

FRENCH PORCELAIN IN TORONTO

Anyone who has ever admired or purchased a piece of fine 'china' will want to see the exciting display of French ceramics at Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum, before it closes on August 22. The exhibition, "Céramiques de France", illustrates the diversity and quality of French pottery and porcelain from the Middle Ages to the Revolution.



Late seventeenth century bust of a Roman Emperor.

Pottery of the thirteenth century is represented by pavement tiles in simple colours which made floor decorations in Gothic churches; their beauty was enhanced by sunlight shining through the multi-coloured stained-glass windows. The tradition of tile manufacturing prevailed in France to the sixteenth century. On some tiles, for instance, the whole fifteenth century society seems to pass in procession - from hunters to artisans, from clowns to knights in full heraldic splendour.

Other ceramic forms also reflect aspects of French life. There are whimsical objects such as an eighteenth century tureen in the shape of a turkey cock or the dish decorated with bunches of asparagus in relief.

In addition to the sumptuous pieces destined for the homes of the wealthy, there are equally lavish pieces illustrating the lives of the less fortunate. Providing this contrast are figurines of a seven-

teenth century hurdy-gurdy player dressed in cape and broad-brimmed hat and of a beggar-woman suckling her child.

The functional pieces include a male figure holding his hat in one hand and a candle socket in the other. The purpose of a seventeenth century bowl containing the figurine of a reclining female nude is more difficult to determine.

Of special interest to Canadians are French ceramics unearthed during archaeological excavations at the Fortress of Louisbourg in Nova Scotia.

CANADA-FRANCE CO-OPERATION

This exhibition, the result of a joint effort by both the Canadian and French Governments, was organized by the Musée National de Céramique in Sèvres and co-ordinated by the National Gallery in Ottawa.

"Céramiques de France" opened to the public on July 15. For the official preview on July 14, there was a joint French and Canadian celebration in honour of Bastille Day at the Royal Ontario Museum. The party was a "Bal Populaire", featuring dancing, free champagne, strolling musicians in the garden and the opportunity to sample French foods and wines. Tickets were limited to 800, and cost \$5 each. Officiating at the opening ceremonies was Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs Mr. Mitchell Sharp. Co-hosts of the "Bal Populaire" were the Royal Ontario Museum and the Consul General of France.



Tureen and tray, about 1798.

Photos courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.