

Press Release

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5th donation campaign



Teschen Table, 1779, Johann Christian Neuber, H. 81.5 cm; W. of tabletop: 70.5 cm, wooden core clad with gilt bronze, hardstones, Saxony porcelain, signed on the tabletop
© Philippe Fuzeau/Musée du Louvre

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SOCIÉTÉ DES AMIS DU LOUVRE

New Donation Campaign for the Acquisition of a "Work of Major Heritage Value"

In the wake of the *Tous mécènes !* (Become a patron!) donation campaigns launched by the museum in 2010 for a painting by Cranach, in 2011 for the restoration of two treasures from Cairo, in 2012 for the acquisition of two magnificent ivory statuettes thought lost, and in 2013 for the restoration of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, the Louvre is once again appealing to the generosity of the general public to raise one million euros to add to its national collection with the purchase of the famous *Teschen Table*, a masterpiece of 18th-century decorative arts and monument commemorating a key moment in European history.

One of the world's most unique pieces of furniture

The *Teschen Table*, also known as the *Breteuil Table* or the *Table of Peace*, is the only work of its kind, made unique by its illustrious past and virtuoso craftsmanship. Both a table and a piece of jewelry, it was listed as a "National Treasure" then as a "Work of Major Heritage Value" by the French Consultative Commission for National Treasures.

The table's wooden structure, clad with gilt bronze, is inset with 128 numbered samples of semiprecious stones representing Saxony's geological riches and Saxony porcelain medallions, allegorical celebrations of peace, on the table's oval top. A booklet from 1780, kept in a drawer beneath the tabletop, identifies each numbered stone.

By the precious nature of the materials used, likening it to the work of a jeweler, and the "stone cabinet" layout of the tabletop, the table is a surprising and spectacular display of the rise and development of the natural sciences during the Enlightenment. It masterfully illustrates the secular tradition of decorative furniture made to the glory of European sovereigns.

A new call for individual donations for this historic acquisition

The total budget for this exceptional acquisition is 12.5 million euros. Every donation, regardless of the amount, will be crucial to the success of the campaign to give the *Teschen Table* its rightful place in the Department of Decorative Arts. The Louvre is thus appealing to the generosity of the general public once again to raise one million euros before January 31, 2015.

At the same time, the museum continues to seek funding from corporations and major donors, and will draw significantly on its own acquisition funds.

Musée du Louvre
External Relations Department
Anne-Laure Béatrix
Adel Ziane

Press Contact
Céline Dauvergne
celine.dauvergne@louvre.fr Tel. + 33 (0)1 40 20 84 66



The *Teschen Table* and its booklet © Philippe Fuzeau/Musée du Louvre

Previous donation campaigns have demonstrated the general public's strong support for the projects and desire to contribute within their means to enriching the Louvre's collection. This fifth campaign will further strengthen the ties between the museum and the public.

How to make a donation:

By credit card, check, or bank transfer before January 31, 2015:

- online at www.tousmecenes.fr (the fastest, easiest solution),
- by check, sent by post along with the form downloaded from www.tousmecenes.fr. If you are a French tax resident, regardless of the amount, 66% of your donation is eligible for an income tax deduction (up to 20% of your taxable income).

French resident companies are eligible for a tax deduction of up to 90% of their donation (within the existing legal framework) and special benefits in terms of exposure and public relations.

The Louvre expresses its gratitude to all donors

All donors will be acknowledged as patrons of the campaign.

For donations of €20 or more, donors will receive an invitation to discover the *Teschen Table*.

For donations of €200 or more, donors will be invited for a private viewing of the artwork on a Tuesday, the day the museum is otherwise closed to the public.

For donations of €300 or more, donors will also benefit from the Ami du Louvre card for a year with free access to permanent collections and temporary exhibitions.

For donations of €500 or more, donors will be invited to discover the artwork during a special private event, and will also receive the Ami du Louvre card.

Become a patron!

Thanks to the tremendous efforts of 7,000 donors in 2010, the Musée du Louvre raised the €1,260,000 required for the acquisition of *The Three Graces*, painted by Lucas Cranach in 1531 (raising €1M in just one month). In 2011, the museum reaped more than €500,000 from over 1,900 generous donors to restore and reassemble two treasures of Cairene architecture for the opening of the Department of Islamic Art, a Mamluk entrance vestibule (15th c.) and a mashrabiya window-screen (18th c.). In 2012, over 4,000 donors succeeded in raising the €800,000 required for the purchase, with the Société des Amis du Louvre, of two ivory statuettes the museum lacked to complete its medieval Descent from the *Cross* collection. In 2013, some 6,700 donors raised a million euros for the restoration of the museum's iconic *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, and the renovation of the monumental staircase that serves as its setting.

The Teschen Table

A monument commemorating European history

The War of Bavarian Succession broke out in 1778, when Maximilian Joseph, Elector of Bavaria, died without a legitimate heir on December 30, 1777. The clash between contenders to the Bavarian throne, which also threatened the interests of the Prince-Elector of Saxony, centered round the rivalry between the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II and King Frederick II of Prussia. For six months this conflict, gravely threatening the balance of European power, prompted impressive troop movements and intense diplomatic negotiations.

The emperor's brother-in-law Louis XVI played a dominant role in the “diplomatic war” led by the French foreign minister, the Comte de Vergennes. The king wisely refused to involve France in an armed conflict. Louis-Auguste Le Tonnelier, Baron de Breteuil, his ambassador in Vienna, was charged with vigorously affirming France’s neutrality and offering to mediate.

During the peace negotiations in Teschen, a city now divided into two towns in the Czech Republic and Poland, Breteuil conducted himself courteously, discreetly, and skillfully. The Teschen Peace Treaty was signed on May 13, 1779, under the successful joint mediation of France and Russia. As a mark of gratitude for his ministrations, and particularly for safeguarding the interests of Saxony, Baron de Breteuil received as a gift from Frederick Augustus III, Elector of Saxony, this table decorated with semiprecious stones. The *Teschen Table* or *Table of Peace*, a genuine monument commemorating a key event in European history, has remained with his descendants until today.

To many historians, the *Teschen Table* immortalizes the Treaty of Teschen, considered by diplomats to be the first modern treaty in which two nations, France and Russia, served as guarantors of peace between Austria and Prussia and, more globally, collective security in Europe.

A masterpiece by Johann Christian Neuber, goldsmith and mineralogist (1736–1808)

Johann Christian Neuber (1736–1808), a hardstone merchant and principal jeweler to the court of Saxony, finished his career as curator of the royal collections amassed in the Grünes Gewölbe (Green Vault) in Dresden by the electors of Saxony since the Renaissance. Herein undoubtedly lies the originality of an artist who was also a man of science and inventor of the “Zellenmosaic” technique, or mosaic composed of hardstones and semiprecious stones extracted from Saxony’s mineral deposits. Neuber was renowned for his snuffboxes, genuine miniature mineral display cabinets captioned with numbers and accompanied with an explanatory booklet, keenly collected by scientists and scholars. The Louvre has twelve of these exceptional *Steinkabinett Tabatieren* on display in the new Department of Decorative Arts galleries devoted to the 18th century (room 56).

During the Enlightenment, while Paris was the undisputed capital of taste and fashion in Europe, Neuber distinguished himself by his personal, innovative style. With the *Teschen Table*, Neuber created one of the first neoclassical masterpieces in Germany: shaped feet, garland decoration, palmette friezes, fluted legs reinterpreted to exalt the *goût grec* (Greek taste). The grisaille medallions painted on Saxony porcelain by Johann Eleazar Zeissig, known as Schenau, are still in keeping with the rococo tradition, but the iconography is clearly inspired by the Antiquity and neoclassical in nature, particularly the central medallion depicting the closing gates of the temple of war and the flame reignited over the altar of Peace.

A new masterpiece for the recently inaugurated 18th-century decorative arts galleries

Solemnly presented on January 1, 1780 to the Court of Dresden, and celebrated as far as Versailles upon its arrival in France in August, the *Teschen Table* has remained in the Breteuil family since the 18th century, and has rarely been exhibited outside the Château de Breteuil, in the Chevreuse Valley, 40 km west of Paris. In 2012, it was the focus of remarkable exhibitions at the Grünes Gewölbe (Dresden), the Frick Collection (New York), and the Galerie Kugel (Paris).

The addition of this exceptional table to the Louvre's new 18th-century decorative arts galleries inaugurated in June 2014 would be a highlight of the museum. Showcased within the revamped museum space, the artwork would be given a worthy setting at the center of the neoclassical masterpieces.

Its acquisition is a unique opportunity to welcome a masterpiece whose symbolic, historical, and artistic dimensions naturally resonate with the Louvre's vocation as a national museum.



Teschen Table, view of the tabletop © Philippe Fuzeau/Musée du Louvre

Become a patron!

A masterpiece commemorating European history

Visuals for the press

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1. . *Teschen Table*, 1779, Johann Christian Neuber, H. 81.5 cm; W. of tabletop: 70.5 cm, wooden core clad with gilt bronze, hardstones, Saxony porcelain, signed on the tabletop © Philippe Fuzeau/Musée du Louvre



2. The *Teschen Table* and its booklet © Philippe Fuzeau/Musée du Louvre



3. *Teschen Table*. View of the tabletop © Philippe Fuzeau/Musée du Louvre