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Achille Etna Michallon (1796-1822), Manufacture de Sèvres (1817), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Manufacture royale de porcelaine de Sèvres, Pair of vases "with ears" with pink background, 1758, Soft-paste porcelain, gilt bronze, Musée du Louvre.



Manufacture de Vincennes, Tea Box of India, 1753, biscuit, enameled inside, soft-paste porcelain, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres.



Manufacture royale de porcelaine de Sèvres, Decor with birds, Duplessis flat plate, 1758, hard-paste porcelain, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres.



Manufacture royale de porcelaine de Sèvres, Children candlesticks, after François Boucher, circa 1773, biscuit, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres.

The **Sèvres - Cité de la céramique** (City of Ceramics), also known as the **Manufacture nationale de Sèvres** and formerly **Manufacture de Vincennes**, is probably one of the most principal European porcelain manufactories as it has contributed to the evolution of porcelain since 1740.

In 1709, **Johann Friedrich Böttger** develops method to make hard-paste porcelain thanks to the discovery of a kaolin field in **Saxony** : the **Meissen porcelain** is born. He then creates the first hard-paste porcelain manufactory out of China and enjoys great success. Soft-paste porcelain manufactories try to overcome this competition, especially the **manufactory of Chantilly**.

In France, in 1738, **Jean-Louis Henri Orry de Fulvy** buy to defective workers the trade secret of the porcelain of Chantilly and in 1740 he installs a soft-paste porcelain workshop in a tower of the Château de Vincennes. **Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour** support this project in order to compete the **Meissen and the Chantilly porcelains**. However, Saxony will jealously guard the secret of hard-paste porcelain (made up of nearly 75% of kaolin) for almost the half of a century, although this porcelain was very coveted by the European courts.

After the death of Orry de Fulvy, the **Manufacture de Vincennes become royal in 1752** and responds to very important orders: in addition to Louis XV, the **Empress of Russia** orders a table service in 1754, for example. This same year, the well-known Vase with ears begins to be produced. This vase, whose shape is the work of **Jean-Claude Duplessis**, is characteristic of the taste for rococo-inspired decoration, as are the paintings by **Boucher**. It will seduce among others Madame de Pompadour and the **Prince de Condé**, whose two vases are now preserved in the Louvre Museum.

During this period, the creations of the Manufacture are inspired by the **taste for Orient**. This *Boîte à thé des Indes* (Tea Box of India), dated 1753, is one of the first objects created by the Manufacture of Vincennes, and is already characterized by its light and elegant aesthetic which will be the trademark of the Manufacture.

The Manufacture, entirely controlled by the Crown, enjoys a great reputation and, in response to more and more important orders, is **transferred to Sèvres in 1756** in a larger building built by the architect Lindet thanks to Madame de Pompadour.

The quality of the materials, of the techniques and of the creations contribute to the success of the Manufacture whose models are made by renowned artists such as the goldsmith Duplessis Father who was the creator of many models from 1748 like the plate *Duplessis, Decor with birds* in 1758 whose naturalistic scene is inspired by the natural history illustrations very fashionable in this time. This service is made with the famous **“Sèvres blue”** (cobalt oxide incorporated in the covering) characteristic of the manufacture. Since the Second Empire, the **Elysée Palace** still uses models of this service.

From 1752, neither enamel or decoration are added to the sculptures, which are still bisques, to differentiate them from the polychrome production of Meissen, as these *Candlesticks with children*, inspired by François Boucher around 1773 to decorate the banquets of Versailles and replace the compositions made of sugar.

In 1768, Pierre-Joseph Macquer and Robert Millot, two researchers at the Manufacture de Sèvres, discover the **first French kaolin field deposit near Limoges** : hard-paste porcelains are sold in Sèvres two years later, such as the *Litron coffee service*, which illustrates both the taste for chinoiseries and gilding whose application is now facilitated through hard-paste. Thanks to this discovery, the Manufacture de Sèvres is developing, particularly from the beginning of the 19th century. The productions are characterized by their modernity and the diversity of styles.

During the First French Empire, the productions of the Manufacture do not fail to celebrate **Napoleon**. His conquests are thus evoked by creations whose decor is indicative of the wave of **Egyptomania** such as the *Egyptian sugar bowl* designed on the return of campaign.

The Manufacture is administered until 1847 by the scientist **Alexandre Brongniart** who participates in its influence. He develops new techniques, such as calibration and slip casting which are recognized during the 1851 World's Fair. He also worked on the creation in 1802 of the collection which will be used for the **Ceramic Museum, the first museum exclusively destined for ceramics and fire arts**. Open to the public from 1824, the Museum intends to present ceramics from all periods and places.

With the Bourbon Restoration and the reign of Louis Philippe I, the iconography is diversified and inspired both by Greek antiquity and ambient Romanticism. This egg-shaped *Lancelle* vase illustrates for example the neoclassical taste. During the Second Empire, the sculptures become again in vogue.

Although the industry is becoming more and more pressing and present from the Third Republic, the Manufacture de Sèvres intends to perpetuate artisanal and traditional techniques while still represent the trends. **Japonism** then **Art Nouveau** inspire creations as this Plain Service with a decor designed by Jules Auguste Habert-Dys, as well as this *Vase Pommerets "pins"*.

The decoration of the vase *The Centaurs* is the fruit of the rare collaborations between the Manufacture and **Rodin** which occur at this time. The shape has been imagined by **Albert Ernest Carrier-Belleuse**, another great name who worked with Sèvres.

It is also during the Third Republic that the six large ovens with a cylindrical form separated into three levels were built by Ambroise Milet from 1877. This ovens are now listed historical monuments. Their firing (the heat is spread uniformly and is followed by a very gradual cooling) is the origin of the incomparable quality of the enamels and their size makes possible the production of monumental pieces.

In 1876, the Manufacture and the Museum were transferred into buildings bordering the **Saint-Cloud Park** built by the State, buildings listed historical monuments where a contemporary creation continues. During the **Art Deco** years, pure and minimalist porcelains are created, like this set of *Cups and saucers* designed by **Jacques Emile Ruhlmann** (1879-1933). Indeed, the capacity to create new forms while be inspired by the modern themes is the trademark of the Manufacture. However, the Manufacture will not stop doing reissue of its iconic models, symbol of excellence in French porcelain.

See also

The Pompadour fireplace — Louis XV style — Neoclassicism — Egyptomania — Japonisme — Art Nouveau — Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse — 1851 World's Fair

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Manufacture royale de porcelaine de Sèvres, Service Litron with three golds decor on black covered, Hard-paste porcelain, developed at the Manufacture de Sèvres around 1770, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres.



Jean-Charles-Nicholas Brachard, Egyptian sugar bowl, 1802-1808, frieze of hieroglyphs in gold on a blue background on the outside, interior lined with gold; golden porcelain base, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres.



Engraving of the Museum of ceramics.



Manufacture royale de porcelaine de Sèvres, Vase Lancelle without handle, rich decoration, 1829, gold and hard-paste porcelain, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres.



Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1875), Flora squatting, 1870, Bisque porcelain, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres.



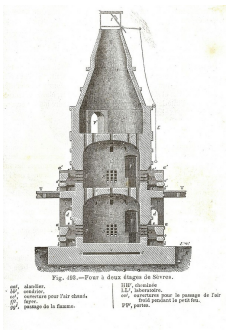
Habert-Dys Jules-Auguste (1850-1927), place, Lobé service, 1888, hard-paste porcelain, gold, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres.



Manufacture de Sèvres, Vase des Pommerets "pins", 1903, porcelain, Petit Palais, Paris.



Manufacture de Sèvres, Saigon Vase, « Limbo and sirens », Auguste Rodin and Albert Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, circa 1888, edition of 1934, Hard-paste porcelain, Musée Rodin, Paris.



Ceramic ovens in Sèvres, Dictionary of industrial chemistry (Barreswil, A. Girard), 1864.



Jacques Emile Ruhlmann (1879 – 1933), Cup and saucer, Ruhlmann, circa 1930, white and gold decor, circa 2000, Cité de la céramique, Sèvres.