



Armorial Charger

Qianlong period circa 1740

Scottish Market

Diameter: 15 inches; 38.5cm

A Chinese porcelain charger with a finely painted grisaille scene after a 1737 print, *La Fontaine de Bacchus* engraved by Jean Moyreau (1690-1762) after a painting by Philips Wouwerman (1619-1668); the underside with a coat of arms attributed to Robert French of Frenchland.

The print by Jean Moyreau is titled *The Fountain of Bacchus* but the painting it is after, by Philips Wouwerman, is usually known as *The Return from the Hunt*. The original painting is now in the Dresden Staatliche Kunstsammlung and the print is from about 1737-1739 as part of an extensive suite by Moyreau of works by Wouwermans. The grisaille enameling by the Chinese artist is of exceptional quality and the use of the original print is extremely sophisticated, relocating some of the foreground elements to better fit the circular canvas of the porcelain dish.

Only five other such chargers are recorded: two in the British Museum, with a biblical and a mythological scene, and three with flowers after Monnoyer, two in the Metropolitan Museum, New York and another in the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

All these dishes have different images on them - which would have been very expensive to commission in Canton. This is most unusual for Chinese export porcelains with Western or European Subject designs like this. Normally the whole teaset or set of plates would have just one image reproduced many times. Some sets of two or four are known but it is very rare by comparison with many European ceramic services which might have many different scenes from a suite of prints.

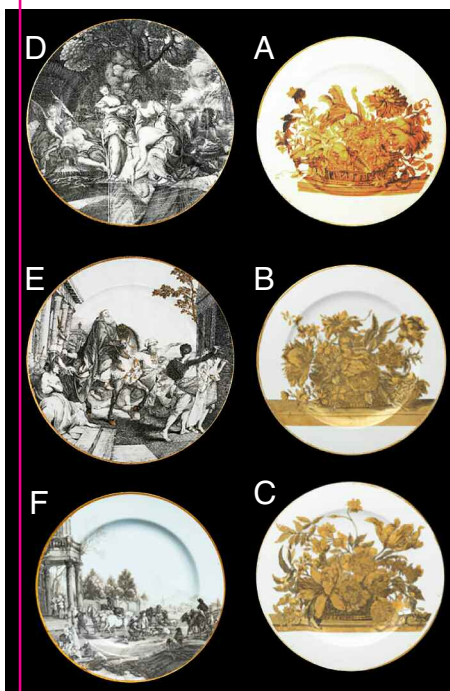
The order for these dishes and another linked set of bird and animal dishes, all painted in very high quality grisaille, are likely from a single workshop in Canton and the venture to produce such high quality works for export is comparable in some ways to the better known Pronk venture which was underway at the same time.

The coat of arms has been attributed by David Howard (1974) to Robert French of Frenchland and Thornydykes in Scotland but there is no evidence of the order or of other art collecting that might suggest that this man was behind the creation of these spectacular porcelains. In the literature these are therefore linked with Robert French but it should be noted that several other families in Britain and the Low Countries bore very similar arms, some of whom had sufficient wealth to order such a set but there is no evidence linking any of them with this set. Some other porcelains are known with these arms and the style of the mantling here looks more British than Continental.

Little is known about Robert French (1705-1758), the son of David French MP (d.1720) of Frenchland and Thornydykes. David was an MP for New Galloway in the Scottish parliament of 1702 and he had been granted substantial lands in Scotland in 1707. He married three times, with his second wife Elizabeth Thomsone (d. 1712) being Robert's mother. David died with his estates in a poor state and they were eventually sold by his heir Robert in 1730. Robert moved to London and made a considerable fortune in commerce. He married Elizabeth Hull (1709-56), daughter of Christopher Hull of Brampton, and their only daughter Elizabeth (1746- 1813) married John Wallace of Sidcup in Kent.



Robert French Armorial Chargers



'Bird and Animal' Chargers



The Robert French Chargers

from a set with the Arms of Robert French on the underside

- One Charger (A) flowers, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem (38.5cm)
- Two Chargers (B,C) flowers, Metropolitan Museum, NY (both 38.5cm)
- Two Chargers (D,E) figures, British Museum, London (both 42cm)
- One Charger (F) figures, with Cohen & Cohen (38.5cm)

Six Chargers are known with different elaborate *grisaille* and gilt decoration to the front and a coat of arms in the well of the foot rim, painted in *famille rose*. Three of these have baskets of flowers with apparently 'new' compositions taking elements from the prints of Jean Baptiste Monnoyer, and three have complete scenes taken from prints, two by Edmé Jeaurat (1688–1738), one of *Achilles being Dipped in the River Styx* (1719) after a lost painting by Nicolas Vleughels and the other of *The Triumph of Mordecai* (1737) after Sébastien Leclerc the Younger (1676-1763) and the third *La Fontaine de Bacchus* (1737) by Jean Moyreau (1690-1762) after Philips Wouwerman (1619-1668). This last has only recently been discovered, emerging from a private collection in Europe. It is hoped that more will appear as the set was likely larger than the extant examples.

These chargers relate to another set of bird and animal designs, also with very high quality decoration without any decorative borders, apart from a gold rim, and the set is made up of different designs rather than the customary repetition of a single design on all the pieces. So it is assumed that these pieces were all produced in the same workshop, in a single complex order supervised by one agent, though possibly for more than one client and it may have been the same artist involved in assembling the designs. The 'flowers' have extensive gilding over the *grisaille* painting which is also unusual. One charger in particular links these two groups, having the same floral composition as found on one of the armorial chargers but painted in the same *grisaille* style as the bird chargers.

The three chargers after Monnoyer represent something of mystery in that the designs on the porcelain are recombinations of elements of the printed sources, created in a sophisticated manner, and which suggest the

'Bird and Animals' Chargers

Six plates (A, B, C, D, E, F): Zeeuws Museum, Middleburg

One plate (G): previously in the Mottahedeh Collection and the Popowich Collection, sold January 2017 Christie's New York

Two plates (H, I): the Metropolitan Museum, New York

Two Plates (J, K): the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem (all examples 28cm)

One Plate (L): the Cunha Alves Collection. The 'link' example (35.5cm)

The birds on these porcelains have been assembled from a range of prints mainly by Nicolas Robert and Francis Barlow but also some from Jan Griffier, Pieter Boel, Francis Place and Johannes Teyler.

Three (C,D,G) are taken straight from a single print but the others take elements from different prints to create new compositions. Two of them (I,K) are from only two prints and the rest from a variety of sources, mainly different suites of Robert's work but also some of his birds used by Johannes Teyler for his coloured print series. The precise 'design pathway' for these fine porcelains is not fully understood, in particular who might have been responsible for the new images. The original designs are from the second and third quarters of the 17th century but the porcelains date to around 1740.

direct involvement of a skilled artist in the production of the porcelain designs. It is not clear, either in this case or for the set of plates with birds, whether these new combinations were done first as prints, which have not been found, or they were done only as drawings intended for the porcelain production alone. Both the Monnoyer designs and the Robert bird prints were much copied by other artists.

Both series use the works of artists associated with Versailles in the second half of the seventeenth century: Monnoyer, Robert, Boel and Barlow all worked producing drawings of animals in the Menagerie at Versailles, first under Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, brother of Louis XIII, and then for Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, brother of Louis XIV.

The two in the British Museum with figural designs use prints by Edmé Jaurat, the elder brother of the more famous Etienne. Edmé was apprenticed to Bernard Picart and worked in the Netherlands for some time before returning to France and establishing a reputation producing accurate engravings of paintings, particularly for the collector Pierre Crozat (1665-1740). The Achilles engraving is dated 1719 and the Mordecai is dated 1737, the same year as the Moyreau print after Wouwermans. .

One of the Monnoyer designs (C) is also on the dish L and the Achilles design is found on a small number of dinner plates, without the arms of French on the underside, both slightly different from the original set. These may have been trials or made at the same time to be sold independently, to offset the expense of setting up the production.



Design Sources: A, B & C are recombined elements derived from flower prints by Jean Baptiste Monnoyer which he published in Paris between 1680-95. These were much copied by other artists and printmakers including Pieter Schenk and Nicolas Poilly.

Here someone has created three new baskets of flowers using blooms and leaf sprays from a variety of these prints. Monnoyer himself reused some like this, as well as many other artists mining them for elements. Thus it is not clear who might have created these - or whether the porcelain designs are taken from drawings created in this way specifically for the order in China - or from prints using these recycled images which have not been found.

The dishes D & E are from two large prints engraved by Edmé Jeurat (1688-1738). The Achilles image is taken from a painting, now lost, by Nicolas Vleughels (1668-1737) showing the infant Achilles being dipped in the River Styx by his mother Thetis. Edmé engraved many works by Vleughels (a number of which are found on Chinese export porcelain) and his younger brother the painter Étienne Jeurat (1699-1789) was a pupil of Vleughels.

The image of the *Triumph of Mordecai* is by Edmé Jeurat after Sébastien Leclerc the younger (1676-1763) the son of Sébastien Leclerc (1637-1714). Other images by both father and son are found on Chinese export porcelain, carved mother-of-pearl and in reverse painting on glass.

The dish F, which only emerged from a private Belgian collection in 2020, is copied from a print by Jean Moyreau after Philips Wouwermans *The Fountain of Bacchus* (also known as *Return from the Hunt*). The original painting is in the Dresden Staatskkkamm and the print is from about 1737-1739 as part of an extensive suite by Moyreau of works by Wouwermans.

References: Cunha Alves, 2016, p292, No 180, charger of the same size with flowers, *en grisaille*, but not with the gilding, no arms on underside; Cohen & Cohen 2014b, *Hit & Myth*, p86, No49, a 23cm dinner plate with Achilles; another 23cm plate with Achilles is in the Victoria & Albert Museum (No C.76-1963); Le Corbeiller 1974, ppp71-5, the two plates in the NY Met NY and discussion of the Monnoyer sources; Sargent 2012, p364, the Peabody example.



