

**D**u Paquier porcelain, made in Vienna between 1718 and 1744, captures a fleeting moment when technical virtuosity and a frothy *joie de vivre* combined to produce sculptural marvels for the table and cabinet. Each elaborately worked whimsy outdoes the next with its colorful palette, arresting form, and imaginative imagery.

Possessing a zest for life mirrored in these exuberant wares, Melinda and Paul Sullivan discovered Du Paquier

*Consummate and passionate collectors, Melinda and Paul Sullivan have combined several centuries of European and American painting and decorative arts in their West Hartford house*

porcelain in 1993. It was the ultimate *coup de foudre* for the seasoned collectors from West Hartford, Connecticut, who instantly succumbed to what Augustus the Strong called *la maladie de porcelaine*.

The Sullivans proceeded to build the largest private collection of Du Paquier in the world, much of it featured in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's recent exhibition *Imperial Privilege: Vienna Porcelain of Du Paquier, 1718–44*.<sup>1</sup> The display accompanied the publication of *Fired by Passion: Vienna Baroque Porcelain of Claudius Innocentius Du Paquier*.<sup>2</sup> Funded by the Melinda and Paul Sullivan Foundation for the Decorative Arts, this comprehensive, three-volume opus is the first major study of the manufactory in half a century.

"When a couple shares the passion, collecting takes on another dimension," Paul Sullivan observes, recalling the many rewarding hours that he and Melinda have spent visiting collections worldwide and learning about porcelain alongside dealers and scholars who have become their friends.



# Crossing Boundaries

By Laura Beach    Photography by Paul Rocheleau



Fig. 1. Madaket, a golden retriever, and Murray, a cavalier King Charles spaniel, join Paul and Melinda Sullivan for a family portrait on the stair of their house, Eyrie Knoll, in West Hartford, Connecticut. The mural, painted in 1994 by Bonnie Schar of Fauxworks in Bradenton, Florida, is a comical take on Édouard Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*. It depicts the Sullivans, traditional gender roles reversed, picnicking in the foreground while their children play. Schar, who included Hartford's Old State House and the Charter Oak tree in the mural, chose a palette and style consistent with Zuber's *Vues de l'Amérique du Nord* wallpaper used on the second-floor landing.

Fig. 2. Bottle by the Du Paquier Porcelain Manufactory, Vienna, c. 1730. Hard-paste porcelain; height 9 7/8, width 5 7/8 inches. Photograph by Joseph Coscia Jr.

Fig. 3. Most of the Sullivans' Du Paquier collection is housed in a porcelain room overlooking the gardens at Eyrie Knoll. On the eighteenth-century English lacquered and painted table at the rear is a contemporary porcelain plate decorated by Samuel Wittwer, a contributor to *Fired By Passion*. It is decorated with a scene, inspired by a print source, showing the Sullivans, the book's patrons, and their collaborators borne by chariot, as if in a royal procession. The Sullivans also collect porcelain sculpture by contemporary ceramist Mara Superior, including her *Belle France* of 2005 on the table in the foreground.

Fig. 4. Old Master paintings, Continental porcelains, and sculpture are focal points in the living room. At the left hangs *Portrait of Mervelt Emilia van Zuylen van Nyevelt* by the Dutch painter Pieter Claesz Soutman (1580–1657). Dating to 1626, it is a promised gift to the Milwaukee Art Museum, which owns the pendant of the sitter's husband, *Portrait of Alexander van der Capellen, Heer van den Boedelhoff*. Meissen figures from c. 1740 modeled by Johann Joachim Kändler (c. 1706–1775) are on the table under the portrait. Atop a pedestal in the far corner is a French carved and painted walnut figure of Saint Michael, c. 1350. On the adjacent dressing table are *Dancer Putting on Her Stocking*, a plaster cast attributed by Gregory Hedberg to Edgar Degas (1834–1917), and Bessie Potter Vonnoh's (1872–1955) *Young Maiden Dancing*, a bronze of 1920. Carved with phoenixes, the English gilded wood looking glass dates to c. 1760. On the table at the far right is *Dancer at Rest with Hands Behind Back*, a bronze cast at the Valsuani Foundry outside Paris in 2005. Next to it is the plaster from which it was made, also attributed by Hedberg to Degas. The unpainted elephant wine dispenser on the table in the foreground is by Du Paquier and dates to c. 1740. It is one of only two known examples of this form. To its right is a Meissen butter dish styled as a tortoise by Georg Fritzsche (1698–1756). On the table in front of the sofa is a *bleu celeste* Sèvres tête-à-tête service of 1773. The drapery fabric and passementerie are from Scalamantré.

Fig. 5. Steinway and Sons made this D-sized macassar ebony and satinwood concert grand piano in 2003 in honor of the American pianist Roger Williams. *Virgin Adoring the Christ Child in a Landscape with St. John the Baptist* by Florentine Jacopo del Sellaio (c. 1441–1493) dates to c. 1480.





The couple's marriage, a second for both, is a fine blend. A retired clinical endocrinologist who followed his father and grandfather into medicine, Paul is scholarly and analytical with an acute memory and talent for observation. He spent his childhood on a tobacco farm north of Granby, Connecticut, an experience that deepened his appreciation for New England antiques and architecture.

A native of the Chicago area, Melinda revels in beauty and has an exacting eye for detail. An ardent student of design history, she admires richly contextualized displays that illuminate broader cultural themes and artistic influences. Melinda's entrepreneurial father taught her to "think big" and be persistent, but it was her mother, Eloise Wright Martin, who taught her to see.

**A**mong her many philanthropic interests, Eloise Martin, who died in 2008 at ninety-three, was a trustee at the Art Institute of Chicago and chaired the museum's European decorative arts committee for two decades. She nurtured her daughter's love of art on trips abroad. And on a visit to New York she introduced Melinda to the noted ceramics dealers Milly Manheim of D. M. and P. Manheim and Hanns Weinberg of the Antique Porcelain Company, where the youthful Melinda was fascinated by a rendering of Marie Antoinette's breast in porcelain.

Melinda and Paul share a love of entertaining. She has co-authored several cookbooks, including the award-winning *Connecticut à la Carte* and *Soupcou*, compiled by

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## Eyrie Knoll's stately character and expansive quarters begged for generously proportioned Georgian English and Irish furniture

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**Fig. 6.** Built in 1929 by Grosvenor Atterbury (1869–1956) for Hartford financier Charles P. Cooley (1867–1954), Eyrie Knoll retains many of its original interior architectural features, such as the fluted columns and stylized anthemion and swag moldings seen here. Above a diminutive marble-topped mahogany sideboard attributed to John Seymour (1865–1818) of Boston, 1800–1810, hang a landscape by Gustave Loiseau (1865–1935), c. 1918, and *Head of a Woman with a Blue Ribbon* of 2005 by American painter Graydon Parrish (1970–). The flanking French gilded wood brackets and porcelain vases date to the nineteenth century. On the sideboard are a Du Paquier clock of c. 1725 decorated with images of Emperor Charles VI and his wife, Elisabeth, and porcelain greyhounds of 1760 by the Vienna State Porcelain Manufactory, successors to the Du Paquier firm. The English candlesticks with lemon colored glass columns date to 1820.





Paul Sullivan's affection for American furniture finds expression in objects from a sideboard attributed to John Seymour to a Simon Willard clock

Fig. 7. In the dining room an English mahogany breakfront bookcase displays selections from the Sullivans' collection of Irish, English, and Scottish silver. Most of it is eighteenth century. A late eighteenth-century Louis XVI galleried mahogany table, left, supports a Queen Anne coffeepot made in Dublin in 1706 by David King (active 1690–1737) for Basil Fielding (1668–1716), third Earl of Desmond. On the English mahogany wine table, center, are candlesticks by Matthew Boulton (1728–1809) of Birmingham, c. 1787–1788. The French *fauteuils* and English three-arm girandole date to the eighteenth century.

Fig. 8. Covered cup, Meissen or Du Paquier, with decoration executed at the Du Paquier manufactory, 1725–1730. Hard-paste porcelain; height 4, width with handles 5 3/8 inches. *Coscia* photograph.

the Junior League of Chicago. He is an avid gardener, accomplished pianist, and oenophile whose private cellar was featured in *Wine Spectator*.<sup>3</sup>

Melinda was the mother of two daughters and Paul had three sons when, as members of a gourmet supper club, they met in 1982 and exchanged recipes for German chocolate cake and lobster bisque. When the Sullivans married in 1992, they knew that they wanted a house for welcoming family and friends. Called Eyrie Knoll, an allusion to Paul's Irish heritage and the residence's secluded perch near Hartford's Elizabeth Park, their home of seventeen years was designed in 1929 by Grosvenor Atterbury for Hartford financier Charles P. Cooley. Illustrated on the cover of *Country Life in America*, the fieldstone and brick country estate shares the picturesque details of other Atterbury commissions, notably the stone barns at Pocantico Hills in New York and the gate lodges in Northeast Harbor and Seal Harbor, Maine, all commissioned by John D. Rockefeller Jr., and constructed between 1930 and 1933.<sup>4</sup>

The couple moved into the residence in May 1994

after completing major renovations. Paneled with butternut, Eyrie Knoll's ample front hall has since been the setting for dinners for as many as sixty guests. The Emerson String Quartet has performed eight times in the adjacent living room, where side-by-side pianos are pressed into service for ensemble duets enjoyed and performed by Paul. In 1999 the Sullivans hosted a dinner prepared by Todd English for guests of honor Julia Child and Jacques Pépin. The fete, which continued into the wee hours, merited the uncorking of a double magnum of Château Haut-Brion 1966 from Paul's cellar.

Eyrie Knoll's stately character and expansive quarters begged for generously proportioned Georgian English and Irish furniture, much of it acquired in Manhattan from Hyde Park Antiques, Kentshire, Stair and Company, and O'Sullivan Antiques. Paul's affection for American furniture finds expression in a handful of fine objects, from a marble-topped Sheraton sideboard attributed to John Seymour to a Simon Willard tall-case clock, both acquired from the Israel Sack firm in New York (see Figs. 6, 9).

"I originally collected antiques that had to do with setting a beautiful table or serving food," Melinda says. "To my elder daughter's amusement, Paul and I spent our second date examining silver hallmarks. We discovered that we had a mutual interest in Irish Georgian silver, which is one of the first things that we collected together." Eighteenth-century English and Irish silver by Robert Garrard, Hester Bateman, Matthew Boulton, and others is displayed throughout the dining room. Vessels such as a Queen Anne coffeepot made in 1706 by David King of Dublin for Basil Fielding, the third Earl of Desmond, have storied pasts. The Sullivans also appreciate specialized forms. Posset pots, salts, brandy warmers, cruets stands, argyles for keeping sauces warm, strawberry dishes, and ornately





Fig. 9. *Dancer of Delhi*, a 1916 portrait of Betalo Rubino by Robert Henri (1865–1929), sets a sensuous tone in the dining room. The mahogany and inlaid satinwood sideboard of c. 1790 is surmounted by a pair of silver soup tureens with sculpted pomegranate handles made by William Fountain (active 1785–1821) of London in 1811. They flank a Royal Copenhagen covered soup tureen of c. 1780 in the Saxon Flower pattern, which Melinda collected as a young bride. Glass artist Robert Dane of Nantucket made the Venetian style candelabra in 2000. At the right is a tall-case clock of 1794 with works by Simon Willard (1753–1848) and a case attributed to Boston cabinetmaker John Seymour. Formerly in the collection of Imelda Marcos, the mahogany dining table of c. 1770 displays sugar sculpture towers made by the food historian Ivan Day for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition *Imperial Privilege: Vienna Porcelain of Du Paquier, 1718–44*, which re-created the image of a table set for the Archduchess Maria Theresa for a banquet in 1740.

Fig. 10. The Netherlandish paintings in the Sullivan collection include *Portrait of a Woman in a Lace Collar* by Michel Jans Van Mierevelt (1567–1641), 1620. To its left a Meissen fluted charger dating from 2000 hangs above an octagonal Meissen charger dating to c. 1740 from the Christie-Miller service. More recently it belonged to Kiyi and Edward M. Pflueger, whose collection was acquired by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Meissen lemon basket was made in the nineteenth century from Kändler molds of 1740. The sconce and candlesticks are French and date to the nineteenth century.



Du Paquier (1705–1751), an Austrian court official, with the help of Meissen artisans began when Ghenete Zelleke, curator of European decorative arts at the Art Institute of Chicago, suggested that Melinda and her sister, Joyce Martin Hampton, make a gift of Du Paquier porcelain to the museum in honor of their mother's eightieth birthday in 1994.

Previously unfamiliar with Du Paquier, the Sullivans loved what they saw. They bought their first piece, a small covered cup with square-cut handles and chinoiserie scenes painted in black *Schwarzlot* enamel suggesting copperplate engraving, from Elaine Werner, then at Asprey in New York (see Fig. 8). Werner subsequently

Fig. 11. The young Melinda Martin spent time with the artists Henriette Wyeth (1907–1997) and her husband, Peter Hurd (1904–1984), at their ranch in San Patricio, New Mexico, where Wyeth painted Melinda's portrait in 1963. Displayed with it in Eyrle Knoll's butternut-lined front hall are two bronzes attributed by Hedberg to Degas. *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen* dates to 1998; *Figure of a Horse*, to 2005. Both were cast at the Valsuani Foundry outside Paris. The marble-topped Irish console table and English demi-lune commode both date to c. 1800. The candlesticks were made in France c. 1820.

pierced cake baskets adorn an early Regency breakfront bookcase and a Louis XVI tiered table (see Fig. 7).

Table talk inevitably turns to the dining room's most seductive guest, the *Dancer of Delhi*. The voluptuous Betalo Rubino, a favorite model of Robert Henri, lounges imposingly over an English sideboard in the artist's oil on canvas portrait of 1916 (see Fig. 9). *Dancer at Delhi* joins the couple's varied collection, scattered throughout the house, of American and European works of art that range from a medieval French walnut figure of Saint Michael (see Fig. 4) to contemporary canvases by American realists Graydon Parrish, Donald Jurney, and others.

As a first-time bride, Melinda chose antique Royal Copenhagen porcelain in the Saxon Flower pattern for her china service and as a young collector gravitated to English and Chinese export porcelain. As her tastes developed, she grew interested in Continental porcelain. "I knew that I liked Meissen but I did not know where to acquire it," says Melinda, who eventually found her way to New York dealer Michele Beiny Harkins. The granddaughter of Hanns Weinberg, Harkins, an authority on European porcelain and works of art, has been an indispensable resource, helping the Sullivans build their collection of Meissen porcelain made between 1712 and 1740 and advising the couple on their global Du Paquier research project. In Germany Gerhard Röbbig and Freddy Reyes were also prime sources for Meissen.

A converted sunroom overlooking the gardens at Eyrle Knoll houses the Sullivans' incomparable collection of Du Paquier. The couple's interest in the Austrian manufactory founded by Claudius Innocentius

sent the couple a copy of *Claudius Innocentius du Paquier: Wiener Porzellan der Frühzeit, 1718–1774* (1994) by Viennese dealer Elisabeth Sturm-Bednarczyk. The catalogue showcased selections from the collection of Ruth Blumka (1920–1994), the late New York dealer in medieval and Renaissance works of art.

Fig. 12. A portrait of John Penn (1760–1834), a grandson of William Penn, by John Singleton Copley (1738–1815), c. 1782, hangs above the mantel in Paul's study. The bronze *Spanish Dance* was cast at the Valsuani Foundry in 2005.



"Elaine asked me to mark the book with the objects that I would like to own. Of course, most of them were not available, but, to our astonishment, many were," Melinda recalls. Blumka's treasures formed the core of the Sullivan collection, which grew quickly after the couple enlisted Sturm-Bednarczyk as their primary dealer for Du Paquier.

"Our timing was propitious. We were fortuitous in our ability to capture the market—and we did so with a vengeance," Melinda has written.<sup>5</sup> Between 1995 and 2007, the Sullivans acquired 160 examples of Du Paquier porcelain. A favorite piece is a tankard of about 1725 to 1730 that juxtaposes a spotted, green salamander handle with a cameo portrait of the lovers Bacchus and Ariadne. Another prized possession is an elephant wine dispenser of around 1740 (see Fig. 4). One of two examples known, it is an unpainted version of a mag-

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nificent centerpiece now at the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

As their collection grew, the Sullivans began considering how they might share the rewards of their scholarly pursuit with others. They wanted to make Du Paquier, never as well known as Meissen, "a household name." After convening a panel of experts to brainstorm, they established the Sullivan Foundation in 2004 and selected Meredith Chilton, an independent scholar who was founding curator of the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art in Toronto, to edit a definitive new publication. *Fired By Passion: Vienna Baroque Porcelain of Claudius Innocentius Du Paquier* can only be described as a labor of love. The sweeping compendium is drawn from three hundred public and private collections from California to Russia and Australia. Nearly five hundred objects are illustrated in exquisite detail and discussed in depth by eight scholars from five countries. Another six experts—including two conservators who compared Du Paquier paste and glazes to Meissen, Vezzi, and Doccia samples of the same period—also contributed to the catalogue.

"It was a rare if not unheard of opportunity," says Chilton, remembering how, courtesy of the Sullivan Foundation, the research team visited collections in Europe and North



America; scoured archives and libraries around the world; and met regularly to compare their findings. The Sullivans hope that their collection will one day go to an institution that can put the Du Paquier story in the context of European decorative arts of the baroque period.

**T**heir Du Paquier collection all but complete, the Sullivans have gravitated to another challenge, sculpture by the French artist Edgar Degas. Working with Gregory S. Hedberg, director of European art at Hirschl and Adler Galleries in New York, the Sullivans acquired a complete set of Degas bronzes that were cast at the Valsuani Foundry outside Paris from a group of seventy-four plasters that were all but unknown before 2004.

Their first purchase, cast at Valsuani in 1998, was a bronze of *The Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen* (see Fig. 11). According to Hedberg, the plaster model from which the Sullivans' bronze dancer was cast records an earlier moment in the history of Degas' original wax model, which resides at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C., a gift of Paul Mellon. Unveiled at the sixth impressionist exhibition in Paris in 1881, the wax is the only sculpture that the fastidious artist saw fit to display publicly.



The Sullivans also acquired forty-nine of the seventy-four recently discovered plasters. The plasters have not been endorsed by some of the most prominent scholars of Degas, who met privately last year to discuss the new Valsuani bronzes and the plaster casts used to make them. The group's refusal to comment publicly has clouded the discovery with doubt.

Hedberg, who has spent the past four years examining the plasters against the waxes (which are known to have been reworked by Degas), the 1918 photographs of the waxes, and against the modèle bronzes cast at the Hébrard Foundry between 1919 and 1936, remains convinced of the plasters' authenticity.

From DuPaquier to Degas, the Sullivans have embraced the challenges—cerebral and visceral, visionary and collaborative—that give collecting its depth of meaning and humanity. From one adventure to the next, collecting is a shared devotion that enriches their marriage and makes each day more interesting than what has come before.



Figs. 13, 13a. Tulip vase from a garniture by the Du Paquier manufactory, c. 1725. Hard-paste porcelain; height 8  $\frac{3}{8}$ , width 8  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Coscia photographs.*

Fig. 14. In the corner of the bedroom is an Irish mahogany desk-and-bookcase of 1755–1760. On the wall at the left hangs *Les Enfants et L'Agneau* of 1879 by William Bouguereau (1825–1905), and over the fireplace is *Evening in May* of 1905 by Dwight William Tryon (1849–1925) in a frame designed by Stanford White (1853–1906). The bed is dressed in a documentary print by Scalmandré that is used throughout the room.

Fig. 15. Handbags by Judith Leiber join hand-colored plates from *Galerie des Modes et Costumes Français d'après Nature* (1778–1787), issued by Paris printers, Jacques Esnauts and Michel Rapilly, in Melinda's dressing room.

<sup>1</sup> The exhibition, held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from September 22, 2009 to March 21, 2010, was organized by Jeffrey Munger, curator in the department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, and co-curator Meredith Chilton, an independent ceramic historian.

<sup>2</sup> *Fired by Passion: Vienna Baroque Porcelain of Claudius Innocentius Du Paquier*, ed. Meredith Chilton and Claudia Lehner-Jobst with contributions from Meredith Chilton, Katharina Hantschmann, Johann Kräftner, Sebastian Kuhn, Claudia Lehner-Jobst, Johanna Lessmann, Samuel Wittwer, and Ghenete Zelleke (Melinda and Paul Sullivan Foundation for the Decorative Arts, Hartford, and Arnoldsche Art Publishers, Stuttgart, 2009). <sup>3</sup> Ted Loos, "Great American Cellars," *Wine Spectator*, vol. 21 (August 31, 1996), pp. 84–85. <sup>4</sup> The architect is studied at length in Peter Pennoyer and Anne Walker, *The Architecture of Grosvenor Atterbury* (W. W. Norton, New York, 2009). For more on Eyrie Knoll, see "Charles P. Cooley Residence, Hartford, Conn.," *Country Life in America*, vol. 70 (July 1936), pp. 22–23 plus cover illustration. <sup>5</sup> *Fired by Passion*, vol. 1, p. 11.

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