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THE FRICK COLLECTION

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**THE FRICK COLLECTION PRESENTS AN IMPORTANT EXHIBITION ON
COYPEL'S DON QUIXOTE TAPESTRIES, PAINTINGS, PRINTS, AND BOOKS**

February 25 through May 17, 2015



Charles Coypel (French, 1694–1752), *Don Quixote at Don Antonio Moreno's Ball*, 1731, oil on canvas, Palais Impérial de Compiègne; long-term loan from the Musée du Louvre, Paris (3566); photo: © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY

Cervantes's *Don Quixote* is considered by many to be among the greatest works of fiction ever written. From the publication in 1605 of the first of two volumes (the second followed ten years later, exactly 400 years ago), the novel enjoyed immense popularity. Reprints and translations spread across Europe, with the adventures of the knight Don Quixote and his companion, Sancho Panza, captivating the continental imagination and influencing both the performing and visual arts.

Coytel's Don Quixote Tapestries: Illustrating a Spanish Novel in Eighteenth-Century France is devoted to a series of tapestries by Charles Coypel (1694–1752), painter to Louis XV, which illustrates twenty-eight of the novel's most celebrated episodes and woven at the Gobelins Manufactory in Paris. The exhibition includes three Gobelins tapestry panels from the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and two Flemish tapestries inspired by Coypel from The Frick Collection, which have not been on view in more than ten years. These are joined by five of Coypel's original paintings (never before seen in New York), called cartoons (from the Italian *cartone*), that were used as full-scale preparatory designs for the tapestries, on loan from the Palais Impérial de Compiègne and the Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris. The series is



Workshop of Peter van den Hecke (Flemish, 1680–1752) after Philippe de Hondt (Flemish, 1683–1741), *Arrival of the Shepherdesses at the Wedding of Camacho* (detail), 1730–45 (before 1748), wool and silk, The Frick Collection, New York (1965.10.20); photo: Michael Bodycomb

completed by eighteen prints and books from the Hispanic Society of America, New York. An accompanying catalogue explores Coypel's role in illustrating *Don Quixote* and the circumstances that made his designs the most renowned pictorial interpretations of the novel. A rich program of lectures, seminars, and salon evenings explores the history of the novel and its influence on print, tapestry, film, ballet, and opera from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The exhibition is organized by Charlotte Vignon, Curator of Decorative Arts, The Frick Collection, and is made possible by The Florence Gould Foundation with additional support from the Grand Marnier Foundation.

CHARLES COYPEL, ROYAL PAINTER TO LOUIS XV

Charles Coypel was born into a family of distinguished French painters. Both his grandfather, Noël Coypel (1628–1707), and his father, Antoine Coypel (1661–1722), were directors of the prestigious Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, and, on several occasions, also produced paintings to be reproduced as tapestries at the Gobelins Manufactory. In 1715, Antoine was appointed First Painter to the King, a title Charles would inherit in 1747. In 1714, the young Charles Coypel was asked to collaborate with the Gobelins Manufactory in what would become one of its most celebrated series of tapestries: *The Story of Don Quixote*. Between 1714 and 1734, he delivered twenty-seven paintings, and a last one in 1751, just before his death. Coypel is believed to have selected the scenes and also determined the order in which he would paint them. Eight cartoons illustrate episodes from the first part of the novel—in which Don Quixote and Sancho Panza embark on foolish, often comical adventures—while the remaining twenty paintings illustrate scenes from the second part, in which the two protagonists evolve from buffoons to heroes.

For the selection of scenes and compositions, Coypel was influenced by contemporary French theater. By the early eighteenth century, numerous plays, ballets, and operas had retold and interpreted the adventures of Don Quixote for both the court and the popular audience. Coypel himself was a playwright, whose first two plays were inspired by Cervantes's novel. Though not a success, *Don Quichotte*—written when Coypel was only eighteen—demonstrates his familiarity with the tale. In 1720, when Coypel was painting the cartoons for the Gobelins, he wrote a second interpretation. Titled *Les Folies de Cardenio*, it was performed five times before the court, with the young Louis XV participating in the ballet. For the tapestry designs, Coypel created images of Don Quixote that would be familiar to theatrical audiences. His characters use gestures and postures seen on stage, and on several occasions, Coypel included a theater-like curtain (see top left image on page 1).

THE STORY OF DON QUIXOTE AT THE GOBELINS ROYAL MANUFACTORY

Founded in 1663, the Gobelins Royal Manufactory produced sumptuous furnishings for the French king's residences and lavish diplomatic gifts that spread his glory to foreign courts. Woven nine times between 1717 and 1794, *The Story of Don Quixote* is one of the Gobelins's most celebrated tapestry series. The number of panels and the selection of Coypel's scenes varied with each weaving. The first weaving (1717–19), for example, included the first fifteen scenes painted by Coypel while the eighth weaving (1763–87) had sixty-seven panels, including three that are in the

exhibition. Such flexibility was possible because Coypel's scenes were not designed to follow the chronology of Cervantes's novel or any other order. This was greatly appreciated by the director of the manufactory, who explained in 1752: "This tapestry set has the advantage that it can be separated into as many or as few pieces as needed, and it is therefore even more suited as a present from the king to princes and ambassadors." At least six panels of the fifth weaving were hung in the 1750s in Louis XV's apartments in the Château de Marly. Others were presented as diplomatic gifts—like the three Getty panels in the exhibition—or purchased by distinguished clients.



Gobelins Tapestry Manufactory (French) under the direction of Michel Audran (French, 1701–1771) and his son Jean Audran *fils* (French, d. 1794), main scene after Charles Coypel (French, 1694–1752); aléntours after Claude Audran III (French, 1658–1734), Jean-Baptiste Belin de Fontenay *fils* (French, 1668–1730), and Alexandre-François Desportes (French, 1661–1743), *Sancho Arrives on the Island of Barataria*, 1772, wool and silk; modern cotton support straps and lining, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (82.DD.68)

A total of about two hundred panels from *The Story of Don Quixote* were woven during the eighteenth century. Each panel presents a central scene by Coypel framed by a trompe-l'oeil carved and gilded wooden frame that appears to be hung on a wall covered in yellow or red fabric. The scenes are surrounded by a decorative border of flowers, animals, and other motifs related to the adventures of Don Quixote. This border, known as an aléntour, was originally designed by Jean-Baptiste Belin de Fontenay *père* (1653–1717) and Claude Audran III (1658–1734). Unlike Coypel's scenes, which remained unchanged throughout the

eighteenth century, the aléntour was modified on six occasions to adapt to new tastes and fashions. All the versions, however, retain the initial idea of creating a highly decorative border that could be shortened in length, as this allowed the tapestries to be slightly adjustable in size, according to the taste or need of the owner.

Tapestries consist of warps—fixed threads, usually of undyed wool—and colored wefts that are interwoven with the base warp to create the image. The *Don Quixote* tapestries were woven on high-warp looms, with the exception of the seventh weaving, which was produced on low-warp looms. On high-warp looms, the warp threads were stretched vertically. In order to weave an exact reproduction of the painted scene, the cartoon was hung on a wall behind the weaver, who looked at the reflection in a mirror placed on the wall in front of him. Only a few cartoons have survived today, and most are in poor condition. Coypel's *Don Quixote* scenes are no exception. Because of their enduring success, the paintings needed to be restored several times during the eighteenth century. Coypel's hand is no longer visible on the cartoons used for multiple weavings, but those woven only once or twice—such as the examples presented in the exhibition—show most of their original surface.

THE ENDURING SUCCESS OF CHARLES COYPEL'S *STORY OF DON QUIXOTE*

"I'll wager that before long there won't be a tavern, an inn, a hostelry, or a barbershop where the history of our deeds isn't painted." Uttered by Sancho Panza, these boastful words would prove prophetic. Charles Coypel's paintings gained wide exposure and additional fame from a series of twenty-five black-and-white engravings made between 1723 and 1734 under his personal direction. (Fourteen are included in the exhibition.) The first twenty-two prints were published in large format and as reverse images of his cartoons by his lifelong friend and collaborator Louis Surugue père. By the 1730s, three more plates were added, reproducing the latest scenes painted by Coypel. In addition to Surugue, the engravings were entrusted to some of the most distinguished French eighteenth-century printmakers: Charles-Nicolas Cochin père, François Joullain, and Bernard Lépicié. These printmakers worked from preparatory drawings made by Coypel after his own paintings, which explains the inscription Coypel invenit, (designed by Coypel) rather than Coypel pinxit (painted by Coypel) at the lower left of each plate.

Accessible to only a few wealthy patrons, the tapestries remained luxury items throughout the centuries while the engravings were affordable to a larger public. Thousands of sheets were printed and sold individually or in folios. Reproduced and reduced in size, the prints also illustrated other editions of Cervantes's novel, not only in French but in English and Dutch as well. In 1746, the engravings after Coypel even became a substitute for Cervantes's words in the lavish book of the Dutch publisher Pieter de Hondt, who cut part of the novel to accommodate the large plates. Four of these early editions are on view. With this series of engravings, Coypel became the most influential eighteenth-century illustrator of Cervantes's novel.



Louis Surugue père (French, 1686–1762) after Charles Coypel (French, 1694–1752), *Don Quixote, Led by Folly, Sets out from His Home to Become a Knight Errant*, 1723–24, engraving, The Hispanic Society of America, New York (LQ 1679); photo: George Koelle



Workshop of Peter van den Hecke (Flemish, 1680–1752) after Philippe de Hondt (Flemish, 1683–1741), *Arrival of the Shepherdesses at the Wedding of Camacho*, 1730–45 (before 1748), wool and silk, The Frick Collection, New York (1965.10.20), photo: Michael Bodycomb

Throughout the eighteenth century, Coypel's designs continued to influence tapestry production in France and abroad. Around 1730–45, the Brussels workshop of Peter van den Hecke produced a series of eight tapestries illustrating Don Quixote, with six of them inspired by engravings after Coypel, two of which belong to The Frick Collection. Visually different from the Gobelins Don Quixote tapestries, the scenes cover the entire surface of the tapestry panel and are surrounded by a simple border that simulates a carved and

gilded frame. The designer of the cartoons, Philippe de Hondt, created the new compositions by adapting, or

combining, elements from engravings after Coypel. Working within a Flemish tradition, de Hondt transposed Coypel's figures to a village scene recalling pictures by David Teniers the Younger rather than setting his figures on an eighteenth-century French stage. Appreciated abroad, seven Van den Hecke panels, including the two Frick tapestries, were acquired by the French court in 1748, when the same court was sponsoring the production of the Gobelins Don Quixote tapestries. A year later, the Flemish tapestries were displayed at the Château de Compiègne in the study of Louis, Dauphin of France, son of Louis XV.

With these two Flemish tapestries, the exhibition brings Coypel's designs full circle—from the original cartoons to the woven Gobelins tapestries to reproductions in prints and books and later tapestries from the workshop of Peter van den Hecke.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue written by Charlotte Vignon, the Frick's Curator of Decorative Arts, with a forward by acclaimed literary translator Edith Grossman. The book (cloth cover, 98 pages, 36 illustrations; \$16.00, Member price: \$14.40) will be available in the Museum Shop or can be ordered through the Frick's Web site [here](#) and by phone at 212.547.6848.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

An extensive series of public programs will be offered in conjunction with the exhibition. Highlights include a series of Salon Evenings featuring speakers, performances, and special events that explore the history of the novel and its enduring influence on both the performing and visual arts. Also offered will be student programs dedicated to the exhibition, a free public evening on May 1, and scholarly lectures on topics related to eighteenth-century French tapestry. **For a complete list of programs, click [here](#), or visit the Web site for details [here](#).**

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App: frick.org/app

Where: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue

Museum 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" on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection

Subway: #6 local (on Lexington Avenue) to 68th 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 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 Visits: Please call 212.288.0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is published regularly and is available upon request.

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