

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE  
COUTURE EDITION

2008

PORZELLAN MANUFAKTUR NYMPHENBURG



FIGURINES BY FRANZ ANTON BUSTELLI

1759/60

With new designs by

Christian Lacroix	9	<i>Julia</i>
Gareth Pugh	10	<i>Capitano Spavento</i>
Pascal Millet (Carven)	11	<i>Leda</i>
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Viktor & Rolf	13	<i>Colombine</i>
Vivienne Westwood	14	<i>Mezzetino</i>
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Franck Sorbier	17	<i>Pierrot</i>
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Adeline André	20	<i>Anselmo</i>
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Maurizio Galante	23	<i>Octavio</i>
Ralph Rucci	24	<i>Pantalone</i>



THE WHITE WARE

The COUTURE EDITION starts with Franz Anton Bustelli's bare *COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE* figures – "carte blanche" for the invited fashion designers.

## HISTORY

With COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE – COUTURE EDITION, PORZELLAN MANUFAKTUR NYMPHENBURG is launching a project that is unique in its quality and complexity: to celebrate its 260th anniversary, it invited 16 of the internationally most renowned couturiers to create new "robes" for the 16 COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE figures by the rococo sculptor, Franz Anton Bustelli. These figurines, which at the time made Nymphenburg world famous and which to this day count among its most valuable treasures, are being re-issued in a COUTURE EDITION that is limited to 25 copies. This is the first time such a broad cooperation between the leaders in the fashion world and a master porcelain maker has been realised.

It is particularly highest design quality in combination with the highly sophisticated handmade individual pieces that demonstrates the close relationship between haute couture creations, the master disciplines of fashion design and Nymphenburg's porcelain. All pieces by Nymphenburg are manufactured using methods that have remained broadly unaltered since the 18th century. From the mixing of the porcelain paste to secret formulas from kaolin, feldspar and quartz through the casting of porcelain pieces up to painting, gilding and polishing: each step is executed by hand, which makes each item unique. Nymphenburg has always worked with the famous artists of their time to create porcelain designs. Bustelli was the first in this continuing line and pioneered the extraordinary aesthetic for which Nymphenburg is known.



MARTIN ENGELBRECHT – COMEDIA FIGURES

It has been demonstrated that Franz Anton Bustelli owned this copper engraving, which dates from the middle of the 18th century. It served as inspiration for his main work: the 16 COMEDIA DELL'ARTE figurines he produced for PORZELLAN MANUFAKTUR NYMPHENBURG.

Franz Anton Bustelli (approx. 1723 – 1763), a sculptor from Ticino, is regarded as the most important porcelain master of his time and the 16 figures that make up the COMEDIA DELL'ARTE are probably his most artistic ensemble of figures: *"In regard to wealth of innovation, fineness and liveliness in modelling as well as warmth and inner content, his creations by far outdo anything that was ever achieved with porcelain sculpture during the rococo period."*<sup>1</sup> Between 1759 and 1760, Bustelli created eight pairs of figures based on the COMEDIA DELL'ARTE, which, with great sensitivity and elegance, he relates to each other through posture, gestures and how their clothes have been painted. With the eight male and female figures, in a free interpretation of a copper engraving by Martin Engelbrecht from Augsburg, Bustelli perfected his own personal style.

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich H. Hofmann, Franz Anton Bustelli: Der Meistermodelleur von Nymphenburg 1754-1763, Munich



COPPER ENGRAVINGS OF PANTALONE

The rich Venetian merchant is a miserly character – he always conceals his money on his back under his coat.

In the *COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE*, an Italian improvised comedy dating from the 16th century, only the most important traits and characteristics are pre-defined. The greedy merchant, the frivolous maid, the conceited doctor and the passionate lover are exaggerated and manifested in the *COMMEDIA*. Current political and social topics were just as important to the performances as were the themes of love's pleasures and sufferings, intrigue, mistaken identities and satire: a humorous profusion of love, firmly anchored in everyday life. Bustelli's virtuosity is clearly apparent in the flirtatious looks and poses he uses to stage the roles assigned to the figures.

The delicate depiction of the figures' robes, physiognomies and expressions is unique. This compositional sophistication, the wealth of detail and the almost tangible materiality of the robes shaped by Bustelli mean that the figures may undisputedly be regarded as masterpieces from the history of porcelain. For the design, Bustelli found inspiration in the fashion of the times which he represented with great sensitivity. And so it appears only natural to invite today's greats of fashion design to create "new clothes" especially for these figures, which at the time constituted the creative highlight of their period. With creations in their characteristic styles, the designers have realised their vision of a contemporary interpretation of Bustelli's figurines.

JULIA – CHRISTIAN LACROIX

Recognising her standing, Lacroix has given genteel JULIA an elegant robe with opulent platinum ornaments that has been hand-painted in several stages. He subtly interrupts the rococo look with brilliantly coloured shoes, gloves and bow.



CAPITANO SPAVENTO – GARETH PUGH

This newcomer to the fashion scene has cloaked the dynamic CAPITANO completely in geometrical shapes. Entirely in the style of his fashion, Pugh has radically made the figure subordinate to the shape and has transformed it into an abstract work of art.



LEDA – PASCAL MILLET (CARVEN)

The large floral pattern is a reference to a fabric from the current collection at Carven, the traditional fashion house in Paris. Only the very observant will notice that the robes possess an undercoating of delicate beige beneath the black flowers.



SCARAMUZ – NAOKI TAKIZAWA

Takizawa, former creative director for the Issey Miyake fashion label, borrowed the classic looking clothes he designed for the dancing SCARAMUZ from current Tokyo street-wear. The hand and face are coated entirely in polished platinum.



COLOMBINE – VIKTOR & ROLF

These fashion designers in Amsterdam have re-interpreted COLOMBINE's role with their creation: with the diamond pattern held in black in black and the mask adorned with a painted teardrop, they have transformed the impish maid of ISABELLA, who just can't stay true to any man, into a character from a tragedy.



MEZZETINO – VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

For her design, Vivienne Westwood, who with Giorgio Armani, Emanuel Ungaro and Christian Lacroix counts among the most important fashion designers of our time, was inspired by Antoine Watteau's paintings of the *COMMEDIA* figures in the French rococo style.



LALAGE – DOMINIQUE SIROP

The French couturier, Dominique Sirop, has transformed the harlequin's partner into an elegantly dressed Grande Dame. The platinum pattern on her dress imitates the iridescence of sequins on Sirop's luxurious clothes.



LUCINDA – ESTEBAN CORTAZAR (EMANUEL UNGARO)

The up-and-coming Colombian, Esteban Cortazar, who was appointed head designer at the Emanuel Ungaro label at the age of just 23 years last year, refers to a pattern from his first collection for this company: climbing roses in the brand-typical pink enshroud the entire figure.



PIERROT – FRANCK SORBIER

The melancholic PIERROT with his lantern doesn't only appear in the *COMMEDIA* – he also turns up in the French folksong, "Au clair de la lune", which dates from the 18th century. In reference to traditional music, Sorbier has completely covered his figure in musical notes and violin clefs.



DONNA MARTINA – DAMIANO BIELLA (ESCADA)

DONNA MARTINA, the DOTTORE's smart wife, entirely unimpressed by his chattering, is off to do her daily errands dressed in a fabric taken from the current Escada summer collection.



DOTTORE – GUSTAVO LINS

The know-it-all and conceited DOTTORE has been newly dressed using the over-top-stitching technique by Lins. The seams produce a filigree and abstract pattern through which the fabric's colour shows – perfectly imitated on the hand-painted porcelain.



ANSELMO – ADELINE ANDRÉ

By transforming the clothes into feathers, Adeline André has compared ANSELMO, the old music teacher, to a nightingale: if not the most beautiful bird, its singing does enchant all.



## CORINE – IGOR CHAPURIN

For now ten years, the couture designs by this fashion designer from Moscow and his costumes for the Bolschoi Ballet have drawn international attention. CORINE is held entirely in brown and platinum, Chapurin's corporate colours. Only a light lace pattern interrupts the closed finish.



ISABELLA – ELIE SAAB

The beautiful and ever popular ISABELLA is clothed in valuable gold and platinum robes. Just like the couture designs with sequins and pearls by Elie Saab who hails from Lebanon, this robe also reflects the association between luxury and modernism.



OCTAVIO – MAURIZIO GALANTE

Gallant OCTAVIO, who has won ISABELLA's heart, has been adorned with circular ornaments within circular ornaments from head to toe. They reflect the style so typical of Galante where fabrics are gathered and layered into frequently circular structures.



PANTALONE – RALPH RUCCI

The miserly merchant of Venice is covered with Chinese characters – a timeless code from a foreign culture expressive of savoir-vivre and distant travels. The complex method of picking out the characters reveals the porcelain concealed under layers of painting.



## COUTURE EDITION

This project was developed over a period of almost two years in close cooperation between PORZELLAN MANUFAKTUR NYMPHENBURG and designers in Paris, London, Amsterdam, Beirut, New York, Tokyo, Moscow and Munich. The designs clearly reflect the different cultural and creative approaches and thus the diverse nature of the global fashion scene.

Vivienne Westwood's MEZZETINO was inspired by the depictions of the COMMEDIA characters in the rococo paintings of Antoine Watteau. Naoki Takizawa, former creative director at Issey Miyake, on the other hand, found inspiration for his SCARAMUZ in Tokyo street fashion. Viktor & Rolf have become famous for designs using distorted proportions and theatrical exaggerations to produce a classic look. For COMMEDIA, they remained true to the line of their most famous catwalk collection, "Black Hole", where the models – including their faces and hair – are shrouded entirely in black. They have created a monochrome black COLOMBINE where the refraction so typical of porcelain allows the glossy and matt areas to come into their own.

Before Christian Lacroix turned to fashion design and became grand master of haute couture, he wanted to do a doctorate on the clothing represented in 18th century paintings – the period of Franz Anton Bustelli. And so it is hardly surprising that he approached his design for PORZELLAN MANUFAKTUR NYMPHENBURG with great interest: *"For as long as I can remember, these figures, when I've seen them in museums or in photos in books, have always drawn my eye as living protagonists and witnesses from an age which they subtly and precisely reflect with costumes that are much more daring than those of today."*



JULIA

The painting of Christian Lacroix's pattern demands great sensitivity and highest precision: only when the platinum ornaments have been applied, are the gaps filled with the black background colour.

Lacroix chose Bustelli's JULIA to focus on: a genteel lady of high standing, wearing a fine hunting costume, shown in an elegant but reserved posture. He "*primarily chose this figurine for its very simple, graphic and complete posture as it thus presents the best foundation for design*".

The clothes designed for her appear at first glance almost simple – in contrast to the otherwise so opulent baroque and colourful collections by this designer. The "mouche" – the beauty spot – and the made-up face refer directly to the rococo period; the floral platinum ornaments adorning the elegant black robe hark back to fabrics from his latest couture collection which have been inspired by the world of bull fighting. "*I wanted the surface to be covered in a single design, the arabesques to be found on the magnificent black-and-white capes worn by toreros.*"

The painted design on the Lacroix piece is one of the most complex that has ever been realised in the history of the manufactory. The individual areas had to be hand-painted and fired separately and consecutively because the paints and the platinum require different firing temperatures. First the platinum ornaments were applied, then the black borders which were finally followed by the brilliant colours. Once the paints and glaze had fused, the platinum ornaments were hand polished with semi-precious gems.

Lacroix subtly pokes fun with this design that seems to imitate rococo fashion: he breaks the appearance of courtly elegance with the canary-yellow gloves and pink shoes and thus locates the figure firmly in the present.

Gareth Pugh, the probably most noted newcomer to the London fashion scene, has taken an entirely different approach in his handling of the task of designing a new robe for a COMMEDIA figure. He made his debut in autumn 2006 with a burlesque collection, which quickly catapulted him to the international stage of fashion design. His futuristic frequently black-and-white designs present a fashion that radically places the clothing as a comprehensive form above its wearers: inflatable items of apparel or clothing entirely covering the models and made from different materials totally dissolve the conventional image of the body and place his designs at the intersection to performance art.

His design for the COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE – COUTURE EDITION is correspondingly radical. CAPITANO SPAVENTO – lovelorn and jealously protecting his beloved ISABELLA with dagger drawn against gallant OCTAVIO – has been clothed from head to toe in Pugh's strict geometric pattern. A black star has been placed at the figure's hips from which the irregular lines radiate all over the body. Which turns the figure into an abstract shape. The hardness of the pattern that he created especially for a fabric from his latest collection is playfully broken by the soft rococo shapes of the porcelain figurine and minimum irregularities in the painting applied by hand. And it is precisely this tension that interested Pugh in the new COMMEDIA clothes: *"I feel the abstract way that the design shoots around CAPITANO almost dominating the natural flow of line is indicative of the way I work on my own collections."* The *"struggle between lightness and darkness"*, which according to Pugh is central to his designs, finds masterful realisation in the all-over design for CAPITANO SPAVENTO. A highly contrasting play of light and dark is ignited between the deep black and ivory-coloured areas that remain free of paint.



CAPITANO SPAVENTO

The incomplete painting of the CAPITANO clearly reveals the focus of Gareth Pugh's design. The star on the hip appears to transmit the geometric rays all over the body.



#### MANUFACTURE

The figurines are produced using complex manual methods: all the required porcelain parts are individually shaped and dried. Using liquefied porcelain paste, these parts are then assembled into a single piece in the modelling shop.

A limited COLLECTORS' BOOK is being issued to accompany the COUTURE EDITION. The editor and designer is the artist, Florian Böhm, who lives and works in Munich and New York. More than 1000 photographs and a comprehensive essay by the art critic, Ronald Jones, are dedicated to the cultural and aesthetic significance of the COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE and its COUTURE EDITION. The development of the project from the first visits at the designers' studios to the complex process of producing and painting the figures by hand at PORZELLAN MANUFAKTUR NYMPHENBURG is recorded in all its facets in the COLLECTORS' BOOK with around two years of the design and realisation history being documented in detail.



SAMPLE PLATES

The designs created by the fashion designers are transferred to porcelain by the porcelain makers. The colours and patterns adapted to the designs are used as models for painting the new "robes".

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE  
COUTURE EDITION

Figures: Franz Anton Bustelli (1759/60)

Designs: Adeline André, Damiano Biella (Escada), Igor Chapurin, Esteban Cortazar (Emanuel Ungaro),  
Maurizio Galante, Christian Lacroix, Gustavo Lins, Pascal Millet (Carven), Gareth Pugh, Ralph Rucci,  
Elie Saab, Dominique Sirop, Franck Sorbier, Naoki Takizawa, Viktor & Rolf, Vivienne Westwood

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