

The Nile

Unknown, after a model attributed to Martin Carlier (French, d. after 1700)

1690–1730

Bronze

11.1

This bronze of a muscular nude male reclining on a sphinx and cradling a cornucopia is an allegory, or figurative representation, of the Nile River. It is a much-reduced version of a colossal ancient marble that was discovered in Rome in 1513. Exhibited in the papal collection until the end of the 18th century, the sculpture has been reproduced in a variety of media and sizes throughout the centuries.

Attract Tag: The Nile

The Tiber

Unknown, after a models attributed to Martin Carlier (French, d. after 1700)

1690–1730

Bronze

11.2

This sculpture represents the Tiber River as a muscular man reclining beside a she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus, the mythical founders of the city of Rome. The figure holds a cornucopia in his right hand and, in his left, the oar with which he controls the tides. Its companion, *The Nile*, is on display nearby.

Attract Tag: The Tiber

Writing Desk and Filing Cabinet (Bureau Plat and Cartonnier)

Attributed to Étienne Doirat (French, c. 1675–1732)

1720–32

Table: oak, fir, and beech with purplewood, bronze, and leather; Filing Cabinet: oak with purplewood, bronze, modern papier-mâché (*carton*), paper, and leather

11.27 and 11.47

This *bureau plat* and filing cabinet are a rare pairing. Although many such desks survive, their filing systems usually do not, which has often led to a focus on their decorative, rather than utilitarian, nature. In the 18th century, the *bureau plat* was a highly functional piece, made to facilitate clerical tasks. Its form had developed alongside a growing culture of bureaucracy that took shape as early as the 16th century, when the French crown established a network of offices to administer its domestic policies.

Attract Tag: Desk and Filing Cabinet

Writing Desk (Bureau Plat)

Attributed to André-Charles Boulle (French, 1642–1732)

1700–1705, with later additions

Oak and walnut with purplewood, brass, gilt bronze, and leather

25.12

The fact that this desk has a relatively simple decoration suggests that it was probably commissioned or purchased by an aristocratic or professional patron rather than the royal crown. Strongly associated with masculine pursuits like business, writing, and study, *bureaux plats* like this often appear in portraits of men, and to a lesser extent of women, who sought to identify themselves as learned, worldly, and competent. Their sheer size, compared to the smaller, more delicate “women’s” desks (like the highly decorative mechanical table nearby), also endowed their users with a degree of monumentality.

Attract Tag: Writing Desk

Mechanical Writing Table

Possibly by Jean-François Oeben (German, 1721–1763, active in France)

1755–65

Oak and walnut with kingwood, tulipwood, purplewood, *bois satiné*, green-stained maple, ebony, holly, maple, Japanese *takamaki-e* lacquer panel, gilt bronze, and iron

Arabella D. Huntington Memorial Art Collection

27.185

This writing table opens by means of an elaborate mechanism that simultaneously propels the top surface backward and a large drawer forward. A button, disguised to resemble a portion of one of the gilt-bronze mounts, releases the center drawer, allowing it to be pushed forward by two steel springs. Mechanical tables catered to a sophisticated clientele fascinated by curiosities and the latest gadgetry. The form of this desk is similar to that of a group of *bureau-toilettes* (writing/dressing tables) Oeben made for Madame de Pompadour, mistress of Louis XV.

Attract Tag: Mechanical Table

Writing Desk (Bureau Plat)

Attributed to the Pagoda Master (French, active in the 1730s)

c. 1730

Oak and walnut with kingwood, gilt bronze, and leather

13.4

The fine bronze mounts, loosely recalling Asian pavilions, that decorate this desk have led scholars to attribute it to the so-called Pagoda Master, an as-yet-unidentified cabinetmaker active in Paris in the 1730s. The fascination with Asian ornament, or *chinoiserie*, developed as trade routes to the East brought artifacts and other examples of Chinese and Japanese design to Europe. This desk combines Asian-inspired escutcheons with traditional European subject matter, seen in the allegorical heads and masks mounted along the legs and side panels.

Attract Tag: Writing Desk

Folding Screen (Paravent)

Manufactured by the Savonnerie Manufactory, after designs by Alexandre-François Desportes (French, 1661–1743)

Tapestry: 1719–84; frame: probably 19th century

Wool and linen with a gessoed and gilded beech exterior frame

11.41

Strategically placed in an elegant interior, *paravents* were used as shields from drafts. This particular screen's six panels feature an arbor surrounding a variety of animals and birds. The Savonnerie Manufactory typically reserved its folding screens exclusively for the French royal family. The size of this example indicates that it was intended for use in a private apartment rather than a public parade room.

Attract Tag: Screen

Pair of Mounted Vases

Manufactured by the Royal Porcelain Manufactory, Sèvres, with mounts by an unknown maker c. 1770–75

Porcelain, gilt bronze, brass, and steel

13.19 and 13.20

With their glittering gilt-bronze mounts and costly Sèvres porcelain, these decorative vases are examples of the type of unusual and expensive goods retailed by specialist dealers in 18th-century Paris. Inside each vase is a gilt-bronze candelabrum on a short stem that rises when the lid is lifted, making the vase a functional *objet de luxe*. The fact that several versions of these vases were acquired by royal and noble patrons likely enhanced their attraction for the Huntingtons.

Attract Tag; Vases

Five Tapestries from *The Noble Pastoral*

Manufactured by the Beauvais Tapestry Manufactory, after cartoons by François Boucher (French, 1703–1770)

1757–60

Wool and silk with linen lining

9.1 to 9.5

This set of five tapestries, four in this room and one in the hall, was woven by order of the French crown on behalf of Louis XV. The pastoral scenes, depicting pleasurable outdoor activities such as picnics and music-making, were popular subjects among the French elite. The Beauvais manufactory wove thirteen separate commissions of full or partial sets of *The Noble Pastoral*, but today The Huntington's set is the only one to remain intact. Purchased for this room by Henry Huntington in 1909, at Arabella's request, at a price of \$577,000 (over \$8.5 million in today's currency), they were his first major expenditure on art.

Attract Tag: Tapestries

Individual Tombstones for *La Noble Pastorale*:

The Fountain of Love

Manufactured by the Beauvais Tapestry Manufactory, after cartoons by François Boucher (French, 1703–1770)

1757–60

Wool and silk with linen lining

9.1

The Flutist

Manufactured by the Beauvais Tapestry Manufactory, after cartoons by François Boucher (French, 1703–1770)

1757–60

Wool and silk with linen lining

9.2

The Fishermid

Manufactured by the Beauvais Tapestry Manufactory, after cartoons by François Boucher (French, 1703–1770)

1757–60

Wool and silk with linen lining

9.3

The Bird Catchers

Manufactured by the Beauvais Tapestry Manufactory, after cartoons by François Boucher (French, 1703–1770)

1757–60

Wool and silk with linen lining

9.4

Set of Tapestry-Covered Seating Furniture

Manufactured by the Gobelins Tapestry Manufactory, with seat covers and backs after designs by François Boucher (French, 1703–1770) and Jean-Baptiste Oudry (French, 1686–1755)

Tapestry covers c. 1779; chair frames before 1892

Wool and silk with modern silk and cotton linings, polyethylene and polyester upholstery materials; gessoed and gilded beech with modern poplar inner frames

9.20 to 9.31

This suite of tapestry-covered furniture combines two 18th-century designs. The seat backs derive from a series of upholstery models in which winged cupids personify the Arts and Sciences, originally designed for Madame de Pompadour, mistress of Louis XV. The seats do not depict human forms, as was customary in the 18th century. They illustrate scenes from Jean de La Fontaine's *Fables* by the animal-painter Jean-Baptiste Oudry. The chair frames, though based on 18th-century models, were made in the 19th century. This suite of furniture was among the first examples of French decorative art purchased by Henry Huntington.

Attract Tag: Chairs and Settees

Individual tombstones for set:

Armchairs (Fauteuils à la d'Artois)

Manufactured by the Gobelins Tapestry Manufactory, with seat covers and backs after designs by François Boucher (French, 1703–1770) and Jean-Baptiste Oudry (French, 1686–1755)

Tapestry covers c. 1779; chair frames before 1892

Wool and silk with modern silk and cotton linings, polyethylene and polyester upholstery materials; gessoed and gilded beech with modern poplar inner frames

9.21 to 9.25, 9.27 and 9.29

Two Settees

Manufactured by the Gobelins Tapestry Manufactory, with seat covers and backs after designs by François Boucher (French, 1703–1770) and Jean-Baptiste Oudry (French, 1686–1755)

Tapestry covers c. 1779; chair frames before 1892

Wool and silk with modern silk and cotton linings, polyethylene and polyester upholstery materials; gessoed and gilded beech with modern poplar inner frames

9.30 and 9.31

Tapestry-covered Firescreen

Manufactured by the Beauvais Tapestry Manufactory, after a design by François Boucher (French, 1703–1770)

Tapestry: 1738–40 or 1767; frame: 1909–10

Wool, silk, and cotton with traces of pigment in a gessoed and gilded beech frame

9.32

The design of this tapestry screen derives from a series of paintings executed by François Boucher in the early 1730s representing the four seasons. In this example, *Cupid, the Vintager*, harvesting his wine grapes, represents autumn. Originally designed to be a decorative overdoor panel, the tapestry was placed in a gilded frame and made into a firescreen in the late 19th century. At the same time, the three birds in the sky were added to cover up repairs to the weave.

Attract Tag: Firescreen

Mantel Clock

Antoine Philibert (French, active 1776–1820), with porcelain manufactured by the Royal Porcelain Manufactory, Sèvres

c. 1800–1810

Marble, gilt bronze, porcelain, enamel, glass, and brass

10.107

The theme of this clock seems to be the various activities of Amour (Love), or Cupid, who appears in the Sèvres biscuit porcelain figures, both giving and receiving lessons of love. Stock porcelain figures such as these were typical decoration for clocks. In fact, the Huntington collection includes another early 19th-century French clock, given to the museum in the late 1970s, with the same figures.

Attract Tag: Mantel Clock

Pair of Andirons with the Figures of Venus and Vulcan

Unknown (French)

c. 1900

Gilt bronze and wrought iron

14.12A and B

Although closely related to a mid-18th-century example from the French royal collections (now in the Musée du Louvre), this pair of andirons, representing Venus, goddess of love, and, appropriately, Vulcan, god of fire, seems to have been made around 1900. Decorative items like these, inspired by antique models, catered to the taste for 18th-century French art that flourished at the time among collectors in America, like Henry and Arabella Huntington.

Attract Tag: Andirons

Two Carpets from the Palace of the Louvre, Paris

Manufactured by the Savonnerie Manufactory, after a design by François Francart (French, 1622–1672) and Beaudrin Yvart père (French, 1611–1690), according to a scheme by Charles Le Brun (French, 1619–1690) and Louis Le Vau (French, 1612–1670)

1670–87

Wool, linen, and bast; with repairs and later inserts in wool, cotton, and linen

15.2 and 15.3

Bought by Henry Huntington from the collection of banker J. Pierpont Morgan, these two carpets are from a series of ninety-three originally woven for Louis XIV to line the floor of the Grand Galerie of the Louvre palace. Their designs draw upon a complex mixture of emblems to convey the king's accomplishments in the realms of art and science. On one carpet, astrology is represented by a female figure in classical robes holding an armillary sphere. The other carpet embodies music through its depictions of the muses of poetry and music.

Attract Tag: Carpets

Individual carpet tombstones:

Music

Manufactured by the Savonnerie Manufactory, after a design by François Francart (French, 1622–1672) and Beaudrin Yvart père (French, 1611–1690), according to a scheme by Charles Le Brun (French, 1619–1690) and Louis Le Vau (French, 1612–1670)

1670–87

Wool, linen, and bast; with repairs and later inserts in wool, cotton, and linen

15.3

Astrology

Manufactured by the Savonnerie Manufactory, after the design by François Francart (French, 1622–1672) and Beaudrin Yvart *père* (French, 1611–1690), according to a scheme by Charles Le Brun (French, 1619–1690) and Louis Le Vau (French, 1612–1670)

1670–87

Wool, linen, and bast; with repairs and later inserts in wool, cotton, and linen

15.2

Diana the Huntress

Unknown, after Jean-Antoine Houdon (French, 1741–1828)

c. 1850–1900

Copper alloy

16.4

This tabletop sculpture of Diana the Huntress is a copy of the celebrated life-size bronze by Jean-Antoine Houdon that is displayed in the hallway upstairs. As such, it reflects a long tradition of producing smaller versions of famous large sculptures. Houdon himself made a number of these in various materials during his lifetime, and copies continued to be produced into the 20th century. The Huntingtons acquired this 19th-century copy in 1916; just over a decade later, Henry bought the 18th-century original for the Arabella D. Huntington Memorial Art Collection.

Attract Tag: Diana

Pair of Lidded Jars with Baskets of Flowers

Unknown (Chinese, Jiangxi Province, Jingdezhen, Qing Dynasty)

1700–1800

Porcelain with overglaze painted enamel decoration

11.42 and 11.43

In addition to French decorative art and British paintings, Henry and Arabella Huntington collected a number of antique Asian ceramic pieces to display in their home. These large lidded vases are decorated with motifs of phoenixes, peonies, and various other flowers. The gilded rococo-style stands echo the style of the French works of art in the room.

Attract Tag: Lidded Jars