

**SCULPTURAL GROUPS
BY CAFFIÉRI AND
LECOMTE**

Karlyn Culmer



Jean-Jacques Cafféri (1725-92)

Geometry and Architecture

1776

Inscribed on left of base: I ° I °

CAFFIERI invenit et Sculpsit 1776

Marble

H 97.2 cm, L 84.4 cm, W 49.5 cm

Waddesdon Manor (no. 2214)

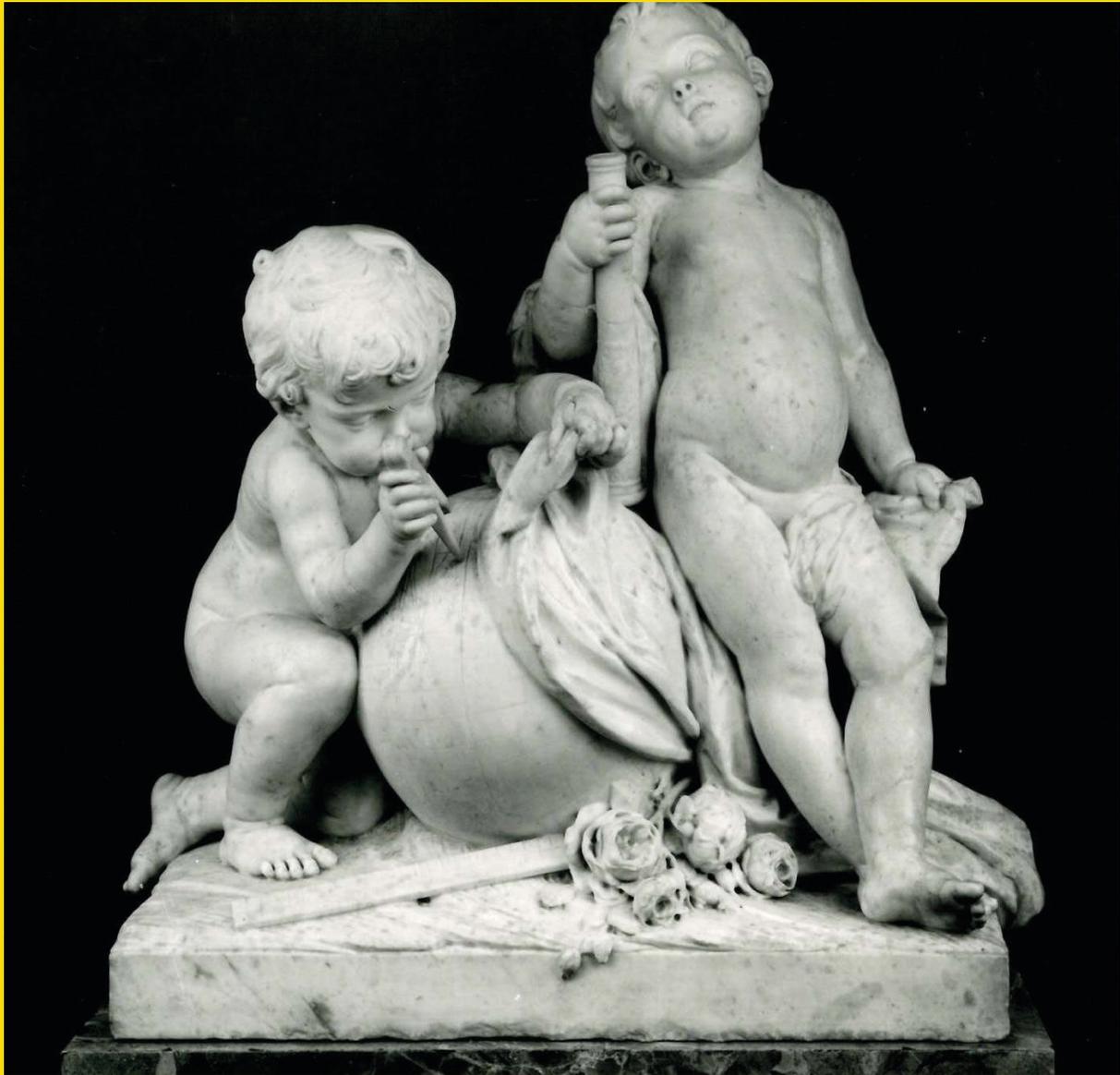
PROVENANCE

Sculpture completed for Abbé Joseph-Marie Terray (1715-1778) in 1776, France; removed from the posthumous sale of Abbé Terray's collection (20 January 1779) and installed by his nephew and heir, Antoine-Jean Terray, Vicomte de Rozières (1750-1794) at Château de La Motte-Tilly; inherited by his son (Abbé Terray's great-nephew), Claude-Hippolyte Terray (1774-1849), and described in the 1818 inventory of Château de La Motte-Tilly; described in Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild (1839-1898)'s 1898 probate inventory as purchased from Lord William Osborne (1835-1888); inherited by Alice de Rothschild (1847-1922); inherited by James de Rothschild (1878-1957); bequeathed by James de Rothschild to the National Trust in 1957.

ESSENTIAL LITERATURE

Jules Guiffrey, *Les Cafféri: Sculpteurs et Fondeurs-Ciseleurs, étude sur la statuaire et sur l'art du bronze en France au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle* (Damascène Morgand et Charles Fatout, 1877), p. 221; Stanislas Lami, *Dictionnaire de sculpteurs de l'école française au dix-huitième siècle* (Honoré Champion, 1910), pp. 157-221; Dennis Sutton, 'La Sculpture', in Francis John Bagott Watson (ed.), *Waddesdon Manor and Its Collections* (Éditions de la Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1959), pp. 75-86 (pp. 82-4); Terence Hodgkinson, 'French Art at Waddesdon Manor', *The Burlington Magazine*, 101.676/677 (1959), pp. 256-7; Terence Hodgkinson, *The James A. De Rothschild Collection At Waddesdon Manor: Sculpture* (Office du Livre, 1970), pp. 16-9; Wend Graf Kalnein and Michael Levey, *Art and Architecture of the Eighteenth Century in France* (Penguin, 1972), p. 100; Ulrich Middeldorf, *Sculptures from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: European Schools XIV-XIX Century* (Phaidon, 1976) p. 106; Michael Levey, *Painting and Sculpture in France 1700-1798* (Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 151-2; Colin B. Bailey, 'The Abbé Terray - An Enlightened Patron', *The Burlington Magazine*, 135.1079 (1993), pp. 121-32; Colin B. Bailey, *Patriotic Taste: Collecting Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Paris* (Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 82-3.





Félix Lecomte (1737-1817)

Geography and Astronomy

1778

Inscribed on left of base: LECOMTE

1778.

Marble

H 94.9 cm, L 80.3 cm, W 48.3 cm

Waddesdon Manor (no. 3158)

PROVENANCE

Sculpture completed for Abbé Joseph-Marie Terray (1715-1778) in 1778, France; removed from the posthumous sale of Abbé Terray's collection (20 January 1779) and installed by his nephew and heir, Antoine-Jean Terray, Vicomte de Rozières (1750-1794) at Château de La Motte-Tilly; inherited by his son (Abbé Terray's great-nephew), Claude-Hippolyte Terray (1774-1849), and described in the 1818 inventory of Château de La Motte-Tilly; described in Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild (1839-1898)'s 1898 probate inventory as purchased from Lord William Osborne (1835-1888); inherited by Alice de Rothschild (1847-1922); inherited by James de Rothschild (1878-1957); bequeathed by James de Rothschild to the National Trust in 1957.

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AN EXPANDED PROVENANCE OF THE SCULPTURAL GROUPS BY CAFFIÉRI AND LECOMTE

- 1776-1778 – Caffiéri's sculpture (accession number 2214) completed; in 1778, Lecomte's sculpture (accession number 3158) completed, per their respective maker signatures with these dates on the bases. These two are part of a set of four sculptures – the others being by Clodion (1738-1814) and Jean-Pierre-Antoine Tassaert (1727-1788), now both at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. – commissioned for Abbé Joseph-Marie Terray (1715-1778), France, per correspondence by Clodion in his negotiations for the marble.¹
- 1778 – Described in the posthumous sale catalogue of Abbé Terray, which took place at the Hôtel d'Aumont, the Parisian residence of Terray's nephew and heir, Antoine-Jean Terray, Vicomte de Rozières (1750-1794). The printed date on the catalogue is December 1778, but a handwritten note on a copy of the sale catalogue preserved in the Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, indicates the sale occurred on 20 January 1779.² Further handwritten notes on the abovementioned copy of the sale catalogue state that lot 25 (Caffiéri's sculpture) and lot 26 (Lecomte's sculpture) were withdrawn, together with the other pair today at the National Gallery of Art,³ and installed by Antoine-Jean Terray at his country house, Château de La Motte-Tilly.⁴
- 1818 – Described in an inventory drawn up for Claude-Hippolyte Terray, Vicomte de Rozières (1774-1849) the Abbé Terray's great-nephew, of the La Motte-Tilly estate, indicating these two sculptures were still there.⁵
- 1898 – Described in Ferdinand de Rothschild (1839-1898)'s probate inventory, indicating it must have entered his collection by this date, Waddesdon, UK.⁶ According to Alice de Rothschild (1847-1922)'s manuscript catalogue entry for the two sculptures, they had been purchased from Lord William Osborne (1835-1888).⁷ Lord William Godolphin Osborne married the second daughter of Admiral Viscount Keith, Giorgiana (d. 1892) and lived at her home, Tulliallan House, near Kincardine, Fife. There are two unsigned marble copies of the sculptures at Wemyss Castle, Fife, which were bought by Captain Michael Wemyss (1888-1982) from Tulliallan. It is thought these copies were fabricated to replace the originals when the originals were acquired by Ferdinand de Rothschild.⁸
- 1898 – Inherited by Alice de Rothschild.
- 1922 – Inherited by James de Rothschild (1878-1957).
- 1957 – Bequest of James de Rothschild to National Trust, Waddesdon, UK.⁹



CATALOGUE ENTRY

Among the more than two hundred pieces of sculpture in the Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor are a pair of marble statues of *putti*, standing in the East Gallery. Made by sculptors Jean-Jacques Caffiéri (1725-92) and Félix Lecomte (1737-1817) respectively, the pair once formed a group with two other statues sculpted by Clodion¹⁰ (1738-1814) and Jean-Pierre-Antoine Tassaert¹¹ (1727-88), both now at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., all highly esteemed sculptors of their time.

Each *putto* within the pair represents a different field of the arts. Caffiéri's pair represent *Geometry and Architecture*, and the sculpture is signed and dated 1776, while Lecomte's pair represents *Geometry and Astronomy*, signed and dated 1778. The other two pairs, by Taessart and Clodion, represent *Poetry and Music* (NGA, no. 1952.5.98), and *Painting and Sculpture* (NGA, no. 1952.5.110), respectively. Correspondence shows that Clodion led negotiations in acquiring the stone for all four pairs in 1774, requesting from his vendor in Italy only the finest quality marble for the prestigious client, Abbé Joseph-Marie Terray (1715-78), Louis XV's *Contrôleur Général des Finances*.¹² The sculptures' iconography was suitable for the patron, since Terray also served as *Directeur Général des Bâtiments du Roi*, a role associated with promoting the arts. In Caffiéri's *Geometry and Architecture*, the *putto* representing Geometry is writing out Pythagoras' theorem on parchment and the shape of a dodecahedron sits at his feet. The second *putto*, *Architecture*, rests a hand on a floor plan, with a Doric capital and a set square at his feet. In Lecomte's *Geography and Astronomy*, the figure of Geography leans on a globe

and is holding a compass. The *putto* of *Astronomy* gazes upward, a telescope in one hand, the other leaning on a scroll marked with concentric circles and the words 'Système de Copernic'. A cluster of roses on the ground symbolizes the flourishing of the arts and sciences. In Clodion's sculpture, *Poetry* is represented by a *putto* sitting atop books with a scroll of paper across his lap and a stylus in his hand. *Music* stands beside him holding a stringed instrument called a cithern and a wind instrument at his feet. Tassaert's *Painting* is a draped female *putto* standing next to a canvas and holding a palette and brushes in her hand. She looks down at *Sculpture*, who holds a chisel and hammer while leaning upon the sculpted head of a man. The head may represent the patron, since it clearly resembles a bust presumed to be of the Abbé Terray by Jean-Baptiste II Lemoyne (1704-78).¹³

The sculptures never made it to their intended destination in the Abbé Terray's *hôtel* in Paris, since he died in 1778. Instead, they were installed at the Hôtel d'Aumont, the Parisian residence of Terray's nephew and heir, Antoine-Jean Terray (1750-94), to be displayed as part of the Abbé's estate sale. However, all four lots were withdrawn¹⁴ from the sale, apparently because the Waddesdon sculptures did not reach their reserve prices, and the National Gallery of Art sculptures received no bids.¹⁵ They were taken by Antoine-Jean Terray to his country house, Château de La Motte-Tilly. In 1794 Antoine-Jean Terray and his wife were executed as enemies of the Republic, and his estate was eventually inherited by the Abbé's great nephew, Claude-Hippolyte Terray (1774-1849), who had fled Revolutionary France. In an 1818 inventory of the estate, the sculptures are described as *mutilé*, and it is noted that the damage occurred eighteen years prior



around the turn of the century.¹⁶ Ferdinand de Rothschild was evidently interested in the detail of this ‘mutilation’. In Alice de Rothschild’s 1906 catalogue, she records that his impression was that ‘these groups stood in some royal or palatial garden at the end of the eighteenth century, where they witnessed some revolutionary scenes, as they bear the marks of bullets’.¹⁷ A series of arguably bullet-sized chips can be identified on the marble bellies of both *Architecture* and *Astronomy*. This detail made a significant enough impression on Alice to include it in the catalogue entry, whereas most other objects are succinctly described by her without anecdotal associations. We can also infer that such details appealed to Ferdinand by his remarks in *Reminiscences* (1897):

Old works of art are not, however, desirable only for their rarity or beauty, but for their associations, for the memories they evoke, the trains of thought to which they lead, and the many ways they stimulate the imagination [...].¹⁸

Ferdinand’s enthusiasm for the French decorative arts, its patrons and associated legends, was a fascination not atypical among nineteenth-century collectors.¹⁹ With the post-Revolutionary sales of royal and noble assets, and scavenged paraphernalia from the ruins of Revolutionary sites, the first half of the nineteenth century witnessed largescale emigration of eighteenth-century French objects to Britain. By the second half, the trade was well-established, and the appetite of the burgeoning wealthy market was voracious. High prices were paid for objects with illustrious provenances and well-known makers, but also for objects considered to have survived the trauma of historical events. With the museums of the Louvre

and Versailles being generally focused on earlier periods of French history, the nineteenth-century British urban and country houses became the destination for concentrated collections of some of the finest French eighteenth-century decorative arts. This strongly shaped the collecting culture that developed through the nineteenth century, which Ferdinand put no small value on, as he summarized in his 1885 article ‘The Expansion of Art’:

Newly-formed collections are generally more accessible in their new homes than in their former secluded retreats. They contribute, not a little, to dignify their new residence; they attract the more enlightened and intelligent portions of society, who, in their turn, attract the fashionable throng. Thus brilliant gatherings are formed which have a beneficent influence on the tone and the conditions of society at large, and may lead to the social and political development of a future age.²⁰

Ferdinand de Rothschild’s appreciation and preservation of these objects provided a material perspective for nineteenth-century historicism. As a collector, his skill lay not only in acquiring these remarkable individual artefacts, but in arranging and displaying them in rich ensembles that were often as dense in historical anecdote as they were in beauty. In the East Gallery at Waddesdon where the two marble sculptures stand, Ferdinand also displays a musical automaton in the shape of an elephant – a mechanical marvel and typical *Wunderkammer* object. Nestling vestiges of the *ancien régime* amidst nineteenth-century eclecticism, Ferdinand’s collection at Waddesdon presents both a highly personal and historic tableau.



NOTES

- 1 National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., respectively nos 1952.5.98; 1952.5.110. See Colin B. Bailey, 'The Abbé Terray – An Enlightened Patron', *The Burlington Magazine*, 135.1079 (1993), pp. 121–32 (p. 125).
- 2 Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, no. CV01279_17790120: F. C. Joullain fils, *Catalogue D'une Très-Belle Collection De Tableaux, de Sculptures en marbre, bronze, plomb doré, terre cuite, & c. de porcelain ancienne & de Séve, & de meubles précieux par Boule. Provenans de la succession de feu M. l'Abbé Terray, Ministre d'Etat, & Secrétaire, Commandeur des Ordres de Sa Majesté* (1778).
- 3 Ibid., pp. 17–18, lots 25–26, pp. 18–19, lots 27–28.
- 4 Bailey, 'The Abbé Terray – An Enlightened Patron', p. 130.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 The Waddesdon Archive at Windmill Hill, Acc. no. 157.1997.3: *Inventory of Waddesdon Manor, Bucks, 1898, vol. III, Reception Rooms, East Gallery*, p. 115.
- 7 The Waddesdon Manor Archive at Windmill Hill, Acc. no. 926: Alice de Rothschild, *Catalogue of the Principal Pictures, Old Furniture, China and Other Works of Art at Waddesdon Manor, 1906*, 1906, p. 46.
- 8 Terence Hodgkinson, *The James A. De Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor: Sculpture*, 1970, pp. 16–8.
- 9 Michael Hall, 'Waddesdon Manor: Buckinghamshire', *Country Life*, 192.23 (1998), p. 65.
- 10 Michael Levey, *Painting and Sculpture in France 1700–1798* (Yale University Press, 1993), p. 151; Bailey, 'The Abbé Terray - An Enlightened Patron', pp. 121–32; Anne L. Poulet and Guilhem Scherf (eds), *Clodion: 1738–1814* (Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1992), p. 307, fig. 153; Norman Herz, Katherine A. Holbrow and Shelley G. Sturman, 'Marble Sculpture in the National Gallery of Art: A Provenance Study', *Archéomatériaux: marbres et autres roches: ASMOSIA IV, Bordeaux, France 9–13 octobre 1995: actes de la IVème Conférence internationale de l'Association pour l'étude des marbres et autres roches utilisées dans le passé* (Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 1999), pp. 101–10; Robert Price and C.D. Dickerson III, 'Restoring Sculpture in Paris After and Before the French Revolution, Facture: Conservation, Science', *Art History*, 6 (2023), pp. 120–51.
- 11 Ulrich Middeldorf, *Sculptures from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: European Schools XIV–XIX Century* (Phaidon, 1976) p. 105; Guilhem Scherf, 'Un Buste de l'Abbé Raynal à l'Académie de Lyon', *Bulletin des Musées et Monuments Lyonnais*, 1 (1988), pp. 10–9 (p. 17, fig. 9); Poulet and Scherf, *Clodion: 1738–1814*, p. 307, fig. 154; Levey, *Painting and Sculpture in France*, pp. 240–3; Bailey, 'The Abbé Terray - An Enlightened Patron', pp. 121–32; Herz, Holbrow and Sturman, 'Marble Sculpture', pp. 101–10; Price and Dickerson III, 'Restoring Sculpture in Paris', p. 120.
- 12 Bailey, 'The Abbé Terray – An Enlightened Patron', p. 125.
- 13 Ibid., p. 127. It is worth noting that Lemoyne was Caffiéri's master during his training at the Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris.
- 14 Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, no. CV01279_17790120: F. C. Joullain fils, *Catalogue D'une Très-Belle Collection De Tableaux, de Sculptures en marbre, bronze, plomb doré, terre cuite, & c. de porcelain ancienne & de Séve, & de meubles précieux par Boule. Provenans de la succession de feu M. l'Abbé Terray, Ministre d'Etat, & Secrétaire, Commandeur des Ordres de Sa Majesté* (1778), pp. 17–9, lots 25–28.
- 15 Middeldorf, *Sculptures*, p. 106.
- 16 Bailey, 'The Abbé Terray – An Enlightened Patron', p. 130.
- 17 The Waddesdon Manor Archive at Windmill Hill, Acc. no. 926: Alice de Rothschild, *Catalogue of the Principal Pictures, Old Furniture, China and Other Works of Art at Waddesdon Manor, 1906*, 1906, p. 46.
- 18 The Waddesdon Manor Archive at Windmill Hill, Acc. no. 177.1997: Ferdinand de Rothschild, *Reminiscences*, 1897, p. 65.
- 19 See Tom Stammers, *The Purchase of the Past: Collecting Culture in Post-Revolutionary Paris c.1790–1890* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).
- 20 Ferdinand de Rothschild, 'The Expansion of Art', *The Fortnightly Review*, 37 (1885), p. 57.

