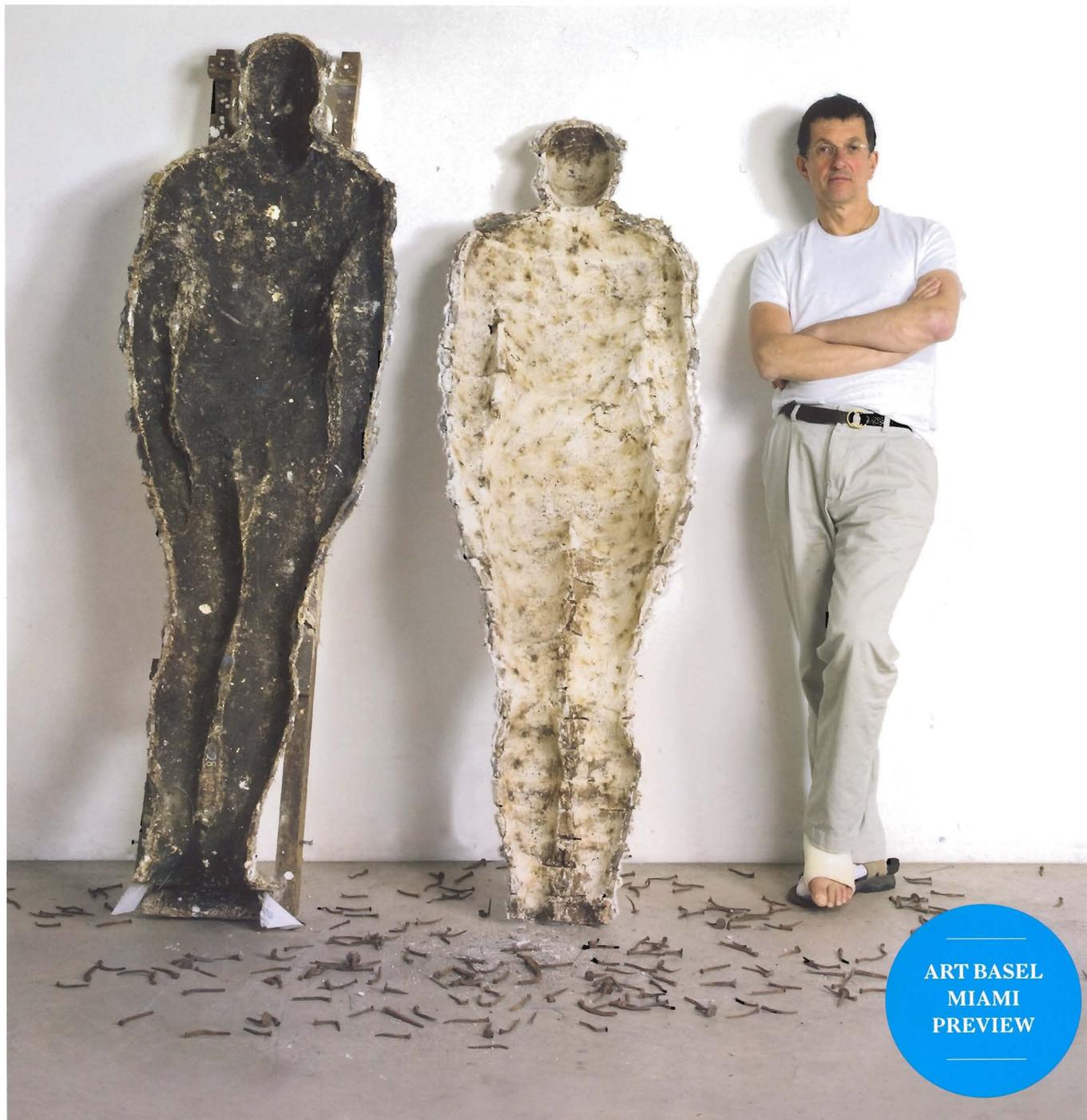


# APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE FOR COLLECTORS

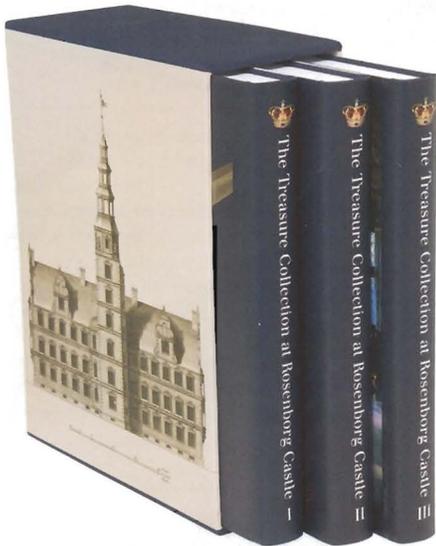
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Canova's Napoleon | Jean-Michel Frank | The Fetta di Polenta



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PREVIEW

ETTORE SOTTASS by Fulvio Ferrari | MODERN BRITISH SCULPTURE by Emma Crichton-Miller





## A right royal treasure trove

Nearly 1,000 possessions of the Danish-Norwegian crown are catalogued in this monumental tome, finds **Philippa Glanville**

**The Treasure Collection at Rosenborg Castle I–III: The Inventories of 1696 and 1718. Royal Heritage and Collecting in Denmark-Norway 1500–1900**

Jørgen Hein  
Museum Tusulanum Press, £235.99  
ISBN 9788763501316

This large book could be described as a treasure hunt. It reconstructs the history of almost 1,000 valued possessions of the Danish-Norwegian crown, assembled in the moated summer palace of Rosenborg, in the Royal Gardens of Copenhagen.

What is Rosenborg? It was never the

principal residence of the court, nor was it widely visited before it opened to the public a quarter of a century ago.

This small palace was originally built for King Christian IV, gradually growing in size over 30 years from his first lodge of 1606 to the completed structure, with its towers and gatehouse (Fig. 2). How did it become the storehouse and showplace for the regalia and other precious possessions of the Danish-Norwegian kings? The immediate trigger was the Swedish invasion in 1658, when an exceptionally cold winter froze Danish waters and the Swedes besieged Copenhagen. Many royal treasures, including historic weapons and jewel-studded horse trappings, were moved into the small but secure summer palace for security, and displayed in the Regalia Chamber.

Although Rosenborg is often categorised by academics as a typical *Kunstammer*, or art collection, this is a misunderstanding now corrected by Jørgen Hein's magisterial study of its evolution. Rosenborg had in fact another role as a site of national memory, a place closer to the Jewel House at the Tower of London. It was, and has been revived as, a *Schatzkammer* (treasure chamber), expressing the lineage and antiquity of the Oldenburg dynasty through their ancestral possessions – notably the silver-gilt Oldenburg Horn, supposedly given to Count Otto in 979 but in fact made in southern Germany c. 1465, shown in the Chamber of Antiquities with a prehistoric golden horn found in Gallehus.

Just as significant was the function of the Regalia Chamber, gathering together inherited royal treasures after the shattering defeats of Christian IV and Frederick III – treasures that are headed by the Royal Crown of Absolutism, made in Copenhagen in 1669–70 in emulation of Louis XIV's crown, which Christian V had seen at St Denis on his Grand Tour of 1663. This is set with Sri Lankan sapphires, the largest of which was given by the Duke of Milan to Christian I in 1474; it was shown on a tilted revolving shelf. Another early treasure is the 1551 Sword of

State, with a silver-gilt scabbard and hilt set with diamonds and enriched with antique motifs. The much earlier blade (described as Passau, c. 1400) was presumably another family possession, freighted with meanings and associations now lost.

More personal relics include the bloodstained clothes of Christian IV. These precious objects were shown only to privileged noble visitors, but fortunately several of them wrote accounts, which are published as appendices in Volume I.

The brick-built palace has remained the realm's vault ever since, with a handsome and secure presentation of the Regalia opened to the public in 1975. In 1996, further royal treasures – once displayed in the Green Cabinet at Rosenborg, but from the early 19th century divided among the Danish museums – were returned to their original setting. All the interiors at Rosenborg are memorable; for Frederick III's first-floor Audience Hall, and to mark the Danish recovery after the devastating defeat of Christian IV in 1648, the King commissioned a striking unicorn throne (actually framed in narwhal tusks) and three silver lions, expressing his sense of King Solomon as the model of justice for a ruler.



**1 Standing cup and cover**

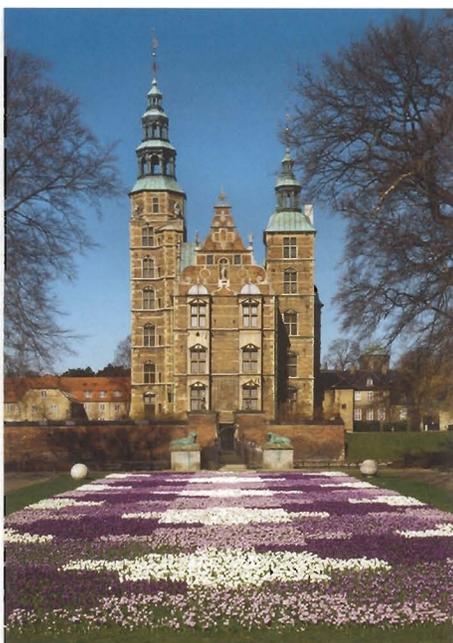
Northern Europe, 1625–50  
(stem, 1610–20)  
Gold, cameos, enamelled ovals and diamonds, ht 43.3cm, diam. 15.1cm  
Photo: Kit Weiss/Rosenborg Castle

**2 Exterior of Rosenborg Castle,**

Copenhagen, seen from the south.  
The palace was originally built for King Christian IV, begun in 1606  
Photo: Kit Weiss/Rosenborg Castle

**3 The Audience Chamber at**

Rosenborg. The silver armchair, gold-braided canopy and one console table are Danish work, while the mirrors and the tall gueridons came from Augsburg. Two English clocks play hymn tunes and dance melodies  
Photo: Kit Weiss/Rosenborg Castle



2



3

(More lions, in copper, ornamented his bathhouse.) These silver lions, almost life-sized, have always been a singular feature of Rosenborg, as this traditional emblem of kingship by that time had become too costly for most European rulers – because of economic pressures and the incessant warfare in northern Europe during the 17th century. Electrotyped in the late 19th century, copies now greet visitors to the Victoria and Albert Museum's Silver Galleries.

The palace evolved into a place for receiving ambassadors, gradually becoming known to the chosen few as a showplace of pomp, then a place of semi-public display, and now an internationally renowned treasure house. This is an extraordinary and atmospheric survival, evoking the values and artistry of a lost world and still retaining many original elements, such as the Glass Room installed for Frederick IV in 1713–14. Rather earlier, and an astonishing survival, is the Indian Tower Room, decorated in 1663–65 by the Frenchman Francois de Bray, where Frederick III held secret audiences. Behind the wall was a 'rising chair', a lift connecting

floors in the tower. The Indian Room is lined with panels of chinoiserie in lacquer, enriched with turquoises and mother of pearl. Another delight is the Room of Mirrors, installed by the Englishman Jonathan Ligott in the 1680s for Christian V.

While a few objects have been given away to royal brides, such as a gold travelling mirror enamelled with flowers, now in the Green Vaults, Dresden – or occasionally melted, the core of the collection remains as it was listed in 1696 and 1718. Rock crystal cups, gold tableware (Fig. 1), the prayerbooks of the royal family, the umbilical cords of royal children in silver boxes, miniatures, a coral rosary carved with death's heads and so many other treasures are here given back their histories, as far as possible, and set within the eight chambers they occupied. The nature of these displays is carefully assessed, the interiors shown as they evolved over time, and there is an excellent account of the way in which the palace and its garden functioned as a setting for court life until the early 18th century. Then it became almost a fossil, only to be brought back to life in this brilliant study.

The three-volume publication is no mere catalogue of regalia, decorative art, goldsmiths' work and robes; the first volume starts with a history of the evolution of Rosenborg as a setting for royal pleasures. Over his many years at Rosenborg, Hein has come to know the site intimately and to understand how these objects were deployed. He has exploited a rich assemblage of sources, such as the many carefully compiled inventories, bills from goldsmiths, letters from foreign agents and diaries of visitors (all transcribed in appendices) to build up his detailed picture. His monumental study, following on from the research of Mogens Bencard and his predecessors at Rosenborg, is an extraordinarily well-documented analysis of early modern royal values and attitudes. It is also beautifully illustrated, not only with details of the objects but with a rich range of portraits, architectural drawings, 19th-century photographs and plans. **A**

*Philippa Glanville is a former keeper of metalwork at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*