The present, according to C. Day Lewis, “is nothing unless it is spun from a live thread out of the past.” How vivid a thread of the past can be is shown in the special exhibition Masterpieces of European Porcelain, on view in Gallery D 6 through May 15. Through the generosity of public and private collectors, more than five hundred outstanding examples of porcelain produced in European factories of the sixteenth to the eighteenth century have been assembled by the Museum. In scope and quality it is the most important exhibition of European porcelain ever held in America; some say it has never been equaled even in Europe.

Many of the finest achievements of European potters not only in the soft-paste porcelain which they first learned to produce but also in the hard-paste, or true, porcelain of the eighteenth century, as well as in the painted and other decoration with which the porcelains were enhanced are represented in tableware, ornamental vases, and especially in small sculpture.

The great variety of subject matter, both realistic and fanciful, familiar and exotic, that found expression in this medium is richly exemplified. In the host of lively figures created by the modelers and painters—birds, animals, gardeners, miners, vendors, dancers of the minuet and the ballet, actors and Italian Comedy characters, dwarfs, masqueraders, ladies and gallants, to mention only a few—one feels “the ardours quivering” within a “captive past.”

ABOVE: Meissen porcelain in the current exhibition. Left: parrot (about 1730-1740; h. 121/2 in.), lent by Mrs. de Becker. Right: magpie (about 1733; h. 21 in.), lent by Irwin Untermyer
Notable pieces in the exhibition of European porcelain are shown in the following pages. **ABOVE:** Boy with a sickle (Vincennes, about 1752; h. 7 7/8 in.), lent by the French Institute. Woman with a basket of fruit (Chelsea, about 1755; h. 8 1/4 in.), lent by Charles E. Dunlap. **BELOW:** Louis XV (Vincennes, about 1755; h. 17 3/4 in.), lent by the Wadsworth Atheneum. The court jester "Baron" Schmiedel (Meissen, about 1739; h. 18 3/4 in.), lent by Mr. and Mrs. Siegfried Kramarsky.
Lady (Meissen, about 1744; h. 11 in.), lent by Irwin Untermyer. Scaramouche (Höchst, about 1750; h. 8 in.), lent by Mr. and Mrs. Edward M. Pflueger. Below: Chinese horseman (Nymphenburg, about 1760; h. 9½ in.), gift of R. Thornton Wilson, in memory of Florence Ellsworth Wilson. Columbine and Pantaloon (Meissen, about 1741; h. 6½ in.), lent by Mr. and Mrs. Jack Linsky
Vases. Left (Chantilly, about 1735; h. 11 in.), lent by R. Thornton Wilson. Right (Sevres, 1759; h. 87/8 in.), lent by Forsyth Wickes. Below: Monsieur Fagon (Sevres, about 1770; h. 8¼ in.), lent by the Philadelphia Museum of Art.