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THE FRICK COLLECTION

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MEDIA ALERT

Masterpieces of French Faience *Selections from the Sidney R. Knafel Collection*

October 10, 2018, through Autumn 2019

This fall, an exhibition at the Frick will draw from the holdings of Sidney R. Knafel, who has one of the world's finest and most comprehensive private collections of French faience. With seventy-five objects, the presentation in the Portico Gallery tells the fascinating and complex history of an aspect of European decorative arts that warrants greater attention. The production of faience, a colorful tin-glazed earthenware, spans a vast history of more than two centuries. The earliest French examples were made in Lyon in the sixteenth century, while works from France's Golden Age of production were made in Nevers and Rouen in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Production in the eighteenth century expanded to other locations, including Marseille, Moustiers,



Plate, Rouen, ca. 1725, Faience (tin-glazed earthenware), D. 9 5/6 inches, Sidney R. Knafel Collection; photo: Michael Bodycomb

Sinceny, and Moulins. Comments Charlotte Vignon, the Frick's Curator of Decorative Arts and organizer of the exhibition, "Faience was largely commissioned by a local regional aristocracy, and the result is another wonderful chapter in the history of ceramics that developed quite apart from the centers of political power and artistic innovation in Versailles and Paris. The Frick has never before exhibited such a large and impressive body of French faience, and we are delighted to illuminate the topic through such a distinguished collection." The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue published in hard and softcover editions by the Frick, in association with D Giles Ltd.



Platter, Nevers, ca. 1660-70, Faience (tin-glazed earthenware), H. 16 inches, W. 19 3/4 inches, Sidney R. Knafel Collection; photo: Michael Bodycomb



Plate, Nevers, ca. 1680–90, Faience (tin-glazed earthenware), D. 22 1/8 inches, Sidney R. Knafel Collection; photo: Michael Bodycomb

As with other types of earthenware, faience remains porous after firing and therefore must be covered with a glaze. The glazes used include a tin oxide that creates the opaque white surface that covers the color of the underlying clay and also creates a stable surface for painting. The Knafel Collection comprises pieces decorated exclusively with the *grand feu* (literally, “high fire”) technique, in which metal oxides are mixed with water and applied to the tin-glazed surface before firing at a temperature of about 1650° F. The palette is necessarily limited to those oxides that can withstand such extreme heat: cobalt (blue), antimony (yellow), manganese (purple and brown), iron (red-orange), and copper (green).

The production of faience in France corresponds to the arrival in Lyon, during the second half of the sixteenth century, of several Italian maiolica potters and painters seeking opportunities outside Italy. This influence is reflected in the French word *faïence*, which derives from the northern Italian city of Faenza, an important center of maiolica production during the Renaissance. French faience draws inspiration from multiple sources, with decoration simultaneously indebted to Italian maiolica, Asian porcelain, and contemporary engravings, while the forms derived mostly from European ceramics and silver.

The function of a piece of French faience depended on the nature of the commission, the patron who first owned it, and its price. During the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, objects in faience were costly and therefore acquired, collected, and gifted exclusively by those at the highest levels of French society. Consequently, earlier pieces from Lyon and Nevers in the Knafel Collection were originally intended only

for display, to be admired by their owners and guests. The spread of faience workshops in Nevers, Rouen, and elsewhere

in France during the eighteenth century inevitably changed the status of these objects and hence their function. One of the most important changes was the later use of faience as dishware, on which to eat or serve food. To ensure the success of their workshops, French potters—beginning with those in Rouen—closely followed the culinary developments occurring in France at the time. Multiple dishes in different shapes and sizes were created in response to the requirements of the *service à la française*, which necessitated serving various dishes of a particular course at the same



Clérissey manufactory, *Ewer*, Moustiers, ca. 1700–25, Faience (tin-glazed earthenware), H. 10 3/8 inches, W. 9 1/2 inches, Sidney R. Knafel Collection; photo: Christophe Perlès



Tray, Rouen, ca. 1730–40, Faience (tin-glazed earthenware), H. 18 inches, W. 22 3/4 inches, Sidney R. Knafel Collection; photo: Michael Bodycomb

time. As the eighteenth century progressed, faience was increasingly used at all times of the day. In the morning, small faience boxes and jars stored pomades, powders, and other accessories of make up, alongside silver and

porcelain vessels on a dressing table for “la toilette.”

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INTERACT

Social:    /FrickCollection

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BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: 212.288.0700

Web site: www.frick.org

Building project: www.frickfuture.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

App: frick.org/app

Museum address: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue

Hours: Open six days a week: 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) on Lincoln’s Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day

Admission: \$22; senior citizens \$17; students \$12; Pay-what-you-wish hours on Wednesdays from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. **PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS:** Children under ten are not admitted to the museum

First Fridays: Museum admission and gallery programs are free from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on the first Friday evening of the month (except January and September)

Subway: #6 local to 68th Street station; #Q to 72nd Street station; Bus: M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

Tour Information: Included in the price of museum admission is an Acoustiguide Audio Tour of the permanent collection. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Shop: The shop is open the same days as the museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

Group Museum Visits: Please call 212.288.0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is available online

Library address: 10 East 71st Street, near Fifth Avenue

Hours: www.frick.org/visit/library/hours

Admission: The Library is open to the public free of charge.

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For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Associate Director of Media Relations & Marketing; Phone: 212.547.6866; E-mail: rosenau@frick.org.