

# Adam Calvert Bentley and Ardgowan Antiques

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## Louis XV Ormolu Mounted, Meissen and Kangxi Porcelain Table Fountain

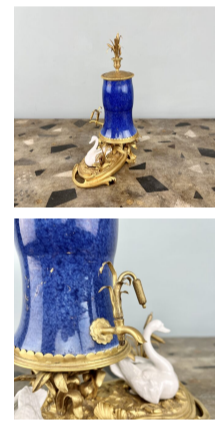
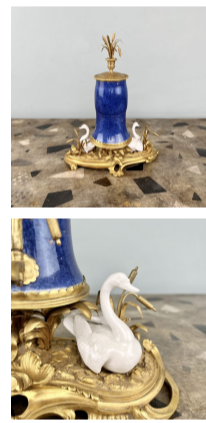
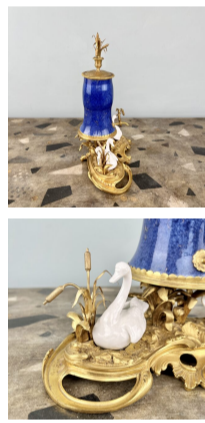
£5,950

A rare Louis XV table fountain or *fontaine a parfum* the central reservoir formed from a late 17th century powder-blue glazed Kangxi Chinese vase, mounted in Paris in the mid 18th century with a tap in the form of a bullrush and raised on a stand formed of bullrushes and water grasses over a pool and flanked by a pair of Meissen porcelain swans, probably modeled by J.J. Kändler and signed with blue crossed swords, above a pierced ormolu rococo scrollwork base

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**SKU:** C4410

**Year:** French. Circa 1740



This rare table-fountain comprising a Chinese vase and two swans, richly embellished with ormolu mounts illustrates the *marchand-mercier's* involvement in design through creative assembly.

Thomas-Joachim Hébert (1687-1773), the celebrated *marchand-mercier* active in Paris during the first half of the 18th century, had two table-fountains in stock when his expanding business was inventoried in 1724; one, composed of a cylindrical red and green coloured Chinese porcelain vase mounted in gilt-bronze, was valued at 120 *livres*; the other was a slightly smaller version of Japanese porcelain mounted in silver.

However, the fashion for transforming exotic and expensive Chinese and European porcelain into true '*objets de luxe*' reached its zenith a few decades later, in the mid-18th century through the activities of the *marchand-mercier* Lazare Duvaux (b. *circa* 1703- 1758), who probably supplied the present object. His *livre-journal* covering the years 1748-1758 lists several similar fountains, including a closely related example delivered to on the 29th of December 1750 to M. de Roissy:

699- *Une fontaine bleue avec des oiseaux de Vincennes, garnie en bronze doré d'or moulu, 216 livres.*

This fountain probably also incorporated similar birds in Vincennes soft-paste porcelain. These birds were modelled by the newly established Vincennes manufactory, which opened in 1740, after a model by the powerful Meissen Manufactory.

Table-fountains were originally conceived to dispense perfumed water, wine, coffee or tea. The present vase, surrounded by a lavish

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porcelain flowers, a playful allusion to the natural scent of flowers, would have had immense appeal to Parisian high-society's fascination with such novel imitations of nature.

In May 1743, a perfume fountain also featuring swans in a rococo base was delivered to Versailles

## Similar Fountains

A comparable perfume fountain was sold at Christies, Paris, 6 Nov 2014, lot 242 (Illustrated)

More recently a strikingly similar example, almost certainly produced by the same workshop was sold at Christies, New York THE COLLECTION OF ADOLPHUS ANDREWS, JR. AND EMILY TAYLOR ANDREWS 18 Jun 2024, Lot 8 (illustrated) This example differs only in the shape of the powder-blue Kangxi porcelain vase

A pair of Meissen porcelain swans of the same size were sold Christies, London, 5th July 2004, lot 184 (illustrated)

## Louis XV (1715-1774)

During the reign of King Louis XV, the great grandson of the Sun King, perfumes were in high demand, largely due to lack of personal hygiene. In fact, his court became known as *la cour parfumée* or the 'perfumed court.' Louis supposedly required a different scent for every room at Versailles and scents to flow in every fountain. He appointed the first royal perfumer, Jean Fargeon, to meet his fragrant needs.