DAVID AARON

Gogotte

Oligocene. 30 million years ago, France

Calcium Carbonate

H: 79 x W: 107 x D:25 cm

A rare Gogotte formation – a millions-of-years old naturally shaped sandstone concretion, consisting of tiny quartz fragments held together by calcium carbonate. The pale sandstone's cloudlike naturally-occurring layers and swirls are formed when superheated water extrudes through crevices into a basin of extremely fine white silicate sand. The silica then cements the sand together to form the Gogotte's fluid lines.

This specimen, like the finest found, comes from Fontainebleau, just south of Paris, France, which is renowned for its extremely fine-grained, porcelain-like sands. Louis XIV, "The Sun King" was so seduced by them that he had numerous specimens excavated to decorate the gardens at Versailles, and a great number of the ornately rounded, convoluted formations can be found surrounding the Grove of the Three Fountains (designed by Le Nôtre in 1677). Destroyed during the time of Louis XVI, the Grove was reconstructed in 2004, with the Gogottes appearing in all of their natural glory. They were known to have inspired the Surrealists, including sculptor Jean Arp, and their abstract forms can be compared to the best of modern sculpture.