



## Pair of Chargers

Kangxi period circa 1716-20  
Austrian market  
Diameter: 12.5 inches; 32cm

A previously unrecorded pair of Chinese armorial porcelain dishes with the arms of Prince Eugene of Savoy augmented with the arms of the House of Austria in underglaze blue, the rim gilded.

This pair is an example of this Chinese armorial porcelain, previously unrecorded on Chinese porcelain, having come from the Savoy family. One of them has a label on the back suggesting that it had been through the antiques trade about a hundred years ago and possibly bought back by a member of the family.

The arms, painted in underglaze blue, are of Prince Eugene Franz of Savoy-Carignan (1663-1736) augmented with the arms of Austria, an honour granted around 1700, and with the order of the Golden Fleece around it. Eugene was given this order in 1687 the same year as Joseph I, Archduke of Austria.

With no other decoration the dating is initially difficult but they are likely from around 1716-23 when Eugene was appointed the Governor of the Austrian Netherlands and was building his elegant summer residence at the Belvedere Palaces in Vienna. These dishes may have resided there or at his Winter residence on the Himmelpfortgasse in Vienna.

“Nothing seemed to be too costly, especially when it came to furnishing the Winter Palace and the Belvedere, as testified by reports of admirers. Wall coverings made of silk, precious stones on console tables, chandeliers, ceiling paintings and frescos by famous Italian masters, English silver, Chinese porcelain and much more created a magnificent ambience hardly imaginable today.” (from *Prince Eugene's Winter Palace on Himmelpfortgasse*, by Agnes Husslein-Arco, 2013)

Eugene was a younger son of Eugene Moritz of Savoy and Olympia Mancini, a niece of Cardinal Mazarin. His father died in 1673 and Olympia was very intimate with Louis XIV until she was involved in the Affaire des Poisons and was banished from France in 1679.

Eugene was brought up in the court of Louis XIV at Versailles under the neglectful eye of his paternal grandmother Marie Bourbon (1606-1692). Under five feet tall and with a pockmarked face he was a frail and effeminate youth who was originally intended for a clerical



portrait of Eugene of Savoy, circa 1718, by Jacob van Schuppen (Rijksmuseum No SK-A-373, on loan at the Belvedere, Vienna)



mezzotint by Petrus Schenck, circa 1706-13, after David Hoyer



mezzotint by Petrus Schenck, circa 1706-13, showing Eugene wearing the collar of the order of the Golden Fleece



role, having no wealth of his own. Liselotte von der Pfalz (1652-1722) described him as “nothing but a dirty, very debauched boy who didn’t show any signs of amounting to anything”.

He moved in the circle of the Abbé de Choisy, a well-known transvestite in Paris and was associated with the King’s brother Philippe, Duc d’Orleans. Elizabeth Charlotte of the Palatinate, the The Duchess of Orléans, who had known Eugene from those days, would later write to her aunt, Princess Sophia of Hanover, describing Eugene’s antics with lackeys and pages. He was "a vulgar whore" along with the Prince of Turenne, and "often played the woman with young people" with the nickname of 'Madame Simone' or 'Madam l'Ancienne'. He preferred a "couple of fine page boys" to any woman, and was refused an ecclesiastical benefice due to his "depravity".

He never married, and fellow officers referred to him as a "Mars without Venus." Eugene was particularly close to the Marquis de la Moussaye (possibly the ex-Huguenot René Amaury de Montbourcher).

In 1683 at the age of nineteen Eugene applied to join the French army and Louis XIV personally intervened to disallow him. Eugene left France at once with nothing but the name of an important family and joined the Austrian army, eventually rising to become of the greatest military commanders of his time - and of all time. Napoleon considered him one of the seven greatest commanders of history.

Despite his rather uncertain start he came to embody the enlightenment ideal of the *honnête homme* as described in the writings of de la Rochefoucauld and Pascal and characterised by a stoic self-control, courage, wisdom and education.

His military successes against the Turks initially earned him great favour, with an important victory at the Battle of Zenta (1697). Then in the War of the Spanish Succession he defeated the French in several battles at Blenheim (1704), Oudenarde and Malplaquet (1709). This last, involving over three hundred thousand troops, was the bloodiest battle of the eighteenth century in which the forces of Eugene and his ally the Duke of Marlborough lost twice as many men as the French but were ultimately victorious.

Later campaigns included the Austro-Turkish War 1716-18 and the War of the Polish Succession after the death of Augustus the Strong in 1733.

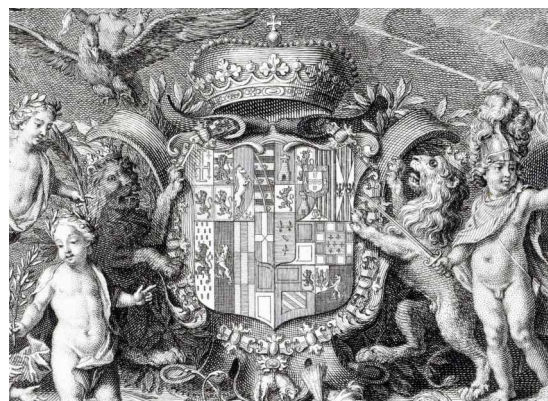
In his memoirs he mentions a visit in 1728 with Charles VI of Austria to Trieste. “I was of the party and should have been heartily tired but for Prince Francis of



Upper Belvedere Palace, Vienna



detail of amorial cartouche above the main entrance to Upper Belvedere Palace



detail of allegorical armorial print, 1719, by Bernard Picart

Lorraine, who was extremely amiable, handsome, only twenty years of age, and gay as his little court of Lorraine.” (Francis later married Empress Maria Theresa of Austria in 1736 and their youngest daughter was Marie Antoinette, wife of Louis XVI of France).

He remained a loyal friend to Marlborough and visited London to support him in 1712 when Marlborough fell out of favour with Queen Anne.

Eugene was a great patron of the arts and built and decorated the Winter Palace and the complex at Belvedere in Vienna where he had a major art collection. He had a library of over 15,000 books and prints and was acquainted with Leibniz, Rousseau and Montesquieu. "It is hardly believable," wrote Rousseau, "that a man who carries on his shoulders the burden of almost all the affairs of Europe ... should find as much time to read as though he had nothing else to do."

Eugene died in 1736 and his estates were left to his niece who sold them immediately. His art was bought by a relative, Charles Emmanuel III, Duke of Savoy and King of Sardinia and his library was purchased by the Archduke of Austria, in 1737, and is now in the Austrian National Collection.

Winston Churchill (a descendant of the Duke of Marlborough) described Eugene as “disdainful of money, content with his bright sword and his lifelong animosities against Louis XIV”.

An anonymous writer in 1718 said of him: “It was by passing through every imaginable vice that he succeeded in acquiring the character of an honorable man.”



engraving circa 1720 by Gerard Valck (1651-1726)  
portrait of Eugene



signature of Eugene de Savoye (sic)