

The Ashmolean Museum acquires a magnificent porcelain centrepiece

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The Ashmolean is delighted to announce the acquisition of the Boar's Head Tureen, one of the most flamboyant pieces of English rococo art in any medium.

Image



The Boars Head Tureen

The Tureen was bought for £237,565 through Christie's under the tax-concessionary scheme for private sales to museums. The Museum is extremely grateful to The Art Fund, the UK's leading independent art charity, for providing a grant of £80,701, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the Friends of the Ashmolean, the Oxford Ceramics Group, Mr Martin Foley, and numerous private benefactors for their generous contributions.

The Boar's Head Tureen is the centrepiece of one of the most historic collections of English porcelain. On loan to the Ashmolean since 1993, the collection consists of over one hundred and thirty pieces of fine Chelsea porcelain. This includes an extensive series of plates bearing the mark of the Chelsea red anchor, in use c1752-8, and a few with the later gold anchor. The collection is a unique survival of an assemblage of porcelain made during the life of the factory.

Established in 1744, the Chelsea factory maintained the highest-profile of any English porcelain factory. Until its closure in 1769 - 70, it epitomized the finest achievements of rococo art in England. Boar's head tureens were the most ambitious vessels ever produced by the factory. No complete example of this extraordinary product can be found in any other public collection in the United Kingdom.

While the Ashmolean's collection of English porcelain is built on the Marshall gift of early coloured Worcester porcelain, arguably the finest and most comprehensive of its kind in the world, there are only token representations of Chelsea or any other mid-eighteenth century factories. The Tureen is a superb addition to the Museum's collection of Chelsea porcelain. Its strong visual impact will be the prime focus of the Ashmolean's English porcelain displays in the future display strategy for the new ceramic gallery, planned for the Museum's new HLF-funded building.

David Barrie, Director of The Art Fund said, "The Boar's Head Tureen is a grisly masterpiece of ceramic art, created when English porcelain production was at its zenith. It's easy to imagine the stir it would have caused when presented at the dinner table in the 18th century, and I'm sure it has an equally startling effect on those who see it on display at the Ashmolean Museum today."

Stephen Johnson, Head of NHMF, said, "This is a truly remarkable example of fine early English porcelain. The National Heritage Memorial Fund's grant will help to ensure that it takes its rightful place as the centrepiece to a unique and historically important collection."

Notes to editors

The Art Fund

[The Art Fund](#), the UK's leading independent art charity. The Art Fund offers grants to help UK museums and galleries enrich their collections and campaigns widely on behalf of museums and their visitors. It has 80,000 members. Since its foundation in 1903, The Art Fund has helped UK public collections acquire over 850,000 works of art, ranging from Bronze Age treasures to contemporary works of art. In 2006 The Art Fund offered over £5 million to museums and galleries, and unveiled one of the most significant projects in its history - a permanent 'Skyspace' at Yorkshire Sculpture Park by the American artist James Turrell. In November 2006, The Art Fund published the findings from its groundbreaking

research comparing the collecting ability of four UK national museums with their international counterparts. The research found that UK museums have a tiny fraction of the spending power of major museums abroad. An Art Fund survey undertaken earlier in the year found that 70% of UK museums now acquire new works of art mainly or solely by gift. The findings of both surveys are available online at www.artfund.org/policyandcampaigns. Independent of government, The Art Fund is uniquely placed to campaign on behalf of public collections across the UK. It was at the forefront of the campaign for free admission in 2001 and the campaign to save the Macclesfield Psalter in 2005.

The MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund

The MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund is a government fund, established at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in 1881 as part of its nationwide work. The annual grants budget, currently £1,000,000, is provided by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). The Fund supports the acquisition of objects relating to the arts, literature and history by regional museums, record offices and specialist libraries in England and Wales. Each year it considers over 300 applications and in 2005-6 awarded grants to 104 organisations, enabling acquisitions of over £4 million to go ahead. 2006 marked the Fund's 125th anniversary.

Building a New Ashmolean

With the support of a £15 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Ashmolean is undergoing a major development to build on its strengths as a world-class museum of art and archaeology. The plan involves building thirty-nine new galleries, an education centre, conservation studios and a walkthrough between the Museum and the Cast Gallery. During the Ashmolean's redevelopment, the Museum remains open to the public and business is taking place as usual. Visitors to the Museum can see most of the Western art galleries, the Print Room and the Egyptian galleries, as well as enjoying the temporary exhibitions, the Shop and the Café.

Admission Free, Opening Times: Tues- Sat: 10.00 – 5.00, Sun: 12.00 – 5.00, Bank Holiday Mondays: 10.00 – 5.00

Further information

Susie Gault, The Ashmolean, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH
Phone: 01865 288 9298 email: Susie.gault@ashmus.ox.ac.uk

Alison Scott or Dervish Mertcan, NHMF Press Office,
Phone: 020 7591 6032/6102 Mobile: 07973 613 820