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A Paris porcelain vase attributed to Nast frères and Feuillet

Barry Shifman

The Indianapolis Museum of Art recently acquired a rare porcelain vase, attributed to Nast Frères and with painted decoration most likely by Feuillet, which dates to around 1825 (colour plate p. and fig. 1).¹ The ground color of the vase is «Cassius purple»,² and the central reserve depicts a view of the Maison de la Reine Blanche at Chantilly. A great deal more is known about this building, and its ownership as discussed later may help to establish the provenance of the vase.

The front of the vase is decorated with a topographical view surrounded by a gilded frame (fig. 2). The landscape scene depicts a turreted building by a pond, other minor structures, and a woman with various animals – several sheep, a cow, a donkey, and a dog – in the foreground. An inscription, «Maison de la Reine Blanche-Forêt de Chantilly», is on the horizontal band below the scene. Elaborate matt and burnished gilding decorates both sides of the vase.³ The reverse exhibits ferns, stylized leaves, and two seated griffons (fig. 3). The vase is composed of two separate sections which are attached by a pair of nuts and bolts at the area between the two relief bands directly below the inscription (see figs. 4–5). Above the square plinth is a pierced base, modeled to resemble gilt bronze, which is most unusual in the production of porcelain in Paris. Although the ram's-head handles and other gilded areas of the vase simulate bronze, the entire object is in fact hard-paste porcelain.

The firm of Nast Frères, who most likely created the Museum's vase and sold it undecorated (in the white) to Feuillet, was one of the major early nineteenth-century porcelain manufacturers in Paris. According to Régine de Plinval de Guillebon, shortly before Jean-Népomucène-Hermann Nast (b. 1754) died in 1817 he reached an unwritten agreement with his two sons, Henri and François, to continue his successful business under the name of Nast Frères.⁴ This arrangement began in 1817 and lasted until March 1, 1831, when Henri became sole proprietor. Henri Nast eventually closed his establishment in 1835. Like their father, the Nast brothers received numerous awards for their creations which were displayed at the various *Expositions des Produits de l'Industrie Française* in Paris. At the 1819 exhibition, their reputation was established when they were granted the highest award, the gold medal. On August 25, 1819, Louis XVIII commented to the Nast brothers at the exhibition: «Je vois avec plaisir le talent passer de père en fils; je vous engage à le cultiver».⁵ The fine manufacture, the monumental size of their objects, the elegance of the shapes,

and the refined taste of the designs were also noted. The success of Nast Frères' relief decoration was such that a large part of their production was sold in the white to Parisian and provincial decorators and dealers. Additional gold medals were awarded to them in 1823, 1827, and 1834.

The attribution to Nast Frères as the manufacturer of the vase under discussion is based on four other vases by them at the Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres (fig. 6).⁶ Two are decorated with a religious scene after Raphael and on the reverse with a peasant scene after Paulus Potter; the other two vases are each painted with figures in a landscape. Although made by Nast Frères, three of the vases bear the mark of the Darté Frères manufactory. All four were in fact decorated by Darté, who bought them undecorated from Nast. Two were displayed in 1819 at the *Exposition des Produits de l'Industrie Française*. The gilded ram's-head handles on all four vases are identical to those on the vase in Indianapolis. Due to their relief patterns, ground color, gilding, and monumental size, a pair of vases by Nast Frères, very similar in shape to those displayed at the exhibition directly listed above, at the Musée du Louvre is also related to the Museum's vase (fig. 7).⁷ Attributed to Nast Frères, another porcelain vase quite near in shape to the Museum's vase was recently sold in Paris (fig. 8).⁸ It is decorated on one side with figures presenting gifts to a king and, on the reverse, with peasants in a landscape. The handles and most of the relief decoration are almost identical to those on the Museum's vase.

Feuillet (1770–1840), who probably painted the vase's view of the Maison de la Reine Blanche, was one of the finest decorators during the Restoration.⁹ By 1814, he was already in business at 18 rue de la Paix in Paris. He was later appointed supplier to the eighth prince de Condé and his son the duc de Bourbon, and his shop became known as *Aux Armes de Condé*. In 1834 he was in partnership with Boyer.¹⁰ Feuillet was considered a talented painter of flowers, fruit, and animals. He is also known for the very high quality of his hunting scenes and landscapes, such as those on a pair of vases at the Musée Condé (fig. 9).¹¹ One vase depicts a stag in the forest of Chantilly jumping a fence and another view of individuals wearing the Condé hunting uniforms; the second example shows a forest scene at Chantilly with the death of a boar and is ornamented with the Condé arms. A punch bowl attributed to Feuillet, from about 1820 and now at the Musée Ariana in Geneva, is ornamented with a Swiss landscape (fig. 10).¹² This scene and its placement on the



bowl are closely related in style to the vase in Indianapolis. The examples mentioned above support the theory that Feuillet decorated the Museum's vase.

In addition, facts about the Maison de la Reine Blanche depicted on the vase and about its owner further strengthen this attribution. Built in 1825-26 this Gothic-style hunting pavilion, owned by Louis-Henri-Joseph (1756-1830), ninth prince de Condé and called duc de Bourbon, still exists in a forest in the region named Commelles at Chantilly (see figs. 11, 16-17). It is situated by a pond called the Étang de la Loge.¹³ In July 1789, due to political turmoil in France, the eighth prince de Condé and his son the duc de Bourbon emigrated. After traveling for a number of years, they settled in England by around 1801 and remained there until the restoration of the Bourbons in 1814. When they returned to France in 1814 they found the domain of Chantilly devastated by the Revolution. A year later, the eighth prince de Condé once again took possession of his property. The Grand Château, a number of other buildings, and most of the parks and forests had been demolished. The prince moved with his son into the Petit Château, which remained intact but required extensive restoration, and almost completely transformed the grounds of his estate.¹⁴ He also acquired vast areas of land in order to augment his property. At his death in 1818, his son inherited the property and continued the restoration and augmentation of the grounds. On April 24, 1825 the duc de Bourbon (and now ninth prince de Condé) purchased a nearby site with the Medieval Loge de Viarmes. The loge was originally built in the fourteenth century on the foundations of an earlier building known through oral tradition as the Château de la Reine Blanche.¹⁵ Legend has it that King Louis IX of France (known as Saint Louis) often met his mother, Blanche of Castile (1188-1252), wife of King Louis VIII, at the ponds of Commelles.

On June 3, 1825, the duc's administrator, Monsieur de Gati-gny gave orders to the duc's architect Victor Dubois (1779-1850):

«Son Altesse Royale a décidé de faire réparer sur-le-champ le bâtiment connu sous le nom de Moulin de la Loge de Viarmes, pour y établir un rendez-vous de chasse, en profitant aussi des écuries et hangards qui dépendent de ce bâtiment, et demande que ces travaux soient terminés pour le 1^{er} octobre prochain. S.A.R. verrait aussi avec plaisir qu'il vous fût possible d'élever au-dessus de ce bâtiment un belvédère qui permit de jouir, dans la plus grande étendue, de la vue de la forêt et des étangs. S.A.S. demande que l'architecture de ce belvédère soit du même genre gothique que celui du bâtiment».¹⁶

In 1826, Dubois completed rebuilding of the duc's new hunting pavilion, which continued to be called the Château or Maison de la Reine Blanche. In order to construct the new hunting pavilion, Dubois demolished all but the foundations of the former Loge de Viarmes.

A description of the loge or château appeared in 1807:

«Un moulin appelé le moulin de la Loge de Viarmes, et le cours d'eau de la Loge Chaperon en dépendant. Ce moulin est situé au milieu de la forêt de Chantilly. Le principal bâtiment a sa façade au soleil levant, avec vue sur l'étang de la Loge et entrée sur la chaussée dudit étang. La dite façade composée de deux corps de bâtiment dont l'un est parfaitement carré et de construction ancienne, flanqué de quatre tourelles: l'une par laquelle on monte aux étages dudit bâtiment est nommée Montépilloy, l'autre au midi appelée Montbrison, une autre au nord appelée Montpellier, éclairées de plusieurs petites croisées antiques. Ledit bâtiment est composé de quatre étages, qui contiennent les meules, engrenages, cylindres, tarares, moulans, tournans et travaillans dudit moulin dans le rez-de-chaussée et les deux premiers étages; le troisième est composé d'une chambre à blé communiquant aux quatre tourelles; enfin un grenier propre à recevoir des grains.

Le deuxième corps de bâtiment, bâti depuis vingt-cinq ans, ayant au rez-de-chaussée deux pièces à feu, l'une des-quelles sert de cuisine et a un four, et, en outre, de trois cabinets, servant le tout à l'habitation. Au milieu est un escalier qui communique au premier étage dudit bâtiment, lequel est composé de deux pièces et un cabinet, le tout servant à resserrer la farine; enfin un grenier au dessus servant au même usage».¹⁷

A watercolor of 1789 by Étienne-Charles Leguay shows the château in ruins with four turrets capped with cones (fig. 12). The specific view of the château that decorates the vase in Indianapolis was in all probability taken from a printed source also showing the building before its renovation in 1825-26 (fig. 11). The *lithograph* was included in Godefrey Engelmann's *Album Exécute par le nouveau procede du Lavis Lithographique* published in Paris in 1821. This same image was also used as the source for the painted decoration of a Sèvres porcelain plate given by Louis XVIII to the Duke of Wellington in 1823 (fig. 14).¹⁸ After the renovation, the four towers had flat tops (as they still do today) and other modifications were made to the château, including the addition of carved ornamentation, a balcony, a new entrance front and staircase, and sculptures (see fig. 16).¹⁹ The rectangular building at the right of the château was also demolished during the renovation. The new building is in the popular «Troubadour», Gothic, or «Cathedral» style which between 1820 and 1830 reached its apogee in France.





2



3



4



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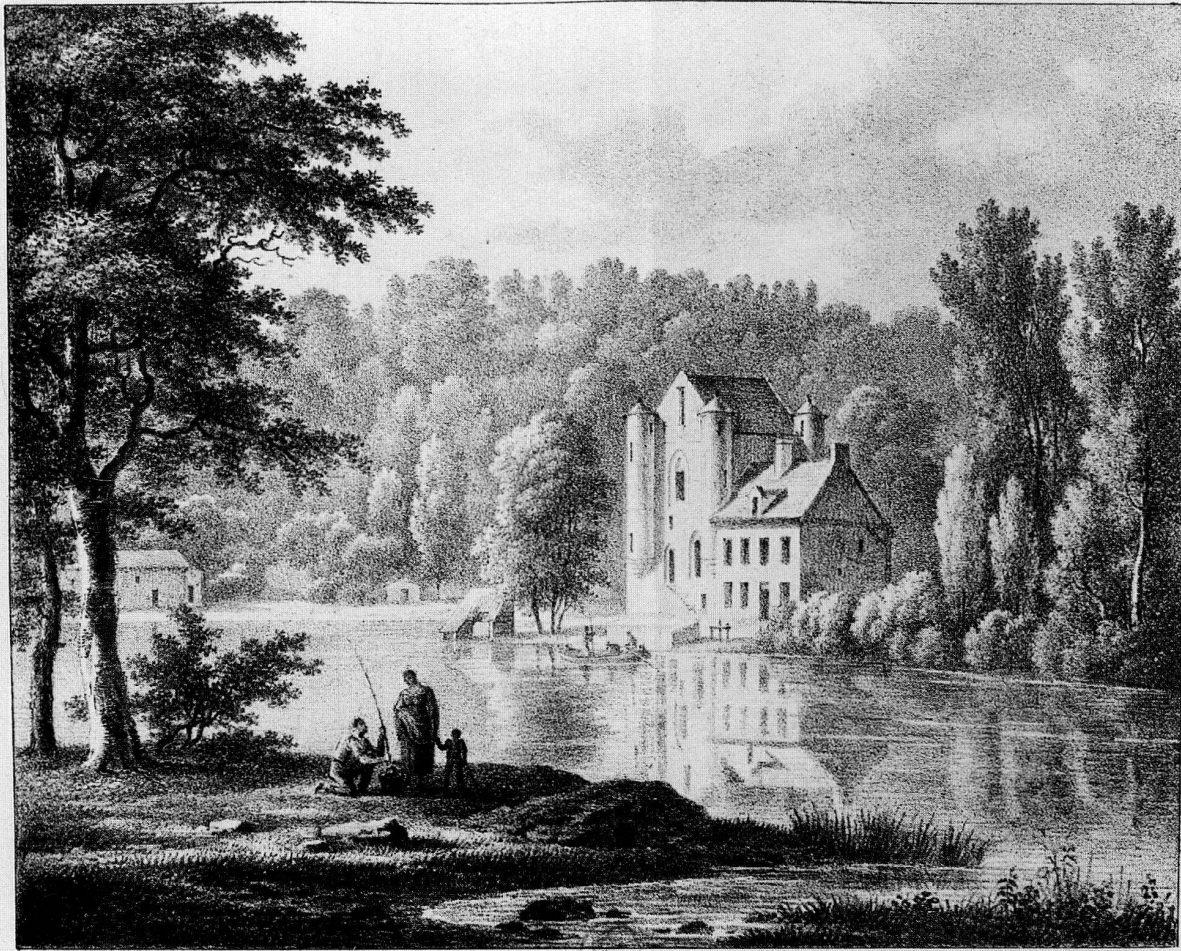












B.A.
Maison de la Reine Blanche
Forêt de Chantelly.

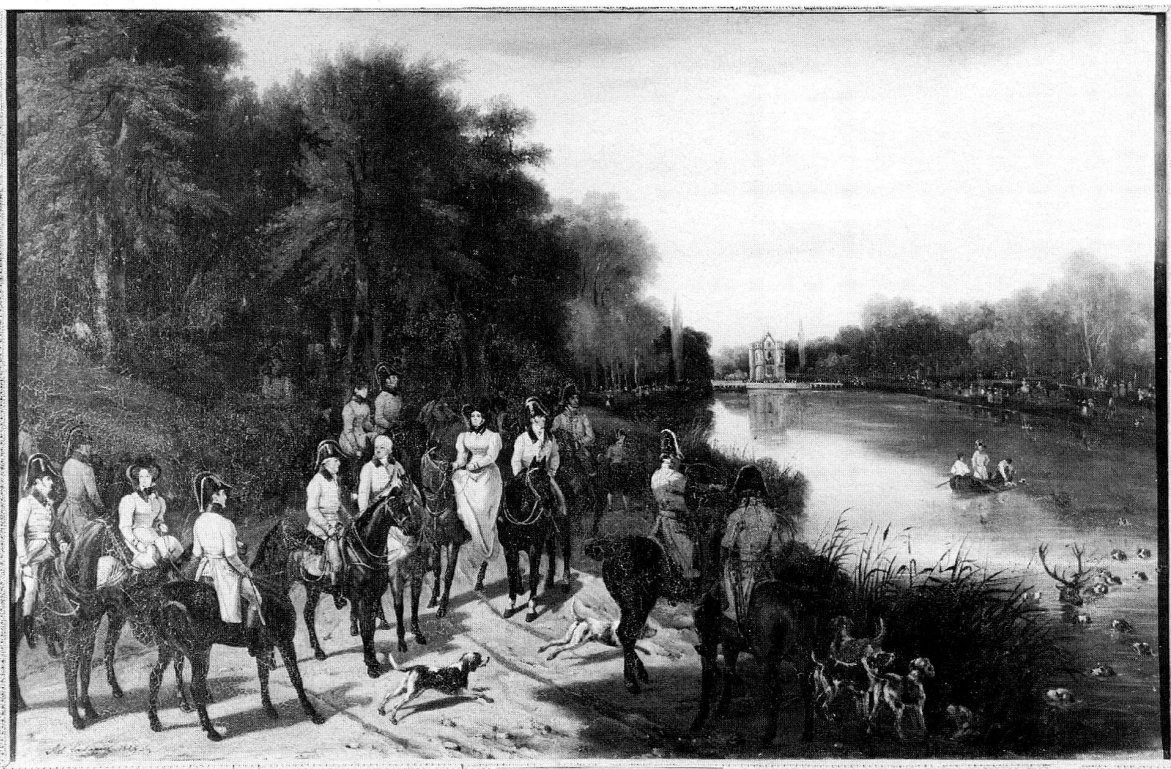
Langlace

Lith. de G. Engelmann.

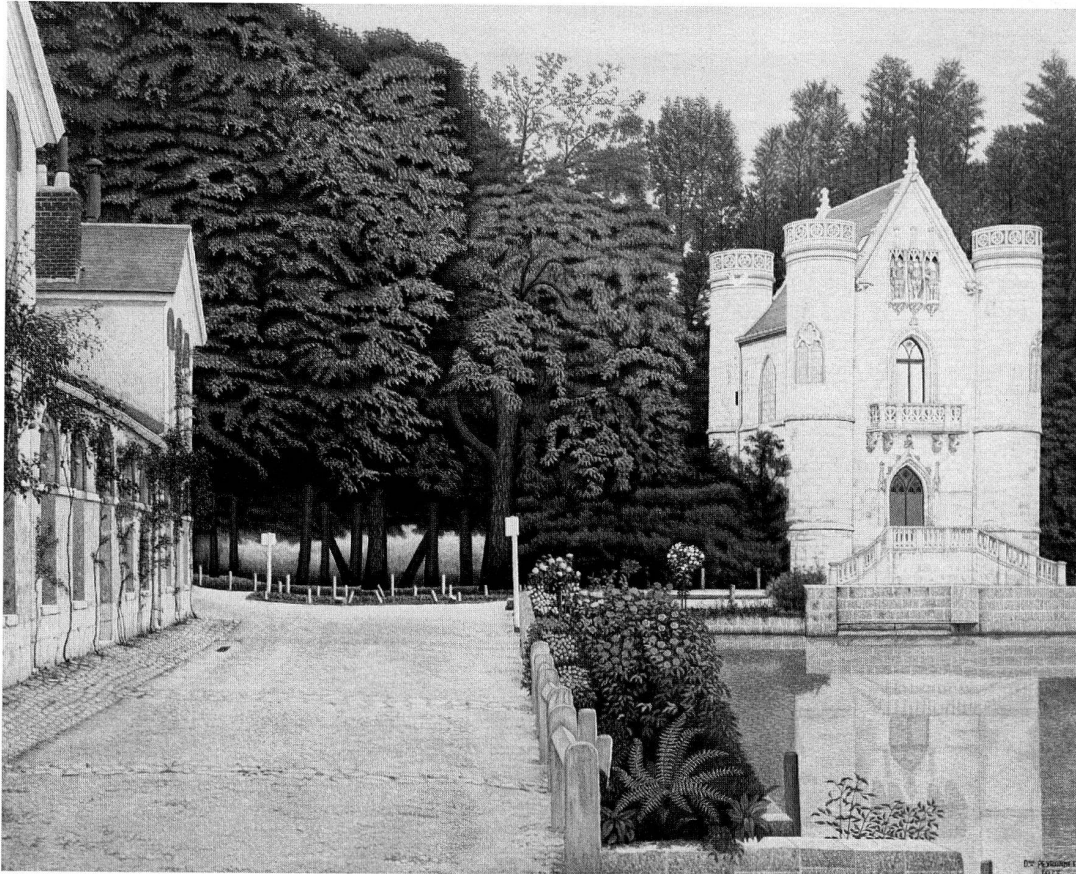
12



13







During this period, great interest in the Middle Ages was reflected in architecture, interior decoration, and the decorative arts. A view of 1829 by Adolphe Ladurner depicts the hunting lodge after these renovations, with the duc de Bourbon and his mistress the baronne de Feuchères in the foreground (fig. 13). A painting of 1933 by Dominique-Paul Peyronnet also shows the château after renovation (fig. 15). It is very likely that the vase now in Indianapolis was commissioned around 1825 by the duc de Bourbon. He had just purchased the property and intended to make extensive renovations to the building and to the site. It is conceivable that the vase was ordered to commemorate, before its destruction, the old Maison de la Reine Blanche, by then a well-known building with historic associations. The vase most likely does not date after 1830, when the duc was found hanged to death at the château of Saint-Leu Taverny. The duc de Bourbon's papers deposited at the Musée Condé have not been catalogued, and it is therefore impossible at this time to determine if the vase was indeed owned by him. However, circumstances point to his being the original owner.

The subsequent history of the vase is far less clear. However, we do know that the duc de Bourbon left his possessions, including the château and park of Chantilly, to his grand nephew the duc d'Aumale (1822-1897), fifth son of Louis Philippe of France. In 1886, d'Aumale left the château, art collection, and park to the Institut de France. It is not known at this time whether the vase was among d'Aumale's possessions nor have any documents come to light that reveal or indicate the provenance of the vase. It next appeared on the New York art market in the 1980s and was acquired by the Indianapolis Museum of Art in 1988.

Figures

- Fig. 1: vase; attr. Nast Frères and Feuillet; c. 1825. Hard-paste porcelain, polychrome enamels, and gilding; H. 18 in. x W. 14½ in. x D. 6¼ in. Indianapolis Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. William R. Spurlock and Lilly Pavilion Discretionary Funds (1988.221).
- Fig. 2: Detail of vase in fig. 1.
- Fig. 3: Reverse of vase in fig. 1.
- Fig. 4: Det. of vase in fig. 1.
- Fig. 5: Det. of vase in fig. 1.
- Fig. 6: vase; Nast Frères, manufacturer; Dartre Frères, decorator, 1819. Hard-paste porcelain, polychrome enamels, and gilding. Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres (9090). Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux.
- Fig. 7: pair of vases; Nast Frères, c. 1819. Hard-paste porcelain, polychrome enamels, and gilding; h. 0.710 m.; Musée du Louvre. Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux.
- Fig. 8: vase, attr. Nast Frères, c. 1825. Hard-paste porcelain, polychrome enamels, and gilding. Photo: Ader, Picard, Tajan, Paris.
- Fig. 9: pair of vases; Feuillet, decorator; c. 1820. Hard-paste porcelain, polychrome enamels, and gilding; H. 17 (17 in). Musée Condé, Chantilly. Photo: Lauros-Giraudon, Paris.
- Fig. 10: punch bowl; attr. Feuillet, decorator; c. 1820. Hard-paste porcelain, polychrome enamels, and gilding; Diam. 7¼ in. Musée Ariana, Geneva. Photo: Jacques Pugin, Geneva.
- Fig. 11: Maison de la Reine Blanche. Forêt de Chantilly, 1821; design by Langlacé, lithograph by Godefroy Engelmann. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Photo: Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
- Fig. 12: Étienne-Charles Leguay (1762-1846). Hunting Scene at the Maison de la Reine Blanche, 1789. Watercolor. From Ernest de Ganay, *Chantilly au XVIII^e Siècle* (Paris and Brussels, 1925).
- Fig. 13: Adolphe Ladurner (1798-1856). L'hallali aux étangs, 1829. Oil on canvas. Musée Condé, Chantilly. Photo: Lauros-Giraudon, Paris.
- Fig. 14: plate, Sèvres porcelain; 1821-22. Hard-paste porcelain, polychrome enamels, and gilding. Apsley House, Wellington Museum, by courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum.
- Fig. 15: Dominique-Paul Peyronnet (1872-1943). Château de la Reine Blanche, Forêt de Chantilly, 1933. Oil on canvas. Photo: Lauros-Giraudon, Paris.
- Fig. 16: Maison de la Reine Blanche, Forêt de Chantilly. Photo: Éditions d'art Yvon, Arcueil.
- Fig. 17: Maison de la Reine Blanche, Forêt de Chantilly. Photo: Lauros-Giraudon, Paris.

NOTES

1. Indianapolis Museum of Art, acc. no. 1988.221; Mr. and Mrs. William R. Spurlock and Lilly Pavilion Discretionary Funds; 18" h. x 14½" w. x 6¼" d. I am grateful to both Régine de Plinval de Guillebon and Antoine d'Albis for their help with a number of questions.

2. According to Antoine d'Albis, Chief Chemist at the Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres, the purple is obtained by pouring a solution of tin chloride on gold chloride. The end result of this operation is a precipitate called «Cassius purple». This is ground with a flux to form

- enamel. After drying, this powder is mixed with essential oil of turpentine to form a thick liquid that is applied to the vase (from d'Albis to author, letter April 6, 1989, Indianapolis Museum of Art).
3. Before the landscape scene was painted on the vase, the gilding was applied and fired. The matt gilding was applied directly to the biscuit porcelain; the gilding that was burnished was applied over the glaze (see note 2, letter from d'Albis).
 4. Régine de Plinval de Guillebon, *Porcelain of Paris 1770-1850* (New York, 1972), p. 280. For further information on Nast see pp. 278-83, figs. 76-77, 142, 216, and 220; see also Plinval de Guillebon, *La Porcelaine à Paris sous le Consulat et l'Empire* (Geneva, 1985), pp. 69-72, fig. 109.
 5. Régine de Plinval-Salgues, «La Céramique Française aux Expositions industrielles de la première moitié du XIX^{ème} siècle», *Cahiers de la Céramique, du Verre et des arts du Feu* 22 (1961), p. 94.
 6. Antoinette Fay-Hallé and Barbara Mundt, *Porcelain of the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1983), pp. 37-38, fig. 35. See another pair of vases of the same shape marked «Darte Frères, à Paris» (sale, Paris, Drouot-Richelieu, October 16, 1989, lot 76). Plinval de Guillebon suggests that the vase in Indianapolis could also have been made by Darte Frères.
 7. Accession no. OA 11267 and OA 11268. H. 0.710 m. For a related pair, see New York, Sotheby Parke Bernet, May 4, 1985, lot 134.
 8. Paris, Hôtel George V, Salon «Vendôme», Ader, Picard, Tajan, December 5, 1989, lot 43.
 9. I am grateful to Madame de Plinval de Guillebon for suggesting the name Feuillet to me (letter from Plinval de Guillebon to author, December 18, 1988, Indianapolis Museum of Art). For information on Feuillet see Plinval de Guillebon, *Porcelain of Paris* (note 4), pp. 244-45. See also Plinval de Guillebon's entry on Feuillet in the forthcoming *Catalogue des porcelaines du Département des objets d'art* at the Musée du Louvre. The dates for Feuillet were kindly given to me by Plinval de Guillebon.
 10. For an example of his work with Boyer, see *Porcellane e argenti del Palazzo Reale di Torino* (Turin, 1986), pp. 315-19, no. 145.
 11. Letter from Amélie Lefébure, Curator of Collections, Musée Condé, to author, February 14, 1989, Indianapolis Museum of Art. I thank Madame Plinval de Guillebon for bringing these vases to my attention. There is a cup and saucer decorated by Feuillet at the Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres, showing a grisaille portrait of the duc de Bourbon (see *Cahiers de la Céramique du Verre et des arts du Feu* nos. 46-47 (1970), p. 82, no. 275).
 12. I am grateful to Marie-Thérèse Coullery, Curator at the Musée Ariana, for supplying the photograph in the illustration. There is no mark on the bowl (AR 9938).
 13. For a detailed history of the forestry domain at Chantilly see Gustave Macon, *Historique du Domaine Forestier de Chantilly*, vol. 1, *Forêts de Chantilly et de Pontarmé* (Senlis, 1905), pp. 28-37; 72-76; vol. 2, *Forêts de Coye, Luzarches, Chaumontel et Bonés* (1906), pp. 13-14, 152-54. For various documents about the site see *Chantilly, Les Archives, Le Cabinet des Titres*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1926), pp. 59-62 (Carton 81), pp. 66-67 (Carton 88).
 14. See Ernest de Ganay, «Les Jardins de Chantilly sous la Restauration», *La Revue de l'Art* 70 (July-Dec. 1936), pp. 19-26.
 15. See Macon, *Historique*, vol. 1 (note 13), pp. 35-37.
 16. For further information about Dubois see Charles Bauchal, *Nouveau Dictionnaire Biographique et Critique des Architectes Français* (Paris, 1887), p. 644. Gatigny's orders are cited in Gustave Macon, *Chantilly et le Musée Condé* (Paris, 1910), p. 210. In the correspondence regarding this hunting pavilion, Antheaume de Surval, régisseur-général des domaines du duc de Bourbon, wrote: «S.A.S. à l'intention de faire un rendez-vous de chasse agréable du moulin de la Loge» (letter of March 29, 1824, cited in Macon, *Historique*, vol. 1 [note 13], p. 35).
 17. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.
 18. I am grateful to Jeanette Hanisee for bringing this plate (acc. no. WM 845 - 1948) to my attention. It was one of forty-eight dessert plates, created between 1821 and 1822, with different views of French sites (see R.J. Charleston, «French Porcelain for the Duke», *Apollo*, September 1973, vol. XCVII, no. 139, pp. 185-186).
 19. A description of the interior was published in 1828: «L'intérieur est disposé avec un soin extrême. Le petit salon dans lequel on entre d'abord, et d'où l'on a une vue sur le premier étang, est fort curieux à visiter, l'ameublement tout entier, dont même la moindre pièce est de forme gothique, se trouve parfaitement en harmonie avec le style de cette jolie fabrique. On y remarque particulièrement une table ornée d'aquarelles, dont les sujets sont pris sur les lieux: la hardiesse de touche de ces croquis décèle une main habile; ils sont de M. Thierry, mort dernièrement. Derrière ce salon est un cabinet de jeu. Un escalier à vis conduit à l'étage supérieur; il est composé d'une grande salle tendue en coutil. Du pied du château s'échappe, sur le derrière, une cascade: elle forme une rivière qui arrose un jardin anglais auquel on travaille encore» (from *Trois Jours en Voyage ou Guide du Promeneur à Chantilly, Mortefontaine et Ermenonville* [Paris, 1828], pp. 36-38).