

FRANK PARTRIDGE

A Suite of Louis XVI Seat Furniture by Henri Jacob

Circa 1780

76 x 29 x 40 in high (193 x 74 x 102 cm) Canapé
25 x 23 x 38 in high (64 x 53 x 96 cm) Chairs

Comprising a canapé and six fauteuils, each covered in its original Aubusson tapestry, depicting the Fables de La Fontaine and other pastoral scenes, the canapé stamped twice H. JACOB, all inscribed in red with museum accession number 42.27-42.33 (7).

Provenance:

By repute Collection of Yolande Martine Gabrielle de Polastron, Duchesse de Polignac, Place de la Concorde.
With French & Company, New York.
Gift of Grace Rainey Rogers, New York, 1942, to the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Literature:

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Bulletin, pp. 47-66, April, 1942. P. Verlet, *Les meubles français du XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1956.

The guide to Period styles for interiors from the 17th Century to the present, second edition by Judith Gura. Page 91

Henri Jacob

Henri Jacob (1753-1824) was the cousin of the famous George Jacob and became master in 1779. His furniture was so very similar to that of his cousins that frequently it was undistinguishable and it is believed that he too favoured the royal patronage. Examples of his work can be seen in practically every museum that has a collection of French Furniture.

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Duchesse de Polignac:



The Duchesse de Polignac was Queen Marie-Antoinette's great confidante (1749-1793). With her charming good looks and "the most attractive and most solid" mind, Yolande de Polastron, who married Count Jules de Polignac, the nephew of "Madame Etiquette", in 1767, met the dauphine Marie-Antoinette for the first time at her wedding at Versailles in 1770.

Marie-Antoinette was taken by the lively and cheerful Madame de Polignac, and the two developed a close friendship starting in 1774. She became part of the Queen's inner circle. With her, Marie-Antoinette abandoned the protocol and etiquette of the Court and loved to get away from it by going to the Petit Trianon. A painting by the Queen's official portraitist, Madame Vigée-Lebrun, shows Madame de Polignac dressed in a gaulle dress, a light, aerial fabric, and wearing a flowery hat, a testimonial to the carefree, simple life at the Trianon.

Madame de Polignac received the title of Duchesse in 1780 and, much to the Court's surprise, was named Governess of the Children of France in 1782, a position that had been held by other noble families and was handed down from mother to daughter. She left her apartments, which were considered to be "the most beautiful apartments at Versailles" among those made available to the Court, to take up residence at the Governesses' apartments, where she undertook renovation work.

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But in 1789, the French Revolution forced her into exile, a victim of the libels against the Queen and her inner circle, notably criticising their lavish spending. She left Marie-Antoinette with deep sadness and continued to correspond with the Queen from Switzerland, Italy and then Austria. Marie-Antoinette was also pained by the absence of her good friend: “Farewell my most tender friend; it is terrible to say, but I must; I barely have enough strength left to send you a kiss,” she wrote. The Duchesse of Polignac died in Vienna on 5 December 1793, fifty days after the Queen.