

In the Footsteps of Fidelle Duvivier

A career summary with new discoveries of his work
for the Sceaux manufactory in France

plus a pictorial Appendix illustrating a selection of his work
in England and the Netherlands

Charlotte Jacob-Hanson



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Detail from a Sceaux faience *assiette calotte* (36), c. 1765, decorated by Duvivier in *petit feu* colors with figures and an animal in a landscape set in a *cartouche* outlined with greenery, flowers and a *fruit coupé*.

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A widely traveled ceramics painter from Tournai, Fidelle Duvivier has long been a familiar name in Great Britain mainly due to a wealth of porcelain he decorated there later in his life. But until the late 1980s nothing had been known about his presence or employment in the Netherlands. For more than ten years I have been researching and attributing his Dutch work and have published and lectured on the subject. More recently, new evidence has come to light concerning his earlier employment in France at the 18th-century Sceaux manufactory near Paris. With additional biographical details and a growing body of attributions, a new chapter to Duvivier's career story has begun to emerge which underscores the versatility of the young ceramic decorator, a chapter that should interest both museums and collectors.

The main objectives of this present book are to introduce these newly discovered French examples by Duvivier, to compare them to some of his Dutch and English work (see Appendix A), and to explain which important conclusions have been reached based on new documents and ceramic evidence. I have attempted to present the narrative in a historical setting, highlighting the personalities associated with the history of the Sceaux manufactory as well as the events that influenced the course of its fortunes.

Duvivier's story is not told here in its entirety yet – other aspects of his career, such as his training in Tournai and his earliest employment in England (at the Derby manufactory) still await scholarly attention. But it is hoped this work will go forward, aided in good measure by the visual material and findings presented here.

Title page:

Detail of a Mennecy saucer showing a bird with cut and whole fruits decorated in polychrome by Fidelle Duvivier, c. 1766-68, while he was employed as a painter at Sceaux. Photo: Nicole Duchon. © Collection communale de Mennecy, France.

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(Detail of a Derby jug decorated by Duvivier, 32. Photo courtesy of Bonhams)

Chronology

TOURNAI – Fidelle François Joseph Duvivier was baptized on 6 August 1740, St. Brice church, the fourth son of Jacques Joseph François Duvivier & Jeanne Josèphe Capart. Apprenticeship as a painter at the porcelain/faience manufactory in Tournai, working there probably until c. 1765. One surviving older brother, Michel-Joseph Duvivier (1733-1771, also a porcelain decorator, who returned to Tournai from Chelsea, England in 1762/63 a widower; became artistic director at the Tournai manufactory until his death in 1771).

SCEAUX (near Paris, France) – Employed as a decorator at Sceaux during the Jacques and Jullien period, probably during the years 1766-1768; decorated mainly faience (pp. 20-29). Some decorative work also found on Mennecy porcelain of this period (title page, **26a, 43**).

DERBY, England – Probably left Sceaux for England during 1768; possibly doing some work in London before signing a four-year contract as a painter for William Duesbury of Derby on October 31, 1769 (**77, 78**). Married his English wife, Elizabeth Thomas, on December 4, 1769 in Derby. May not have stayed in Derby until the expiration of his contract. Appears to have done independent work for the porcelain decorating atelier of James Giles in London - see (**54a**) and a signed, dated Worcester teapot, 1772 (**62a,b**), Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

SCEAUX (near Paris, France) – Returned to Sceaux before 1775 (daughter baptized there in February of that year) and decorated mainly porcelain of the Glot period (**22, 24, 28, 44, 47-52, 65**).

LOOSDRECHT – c. 1780-1784 – Next documented in the Netherlands and employed at the Loosdrecht manufactory (daughter baptized in Slootdijk church, 1783). (See **2, 66, 67, 71, 73a, 74, 75, 81-85, 91, 92, 94**). Also worked briefly for the Lynckers of The Hague, decorating mostly Ansbach porcelain (**3, 68, 70, 79, 80**; one Tournai example known (**69a,b**)). Did not work at Amstel, but returned to England (Staffordshire) c. 1784.

NEW HALL (Staffordshire, England) – 1785-1790 working for the New Hall factory, decorating porcelain (**1, 5, 56a, 58-60, 76, 86, 88**). Some eighteen services identified/published. Also did commissioned work on New Hall, 1796 (**90a,b**). Other work for Ralph Wedgwood; John Turner (1787); James Neale (**89**); and for Enoch Wood (no examples known yet).

CHAMBERLAINS (of) **WORCESTER**, England – 1792 (name recorded on a wage list); decorated at least two known services on Caughley porcelain blanks (**64**).

AMERICA - At some point after 1796 Duvivier traveled to the United States, where he was said to have been involved with a "Galantee Shew" or Magic Lantern show, but it is not known in which city or for how long. His interest in the peep show is recorded on Loosdrecht porcelain, twice: once on a plate in Kasteel Sypesteyn (**92**) and once on a dinner plate in the dinner service kept at Kasteel Duivenvoorde, Voorschoten, Netherlands (**91**). It is not yet known where or when Fidelle Duvivier died.



1 Detail from a New Hall porcelain saucer, c. 1785-90, decorated by Fidelle Duvivier (67.1.7b), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California.

Preface

Fidelle Duvivier: adding a new chapter to his story

Career summary

Many who have heard the name Fidelle Duvivier will be familiar with numerous examples of his decoration on English New Hall porcelain done in the period c. 1785 to 1790. In older literature these pieces were dated c. 1782 to 1790 because it was not known at the time that prior to his employment at New Hall he had worked for a few years in the Netherlands, from about 1780 until 1784. He was employed not only by Reverend Joannes de Mol (1726-1782), the founder of the Loosdrecht manufactory, where genuine hard-paste porcelain was made between 1775 and 1784, but also briefly by the Lyncker family of The Hague, who never made porcelain but in reality only decorated imported wares.¹ (Further details about these discoveries as well as a selection of examples may be found in my published articles, as well as below, and in Appendix A of this book).²



2 A Loosdrecht porcelain bowl, c. 1783, decorated in sepia by Fidelle Duvivier. H 10 cm, diameter 19.7 cm. Private collection, the Netherlands.



3 A Hague-decorated Ansbach porcelain covered tureen painted in puce camaïeu by Fidelle Duvivier, c. 1783. H 13.5 cm, diameter 16.5 cm. Photo: Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, the Netherlands.

Among Duvivier's work on New Hall porcelain were some specially-commissioned pieces, including several large cylindrical mugs, and while he added his signature to some of these pieces,³ he did not sign any of his Dutch work. Even so, it was not difficult to recognize the close stylistic similarities between the plentiful New Hall specimens (or other late Staffordshire work) and the relatively unknown body of Continental decoration dating from before 1785. These new Dutch attributions to Duvivier have increased the number of valuable visual clues amongst the categories of his landscape vignettes, bird painting and figure painting, all of which should certainly make future identification work easier.⁴

By latest calculations Duvivier seems to have decorated an even greater number of tea and coffee services plus partial dinner services for the Loosdrecht manufactory than he did for New Hall a few years later.⁵

The first Englishman to attempt to identify Fidelle Duvivier's work and to study those artists, sculptors and painters who came to work in England from Tournai (now in Belgium) was the researcher and collector, Major William H. Tapp (1884-1959).⁶ He traveled to Tournai before the outbreak of World War II, visiting the city's archives and meeting with collectors and historians there. After returning home he wrote three articles for the magazine *Apollo*, which were published in 1940 and 1941, one concerning "Joseph Duvivier, China Painter of Chelsea and Tournai," followed by two articles about Fidelle Duvivier.⁷ His commentaries on such an important family were acknowledged by British ceramic authorities and have been referenced in ceramics literature for well over forty years. But although these articles were widely quoted for such a long time, they have had to undergo greater scrutiny and rectification in recent years. Today, Tapp's authority, not surprisingly, shows rather a lot of tarnish since a good portion of what he wrote so confidently regarding Fidelle's family background has proven to be inaccurate or misleading in many cases. Tapp probably spoke little if any French and he noticeably misspelled place and proper names; he read church records incorrectly and often came to rather hasty (and faulty) conclusions about many of his findings.⁸ Most of Tapp's misattributions of the English objects Duvivier painted have been corrected over time and some attributions dropped, but the process of verifying or rejecting the greater part of his claims about the Duvivier family relationships will require more attention.⁹

Major Tapp illustrated his first article on Fidelle Duvivier with some rare and fine porcelain objects decorated by the artist, some of which were then in his own collection. These included two "tankards" or mugs he called Caughley (actually New Hall) and the famous signed Gerverot Beaker (now in the British Museum),¹⁰ the drawing of a New Hall teapot (**88**) from Llewellynn Jewitt's collection (regrettably, still unaccounted for since 1925), plus a curious "Chelsea-Derby vase, circa 1770 ... from Dr. Percy Lichfield's collection." Tapp attributed this piece to Duvivier, making the case that the similarity of the dogs on both the vase and the signed Gerverot Beaker proved conclusively (to his mind, at least) that both were Duvivier's work. But since this Chelsea-Derby vase (finally located in an American collection) can be dated closer to c. 1780, a time when he was more likely living on the Continent, Tapp's arguments lose their relevance.¹¹

In 2005 Hilary Young and Errol Manners kindly arranged for me to have the chance to look through a large box of surviving Tapp papers, letters, drafts of manuscripts and photographs kept by Tapp's son. These certainly did shed some light on the major's acquaintances, his journey to Tournai, research in England and correspondence with museum directors and curators (e. g. Bernard Rackham, the Keeper of Ceramics in the Victoria and Albert Museum from 1914 to 1938). One manuscript draft contained a particularly striking observation:

"... sometimes the facts appear clearer jobbing backwards."

Jobbing backwards so aptly describes what has become the necessary tactic in order to trace the career of this peripatetic decorator and recognize his work: one is forced to construct a reverse chronology. And I would agree with Major Tapp: many facts have indeed emerged while moving backwards from studying the later years in Staffordshire (1785 to 1796+) to Duvivier's time in the Netherlands (c. 1780 to 1784); then back further to the period of his

documented employment at the Sceaux manufactory near Paris around 1775, which was the next logical step backwards in the story. While researching my first article on Fidelle Duvivier (2006), I found two likely Sceaux attributions that appeared stylistically similar to a New Hall teapot and a Loosdrecht plate.¹² (56a, 66) These are illustrated in Appendix A along with a great many more examples.

But what other earlier undisputed dates help us in this reverse chronology of Duvivier's career? Prior to 1775, we can vouch for Fidelle's presence in Derby by his surviving four-year contract with William Duesbury (dated October 31, 1769),¹³ but whether he stayed in England working for Duesbury for the full duration of the contract is not certain. There is his marriage to Elizabeth Thomas on December 4, 1769 as well as the birth and death of their first-born son in 1771 in Derby.¹⁴ Of relevance to this period of his earliest employment in England are a number of well-known pieces long attributed to him (62, 63 in Appendix A), which strongly suggest that he did independent or part-time decoration for James Giles's London decorating establishment, and possibly for others, but we still do not know whether these pieces were decorated while he was under contract to Derby, or whether they were done prior to or after working for Duesbury.

Tapp may not have reasoned correctly about many things, but he can be credited with having been the first to mention that Duvivier was working at Sceaux in 1775.¹⁵ And his source for this fact, the *Histoire des Manufactures françaises de Porcelaine* (1906), is a landmark French reference work which included the earliest findings relating to Sceaux, a manufactory whose history has been generally neglected – even in French ceramic literature – and whose production is sorely underrated.

Personally speaking, this search for Duvivier's work at Sceaux has yielded a richer repertoire of his talent than I had hoped to find. It not only sheds new light on his earliest work in England, but reveals an unexpected turn to this story – one that will be explained in the next section of this book. Relating this new chapter of Duvivier's career would be impossible without filling in some historical background to the French setting, the times and the characters involved. Since so little has been written in English about the Sceaux manufactory's history and its three periods of production, a few pages have been devoted to this background as well. Starting with the sole documentary clue pointing to Duvivier's presence at Sceaux, the story begins with the year 1775.



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4 Detail from an 18th-century Sceaux faience plate (27) decorated by Duvivier.
Photo: Millon-Associés, Paris, France

NOTES

¹ My search for Duvivier's work in Dutch collections was prompted by mention of him in the Dutch catalogue published for the 1988 exhibition of Loosdrecht porcelain held at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam: Wilhelmus M. Zappey et al., *Loosdrechts Porselein 1774-1784*, ed. Abraham L. den Blaauwen (Zwolle: Waanders, 1988), pp. 37-39, 47, 103. See the Appendix C for summaries about the Loosdrecht manufactory and the Lynckers of The Hague.

² Four articles by Charlotte Jacob-Hanson: "Fidelle Duvivier in France and the Netherlands," *The Magazine Antiques*, Vol. 169, no. 1 (January 2006), pp. 168-177; "Deux-viviers? – A Critical Reappraisal of the Duvivier Family Tree," *ECC Transactions*, Vol. 19, Part 3 (2007), pp. 477-483; "Fidelle Duvivier: Tracing the Career of a Porcelain Painter," *Vormen uit Vuur*, vol. 199, 2007/4, pp. 37-45; "Fidelle Duvivier: New Attributions in the Netherlands," *Handbook of the International Ceramics Fair and Seminar* (2008), pp. 19-27.

³ Two of these cylindrical New Hall mugs in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (C.128.1977 and C.151.1977) are discussed in David Holgate, "Fidelle Duvivier Paints New Hall," *ECC Transactions*, Vol. 11, Part 1 (1981), pp. 12-20; Holgate also discusses a third example, once the property of Dr. Margaret Vivian (auctioned by Sotheby's, New York on April 22, 1994, lot 85 as "Caughley"). (5, following note 15 here). Afterwards it was acquired by Geoffrey Godden and is presently still on loan to the Potteries Museum, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. A fourth mug painted in sepia with a scene of three boys seated at a table before a farmhouse, once belonging to Major William H. Tapp, reappeared after a long absence and was auctioned by Trembath Welch, Great Dunmow, Essex, on July 14, 2003. It is now in the Turner collection. See Jonathan Turner, "Some Rare Duvivier Pots," *ECC Transactions*, Vol. 20, Part 1 (2007), p. 159.

⁴ Among the researchers who have contributed greatly to the present knowledge about Duvivier's later work in Staffordshire are David Holgate, who identified eighteen New Hall services decorated by Fidelle Duvivier, and Geoffrey Godden, whose interest in this painter spanned many decades. During the 1785-96 period, Duvivier also did work for James Neale (1740-1814) and John Turner (1738-1787), as well as for Ralph Wedgwood (1766-1837). See Dr. Minnie Holdaway, "The Decoration of Creamware & Pearlware of Ralph Wedgwood at the end of the Eighteenth Century," in *Creamware and Pearlware Re-examined* (English Ceramic Circle, 2007), pp. 74, 75. Dr. Holdaway's collection was auctioned by Sworders on Feb. 22, 2011 and included other pieces decorated by Fidelle Duvivier.

⁵ While in The Hague doing work for the Lynckers Duvivier mainly decorated Ansbach porcelain tureens or *lavoir* sets (ewers with basins); examples of these are in the reserve collection of the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague. They are marked with an underglaze blue stork on the base (the Ansbach manufactory delivered white porcelain to the Lynckers with their mark already painted under the glaze). In the reserve collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, is an Ansbach coffee cup with a putto on a cloud in polychrome by Duvivier (79) as well as a Tournai chocolate cup, cover and saucer with puce decoration and an overglaze stork mark on the base. (69a, b) These are published here for the first time.

⁶ Gerald Pendred, "Major William H Tapp, MC – Ceramic Researcher Extraordinary," *Derby Porcelain International Society Journal*, Vol. 1 (1989), pp. 33-46, lists all of his writings. Included in the list is an article for *Connoisseur* (1938) on the Tournai sculptor Joseph

Willems (d. 1766), who worked at Chelsea; an article on another sculptor, Nicholas Joseph-François Gauron (1736 – ?), who was active at both manufactories (*Apollo*, March 1942); and an article on "Joseph Duvivier, China Painter of Chelsea and Tournai," (*Apollo*, January 1940). The confusion surrounding the identity of this painter is discussed in my article; "Deux-viviers? – A Critical Reappraisal of the Duvivier Family Tree," *ECC Transactions*, Vol. 19, Part 3 (2007), pp. 477-483.

⁷ William H. Tapp, "Fidelle Duvivier, Ceramic Artist," *Apollo*, Part 1, Vol. 32 (December, 1940), pp. 160-163, and Part 2, Vol. 33 (March, 1941), pp. 57-59; 76.

⁸ Tapp repeatedly wrote "Fidellé," but the French name is written "Fidèl' or 'Fidèle" (the English version Fidelle should not have an accent on the final "e"). Regarding Fidelle's marriage to Elizabeth Thomas in Derby (Church of All Saints) on December 4, 1769, under Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1754 everyone had to be married in a Church of England church. They could be buried, or perhaps baptized by their own rites, but even Jews and Catholics had to be married by the Church of England. I thank Field McIntyre, London, for this information. Fidelle's own family was not Huguenot, but Catholic, as Tournai parish records clearly show. Two daughters were born later to the couple, one in France (Sceaux), in 1775, and one in the Netherlands (Slootdijk), in 1783. Both baptisms were performed in Catholic churches. Moreover, Fidelle's mother's name was Joanna Josèphe Capart, not Laport, a name Tapp misread in the Tournai church records. (I thank the Belgian researcher, Monsieur Jean-Louis Fiems, for this information and for sending photographs of the pertinent St. Brice records).

⁹ See also David Holgate, *New Hall* (London, Faber & Faber, 1987). Among those New Hall services Holgate identified as painted by Duvivier were several examples mistakenly attributed to Worcester by Tapp in his second Duvivier article. Geoffrey Godden devoted a full chapter to Fidelle Duvivier in *New Hall Porcelains* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club Ltd., 2004), pp. 159-186. Regarding the Duvivier family tree, see Jacob-Hanson, "Deux-viviers?" p. 480, and the updated genealogical pages with comments in Appendix B.

¹⁰ Aileen Dawson, "The 'Gerverot Beaker': A New Acquisition for the British Museum," *Northern Ceramic Society Newsletter*, no. 160 (December 2010), pp. 55–62. Louis Victor Gerverot (1747-1829) likely knew Fidelle Duvivier from their time in the Netherlands; both worked at Loosdrecht. Their paths crossed again in England when Gerverot entered into a brief partnership to make porcelain with John Turner of Lane End, Staffordshire. Gerverot modeled this famous beaker and Duvivier decorated it (1787). More biographical information about Gerverot can be found in my articles posted at www.academia.edu.

¹¹ This Chelsea vase was given as an anonymous gift to the Rhode Island School of Design Museum in Providence, Rhode Island in 1956. It bears a gold anchor mark on the plinth. (See the link http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2360_vase). I am grateful to Elizabeth A. Williams of the RISD Museum for sending file information and to J.V.G. Mallet for his comments on the photograph ("the vase is certainly Chelsea-Derby, ca. 1780, and shows a frieze after a Polidoro da Caravaggio design").

¹² Jacob-Hanson (2006), op. cit., p. 169, Pl. III; p. 170, Pl. IV. See (51) and (44a).

¹³ Two attributions to Duvivier's decoration for Derby (putti on clouds) can be found in Appendix A (77, 78). This next "chapter" of Duvivier's career still remains to be written. For a brief description of William Duesbury (1725-1786) see Appendix C.

¹⁴ Details regarding the contract between Duvivier and William Duesbury, signed on October 31, 1769, are given by John Twitchett, *Derby Porcelain* (London, Barrie & Jenkins, 1980), p. 229. Regarding the discovery of the marriage record see Jacob-Hanson (2006), op. cit., p. 172.

¹⁵ Tapp concluded his second *Apollo* article on Fidelle Duvivier with a "Summary of Factories" of his employment and he notes: "1775-76 - working at Sceaux, outside Paris; bird and figure subjects." Unfortunately, we do not know which pieces of Sceaux he may have seen in books or museums but Duvivier's work did indeed include "bird and figure subjects."



5 New Hall porcelain mug, decorated and signed by F. Duvivier, ca. 1792. H 14.3 cm. Under the tavern sign, which depicts the "Good [i.e. headless] Woman," are the words *Bierre* and *Good Wyfie*. Private collection. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.