

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, case 28 (2023-24): A highly important Louis XIV table top, attributed to Bernard Perrot d'Orléans, circa 1670-1680	
Statement from Expert Adviser	Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the table top meets Waverley criteria two and three See below
Statement from the Applicant	Statement from the applicant referencing the three Waverley criteria. The Reviewing Committee will designate an object as a 'national treasure' if it considers that its departure from the UK would be a misfortune on one or more of the following three grounds: a) Is it closely connected with our history and national life? b) Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance? c) Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history? The applicant did not dispute that the object met the Waverley criteria.
Note of case hearing	See below
Press release	A press release was issued by the Secretary of State on 19 June 2024: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/exquisite-table-top-once-owned-by-louis-xiv-at-risk-of-leaving-the-uk
Recommended price	£7,500,000 (plus VAT of £300,000 which can be reclaimed by an eligible institution)
1st Deferral period	18 October 2024
2nd Deferral period	
Note of outcome	

RCEWA – A highly important Louis XIV table top, attributed to Bernard Perrot d'Orléans, circa 1670-1680

Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the table top meets Waverley criteria two and three

Please note that images and appendices referenced are not reproduced.

Executive Summary

Brief Description

Table top made of panels of *millefiori*, lampworked and cast glass set onto a copper base with *repousse* gilt-brass surrounds. Attributed to Bernard Perrot (1640-1709) made 1668-1681.

117 x 81 cm

Condition

The work appears to be in good condition. The table top underwent restoration after its sale in 1988.

Provenance

In the collection of Louis XIV by 1681

Sold by the Garde Meuble, 4 August 1752, purchased by 'Sr Boucher'

Sold 'the Property of Sir Adrian Beecham, Bt., removed from Clopton House, Stratford-on-Avon', Christie's, London, 25 June 1975, lot 91

Sold Sotheby's, London, 24 November 1988, lot 4 (anonymous sale)

Literature

Tim Clarke & Jonathan Bourne, 'Louis XIV's Glass Table', *Apollo*, (November 1988), 333-339 & 379.

Jacques Bénard and Bernard Dragesco, *Bernard Perrot, et les Verriers Royales du Duché d'Orléans 1662-1754*, (Orléans, 1989), 73-76.

Paul Hollister, 'Louis XIV's glass table, a triumph of imagination and technology', *Annales du 12e congrès de l'Association internationale pour l'histoire du verre (Vienna, 1991)*, (Amsterdam: 1993), 441-456.

Bernard Perrot 1640-1709: Secrets et chefs-d'oeuvre des verrières royales d'Orléans, exh. cat., (Orléans, 2010), 55-66.

Exhibitions

Bernard Perrot 1640-1709: Secrets et chefs-d'oeuvre des verrières royales d'Orléans, Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Orléans, Orléans, France, 13 March – 27 June 2010

Comparable objects

The table top is unique. No other works of this date in glass of this scale or complexity exist in UK collections.

Waverley criteria

The subject of this statement, the glass table top attributed to Bernard Perrot, meets Waverley Criteria 2 and 3. (2) The table top is of outstanding aesthetic importance, being listed in the inventory of furniture belonging to Louis XIV, King of France, who carefully cultivated an image of power and splendour through patronage of arts, and whose personal taste impacted the entire course of artistic production across Europe during his reign and long after it. The table top is also an exceptional object in glass history, with nothing comparable recorded as being produced by late 17th-century glassmakers. (3) The table top is of exceptional significance to the study of the work of Bernard Perrot and other émigré glassmakers working in France in the 17th century. The work is unique in the catalogue of known works attributed to Perrot, and is by a long way the most impressive, sophisticated and important of them.

Detailed Case

This glass table top represents a unique object that once belonged to King Louis XIV and was fabricated by one of the most prominent and inventive glassmakers in France in the second half of the 17th century, Bernard Perrot. It is a monumental and striking example of glassmaking, created to adorn the interior of a magnificent palace, and it fuses sophisticated technical processes with a complex iconographical programme.

It is widely acknowledged that Louis XIV used the arts to legitimise and validate his status as an absolute monarch – reigning with divine right – and thus he would have carefully commissioned or chosen the objects that were visible in the public and private areas of his court. His personal taste dictated the aesthetics of luxury objects, and he sponsored and encouraged the establishment of workshops to produce furnishings for his royal residences, including ceramics, silver, tapestries and silk. The sole fact that an object was purchased for a royal residence of Louis XIV is indicative of its exceptional status, being produced by the foremost designers and craftspeople and to the highest possible quality. Both Paul Hollister and Timothy Clarke have suggested, plausibly, that the table top was intended to be placed either in Versailles, or one of its pavilions such as the Trianon de Porcelain, decorated with ceramic tiles produced at nearby French production centres such as Nevers and Rouen. In any case, its presence in the public or semi-private spaces of the French court would have placed this table top close to the very centre of the daily life of the monarch.

The table top is first documented as a complete table in the *Inventaire general des meubles de la couronne et des maisons royales*, transcribed and published by Jules Guiffrey in 1885-86, under the list of *Mobilier faisant partie du mobilier de la couronne avant 1681* (Furniture forming part of the furniture of the crown before 1681).¹ Number 276 in the list, under the section *Cabinets, tables et Guéridons de*

¹ Jules Guiffrey, *Inventaire general des meubles de la couronne sous Louis XIV*, volume 2, (Paris, 1885-86), 155.

diverses sortes, is described as ‘Une table couverte de divers morceaux de Verre fondu et meslé, du plusieurs couleurs, ornée d’un compartiment de cuivre doré cizelé, fort léger, avec son pieds aussy couvert de verre, longue de 3 pieds ½, large de 2 pieds ½, sur 2 pieds 5 pouces de hault’ (‘A table covered in various pieces of melted and mixed glass, of several colours, decorated with compartments of carved gilded copper, very light, with its legs also covered in glass, 3 ½ feet long by 2 ½ feet wide, about 2 feet 5 inches high’).² The number ‘276’, which appears painted or branded three times underneath the table top, as well as the near match of the dimensions, leaves little doubt that the subject of this statement is the surviving top of the table described in the 1681 inventory.

This description of a glass table top with its glass columnar legs is a singularity in the 17th century, with no other examples of glass tables of this date being recorded. It is also possible that a number of *millefiori* glass columns that reside in public collections in the UK and USA are the surviving legs for this particular table top, adding to the research and display potential for this object, and its public interest. For example, in the British Museum, a column of copper covered in coloured glass canes shows a remarkable similarity to the glass on the table top.³ The close visual similarity between the table top and four glass over copper columns forming part of a cabinet in the Smithsonian has also been noted.⁴

The table top is made of 111 panels of carefully worked glass, using a mixture of filigree, or coloured canes of glass fused together, and pictorial panels made using the lampwork and casting technique. The pictorial panels depict scenes from classical mythology, such as the Judgement of Paris, comprising ovals and cartouches containing opaque white glass figures of gods and goddesses, alongside scenes of hunting, flora and fauna. The combination of classical imagery, quite possibly drawn from printed sources, as well as more naturalistic motifs suggests an ambitious and design-literate workshop origin, and belies the table top’s status as a courtly object.⁵

The table left the French royal collection in 1752, when a sale took place of items from the Garde Meuble de la Couronne (the repository of royal furniture). It was purchased by an individual recorded as ‘Sr. Boucher’, and it has been suggested that this could be the important French painter François Boucher (1703 – 1770).⁶ Boucher was an avid collector of natural history specimens and curiosities, and this table top closely aligns with the type of objects that he is known to have possessed. The catalogue of the sale of his collection which took place in 1771, though it makes no mention of this specific table top, does include a large number of objects under the section ‘curious furniture’, such as pieces made of hardstone

² The original lists are held in the Archives Nationale, France. The list ‘Furniture forming part of the furniture of the crown before 1681’ is under reference O’3333.

³ Object number 1873,0502.215.

⁴ Object number 1929.8.423

⁵ Tim Clarke & Jonathan Bourne, ‘Louis XIV’s Glass Table’, *Apollo*, (November 1988), 338.

⁶ Archives Nationale, France, O’3336, fol. 278. The full transcription is quoted in Tim Clarke & Jonathan Bourne, ‘Louis XIV’s Glass Table’, 379, fn.4.

and tortoiseshell, that are comparable.⁷ If it can be proved that this table was also in the possession of François Boucher, the significance of the table would be increased.

The table top, in the words of the glass historian Paul Hollister, 'was very likely aesthetically conceived, but almost certainly engineered and supervised...by the naturalized Italian émigré Bernard Perrot'.⁸ Born as Bernardo Perrotto in Altare, a prominent glassmaking village in Liguria, Italy, Perrot learned his craft in family workshops there. Altarese glassmakers, unlike those who lived and worked in Venice, were permitted to travel and practice their trade elsewhere. This, combined with the steady influx of craftspeople to France encouraged by successive monarchs from the 16th century, meant that centres such as Lyon and Nevers became a natural home for glassmakers like Perrot.

Perrot initially worked in Paris before moving to Nevers, where the glasshouse was under the management of another Altarese glassmaker. Excelling within the glassmaking community in Nevers, in 1668 he was sponsored by Louis XIV's brother Philippe duc d'Orléans to oversee the establishment of a royal glassworks in Orléans and was granted a 30 year monopoly, at which point he was also naturalised and took the name Bernard Perrot. As a royal object, Perrot's glassworks presents the most likely place of manufacture for the subject of this statement.

This table is a unique and outstanding example of 17th-century glassmaking utilising a number of innovative techniques. The strength of the attribution to Perrot also lies in the fact that his work is characterised by experimentation, evidenced by a number of special privileges and patents granted to him between the 1660s and 80s. Included amongst these were making a 'rich enamel on tiles and columns of copper' and the 'forming of porcelaine de verre [opaque white glass]...in two-part moulds'.⁹ These techniques are present on this table top, strengthening an attribution to Perrot. Some of the techniques, such as the casting of the opaque white glass figures in shallow moulds, do not appear to be recorded on any other works in glass of this date, making this example unique and significant for the study of such glass making techniques.

The table combines new glass making techniques with a distinctly Venetian tradition of using coloured filigree glass, and the emerging practice of lampworked figures that are now closely associated with the workshops of Nevers and Orléans. As such, it represents a richly conceived object that poses questions about the

⁷ Pierre Rémy, *Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, desseins, estampes, . . . minéraux, cristallisations, mandrepores, coquilles & autres curiosités, qui composent le cabinet de feu M. Boucher, Premier Peintre du Roi* (Paris, 1771), 142-153.

⁸ Paul Hollister 'Louis XIV's glass table, a triumph of imagination and technology', *Annales du 12e congrès de l'Association internationale pour l'histoire du verre* (Vienna, 1991), (Amsterdam: 1993), 442

⁹ These are summarised in Paul Hollister 'Louis XIV's glass table, a triumph of imagination and technology', 447-449

nature of workshop organisation in the glasshouses of 17th-century France, the impact of Italian émigrés on royally commissioned glass, and the sphere of influence of Perrot and his work. Though works attributed to Perrot are in a number of collections across the UK, these mostly constitute small-scale vessels and tableware such as cutlery and centrepieces. In this table the full scope of Perrot's achievements, as well as the refined and ambitious designs associated with his workshop, can be seen and would reward in-depth study.

.....

.....

*[Information has been withheld here in line with the requirements of section **40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 –Personal information. A public authority is entitled to withhold information under section 40 (2) where the information is personal data]***

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, note of case hearing	
Meeting date	Tuesday 7 May 2024
Object	A highly important Louis XIV table top, attributed to Bernard Perrot d'Orléans, circa 1670-1680
Expert Adviser's objection	The Curator, Ceramics & Glass 1600-1800, Decorative Art & Sculpture Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, joined by the Acting Keeper, Decorative Art & Sculpture Department, Victoria & Albert Museum had objected to the export of the table top under the second and third Waverley criteria on the grounds that its departure from the UK would be a misfortune because it was of outstanding aesthetic importance and it was of outstanding significance for the study of the work of Bernard Perrot and other émigré glassmakers working in France in the 17 th century.
Committee Members & Independent Assessors	<p>Six of the regular eight Committee members were present and able to inspect the table top. They were joined in person by two independent assessors, acting as temporary members of the Committee.</p> <p>One independent assessor joined remotely, having viewed the object prior to the hearing. The applicant and expert adviser confirmed that they were content with the independent assessor joining the meeting virtually, participating in the discussion, and voting.</p> <p>The Chairman recused himself from the discussion and from voting due to a conflict of interest.</p>
Value on the licence	The value shown on the export licence application was £7,500,000, which represented the purchase price.
	The applicant was informed that an interim process was currently in place for Committee hearings. The Committee was still holding hybrid meetings, but any Committee members, including the independent assessors, were required to inspect the object/s under consideration prior to discussing the case and voting. Any permanent Committee members or independent assessors who were not able to view the object were not able to vote.

	<p>The applicant confirmed that the owner understood the circumstances under which an export licence might be refused.</p>
VAT	<p>The applicant confirmed that the value did not include VAT and that VAT of £300,000 on the commission would be payable in the event of a UK sale.</p>
Expert Adviser's comments	<p>The expert adviser stated they had nothing further to add to their submission.</p>
Applicant's comments	<p>The applicant stated they had nothing further to add to their submission.</p> <p>When questioned about the provenance, the applicant stated that it probably arrived in England in the late 19th or early 20th century in the Beecham family but that nothing more was known beforehand. Further, they confirmed that Sir Adrian Beecham, who had owned the table top, was the son of Sir Thomas Beecham, the noted conductor and impresario.</p>
Committee's discussion	<p>The expert adviser and applicant retired, and the Committee discussed the case.</p> <p>They agreed that the table top was a remarkable combination of scientific and technical work and of great aesthetic impact. It represented the only known physical evidence of Bernard Perrot's use of lamp work. They commented that the metalwork may not appear as refined as other elements but was visually striking in its finish and use of motifs; it added to the "naïve" feel of the composition. Although, exceptionally, the table was listed in the inventory of furniture belonging to King Louis XIV, they noted that it may not necessarily have been a royal commission, but perhaps an attempt by Perrot to gain royal favour. Nevertheless, they noted that it was visually extraordinary and technically the most sophisticated and important piece of 17th-century French glasswork known to survive.</p> <p>They also agreed that the connection to the Beecham family was significant in relation to the study of the history of collecting, as was the reference to its possible later ownership</p>

	<p>by the artist François Boucher. They noted that there were many fascinating research angles, including its iconographical interpretation, the use of design sources (such as for gardens, decorative arts print sources and embroidery), the study of French 17th-century interiors, Perrot's own career trajectory and technical developments in glass making.</p>
Waverley Criteria	<p>The Committee voted on whether the table top met the Waverley criteria. Of the eight voting members, no member voted that it met the first Waverley criterion. Eight members voted that it met the second Waverley criterion. Eight members voted that it met the third Waverley criterion. The table top was therefore found to meet the second and third Waverley criteria for its outstanding significance to the study of the work of Bernard Perrot and other émigré glassmakers working in France in the 17th century. It was also of outstanding significance to the study of interiors in France, decorative art design, and the history of British industrialist collecting.</p>
Matching Offer	<p>The Committee recommended the sum of £7,500,000 (plus VAT of £300,000 which can be reclaimed by an eligible institution) as a fair matching price.</p>
Deferral periods	<p>The Committee agreed to recommend to the Secretary of State that the decision on the export licence should be deferred for an initial period of four months. At the end of the first deferral period, if the Arts Council received notification of a serious intention to raise funds with a view to making an offer to purchase the table top, the owner will have a consideration period of 15 Business Days to consider such offer(s). The Committee recommended that there should be a further deferral period of six months that would commence following the signing of an Option Agreement.</p>
Communication of findings	<p>The expert adviser and the applicant returned. The Chairman notified them of the Committee's decision on its recommendations to the Secretary of State.</p> <p>The expert adviser agreed to act as champion if a decision on the licence was deferred by the Secretary of State.</p>