a similarly entwined short section of pierced guilloche that emerges from a curved composition of leaves. This forms the lower corner of the frame and is set on the outside with a short leafy branch with berries that curves down toward the juncture of the legs and the body of the commode.

The lower part of the framing mount is likewise composed of a simple flat molding entwined with a leafy vine that emerges from a scroll formed by the aforementioned cluster of leaves. These moldings are attached to two C-scrolls set above the central apron mount. The latter is centered by a trilobed shell-like form, set with alternating large and small oval cabochons. To either side extend stippled strips that are curved to follow the profile of the apron. They have raised borders and are set with a flamelike motif. Each is clasped below by a short leafy branch that emerges from a corolla and terminates in a scroll of leaves.

The keyhole escutcheon on the lower drawer front, a nineteenth- or twentieth-century replacement (See “Technical Description” below), consists of five feathers supported by two C-scrolls and is of the same form as these elements forming the escutcheon above, centering the upper frame. The framing mounts of the sides of the commode are of the same model as that on the front of the piece, with the central section (containing the keyhole escutcheon and the apron mount) removed and the

simple flat strip mounts joined. The feet are mounted with gilt bronze *sabots* that adopt many of the same design features of the commode's other mounts. Each features five feathers bounded by C-scrolls.

The fronts of the drawers are set with a large panel of Chinese red lacquer with illustrations in gold, brown, and black. The scene of an emperor and his court is visually centered by a short staircase painted above the apron. It leads to an open terrace surrounded by a low framed and paneled wall. A large central screen is painted with mountains, groups of trees, and swirling clouds above. In front of the screen is a group of five figures: the central seated and bearded emperor, flanked by two female and two male courtiers. To the left a group of seven courtiers stand in a loose arrangement, looking in various directions. On the right a group of five courtiers stand similarly posed. One man stands on the carpet, with his back toward the viewer; another, near the top of the flight of steps, is also turned to face the seated emperor. Short leafy plants rise here and there, both inside and outside the walled area, while a crane carrying a ribbon-tied double scroll in its beak flies from the left toward the central group.

The left side of the commode is set with a panel of Chinese red lacquer, depicting in gold and brown a low-lying building set on a rocky shore. Waves and promontories are painted in the foreground. Behind the building are trees of several species and bushes. Three birds fly in the sky. The right side of the commode is also set with a panel of Chinese red lacquer painted gold and brown (fig. 6-1). At its center is a house on stilts over water with a bridge extending from it. In the foreground are waves, promontories, and small plants. A tree rises behind the house, and a branch of a fir tree extends into the scene from the left. Two birds fly in the sky, which also contains clouds. The remaining surfaces of the commode have European red lacquer applied in a hue that matches the ground of the Chinese lacquer.



Figure 6-1 Right profile.

MARKS

The commode is stamped “B.V.R.B.” on the top of both the left and right rear leg stiles, and each of these stamps is flanked on either side by a “JME” mark, for *jurande des menuisiers-ébénistes* (fig. 6-2).



Figure 6-2 On top of the right rear leg stile are the stamps “JME,” “B.V.R.B.,” “JME.”

COMMENTARY

The *commode* is stamped “B.V.R.B.,” for Bernard II van Risenburgh.¹ A number of commodes of this design and size, with gilt bronze mounts of the same model, exist. Unless noted otherwise, they all bear Van Risenburgh’s stamp.

a) Musée des Beaux-Arts de Caen. A commode of the same model and mounts, with the exception of the keyhole escutcheon on the lower drawer. It is veneered with panels of Chinese black and gold painted lacquer showing pagodas, trees, and bridges (fig. 6-3).²

b) Victoria and Albert Museum, London. A commode of the same model and mounts, with the exception of the lower keyhole escutcheon, which resembles that on the Caen commode. An added arrangement of gilt bronze is found above the center of the lower part of the framing mount. It is veneered with panels of black and gold Japanese lacquer, painted with mountains, landscapes, trees, pagodas, and water.³

c) Sold at Christie’s, Monaco, June 16, 2001, no. 714. A commode of the same model and mounts, with the exception of the lower keyhole escutcheon, which resembles that on (a) and (b) above. It is veneered with panels of black and gold Chinese lacquer showing a bridge, trees, two women, and a child.⁴

d) Partridge Fine Arts, London. Summer exhibition, 1984, no. 23. A commode of the same model and mounts, with the exception of the lower keyhole escutcheon and the apron mount. The latter is a replacement as the

profile of the original mount can still be seen on the apron. It is veneered with panels of black and gold Japanese lacquer showing mountainous landscapes and trees.⁵

e) Sold, Artcurial, Paris, December 13, 2005, lot 119, from the collection of Jean Rossignol and now in the collection of the Musée du Domaine départemental de Sceaux. A commode of the same model and mounts, with the exception of the lower section of the corner mounts and the feet mounts. The front, sides, and top are veneered with panels of Coromandel lacquer showing buildings, trees, rocky escarpments, and a bridge peopled with numerous figures. It is not stamped “B.V.R.B.” but bears the mark of the château of Sceaux.⁶

f) Sold, Palais Galliera, Paris, June 18 and 19, 1964, lot 184. A commode of the same model and mounts, with the exception of those at the corners and feet. Veneered with wood marquetry of large scrolls on a pale striped ground. Stamped “DELORME” for Adrien Faizelot-Delorme (master 1748, died after 1783).⁷

g) Sold, Christie’s, New York, May 21, 1996, lot 323. A commode of the same model and mounts, with the exception of the mounts at the feet. Veneered with tulipwood and amaranth with end cut marquetry. The commode had been previously sold at Christies, New York, in 1994 (October 26, lot 87), and in 1982 at Sotheby’s, Monaco (November 6, no. 186).⁸



Figure 6-3 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), *Commode*. Caen, Musée des Beaux-Arts. Photo: Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen, France / Bridgeman Images

Four other commodes of this model, similarly mounted but painted with red and gold European lacquer, exist.⁹

And only one, also similarly mounted, stamped “B.V.R.B.” and “JME” on the left strut, is decorated, like the Museum’s commode, with Chinese red lacquer. It was probably the one delivered by Lazare Duvaux to Marchioness d’Haussy in 1756 (fig. 6-4).¹⁰ All of them show the same scene of numerous figures robed in gold standing on an open-air terrace surrounded by low screens as found on the Museum’s commode. But the Museum’s commode is the only one that has a figure in the foreground to the right. Consequently, the painter who did the first European lacquer commode copied the scene after the Chinese lacquer commode now at the Louvre Abu Dhabi and not the Museum’s commode, and he or the other painters then followed suit. One, who painted the commode now in the musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, could not resist the use of European vanishing perspective when depicting the central carpet.¹¹ The fact that two nearly identical large panels of Chinese lacquer, with only one figure distinguishing one from the other, were used to make two very similar commodes is a good example of the production of multiples that China did for lacquer export. An X-ray of the Museum’s commode reveals that the panel of Chinese lacquer only extends to just above the portrayal of the central staircase. This addition to the scene is painted in European lacquer, and the steps are therefore drawn in European perspective (See “Technical Description” below).



Figure 6-4 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), *Commode*, ca. 1753–56. Oak with Chinese lacquer panels, European lacquer, gilt bronze mounts, *campan* marble top, 84 × 116 × 54.5 cm (33 × 45.75 × 21.5 in.). Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi. Photo: © Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi / Thierry Ollivier

By the early 1750s, when the *marchand-mercier* Thomas Joachim Hébert had retired from business, Van Risenburgh was working primarily for Lazare Duvaux. In this *marchand-mercier*’s surviving journals for the years 1748 to 1758 the following commodes are listed:

[May 1754] M. Dufour, le père: Une commode de vernis rouge à pagodes, ornée partout en bronze doré d’or moulu, le marbre de vert campan, 720 l.¹²

[. . .]

[June 1754] Mme la Duchesse de Mirepoix: une commode plaquée en vernis rouge à pagodes, garnie partout en bronze doré d’or moulu, avec son marbre de vert campan de trois pieds & demi, 720 l.¹³

[. . .]

[October 1756] Mme la Marq. d’Haussy: une commode de vernis la Chine, en rouge à pagodes, garnie partout en bronze doré d’or moulu, avec son marbre de vert campan de trois pieds & demi, 720 l.¹⁴

[. . .]

[December 1756] S. A. S. Mgr le Duc d’Orléans: une commode de lacq rouge, garnie partout en bronze doré d’or moulu, le marbre d’Alep, 720 l.¹⁵

[. . .]

[March 1758] M. Duperron: une commode de vernis rouge, garnie partout de bronze doré d’or moulu, avec son marbre de vert campan de trois pieds & demi, 720 l.¹⁶

These five *commodes* all cost the same and are similarly described. It is very likely that they are the ones that are known today. All had marble tops of *vert campan*, except for the single lacquered example sold to the duc d’Orléans, which is described as having a top of *brèche d’Alep*. The Museum’s commode is topped with this stone, and it is therefore possible that it is the one made for Orléans. It is of interest to note that the first three of the five red lacquer commodes to be purchased from Lazare Duvaux were in European red lacquer, which may have been more popular in its pristine condition than the older genuine Chinese lacquer.

PROVENANCE

–1972: Private Collection (Paris, France) [sold, *Objets d’art et d’ameublement principalement du XVIIIe siècle*, Palais Galliera, Paris, March 2, 1972, lot 109, through French and Company to the J. Paul Getty Museum].¹⁷

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Imagining the Orient, J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center (Los Angeles), October 5, 2004–April 3, 2005.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alcouffe 1988, 282, fig. 3; Kjellberg 1989, 139; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 26, no. 26; Wolvesperges 2000, 188–89, fig. 85; Wilson and Hess 2001, 15, no. 26; Heginbotham et al. 2008, vol. 2, 1100–1103, 1105, figs. 1–2, 4–5; *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 156 n. 3 (T. Wolvesperges).

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The substrate of the commode is constructed primarily of white oak and is an example of very neat and precise cabinetmaking. The nature of the construction suggests a certain order of assembly. First the front and rear legs on each side would have been attached to the case sides. Each of the four leg posts runs from the top of the case to the floor and is made of two long boards laminated together to form a solid square block from which the final curved form was shaped. In the rear, the laminates of the rear posts are each approximately 3 cm x 6 cm and are arranged front and back, while in the front, the laminates are each approximately 4 cm x 8 cm in section and are arranged side to side (fig. 6-5). The sides of the case are made of three or four butt-joined boards, with the grain running horizontally, which were attached to the front and rear posts with long tongue-and-groove joints.



Figure 6-5 Detail of the top of the left rear leg showing its laminated construction from two pieces of oak. The image also shows the maker's stamp, the back rail slid into place from above, and the small patch inserted to fill the groove cut for the case side attachment.

Next, the back panel, comprising a tripartite frame-and-panel construction, would have been fitted to the rear legs. The lower rail would have been inserted first, attached with unpinned mortise-and-tenon joints (none of the mortise-and-tenon joints in this commode are pinned)

(fig. 6-6). The two upright medial stiles were then attached to the lower rail of the case back, also using unpinned mortise-and-tenon joints, and the raised panels—flat on the inside and raised with a cove molding on the exterior—were placed in grooves in the posts and framing members. The simple quarter-round cove molding on the edges of all the panels in this commode is unusual, being found in only one other entry in this catalogue, cat. no. 8, the double desk by Van Risenburgh. The upper rail, mortised to receive the medial stiles, was then slid into place from above, which explains the unusual unpinned slip joints (single-shouldered, open, mortise-and-tenon joints) used to attach the rail to the legs at either end (fig. 6.7). At this stage, the upper rail would have been left unglued for reasons explained below.



Figure 6-6 Back.



Figure 6-7 Top.

The next element to be added would have been the case bottom. The lower rail of the back is grooved along its bottom interior edge and serves as a rear rail for the case bottom. The side rails of the case bottom are attached to the back rail with a tongue-and-groove joint, while at the front, the only attachment is a very small tongue that fits into the groove at the very end of the front rail. There is no attachment between the rails and the leg posts, and

likewise there is no attachment between the rails and the case sides.

The case bottom's front rail was then inserted from the front, attached to the legs with sliding dovetail joints. These joints were subsequently covered by veneer. Separate pieces of oak were glued to the bottom of the front edge of the rail on each side, adding the depth needed to create the curved profile of the skirt (fig. 6-8).



Figure 6-8 The case without marble top, drawers, or mounts showing the bottom exterior rail and cutout for the drop apron.

The dustboard, or middle panel assembly, was then incorporated into the structure in a manner similar to that of the lower panel, with one notable exception. Here, the rear rail is attached to the back legs with simple tongue-and-dado joints; the dados are cut into the leg, at the full thickness of the rail, from front to back. Given that the case back construction was already in place, the back rail would have been the first piece inserted, followed by the four front-to-rear rails (mortise and tenoned at front and back) and the three raised panels, with cove-molded edges facing up. Finally, the front rail would have been inserted, again from the front. The sliding dovetail for this joint clearly runs through to the front of the front leg and is covered by veneer.

The top panel assembly was the last section to have been added. The two medial rails are through-tenoned into the top, rear rail (fig. 6-9). The side rails are dovetailed into the legs at the front and back with single open-faced dovetails. Notably, these have been positioned so that they hide the grooves cut into the legs for the side panels. These grooves were cut along the entire length of the inside faces of both the front and rear legs, presumably while the wood was still square in cross section. Below the level of the case bottom, much of the grooving was cut away when the leg was shaped and some was covered by apron blocks or veneer, but, especially at the rear, the grooves are still clearly visible (fig. 6-10). At the top of the

leg, the end of the groove for the back panels is also exposed; however, a small patch of wood has been inserted to fill the gap, adjacent to the tenon for the rear rail (see fig. 6-5). Similar gaps in the top of the legs of Van Risenburgh's *commode à vantaux* (cat. no. 5) either have been left open or the patches have fallen out.



Figure 6-9 The front-to-rear medial rails were attached to the top rear rail using unpinned through mortise and tenons, seen here.



Figure 6-10 This image shows the long groove cut in the leg post that extends below the case bottom.

In addition to the dovetails, the side rails of the case top are also tongue and grooved into the top rail of the back panel, utilizing the same groove used for the top panels. In order for this to be accomplished, the top rear rail of the back must have been lifted up enough to expose the groove along its top edge. The rails and panels of the top would then have been fitted together and the entire top assembly then lowered into place and glued.

The construction of this commode is virtually identical to that of the Van Risenburgh commode with Chinese red

lacquer at the Louvre Abu Dhabi described in “Commentary” above (fig. 6-4), with the exception that the majority of mortise-and-tenon joints and slip joints in the related commode are pinned.

The surface of the commode has been veneered with panels of Chinese red lacquer supplemented by European lacquer on the legs and edges. When examined using X-radiography and infrared reflectography, the Chinese red lacquer panels on the front of the drawers appear to be from a single large panel of lacquer, not reassembled from sections of a folding screen as is more commonly encountered (see cat. no. 13). The original form and function of such a wide panel of red lacquer is not evident, but it is possible that such panels were taken from chests, tabletops, or even produced specifically for export to be used as ornaments in European architecture or furniture. Black lacquer panels of similar format may be found in the so-called Red Room of the Chinese Pavilion of Drottningholm Palace in Stockholm. The Chinese red lacquer panels on this commode have been cut down to approximately 1 to 1.3 mm in thickness, leaving just a very thin layer of the original conifer wood substrate in place (fig. 6-11). This veneer of lacquer then was applied to the case and to the drawer fronts, presumably using traditional veneering techniques. The panels that adorn the drawer fronts and two sides of the commode have a layer structure typical of Chinese export lacquer and similar to that of the Chinese lacquer panels used on the Dubois *secrétaire* (cat. no. 13). First, two clay-containing foundation layers, bound with a mixture of drying oil and blood, were applied to the wooden substrate. Markers for cedar oil and gum benzoin were also detected in the foundation layers. While cedar oil has been detected in other examples of Chinese export lacquer, gum benzoin is not typically reported in these objects.¹⁸ This foundation also contains an interlayer of paper between the two applications of the coarse foundation mixture. The foundation was then coated with two layers of laccol-based Asian lacquer both of which contain cedar oil, laccol carbohydrates, and tannins. The lower lacquer layer is pigmented with red iron earth and the upper with the brighter, more expensive vermilion.

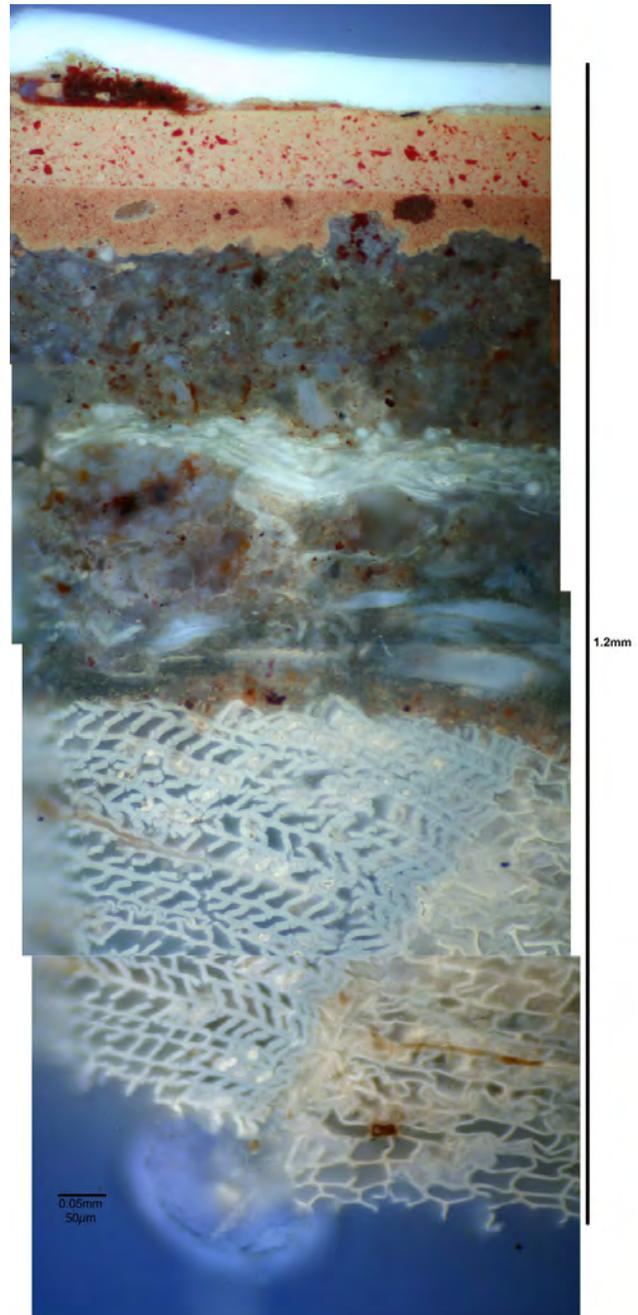


Figure 6-11 Composite ultraviolet photomicrograph of the Chinese lacquer showing an overall thickness of 1.2 mm, including what remains of the original wood substrate.

As mentioned in “Commentary” above, the Chinese panels, which cover most of the commode’s surface, do not extend to the top of the upper drawer or the bottom edge of the lower drawer front. Here, a French craftsman added European imitation lacquer to extend the composition, including, at the bottom, the set of stairs in Western perspective. In X-radiography and infrared photography, the top and the bottom of the Chinese lacquer panel are readily apparent (fig. 6-12).



Figure 6-12 Composite X-radiograph of the drawer fronts, showing the extent of the Chinese lacquer; overlaid with a visible image, UV fluorescence image, and infrared reflectogram.

Around the Chinese lacquer panels, the entire case has been veneered with sycamore maple applied with the grain running diagonally on both sides and on the front legs. This veneering is much smoother and more fine-grained than the oak substrate, creating a surface that is more amenable to a high polish lacquer imitation and requires less grain filling than oak would. On the top corners of the front leg posts, large blocks of solid sycamore maple have been spliced into the oak substrate (fig. 6-13). This has been done because this area is visible behind the pieced corner mounts and thus needed to be given a coat of European red lacquer. Normally this would require the area to be veneered with smooth-grained domestic wood first; however, as veneering around a very tight curve would be difficult, this entire corner block has been cut out and a piece of solid, smooth sycamore maple inserted.



Figure 6-13 Detail of one of the solid sycamore maple blocks inserted into the tops of the legs to provide a smooth substrate for lacquering.

The European lacquer was built up in a series of spirit-resin varnish layers applied to the areas surrounding the Asian lacquer panels as well as the legs (fig. 6-14). First, a pigmented varnish was applied directly to the sycamore maple veneer. This layer appears deep within the wood grain when examined in cross section at high magnification (fig. 6-15). Based on additional analysis with scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM-EDS) and pyrolysis gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (py/GC-MS), the layer was colored with vermilion and bound in a sandarac-spirit varnish, likely with the addition of gum elemi and camphor. These materials are in keeping with a fine eighteenth-century “white varnish.”¹⁹ In the eighteenth century, sandarac was the most common major ingredient for transparent gloss lacquers. The resin readily dissolved in alcohol and dried quickly. It was also one of the lightest-colored resins available at the time and hard enough to take a high polish.²⁰ The softer resins gum elemi and camphor would have been added to compensate for the brittleness of the sandarac and to plasticize the resin film, improving the toughness and adhesion of the lacquer.²¹ For European red lacquer, spirit-resin varnishes were the predominant recipes listed

in period literature; drying oil-resin and essential oil varnishes were rarely mentioned.²² While some period recipes for red lacquer call for the use of shellac and colophony, there does not appear to be any evidence that either of these materials were used in the original European lacquer on the commode, with the exception of the later restoration coatings carried out, at least in part, with bleached shellac. The presence of bleached shellac, developed in the early nineteenth century, can be detected analytically by the identification of specific chlorinated resin compounds.



Figure 6-14 Detail of the foot with mount removed showing area of European lacquer sampled for analysis.

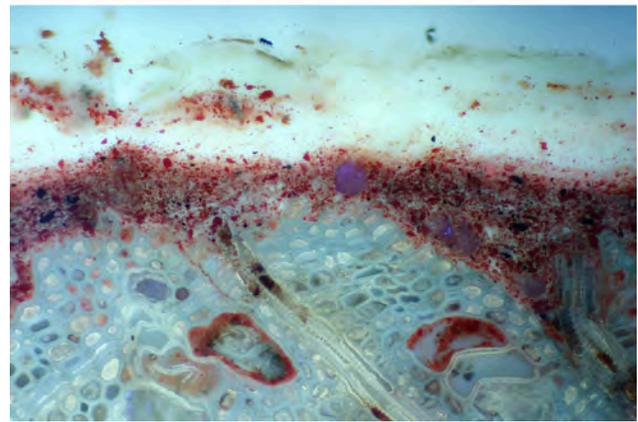
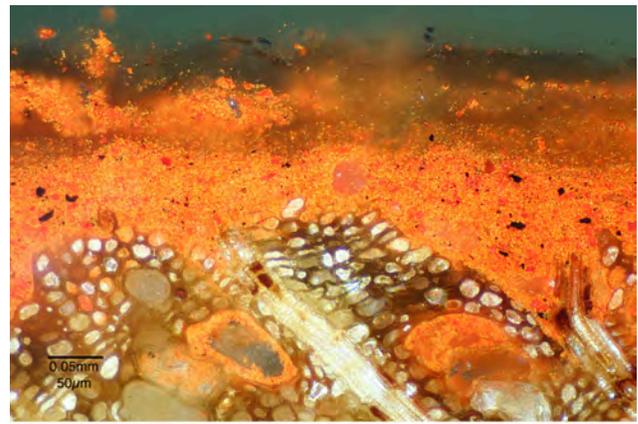


Figure 6-15 Cross-section photomicrograph in visible light (top) and ultraviolet illumination (bottom) showing the buildup of the European varnish layers.

In general, the gilt bronze mounts on the commode appear to be original, finely chased, and in good condition. Twenty brass elements from the commode were analyzed by X-ray fluorescence spectrometry (XRF) for alloy composition. The results for eighteen of the twenty measurements were consistent with eighteenth-century manufacture. The escutcheon of the lower drawer appears to be a late nineteenth- or twentieth-century replacement, as does one small section of foliate molding from the top drawer. These two elements contain elevated levels of zinc and extremely low levels of impurities such as silver, antimony, and iron, making it highly unlikely that they date to the eighteenth century.

The marble top is made from *brèche d'Alep* from the Bouches-du-Rhône, France. The multicolored breccia marble is somewhat unusual for its very small (< 5 cm) cobbles. Normally *brèche d'Alep* contains large cobbles up to 30 cm in length. The predominant color of the cobbles is a tan-cream, although red and even black cobbles are present.

A.H., with J.C., K.P., M.S., and R.S.

NOTES

1. For more information on Bernard II van Risenburgh, see primarily Pradère 1989a, 183–99; Baroli 1957, 56–63. See also Daniel Alcouffe, in *Louis XV . . .* 1974, 323–24.
2. 85 x 114 x 56 cm; *Musée des beaux-arts et collection Mancel, Caen* 1984, 57; Tapié 1994, 124.
3. 83.3 x 115.2 x 53.3 cm; Jones Collection, acc. no. 1094-1882. Wilk 1996, 102–3.
4. H: 2 ft. 8 in., W: 3 ft. 9 in., D: 1 ft. 8 7/8 in. (81.5 x 114.5 x 53 cm); sold, Christie's, *Important Mobilier, Orfèvrerie et Objets d'art dont une collection provenant d'une villa du Cap Ferrat, June 16, 2001* (Monaco: Christie's, 2001), lot 714.
5. H: 2 ft. 9 in., W: 3 ft. 8 1/2 in., D: 1 ft. 9 in. (84 x 113 x 53 cm); Partridge Fine Arts Ltd., *Summer Exhibition 1984, June 4–July 28, 1984* (London: Partridge Fine Arts Ltd., 1984), no. 23.
6. 82.5 x 125.5 x 54 cm; Artcurial, *Collection Jean Rossignol, tableaux anciens, objets d'art et bel ameublement du XVIIIe siècle, December 13, 2005* (Paris: Artcurial, 2005), lot 119, inv. no. 2005.14.1; *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 134–35, no. 32 (Y. Bapt).
7. 82.5 x 119 x 50.5 cm; Palais Galliéra, *Tableaux anciens, objets d'art et de bel ameublement du XVIIIe siècle, June 18 and 19, 1964* (Paris: Palais Galliéra, 1964), lot 184. See also Pradère 1989a, 180, fig. 164.
8. H: 2 ft. 10 1/4 in., W: 3 ft. 8 1/2 in., D: 1 ft. 9 1/4 in. (87 x 112.5 x 54 cm); Christie's, *Important French Furniture from a Private Collection, May 21, 1996* (New York: Christie's, 1996), lot 323; Christie's, *Important French Furniture, Objects of Art and Sculpture, October 26, 1994* (New York: Christie's, 1994), lot 87; Sotheby's, *Important French Furniture, Decorations, and Clocks, November 6, 1982* (New York: Sotheby's, 1982), lot 186. See also Pradère 1989a, 190, fig. 176.
9. 1) Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, from the Collection Trimolet. See Boutemy 1957, 169, fig. 3. The European lacquer decoration on the front of the commode differs in some respects from that on the Museum's example. The carpet in the middle ground is shown in true perspective, and the low screen below it extends beyond the confines of the lower gilt bronze frame to cover the area of the apron. The flying crane does not carry a ribbon-bound double scroll in its beak.
- 2 and 3) Sold, Sotheby's, *Bel ameublement: Collection de M. et Mme Delplace, ancienne collection René Weiller et divers amateurs, June 15, 1996* (Monaco: Sotheby's, 1996), lots 132 and 133, a pair, formerly in the collection of the duc de la Rochefoucauld-Doudeauville. They are painted with European lacquer, and in both examples the painted decoration extends beyond the lower framing mount over the surface of the apron. These commodes are now in a private New York collection. They are also illustrated in Vacquier 1910, pl. 31.
- 4) Another example is reputed to be in a private collection in Le Mans, France.
10. Now in the collection of Louvre Abu Dhabi. H: 33 in., L: 45 3/4 in., D: 21 1/2 in. (84 x 116 x 54.5 cm). I thank Alexis and Nicolas Kugel for this information and the photograph of the commode.
11. See note 9 above.
12. Duvaux 1873, 200, no. 1771.
13. Duvaux 1873, 205, no. 1814.
14. Duvaux 1873, 298, no. 2606.
15. Duvaux 1873, 305, no. 2675.
16. Duvaux 1873, 353, no. 3061.
17. French and Company invoice, March 16, 1972, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
18. Heginbotham et al. 2016; Petisca et al. 2011; Matsen, Petisca, and Auffret 2017.
19. For instance, Bonanni 1723, 33–34, describes a recipe of Father Zahn that calls for “ten ounces of wine spirit, two ounces of sandarac, and two of common Terebentine or Venice; the latter is best.” Watin 1773 also discusses the use of gum elemi and camphor in many sections.
20. Walch 1997, 28.
21. Webb 2000, 105; Koller and Baumer 1997, 55.
22. Walch 1997, 134.





7. Pair of commodes

French (Paris), ca. 1750

By Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766, master before 1730)

White oak* veneered with bloodwood*, kingwood*, and amaranth*; drawers of walnut* and white oak; gilt bronze mounts; brass, steel, and iron locks; modern *campan grand mélange* marble tops

H: 2 ft. 10 3/16 in., W: 3 ft. 3 15/16 in., D: 1 ft. 10 1/16 in. (86.8 × 101.4 × 56 cm)

71.DA.96.1–2

DESCRIPTION

Each rectangular commode has a bowed front and sides and is raised on four six-sided cabriole legs. The *campan grand mélange* marble top is of conforming shape and has a molded edge. The front corners are set with large pierced mounts that extend down to the top of each forward leg. Cast in one piece or soldered together, the lower pierced section consists of opposed foliate scrolls terminating in pierced flame work. Above, rising from stylized oak leaves, is a large oak leaf bearing cabochons and supporting a small oak twig bearing an acorn and two cups. The upper part of the mount is cast with a burst of flame motif surrounding an aperture from which depends a branch of oak with leaves, acorns, and cups. Held in this branch is a hunting trophy consisting of a horn, a spear, a powder flask, and a bow; on the alternate corner, a quiver, a gun, and a bag.

The front of each commode (fig. 7-1) is set with a large asymmetrical framing mount consisting of foliate C-scrolls, C-scrolls edged with a pierced flame motif set with small cabochons, and hipped scrolls forming at the top right small plinths. Convolvulus and roses twine among the scrolls at the upper corner. The keyhole pierces a large flame motif set between scrolls at the center of the top drawer. The apron takes the form of a large leaf set with cabochons. One frond of the leaf extends below the lower profile of the commode, which is edged along the front and sides and down the outer edges of the legs with a plain gilt bronze molding. This molding is lacking, from the middle of the sides and extending down the corners of the back legs, from commode .2.



Figure 7-1 Front of 71.DA.96.1.

A semicircular disc of wood has been attached to the front lower edge of the bottom drawer to receive the apron and its adjoining mounts. When the drawer is closed, this semi-disc fits into a corresponding shape carved out of the carcass in that area.

The front of the lower drawer is set with a leaping stag at bay and two hounds. All are set on a strip of rocky ground that is sparsely covered with tufts of grass. A keyhole pierces the central tuft.

The sides of the commode are set with large framing mounts, each of the same design (fig. 7-2). Separate models for the left and right sides have not been made, and in order to make the left frame seem different from the right, a section of pierced flame work has been removed. Lacking from all four framing mounts are the tips of the central frond of a large leaf carrying

cabochons, set at the center of the lower frame. The frame is composed of elements similar to those on the front, with the addition of an area of pierced guilloche and a small section of rock work.



Figure 7-2 Right side of 71.DA.96.1.

The feet are shod with mounts formed by double C-scrolls centered by pierced flame work, backed by large cabochons framed with additional C-scrolls and leaves. Each commode is veneered on the front with a shaped panel of bloodwood whose grain is arranged horizontally. From the left extends a large shattered oak tree in kingwood. At the sides, the shaped panels of bloodwood are set with twining stems set with flowers and leaves in end cut kingwood. The remaining areas of the commodes are veneered with amaranth.

MARKS

The carcass of each commode is stamped “B.V.R.B.” on the top of each front leg (fig. 7-3).



Figure 7-3 Stamped “B.V.R.B.” on the top of the proper left leg stile (71.DA.96.2).

COMMENTARY

The commodes are stamped “B.V.R.B.,” indicating that they were made by Bernard II van Risenburgh.¹ Due to similarities in design and provenance, it is possible that the commodes were part of a suite of furniture consisting of a pair of corner cupboards (fig. 7-4),² a pair of larger commodes (fig. 7-5),³ and a single commode (fig. 7-6).⁴ The set was part of the collection of the Albertine line of the House of Wettin, and according to a 1798 addendum to a 1794 inventory, some elements of the group were moved from the Kurländer Palais in Dresden to the audience chamber of the Dresdner Residenzschloss.⁵



Figure 7-4 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), Corner cupboard (*encoignure*) (one of a pair), ca. 1750. Now destroyed. Residenzschloss, Dresden. Pictured in Adolf Feulner, *Kunstgeschichte des Möbels* (Berlin: Propyläen-Verlag, 1927), 325, fig. 227.



Figure 7-5 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), *Commode* (one of a pair), ca. 1750. Oak carcass and drawer fronts, walnut sides and drawer bottoms, frame of amaranth, marquetry of amaranth, satinwood, rosewood, and other exotic woods that could not be identified through macroscopic analysis; mounts of brass and firegilding; *brèche d'Alep* marble top; brass and iron locks, 92.5 × 150 × 64.5 cm (36.5 × 59 × 25.4 in.). Dresden, Kunstgewerbemuseum–Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, inv. no. 37418. © Kunstgewerbemuseum, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden / Foto: Frank Dornacher



Figure 7-6 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), *Commode*, mid-eighteenth century. Oak carcass and drawer fronts, walnut sides and drawer bottoms, frame of amaranth, marquetry of amaranth, satinwood, rosewood, and other exotic woods that could not be identified through macroscopic analysis; mounts of brass and firegilding; marble top; brass and iron locks, 89 × 146 × 67 (35 × 57.5 × 26.4 in.). Dresden, Kunstgewerbemuseum–Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, inv. no. 37348. © Kunstgewerbemuseum, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

The Museum's commodes and those remaining in Dresden stand alone in Van Risenburgh's oeuvre. Pieces of similar shape and size are not found elsewhere among his works; nor is the marquetry typical of his style. As seen in the previous catalogue entries, he reemployed the same models of mounts throughout his career and had an established repertoire that makes his works readily recognizable. However, the profuse mounts on these commodes are of designs quite unlike any others used by him. Their attachment to the commodes was ill considered. The small trophies covering the corner mounts completely obscure the upper profile of the corners, while the clumsiness of the hanging mount extending below the lower edge of the top drawer is not found elsewhere on this master's usually carefully conceived pieces.

If Van Risenburgh had been instructed, by whichever *marchand-mercier* he was working for at the time, to design the commodes and the corner cupboards in a more bombastic, asymmetrical style suitable for the Saxon court, it is not likely that such a change would have affected the quality of his work. If it were not for the presence of his stamp on these pieces and the commodes now in the collections of the Kunstgewerbemuseum of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, they would not be attributed to Van Risenburgh on the basis of their design and quality. However, an exception can be made for the corner cupboards, which were unfortunately destroyed in the 1945 bombing of Dresden in World War II. A photograph published in 1927 shows them to be of similar size and shape as the Museum's lacquer mounted pair (cat. no. 4).⁶ The mounts on the central foot are of the

same model as those found in the same area on the Museum's corner cupboards and are the only other known examples of this mount. Elsewhere the mounts on these lost pieces were as wild and asymmetrical as those found on the rest of the set.

The commodes and the corner cupboards are reputed to have been given by the dauphin Louis (1729–1765), son of Louis XV and father of Louis XVI, to his father-in-law, Frederick Augustus II, elector of Saxony and king of Poland (1696–1763).⁷ The dauphin married his daughter Maria Josepha of Saxony (1731–1761) in 1747. There are, however, no documents to prove this provenance. These objects are only documented from the late eighteenth century as pieces of the suite listed in a 1798 addendum to a 1794 inventory of the Dresdner Residenzschloss.⁸

In 1918 the Kaiser and all the other ruling kings and princes of Germany renounced their thrones, and the Saxon properties were partially divided between the state and the Wettin family. Schloss Moritzburg remained in the possession of the Albertine line of the Wettin dynasty, whose members used it as a residence. In 1945, Prince Ernst Heinrich of Saxony (1896–1971) left the castle, and it became the property of the state.⁹ It seems that in 1925 the prince was already contemplating the sale of the commodes now at the Museum that he had been allowed to keep. On August 18, the Paris office of Duveen sent Joseph Duveen an urgent telegram in which the writer declares:

Returned [to] Paris today. [. . .] Nothing [of] interest [to] us [in the] King [of] Saxony's collection. [. . .] Pair [of] commodes signed Burb too rich [and] heavy made probably for [the] German market[.] [P]rice asked [is] ten for [the] pair.¹⁰

A day later, on August 19, the correspondent in Paris writes concerning the king of Saxony's collection:

The pair of Commodes for which they are asking £10,000. I do not care for [them] at all. They are small and over decorated. They are signed "Burb," but the bronzes are not by Caffieri as suggested.¹¹

On August 20 another letter informs Duveen:

It is a[b]solutely useless your going to Dresden. My report is quite correct and you can rely on it. The only piece which is interesting for the Firm is, as I told you in my yesterday's letter and in my wire of the previous day, the rock crystal jug. [. . .] As to the two Commodes about which I wrote you in my report yesterday, the Prince can only sell one, and the price for it is £5,000. He cannot sell the other one because the state does not

allow him to do so, although it is his property. Even if we could get the pair, you would not buy them. The commodes are very small and have got heavy mounts, which although of good quality, have probably been made for the German market. I am trying to obtain for you a photograph of the Commodes.¹²

Eight years later, a letter dated June 26, 1933, from the New York office to London reads:

I am obliged to you for your letter of the 24th June, telling me about the commodes belonging to Ball, ex the King of Saxony, but while I appreciate your writing me about them, they would not be suitable for the position in Mrs. Dillman's house.¹³

And a letter dated June 24 from London to New York states:

I see by Thursday's telegram from New York that the Commodes you have in view for Mrs. Dillman are too large, as the space is only four feet. The Commodes, belonging to Ball, coming from the King of Saxony, are about this size, if not a little smaller. We sent you the photograph to New York about two years ago. They have marqueterie by Van Risenburgh which, at the present time, is very dark but which would surely clean up lighter, and they have the finest L.XV mounts I have ever seen, quite unique in design. They are asking £10,000 for them, but I am sure today we could get them much cheaper. Perhaps, at a push, we could get them on approval, so as to avoid the Lady [Mrs. Dillman] being taken to see them by Jean Seligmann or others. At the present time, they are at Jansen's where Ball has taken a room temporarily.¹⁴

This correspondence shows that the prince sold or consigned the commodes to the dealer Alexander Ball.¹⁵ At least eight years later it was decided that they were not suitable for Anna Thomson [Dillman] Dodge, although at some unknown later date the commodes were sent to America by Ball to the dealer and interior decorator Jansen. Here, presumably, Anna Thomson Dodge saw them and approved their purchase, mainly because they were of the right size for the breakfast room at her home, Rose Terrace, outside Detroit, in Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan.¹⁶

PROVENANCE

1798: possibly the collections of the House of Wettin Kurländer Palais, Dresden, Germany; in 1798, moved to the audience chamber of the Dresdner Residenzschloss, Dresden, Germany;¹⁷ ca. 1924–early 1930s: Prince Ernst Heinrich von Wettin, German, 1896–1971 (Schloss

Moritzburg, Porzellanquartier in the apartments of Frederick Augustus II, near Dresden, Germany), sold to Alexander Ball, early 1930s;¹⁸ early 1930s–1934: Alexander Ball, German (Paris, France), sold to Anna Thomson Dodge, 1934;¹⁹ 1934–70: Anna Thomson Dodge, American, born Scotland, 1871–1970 (Rose Terrace, Breakfast Room, Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan), upon her death, held in trust by the estate, 1970;²⁰ 1970–71: Estate of Anna Thomson Dodge, American, born Scotland, 1871–1970 [sold, *The Highly Important Collection of French Furniture and Works of Art*, Christie's, London, June 24, 1971, lot 102, through French and Company to the J. Paul Getty Museum].²¹

EXHIBITION HISTORY

The J. Paul Getty Collection of French Decorative Arts, Detroit Institute of Arts (Detroit), October 3, 1972–August 31, 1973 (displayed October 3–December 17, 1972).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Feulner 1927, 324–25; Coleridge 1971, 36, ill.; Christie's London, Anna Thomson Dodge sale, June 24, 1971, 83–84, lot 102, ill. (.1 only); Wilson 1975, 113, ill.; Stürmer 1982, 57, fig. 13; Kjellberg 1989, 139; Pradère 1989a, 189, fig. 175; Gruber 1992, vol. 2, 388, ill.; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 27, no. 28; Ramond 2000a, 128–29, ill.; Wilson and Hess 2001, 15, no. 28.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The two commodes are constructed nearly identically. In each commode, the massive legs, or posts, each made of one piece of wood, are tapered and run from the top to the bottom of the case. A bipartite frame-and-panel construction forms the case back (fig. 7-7), the back legs acting as the vertical framing stiles and the horizontal rails attached with unpegged mortise-and-tenon joints. The tenons of the horizontal rails are barefaced, that is, the front (interior) surface is not shouldered and is flush with the surface of the rail. The top is made in a bipartite frame-and-panel construction with a trapezoidal shape (fig. 7-8). The ends of the four rails are dovetailed into the legs, each with a single, open-faced dovetail, except for the rear rail, which has paired dovetails. The dovetail joints between the front rail and the legs are unusual; the top inner edges of the legs are notched, so the edges of the front rail (behind the dovetail pin) can rest on them (fig. 7-9). This serves as an additional lateral stabilization for

the rails and is an improvement over the simpler arrangement seen on the commodes in cat. nos. 5 and 6.



Figure 7-7 Back of commode .1.



Figure 7-8 Top of commode .1.



Figure 7-9 Detail of the notched dovetail joint between the front rail and proper left leg.

The case bottom and the dustboard between the drawers are made in bipartite frame-and-panel construction, similar to the top (fig. 7-10). The dustboard is framed with rails on all sides. The case bottom, however, has no rear rails of its own, utilizing instead the lower rail of the case back as its rear member. Thus, the panels of the case bottom are, along their rear edges, housed in grooves cut into the lower rail of the case back. The side rails of the case bottom and dustboard are connected to the rear and front posts with sliding half-dovetails (fig. 7-11). The front rail of the case bottom is also joined with sliding half-dovetails to the front posts; these appear to have been cut through the entire thickness of the posts, allowing the rail to be pushed in from the front. A number of short blocks of oak have been glued to the bottom front edge of the rail and carved to form the apron contour.



Figure 7-10 Bottom of commode .1.



Figure 7-11 Detail of the sliding half-dovetails that are used to connect the side rails with the rear and front legs.

The front rail of the dustboard is dovetailed to the front posts in the same manner as for the case bottom; however, the dovetail housings at the level of the dustboard are not cut through the whole depth of the posts, so the rail must have been slid into place from the back (interior). The rear rail of the dustboard is attached to the back posts with sliding half-dovetails that do not

extend through the full thickness of the posts, and therefore the rails must have been inserted from the front (interior). The rear rail is supported at its center by an oak peg that passes through the medial stile of the case back into the rear edge of the rail.

The medial rail of the case bottom is attached to the lower rail of the case back with a wedged, through-mortise-and-tenon joint, with a single wedge placed at one side of the tenon. The drawer runners and guides are glued on top of the panels of the dustboard and the case bottom to compensate for the trapezoidal shape of the frame and to build the rectangular support, necessary for the drawers. The drawer guides for the lower drawer (which prevent side to side movement of the drawer) are attached directly to the lower rail of the case back with through-tenons. The case sides, made of three to four butt-joined, horizontally oriented boards each, are attached to the posts with tongue-and-groove joints.

The details of the construction make clear the order of assembly of the cases. For each, the maker must first have attached the bottom and middle front rails to the front leg posts and the case back assembly to the back leg posts. Next the medial rails and panels of the case bottom and drawer divider were assembled between the front and rear sections. The corresponding side rails were then slid into their half-dovetail mortises in the legs from the outside. Only after these rails were in position could the side panels be slid into place between the front and rear legs; the sides must have been inserted from the bottom, as the grooves into the leg posts do not extend to the top of the posts. The case top was the last section to be assembled. All of the rails and panels were fitted together and dropped into the dovetail mortises in the tops of the four posts. In order to accomplish this, the inside front corners of the rear posts had to be notched, allowing the corners of the panels to drop cleanly into position. The notches were filled, after assembly was complete, with small blocks of oak, still visible on the tops of the legs (fig. 7-12).



Figure 7-12 Detail of a small block of oak, added to fill the gap around the notched inside front corners of the rear legs, after assembly.

The drawers are mainly made of European walnut; only the curved fronts are made of oak. At the back, the drawers are assembled with widely spaced through-dovetails, and at the front, half-blind dovetails. Whereas a pin is conventionally placed at the top and bottom of a dovetail joint, in this case, on both ends, a tail is the final element (figs. 7-13, 7-14). The variable sizes and shapes of the dovetails and their irregular arrangement seem to be in keeping with other Van Risenburgh drawer joints (see cat. nos. 6, 8, 10). Each of the drawer sides and backs is made of a single board with the top edges rounded. The fronts are complex laminates of oak, subdivided into three or five sections in the length. Some of the single sections are themselves made up of two pieces of wood, stacked vertically and butt joined to each other. The drawer bottoms are housed in grooves in all four sides, fixed with additional walnut strips glued to the bottom edges of the sides. The bottom boards, with the grain oriented from side to side, are plain and not beveled. On the bottom edge of the lower drawer fronts, semicircular blocks of oak form pendants. The applied aprons of the cases are cut away to house the pendants when the drawers are closed (fig. 7-15).



Figure 7-13 Top view of the upper drawer of commode .1.



Figure 7-14 Bottom view of the lower drawer of commode .1.



Figure 7-15 Three-quarter view without drawers showing internal construction and the cutaway apron.

The variegated walnut of the drawers appears to retain large sections of sapwood, some with exposed insect channels, which is unusual. Many surfaces still show the marks of a toothing plane; the distances between the teeth are very small (0.4–0.8 mm), similar to the marks on the rest of the commode. During a previous restoration the insides of the drawers were treated with a pigmented glaze, apparently meant to darken the sapwood and harmonize the well-preserved interior surfaces with the aged character of the commodes.

The exteriors of the commodes are veneered with an amaranth ground, bloodwood fields, and kingwood-inlaid decoration. Based on visible tool marks in some corners, it is likely that the amaranth was first glued to the surface and then cut to shape with a knife. The bloodwood fields were then inserted in several pieces, before the kingwood decoration was inlaid (fig. 7-16). Tool marks suggest that the kingwood decoration was cut to shape with a fretsaw and then inlaid with a shoulder knife. Even though the design on the commodes is similar, there are differences in the pattern, which reveal that the kingwood design was not stack cut, but cut piece by piece. The legs and areas beneath the mounts are veneered in amaranth.



Figure 7-16 Detail of the marquetrie. The kingwood was likely cut to shape with a fret saw and inlaid with a shoulder knife.

X-radiographs of the sides and the drawer fronts show the marks of a toothing plane on the wooden substrate below the veneer. The marks, similar to those on the drawers, cover the whole surfaces, irrespective of the changes in veneers and design. In addition to the toothing plane marks, X-rays of the central fields on the sides show that there is a lattice pattern of rough, irregular scoring scratched into the secondary wood. This pattern of scratches, probably made to provide a better joint between the marquetrie and the secondary wood, appears only in the radiographs of the sides, suggesting that the

sides may have been veneered during a previous restoration to repair splits in the panels.

It is very likely that the commodes were restored in the 1930s, either before they were sold to Mrs. Anna Thomson Dodge or after they became part of her collection. One other restoration took place in late 1972 and early 1973 at Thorpe Bros., New York, but there are no descriptive documents regarding this treatment. It is quite possible that at this time the cracks in the sides of the carcass, which are still visible in the auction catalogue photographs of 1971, were filled and in-painted. The appearance of the veneers in areas covered by mounts is no less faded than in uncovered areas, leading to the conclusion that the entire surface was scraped or sanded during a relatively recent restoration. The finish appears very glossy and new; it likely dates to the Thorpe Bros. restoration.

The gilt bronze mounts are attached to the carcass with modern brass screws. The elaborateness in chasing of the mounts differs; some have a more precise and finer chasing than others. Careful examination of the reverse sides reveals that one group of mounts served as the models from which the others were cast. In general, for each pattern of mount, one example can be found with file marks or other individual characteristics, which appear cast into the other examples. In most instances, the model, or “original” mount, is measurably larger than the aftercasts and is less detailed in its chasing (see fig. 7-17). This suggests that the models were finished castings before they were replicated and that the aftercasts were chased separately after fabrication. The four framing mounts on the sides of the commodes are each soldered together from four separate elements, yielding sixteen individual elements in total. Of these sixteen, four (one of each type) are clearly the “originals”; however, these four are randomly distributed within the four larger frames. In an attempt to determine whether this mixed use of models and aftercasts is original or the result of later restoration, twelve mounts were removed and twenty different spots were analyzed by X-ray fluorescence spectrometry (XRF) to determine alloy compositions. In all cases the alloys are typical of eighteenth-century Parisian brass castings. Only three mounts show a high zinc concentration, between 25 and 28%, which is atypical for mounts made in this period, but other detectable components are present in a typical amount. This result suggests that the mounts are from the period of manufacture and that the use of aftercasts is an original characteristic of the commodes.



Figure 7-17 Two versions of one of the mounts, at top the model or “original” and at bottom an aftercast made from that model. There is a marked difference in their surface treatment. Generally, the models are larger and less detailed, and the copies are smaller, with more elaborate surface chasing.

The drawer locks, which appear to be original, are produced in the same way as the locks of the Van Risenburgh *bureau plat* (cat. no. 10). They are warded locks of brass and steel with double bolts, half-covered and fixed to the drawers with round-headed iron screws. The mechanism is made of iron; only the backplate is made of brass. The alloy of the brass backplate is typical of eighteenth-century production. The two commodes have different keys; it is not readily evident if one of the keys is original.

The J. Paul Getty Museum bought the commodes with other marble tops, which were, however, not original. Too large for the commodes (101.4 and 101.7 cm wide and 56.0 cm deep), with many repairs and showing different profiles, the two previous tops were made of different types of stone. The *campan grand mélange* marble tops are replacements dating to the 1990s. This stone is composed of a red limestone matrix, with lenticular nodules of gray-green marl (calcareous clay) and cream-pink regions separated occasionally by dark green veins of chlorite. These regions are cross-cut by white veins of

crystalline calcite. Unlike regular *campan* marble, there are fewer fossils of nautiloids visible, possibly due to relatively intense metamorphic processes of heat and pressure. The two tabletops were cut from a single piece of marble, and the upper surfaces are book matched.

A.H., with Y.C., C.E., and R.S.

NOTES

1. For more information on Bernard II van Risenburgh, see primarily Pradère 1989a, 183–99; Baroli 1957, 56–63. See also Daniel Alcouffe, in *Louis XV . . .* 1974, 323–24.
2. Feulner 1927, 325, fig. 277. Destroyed during World War II.
3. Haase, Jenzen, and Richter 1996, 72–73, no. 40, illus. (of inv. no. 37418 only). In the collection of the Kunstgewerbemuseum of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, inv. nos. 39198 and 37418 (89 x 145 x 56 cm).
4. Feulner 1927, 327, fig. 278. In the collection of the Kunstgewerbemuseum of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, inv. no. 3738 (90 x 142 x 65 cm). Haase-Messner and Reinheckel 1973, 13, no. A1.
5. A pair of corner cupboards, a pair of commodes larger than the Museum’s, one commode, and two candelabras, but not the Museum’s pair of commodes, are listed in a 1798 addendum to a 1794 inventory of the Dresdner Residenzschloss: Staatsarchiv OHMA Lit. R Kap. XVI Nr. 10, Vol. I S. 312. Correspondence with Gisela Haase, curator at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, February 1, 1977, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum. Haase later published this archive citation in Haase 1983, 363 n. 108. Correspondence with Christiane Ernek-van der Goes, curator at the Kunstgewerbemuseum of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, November 27, 2017, states the archive citation for this inventory as Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, 10010 Hausmarschallamt, Akte 198, Inventar Residenzschloss Dresden, erstellt 1794 mit Nachträge aus späteren Jahren, fols. 311v and 312v.
6. Feulner 1927, 325, fig. 277.
7. The first documentation of this hypothesis was during the sale of the commodes from Alexander Ball to Anna Thomson Dodge in 1934; see correspondence between F. E. Upton and L. Alavoine and Co., April 24, 1934, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum. This possible provenance was then published in the catalogue for the auction of Anna Thomson Dodge’s estate: Christie’s, *The Highly Important Collection of French Furniture and Works of Art, June 24, 1971* (London: Christie’s, 1971), lot 102. In 1996 Haase states that it was the marriage of Maria Josepha and the dauphin Louis that began the popularity of French furniture in Dresden but does not present the possibility that Louis gifted the suite to Frederick August II (Haase, Jenzen, and Richter 1996).
8. See note 5.

9. Prince Ernst Heinrich of Saxony was the third son of the last king of Saxony, Frederick Augustus III, who had abdicated in 1918 and died in 1932. The prince was the direct descendant of Frederick Augustus II, Elector of Saxony.
10. Files Regarding Works of Art: King of Saxony Collection, ca. 1922–27. Duveen Brothers Records, 1876–1981 (bulk 1909–64). Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 287, folder 20, August 18, 1925. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/960015b287f020>.
11. Files Regarding Works of Art: King of Saxony Collection, ca. 1922–27. Duveen Brothers Records, 1876–1981 (bulk 1909–64). Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 287, folder 20, August 19, 1925. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/960015b287f020>.
12. Files Regarding Works of Art: King of Saxony Collection, ca. 1922–27. Duveen Brothers Records, 1876–1981 (bulk 1909–64). Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 287, folder 20, August 20, 1925. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/960015b287f020>.
13. Collectors' Files: Dillman, Mrs. (Dodge), 1, ca. 192533. Duveen Brothers Records, 18761981 (bulk 190964). Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 442, folder 5, June 26, 1933. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/960015b442f005>. Anna Thomson was formerly married to Horace Dodge and inherited his vast fortune when he died. After she divorced her second husband, the actor Hugh Dillman, in 1947, she decided to be called Anna Thomson Dodge.
14. Collectors' Files: Dillman, Mrs. (Dodge), 1, ca. 192533. Duveen Brothers Records, 18761981 (bulk 190964). Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 442, folder 5, June 26, 1933. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/960015b442f005>.
15. Alexander Ball was a Berlin dealer. The family immigrated to the United States before World War II. Known as A&R Ball, they had premises at 30 W. 54th St. in New York. I am grateful to Gerald Stiebel for this information.
16. Shown in a photograph of the pair of commodes in the breakfast room, courtesy of Grosse Pointe Historical Society. The Breakfast Room at Rose Terrace II, ca. 1971.
17. Pieces of the set, but not precisely the Getty commodes, are listed in the 1798 addendum to the 1794 inventory of Dresdner Residenzschloss. See note 5.
18. Correspondence with Gisela Haase, curator at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, January 5, 1977, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department.
19. Correspondence between Alex Ball and Henry Hawley, curator of decorative arts at the Cleveland Museum of Art, January 2, 1971, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
20. Collectors' files: Dillman, Mrs. (Dodge), 1, ca. 1925–33, Duveen Bros. Records, Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 442, folder 5; correspondence between L. Alavoine and Co. and Mr. F. E. Upton, April 24, 1934, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
21. French and Company invoice, June 28, 1971, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.





8. Double desk

French (Paris), mid-1750s

By Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766, master before 1730)

White oak* veneered with tulipwood*, kingwood*, and bloodwood*; drawers of mahogany*; gilt bronze mounts; gilt bronze and iron hardware and locks; stained leather

H: 3 ft. 6 1/2 in., W: 5 ft. 2 1/2 in., D: 2 ft. 9 3/8 in. (107.8 × 158.7 × 84.7 cm)

70.DA.87

DESCRIPTION

This double-sided writing desk has two fall fronts and bombé sides and is supported by tall cabriole legs of five-sided cross section (fig. 8-1). The body of the desk is set with six drawers, with three on either side. Behind each fall front there are nine pigeonholes above four drawers (fig. 8-2).



Figure 8-1 Right profile.



Figure 8-2 Three-quarter right front, fall front open.

The desk is set with elaborate, highly burnished, and chased gilt bronze mounts. A molding with a concave center frames the rectangular top (fig. 8-3). It is set at each corner with a mount composed of a central concave, stippled cabochon with elongated grooves, surrounded by a C-scroll and a long twining acanthus leaf, and above a lobed scroll and widely splaying leaf. Below are two lobed C-scrolls nested together and framed with leaves and combed flame work. At the center of each long side, clasping the concave molding, is a mount composed of a fan of five lobes on a stippled ground, topped by S- and double C-scrolls, above scrolling leaves, all supported by a short branch bearing leaves that extends to either side.



Figure 8-3 Top.

At the corners of the desk, level with the drawers, are large mounts. The central pierced area of each is surrounded by C- and S-scrolls enclosing an undulating branch bearing leaves, a flower, and buds. Above, a grooved cabochon is flanked by C-scrolls, all topped by an acanthus leaf and two leafy buds. The corner mount below ends in a cabochon surrounded by four short leaves.

A plain double molding runs between this large mount, the one above it, and down the outer edge of the leg to the foot. The *sabot* is composed of a double leafy scroll, the leaves of which rise and join at the back. The outer upper surface of the foot, held by the leafy scrolls, is formed by a large concave cabochon, framed by two C-scrolls and surrounded by short leaves, the lowest of which curls over a second cabochon forming the toe. The fall front is framed on all sides by conjoined elongated and lobed scrolls, which are bordered by leaf work and combed flame work. At the center top of the frame is an escutcheon capped by a C-scroll, set above an arrangement of leafy C- and S-scrolls and backed by shellwork. It is pierced at its center by a keyhole.

The frame is set on its lower outer corners with leafy scrolls. At the lower center is a ribbed and winged form chased with flame work and held by double scrolls. Leafy and scrolled concave moldings frame the central drawer. The large escutcheon is composed of a central cabochon pierced with a keyhole and surrounded by ribbed auricular work that descends to form a tongue over a pendant cluster of leaves and berries. To either side are C-scrolls and extending leafy scrolls. The outer drawers are also framed in gilt bronze, similarly composed of leafy and scrolled concave moldings, the side along the top of the drawer being straight. A large cabochon forms the center of the keyhole escutcheon. It is surrounded by C- and S-scrolls enclosing flame work and is supported at its

base by a cartilaginous flower form. To the left and right emerge short branches that bear leaves, flowers, and buds. The outer drawer frames and escutcheons are mirror images.

A plain molding outlines the lower profile of the front of the desk and runs down the inner edges of the legs. It is set with small groups of leaves in the areas between the drawers. A similar molding outlines the lower profile of the side of the desk and runs down the outer edges of the legs. The molding is overlaid at its center by a mount consisting of a C-scroll enclosed by an S-scroll, capped by a broad flame motif and supported by leafy scrolls on either side.

The desk is veneered with stylized floral marquetry in kingwood set in the tulipwood background panels on the fall front, sides, drawer fronts, and the top. On the fall fronts two stems are placed to rise from the arrangement of gilt bronze leaves on the lower frame, mentioned above. The twining branches carry leaves, flowers, and tendrils, all growing from a clump of leaves. At the center of the fall front is a loose arrangement of branches also carrying leaves, flowers, and tendrils. The drawer fronts below bear similarly laden branches emerging from either side of the gilt bronze escutcheons. The bombé sides of the desk carry marquetry of four branches of flowers and leaves tied with a crinkled bow (see fig. 8-1). With the exception of the drawer fronts all the marquetry panels are outlined with borders of a darker-colored tulipwood. The hinged flaps lower to reveal a series of nine pigeonholes, five above and four below, above four drawers. The floors of the open compartments are veneered with loose arrangements of kingwood flowers, leaves, and single branches. The four drawer fronts carry small gilt bronze handles in the form of branches of flowers and leaves, and all are veneered with marquetry composed of a single leafy branch with tendrils (fig. 8-4).



Figure 8-4 Front of a drawer inside the desk.

The gilt bronze cover plates for the hinges are engraved with acanthus leaves and studs on a stippled ground, surrounded by a burnished border (fig. 8-5). The inside of the fall fronts are lined with green leather.

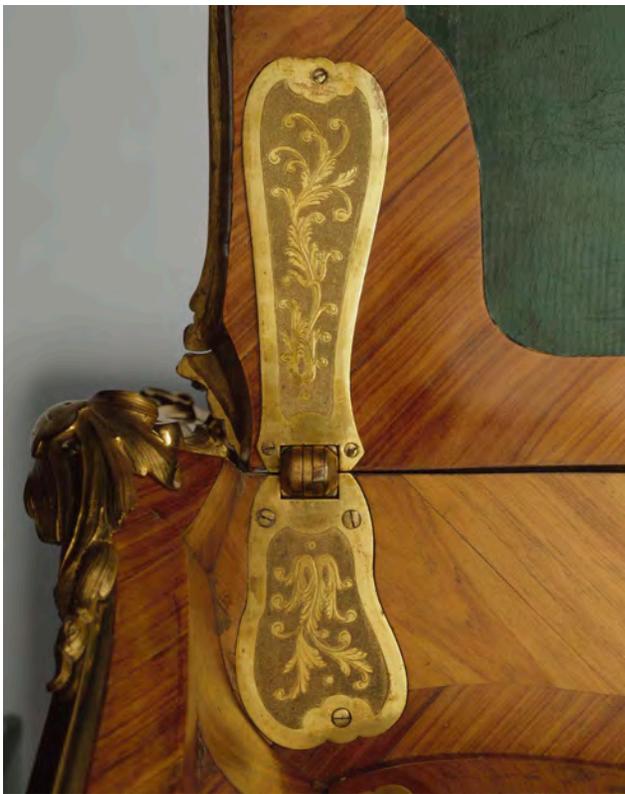


Figure 8-5 Engraved plates that cover the hinges inside the desk.

MARKS

The underside of the upper side rail inside the right front drawer compartment is stamped “B.V.R.B.” once and “JME,” for *jurande des menuisiers-ébénistes*, twice. The

underside of the lower rail beneath the rear central drawer also bears the maker’s stamp, flanked by “JME” stamps (fig. 8-6). On the underside of the carcass near the front side of the desk are seven red wax seals of the Duke of Argyll (fig. 8-7).



Figure 8-6 Underneath the central drawer on the back of the desk, a rail is stamped “JME,” “B.V.R.B.,” “JME.”



Figure 8-7 One of the seven wax seals of the Duke of Argyll.

COMMENTARY

This monumental and unique double desk was made by Bernard II van Risenburgh probably in the mid-1750s and can be compared to a few other opulent pieces made by this master.¹ A large armoire set with panels of red lacquer made for Jean-Baptiste de Machault d’Arnouville in the collection of the musée du Louvre probably dates from this period (see fig. 1-6),² and a large *secrétaire-bibliothèque* now in the musée de Tessé in Le Mans was delivered by Lazare Duvaux to the Grand Trianon in 1755 (see fig. 2-6). The fall front of this *secrétaire* is veneered with a bunch of flowers tied with a ribbon that is similar in design to that found on the sides of the Museum’s desk.³ The most similar in form is a large *bureau à pente* belonging to Neil Archibald Primrose, seventh Earl of Rosebery and third Earl of Midlothian, at Dalmeny House in Scotland (fig. 8-8).⁴ Veneered with floral marquetry in *bois de bout* on a tulipwood ground, it bears mounts of the same models at the upper corners, at the center of the top,

at the upper corners of the legs, and on the feet. This desk, somewhat shorter in width, carries only two drawers in its frieze below the fall front, and consequently the lower profile beneath them differs. The original provenance of the Rosebery desk is not known, but like the Museum's desk, it must have been made for an extremely rich client of the *marchand-mercier* Duvaux or Simon Philippe Poirier.



Figure 8-8 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), *Lean-to secrétaire*, ca. 1750. Oak veneered with tulipwood, inlaid with stylized floral marquetry of kingwood; mounts of chased and gilt bronze; drawers of mahogany, probably relined, 104 × 142.2 × 67.5 cm (41 × 56 × 26.5 in.). Edinburgh, Dalmeny House, collection of the Earl of Rosebery. Private Collection / Photo: Rosebery Estates

It is likely that the Museum's desk is a development of this single-sided bureau, and it carries extra embellishments such as drawers of solid mahogany with gilded lock boxes and engraved cover plates to the hinges (see fig. 8-5).⁵ Both desks derive from the smaller *bureaux à pentes* made by this master throughout his career.⁶ While a few other double-sided desks exist, they are either of differing form or of doubted authenticity.⁷

When the desk was acquired by J. Paul Getty in 1952, it came with a family tradition as to its provenance, which has since been disproved. It was said that the desk had been acquired in Paris in 1760 by Lady Elizabeth Gunning (1733–1790), the wife of James George Hamilton, sixth Duke of Hamilton (1724–1758). Following his death in 1758, she married John Campbell, fifth Duke of Argyll (1723–1806) in 1759. While it is known that the duchess was in Paris in 1760 and in 1763, no mention of such a purchase is mentioned in the family's documents.⁸ An even more fanciful idea has been suggested, namely, that the desk was made for the twin daughters of Louis XV,

Louise-Élisabeth, Duchess of Parma, and her sister, Madame Henriette.⁹ Apart from the fact that the latter died in 1752, the desk bears no royal inventory number, and it is not found in the Registers of the Garde-meuble, its massive form alone would, it seems, make it unsuitable for the use of young girls. In addition, as the Duchess of Parma was married in 1739 and left Versailles that same year, although she did make return trips to Versailles, it would seem unlikely for such a commission to have been made for her and her unmarried sister a decade later, when the desk appears to have been made.

In 1991, Patrick Leperlier discovered a description of a similar desk in the inventory taken in 1795 after the execution of the *fermier-général* Louis Balthazar Dangé de Bagneux (1739–1794):

19 Frimaire an IV.

[No.] 108—Item un secrétaire en tombeaux à deux faces de bois rose et palissandre plaqué à fleurs à trois tiroirs de chaque côté avec ornements et entrées de serrure de cuivre doré prisé deux cents quarante livres.¹⁰

As no other desk of this description is known to exist, it is very likely that this is the Museum's desk. Louis Balthazar possibly purchased the desk at the death of his uncle François Balthazar Dangé du Fay (1696–1777) from the contents of his home.¹¹ Dangé du Fay lived in the hôtel de Villemaré, 9, place Louis le Grand (now place Vendôme), and the desk stood in his *cabinet bibliothèque* in the entresol. When the seals were placed on the contents of the hôtel at the death of his wife, Anne (née Jarry), on March 22, 1772, the *conseiller du Roy commissaire au Châtelet* Pierre Thierion stated:

avons pareillement apposés nos scellés aux bouts et extrémités de quatre bandes de papier traversantes les ouvertures et fermeture de trois tiroirs et une bascule d'un bureau en secrétaire de bois de rapport ornés de ses fontes dorés d'or moulu et sabots de piés de biches l'aut[re] partie dudit bureau pareille ouverte et vuide.¹²

In the inventory taken five days later, Leperlier found a further description of the desk:

le 1^{er} avril [. . .]

Dans le cabinet de M^r. Dangé aux entresols ayant vue sur lad. place de Louis le Grand [. . .]

[. . .] un secrétaire en tombeau aussi de bois de placage à fleurs avec ornements, entrées de serrure sabots filets et autres garnitures dorées d'or moulu avec son serre-papier de pareil bois garni de huit cartons de maroquin

*rouge à fleurs d'or & petits boutons de cuivre [. . . avec une commode à cylindre et trois tables prisés] 1600 [livres].*¹³

The mention of a *serre-papiers* is puzzling, as there is nowhere on the desk where it could have stood. Perhaps it was set on another piece of furniture en suite. It does not appear in further descriptions of the desk in the inventory of Dangé du Fay himself, who died in 1777.¹⁴ Shortly after his death, a public sale of the furniture was held that brought 109,727 livres for his heirs, the five children of his brother, who had died in 1741.¹⁵ It is apparent that the desk was bought back at the sale by Dangé du Fay's nephew Louis Balthazar Dangé de Bagneux, who had been associated with his uncle, a *fermier-général* from 1736 until his death. Louis Balthazar was *trésorier général des Invalides* in 1758, a *fermier-général adjoint* from 1768 to 1777, and *titulaire* from 1778 to 1791.¹⁶ His widow, Anne-Marie Sanson, died in 1796, two years after his execution, and her heir was their daughter Marie-Émilie Françoise Dangé de Bagneux Creuzé.¹⁷ It is likely that the desk made its way to Inveraray Castle in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

In 1978, Ian Campbell, twelfth Duke of Argyll (1937–2001), discovered the original bill for the desk. Unfortunately, the bill was misfiled in the Inveraray archives before he could disclose the name of the seller and could not be found.¹⁸ In the book *Collector's Choice: The Chronicle of an Artistic Odyssey through Europe*, J. Paul Getty and Ethel Le Vane give the background for his acquisition of the desk in 1952.¹⁹ In 1951 Getty was having lunch at Whites with the eleventh Duke of Argyll, Sir Ian Douglas Campbell (1903–1973). The duke, who had recently succeeded to the title, told him that he had also inherited “the usual quota of uninteresting paintings and unimportant French furniture” and invited Getty to spend the weekend at Inveraray. Getty, having “too many calls” on his time, declined. After lunch he met with his friend Sir Robert Abdy, “a famous connoisseur of French furniture” (and a dealer) and told him about the duke's offer. Abdy assured Getty that the duke could not possibly have any furniture of great importance or value. Abdy seems to have then immediately gone to Inveraray, where he saw the double desk. He bought it and sold it to Rosenberg & Stiebel in New York. Eventually Getty tracked it down and paid \$35,000 for it. He imagined that he could have paid much less if he had accepted the duke's invitation.

PROVENANCE

By 1772–77: possibly François Balthazar Dangé du Fay, French, 1696–1777 (Hôtel de Villemaré, place Louis le

Grand, now place Vendôme, Paris, France), sold to his nephew and heir, Louis Balthazar Dangé de Bagneux, 1777;²⁰ 1777–94: possibly Louis Balthazar Dangé de Bagneux, French, 1738–1794, by inheritance to his wife, Anne-Marie Sanson, 1794;²¹ 1794–96: possibly Anne-Marie Sanson, French, died 1796, by inheritance to her daughter, Marie-Émilie Françoise Dangé de Bagneux Creuzé, 1796;²² 1796– : possibly Marie-Émilie Françoise Dangé de Bagneux Creuzé, French (Rue Saint-Honoré, Paris, France);²³ early nineteenth century– : possibly Dukes of Argyll, Scottish (Inveraray Castle, Argyll, Scotland); –1951: Ian Douglas Campbell, eleventh Duke of Argyll, Scottish, 1903–1973 (Inveraray Castle, Argyll, Scotland), sold to Sir Robert Henry Edward Abdy; 1951– : Sir Robert Henry Edward Abdy, fifth Bart., English, 1896–1976 (London, England), sold to Rosenberg & Stiebel, Inc.; –1953: Rosenberg & Stiebel, Inc. (New York, NY), sold to J. Paul Getty; 1953–70: J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976, donated to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1970.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Louis XV: Un moment de perfection de l'art français, Hôtel de la Monnaie (Paris), December 1, 1974–April 30, 1975.

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Getty and Le Vane 1955, 261–63; Wescher 1955, 118, 121, 127, fig. 10; Getty 1956, 78, ill.; Boutemy 1958, 43, ill.; Getty 1963, 116–17; Frégnac and Meuvret 1965, 78, fig. 3; Getty 1965, 145–47, 151, ill.; Alcouffe 1974, 465–66, ill.; *Louis XV . . .* 1974, 327–28, no. 430; Hoffman 1975, 190; Wilson 1975, 112; Verlet 1982, 50, 140, 152, 267, fig. 3; *French Connections . . .* 1985, 66, fig. 30; Kjellberg 1989, 130, 135, 139, ill.; Alcouffe 1990, 142, under no. 68; Verlet 1991, 19, 133, 222, fig. 3; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 36, no. 41; Ramond 2000a, 124–26, ill.; Wilson and Hess 2001, 24, no. 41.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

All the structural elements of the carcass are made of white oak. The legs, or corner posts, are made up of at least two pieces of oak laminated together side by side to make up the bulk of the leg form. X-radiography shows that these posts only rise up to the level of the writing surface. The case bottom is made in frame-and-panel construction, with three panels corresponding to the three drawer compartments. The front and rear rails of the case bottom appear to be set into the corner posts with shouldered mortise-and-tenon joints; the tenons are flush with the inside surface of the rail. The bulk of the

rails are made of single pieces of oak approximately 8 cm high by 4 cm deep, but to increase the depth along the center section, three separate pieces of oak approximately 1 cm thick have been laminated on the outside faces. The rails have been chamfered along the lower outer edges and carved to accommodate the curved and protruding edges of the drawer fronts (fig. 8-9).



Figure 8-9 View through the interior of the left side of the desk showing the bottom front rail, leg post, and drawer divider, all carved back to accommodate the drawer front.

The side rails of the case bottom, running between the front and back legs, are approximately 4 cm thick and 6.7 cm wide and set into shallow horizontal dadoes in the front and rear posts.²⁴ In an unusual departure from standard Parisian methods, these rails are deeply rabbeted on the upper inside corners so that they form both the drawer supports and the drawer guides. The medial rails of the case bottom frame-and-panel assembly are attached to the front and rear rails with unusual mortise-and-tenon joints. The tenons are flush with the lower face of the rails, and, based on the presence of paired scribe marks on the inside surface of the front and rear rails, they appear to be shouldered on both sides. Like the side rails, the medial rails are also made of thick single pieces of oak and are rabbeted along their top edges so that they form both the drawer supports and the drawer guides.

The three panels of the case bottom are each made of two quartersawn boards arranged with the grain running from front to back. On both the interior and exterior surfaces these boards very clearly show tool marks from the subtly curved blade of a scrub plane. On the bottom or exterior, the edges of the panels are raised with simple cove moldings, cut with a molding plane. This type of panel raising is employed in only one other piece in the collection, also stamped “B.V.R.B.,” the red lacquer commode (cat. no. 6). The interior vertical dividers that separate the three drawer compartments are glued to the medial rails of the case bottom and to the rails of the writing surface compartment above; there is no joinery fastening these panels. The exterior stiles that separate

the drawers at the front and rear of the commode are mortise and tenoned into the rails above and below. The tenons here are flush with the back surface of the stiles.

At the level of the writing surface on either end of the desk, there are heavy rails running between the front and rear posts, just inside the case sides. These rails are very thick—about 4.5 cm from top to bottom—and they are apparently attached to the front and rear posts with shallow horizontal rabbet-and-dado joints. The rails, which also serve as kickers for the side drawers, are grooved on their interior faces; the long, broad planks that form the writing surface above the drawers are rabbeted to fit these grooves. Above the central drawer, a stick of oak, running from front to back, is glued and lapped to the underside of the writing surfaces to act as a kicker.

The lower sections of the sides of the case form structural rails, mortise and tenoned into the legs at front and rear. Above these sections, X-radiography shows a complex patchwork of oak blocks, overlapping the tops of the legs and stacked and laminated together in at least two layers to form the gracefully curved form of the upper sides (fig. 8-10). The top of the desk is made of a single long board, attached to the sides with a rabbet-and-groove joint; narrow blocks are glued to the underside to thicken the front and rear edges.

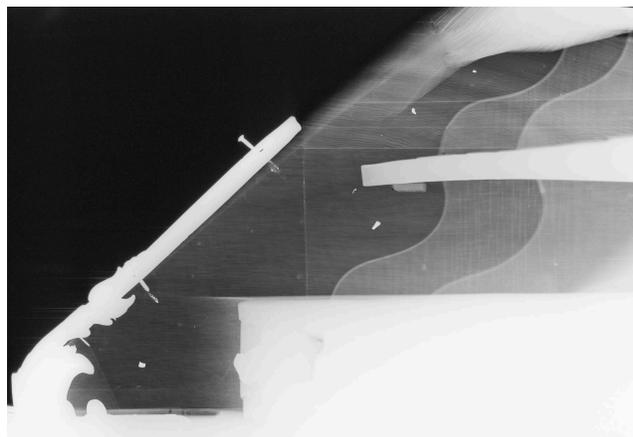


Figure 8-10 X-radiograph showing the buildup of overlapping, stacked, and laminated oak blocks that create the curved form of the case sides.

The repeated use of rabbet-and-dado joints (rather than the more common tongue and groove) is an unusual and distinctive feature of this desk. In addition, many of the mortise-and-tenon joints in this piece are made in an analogous way; that is, one face of the tenon is flush with the face of the rail rather than recessed on both sides. These variant joinery types were probably faster and

easier to cut than their more traditional counterparts, but they are generally considered inferior in strength.

Below the top, a vertical dividing panel runs the length of the case, serving as a back for the pigeonhole and drawer compartments on both sides. This panel is set into dados in both of the case sides but is not attached to the case top. X-radiographs of the fall fronts show that they are each made of four long boards, butt joined, and capped with breadboard ends attached with tongue-and-groove joints.

The pigeonholes and drawers on both sides of the desk are built as separate removable units (fig. 8-11). Each unit is made of three horizontal members, a narrower one above made from a single board and two wider ones below, each made from two boards laminated together. The ends of the two lower horizontal members are rabbeted, and the tongues are fitted to grooves on the sides of the case. The vertical partitions are made with the grain of the oak substrate running vertically, allowing them to expand and contract in concert with the horizontal members. The partitions are attached at top and bottom with single-faced sliding dovetails that were cut after the individual elements had already been veneered. Many, perhaps half, of these dovetails have been modified in an unusual manner; they have been converted into wedged dado joints. It is not clear whether these carefully executed modifications were made during the original construction or were part of a restoration campaign. The former appears to be more likely as there is very little evidence of significant restoration to the piece, with the exception of the finish.



Figure 8-11 The pigeonholes and drawers on both sides of the desk are built as separate removable units.

All of the drawers of the double desk, both the large exterior drawers and the smaller interior ones, are made in a similar manner. The drawers are made primarily of high-quality mahogany with a striped figure. Only the drawer fronts are made of oak, and even these are

veneered with mahogany on their top and inside faces. The top edges of the drawer sides and backs are gently rounded. The drawer bottoms are set into rabbets on all sides and then covered with mitered strips glued around all four edges. The grain of the drawer bottoms runs from side to side.

It appears that several modifications were made to the design of the desk during its fabrication. Perhaps the most significant of these was a change in the number of large exterior drawers on each side from two to three. The evidence that such a transformation occurred is apparent when the center drawers on either side are pulled out. Long mortises have been cut into the rails above and below the central drawer front that were evidently intended to secure a single, wide stile that would have separated two large drawer compartments where there are now three, an arrangement very similar to that of the Dalmeny desk discussed in “Commentary” above. This suggests that the Getty desk was made later as an enlarged (and two-sided) version of that desk but that as it was being built it became clear that its greater length was better suited to division into three drawers rather than two.

A second modification concerns the spacing of the pigeonholes in the interior of the desk. When the front shelf unit is removed from the desk, an extra set of four sliding dovetail mortises can be seen on the rear edge of the upper shelf (see fig. 8-11). The outer mortises are positioned directly above the outer dividers of the levels below. The inner mortises are spaced equally in between, slightly toward the center of the current dividers. On the rear shelf unit the extra mortises are not present, suggesting that the front unit was built first using the extra mortises and then the design was revised, shifting the dividers into their current, equally spaced, arrangement. Furthermore, sliding dovetail mortises have been cut into the underside of the case top, on both sides, directly above the current position of the upper dividers. It appears that at some point the maker intended the dividers to be joined to the case top; however, this plan too seems to have changed during fabrication. The dividers were in fact left without dovetails on top, allowing the entire unit to slide freely in and out of the desk compartment.

Yet another design modification during construction appears to have been made to the legs. X-radiographs of the upper sections of the legs show that blocks of wood have been inserted to enlarge the swell of the knees behind the pierced sections of the corner mounts (fig. 8-12). The original mass of wood from which the legs were

cut would clearly have been large enough to create the final form; this implies that the legs were first cut to shape, and then, probably when the mounts were being fitted, it was decided to augment the knees to conform more closely with the interior surface of the pierced mounts.

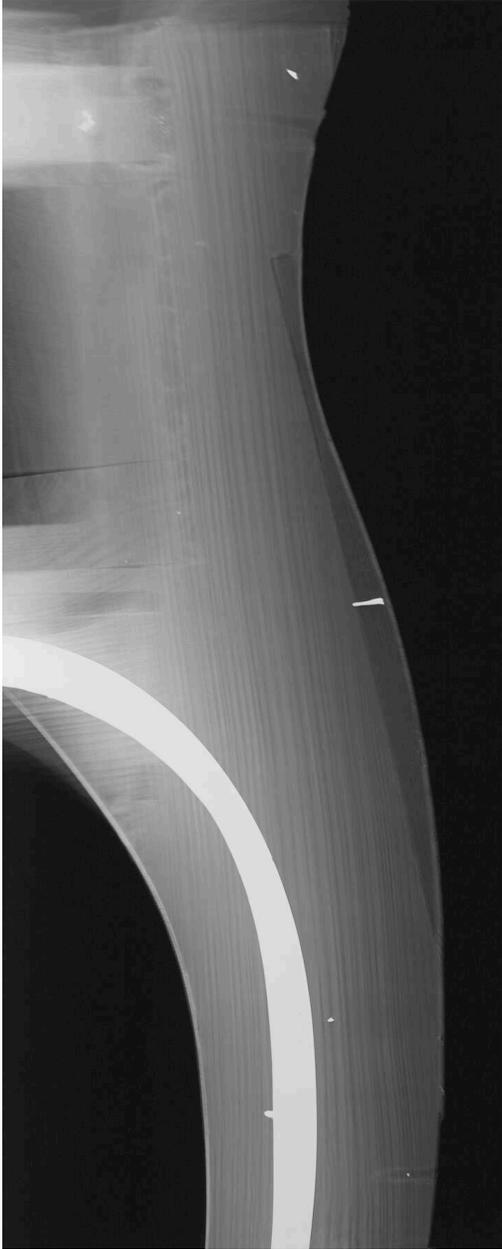


Figure 8-12 X-radiograph detailing how the upper sections of the legs were internally modified to enlarge the swell of the knees behind the pierced sections of the corner mounts.

The exterior and interior of the desk are veneered in tulipwood, kingwood, and bloodwood. This choice of veneer woods is consistent with other pieces made by Van Risenburgh. The stylized flowers and leaves of the marquetry are made of kingwood that is obliquely cut to

yield so-called oyster or sausage veneer; many of the larger flowers are made of two symmetrical, book-matched pieces. The branches are made of numerous small quartersawn veneer elements, and on the end panels, the sprays of flowers are held together by a ribbon of bloodwood. The floral elements are set into a background of light-colored tulipwood, which is framed with borders of darker-colored tulipwood that surround the drawers and extend down the legs of the table. The chamfered inner corners of the legs are veneered in kingwood, and the backs of the legs are in cross-grain bloodwood. The front edges of the drawer and pigeonhole assemblies are also cross banded with bloodwood veneer.

The condition of the marquetry decoration is generally very good, with few obvious replacements of veneer. The exterior has been significantly faded by light, but the interior has remained extraordinarily well protected and reveals the strong contrast of color and tone that was originally intended.

The extremely high quality of the fitting of the kingwood elements into the tulipwood along with examination of X-radiographs suggests that the marquetry was cut with a fretsaw using the “conic cutting” technique and was likely assembled in large sections prior to being glued onto the carcass. The more common method of producing marquetry at the time of the manufacture of this desk is called the piece-by-piece technique. In this method, the sheets of background veneer are first glued one by one on the finished carcass of a piece of furniture and the marquetry elements are inlaid subsequently. Small iron nails are placed alongside each piece of background veneer to prevent it from sliding out of position during gluing and clamping. These veneer pins are removed once the glue has dried, and the next piece of veneer is then glued. On this desk, however, X-ray examination of the fall fronts and sides revealed no veneer pin holes. In the piece-by-piece method, the inlay work is done using a knife called a shoulder knife. The difficulty of using this tool often results in small slippages, resulting in unwanted cuts referred to as shoulder knife marks. A thorough examination of the Getty double desk under a microscope revealed no shoulder knife marks on any area of the marquetry, suggesting that the shoulder knife was not used on this piece. The examination did reveal connecting cuts between separate kingwood elements. This, along with the rounded shape of the kingwood elements, suggests that the holes cut in the tulipwood background to receive the kingwood elements were created using a fretsaw before the background was glued onto the solid wood carcass.

Conic or bevel cutting is similar to *bouille marquetry* or *stack cutting*, where multiple veneers are cut simultaneously and assembled into finished sections prior to gluing; however, unlike *bouille marquetry*, the saw blade is angled slightly and the kerf created by the saw blade disappears when the top piece is dropped into the hole created in the lower veneer. This technique results in flawless joins; however, unlike standard *bouille work*, only a single pair of veneers can be cut at a time. Bevel marquetry cutting had almost certainly been only recently developed at the time of the manufacture of this desk and is seen on other pieces in the Museum attributed to Van Risenburgh and his contemporaries (see, e.g., the writing table, cat. no. 18). However, gluing very large sheets of finished marquetry onto compound-curved surfaces without the aid of veneer pins is technically complex and very unusual in the mid-eighteenth century.

The inner surfaces of the fall fronts are covered with a broad field of green-stained leather framed with tulipwood. Each field is composed of two pieces of leather, joined at the center, without any tooling. The leather is clearly old; however, it is difficult to say whether or not it is original.

The desk is stamped twice with the mark of Van Risenburgh. The first stamp is on the underside of the lower rail, beneath the center drawer on the rear side. The location of the second stamp is rather more unusual: it is in the interior of the right front drawer compartment, on the underside of the upper side rail. The position of this stamp would make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to strike it after the desk had been fully assembled, suggesting that it was done while the desk was still under construction. Both stamps are struck and inked as is typical of Van Risenburgh. The stamps were compared by means of high-resolution rectified photographs to the stamps on the Museum's display cabinets (cat. no. 2) and lacquer commode (cat. no. 5). The marks are so nearly identical that they were almost certainly struck with the same stamp.

The current finish on the exterior of the desk is a cellulose nitrate lacquer of recent origin and was applied during a restoration campaign in 1973–74.²⁵ This lacquer was applied rather thickly and then sanded and polished to produce a very flat and uniform surface. The coating has now yellowed and opacified, somewhat obscuring the color and contrast of the albeit faded marquetry. On the interior of the desk the situation is rather different. Examination under ultraviolet illumination shows clearly that an earlier restoration (of unknown date) involved the brush application of an orange-fluorescing coating

(presumably shellac) over most of the interior marquetry. The restorer's brush failed, however, to reach the back of the pigeonholes, and as a result, there remains along the rear edge an irregular band of apparently unrestored veneer (fig. 8-13). The unrestored passages appear to have only a very thin coating, which fluoresces very weakly in a pale greenish color. Minute scrapings of this coating were analyzed by Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), and this analysis suggests very strongly that the primary component is beeswax. It would appear, then, that at least the interior was originally polished with wax, suggesting the possibility that the exterior was originally similarly polished.



Figure 8-13 One of the desk's interior shelf units, under visible (top) and ultraviolet (bottom) illumination. A varnishing restoration campaign is made visible in ultraviolet light: the restorer's brushstrokes, which appear orange, fail to reach the very back of the unit where the original wax finish is preserved.

The gilt bronze mounts on the desk are of very high quality and are in an excellent state of preservation. The chasing of the matted surfaces is comparatively uniform, though it is very carefully executed. These matte passages contrast dramatically with the long, broad areas of highly burnished gilding. Analysis of the gilding by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) confirms that it contains significant amounts of mercury and is comparatively thick, suggesting that it is traditional mercury amalgam gilding.

Many smaller cast elements have been assembled into large unified mounts by soldering them together. The mounts around the edges of the exterior drawers, for example, are each assembled from four separate castings. XRF analysis of the soldering metal used to join the segments shows it to be a very high zinc brass alloy (> 34%) that contains traces of cadmium. This is unusual in the mid-eighteenth century and suggests that the metal used was "spelter" brass made using metallic zinc, a rare and expensive commodity in the eighteenth century. Standard solder of the period was so-called cementation

brass containing approximately 30% zinc. The advantage of using the costlier spelter brass would surely have been its lower melting temperature, making the extensive soldering done on the mounts easier and less likely to damage the castings.

Sixteen gilded bronze elements were removed from the desk and analyzed on their back surfaces by XRF to determine the general composition of their alloys. All are cast from brass with moderate zinc content ranging from about 19 to 27%. This is slightly higher than normal for the period, but the concomitant use of high zinc soldering metal ensured that these mounts could still be safely joined. The cast elements also contain typical eighteenth-century amounts of minor elements and impurities, including 1 to 2% lead and approximately 1% tin, as well as minor amounts of iron, nickel, silver, and antimony.²⁶

The locks of the exterior drawers are mounted in an unusual fashion. The locks themselves are roughly finished iron mechanisms with double-throw action and twin bolts. These are mounted to a pair of horizontal oak blocks that are glued and nailed to the inner face of the drawer fronts (fig. 8-14). The elegant gilt bronze lock boxes are separate, cast elements that are then fitted over the lock assemblies and mounted directly to the drawer fronts (fig. 8-15).



Figure 8-14 Detail of a lock from one of the exterior drawers, mounted to a pair of horizontal oak blocks that are glued and nailed to the inner face of the drawer fronts.



Figure 8-15 Drawer seen from the top with its gilt bronze lock box.

The hinges for the fall fronts are also mounted in an unusual and somewhat analogous fashion. At first glance, these substantial hinges appear to be made of engraved and gilt bronze. In fact, however, the kidney-shaped decorative plates are merely covers for the functional iron hinges concealed below (fig. 8-16). At the center of the lower edge of each fall front, a gilt bronze stop plate with a stub tenon is designed to engage the mortise of a mating plate mounted in the case, just above the center drawer. This extra hardware is intended to help support the fall front and to keep it aligned with the writing surface of the desk proper. Over the years, however, the case has sagged somewhat so that when the fall fronts are opened the stop plates do not mate.



Figure 8-16 Detail of one of the fall fronts showing the iron hinge and their elegant gilt bronze cover.

In order to help confirm the age of the desk, a thorough dendrochronological (tree ring dating) study of the piece was undertaken. Eighteen individual pieces of wood from the structure and the drawers were identified as having areas of exposed end grain suitable for analysis. Most of these were pieces from the removable drawer and

pigeonhole assemblies, but the wood of the legs was also used. High-resolution macrophotographs were made of the end grain, and all visible rings were measured to the nearest hundredth of a millimeter. Analysis of the ring patterns in the wood show that the youngest existing ring dates to 1730 and that the oak for the desk originated in northeastern France. Unfortunately, no sapwood remains on any of the pieces studied, and without sapwood it is difficult to establish a *terminus ante quem* for the date the tree(s) were felled. However, if one assumes that the existing boards had the sapwood neatly trimmed with the loss of only several rings of heartwood, then, since oak is known to have an average of 15 sapwood rings,²⁷ one may surmise that the tree was likely to have been cut around the late 1740s.²⁸ Allowing for seasoning of the timber and fabrication of the piece, the dendrochronology results are consistent with fabrication of the desk in the mid-1750s.²⁹

A.H., with Y.C.

NOTES

1. For information on Bernard II van Risenburgh, see primarily Pradère 1989a, 183–99; Baroli 1957, 56–63. See also Daniel Alcouffe, in *Louis XV . . . 1974*, 323–24.
2. On deposit at the château de Versailles since 1796. Acc. nos. V5090 and OA 9599. See Daniel Alcouffe, in *Louis XV . . . 1974*, 324–25; Meyer and Arizzoli-Clémentel 2002, vol. 2, 50–52, no. 8; *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 154–55, no. 40 (A. Pradère), and 156–57, no. 41 (T. Wolvesperges); Pruchnicki 2013, 55.
3. Musée de Tessé, Le Mans, inv. no. 1906.29.66. Daniel Alcouffe, in *Louis XV . . . 1974*, 325, no. 427; Charles 1989, illus. between 144–45, 241–42, no. 074; Pradère 1989a, 198, fig. 190; *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 158–59, no. 42 (G. Mabilie). A “B.V.R.B.” stamp was discovered in the course of a restoration in the early 1990s. See Chaserant, Lauwick, and Payet 1995.
4. Jackson-Stops 1985, 551–52, no. 489. Measurements: 3 ft. 5 in. x 4 ft. 8 in. x 2 ft. 2 1/2 in. (104 x 142.2 x 67.5 cm).
5. The hinges of the Dalmeny desk do not possess plates, and it is likely that the surface of the fall front has been reveneered.
6. See a. The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor, acc. no. 1926.91. Veneered with trellis marquetry. (H: 3 ft. 3 in., W: 2 ft. 6 in., D: 1 ft. 5 1/4 in.; 99.1 x 76.2 x 43.8 cm.)
 - b. Versailles, inv. no. V 5268. See Pradère 1989a, 192, fig. 179; Meyer and Arizzoli-Clémentel 2002, vol. 1, 108–11, no. 29.
 - c. The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Widener Collection, inv. no. 1942.9.419. With *bois de bout* marquetry (H: 2 ft. 7 1/2 in., W: 1 ft. 9 in., D: 1 ft. 2 1/8 in.; 80 x 53.3 x 35.8 cm). *Works of Art from the Widener Collection* 1942, 18, no. C-272.
 - d. Painted in blue European lacquer with Japanese motifs in gold and brown at the Galerie Steinitz, Paris. The gilt bronze mounts are struck with the crowned C, dating the piece to between 1745 and 1749. Illustrated in Pradère 1989a, 192, fig. 178.
 - e. Veneered with black and gold Japanese lacquer, the gilt bronze mounts are struck with the crowned C. Sold by Beaussant Lefèvre at Drouot Richelieu, *Tableaux anciens et modernes, objets d'art et de très bel ameublement, November 24, 1995* (Paris: Drouot Richelieu), 1995, lot 177 (88 x 98.5 x 50 cm).
 - f. Veneered with black and gold Japanese lacquer with mounts of the same model and similar dimensions to (e) but unstamped (87 x 99 x 50 cm), in the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum. See Coutinho 1999, 156–59, no. 12, acc. no. 285.
7. a. A simply decorated double-sided desk is in the musée national Magnin in Dijon. It bears mounts only at the feet and keyholes and is veneered with *bois de rose en aile de papillon*. It is stamped “B. Durand,” for Bon Durand (m. 1761) (88.5 x 69.5 x 52.5 cm). See *Musée national Magnin* 1992, 26, no. 6.
 - b. A large double desk (described as a *secrétaire double en dos d'âne*) veneered with floral marquetry in rosewood, with a pronounced kneehole, flanked by drawers. The fall front is decorated with an untraceable and probably imaginary coat of arms as well as the monograms SA and GA. It is inscribed beneath, “Facit [sic] p. A. Augustii Le 11e 9bre 1768,” sold, Sotheby's, *Good Continental Furniture, Works of Art, Tapestries and Oriental Rugs and Carpets, November 30, 1979* (London: Sotheby's, 1979), lot 302 (3 ft. 10 in. x 4 ft. 10 in. x 3 ft. 3 in.; 117 x 147 x 99 cm). Illustrated in “Notable Works of Art Now on the Market,” Supplement, *Burlington Magazine* 119, no. 897 (December 1977), pl. XV, as the property of Edmund Joachim Kratz, Hamburg.
 - c. Sold from the collection of Sir Everard Radcliffe: Christie's, *The Remaining Contents of Rudding Park, Harrogate, Yorkshire, October 16–17, 1972* (London: Christie's, 1972), lot 75, pls. 15 and 16 (H: 3 ft. 8 in., W: 6 ft. 8 in.). Formerly in the collection of the Dukes of Newcastle. Considered to be of nineteenth-century date.
 - d. A desk formerly in the collection of Charles de Beistegui, veneered with plain veneers and with scrolling ribbons of a darker wood, with a pronounced kneehole flanked by drawers. Sold, Palais Galliera, *Objets d'art et de très bel ameublement: Biscuit émaillé bleu de la chine, porcelaine de la compagnie des Indes, tapis, tapisseries, June 9–10, 1976* (Paris: Palais Galliera, 1976), no. 208 (113 x 197 x 104 cm). Illustrated in “Entretien avec Charles de Beistegui” 1952, 11. Considered to be of nineteenth-century date.
 - e. An apparently loose copy of the Museum's desk, made in the nineteenth century, sold, Christie's, *The Nineteenth Century: European Ceramics, Furniture and Works of Art Including Sculpture from Nidd Hall, Yorks. September 24, 1987* (London: Christie's, 1987), lot 321.

- f. A double-sided *secrétaire* stamped "FEURSTEIN," for Joseph Feurstein (master in 1767), veneered with tulipwood and kingwood in *bois de bout* marquetry, sold, Christie's, *The Dr. Anton C. R. Dreesmann Collection: European Furniture and Chinese Export Porcelain Including Clocks, Antiquities, and Works of Art, April 10, 2002* (London: Christie's, 2002), lot 241.
8. Stephen and Lee 1973, 786–87; correspondence with Mrs. Diana Short of the Argyll Estates Office, Cherry Park, Inveraray, Argyll, August 21, 1978, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 9. Frégnac and Meuvret 1965, 78.
 10. Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, LXXXVII, 1276, 19 frimaire an IV (December 10, 1795), inventory after the death of Louis Balthazar Dangé de Bagneux.
 11. Correspondence with Patrick Leperlier, April 18, 1991, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 12. Paris, Archives nationales de France, Y 10902 A, March 22–24, 1772: "Sçellé après le décès de Madame Dangé en son hôtel place Vendôme et par suite à Fouilleuse, Puteaux et Grosloy."
 13. Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, LXXXVII, 1138, March 27, 1772, inventory after the death of Anne Dangé (née Jarry).
 14. "[. . .] dans le cabinet en suite [du premier cabinet de M. Dangé ayant vue sur la place] [. . .] 125 un secrétaire en tombeau en bois de rose et palissandre avec fonte et entrées de s[err]ures de cuivre doré d'or moulu [. . . avec une commode, un petit bureau, et une table prisés le tout ensemble . . .] 1600 [livres]." Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, LXXXVII, 1165, March 17, 1777, inventory after the death of François Balthazar Dangé du Fay.
 15. See note 11.
 16. Cadilhon 2003, 193.
 17. Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, LXXXVII, 1277, 6 ventôse an IV (February 25, 1796), inventory after the death of Anne-Marie Sanson, widow of Louis Balthazar Dangé de Bagneux.
 18. Correspondence with the author, August 21, 1978, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 19. Getty and Le Vane 1955, 261–63.
 20. A *secrétaire en tombeau* is recorded in the inventory after the death of his wife, Anne (née Jarry), dated March 27, 1772 (Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, LXXXVII, 1138), and also in the inventory after his own death, dated March 6, 1777 (Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, LXXXVII, 1165, inv. item no. 125).
 21. A *secrétaire en tombeaux à deux faces* is recorded in the inventory after his death, dated 19 frimaire an IV (December 10, 1795) (Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, LXXXVII, 1276, inv. item no. 108).
 22. Recorded in the inventory after her death, dated 6 ventôse an IV (February 25, 1796) (Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, LXXXVII, 1277, verso of page with inventory items adding up to 14,191 livres).
 23. Recorded as the only heir in the inventory after the death of her mother, Anne-Marie Sanson, dated 6 ventôse an IV (February 25, 1796) (Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, LXXXVII, 1277, p. 1).
 24. The measurements of all the case bottom rails conform well with eighteenth-century French units of measure: 4 cm equals 1 1/2 *pouces* (Paris in.), 6.7 cm equals 2 1/2 *pouces*, and 8.1 cm equals 3 *pouces*.
 25. The lacquer was analyzed using Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) in 1999. FTIR analysis was conducted by Herant Khanjian of the Getty Conservation Institute.
 26. For details of the XRF analysis see the X-ray Fluorescence Analysis Report by Arlen Heginbotham, on file in the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 27. Locatelli, Lavier, and Pousset 2011.
 28. If more rings of heartwood were trimmed off, the estimated date would be correspondingly later.
 29. For a more detailed discussion of the dendrochronological analysis, see the report by Didier Pousset and Christine Locatelli, on file in the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.





9. Writing table

French (Paris), ca. 1755

By Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766, master before 1730)

White oak and fir* veneered with amaranth*, kingwood, and tulipwood; drawers of mahogany* and white oak; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron locks; replacement leather writing surface

H: 2 ft. 5 1/2 in., W: 3 ft. 1 7/8 in., D: 1 ft. 10 11/16 in. (74.9 × 96.2 × 57.6 cm)

65.DA.1

DESCRIPTION

This writing table set with gilt bronze mounts has an undulating top with rounded corners and is supported on four cabriole legs that are six-sided in section. It contains two locking drawers opening from the sides of the table. A writing slide that pulls out from the front is lined with green leather decorated at its edge with gilt tooling. Slides for the support of candlesticks are set above the side drawers (fig. 9-1).



Figure 9-1 Three-quarter right front, with writing slide and candlestick slides pulled out.

Each of the four corners is mounted with an arrangement of flowers, buds, and leaves below an apposed C-scroll mount, their outer edges framed with leaves whose curling bases appear as five knobs. At the lower corner of each frieze at the back and front and sides is a small mount composed of interlocking foliate scrolls. At the lower front center of the back and front is a mount composed of foliate C- and S-scrolls set with leaves and shells surrounding a curved cabochon. Pierced keyhole

escutcheons are found at the center of the side drawers. These are composed of scrolls and leaves surrounding shells on a stippled ground.

The lower edge of each frieze is set with a plain gilt bronze molding that extends down the outer edge to the foot. The front surface of each leg is also set with two moldings that continue above to frame the corner mounts and extend below to the feet. Each foot exhibits a large curved concave cabochon enclosed by simple scrolls that turn to form the rounded toe of the mount. The three slides are set with simple knobs.

The curvilinear surface of the table is veneered with a broad outer band of amaranth of conforming shape. At the center is a kingwood marquetry arrangement of stylized flowers, leaves, stems, and tendrils. Surrounding this group is a large double frame of interlocking scrolls in amaranth. Above, the two scrolls support a narrow trellis of two layers, the compartments filled with veneers of quarter-cut kingwood. Below, a short curved prominence rises from the scrolls. From its top issues long kingwood twining branches carrying leaves, flowers, and tendrils that branch and pass beneath and above the sides of the frame of interlocking scrolls. Leafy twigs and tendrils extend from the hipped lower side of the frame.

The veneers covering the back and the front friezes are set within a frame of amaranth shaped to form a background for the central mount. Scrolled and twining branches of marquetry leaves and flowers in kingwood extend from either side. The ground is veneered with tulipwood. Both panels are of precisely the same size. A strip of veneer, similar to that decorating the front edge of the writing slide, is set at the top of the panel of marquetry on the back so that both the front and the back of the writing table match. Similar panels of marquetry

are found on the drawer fronts at the sides of the table. The surface of the writing slide, to either side of the shaped leather panel, is veneered with rising branches of leaves, flowers, and tendrils in kingwood in a tulipwood ground (fig. 9-2). The slides extending from either side of the table are simply veneered with quarter-cut tulipwood and surrounded by a raised molding of amaranth (fig. 9-3). The left-hand drawer is fitted with compartments intended to hold writing equipment (fig. 9-4).



Figure 9-2 Writing slide with green leather and marquetry surface.



Figure 9-3 Slide to support a candlestick.



Figure 9-4 Drawer.

MARKS

The undersurface of the table, at the left front rail, is stamped “B.V.R.B.,” for Bernard II van Risenburgh, and flanked by “JME,” for *jurande des menuisiers-ébénistes* (fig. 9-5). Two paper labels are glued to the undersurface. One is printed “Londesborough” beneath a baron’s coronet (fig. 9-6). The other reads “J.J. ALLEN, Ltd., / Furniture Depositories, / LONDON / Mr.....COUNTESS LONDESBOROUGH / No.”



Figure 9-5 “JME” and “B.V.R.B” stamps on the underside of the left front rail.



Figure 9-6 Two paper labels on the underside of the table, one printed “Londesborough” and the other “J.J. Allen.”

COMMENTARY

The table was made by Bernard II van Risenburgh.¹ Two other tables of the same form bearing three slides and a drawer at each side and mounts of the same model exist. The example most similar to the Museum's was that sold from the collection of Barbara Piasecka Johnson at Sotheby's New York in 1992.² Stamped "B.V.R.B.," it was of precisely the same form and carried the same mounts, but the design of the end cut marquetry was markedly different. That on the top consisted of a broad frame of apposed C-scrolls centered by an arrangement of two intertwining leafy stems. The frame on the top of the Museum's table (fig. 9-7) carries an area of trellis containing small rectangles of quarter-cut veneers with stems, leaves, and flowers dispersed across the surface of the table in a considerably looser design. The marquetry on the friezes of the Johnson table is framed with a wide border of kingwood.



Figure 9-7 Top surface.

The design for the marquetry on the Johnson table is also seen on one in the Wrightsman collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 9-8).³ On this table, a more luxurious item with a raised and pierced gilt bronze gallery, many of the flowers and leaves are made of mother-of-pearl and horn painted green, red, and blue. J. Paul Getty attempted to purchase this table. In the library at the Getty Research Institute a catalogue of the Parke-Bernet sale of the collection of Sarah Jones Walters in 1941 is annotated in Getty's own hand.⁴ It reveals that he bid \$4,000 for this table. It sold for \$13,200 to Baron Cassel van Doorn.



Figure 9-8 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), Writing table (*table à écrire*), ca. 1755. Oak veneered with tulipwood, kingwood, amaranth, mahogany, ebony, mother-of-pearl, stained horn; gilt bronze mounts; modern velvet, 78.1 × 96.5 × 57.5 cm (30.75 × 38 × 22.6 in.). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1976, 1976.155.100. Photo: www.metmuseum.org, CCO

While a number of smaller tables equipped with writing slides, stamped by or attributed to this master, exist, the mounts seen on the friezes, corners, and feet of these tables are unique.⁵ Only the vertical floral clusters set below the C-scrolls at the corners have been used on another piece of furniture made by Van Risenburgh. They are found to either side of the fall front of the large *secrétaire bibliothèque* acquired from the *marchand-mercier* Lazare Duvaux in 1755 for the *cabinet* of Louis XV at the Grand Trianon (see fig. 2-6).⁶

Daniel Alcouffe has noted that Duvaux sold two tables of this rare type,⁷ one to Madame de Pompadour for use at Bellevue in 1752—"1020 [. . .] Une table à contours en bois d'acajou plein, avec trois tablettes qui se tirent, garnie de boutons & chaussons dorés d'or moulu, garnie de roulettes dans les pieds, 112 l."—and another in 1754 to a Monsieur Fontferriere—"1844 [. . .] Une table à contours aussi plaquée en bois de rose, avec trois tablettes qui se tirent, 90 l."⁸ It seems that Van Risenburgh continued to produce such tables until his retirement because of ill health in 1764. In the inventory of stock sold to his son in that year is "un bâtis d'une table de 3 pied [97 cm] des tablette et tiroir par les bous."⁹

A label pasted beneath the table (see "Marks" above) is of nineteenth-century date. It is printed with a baron's coronet and the name "Londesborough" in Gothic characters (see fig. 9-6). It could have been placed there by William Francis Henry Denison, second Earl of Londesborough (1864–1917), or his father, William Henry Forster Denison, first Earl of Londesborough (1834–1900). The table was probably acquired by Lord Albert Denison, the first Baron Londesborough (1805–1860) and the son of George IV's last mistress, the Duchess of Coyngham. He had inherited great wealth from his maternal uncle and

was an avid collector (see cat. no. 2). He was created baron in 1850, so the label would postdate that year.

In *Collector's Choice* it is noted that Getty had first seen the table at the London dealer Botibol in 1937, together with the *bureau plat* by Van Risenburgh (see cat. no. 10): "Greatly admiring them, he [Getty] was informed that neither piece was for sale. Nothing daunted, he said, 'I'll make you an offer for both pieces. And I'll hold my offer open indefinitely. If you ever decide to sell them—and at my price—just cable me to Los Angeles.' That was during the summer of 1937. . . . It was May of 1940 when he received the cable accepting his offer."¹⁰ However, Museum records show that in fact he acquired the table from Botibol on July 7, 1938, for \$7,291.28. A letter from Botibol written on January 25, 1940, reads, "I enclose a photograph of the fine Louis Quinze writing table which I bought at Christies for L1,400 [see cat. no. 10]—also Louis Quinze inlaid table for which I wanted L3,500 [this catalogue entry]."¹¹ This letter is therefore referring back to the 1938 sale and shows Botibol's original asking price.

PROVENANCE

Mid-nineteenth century–1860: possibly Albert Denison, first Baron Londesborough, English, 1805–1860, by inheritance to his son, William Henry Forester Denison, 1860;¹² 1860–1900: William Henry Forester Denison, second Baron and first Earl of Londesborough, English, 1834–1900, by inheritance to his son, William Francis Henry Denison, 1900; 1900–1917: William Francis Henry Denison, second Earl of Londesborough, English, 1864–1917, by inheritance to his wife, Grace Adelaide Fane Denison, 1917; 1917–33: Lady Grace Adelaide Fane Denison, English, 1860–1933 (London, England), upon her death, held in trust by the estate, 1933; 1933: Estate of Lady Grace Adelaide Fane Denison, English, 1860–1933 [Hampton and Sons, London, July 24, 1933, lot 123];¹³ 1933–38: J. M. Botibol, in business 1920–53 (London, England), sold to J. Paul Getty, 1938;¹⁴ 1938–65: J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976, donated to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1965.

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Getty 1949, ill. facing p. 57; Getty and Le Vane 1955, 147–48; Wescher 1955, 118, 121, 124, fig. 9; Getty 1965, 149; Watson 1966, vol. 2, 309; Kjellberg 1989, 139; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 52, 53, no. 68; Wilson and Hess 2001, 37, no. 65; Heginbotham 2013, 153, fig. 4.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The top of the table is assembled in a very unusual manner. A cursory examination (through the drawer openings, fig. 9-9) of the underside of the top gives the impression of a tripartite frame-and-panel construction, with rails on all four sides and two equally spaced medial rails running from front to back. X-radiography of the top, however, reveals a very different construction (figs. 9-10, 9-11). The top is in fact based around an extraordinarily broad, single plank of fir approximately 81.5 cm long, 50 cm wide, and 1.4 cm thick. Along the rear and side edges, the plank is framed by 2-cm-thick oak rails, about 7 cm and 9 cm wide, respectively. These rails are grooved along their inner faces, and the fir plank is correspondingly rabbeted to form a tongue along these edges. Unusually, the rear rail is not fixed to the side rails with the customary mortise-and-tenon joints. Rather, it is simply attached with tongue-and-groove joints. The two medial "rails" are not rails in the conventional sense but are merely slats of oak, approximately 6 mm thick, that are glued to the underside of the top. The ends of the slats are pointed and fit into recesses cut into the front and rear rails. Similarly, X-radiographs show that the front "rail" of the top is also simply a 6-mm-thick slat, glued to the underside of the broad fir plank. This slat, which is approximately 12.5 mm wide at its widest point, has no mechanical joints fastening it to the side rails, the medial rails, or the fir plank itself. At either end of the front edge, where the top bows forward, additional blocks of wood approximately 2 cm wide have been glued on to extend the substrate.



Figure 9-9 View through the case, from right to left, with drawers and candle slides removed. The writing slide is extended toward the front (left side of the image).

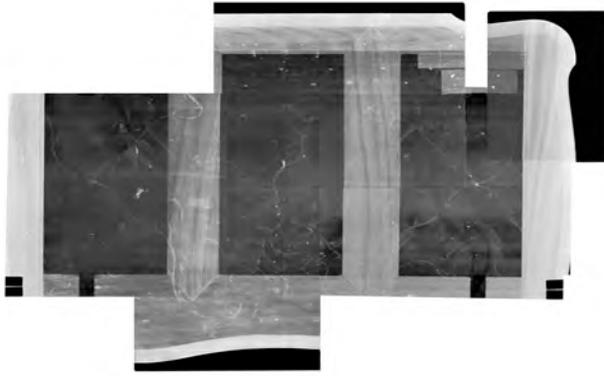


Figure 9-10 Composite of several X-radiographs of the tabletop showing its unconventional assembly method.

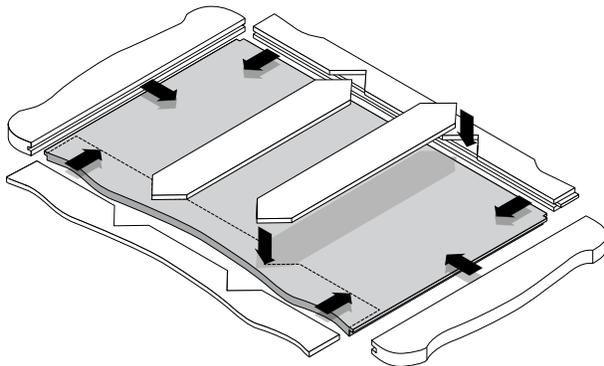


Figure 9-11 Schematic diagram of the construction and assembly of the top.

The edge of the tabletop has a thin quarter-round molding of solid tulipwood. This molding is made up of approximately 76 individual pieces of wood, averaging about 4 cm long, with the grain oriented perpendicular to the edge of the top (“cross-grain” molding). Although the molding appears to be only about 8 mm wide, X-radiographs clearly show that the tulipwood pieces are actually about 2.1 cm wide and extend well beneath the adjacent amaranth veneer banding (fig. 9-12).

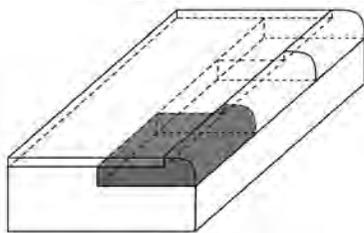


Figure 9-12 The quarter-round molding along the edge of the tabletop is made of many pieces of solid tulipwood, averaging about 4 cm long and about 2.1 cm wide, which extend well beneath the adjacent amaranth veneer banding.

The top is attached to the case with four loose butterfly tenons that slide into pairs of dovetail mortises cut into

the front and rear top rails of the case and the front and rear framing rails of the top.

The case bottom is made of four butt-joined quartersawn oak boards whose grain runs front to back. Three of the boards are 25 cm wide; one is 12 cm wide. The narrow board has a noticeable strip of sapwood nearly 1 cm wide along one edge. The central wide board has a triangular piece of wood spliced into one corner; this piece measures approximately 10 x 3.5 cm and appears to be an original part of the construction (fig. 9-13).



Figure 9-13 Bottom.

The drawers (see fig. 9-4) are extremely similar in construction to those of Van Risenburgh’s double desk (see cat. no. 8). They are made primarily of unfigured mahogany, with the exception of the drawer fronts, which are of oak, veneered on their inner and top surfaces with mahogany. The top edges of the drawer sides and backs are gently rounded and the dovetails at the rear corners are mitered at the top. The drawer bottoms are set into rabbets on all sides and then covered with mitered strips glued around all four edges. Unlike the double desk’s drawers, the grain of the bottoms of these drawers runs from front to back.

The writing slide and candlestick support slides (see figs. 9-2, 9-3) are made in a manner analogous to the top. In all cases, broad, thin planks of fir with their grain running from side to side serve as the basis of the slides. These are fixed with thicker oak battens, or breadboard ends, on both sides, using rabbet and dado joints. At the front, a thin slat of oak is glued to the underside of the fir plank as an ersatz front rail. On the writing slide, three additional oak slats, approximately 5 cm wide, are glued to the underside of the fir plank, running from front to back, presumably to stiffen the panel. There is no rear “rail” on the writing slide. The candlestick slides each have one additional slat glued to the underside of the fir panel.

These slats are approximately 8.2 cm wide and run from side to side (between the side battens) about two-thirds of the way back from the front of the panel. Stop blocks are glued to the upper surface of the slides near the rear edges that prevent them from pulling completely out of the case.

On all three slides, the fir panels have long, shallow, sliding dovetail mortises cut into the bottom surfaces, running from the rear of the panel almost to the front. On the writing slide, the three mortises are approximately 1.1 cm wide and are covered by the medial slats; thus the mortises are visible only in X-radiographs. On the candlestick slides, the mortises (one on each slide, not symmetrically placed) have been filled with cross-grain strips of fir that appear old and whose oxidized surface matches the surrounding fir panel surface. These mortises have no current function and may represent an original design alteration.

X-radiographs of the top and the proper right slide reveal a number of unexplained holes in the fir panels. These include several triangular holes on each panel, 1.5 to 3 cm deep, apparently made by handmade nails driven into the edges of the panels. In addition, on the underside of the top there is a set of at least eight round holes, approximately 3 mm in diameter, arranged in a zigzag pattern, and now filled with putty.

The presence of so many extraneous holes and dovetail mortises in the fir panels of the top and slides suggests the reuse of old wood. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to determine with certainty whether this represents the original construction by Van Risenburgh or is the result of a later alteration, though one interesting piece of evidence points to the former. The similar table at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (see fig. 9-8), also has its top made from a single broad fir board, and, remarkably, this top has two long transverse sliding dovetail mortises, nearly identical to those on the Museum's slides. The Metropolitan panel appears to have been thinned somewhat so that the mortises are shallower, but in all other respects, these mortises appear identical to those on the Museum's table. As the two tables have no known shared history of restoration, this suggests that a very large plank of fir was, in fact, recovered from some previous construction and reused in Van Risenburgh's workshop for the fabrication of both these tables.¹⁵

The unusual construction of the top and slides has no analogue in other works by Van Risenburgh in the Museum's collection. The most similar sliding panels by Van Risenburgh are on the display cabinets (see cat. no. 2); however, the display cabinets' slides are made using

full-thickness oak boards in the main panel rather than thinned fir planks. The Metropolitan table has slides constructed of oak, more similar to the display cabinets than to the Museum's table.

Based on evidence revealed by examination of the marquetry decoration, X-ray analysis, and tool marks present on the table, it is likely that the majority of the marquetry was cut using a fretsaw, with some areas inlaid. The stylized flowers and leaves are made of single pieces of so-called oyster veneer (cut at an oblique angle to the grain direction of the timber), while the branches are made of numerous quartersawn veneer pieces lined up, end to end. In several places there are clearly visible connecting cuts between separate kingwood elements (fig. 9-14). Along with the rounded tips of the leaves, these are a strong indication that the majority of the marquetry was created using a fretsaw. As with the double desk by Van Risenburgh (see cat. no. 8), the overall high quality of the fitting of the kingwood elements into the tulipwood background suggests that the cutting was done using bevel or conic cutting, resulting in nearly flawless seams.

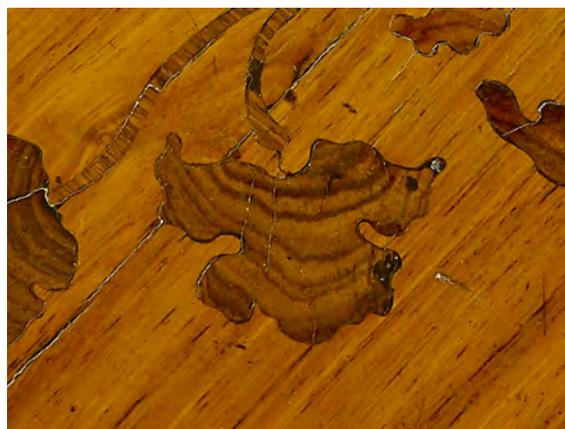


Figure 9-14 Detail of a flower in the veneer showing a visible connecting cut between a leaf and a stem.

X-ray examination of the marquetry also revealed numerous small holes that had been caused by the placement of veneer pins during construction. These small iron nails were placed alongside a piece of veneer to stop it from sliding out of position during gluing and clamping. These holes are now only visible in X-ray, and, as is symptomatic of hand-forged tacks predating the Industrial Revolution, they are of rectangular shape.

Based on the position of the veneer pins, it is apparent that the marquetry of the top was conceived as three small marquetry compositions set one after the other within the amaranth framing. While each individual panel was primarily fabricated using conic cutting, the

small kingwood elements that connect the separate marquetry areas of the top, as well as some kingwood stems, were subsequently added by inlaying using a shoulder knife, and several shoulder knife marks can be seen in these areas (fig. 9-15). Mixing techniques is typical of an accomplished marquetry workshop.



Figure 9-15 An errant shoulder knife mark shows that the stem here was inlaid with a knife, not a fretsaw.

Bevel marquetry cutting had almost certainly just been developed at the time of the manufacture of this table.¹⁶ The relatively small size of the individual marquetry compositions produced by conic cutting is symptomatic of eighteenth-century technical limitations; specifically, until the development of larger mechanized marquetry saws, the size of the unit to be cut was limited by the depth of the throat of the fretsaw being used.

The leather writing surface (see fig. 9-2) is almost certainly a replacement. It is rather poorly fitted to the surrounding veneer, and the quality of the tooling is not high.

Most of the gilt bronze mounts on the desk are of only moderate quality. Upon close examination, the chasing of the surfaces is rather perfunctory, often appearing to employ only a single chasing tool. The burnished areas often retain a streaky texture, and numerous small casting flaws and porosities remain visible on many mounts. The only exceptions to this rule are the escutcheons on the drawers, which are much more carefully executed. Here the chasing is precise (using at least three distinct tools to produce a variety of textures), the burnished passages have been carefully polished, and no casting flaws are in evidence.

Eight gilt bronze mounts were removed from the table for examination and analysis, including at least one example of each mount type with the exception of the *chutes*, or

foot mounts, and the thin beaded edge molding. The mounts were analyzed by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) to determine alloy composition. The alloys of six of the eight mounts are typical in all respects of eighteenth-century castings. The alloys of these mounts are also reasonably consistent within the group, with 18–24% zinc, 0.5–1.5% tin, 1–2% lead, and significant levels of unintentional impurities such as silver, iron, antimony, and arsenic. The two exceptions are two small scrolling acanthus mounts that appear to be poor-quality copies of other original mounts on the table. They apparently have had no chasing, and their surfaces appear ill defined, with abundant casting flaws (fig. 9-16). In addition, they were found to have levels of silver, antimony, and iron that are so low as to make it extremely unlikely that they are of eighteenth-century origin. There are a total of eight of this type of mount on the tables (two on each of the four sides; mirror images of each other). Two examples of chased versions of this mount were also analyzed; their alloys appear typical in all respects of eighteenth-century castings, suggesting that they are original.



Figure 9-16 The scrolling acanthus mount on the left is one of two later copies of the original mounts (example on the right). The copies are not as finely chased and have unrepaired casting flaws.

The floral corner mounts on this table have been applied in the same manner as they appear on the Johnson table (see “Commentary” above); however, they are inverted when compared to the nearly identical mounts of the Metropolitan table. An examination of the verso of the Getty mounts makes it clear that their current orientation is original. The mounts have been carefully filed to conform to the beaded moldings of the legs; because these moldings are not parallel but rather slowly converge toward the feet, the corner mounts cannot be simply inverted and reattached.

Both of the drawer locks have clearly been replaced, as evidenced by two complete sets of screw holes in the lock mortises. While the current double-throw locks appear to be handmade, the alloy of one brass lock plate was found by XRF to have low levels of most impurities but elevated levels of nickel, a combination that is very rare until the late nineteenth century. The gilt bronze pulls on the three slides also appear to have been replaced; all three have lathe-cut threaded screw shafts that have true gimlet points, which were not patented until the mid-nineteenth century.

The table was heavily restored in London by H. J. Hatfield & Sons Ltd. in 1972. According to their report, at that time the joints between the legs and the front and rear rails were disassembled, cleaned, and reglued; missing veneer around these joints was replaced. The veneer on all four legs was entirely lifted and relaid. After removing the veneer, one of the legs was found to have been previously broken and badly repaired; therefore this leg was “reset.” Recent radiography reveals that this repair was done to the right rear leg and that two sizable wood screws were used to secure the leg. As marquetry on the top was blistering and delaminating over large areas, Hatfield’s lifted and relaid virtually all the veneer, with the exception of areas that were deemed too thin and fragile as the result of excessive scraping during previous restorations. Several small missing pieces of the marquetry were replaced during this restoration; these are detectable when the table is viewed under ultraviolet illumination. The lifting and re-laying of the veneer on the top probably accounts for the relatively poor fitting of the marquetry elements in certain areas (see fig. 9-14).

A.H., with Y.C.

NOTES

1. For information on Bernard II van Risenburgh, see primarily Pradère 1989a, 183–99; Baroli 1957, 56–63. See also Daniel Alcouffe, in *Louis XV . . .* 1974, 323–24.
2. Sotheby’s, *Important French and Continental Furniture, Decorations, Ceramics, and Carpets, May 21, 1992* (New York: Sotheby’s, 1992), lot 84 (H: 2 ft. 6 in., W: 3 ft. 2 1/4 in., D: 1 ft. 10 1/2 in.; 76.2 x 97.2 x 57.2 cm). It had been sold previously from the collection of Paul Dutasta: Galerie Georges Petit, *Objets d’art et de bel ameublement du XVIIIe siècle [. . .] de M. Paul Dutasta, June 3–4, 1926* (Paris: Galerie Georges Petit, 1926), lot 144.
3. Acc. no. 1976.155.100. Watson 1966, vol. 2, 306–9, no. 151.
4. Parke-Bernet Galleries, *The Mrs. Henry Walters Art Collection, May 3, 1941* (New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries, 1941), lot 1420; J. Paul

Getty also wrote about the auction in his diary: *J. Paul Getty Diary, August 8, 1940–December 26, 1941*, May 3, 1941, 136–37, Getty Research Institute, IA40009, <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/cifaia40009>.

5. For example, the dimensions of a table stamped “B.V.R.B.” and owned by Paul Dutasta were recorded as “H. 66, W. 76, D. 45 1/2 cm.” See Galerie Georges Petit, *Objets d’art et de bel ameublement du XVIIIe siècle [. . .] de M. Paul Dutasta, June 3–4, 1926* (Paris: Galerie Georges Petit, 1926), lot 146. Watson also reproduced two tables no longer in the Wrightsman Collection, one stamped “B.V.R.B.” (H: 2 ft. 3 1/4 in., W: 2 ft. 4 1/2 in., D: 1 ft. 4 1/2 in.; 69.2 x 72.4 x 41.9 cm) and another attributed to him (H: 2 ft. 3 3/4 in., W: 2 ft. 6 1/4 in., D: 1 ft. 6 1/2 in.; 70.5 x 76.8 x 47 cm). See Watson 1966, vol. 2, 310–11, no. 152; and 315, no. 154; A fourth table sold at Palais Galliera, *Tableaux anciens, objets d’art et de très bel ameublement [. . .], June 12, 1973* (Paris: Palais Galliera, 1973), lot 106, stamped “B.V.R.B.” (H: 66.5 cm, W: 46 cm, D: 32 cm). It is now at the musée de Tessé in Le Mans.
6. Musée de Tessé, Le Mans, acc. no. 1906.29.66. Pradère 1989a, 198, fig. 190; *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 158–59, no. 42 (G. Mabile).
7. Research of Daniel Alcouffe in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum. Unfortunately, these two tables cannot be identified among those preserved today.
8. Duvaux 1873, 112, 210.
9. Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, XXVIII, 389, October 18, 1764, sale of the shop’s assets and its sublease, Bernard II van Risenburgh and his wife to their son. As indicated in a manuscript by Daniel Alcouffe in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum. The archival location of the probate inventory is published in Alcouffe 1974, 323–24.
10. Getty and Le Vane 1955, 148.
11. J. Paul Getty Papers, 1909–89: Art collecting and collections, 1934–74, 1977, 1982, undated; J. M. Botibol 1939–40, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
12. Label on the undersurface of the table is printed “Londesborough” beneath the coronet of a baron.
13. Correspondence with Francis Buckland, May 1984, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
14. J. Paul Getty Papers, 1909–89: Art collecting and collections, 1934–74, 1977, 1982, undated; J. M. Botibol 1939–40, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
15. The authors would like to express their appreciation to Mecka Baumeister and Danielle Kisluk-Grosheide for allowing close examination of the Metropolitan Museum’s table.
16. Chastang 2012.





10. Writing table (*bureau plat*)

French (Paris), ca. 1745–49, with nineteenth-century alterations

By Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766, master before 1730)

White oak and white pine*, veneered with tulipwood*, stained pear*, and ebony*;
drawers of walnut and white oak; gilt bronze mounts; brass, steel, and iron
hardware and locks; replacement leather top

H: 2 ft. 7 in., W: 5 ft. 4 1/2 in., D: 2 ft. 7 1/2 in. (78.7 × 163.8 × 79.6 cm)

78.DA.84

DESCRIPTION

This rectangular table with undulating sides has a top of conforming shape. It is supported on four cabriole legs that are five-sided in section. It contains three drawers, the central drawer being slightly recessed. Each drawer is fitted with an individual lock. Matching false drawer fronts are repeated on the back of the table. The top is covered with black leather edged in tooling in a scrolled and twisted rope design. The leather is surrounded by a broad frame of tulipwood bordered on either side by a narrow band of ebony.

Each rounded corner of the stepped gilt bronze frame of the top is overlaid with a clasp mount composed of a central leafy motif surrounded by C-scrolls, with a shell-like frame. Further C-scrolls surmount the arrangement, emerging from a central leafy bud. Each corner of the body of the table is set with a large pierced mount. The burnished frame of the cartouche is lined with small C-scrolls and wavelike borders. The aperture of the upper pierced shield-shaped section is lined with C-scrolls, and at the base of the mount an undulating leafy branch bearing flowers rises from a leafy whorl to fill the main pierced area. A further extension of the mount below the leafy whorl consists of a cabochon set on a foliate form that terminates in a small pendant of two buds. This section overlaps the bifurcated top of the leg mount, which is cast with pierced guilloche of decreasing size on a stippled ground, framed on either side by a flame motif (fig. 10-1).



Figure 10-1 Mount on a corner of the table.

At the center of each side of the table is a mount consisting of an undulating leafy plant carrying flowers and berries, rising from a berried leaf whorl (fig. 10-2). The arrangement is supported by two stippled foliate C-scrolls that follow the lobed lower profile of the table. To either side of the recessed central drawer is a large mount composed of two burnished scrolls lined with small C-shapes and containing a series of pierced oval guilloche alternating with small cabochons. Above is an arrangement of leaves carrying buds, and below is a further C-scroll similarly set with small C shapes and flame motifs set with cabochons, resting on two extending acanthus leaves.



Figure 10-2 Right profile.

The keyhole escutcheon of the middle drawer is centered by a shell surrounded by C-scrolls and leaves and surmounted by a leafy plinth, all arranged to form an asymmetrical assemblage. The outer drawers also carry keyhole escutcheons formed to serve as small handles. The escutcheon itself is pear shaped with a stippled ground. It is clasped by leaves on either side and surmounted by a berried knop. Another leafy cup containing a berry hangs below. Two ribbed and arching leaves form the handle.

The feet are shod with pierced gilt bronze *sabots*. The pierced cartouche of each is formed by two joined C-scrolls rising from an incurving foliate foot and supporting a small leafy bud. The interiors of the C-scrolls forming the cartouche are lined with small C shapes. The drawers and the sides of the table are set with simple flat burnished frames shaped to follow the contours of the drawer fronts and the profile of the lower edge. These

also frame the central mount on either side of the desk. The body and the legs of the table are veneered with tulipwood, with ebony used for the top edge of the drawers.

MARKS

The table is stamped “B.V.R.B.,” for Bernard II van Risenburgh, with “JME,” for *jurande des menuisiers-ébénistes*, stamps on either side, on the top of both the right- and left-hand front leg stiles, and only visible when the top is removed (fig. 10-3). An effaced “B.V.R.B.” stamp is flanked by two “JME” stamps on the underside of the table on a rail under the left drawer (fig. 10-4). A number of gilt bronze mounts are stamped with the crowned C.¹



Figure 10-3 Top of a front leg with the stamps “JME,” “B.V.R.B.,” “JME.”



Figure 10-4 Underneath the table by the left drawer, with the effaced stamps “JME,” “B.V.R.B.,” “JME.”

COMMENTARY

The table is stamped “B.V.R.B.” on the horizontal surface on the top of the front left and right legs, beneath the top, as well as on the underside of the table on a rail under the left drawer.² The stamps were discovered when the table was dismantled during conservation by H. J. Hatfield in 1973. In its size, profile, and gilt bronze mounts, the desk resembles two other *bureaux plats* also stamped “B.V.R.B.” One is in the collection of the Princely Collections,

Liechtenstein (fig. 10-5).³ With the exception of the drawer handles, the central side mounts, and the corner clasps of the top, the mounts are of the same model and are struck with the crowned C.⁴ The drawer fronts and the sides of the table are veneered with end cut floral marquetry. The second table was offered for sale at Christie's London in 1993 (fig. 10-6).⁵ Formerly in the collection of Baron Gustave de Rothschild (1829–1911), it is set with mounts of the same form, with the exception of the handles on the drawers, which are absent. In their place are simple keyhole escutcheons. Short trailing mounts attached to the scrolled corner mounts may be later additions. The mounts are struck with the crowned C.⁶ The fronts of the drawers and the sides of the table are set with panels of Japanese lacquer.



Figure 10-5 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), *Bureau plat*, 1745–49. Tulipwood and kingwood with gilt bronze mounts, 170 × 81 × 82 cm (66.9 × 31.9 × 32.25 in.). Vienna, The Princely Collections, Liechtenstein. © LIECHTENSTEIN. The Princely Collections, Vaduz-Vienna



Figure 10-6 Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), *Bureau plat*, 1745–49. Amaranth, *bois satiné*, and Japanese lacquer with gilt bronze mounts, 164.5 × 78 × 80 cm (64.75 × 30.75 × 31.5 in.). London, Christie's, June 10, 1993, lot 34. Private Collection. Photo: © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images

It is possible that the Museum's table was once decorated with Asian black lacquer in the same manner. The top interior edges of the drawers are veneered with bands of

ebony (fig. 10-7), and the interior sides of the legs are veneered in ebonized pear, both elements that appear to be original. These features would have complemented the original lacquer panels. The broad flat frames surrounding the drawer fronts and the side friezes, which are of identical form to the Rothschild table mentioned above, now contain plain areas veneered with a wood of ill-chosen grain, likely added in the mid-nineteenth century. Thus the Museum's table's appearance has been significantly altered over time.⁷



Figure 10-7 Drawer.

Smaller *bureaux plats* for more intimate surroundings seem to have been introduced in the 1730s. Such a table was delivered to Louis XV's private *cabinet* at Versailles in 1734.⁸ That table survives at Versailles today, and Christian Baulez has attributed it to the *ébéniste* Louis Marteau, who died in 1746.⁹ Although heavier in style, it does bear comparison to the Museum's table in the design of two of its gilt bronze mounts, especially the corner mounts. These extend from double scrolls down the outer edge of the legs and are pierced with ovals of alternating large and small size down the entire length. The large mounts centering the sides of the table are in the form of flowering plants rising from concave grounds. They are of similar form to those found on Van Risenburgh's table and may have been its inspiration.¹⁰

Even though lacquer may be lost from the drawer fronts, it appears that at least one of the combined escutcheons and handles on the side drawers and one of the asymmetrical escutcheon mounts on the center drawer of both the front and back of the desk are original. They are found in the same position on a table delivered by the *marchand-mercier* Thomas Joachim Hébert to the dauphin Louis-Ferdinand in 1745 for his Grand Cabinet at Versailles.¹¹ Feet mounts of the same model are to be seen on a *secrétaire en pente*, also by Van Risenburgh, delivered by Hébert to the dauphine Maria-Teresa Rafaela of Spain for use in her private *cabinet* that same year.¹²

A nineteenth-century copy of the table stamped “EHB,” for Edward Holmes Baldock (1777–1845), was sold at auction in Los Angeles in 1978 (fig. 10-8).¹³ Close examination revealed flaws in its gilt bronze mounts in the same areas where crowned Cs are to be found on the mounts of the Museum’s table, showing that the latter was in Baldock’s possession and that a copy was made of it, casts having been taken of its mounts. It is the only known example of the dealer and “improver” making a direct copy of an object. As Baldock is listed in the London directories between 1808 and 1844, the Museum’s table must have been in London at some point during that span of years; it is possible that Baldock was responsible for the removal of the lacquered panels.



Figure 10-8 Edward Holmes Baldock (English, 1777–1845), *Bureau plat*, nineteenth century. Tulipwood and kingwood with gilt bronze mounts, 79 × 161.7 × 80.6 cm (31.1 × 63.7 × 31.7 in.). Los Angeles, Sotheby Parke-Bernet, October 31, 1978, lot 795. Photo: © Sotheby’s

PROVENANCE

–1931: Henry Hirsch, English, died 1934 (23 Park Lane, W, London, England) [sold, *The Important Collection of Old English Furniture, Fine Chinese Porcelain, French and Italian Furniture, and Objects of Art formed by Henry Hirsch, Esq.*, Christie’s, London, June 10–11, 1931, lot 171, to J. M. Botibol]; 1931–40: J. M. Botibol, in business 1920–53 (Hanway Road, London, England), sold to J. Paul Getty, 1940;¹⁴ 1940–76: J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976, upon his death, held in trust by the estate, 1976; 1976–78: Estate of J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976, distributed to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1978.

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Getty 1949, ill. facing p. 56; Getty and Le Vane 1955, 171; Boutemy 1957, 166–67; Shifman 1984, 38–42, figs. 2, 4–5,

7–8; Kjellberg 1989, 139; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 51, no. 65; Wilson and Hess 2001, 36, no. 62.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

It is apparent that the Getty *bureau plat* is a heavily restored example of Van Risenburgh’s work, with at least three significant restoration campaigns identified. There is some evidence to suggest that major alterations were made as early as the second quarter of the nineteenth century, possibly including replacement of nearly half of the veneer, a substantial number of the mounts, and the *bureau plat*’s top. These restorations may be associated with the London dealer and “improver” Edward Holmes Baldock.

The top front rail, which runs above the drawers, is connected to the legs with a pair of open-faced dovetails at each end (see fig. 10-3). The bottom rail does not run in one piece from one leg to the other but is made of three separate horizontal sections linked by two short vertical blocks located between the drawers. At either end, the composite rail is connected to the legs with sliding dovetails that extend through the full thickness of the legs. The vertical blocks between the drawers are connected to the top front rail with two dowels that pass through the upper rail and are visible from the top (fig. 10-9). This is an unusual method of construction for mid-eighteenth-century Paris. The three horizontal sections of the bottom rail appear to be attached to the vertical blocks with mortise-and-tenon joints although, even after examination with X-radiography, the exact configuration could not be determined. The bottom rail underneath the middle drawer is elevated about one inch higher than the side rails, accommodating the reduced height of the middle drawer. Additional blocks of oak were glued to the bottoms of the horizontal rails next to the legs and the vertical blocks to achieve the curved form of the lower rail.



Figure 10-9 Case with top and drawers removed, showing the double pins used to attach the vertical blocks between the drawers to the top front rail.

The case bottom is constructed in a tripartite frame-and-panel construction (fig. 10-10). At the front, the composite lower rail below the drawer fronts doubles as the front rail of the case bottom, with the rear edges of each of the three horizontal sections grooved to receive the panels. The rear rail, also acting as the rail for the rear rail for the case bottom, is similarly grooved. The case bottom's side rails are separate pieces of wood, grooved on their interior faces, that are simply glued to the case sides. There is no joinery connecting the side rails to the legs, though they are supported from below by glue blocks attached to the legs and case sides.



Figure 10-10 Bottom.

The two medial rails of the case bottom, running from front to back, are attached to the front vertical blocks between the drawers with a pair of wooden pegs, driven diagonally through the bottom of the rails up into the blocks. The medial rails are inserted at an angle, tilting upward toward the central drawer compartment, in order to elevate the central panel of the case bottom. The ends of the pegs are visible from below, though they are somewhat obscured by the brown stain that has been applied to the case bottom. This, as with the pegged

connection of the vertical blocks to the upper rail, is quite an unusual construction, though it seems original.

The case bottom's three oak panels are beveled along their lower edges. Side drawer guides are glued onto the side and medial rails, secured by nails. Kickers, which prevent the drawers from tipping forward when pulled out, are joined above the drawers at either end to the front and rear rails with a single stepped dovetail joint. There are two extra dovetail mortises cut into the top front rail, just outside of the side drawer kickers (fig. 10-11). These would appear to be the result of an error of placement during construction.



Figure 10-11 Detail of one of the two extra dovetail mortises cut into the top front rail, just outside of the side drawer kickers, that are likely the result of a placement error during construction.

The original top of the *bureau plat* was attached to the case with eight sliding dovetails. This top has been replaced, and the new top is attached with screws, but evidence of the original attachment method remains visible on the top of the case. Along the front and rear rails, sliding dovetail mortises were cut perpendicular to the rails, two per rail (fig. 10-12). These originally held loose double-dovetail blocks,¹⁵ half of which protruded up from the top of the rail and locked into recessed sliding dovetail mortises in the top. At some point in the past, these dovetail blocks were cut with a saw to release the top from the case,¹⁶ leaving half of each block in the case rails.



Figure 10-12 Remnants of the original loose double-dovetail blocks that were severed to remove the original case top.

In addition to the front and rear dovetail joints, two additional sliding dovetail fixtures were originally employed to secure the top to the case's side rails. Trapezoidal gaps (~2 1/8 in. high x 1 9/16 in. wide) from these joints are still visible in the case sides. These once contained blocks of oak with dovetails that extended above the side rails (fig. 10-13). Remnants of the original blocks are still present in two of the gaps. The corresponding sliding dovetail mortises in the original top would have had square-sided gaps as well as undercut sections to receive the eight protruding dovetails from the case. The original case top joinery method is similar to that of a preserved *bureau plat* in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, stamped and dated by Gaspard Feilt around 1750 (object no. 1052:1 to 5-1882) (<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O11865/writing-table-feilt-gaspard/>).

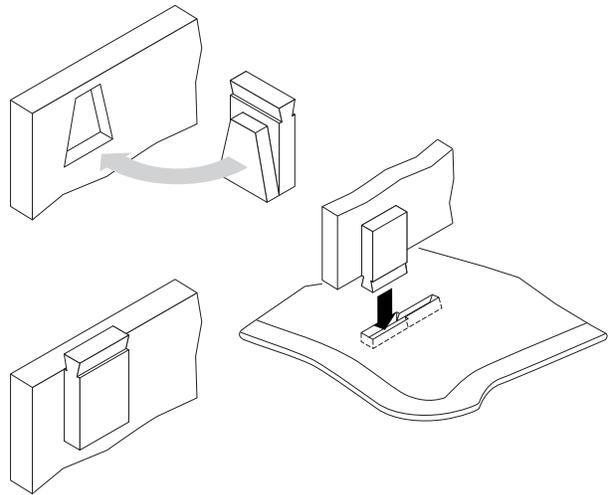


Figure 10-13 Drawing (left) detailing the original method for securing the top to the case's side rails. Trapezoidal gaps in the rails held blocks of oak with dovetails that extended above the side rails. These gaps are still visible in the case sides. Drawing (right) of the sliding dovetail mortises in the original top. These would have had square-sided gaps, as well as undercut sections to receive the eight protruding dovetails from the case.

The Getty *bureau plat's* top is made as a tripartite frame-and-panel construction whose butt-joined pine panels are secured to oak rails. The tabletop is mounted to the rails of the case with eight screws inserted from below. The current top has no mortises corresponding to the original sliding dovetail attachment method seen on the case, confirming that it is a replacement. Further, the panel wood was identified by microscopic anatomy as a species of white pine (*Pinus strobus*, *P. cembra*, or *P. peuce*), none of which is commonly used in eighteenth-century French furniture. These are rabbeted along their upper edges and secured within grooves in the rails.

The drawer sides and bottoms are made from walnut and the fronts are made from oak veneered with tulipwood. The drawer sides are connected to the fronts and sides with four dovetails at each corner. Dovetails are visible at the back, but narrow oak block additions cover the front joints, and the construction of those dovetails is not visible (see fig. 10-7). The tops of the drawer fronts have been veneered with sheets of ebony approximately 5 mm thick. These are most likely later additions. The lower profile of the drawer fronts has been formed by the addition of several curved blocks of oak glued to the bottom of the drawer. The drawers' bottom boards are secured within rabbets in the side and rear boards; additional narrow strips of wood have been glued to the underside of these joints. The drawer bottoms rest in grooves in the drawer fronts.

The entire carcass is veneered with tulipwood whose grain is mostly diagonally oriented, the exception being

the rectangular framed veneer panels on all sides, where it runs horizontally (fig. 10-14). The framed panels on the sides are made from rectangular book-matched patterns, where the two halves reflect each other. On the drawer fronts, the tulipwood veneer appears to have been cut into slightly undersized rectangular pieces and then glued to the substrate. This left some areas on the edges of the drawer fronts (that are covered by gilt bronze mounts) unveneered. These areas were then filled with oak veneer. This peculiar arrangement is almost certainly a restoration (see below). The insides of the legs are veneered with black pearwood, possibly in imitation of ebony or Asian lacquer.



Figure 10-14 Replacement veneer with horizontally oriented grain on one of the drawer fronts, pictured here with frame mount removed. Oak veneer patches can be seen at either end. The veneer is rough and blistered, probably from “aging” with acid.

Much of the tulipwood veneer on the *bureau plat* is in a highly deteriorated condition, including all the veneer on the tabletop and the veneer on the central panels of the drawer fronts, the central panels on the sides, and many apparently replaced sections on the rest of the carcass. The wood in these areas appears rough and almost blistered, with noticeable blotchy darkening around the pores. The likeliest explanation for the deteriorated condition of the wood is that these are all areas where new tulipwood was put in place during a major restoration and that the new wood was chemically treated in an attempt to artificially age it and unify its appearance with the original veneer. Numerous nineteenth-century sources provide instructions to restorers and fakers as to how such chemical aging may be accomplished using a variety of acids and oxidizing compounds.¹⁷

Conservators in the Decorative Arts conservation lab attempted to reproduce an aging effect on tulipwood veneer with different acids and found that convincing

aging could be achieved with the application of a nitric acid solution, which is commonly mentioned in restoration manuals. On application, the tulipwood lost the strong chromatic contrast between the pinkish- and cream-colored streaks; however, the pores of the wood became noticeably dark, presumably because of preferential absorption of the acid. This darkening of the pores, which might well increase with aging, is very similar to the appearance of the deteriorated tulipwood on the Getty *bureau plat*. The use of nitric acid would also be in accord with the results of an examination of samples from the deteriorated wood using electron microscopy. Residues of nitric acid would be nearly impossible to detect; however, this analysis found no remnants of other common (detectable) acids or oxidizing agents such as hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, potassium permanganate, or potassium dichromate.

Analysis by electron microscopy of a cross-section sample of deteriorated veneer found a thin layer of chrome yellow pigment directly on the surface of the wood. This color is particularly concentrated in the darkened pores of the replacement veneer and appears to have been specifically intended to compensate for the acid-induced deterioration in these areas. Chrome yellow pigment is known to have been first synthesized in the late eighteenth century and only used in painting from the beginning of the nineteenth century. The popularity of the pigment declined after the beginning of the twentieth century as cadmium yellows were introduced and replaced chrome yellow for many purposes.¹⁸

In a 1974 letter to Gillian Wilson, J. Sargent of H. J. Hatfield & Sons Ltd. mentions the use of a “certain amount of false colour” in the wood polish during a recent restoration of the *bureau plat*, saying that without this, the veneer “would have looked rather like a patch work quilt!”¹⁹ It must be considered, then, that the chrome yellow could have been applied by Hatfield’s; however, it currently lies below three distinct layers of varnish, and Sargent’s letter specifies that their restorers only added new colored varnish *over* the existing finish. Thus it seems more likely that the chrome yellow dates to an earlier, nineteenth- or early twentieth-century restoration.

If it is true that the veneer in the framed fields on the drawer fronts and sides of the *bureau plat* has been replaced as described above, then it would seem likely that these fields were originally decorated in a manner different from that at present. As described in “Commentary” above, other closely related Van Risenburgh examples are decorated with floral marquetry

or lacquer panels, and decoration with porcelain plaques could also be possible in this period. Assuming that the Getty *bureau plat* originally had one of these forms of decoration, there appear to be two plausible explanations for the apparent extensive alteration of the original decoration. If the original decoration was either floral marquetry or lacquer, the surface may have deteriorated to the point where it required replacement; or, if the original panels were porcelain, they could also have been broken or removed from this table and repurposed.

X-radiography of the drawer fronts found no evidence that the substrate had ever been excavated to receive porcelain plaques, nor did it reveal any traces of cutting marks or veneer pins that might suggest the former presence of floral marquetry. Careful examination has also not revealed any direct evidence for the prior presence of lacquer panels on the *bureau plat*. One piece of circumstantial evidence that lends some support to the idea of original lacquer panels is that the black inner surfaces of the legs are veneered in pearwood. This veneer appears to be original, and the use of smooth-grained domestic wood veneer such as pear was common practice in eighteenth-century Paris for areas that were to be lacquered in imitation of Asian lacquer. It should be noted, however, that the Rothschild example of this model that has lacquer panels (sold, Christie's 1993) did not, at the time of sale, have black-colored inner surfaces on the legs (see fig. 10-6). The use of ebony veneer on the top and on the edges of the Getty's drawer fronts may also relate to lacquer panels, but as these are both likely to be later restorations, the connection is tenuous.

There are thirty-six three-dimensional gilt bronze mounts and ten flat frames. Mount patterns can be further divided into groups, in which many of the mount variations are used either twice or four times, the result of copies made from the same master model. Nearly all of the mounts are cast and chased, but the level and precision of the finishing differs within the groups. In addition, the reverse surfaces exhibit a range of patina and texture.

The tabletop's corner mounts are of particular interest as they appear to be *surmoulage* copies of preexisting mounts. These mounts have identical impressions of old screw holes on their back sides, which suggests that they were cast from finished mounts (which had been previously attached to a piece of furniture) rather than from master foundry models (fig. 10-15). It is possible, then, that these mounts are copies of the original mounts that were present on the original top, before it was replaced, though this must remain conjecture.

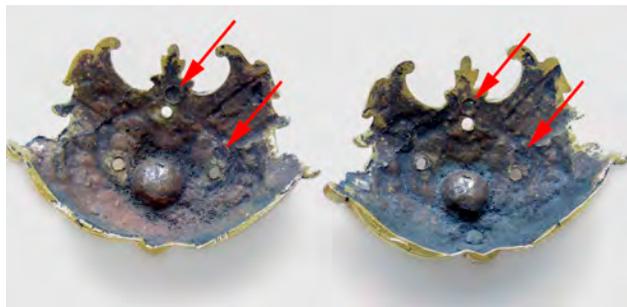


Figure 10-15 Reverse sides of two corner mounts show remnants of earlier screw holes, indicating they are *surmoulage* copies. They may be copies of the original corner mounts.

All of the mounts are fixed with slotted head screws directly onto the carcass. In addition, the tabletop edge moldings are fixed to the substrate with slotted head bolts that run through the wood from below and are secured with nuts soldered to the backsides of the mounts (fig. 10-16). The bolt heads are countersunk into the wood. The bolts that attach the perimeter moldings to the top are fabricated in iron with a major diameter of 7/32 in. and 24 threads per inch and appear to be of early industrial production. Their shape, diameter, angle, and thread count are equal to the British standard formalized by Whitworth in 1841. The Whitworth standard was based on contemporary best practice, so it is possible that the bolts were produced before this time. This thread pattern became technically obsolete in the mid-twentieth century.



Figure 10-16 Backside detail of one of the tabletop mounts. These are fixed to the secondary wood with slotted-head bolts that run through the frame and are secured with nuts soldered to the backsides of the mounts. The threading of the bolts conforms to a British nineteenth-century standard.

At least one example of every mount group was analyzed by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF). The results place the mounts in three general groups. The first group is composed of mounts whose alloy composition is well

within the range of known eighteenth-century compositions. This group includes all the mounts on the legs, one of the central mounts on the sides, the flat framing mounts on the drawers and sides, two of the scroll mounts flanking the center drawers, and one of the side drawer escutcheons. The second group includes mounts whose composition is very elevated in zinc (around 26%) and very low in tin, lead, and impurities overall. Based on composition, this group probably dates to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century; it includes one of the side drawer escutcheons, the central mount on the left side, and the center drawer escutcheon on the back of the desk. The locks also probably date to this period. The third group of mounts exhibits a range of compositions intermediate between the first two groups, with levels of impurities that point to a mid-nineteenth-century date. This group includes all of the mounts on the top, as well as two of the side drawer escutcheons and the scrolling mounts flanking the front center drawer. Several of these mounts contain detectable amounts of bismuth, which is extremely rare in French gilt bronze mounts but is quite common in nineteenth-century British castings.

The evidence discussed above suggests two distinct periods of significant restoration prior to the documented restoration by Hatfield's in 1974. As discussed in "Commentary" above, Shifman argues that the Getty *bureau plat* was the model for a known copy commissioned by Edward Holmes Baldock in the 1830s (see fig. 10-8).²⁰ The alloy composition of the mounts on the top suggests that the top may have been replaced around this time, perhaps by Baldock, along with several mounts on the lower section. As all the tulipwood veneer on the replaced top has been chemically aged, it seems likely that this veneer dates to the time the top was replaced. And as this veneer matches the condition of the veneer in the fielded panels, it follows that the transformation of the decoration in these panels, and the aging of the tulipwood replacements, may also have occurred under Baldock's supervision at this time, as suggested in "Commentary" above. The chrome yellow pigment that has been used to mask the darkened pores of the artificially aged veneer would have been available in the 1830s and so might also date to this period.

The X-ray fluorescence results from the gilt bronze mounts also suggest that several mounts and the locks were replaced in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, and it is also possible that the application of chrome yellow is associated with this restoration. It is not unreasonable to suspect that such a restoration might have occurred around the time of the 1931 Christie's sale of the *bureau plat* to the dealer J. M. Botibol in London.

A.H., with Y.C. and K.P.

NOTES

1. Verlet 1937, 22–23. An edict of Louis XV, registered with Parliament on March 5, 1745, required that all works old or new made with copper, either in pure form or as part of an alloy, be stamped with a crowned C. This mark was canceled on February 4, 1749; therefore, objects with this stamp can be dated to between 1745 and 1749.
2. For more information on Bernard II van Risenburgh, see primarily Pradère 1989a, 183–99; Baroli 1957, 56–63. See also Daniel Alcouffe, in *Louis XV . . . 1974*, 323–24.
3. The table appears in a mid-nineteenth-century watercolor of the armory at Lednice, Czechoslovakia. See Pratt 1991, 135. See also Shifman 1984, 41, fig. 13.
4. See note 1. Correspondence with Reinhold Baumstark, director of the Princely Collections, July 9, 1980, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
5. Christie's, *Important French Furniture and European Carpets, June 10, 1993* (London: Christie's, 1993), lot 34.
6. The separate central sections of the pierced corner mounts have at some point been placed upside down.
7. Consequently, the table has never been on display in the Museum's galleries.
8. Meyer and Arizzoli-Clémentel 2002, vol. 1, 106–7, no. 28 (Inv. M. 1052).
9. Meyer and Arizzoli-Clémentel 2002, vol. 1, 106. The desk was long attributed to Antoine-Robert Gaudreaus. It is also attributed to Marteau by Yves Carlier, who refers to the earlier Gaudreaus attribution in Carlier 2009, 79, fig. 1.
10. A similar "growing plant" mount was used by Jacques Dubois. See Alcouffe, Dion-Tenenbaum, and Lefébure 1993, 150–51, no. 45, for a *bureau plat* with a similar mount in the form of a small tree set upon a concave base (Inv. OA 6600).
11. Meyer and Arizzoli-Clémentel 2002, vol. 1, 112–115, no. 30 (Inv. V3528).
12. Meyer and Arizzoli-Clémentel 2002, vol. 1, 108–11, no. 29 (Inv. V5268).
13. The table appears in a mid-nineteenth-century watercolor; see note 3 above.

14. J. Paul Getty Papers, 1909–89: Art collecting and collections, 1934–74, 1977, 1982, undated; J. M. Botibol 1939–40, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
15. The single dovetail blocks did not completely fill the mortise cavities, so additional shorter blocks of oak were inserted as gap fillers and to lock the dovetails in place.
16. Saw marks from this operation are visible on the rails in the area surrounding the mortises.
17. See, e.g., Eudel 1887, 308, where nitric acid and potassium permanganate are mentioned as chemicals to age the wood.
18. Harley 1982, 100–102.
19. Letter in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
20. Shifman 1984, 38–42.





11. Corner cabinet

French (Paris), cabinet, ca. 1744–55, clock, ca. 1744

By Jacques Dubois (French, 1694–1763, master 1742); clock movement by Étienne Le Noir II (French, 1699–1778, master 1717); enamel dial by Antoine Nicolas Martinière (French, 1706–1784, master 1720); design attributed to Nicolas Pineau (French, 1684–1754); maker of gilt bronze clock case unknown

White oak* and mahogany* veneered with bloodwood*, kingwood*, *ferréol**, amaranth, and mahogany; enameled metal clock dial; glass; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron hardware and lock [Restorations in fir*, walnut*, and Andaman padauk*]

H: 9 ft. 6 in., W: 4 ft. 3 in., D: 2 ft. 4 1/2 in. (289.5 × 129.5 × 72 cm)

79.DA.66

DESCRIPTION

A female figure, probably representing Astronomy, is seated on a cloud at the top of the clock. She holds a globe in her left hand and carries a torch, the flame of which is missing, in her right. Her head is encircled by a diadem of seven stars, and a sunburst is placed on her chest. In front of her stands an eagle whose head is turned in her direction, away from the viewer. The dial is surrounded by a concave band of auricular work, which is contained by large S-scrolls that continue down the sides of the clock to join the widely splayed and scrolled legs. The feet are overlaid with acanthus leaves, which rise and mingle with a garland of flowers to either side of the clock. Beneath the dial a large shell depends from addorsed leafy C-scrolls. The white enamel dial is painted with Roman numerals in blue and Arabic numerals in black. The pierced and scrolled hands are of gilt bronze. The whole facade of the clock is supported at the back by an S-shaped iron bar.¹

The open section of the *étagère* below contains one shelf. The front edge of the upper surface, on which the clock is perched, is set with a molding decorated with leaf tips and C-scrolls above beading. The *étagère* below is fronted on both sides by large scrolled and leafy mounts set above with shell-like forms and bordered below with broad auricular work. Above in the center is a large pierced shell. Further scrolled and leafy mounts extend along the interior walls of the space, above and below. The scrolls are set with auricular work and a winding stem of laurel. At the back a leafy mount rises from a cabochon surrounded by leafy scrolls. The vertical mount rises to

enclose an oval concavity, chased with auricular waves and set with a short pendant of leaf clusters that falls from a fanned shell motif above.

The edge of the upper shelf is set with a molding of guilloche set with alternating rosettes and cabochons. The *étagère* below is framed above by leafy scrolls centered by a large pierced shell motif. The front edges of the sides of the area are set with massive mounts that consist of a naked winged putto sitting on a recumbent lion. The groups are supported by large leafy S-scrolls, which extend above to form the outer frame of the *étagère*, continuing and branching to form the scrolling two branch lights. The twisting branches are set with leaves and borders of pierced and unpierced shellwork. The bobèches and the drip pans are formed by scrolling leaves set with curved gadroons. Both the putti carry quivers of arrows. Their hands originally carried chains that were attached to the bars held in the jaws of the lions.

The double *bombé* interior walls of the *étagère* are set below with borders of leafy scrolls set with short areas of concave shellwork and a twining laurel stem. At the back is a complex vertical mount consisting of an oval cabochon surrounded by auricular work and held by two C-scrolls. Above rise large leafy scrolls that clasp the upper *bombé* profile of the wall and extend briefly across the undersurface of the shelf above. Feathered wings extend to either side. Below, the main vertical shaft of the mount is set with leafy scrolls and auricular S-scrolls above leafless scrolls. These enclose, in descending order, a small round cabochon topped by a leaf cluster, a short rising leaf spike on a stippled ground, a concave area of

auricular work, and a corolla set with a leafy pod from which rises to either side leafy branches set with flowers. The mount terminates at the base in a further concave oval form, surrounded by C-scrolls and lined with auricular wave stippling.

The front edge of the double-bowed drawer component is set with a broad molding consisting of leafy S-scrolls enclosing buds and shell forms on a stippled ground. The frieze is occupied by the face of a drawer set at its center with a scrolled and stippled cartouche pierced with a keyhole. The cartouche is surrounded by a broad frame of auricular work from which extend, on either side, leafy S-scrolls. Crossed palm leaves are set behind this arrangement. The drawer front is also set with leafy scrolled rising handles, set with small clusters of flowers and leaves. The lower edge of the drawer is set with a narrow stippled molding of leaf tips.

The canted corners are set, at the level of the drawer, with a pierced mount consisting of C- and S-scrolls, enclosing a large cabochon below, surrounded by an auricular frame. Above, two leafy branches are suspended.

Below, the corner mounts on the lower case consist of a shaft that rises to form a double scroll. From this depends a pendant of bellflowers. To each side of this pendant are large concave areas of shellwork. The inner of the two moldings extends to form a leafy scroll that passes behind the other molding to emerge as a twining leafy stem set with flowers. The outer molding extends down the entire length of the corner and is entwined. A further pendant of bellflowers emerges from the area of shellwork. It passes down the outer edge of the mount and reemerges on the inner edge.

The four outer legs are mounted with broad leafy moldings on their inner and outer edges. The upper areas of the outer legs are clasped by large concave bosses, chased with auricular waves and set with horizontally placed concave cabochons. The bosses are clasped by auricular C-scrolls. Above rises an arrangement of three scrolled leaves. Extending from the inner edge is an outstretched feathered wing, resting on S-scrolls of auricular work. The moldings at the outer and inner edges of the leg extend to form the double-scrolled foot, the front of which is set with a fan of leaves and the back with a single acanthus leaf. The inner legs carry mounts of a differing form. Above is a curved cabochon clasped by four leafy C-scrolls, three of which carry borders of auricular shellwork. A small sprig of flowers and leaves appears at the outer edge of this arrangement. The outer moldings of the leg descend to form double scrolled feet. The scrolls support a large concave cabochon, framed

with auricular work and topped by leaves. A large acanthus leaf forms the back of each foot.

The lower profile of the cupboard, between the two inner legs, is set with a small cabochon enclosed by C-scrolls, topped by a shell and flanked on either side by leaves from which extend twining branches carrying leaves and flowers, all supported by the scrolled moldings that rise from the inner edges of the legs. The outer lower profiles are set with large shells that are similarly supported by extensions of the inner and outer leg moldings. Above the double doors of the cupboard is a broad and plain ogee molding. The doors carry frames of gilt bronze, each consisting of a curved leafy molding set at the outer lower and upper corners with curved areas of shellwork and at the inner upper corners with an S-shaped area of pierced shellwork. At the midpoint the borders carry areas of shellwork; the borders set at the inner edges of the frames clasped by leaves and pierced with keyholes form the escutcheons. The frames are entwined along their lengths on all four sides by ivy branches carrying leaves and berries. Below the doors a further broad molding extends across the front. It is cast with the same elements as those found on the molding at the top of the cabinet, below the clock.

The interior surfaces of the étagère, the top of the lower case, and both the doors are veneered with bloodwood, the grain placed to form diamonds, set with twining branches of end cut kingwood, carrying stylized flowers and leaves. The surface of the top of the lower case is also bordered at the front by a broad band of *ferréol*. The interior of the cabinet doors are veneered with mahogany and set with foliate decorations in amaranth. The undersurfaces of the two shelves are veneered with bloodwood and twining branches of end cut kingwood. The upper surface of the upper shelf is plainly veneered with bloodwood, as are all the remaining surfaces of the cabinet.

MARKS

The back of the carcass is stamped "IDUBOIS" three times (fig. 11-1). A paper label on the back of the carcass is inscribed in ink with the Nazi Administration/ Zentralstelle für Denkmalschutz (Central Office for Monument Protection) confiscation number "AR 653." This number is also painted twice on the back. Inscribed in Polish on the bottom of the carcass of the cabinet's central drawer is "Josef Bone(k?) Poprawiał w roku 1845," which translates as "improved in the year 1845." The clock dial is signed "ETIENNE LE NOIRE A PARIS." The backplate of the movement is inscribed "Etienne LeNoir AParis." The back of the dial is signed "a. n. martinierie,

1744-7 bre.” The spring of the striking train is signed “Buzot aout 1744.” Graffiti on the front plate reads, “RK. 1788 ie 28 Aprilis Kurk-hausy,” and on the dial plate, “metez/cinq/pieds/gros/troux/Etienne Le . . . /A . . . S/17/77.”²



Figure 11-1 Stamp “IDUBOIS” on the back.

COMMENTARY

The corner cupboard is stamped “IDUBOIS,” for Jacques Dubois.³ In its form and size it is unique in the oeuvre of Dubois, although mounts of the same model as those found on the main body of the cabinet appear on other pieces stamped by or attributed to this master. The corner mounts set to either side of the drawer above the double doors and the escutcheon between them can be found on the cornice of three *bibliothèques* (a pair and a single example) that have passed through the art market in recent decades.⁴ The model of the corner mounts at the sides of the cabinet are found on two *bureaux plats*, one in the Rijksmuseum attributed to Dubois,⁵ and the other, veneered with Japanese lacquer and stamped by the same maker, in the musée du Louvre.⁶ Two commodes also bear corner mounts of this model; one, stamped by Dubois, was formerly in the Niarchos collection,⁷ and the second that passed through the Paris market in 1988 was delivered by Joubert in 1764 for the comte d’Artois at Fontainebleau.⁸ Finally, a pair of corner cupboards in the Palazzo Quirinale (see fig. 12-3) bear these mounts.⁹ All the other gilt bronze mounts on this piece are of unique form, as is the model of the clock case surmounting it.

The exuberant design appears to be based on a print produced by Jean Mariette (1694–1774) (fig. 11-2),¹⁰ which is itself based on a drawing by Nicolas Pineau (1684–1754) (fig. 11-3).¹¹ While the drawing is not signed, the engraving is inscribed “Pineau del. and Mariette exc.” Both the drawing and the engraving must date to some twenty years before the construction of the cabinet.

Pineau, one of the great creators of the Rococo style, could not have conceived this drawing after 1730. It shows a corner cabinet in a markedly Régence style. The drawing may have been made by Pineau shortly after his return from Russia in about 1727, and the print made after it shows part of a *chambre à coucher* with bed and paneling also in the Régence style. It was subsequently reengraved by Johann Georg Merz (1694–1762) in Augsburg.¹² The image was reversed, and the text appeared in French and German. The early representation of the cabinet shows putti sitting on lions, open shelves, and flanking candelabra, all supported on four short cabriole legs. The drawing is detailed, with even the direction of the striation of the veneers indicated.

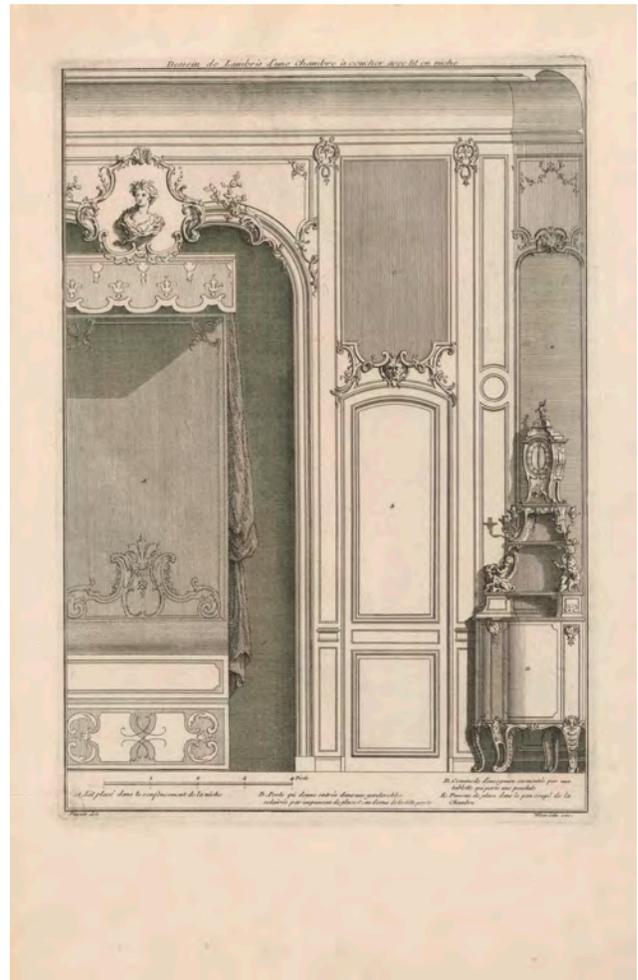


Figure 11-2 Delineator, Nicolas Pineau (French, 1684–1754), and publisher, Jean Mariette (French, 1694–1774), *Dessin de Lambris d’une chambre à coucher avec lit en niche*, ca. 1727. Engraving on white laid paper, platemark: 30.1 × 21.1 cm (11.8 × 8.3 in.), sheet: 41.5 × 27.8 cm (16.3 × 10.9 in.). New York, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 1959-85-49. Photo: www.si.edu, CCO



Figure 11-3 Nicolas Pineau (French, 1684–1754), *Encoignure avec pendule*, eighteenth century. Pen, gray wash, brown wash, 27.7 × 7.5 cm (11 × 3 in.). Paris, Musée des Arts décoratifs, collection UFAC, inv. no. 4504. Photo: © MAD, Paris. madparis.fr

Shortly after the corner cabinet was sold at auction in 1979, a 1903 inventory of the Viennese collection of Nathaniel Mayer von Rothschild (1836–1905) was found in the library of the Museum für angewandte Kunst in Vienna.¹³ The manuscript version still belongs to his descendants, and it gives a complete provenance for the cabinet, which had been lacking until this discovery. The

entry for the cabinet reads as follows: “Dieser Eckschrank gehörte ursprünglich dem Grafen Clemens Branicki, Hetman des Königreiches Polen unter Stanislaus August und kam später durch Erbschaft in den Besitz der Familie v. Szymanowski von welcher ich ihn acquirierte.”¹⁴

Jan Klemens Branicki (1689–1771) was Grand Hetman (military commander) to the Crown of Poland. He had spent his early years in France, as was the custom, and did not return to Poland until 1715. His third and last wife was the sister of Stanislas Poniatowski, the last king and grand duke of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Branicki owned a palace in Warsaw, which was largely destroyed during World War II, and a residence outside the city at Białystok that was dubbed the Versailles of Poland.¹⁵ Shortly after his death in 1771, an inventory of his possessions was drawn up. “Paris corner cupboard with ornaments candelabra (Lustres), two candleholders each in gilt metal and on top one Paris clock,” was among the items described in the Parade Room of the Branicki Palace in Warsaw. The rest of the space is described in some detail, including an elaborate bed, Parisian console tables, and a large ensemble of seating furniture, all upholstered, like the bed, in red velvet with gold braid, which included two sofas, at least six chairs en suite, eleven *tabourets*, and twelve caned Polish chairs.¹⁶ Parisian wall lights, mirrors, and a chandelier decorated with porcelain flowers, birds, and figures illuminated the room. It was an interior of considerable splendor, but because the contents of both the Warsaw palace and the Białystok residence have been entirely dispersed, one cannot be sure of the date or style of the objects that occupied the same room as the corner cabinet.

It appears that Branicki was buying furniture from Paris in the early 1750s if not before and had agents working for him. In a letter of November 23, 1752, written to Mr. Ignacy Koziębrodski, administrator of the Branicki Palace in Warsaw, he states, “I wish the corner cupboard with [lights] for my chamber to be ready. I put Mr. Lullier under the obligation and I write about it to the Honorable General Mokronowski.”¹⁷ From this letter one can say with some certainty that the corner cabinet must have arrived in Warsaw soon after that date and was installed in the palace in late 1752 or early 1753.¹⁸

The cabinet certainly exhibits the fullest flowering of the Rococo, a style apparently admired by the Polish aristocracy. It is very likely that Branicki knew Count Franciszek Bieliński and must have been familiar with and perhaps was influenced by the small room he owned that had been designed for him in an extreme asymmetrical style by Juste Aurèle Meissonnier

(1695–1750) in 1734.¹⁹ It is also possible that he was familiar with the engraving by Mariette after Pineau (see fig. 11-2) or the copy by Merz, which would have been disseminated widely in Poland. Whether or not Branicki himself chose the design of the piece of furniture, it was necessary to update Pineau's mid-1720s drawing reflected in Mariette's or Merz's printed versions to make it fashionable. It may be surmised that Pineau was asked to accomplish this task, although he would have been in his late sixties by this date and there are no marked similarities between his published engravings and this piece.

The back of the dial of the clock is dated 1744, as is the spring of the striking train, firmly dating the clock, its dial, and the movement to that year. It is most unlikely that an important commission like the cabinet was in production for some eight years. A likelier explanation is that Jacques Dubois used a clock that he already had in stock, though this was not usual workshop practice. The gilt bronze case is merely a facade, propped up at the back with an iron bar. It carries what might be read as a figure representing the muse of astrology. She is not usually shown with an eagle, which is, however, the heraldic symbol of Poland.²⁰

PROVENANCE

1752 or 1753–71: Ordered by General Mokronowski for Count Jan Klemens Branicki, Polish, 1689–1771 (Warsaw, Poland), through the *marchand-mercier* Lullier of Warsaw, by inheritance to the count's sisters, 1771;²¹ 1771–late eighteenth century: Branicki family, possibly by inheritance to Marianna Szymanowska; late eighteenth century–1837: possibly Marianna Szymanowska, Polish, 1780–1837, great-granddaughter of Krystyna (Branicki) Sapieha, sister of Jan Klemens Branicki, by inheritance within the Szymanowski family, 1837;²² before 1903: Szymanowski family, sold to Baron Nathaniel (Mayer) von Rothschild;²³ by 1903–5: Baron Nathaniel (Mayer) von Rothschild, Austrian, 1836–1905 (Vienna, Austria), by inheritance to his nephew, Baron Alphonse (Mayer) von Rothschild, 1905;²⁴ 1905–38: Baron Alphonse (Mayer) von Rothschild, Austrian, 1878–1942 (in the Régence, or Rote, Salon, Theresianum Gasse 16–18, Vienna), confiscated by the Nazis, 1938;²⁵ 1938–45: in the possession of the Nazis (stored at Das Zentraldepot für beschlagnahmte Sammlungen, Saal 6, Neuen Berg, Vienna, Austria, from autumn 1938 until May 25, 1941; moved to Hohenfurth Monastery, Vyšší Brod, Czech Republic, a Führermuseum holding location; later transferred to Altausee salt mines), recovered by the Allied Forces, June 30, 1945;²⁶ 1945–48: in the custody of the Allied Forces (salt mines at Altausee, Austria; transferred to Central Collecting Point, Munich,

Germany), repatriated to the Republic of Austria on May 5, 1948;²⁷ 1948: in the custody of Austrian government, restituted to widow of Baron Alphonse Mayer von Rothschild, Baronin Clarice von Rothschild, 1948; 1948– : Baronin Clarice von Rothschild, Austrian, 1874–1967 (Vienna, Austria; sent to New York, NY, soon after 1948), sold to Rosenberg & Stiebel;²⁸ –1950: Rosenberg & Stiebel, Inc. (New York, NY), sold to Wildenstein & Co., 1950;²⁹ 1950– : Wildenstein & Co. (New York, NY); –1963: Georges Wildenstein, French, 1892–1963 (New York, NY), by inheritance to his son, Daniel Wildenstein, 1963; 1963–77: Daniel Wildenstein, French, 1917–2001 (New York, NY), sold through Sotheby Parke-Bernet (London, England) to Akram Ojjeh, 1977; 1977–79: Akram Ojjeh, Saudi Arabian, 1918–1991 [sold, *Magnifique ensemble de meubles et objets d'art français*, Sotheby Parke-Bernet, Monaco, June 25–26, 1979, lot 60, to the J. Paul Getty Museum].

EXHIBITION HISTORY

The Corner Cupboard by Dubois: A Closer Look, J. Paul Getty Museum (Malibu), March 10, 1992–April 27, 1993.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Molinier 189?, vol. 3, 146–47, pl. 13; Schmidt 1920, 168–69, fig. 130; Salverte 1923, 96, pl. 18; Feulner 1927, 321, 330–31; Salverte 1927, 104–5, pl. 18; Salverte 1953, 97, pl. 19; Packer 1956, 34, fig. 40; Boutemy 1959, 36, 41, fig. 17; Salverte 1962, 100, pl. 18; Frégnac and Meuvret 1965, 102; González-Palacios 1966, 58, 62–63, 64, fig. 27; Watson 1966, vol. 1, 231, vol. 2, 544; Kjellberg 1978, 192–93, no. 217, ill.; Kjellberg 1979, 115, ill.; Feulner 1980, 180–81, 358, no. 292; Wilson 1980, 1–3, no. 1, fig. 1–2; Verlet 1982, 222; Sassoon and Wilson 1986, 17, no. 38; Kjellberg 1989, 267, 270, 273, 275, ill.; Pradère 1989a, 173, figs. 153–54; Boiron 1990, 53, 55, ill.; Bourne and Brett 1991, 83, fig. 258; Verlet 1991, 181; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 31–32, no. 35; Wilson et al. 1996, 70–77, no. 10; Kjellberg 1997, 165, fig. b; Wilson and Hess 2001, 20, no. 35; Leben 2004, 71, ill.; Baarsen 2013, 141; Heginbotham 2013, 154–55, figs. 6–7; Łopatecki and Walczak 2015, 177, 179, fig. 73.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

This imposing corner cabinet appears to have been constructed in such a way as to facilitate its transport by river and sea from Paris to Count Branicki in Warsaw.³⁰ The wooden cabinetry breaks down into nine relatively compact elements that can be easily assembled and disassembled by a nonspecialist using only thirteen

simple wood screws (fig. 11-4). The nine individually fabricated elements of cabinetry can be assembled into three primary sections of the cabinet: the upper open section, or étagère; the drawer compartment in the center; and the lower case (fig. 11-5).



Figure 11-4 Back left.

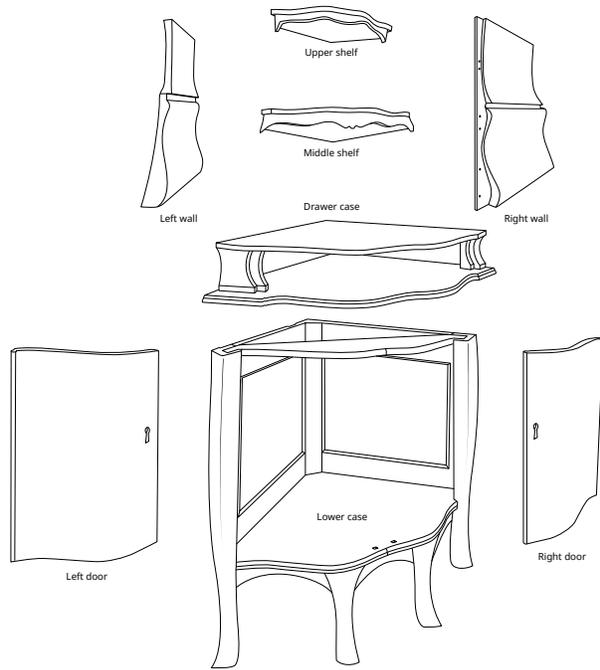


Figure 11-5 An exploded diagram showing eight of the nine elements of cabinetry (the drawer has been omitted for clarity) that can easily be assembled and disassembled for transport.

The vast majority of the gilt bronze mounts could have been fixed in place prior to shipment; only eight gilt bronze elements (including the clock in its case) would have required being packed separately and mounted after the cabinet was assembled (fig. 11-6). Although this manner of construction for shipment became well known by the late 1760s through the work of David Roentgen,³¹ this cabinet represents an early and unusual example of furniture designed for transport.



Figure 11-6 These seven gilt bronze elements, as well as the clock in its case, would have been the only elements requiring separate packaging prior to shipment. The remainder of the mounts could travel while fixed in place.

The étagère itself breaks down into four flat sections. The two back panels are each made of three wide vertical oak boards, butt joined and capped at either end by horizontal battens (or breadboard ends) approximately 5 cm wide (fig. 11-7). The battens were originally secured to the end grain of the panels using only glue and wooden pins, three at the top and probably four at the bottom. The undulating form of the panels was created by gluing cross-grain boards of oak to the fronts of the panels and shaping them, probably with planes and scrapers. The left panel is flat along its back edge, fitting into a contoured rabbet in the rear edge of the right panel. It appears that the two panels were originally joined by four screws running through the back of the right panel and into the rear edge of the left panel.

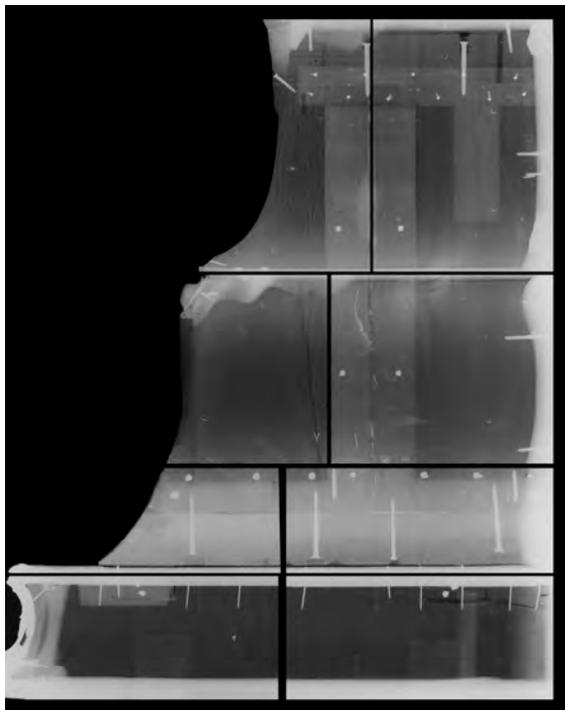


Figure 11-7 X-radiographic composite showing a side view of the étagère and the drawer compartment beneath it.

The upper and middle shelves of the étagère are made of two and four oak boards, respectively, butt joined with the grain running diagonally, from side to side. The shaped aprons below the front edges are made from single pieces of oak and were attached to the shelves with three screws each, driven downward through the shelf and into the apron. At least one of the original handmade screws survives in the upper shelf, though the others have been replaced. The upper shelf rests on top of the side panels and is fixed in place with four screws, two at the rear and one at each front corner. The middle shelf rests in long dados in the back panels and is attached with two pairs of screws through the side panels near the front

edges. The assembled étagère sits on top of the drawer compartment and is held in place by means of four loose unpegged tenons, two on each side, that are glued into mortises cut into the lower battens of the side panels (this join is visible in the radiograph, fig. 11-7).

The top and bottom panels of the triangular drawer compartment are each made of four oak boards, butt joined, with their grain running diagonally from side to side. The back sides of the drawer compartment are made of single heavy boards of oak, approximately 3.5 cm thick, dovetailed together at the back corner. On either side of the drawer opening, the stepped returns are assembled from mitered sections of molded oak, glued together with small supporting glue blocks but with no joinery. The top and bottom of the drawer compartment overlap the sides and are attached only with glue and sixteen wooden pegs, driven in from above and below.

The front of the trapezoid-shaped drawer is made of oak, veneered on the back, top, sides, and bottom with mahogany. The drawer sides, back, and bottom are also mahogany, with half-blind dovetails at the front and full, through-dovetails at the rear. The top edges of the sides and back are only very slightly rounded. The drawer bottom is made of three boards with the grain running from side to side; it rests in rabbets in the drawer sides but overlaps the entire thickness of the back. Thin strips of mahogany are applied to the bottom along the sides as drawer runners, and a pair of parallel strips running from front to back act as drawer guides, mating with a corresponding central strip of oak, running from front to back in the interior of the compartment (fig. 11-8).



Figure 11-8 Drawer bottom, composed of three horizontal boards, thin strips of mahogany drawer runners, and a pair of parallel drawer guides running from front to back. The latter mate with a corresponding central strip of oak in the interior of the compartment.

The drawer compartment sits on top of the lower case and is held in position with four loose dovetail tenons that fit into corresponding dovetail mortises in the lower case, two on each side. The tenons are glued into their mortises in the drawer compartment, and all mortises are open on their rear faces.

The cabinet base is made in a conventional frame-and-panel construction. Three substantial oak posts running from the floor to the top of the case at each corner form the core of the structure.³² The front corner posts are each formed from timber approximately 9.5 x 9.5 cm in section, while the rear post measures 8 x 8 cm. The rear post is heavily chamfered on the inner corner. The front corner posts are connected to the rear posts with oak rails framing a single large panel of mahogany on each side. The rails measure approximately 12.5 cm in height and 2.2 cm in thickness and are attached to the stiles with double-pegged mortise-and-tenon joints; the tenons are the full height of the rails and are barefaced (i.e. formed by rabbets on the rear sides and flush on the inner surfaces). The pegs are irregular in shape and measure 8 to 9 mm in maximum diameter. The edges of the posts and rails adjacent to the panels are chamfered on their exterior faces. The solid mahogany panels are quite thin, at approximately 7.5 mm in thickness. One panel is made from two wide boards and the other from three wide boards, butt joined, with the grain running vertically. They are very slightly chamfered on the exterior edges and are fitted into grooves within the posts and rails. The inner surfaces of the rails and the rear post are all veneered with mahogany to match the back panels.

The bottom panel of the lower case is made of five butt-joined boards, with the grain running diagonally, parallel to the front of the cabinet. The panel is supported at its back corner in a dado cut into the rear post. Along the back sides, the panel sets into a rabbet cut into the lower edges of the back rails; three evenly spaced wooden pegs, driven in horizontally from the rear, secure the bottom panel to the rails on each side.³³ X-radiographs reveal that along the front edge, the bottom panel is simply glued to the top of the lower front rail without any joinery. The front rail, in turn, consists of two sections that meet end to end in the center, again with no joinery. The ends of the front rail are housed, along with the bottom panel, in dadoes in the corner posts. X-radiographs show that the two medial feet are made of single blocks of oak joined to the rail above with unpinned mortise-and-tenon joints; the tenons at the top of the legs run the full width of the leg. A series of glue blocks glued in place adjacent to the legs form the curved transitions from leg to rail.

The upper rail of the lower case is made of a broad horizontal oak plank. It follows the shape of the carcass at the front and rests in open dovetail mortises in the corner posts. The rear rails have also been notched just behind the corner posts in order to make a narrow shelf that supports the end of the rail. Large handmade screws, apparently original, run downward through the dovetail tenons of the rail, into the end-grain of the front posts. In addition, wooden pegs (one on each side) have been driven through the backside of the rear rails and into the edge of the rail.

Three small glue blocks attached to the inside surfaces of the posts indicate that there was once a central shelf in the lower case. One of the glue blocks is still attached with a handmade screw that is very similar in form to the other original screws of the cabinet, suggesting that the shelf was an original feature. A large hole going diagonally through the back post at the level of the shelf would originally have held a handmade screw to firmly secure the shelf in place.

X-radiographs of the cabinet doors show that their cores are made of seven vertical staves, butt joined and capped at either end with transverse battens approximately 5 cm wide (fig. 11-9). The battens were originally attached only with glue and four evenly spaced wooden pegs on each end (approximately 8 mm in diameter), driven through the battens and into the staves. The tops and outside edges of the doors are veneered with mahogany, while the bottom edges are unveneered. Along the middle edges of the doors, where they meet and lock together, long strips of solid mahogany about 2.5 cm wide have been glued to the oak core. These strips are rabbeted on alternating sides so that the doors overlap at the center when shut.

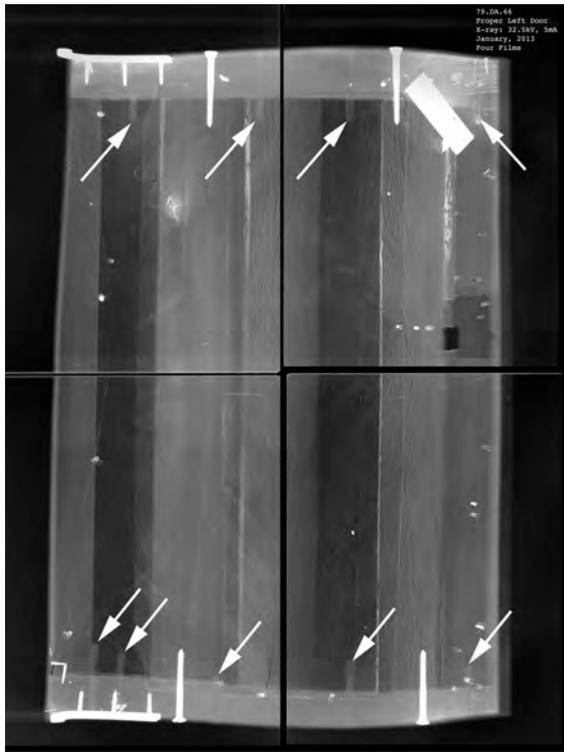


Figure 11-9 X-radiographic composite of the proper left drawer showing the seven vertical butt-joined staves that are capped at either end with transverse battens. The battens were originally attached only with glue and four or five evenly spaced wooden pegs on each end (indicated with arrows) but are currently attached with screws, as seen in the radiographs.

The cabinet doors are hung on loose knife hinges that allow the doors to be lifted off of their mounts when the central drawer compartment is removed. This is similar to the black lacquer corner cupboards by Dubois (see cat. no. 12), though in this instance the upper half of the upper hinges are fixed directly into the bottom of the drawer compartment, and as a result the doors fall loose as soon as the middle case is lifted.

The widespread use of pegged joinery is unusual in the finest Parisian work of the mid-eighteenth century. In particular, the use of pegs (rather than tongue-and-groove joints) to attach cross-grain battens to the end grain of solid wood panels must be considered a relatively poor construction technique. This has resulted in massive structural failure of the doors and rear panels of the upper case, and there have been several campaigns of extensive restoration (see below). On the curved doors, the use of pegged battens can be attributed to the relative difficulty of cutting curvilinear tongue-and-groove joints. Dubois used the same technique of pegged cross battens on the curved doors of his lacquered corner cupboards (see cat. no. 12). It is interesting to note that in other pieces in the Getty collection, Bernard II van Risenburgh,

a superior cabinetmaker, did go to the extra trouble of cutting long, curved tongue-and-groove joints on the doors of both a commode (see cat. no. 5) and a pair of corner cupboards (see cat. no. 4).

There appear to have been at least three generations of repair to the back panels of the upper case, including the application of numerous battens to the rear of the panels with screws and glue, as well as additional generations of both wooden pegs and large screws driven through the horizontal battens and into the vertical boards. X-radiographs of the doors also show extensive restoration with battens of wood inlaid into the back sides to stabilize major splits, large screws, and an iron plate used to reinforce splits and joint failures. These repairs are hidden under the veneer of the doors' inner surfaces, suggesting that the veneer was entirely lifted and then relaid after the repairs were done.

In general, the quality of oak used for the construction of the cabinet is not high. All three posts as well as several boards used in the back panels of the upper case and the doors have large knots included, visible either by eye or in X-radiographs. This feature is consistent with the quality of timber used in other pieces by Dubois in the Museum's collection (see cat. nos. 12, 13).

The stylized flowers of the marquetry decoration are of kingwood inlaid into a bloodwood background. The marquetry decoration is framed primarily with *ferréol* (*Swartzia* sp.). The inside of the cabinet's doors is veneered with stylized foliates of amaranth (*Peltogyne* sp.) inlaid into a background of bloodwood.

Based on close examination of the marquetry decoration and the tool marks, it is clear that the entire marquetry was inlaid with a knife. The bloodwood background would first have been glued in place in large sheets. The outline of the kingwood petals, leaves, and stems would then have been incised into the bloodwood using a sharp knife known as a shoulder knife or inlay knife. Next, the bloodwood within the incised lines would have been removed using chisels, and finally the kingwood elements would have been glued into the prepared cavities. The intrinsic challenge of using the shoulder knife often resulted in slight losses of control, which are visible in the form of small, unwanted cuts referred to as shoulder knife marks. The corner cupboard marquetry displays these shoulder knife marks as well as distorted wood fibers around tight curves or on the edges of hardwood veneer (figs. 11-10, 11-11). Both marks are indicative of the inlaying technique.



Figure 11-10 Marks of a shoulder knife suggest strongly that the marquetry was inlaid and not stack cut with a saw.



Figure 11-11 Distorted fibers of wood also indicate the inlay technique with knife cutting of the background veneer.

Despite their relatively large dimensions, the stylized leaves and petals of the flowers were cut from single pieces of so-called oyster veneer, where the wood is cut on a bias across the grain and through the center of a piece of timber, resulting in an oval, concentric ring pattern. These oval blanks would have been cut to shape with a fretsaw. The stems, however, are cut from long-grain, quarter-sawn veneer and were likely prepared with a knife. The marquetry is relatively poor in quality. Although the apparent substandard quality may be exacerbated by age and restoration, there are clear signs of poor original cutting and inlaying. The modest quality of both the construction and the marquetry seems rather incongruous in a commission of this scale and ambition, particularly considering the outstanding quality and extravagant design of the mounts.

X-ray examination of the marquetry reveals many small holes caused by the placement of veneer pins during construction. These small iron nails were placed alongside a piece of veneer to prevent it from sliding out of position during gluing and clamping. These holes are now only visible by X-ray and, as is symptomatic of hand-forged nails predating the Industrial Revolution, are of rectangular cross section.

The veneer of the lower case and the *étagère* are extremely consistent and display the same quality of execution. There is little doubt that they were made at the same time. It is interesting to note that the two top shelves of the upper cupboard possess marquetry decoration only where it can be easily seen. They are veneered with the same elaborate stylized floral marquetry below but are veneered with a plain bloodwood veneer on their top surfaces, which are too high to be visible to a person of average height.

The suite of gilt bronze mounts on this cabinet is noteworthy not only for its exuberance but also for the variety of techniques used in its fabrication. The majority of the mounts are relatively flat and were sand cast in the usual manner, utilizing a two-piece mold.³⁴ A number of mounts on the cabinet, however, are more three dimensional and thus required more complex mold-making procedures. In particular, the massive candle arm mounts (with putti and lions), as well as the clock, were cast in multiple sections using the lost wax technique.³⁵ The sections were joined using a combination of soldering and mechanical joints. Curiously, the left and right figural groups of putti seated on lions were not cast in the same way. In the left mount, the lion and putto were cast separately, and the putto itself was cast in four pieces (body + 2 wings + arm), all of which were joined by soldering. In contrast, for the right mount, the putto and lion were cast together in one pour. The putto in this latter mount was cast in six parts (body + one wing + 2 arms + 2 legs). There is no easily discernible reason for why the two compositions were cast so differently. On both of these mounts the candle arms were cast in seven separate pieces, many of which are joined with threaded rods and soldering metal (fig. 11-12), though there are also lapped and pinned joints as well. The candle arm sections are joined to the figural groups at about the level of the putti's heads with riveted brass straps at the rear (fig. 11-13) and soldering at the front. Oddly, on both sides, the lion's tail runs across this joint between the figural group and the foliate candle arms, and in both cases, the two parts of the lion's tail were chased in completely different ways. This suggests that the two halves were chased at different times or by different people, prior to being assembled. Presumably, this reflects the fact that it was easier for the chaser(s) to manipulate the smaller

individual castings rather than the massive, fully assembled mounts.

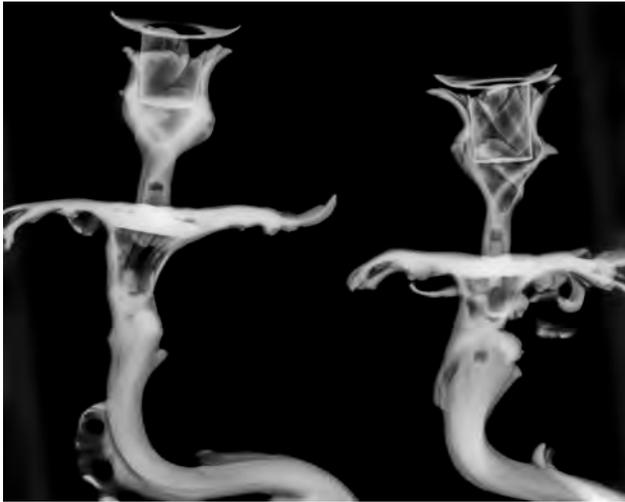


Figure 11-12 X-radiograph of both candle arms showing they were cast in seven pieces and joined with threaded rods and soldering metal.



Figure 11-13 Riveted plates reinforce the joints between the candle arm sections and the figural groups below.

The gilt bronze clock case was made in three major parts: the left side, the right side, and the upper figural group. The two sides of the clock case are mechanically joined with three large rectangular plates of brass riveted across the central seam with numerous brass pins. This joint was then soldered shut from the front to hide the seam. Additional floral elements (two on each side, though one is now missing on the left) are attached to the sides of the case only with threaded rod and nuts. The upper figural group was cast in four pieces; the eagle's head, the billowing upper drapery, and Astronomy's right arm are separate castings, attached both mechanically and by soldering. The figural group as a whole is attached to the lower portion of the clock case only with threaded rods and nuts.

All the lost wax cast sections suffer from numerous casting flaws where the molten metal failed to fill the mold. Many of these were repaired with brass rod or wedges of brass, hammered into the gaps from the rear and soldered in place. These repairs are conspicuous on the interior surfaces of the mounts.

In addition to two-part sand casting and lost wax casting, two of the mounts on the cabinet were clearly produced using complex piece molding in sand. These mounts, from the outer edges of the upper shelf (fig. 11-14), have the relatively smooth and unblemished interior surfaces typical of sand castings but clearly show mold lines that suggest that the mold into which they were cast was probably made of from ten to fifteen pieces of compressed sand. Complex sand casting of this type is well documented in the nineteenth century, but these mounts offer uncommon evidence that the technique was being practiced in mid-eighteenth-century Paris as well.



Figure 11-14 One of two mounts from the outer edges of the upper shelf that show evidence of complex sand piece molding. Seen here from behind, the cast exhibits the relatively smooth and unblemished surfaces of sand castings coupled with distinct mold lines.

A representative selection of eighteen gilt bronze elements were removed from the cabinet and analyzed for alloy composition using X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF). The alloys of the majority of the mounts are very typical in all respects of eighteenth-century Parisian castings, and this supports the view that they are original to the cabinet.

Three mounts, however, have an alloy composition that differs substantially from the former group. These are framing mounts from the lower doors that appear to be replacements. They have distinctly different chasing (with textured surfaces that appear somewhat more regular and "mechanical") and are also notable for the carving tool marks that have been cast into the rear surfaces, suggesting that they were molded from wooden master

models (fig. 11-15). The two are clearly distinguishable based on their chasing and the working of the models, as well as the composition of their alloys.



Figure 11-15 Comparison of the two sides of original mount (left) and a later replacement (right). The two are clearly distinguishable based on their chasing (top) and the working of the models (bottom).

The alloy of the replacement mounts is significantly higher in tin as well as in several impurities (iron, antimony, and nickel) than that of the original mounts. The relatively high levels of these elements, the substantial silver content, and the apparent use of a wooden master model make these mounts similar to some gilt bronze mounts produced in Berlin and Dresden that have been examined and analyzed by Getty conservators. This elemental distribution has also been shown to be common in copper alloys from central European sources in the publications of Josef Riederer.³⁶ It is certainly possible that the reproduction of these mounts is associated with the 1845 restoration by the Polish restorer Josef Bonek (see below), though the identity of the workshop that could have produced these bronze mounts is unknown.

The dates of two significant restorations to the cabinet are known. The first is known from an inscription in Polish written in pencil on the lower surface of the drawer compartment. The inscription reads:

Josef Bone(k?)

Poprawiał w roku 1845 [*Improved in the year 1845*]

The second known restoration was undertaken in 1982, shortly after the Museum's acquisition of the cabinet. This restoration was executed in England by David Hawkins.

There are numerous small areas of veneer restoration using Andaman padauk (*Pterocarpus dalbergioides*) on the outside of the cabinet. This wood has a color and figure similar to the bloodwood it replaces, but the width of the stripes is narrower and the dark vessels are more pronounced (fig. 11-16). In addition, the entire surface of the internal bottom panel of the lower cupboard is veneered in padauk. Although some correspondence and photographs exist in the Museum's object file showing the corner cupboard during the Hawkins restoration, there is no conservation report. Bloodwood was relatively unknown by English restoration workshops at this time, and it is very probable that the appearance of all the padauk dates from this recent English restoration. Most restoration work seems to have been concentrated in the bombé parts of the corner cupboard and the large lower bottom panel. X-ray analysis shows cracking and recent consolidation of the proper right door in particular. X-radiographs also show extensive repairs to splits in the case bottom, executed with nine butterfly spline inlays, now covered by the padauk restoration veneer. The upper panel of the drawer compartment, which has marquetry on the top, is counter-veneered on the underside, with what appears to be padauk. This was presumably also done by Hawkins to minimize warping and/or splitting of the panel. The counter-veneer is arranged in two symmetrical diagonal fields.

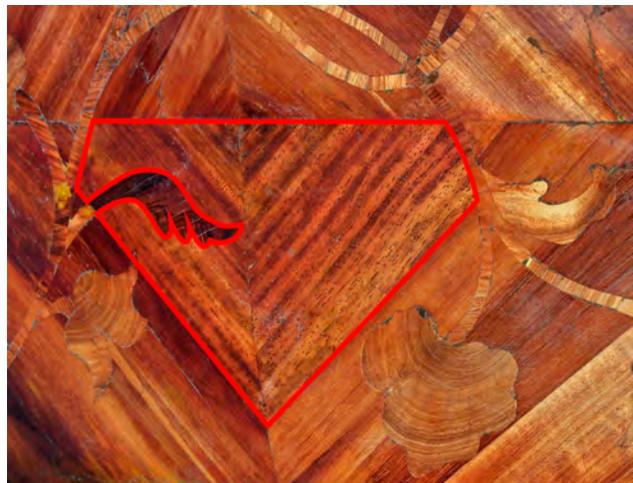


Figure 11-16 A detail of a restored veneered area where Andaman padauk (*Pterocarpus dalbergioides*) was used in place of the original bloodwood. This replacement wood is similar in color and figure to the bloodwood, but the width of the stripes is narrower and the dark vessels are more pronounced.

The rear foot has been replaced, probably by Hawkins, with a solid walnut block; the joint is just below the recess

on which the bottom shelf rests. The block is attached with four dowels. X-radiographs show holes apparently drilled with a relatively modern spade or screw-auger bit.

A.H., with Y.C. and J.D.

NOTES

1. See Wilson et al. 1996, 70–77, no. 10.
2. See Wilson et al. 1996, 70–77, no. 10.
3. For more information on Jacques Dubois, see Pradère 1989a, 168–75; Boiron 1990, 42–59; Wolvesperges 2000, 283–91.
4. A pair of *bibliothèques*, attributed to Jacques Dubois, *Important French and Continental Furniture, Sculpture and Rugs, April 26, 1990* (New York: Christie's, 1990), lot 160. See another similar *bibliothèque*, also attributed to this master: *Bel Ameublement, July 3, 1993* (Monaco: Sotheby's, 1993), lot 98.
5. Acc. no. RBK-16660. See Pradère 1989a, 174, fig. 155; Baarsen 2013, 138–41, no. 29.
6. Acc. no. OA 6083. Purchased by Louis-Philippe, duc d'Orléans, in 1769. See Pradère 1989a, 171, fig. 149; Durand 2014, 258–59, no. 82.
7. Kjellberg 1979, 116, fig. 2. See also Pradère 1989a, 168, fig. 146, where the commode is described as also bearing the stamp of Migeon as dealer.
8. With the dealer Michel Meyer in the 1980s. It was painted with the inventory number 2321. Photograph in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
9. González-Palacios 1996, 136–40, no. 9. They bear the marks of the Palazzo Colorno.
10. The engraving is listed in Guilnard 1880, 127. Part of Mariette's *L'Architecture française*, the engraving is titled "Dessein de Lambris d'une Chambre à coucher avec lit en niche." The corner cabinet, lettered D, is captioned "Commode d'encognure surmontée par une tablette qui porte une pendule."
11. Inv. no. 4504, musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris; Meuvret and Frégnac 1963, 101; Pradère 1989a, 172. Pineau, also known as "Pineau le Russe," was in Saint Petersburg from 1716 to about 1727, employed by Peter the Great as *premier sculpteur de Sa Sacrée Majesté Czarienne*. See Biaï 1892, 15–30.
12. In the collection of the Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst (MAK), Vienna, Austria, acc. no. KI 10018-8.
13. I am grateful to Jonathan Bourne for first bringing this inventory to my attention. Rothschild 1903.
14. I am grateful to Mrs. Bettina de Rothschild Loomam for her assistance. She provided the Museum with a transcript of Nathaniel von Rothschild's manuscript of the inventory and lent the original photograph of the Rote Salon in Vienna, from which the Museum took a copy. Correspondence with David Cohen, September 9, 1991, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
15. Łopatecki and Walczak 2015.
16. Inventory of Jan Klemens Branicki, October 20, 1772, no. 82, f. 535v–536, Roskie Archives, Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw. I thank Dr. Andrew A. S. Ciechanowiecki for his translation of the relevant part of the inventory and for his assistance in contacting Polish colleagues concerning Branicki and his ownership of the corner cabinet. Correspondence with the author, September 2, 1981.
17. "Szafkę kątową ze szkłem w pokoju moim, abym zastał gotowa, bardzo obligować Mr. Lullier i pisać o to do Jegomości Pana Generała Mokronowskiego." Correspondence between Jan Klemens Branicki and Mr. Koziębrodski, November 23, 1752, no. 320, fol. 85v, Roskie Archives, Teke Glinki, Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw. I am grateful to Bożenna Majewska-Maszkowska, curator of the Art Collections, Royal Castle of Warsaw, for providing me with this reference. Correspondence with the author, July 28, 1981. Lullier was a Warsaw *marchand-mercier*.
18. It is possible that Branicki's cupboard may have been paired with a stove. Although no such object is known to survive, the count's inventory does mention a freestanding cast iron stove with gilding on the bottom and stone legs in the vicinity of the corner cabinet. Whether this object's appearance was meant to echo the design of the Dubois corner cupboard is impossible to determine from this vague mention, but *encoignures* are traditionally paired with another object of like design, and Branicki's may have been no different. See Valentino 2011, 10. It is worth mentioning too that Branicki ordered a second, even larger cabinet. Although the 1772 inventory does not allude to any other large corner cabinets, it seems to mention the Getty's cabinet specifically. See Correspondence of M. Koziębrodski, December 6, 1753, no. 30, f. 163, Potocki Archives, Teke Glinki, Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, as indicated by Valentino 2011, 10–11.
19. See Nyberg 1969, pls. 87–90; Fuhring 2008, 38. The small cabinet has since disappeared.
20. Wilson et al. 1996, 70–77, no. 10.
21. Correspondence between Jan Klemens Branicki and Mr. Koziębrodski, November 23, 1752, no. 320, fol. 85v, Roskie Archives, Teke Glinki; Inventory of Jan Klemens Branicki, October 20, 1772, no. 82, fols. 535v–536, Roskie Archives. Both in Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw.
22. Correspondence with Bożenna Majewska-Maszkowska, Curator of Art Collections, Royal Castle in Warsaw, July 28, 1981, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
23. Inventory of Baron Nathaniel (Mayer) von Rothschild in the collection of the library of the Museum für angewandte Kunst in Vienna. Notizen über einige meiner Kunstgegenstände, 1903, no. 80.

24. Inventory in the collection of the library of the Museum für angewandte Kunst in Vienna. Notizen über einige meiner Kunstgegenstände, 1903, no. 80.
25. Correspondence with Bettina de Rothschild Looram, September 9, 1991, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
26. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum Zentral Depot, database record of the Zentralstelle für Denkmalschutz, under number AR653; Katalog Beschlagnahmen, Sammlung A.R., p. 13, no. 653. And correspondence with Bettina de Rothschild Looram, September 9, 1991, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum. https://www.zdk-online.org/k/AR_653/.
27. Berlin, Deutsches Historisches Museum, digitized records under number 1855; Koblenz (Germany), Bundesarchiv (Federal Archives), B 323/609 (Control Number File 609) and B 323/652 (Restitution Card File 652). https://www.dhm.de/datenbank/ccp/dhm_ccp_add.php?seite=6&fld_1=1855.
28. Correspondence with Bettina de Rothschild Looram, September 9, 1991, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
29. Conversation with Wildenstein & Co., October 4, 1991.
30. It is likely that the cabinet traveled down the Seine by barge to Le Havre on the English Channel and then by oceangoing vessel north, around Denmark, to the city of Gdansk on the Baltic coast of Poland. From there, it would likely have traveled by barge up the Vistula River to Warsaw.
31. Koeppel 2012, 12, 98.
32. The rear leg, below the level of the case, however, has been replaced with walnut during a later restoration.
33. There are now four pegs on each side, but one of each group appears to be a later addition.
34. For a detailed description of this process, see Considine and Jamet 2000, 283–95.
35. The most obvious indicators of lost wax casting are the presence of small bubbles of metal and branched flashes on the interior surfaces of the castings. See Heginbotham 2013.
36. Riederer 1980; Riederer 1982; Riederer 1983.





12. Pair of corner cupboards

French (Paris), ca. 1755

By Jacques Dubois (French, 1694–1763, master 1742)

White oak veneered with pear* and bloodwood, set with leather panels of Chinese black lacquer, and painted with European lacquer; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron hardware and locks; *brèche d'Alep* top

H: 3 ft. 2 1/4 in., W: 2 ft. 7 1/2 in., D: 1 ft. 11 1/4 in. (97.2 × 80 × 58.7 cm)

78.DA.119.1–2

DESCRIPTION

Each corner cupboard has a bowed front and is fitted with a single lockable door. It is supported on four short legs, three of which are of cabriole form. The two outer legs are five-sided in section, while that in the center front has an almost flat outer surface and a curved back. The fourth leg at the back of the piece is L-shaped in section, fitted with a block of smaller dimensions. The stone tops are of *brèche d'Alep*, cut to conforming shape and with a molded front edge.

The corners are set with pierced gilt bronze mounts. Each consists of a central cabochon set in a C-scroll, edged by a leafy border. This is enclosed on either side by hipped scrolls of C and S form, fringed with a shell-like form, terminating in scrolling leaves below and rising above to an S-shaped platform, resting on and supporting leafy motifs. A leafy twig bearing three berries rises from the lower part of the mount, twining and appearing to either side of the main arrangement as it rises. Each corner mount is the reverse of the one opposite it.

A straight mount of overlapping leaves and berries descends from this mount to the top of the leg, where it joins a cluster of acanthus leaves. These leaves overhang a concave molding that extends horizontally across the front of the corner cupboard, immediately below the single door. A short plain molding extends from the acanthus leaves down the outer edge of each outer leg to the scrolled and pierced foot mount. Each foot is composed of S-scrolls enclosing an arrangement of leaves from which rises a short stem carrying leaves and berries, set against a large divided leaf. A mount of the same model is set on the central foot, and a twisted rope molding rises from either side to outline the lower profile

of the corner cupboard. Above the central leg is a small mount in the form of a shell flanked by foliated C-scrolls.

The door is set with a large continuous framing mount composed of C- and hipped S-scrolls set with leaves. On either side rise twining leafy branches carrying berries. Shorter flowering branches emerge above and descend to either side. The center of the upper part of the frame is composed of four addorsed C-scrolls asymmetrically arranged, set with leaves, leafy twigs, and berries. In the middle of the lower section of the framing mount is a larger rising asymmetrical arrangement of C-scrolls set above a large pierced shell, which is supported by further C-scrolls. Short branches bearing flowers emerge from the left and above.

The doors are set with leather panels of Chinese black lacquer featuring three tones of gold and touches of vermilion and red ocher. The scene on corner cupboard .1 shows an open fenced area in front of a house with a pillared porch. Above right are three horses depicted in two tones of gold on which is set a lord attended by two members of his court and servants carrying fans. In front of the house are ten more servants, each wearing a short-brimmed hat, engaged in various actions. Two carry swords, two carry red staves, two carry standards, and two beat drums. Another carries a large flag that the wind has wrapped around his body. The tenth figure is damaged, and it is not possible to define his task. In the center are seven more servants. One carries a sword, another a flag, and two carry standards. The activities of the remaining figures are not comprehensible, probably due to incorrect overpainting. The ground is painted with tufts of grass, and a tree emerges from behind a rock on the lower right.

The lacquer on cupboard .2 depicts a large open temple held up by columns. Inside are three figures, one bearded and seated, and two large drums. A fourth man stands on the staircase and receives a letter from a messenger. To the left of the temple a large tree stands in front of various structures. Above is a group of four warriors. All carry swords. One bears a standard, and two others carry scepters on the ends of long red poles.

The remaining surfaces on the facades of the corner cupboards are decorated with European black lacquer, and each door is outlined with a narrow border of gold paint. Each lock plate is partly concealed by the framing mount. Set between broad scrolls and a leafy emergence, they take the form of simple stippled plates centered by keyholes. The interior surface of each door is veneered with an outer frame of quartersawn bloodwood surrounding four panels of the same veneer. The cupboards are fitted with a single shelf, and the entire interior surface is covered in European vermillion red lacquer (fig. 12-1).



Figure 12-1 Three-quarter right front view, with door open.

MARKS

Each corner cupboard is stamped on top of the front right leg stile “IDUBOIS” once and “JME,” for *jurande des menuisiers-ébénistes* twice (fig. 12-2).



Figure 12-2 On top of the front right leg stile is stamped “IDUBOIS,” “JME,” “JME” (78.DA.119.2).

COMMENTARY

The corner cupboards are stamped “IDUBOIS,” for Jacques Dubois.¹ A pair of corner cupboards in the Palazzo del Quirinale in Rome carries a framing mount on their single doors of the same floral and extremely asymmetrical model (fig. 12-3).² They are stamped by Dubois, and apart from having similar profiles and measurements (105 x 85 x 54 cm) they carry mounts elsewhere of differing models and are veneered with *bois de bout* marquetry. No other corner cupboards of this design by Jacques Dubois are known.



Figure 12-3 Jacques Dubois (French, 1694–1763), Pair of corner cupboards, ca. 1750. Oak veneered with bloodwood, softwood, and kingwood; gilt bronze mounts; *fleur de pêcher* marble top, 105 × 85 × 54 cm (41 × 33 × 21 in.). Rome, Palazzo del Quirinale. Segretariato Generale della Presidenza della Repubblica, Roma – Foto: Araldo De Luca

Corner mounts of the same model can be seen on a small commode veneered with Chinese lacquer and stamped by Dubois in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.³ A commode stamped by this master veneered with amaranth banding and bearing corner and feet mounts of the same model was sold in Paris in 1954.⁴ A *bureau plat* set with corner mounts of this model and veneered with panels of lacquer, of similar form to that in the musée du Louvre made for the duc de Choiseul,⁵ was sold from the Patiño Collection in New York in 1986.⁶ In an inventory taken of Dubois's large workshop at his death in 1763 the following is listed: "2 grandes encoignures aussi de vernis de la Chine à cartels, prisées 1 000 l."⁷

In J. Paul Getty's diary for 1950 he notes that in September he visited Lionel Levi of Cameron's in London, where he saw "a fine pair of Louis XV lacquer encoignures L3,500. Agreed to the price."⁸ Evidently the final transaction with Getty was held a month later by Levi's associate Frank Partridge, and the price given in the files of the Museum is \$11,931.93. The cupboards were sent to Malibu, but Getty asked for their return in 1960, and they remained in Sutton Place until just before his death. They were returned to the Museum in 1975. The years of exposure to the uncontrolled climate in both Sutton Place and the Ranch House in Malibu have taken their toll on the

Chinese lacquer. They have been restored and repainted so many times that little of their original surface remains visible (see "Technical Description" below). For this reason the corner cupboards have never been on display in the Museum.

A note in the Museum's files states that the corner cupboards were once in the collection of Nathaniel von Rothschild of Vienna.⁹ This provenance appears to be incorrect. Nathaniel von Rothschild's collection was in part restituted in 1947 to Clarice von Rothschild, who sent it to Rosenberg & Stiebel in New York. Gerald Stiebel cannot find a mention of the corner cupboards in the company's archives and thinks it is unlikely that his forebears would have passed them to a London dealer.¹⁰ The original invoice, provided by Frank Partridge, makes no mention of a Rothschild provenance. In *Collector's Choice* Getty writes, "I have a pair of black lacquer Louis XV encoignures by Dubois. I'd been in the market for such a pair for about fifteen years before I saw these at Partridge's in London. Their beauty and elegance so impressed me that I bought them—regardless of their high price—without hesitation. Frank Partridge was under the impression that these also came from one of the Rothschild collections. But their previous ownership was never fully confirmed."¹¹

It is likely that the corner cupboards were in fact sold by Francis David Charteris, the twelfth Earl of Wemyss and eighth Earl of March (1912–2008), at Christie's on March 7, 1946: "99 A PAIR OF LOUIS XV ENCOIGNURES, each enclosed by one door, lacquered with Chinese figures and buildings in gold heightened with red on black ground, mounted with ormolu borders to the panels and corner mounts chased with sprays of flowers entwined with scrollwork, surmounted by giallo marble slabs—32 in. wide stamped I. Dubois, ME."¹² Unfortunately, the sale catalogue is not illustrated.

They were acquired by Raphael Rosenberg for 890 guineas.¹³ He was in partnership with his brother Saemy, having left Germany before World War II. The London company was known as S&R Rosenberg Ltd. There is a likelihood that they bought the corner cupboards together with Levi of Cameron's and Frank Partridge, but this has yet to be confirmed.¹⁴

PROVENANCE

–1946: Francis David Charteris, twelfth Earl of Wemyss and eighth Earl of March, Scottish, 1912–2008 (Gosford House, Longniddry, East Lothian, Scotland) [sold, *Old French and English Furniture and Porcelain* [. . .], Christie's, London, March 7, 1946, lot 99, to Raphael

Rosenberg]; 1946– : Raphael Rosenberg, German, 1894–1968;¹⁵ –1950: Cameron and Frank Partridge & Sons, Ltd. (London, England), sold to J. Paul Getty, 1950; 1950–76: J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976 (Sutton Place, Surrey, England), upon his death, held in trust by the estate; 1976–78: Estate of J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976, distributed to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1978.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Connecting Seas: A Visual History of Discoveries and Encounters, Getty Research Institute (Los Angeles), December 7, 2013–April 13, 2014.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Getty and Le Vane 1955, 151, 167; Wescher 1955, 118, 122, 130, fig. 14; Getty 1956, 81, ill.; Getty 1963, 120, ill.; Getty 1965, 150, ill.; Huth 1971, 145, no. 234; Kjellberg 1989, 273; Boiron 1990, 56, ill.; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 33–34, no. 38; Wilson and Hess 2001, 22, no. 38; Hagelskamp, Heginbotham, and van Duin 2014, S221–S222, fig. 1; Schilling et al. 2014, S131; Hagelskamp, Heginbotham, and van Duin 2016, 91–96, figs. 1a–1b, 5c–5d, 6, 8.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

At first glance, these corner cabinets appear to be assembled using standard frame-and-panel construction (fig. 12-4). A look at the underside quickly reveals, however, that things are not as they initially appear (fig. 12-5). Dovetails join the case back panels to the case bottom, and what first appear to be lower structural rails (securing the front and rear legs) are little more than thin battens of oak that were nailed across the case back without structural function. X-radiographs confirm that the same is true at the top of the case; ersatz rails are

nailed along the top rear edges, seemingly to conceal the underlying dovetail joints and give the impression of frame-and-panel construction (fig. 12-6). The two back panels of each cabinet are joined to each other at the back corner with a simple dado, secured with glue and nails. The panels are each assembled from three boards of rather poor quality oak. In each case, the board closest to the back corner is longer than the others and runs down to the floor. These boards have been sawn to shape and form the basis of the rear foot. Once again, the functional joint between the rear panels is concealed with oak battens of negligible structural utility, giving the false impression of a solid post at the rear corner.



Figure 12-4 Right back.



Figure 12-5 Bottom.



Figure 12-6 Top.

The back panels are attached to the two front posts with tongue-and-groove joints; as is commonly the case, the grooves can be seen extending below the case bottom on the rear face of the front legs. Even the front corner posts are not entirely what they appear. While there are indeed solid posts at the corners, they have been augmented on their inside and outside faces, as well as on their tops, with oak battens analogous to those used on the case back. The reasons for doing this are not readily apparent; the resulting composite post is not unusually large, and a single block of wood could easily have been used. It is possible that the widening of the posts represents a modification to accommodate corner mounts that are larger than those anticipated in the original carcass design. Another unusual feature of the front posts may lend credence to this supposition. When the corner mounts are removed, one sees that bulbous blocks of wood, approximately 10 cm high by 5 cm wide, have been inserted into the posts behind the mount's central cabochon (fig. 12-7). The surfaces of these blocks are visible through the piercing of the corner mounts; it appears to have been necessary to add these blocks because the original contour of the post was too shallow to adequately fill the space behind the current mounts. This, again, supports the idea that the original carcass design was conceived with different, less protuberant, corner mounts in mind.¹⁶



Figure 12-7 Detail of the protruding blocks of wood that were added to the front posts, presumably to fill the gap between the post and the current mounts.

The short front corner legs have been built up from several small blocks of oak, glued onto the post and then cut back to create the cabriole form. Beneath the front edge of the case bottom, two serpentine blocks of wood are attached, joining in the middle, to form the skirt. The central foot is attached into these blocks with a single large mortise-and-tenon joint, visible in X-ray. Diagonal cross braces attached with screws support the underside of the case bottom (see fig. 12-5); however, these do not appear to be original.

The cabinets' bowed doors are made of laminated oak. X-radiography clearly shows that for each door, approximately fifteen narrow vertical staves are glued

side by side to form the body of the door, and then substantial battens are attached to the top and bottom of the door with numerous wooden pegs and glue (figs. 12-8,

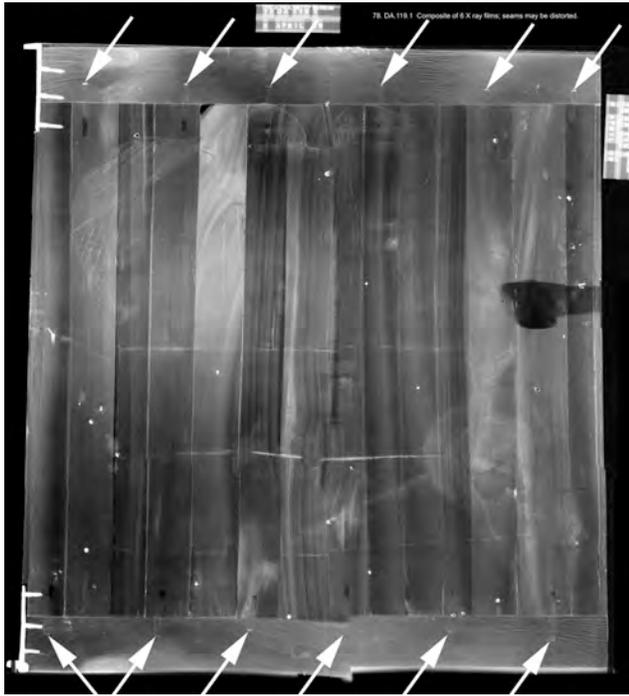


Figure 12-8

Composite X-radiographs of the .1 and .2 doors show that the cabinets' bowed doors are constructed of approximately 15 narrow vertical staves that were glued to one another and not attached by structural means. Also visible in the X-radiographs are the wooden pegs used to secure large battens across the tops and bottoms of each door (indicated with arrows).

The interiors of the doors are veneered with bloodwood. The exterior of the doors, surrounding the central lacquer panels, is veneered with fruitwood, likely pear, which serves as a smooth ground for the European black lacquer.

The cabinet doors are hung at the top and bottom on loose knife hinges that allow the doors to be lifted off of their mounts when the marble top is removed. X-ray images show that at some point in the past, possibly originally, both cabinets had third hinges in the middle of the door (screw holes are visible in the radiographs); it is not known why or at what time the third hinges were added and/or removed.

The decoration of Chinese lacquer on this pair of cabinets is extraordinary in several respects. First and foremost, it has been applied onto a markedly convex surface. The use of true Asian lacquer in this manner is extremely rare, for the simple reason that it is extremely difficult to accomplish. As has been noted previously (see, e.g., cat. no. 5), lacquer panels have a certain amount of *flexibility* when thinned to veneerlike thickness of approximately 1

12-9). This rather unsophisticated method of assembly was also used by Dubois on the doors of his large corner cabinet made for Count Branicki (see cat. no. 11).

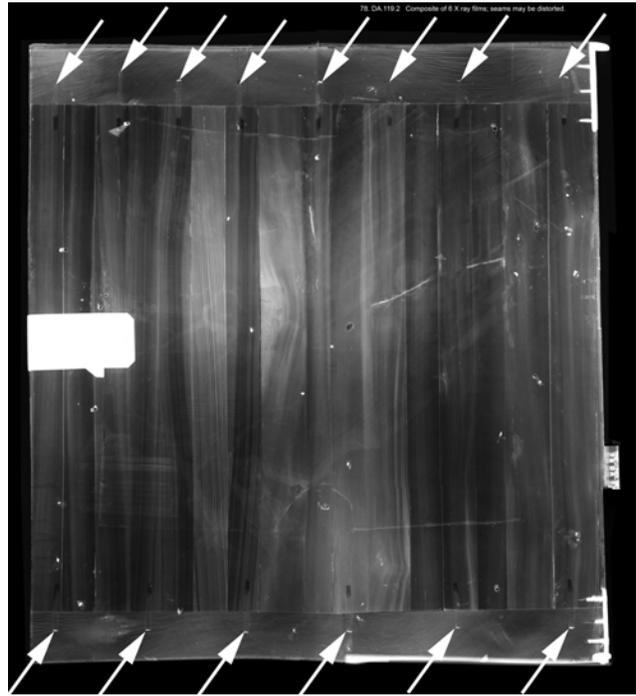


Figure 12-9

mm. This allows them to be carefully bent in one dimension. Lacquer panels, however, have very low *extensibility*; that is, they cannot be stretched (or compressed) to any appreciable degree. This characteristic makes it virtually impossible to bend flat lacquer onto a compound curve without tearing or distorting the lacquer. How then was Dubois able to accomplish this extraordinary feat on these corner cabinets? The answer lies both in his technique and in his careful choice of materials.

X-radiographs of the doors reveal distinct patterns of cuts in the lacquer, which provide the first clues to Dubois's method. The cuts show where thin wedges of lacquer were excised from the original panel, allowing it to lay flat on a convex substrate. A familiar analog might be a tailor's technique of placing a triangular dart into a garment, allowing the textile to conform to the curves of a human form. Interestingly, the patterns of cuts on the two doors are very different. On one (cabinet .2), major cuts are made radially from the top and sides into the center of the panel (fig. 12-10). These cuts stop short of the center such that the panel remains in one piece. On the other

door (cabinet .1), two major horizontal cuts split the panel into three sections and two short vertical cuts push upward from the lower edge of the upper section (fig. 12-11). The fact that the two doors were prepared in such different ways suggests that the craftsman responsible was experimenting with a technique that was not altogether routine for him. By placing a sheet of transparent polyester film (nonextensible) over the doors and making similar cuts, it is possible to determine how much of the original lacquer had to be excised to allow the lacquer to conform to the convex door fronts. This exercise also reveals that the method using radial cuts is less successful at allowing easy conformation than the other method of splitting the panel into horizontal bands. It seems likely, therefore, that the doors were prepared in that order.¹⁷



Figure 12-10 Two-dimensional view of the lacquer on cabinet .2 showing the “darts” that enabled the panel to lie flat across the rounded surface of the current cabinet.



Figure 12-11 Lacquer layout on the .1 cabinet. This panel was cut into three sections before it was secured to the cabinet.

Two additional points of interest are raised by the X-radiographs. The first is that the original Chinese panels do not extend to the edges of the field defined by the gilt bronze mounts. This indicates that the French craftsman responsible for lacquering the balance of the case would also have had to add significant sections of new decorative work to extend the original composition, particularly at the sides. This circumstance was presumably brought on by necessity, and therefore it seems reasonable to assume that the original Chinese panels were never significantly wider than their current maximum width of approximately 50 cm. It is also clear that the excision of original lacquer material during the bending process would have required the cuts to be hidden and any mismatches of design across the seams to be corrected by the French lacquerer as well. This is most clearly in evidence on cabinet .2 in the area of the tree. Here, the original French retouching is visible as a 2-cm-wide band straddling the cut; the French work was executed in brass powders that have tarnished and darkened (fig. 12-12).



Figure 12-12 A significant amount of retouching was necessary to bridge the gaps in excised original lacquer, seen here on cabinet .2 as a 2-cm-wide band straddling the cut.

Dubois's success in bending his Chinese panels onto these doors may be attributable not only to the skill of the craftsman but also to the inherent qualities of the panels he selected. These panels are extremely unusual in that they were originally lacquered onto a leather substrate. At the time of writing, no other examples of lacquered leather are known on French furniture. This substrate would undoubtedly have been an advantage to Dubois as he attempted this challenging compound bending technique. Wood (the preponderant substrate for lacquer) has a distinct grain direction, and as a result, a panel of lacquer on wood will bend more readily in one direction than the other. Leather, on the other hand, is essentially isotropic, without any inherent directional structure, allowing these panels to bend with equal ease in any direction. Using the analytical technique peptide mass fingerprinting, the leather substrate used for these panels was identified as deriving from a water buffalo.¹⁸ This finding aligns with the sixteenth-century Chinese text "Xiu Shi Lu," which states that water buffalo hide was the preferred leather type for lacquer.¹⁹ The relative thinness of the leather used in these panels (cross sections show it is about 0.4 micron thick) suggests that the hide was likely thinned (figs. 12-13, 12-14).²⁰ Due to the leather substrate, the ground layers of this lacquer have also been prepared differently from other examples of Chinese lacquer in the Getty collection (see cat. nos. 5, 13). Whereas examples on wood contain multiple thick protein-bound ground layers with paper intermediate layers, the lacquer on this object was applied over a thin ground layer measuring only 20 microns in thickness. Based on scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM-EDS) analysis, this layer appears to contain clay with an inorganic composition similar to that found in typical

Chinese export grounds. Another advantageous characteristic of these panels lies in the composition of the lacquer. The lacquer used for these panels was originally mixed with large amounts of drying oil, which may have resulted in a dried film of enhanced flexibility. While the addition of drying oil is relatively common among the Asian lacquer panels studied, the drying oil used in this object appears to have been heat bodied.²¹ Heat bodying of drying oils in China consisted of heating the oil to a very high temperature. Based on the examples studied at the Getty Conservation Institute and the J. Paul Getty Museum up to the time of writing, heat-bodied oils appear to have only been used in Chinese lacquer objects; they have not yet been identified in Japanese examples.

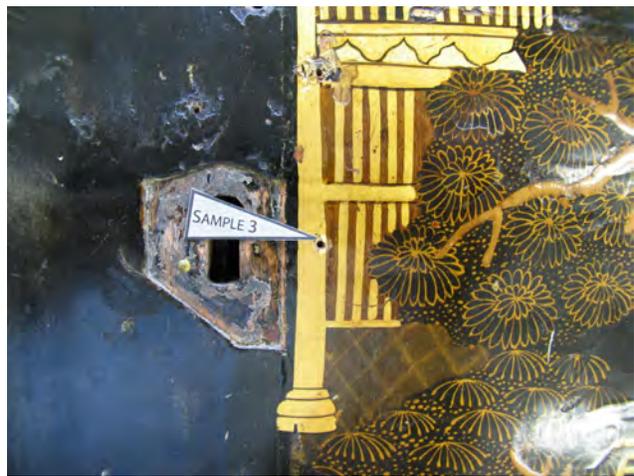


Figure 12-13 Detail of the area sampled to analyze the composition and structure of the original Chinese lacquer. The sample location is concealed by a gilt bronze mount.

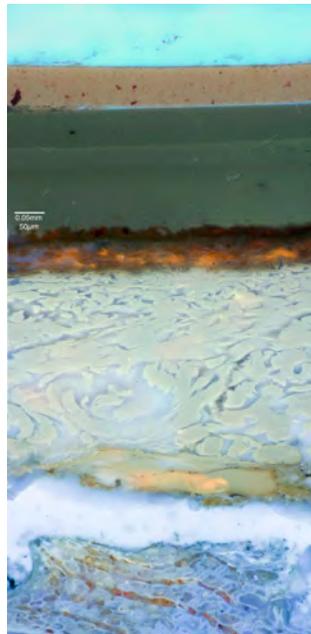


Figure 12-14 Cross-section photomicrograph in ultraviolet illumination illustrating the thickness of the water buffalo hide substrate.

Analysis by pyrolysis gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (py/GC-MS) shows that the lacquer can be classified as laccol lacquer, which originates from the tree *Toxicodendron succedaneum*. While this lacquer is commonly known as Vietnamese lacquer, the tree's range extends into southern China and would have been available to Chinese artisans.²² In addition to drying oil and lacquer, samples from the two black lacquer layers are also rich in laccol carbohydrates and tannins. Laccol sap is known to contain nearly three times more naturally occurring carbohydrates than *urushi*.²³ The tannins detected likely also relate to those naturally occurring in laccol lacquer.²⁴ The lower lacquer layers also have small amounts of cedar oil; this material is commonly found in eighteenth-century Chinese export lacquer, though it is not mentioned in the Chinese literature and its function in the lacquer mixture is not currently known.²⁵ The red lacquer used as a mordant for the gold powder decoration has a similar composition to the transparent lacquer, as it contains laccol lacquer, laccol carbohydrates, tannins, and drying oil but with the addition of an iron-based red colorant.

The original source of the Chinese lacquered leather panels is rather enigmatic, and little has been published to indicate from what type of object such panels might derive. Perhaps the most likely source would be a leather-wrapped folding screen, a leather-bound traveling chest,²⁶ or a document box, but for now this must remain a subject of speculation.

Unfortunately, as mentioned in “Commentary” above, the majority of the Asian lacquer has been overpainted. This restoration work, though skillfully executed, obscures most of the original decorative surfaces. The only areas that appear to be essentially free of overpaint are the foliage of the trees and the face and horse of the emperor.

Beyond the bounds of the Chinese panels, the cases of the cabinets were decorated in European black lacquer.²⁷ Ultraviolet and electron microscopy along with py/GC-MS analysis show that the original European lacquer was built up in three primary layers. First, a foundation of an organic black pigment, probably lampblack, was applied. This would have been a relatively inexpensive pigment with a slightly warm tone. This pigment was bound in a spirit-resin varnish based on pine resin, sandarac, and possibly a small portion of shellac.²⁸ This combination of soft pine resin and harder sandarac would have allowed the finish to be tough and elastic, yet hard enough to polish. A small amount of shellac may also have been added to further increase the hardness of the layer. Starch was also detected in this layer and may relate to the use of

a size to prepare the wood substrate.²⁹ After the initial pigmented layer, a coat of bone black, which was more expensive but could produce a deeper and truer black, was applied, followed by a final transparent varnish layer. The bone black layer and the final transparent varnish were bound in a similar medium to that seen in the first layer; however, camphor was also detected in the transparent layer. Jean-Félix Watin notes that camphor could be added, in small amounts, to spirit varnishes to improve their working properties:

Le camphre est une résine légère . . . qui ne sert dans le Vernis à l'esprit-de-vin que pour le rendre liant, l'empêcher de gerser, mais il faut en mettre peu.

[Camphor is a very light resin . . . that only serves in spirit varnishes to render them smooth, prevent them from wrinkling, but it is necessary to add only a little.]

This may explain its addition in the final finish layer.³⁰

The interior of the cabinets is in brilliant red European lacquer. This conceit is probably derived from Japanese lacquer cabinets of the seventeenth century whose black and gold exteriors were commonly complemented by red or green interiors. In this case the original European lacquer was built up in two primary layers; a ground of vermilion adulterated (knowingly or not) with red lead and sealed with transparent varnish. The medium for both layers seems to have been nearly identical, containing pine resin, a polycommunic diterpenoid resin (possibly sandarac or soft copal),³¹ and a drying oil. It may be that a small amount of shellac was also added to these layers, though the analytical results are not conclusive on this subject. Likewise, the analysis seems to indicate that beeswax, as well as a larger amount of drying oil, is present in the lower layer; however, with no known recipes of the period calling for beeswax to be mixed into a varnish, it is possible that this represents a contaminant in the sample from a later restoration treatment. Both the interior and the exterior European lacquers have been restored with several campaigns of paint and/or varnish (fig. 12-15).



Figure 12-15 Sample of the European red lacquer from the interior of the cabinet viewed as a cross section in ultraviolet illumination. The photomicrograph features the original series of two varnish layers, one pigmented and one transparent, followed by later restoration coatings.

The gilt bronze mounts on these corner cabinets are no less a virtuoso performance than the bent lacquer panels. The mounts on the doors surrounding the lacquer were originally single frames, assembled from numerous small castings by skillful soldering. Standard practice of the period would have called for the individual castings to have been mounted separately, hiding the joints as well as possible through careful mechanical fitting and overlapping. In this case, however, Dubois appears to have taken the opportunity to display the skill of his *bronzier* by successfully overcoming the technical difficulties inherent in creating a unified frame on this scale. Soldering multiple sections of cast brass³² together to form larger mounts was always a challenging task. The sections had to be held in perfect alignment while the area to be joined was placed in the center of a charcoal furnace or otherwise surrounded by hot coals. Small clippings of solder mixed with flux were placed over the joint, and the joint area was brought to a cherry-red heat (approximately 920°C) until the solder melted and flowed

into the joint. The danger was that if the joint was overheated, the castings themselves could melt, ruining the mount entirely. The soldering metal used was typically brass with a higher zinc content (and thus lower melting point) than the metal to be joined. In practice, however, the difference in melting points could be as little as 50°C, and overheating was a serious concern. In order to reduce the potential for accidental melting in these mounts, Dubois's *bronzier* chose an unusually high-zinc brass for his solder (about 37% zinc as determined by X-ray fluorescence [XRF] analysis) while keeping the zinc content of the casting metal relatively low (about 16% by XRF) in order to maximize the difference in their melting points.³³ Such high-zinc soldering metal was a specialty product that could not be produced by the conventional brass-making technology of the day. It relied for its manufacture on costly and imported metallic zinc, and its documented use in French furniture is rare, though period sources do discuss its use.³⁴

Another significant difficulty with producing single large mounts on this scale was in controlling their final shape so that they would fit perfectly the complex curved surface of the corner cabinets' doors. To achieve this goal, every soldered joint had to be in near-perfect alignment, as any attempt to bend the frame after assembly would risk cracking the joints. Perfect alignment would have been particularly crucial and also particularly difficult in the final stages when the loop was to be completed. In order to fix the position of his sections with great precision during the final soldering operations, Dubois's *bronzier* resorted to an ingenious trick. Once the upper and lower halves of the frames had been assembled, he drilled two small holes on either side of the last joints to be welded. He then looped copper wire through the holes and twisted it to pull the joints tightly together, fixing the position of the sections securely so that they could be soldered without shifting. The remnants of the wire, surrounded by solder, are still visible (figs. 12-16, 12-17).



Figure 12-16



Figure 12-17

Details of a mount from the .2 cabinet showing the soldering method used to ensure that the mounts would perfectly conform to the surface of the cabinet.

The framing mounts on the doors also show evidence of having been modified somewhat from their original

design. At the bottom of each mount, on either side of the central C-scroll arrangement, there is a section of unadorned molding that has been lengthened by adding a short section of metal, about 4 cm long. These sections of metal (two on each cabinet) are not sand cast like the other sections of the mount but rather are cut and filed from solid blocks of brass. This suggests that the original model for the framing mounts tapered somewhat toward the bottom but that for this particular pair of cabinets, the design was altered to render it more rectangular in form. The Quirinale cabinets (see “Commentary” above and fig. 12-3) appear to have the door mounts in their unaltered form.

Quantitative XRF spectrometry of eighteen representative casting sections from the cabinets’ mounts reveals that the alloy of the mounts is typical in all respects of French eighteenth-century casting brass. The composition of the metal used for the framing mounts on the doors is so uniform that the mounts were almost certainly cast from a single batch of molten metal. The narrow plain moldings running between the legs along the lower edge of the skirt appear to have been replaced on cabinet .2; confirmation of this by alloy analysis was not possible as the moldings were too small to be analyzed with the XRF instrument at hand.

The cabinets’ mounts have been gilded with leaf gold, not by traditional amalgam gilding. Lap lines and folds in the leaf are visible in areas of wear since the gold here is of double or triple thickness. Little written evidence from the eighteenth century exists to explain how the technique was carried out in the period. D’Arcet, in 1818, briefly mentions that the technique passed out of use some fifty years earlier and that it involved “applying the leaves of gold on the bronze whitened by means of mercury.”³⁵ XRF analysis confirms that there is mercury present in the gilding layer of these mounts. This method may have been chosen for these mounts because it required less heating of the mounts than conventional amalgam gilding and therefore presented less risk of damaging the multiple soldering joints on the delicate frames.

The cabinets’ marble tops are approximately 2.5 cm thick and are made of *brèche d’Alep*, a heterogeneous marble consisting of multicolored, somewhat rounded cobbles in a beige to orange sand and gravel matrix. The predominant color of the cobbles is from tan to cream, although red and even black cobbles are found as well. Many similar limestone breccias of this type occur in varying colors throughout the Mediterranean. The original Alep Breccia is from Syria. This stone, however, is

thought to have been quarried in Le Tholonet, Bouches-du-Rhône, France. Although the quarry is inactive now, it had been in use since ancient times.

A.H., with J.C., M.S., and R.S.

NOTES

1. For more information on Jacques Dubois, see Pradère 1989a, 168–75; Boiron 1990, 42–59; Wolvesperges 2000, 283–91.
2. González-Palacios 1996, 136–40, no. 9. They bear the marks of the Palazzo Colorno.
3. Bequest of Forsyth Wickes, acc. no. 65.2513. Munger 1992, 317–18, cat. no. 30.
4. Galerie Charpentier, *Tableaux anciens et modernes, objets d’Extrême-Orient, haute époque, bel ameublement du XVIIIe siècle, May 28, 1954* (Paris: Galerie Charpentier, 1954), lot 137.
5. Acc. no. OA 6083. Alcouffe, Dion-Tenenbaum, and Lefébure 1993, 158–61, no. 48; Durand 2014, 258, no. 82.
6. Sotheby’s, *The Patiño Collection: Important French Furniture and Decorations, German and Chinese Export Porcelain, European Tapestries and Carpets, November 1, 1986* (New York: Sotheby’s, 1986), lot 114.
7. Pradère 1989a, 170.
8. J. Paul Getty Diary, July 1–December 5, 1950, September 18, 1950, 59. Getty Research Institute, IA40009. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/cifaia40009>.
9. The undated note claiming that the corner cupboards were previously in the collection of Nathaniel von Rothschild is typed on an envelope along with other cataloguing information.
10. I am grateful to Gerald Stiebel for his assistance in this matter. Correspondence with the author, April 7, 2005, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
11. Getty and Le Vane 1955, 151.
12. Either the marble slabs were wrongly described in the catalogue or they were replaced between 1946 and 1950. The corner cupboards now carry slabs of *brèche d’Alep*. Christie’s, *Old French and English Furniture and Porcelain, the Property of the Right Hon. the Earl of Wemyss and March, and removed from Gosford House, Longniddry, East Lothian, March 7, 1946* (London: Christie’s, 1946), lot 99.
13. Handwritten note in a copy of Christie’s, *Old French and English Furniture and Porcelain, the Property of the Right Hon. the Earl of Wemyss and March, and removed from Gosford House, Longniddry, East Lothian, March 7, 1946* (London: Christie’s, 1946), in the collection of the Getty Research Institute library.
14. Correspondence between Gerald Stiebel and the author, April 7, 2005, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.

15. Correspondence between Gerald Stiebel and the author, April 7, 2005, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
16. There is no evidence to suggest that the current mounts are not original; see discussion below.
17. For additional information on bending Asian lacquer, see Hagelskamp, Heginbotham, and van Duin 2016.
18. The leather was identified by Dan Kirby Analytical Services utilizing peptide mass fingerprinting, which involves the enzymatic digestion of proteins followed by matrix assisted laser desorption-ionization time of flight mass spectrometric (MALDI) analysis of the resultant peptide mixture.
19. Wang and Huang 2004.
20. Wilson 1941, 636, shows a reference sample of tanned water buffalo hide with a total thickness of 1.6 mm and a grain to corium ratio of approximately 1.6. See Kite and Thomson 2006 for additional information on leather structure and processing.
21. The processing of heat-bodied oil may be indicated by the presence of a class of compounds known as methyl alkylphenyl alkanoates (APAs). These compounds are formed from highly unsaturated linolenic acid and elostearic acid by bodying linseed, perilla, or tung oils at elevated temperatures. See Heginbotham et al. 2016.
22. The py/GC-MS analysis also demonstrated that the lacquer used was derived from *Toxicodendron succedaneum*, the so-called Vietnamese lacquer tree, which appears to have been used extensively in China. This is contrary to the conventional wisdom, which holds that Chinese lacquer is made from the sap of *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*. The analysis also revealed that the oil used was probably rapeseed oil and that the leather was vegetable tanned. For details, see the organic analysis reports by Michael Schilling and Herant Khanjian on file in the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
23. Kumanotani 1995.
24. Laccol sap tapped from a *Toxicodendron succedaneum* tree growing at the Los Angeles Arboretum was found to contain tannins. See Schilling et al. 2016, 17.
25. Heginbotham et al. 2016, 35.
26. Lacquered leather trunks (*malle* in French) with tops as large as 105 x 53 cm were in regular production in Canton in the first half of the nineteenth century (Rondot, Hedde, and Haussman 1849, 125–26), but their production in the mid-eighteenth century has not been confirmed.
27. See “The Analysis of East Asian and European Lacquer Surfaces on Rococo Furniture,” in this volume.
28. Based on interpretation challenges noted in “The Analysis of East Asian and European Lacquer Surfaces on Rococo Furniture,” in this volume, it is difficult to definitely exclude the use of soft copal in this lacquer.
29. Walch 1997, 136–37.
30. Watin 1778, 208.
31. See note 8 above.
32. The mounts are technically brass, an alloy primarily of copper and zinc; see “Technical Note.”
33. This difference in alloy composition yields a difference in melting point of approximately 125°C (Gillett and Norton 1913). For details of the analysis methodology, see “The Use of X-Ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy (XRF) in the Technical Study of Gilt Bronze Mounts,” in this volume.
34. A recipe for soldering metal nearly identical to this is given on p. 35 of Jean-Gaffin Gallon, *L'Art de convertir le cuivre rouge ou cuivre de rosette en laiton ou cuivre jaune* (1764), in Henri Louis Duhamel de Monceau, *Descriptions des arts et métiers* (1767), vol. 11.
35. Arcet and Sève 1818.





13. *Secrétaire*

French (Paris), ca. 1755

By Jacques Dubois (French, 1694–1763, master 1742)

White oak and sycamore maple* veneered with panels of Chinese red lacquer on coniferous wood and painted with European lacquer; interior drawers of sycamore maple and Japanese arborvitae; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron hardware and locks; *brèche d'Alep* top; replacement silk velvet, and trim

H: 3ft. 4 1/2 in., W: 3ft. 9 in., D: 1ft. 3 1/8 in. (102.8 × 114.3 × 38.4 cm)

65.DA.3

DESCRIPTION

The rectangular *secrétaire* has flat sides (figs. 13-1, 13-2) and a double bowed front. The forecorners are rounded, and the front lower profile is serpentine. The two front feet are rounded on the front, continuing the shape of the forecorners, and are also rounded on the surface facing inward. The two back feet are three sided: a flat side faces the back and the outward facing surface, and the side facing inward is rounded. The slab on the top is of *brèche d'Alep* cut to conforming shape and with a molded edge. The upper half of the front is occupied by a panel that forms the fall front of the *secrétaire*. Below are two doors, the one on the right fitted with a lock.



Figure 13-1 Left profile.



Figure 13-2 Right profile.

The upper corners of the piece are fitted with pierced mounts. Each is composed of a shaped central cabochon topped by shellwork and surrounded by C- and S-scrolls

and a twining leafy branch set with a flower. At the bases of the rounded corners are small mounts composed of C- and S-scrolls, rock work and shellwork, and a rising plant with berries. At the top of each side, toward the back, is a mount composed of addorsed elongated C-scrolls supporting a cartilaginous shell form centered by an oval cabochon above and a pendant of leaves below. Beneath the doors a horizontal molding of alternating cabochons and flowers flanked by leaves runs along the sides and front of the *secrétaire*.

The forefeet are clad on their outer surfaces with curved pierced mounts formed by large C-scrolls containing a leafy branch, topped by small C-scrolls supporting a flame motif. Half of this mount is applied to each of the back legs.

The mount attached to the central apron consists of linked C- and S-scrolls edged with a shell-like motif carrying small leaves and supporting at its center an arrangement of three C-scrolls and leaves.

The fall front and the doors below are framed with gilt bronze. The continuous mount of the fall front is composed, in the main, of a burnished molding set with flame motif borders, overlaid with ivy and laurel leaves and branches amid burnished C-scrolls, with acanthus scrolls in the upper corners and at the center a cabochon pierced with a keyhole. The frame continues down the outer and lower edges of the doors. It carries similar elements but lacks the ivy leaves. The horizontal framing mount at the tops of the doors takes the form of a straight burnished double molding, intertwined with a long branch of laurel bearing leaves and fruits. The vertical border between the doors is composed of linked and burnished C- and S-foliolate scrolls set with flame motif

borders and a winding laurel branch. The keyhole escutcheons (the one on the left door is blind) are formed by C-scrolls enclosing pierced cabochons, surrounded by shell and flame motifs, topped by an acanthus leaf set with a smaller cabochon.

The fall front lowers on hinges to reveal a central open pigeonhole (fig. 13-3). On the left is a lockable drawer bearing a small *rocaille* escutcheon and on the right two additional drawers. The fronts of the drawers are serpentine. Above is an open compartment that extends across the width of the *secrétaire*. The interior is decorated with European red lacquer, and the drawer fronts are outlined in gold paint. The interior bodies of the drawers are lacquered black and the outer surfaces stained black. The lower drawer on the right is fitted with three compartments for writing implements. The surface of the fall front and the forward surface of the pigeonhole are covered with green velvet surrounded by a narrow gilded *galon*. The drawers are fitted with simple foliate pulls in gilt bronze.



Figure 13-3 Front with fall front writing surface open.

The compartment behind the doors below is divided in half by a shelf, and the lower half further divided into two by a vertical partition (fig. 13-4). With the exception of the lower left compartment, the interior is painted red. The left-hand door is held in a closed position by a latch and eye. The right door carries the lock. The edges of both the doors are serpentine and follow the form of the attached gilt bronze framing mount.



Figure 13-4 Front with bottom cupboard doors open.

The large panel of Asian red lacquer covering the front of the *secrétaire* with gold, black, and brown depicts eighteen Europeans hunting. All are dressed in jackets, breeches, and hats. Twelve of the men carry swords, eight are armed with muskets, and two hold tall lances. Three men are on horseback, and one, hatless, ties up the legs of a doe or small deer. All this activity takes place on an open plain dotted with shrubs and grasses. In the foreground a tree rises from rocks, and in the middle ground another tree grows immediately above it. To the left is a many-storied building with curved roofs and a cupola. At an open window stands an Asian person of indeterminate gender. The entire panel is framed with a narrow border of gold paint, applied to the carcass of the piece.

The left profile of the *secrétaire* (see fig. 13-1) is set with a lacquer panel that shows a rocky foreground on which small bushes and grasses grow. A tree rises at the center. In the middle and background is a collection of buildings, built on stilts, with curved roofs. A steeple rises in the background. The upper part of the panel is painted with a shattered pine tree and a bird. The panel is outlined with a narrow border of gold paint.

The right profile of the *secrétaire* (see fig. 13-2) is set with a lacquer panel showing in the foreground a house on stilts with a curved roof. Small trees and a large branch intrude into the scene, with a rocky outcrop above. In the middle ground is a similar stilted building in front of rocks planted with weeping willows. Three birds fly in the sky.

MARKS

The *secrétaire* is stamped “IDUBOIS” and “JME,” for *jurande des menuisiers-ébénistes*, on top of the front right post (fig. 13-5).



Figure 13-5 The top front right post is stamped “IDUBOIS” and “JME.”

COMMENTARY

The *secrétaire* is stamped “IDUBOIS,” for Jacques Dubois.¹ While the model for some of the mounts, wholly or in part, can be found on other pieces of furniture stamped by this maker, no other *secrétaire* of this form can be found in this master’s oeuvre, or indeed by any other *ébéniste* working in this period. Traditionally, all Parisian *secrétaires* are of greater height than width, but this piece is an exception. It has obviously been made to carry the rare and large panel of Asian lacquer, which has been cut into three pieces to form the fall front and the doors. The panel shows Europeans, probably members of the Dutch East India Company, hunting on foot and on horseback. The lacquer, which may have been made especially for export to the West, appears to have been assembled from two adjacent leaves of a folding screen (see “Technical Description” below). Despite the high value of the lacquer, the work on the rest of the *secrétaire* is not of the highest quality, displaying a certain crudeness sometimes encountered in Dubois’s work. The panel construction and the joinery of the carcass are unusual for work done in Paris at this time, and there is evidence that the *secrétaire* has undergone significant restoration (see “Technical Description” below).

As stated above, mounts of the same model appear on other pieces stamped by this master. The apron mount appears again on a commode by him that was sold from the collection of Léon M. Lowenstein in Paris in 1935² and on a corner cupboard, stamped “IDUBOIS,” that was sold at Christie’s, Monaco, in 1992.³ This corner cupboard was

also set with corner mounts of the same model, placed at the top and bottom of the canted corners. The upper corner mounts are seen on an unstamped *secrétaire*, veneered with *bois de bout* marquetry and attributable to Dubois, that was sold from the collection of Madame Fenwick (Ethel M. Fenwick Cabell) at the Palais Galliera in 1964.⁴

The framing mounts of the fall front and the outer edges and bases of the doors below are of the same model, with some additions, as those found framing the fall front of a lacquer veneered *secrétaire en dos d’âne* sold from the collection of Erich von Goldschmidt-Rothschild in Berlin in 1931.⁵ Mounts of the same model were set on a similar *secrétaire en dos d’âne* that was sold in Paris in 2002, and they were struck with the crowned C mark.⁶ Parts of the vertical mount set at the inner edge of one of the doors below the fall front are found in a mount of greater length and in a similar position on a *secrétaire* decorated with European lacquer, stamped “IDUBOIS,” that passed through the Paris market in 1990.⁷ This mount also bore crowned C stamps. On the basis of these datable mounts it is possible to date the Museum’s *secrétaire* to about 1755.

PROVENANCE

–1951: Rosenberg & Stiebel, Inc. (New York, NY), sold to J. Paul Getty; 1951–65: J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976, donated to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1965.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Imagining the Orient, J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center (Los Angeles), October 5, 2004–April 3, 2005.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wescher 1955, 118, 122, 130, fig. 15; Getty 1963, 120–21, ill.; Getty 1965, 150–51, ill.; Kjellberg 1989, 273; Boiron 1990, 55, ill.; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 37, no. 43; Wolvesperges 2000, 42, 45, fig. 28; Wilson and Hess 2001, 25, no. 43; Harwood, May, and Sherman 2002, 401, figs. 23–32; Schilling et al. 2014, S131.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

This *secrétaire* has clearly been heavily restored, making a complete understanding of its history difficult to ascertain. In terms of its joinery, the construction of this *secrétaire* is unusual for Parisian work of the mid-eighteenth century.⁸ The case is based on only two real posts—substantial timbers that run from the top of the

case to the floor—rather than the usual four. The two posts are in the two front corners and are made of sycamore maple. The sides of the case are each made of three 2.5-cm-thick boards of white oak that are joined to each other and to the front posts with loose splines (fig. 13-6). This type of joint is atypical of Parisian work. At the rear corners, rather than true posts, there are pseudo-posts created by gluing an extra piece of oak, about 2.5 cm x 4 cm in section, to the side panel, doubling its thickness at the back edge. The overall quality of the oak used throughout the case is relatively low, with curving grain and numerous knots.



Figure 13-6 Detail showing the join of the side panels to the front post with loose splines. This type of joint is atypical of Parisian work.

At the top (fig. 13-7) and bottom of the case front, long, shaped rails of sycamore maple connect to the front posts with mortise-and-tenon joints. In addition, sycamore maple blocks have been applied to the lower portion of the case sides and front posts in order to provide the added dimension necessary below the level of the horizontal cabochon and flower molding. On the sides, the concave oak substrate has been cut back to provide a flat bedding for these sycamore maple blocks. The widespread use of sycamore maple for all surfaces that are finished in European lacquer is a strong indication that the case was constructed for the express purpose of being lacquered (see the discussion of substrates for European lacquer in cat. no. 5).



Figure 13-7 Top.

The case back is assembled as a bipartite frame-and-panel construction with rails at the top and bottom that are mortise and tenoned (with oak pegs) into the tops and bottoms of the pseudo-posts. The tenons of the upper rails, both front and back, have been cut in an unusual manner, with an angled shoulder, visible in X-radiographs (fig. 13-8). The one vertical stile in the frame-and-panel construction is attached to the upper and lower rails with pegged mortise-and-tenon joints, executed in the traditional manner. This stile has fine ogee moldings cut along its length on the interior edges. The grooves in the pseudo-posts that hold the back panels have been cut continuously from the top of the case to the floor and are clearly visible on the inner faces of the back legs.

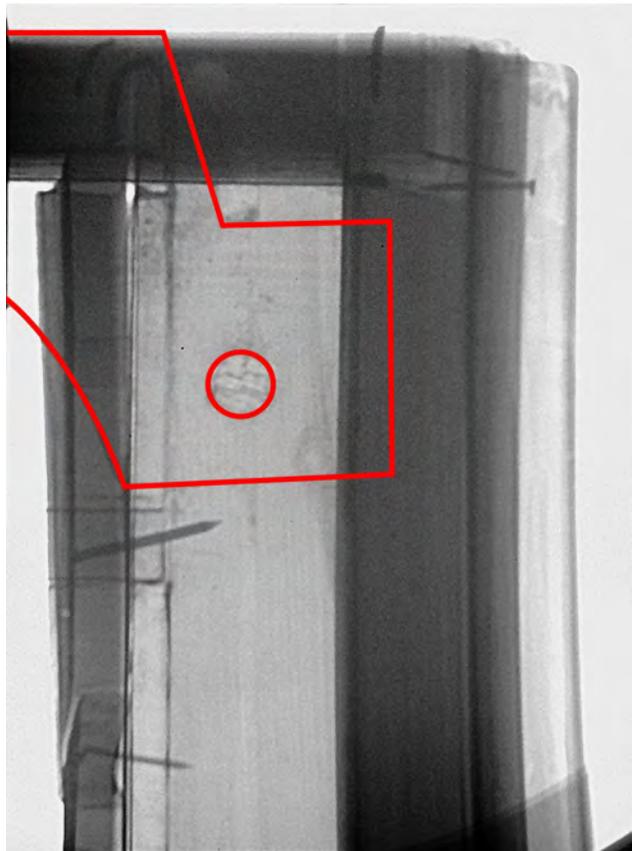


Figure 13-8 X-ray detail showing the tenons on the case front that have been cut with unusual angled shoulders.

The unusually large back panels are each made of seven pieces of wood, with the grain running from side to side (fig. 13-9); the horizontal configuration of these boards is unusual in such a tall and narrow panel. Normally in an elongated panel the grain direction corresponds to the longer dimension, thus minimizing the effects of cross-grain shrinkage (see, e.g., the back panels in cat. nos. 4 and 12). Significant shrinkage has in fact occurred in the panels, and as a result strips of oak over 1.5 cm wide have been inserted in the upper sections of each panel to compensate. These repair strips are only as long as the space between the posts and the center stile and thus were almost certainly added without disassembling the case.



Figure 13-9 View of the *secrétaire's* back with arrows indicating the tongue-and-groove joint assembly method for the horizontal boards, exposed by the chamfering of the panels.

The back panels are rather crudely beveled on the back face and still retain some pit saw marks. The individual boards are assembled with tongue-and-groove joints. Many boards have a tongue on one edge and a groove on the other; unusually, however, some boards have either tongues or grooves on both edges, and there is no apparent pattern or logic to the arrangement. Several of the boards in each panel are somewhat tapered. On the whole, this method of panel construction appears to be more common in Dutch furniture than in French.

The case top is made of three fairly narrow boards of oak, butt joined, with their grain running from side to side; these are attached to the case sides with open-faced dovetails. The dovetails are rather imprecisely cut and are asymmetrically arranged; on the proper right side there are six dovetails, while on the proper left side there are

only five. At the front and the rear, the case top is glued and nailed into a dado cut into the adjacent rails (fig. 13-10). The nails that currently hold it in place appear to be of wire, and there is no evidence of prior nails.

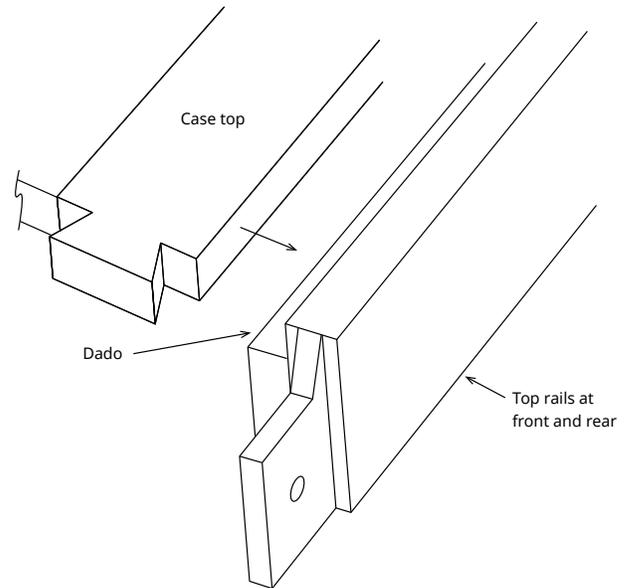


Figure 13-10 The case top boards rest in dados in the top rails at front and rear.

The case bottom is made of three boards of oak that are attached to the side panels with four mortise-and-tenon joints. The tenons are the full thickness of the bottom panel. The bottom is attached to the back rail with glue and also by means of a peg that runs through the mortise and tenon between the medial stile and the bottom rail of the back and into the case bottom.

The fall front of the *secrétaire* is made of several horizontal boards with battens or “breadboard ends” positioned vertically at either end. X-radiography reveals that the horizontal boards are butt joined, while the battens are attached with tongue-and-groove joints. The lower doors are similarly constructed using simple butt-joined boards with breadboard ends; however, in the case of the doors, the battens are horizontal (at top and bottom) and the panel boards are aligned vertically. The green velvet writing surface on the interior of the fall front is not original. Beneath it lies a deteriorated leather writing surface surrounded by a border strip of sycamore maple veneer approximately 4 cm wide coated with European red lacquer.

Behind the fall front, the drawer fronts, shelves, and vertical dividers retaining the drawers are made of sycamore maple. The vertical dividers are attached at top

and bottom with sliding half dovetails. There has evidently been some modification to the arrangement of the upper case interior as the top of the horizontal divider is notched at the center as if to receive an additional vertical divider, now missing. There is no corresponding notch on the bottom of the case top, suggesting that there may have been an intermediate shelf at some point in the past. The several thin panels with curved edges on the sides of the inner case are held in place with modern wire nails.

The bottoms and sides of the drawers in the upper case are made of a wood identified in 1994 by Bruce Hoadley as Japanese arborvitae. This is lacquered on the interior surfaces with a simple Asian black lacquer (fig. 13-11). The outer surfaces of these panels are roughly planed and stained black, suggesting that they were salvaged and reused from unornamented parts of a piece of Asian lacquered furniture.



Figure 13-11 Detail of open side drawers.

In the lower part of the case, the horizontal shelf is supported above and below by rails that are simply glued and nailed to the inside of the case sides at both ends. The nails that currently hold it in place appear to be wire nails, and there is no evidence of prior nails. The vertical divider is tenoned with four tenons on the bottom and four tenons on the top to hold it in position. The proper right compartment at the lower level is the only one without European red lacquer on the interior. Evidence of wear from a lock bolt on the inside edge of the oak post on the proper right side of the compartment suggests that it once contained a strong box or similar fitting, now missing.

While the stylistic attributes of the lacquer panels leave some ambiguity as to their origin, the lacquer stratigraphy and composition closely resemble known examples of Chinese export lacquer, which can also be seen on the Van Risenburgh red lacquer commode (see cat. no. 6). In X-radiographs it is possible to see the joints between the original Asian wood boards on which the lacquer was applied (fig. 13-12). The grain of the boards runs vertically, and the boards vary from about 10 to 15 cm in width. X-radiography also shows that the lacquer on the front likely comes from two panels of a folding screen. Just to the left of center, the vertical seam between the two panels is clearly visible as an abrupt change in density. Discontinuous cracks in the lacquer along the edges of the panels clearly indicate that they are separate panels. The panel on the right is approximately 54 cm in width, which is within the normal range for panels of eighteenth-century Chinese folding screens.

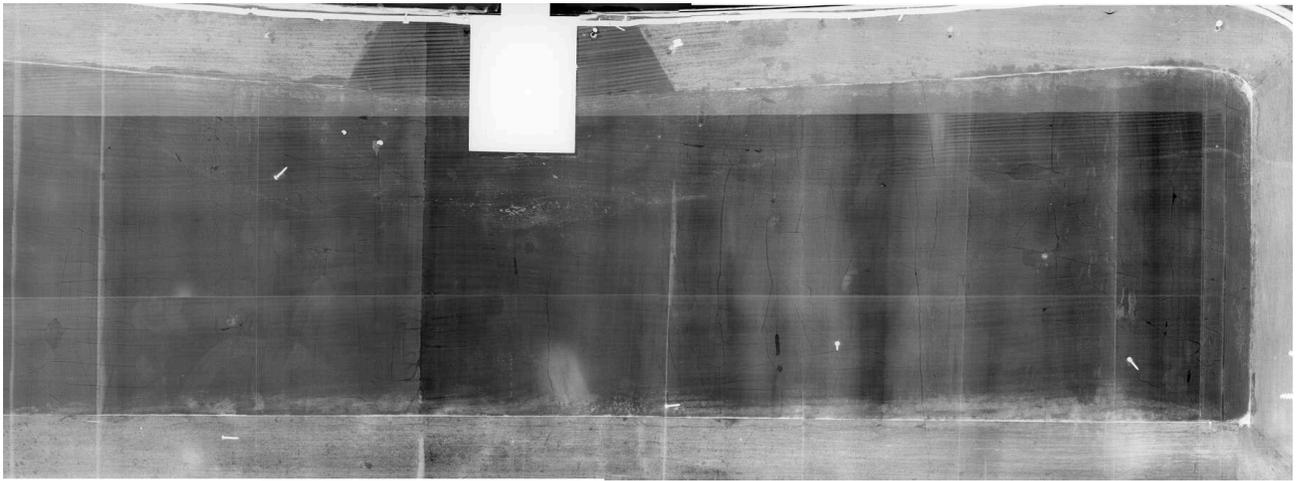


Figure 13-12 Composite X-ray of the *secrétaire*'s fall front showing the vertical joints between the original Asian wood panels on which the lacquer was first applied.

Cross-section analysis shows that the substrate wood of the lacquer panels is from the cypress family (Cupressaceae) and was prepared with two to three layers of clay-based ground material bound in blood, with each layer separated by a paper interlayer. Pig's blood is referenced in nineteenth-century accounts as an ingredient in Chinese lacquer foundation layers and has been commonly found in the analyses of many Chinese lacquer objects, frequently used alongside drying oil (figs. 13-13, 13-14).⁹ The ground layer may also contain a small amount of cedar oil, although this cannot be definitively confirmed.¹⁰ On top of the ground, a layer of red lacquer made with iron earth pigment was applied; this was followed by a layer of brilliant red lacquer prepared with vermilion pigment. Analysis by pyrolysis gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (py/GC-MS) shows that the lacquer used to prepare the red layers is not the traditional Chinese *qi* lacquer (extracted from trees of the species *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*). Instead, this lacquer seems to be made from so-called Vietnamese lacquer, based on the polymer of laccol and derived from *T. succedaneum*. This does not mean that the lacquer necessarily originated in Vietnam, as the trees are widespread in East Asia and are commonly tapped for lacquer in parts of southern China and Taiwan as well.¹¹ Vietnamese lacquer has been reported in several pieces known to have originated in Guangzhou, also known as Canton, which was a major center of lacquer production and trade in southern China.¹² This laccol lacquer was commonly mixed with a drying oil, which was also detected with py/GC-MS in the lacquer layers of the *secrétaire*. The samples also contain a small fraction of carbohydrates, which are most likely related to the naturally occurring carbohydrates in the laccol sap.¹³

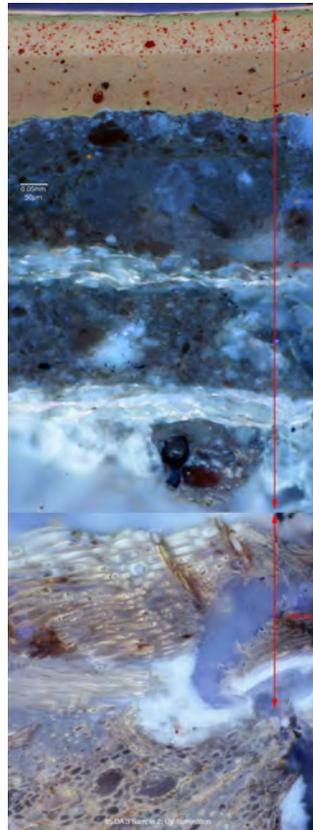


Figure 13-13 Composite cross-section photomicrograph in ultraviolet illumination showing the lacquer stratigraphy.



Figure 13-14 Detail of the sample site for fig. 13-13, covered by a gilt bronze mount.

The decoration of the lacquer panels is executed in a variety of metal powders, including gold (primarily for the figures' clothes), brass (used widely in buildings and horses), and tin (found in the figures' socks, cravats, and dark pants).¹⁴ The metal flake decoration is almost entirely flat, the only exception being the figures' faces, which are in very low relief. The panels have an unusual pattern of long diagonal cracks crossing over a more typical gridlike pattern of cracks (fig. 13-15). This may be related to the fact that the lacquer is unusually thick; together, the three-layered ground with the two red foundation layers measures nearly 1 mm. Cross sections suggest that panels were thinned to less than 1.3 mm before being applied to the carcass of the *secrétaire*, leaving only a very small amount of wood to support the brittle lacquer layers. It is possible, then, that some of the diagonal cracking is the result of flexing that occurred when the panels were first thinned and manipulated in the eighteenth century. This is supported by the observation that some of the diagonal cracks on the front of the *secrétaire* appear to continue across the divisions between the fall front and the lower doors, suggesting that they occurred before the panel was divided.



Figure 13-15 Detail of cracks in the lacquer, seen in raking light, showing the unusual pattern of long diagonal cracks that cross over the more typical gridlike pattern of cracks.

The decorative work on the lacquer panels has undergone significant restoration in the past, much of it executed very skillfully. Several of the figures have been entirely restored, others partially (fig. 13-16). Examination under magnification reveals that much of the foliage, particularly the grasses in gold, have been restored using a dark red underlayer, or size, which is distinguishable from the brilliant red underlayer of the original lacquer work. The largest area of restoration is on the proper right door and covers the centermost 10 cm, from top to bottom. This restoration entirely replaces the original lacquer; the reason for the loss of so much original material is not known.



Figure 13-16 Comparison illustrating some of the subtle differences between the original figures (on the left) and the restored figures (on the right).

X-radiography of the fall front, doors, and side panels reveals the presence of numerous wire nails embedded in the carcass beneath the lacquer, most of which (mysteriously) are not perpendicular to the surface. The judicious use of a magnet confirms that many of these nails lie close to the exterior surface but beneath intact and “unrestored” passages of lacquer. Fine drawn-iron

wire nails were available in the mid-eighteenth century, and the process of their manufacture is well documented;¹⁵ however, industrially produced versions only became commonplace in the late 1880s. Without direct access to the nails, it is difficult to date the production of these specific nails. One possible explanation for the presence of these nails is that sometime between the late nineteenth century and 1951, when the *secrétaire* was acquired by J. Paul Getty, the Asian lacquer, being in very poor condition, was removed entirely from the piece, then consolidated and reattached as part of a major restoration. Another possibility that cannot be ruled out entirely, however, is that the lacquer panels are not original to the piece and were added later to replace severely damaged original Asian or European lacquer.

The European lacquer on the exterior of the *secrétaire* (surrounding the Asian panels) is not original. Scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM-EDS) of cross sections indicates that any original European lacquer had been completely stripped off. The existing layers are colored with a complex mixture of pigments that include a red lake (cast on a substrate that includes barium sulfate), chrome yellow, and zinc white. The history of manufacture of these pigments suggests strongly that the lacquer was restored after about 1840.¹⁶ Furthermore, very close similarities in elemental composition between the restored European lacquer on the case exterior and large areas of restoration in the Asian lacquer (as determined by X-ray fluorescence spectrometry [XRF]) suggest that both were done at the same time, probably in the first half of the twentieth century. Based on py/GC-MS analysis, restoration coatings applied on top of the Asian lacquer appear to be primarily shellac. The existing exterior European lacquer has been artificially patinated with evenly distributed dents and umber-colored pigment applied around the mounts. This pattern of “distressing” is distinct from any damage or soiling found on the Asian lacquer panels.

As mentioned in “Commentary” above, the gilded bronze mounts are almost all models that appear on other works stamped by Dubois. Quantitative XRF spectroscopy of fourteen representative mounts from the *secrétaire* revealed that the alloy of the mounts is typical in all respects of French eighteenth-century casting brass. The composition of the metal, particularly the presence of significant impurities, including antimony and silver combined with relatively low levels of zinc (17–23%) and relatively high levels of tin (0.8–1.5%), makes it extremely unlikely that the mounts are late nineteenth- or twentieth-century castings. The gilding is generally in good

condition. XRF analysis detected traces of mercury in the gilding, suggesting that they have been amalgam gilt; however, the presence of small amounts of gold on the back sides of the mounts, even where no gilding is present, may be an indication that the mounts have been regilded by electroplating.

The quality of the chasing and finishing of the mounts is only fair, and the mounts’ arrangement is somewhat awkward. For example, similar passages along the outer edges of the primary framing mounts that surround the fall front and doors have been filed and chased in dissimilar ways. The transitions between mounts are rather crude. This is particularly noticeable where the horizontal mount along the bottom edge of the fall front meets the framing mounts at either end and also where the vertical mount between the doors joins with the mounts above and below. Jacques Dubois managed a very large workshop and is thought to have kept many mounts in stock and ready for use as necessary. It may be that this *secrétaire* is an example of a model of furniture for which a new suite of mounts was not designed, but rather a selection of preexisting mounts was selected and adapted to fit a new form.

Both of the exterior locks, as well as the hook and loop that secure the proper right door, have been replaced. This is evident from the evidence of old, superfluous screw holes and changes to the shape of the lock mortises.

The stamp on the top of the proper left front leg (“DUBOIS”) (see fig. 13-5) is very similar in size and detail to that found on the monumental corner cabinet stamped Dubois (see cat. no. 11 and fig. 11-1). However, both of these stamps are rather different from the Dubois stamp found on the pair of black lacquered corner cupboards (see cat. no. 12 and fig. 12-2). Little is known for certain about how many different stamps might have been used by individual workshops (particularly large shops such as Dubois’s), though the guild regulations of the time seem to suggest that there should have been only one. In the case of Dubois, the matter is complicated by the fact that his son, René (master 1755), is also said to have used his father’s stamp.

The *secrétaire*’s marble tabletop is approximately 2.3 cm thick and is made of *brèche d’Alep*, a heterogeneous marble consisting of multicolored, somewhat rounded cobbles in a beige to orange sand and gravel matrix. The predominant color of the cobbles is from tan to cream, although red and even black cobbles are found as well. Many similar limestone breccias of this type occur in varying colors throughout the Mediterranean. The original Alep Breccia is from Syria. This stone, however, is

thought to have been quarried in Le Tholonet, Bouches-du-Rhône, France. Although the quarry is inactive now, it had been in use since ancient times. Near the proper right end, the slab has been broken into five major fragments and repaired with four iron cramps.

A.H., with J.C., M.S., and R.S.

NOTES

1. For more information on Jacques Dubois, see Pradère 1989a, 168–75; Boiron 1990, 42–59; Wolvesperges 2000, 283–91.
2. Galerie Jean Charpentier, *Objets d'art et de bel ameublement du XVIIIe siècle, December 17, 1935* (Paris: Galerie Jean Charpentier, 1935), lot 136.
3. Christie's, *Mobilier et objets d'art, February 28, 1992* (Monaco: Christie's, 1992), lot 67.
4. Palais Galliera, *Tableaux anciens, dessins, aquarelles, gouaches, pastels, bel ameublement du XVIIIe, tapisseries, meubles et objets d'art, December 8, 1964* (Paris: Palais Galliera, 1964), lot 154.
5. Hermann Ball & Paul Graupe, *Sammlung Erich von Goldschmidt-Rothschild, March 16, 1931* (Berlin: Hermann Ball & Paul Graupe, 1931), lot 123.
6. Christie's, *Important mobilier, objets d'art, orfèvrerie, céramiques européennes, arts d'Asie, June 24, 2002* (Paris: Christie's, 2002), lot 206.
7. Wolvesperges 2000, 286, fig. 153; Drouot Richelieu, *Dessins et tableaux anciens, objets d'art et bel ameublement des XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe et XIXe siècles, tapisseries, tapis, March 19, 1990* (Paris: Drouot Richelieu, 1990), lot 67.
8. For their valuable insights into the construction of this *secrétaire*, the authors would like to acknowledge Yannick Chastang, Paul van Duin, and Antoine Wilmering.
9. Gray 1875, 200; Webb, Schilling, and Chang 2014, S185.
10. For additional information about the capabilities and limitations of lacquer analysis, see "The Analysis of East Asian and European Lacquer Surfaces on Rococo Furniture," in this volume.
11. Wan et al. 2007, 502–3.
12. Heginbotham et al. 2016; Petisca et al. 2011, 7–8.
13. Kumanotani 1995.
14. The metals present were determined using qualitative X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF). Spectra are on file in the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
15. Réaumur 1761, 53–54, pl. II.
16. Kühn 1986, 170–72; Kühn and Curran 1986, 188–89.





14. Commode

French (Paris), early to mid-1750s

Attributed to Joseph Baumhauer (French, died 1772; *ébéniste privilégié du Roi*, ca. 1749)

White oak veneered with ebony* and a wood identified as service tree*; set with panels of Japanese lacquer on Japanese arborvitae and painted with European lacquer; drawers of white oak; brass and iron hardware and lock; gilt bronze mounts; *campan mélange vert* marble top

H: 2 ft. 10 3/4 in., W: 4 ft. 9 1/2 in., D: 2 ft. 3/4 in. (88.3 × 146.1 × 62.6 cm)

55.DA.2

DESCRIPTION

The commode has a serpentine front and sides and is raised on four five-sided legs. The entire body of the commode is occupied by two drawers. The upper drawer is fitted with a lock that shoots a bolt that engages with the drawer below. The commode is topped by a slab of *campan mélange vert* marble, which is cut to conforming shape and edged with moldings above and on its underside.

The corner mounts are composed of foliate scrolls overlaid with a branch of flowers and buds emerging and rising from a calyx. The latter is backed by a whorl of leaves, from which descends a pendant of leaves and berries along the outer edge of the convex scrolled shaft of the mount. A cluster of a flower and three leaves flanks the mount in the area of the calyx. A broad molding extends down the outer edge of the leg to the foot, which is composed of concave and convex foliate scrolls.

The fronts of the drawers are outlined by a broad frame composed of C- and S-foliate scrolls. At the sides and along the top branches carrying leaves, flowers and berries emerge and twine above and below the frame, forming handles above. The central frame, forming a tripartite front, is similarly composed, with leafy branches extending to either side at the base to form handles for the lower drawer. At the upper part of this frame the keyhole pierces a leaf that grows from a short branch that is tied with a crinkled ribbon. The branch is also clasped by foliate C-scrolls at either side, which rise to flank a fanlike arrangement above.

The apron mount, attached to the base of the lower drawer, is composed of a leafy calyx set between two C-

scrolls from which extend five leafy branches carrying berries. The lower profile of the front is framed by leafy scrolls that extend, as plain moldings, down the inner edges of the legs. At the junction of each leg with the body of the commode small branches of leaves and berries extend from the leafy frame. The sides are similarly framed, with a leafy cabochon set over the frame at the center of the top and the base. The molding that outlines the lower profile of the commode is centered by a single scrolled leaf. At the junction of the legs with the body a similar small branch of leaves and berries extend from the molding.

The front is veneered with two lacquer panels, the joint between them hidden by the right edge of the central framing mount. A larger panel, covering the left two-thirds of the commode front, shows a rocky shoreline with flowering plants at the left and two waterfowl, aligned at the center of the commode, at the right. Their feet and beaks are painted red, and their plumage is golden. Above, flanking the keyhole escutcheon, two butterflies, painted in gold, were added by a French *vernisseur*.

A smaller panel, covering the right third of the commode, shows a rocky shoreline from which grow flowering hibiscus trees and carnations. The flowers and some of the leaves on both panels are painted red. The gold-speckled ground is painted with small groups of flowering plants and grass in gold, while waves are represented in the foreground.

The left side of the commode is set with a panel of Japanese lacquer showing a hillock topped by a group of chrysanthemums and grasses (fig. 14-1). At the center front, a lower hillock is topped with grasses. The hillocks

and the majority of the flowers and leaves are depicted with gold-sprinkled reddish lacquer. Two leaves and one flower are cream colored. All the petals and leaves are outlined in gold, and the veins of the leaves are similarly portrayed. The foreground is painted with waves. The right side of the commode is set with a panel of Japanese lacquer showing a basket containing hibiscus flowers and leaves and a rising branch of wisteria. The basket is fitted with a tall, rectangular handle. The remaining area of the surface of the commode and the outer surfaces of the legs are painted with imitation *nashiji* (See “Technical Description” below).



Figure 14-1 Right profile.

MARKS

A paper trade label of the *marchand-mercier* François Darnault, or François Charles Darnault, is pasted on the top of the carcass, and another is pasted underneath (fig. 14-2). Each reads as follows:

AU ROY D'ESPAGNE,

Rue de la Monnoie, près le Pont-neuf, à Paris.

DARNAULT, marchand, vend tout ce qu'il y a de plus beau & de plus nouveau, savoir, toutes sortes de

miroirs, glaces de cheminées, trumeaux, avec leurs bordures sculptées & dorées, de toutes grandeurs.

Toutes sortes de grilles, ou feux de cheminées, des bras de toutes façons, à deux & trois branches; écritoires, flambeaux, porte-mouchettes, girandoles & lustres à six, huit & dix branches, le tout de bronze cizelé, doré d'or moulu, d'or en feuilles, argenté, & en couleur d'or.

Des lustres & girandoles de crystaux, lustres de bois doré, toutes sortes de belles pendules en bronze cizelé & doré d'or moulu, & couleur d'or, avec leur mouvement, tant à répétition qu'autrement, que l'on ne vend qu'avec garantie, toutes sortes de tables de marbre à choisir, avec leurs pieds à consoles sculptées & dorées.

Des tableaux pour dessus de porte, de toutes grandeurs, avec leurs bordures de bois doré.

Des toilettes complètes en vernis de toutes couleurs.

Cabarets, cabinets, paravents, & écrans en vernis de la Chine, & autres.

Des bureaux pour écrire, serre-papiers, commodes de toutes grandeurs avec leurs dessus de marbre, des secrétaires, armoires, bibliothèques, le tout en bois des Indes, de toutes espèces, en vernis de la Chine & du Japon, garnis de bronze doré d'or moulu & en couleur d'or.

Et toutes sortes d'autres choses pour meubler les appartemens; le tout à juste prix & en conscience.

A PARIS.

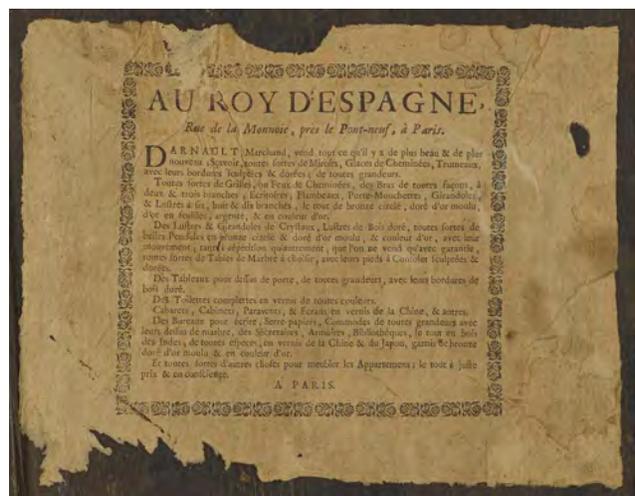


Figure 14-2 On the underside of the commode, a trade label for the *marchand-mercier* François Charles Darnault.

A small oval paper label is attached to the upper surface of the commode. It is printed in red, "CHENUE/ EMBALLEUR/ 5 rue de la Terrace, PARIS," and inscribed in pencil, "Michel" (see fig. 14-6). The top of the carcass is inscribed in red crayon, "8795."

COMMENTARY

The commode is not stamped with the maker's name, "JOSEPH," which was used by Joseph Baumhauer.¹ However, it is attributed to this maker because at least six other commodes, four of which bear his mark, exist with almost precisely the same size and form and carry mounts of the same models.

1. A stamped commode veneered with panels of black and gold Japanese lacquer depicting rocky landscapes with villages, in the Jones Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (fig. 14-3).²

2. A pair of stamped commodes veneered with *bois de bout* marquetry in the Widener Collection at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.³

3. A stamped commode veneered with *bois de bout* marquetry in the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio.⁴

4. An attributed commode veneered with wave-cut marquetry in the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor.⁵

5. An attributed commode decorated with European lacquer in the Budapest Museum of Applied Arts, Hungary.⁶



Figure 14-3 Joseph Baumhauer (French, died 1772), Commode, 1755–58. Carcass of oak, veneered with Japanese lacquer and with fruitwood decorated with *vernis Martin*, mounts of gilt bronze, *rouge de Villefranche* (possibly Languedoc) marble, 84.5 × 139 × 58.5 cm (33 × 55 × 23 in.). London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1013-1882. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The attribution of this commode to Joseph Baumhauer (known simply as Joseph in his time) is further strengthened by the appearance of mounts of the same model on various pieces of furniture stamped or attributed to this master. The elaborate apron mount is found on an attributed commode in the musée Jacquemart-André, Paris, which is veneered with *bois de bout* marquetry.⁷ Corner mounts of the same model appear on a curved and stamped *bureau plat* in the Wrightsman collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,⁸ and on an apparently unstamped commode sold from the collection of Cécile Sorel in 1928. The latter also bore *sabots* of the same model.⁹ The center of the upper part of the framing mount that encloses the escutcheon is found in a similar position on a *pupitre à écrire* delivered to Count Johann Karl Philipp von Cobenzl, minister plenipotentiary of the Austrian Netherlands, by Lazare Duvaux in 1758.¹⁰ Here the mount is without the overlaid leafy branch tied with a ribbon bow.

The Museum's commode bears two trade labels of the *marchand-mercier* François Darnault, or François Charles Darnault, pasted above and below the carcass, giving the name of the shop as Au Roy d'Espagne in the rue de la Monnaie. Darnault had moved to this address from his establishment A la Ville de Versailles in the rue Grenier in 1745, leaving his son François Charles in charge of the original business. In 1753 the son moved to the more fashionable establishment and formed a partnership with his father, who died shortly after.¹¹ The label is undated

and does not help to date the commode, which, on stylistic grounds, must have been made in the early to mid-1750s and was probably ordered by François Darnault. The *marchand-mercier* would have supplied the four Japanese lacquer panels that decorate the front and sides of the commode. Two panels form the front, and the seam is hidden by one of the vertical mounts of the inner frame. Two panels of Japanese lacquer of different sizes have been used here by French craftsmen to create a symmetrical composition out of panels that were originally asymmetrical. The Parisian *ébénistes* used disparate panels of Japanese lacquer to create symmetrical compositions, often of tripartite composition.

At some point, the original black field turned brown and was painted over, quite crudely, with black varnish. This may have been done at the time of the construction of the commode. As was quite common, a French *vernisser* may have added some flying insects and extraneous tufts of grass to the front panels, both to hide small areas of damage and, perhaps, to fill the empty areas of the Japanese composition, so alien to European taste.¹² The imitation *nashiji* lacquer found on all the surfaces of the commode not covered with Japanese lacquer is an added refinement that is also found on the works of Baumhauer's contemporary Jacques Dubois.¹³ Unfortunately, it appears to have been repainted at least twice. The surface now visible consists of a low-quality varnish with suspended coarse copper flakes. It must have originally been quite bright and sparkling, giving the commode an extra air of luxuriance, in combination with its richly gilt mounts and the fine top of green *campan mélange* marble, the edge of which is carved with the unusual feature of a double molding above and below.

PROVENANCE

–1955: Sir Alfred Chester Beatty, American, 1875–1968 (London, England), sold through Sir Robert Henry Edward Abdy, fifth Bart., English, 1896–1976, to J. Paul Getty, 1955;¹⁴ 1955–76: J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976, upon his death, held in trust by the estate; 1976–78: Estate of J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976, distributed to the J. Paul Getty Museum.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Getty and Le Vane 1955, n.p., ill. facing p. 336; Wescher 1955, 135 n. 30; Getty 1956, 81; Getty 1963, 114–15; Boutemy 1965, 85; Getty 1965, 144–45, ill.; Watson 1966, vol. 1, 152; Wilson 1975, 106; Augarde 1987, 36; Kjellberg 1989, 452; Pradère 1989a, 233, 244, no. 236; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 27, no. 29; Sargentson 1996, 171, pl. 2; Wolfesperges 2000, 171, fig. 78; Wilson and Hess 2001,

16–17, no. 29; Harwood, May, and Sherman 2002, n.p., color pl. 56; Heginbotham and Schilling 2011, 93–94, 95, figs. 2, 6; Heginbotham 2013, 151–53, fig. 2; Herda-Mousseaux 2018, 80–87, 81, fig. 25.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The carcass of the commode is made entirely of flat-sawn white oak (fig. 14-4). The four corner posts run from the floor to the top of the case and are formed of single pieces of wood. Each of the side panels is made of two boards, butt joined, with their grain running horizontally. The upper board on each side is exceptionally wide, measuring almost 40 cm across the grain, while the lower board is much narrower, at approximately 8 cm. The side panels are flat on the interior and shaped in a gentle curve on the exterior. They are approximately 3 cm thick at their widest point and are attached to the front and rear posts with tongue-and-groove joints.



Figure 14-4 Three-quarter view with drawers removed.

The case back is made using tripartite frame-and-panel construction (fig. 14-5). The horizontal rails attach directly to the rear legs with unpinned mortise-and-tenon joints (nowhere on the case are mortise-and-tenon joints pinned). The upper rail is made of two pieces of wood, one glued atop the other. The upper piece is only a narrow spline of just over 1 cm thickness; this kind of composite rail is anomalous and might be the consequence of an initial measurement error by the cabinetmaker. It is a feature that is not duplicated in the otherwise similar construction of commodes by Joseph Baumhauer at the Victoria and Albert Museum (1013-1882) or the Legion of Honor (1931.112). The three equally sized panels of the back are each made of two boards, butt joined and chamfered on the interior edges, with the grain of the wood running vertically.



Figure 14-5 Back.

The case top is also a tripartite frame-and-panel assembly with equally sized panels, each made from two butt-joined boards arranged with the grain running from front to back; these are also chamfered on their interior edges. The four perimeter rails are attached to the corner posts with single, open-faced dovetails (fig. 14-6). The side rails extend slightly to the inside of the front posts, allowing their lower surfaces to act as “kickers” for the drawer below. The rear rail of the top overlaps the case back assembly and is attached to it with three oak dowels that run downward through the former and into the latter. The medial rails are joined at front and back with unpinned mortise-and-tenon joints.



Figure 14-6 Top; the four corner posts are attached to the perimeter rails using single, open-faced dovetails.

The case bottom and the dustboard (separating the two drawers) are assembled in a nearly identical fashion, each being a modified tripartite frame-and-panel construction without side rails. The rear rails are set loosely into square-shouldered dadoes in the rear posts. The front rails are attached to the corner posts with horizontal sliding dovetails whose mortises run through the entire thickness of the posts. As usual, the medial rails are joined at front and back with mortise-and-tenon joints. The panels are each made of two or three butt-joined boards, the grain oriented front to back, with edges chamfered on

the lower surfaces. As there are no side rails in either the case bottom or the dustboard, the side panels of these assemblies run all the way to the angled sides of the case. These irregularly shaped panels are supported along their front, back, and inner edges in the usual fashion, in grooves cut in the rails. Along their outer edges where they meet the case sides, the panels are completely unsupported. The four internal drawer guides are each made of a single piece of oak, cut to an L-shaped section and glued down onto these side panels. In addition, thin strips of oak are glued to the underside of the side panels of the dustboard, just opposite the guides, to serve as kickers for the lower drawer.

The curved lower edge of the case front and sides runs below the rails of the case bottom; numerous short blocks of oak have simply been glued to the bottom of the rails, the upper portions of the legs, and the bottom of the lower drawer front (fig. 14-7). These were then sawn, rasped, and filed to shape in order to create the desired profile.



Figure 14-7 Bottom.

The drawer fronts are made in a laminated construction with four rows of upright boards stacked and glued edge to edge to make up the full height of the element. Some rows are composed of single boards, while others contain as many as seven short blocks of wood along their length. The upper edges of both drawer fronts, as well as the lower edge of the upper drawer front, are veneered with ebony. The sides and backs of the drawers are made of single boards and have slightly rounded top edges; they are assembled using standard through-dovetails at the rear and half-blind dovetails at the front. The front dovetails are hidden by curved blocks of wood glued over them to serve as extensions to the drawer fronts (fig. 14-8). The front legs have been rebated along their front edges to accommodate these drawer front extensions. The drawer bottoms are each made of five thin boards, butt joined, with the grain running front to back. They are set into rebates in the bottom of the drawer sides and back, and the joints are covered with a thin strip of oak that serves as the drawer runner.



Figure 14-8 Lower drawer.

Wherever Japanese lacquer is not present, the exterior of the commode has been veneered with a wood identified as belonging to the Maloideae subfamily of the Rosaceae. Based on its microscopic and macroscopic features, this wood is likely to be service tree (*Sorbus domestica*; *cormier* in French) but could also be pear or perhaps apple.¹⁵ All three woods have very smooth grain and were readily available to Parisian cabinetmakers of the period at relatively low cost.¹⁶ This veneer has been applied with the grain oriented vertically rather than on the diagonal as was more common.

The commode has one large double-throw lock in the upper drawer that has two bolts operated by a single key. The first bolt rises into the case top, and the second drops simultaneously down through a strike plate (attached to the dust panel) and into the lower drawer front, thus securing both drawers.

The commode features panels of Japanese lacquer that have been applied to the drawer fronts and to the sides of the case. On the drawer fronts, two separate panels of raised (or *takamakie*) lacquer have been arranged in an unusual manner to create a very symmetrical composition out of panels that were originally asymmetrical. X-radiography clearly shows that the first panel covers the left two-thirds of the drawer fronts, with floral designs on the left and ducks and butterflies on the right. The second panel, half the size of the first, covers the right third of the drawer fronts (fig. 14-9).



Figure 14-9 View of the cabinet with most of its mounts removed, detailing the locations of two seventeenth-century Japanese lacquer panels.

The panels on the front of the commode were almost certainly taken from the tops of a matched pair of Japanese cabinets dating to the second half of the seventeenth century. The larger panel on the left of the Museum's commode would have been nearly the entire top of one of the cabinets, while the panel on the right was only one-half of the top of the matching cabinet (whose decoration would have been a near mirror image of the first).¹⁷ The unused half of the second cabinet's top panel would likely also have had a pair of birds. The current whereabouts of this half-panel are unknown, but it is intriguing to imagine that Darnault may have saved it for use in another, subsequent, commission. Pairs of preserved Japanese cabinets showing very similar compositions and with appropriate dimensions are at Temple Newsam (fig. 14-10) and Christie's lot 272, sale 5538, December 16, 2008, in Paris. Lacquerwork that is extremely similar in technique and design to the Getty's commode (perhaps even from the same workshop) can be found applied to the lower half of a nineteenth-century French *secrétaire*, also at Temple Newsam (fig. 14-11).

The two panels on the sides of the commode are also Japanese lacquer, though they are unrelated in style or technique to each other or to the panels on the front. These panels are cut to shape so that the seams between the panels and the French *aventurine* surrounding them are hidden behind the gilded bronze mounts. Both panels are decorated in flat (or *hiramakie*) style lacquer whose size and compositions suggest that they might have come from the interior surfaces of cabinet doors. The panel on the right is a fine example of so-called *kodaiji*-style decoration in which gold leaves with black veins are juxtaposed with black leaves with gold veins.

Based on cross-section samples taken from the front left panel, the Japanese lacquer on this commode was planed and scraped by the French craftsmen to approximately 1.1 mm in thickness; this includes both the lacquer itself and the bare half-millimeter of the original Japanese wood



Figure 14-10 One of a pair of Japanese lacquer cabinets, 1670–1700. 78.6 × 99 × 61.8 cm (30.9 × 38.9 × 24.3 in.). Leeds, Temple Newsam. Photo: Leeds Museums and Art Galleries (Temple Newsam House) UK / Bridgeman Images

substrate that the French cabinetmaker left behind (figs. 14-12, 14-13).¹⁸ This Japanese wood has been identified microscopically as Japanese arborvitae (*Thuja standishii*).



Figure 14-11 Morel and Seddon, Fall-front *secrétaire*, ca. 1829–30. 177.5 × 110 × 56 cm (70 × 43.3 × 22 in.). Leeds, Temple Newsam. Leeds Museums and Art Galleries (Temple Newsam House) UK / Bought with financial assistance from the National Art Collection Fund (with a contribution from the Wolfson Foundation), the LMA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, the Pilgrim Trust, the Leeds Art Collections Fund, the Arnold Burton 1998 Charitable Trust, the Leche Trust, the A & S Burton 1960 Charitable Trust, Giles Eilwood Limited, the Tomasso Brothers Limited, and Dr. Terry Friedman / Bridgeman Images

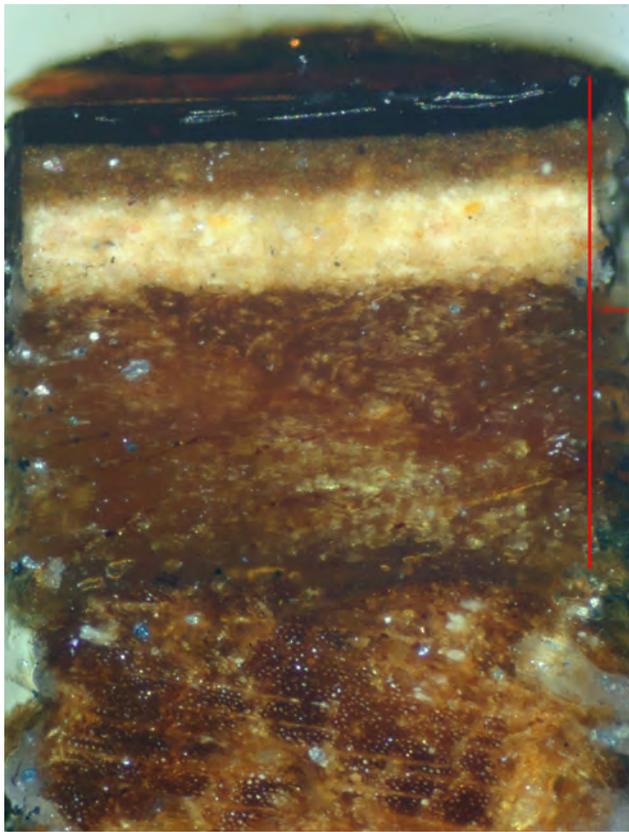


Figure 14-12

Composite cross-section photomicrographs of the Japanese lacquer in ultraviolet illumination and visible light showing the thickness of the lacquer layers and the original Japanese wood substrate.

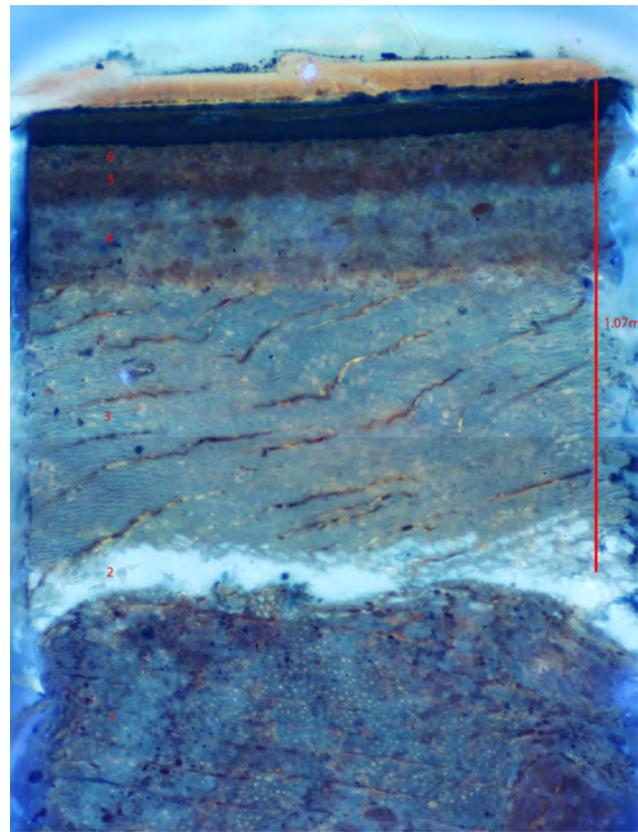


Figure 14-13

It is unusual that the Japanese lacquer panels on the drawer fronts extend beyond the boundaries of the gilded bronze frames, clear to the edges of the drawer fronts (see fig. 14-9). X-radiography reveals that the original Japanese *nashiji*, or sprinkled metal flake, border surrounding the compositions is still present, though hidden, along the top edges of the panels (fig. 14-14). This border is linear (in keeping with the rectangular format of the original cabinet) and is unrelated to the curving outline of the present mounts. Scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (SEM-EDS) on cross-section samples shows that the original border was executed in silver metal flake, common in Japanese work of the period.¹⁹



Figure 14-14 X-radiograph detail (top) of the top drawer and visible light photography (bottom) of the same area. Close inspection of the upper edge shows a linear band of original Japanese sprinkled *nashiji* silver powder decoration that has been covered by European lacquer. The Japanese butterfly, clearly visible in the X-radiograph because it was made using gold, has also been covered by European lacquer, while the later European butterflies are nearly invisible in the X-radiograph because they were executed in brass powder.

A detailed analysis was conducted on the Japanese lacquer from the drawer fronts using SEM-EDS, fluorescence microscopy, Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), and pyrolysis gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (py/GC-MS). The foundation for the lacquer consists of three layers of predominantly clay-based material, with the lowermost layer bound in glue and the upper two foundation layers bound in *thitsi* lacquer with the addition of drying oil and starch. A small number of compounds associated with cedar oil were also found in low abundance in the foundation layers. While this could indicate that cedar oil, collected from a wide range of trees in the family Cupressaceae, was used in the foundation, this material is not normally associated with Japanese lacquer and the compounds are more likely to be associated with volatiles from the substrate wood, *Thuja standishii*, a member of the same botanical family. Above the ground, a thin layer of carbon black was applied, followed by two layers of dark-colored, transparent lacquer. The *hiramakie* and *nashiji* decoration was applied over this black lacquer ground in a manner similar to that seen on the B.V.R.B. commode, using gold, silver, and vermilion (see cat. no. 5).

Also, similar to the B.V.R.B. commode, the raw lacquer used to prepare these panels is not entirely true Japanese *urushi* but also contains *thitsi*, or Burmese lacquer, an inferior but significantly less expensive alternative. *Thitsi* alone appears to have been used in the foundation layers, while the upper layers consist of a combination of *thitsi* and *urushi*. In all cases the lacquer has been further mixed with a drying oil, a class of materials commonly added to both extend the expensive lacquer and modify its working properties.

After the lacquer panels were thinned and glued into their current configuration, the French *vernisseur* painted over the linear Japanese *nashiji* border with black and supplanted it with his own imitation of *nashiji* (known as *aventurine* in eighteenth-century France),²⁰ which conformed to the curved gilded bronze mounts and also covered the legs. X-radiography reveals that in addition to painting out the border, the *vernisseur* painted over an original gold butterfly on the upper drawer (fig. 14-14). The butterfly appears to be slightly damaged in the X-ray, and this may have been the reason that it was covered. The French craftsman then added two butterflies to the upper drawer, placing them on either side of the central escutcheon as if to reinforce the contrived symmetry of the overall composition. These added butterflies were added in brass powder rather than gold.

Analysis of the original French *aventurine* by SEM-EDX and py/GC-MS shows that it is composed of four major layers (fig. 14-15). First, a black ground coat of carbon black mixed with bone black pigment bound in a spirit-resin varnish was applied. This resin mixture shares many characteristics of traditional eighteenth-century transparent spirit varnishes, including the use of the hard resins sandarac and shellac²¹ to improve polishing, and softer resins from the Pine family, along with camphor to plasticize and toughen the final film. Above the pigmented varnish layer, a thin size, of unknown organic composition, was applied. This size served to adhere fine brass flakes, which were then covered with a thick varnish layer similar to that used in the black ground.

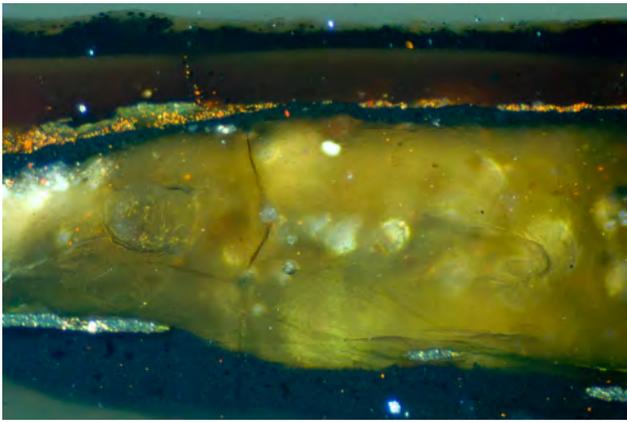


Figure 14-15 Cross-section photomicrographs in visible light showing the original European *aventurine*, or imitation *nashiji*, decoration.

The *aventurine* visible today is not original to the commode; cross-section microscopy clearly reveals that there have been at least two complete reapplications of the *aventurine*. Analysis of the first major restoration shows that it used a ground containing bone black pigment mixed with indigo, bound in a spirit-resin varnish containing shellac, sandarac, and a small amount of drying oil. The indigo would have served to impart a cooler, deeper black and counteract the warm color of the shellac-containing varnish. A size containing vermilion was used to adhere the brass flakes on top of the black ground. The pigmented layer and the metallic decoration were coated with a transparent varnish of a very similar resin composition, although with the addition of slightly more drying oil. This restoration varnish appears to be primarily drying oil with the addition of shellac and polycommunic diterpenoid resin, likely sandarac or soft copal. The more recent restoration (visible today) uses inappropriately coarse copper flakes in an oil-resin varnish that has badly reticulated. This varnish contains a mixture of a large amount of drying oil with shellac and “hard” copal. This restoration layer most likely dates to the nineteenth century or later, when hard copal from Africa was widely used as varnish material.²² The cross-section analysis suggests that the original French *aventurine* may only survive in a fragmentary state.

In addition to the repainting of the French *aventurine*, there has been considerable restoration to the Japanese lacquer panels. Much of the gold decoration on the front and left side panels has been overpainted in the course of at least two significant restoration campaigns. This can be observed both under ultraviolet illumination (fig. 14-16) and by comparison of X-radiographs with visible light images (fig. 14-17). In strong light, it is also possible to see that the original black background of the panels has faded considerably to brown and that, to remedy this, some

considerable areas have been “reinforced” with washes of black varnish. The browning of light-aged Asian black lacquer is a common occurrence when it is exposed to heat and humidity,²³ as it certainly would have been when it was glued to the drawer fronts by the French cabinetmaker. The *kodaiji*-style panel on the right side remains in very good condition and is the least restored.



Figure 14-16 Front of the cabinet under ultraviolet illumination, detailing the extent of restoration overpaint on the surface.

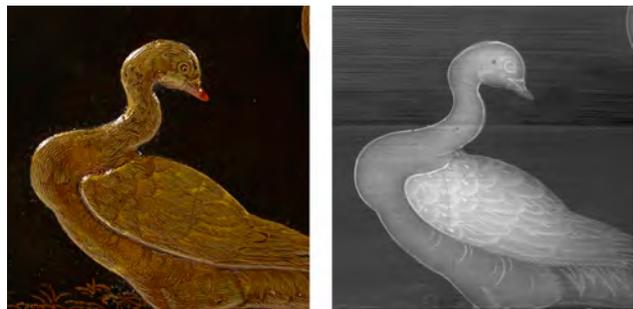


Figure 14-17 Detail of the duck in visible light (left) and X-radiograph (right). The original Japanese gold decoration is visible in the X-radiograph but is hidden in visible light by later European overpaint, executed in brass powder paint.

The gilded bronze mounts are very skillfully finished and fitted. The foliate elements are chased in a relatively uniform and regular manner, yielding a lively, textured surface. This contrasts with the smooth surfaces of the moldings and C-scrolls, which, in turn, have alternating passages of burnished and matte gilding. The primary framing elements of the mounts are quite large, often composed of several individual castings that have been soldered together; numerous smaller elements of foliage are neatly and precisely fitted over and around these framing elements.

Ten representative gilded bronze mounts were removed from the commode and analyzed for bulk alloy composition by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF). All

of the analyzed mounts were found to have compositions very typical of known eighteenth-century castings; they contain about 18–22% zinc, 1–1.5% tin, and 1.5–2.5% lead, with detectable levels of impurities such as iron, nickel, silver, and antimony. The lock, lock plates, and soldering metal used to assemble the larger mounts were also analyzed and found to have normal eighteenth-century compositions for their types; both contain about 28 to 32% zinc, along with minor elements and impurities.²⁴

It appears that all of the mounts have been regilded, at least in part by electroplating. Three pieces of evidence support this supposition. First, the gilding on the mounts is conspicuously free of any “holidays,” or small areas, often only visible under magnification, where the gold failed to adhere to the metal. Such perfect coverage of gold is much easier to achieve with electroplating than with mercury-amalgam gilding. Second, virtually all of the backs of the mounts bear traces of a dark material that may be a stopping-off varnish used to prevent gold from depositing onto the backs of mounts when they are dipped into the plating solution.²⁵ Analysis of this varnish by FTIR and py/GC-MS has determined that the stopping-off varnish is composed primarily of bitumen, with the addition of some camphor. The third piece of evidence to suggest that the mounts have been regilded is the presence, despite the stopping-off varnish, of a small amount of gold evenly distributed overall on the backs of the commode’s mounts. Although not visible to the naked eye, this gold is easily detectable by XRF. The occurrence of an extremely thin overall gold layer on the reverse is almost never encountered with purely amalgam gilt mounts.

In addition to having been regilded, the mounts appear to have been chemically toned. The color of the mounts is considerably warmer than usual and is similar to the tonality that can be achieved using a solution of caustic soda (sodium hydroxide).

The commode’s marble top is an amygdaloidal marble called ribboned campan, or *campan mélange vert*, that comes from the Hautes-Pyrénées region of France. The characteristic lenticular nodules of gray-green to pinkish marl (calcareous clay) encase small nautiloids and *Clymenia* ammonite shells. The dark green matrix is colored by chlorite, and the broad red streaks are believed to have been caused by iron-fixing microbes in the sediment before it solidified into rock. White crystalline veins of calcite cut through the stone.

Campan marble was used as early as the first century by the Romans, who quarried it near Pont de la Taule (Ariège). The quarry at Espiadet was active through the

medieval period and was declared to be a royal quarry by Louis XIV. It was very active in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was closed in the twentieth century.

A.H., with J.C., M.S., and R.S.

NOTES

1. For information on Joseph Baumhauer, see Boutemy 1965, 82–89; Augarde 1987, 14–45; Pradère 1989a, 230–45.
2. Jones Collection, acc. no. 1013-1882; 2 ft. 10 in. x 4 ft. 2 in. x 2 ft.; see Kjellberg 1989, 453.
3. Acc. nos. 1942.9.411 and 1942.9.412; ex. coll. Duke of Leeds, Hornby Castle, sold, Christie, Manson & Woods, *Catalogue of a Small but Choice Collection of Porcelain [. . .], June 28, 1901* (London: Christie, Manson & Woods, 1901), lot 100; 33 1/16 x 51 7/8 x 23 3/4 in. and 33 1/16 x 49 x 22 7/16 in. (this model of commode was made in two sizes, one slightly smaller in width than the other, with both sizes represented in this collection). See Molinier 1902, n.p.; Packer 1956, fig. 47.
4. Acc. 1976.38; 86 x 127 x 63 cm; ex. coll. Edmund de Rothschild, Exbury. See Augarde 1987, 38, fig. 34; Pradère 1989a, 233, fig. 234.
5. Acc. no. 1926.112; 2 ft. 11 in. x 4 ft. 9 1/4 in. x 2 ft. 1 5/8 in.; ex. coll. Ascher Wertheimer, London, and Archer H. and Collis P. Huntington. See Boutemy 1965, 82, fig. 1; Rieder 1980, 130, fig. 4.
6. 84.5 x 139 x 58.5 cm; ex. coll. Festetics Palace at Keszthely. See Szabolcsi 1964, cover illus. The floral sprays that entwine the inner framing mounts are missing. The commode is reputed to be of nineteenth-century date but has not been seen by the author.
7. Inv. MJAP-M 570. See Pallot and Garnot 2006, 106–9, no. 22.
8. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Wrightsman, acc. no. 1979.172.2. See Watson 1966, vol. 2, 300–301, no. 148.
9. Galerie Georges Petit, *Objets d'art et très bel ameublement du XVIIIe siècle et autres, December 6–7, 1928* (Paris: Galerie Georges Petit, 1928), no. 180.
10. Ex. coll. Wildenstein & Co. and Akram Ojeh, sold, *Magnifique ensemble de meubles et objets d'art français: Collection Monsieur Akram Ojeh, June 26, 1979* (Monaco: Sotheby Parke-Bernet, 1979), lot 141; Pradère 1989a, 233, fig. 235.
11. Sargentson 1996, 21–23.
12. For an X-ray photograph of a commode by Bernard II van Risenburgh showing European additions to the Japanese lacquer, see Parker, Appleton Standen, and Dauterman 1964, 77, fig. 61.
13. Jacques Dubois seems to have been the first *ébéniste* to have employed this technique, produced for him by *vernisseurs* such as the Martin brothers. It is found on a *secrétaire en dos d'âne* that bears crowned Cs on its mounts and belonged to Joseph-

- Florent, marquis de Vallière (1717–1776). See *Wolvesperges* 2000, 290–91, no. 158. The desk was sold at Christie's, *Important French Furniture from a Private Collection, May 21, 1996* (New York: Christie's, 1996), lot 346. See also a similar desk by Dubois that is lacquered in this manner: *Wolvesperges* 2000, 288–89, no. 157.
14. Correspondence between Norris Bramlett and Sir Alfred Chester Beatty, October 3, 1955, J. Paul Getty Museum Early Administrative Records, 1939, 1949–86, undated, Getty Research Institute (IA10003). On March 8, 1955, Mr. Getty paid Sir Alfred Chester Beatty an unitemized total of £27,000 for a *bureau plat* (55.DA.3), this commode, and a music stand by Martin Carlin (55.DA.4). In a letter to J. Paul Getty dated October 3, 1955, and mailed from Ailesbury Road in Dublin, Beatty priced the commode at £3,500, the *bureau plat* at £21,000, and the music stand at £2,500.
 15. See the Wood Identification Report by Arlen Heginbotham, dated November 24, 2008, on file in the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum. Also, for a discussion of the reasons for veneering surfaces to be japanned, see cat. no. 5.
 16. See Roubo 1774, 782–87.
 17. Another possibility is that the larger panel of lacquer came from the fall front of a "scritoire," or writing cabinet.
 18. The Japanese substrate wood was identified microscopically as *Thuja standeshii*, or Japanese arborvitae. See the Wood Identification Report by Bruce Hoadley and Joseph Godla, dated June 26, 1995, on file in the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 19. See the ESEM Examination Report by Arlen Heginbotham, dated December 8, 2008, on file in the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 20. *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 4th ed. (1762), 129: "Il y a aussi une aventurine factice, qui est une composition faite avec de la poudre d'or, jetée à l'aventure sur du vernis, ou sur du verre fondu."
 21. The shellac detected in the pigmented layer may relate to contamination from the size layer above rather than a material intentionally added to the resin varnish.
 22. Based on the presence of polyozic marker compounds detected in py/GC-MS analysis. For further discussion of the use of African copal, see Augerson 2011, 18.
 23. Webb 2000.
 24. See the X-ray Fluorescence Analysis Report by Arlen Heginbotham, dated November 19, 2008, on file in the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 25. A particularly early and well-preserved example of stopping-off varnish can be found on the reverse of the mounts on the Victoria and Albert Museum's cabinet by Prignot (7247–1860), made in 1855, with mounts electroplated by Elkington's.





15. Writing table (*bureau plat*)

French (Paris), ca. 1745–49

Attributed to Joseph Baumhauer (French, died 1772; *ébéniste privilégié du Roi*, ca. 1749)

White oak* and ash* carcass veneered with bloodwood*; drawers of white oak; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron hardware and lock; leather top

H: 2 ft. 7 1/16 in., W: 5 ft. 11 3/8 in., D: 3 ft. 3 5/8 in. (78.9 × 181.3 × 100.6 cm)

71.DA.95

DESCRIPTION

This writing table of rectangular shape is supported on four cabriole legs that are five-sided in section. The table has five drawers, two of them hidden, all accessed from the front and with the central drawer recessed (fig. 15-1). The front of the desk is replicated on the back, however, with false drawer fronts. The top of the desk is set with three pieces of dark-colored leather cut to a conforming shape and tooled with a foliate scroll design with traces of gilding. An undulating and partly stippled gilt bronze frame molding surrounds the desk's top.



Figure 15-1 Three-quarter view with drawers open.

The white oak and ash carcass of this large rectangular desk is veneered with bloodwood. Wave-cut sections are used on the three drawer fronts, side panel insets, and back, with the legs veneered with pieces forming a chevron pattern. Thin, segmented frames follow along the desk's lower edges and down the five sides of each leg. Shaped to follow the desk's contours, a series of flat gilt bronze frames, burnished and stippled, are screwed over the veneer to delineate the drawer fronts and side panels

(fig. 15-2). Most of the framing mounts are marked with a crowned C. The simple framing mounts set off the more sculptural rococo mounts, all of which also bear crowned C marks.



Figure 15-2 Right profile.

Each corner of the desk features an imposing gilt bronze mount in the shape of a robust shell formation at the top. Bordered by sinuous, leafy scrolls, these exuberant corner mounts descend down the desk's legs, tapering into vegetal *chutes* that terminate in delicate shell and C-scroll *sabots*. The pulls on the two matching side drawers take the form of three-dimensional foliate scrolls, which lead into an exuberant pierced assemblage of rococo scrolls and garlands flanking the slightly recessed central drawer (fig. 15-3). This drawer, which is slightly wider than those on each side, features a functional double-throw lock. It has a keyhole escutcheon in the shape of a frilled shell set within a pair of foliate C-scrolls connected by two more

abstract, shell-like motifs. Two scrolling drawer pulls extend from both sides of the escutcheon. The three front drawers conceal two secret, narrow drawers, one on each side of the central drawer.



Figure 15-3 Handle of the front right drawer.

A pierced gilt bronze mount is positioned at the center of the desk's side panels. This asymmetrical cartouchelike mount, which adopts the line of the desk's lower edge, takes the form of a large shell ornament set within a mass of foliate C-scrolls and floral garlands.

MARKS

All sculptural mounts and most border mounts are stamped with the crowned C (fig. 15-4), indicating a date between 1745 and 1749.¹



Figure 15-4 Crowned C mark.

COMMENTARY

The table is not stamped with a maker's name, but it is attributed to Joseph Baumhauer on the basis of a closely comparable table stamped "JOSEPH" sold at auction in Paris in 1906 from the collection of Basil Kotschoubey (fig. 15-5).² In the preface to the sale catalogue written by Léon Roger-Milès, that table is stated to have come from the collection of Count Alexei Razumovsky, the purported

morganatic husband of Empress Elizabeth of Russia.³ While the mounts on the Kotschoubey table are all apparently of the same model as those found on the Museum's table, the lower profile differs, and the central drawer front is flat, both horizontally and vertically. The elaborate kneehole mounts do not extend below the drawer frame but are more or less contiguous with it. The 1906 sale catalogue makes no mention of crowned Cs, but at this date their presence may have been overlooked or their meaning unknown to the cataloguer. The table did not apparently have secret drawers or special locking systems. It is not possible to see the arrangement of the veneers in the poor photograph, and the catalogue merely gives the description "en bois de placage." The table was sold for 53,500 FF to a Monsieur Pauline.⁴ Its present whereabouts are unknown.



Figure 15-5 Joseph Baumhauer (French, died 1772), *Bureau plat and cartonnier*, reign of Louis XV. *Bureau plat*: 190 × 95 × 84 cm (75 × 37.5 × 33 in.), *cartonnier*: 86 × 64 cm (34 × 25 in.). Paris, Hôtel Drouot, *Objets d'art et d'ameublement composant la collection de M. B. Kotschoubey*, April 13–16, 1906, lots 384 and 385.

A second table bearing mounts of the same model is in the musée du Louvre.⁵ It was given by René Grog in 1972, and its previous history is not known. The mounts and the carcass are unstamped, and it contains only three drawers. The lower profile differs from the Museum's and the Kotschoubey table in that it is "hipped" in the area below either side of the central drawer, but like the Museum's table the elaborate kneehole mounts extend below the plain framing mounts of the drawer fronts to touch the thin profile molding below. The mounts are all set on areas of amaranth, which outlines them. The rest of the surface area is veneered with bloodwood, with the grain set diagonally.

A third *bureau plat* in the Louvre, formerly thought to be stamped "Séverin," resembles the Museum's example in

almost all respects—construction, secret drawers, locking systems, veneers, and mounts—with the exception being the kneehole mounts, which are of a considerably simpler model.⁶ Another *bureau plat* of this model and construction is in the musée de Soissons.⁷ Although it is stamped “M.CRIAERD” (master in 1738) twice, it is considered by Alexandre Pradère to be a copy of that in the Louvre.⁸ Indeed nineteenth-century copies of the so-called Séverin table exist, stamped with the names of such makers as Durand,⁹ Dasson,¹⁰ Beurdeley,¹¹ and Krieger.¹² Numerous unstamped examples have passed through the market, mounted in the same manner but, according to the catalogue descriptions, containing only three drawers each.

The veneers on the Museum’s table are laid with a mixture of straight grain, diagonally set marquetry on the upper case, wave-cut marquetry on the drawer fronts and side panel insets, and chevron arrangements on the legs. The former technique was used by Joseph Baumhauer on a commode bearing his stamp in the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor (see cat. no. 16), and on the so-called Séverin table in the Louvre. With the exception of those found at the upper corners and the feet, the mounts on these *bureaux plats* are not found elsewhere. Models of these corner mounts can be seen on a commode stamped “HANSEN,” for Hubert Hansen (master in 1747), again in the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor.¹³

The Museum’s table was first published in 1907, in an album reviewing an exhibition held in Saint Petersburg in 1904. This exhibition of European and Russian decorative arts at the Stieglitz Museum of Decorative and Applied Arts was sponsored by Empress Alexandra Feodorovna for the benefit of the war wounded. The table then belonged to the tsar’s cousin Helene, princess of Saxe-Altenburg. In the catalogue written by Adrien Prachoff,¹⁴ the table is described as being the “perle de la collection,” as having always been in the Chinese Palace at Oranienbaum, and belonging originally to Catherine II.¹⁵ Prachoff noted that the bronzes were stamped with “un poinçon parisien” and stated that this mark was used on objects made in Paris in 1743–44. At this time most historians were suggesting that the crowned C mark stood for the *bronzier* Jacques Caffieri. Prachoff was in advance of his time in recognizing that this was at least a datable tax stamp.¹⁶

The table was also published by Denis Roche in 1913 in his *Le Mobilier français en Russie*.¹⁷ In the introduction of the book he discusses a *bureau plat* with a *bout de bureau*, *serre-papiers*, and clock that was delivered to the empress

Elizabeth as a gift from Louis XV.¹⁸ They were registered in the *Présens du Roi* of May 3, 1745:

Reçu du s.r Hébert un bureau de cabinet de 6 pieds de long sur 3 de large, en bois violet à compartimens, contourné, orné de chutes, pieds, cadres & quarts de rond, de bronzes réparés et dorés d’or moulu.

Plus, une armoire allant au bout dudit bureau, aussi de bois violet travaillé en fleurs et compartimens, et orné de même de bronzes réparés & dorés d’or moulu.

Plus, un serre-papiers du même goût, avec ses portes garnies de glaces.

Finalement, une pendule assortissante, et ornée de figures & autres accompagnemens dorés d’or moulu.

Toutes lesquelles choses lui avoient esté ordonnées pour un présent de sa Majesté à l’Impératrice de Russie, et reviennent avec les caisses dans lesquelles elles ont été emballées, à la somme de sept mille deux cens cinquante cinq livres, suivant le mémoire qu’en a fourni led[it] Hébert, de lui signé et certifié véritable, cy . . . 7255 [livres].¹⁹

The whereabouts of the royal gift, veneered with floral marquetry, remains unknown.

A *serre-papiers* stamped “JOSEPH” and with mounts struck with the crowned C, now placed on a *bout de bureau* by Bernard II van Risenburgh (see cat. no. 3) and bearing the trade label of Darnault, is in the Hermitage (fig. 15-6).²⁰ It is suggested by Alexandre Pradère that the *serre-papiers* was originally placed on the Museum’s table.²¹ This stamped *serre-papiers* and the Museum’s *bureau plat*, both bearing mounts struck with the crowned C, must be among the earliest objects produced by Joseph Baumhauer.



Figure 15-6 Joseph Baumhauer (French, died 1772) and Bernard II van Risenburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766), *Cartonnier*, mid-eighteenth century. Oak, amaranth, red wood, gilt bronze, marquetry, 133 × 106 × 46 cm (52 × 42 × 18 in.). Saint Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, MB 434. Photo: © The State Hermitage Museum / Vladimir Terebenin

The revolutionary government seized the desk from Helene during the Russian Revolution, and it was nationalized in 1919. The Soviet government then sold it to the Duveen Brothers in 1931. Joseph Duveen did not purchase the table directly from Russia but from a Russian dealer, “M. Iljin,” in Berlin.²² The transaction is discussed in a letter to New York from Paris dated November 17, 1931:

We called to see Iljin when we were in Berlin. [. . .] He then asked us to make him an offer for the remaining pieces. [. . .] [H]e insisted [. . .] so we made him an offer of \$16,000 for the vases and the inkstands including the fine Louis XV table from Oranienbaum. He said our offer was ridiculous and impossible for him to accept, as the valuation of his experts for these pieces was \$28,500. We had a long argument over the matter, but we told him that we could not increase our offer. He came down to \$18,000, then to \$17,000, but we would not budge and prepared to leave. He then put the matter to a vote between himself, the Berlin director and the

Leningrad director. Two voted “for” and one “against” so he accepted our offer.²³

Duveen set aside the *bureau plat* for Anna Thomson Dodge (1871–1970), who was in the midst of building her mansion Rose Terrace in Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, just outside of Detroit. The table, together with volumes 1 and 2 of Denis Roche’s book *Le Mobilier français en Russie*, is included in a list of “Goods Shipped to Detroit” dated January 10, 1934.²⁴ It was placed in the hall of Rose Terrace, which opened in 1934.²⁵ An invoice dated August 27, 1935, shows that Mrs. Dillman (Anna Thomson Dodge) paid Duveen \$72,000 for the table.²⁶

PROVENANCE

1745–62: possibly Empress Elizabeth of Russia, 1709–1762, given to her by King Louis XV of France, 1745, and then by inheritance to Catherine II of Russia, 1762;²⁷ 1745–63: or possibly Count Mikhail Illarionovich Vorontsov, Russian, 1714–1767 (Vorontsov Palace, St. Petersburg, Russia), sold to Empress Catherine II of Russia with the Vorontsov Palace, 1763; 1762 or 1763–: Empress Catherine II of Russia, 1729–1796;²⁸ by 1904–19: Helene, duchess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, princess of Saxe-Altenburg, Russian, 1857–1936 (Cabinet de la Souveraine, Chinese Palace, Oranienbaum, near St. Petersburg, Russia), seized by the revolutionary government and nationalized during the Russian Revolution, 1919;²⁹ 1919–31: Soviet government, sold through Nikolai Iljin, one of the heads of the Antikvariat, to Duveen Brothers, Inc., in Berlin, Germany, 1931;³⁰ 1931–34: Duveen Brothers, Inc., sold to Anna Thomson Dodge, delivered in 1934;³¹ 1934–70: Anna Thomson Dodge, American, born Scotland, 1871–1970 (Rose Terrace, Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan), upon her death, held in trust by the estate, 1970;³² 1970–71: Estate of Anna Thomson Dodge, American, born Scotland, 1871–1970 [sold, *Highly Important Collection of French Furniture and Works of Art*, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, June 24, 1971, lot 98, through French and Company to the J. Paul Getty Museum].³³

EXHIBITION HISTORY

L’Exposition rétrospective d’objets d’art, musée du baron Stieglitz (Saint Petersburg), February 1–April 30, 1904; *French Furnishings of the Eighteenth Century*, Toledo Museum of Art (Toledo), December 3–31, 1933; *The J. Paul Getty Collection of French Decorative Arts*, Detroit Institute of Arts (Detroit), October 3, 1972–August 31, 1973.

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Prachoff 1907, 229, 231–32, 234, pl. 7 ; Roche 1912–13, vol. 1 (1913), 13–14, pl. XVIII; *French Furnishings . . .* 1933, no. 58; *Catalogue . . . Anna Thomson Dodge* 1933, viii–x, n.p., ill. ; *Catalogue . . . Anna Dodge Dillman* 1939, ix and unpaginated entry; Boutemy 1957, 173–74; Boutemy 1965, 88–89, fig. 12, ill.; Coleridge 1971, 35–36, fig. 3; Christie's London, Anna Thomson Dodge sale, June 24, 1971, 79–80, lot 98, ill.; Boutemy 1973, 58–59, fig. 31; Rieder 1980, 131; Augarde 1987, 16, 19, fig. 3; Pradère 1989a, 245; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 50–51, no. 64; Wilson and Hess 2001, 35, no. 61; Bennett and Sargentson 2008, 76 n. 6, under no. 12, entry by Florian Knothe.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

This *bureau plat* is an extraordinary example of the finest craftsmanship the eighteenth century had to offer in cabinetmaking, mechanical ironwork, and gilt bronze fabrication. The structure is made primarily of white oak, with some ash used in the construction of the top. The four legs, running from the floor to the top of the case, are each made up of two boards laminated together to form the large mass (approximately 4.5 x 4.5 in.) from which the profile was shaped. The inside corners of the legs, below the level of the case bottom, are treated in an unusual manner. Each has a V-shaped channel cut into the inner face, running from the floor to the bottom of the case (fig. 15-7). Near the top of the leg, a wedge-shaped section was left protruding into the channel, allowing the leg to have a square section at the level of the case.



Figure 15-7 Bottom of the case.

The side and rear frieze rails are connected to the legs with shouldered mortise-and-tenon joints. The rear frieze rail is constructed in a highly unusual manner. It is made

of five separate pieces; a recessed center section that has been extended at either end with 6-in.-long blocks, attached with massive finger joints (fig. 15-8). Two swelling end sections are glued to the outer face of these connecting blocks, extending the rail to its full length.

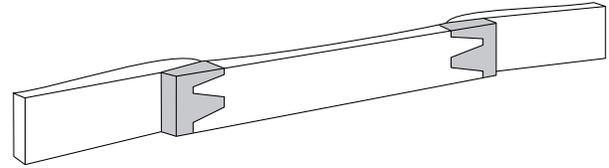


Figure 15-8 Construction of rear frieze rail, as seen from inside the case. Gray areas indicate the extension blocks, attached to the center rail section with massive finger joints.

The table's case bottom is made as a two-tiered frame-and-panel construction, with an upper tier at the center and lower tiers at the sides (fig. 15-9). The side rails are joined to the front and rear legs with mortises and tenons. The massive 2-in.-thick front and rear rails are joined to the side rails (not the leg posts) at a slightly canted angle, probably using mortises and tenons. These long rails are stepped on their upper faces to form the levels on which the drawers ride, while the bottom faces of the rails have a curved, gradual transition between the levels. The front and rear rails are built out on their exterior edges with several glued-on blocks of wood, three along the rear and four along the front. The blocks closest to the ends are joined to the leg posts with double mortises and tenons.

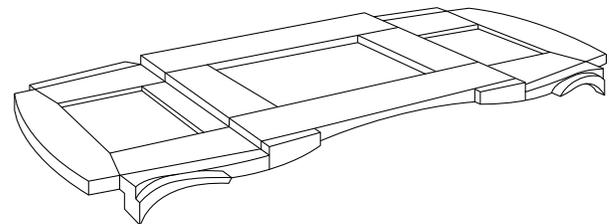


Figure 15-9 Schematic drawing of the two-tiered construction of the bottom frame.

The medial rails of the bottom frame appear to be secured with mortise-and-tenon joints. The two side panels are each made of two boards glued together on edge, while the larger central panel is made of five boards; the grain of all three panels runs from front to back. The entire bottom assembly is housed in a rabbet cut into the lower edges of the frieze rails.

The central drawer compartment is extremely solidly constructed and provides a great deal of support to the central portion of the *bureau plat*. The compartment may

be thought of as two boxes made of thick oak boards, one at the front of the desk and another at the rear. The raised center sections of the case bottom rails serve as the bottoms for both boxes. The front box, which forms the openings for the center and secret drawers, is built with four uprights (fig. 15-10) all of which have their grain running vertically. The outermost uprights are connected to the horizontal box top with a set of dovetails and to the case bottom with mortises and tenons. The inner pair of uprights is joined to the top with four transverse through-tenons and at the bottom with mortise-and-tenon joints. The construction of the rear box is identical to that of the front, with the exception that the outer uprights have been omitted. Transverse upright boards, with the grain running front to back, connect the front and rear boxes and separate the central drawer compartment from the secret drawers.



Figure 15-10 Interior of the case with drawers and dust panels removed.

The front and rear box constructions may act as a sort of structural truss, stiffening the structure and helping to limit sagging of the *bureau plat* at the center. Currently, the total downward deflection of the top at the center is less than 5 mm.

Above the center drawer, and between the tops of the front and back boxes, there is a two-part sliding dust panel (fig. 15-11). The two panels, each of which has a long, thin rail glued to its top, are able to slide to the left and right but only if the side drawers are pulled nearly all the way out. The purpose of this highly unusual arrangement is not entirely clear. It is possible that the small space between the dust panels and the top (only about 1.5 mm deep) could have been designed as a secret compartment for documents; however, the space is awkward to access, and any document pushed deeply into the cavity would be nearly impossible to retrieve without removing the top.



Figure 15-11 Interior of the case with drawers and dust panels in place.

The drawers of the *bureau* are a tour de force of the cabinetmakers' art. They are made using an extraordinary variety of sophisticated dovetail types, the complexity and inventiveness of which far exceed the bounds of necessity. Made using highest-quality quarter-sawn white oak, the drawers incorporate lapped full-blind dovetails, lapped and mitered full-blind dovetails, reverse lapped and mitered full-blind dovetails, lapped half-blind dovetails, and lapped and mitered half-blind dovetails (fig. 15-12). The sides of the drawers are quite substantial at approximately 14 mm thick, and the upper edge is flat (not rounded or beaded). The drawer bottoms are approximately 9 mm thick and are rabbeted on the underside of the edges to form a tongue that is housed in grooves in the four sides of the drawer. This drawer construction technique was unusual at the time but represents an innovative and advanced method that was adopted widely in the following decades. The wood of the drawer bottoms is oriented with the grain running from side to side, except for the long, thin secret drawers where the grain runs from front to back.

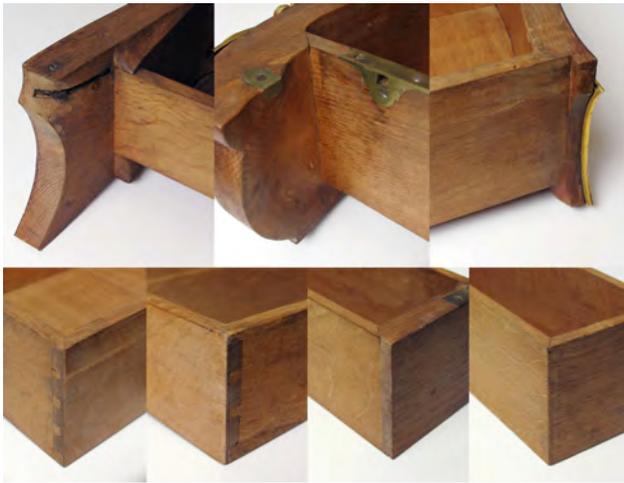


Figure 15-12 Composite of the types of dovetails seen in the drawer constructions: lapped full-blind dovetails, lapped and mitered full-blind dovetails, reverse lapped and mitered full-blind dovetails, lapped half-blind dovetails, and lapped and mitered half-blind dovetails.

The single lock for the desk is a double-throw lock located in the center drawer. It appears to be original to the desk, though its manufacture, using a cast brass case and finial-capped screws and bolts, is atypical for the period. A secondary mechanism, actuated by the bolt of the lock, is inlaid into the top of the front box construction, above the central drawers (fig. 15-13). When the central lock bolt is thrown upward it pushes on the canted ends of two long iron push rods, which are thus forced outward toward either end of the table. The ends of these rods seat into brass strike plates mounted on the sides of the outer drawers, locking them simultaneously with the central drawer. When the central lock is unlocked, the iron push rods do not retract automatically. Rather, the rods must be retracted manually by pushing two iron tabs, discreetly located in recesses in the underside of the writing surface, just above the lock. A tertiary mechanism ensures that the lock bolt can be thrown shut only if all three of the primary drawers are in the fully closed position. Two long steel springs are inlaid behind the secondary mechanism; these push forward on short iron push rods that run from front to back above the secret drawer compartments on either side. When these rods are in their fully forward position small tabs on their inner sides block the secondary push rods from sliding outward to lock the side drawers; this in turn prevents the central lock from being thrown shut. When the side drawers are fully closed, the short push rods are forced back, the tabs shift out of the way, and the secondary push rods are free to slide outward as the lock bolt is thrown.



Figure 15-13 View of the secret drawers that are only accessible when the main central drawer is closed.

When all three of the large drawers are open, the two secret drawers are relatively inconspicuous; their fronts are of plain unvarnished oak and, obscured in the shadows below the top, they appear to be part of the structure. In order to open these drawers, short iron tabs concealed in the back of the top corners of the central drawer front must be rotated outward, like the blade of a pocketknife, so that they point toward the secret drawers (see top left of fig. 15-12). When the central drawer is then closed again, the thin tabs slide precisely into the narrow gaps just above the secret drawers and hook onto brass catches on the tops of the drawer fronts. When the central drawer is retracted once again, the tabs pull open the secret drawers at the same time (see fig. 15-13).

The top of the *bureau plat* is of frame-and-panel construction with wide rails, made of ash, running the length of the table at the front and back (fig. 15-14). Why these two elements alone were made of ash is unclear. Ash is slightly less heavy than oak but otherwise has very similar mechanical properties.³⁴ According to Roubo, writing in Paris about two years after this *bureau plat* was made, ash was little used in cabinetmaking except for small pieces.³⁵ Viaux-Lauquin agrees that ash was rare in eighteenth-century Parisian cabinetmaking but that it was used in the regional furniture of eastern France, particularly Burgundy.³⁶ With the exception of these two elements, the rest of the top is made of white oak. The division of the top into panels is unusual; the wide primary medial rail runs the length of the top, from end to end, rather than crossing the shorter width across the center of the top. Four short front-to-back rails further divide the top into one larger and two smaller panels. The panels themselves are of equal thickness to the rails and are supported with tongue-and-groove joints.



Figure 15-14 Underside view of the top showing its frame-and-panel construction.

The top is attached in such a way that it is possible for it to be easily removed. Four iron tabs protrude downward from the underside of the top along the rear edge. Each tab is pierced with an approximately 1-cm-diameter hole. Two similar tabs are mounted near the front on the underside of the top. These two are rotated 90° and are slotted rather than being simply pierced. When the top is put on the base the rear tabs align just forward of four round iron pins protruding from the rear frieze. The slotted front tabs drop into mortises in the front legs. When the top is slid toward the rear, the holes in the rear tabs capture the pins in the rear frieze rail and the front tabs engage a perpendicular iron pin in the legs, preventing the top from moving upward. Once the tabs are locked into position, the top is prevented from sliding forward again by means of screws through a pair of L brackets attached to each side of the central drawer compartment.

The veneered decoration of this writing table, a parquetry of quartersawn and oyster veneer, was identified by microscopic anatomy as bloodwood. It is in extremely good condition, with no obvious signs of replacement. The veneer has been stained with a red-brown pigmented stain, which is most evident under the corner mounts. It is unlikely that this was part of the original surface treatment as it reduces the natural contrast of colors in the wood. The stain may have been applied during a previous restoration treatment to compensate for light-faded veneer.

In typical rococo style, there is no clearly established aesthetic rule between the use of straight-grain veneer and oyster veneer. The sides of the writing table are decorated with oyster veneer (sawn at an oblique angle to the grain direction) assembled in the same manner as the

commode attributed to Jean-Pierre Latz (see cat. no. 16) and framed with straight-grain quartersawn veneer. The front and back frieze rail of the writing table, the side drawers, and two side panels of the frieze rail (made to simulate two side drawers) are veneered with a zigzag pattern of straight-grain veneer. The front central drawer is veneered with a zigzag pattern of straight-grain veneer over its entire surface, except at its center where two pieces of oyster veneer are used behind the pierced mounts. The central back panel of the frieze rail, also simulating a drawer front, is veneered with oyster veneer similar to the sides of the writing table.

The oyster veneer marquetry of this desk is similar to that of the Latz commode. However, it is much simpler in its execution because of the limited height of the side panels and front drawer of this writing table. The veneer work beneath the large scroll and floral mounts on the fronts of the side drawers and on the rear frieze rail is incomplete; only the areas visible through the openings in the mounts are veneered. This may be viewed as an economical saving of expensive imported veneer or may have been a means of avoiding the challenging task of veneering the complex bombé form of the writing table.

X-radiography reveals numerous small holes beneath the veneer (fig. 15-15). These holes are the result of the small nails, called veneer pins, that were originally placed alongside sections of veneer to stop them from sliding out of position during gluing and clamping. These holes are now only visible in X-radiographs and appear to be circular. Round pins are unusual for the period of manufacture of this writing table as most nails and pins produced at the time were hand-forged and were rectangular in shape. Small drawn iron nails (*petit clous* or *épingles*) were, however, available at the time, and their production is described in detail by Réaumur.³⁷

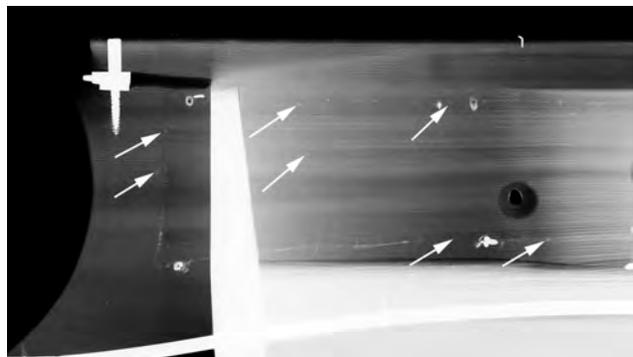


Figure 15-15 X-radiograph of the holes left behind by veneer pins. These pins are used during the fabrication process to keep sections of veneer stationary.

The mounts on this piece are cast and fitted with great skill. The chasing is equally fine, with a variety of matting techniques and punched embellishments, contrasted with burnished passages, that yield a lively and refined quality. All of the sculptural mounts as well as most of the border mounts, including the narrow beaded molding running along the lower edge of the frieze and the edges of the legs, are stamped with a crowned C.

The gilt bronze molding that surrounds the top of the bureau is mounted in four separate sections, two smaller sections above the central drawer compartment and two large U-shaped sections at either end. The molding is attached to the top with large-headed, handmade, iron machine screws that run upward through the edges of the top and into bridge-shaped anchors that have been soldered to the undersides of the mounts (fig. 15-16). Twenty-eight of the thirty existing machine bolts appear to be original; the heads are hand filed, and fine cracks along the length of the shafts suggest that they are made of wrought iron. The threading appears to have been formed by mechanical means or by a screw plate. The dimensions of the threading do not conform to any known nineteenth- or twentieth-century standard but rather conform well with units of measure commonly used in eighteenth-century France.³⁸



Figure 15-16 Detail of an anchor bridge soldered to the underside of the gilt molding. These help secure the molding around the top of the bureau.

Twenty brass elements from the *bureau plat* were analyzed by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) for alloy composition, including fifteen gilded bronze mounts, four pieces of brass hardware related to the lock mechanism, and one area of soldering metal behind a joint in the top molding. The alloys of the mounts are very typical in all respects of early to mid-eighteenth-century French castings. The alloys are also very consistent within

the group, containing on average 17% zinc, 1% tin, and 1.5% percent lead, along with traces of iron, nickel, silver, and antimony. Likewise, the hardware and solder also appear consistent with eighteenth-century manufacture, with elevated zinc levels up to about 31%. These findings suggest that a nineteenth-century date for the mounts is extremely unlikely.

The black leather writing surface, with its tooled and gilt border decoration, is old, but it cannot be easily determined if it is original.

There are very few restorations evident on this *bureau plat*. The varnish on the exterior has doubtless been restored. In addition, six heavy iron straps have been installed to the top edge of the frieze rail to reinforce the structure. Four of these (one in each corner) appear earlier than two applied directly above the finger joints on the rear frieze rail, all of which are attached with relatively modern machine-made screws.³⁹ The two latter straps are probably from a restoration that occurred in the early 1970s. Also, during the 1970s restoration, thin strips of light-colored wood were meticulously glued into any existing cracks where glue joints had separated.

By and large, however, the *bureau plat* is in an extraordinary state of preservation, with very minimal wear or evidence of use. This fact, along with the many unusual features of its construction and a relatively light oxidation of the interior surfaces, has led several knowledgeable observers to consider the possibility that the Getty *bureau plat* might be a later copy of the so-called Séverin table, now at the Louvre. The existence of several known nineteenth-century versions of this desk lends some credence to this idea.

In order to help confirm the age of the Getty *bureau plat*, a thorough dendrochronological (tree ring dating) study of the piece was undertaken. Nineteen individual pieces of wood from the structure and the drawers were identified as having areas of exposed end-grain suitable for analysis. High-resolution macrophotographs were made of the end-grain, and all visible rings were measured to the nearest hundredth of a millimeter. Analysis of the ring patterns in the wood shows that the youngest existing ring dates to 1713 and that the oak for the *bureau plat* grew in eastern France, probably in the region of Franche-Comté. Given that no sapwood remains on any of the pieces studied, these results imply that the earliest felling date for the tree(s) would be about 1730. Without sapwood, it is difficult to establish a *terminus ante quem* for the date of felling, but based on experience from other furniture studies it is extremely likely that the tree was cut before 1750.⁴⁰ These results strongly suggest that the Getty

bureau plat is an original eighteenth-century work and are in excellent accord with the date of 1745–49 proposed based on the evidence of the crowned C stamps.

A.H., with Y.C.

NOTES

1. Verlet 1937, 22–23. An edict of Louis XV, registered with Parliament on March 5, 1745, required that all works old or new made with copper, in pure form or as part of an alloy, be stamped with a crowned C. This mark was canceled on February 4, 1749; therefore, objects with this stamp can be dated to between 1745 and 1749.
2. For information on Joseph Baumhauer, see Boutemy 1965, 82–89; Augarde 1987, 15–45; Pradère 1989a, 230–45.
3. “Voici, par exemple, un bureau Louis XV, signé Joseph, avec son cartonnier, qui a appartenu au comte Rasoumowski, l’époux morganatique de l’impératrice Elisabeth de Russie, fille de Pierre le Grand.” Léon Roger-Milès, preface, Hôtel Drouot, *Catalogue des objets d’art et d’ameublement composant la collection de M. B. Kotschoubey, April 13–16, 1906* (Paris: Hôtel Drouot, 1906), 9. The desk sold as lot 384, and on pp. 55–56 it is described as follows: “IMPORTANT BUREAU-PLAT du temps de Louis XV, de forme contournée, à quatre pieds cambrés, ouvrant à trois tiroirs à la ceinture, en bois de placage. Il est très richement orné de bronzes finement ciselés et dorés. Sur les pieds: chutes à rocailles et feuillages, baguette et sabots à volute; sur les tiroirs: baguettes d’encadrement moulurées, agrémentées de rinceaux feuillagés et fleuris dans lesquels se trouvent les entrées de serrures. Le dessus du meuble se profile d’un large quart de rond à moulures. Il porte l’estampille de Joseph, maître-ébéniste, dont on peut voir un meuble, de caractère analogue, au South Kensington à Londres. La même signature se trouve sur une commode en laque ayant fait partie de l’ancienne collection Ch. Stein (voir Émile Molinier, *L’Histoire du mobilier français*). (Restaurations, notamment dans l’ébénisterie.) Long., 1 m. 90; larg., 95 cent.; haut., 84 cent.” The cartonnier was sold as lot 385 and described as follows: “CARTONNIER du temps de Louis XV, de forme mouvementée, à quatre pieds, avec sept casiers, en bois de placage. Il est richement orné de bronzes dorés à rinceaux, feuillages et motifs variés, formant encadrements sur les côtés. Il repose sur un meuble, de même bois de placage, ouvrant à porte sur chacun des côtés également, orné de bronzes dorés. Ce cartonnier avec son support peut accompagner le bureau précédent. Dimensions du cartonnier: long., 86 cent.; haut., 64 cent. Dimensions du dessus du cartonnier: long., 95 cent.; haut., 88 cent.; prof., 40 cent.” A handwritten note in a copy of the auction catalogue in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France details that the cartonnier sold to the vicomte de La Redoute for 12,700 francs.
4. Hôtel Drouot, *Catalogue des objets d’art et d’ameublement composant la collection de M. B. Kotschoubey, April 13–16, 1906* (Paris: Hôtel Drouot, 1906), 55. The photograph of the *bureau plat* is in a copy of the auction catalogue in the collection of the Getty Research Institute, and the handwritten note is in a copy in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.
5. Acc. no. OA10452; Alcouffe 1997, 46.
6. Acc. no. OA7805. It was once reputed to have belonged to the abbé Terray. See Champeaux 1896–97, plate 814 (78 x 200 x 90 cm); Dreyfus 1924, 87, illus.
7. Inv. 993.9.2. See Champeaux 1890–91, plate 258 (79 x 199 x 98 cm).
8. Correspondence with the author, September 20, 2000.
9. Sotheby Parke-Bernet, *Fine French Furniture, British & French Paintings [. . .], March 30, 1951* (New York: Sotheby Parke-Bernet, 1951), lot 152, signed F. Durand Fils (31 1/2 in. x 6 ft. 7 in.), with hidden drawers. Also Nouveau Drouot, *Tableaux et sculptures, meubles et objets d’art du XIXe siècle, November 9, 1987* (Paris: Nouveau Drouot, 1987), lot 123, stamped “G. Durand”; no hidden drawers are mentioned in the sale catalogue (80 x 199 x 102 cm). A further copy was seen by the author in the gallery of the Parisian antiques dealer Pierre Lécoules, rue Taitbout, in 1975. It was fitted with hidden drawers and had levers to lock both them and the side drawers shut.
10. Offered for sale, Sotheby’s, *Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Works of Art and Furniture, March 1, 1991* (London: Sotheby’s, 1991), lot 188. Stamped “Henry Dasson 1888.” It did not contain hidden drawers (L: 6 ft. 6 in.). Sold again, Sotheby’s, *Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Works of Art and Furniture, November 8, 1991* (London: Sotheby’s, 1991), lot 180. Another copy, stamped Dasson, was advertised by Pierre Lécoules, in *Apollo* 142 (December 1973): 130.
11. Christie’s, *Nineteenth Century Furniture, Sculpture, Porcelain and Decorative Objects, September 23, 1994* (New York: Christie’s, 1994), lot 2789. Stamped “A. Beurdeley à Paris.” It did not contain hidden drawers (31 x 57 x 32 1/2 in.; 78.7 x 144.7 x 82.5 cm). Another copy, stamped “Beurdeley,” was seen by the author in 1975 in the gallery of Pierre Lécoules. It contained hidden drawers.
12. J. Mercier, D. Thullier, T. May, D. Soinnie, and P. Deguines, *Orfèvrerie – Céramique [. . .], March 26, 2000* (Lille: Mercier, Thullier, May, Soinnie, Deguines, 2000), lot 409, signed “KRIEGER à Paris” on the bronzes and the lock plate. It contained hidden drawers (81 x 198 x 100 cm). Another sold at Christie’s, *19th Century Furniture and Sculpture, Christie’s, March 21, 2002* (London: Christie’s, 2002), lot 108. Undersurface of the carcass and lock plate signed “Krieger, Paris” (31 1/2 x 79 x 39 1/3 in.; 80 x 201 x 100 cm). A third sold at Millon et Associés, *June 27, 2003* (Paris: Millon et Associés, 2003), no. 87. Stamped “KRIEGER” on the lock plate (80 x 177 x 82 cm).
13. Acc. no. 1926.87. See Rieder 1980, 130, fig. 5.
14. Prachoff 1907, 229–31, pl. VII.
15. See Worsley 1989, 68–73.
16. Prachoff 1907, 231.

17. Roche 1912–13, vol. 1, pl. xviii.
18. Roche 1912–13, vol. 1, 13–14.
19. La Courneuve, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, Archives diplomatiques, Registres des Présents du Roi, tome 2062, fol. 25v; on fol. 26r, under the date May 8, 1745: "Le bureau, l'armoire, le serre-papiers de la pendule décrite dans l'article cy-contre, après avoir été emballés dans quatre caisses différentes [sic] ont été embarqués par ordre de M.r le marquis d'Argenson ministre et secrétaire d'État des Affaires [sic] étrangères, à adresser à M.r de la Bourdonnaye intendant de Rouen, avec une instruction pour la faire passer sûrement à Petersbourg sur un vaisseau neutre [?]; et M.r de la Bourdonnaye a accusé depuis la réception des dites quatre caisses bien conditionnées, tant à M.r le marquis d'Argenson qu'au S.r de Bazé [name difficult to read because of the archives' stamp] et leur marquant les précautions qu'il a prises pour la sûreté de cet envoy, qui revenant comme il a esté expliqué cy contre à la somme de sept mille deux cents cinquante cinq livres. doit estre pareillement porté en dépense pour la susdite somme de cy 7255 [livres]." The desk is also mentioned in tome 2097, fol. 97r/v: "En 1745. Un bureau de cabinet de six pieds de long sur trois de large, en bois violet à compartimens, contourné, orné de chutes, pieds, cadres & quarts de rond, de bronze réparés et dorés d'or moulu. Une armoire allant au bout dudt. bureaux [sic] avec les memes ornemens. Un serre papier avec les memes ornemens, avec ses portes garnies de glaces. Une pendule assortissante à l'Impératrice de Russie, le tout du prix de 7255 [livres]." It also appears in tome 2098, fol. 30v, on May 22, 1745: "Présent d'un bureau de cabinet envoyé en Russie de la valeur de 7255 [livres]."
20. Acc. no. 434 M6. See Rappe 1993, 206, figs. 1, 2; Wilson, Sassoon, and Bremer-David 1984, 196.
21. Pradère 1989a, 245.
22. It is likely that "M. Iljin" was Nikolai Nikolaevich Ilyin (1887–1939?), who was chairman of the Antikvariat, or State Trading Office, from 1930 to 1935 and frequently traveled in that capacity to Germany, France, Britain, Austria, and the United States from 1930 to 1933. The Antikvariat was the agency that sold nationalized collections of art and antiques on the international market at the behest of the Soviet Commission for Accounting and Sales of State Funds. Semyonova and Iljine 2013, 96–21, 345.
23. Files regarding works of art: Pavlovsk Palace Collection, 1931–54. Duveen Brothers Records, 1876–1981 (bulk 1909–64). Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 271, folder 22. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/cifa960015>.
24. Collectors' files: Dillman, Mrs. (Dodge), 2, ca. 1934, Duveen Brothers Records, 1876–1981 (bulk 1909–64), Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 442, folder 6. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/960015b442f005>.
25. Agis Salpukas, "An Era Ends as a Great Estate's Trappings Go Up for Auction," *New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1971.
26. A copy of the invoice is in the curatorial file in the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
27. La Courneuve, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, Archives diplomatiques, Registres des Présents du Roi, tome 2098, fol. 30, Pierres et Bijoux des Présens du Roy, March 20, 1738–April 25, 1745.
28. Prachoff 1907, 229–31.
29. Prachoff 1907, 229–31.
30. Files regarding works of art: Pavlovsk Palace Collection, 1931–54, Duveen Archives, Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 271, folder 22.
31. Collectors' files: Dillman, Mrs. (Dodge), 1, ca. 1925–33, Duveen Archives, Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 442, folder 5.
32. Collectors' files: Dillman, Mrs. (Dodge), 1, ca. 1925–33, Duveen Archives, Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 442, folder 5.
33. French and Company invoice, June 28, 1971, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
34. Bendtsen and Ethington 1975, 8.
35. Roubo 1774, vol. 3, 784.
36. Viaux-Lauquin 1997, 107–9.
37. Réaumur 1761, 53, pl. 2.
38. The major diameter of the threaded sections (4.6 mm) is very close to two *lignes*, while the pitch or spacing of the threads (1.13 mm) is almost exactly two threads per *ligne*.
39. Were this piece to have been stamped by its maker, the corner straps would likely have obliterated any trace.
40. For details of the dendrochronological study, see the complete reports by Didier Pousset with Christine Locatelli and Arlen Heginbotham, on file in the Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation Department, J. Paul Getty Museum. Macrophotography for the study was done by Jack Ross of the Getty Imaging Services Department.



16. Commode

French (Paris), ca. 1750

Attributed to Jean-Pierre Latz (French, ca. 1691–1754, *ébéniste privilégié du Roi* before May 1741)

White oak* and poplar* veneered with bloodwood*; drawers of white oak and walnut*; brass and iron locks; gilt bronze mounts; *fleur de pêcher* marble top

H: 2 ft. 10 1/2 in., W: 4 ft. 11 5/8 in., D: 2 ft. 2 5/8 in. (87.7 × 151.5 × 65 cm)

83.DA.356

DESCRIPTION

The rectangular commode, decorated with gilt bronze mounts, has bombé front and sides. It is supported on four cabriole legs of five-sided section. It contains two drawers, the face of the lower centered by a keyhole. The top is of *fleur de pêcher* marble shaped to conform to the top of the commode. It has a molded edge.

The front corners are set with mounts. Each is composed of a concave upper section that carries a descending row of bean-shaped *godrons* held by a burnished flat frame that extends above to leafy bifurcate scrolls and below in a short pendant of bell flowers and a bud. To either side of this arrangement are crimped ribbons.

The lower half the mount is of convex form. It is centered by a strip of small, concave bean-shaped cabochons interspersed with striations. The frame of the mount, set with egg and leaf molding, extends above it into a leafy scroll set with a small wing. A small pendant of three leaf buds is suspended from the end of the mount.

The foot mount takes the form of a bifurcated scroll framing a heavily stippled oval form containing an oval cabochon. A stud centers a bridge between the scrolls, and three short leaves curl below. The rest of the foot is composed of ribbed leaves and is topped at its center by a three-petal flower supporting a bud. A molded strip extends up the outer corner of the leg to the corner mount.

The front of the commode (fig. 16-1) is set with a large frame composed of C-scrolls, the four on the upper drawer set with a wing and strips of shellwork. On the lower drawer the frame is centered by a pierced symmetrical ornament composed of an ovoid figure

flanked by abstract rocaille forms and foliate scrolls. The foliate elements continue to twist along the lower portion of the frame mount, almost reaching the front two legs. The lower drawer is also set with an asymmetrical keyhole escutcheon. Frilled shellwork and scrolls surround the oval keyhole. These asymmetrical features are set against a naturalistic twig whose leafy branches emerge from behind the rocaille ornament.



Figure 16-1 Detail of the front.

MARKS

Stamped “RESTAURE par P. SPOHN” on the top of the carcass on the right back post (fig. 16-2).¹



Figure 16-2 “RESTAURE par P. SPOHN” stamp on top of the right rear post, beneath the marble.

COMMENTARY

A commode of the same form, similarly mounted and veneered, and stamped “I.P.LATZ” is in the Palazzo del Quirinale in Rome (fig. 16-3).² It was part of the large quantity of furnishings brought from France by Elisabeth of France to Italy after she became Duchess of Parma in 1748.³ That commode can be dated between 1745 and 1749 as its mounts bear the tax stamp of the crowned C.⁴ Styled Madame Infante after her marriage, the duchess made three voyages to Paris, in 1748, 1752, and 1759, with the evident aim of acquiring furnishings for the empty palaces of Parma.⁵ Included in these purchases were other pieces of furniture that are now attributed to Latz.⁶ The eighteenth-century provenance of the Museum’s commode is not known. It represents an instance where Latz has repeated a model for another patron. In any case, the Museum’s commode may postdate the one now in the Quirinale since the keyhole escutcheon has been cast without two small twigs to the left side that are found on the keyhole escutcheon on the other commode.⁷



Figure 16-3 Jean-Pierre Latz (French, 1691–1754), Commode, 1745–49. Oak veneered with bloodwood; gilt bronze mounts; *brèche violette*, 88 × 153 × 66.5 cm (34.5 × 60 × 26 in.). Rome, Palazzo del Quirinale. Segretariato Generale della Presidenza della Repubblica, Roma / Foto: Araldo De Luca

This commode is characteristic of Latz’s documented works in form, decoration, and construction. Henry Hawley notes that furniture made by Latz is distinguished by being sculptural in form, usually with a rich surface decoration of marquetry and gilt bronze, and exhibits a tendency toward a dominant central field of decoration, clearly set off from the rest of the piece.⁸ The gilt bronze moldings that frame the drawers are not solely secured from the outside by screws or pins but are partially attached on the concealed sides of the drawers by means of metal flanges soldered to the reverse of the moldings, a feature characteristic of furniture made in the 1760s by Jean-François Oeben and Jean-Henri Riesener.

Hawley has demonstrated how the repetition of the mounts found on signed and unsigned pieces serves to confirm an attribution to Latz. In this respect, he regards the Quirinale commode as a keystone for the attribution of a large number of pieces to this maker. The relevance of the mounts in a discussion of the group of furniture listed above is that Latz held the exclusive rights to his models for gilt bronze mounts until 1749. He produced mounts in his own shop in violation of guild rules, and in 1749 various ornaments and tools were seized by guild authorities. He regained possession of his property, but after that date he relied on others to make the mounts using models that belonged to him.⁹

In addition to the Museum’s commode, there are three other commodes, one stamped by and two attributed to Latz that have the same or similar mounts to those on the stamped Quirinale example. A stamped commode of the same form and carrying mounts of the same model (with the exception of the keyhole escutcheon) was sold at

auction in 2006.¹⁰ It was veneered with end cut floral marquetry and featured a rather ill-conceived bird on the surface of the upper drawer, which may have been a later addition. An unstamped commode also in the Palazzo del Quirinale and attributed to Latz is of the same size and shape and for the most part has mounts of the same model as those on the Museum and stamped Quirinale commodes.¹¹ It too is veneered with end cut floral marquetry. A commode in a private collection has many mounts of the same model.¹² Only the *chutes* and drawer pulls are of a different model, and there is no escutcheon plate or mount at the junction of the legs and body. It is veneered with floral marquetry attributed to Jean-François Oeben and probably dates between 1750 and 1755.

Another series of pieces attributed to Latz have escutcheon mounts of the same model as on the unstamped Quirinale commode,¹³ and individual or groups of mounts on these pieces and on those listed above can be found on yet another group of pieces all consequently attributed to Latz.¹⁴ Thus the repetition of mounts on signed and unsigned pieces serves to confirm attributions to him that can also be made on the basis of the general style of the pieces and the designs and execution of their marquetry.

A small sketch in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, further strengthens the attribution of the Museum's commode to Latz (fig. 16-4).¹⁵ The drawing in pen and ink on a single sheet shows a clock and a commode. This drawing is from a collection formed by the Swedish architect Carl Hårleman (1700–1753). He obtained it during a visit that he made to Paris in 1744–45. On the drawing, the design of the mounts of the Museum's commode has been precisely, though incompletely, shown. The escutcheon plate is not represented in the drawing. The more fulsomely rendered drawing of the clock conforms to a clock acquired by Frederick the Great in 1746.¹⁶ Several of the mounts on this clock are also on the Cleveland Museum of Art's clock (signed and dated 1744)¹⁷ and the stamped clock at Waddesdon Manor.¹⁸ Whether or not the drawing is by Latz, the design, we assume, is; therefore, it is probable that the design on which the Museum's commode is based dates to the period 1744–45.



Figure 16-4 Carl Hårleman (Swedish, 1700–1753), *A Clock and a Commode*, ca. 1744–45. Pen and ink tracing on thin yellow, probably oiled, paper. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, NMH THC 7158. Photo: Nationalmuseum Sweden

The recognition in Latz's work of a personal style presupposes his responsibility for the design of all furniture produced in his shop.¹⁹ Many drawings are listed in the inventories taken after his death in 1754 and the death of his wife in 1756.²⁰ That these drawings were related to the cabinetmaker's trade and were not merely in his private collection is indicated by their location (with the tools, etc.) and the low price gained for them, indicating that these drawings had little intrinsic value.²¹ It is evident that a single taste directed the production of the shop and that Latz designed the mounts used on his furniture.

Although an analysis and comparison of the mounts used on pieces by Latz is necessary for attribution, he was primarily a marquetry craftsman. It is the exceptional quality of the marquetry that distinguishes his work from that of his peers. Observation of Latz's work indicates some variation in technical quality, particularly of his gilt bronze mounts. This is not surprising, though, since after

the raid on his shop in 1749, he most likely relied on others to produce the mounts used on his furniture. However, the technical quality of his marquetry seems to have been consistently high. It varied in complexity from easily executed geometrical patterns to marquetry of brass and tortoiseshell, colored horn, and mother of pearl, of a sort that must have taxed the skills of any cabinetmaker to his limits.²²

Characteristically, the marquetry on the Museum's commode is of a superior quality. The strongly grained veneer forming a wave pattern on the commode is not commonly found. It was created by cutting a log of *bois satiné* obliquely to form oval veneers; these were then cut into rectilinear shapes and arranged to form waving lines. This is a particularly difficult type of marquetry to produce. Other pieces attributed to Latz with similarly arranged veneers are a pair of corner cupboards now in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence,²³ and a *bureau plat* now in the Wallace Collection, London.²⁴ The simple veneers of this *bureau plat* that make use of circular patterns of the wood grain resemble those of the Museum and the stamped Quirinale commodes. Other *ébénistes* also produced furniture with this type of marquetry; however, the wave-cut veneer on the pieces by Latz is in most cases more precise and extensive than that of other makers.²⁵

PROVENANCE

–1876: Anthony Nathan de Rothschild, first Bart., English, 1810–1876 (England), by inheritance to his daughter, Annie Henriette de Rothschild, 1876; 1876–1926: Annie Henriette de Rothschild, English, 1844–1926 (England), upon her death, held in trust by the estate, 1926; 1926–27: Estate of Annie Henriette de Rothschild, English, 1844–1926 [sold, *Old French Furniture, Objects of Art, Porcelain and Tapestry*, Christie's, London, May 5, 1927, lot 138, for 980 guineas to S. Founés]; 1927– : S. Founés;²⁶ Mme Duselschon (Château de Coudira, Prégny, Switzerland);²⁷ Mme Rouvière (Lausanne, Switzerland);²⁸ –1983: Maurice Segoura, Inc., founded 1957, dissolved 2006 (Paris, France), sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1983.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wilson, Sassoon, and Bremer-David 1984, 197–98, no. 7, figs. 17a–b; Pradère 1989a, 160, fig. 136; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 26, no. 27; González-Palacios 1996, 111; Ramond 2000a, 109, ill.; Wilson and Hess 2001, 15, no. 27.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

This remarkable commode exhibits a very high level of craftsmanship in its technically innovative marquetry, as well as in its exceptionally finely modeled and chased mounts. The four corner posts are made of single pieces of white oak, running from the floor to the top of the case. The case top is made as a tripartite frame-and-panel construction, with each of the framing rails attached to the corner posts using single, open-faced dovetails (fig. 16-5). Along their longer rear edges, the side rails are also attached to the rear rail with tongue-and-groove joints. The medial cross rails are both attached with double-pinned mortise-and-tenon joints. The left and center panels of the top are made of single panels of wood, while the third panel is made of two pieces glued together. The panels are chamfered on their interior faces, with a wide (~5 cm) plain chamfer. All of the panels of the commode are cut with this distinctive chamfer.



Figure 16-5 View of the top of the commode without the marble slab, showing the tripartite frame-and-panel construction method and open-faced dovetails at the corner posts.

The case bottom is also a tripartite frame-and-panel construction with dedicated rails around the entire perimeter that are not part of the construction of the sides or the back panel (fig. 16-6). The rear rail is attached to the corner posts with single-pinned mortise-and-tenon joints. The front rail is attached to the posts with horizontal sliding dovetails; the mortises of these dovetails do not traverse the entire post but are only cut into the rear two-thirds of the member, showing that the rail must have been slid into position from the back (interior). The side rails of the case bottom fit into dadoes in the corner posts at the front and rear. In addition, the longer rear edge of the rails attaches to the rear rail with a tongue-and-groove joint. The dustboard, which separates the two drawer compartments, is made in a fashion identical to the case bottom, except that the panels are all made of poplar. Each panel is made of one wide board glued to a narrower board. The right panel has on its underside a red chalk drawing of a male figure

with a long queue, fencing. Portions of the drawing were cut away on all sides when the panel was chamfered (fig. 16-7).



Figure 16-6 Bottom.



Figure 16-7 Composite of the red chalk drawing found on the underside of an interior panel showing a male figure with a long queue, fencing.

The quadripartite case back is also made as an independent frame-and-panel construction, with its own dedicated top and bottom rails that are not part of the construction of the top or bottom panel assemblies. These bottom rails are mortise and tenoned into the end posts

and are double pinned; the tenons are bare faced (flush on their interior faces). The vertical stiles are fixed into the top and bottom rails using the same joinery. All of the rails and stiles of the back are made of thinner stock than the case top and bottom assemblies; they are approximately 1.4 cm thick, while the others are approximately 2.1 cm thick. The panels of the back are each single pieces of wood, broadly chamfered on their inner faces. The rear rails of both the case top and the case bottom are attached to the horizontal rails of the case back with tongue-and-groove joints that run the full length of the pieces.

Each case side panel is made of three thick planks of oak, glued on edge and held with rabbet-and-dado joints along all four edges. The grain of these panels runs vertically.

The drawer fronts are made in a laminated construction with four tiers, stacked vertically. Each tier is either made of a single oak board or consists of three shorter boards, butted end to end. The drawer sides and backs are each made of a single board between 9 and 10 mm thick, with gently rounded top edges and dovetails, mitered at the top rear corners. The drawer bottoms are made of three butt-joined boards approximately 8 mm thick, with the grain running from side to side. Along their front edges, the bottoms fit into grooves in the drawer fronts. On the remaining three edges, however, the bottoms are simply screwed into the drawer sides from below with handmade tapered screws. Thin strips of oak, approximately 2.5 cm wide, are glued to the bottoms of the drawer along the side edges to serve as drawer runners. At each end of both drawer fronts, blocks of walnut with the grain running vertically are glued over the dovetails, creating a rounded extension of the drawer front beyond the drawer sides. The front corner posts of the case are carved back to receive these extensions when the drawer is closed. On the bottom drawer, the drawer extension is further elaborated with an additional layer of oak, with the grain running horizontally, glued to the face of the drawer front and overhanging the walnut block by an additional 1 to 2 cm. This construction creates an unusual two-stepped extension that produces the forward sweeping curve at the edges of the drawer front. To receive this extension when the lower drawer is closed, the corner posts on either side are carved back into a matching two-stepped recess, a very unusual feature (fig. 16-8).



Figure 16-8 Three-quarter view with drawers open.

The joinery of this commode is unique among the Museum's Rococo collections because it makes use of four independent frame-and-panel constructions (for the top, back, bottom, and dustboard). It is more typical for the top, back, and bottom assemblies to share at least one rail between them so that, for instance, the rear rail of the top frame doubles as the top rail of the back frame-and-panel assembly or the bottom rail of the back frame doubles as the back rail of the bottom frame-and-panel assembly. It should also be noted that the joinery of this commode is entirely different than that of the Quirinale commode (see "Commentary" above). The Quirinale version, which is nearly identical to the Getty commode in its outward appearance, is built in plank construction (fig. 16-9). This is also highly unusual in this period, but interestingly it is similar in this respect to Latz's corner cupboards described elsewhere in this volume (see cat. no. 17). It is possible that the apparent atypicality of Latz's commode and cabinet joinery stems from the fact that the great majority of the production of his workshop was clock cases.²⁹ The use of plank construction for long case clocks was quite common, so perhaps Latz's familiarity with this construction method led his workshop to use it on larger case furniture where it was generally considered to be inappropriate. Wide boards are prone to expand and contract considerably across their widths with changes in relative humidity. The use of a frame-and-panel construction ensures that the overall dimension of the assembly (defined by the frame) remains constant even as the loosely fitted panel in the center is free to shrink and swell. The unusual aspects of the Museum's commode's frame-and-panel construction may also be attributable to the Latz workshop's relative lack of familiarity with the construction of full-sized case furniture, or it might equally raise the possibility that the carcass construction was subcontracted to another cabinetmaking workshop.



Figure 16-9 Interior of the Latz commode in Rome, Palazzo del Quirinale (see fig. 16-3). This version appears outwardly identical to the Museum's, but its joinery method is largely plank construction. Segretariato Generale della Presidenza della Repubblica, Roma / Foto: Araldo De Luca

The construction of the drawers of the commode is also atypical of most Parisian work from this period. Aside from the double-stepped extensions of the lower drawer front mentioned above, it is unusual in this period to find the drawer bottoms screwed to the lower edge of the drawer sides. Also unusual is the fact that the drawer bottoms are not housed in grooves or dadoes in the drawer sides but completely overlap both the sides and back. Although unexpected, there is no apparent indication that this construction is not original.

Many of the oak panels on this piece have significant sections (up to 2 cm wide) of light-colored sapwood in them. This includes two of the three panels comprising the top, two of the four back panels, and two of the three bottom panels. Sapwood is also found in the left side rail of the top, as well as in several of the laminated blocks in the drawer fronts. The sapwood of oak is much less resistant to insect infestation than the inner heartwood. Thus standard practice was to carefully cut away any remaining sapwood as larger boards were converted to pieces of furniture in the cabinetmaker's workshop. The presence of significant amounts of sapwood within the carcass of this piece might be seen as a sign of the

workshop's taking shortcuts or lack of attention to detail. It may be worth noting that sapwood is also found in the Museum's corner cupboards with cases attributed to Latz (see cat. no. 17).

Best practice of the day also dictated that knots of any significant size be cut away and discarded from the cabinetmaker's wood before use, though this seems to have been less stringently observed than the proscription against sapwood. Still, the presence, in one of the vertical boards composing the right side panel, of a very large knot of nearly 15 cm in diameter must be considered extraordinary and confirms the sense that the workshop producing this commode's carcass was less than meticulous in its wood selection.

Another unusual aspect of wood selection in the commode is the use of poplar for the panels of the dustboard. The use of poplar is extremely rare in Parisian *ébénisterie*. The only other confirmed examples in the Museum's collections are in the *serre-papiers* by Bernard II van Risenburgh (cat. no. 3), where it was selected as a ground for the black European lacquer and for a small secret compartment panel in a cabinet by Benneman that dates to the 1780s (78.DA.361). Even in *menuiserie*, poplar is an unusual choice. In the Museum's collection it has only been documented in a pair of globes, also decorated in European lacquer (86.DH.705). The fact that the most recent major restoration of the commode (presumably by P. Spohn; see below) utilized panels of poplar to reinforce the case sides suggests the possibility that the dustboard panels were replaced at this time, although conjuring a motive for replacing well-protected, interior panels such as these is rather difficult. In addition, careful examination reveals no evidence that the case of the commode has been dismantled to the extent necessary for the panels to have been replaced. It would appear that the originality of the poplar panels must remain unresolved for the moment.

At first, it seems worrisome that the transverse medial rails of the top, back, bottom, and dustboard are all exactly 2 1/2 in. (6.3 cm) in width, since imperial measurements were not used in eighteenth-century France. However, as no other members of the commode are consistently of imperial measure, it would appear that the rails were all cut from the same stock and that the measurement is merely a coincidence.

This commode is veneered in only one type of wood, identified microscopically as bloodwood. The wood is cut in the distinctive form of so-called sausage veneer. This type of veneer is obtained by sawing a log of wood at an oblique angle along its length, resulting in elongated oval

pieces of veneer. By comparing the length to the width of the ovals it is possible to estimate that the log of bloodwood that produced the veneer was cut at an angle of about 25° off of the longitudinal axis.³⁰ The striking composition of the marquetry was achieved by selecting the two arched sections of each oval and then placing alternating upward-facing and downward-facing arches next to each other in adjacent vertical bands.

Although the pattern of the undulating wood grain appears at first very simple and fluid, the cabinetmaker was obliged to construct a remarkably intricate patchwork of pieces to achieve this result, his work being greatly complicated by the complex curvature of the commode's surfaces. Figure 16-10 illustrates the 135 individual pieces of veneer that were required to complete the composition just on the front of the piece. Aside from the challenge of choosing and arranging the pieces of veneer to form a smooth and unbroken pattern, the curvature of the substrate required that most of the larger pieces of veneer each be cut down into two or three smaller vertical sections (see dashed lines in fig. 16-10) and each resulting piece subtly reshaped so that they could be bent over convex or concave surfaces and still fit perfectly together at the edges. As an exaggerated example, one might imagine the way in which pieces of a map must be cut into lens-shaped sections so that they can be fitted onto a globe. The fitting of the veneer is flawless over the entire commode. Two points of technique help to explain how this was accomplished. First, the cabinetmaker divided the overall surface of the commode into smaller fields, defined by the applied gilded bronzes. He carefully matched the grain and fitted the veneer within each field but did not bother with careful fitting along the borders in areas that would be covered by the mounts. This suggests that the bronzes were fabricated and available to the cabinetmaker before the veneering was undertaken. Second, the *ébéniste* proceeded with his clamping and gluing of veneer one piece at a time. This is made clear by examination of X-radiographs in which the clear evidence of veneer pin holes can be observed. Adjacent to each individual piece of veneer, the faint impression of between one and three square holes in the substrate can be seen. When the cabinetmaker glued a piece of veneer in place, he would have hammered small veneer pins along its edge to prevent the piece from slipping out of place as he clamped it under a hot sandbag. Once the glue had dried, the clamp would have been removed and the pins pulled out. The next adjacent piece of veneer would then have been carefully fitted and glued next to the previous piece (covering the holes associated with the previous piece), and a new set of veneer pins would be hammered in

along the leading edge. Thus the fact that each individual piece of veneer has pinholes next to it shows that each piece was glued and allowed to set before the next adjacent piece was applied. Furthermore, the placement

of the veneer pins shows that the cabinetmaker began at the outside edges of each field and worked toward the center.

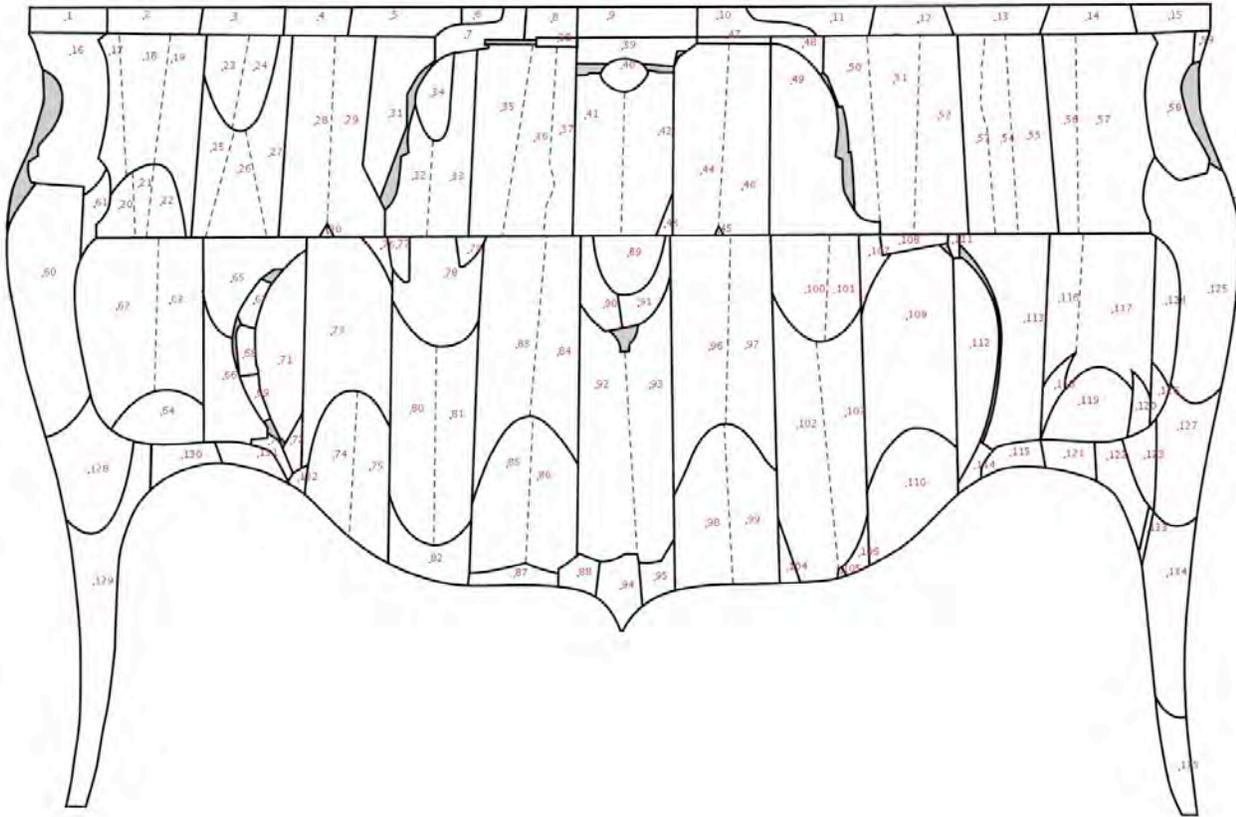


Figure 16-10 Schematic diagram illustrating the 135 individual pieces of veneer on the front of the commode.

On each of the other three commodes known today that have this veneer pattern (see “Commentary” above), the veneer is assembled in a slightly different way. That of the Museum’s commode is the only one to be arranged in regular vertical bands, while the others make use of more irregular shapes based on trapezoids. The Museum’s commode and the Quirinale commode are the only two in which the same waving pattern is extended to the rails and legs; the rails and legs of the two other commodes are veneered with simple and straight-grained tulipwood set at a 45° angle.

The gilded bronze mounts are of very high technical quality. The contrast between matted and burnished areas is pronounced, and the transitions are carefully delineated. The chasing of the matted areas shows a variety of textures and patterns, especially on the central escutcheon, where each element of the composition (e.g., leaves, wood, and feathers) is given its own distinctive

and realistic texture. The burnished passages on the mounts are quite extensive and carefully executed. The mounts are also carefully fitted to the case, and the joints between elements are neatly hidden through precise filing and fitting. The mounts are all fastened to the case with screws. As in most cases in the Museum’s collection, the original fasteners have all been replaced over the years with modern screws. In addition to the screws, the drawer handles have been drilled and tapped on their rear surfaces to accept handmade threaded bolts, inserted from the rear through holes in the drawer fronts. The bolts were presumably added for extra strength.

The single lock in the lower drawer serves to secure both drawers. It has a double-throw bolt that passes upward through a pierced brass lock plate that is attached to the underside of the dustboard (securing the lower drawer) and then up into a separate brass lock plate fixed to the

bottom edge of the upper drawer front (securing the upper drawer).

The mounts are generally in good condition, though there has been noticeable wear to the mercury gilding on protruding surfaces (the presence of mercury in the gilding was confirmed by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy [XRF]). There is also some patchy coppery-orange-colored staining on many of the gilded bronze elements. Analysis of the spots by XRF confirms that the stains are enriched in copper. The cause of the stains is unknown, but they may result from a previous acid-based cleaning campaign.

Fourteen mounts were removed and analyzed by XRF to determine their alloy composition. The measured compositions were all found to be normal for mid-eighteenth-century casting brass, with about 18–24% zinc, about 1% each of tin and lead, and traces of many impurities such as silver, antimony, iron, and arsenic. Sections of the framing mounts on the drawer fronts and case sides have been soldered together, apparently with high-quality “spelter” brass, which has very high zinc content, around 35%. These results confirm that the mounts are very likely to be original to the commode.

The marble of the top is called *fleur de pêcher* (peach flower) (fig. 16.11). It is described by Margolis as “an intensely variegated breccia marble.”³¹ The fragments are violet, flesh-colored, tan, and gray-purple, embedded in a white matrix. This matrix is also fractured and is now held together by a dark purple cement. Veins and fractures are tinged with blue, green, and gold flecks. According to modern manufacturers of marble products, there are two *fior di pesco* varieties from Italy: *carnico*, which is flesh colored and relatively homogeneous; and *classico*, which contains red, flesh color, white, and blue, in a heterogeneous mixture. The rear portion of the top could possibly be described as *carnico*; however, the overall area is much more vividly colored.



Figure 16-11 The marble top.

The origin of the “flowers” in this marble is described by Dubarry de Lassale as possibly derived from stromatolites

(structures created by algae in certain shallow warm-water marine environments).³² In the trade, *fleur de pêcher*, or *fior di pesco*, is often referred to as *marmor calcidicum*. Lazzarini and Borghini describe the source as Eretria, Calcide, Greece.³³ However, Dubarry de Lassale (and modern manufacturers) state the source of *fior di pesco* is Serravezza, Carrara Basin, Italy, from a quarry opened in the seventeenth century. The tabletop is 3 cm thick. There is an old, repaired fracture in the right rear quadrant.

Although the overall condition of the marquetry decoration is extremely good, with no obvious replacement of veneer, there appear to have been at least two campaigns of significant structural restoration of the commode. The first appears to have involved the removal of the left and right panels of the case back assembly. Thin strips of the framing members surrounding the panels were carefully cut away on the rear side, exposing the groove and allowing the panels to be removed without dismantling the pinned mortise-and-tenon joints of the frames. Subsequently, the original panels appear to have been placed back into their frames and the strips of oak carefully glued and nailed back in place. The nail heads were covered over and disguised so that the traces of this intervention are now nearly invisible to the naked eye, though the nails are easily located with a magnet and all of the cuts in the frames are readily apparent in X-radiographs. It is not entirely evident why this was done. Removal of the two panels would not appear to have facilitated any further dismantling of the structure. One possible explanation is that the panels were removed in order to allow easier clamping of loose elements on the rear part of the case sides during the restoration. The fact that apparently modern wire nails were used to reattach the cut-away strips of oak to the frames (visible in X-radiographs) suggests that this intervention took place after about 1880, when the use of industrially produced wire nails became widespread, though it must be considered that handmade wire nails were available in the mid-eighteenth century.³⁴

A second and more substantial restoration appears to have taken place sometime in the mid-twentieth century, probably while the commode was in Switzerland. The supposition that the restoration occurred in Switzerland is based simply on the observation that the commode has a twentieth-century history only in England, Switzerland, and the United States; since the restorer’s stamp is in French (see below), it would appear most likely that the restoration occurred in Switzerland. During this restoration, major splits in the case sides and drawer fronts were repaired and the bottom of the upper drawer

was planed down and reattached to the sides with replacement screws. On the right side of the commode, the oak substrate panel had a single massive split, revealing a gap of approximately 1 cm. The restorer (presumably the enigmatic P. Spohn who stamped the commode on the top of the right rear post “RESTAURE par P.SPOHN”; see fig. 16-2) addressed this large split with a creative, if heavy-handed approach. Rather than fill the split, which would require extensive veneer patching or inpainting, he improvised a method of pushing the side panel back together. The problem the restorer faced was that the panel remained securely attached to both the front and rear posts; this he solved by sawing the front half of the panel free. First, he removed the gilded bronze frame from the side, and then, starting at either the top or bottom of the split, he sawed straight through the case, following the contour of the gilded bronze so that his saw kerf would be hidden once the mounts were replaced (fig. 16-12).

As the restorer came to the vertical portion of his line, parallel to the front of the commode, his cut ran into the rear edge of the front post. He did not stop, however, but continued to cut through the post in order to free the front section of the panel. Once the panel section was free, the restorer slid it toward the back, closing and gluing the split in the case side but also opening a new gap along the vertical saw kerf. The restorer then filled this new gap with glue and oak wedges driven into the gap from the outside (fig. 16.13). The tapered ends of the wedges were not cut off and are still visible inside the case.

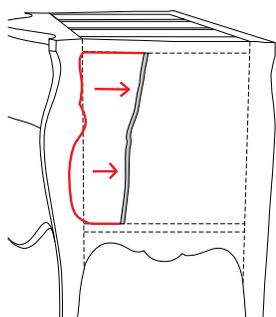


Figure 16-12 In order to repair a split, the side of the commode was sawn through along the red line; the loose section that resulted was then slid toward the back to fill the split.



Figure 16-13 Detail of the oak wedges used during the restoration to fill the new gap along the vertical saw cut.

In an attempt to further stabilize the case side, the restorer then cut two planks of poplar, which fit against

the inside face of the side panel, inside the top and bottom drawer compartments. These reinforcing panels run nearly the full width of the case side, with their grain running horizontally, that is, perpendicular to the case side panel. He then glued and screwed the planks to the side panel, using an abundance of screws (average 12 per plank). On the left side of the commode, the side panel also suffered from splitting; rather than one major split, however, the panel had six smaller splits. Just as on the right side, the restorer screwed and glued horizontal poplar planks to the inside of the case side (see fig. 16-8). He then filled and inpainted the splits to match the surrounding veneer.

It appears that Spohn also repaired a loose joint between the right case side panel and the right rear post. Rather than simply rely on glue to repair the fault, he went so far as to drill five 9 mm holes in a vertical row, through the back of the post and well into the case side panel. X-radiographs suggest that Spohn used a screw-lead auger bit. He then drove 15-cm-long oak pegs into the holes to secure the joint (fig. 16-14).

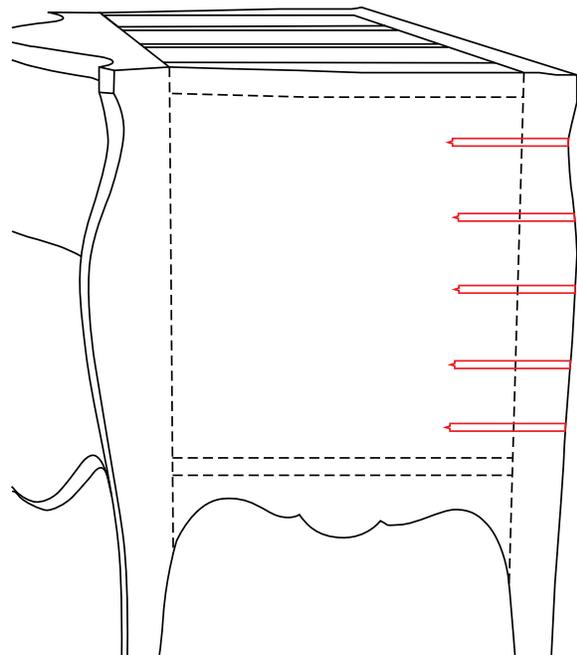


Figure 16-14 Line drawing detailing the repair at the join between the right case side panel and the right rear post. Five 9-mm holes were drilled through the back of the post and into the case side panel; 15-cm-long oak pegs were then driven into these holes with glue to secure the joint.

The upper drawer front also has a split that has been repaired. The split runs horizontally through the central portion of the drawer front, and, like the case sides, it has been repaired in a rather heavy-handed manner. Five

blocks of oak, each about 8 x 4 x 2 cm, have been inlaid into the rear side of the drawer front, separated by 3–4 cm and traversing the split (fig. 16-15). In addition, it would appear that at some point the glue joints of the upper drawer bottom failed and that possibly one or more of the boards warped or bowed to some degree. The drawer bottom has been reglued, and much of both surfaces has been planed down and flattened, removing the oxidized surface and revealing lighter-colored wood below. The screws fastening the upper drawer bottom have been replaced with screws very similar in type to those used to attach the poplar reinforcing planks on the case sides, suggesting (though certainly not proving) that the work was done at the same time, by the same restorer, presumably P. Spohn.

A.H., with Y.C. and R.S.



Figure 16-15 Image of the five vertically oriented blocks of oak that were used to repair a split in the upper drawer front.

NOTES

1. There is no crowned C stamp on the commode, as mistakenly stated in the previous Museum's catalogues (see "Bibliography").
 2. See Hawley 1970, 231–32, no. 21. All further references to works catalogued in this article will be referred to by the letter "H" followed by the catalogue number, e.g., (H21). See also González-Palacios 1996, 108–11, no. 1.
 3. Louise-Elisabeth of France (eldest twin daughter of Louis XV), b. Versailles 1727, m. 1739 (to Philip, seventh son of Philip V, king of Spain, b. Madrid 1720, recognized as Duke of Parma by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle on October 18, 1748, and took possession of Parma in February 1749, d. Alessandria 1765), d. Versailles 1759. See Briganti 1969. For a discussion of her continued taste for French furnishings and French influence on Parmesan furniture, see Briganti 1965, 48–59.
 4. An edict of Louis XV, registered with Parliament on March 5, 1745, required that all works, old or new, made with copper
 5. The three royal residences of Parma were the Palazzo Colorno, the summer residence; the Palazzo del Giardino, uninhabited at that time; and the Casa Reale, the ducal palace in Parma itself. They had been stripped of their contents by the outgoing regime. Louise-Elisabeth returned from her first trip, in 1749, with thirty-four wagonloads of furnishings; from her second trip, she returned in 1753 with fourteen wagonloads; she died at Versailles in 1759 before returning from her third trip home. All the furniture ordered in Paris between 1752 and 1754 was destined for the summer palace of Colorno. See Briganti 1969, esp. 14–17, 48–50. See also Pallot 1989, 132–35.
 6. A *bureau plat*, Palazzo del Quirinale (H34). Probably made between 1745 and 1749. It was brought by Louise-Elisabeth to Parma in 1753 and was to be found in her grand apartments at the Palazzo Colorno. See also González-Palacios 1996, 128–33, no. 7.
- A pair of corner cupboards, Palazzo del Quirinale (H46). Probably made about 1750. They were also part of the group of furniture brought by Louise-Elisabeth to Parma in 1753. See also González-Palacios 1996, 122–25, no. 5.
- A pair of corner cupboards, Palazzo del Quirinale (H47). Probably made about 1750, with the same history as those listed above. See also González-Palacios 1996, 118–21, no. 4.
- A pair of corner cupboards, Palazzo Pitti, Florence (see Colle 1992, 196, cat. no. 138, ill. on 197). These have bombé fronts and the same type of moiré marquetry as is found on the Museum's and the stamped Quirinale commodes. Madame Infante also called on other Parisian craftsmen such as Jacques Caffieri, Jacques Dubois, Nicolas Quinibert Foliot, Jean-Baptiste Tiliard, and Bernard II van Risenburgh when choosing furnishings according to the latest Paris fashion.
7. The commode in all the previous Getty Museum catalogues (see "Bibliography") was dated ca. 1745–49 because of the incorrect assumption that it had a crowned C stamp on one of its mounts.
 8. Hawley 1970, 207.
 9. Pradère 1989a, 153, 156. See also Hawley 1970, 204–5 and Document 4, 211.
 10. Sold at Christie's, *Segoura, October 19, 2006* (New York: Christie's), 2006, lot 100. The sale was of the remaining stock of the Parisian dealer Maurice Segoura.
 11. H28. See also González-Palacios 1996, 112–14, no. 2.
 12. *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 160–61, no. 43 (P. Leperlier); also Pradère 1989a, 160, fig. 135.

13. These include the Pillnitz commode (H37), Moritzburg commode (H38), Woburn desk (H29), Ball desk (H31), and the commode sold at Christie's, *Segoura, October 19, 2006* (New York: Christie's, 2006). See note 10 above.
14. The most significant of these is the Waddesdon clock (H2) that is stamped "I.P.LATZ," with crowned Cs, which imply a date between 1745 and 1749. The mount at the top of this clock seems very much related to the escutcheon plates discussed above. The surround of the pendulum window and the decorative motif immediately beneath it are to be found on both the Cleveland clock (H1, inscribed "LATZ A PARIS FECIT MDCCXLIV") and the Museum's planisphere clock (74.DB.2). Other pieces in this category include the Cleveland commode (H35), Toledo commode (H36), Waddesdon desk (H30), Edey clock (H4), and the Quirinale *bureau plat* (H34).
15. See Hawley 1979, 176, 179; Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden, acc. no. THC 7158.
16. This clock (H12), in the collection of the Sanssouci Palace in Potsdam, is almost identical to one in Dresden from the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (H11). Both clocks share the figure of Father Time from a clock formerly in a Parisian private collection (H3).
17. H1. See note 12 above.
18. H2.
19. Hawley 1970, 210.
20. Hawley 1970, 210 and Documents 5, 6, 7, all cited on p. 211.
21. Hawley 1970, 210.
22. Hawley 1970, 210.
23. See citations in note 5 above; see also Cirillo and Godi 1983, 127, no. 312, illus. 128.
24. See Hughes 1996, vol. 2, 1050–54, cat. 207, acc. no. F112.
25. For pieces by other *ébénistes* with similarly arranged veneers, see a *bureau plat* by Joseph Baumhauer at the Museum (cat. no. 15); a commode by Joseph Baumhauer in the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor (Boutemy 1965, 82); and a commode by Jacques Dubois at Waddesdon Manor (De Bellaigue 1974, vol. 1, 218–20, no. 47). The wave-cut pattern on the Latz pieces covers the entire surface, unlike the Baumhauer and Dubois commodes where it is restricted to the drawer fronts and side reserves.
26. Receipt of sale in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
27. Correspondence with Maurice Segoura, November 9, 1983, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
28. Correspondence with Maurice Segoura, November 9, 1983, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
29. Hawley 1970.
30. The average height-to-width ratio of complete ovals matching the curvature of the veneer is about 2.25:1 based on five measurements. Therefore, if θ = the angle of the cut (off the vertical axis), then $\sin\theta = \frac{1}{2.25}$ and $\theta = 26^\circ$.
31. Margolis 1987.
32. Dubarry de Lassale, Barco, and Bresc-Bautier 2000.
33. Lazzarini 2004.
34. Réaumur 1761.





72.DA.39.1-2 are on top, 72.DA.69.1-2 are below.

17. Two pairs of corner cupboards (*encoignures*)

French (Paris), ca. 1750–60

Carcass and mounts attributed to Jean-Pierre Latz (French, ca. 1691–1754, *ébéniste privilégié du Roi* before May 1741), marquetry panels attributed to Jean-François Oeben (French, born Germany, 1721–1763, *ébéniste mécanicien du Roi* from 1760 and master 1761), and 72.DA.69.1–2 altered by Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806, master 1768 and *ébéniste ordinaire du Roi* from 1774)

White oak* veneered with amaranth*, sycamore maple*, holly, fruitwood, barberry, boxwood, maple*, walnut*, and other unidentified woods; gilt bronze mounts; brass hinges; brass and iron locks and keys; *brèche d'Alep* tops

H: 3 ft. 2 1/4 in., W: 2 ft. 9 3/4 in., D: 1 ft. 11 1/8 in. (97.2 × 85.7 × 58.7 cm)

72.DA.39.1–2

H: 3 ft. 1/4 in., W: 2 ft. 8 1/4 in., D: 2 ft. (92.1 × 81.9 × 61 cm)

72.DA.69.1–2

DESCRIPTION

Although they differ slightly in dimension, these two pairs of double-door corner cupboards share a number of characteristics. The carcass of each of the four cupboards is fashioned from white oak, supplied with a *brèche d'Alep* marble top, and embellished with a profusion of gilt bronze mounts and floral marquetry. The doors are set with brass hinges, with the right door containing a single brass keyhole and iron lock. The front legs on the left and right sides of each cupboard take the form of short cabrioles, whereas a deep rounded apron forms the third, center leg. The interior of each cupboard reveals a single fitted shelf. Only the cupboards from pair 72.DA.39 contain posts that run vertically along the back of the interior. The white oak side panels of the cupboards come together at the back to form a 90° angle. The door panels are bowed in form, with those of 72.DA.69 presenting a slightly more bombé shape.

Both pairs of cupboards exhibit naturalistic marquetry on the exterior door panels. The marquetry consists of now-faded bouquets of carnations, daffodils, honeysuckle, narcissi, poppies, roses, tulips, jasmine, and other flowers. Each floral spray is unique and not bound by a ribbon or tie. They appear as if floating on the surface of the doors, although the overall composition and arrangement of flowers is looser on 72.DA.39 than on 72.DA.69. On the first pair (72.DA.39), the door panels feature a stained sycamore maple ground, bordered by amaranth along the edges and down the front two legs. Adopting the shape of

a rounded rectangle, the stained sycamore maple section is further delineated by a foliate scroll frame of gilt bronze and contains the floral marquetry of amaranth, sycamore maple, holly, fruitwood, barberry, boxwood, maple, walnut, and other unidentified woods. The white oak interior of each cupboard is varnished. The second pair of cupboards (72.DA.69) is similarly veneered and set with gilt bronze mounts. The stained sycamore maple ground is framed by amaranth and contains the floral marquetry made from a similarly diverse assemblage of woods.

The gilt bronze mounts seen on both pairs of cupboards are remarkably similar. Each cupboard has a foliate scroll frame on each door, two *sabots*, two corner mounts, and a central apron mount. A flat gilt bronze frame follows along each cupboard's lower front edge. The *sabots* consist of a mass of foliate scrolls that twist around a ridged middle section that is bisected by an undulating scroll. Each *sabot* is crowned with an outstretched wing. The corner mounts are similar in design, with foliate scrolls and a segmented, branchlike motif extending a third of the way down each cupboard's sides and terminating in a leafy bud. The central apron mount features a pierced, shell-like rococo ornament set upon a series of matching asymmetrical foliate C-scrolls. The marquetry on each door front is surrounded by gilt bronze frames composed of foliate scrolls set with buds and leaves.

MARKS

72.DA.39.1 features a printed paper label on the back, reading “Zollstück.” A paper label on the back of 72.DA.39.2 reads, “DEPT. OF WOODWORK ON LOAN FROM L Currie, Esq. No. 5/ 15.V.1917,” with the lender’s name handwritten in ink.

72.DA.69.2 features the stamp “J.H. Riesener,” for Jean-Henri Riesener, on the top right corner (see fig. 17-7, below). A handwritten inscription, presumably in pencil, on the cupboard’s underside reads, “Réparée le 13 Juillet 1843 / par [illegible] de Fère Champenoise / rue de Vitry No 29” (see fig. 17-8, below).

COMMENTARY

These two pairs of corner cupboards and their gilt bronze mounts were attributed by Henry Hawley to Jean-Pierre Latz, born near Cologne around 1691 and naturalized in Paris in 1736.¹ Referred to as *encoignures*, or *coins*, in the eighteenth century, such case pieces would have ordinarily been placed at the corners of a room, generally in single pairs.² Latz, who did not always stamp his work and was named *ébéniste privilégié du Roi* in 1741, produced a number of such pieces. Among these is a pair of corner cupboards with stylized floral marquetry in the collection of the Palazzo del Quirinale that exhibit pierced rococo apron mounts very similar to those seen on the Museum’s cupboards (fig. 17-1).³ Made around 1750 and before Latz’s death in 1754, these unsigned cupboards are attributed to Latz on the basis of the similarity between their marquetry and that of a commode, also in the Quirinale (see fig. 16-3), that is in turn similar to another in the same collection but stamped by the maker and distinguished by its wave-cut bloodwood veneer.⁴ Both the Quirinale commode and the corner cupboards belonged to Louise-Elisabeth, Duchess of Parma, and were among the pieces that she brought to furnish the Palace of Colorno upon her arrival from Versailles in 1753.⁵ A pair of corner cupboards in the collection of the musée Carnavalet stamped by both Latz and Léonard Boudin offers a comparable overview of the former’s style as expressed in gilt bronze.⁶ Flanking the escutcheon of these cupboards’ upper drawers and seen along the corner mounts, the outstretched wing motif that alights from an exuberant scroll likewise graces the top of the Museum’s cupboards’ *sabots*.⁷



Figure 17-1 Jean-Pierre Latz (French, 1691–1754), Pair of corner cabinets (*encoignures*), ca. 1750. Oak veneered with amaranth, rosewood, bloodwood; gilt bronze mounts; giallo Siena marble, 94.5 × 82.5 × 59 cm (37 × 32.5 × 23 in.). Rome, Palazzo del Quirinale, Segretariato Generale della Presidenza della Repubblica, Roma / Foto: Araldo De Luca

Furniture made by and attributed to Latz embodies the stylistic repertoire of the Rococo. Although he is credited with the cupboards’ carcasses and mounts, the attenuated floral marquetry on their doors is believed to have been undertaken by Jean-François Oeben, another Parisian cabinetmaker of Germanic extraction, at a slightly later date.⁸ Any collaboration between these two cabinetmakers is based on circumstantial evidence, although there are several theories related to the possibility. Yannick Chastang made a connection between the Museum’s cupboards and an after-death 1756 inventory.⁹ Indeed, Oeben might have purchased furniture frames from Latz’s widow, Marie-Madeleine Seignat, who continued her husband’s business for two years before her death in 1756.¹⁰ The Museum’s cupboards are not the only pieces of furniture conjectured to have been begun by Latz and finished by Oeben. Commissioned by the Garde-meuble de la Couronne, a commode probably intended to furnish the bedchamber of the dauphine, Marie-Josèphe of Saxony, at the château of Choisy and now in a private collection, likely owes its carcass and mounts to Latz. Delivered in 1756 or 1757, the finished piece bears delicate floral marquetry on the sides and drawer fronts attributed to Oeben.¹¹ In similar fashion, a small cabriole table in the

collection of the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor, exhibits Latz's stamp under the rail and Oeben's under the drawer. This table's overall form appears characteristic of an older craftsman at midcentury, whereas the marquetry is certainly in keeping with Oeben's more natural aesthetics.¹²

Oeben helped usher in a new transitional style that combined rococo and neoclassical elements, a development notably seen in his *commodes à la grecque* made for clients that included the marquise de Pompadour and her brother, the marquis de Marigny, beginning around 1760.¹³ He is perhaps most famous for his involvement in the creation of the celebrated *bureau du roi*, a piece that he began in 1761 and was ultimately completed by his apprentice Jean-Henri Riesener and delivered to Versailles in 1769.¹⁴ For all his innovation, Oeben continued to produce more conventional rococo models and forms, among them two stamped multipurpose cabriole tables (cat. nos. 18, 19) also in the Museum's collection.

A hallmark of Oeben's style is the use of elegant, realistic floral marquetry. For his design, it appears that he found his inspiration in Louis Tessier's *Livre de principes de fleurs, dédié aux dames*, with engravings by Juste Chevillet.¹⁵ A securely dated example demonstrating Oeben's Tessier-inspired marquetry is the above-mentioned *bureau du roi* with elements directly derived from plates 43 and 44 (*Jasmin d'Espagne*) of the book. Conceived as a ladies' guide to drafting and shading techniques, this book actually proved to be an indispensable resource for cabinetmakers. It showcases models for various floral specimens by Louis Tessier (1719–1781), an artist who spent his entire career, if not his life, working at the Gobelins Manufactory.¹⁶ While a manuscript copy of the book contains a frontispiece dated 1755, the printed versions of the *Livre* are undated but generally thought to date from the same year or soon after.¹⁷

The publication of the *Livre* after Latz's death effectively precluded him from ever having produced such marquetry for the Museum's corner cupboards. Chastang has identified several plates from Tessier's book and other publications by him as the basis for marquetry designs by cabinetmakers like Oeben.¹⁸ For example, at least four of Chevillet's engravings in the *Livre* were reproduced to create the now-faded marquetry flowers seen on 72.DA.69. These include plates 29 and 30 (*Semi-double simple [géroflé]*), 31 and 32 (*Rose double*), 33 and 34 (*Lys*) (see fig. 17-2), and 43 and 44 (*Jasmin d'Espagne*). The other flowers are from an as yet unidentified source, and it is

worth noting that in instances where the same species is repeated in the marquetry, they are not all conclusively sourced from Tessier. Oeben kept a ready and apparently large supply of precut flower motifs at hand, as seen in the following entry from the 1763 inventory of his workshop.

Un petit coffre-fort rempli de fleurs en bois découpé et nué, propres à être employés en différens ouvrages, dont la plus large est d'environ 3 ou 4 pouces et la plus petite de la largeur de 3 lignes, lesquels il a été impossible de compter et décrire, attendu la quantité considérable qui s'en trouve et la différence des espèces, prisé le tout ensemble (non compris led. petit coffre fort qui a été prisé cy devant dans les effets du magasin d'où il a été tiré pour servir à renfermer lesd. fleurs) la somme de 400 livr.¹⁹



Figure 17-2 Juste Chevillet (French, 1729–1802) after Louis Tessier (French, 1719–1781), *Lys*, from *Livre de principes de fleurs, dédié aux dames*, ca. 1755. Engraving with etching. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, P860001 (2918-915).

Other Oeben pieces feature similar marquetry flowers. For example, a pair of corner cupboards by Oeben in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum repeat the tulip and carnations seen on the right door of 72.DA.39.1.²⁰ The frieze of a circa 1760 writing table at the

Rijksmuseum features the same cut rosebud seen on the left door of 72.DA.69.1.²¹ The question of who was actually responsible for producing the flowers themselves remains, however. Oeben's status as *ébéniste mécanicien du Roi* from 1760 on freed him from guild restrictions, and he took advantage of this privilege to create everything from metal frames and mounts to more functional hardware, including locks.²² Although the creation of elaborate marquetry figures was also part of his business, it is entirely possible that some of this was contracted out by a *marqueteur* working for Oeben or even Latz's widow. She might have sought such assistance, and her own operation of Latz's business coincided with the earliest possible publication date of the *Livre de principes de fleurs*.

Of further interest with respect to the trajectory of furniture from one maker to another, the right-hand top corner of cupboard 72.DA.69.2 reveals the now-faint stamp of Jean-Henri Riesener (see fig. 17-7, below). Technical analysis indicates that this pair of cupboards was shortened at both the top and the bottom sometime after production. The presence of Riesener's stamp on the one cupboard suggests that these changes took place sometime after he took over Oeben's workshop in the mid-1760s. Indeed, Riesener was only entitled to begin stamping his own work as a master in 1768.²³ However, the handwritten cursive inscription on the bottom of 72.DA.69.1 references a repair made in July 1843 by someone working at 29, rue de Vitry in the commune of Fère-Champenoise, in the Marne Department. Although the Museum's pair might have been shortened at this date, the presence of Riesener's stamp on top of the one cupboard suggests that the alterations, perhaps part of a restoration or refurbishment, were made in Riesener's workshop in the Arsenal, which remained in operation until 1798.

PROVENANCE 72.DA.39.1–2

By 1917–after 1920: Lawrence Currie, English, 1867–1934 (London, England);²⁴ –1936: private collection (Berlin, Germany) [sold, *Kunstbesitz eines Berliner Sammlers*, Hugo Helbing Gallery, Frankfurt am Main, June 23, 1936, lots 260–61]; –1938: private collection (Germany) [sold, *Eine Bekannte Süddeutsche Privatsammlung und Anderer Privatbesitz*, Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne, March 12, 1938, lot 217]; –1955: private collection (New York, NY) [sold, *Fine French XVIII-Century Furniture & Decorations*, Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, October 21–22, 1955, lot 358, to Dalva Brothers, Inc.]; 1955– : Dalva Brothers, Inc. (New York, NY), sold to Philip Robert Consolo;²⁵ Philip Robert Consolo, American, 1915–2011 (Miami, FL);²⁶

possibly private collection (California);²⁷ –1972: Frank Partridge & Sons, Ltd. (London, England), sold through French and Company to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1972.²⁸

PROVENANCE 72.DA.69.1–2

Sidney J. Block (London, England);²⁹ –1972: French and Company, Inc. (New York, NY), sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1972.

EXHIBITION HISTORY 72.DA.39.1–2

Loan to Victoria and Albert Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum (London), May 9, 1917–May 26, 1920.

EXHIBITION HISTORY 72.DA.69.1–2

Loan to the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute (Williamstown, MA), May 20, 1998–February 27, 2009.

EXHIBITION HISTORY 72.DA.39.1–2 AND 72.DA.69.1–2

The J. Paul Getty Collection of French Decorative Arts, Detroit Institute of Arts (Detroit), October 3, 1972–August 31, 1973; *Paris: Life & Luxury*, J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center (Los Angeles), April 26, 2011–August 7, 2011; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (Houston), September 18, 2011–January 2, 2012.

BIBLIOGRAPHY 72.DA.39.1–2

Hawley 1970, 254, no. 49, ill.; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 32, no. 36; Ramond 2000a, 133, 135, ill.; Wilson and Hess 2001, 21, no. 36; Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 50, ill.; Chastang 2007, 120–22; Bremer-David 2011, 104–5, fig. 62; 166, no. 4.

BIBLIOGRAPHY 72.DA.69.1–2

Hawley 1970, 255, no. 50, ill.; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 32–33, no. 37; Ramond 2000a, 133–34, ill.; Wilson and Hess 2001, 21, no. 37; Chastang 2007, 120–22; Bremer-David 2011, 116, no. 5.

P.H.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The structure of the two pairs of cabinets is currently rather different, however the physical evidence suggests that their original construction was quite similar. It appears that both pairs have been modified in different ways since the time of their fabrication. In this essay, the original construction of both pairs is described, followed

by a discussion of the ways in which each has been modified.

The original fabrication of both pairs of cabinets was based on a plank construction using variants of tongue-and-groove joints. The two back planks of each cabinet were made of five or six boards of white oak about 1.8 cm thick, butt joined and glued together on edge (fig. 17-3). The panels were joined together at the rear corner using a rabbet-and-groove joint along their entire length. At the front corners, pseudo-posts were formed by laminating long pieces of wood, approximately 5 x 9 cm in section, to the interior surfaces of the planks along their front edges. These composite posts were then sawn and shaped to their final form. Sections along the lower edges of the rear planks were cut away to form the front and rear feet; a small, chamfered glue block about 3.2 mm square was glued into the back corner, below the case bottom, to reinforce the rear foot and support the case bottom.



Figure 17-3 Back side of 72.DA.69.1 showing original plank construction of the back panels.

The triangular bottoms of the cabinets were also made from single large planks. Each bottom was formed of six boards butt joined and glued together on their edges, with the grain of the wood running parallel to a line drawn between the corner posts. The bottom planks, about 20 mm thick, were slightly rabbeted on the lower side of

their back edges and were fitted into long horizontal dadoes running the width of the back planks. Along their front edges, the bottom planks ran all the way to the front of the cabinets, flush with the door fronts above. Below the front edge of the case bottoms, curved blocks of wood approximately 4.5 cm high and 4 cm deep were glued in place, forming an auxiliary rail running from corner to corner on each cabinet. Each of these rails was made of two pieces of wood, joined at the center with a slip joint. At either end, the rails were attached to the corner posts with a variant of a slip joint using a loose tenon. Three additional blocks of wood were stacked and glued to the bottom of each rail at the center to form the apron.

Due to subsequent modifications made to both pairs of cabinets, the original construction of the case tops is not understood in complete detail. However, in keeping with the rest of the original construction, the tops were almost certainly constructed of solid planks, and both pairs of cabinets are currently fitted with such tops. How the tops were originally joined to the case backs is a matter of speculation since both pairs have been modified in this area. Along the front edges, it appears that cabinets 72.DA.39.1–2 retain their original joinery. These case tops were extended to the very front edge of the cabinets and joined at their ends to the front posts with small dovetails (fig. 17-4). Below the front edges, curved strips of oak were glued to their undersides to form an auxiliary rail in a manner analogous to the blocks added below the case bottom; that is, they are joined at the middle with a slip joint and attached to the corner posts with loose tenons.

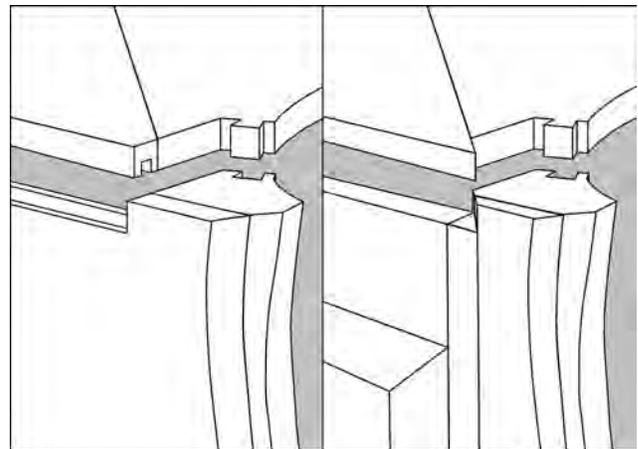


Figure 17-4 Schematic diagram showing the original and restored structures for the 72.DA.39 cabinets.

The doors of the cabinets were made in a laminated construction with cross battens at top and bottom. On pair 72.DA.69.1–2, the laminated vertical sticks of oak are approximately 2.5 cm in width; on pair 72.DA.39.1–2 they

are approximately 4.5 cm wide. The cross battens, attached at top and bottom with tongue-and-groove joints, were also laminated using sticks of corresponding dimension. In addition to the difference in stick size, there are significant differences between the two pairs of doors, both in size and in shape. The doors of 72.DA.69.1–2 are approximately 2.5 cm taller than those of 72.DA.39.1–2, and they have a more pronounced bombé form than their counterparts. Although the cases of 72.DA.69.1–2 have been shortened (see below), it appears that the cabinets overall were originally taller than those of 72.DA.39.1–2 by a corresponding amount. While virtually every other detail of construction was identical between the pairs, these differences suggest that they were not made as a set of four at the same time.

As mentioned above, both pairs of cabinets have been altered since their construction. In particular, the pair 72.DA.69.1–2 has been shortened by approximately 7.5 cm, removing approximately equal amounts of material from both the top and bottom. This is evident when the corner mounts and apron mounts are removed. Old screw holes are readily apparent (either by eye or by X-radiography in areas where veneer replacements cover the old holes). These holes clearly indicate the exact position of the mounts before the shortening occurred (figs. 17-5, 17-6). The amount of shortening can be determined by measuring the offset of the new and old holes. At the bottom, the shortening appears to have been accomplished by cutting about 3.7 cm off the ends of the three legs. The apron was also cut down, roughly following the contours of the newly positioned apron mount.

At the top, cutting down the cabinet was somewhat more involved. Along the front edge, it appears that the front posts and the composite front rail were cut down by approximately 3.7 cm. The top panel (which ran to the front edge of the rail) must then have been completely cut away. It appears that the original top panel was then remade, possibly using some of the original wood but without dovetails attaching it to the corner posts. This may have been necessary because when the corner posts were cut down, the mortise and tenons of the front rail joinery were exposed at the tops of the posts; cutting a dovetail mortise into this exposed joinery may have been considered unwise. Rather than dovetails, the remade top was set into a large rabbet in the top of the posts, completely covering the underlying joinery. This required the remade top to be larger than the original top, so at least this section must have been fabricated using a new piece of wood. Between the posts, the top was set into a rabbet cut into the rear edge of the front rail. The back panels of the cabinets were then cut down by an additional 1.5 cm (beyond the amount removed from the posts and rails) to allow for the top to sit on top of them; they are secured to the top with a rabbet-and-dado joint along their entire length.

The top on cabinet 72.DA.69.2 is marked at its right corner with a recently discovered stamp of J. H. Riesener (fig. 17-7). Reflectance transformation imaging (RTI) was used to help visualize the faint remnants of the stamped impression.³⁰ This process involves taking approximately thirty images under a range of lighting conditions from which a composite is made using several different RTI modes.



Figure 17-5

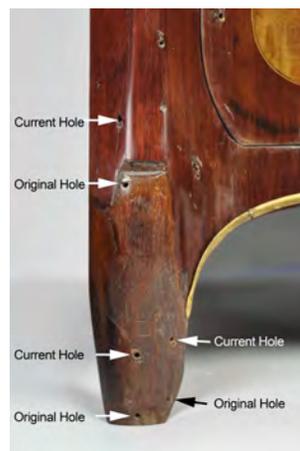


Figure 17-6

Details of the 72.DA.69.2 cabinet with mounts removed illustrating the different locations for the mounting hardware, original and current. Figure 17-5 is of the top left corner; figure 17-6 is of the left foot.

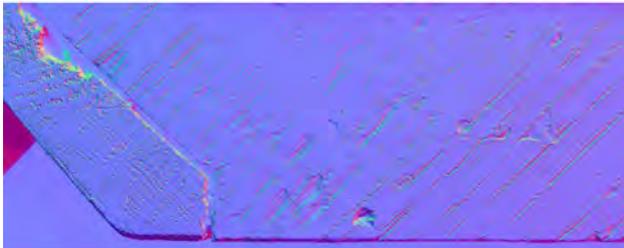


Figure 17-7 The top on cabinet 72.DA.69.2 is marked at its right corner with a recently discovered stamp of J. H. Riesener. This photographic composite shows, from the top, the stamp in normal light, with RTI “specular enhancement” (grayscale), and with RTI “normals visualization.” The lowest image is a close-up detail of the stamp modified with yellow outlines to indicate areas that can be discerned in the images and with orange outlines to indicate the areas where letters are not visible but assumed to have once been based on complete surviving Riesener stamps.

The stamp was struck on the replaced section of the top that seems to have been added during the shortening of the cabinets. This suggests the possibility that Riesener (who took over the direction of Oeben’s workshop sometime between 1763 and 1765) carried out the shortening. Riesener is certainly known to have executed such structural modifications, as exemplified by a commode in the Frick Collections (15.5.76) that was made by Riesener himself in the mid-1780s and then extensively modified, including shortening and remounting, in 1790–91. If this were the case, the shortening would have been executed after Riesener became a master (entitled to stamp his own work) in 1768. Whether Riesener shortened the cabinets or not, the presence of his stamp suggests that the work was done before about 1798, the last year he is known to have had an active workshop at the Arsenal in Paris.³¹

In addition to the Riesener stamp, there is an inscription, apparently in pencil, on the bottom of the same cabinet (fig. 17-8). In a bold cursive hand is written “Réparée le 13 Juillet 1843 / par [indécipherable] de Fère Champenoise / rue de Vitry No 29.” Fère-Champenoise is located approximately 100 km east of Paris in the Ardennes. It cannot be entirely ruled out that the shortening of this pair of cabinets was executed at this time, though the Riesener stamp on the apparently remade top suggests that this is unlikely.



Figure 17-8 Near-infrared reflectance image of the inscription, presumably in pencil, on the 72.DA.69.2 cabinet: “Réparée le 13 Juillet 1843 / par [indécipherable] de Fère Champenoise / rue de Vitry No 29.”

The cabinets 72.DA.39.1–2 have not been shortened, and they essentially retain their original aspect from the front. Behind their facade, however, this pair has also been dramatically altered. It appears that the entire cases, behind the front posts, have been replaced with new construction. The construction of the front section of this pair of cabinets is very similar to that of 72.DA.69.1–2, with the minor differences outlined above. It appears that the sections of the top and bottom panels that run between the corner posts and forward to the front of the case are original. Behind the plane defined by the corner posts, however, the boards of both panels are thinner by 2 to 3 mm and appear to be replacements. The current construction of the case backs is based on a frame-and-panel construction; however, the evidence suggests that they were originally of plank construction like those on 72.DA.69.1–2.

Viewed from above, it is evident that the corner posts are composite elements with a strip of oak, running the full height of the case, glued to the outside face of the main timber. Practically, there is no advantage to (or need for) this configuration, as the posts are not of large cross-sectional dimension. The explanation appears to be that the added strips are the remnants of the original case back panels that were subsequently cut off behind the posts. The intact joinery between back plank and corner post can still be seen on the 72.DA.39.1–2 cabinets, with

its glue line in precisely the same location on both. The remnant strips of the back panels have been thinned somewhat, and as a result, the overall dimension of the corner posts is slightly smaller than the posts of the 72.DA.69.1-2 cabinets, which have not been thinned. When the rear sections of the cabinets were removed, the restorer apparently made a continuous and expedient cut through the top and bottom panels as well as through the rear edges of the corner posts. As a result, the latter were left with an awkward, chamfered face at the rear. In order to return the posts to square, the restorer was then obliged to glue on a triangular strip of wood to these chamfered faces before proceeding to construct his new frame-and-panel structure (see fig. 17-4).

A detailed examination of the rear, frame-and-panel, construction of this pair of cabinets gives some clues as to their origin. In particular, the replaced sections of the case bottoms (behind the corner posts) are attached to the bottom edge of the lower rails with modern wire finishing nails only. No other joinery secures the case bottom, and there is no evidence that the nails have ever been replaced; these nails thus appear to be an integral part of the reconstruction of the cases (fig. 17-9). As wire finishing nails were only in common use after about 1880, it would appear that the rebuilt cases were made subsequent to this date. Further refining the date, the presence of the dated Victoria and Albert Museum label on the rebuilt back of cabinet 72.DA.39.2 (see “Commentary” above) demonstrates that the alteration predates 1917.



Figure 17-9 Bottom of 72.DA.39.2. The bottom boards behind the front legs are replaced and are fastened to the case sides with modern wire nails.

Given that the cabinets were in England by 1917, it seems plausible that the rebuilding of the cases occurred in England as well. The fact that the rear posts are exactly 2 in. square in cross section, many of the horizontal rails of the back panels are exactly 2 in. wide, and the wire nails are 1 1/4 in. long supports this supposition.

Both pairs of cabinets have had some replacements to the original lock and catch hardware. On cabinets 72.DA.69, the locks (installed in the right-hand doors) have clearly been replaced, as evidenced by two complete sets of screw holes in the lock mortises. These cabinets, however, retain the original catch mechanisms for the left-hand doors. These are composed of flexible iron straps attached to the underside of the shelves, whose ends slip over and catch on small decorative iron hooks that are screwed into the rear side of the left doors. Cabinets 72.DA.39.1-2 retain their original iron locks and elegant dolphin keys (fig. 17-10); however, the left door catch mechanisms have been removed and replaced with English-style recessed catches installed at the top inner edge of the doors.



Figure 17-10 Original dolphin keys for cabinets 72.DA.39.1-2.

The majority of the gilt bronze mounts were removed from all four cabinets for examination and analysis. The mounts on 72.DA.39.1-2 are noticeably more corroded than those from the other pair, both on the fronts and on the backs, possibly as the result of exposure to atmospheric pollutants that were particularly intense in the area around London in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It would appear that the mounts for all four corner cabinets were prepared and fitted to the carcasses as a group. Each set of corresponding corner mounts (from the tops and bottoms of the leg posts) are numbered from 1 to 4 with filed notches. The mounts from cabinets 72.DA.39 are marked 1 and 2, while those from 72.DA.69 are marked 3 and 4. On both sets of corner

mounts, one of the four was clearly the model from which the other three were cast. This is evident from unique chisel marks or casting repairs that have been duplicated through casting into the other three copies (figs. 17-11, 17-12). In both cases, the original mount is currently placed on one of the 72.DA.39 cabinets.



Figure 17-11 The left front of the corner mounts taken from each of the four cabinets. The first casting is on the top and the copies are beneath.



Figure 17-12 The backs of the corner mounts in fig. 17-11.

The framing mounts on the doors tell a slightly different story; here again, most of the corresponding pairs of mounts on the 72.DA.69 cabinets are marked with three and four file marks, respectively. In some cases the corresponding mounts from 72.DA.39 are marked as 1 and 2; however, in at least two cases the mounts on these cabinets are clearly copies of one of the 72.DA.69 mounts and the three or four file marks on the latter are reproduced on the former. As mentioned above, the doors of the 72.DA.69 pair of cabinets are slightly taller than those on the 72.DA.39 cabinets. It would appear that the framing mounts were originally made to fit the larger door size. As a result, many of the 72.DA.39 framing mounts have been shortened when they were fitted to their doors. This was accomplished by cutting out small sections of the mounts (in areas with little ornamentation) and then soldering the mount back together (fig. 17-13).



Figure 17-13 Framing mount from a 72.DA.39 cabinet (left side of each image) compared to a corresponding mount from a 72.DA.69 cabinet (right side of each image). The solder line is visible on the 72.DA.39 mount where it was shortened by cutting out a section of brass. The impression of an iron binding wire (used to secure the sections during soldering) is visible in the soldering metal on the reverse.

X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analysis to determine alloy composition was conducted on 22 mounts from 72.DA.39.1–2 and on 30 mounts from 72.DA.69.1–2. In addition, two samples of soldering metal (sections of mounts) from each pair of cabinets were analyzed, along with one area of amalgam gilding from each pair. The mounts all appear to have typical compositions for mid-eighteenth-century castings, with 18–25% zinc, about 1% tin, and 1.5% lead, along with distinct traces of impurities such as antimony, iron, silver, nickel, and arsenic. There is no clear clustering of compositions that would suggest that any particular group of mounts from one or the other pair of cabinets was cast separately from the others. The solder used on both pairs of cabinets appears consistent and has zinc contents measuring 30–33%. Analysis of the gilded surfaces shows a considerable thickness of gold and the definite presence of mercury, both consistent with traditional amalgam gilding.

The corner cabinets are decorated with floral marquetry panels framed with amaranth. Sampling of the marquetry woods for anatomical analysis was not possible, so close examination of the macroscopic features was employed to identify the many different woods used on the marquetry. The flowers, inlaid in a stained sycamore maple background, were identified as being of holly, sycamore maple, fruitwood (possibly pear or apple wood), barberry, boxwood, and an unidentified tropical wood (used only on the left door of 72.DA.69.1). Many of the flowers are made from a single piece of veneer, and the contrast in tone still visible today is the result of careful sand shading and the use of carefully selected wood grain. The stems of the rosebushes are made from kingwood to imitate mature stems. This careful selection of marquetry wood is symptomatic of the furniture produced in the workshop of Jean-François Oeben. The black leaves and stems in the marquetry, previously thought to be ebony, are actually

holly that was originally dyed green but that has degraded to near-black over time (see “Technical Description,” cat. no. 18).

The original green dye recipe used by Oeben for these leaves and stems appears to have used the yellow dye young fustic (derived from the wood of *Cotinus coggygia*) in combination with an iron sulfate mordant. Iron sulfate, *vitriol vert* or *couperose* at the time in French, was a product of copper mines and was available in Paris from several sources in the eighteenth century.³² Hickel has shown that iron sulfate from European copper mines could be highly impure, often containing complex mixtures of sulfates of iron, zinc, manganese, aluminum, potassium, magnesium, and copper.³³ Initial spot XRF analysis of the blackened leaves in the marquetry of these cabinets quickly revealed that iron sulfate from at least two different sources was used to create the original green color. Some elements showed a dominant signal for iron alone, while other elements clearly contained large concentrations of both iron and zinc. Subsequent XRF macroscanning of sections of a door from cupboard 72.DA.69.2 (fig. 17-14) shows how leaves with high iron content (appearing red in the scans) appear mixed in the composition with leaves that contain both iron and zinc in high concentration (shown as fuchsia). The satiné gris background has lower levels of iron and zinc, while the stems and leaves that appear black in the XRF scans have virtually none.



Figure 17-14 XRF macroscanning images (left) of sections of a door from cabinet 72.DA.69.2. These illustrate how leaves with high iron content (appearing red in the scans) appear mixed in the composition with leaves that contain both iron and zinc in high concentration (shown as fuchsia). The satiné gris background has lower levels of iron and zinc, while the stems and leaves that appear black in the XRF scans have virtually none.

Informal experiments to reproduce Oeben's green-dyed holly in the conservation laboratory of the Museum used different blends of impure iron sulfate per Hickel's formulations. The results suggest that different shades of green are created depending on the composition of the iron sulfate, with more impure mixtures producing lighter, brighter greens and purer iron sulfate yielding significantly darker tones. It appears likely, then, that Oeben used different qualities of iron sulfate to produce batches of different shades of green-dyed wood. He then selected leaves dyed from different batches of veneer to create a sophisticated palette of tones in his final compositions.

The highly figured sycamore maple background, which is now a slightly greenish-brown (this color is often referred to as tobacco green), was almost certainly originally a silvery gray, referred to in the eighteenth century as "satiné gris." This sycamore maple veneer, with its dramatic rippled patterning, would have had an appearance similar to a fashionable gray moiré silk, called "tabis." XRF analysis of the veneer shows elevated levels of iron and zinc in the sycamore maple background (though substantially less than found in the blackened leaves mentioned above). The same iron sulfate used for the green leaves discussed above is also the primary ingredient mentioned by Roubo for dyeing wood gray,³⁴ and experiments in the Museum's conservation laboratory confirm that a bright, silvery gray tone can be easily imparted to sycamore maple using dilute solutions of iron sulfate. It is not uncommon to find eighteenth-century documents describing furniture with marquetry in *satiné gris*. Where these pieces can be identified today, they also have highly figured sycamore maple veneer, now turned toward greenish-brown.³⁵

Based on evidence revealed by examination of the marquetry decoration, X-radiography, and tool marks present on the corner cabinets, it is likely that the majority of the marquetry was cut using a fretsaw with the stems and leaves inlaid using an inlay knife. The flowers, leaves, and stems were partly cut as individual pieces and partly stack cut using a piercing saw that produced a saw kerf (the gap left by the width of the saw) of about 0.2 mm on the flowers. Some flower elements were shaded by leaving individual pieces of veneer to heat in hot sand until the desired level of singeing was obtained. The elements forming a flower were then drawn together into the flower shape to eliminate the saw kerfs left by the saw blade. Once assembled, the flowers were glued to a piece of paper and then inlaid in the sycamore maple background using the fretsaw. The advantage of this technique was that ready-made,

possibly even subcontracted flowers could be created in advance and made ready to be inlaid and glued on a finished carcass. The rounded shape of the flowers and the extremely high quality of their fitting into the sycamore maple background suggests that they were saw cut using a technique known as bevel cutting or conic cutting (see also cat. no. 19). The process is similar to *bouille* marquetry or stack cutting, where two veneers are cut simultaneously; however, unlike *bouille* marquetry cutting, the saw blade is angled slightly and the kerf created by the saw blade disappears when the top piece is dropped into the hole created in the lower veneer. This technique results in flawless joins, although only a single marquetry composition can be made at a time. The small stems and leaves that connect the separate flowers were subsequently inserted using a shoulder knife, and a few knife marks can be seen in these areas (fig. 17-15).



Figure 17-15 Detail showing typical marks on the leaves and adjacent areas left by the use of an inlay knife.

X-radiography also helps to confirm the use of two separate techniques. In X-ray, the outlines of the flowers are relatively faint, while the stems are more pronounced, probably due to a thicker layer of glue present in the grooves made by the knife cuts (fig. 17-16). This confident mixing of techniques is typical of an accomplished marquetry workshop. Conic cutting had apparently only recently been developed at the time of the manufacture of these corner cabinets. The relatively small size of the marquetry designs produced by bevel marquetry is symptomatic of eighteenth-century technical limitations.



Figure 17-16 X-radiograph of the marquetrie on an area of the 72.DA.69.2 cabinet. The lines around the perimeters of the flowers are generally fainter than those outlining the stems and smaller leaves. This is likely because the stems and leaves were inlaid using a knife, which left a deep groove in the substrate that subsequently was filled with dense glue. The flowers, on the other hand, were probably inlaid into the background with a fretsaw, before the veneer was applied to the substrate, resulting in a thinner glue line.

There is some occurrence in the marquetrie of engraved lines filled with black pigment. Engraving additional lines to add detail to a composition was common in Oeben's work, but repeated scraping, a common restoration practice from the eighteenth century to the present day, must have resulted in the loss of engraving decoration. Although some engraving remains, one can only speculate on how much more has been lost. The occurrence of lines drawn in ink on the marquetrie is almost certainly the result of later restorers replacing lost engraving lines (fig. 17-17).



Figure 17-17 The black lines drawn in ink on the surface of leaves are almost certainly the result of a previous restoration that was meant to replicate original engraved (and black pigment-filled) embellishments.

The condition of the marquetrie is generally good, although in some areas there has clearly been considerable scraping of the surface during previous restorations. In some instances, such as on the left door of the corner cabinet 72.DA.39.1, the scraping appears to have been done in conjunction with the repair of splits in the substrate oak. On this door, the long split has caused visible damage to the veneer; however, in the middle of the split, one flower appears entirely undamaged. This flower also exhibits significantly stronger sand shading than the surrounding marquetrie. These two characteristics suggest strongly that the flower has been replaced (fig. 17-18). On the lower portion of the right door on the same cabinet, a section of the sycamore maple background veneer has been scraped sufficiently to remove the gray-stained surface layer, exposing the light tone of the natural wood.



Figure 17-18 The flower on the upper left, found on the left door of 72.DA.39.1, is different from surrounding examples and is most likely a replacement.

There have been some significant replacements to the amaranth veneer on the cases of the cabinets. In particular, the majority of the veneer on the aprons (below the doors) has been replaced on both 72.DA.39 cabinets along with several smaller sections along the top rail. It would appear that both aprons have had serious horizontal breakages in the past that probably badly damaged the original veneer, leading to its replacement. The glossy varnish is continuous across all areas of restoration, implying a fairly recent application, possibly shortly before the cupboards' acquisition by the Museum.

X-radiographic examination revealed several small square holes that mark the location of veneer pins used during assembly of the marquetry. Traditionally, veneer pins were used to stop pieces of veneer from sliding out of position during gluing and clamping; they were hammered into the substrate wood next to the edge of the veneer and removed once the glue had dried. Subsequent pieces of veneer would then cover over these holes so that today they are only visible by X-radiography. It is clear from the location of the veneer pin holes that the amaranth frame was glued in position first, followed by the black and white border strips and finally by the central marquetry.

The four marble tops are made from *brèche d'Alep* from the Bouches-du-Rhône, France. It is a yellow, pink, red, and black breccia marble with round and some angular clasts, with a reddish-orange cement made of sediment grains similar to the larger fragments. The clasts are fine-grained in nature, and occasional fossils of bivalves can be seen. This indicates an aquatic environment for the source of the clasts. There are some fractures infilled by reddish-orange cement that cross-cut the large grains and must have preceded the formation of the stone, yet the fracture happened before cementation had occurred.

A.H., with Y.C. and R.S.

NOTES

1. The standard monograph is Hawley 1970, 203–59; the Museum's cupboards are reproduced as nos. 49 and 50, 254–55. See also Hawley 1979, 176–82; Kjellberg 1989, 482–89; Pradère 1989a, 152–61. Hawley attributes these cupboards to Latz but tempers his conclusion by noting that mounts of similar design are not found on any other pieces stamped or firmly attributed to him. He dated them to about 1750.
2. Verlet 1966, 160–61.
3. A related apron mount can be seen on a pair of corner cupboards attributed to Latz in the collection of Schloss Wilhelmstal, inv. no. Z 92/1, near Cassel in northern Hesse. This pair is cited in Hawley 1970, 253–54, no. 48.
4. See Hawley 1970. The stamped Quirinale commode, which is similar to the Museum's attributed to Latz (cat. no. 16), is reproduced on pp. 231–32, no. 21; the nonstamped, marquetry commode is reproduced on pp. 237 and 239, no. 28; the corner cupboards are reproduced on p. 253, no. 47.
5. See Briganti 1965, 48–59.
6. Boudin, who was born in 1735, could not have applied his own stamp before 1761, when he was named a master cabinetmaker. Hawley suggests that Boudin, who specialized as a *marqueteur* and eventually operated as a *marchand-mercier*, might have acquired the Carnavalet cabinets, finished or not, with the mounts and repaired, altered, or finished them himself. Possibly a later addition by Boudin or another *marqueteur*, the marquetry is markedly naturalistic. See Hawley 1970, 324, no. 24. See also Kjellberg 1989, 484; Forray-Carlier 2000, 88–91, cat. no. 28.
7. The outstretched wing mount is also seen on a pair of corner cupboards in a private collection signed by Latz and presumably stamped with the mark of the château d'Eu, reproduced in Hawley 1970, 232–33, no. 22.
8. The most recent and comprehensive monograph of Oeben and his work is Stratmann-Döhler 2002. The author does not cite the Museum's cupboards in the appendix of Oeben's signed or attributed furniture but discusses 72.DA.39 and illustrates

- 72.DA.39.2 on pp. 50–51, respectively. See also Pradère 1989a, 252–63; Chastang 2001, 58–69.
9. Chastang 2007, 122 n. 24, refers to items 32 and 40 in Seignat's 1756 inventory that quite possibly refer to the Museum's cupboards, then in an unfinished state. See Paris, Archives nationales de France, Minutier central, XXVIII, 348, December 20, 1756: "32. Item une paire de bâtis d'encognures de bois de chêne dont les fermetures sont de cuivre prisé ensemble douze livres"; "40. Item deux bâtis d'encognures de bois de chêne, quatre bâtis de commodes bombées de bois de chêne à deux tiroirs chacunes sans serure prisé cent vingt livres."
 10. On the possibility of Oeben buying unfinished frames from Latz's workshop, together with their mounts, to veneer later, see Pradère 1989a, 253.
 11. *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 160–61, no. 43 (P. Leperlier). This piece is similar in form to the unstamped Quirinale commode with stylized floral marquetry, attributed to Latz and probably brought to Colorno by the Duchess of Parma in 1753, illustrated in Hawley 1970, 237 and 239, no. 28.
 12. Cat. no. 1927.68. Gift of Archer M. Huntington.
 13. See, e.g., a *commode à la grecque* by Oeben in the Museum's collection, 72.DA.54.
 14. *18th Century: Birth of Design* 2014, 192–97, no. 55 (D. Alcouffe).
 15. It is tempting to speculate on the degree to which Oeben might have been inspired by other contemporary sources for floral marquetry. His 1763 inventory records a variety of botanical artworks, including prints and paintings, in various rooms of his home. The inventory is transcribed in Guiffrey 1899. Relevant excerpts include "une vue de la décoration des illuminations de Versailles et une estampe représentant un bouquet de fleurs, sous verre blanc, dans leurs bordures de bois noircy" in a chamber overlooking the Cour des Princes; "cinq tableaux dessus de porte, dont quatre représentant des corbeilles de fleurs et les autres des animaux et oiseaux, tous peints sur toile [sic], le tout encastré dans la boiserie" of the chamber where Oeben died; and "un petit tableau peint sur toile sans bordure, représentant des fleurs" in a chamber also looking onto the Cour des Princes, all cited on pp. 315–16. A cabinet contained "trois autres petits tableaux représentant[sic] chacun un pot de fleurs sous verre blanc, dans leurs bordures de bois doré; un autre tableau peint sur bois, représentant une corbeille de fleurs, aussi dans sa bordure de bois doré; dix-sept estampes sous verre représentant différents sujets dans leurs bordures unyes, et deux tableaux peints sur toile sans bordures, représentant un pot de fleurs," as described on p. 362.
 16. Writing to the Parisian miniaturist Pierre Noël Violet in 1781, the history painter Clément Louis Marie Anne Belle announced Tessier's death in December of that year, describing him as "one of two flower painters" at the Gobelins and the son of an "ouvrier tapissier" at the Manufactory. Belle to Violet, December 14, 1781, cited in "Lettres inédites" 1907, 66–68. The letter identifies the other Gobelins flower painter as Maurice Jacques, who died in 1784 at seventy-two years of age.
 17. Taking into account the 1755 date of the manuscript version of the *Livre de principes de fleurs* and considering the possibility that it was printed in Paris as early as that year, at least two Chéreau widows then associated with the business Aux deux Piliers d'or in the rue Saint-Jacques could have overseen the publication of Tessier's book. Geneviève Marguerite Chéreau, wife and first cousin of the printer and engraver François II Chéreau, was widowed in February 1755. François II inherited Aux deux Piliers d'or from his father; Geneviève Marguerite continued to operate it after his death in February 1755 and continued to do so until 1768. However, her mother-in-law, Marguerite Étienne Caillou, widow of the famed printer François I Chéreau since 1729, also assisted her son in his endeavors at Aux deux Piliers d'or and did not die until April 1755. See Jal 1872, 378–79. This runs counter to Chastang, who identifies Anne Louise Chéreau, née Foy de Valois, as the widow of François II Chéreau and the likely publisher of the *Livre* as early as 1755 (Chastang 2007, 115); and Anne Louise Foy de Valois/Vallois was also a woman engraver but married François II Chéreau's son Jacques-François in 1769. She was never a widow as she died in childbirth in 1771, predeceasing her husband by over twenty years (Jal 1872, 378).
 18. See Chastang 2001. The undated *Livre de corbeilles et vases de fleurs* was published by Jacques-François Chéreau for Tessier, probably around 1770. This book contains illustrations of flowers in baskets and vases by Tessier engraved by Jean-Jacques Avril.
 19. Chastang 2001, 356. These marquetry flowers are immediately preceded by "un dessein en bois nué et découpé, représentant trois vaches, une chèvre et un bouvier apuyé contre une mesure, un corps de corbeille de 5 pouces de haut, un autre petit corps de corbeille de 2 pouces et demy de haut, aussy en bois nué et découpé, deux débris de mesure découpés et ombrés en bois blanc du même dessein."
 20. Acc. no. 1114-1882. Eriksen 1974, 314, pl. 96.
 21. Acc. no. BK-16662. Baarsen 2013, 174–77, no. 40.
 22. Pradère 1989a, 258.
 23. A commode in the Frick Collection (acc. no. 1918.5.71) bears witness to this practice. The commode was completed in the early 1780s. Riesener shortened this piece's legs before it was delivered to Marie-Antoinette's apartments in the Tuileries shortly before the fall of the monarchy. In addition to altering the commode's dimensions, Riesener changed the mounts and added a new marquetry panel that he both signed and dated 1791.
 24. French and Company invoice, January 27, 1972, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
 25. Correspondence with Leon J. Dalva, October 15, 1993, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.

26. Correspondence with Leon J. Dalva, October 15, 1993, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
27. Correspondence with John Partridge, 1974, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
28. French and Company invoice, January 27, 1972, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
29. French and Company invoice, June 27, 1972, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
30. Mudge et al. 2010.
31. Pradère 1989a.
32. Roubo 1774, vol. 3, 795.
33. Hickel 1963.
34. Roubo 1774, vol. 3, 797.
35. Paulin 2009; Paulin 2015.



18. Mechanical reading, writing, and toilette table

French (Paris), ca. 1760

By Jean-François Oeben (French, born Germany, 1721–1763, *ébéniste mécanicien du Roi* from 1760, master 1761)

White oak* veneered with bloodwood*, kingwood*, amaranth*, padauk*, barberry, holly*, boxwood, sycamore maple, tulipwood, hornbeam, ebony*, cedar; drawer of juniper*; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron mechanism and lock; silk

H: 2 ft. 4 3/4 in., W: 2 ft. 5 1/4 in., D: 1 ft. 3 in. (73 × 74 × 37.8 cm)

70.DA.84

DESCRIPTION

The table of rectangular form is supported on four cabriole legs that are five sided in section. The front, back, and sides of the body of the table are slightly bowed. The top is of conforming shape and is surrounded by a flat gilt bronze molding with a raised edge, forming a rim around the top. Each corner is set with a pierced gilt bronze mount consisting of a flared shell-like form above opposed C-scrolls centered by a leafy branch. This overhangs a curved and burnished shaft edged with a shell-like border and ending in a leaf. At each side of the table is an escutcheon, which takes the form of a shaped cabochon framed by C-scrolls, strap work, flamelike borders, and rising leafy scrolls, set below a nine-petaled flower. On the right side the escutcheon is pierced twice, in its lower part with a keyhole to receive the key that locks the drawer below and with a circular hole through the center of the flower. This aperture receives the tool that winds the spring-loaded opening mechanism. The lower part of this mount has been cut away to allow for

the opening of the drawer. The escutcheon on the left side is pierced solely with a hole for the winding tool.

Lifting handles have been attached to each side, formed by C- and S-scrolls, flame work set with kidney-shaped concave cabochons, and short leafy twigs. They appear to be attached upside down and may have once served as drawer handles on an earlier piece of furniture. Each foot is clad with a mount of similar but not identical form to those found on the writing and toilette table also in the Museum (cat. no. 19).

The tabletop is veneered with a panel of marquetry (fig. 18-1). Occupying most of the area is a bunch of cut flowers depicted as tied with a green ribbon bow. Among the flowers, which have very dark leaves and stems, tulips and roses may be recognized. Subsidiary stems branch from main stems and carry flowers of a different species with incorrect foliage for the type. Some of the flowers on the right-hand side appear to be of the daffodil family but are set on curving stems with roselike leaves.



Figure 18-1 Top.

The flowers are set on a field of amaranth, outlined by a stringing of holly and ebony. The outer edge of the tabletop is framed with a narrow border of green-stained wood outlined with holly stringing. It is interrupted with small circles of the same wood and at the cardinal points by an oval, kidney-shaped, and fanlike element. The four corners are set with similar fan motifs.

The friezes of the table are veneered with shaped panels of parquetry in bloodwood and kingwood, consisting of diamonds and parallelograms of contrasting woods placed to form chevrons or an illusionistic cube parquetry that may have been more readable before the woods faded to their present tones. The panels are all outlined in holly and ebony stringing, and the remaining areas of the sides and the legs are veneered with amaranth.

The body of the table is occupied at the lower level by a shallow lockable drawer that extends from the right (fig. 18-2). Above is a deeper drawer that springs open by mechanical means from the front of the table. It contains lidded compartments to either side of a lifting panel. The lids are veneered with panels of chevron parquetry and on their undersides with quarter-cut panels of tulipwood, all outlined with double stringing. The central panel is hinged, and when raised it can be supported by a manually activated lifting metal tab that fits into any one of a series of notches cut into the back. The face of the panel is lined with a bluish-green silk, surrounded by stringing. The lower part is hinged and forms a book or

paper support. It is veneered with a narrow panel of tulipwood and is similarly outlined. Below the shallow, lidded compartment is a small drawer that may be mechanically released and is pushed forward with a spring. The remaining areas of the lidded drawer, its sides and interior, are veneered with amaranth.



Figure 18-2 Three-quarter right front, drawer open.

MARKS

Stamped “J.F.OEBEN” and “JME,” for *jurande des menuisiers-ébénistes*, on the underside of the front rail (fig. 18-3). The underside is also inscribed “4880” in chalk.



Figure 18-3 The underside of the front rail is stamped “J.F.OEBEN” and “JME.”

COMMENTARY

The table is stamped “J.F.OEBEN,” for Jean-François Oeben.¹ Unlike the table in the following entry (cat. no. 19), this table is mechanical. The top springs back, and the main frieze drawer opens when a key is turned in a lock on the right side of the table. In its form, mounts, and arrangement of its marquetry elements, this table is unique in Oeben’s oeuvre. The top is not of the usual kidney shape but is slightly convex on all four sides. Correspondingly, the profile of the front is bowed slightly, and it is not recessed at the kneehole. The shape of the lower profile is also unique, as is the greater height of the frieze area, caused by the insertion of a second drawer, opening from the side of the case. The model of the foot mounts is a rarely found variant of those seen in cat. no. 19 and can be seen on two tables, one stamped and one attributed to Oeben, in the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum.² Corner mounts of the same model are found on a table attributed to Oeben in the Huntington Museum.³ They also appear on three other unstamped and unattributed pieces: a mid-eighteenth-century commode decorated with European lacquer,⁴ a *table de chevet* in the musée des Arts décoratifs,⁵ and a *secrétaire-commode* in the château de Fleury-en-Bière.⁶

The table, unlike most of the mechanical pieces by Oeben, is devoid of any strip mounts following the lower profiles of the piece and outlining the legs. It is probable that the carrying handles are a later addition, for the model does not appear elsewhere on his work and they are also

somewhat incongruous on such a small and relatively light piece of furniture.

The cut flowers on the surface of the table are not contained in a basket or a vase, nor are they surrounded by an elaborate rococo or strap work frame; instead, they are arranged loosely across the top, tied with a bow and backed by a strongly grained wood.⁷ At least four of the flowers are seen elsewhere on pieces by Oeben. The large open tulip (fig. 18-4) is found, in reverse, on the fall front and on the left-hand door below of a *secrétaire* in the Residenz Museum, Munich;⁸ on the top of a mechanical table bearing Oeben’s stamp that was sold in Paris in 1993;⁹ among the flowers in the center front of a transitional commode formerly in the Bensimon Collection;¹⁰ and on a table attributed to this master in the Jones Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum.¹¹ It also appears on the center front of an earlier commode attributed to Jean-Pierre Latz.¹² The quality of the cutting, shading, and arrangement of the woods forming the petals of this flower varies widely, the finest example being seen on this table.



Figure 18-4 Marquetry open tulip on the top center of the tabletop.

The closed tulip on the left (fig. 18-5) is also found, in reverse, on the top of the Museum’s other table by this master (cat. no. 19) and on the exterior surface of a lid in a table set with mounts bearing small castles, by Oeben and supposedly made for Madame de Pompadour, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (fig. 18-6).¹³ The open rose to the left of the closed tulip also appears on the above table, placed upside down, hanging to the left of the vase, and it is also seen on the top of the mechanical table in the Louvre that much resembles that discussed in cat. no. 19.¹⁴ The open rose on the extreme left, seen from behind, also appears on the left upper drawer of a table formerly with the dealer Partridge, which also bears the

Tessin lily across the drawer fronts on the right side of the kneehole (see cat. no. 19).¹⁵



Figure 18-5 Marquetrie closed tulip on the top center of the tabletop.



Figure 18-6 Jean-François Oeben (French, born Germany, 1721–1763), and Roger Vandercruse, called Lacroix (French, 1727–1799), Mechanical table, ca. 1761–63. Oak veneered with mahogany, kingwood, and tulipwood, with marquetrie of mahogany, rosewood, holly, and various other woods; gilt bronze mounts; imitation Japanese lacquer; replaced silk, 69.9 × 81.9 × 46.7 cm (27.5 × 32.2 × 18.4 in.). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Jack and Belle Linsky Collection, 1982, 1982.60.61. Photo: www.metmuseum.org, CC0

The cube parquetry decorating the friezes of the table is found on a number of Oeben pieces; a *meuble à transformation* attributed to Oeben, which was sold at Sotheby's Zurich in 1997, should be singled out.¹⁶ Not only are the sides, drawer fronts, and parts of the top veneered with this cube pattern, but the flowers on the top contain

the same large open tulip and on the extreme left a repeat, in reverse, of the narcissus on the far right. Like the Museum's table, the profile of the top is not kidney shaped but rectangular, very slightly convex on three sides and straight at the front, while the drawers below have flat fronts with no central recess.

A reference to a *table coulante* with a drawer in the side is listed in the *magasin* of Oeben's inventory of 1763 (see cat. no. 19).¹⁷ It is given measurements similar to those of the Museum's table, but no flowers are mentioned, and the piece was more fully mounted with moldings. But the similarity of the form and the size of the two pieces, the use of parquetry, and the darker amaranth employed as a veneer for the legs and the remainder of the body all point to a date near Oeben's death.

In 1949 J. Paul Getty noted in his diary that he had visited Cameron's on Duke Street on October 7 and saw "a mechanical table by Oeben for L2,500."¹⁸ On October 12 he wrote, "I authorized him [Frank Partridge] to take it [the so-called Josse *bureau plat*, J. Paul Getty Museum, acc. no. 67.DA.10] and the mechanical table—L8,000 for the two. He phoned me one hour later that the deal was closed."¹⁹ The following day Fabre told Getty that the table was by Jean-François Oeben and that he had had it in his possession for some years.

In December of that year Getty was in Malibu, and on December 31 he noted in his diary, "Drove Mitchell Samuels to the Ranch at noon. . . . The mechanical table was partly open when unpacked, I succeeded in closing it but couldn't get it to open again by turning the key, possibly I had wound it too tight. Mitchell said it was a great table. There are about 15 in the world, about 5 in America. He said my table was not as important as the three in New York, his 2 and the one in the Metropolitan Museum. He thought my mechanical table was by Oeben and of about the same value as my B.V.R.B. table [cat. no. 9]."²⁰

PROVENANCE

–1949: B. Fabre & Fils (Paris, France) and Cameron (London, England), sold to J. Paul Getty, 1949; 1949–70: J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976, donated to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1970.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Paris: Life & Luxury, J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center (Los Angeles), April 26–August 7, 2011; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (Houston), September 18, 2011–January 2, 2012.

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G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The carcass of this small writing table is made entirely of white oak. The cabriole legs, which run to the top of the case, are connected to the back and side friezes with broad, shouldered mortise-and-tenon joints, visible in X-radiography. The front frieze, which spans only the lower part of the case, is connected to the legs with a simple mortise and tenon on either end. None of the mortise-and-tenon joints appears to be pegged. The left side and back frieze panels are each made of two stacked horizontal boards, butt joined, which together span the entire height of the case. The right side frieze, made of a single board, runs only across the upper part of the case, above the side drawer. The front frieze panel is also made of a single board and runs below the sliding drawer case. The side frieze panels are exceptionally thick (up to 7 cm at their centers) to accommodate the bulky barrel spring mechanisms that are set into deep mortises on the interior faces (fig. 18-7). The front frieze panel is also unusually thick (over 5 cm in depth at its center). The heavy construction of the case may have been considered necessary due to the constant tension on the structure from the spring-loaded release mechanism.



Figure 18-7 Interior of the right-side frieze showing the mainspring assembly at center, with brass guide rails above and below.

The case bottom is made of a bipartite frame-and-panel construction, using the front, rear, and left case sides as perimeter rails. On the right side, the fourth rail sits below the level of the side drawer, apparently attached to the legs with sliding dovetail joints. The medial rail of the case bottom is fixed to the front and rear rails with unpegged mortise-and-tenon joints. Each of the two case bottom panels is made of three boards, two wider and one narrower, rabbeted along their upper edges and fitting into grooves cut into the rails and legs. The panels are flush with the surface of the middle and right side rails, forming a smooth bed for the side drawer. Within this drawer compartment, an oak drawer guide is glued to the top of the panel, parallel to the back frieze. Along the front, the interior face of the thick front frieze serves as the guide for the side drawer.

The bottom of the upper case (above the side drawer and below the sliding drawer case) is constructed in a manner similar to the lower case bottom, though each panel is made of four pieces of wood rather than three. The panels and medial rail are flush with the top edge of the front frieze, making a smooth bed below the sliding drawer case.

The long side drawer is located between the upper and lower case bottoms. The four drawer sides are connected to one another with three small dovetails at each corner, through-dovetails at the rear and half-blind at the front; at the front, the sides of the dovetails are covered by veneer. The drawer bottom is made of two oak boards of equal width, butt joined and with the grain parallel to the long sides. The bottom panel is rabbeted along the lower edges and held in grooves in the drawer front, sides, and back. The back side of the drawer is notched at the top to accommodate the mechanism that releases the central sliding drawer case.

The sliding drawer case fills the space above the upper case bottom and between the two case side panels. The case is constructed of four sides, joined with three dovetails at each corner. Two dividers, running from front to back, divide the case into three compartments. Each compartment has an independent bottom panel, formed of two oak boards, rabbeted along their upper edge, and secured in grooves in the case sides and dividers. The side compartments have hinged lids that open outward. Each lid is mitered on the hinged edge and is fabricated as an unusual variant of a mitered frame-and-panel construction. Each has a central panel whose grain runs side to side (parallel to the short sides of the lid). On each long side, cross-grain framing elements are attached with deep tongue-and-groove joints, visible in X-

radiographs. Unusually, the mitered short side framing elements are simply butt joined and glued to the adjacent members, effectively relying on the veneer on the front and back of the panel to provide structural integrity.

The center compartment of the sliding drawer case is divided into an upper and lower section by a horizontal oak panel with side-to-side grain orientation, rabbeted along its lower edges and held in grooves in the case front, back, and dividers. Below this medial panel, the central compartment is fitted with a spring-loaded concealed drawer whose veneered front blends seamlessly with the geometric pattern of parquetry surrounding it. The drawer is constructed primarily from juniper; the exception is the front board, which is made from oak, veneered on the edges and the inside with juniper. The drawer bottom is made of three small quarter-sawn boards, with matching grain, arranged with the grain running from side to side. There is no handle on the front of the drawer. The drawer is opened by depressing a brass lever on the underside of the front edge of the sliding drawer compartment, below the drawer front. This lever releases a catch on the bottom edge of the drawer front, and the drawer springs forward, propelled by a thin, crescent-shaped iron spring, approximately 3 cm high and 20 cm wide. The spring is attached with two screws, at its midpoint, to the back wall of the drawer compartment behind the drawer.

The hinged bookrest covers the upper part of the central compartment. The main panel of the bookrest is made of two boards of oak, butt joined, with the grain running front to back. Cross-grain battens, or breadboard ends, are attached at the front and back edges with tongue-and-groove joints and are visible with X-radiography. When raised, the rest is supported by a brass tab that fits into one of several notches on the backside of the rest.

The tabletop's main panel is made of four boards of oak with the grain running from side to side. The grain of the four boards is not perfectly quarter sawn, nor is the grain straight and parallel from end to end (fig. 18-8). At either end of the top, cross-grain battens are attached to the main panel with tongue-and-groove joints. Currently the top is counter veneered on the underside with oak veneer approximately 1.5 mm thick, with the grain running perpendicular to the main panel. The presence of butterfly repairs below the counter veneer (visible in the X-radiograph) suggest that the counter veneering may have been done at the time of a substantial intervention to repair cracks in the top. The cross-batten construction, which is designed to keep the top flat and straight, also makes the top vulnerable to splitting due to the different

expansion and contraction characteristics of wood along and across its grain. It is interesting to note that in the Museum's later model of this form (cat. no. 19), the top was made without cross battens, relying instead on the use of three carefully selected quarter-sawn boards with perfectly straight grain to provide stability.

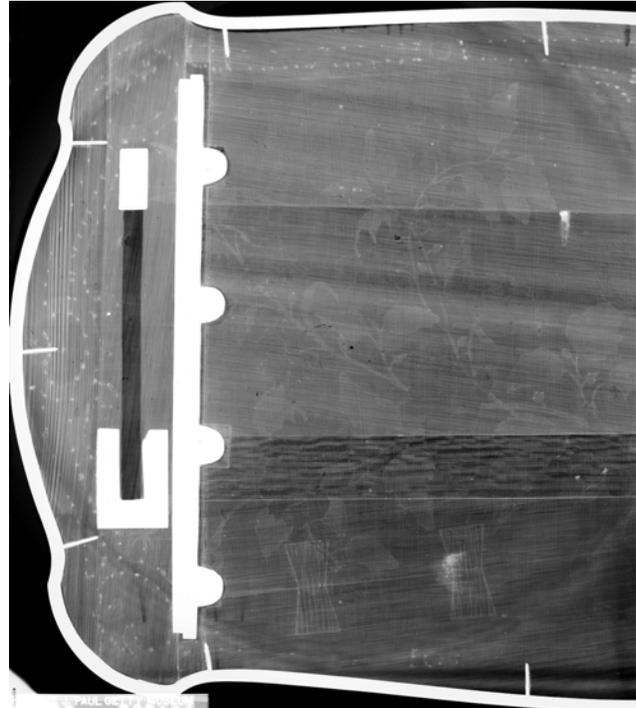


Figure 18-8 X-radiograph of the top showing the cross-grain batten on the left, the diagonal grain of the main boards, and the butterfly repairs at the bottom.

The table's sliding drawer case spring mechanism is powered by a pair of matching main springs housed in barrels on either end of the table. Some other early examples of this form by Oeben employ an alternate spring release mechanism based on flat springs and crossed push rods (fig. 18-9). There is no evidence that the Museum's table ever had a flat spring-type mechanism; however, during examination, the existing spring mechanisms were removed, and it became clear that there has been some modification to the mechanical system in the past. There are four, more closely spaced, old screw holes beneath the current iron mounting plates that appear to be associated with earlier, smaller, spring mechanisms (fig. 18-10) or perhaps even a gear wheel without a spring mechanism. One of the iron plates to which the current barrels are fixed bears an as yet unidentified stamp with the initials "MB" on it. The springs can be wound by a key on either side of the table. Two toothed rails, attached at either end of the underside of the table's top, engage the teeth at the top of the barrel,

while two other toothed rails, attached to either side of the sliding drawer case, engage with the teeth at the bottoms of the barrels (fig. 18-11). The drawer case's rails have extraneous holes and wooden patches adjacent to them, suggesting that they have been repositioned, possibly at the same time as the springs were modified. Both on the top and on the sliding case, the toothed rails slide into U-shaped brass guide rails set into the case sides above and below the toothed wheel. The lower brass guides do not extend to the fronts of the legs. Small sliding blocks cover the front access to the brass guides. These can be removed to allow the toothed rails on the sides of the sliding case to be inserted or removed from the guides (fig. 18-12).



Figure 18-11 Left side of the sliding drawer case, showing the toothed brass rail with extraneous holes and patched wood, indicating some prior modification of the mechanism.



Figure 18-9 Spring release mechanism of a table in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 1095:1 to 3-1882. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

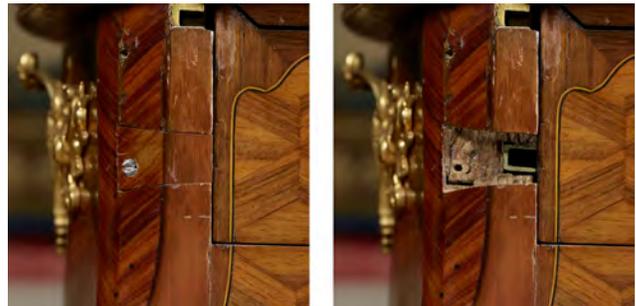


Figure 18-12 Front left corner with the corner mount removed and sliding block in place (left) and removed (right).

The sliding mechanism for the top and case is activated with a second, smaller key that is inserted into an additional keyhole on the right side, beneath the one used to wind the mechanism (fig. 18-13). Turning the key moves a lever that is mounted on a long iron plate, housed in the upper case bottom (fig. 18-14). Moving the lever releases a catch at the center of the bottom of the sliding drawer case, allowing the case to slide forward, propelled by the springs.



Figure 18-10 Interior of the left-side frieze with mainspring assembly removed, showing four unused screw holes from an earlier mainspring or simple gear wheel.



Figure 18-13 The sliding mechanism for the top and case is activated with a second, smaller key that is inserted into an additional keyhole on the right side, beneath the one used to wind the mechanism. View the video at <https://youtu.be/m5OxVgH-T1I>.



Figure 18-14 Turning the key moves a lever that is mounted on a long iron plate, housed in the upper case bottom. View the video at <https://youtu.be/m50xVgH-T1I>.

Mechanical stops prevent the top and case from sliding too far forward or back. The top is constrained by iron rods that run vertically up through holes in the case sides. These project above the top surface of the case sides and into grooves cut into the underside of the top. At either end of the grooves, brass plates that limit the travel of the top are screwed in place. The vertical iron stop rods are of different length on either end of the table because of the presence of the side drawer front on the right side. On the left side of the table, the rod runs through the entire height of the case side and is held in place by a small brass plate, screwed into the bottom of the case side, that covers the end of the hole in which the rod is held. This allows the iron rod to be easily removed from below so that the table can be disassembled. On the right side, the rod descends only to the level of the top of the side drawer, and the corresponding brass cover plate is located inside the drawer compartment. The cross rail that runs below the drawer front is also drilled with a hole to allow the rod to be inserted and removed from below, though there is no brass cover plate for this hole.

The forward movement of the sliding case is limited by threaded bolts that pass through the sides of the sliding case and project into a groove in the table's case side, just below the lower brass U-channel (fig. 18-15). Brass stop plates are fixed at the front end of each groove, fixed with a single screw, to halt the forward travel of the sliding case.

The speed and force with which the mechanism releases can be roughly controlled by adjusting the tightness to which the springs are wound. The mainsprings of the mechanism do not, however, require winding after each operation of the mechanism; rather, the act of closing the table rewinds the springs to their prior state (fig. 18-16), thus the springs only need to be fully rewound when the table has been disassembled and reassembled.

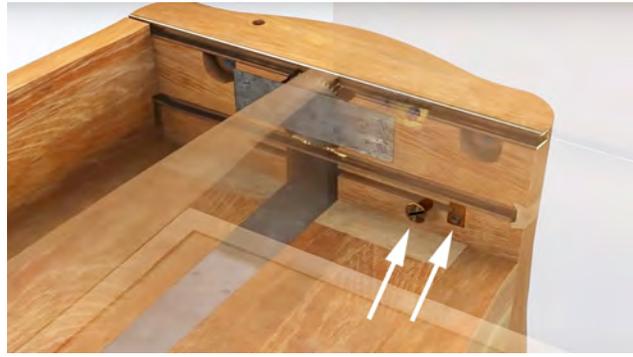


Figure 18-15 The forward movement of the sliding case is limited by threaded bolts that pass through the sides of the sliding case and project into a groove in the table's case side. A brass stop plate is affixed at the end of the groove. View the video at <https://youtu.be/m50xVgH-T1I>.



Figure 18-16 The mainsprings of the mechanism do not require winding after each operation of the mechanism; the act of closing the table rewinds the springs to their prior state. View the video at <https://youtu.be/m50xVgH-T1I>.

The table's side friezes are veneered with a trellis parquetry with bloodwood diamond shapes bordered by kingwood bands. The fields of trellis parquetry are edged with a border strip of white holly and ebony and framed with bands of amaranth. This design is replicated on the sliding case's lids. X-radiographic examination of the trellis parquetry on the hinged lids revealed numerous small holes made by the placement of iron veneer pins during assembly. These small veneer pin holes indicate that the trellises were assembled in a sequence of individual gluing steps. Veneer pins were placed alongside a piece of veneer to stop it from sliding out of position during clamping and were removed once the glue had set. Subsequently, additional adjacent pieces of veneer were added, covering the pinholes. Although sometimes difficult to interpret, the pattern of pinholes can give clues to the order in which the veneering was executed. In this case, it appears that the amaranth border and adjacent stringing were glued in place first, followed by the kingwood trellis bars, with the bloodwood diamonds inserted at the end. At least on some edges, trimming of individual pieces of veneer was carried out

after they were glued down, as indicated by knife marks visible, for example, along the top edge of the side drawer front (fig. 18-17). The knife used was most probably similar to the shoulder knife illustrated in plate 293, figs. 11 and 12, in A.-J. Roubo, *L'Art du menuisier ébéniste*, 1774 (https://archive.org/details/gri_33125009321973/page/n837).



Figure 18-17 Mark from a shoulder knife on the top edge of the side drawer front, showing that pieces of veneer were trimmed in place, after having been glued down to the oak substrate.

The interior surfaces of the three compartments in the sliding drawer case are veneered with a wood of the genus *Pterocarpus*, commonly called padauk or narra. This veneer appears to be original, though it is an unusual wood in ancien régime French furniture. In the Museum collections, the only other original use of padauk that has been found is for the secret drawers in the two coffers attributed to André Charles Boulle, dating to the 1680s (82.DA.109). There are over thirty species of the genus *Pterocarpus* native to Africa and Asia. While the species and geographic origin of this example have yet to be identified, the genus was identified by microscopic anatomy and confirmed by chemical analysis.²¹

Based on evidence revealed by examination of the marquetry decoration, X-ray analysis, and tool marks present on the table, it is likely that the majority of the floral marquetry on the table's top was inlaid in the background amaranth veneer using a shoulder knife. The flowers and leaves were almost certainly produced by stack cutting, using a piercing saw, or fretsaw, to cut the individual pieces as well as many of the veins. Using a stack technique, two or even three nearly identical elements could be produced at once. Two of the five-petaled flowers (probably jasmine) at the top left of the table's bouquet are so similar that any differences can be attributed to a shift in the angle of the saw while the stack

was being cut. The saw kerf (the gap left by the width of the saw) is about 0.2 mm on the flowers. Some of the individual elements from the flowers and leaves were sand shaded by placing them in hot sand until the desired level of singeing was obtained. The elements forming a flower were then drawn together into the flower shape and glued to a piece of paper, largely eliminating the saw kerfs between pieces. Once assembled, precut elements could be stored and saved for later use.

On this table the floral elements appear to have been inlaid in the amaranth background using a sharp knife, probably a shoulder knife, to cut away the background veneer, creating cavities to receive them. The fitting of the flowers into the background is very precise, with virtually no gap in most areas. Under careful inspection, there is little direct evidence of knife cutting in the form of small overcut marks or bending of the wood fibers where the knife cuts run across the grain. However, the flowers exhibit many sharp internal and external corners that show no sign of the turn of a saw blade, even at high magnification. This is in contrast to the saw-cut inlaying of the other Museum *table à coulisse* by Oeben (cat. no. 19), where the fitting is not as precise and the turns of the saw blade are often evident on the perimeter of the flowers.

Although it is not possible to reconstruct the exact order in which the floral marquetry elements were inlaid, X-radiographs do show that in some areas, the stems of the flowers were inlaid first, and flowers inlaid over them. In these areas, the knife marks in the oak substrate associated with the inlaying of the stems continue underneath the flowers (fig. 18-18). This is further evidence that the flowers were not inlaid in the background veneer with a saw prior to gluing the marquetry down. Again, this is in contrast to the saw-inlaid marquetry of the other Museum table, where the X-radiographs show no instances of stem inlaying below flowers (see fig. 19-12).



Figure 18-18 Detail of an X-radiograph (top) showing clear cutting marks of a stem running under a flower. This suggests that the stem was inlaid first with a shoulder knife and the flower second. This would not be the case if the flower had been inlaid with a marquetry saw prior to laying the veneer on the oak substrate (compare to fig. 19-12). The leaves and stems appear light because of the high concentration of iron sulfate in the wood, used as a dye mordant.

Most of the veining in the flowers and leaves of the marquetry was made using the marqueteer's saw. In addition, however, some additional veining (as well as shading on the ribbon and corner shell elements) has been added using an engraving tool, and these veins have been filled with either red or black mastic. The two types of veining are clearly distinguishable under magnification, as the engraved lines end in sharp points while saw cut lines have a blunt, square end (fig. 18-19). Analysis by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) suggests that the red filler used in the central tulip (see fig. 18-4) is made with vermilion pigment (mercury sulfide) and that the black filler is likely made with a carbon-based pigment.



Figure 18-19 Detail showing veins made with a saw (blunt ended) and additional veins added with an engraving tool (sharp ended).

Microscopic identification of the majority of the woods composing the marquetry on the table's top was not considered possible because the necessary sampling posed an excessive risk of damage to the marquetry; however, close examination under magnification indicates the presence of a great variety of woods. The bouquet of flowers, inlaid in an amaranth background, is estimated to be composed of holly, sycamore maple, barberry, boxwood, and, in small parts, a softwood similar to cedar. Many of the flowers executed in light-colored woods were originally dyed in bright colors, which have now faded almost completely.

One small fragment of veneer, about 4 mm across, was able to be lifted from the top for microscopic identification. This came from a previously damaged area of the dark leaves and stems of the flower bouquet. The use of dark, nearly black wood for leaves and stems has long been considered a distinctive and identifying characteristic of Oeben's work. In catalogues and scholarly publications about Oeben (or the early work of his successor, Jean-Henri Riesener), this dark wood has variously been described as "ebony," "dark stained wood," or "black wood."²²

The fragment of dark wood removed from the top was sampled and analyzed on its verso, without damaging the upper surface and overlying varnish layers. After analysis, the fragment was returned to its original location. Based on optical and scanning electron microscopy of anatomical features, the wood was identified as holly, naturally the whitest of woods. Further analysis demonstrated that the dark, almost black-colored holly was originally stained a shade of olive green using an unstable dye recipe, which has now deteriorated and darkened dramatically.²³

Initially, analysis by XRF showed that the dark wood in the marquetry composition uniformly contains extremely high levels of iron. Since then, numerous other examples of darkened marquetry by Oeben have been analyzed by XRF with highly consistent results, including the Museum's toilette table (cat. no. 19), along with two pairs of corner cupboards (cat. no. 17), as well as related toilette tables at the Residenz, Munich (inv. no. M33) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (1095-1882). The presence of high iron concentrations in darkened wood has also been found in the rolltop desk by Riesener in the Wallace Collection (F102). The most likely source of concentrated iron in the wood is from an iron sulfate mordant (known as *vitriol vert* or *couperose* in eighteenth-century France), which would have been used in conjunction with organic dye. Iron sulfate was widely available in mid-eighteenth-century Europe and was used by marquetry craftsmen to produce satin-gray, or *satiné gris*, stained sycamore maple backgrounds that were popular among Oeben, Riesener, and others in Paris at the time.²⁴

Further analysis of the fragment removed from the tabletop was conducted using high-performance liquid chromatography (HP/LC), which revealed the presence of a little-used yellow dyestuff in the wood, called young fustic, derived from the wood of a small tree or shrub native to Europe, smoke tree (*Cotinus coggygria*). Remarkably, the use of young fustic dye in the darkened leaves and stems of Oeben's marquetry was confirmed through independent analysis by Heinrich Piening of the Bayerische Schlösserverwaltung on a related table in the Residenz, Munich (inv. no. M33), using UV-visible fiber optic reflectance spectroscopy (FORS). The HP/LC analysis did not find any blue dye compounds in the sample, although the most common recipes for green dyes in the eighteenth century called for the combined use of a yellow and a blue dye.

A search in the Getty Research Institute library of eighteenth-century manuscripts on the subject of dyeing textiles identified a subcategory of recipes for darker greens, variously called forest drab, bottle green, or olive green, that correlates well with the current analytical results. This group of recipes calls for dyeing with a yellow dye followed by an iron sulfate mordant that shifts the color of the dye from yellow to green. In particular, Ellis gives a recipe for "forest drab" that includes young fustic and iron sulfate.²⁵ Interestingly, he notes that "this colour is inclined to darken." Young fustic (*fustet* in French) was generally considered a poor-quality dye, not lightfast and, specifically, not suitable for making green in combination with indigo.²⁶ Ellis, however, points out that "the colour it naturally produces is an orange yellow. It is

often employed in greens, olives and drabs; if good it answers a valuable purpose."²⁷

The results of the XRF analysis suggest that Oeben's workshop used solutions averaging 10% (w/v) of iron sulfate in their iron/fustic dye recipe, far in excess of the concentration recommended in most recipe books today or in the eighteenth century. It is likely that an excess of iron sulfate deposited in the wood is directly responsible for the extreme darkening and deterioration of the wood. Iron-tannate dyes (whose chemistry is closely related to iron gall ink) are thought to produce sulfuric and/or acetic acid as they degrade.²⁸ It appears that this inherently flawed iron/fustic recipe was used nearly exclusively in marquetry associated with Oeben and his workshop. Jean-Henri Riesener, who took over the Oeben workshop after his death, seems to have continued using pieces of veneer dyed with this recipe even after becoming a master in his own right. Riesener used the iron/fustic dyed wood far less than Oeben had, and it is not clear whether Riesener continued to dye wood with this recipe himself or if he was simply continuing to use stocks of dyed veneer that he inherited after the death of Oeben.

The origin of the flawed dye recipe is a mystery. Cabinetmakers were notoriously secretive about their dyeing methods, as described by Roubo:

*La teinture des bois est d'une très-grande importance pour les ébénistes. [. . .] Cependant les ébénistes ont toujours fait un très-grand secret de la composition de leurs teintures, afin de s'en conserver la jouissance exclusive, et de ne pas trop augmenter le nombre des ouvriers: de-là vient que la plupart des compositions dont les anciens ébénistes se servoient, ou ne sont pas venues jusqu'à nous, ou bien ont été mal imitées; et que celles dont on se sert a présent, ou sont défectueuses, ou bien, si elles sont bonnes, ne peuvent se perfectionner, vu que ceux qui les possèdent en cachent les procédés, non-seulement à leurs confrères, mais même à ceux dont la théorie pourroit leur être utile pour perfectionner la composition de leurs teintures.*²⁹

(Dyeing wood is very important to cabinetmakers. [. . .] However, cabinetmakers have always made great secrets of their dye recipes in order to preserve exclusivity and not increase the number of new workers too much. Hence, the majority of the recipes used by old cabinetmakers have not been passed on to us, or else have been wrongly copied; and those that are used at present are either defective, or if they are good, they cannot be improved because the people who know the recipes hide the process not only from their colleagues but also from knowledgeable people who know the

theory of dying and could help them improve the composition of their dye recipe.)

It is entirely possible, however, that Oeben learned of the iron/fustic green recipe from textile craftsmen working in the tapestry workshops of the Gobelins Manufactory with whom he would have regular contact when his workshop was located in the Gobelins (1754–61). Such a recipe might have been more stable over time when applied to textiles than it has proven to be for veneers, primarily because dyed yarn can be easily rinsed after dying. Rinsing can remove excess iron sulfate from textile materials quickly and effectively and thus reduce darkening and deterioration with age. Because of wood's density and compact structure, the dying process is much slower than for textiles, with veneers often left to soak in the dye bath for months to ensure full penetration of the dye. Likewise, effective rinsing of excess mordant out of dyed sheets of veneer would have taken a considerable amount of time, and, if the importance of removing excess iron sulfate was not recognized at the time, then inadequate rinsing could be an important factor in the blackening of Oeben's foliage.

In order to try to understand the original palette of green tones that could be achieved on holly using Oeben's recipe, a series of test squares of holly veneer were dyed using different concentrations of young fustic dye and iron sulfate mordant. The young fustic dye was prepared directly from shavings taken from locally grown smoke tree wood. Initial replication tests used pure, laboratory-grade iron sulfate as the mordant, but these tests resulted in an extremely dark green tone that seemed an unlikely choice for naturalistic rendering of foliage. Additional research into the composition of natural iron sulfate produced by European mines revealed that the iron sulfate available in Paris in the eighteenth century would have been sourced from several different regions of origin and would have been contaminated with significant amounts of copper and zinc sulfates as well as alum (potassium aluminum sulfate), magnesium sulfate, and other compounds.³⁰ Using young fustic dye followed by historically accurate blends of impure iron sulfate for the dye mordant resulted in a range of muted greens that are probably representative of the original colors of the leaves and stems in Oeben's marquetry (fig. 18-20).

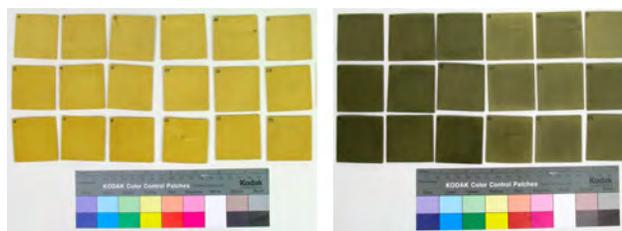


Figure 18-20 Sample tiles of holly wood. At left, dyed with young fustic dye at different concentrations; at right, mordanted with two different grades of impure iron sulfate (left nine tiles and right nine tiles) to show the range of green tones that could be achieved using Oeben's original recipe.

The central bouquet of flowers is tied with a ribbon of blue-dyed sycamore maple, now faded to green. This ribbon and the blue-dyed hornbeam cartouches around the perimeter (similarly faded) are the only originally dyed areas of marquetry to retain substantial coloration, thanks to the use of lightfast indigo-based dye. Many of the floral elements of the marquetry must have been originally dyed in bright colors, though currently these have faded to such a degree that they cannot be detected with confidence by eye. However, with the use of FORS, coupled with sophisticated spectrum-evaluation software and a large database of reference spectra, the original dye materials can be detected based on subtle characteristics of the light spectrum reflected from the individual pieces of wood. Heinrich Piening collected fifty-nine reflectance spectra from marquetry elements on the top and identified several dyestuffs, including cochineal, brazilwood, indigo, and logwood. With knowledge of the dyes in hand, historically accurate replications of the dyed woods were made to determine a palette of reference colors for each element in the original marquetry. Most recipes were based on either Schwebpe or Michaelson and Buchholz.³¹ Examples of naturally colored wood veneers used in the original manufacture of the table's marquetry were also obtained. All of the veneer reference materials were sanded and varnished with Roubo's transparent *vernis de Venise*³² in order to present a good approximation of the final appearance of the veneers on the table when it was newly made.

Using these reference materials as a guide, digital imaging specialists at the J. Paul Getty Museum manipulated high-resolution images of the table, creating multiple masks and transformation layers to match the appearance of each element carefully to its corresponding reference sample. Color-controlled prints of the manipulated image were compared to the actual dyed wood samples, and subtle corrections were made iteratively. The shading and shadowing apparent in most of the marquetry are the result of sand shading of the individual pieces of wood that was part of the original production process; this was

not enhanced digitally. In the blackened wood of the leaves and stems, the original sand shading can no longer be detected, so in these areas an imitation of sand shading was digitally applied. The resulting images (figs. 18-21,

18-22) present as accurate an image of the vibrant original appearance of Oeben's marquetry as is currently possible.



Figure 18-21 The Museum's table, in its current condition on the left and virtually restored to its original colors on the right.



Figure 18-22 The top of the table, virtually restored to its original colors based on detailed analysis of trace dye compounds remaining in the wood and the use of reference samples, prepared using traditional techniques.

The table is decorated with thirteen gilt bronze mounts, including the molded rim of the top. Within each type, the mounts are consistent in their design and chasing, as well as in the texture and coloration of their versos; there are no obvious replacements or aftercasts. Nine of the gilt bronze mounts were analyzed for elemental composition using XRF. All were found to be made from brass alloys that are typical of eighteenth-century Parisian gilt bronze production, with zinc levels between 20 and 25%, lead between 1.0 and 3.0%, and tin between 0.5 and 1.0%. The alloy of the mounts was also found to contain impurities, such as silver, antimony, arsenic, nickel, and iron, at levels expected for the period. The handles and escutcheons were not found to be significantly different in composition from the other gilt bronze mounts on the table.

Eight pieces of brass hardware were also analyzed by XRF to determine their composition. These include upper and lower guide rails, both gear wheels, stop plates, and the side drawer lock housing. The guide rails for the sliding top were made by sand casting and have an alloy similar to the gilt bronze mounts. The gear wheels as well as the original stop plates are made from a typical sheet brass alloy of the period, with high zinc (ranging from 28 to 32%), lead around 1.5%, and little or no tin. The levels of impurities are similar to the gilt bronzes, but with little to no antimony. Only one brass stop plate (at the center of the bottom of the sliding drawer case) and the lock housing on the side drawer were found to have alloys not consistent with eighteenth-century production. These have very high zinc levels, at about 34 to 36%, and very low levels of impurities, suggesting that they are late nineteenth- or twentieth-century replacements.

A.H., with Y.C. and C.E.

NOTES

1. For information on Jean-François Oeben, see Pradère 1989a, 252–63; Stratmann-Döhler 2002.
2. Coutinho 1999, 167–75, no. 14, inv. no. 749; 177–81, no. 15, inv. no. 579.
3. Wark 1979, 57, fig. 77; Bennett and Sargentson 2008, 65–68, no. 8.
4. Boutemy 1964, 208, fig. 2.
5. Janneau 1952, pl. 143.
6. Janneau 1930, pl. XXVa.
7. For similar arrangements of flowers tied with a bow, see Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 56, for the marquetry on a *meuble entre deux*, with tambour doors, ex. coll. Perrin; and 73, for a *secrétaire*, with the bouquet across the lower doors, ex. coll. Segoura.
8. Langer and Ottomeyer 1995, 128–32, no. 26; Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 60–61, 178.
9. Hôtel Drouot, *Tableaux meubles et objets d'art tapis-tapisseries*, February 8, 1993 (Paris: Hôtel Drouot, 1993), lot 58, formerly in the Deane Johnson Collection, sold, Sotheby Parke-Bernet, *Highly Important Furniture Decorations and Extremely Fine Continental Porcelain*, December 9, 1972 (New York: Sotheby Parke-Bernet, 1972), lot 97.
10. Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 53, 171.
11. Acc. no. 1095:1–3 1882. Stratmann 1973, 110–113, figs. 37a–c; Brackett 1930, 8, no. 18.
12. Sold, Christie's, *Magnificent French Furniture: Formerly from the Collection of Monsieur and Madame Riahi*, November 2, 2000 (New York: Christie's, 2000), lot 20; Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 49, cat. no. 38. For a discussion of the relationship between the marquetry of Latz and Oeben, see cat. no. 17.
13. Acc. no. 1982.60.61, given by Jack and Belle Linsky. Metropolitan Museum of Art 1984, 210–12; Parke-Bernet Galleries, *Property of the Late Martha Baird Rockefeller*, October 23, 1971 (New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries, 1971), lot 711; Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 124, cat. no. 121.
14. Alcouffe, Dion-Tenenbaum, and Lefébure 1993, 176–79; Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 93, cat. no. 119.
15. Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 121, cat. no. 155; ex. coll. Partridge Fine Arts Ltd., *Summer Exhibition 1984, June 4–July 28, 1984* (London: Partridge Fine Arts Ltd., 1984), no. 35.
16. Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 33 and 100, cat. no. 126; sold, Sotheby's, *The Distinguished Collection of a Lady*, December 9–11, 1997 (Zurich: Sotheby's, 1997), lot 236; ex. coll. Herbert M. Gutmann, sold, Paul Graupe, *Sammlung Herbert M. Gutmann*, April 12–14, 1934 (Berlin: Paul Graupe, 1934), lot 96.
17. Guiffrey 1899, 338.
18. J. Paul Getty Diary, July 29–December 31, 1949, October 7, 1949, 50. Getty Research Institute, IA40009. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/2010ia16v10>.
19. J. Paul Getty Diary, July 29–December 31, 1949, October 12, 1949, 52. Getty Research Institute, IA40009. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/2010ia16v10>.
20. J. Paul Getty Diary, July 29–December 31, 1949, December 31, 1949, 102–3. Getty Research Institute, IA40009. <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/2010ia16v10>.
21. For the technique of chemical wood identification, see Schilling and Heginbotham forthcoming.
22. De Bellaigue 1974; Ramond 2002; Langer and Ottomeyer 1995.
23. Heginbotham et al. 2020.
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19. Writing and toilette table

French (Paris), ca. 1760–70

By Jean-Francois Oeben (French, born Germany, 1721–1763, *ébéniste mécanicien du Roi* from 1760, master 1761) and workshop

White oak* veneered with kingwood, tulipwood, amaranth, boxwood, holly*, barberry*, stained hornbeam, bloodwood, sycamore maple*, stained maple*, ebony; leather; silk* fabric lining; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron fittings and lock; iron screws

H: 2 ft. 4 in., W: 2 ft. 7 1/2 in., D: 1 ft. 6 1/8 in. (71.1 × 80 × 46 cm)

71.DA.103

DESCRIPTION

The table of rectangular shape is supported on four cabriole legs that are five sided in section. The front is double bowed, the sides serpentine and bowed, and the back single bowed. The top is of conforming shape and is surrounded by a flat molding with raised edges, forming a shallow rim on the top. Each corner is set with a gilt bronze mount consisting of a bearded and mustachioed Chinese head supported on a stippled shaft from which depend three husks. Above the head spring acanthus leaves that cross. The upper part of the mount is formed by a scallop shell, and a separate simple molding extends down the outer edge of each leg to the foot. The serpentine lower edge of the frieze is set with leafy moldings that extend down the inner edges of each leg. Each foot is clad with a mount that consists of leafy

scrolls set to either side of a cabochon, above a lipped extension.

The tabletop (fig. 19-1) is veneered with a complex panel of marquetry. At the center is a low-walled wicker basket filled with flowers, among which roses, tulips, narcissus, and honeysuckle can be identified. The basket sits on a shaped plinth that is faced with a large scallop shell and panels of burl wood. To each side of the plinth a broad frame extends around the outer surface of the tabletop. Above, it supports a shallow trellis, from the center of which depends a double garland of flowers that extends to each corner. Here they are threaded through the frame to hang down at either side. The flowers forming the swag have not been cut to give much detail, but among them roses, poppies, daisies, honeysuckle, and convolvulus may be recognized.



Figure 19-1 Top.

At the corners of the tabletop are animals representing the four elements. A dove representing Air is perched on a small cloud on the upper left. Below on the lower left is a swan, representing Water, which sits on a scrolled extension of the broad frame and is backed by a stand of bullrushes. On the upper right, a salamander, representing Fire, is perched on a leafy scroll and is surrounded by flames. Below, on the lower right, sits a lion, representing Earth. Its front legs are set on an extension of the plinth, its back legs supported by a scroll. Behind rises a leafy tree carrying a single fruit.

Various elements of the marquetry—the flowers, the leaves, and the scallop shell, for example—bear some evidence of scorching, and much of the green stain has survived in the leaves and the maple burl wood veneers. The friezes of the table are veneered with shaped marquetry panels of trellis, with circles at the crossings. The squares formed are filled with four petaled flowers in a barberry. Each panel is outlined by holly and black-dyed maple stringing, and the remaining surfaces of the frieze are veneered with tulipwood. The outer surfaces of each leg are set with narrow panels of maple burl wood, outlined with holly and black-dyed maple stringing. Situated above each panel, at the junction of the leg with

the frieze, is a similarly outlined oval panel of maple burl wood. The remaining surfaces of the legs are veneered with tulipwood.

The body of the table is occupied by a large lockable drawer, the front of which, with the exception of a narrow upper border of tulipwood, is veneered with a panel of trellis marquetry. The drawer is covered by a sliding lid. The surface of the lid carries a large kidney-shaped panel of leather, which has been stained with marbled designs. Its border is tooled and gilded with stylized pomegranates, clover, leafy scrolls, stars, and dots. Below is a small panel of maple burl wood veneer and to either side a panel of trellis marquetry. The remaining area of the lid is veneered with tulipwood, and all these fields are outlined with holly and black-dyed maple stringing.

Pressure on a gilt bronze stud set at the front of the lid activates a steel catch, enabling the lid to be manually slid back when the drawer has been opened. The catch connects with a second catch located in the forward interior surface of the drawer, which itself may be activated by pressure on a lever set below the drawer. The latter action is necessary to lock the sliding lid closed.

The sides of the drawers are veneered, at the front, with trellis marquetry, and the writing surface that slides back to reveal compartments sits on ebony glides. The marquetry is relatively unfaded, and the brightness of the trellis gives some idea of the original appearance of the table. The interior of the drawer is divided into two compartments of unequal size, completely lined with pale blue watered silk (fig. 19-2).



Figure 19-2 Interior of the drawer with divided compartments and watered silk lining.

MARKS

The underside of the table on the rear rail is stamped “J.F.OEBEN” twice (fig. 19-3). The underside of the central rail is inscribed with “No.4” in ink. Also beneath the table is a label printed “Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. / 10 West Fifty-fourth Street, New York.” A label inside the drawer in the front right compartment is inked, “C.6478 / J.D.R Jnr.”



Figure 19-3 The underside of the rear rail is stamped “J.F.OEBEN.”

COMMENTARY

In his short career, Oeben made numerous small toilette tables that contained mechanical fittings or were designed to be manipulated by hand.¹ The Museum’s table, stamped “J.F.OEBEN,” is of the latter variety: when the large drawer in the frieze is unlocked the drawer can be pulled out by hand and the top slid back. These toilette or writing tables were decorated with floral marquetry, sometimes combined with geometrical parquetry as seen on this example.² Examples are known that are solely veneered with parquetry³ or with plain veneers.⁴

Two other tables bear trellis marquetry of the same design, with similarly decorated tops containing the four animals that represent the elements. One is in the musée du Louvre,⁵ and the other, formerly in the Lindenberg family, was sold in Paris in 2003 (figs. 19-4, 19-5).⁶ The top of the former table shows a basket of different form, but some of the flowers that fill it have been cut from the same patterns or templates as those on the Museum’s table. The surrounding frame is of differing design, and the floral swags are composed of flowers that are more widely placed, though many are of the same model.⁷ The table from the Lindenberg collection, probably the one purchased in Paris in 1768 by the Heinrich Carl von Schimmelmann, has a marquetry top of almost precisely the same design as that found on the Museum’s table. With the exception of the large tulip, the flowers in the central basket repeat each other, as do those composing the floral swags.⁸



Figure 19-4 Jean-François Oeben (1721–1763), Mechanical table, ca. 1755. Oak veneered with amaranth, burl wood, bloodwood, kingwood, and mahogany; marquetry in polychrome wood and green-stained ivory; Japanese lacquer; gilt bronze mounts, 68.3 × 79.5 × 44.8 cm (27 × 31 × 17.5 in.). Paris, Musée du Louvre, OA 10404. Photo: © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Thierry Ollivier / Art Resource, NY



Figure 19-5 Jean-François Oeben (1721–1763), Mechanical table, ca. 1750–55. Oak veneered with kingwood, amaranth, burl wood, sycamore maple, mahogany; marquetry in polychrome wood; gilt bronze mounts; drawers lined with blue silk, 72 × 80 × 43 cm (28 × 31.5 × 17 in.). Paris, Sotheby's, *Bel ameublement et objets d'art*, December 15, 2003, lot 109. Photo: © Sotheby's / Art Digital Studio

This reuse and repetition of elements is also found in the floral marquetry of André Charles Boulle, in whose steps Oeben followed in his reintroduction of naturalistic floral marquetry on Parisian furniture. Oeben would have been familiar with that great master's work, especially as he rented lodgings at the Louvre in the large apartment of Boulle's youngest son, Charles Joseph. He lived there from 1751 to 1754. In the inventory taken after Oeben's death on January 21, 1763, the following is listed on March 3: "Un petit coffre-fort rempli de fleurs en bois découpé et nué, propres à être employés en différens ouvrages, dont la plus large est d'environ 3 au 4 pouces et la plus petite de la largeur de 3 lignes."⁹ A similar box containing wood flowers and birds was listed as being destroyed in the fire of 1720 at André Charles Boulle's workshop.¹⁰

Unlike the Museum's table, the two other similar examples are fitted with small drawers set within the large frieze drawer. This addition necessarily makes the drawer quite shallow in the central area. The drawer of the Louvre table has a central rectangle decorated with Japanese lacquer that lifts to form a reading stand. It is flanked on either side by lidded compartments. The surfaces of the lids are veneered with the same design of trellis marquetry as that found on the frieze. The interior of the drawer of the Lindenberg table is fitted with, at the center, a covered compartment, the lid of which slides back. To either side the hinged lids of the compartments are veneered with marquetry depicting single-cut branches of roses.

The large single drawer of the Museum's table is not fitted with a bookrest or lidded compartments. The entire lidded surface, at pressure on a button, can be released and pushed back manually to reveal a blue silk-lined

interior. The trilobed panel of leather forming a writing surface has been stained to resemble marble, and the gilded tooling around the edge may be original. Such a sliding arrangement is unique in Oeben's oeuvre, although a shaped and similarly stained leather panel, decorated with a border of tooled and gilded daisies, is found on the inner surface of the fall front of a small writing box stamped with this master's name.¹¹

These three tables have been traditionally dated to 1754 or a little earlier on the basis of a table of similar form and decoration that appears in a painting by François Guérin (active between 1751 and 1791) of Madame de Pompadour and her daughter Alexandrine Le Normant d'Étiolles, formerly in the Edouard de Rothschild collection. The table in the painting is shown open, with the sides of the drawer veneered with no design but with the surfaces of the hinged lids decorated with trellis marquetry; this is likely to be the one now in the musée du Louvre, whose trellis pattern on its sides also corresponds to what is visible on the profile view of the table in the double portrait.¹² Alexandrine died in 1754 of peritonitis, and previous historians have used this date as the last possible year for the execution of the painting and the table depicted in it. However, Alastair Laing has discovered that the painting was described in the Salon of 1763 and is a posthumous portrait of the child, apparently taken from a painting made by François Boucher in 1749.¹³ Thus it is known that Madame de Pompadour possessed a table of this type in 1763, but it is not known when she acquired it, nor can it be identified in the inventory taken at her death a year later. Similar identification issues arise for the exceptional Oeben table from the Jack and Belle Linsky Collection preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. With its flower marquetry on the sides and its unique treatment of the legs, pierced with three openings, it does not match the table in the Guérin painting. Nonetheless, it was most likely made for Madame de Pompadour, whose coat of arms appears in the gilt bronze mounts at each corner and whose ducal coronet decorates the vase at the center of the marquetry top (in 1752 she was given the title duchesse-marquise de Pompadour). But neither can the Linsky table be identified with the ones cited in the after-death inventory of Madame de Pompadour.¹⁴

The dating of objects made by Oeben is extremely difficult as his entire career lasted only about sixteen years. After his death in 1763, his widow, per guild regulations, continued operating the workshop with his stamp. It is very likely that a considerable number of pieces in the neoclassical style bearing Oeben's stamp were in fact made or finished after his death. One former apprentice,

Jean-Henri Riesener, took over the practical day-to-day production of the workshop, married Oeben's widow in 1767, and continued to use his master's stamp at least until he himself became a master in 1768.

Oeben's name first appears in the *Livre Journal* of Lazare Duvaux in 1752, where he is listed four times as making a total of twelve frames, some listed as for prints and others listed as being in "bois de rapport, à fleurs" or "incrusté de fleurs," that were all sold to Madame de Pompadour. Between 1757 and 1758 five mechanical tables are listed in the *Livre Journal*.¹⁵ None is entered under Oeben's name, and only one is described as having floral marquetry. That table cost 216 livres, as did three of the others, so it should be assumed that they were similarly decorated.

At least four *tables coulantes* or *à coulisse* are listed in the inventory taken at Oeben's death, and three other tables are described in some detail.¹⁶ One, with almost the same measurements as a larger table in the Rijksmuseum,¹⁷ appears in the *chambre* of the late Oeben:

*Une table de 3 pieds 4 pouces [108 cm] de long sur 19 pouces [51 cm] de large, 27 pouces [72 cm] de haut, plaquée sur le dessus de bois de rose à compartiments et filets blancs et noirs, trois panneaux sur le dessus fond d'amaranthe incrustées de fleurs nuancées, le corps de la parclose au pourtour en mosaïque de rose bleu fond satiné, orné de quatre chutes de bronze ciselé à testes de bellier doré d'or moulu et petites moulures sur tous le champs, le dessus orné d'une moulure de bronze au pourtour d'un pouce [2.7 cm] de large, le tout doré d'or moulu, le dessus s'ouvrant à ressorts secrets avec son pupitre avec ses pieds chaussés à roulettes de cuivre.*¹⁸

The table was valued at 700 livres. The two other tables, described as being in the *magasin* "ayant vue sur le Cour du Prince," are listed as follows:

*1. Item, une table en pupitre, de 32 pouces [86 cm] de long sur 26 [70 cm] de large et 16 [43 cm] de profondeur, le dessus de bois argenté garni de fleurs, et le pupitre de bois de rose et deux panneaux de fleurs, [lids for compartments?] le dessus de lad. table garnie de sa moulure de bronze - prisee 96 liv[res].*¹⁹

*83. Item, une table coulante de 27 pouces [72 cm] de long, 16 pouces [43 cm] de large, avec un tiroir par le côté, plaquée en mosaïque, ornée de chutes, pieds, cadre autour du dessus et moulures autour de la parclose de bronze non doré - prisee 96 liv.*²⁰

Both of these tables, bearing measurements similar to the Museum's example, were being offered for sale and must

have been made in the last year or two before Oeben's premature death. As in 1757 he was probably the supplier to Lazare Duvaux of such tables, he must have produced this popular model at least during the last six years of his life. Oeben specialized in small tables with mechanized moving parts, though the Museum's table did not and does not have such a mechanism: the moving parts were and remain manually operated. Even so, the carcass of the Museum's table may have been made by Oeben in the early 1760s, while the veneer, with its somewhat neoclassical trellis marquetry, was most likely applied by his workshop after his death in 1763.

The marquetry on the top of this table uses very little veneer dyed with the problematic, blackening green dye seen in cat. no. 17 and discussed at length in cat. no. 18. Oeben seems to have used his inherently flawed green dye extensively in the mid-1750s when he introduced this form of table, and the majority of floral marquetry produced in his lifetime contains substantial numbers of dark brown or black leaves and stems that are the result of the deterioration of the components of this dye recipe. The poor stability of the greens dyed with this recipe must have become apparent within a decade or two, and its use diminished over time. Thus the very limited use of blackened wood in the Museum's table argues for a date of the marquetry in the 1760s.

As is the case with most *ébénistes* of the eighteenth century, no working drawings or sketches made in Oeben's workshop have survived. His floral marquetry has been compared to the engravings after the flower painter Louis Tessier (ca. 1719–1781) who worked in the Gobelins at the same time as Oeben. Indeed, the families appear to have been close, for in 1768 a daughter of Tessier became godmother to a daughter of Simon Oeben.²¹ Flowers based on designs after Tessier appear in the marquetry of Oeben on several pieces.²² They also appear on pieces attributed to Jean-Pierre Latz and even in the marquetry of pieces by Oeben's apprentice, Jean-Henri Riesener.²³ The direct and indirect transmission of Tessier's flower patterns to the workshop of *ébénistes* deserves further study.²⁴ A technical examination of this table shows that the marquetry was cut using the conic cutting method, which succeeded the knife inlaid method characteristic of work produced by Oeben, as, for instance, the other Museum's table (cat. no. 18) (see "Technical Description" below).

Francis Watson has pointed out that the trellis pattern used by Oeben for the friezes of at least these three tables seems to derive from similar trelliswork found in lacquer on the drawer fronts of Japanese boxes (*kodansu*).²⁵ This

design, a traditional Japanese pattern, was found on lacquered objects imported into France in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It is possible that a *marchand-mercier* such as Lazare Duvaux who sold such exotic wares might have encouraged Oeben to adapt the design to his marquetry.

The gilt bronze mounts on the Museum's table are of the same model as those found on the two similar tables mentioned above (Louvre and ex. coll. Lindenberg). The scrolled feet are found on numerous mechanical tables by Oeben, as are the corner mounts bearing the masks of mustachioed Chinese men.²⁶ The names of the craftsmen who supplied them are listed in the inventory taken at Oeben's death in 1763.²⁷ He owed the chaser Louis Barthélemy Hervieux the large sum of 7,721 livres, showing that the latter must have provided a great amount of work for the master.²⁸ To the chaser Duplessis²⁹ and the caster Étienne Forestier³⁰ he owed 1,122 livres and 4,179 livres 9 sols 3 deniers, respectively.

PROVENANCE

Before 1912: John George Stewart Murray, Marquess of Tullibardine, eighth Duke of Atholl, Scottish, 1871–1942 (Scotland), sold or by gift to Mary Gavin Baillie-Hamilton;³¹ before or by 1912: Mary Gavin Baillie-Hamilton (Hon. Mrs. Robert Baillie-Hamilton), Scottish, 1832–1912, by gift or inheritance to her sister Magdalen Bateson Harvey;³² by 1912–13: Magdalen Bateson Harvey (Lady Harvey), Scottish, 1836–1913 (London, England);³³ by 1913 and before 1927: Lewis & Simmons (180 New Bond Street, London, England; 16, rue de la Paix, Paris, France; and 605 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY), sold to Elbert H. Gary;³⁴ –1927: Elbert H. Gary, American, 1846–1927 (New York, NY), upon his death, held in trust by the estate;³⁵ 1927–28: Estate of Elbert H. Gary, American, 1846–1927 [sold, *Collection of the Estate of the Late Judge Elbert H. Gary*, American Art Association, April 21, 1928, lot 272, to Duveen Brothers, Inc.]; 1928: Duveen Brothers, Inc. (New York, NY), sold to John D. Rockefeller, 1928;³⁶ 1928–60: John D. Rockefeller, Jr., American, 1874–1960 (New York, NY), by inheritance to his wife, Martha Baird Rockefeller, 1960;³⁷ 1960–71: Martha Baird Rockefeller, American, 1895–1971 (New York, NY) [sold, *Property of the Estate of the Late Martha Baird Rockefeller*, Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, October 23, 1971, lot 712, through the Antique Porcelain Company to the J. Paul Getty Museum].³⁸

EXHIBITION HISTORY

The J. Paul Getty Collection, Minneapolis Institute of Art (Minneapolis), June 29–September 3, 1972; *The J. Paul*

Getty Collection of French Decorative Arts, Detroit Institute of Arts (Detroit), October 3, 1972–August 31, 1973; *The Making of Furniture*, J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center (Los Angeles), October 7, 2003–October 23, 2005.

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The J. Paul Getty Collection 1972, unpaginated, no. 56, ill. 61; Wilson 1975, 111, ill.; Kjellberg 1989, 619; Pradère 1989a, 255, fig. 264; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 52, no. 67; Godla and Hanlon 1995, 169, fig. 12; Auslander 1996, 55, fig. 5; Baumeister et al. 1997, 256, fig. 11; Ramond 2000a, 31, 148–53, ill.; Ramond 2000b, 12–13, cover, ill.; Wilson and Hess 2001, 36–37, no. 64; Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 96–97, 182, ill.; Kopf 2008, 106–7, fig. 134; Baarsen 2013, 177, 179; Durand 2014, 386.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The table's structure is constructed entirely of oak. The four cabriole legs are made from single pieces of oak, extending from the floor to the top of the case. The serpentine side and back rails of the case are built up of four glued laminations of plain-sawn oak, stacked one on top of the other. Each lamina is approximately 3.3 cm high, corresponding to 1 1/4 Paris *pouce*, and is carefully positioned with the growth rings oriented horizontally such that the assembled rail is effectively quartersawn. This refined method of assembly yields rails of optimal dimensional stability. The side, front, and back rails are attached to the legs with unpegged, shouldered mortise-and-tenon joints, clearly visible in X-radiographs. The front rail is made of a single heavy piece of oak, which is connected to the two front legs with paired mortise and tenons, also unpegged. The front edge of this rail has been carved back, or relieved, at the sides to accommodate the pendant brackets along the lower edge of the drawer front.

The table's top is made of three pieces of perfectly quartersawn oak, butt joined and glued together. The top slides forward and back on paired brass rails, mounted with iron screws to the case sides and to the underside of the top. The brass runners are neat and tight in the case sides, though the runners on the top are not. It seems that repairs to the top addressing shrinkage problems required that the runners be slightly repositioned and the mortises expanded. The runners are cast, not made from sheet brass, as is made clear by significant porosities visible in the metal. The movement of the top is limited by stop pins that run through the side rails from bottom to

top near the back leg. The tops of the pins run in grooves cut into the underside of the top; they are roughly threaded along their lower inch, near the slotted heads (fig. 19-6). This threading is designed to grab the wood of the case-side hole, but after centuries of use, the holes are nearly completely stripped. The lack of a spring-powered, or even geared, opening mechanism makes this table unusual among the many similar *tables à coulisse* produced in Oeben's workshop. This feature is, however, shared with the Lindenberg table, thought to have been purchased in 1768 and which has a nearly identical marquetry design.



Figure 19-6 Detail of one of the stop pins that limits the movement of the sliding top.

The case bottom is formed of two panels, each made of two pieces of quartersawn oak, butt joined and glued to each other, and separated by a medial rail running from the center of the front rail to the center of the rear rail (fig. 19-7). The medial rail, which is chamfered along all four longitudinal edges, is fastened to the rails on either end with unpegged mortise-and-tenon joints. The two panels rest in grooves cut into the side rails, legs, and medial rail and front and rear rails. The grain of the panels runs from side to side, and the panels are not beveled on either face. The internal drawer runners were glued in place after the assembly of the case bottom.



Figure 19-7 Bottom.

The drawer unit, with its sliding writing surface, rides on ebony glides approximately 1 cm square, which are glued into a groove in the drawer side (fig. 19-8). These glides slide in grooves in the case sides, running from the rear of the case interior to the very front surface of the case. At their forward end, these grooves are hidden, and the forward travel of the drawer unit is stopped by diagonally positioned blocks of tulipwood, which slide into a tapered dovetail mortise in the front face of each leg (fig. 19-9). The blocks are held in place and are hidden by the bronze mounts on the corners.



Figure 19-8 Detail of the ebony glides on the sides of the drawer. These slide within grooves on either side of the case.



Figure 19-9 Detail of one of the diagonally oriented blocks that cover the grooves cut for the drawer glides.

The sides of the drawer unit are made of quartersawn oak boards. The curved front and rear panels are fabricated in a manner analogous to the case sides and back, with three plain-sawn boards glued one atop the other and then sawn to shape, resulting in a dimensionally stable quartersawn element. The drawer bottom is composed of four pieces of quartersawn oak, butt joined, with the grain running from side to side. The bottom slides into grooves in the drawer sides from the rear, overlapping the drawer back. The drawer is divided in its interior by an oak board running from front to back near the right side, held in place with rabbet-and-dado joints at either end. The lining of the drawer is a plain weave, moiré silk textile, trimmed so that no selvage is visible and glued to the substrate with an unknown adhesive. The threads, which exhibit little or no twist, are woven finely, with 39 threads per cm along the warp and 43 threads per cm along the weft.

The sliding writing surface is made of four quartersawn oak panels, butt joined and glued together, with the grain running from side to side. The panel slides into the drawer assembly from the rear, running in grooves in the sides of the drawer. This relatively thin panel was not

counter-veneered and, perhaps as a result, has cupped slightly.

The elaborate veneering of the table utilizes a wide variety of naturally colored and dyed woods, executed in a combination of saw- and knife-cut techniques. The floral marquetry of the top is executed in a variety of natural and dyed woods that could only be identified by direct observation under magnification, without sampling for anatomical investigation by thin section (as is preferred). Without microscopic examination of anatomical features, the identification of the woods must be considered provisional, but the top appears to contain kingwood, amaranth, bloodwood, barberry, boxwood, holly, maple burl, hornbeam, and sycamore maple. Many of the flowers are made from a single piece of wood, with the contrast and shadows provided by careful sand shading and the use of carefully selected figured wood such as end-grain and oyster-cut barberry veneer.

Careful examination of the marquetry under magnification, in combination with X-radiography, reveals certain information about the working methods used. It appears that nearly all the flowers and a majority of the leaves on the table's top were stack cut using a fretsaw, mostly from single pieces of naturally colored or dyed veneer. The individual elements of each flower were selectively sand shaded to give the illusion of shadow and volume and then reassembled, closing up the gaps or kerfs made by the saw as much as possible, before gluing them to pieces of paper. The flowers and many of the leaves appear to have been inlaid in the amaranth veneer background using a fretsaw, before the amaranth was glued down to the oak substrate. The evidence for this is found by a careful examination of the perimeters of the elements; both the flowers and the leaves tend to have rounded forms, with few pointed tips, and the blunt-ended kerf left by the saw blade is often visible at inner corners (fig. 19-10). The gap between the flowers and the background is larger than it is for the shoulder-knife inlaid flowers in Oeben's earlier marquetry (cat. nos. 17, 18) but is thin enough in many instances to suggest that the flowers may have been inlaid using a specialized sawing technique known as bevel cutting or conic cutting. The process is similar to boule marquetry or stack cutting where the flower or leaf is glued to the background veneer and the outline is cut simultaneously in the flower and the background veneer. However, unlike boule marquetry cutting, in conic cutting the saw blade is angled slightly away from the center of the flower during cutting so that the flower is slightly enlarged and the corresponding hole in the background is slightly reduced. This has the effect of nearly eliminating the kerf created

by the saw blade when the flower is glued in place.³⁹ When executed well, this technique results in very tight joints; however, only a single inlay group can be made at a time. Knife marks and bent fibers, which are the signs of shoulder knife inlaying, are limited to the stems of the flowers and a few leaves on this table (fig. 19-11).



Figure 19-10 Blunt-ended saw cuts and consistently rounded petal tips suggest the flowers and many leaves were inlaid in the background veneer using a fretsaw prior to gluing the marquetry to the oak substrate.

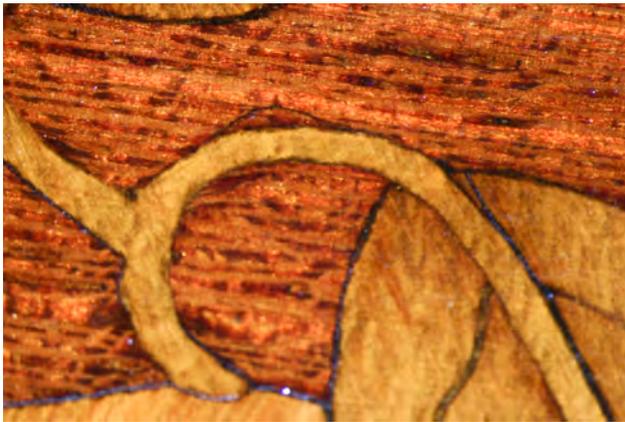


Figure 19-11 An errant knife mark, bent wood fibers in the background veneer, and sharp corners with no kerf all suggest that this curved stem was inlaid using a shoulder knife, after the veneer had been applied to the oak substrate.

Examination of the marquetry on the top using X-radiography supports the conclusion that the flowers were saw inlaid first, presumably by conic cutting, and that the stems were inlaid after the flowers and background veneer were already adhered to the oak substrate. In figure 19-12, the outlines of the flowers and stems are visible because animal glue, concentrated in the joints, is denser and more radio-opaque than wood, resulting in a white line in the X-radiograph. The lines between the flower petals and the background veneer are notably less distinct than the lines surrounding the pieces of stem. This is almost certainly because the stems were inlaid using a shoulder knife, which cut through the background veneer into the oak substrate, leaving a deep mark. When the stems were glued in place, the knife

mark filled with glue, resulting in a thicker glue line than around the saw-inlaid flowers. In addition, the knife marks around the stems do not continue under the flowers, which accords with the stems being inlaid after the flowers. This is in contrast to what is seen in the X-radiographs of the marquetry on the top of Oeben's earlier mechanical table (see fig. 18-18), where the cut marks of the stems are clearly visible under the flowers, showing that the stems were inlaid first, followed by the flowers.

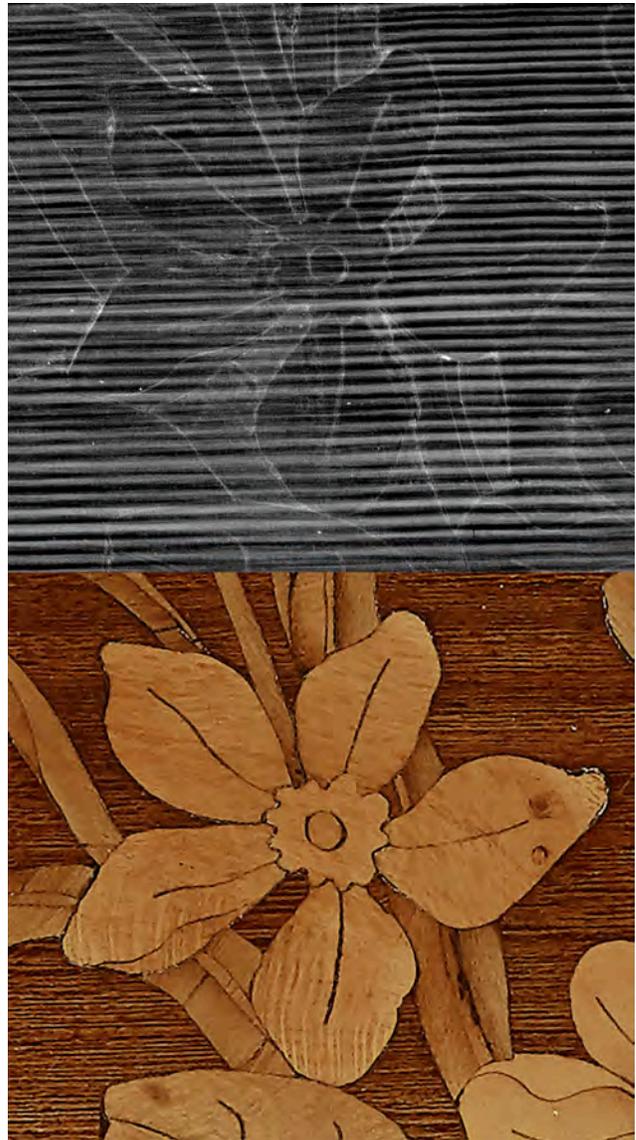


Figure 19-12 Detail of an X-radiograph (top) of a central flower in the marquetry of the top. The outlines of the stems do not continue under the flower petals, suggesting that the stems were inlaid after the flowers (compare to fig. 18-18). The thickness of the glue lines also gives clues to the marquetry techniques used.

The differences in marquetry technique between this table and the mechanical table (cat. no. 18) suggest that

this table was produced later. In particular, conic cutting (more evidence of which below) is generally considered to have been developed in the later Rococo period and represents an innovation in technique that succeeded the use of shoulder knife inlay, used by Oeben in the 1750s and early 1760s.

Much of the hornbeam and sycamore maple, which, along with the naturally bright yellow barberry, comprises the majority of the floral elements, is likely to have been dyed in shades of green, blue, and red, though only vestiges of blue and green remain visible today. Traces of a bluish-green color survive in the maple burl wood panels that were likely dyed in imitation of stone.⁴⁰ The small leaf elements, which currently appear black, are probably holly that was originally dyed olive green but has degraded due to the high iron sulfate content of the dye recipe (see cat. no. 18). As mentioned in “Commentary” above, the very limited use of this deterioration-prone dye recipe on this tabletop suggests a relatively late date for the marquetry. As points of comparison, the toilette and writing table at the Wallace Collection (inv. F110), thought to have been completed in Oeben’s workshop in 1763 or 1764, still made extensive use of this now-darkened wood in the central floral marquetry of the top, while the Lindenberg table, thought to have been purchased in 1768, appears to use even less than the Museum’s table. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the location of the Lindenberg table is not known, so it has not been possible to examine it in person to make precise comparisons of the marquetry pattern and cutting techniques.

There is some limited engraving visible in the marquetry of the top. This is clearly distinguishable from saw cuts under magnification as the engraved lines end in sharp points while saw-cut lines have a blunt, square end (fig. 19-13). The engraving occurs primarily in the four animals representing the elements, though two clusters of flowers are also engraved; on one of these clusters the lines are colored with a red-pigmented filler, almost certainly containing vermilion based on the detection of mercury by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF).

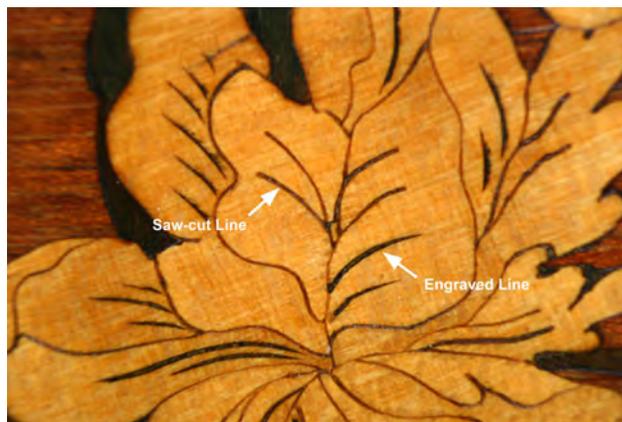


Figure 19-13 Some flowers were enhanced with engraved veins filled with black or red mastic. The engraved lines have pointed tips, while saw-cut veins have blunt tips.

The sides of the case and the drawer unit are decorated with geometric marquetry in tulipwood, amaranth, holly, barberry, black-dyed holly or maple, and green-stained maple burl. Every visible interior surface of the compartment beneath the writing surface has been very carefully veneered with tulipwood so that the oak substrate is not visible.

Based on evidence revealed by careful visual examination of the marquetry, augmented by X-radiography, it is likely that the trellis marquetry on the sides of the table was cut using a combination of fretsaw cutting and inlay using a shoulder knife. By examining X-rays of the marquetry on the case sides and writing surface, it was possible to determine that the tulipwood border was laid down first and the holly and black-dyed maple stringing was then glued in place along its borders. During assembly, the stringing was held in place with small veneer pins, nailed into the oak substrate, which pushed the thin strips of wood up against the edge of the tulipwood. The holes left by these pins, and even some of the tips of the pins that broke off in the wood, were then covered when the adjacent trellis marquetry was applied. This evidence is now visible in X-ray images (fig. 19-14).

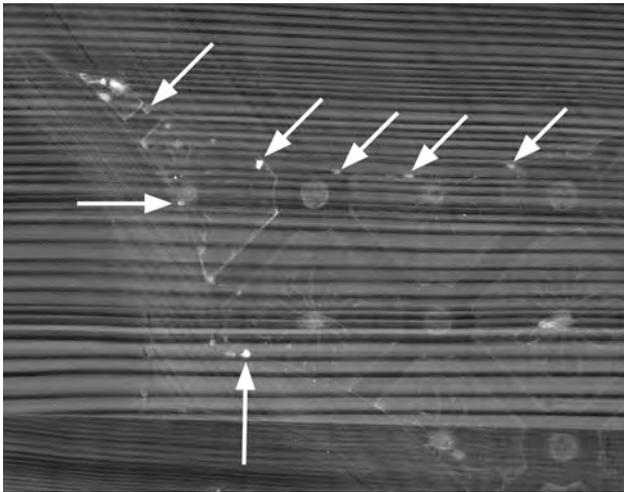


Figure 19-14 X-radiography indicates the use of veneer pins to hold stringing in place during marquetry assembly. Both the holes left by the pins and even some broken-off fragments are visible in this X-radiograph.

It seems that the holly framing of the trellis was applied next. The general shape of the trellis was apparently cut first using a fretsaw, but following gluing of the trellis on the carcass, it was trimmed to final shape with an inlay knife. Saw cut marks (fig. 19-15) as well as inlay knife marks (fig. 19-16) are both visible on the white holly trellis; however, the most obvious fretsaw mark is approximately 2 mm from the finished trellis edge, so it can be concluded that the fretsaw was used to cut the trellis to an approximate size and that it was adjusted, after gluing, with a shoulder knife.



Figure 19-15 Typical fretsaw mark on the holly trellis of the sliding writing surface. The fretsaw mark is a couple of millimeters away from the finished trellis, suggesting that the fretsaw was used only to cut the trellis to its approximate size.



Figure 19-16 Typical inlay knife mark on the trellis, suggesting that the trellis was trimmed to its final size using an inlay knife.

The barberry flowers set in amaranth fields were the last elements to be added to the trellis parquetry. These flowers appear to have been inlaid using the same conic cutting technique as was used for the flowers on the top, though in this case the evidence for angled saw cutting is much clearer. Again, the flowers were produced as individual pieces by cutting them out with a piercing saw.

While all of the flowers are of the same general form, there is considerable variation among flowers in the shape of the petals, indicating that they were cut quickly, without following a precise pattern. Some flower elements were shaded by leaving individual pieces of veneer to heat in hot sand until the desired level of singeing was obtained. Again, the elements forming each flower would have been drawn together into the flower shape and glued to a paper backing, largely eliminating the kerfs left by the saw blade. Once cut and assembled, the flowers were inlaid in the amaranth background using a fretsaw. A cross section of the trellis marquetry is visible on the edge of the internal sliding writing surface. It clearly shows an angle to the edge of the barberry flowers, an indication that the flowers were set in the purpleheart with a bevel for a perfect fit (fig. 19-17). While such bevel angles are also possible where an inlay knife has been used, in view of the other supporting evidence, it seems clear that conic cutting using a fretsaw was employed in this instance.



Figure 19-17 View of the exposed edge of the trellis marquetry on the sliding writing surface. The beveled edge of the yellow barberry flower is clearly visible, showing the use of the conic cutting technique.

The small, round amaranth plugs or dots set in the white trellis are very uneven in shape, and careful observation of the holly trellis shows that the holes to receive the amaranth plugs in the trellis were not drilled, as one might expect, but were cut out using an inlay knife. This time-consuming and arguably not very successful technique is unusual for the workshop of Oeben/Riesener.

It is difficult today to appreciate how colorful this marquetry would have been when first made. Computer reconstructions⁴¹ and modern marquetry reconstructions offer interesting suggestions of what the marquetry of this table may have looked like, but the intensity and hue of the color for dyed woods in particular remains somewhat speculative. Since the trellis marquetry of the case sides is done entirely in naturally colored woods, a quite clear idea of its original appearance can be gained by faithful

reproduction. A didactic reproduction, made in 2003 by Alain Guérout under the supervision of Michel Jamet (L'Ebenisterie Michel Jamet, Paris), conveys a very realistic impression of the original vibrant color and contrast of this marquetry (fig. 19-18).



Figure 19-18 This reproduction of the Museum's table, showing the different stages of production, was made in 2003 by Alain Guérout. Because the trellis marquetry is made using only naturally colored woods, the finished right side of the reproduction gives an extremely realistic view of the table's original appearance.

The marbled leather writing surface and the elaborate gilt tooling appear to be original. The leather appears to be sheepskin based on the triplet clusters of hair follicles, arranged in wavy bands. The coloring technique seems to correspond in general to Guffecourt's 1763 description of "grosse marbrure . . . pour quatre couleurs" (large marbling in four colors),⁴² except that in this case there appears to be a fifth color (fig. 19-19). The dominant pattern of the marbling is executed in two tones, a greenish-gray and a black stain. Both of these are presumably achieved using iron-containing solutions of different strengths. Gauffecourt's recipes call for solutions prepared by soaking iron filings in vinegar, possibly with the addition of lemon juice. It is also possible that iron sulfate solutions (*vitriol vert*) may have been used. Accents of red have been added, apparently using one more concentrated and one more dilute stain of the same red dye material. Gauffecourt calls for the red accents to

be achieved with brazilwood, using an alum mordant, though no analysis has been carried out on this leather to confirm the dye material. The fifth color present in this leather, which is not described by Gauffecourt, is a transparent green with blurred edges. This appears in long streaks or veins rather than the hard-edged, globular patterns of the other four colors. The green color appears to have been applied over the other colors but still below the gilt tooling.



Figure 19-19 The drawer unit, separated from the rest of the table during examination, shows the entire sliding writing surface with its marbled leather and gilt tooling.

The majority of the elaborately tooled gilt border running continuously around the perimeter of the leather appears to have been executed with two tools. A rolling tool would have created the triangle and line pattern at the edge. The pattern of poppies and scrolling foliage was executed with a single elaborate punch that was struck repeatedly in sequence. In contrast to the simple repeats of the border, the four ornamental compositions in the corners of the leather are each made using seven different small stamps, with the result that each composition is slightly different from the others.

Thirteen brass elements from the table were analyzed for alloy composition by XRF. Nine of these elements were gilded bronze mounts, three were rails from the sliding mechanism, and the last was the lock plate. The gilded bronze mounts appear to be cast from moderate-zinc brass alloys, which are consistent with eighteenth-century manufacture. Two of the mounts (the right rear corner mount and the left rear foot) appear different from the others, as the quality of their chasing is markedly lower than that of all the other mounts. The composition of these two mounts is quite similar to the other mounts, however, so there is no implication that they are significantly later. It is possible that they were simply chased by a less experienced craftsman than the other

mounts but still in the same workshop, or they may be early (probably eighteenth-century) replacements.

As expected, the sheet brass of the lock is of a very different alloy than the cast brass of the mounts, with significantly higher zinc levels (about 32%) and relatively low levels of tin, iron, silver, and antimony. This composition can be considered typical of high-quality eighteenth-century sheet brass. The brass rails were cast from an intermediate alloy, with relatively high zinc levels (about 27%) but with levels of other impurities, including lead, similar to the cast mounts. The textile lining over the lock has been cut, lifted, and reglued in order to allow access to the lock. This was done poorly and has resulted in staining of the textile. The lock appears to have been removed for repair but not replaced. There is only one set of screw holes in the substrate, and the position of the keyhole has not been altered.

There does not appear to be any original varnish or wax on the table. At present there are at least two layers of varnish; based on examination under ultraviolet light, the lower varnish appears to be shellac based. This has been sanded through in some areas. On top of the shellac layer, a bluish-white fluorescing synthetic varnish has been applied.

A.H., with Y.C., C.E., and K.P.

NOTES

1. For information on Jean-François Oeben, see Pradère 1989a, 252–63; Stratmann-Döhler 2002.
2. Stratmann-Döhler 2002, figs. on pp. 17, 95, 101, 119, 124, 125.
3. Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 29, 93, 95, 131, 133.
4. Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 95.
5. Inv. no. OA 10404. Alcouffe, Dion-Tenenbaum, and Lefébure 1993, 176–79, cat. no. 53. H: 68.3 cm, W: 79.5 cm, D: 44.8 cm.; Durand 2014, 386–87.
6. Sotheby's, *Bel ameublement et objets d'art, December 15, 2003* (Paris: Sotheby's, 2003), no. 109. H: 72 cm, W: 80 cm, D: 43 cm. None of the contributors of this entry has seen that table personally or knows of a furniture specialist who could examine it.
7. Schematic engravings of the tops of the tables in the Louvre and in the J. Paul Getty Museum are illustrated in Ramond 2000a, 148–53. Ramond identifies the woods used and discusses the quality of the marquetry.
8. Eriksen 1964, 81–88; Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 119; Baarsen 2013, 174–77. A table in the Rijksmuseum (acc. no. R.B./K.16662) has a basket filled with flowers of the same form as those on the Museum's table. Extra branches of rosebuds and honeysuckle leaves have been added to the left and right to fill larger areas caused by the greater width of the table (105 cm).
9. Guiffrey 1899, 298–367, esp. 356 (Paris, Archives nationales de France, Z/1m 39).
10. Inventory drawn up by Boulle after the fire: Montaignon 1855–56, 347. See also Wilson et al. 2008, 121.
11. Formerly in the possession of Kraemer, Paris, per undated catalogue.
12. I thank Arlen Heginbotham and Yannick Chastang for these observations. Indeed, the table seen in profile in the painting is shown with a corner that has a marquetry pattern with one or two lozenges vertically aligned, as in the Louvre table, while the pattern of the Museum's table in the corner, next to the legs, is larger, with two or three lozenges vertically aligned.
13. Alastair Laing shared his discovery with Xavier Salmon, who refers to it in Salmon 2002, 156–57, fig. 2.
14. It should be added that it cannot even be identified in the inventory prepared after Oeben's death, either in the list of items awaiting delivery to Madame de Pompadour or in his large stock of completed and partly completed furniture. On this table, see William Rieder, in Kisluk-Grosheide, Koeppel, and Rieder 2006, 150–52, cat. no. 60, figs. 87, 88.
15. Duvaux 1873, 334–35, October 12, 1757: "2896.–Mme la Ctesse de MAUREPAS: . . . une table à écrire à tiroir, le dessus qui se pousse, en bois de rose, avec garnitures & portans dorés d'or moulu, 216 l."; 349, June 25, 1758: "3041.–M. de la REYNIÈRE; une table à écrire dont le dessus à coulisse, le tiroir garni de quarts de rond, baguettes, pieds, chûtes & ornemens dorés d'or moulu, le placage en bois de rose à fleurs, 216 l."; 352, February 2, 1758: "3057.– M. le Cte d'Usson. . . Une table à écrire dont le dessus est à coulisse, plaquée en bois de rose, les ornemens dorés d'or moulu, 192 l."; 368, June 9, 1758: "3165.– Mme la Duchesse de MAZARIN: . . . une table à écrire à coulisse, tiroirs & écritoire en bois de rose & ornemens de bronze doré d'or moulu, 216 l."; 371, July 27, 1758: "3189.–M. de BOULOGNE, fils: . . . une table à écrire à coulisse, plaquée en bois, garnie en bronze doré d'or moulu, 216 l."
16. Guiffrey 1899, 330–38: No. 4—"une petite table à coulisse"; No. 8—"une table à coulisses, plaquée en bois d'acajou de 3 pieds [97 cm] de long, 16 pouces [43 cm] de large, garnie d'une tablette dans l'entre jambe et une moulure de bronze non doré au pourtour du dessus"; No. 47—"une table coulante"; No. 82—"une table dont le dessus est à coulisse."
17. Rijksmuseum acc. no. BK-16854; Baarsen 2013, 178–81; Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 119.
18. Guiffrey 1899, 328.
19. Guiffrey 1899, 329.
20. Guiffrey 1899, 338.
21. Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 132.

22. The Tessier engraving of a lily is reproduced in De Bellaigue 1974, vol. 1, 245. For the appearance of the lily in Oeben marquetry, see Stratmann-Döhler 2002, a *secrétaire* on p. 73 and a mechanical table with tiers of drawers to either side of a kneehole on pp. 120–21 (cat. no. 155).
23. For lilies in the marquetry on pieces attributed to Jean-Pierre Latz, see the corner cupboard 72.DA.39.2 in cat. no. 17; and for those in the marquetry of Jean-Henri Riesener, see a commode delivered to the comtesse de Provence in 1776, illustrated in De Bellaigue 1974, vol. 1, 244; and on the surface of a table delivered to Madame Elisabeth in 1778, see De Bellaigue 1974, vol. 2, 512.
24. De Bellaigue 1974, vol. 1, 307; Chastang 2007.
25. Watson 1981, 157–66.
26. Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 25, 29, 93, 132–33.
27. Guiffrey 1899, 298–367 (Paris, Archives nationales de France, Z/1m 39).
28. Guiffrey 1899, 301, under no. 7; Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 28; Pradère 1989a, 262–63.
29. Guiffrey 1899, 301, under no. 10; Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 28; Pradère 1989a, 263.
30. Guiffrey 1899, 308, under no. 66; Stratmann-Döhler 2002, 28; Pradère 1989a, 263.
31. Collection of the Estate of the Late Judge Elbert H. Gary, American Art Association, April 21, 1928, lot 272: “Collection of Mrs. Mary Gavin Baillie Hamilton”; Getty Research Institute, Photo Archive, Seligmann Collection, 89.P.7, box 15. The identity of the marquess is based on the fact that he only had this title until 1917.
32. Collection of the Estate of the Late Judge Elbert H. Gary, American Art Association, April 21, 1928, lot 272: “Collection of Mrs. Mary Gavin Baillie Hamilton”; Getty Research Institute, Photo Archive, Seligmann Collection, 89.P.7, box 15.
33. Collection of the Estate of the Late Judge Elbert H. Gary, American Art Association, April 21, 1928, lot 272: “Collection of Lady Harvey, London”; Getty Research Institute, Photo Archive, Seligmann Collection, 89.P.7, box 15.
34. Collection of the Estate of the Late Judge Elbert H. Gary, American Art Association, April 21, 1928, lot 272: “From Lewis and Simmons, Paris”; Getty Research Institute, Photo Archive, Seligmann Collection, 89.P.7, box 15.
35. Ronald Freyberger, “Great Auctions of the Past: The Judge Elbert H. Gary Sale,” *Auction 2*, no. 10 (June 1969): 10–13. Judge Elbert H. Gary founded U.S. Steel Corporation with J. P. Morgan in 1901. He acquired paintings, sculpture, and decorative art from Duveen beginning in about 1912. A few months before Gary died in 1927 he moved from 856 Fifth Avenue to 1130 Fifth Avenue. His widow decided that everything in the new townhouse should be sold. Duveen offered \$1.25 million for the entire collection, but the executors of the estate, the New York Trust Co., decided that the objects should be sold at auction, at the American Art Association. The sale took place in 1928, and Duveen secured the table for John D. Rockefeller, for no cost, for \$28,000. Secret 2004, 294–98.
36. Collectors’ files: Gary, E. H., 2, ca. 1927–36, Duveen Brothers Records, Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 455, folder 4; and Collectors’ files: Rockefeller, J. D., Jr., 5, ca. 1926–29, box 505, folder 2; Duveen Brothers Stock Documentation, Getty Research Institute, 2007.D.1, box 516.
37. Collectors’ files: Gary, E. H., 2, ca. 1927–36, Duveen Brothers Records, Getty Research Institute, 960015, box 455, folder 4; Collectors’ files: Rockefeller, J. D., Jr., 5, ca. 1926–29, box 505, folder 2.
38. Ronald Freyberger, “Great Auctions of the Past: The Judge Elbert H. Gary Sale,” *Auction 2*, no. 10 (June 1969): 10–13.
39. Conic cutting is described in greater detail in Ramond 2000b, 38–39.
40. For a detailed discussion of the dying and use of burl woods in the seventeenth to nineteenth century, see Baumeister et al. 1997.
41. Godla and Hanlon 1995.
42. Gauffecourt 1987, 44–47, 107–8.





20. Commode

French (Paris), portions of carcass and gilt bronze mounts, ca. 1735; finished carcass and veneer, late nineteenth or twentieth century

By unidentified *ébéniste* "DF"

White oak, maple, and fir veneered with tulipwood, kingwood, amaranth, and other unidentified woods; gilt bronze mounts; brass and iron lock; *brèche d'Alep* top

H: 2 ft. 10 1/4 in., W: 5 ft. 1 1/4 in., D: 2 ft. 1 in. (87 × 155.5 × 63.5 cm)

76.DA.15

DESCRIPTION

This commode contains two drawers with functioning locks. Exhibiting a serpentine profile along the front and side panels, the rectangular case is supported by four legs and surmounted by a *brèche d'Alep* marble top with a molded edge.

Cast and chased gilt bronze *chutes* embellish the front corners, running the length of the sinuous front legs and terminating in *sabots* (fig. 20-1). These appear as continuous floral garlands coiffed with birds perched on leafy C-scrolls. The back legs terminate in *sabots* like those seen on front but take a heavier, multisided shape. Other mounts include two pairs of drawer pulls and two escutcheons in a transitional, naturalistic style seen on the drawer fronts. The apron mount features a stylized shell motif flanked on either side by C-scrolls and acanthus leaves (fig. 20-2). A continuous gilt bronze frame mount surrounds the drawers, with a similar mount used on each side of the commode. Last, a vertical mount of alternating C-shaped and foliate motifs is set on either side.

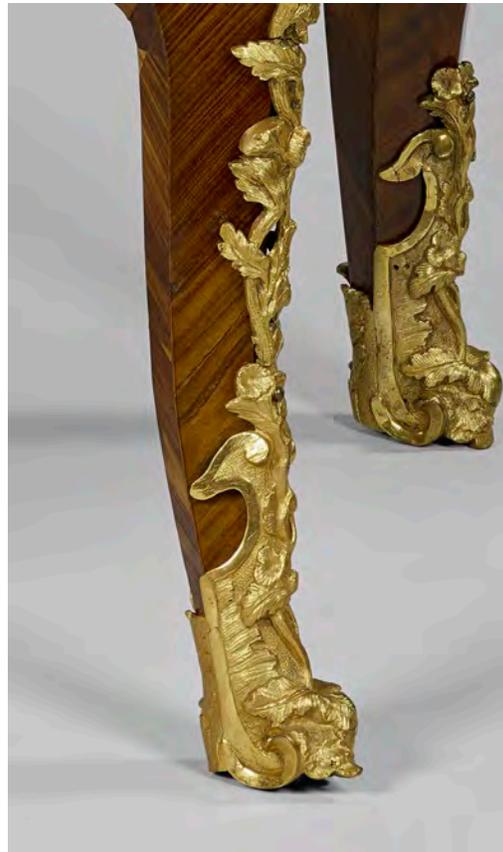


Figure 20-1 Foot mount.



Figure 20-2 Apron mount.

The visible surfaces of the commode's white oak frame are entirely veneered with contrasting tulipwood, kingwood, amaranth, and three other unidentified woods. The marquetry is distinguished by a variety of abstract forms including scrolls and *rocailles* that extend across the drawer fronts and frame the hardware. Although the central motif on the commode's front is irregular, the seemingly asymmetrical designs that flank it are mirror images. On the side panels, the gilt bronze frame mounts each contain a marquetry shell.

MARKS

Stamped "DF" on the top of the front left stile (fig. 20-3). A partially defaced paper label on the back is printed, "(H)oult's Ltd. / (Dep)ositories / (?)E306(9?)." "E1649" is written in chalk across the back of the carcass. Underneath the carcass near the front is an inscription in pencil that reads, "fond derrière."



Figure 20-3 On the top of the left front stile is stamped "DF."

COMMENTARY

The commode is stamped with the partly obliterated initials "DF"; however, technical analysis indicates that while some elements of the carcass and the majority of the gilt bronze mounts are original to the eighteenth century, much of it has been significantly altered. The current appearance of the commode must be the result of one or more restoration campaigns, with the piece being completely reveneered in the late nineteenth or twentieth century (see "Technical Description" below).

The monogrammatic stamp "DF" is found on a small group of case furniture, mostly commodes, sharing characteristics of style, decoration, and construction. These pieces all date from the second quarter of the eighteenth century, most of them are veneered with Asian or European lacquer, and many of them have mounts of the same model.¹ For these reasons it is assumed that this group is by one maker, and it is now generally agreed that the stamp "DF" probably stands for Jean Desforges (active ca. 1730–after 1757), a member of a family of Parisian *ébénistes* working in the first half of the eighteenth century.² According to Calin Demetrescu, the signed initials "DF" that are found consistently in contemporary documents concerning Denis, Michel, and Jean Desforges support the assumption that those initials were used by the family as a standard identification that was transferred from father to son; in addition, the monogram "DF" was used by this family and principally by Jean, whose dates correspond with the style of the group of furniture stamped "DF." However, this identification is not certain; it remains unclear exactly what role this maker may have had in the production of the pieces bearing this stamp. Compounding the uncertainty is the fact that the record of the registration of masters was not kept between 1693 and 1735, and no *ébéniste* named Desforges is registered between 1735 and 1750.³

The monogram "DF" appears more than once on furniture bearing the stamp of other *ébénistes*. An Asian lacquer commode stamped "DF" is also stamped "B.V.R.B.," for Bernard II van Risenburgh. It is assumed that the latter made the carcass.⁴ One of a pair of Asian lacquer commodes bears the stamp "DF" and the other that of Adrien Delorme.⁵ Another commode bears the stamps of both Antoine and Mathieu Criaerd, as well as the "DF" mark.⁶ It has been suggested by Dominique Augarde that several other pieces bearing Criaerd's stamp are so close to the style associated with the "DF" group that the two *ébénistes* must have collaborated more closely than was normally the case.⁷ It is possible that the *ébéniste* Jean

Desforges stamped pieces made by other craftsmen either as a repairer or as a *marchand-ébéniste*.⁸

Of the pieces marked “DF” or attributed to this group, the Museum’s commode is the only piece known that is entirely veneered with wood marquetry; no other commode from this group is of the same form. While the serpentine profile of the front is typical of pieces from this group, the sides have a more pronounced S-curve and the back corners splay out wider than the front and are unusually heavy in design. The form of this piece has similarities with commodes in the Régence and early Rococo styles, before the more standard gracefully proportioned shape of the Rococo was widely adopted.⁹ These characteristics indicate that the Museum’s commode in its original form would date from the beginning of the “DF” group, around 1735.¹⁰

The majority of the mounts seem to date from the same period (see “Technical Description” below). The original apron mount seems to have been replaced with the current mount; it does not follow the lower profile of the carcass and is of lesser quality than the other mounts on the piece (see fig. 20-2). There is only one other known commode, called the Strauss commode, with the same mounts. It was published in 1911 and is not known to be stamped.¹¹ The corner, feet mounts, and two keyhole escutcheons are of the same model as those found on the Museum’s commode. The framed panel on the front is of Asian lacquer, with the surrounding areas veneered with wood. This is a characteristic of all the “DF” commodes, with Asian lacquer restricted to the framed panels at the front and sides.

Although the present wood marquetry appears to date to the late nineteenth or twentieth century, similar patterns are found on other pieces made between 1730 and 1750. An unstamped commode made around 1750 with a very similarly designed marquetry cartouche on the front was sold in Paris in 1989.¹² The pattern of the cartouche on the front and sides of the Museum’s commode is also very similar to that found on a *secrétaire* stamped “B.V.R.B.,” for Bernard II van Risenburgh, that sold from the Polès Collection in 1927.¹³ Other pieces with marquetry of similar design are known, most of which are stamped or attributed to Van Risenburgh.¹⁴

As for what preceded the late nineteenth- or twentieth-century veneer, it is highly likely that the commode was originally veneered with Asian or European lacquer. As stated above, the Museum’s commode is the only piece stamped or attributed to “DF” that is entirely veneered in wood. Although there is no physical evidence of the possible original lacquer veneer, if this commode is part

of the “DF” group, then it is likely that it would have featured Asian or European lacquer like many in the group.

PROVENANCE

Mrs. S. Shrigley-Feigl (Cragg Hall, Wray, Lancaster, England), sold to Alexander & Berendt Ltd.;¹⁵ –1976: Alexander & Berendt Ltd. (London, England), sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1976.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sassoon and Wilson 1986, 12, no. 25; Demetrescu 1992, 67, fig. 7; Gruber 1992, vol. 2, 377, ill.; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 25, no. 25; Gruber 1996, vol. 2, 377, ill.; Wilson and Hess 2001, 14, no. 25.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The carcass of the commode is made primarily of white oak. The four corner posts run from the floor to the top of the case and are formed of single blocks of wood. The core of each of the side panels is made of two boards, butt joined, with their grain running horizontally, attached to the front and rear posts with tongue-and-groove joints. The exaggerated curves of the sides required extra thickness to be added to the panels; this was accomplished by gluing several boards with vertically oriented grain to the exterior of the sides at the front and rear and also gluing a wide, vertically oriented board (with ogee molded edges) to the inside face of each side near the middle. At the top and bottom, the side panels have tenons that fit into mortises cut into the case rails above and below.

The case back is made using an unusual five-sectioned frame-and-panel construction (fig. 20-4). The horizontal rails attach directly to the rear legs with mortise-and-tenon joints. The narrow upper rail is unpinned, while the wider rail at the bottom is pinned. The vertical medial stiles are mortise and tenoned to the upper rail with single pins but to the lower rail with double pins. The five equally sized panels of the back are each made of a single board, rabbeted on the interior edges, with the grain of the wood running vertically.



Figure 20-4 Back.

The case top is a bipartite frame-and-panel assembly with equally sized panels, each made from two butt-joined boards arranged with the grain running from side to side; these are also rabbeted on their interior edges (fig. 20-5). The side rails are attached to the corner posts with open-faced dovetails; the dovetails for the front and rear rails are unusual in-line double dovetails (fig. 20-6). The rear rail of the top overlaps the case back assembly but is not joined to it except with glue. The medial rail is joined at front and back with double-pinned mortise-and-tenon joints.



Figure 20-5 Top.



Figure 20-6 Detail showing the in-line double dovetail and the open-faced dovetail on the left front corner post.

The case bottom and the dustboard (separating the two drawers) are each a single frame-and-panel construction without rear rails (fig. 20-7). The ends of the front rails are set into dadoes in the corner posts. The side rails of the case bottom run at an angle between the corner posts and are attached with sliding dovetails whose mortises run through the entire thickness of the posts. The very large bottom panel is rectangular and does not reach all the way out to the side rails. The triangular spaces between the 2-in.-wide side rails and the case-bottom panel are filled with triangular blocks of oak that are attached to the rails with tongue-and-groove joints. This is a very peculiar construction that is atypical of eighteenth-century Parisian cabinetmaking. The case-bottom panel itself is made of seven butt-joined boards of irregular width whose grain runs from front to back; all edges are rabbeted along the lower edges, and the panel is supported at the rear in a groove cut into the lower rail of the case back.



Figure 20-7 Bottom.

At the level of the dustboard, the side rails supporting the panel are made of single triangular blocks that are mortise and tenoned into the front rail and set into dadoes in the rear posts. In contrast to the case bottom, the large single panel is made of two boards with their grain oriented from side to side; the front and side edges are rabbeted, while the rear edge, which is entirely unsupported, is not.

The four internal drawer supports are each made of a single strip of oak, glued directly to the edges of the bottom panel and dustboard panel, respectively (fig. 20-8). Adjacent to each drawer support strip, two additional strips of oak are stacked, glued, and nailed to the side rails, to serve as drawer guides. There are no separate kickers installed in the case to prevent the drawers from tipping forward when opened.



Figure 20-8 The case with drawers removed.

To form the curved lower edge of the case front and sides, numerous short blocks of oak, maple, and fir have simply been glued to the underside of the rails and then sawn and carved to shape in order to create the desired profile.

The curved drawer fronts are made in a five-layered laminated construction, stacked and glued from front to back. Each layer is approximately 2.3 cm thick and is the full height of the drawer. The upper edges of both drawer fronts are veneered with purpleheart. The sides and backs of the drawers are made of single boards of oak and have slightly rounded top edges; they are assembled using standard through-dovetails at the rear and half-blind dovetails at the front. The front dovetails are partially hidden by added strips of oak glued over them to extend the drawer fronts. The front leg posts have been rebated along their front edges to accommodate these drawer front extensions. The drawer bottoms are each made of five thin boards, butt joined, with the grain running front to back; four of these are quite wide, while the fifth, at one end, is narrow. The boards of the drawer bottoms are

all neatly quartersawn; all other panels in the commode are plain sawn. The bottoms are set into rabbets in the lower edge of the drawer fronts and backs and fastened with nails. At the sides, long thin strips of oak have been glued to the bottom edges of the drawer sides. These have been rabbeted to form grooves that capture the edges of the drawer bottom panels. It is not entirely clear if this is the original construction or a repair.

The commode is veneered with a marquetry decoration made of at least six different species of wood. Study of the wood under the stereomicroscope strongly suggests the presence of tulipwood, kingwood, and amaranth. Three other woods could not be securely identified; two are dark in tone, and the third is light. These three appear to be tropical species that are not part of the usual palette of woods used by eighteenth-century French cabinetmakers.

The condition of the marquetry decoration is extremely good, with no obvious replacement on the front and right side panels of figurative marquetry. The left side panel, however, was extensively restored in 1977, and there are large elements that appear to be recent replacements, the wood being of a lighter color and almost certainly not of the appropriate species. The diagonally oriented veneer surrounding the ornamental panels is of kingwood, apparently with large areas of replacement, particularly on the sides.

A number of lines of evidence suggest that this commode has been massively restored and altered. It appears, for instance, that nearly the entire commode has been reveneered. Three kingwood elements on the left side show distinct, parallel, and regularly spaced markings that are typical of mechanical veneer saw marks (fig. 20-9). These saw marks should have been removed during the scraping and sanding of the marquetry when it was originally made, but in these areas the marks have survived. In addition, photographs taken during the 1977 restoration of the left side marquetry clearly reveal that such mechanical saw marks appear on the reverse of virtually every element within the decorative marquetry panels (fig. 20-10). Although mechanical saws had been invented many centuries before the manufacture of this commode,¹⁶ it appears that such saws were not used to cut veneer in France until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The detailed descriptions of furniture production given in Roubo refer *only* to the sawing of veneers by hand.¹⁷ Furthermore, the earliest verified French patent for a veneer-cutting saw is that of Jean-Baptiste-Marie Albert Cochot, registered in 1814,¹⁸ and the first known English patent for such a device appears to be in 1842 by Gregson.¹⁹



Figure 20-9 Mechanical saw marks on a kingwood veneer element.



Figure 20-10 This photo from the 1977 restoration shows an example of the mechanical saw and tothing plane marks that remain on the reverse of elements within the marquetry panels.

In addition to the evidence of the veneer sawing, a close examination of the marquetry decoration shows that the entire marquetry was cut with a fretsaw using a technique known as “piece by piece,” which, as the name suggests, means that each element of the marquetry was cut individually before being assembled and glued on the solid wood carcass. This marquetry technique was in common use from the nineteenth century, but there is no documented example of this technique being used prior to that time.

Yet another clear indicator that the decorative marquetry panels have been replaced can be seen in X-radiographs of the drawer fronts. These images (fig. 20-11) clearly show that the existing handles have been mounted to the drawers in several slightly different positions throughout the history of the piece; however, only the most recent set of screw holes are currently visible. Previous generations of screw holes have been covered by the existing marquetry, confirming that the latter is a relatively recent addition. As discussed in “Commentary” above, it seems likely that the areas now covered with decorative marquetry in wood once contained panels of Asian lacquer, though no supporting physical evidence for this could be found.

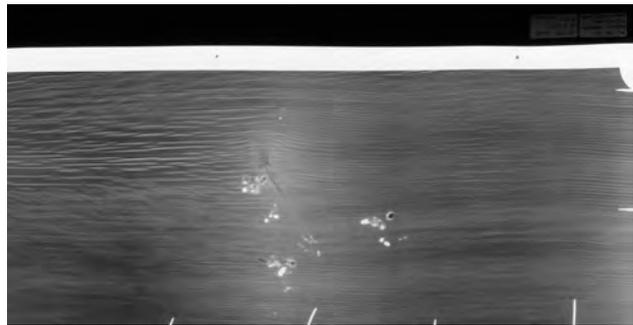


Figure 20-11 X-ray of the top drawer showing the myriad locations of the drawer handles throughout the history of the piece. Only the current set of holes remain visible; the others are covered by subsequent marquetry additions.

The diagonally oriented kingwood veneer that covers the legs and frames the marquetry panels appears also to have been heavily restored. A careful examination of the veneer reveals that two distinct types of kingwood veneer are prevalent on the carcass. The first is very precisely quartersawn veneer; this type is easily identifiable by eye by virtue of its ubiquitous light-colored rays, which, upon quartersawing, appear as tiny bright streaks running perpendicular to the grain direction (fig. 20-12). This type of veneer is predominant on the front surfaces of the legs and the carcass. In certain areas, however, large sections have been replaced with a second type of kingwood veneer that is mostly flat sawn. This second type of veneer lacks the ray “streaks” and generally exhibits dark stripes in the grain that are more widely spaced than in the quartersawn variety (fig. 20-13). The kingwood in the replaced areas of diagonal veneer on the carcass bears a strong resemblance to that used in the decorative marquetry panels, suggesting that they may be contemporary.



Figure 20-12 Example of quartersawn kingwood showing the light-colored rays that run perpendicular to the grain direction.



Figure 20-13 Flat-sawn kingwood lacks the ray “streaks” and generally exhibits dark stripes in the grain that are more widely spaced than in the quartersawn variety.

The pattern of veneer replacements on the front of the carcass is suggestive of further alterations to the structure of the commode. Many of the replacements are concentrated around the joints between the front rails and the legs; this includes the entire surfaces of both front corner brackets. This pattern is consistent with a previous complete disassembly of the carcass (more evidence of which below). Closer inspection of the corner brackets (both on the front and on the sides) reveals that they are made from a variety of woods, including, apparently, fir and maple. This suggests that the brackets are elaborated replacements, the originals most likely being simple curved shapes similar to those still found on the back of the commode (see fig. 20-4) and also to those found on the Strauss commode.

The peripheral kingwood veneer on the case sides appears to be entirely of the flat-sawn variety, suggesting that it has been entirely replaced. Further veneer replacements occur at the center of the top rail and on the central apron, both of which have been entirely recovered with flat-sawn veneer. Examination of the top rail reveals that the front edge of the substrate has been built out behind the veneer with a thin strip of oak, presumably to make it conform better to the profile of the drawer fronts. The replaced veneer in this area suggests that this was done as part of a restoration campaign. The complete replacement of veneer on the elaborately shaped apron suggests that this element, like the corner brackets, may also be an elaborated replacement for a simpler original apron, perhaps similar to the one on the Strauss commode. Support for this conjecture lies in the highly unusual V-shaped block construction of the apron and the fact that the bow-shaped support block (for which there is no known precedent) is exactly 1 in. thick, suggesting the use of an English standard-thickness plank (see fig. 20-7).

Methodical measurement of structural elements in the commode proves to be quite revealing. A very large number of individual pieces of oak in the construction

have been cut to dimensions corresponding to Imperial units (inches) used in the United States and the United Kingdom to this day but not used in eighteenth-century France. While one might expect some measurements to conform to Imperial units by pure chance, the prevalence of such measurements on this commode clearly exceeds chance by a substantial margin and therefore provides a strong indication that large sections of the commode were fabricated in the United States or the United Kingdom (the latter is more likely, as evidenced below). To give some examples, the vertical stiles of the case back are each exactly $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide, and they are spaced exactly 8 in. apart; the upper rail is exactly $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide, and the lower rail is exactly $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide (see fig. 20-4). Furthermore, all of the holes for the wooden pins in the mortise-and-tenon joints are perfectly round and appear to have been drilled with a $\frac{5}{16}$ in. bit. All of this is strong evidence that the entire case back has been replaced.

The evidence on the case top is less clear (see fig. 20-5). The rear rail is exactly $2\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide; however, the medial rail is slightly less than 5 in. Arguing for the originality of parts of the top, the pins for the medial rail's tenons are oblong and slightly smaller than those on the back; in their smaller dimension they are almost exactly $\frac{1}{4}$ pouce, or “Paris inch,” of the eighteenth century. On the other hand, two characteristics of the top's panels arouse suspicion. The first is the presence of ersatz “wormholes” in both panels. There are twenty-one holes spread across both panels that have the outward appearance of being flight holes of wood-boring insects. Closer inspection and measurement readily shows that these holes have been drilled with a $\frac{1}{32}$ -in. drill bit, and many of the holes go straight through the panels. The only apparent reason for someone to have made these holes is to create the illusion of age in young wood. Thus the presence of these artificial wormholes suggests strongly that the panels, at least, have been replaced. Numerous artificial wormholes also appear on the panels and rails of the case back, and again, many are drilled straight through from front to back. On the case back, the drill bit used was $\frac{1}{16}$ in. in diameter.

In addition to the drilled “wormholes,” the proper right panel of the case top appears to have a split in one of its boards, not an uncommon occurrence in large panels on eighteenth-century furniture. Again, however, all is not as it initially appears. The “split,” within a single board, is in fact perfectly straight and has edges that are perfectly perpendicular to the surface; that is, the split has been cut into the panel, apparently again with the intent to foster the appearance of age.

The panels of the case bottom and the drawer divider are both probably replacements. Single, undivided panels of this size appear to be without precedent in eighteenth-century Parisian work. Both are rabbeted, not chamfered, on their edges, as are the replaced panels of the back and top. The rabbet on the proper right side of the middle panel is particularly noteworthy as it appears to have been cut into the edge of the panel using a table saw. From below, the kerf of the circular blade, precisely 1/8 in. thick, can be seen and measured.

Careful measurement is also revealing with regard to the drawers. All of the dovetails at the rear corners of the drawers have been laid out using spacings that conform to Imperial units, suggesting that the drawer backs and sides are replaced. The drawer bottoms are currently held in place with wire nails; however, an additional, earlier set of nail holes exists alongside these nails. The earlier nail holes are perfectly round and retain the impression of the perfectly round nail heads. This suggests that the “original” fastenings for the drawer bottoms were also industrially produced flat-headed wire nails and thus that the drawers were assembled after about 1880 when such wire nails became common. In contrast, the dovetails at the front corners of the drawers do not conform to Imperial units. This, along with the X-ray evidence showing the multiple former locations of the handles, suggests that the substrates of the drawer fronts could be early.

The majority of the gilded bronze mounts were removed for examination and alloy analysis by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF). The majority of the mounts appear consistent with eighteenth-century manufacture. Alloy analysis shows relatively high levels of impurities such as silver and antimony as well as moderate zinc content (17–21%) and tin levels around 1.5%, all of which are consistent with period manufacture. The exceptions are the midleg mount on the left side and the apron mount, both of which appear to be later additions. Examination of the back side of the midleg mount reveals that it is a copy or *surmoulage* of the corresponding mount on the right side; file marks and holes for screws on the original mount clearly appear, cast in, on the copy. The tone of the gilding on this mount is also noticeably different from that of the other mounts, and it is distinctly free of even mild surface corrosion. Interestingly, the copy was made in three sections of approximately equal length, with the center section inverted. It is not clear if this was done intentionally to give an illusion of symmetry to the copy or if it was simply the result of an error during the reproduction process, though the former seems more likely. In most respects, the alloy of this *surmoulage* is not

dramatically different from other original mounts on the commode; however, it does contain an unusually large amount of nickel, a feature that does not appear to be common in French gilt bronze until after about 1890 and that is uncommon after the mid-twentieth century. The brass cover plate of the lock in the lower drawer shares a similarly high nickel content, suggesting a similar date range.

The other mount that appears to be a later addition is the central apron mount (see fig. 20-2). This mount has little in common stylistically with the other sculptural mounts on the commode, and the fact that the entire apron, to which it is attached, has been replaced immediately suggests that it may not be original. Alloy analysis by XRF reveals that the mount has an anomalously high zinc content in comparison to all of the other mounts, a level (approximately 28%) that does not appear at all in French mounts until after about 1860.

The commode’s marble tabletop is approximately 2.3 cm thick and is made of *brèche d’Alep*, a heterogeneous marble consisting of multicolored, somewhat rounded cobbles in a beige to orange sand and gravel matrix. The predominant color of the cobbles is from tan to cream, although red and even black cobbles are found as well. Many similar limestone breccias of this type occur in varying colors throughout the Mediterranean. The original Alep Breccia is from Syria. This stone, however, is thought to have been quarried in Le Tholonet, Bouches-du-Rhône, France. Although the quarry is inactive now, it had been in use since ancient times. Near the left end, the slab has been broken into five major fragments and repaired with four iron cramps.

In summary, this commode appears to retain some elements of a commode by DF dating to around 1735; however, at least one and possibly multiple restoration campaigns have significantly altered the piece since that time. Many wooden structural elements have been replaced, and some of the replacements were clearly disguised with the intent to conceal the intervention. With this degree of restoration, it is difficult to say to what extent the commode retains its original form and dimensions. Clearly the majority of the marquetry and veneer on the surface of this commode dates to the late nineteenth or twentieth century. That said, the gilt bronze mounts appear to be mostly of the period, possibly “original,” as do the substrates of the legs and possibly the substrates of the drawer fronts of the commode.

A.H., with Y.C. and R.S.

NOTES

1. For a list of commodes stamped "DF," see Pradère 1989a, 178.
2. See Demetrescu 1992, 66–81, esp. 81.
3. Paris, Archives nationales de France, Y 9323 to 9327. Pradère has argued that since there was no trace of a Jean Desforges and no trace of an *ébéniste* with a Christian name beginning with D and a surname beginning F, the more common method of forming a monogram, he suggests the possibility of a double surname, François Delorme-Faizelot (1691–1768), better known as François Faizelot-Delorme, which would be appropriate since he was an *ébéniste* who specialized in lacquer furniture. See Pradère 1989a, 177–78. However, in light of Demetrescu's research, this hypothesis would no longer seem very plausible.
4. Pradère 1989a, 178, appendix, no. 8, veneered with Chinese lacquer, formerly in the Josse Collection. Molinier 1892, 114. Sold, Christie's, *French and Company: Magnificent French and English Furniture, November 24, 1998* (New York: Christie's, 1998), and now in a private collection. When this commode was sold in 1998, it was discovered to be the commode of the dauphine, Marie-Theresa Rafaella, marked with the inventory number 1343. Only Pradère has published that the commode was stamped "DF" in addition to "B.V.R.B."
5. Pradère 1989a, 177, fig. 161, ex. coll. Galerie Segoura, Paris.
6. Sotheby's, *Sale June 25, 1982* (London: Sotheby's, 1982), lot 35; the citation for this auction is from Francis J. B. Watson, "Biography of the Master DF," unpublished manuscript of National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue volume on French eighteenth-century furniture and decorative arts (substantially completed by 1986/87), in the curatorial files of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. This auction was then published by Demetrescu 1992, 74. This commode was wrongly identified as being in an auction on this date.
7. See Watson, "Biography of the Master DF," which cites undated correspondence with Jean-Dominique Augarde. Also, concerning the network between the *ébénistes* "DF" and Criaerd, see Demetrescu 1992, 69, 81. Moreover, Demetrescu acknowledges the documentation he consulted at the Centre de Recherche Historique sur les Maîtres Ébénistes, where Augarde was a principal director.
8. Demetrescu 1992, 80. See also draft catalogue entries for acc. nos. 1942.9.408, a commode, and 1942.9.417 and .418, a pair of *encoignures*, all three stamped "DF" and attributed to Joseph Baumhauer by Watson, "Biography of the Master DF." He, in agreement with Pradère that "DF" was not Jean Desforges, argued that it was "the Master DF" who stamped objects in his capacity as a restorer or *marchand-ébéniste*.
9. See, e.g., cat. nos. 14 and 6 (Baumhauer and Van Risenburgh, respectively). See also Demetrescu 2003.
10. Pieces from the "DF" group are dated between ca. 1730 and 1755. See Demetrescu 1992, 66–81.
11. Guérin 1911, pl. 17. In the collection of a Monsieur Strauss, present location unknown.
12. Sold, Ader Picard Tajan, *Objets d'art et de très bel ameublement, December 5, 1989* (Paris: Ader Picard Tajan, 1989), lot 152. In this catalogue the commode is attributed to Jean-Pierre Latz, an attribution doubted by Henry Hawley (note, object file of 76.DA.15, Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum). The marquetry on the commode is somewhat similar in character to the marquetry found on a long case clock stamped "I.P.LATZ," now at Waddesdon Manor. See De Bellaigue 1974, vol. 1, 84–88, cat. no. 11.
13. Sold, Galerie Georges Petit, *Objets d'art et de magnifique ameublement du XVIIIe siècle, June 22–24, 1927* (Paris: Galerie Georges Petit, 1927), lot 255, pl. CIV.
14. See the following examples for marquetry of similar design: Advertisement by Rheims & Laurin, *Burlington Magazine* 110, no. 787 (October 1968), lii; Sold, Palais Galliera, *Céramique de la chine, tableaux anciens, bel ameublement du XVIIIe siècle, November 30, 1968* (Paris: Palais Galliera, 1968), lot 266; *bureau plat*, stamped "B.V.R.B.," sold, Sotheby's, *Property from the Estate of Mrs. Charles Allen, Jr., November 1, 1997* (New York: Sotheby's, 1997), lot 106; commode, by Bernard II van Risenburgh, Verlet 1966, 57; *secrétaire en pente*, probably by Bernard II van Risenburgh, sold, Sotheby's, *Rugs and Carpets, Tapestries, Clocks, Works of Art, Important French Furniture, November 24, 1972* (London: Sotheby's, 1972), lot 83; also illustrated in Kjellberg 1989, 883.
15. Invoice from Alexander & Berendt, Ltd., May 13, 1976, in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Art Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
16. Wilmering 1999, 52–53.
17. Roubo 1774, vol. 3, 799–802.
18. Jean-Baptiste-Marie Albert Cochot, *Mécanique propre à scier en feuilles le bois d'acajou, ou tout autre bois. Brevet d'invention de 5 ans, pris le 7 décembre 1814*. Pub. T7, p. 361. INPI (Institut National de la Propriété Industrielle).
19. Matthew Gregson, Cutting Veneers, "An Invention or Improvement applicable to the Sawing or Cutting of Veneers." Patent number 9503, April 29, 1842. Both the French and English patent records have been extensively searched by Chastang on this account.



21. Commode

French (Paris), ca. 1850–1900

Maker unknown

White* and red oak*, poplar* and fir* veneered with tulipwood* and kingwood*; gilt bronze mounts; iron lock hardware; Rance limestone top

H: 2 ft. 11 1/2 in., W: 4 ft. 9 in., D: 2 ft. 2 1/4 in. (90.1 × 144.8 × 66.6 cm)

70.DA.79

DESCRIPTION

This commode is of approximately the same size and form as the Museum's commode attributed to Joseph Baumhauer (cat. no. 14). The gilt bronze mounts are of similar model. The front and the sides are veneered with tulipwood arranged in four quadrants. The framing mounts are backed and outlined with kingwood, which is also used as a veneer for the remaining surface areas. The commode is topped by a slab of Rance limestone, cut to conforming shape.

MARKS

The top surface of the front left stile is stamped "JME," for *jurande des menuisiers-ébénistes*, "N.PETIT," and "DELORME" (fig. 21-1).



Figure 21-1 The top of the right leg stile is stamped "DELORME," "JME," and "N.PETIT."

COMMENTARY

The evidence given in the "Technical Description" below suggests that the commode was made in the second half of the nineteenth century using new bronze mounts and

pieces of an eighteenth-century commode stamped "DELORME," for Adrien Faizelot Delorme (died after 1783, master 1748), and "N.PETIT," for Nicolas Petit (1732–1791, master 1761), along with other pieces of old wood.¹ It was bought by J. Paul Getty from the London dealer J. M. Botibol in 1938 for £1,110.94.² In various lists of Getty's possessions, especially those made during the move of his belongings to America in 1939, the commode is habitually referred to as "the French tulipwood *commode*." It seems that neither Getty nor Botibol knew of the existence of the cabinetmakers' names struck on the surface of the top.³

The mounts are close copies of those found on the commode attributed to Joseph Baumhauer, which was acquired by Getty in 1955 (cat. no. 14), and of all the commodes of this model made by this master (see cat. no. 14, "Commentary"). Most of the differences are small, ranging from the shape of leaves and flowers to the angle of a stem from a branch. Larger and more easily visible additions and variations are the fanlike form in the center of the upper framing mount at the side of the commode and the very clear difference between the form and placement of the flowers and leaves clustered at the center of the concave upper part of the corner mounts (fig. 21-2).



Figure 21-2 A corner mount from the Baumhauer commode (cat. no. 14) on the left, compared to one from this commode on the right. Differences in layout and scale make it clear that these are not direct copies of the Baumhauer mounts.

Such differences in form and placement make it impossible that the mounts were cast from Joseph Baumhauer models; the maker of the mounts must therefore have been removed from the presence of the original commode. It appears that one of the methods that could have been employed to make mounts so closely comparable would be by the use of photographs. This would place its production in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, another possible method could have been the use of drawings.

Whoever constructed the piece must have been aware of the stamps of Petit and Delorme. They are genuine stamps, and it is not simply fortuitous that they are present. Whoever made the commode knew of their significance and included the piece of wood that carried the names.⁴ Thus the commode is an intentional fake,

made in France, where the existence and meaning of such marks were well established by the turn of the century.

In the Museum's registrar's files is the statement that the commode came from the collection of Cécile Sorel, comtesse de Ségur, from which it was sold by Germain Seligman to Julia Atterbury Thorne of New York in 1933.⁵ The Sorel Collection was sold in Paris in 1928. The catalogue reveals that only one commode was in the collection, and it was one of a few pieces that was illustrated (fig. 21-3).⁶ Surprisingly, it bears corner and feet mounts of the same model, but in all other respects it is dissimilar to the Museum's example. It is possible that the body itself was cannibalized and changed to form the present piece, but from an inadequate photograph it is impossible to make more than a tentative suggestion.



Figure 21-3 Unknown maker, Commode, reign of Louis XV. Unidentified wood, gilt bronze mounts, *brèche d'Alep* marble top, 142 cm (56 in.) wide. Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, *Objets d'art et très bel ameublement du XVIIIe siècle et autres*, December 6–7, 1928, lot 180.

The Museum's commode compares closely to one in the Victoria and Albert Museum, bequeathed in 1882 by John Jones together with the rest of his collection (fig. 21-4).⁷ In 1883 an article in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* announced that the new Jones galleries were open and that Parisian craftsmen were welcome to visit them and copy the pieces.⁸ But no copies of the Baumhauer commode (cat. no. 14) have yet come to light, and subtle differences in the design of the mounts and the greater width of the piece make this an unlikely candidate. A copy would, in all certainty, have been made entirely from scratch and would not have been assembled from old pieces of wood taken from some other piece of furniture, like the present example. Therefore, the precise date and the origin of the commode remain uncertain.



Figure 21-4 Joseph Baumhauer (French, died 1772), *Commode*, 1755–58 (designed). Carcass of oak veneered with Japanese lacquer and with fruitwood decorated with *vernis Martin*; mounts of gilt bronze; slab of *rouge de Villefranche* (possibly Languedoc) marble, 86 × 127 × 62.3 cm (33.85 × 50 × 24.5 in.). London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1013-1882. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

PROVENANCE

Possibly Cécile Sorel, comtesse de Ségur, French, 1873–1966 (Paris, France), sold to Jacques Seligmann et Fils;⁹ –1933: Jacques Seligmann et Fils (Paris, France), sold to Julia Atterbury Thorne, 1933;¹⁰ 1933– : Julia Atterbury Thorne, American, 1891–1974 (New York, NY);¹¹ –1938: J. M. Botibol (London, England), sold to J. Paul Getty, 1938;¹² 1938–70: J. Paul Getty, American, 1892–1976, donated to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1970.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Loan to the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute (Williamstown, MA), May 20, 1998–February 27, 2009.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Getty and Le Vane 1955, ill. facing p. 209; Wescher 1955, 118, 124, fig. 8; Boutemy 1965, 84, fig. 3; Wilson 1975, 106, ill.; Sassoon and Wilson 1986, 13–14, no. 30; Augarde 1987, 32; Kjellberg 1989, 246; Pradère 1989b, 110; Bremer-David et al. 1993, 28, no. 30; Wilson and Hess 2001, 17, no. 30; Genestie 2006, 56, ill.; Heginbotham 2013, 152, fig. 2.

G.W.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

There is reason to believe that this commode is a fraudulent pastiche made up from pieces of an old commode, other salvaged wood, and early twentieth-century gilt bronzes.

The carcass of this commode is made of white oak, red oak, fir, and poplar. The four corner posts are each made of single blocks of oak, running from the top of the case to the floor. The case side panels are each made of eight or nine narrow fir boards laminated together with the grain running from front to back; this wood has been shaped on the outside to form the curved surface but is smooth and finished on the inside surface. The side panels are attached to the front and rear posts with tongue-and-groove joints.

The case back is made of white oak using tripartite frame-and-panel construction (fig. 21-5). The horizontal rails attach directly to the rear legs with mortise-and-tenon joints that are secured with single pins. Similarly, the two vertical stiles of the back are joined to the horizontal rails with single-pinned mortise and tenons. The three equally sized panels of the back are each made of two boards, butt joined and chamfered on the interior edges, with the grain of the wood running vertically.



Figure 21-5 Back.

The case top, dustboard, and case bottom are all made as bipartite frame-and-panel assemblies in white oak with equally sized panels, each made from two boards glued together with the grain running from side to side (fig. 21-6). The edges of these panels have been thinned on one face to fit in the surrounding grooves. This has been done with two different tools; some edges are roughly

chamfered with a straight-bladed plane, while others have square shoulders cut with a rabbet plane. Some edges have been thinned using both techniques. In the top and dustboard assemblies, the flat, unshaped side of the panels faces up, while in the case bottom, the flat side faces down.



Figure 21-6 The interior of the commode reveals inconsistent colors, textures, and degrees of aging in the wood used. The fir panels of the sides also have exposed insect tunnels, typical of old wood that has been resurfaced and reused.

The side and front rails of the case top are joined to the top of the corner posts with single open-faced dovetail joints. For both the case top and bottom, the rear framing rail is formed by the corresponding rail of the case back. These rails are grooved along their lengths to house the rear edges of the panels. The rear rail of the dustboard assembly is a separate, narrow piece of wood that is set into dadoes in the corner posts at each end. The front rails of the dustboard and case bottom are attached to the corner posts with vertical mortise and tenons. The side rails for the dustboard and case bottom rest in square-shouldered dadoes in the front and rear posts. All of the side rails extend slightly to the inside of the front posts, allowing them to act as both drawer supports and as “kickers” for the drawer below. For drawer guides, roughly triangular blocks of poplar are fitted above and glued to the side rails of the dustboard and case bottom. These guides butt up against the case sides, posts, and case back and are glued in place without joinery. The medial rails at all three levels appear to be fixed to the front and rear rails, not with mortise-and-tenon joints as usual, but with only tongues that fit the grooves cut for the panels.

The drawer fronts are constructed of stacked and laminated blocks of fir and oak. The exact configuration is

obscured by veneer on the inside, outside, top, and sides of the drawer fronts. X-radiography shows clearly that above the level of the drawer bottoms, four layers of wood (fir) are stacked one atop the other. The curvature of the fronts is made up by further laminations of fir blocks, glued to the back of the center section at either end. The inside surfaces of the drawer fronts are veneered in oak, with the grain direction running vertically; the top and side edges are veneered in cross-grain kingwood. Below the drawer bottoms, the pendant portion of the drawer fronts are cut from single boards of oak.

The sides of the drawers are each made of two white oak boards and have shouldered, or “quirked,” bead moldings on their top edges; they are assembled using standard through-dovetails at the rear and half-blind dovetails at the front, though the latter are obscured by kingwood veneer and curved extension blocks; the front posts have been rebated along their front edges to accommodate these drawer front extensions. The drawer backs are made of red oak and are about half the thickness of the sides. The drawer bottoms are each made of six thin boards, butt joined, with the grain running front to back. They are set into rebates in the bottom of the drawer sides, and the joints are covered with a thin strip of oak that serves as the drawer’s runner. At the rear, the drawer bottoms overlap the drawer back to which they are affixed with small modern wire nails.

A single lock in the upper drawer serves to lock both drawers. The lock is a “single-throw” type, made entirely of iron, and is face mounted; that is, it is not set into a mortise in the drawer front but mounted directly onto the rear surface of the front. The lock has bolts that throw both upward and downward; the latter passes through a pierced iron plate attached to the front edge of the drawer divider and then down into an iron strike plate mounted on the lower drawer.

The corner posts of the commode may well be eighteenth century, if for no other reason than that they bear the Delorme and Petit stamps, which would have been of little interest or value before 1938, when the commode was acquired by J. Paul Getty. The fir side panels, on the other hand, appear to have been made from reused old wood. There are exposed insect tunnels on the inside surfaces that imply that the panels were cut or planed after infestation was significantly advanced. In addition, X-radiography shows old screw holes in the top edge of one board, a surface that is now a concealed glue joint in the middle of the larger panel. A general inspection of the

case interior reveals considerable variation in the color and degree of oxidation of the wood (see fig. 21-6). The back panels, for instance, were apparently made from wood that was already heavily weathered to a gray color prior to shaping; where a plane was used to chamfer the edges and to flatten the panel, the weathering layer has been removed. Staining around the pins of the mortise-and-tenon joints in the case back suggests that the back has been disassembled and that measures were taken to obscure the fresh-colored wood of new pins (see fig. 21-5). The use of poplar for drawer guides appears almost unprecedented in eighteenth-century French furniture and is thus an indicator that these elements may date to the period of major restoration. Likewise, the use of square-shouldered rabbets on panel edges is unusual in Parisian work of the mid-eighteenth century, except in instances where one surface of the panel is designed to be flush with the surrounding rails. The use of chamfering in combination with rabbeting appears to be unprecedented, suggesting that the horizontal panels, though possibly old, have been reworked to fit in their current locations.

As with the case, it appears that the drawers have been greatly altered. The drawer backs are made of red oak, which is endemic to the Americas and extremely unlikely to have been used by cabinetmakers in eighteenth-century Paris. There are saw kerfs in the drawer sides adjacent to the dovetails that are not aligned with the current joints, indicating that they have been recut. The practice of veneering the inside of drawer fronts with oak is apparently entirely without precedent in eighteenth-century France. X-rays show that some of the stacked blocks that form the core of the drawer fronts are riddled with insect tunnels, while adjacent blocks are untouched; no exit holes are visible on the inside or outside surfaces (fig. 21-7). This suggests strongly that the drawer fronts were made up from reworked pieces of old wood. Furthermore, the drawer fronts have a much more pronounced curve than the horizontal rails of the case behind them, leaving a gap when the drawers are closed of about 1.5 cm between the center of the drawer fronts and the rails. This lack of conformity also supports the idea that the drawer fronts are rebuilt. The drawer bottoms also appear to be made of reused wood. The six boards of each drawer bottom may be divided into three symmetrically arranged pairs; each pair is slightly different in thickness, patina, and tool markings. One of the three board types has repetitive but slightly irregular curved tool marks that were probably formed by an early rotary woodworking tool of the type developed in the mid-nineteenth century (fig. 21-8).

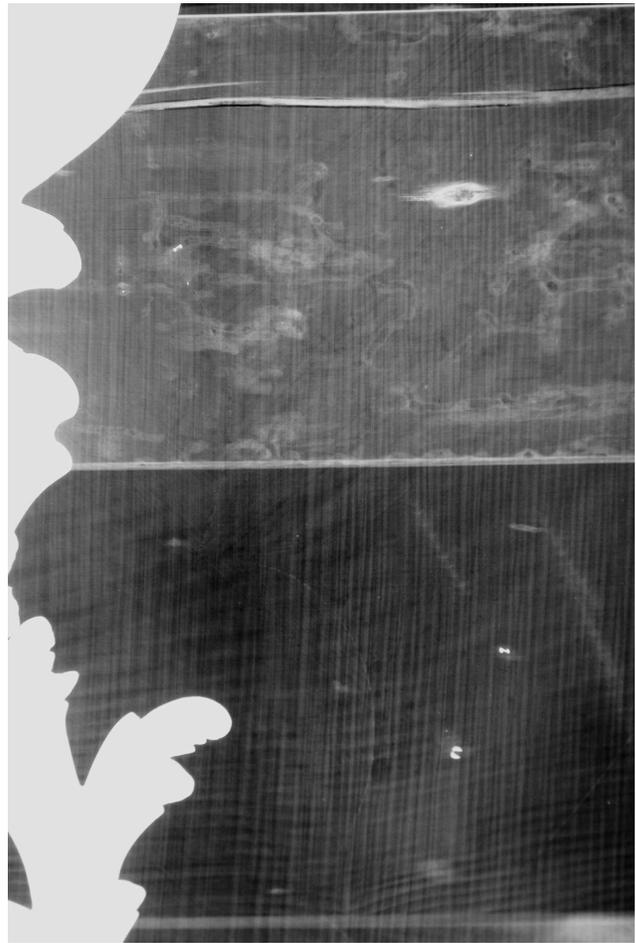


Figure 21-7 Detail of an X-radiograph of the lower drawer front. The upper half shows extensive tunneling in the substrate by wood-boring insects, while the lower half is undamaged. This suggests that old wood was cut and reused to fabricate the drawer front.



Figure 21-8 The saw marks on the drawer bottom are of a type made by a large rotary saw, of a kind not invented until the mid-nineteenth century.

The flat-headed wire nails that currently affix the drawer bottoms to the drawer backs are relatively modern and

were likely added around the same time that splits in the drawer bottoms were repaired with added strips of oak. On both drawers, the old, and apparently original, nail holes are still visible. These holes are perfectly round, with impressions of round, flat nail heads in evidence, suggesting that the original nails were also wire nails. Iron wire nails were available in eighteenth-century France and were first patented and produced industrially on a small scale in France in the early part of the nineteenth century;¹³ however, wire nails do not seem to have been widely adopted until the later nineteenth century, suggesting that the drawers were fabricated in their current state since that time.

The two woods used as decorative veneers on the commode have been identified microscopically in 1994 by Bruce Hoadley as kingwood and tulipwood. In most of the central fields tulipwood veneer has been carefully selected so that the center band of each quadrant is cut from wood that has been sawn at an angle to the grain, resulting in a hyperbolic shape radiating outward; on either side of the central band of diagonally cut veneer, straight-grain pieces of wood fill out the quadrant. The seams between the tulipwood and the kingwood surrounds are rather large and irregular, reflecting poor craftsmanship. Careful examination of the seams under magnification reveals tool marks from both a fine saw and a knife, suggesting that a combination of techniques was used to cut the marquetry. The fact that the marquetry is applied to reworked and reused wood on the sides and drawer fronts suggests that little if any of the veneer dates to the eighteenth century.

As mentioned in “Commentary” above, the gilt bronze mounts closely copy the design of mounts found on the Baumhauer commode (cat. no. 14) and on other commodes by Baumhauer. The differences are substantial enough, however, to make it clear that they are neither from the same models nor are they after-casts of Baumhauer mounts. The chasing on the mounts is competently and consistently executed, though in a rather mechanical fashion, with little variation, whether over foliage or flowers. This stands in contrast to the mounts of the Baumhauer commode, where there is a more complex interplay between matte and burnished passages (figs. 21-9, 21-10; and see fig. 21-2). Although the mounts are not as elegantly chased as the mounts by Baumhauer, they are extremely well fitted to the cabinet and to each other. The overlaps between sections are very precisely shaped and filed to give a convincing appearance of single large mounts.



Figure 21-9



Figure 21-10

Comparison of the original eighteenth-century mounts of the Joseph Baumhauer commode (cat. no. 14) and the copies on this commode. The chasing of the Baumhauer mounts (left) is more varied; the chasing of the later copies (right) is more mechanical, though very skillfully executed. The differences between the two make it clear that new master models were made for the copies rather than simply taking molds from the originals.

The gilt bronze mounts on this commode appear quite consistent in their chasing and condition and in the texture and color on their back surfaces, suggesting that they are all the product of one production campaign. Six representative gilded bronze mounts were removed from the commode and analyzed for alloy composition by X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF). The mounts were found to have consistent compositions that appear to be atypical of mid-eighteenth-century castings. They have higher zinc content, lower tin content, and lower levels of impurities than original mounts of the period. An estimated date of manufacture for the mounts was generated using machine learning techniques to compare their compositions to a database of securely dated gilded bronzes produced from 1685 to 2008.¹⁴ The results of the analysis suggest that the likeliest date of manufacture for the mounts is 1937, one year before the purchase of the commode by J. Paul Getty. This is, of course, only an estimate, with a fairly large margin of error of ± 36 years. Still, since no restorations have been recorded since Getty’s purchase, the analysis suggests that the mounts were very likely produced between about 1900 and 1938.

Additional evidence that the mounts are not eighteenth century can be found by an examination of threaded fasteners used to secure the mounts and locks. Each drawer handle has, in addition to several screws, one large threaded rod made of iron attaching it to the drawer. The rod threads into tapped holes in the handles

themselves and are secured from the reverse with round, brass nuts. There is no indication that this is not the original arrangement, yet the rods are exactly 5 mm in diameter and the threads are spaced exactly 1.5 mm apart. The precise conformity to metric dimensions suggests that these fixtures probably date well after about 1800, when the metric system was adopted in France. The thread spacing and the angle of the threads (approximately 68°) do not conform to any known metric standard. European thread standards were largely unified in 1898 and generally adopted a 60° thread angle, suggesting that the tools used to make the threads of these rods were made prior to this date.¹⁵ The screws used to attach the lock offer further clues to the date of this commode's fabrication. The four identical current screws appear to be the only ones ever to have been present in the drawer. Their holes are clean and unmolested, and X-radiography, which often reveals evidence of multiple screw holes, shows none. The screws are machine made and round headed and have conical, or "gimlet," points of the sort that first came into mass production around 1850.¹⁶

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a period of prolific production of reproductions of very high quality ancien régime French furniture.¹⁷ It seems likely, then, that the makers of the Delorme commode mounts must have had sufficient access to the Baumhauer commode (or another extremely similar piece) to make drawings or take photographs of the mounts that were then used to create new master models. However, it would seem that this access did not allow for removing the mounts and making molds of the originals, which would have been a much more economical way to reproduce the pattern.

The marble top has previously been described as *lumachella pavonazza*,¹⁸ a fossiliferous limestone from the Austrian Alps with a deep red-brown matrix, purple streaks, white patches, and numerous marine fossil inclusions. However, the fossil organisms contained in *lumachella pavonazza* are mainly crinoid columnals.¹⁹ The top of this commode contains primarily branchiate corals and bryozoans, with few if any crinoid columnals. This suggests that the stone is more likely to come from Rance, a source in Belgium near a town of the same name. The "marble" (technically a Devonian limestone) quarried in the area of Rance is said to have been used in furniture during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the commercial quarry is now closed.²⁰

In summary, the weight of evidence suggests that this commode was made in the second half of the nineteenth century or early twentieth century using pieces of an eighteenth-century commode stamped by Delorme and Petit along with other pieces of old wood.

A.H., with R.S.

NOTES

1. On the basis of these stamps, the commode has been previously published as a work by Adrien Faizelot Delorme, subsequently sold by Nicolas Petit.
2. J. Paul Getty Papers, 1909–89: Art collecting and collections, 1934–74, 1977, 1982, undated; J. M. Botibol 1939–40; in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
3. The commode was published as being attributed to Joseph Baumhauer in Wescher 1955, 118, 124, fig. 8; and Boutemy 1965, 84, fig. 3. It seems that the stamps were first noticed in 1971; see documents in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
4. For more on Adrien Faizelot Delorme, see Genestie 2006; and on Nicolas Petit, see Droguet 2001.
5. Documents from Jacques Seligmann et Fils in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
6. Galerie Georges Petit, *Objets d'art et très bel ameublement du XVIIIe siècle et autres, December 6–7, 1928* (Paris: Galerie Georges Petit, 1928), lot 180.
7. Acc. no. 1013-1882; Kjellberg 1989, 453.
8. Champeaux 1883.
9. Documents from Jacques Seligmann et Fils in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
10. Documents from Jacques Seligmann et Fils in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
11. Documents from Jacques Seligmann et Fils in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
12. J. Paul Getty Papers, 1909–89: Art collecting and collections, 1934–74, 1977, 1982, undated; J. M. Botibol 1939–40; in the files of the Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, J. Paul Getty Museum.
13. Priess 1973.
14. For details of the methods used, see Heginbotham, Erdmann, and Hayek 2018.
15. Roe 1916, 247.

16. Jenkinson 1999.
17. Payne and Linke 2003; Mestdagh and Lécoules 2010.
18. Margolis 1987.
19. Borghini 1989.
20. Dubarry de Lassale, Barco, and Bresc-Bautier 2000.

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