

Portrait of Marie Antoinette in Reception Room

Compiled research 2025:

1951 (May 25th) Dr. J. Schoneman of Schoneman Galleries contacts W.R.:

“This is one of the most important paintings by Vigee LeBrun, in a perfect state of preservation. We would be very pleased if we could interest you in looking at this painting.” He states the provenance of the “1939 World’s Fair” and that the painting came from the Royal family and was recently owned by Mr. Cailleux.

1951 (September 21) Schoneman writes W.R.

- “As agreed I send you the painting by Vigee LeBrun, portrait of Marie Antoinette”
- Collection” Duchesse of Tourzel, and descendants of Paul Cailleux, Paris.”

2025- Obtained through the Winterthur Library, a scan of the page from Five Centuries of History Mirrored in Five Centuries of French Art, NY World’s Fair, 1939. Where it is (wrongly) attributed to LeBrun.



1955

River House appraisal lists two works by LeBrun

- One of Madame Elisabeth of Frances sold to Natalie Coe Vitetti
- One of Marie A. sold to Robert Coe for \$7,000

The Madame Elisabeth portrait appears in a photo from Robert Coe's album in the "Rome Palazzo Vitetti." According to a curator, Vincent Cochet, it's likely a copy.

The painting is referenced again in a list titled, "Robert Coe, purchases made from the Coe Foundation"

- Marie A. by Vigee LeBrun for \$7,000. This document notes River House provenance.

1983 (January 5th)

Robert Coe writes to Mr. Babet that he discussed the provenance "some ten years ago" with Mr. Cailleux, the previous owner, who sent it to the World's Fair in New York, 1939 where it was exhibited. Mr. Cailleux bought it from a French Duke who was the descendent of the Duchesse de Tourzel who was the governess of Marie Antoinette's children. He goes on to say:

"My father, W.R. Coe, acquired it after auction from Mrs. E.F. Hutton, who, the day after the auction, decided she didn't want it, she let my father have it for \$1,000—less than she paid for it."

"My father hung it in his house at Yemassee, South Carolina. After his death in 1955, I purchased it from the Coe Foundation for \$8,000 and I have always hung it in my house in Cannes." Over the fireplace in his sitting room.

2025- It's likely that Mrs. E.F. Hutton was Dorothy Dear Hutton, the third wife of E.F. Hutton. She was a close friend of the Coes and is featured in many photographs and referenced in letters. There is a portrait displayed at Cherokee in South Carolina, but it is not this one. It's possible that Robert Coe had mixed up the story if in fact W.R. Coe purchased the painting in 1951 from Schoneman Galleries.

Unfortunately, no photos exist of the painting at Cannes.

1986 Natalie Coe Vitetti donates the painting to Planting Fields Foundation.

2025-It's possible that Natalie acquired the painting from Robert after he died in 1985, no documentation found as of yet.

1986 In correspondence regarding the shipment of the painting, Jean-Michel Babet (who organized the shipment from France) refers to the work as "Vigee LeBrun"

1987 Sherman Conservation report reports that the "LB" signature is fake

1994 Lorraine Gilligan states in a letter that "Robert Coe believed the portrait to be the work of Madame Vigee-LeBrun, who had executed several famous portraits of the sitter. However, later records show that the painting was reattributed to Polish painter, Alexander Kucharski."

Alexander Kucharski is noted as the painter on the shipment record from France to PF, dated January 22, 1987, and a document signed by Mr. Babet dated December 17, 1986.

2025 Curator Vincent Cochet of Château de Fontainebleau states

"I can confirm you that the style of the painting forbids to give it to E. Vigée-Lebrun and I am not sure that the attribution to Kurcharsky is believable. It is inspired by the manner of Vigée-Lebrun, but the strange thing in the signature LB on the left side. It could be the monogram of Louis Auguste Brun, said Brun de Versoix (1758-1815), who made different portraits of the Queen and the royal family during the reign of Louis XVI."