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### ABBREVIATIONS

MMA The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
MMAB *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*  
MMJ *Metropolitan Museum Journal*

*Height precedes width and then depth in dimensions cited.*

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# Malachite Networks: The Demidov and Medici Vases-Torchères in The Met

**LUDMILA BUDRINA**

Since the middle of the last century, The Metropolitan Museum of Art has held three extraordinary works executed by the Parisian atelier of Pierre Philippe Thomire, which incorporated Russian malachite. This richly patterned semiprecious stone, known for its brilliant green color, had strong associations with the Russian count, collector, and industrialist Nicolai Nikitich Demidov (1773–1828). The first, a monumental vase with gilt bronze figural handles, has been amply studied, and its history traced from the time of its making in 1819 for Demidov to its acquisition by the Museum in 1944.<sup>1</sup> The others, impressive twelve-light torchères, were given to the Museum in 1964 by Rodman A. de Heeren, and until now had not been studied in depth or attributed to a specific patron (fig. 1a, b). This research note

*fig. 1a, b* Pedestal and plinth of one of a pair of vases-torchères, 1821–23 (see fig. 9 for the vase, now too delicate to photograph). Pierre Philippe Thomire (French, 1751–1843) and Francesco Sibilio (Leopoldo Francesco Sibilio, 1784–1859). Paris and Rome. Malachite veneered on copper, patinated bronze, gilt bronze, overall 8 ft. 6 in. × 16 7/8 × 16 7/8 in. (259.1 × 42.9 × 42.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Rodman A. de Heeren, 1964 (64.163.1a–d and 64.163.2a–d)



reconstructs the pieces' history with Nicolai Demidov and his residence in Florence, Villa San Donato. Archival documents that have never before been published in English reveal Demidov's key role as a supplier of Russian malachite to skilled artisans in Italy and France, and his equally central position in shaping the European taste for this semiprecious stone as a luxury material for monumental furnishings. Importantly, the documents also show that Demidov's son, Anatole, sought to refashion the vases for new audiences in the second half of the nineteenth century, displaying them at San Donato, which functioned as a residence and as a showroom for promoting new uses for malachite.

The pair was executed for Demidov by the workshops of Pierre Philippe Thomire in Paris and Francesco Sibilio in Rome in 1821–23, and arrived in the United States after 1880. The model of the vases derives from the famous classical krater shape of the Medici vase (Greek, 1st century B.C., Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence) that once belonged to the Villa Medici in Rome.<sup>2</sup> However, the malachite pieces are embellished with imposing pedestals with cubic plinths. The large branches shaped as bouquets once served as candelabra.<sup>3</sup> The bronze decoration is extraordinarily rich: a relief scene representing the sacrifice of Iphigenia as well as grape and acanthus leaves, and the ovoid decoration on the lip of each vase is complemented by the sprigs and geometric frames below. On each side of the



pedestal and plinth are black stone reserves, now embellished with bronze relief. The pedestal and the plinths employ malachite, but the types of stone and the technique of the applied mosaic differ from that of the vases, for reasons that will subsequently become clear.

The visibility of malachite as a luxury material increased significantly at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as Demidov desired monumental objects of striking, architectural proportions for use at his Parisian houses, and later at the palazzo in Florence, where he moved in the 1820s, believing the climate would benefit his health. While the history of Catherine the Great's patronage of French luxury objects in the second half of the eighteenth century is well known, less studied are the connections that linked Russian suppliers of rare and precious materials, such as malachite, to elite French workshops that incorporated these materials into exceptional works of decorative art in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Documents related to the vases in Russian Archives show the close links between France and Russia in the early nineteenth century.

Malachite, a stone featuring striations of intense green, appeared in European decorative arts at the onset of the nineteenth century. One of the main suppliers of this material to emerge in France was Demidov, a wealthy Russian aristocrat at the time and an early mining industrialist. In the first years of the century he lived in Paris, seeking to acquire the highest-quality goods on the Parisian market. Demidov not only purchased finished pieces, but also played an active role in commissioning objects for which he supplied the raw materials. This distinguished him from other connoisseurs of the period. He sought out the finest artists. Such was the case for his relationship with Thomire (1751–1843), among the most important *bronziers* in Paris with an exceptional list of illustrious clients, including Napoleon. The main part of Demidov's French gilt bronze collection was developed in this workshop. Unusually, the count was actively involved in the entire evolution of his orders, discussing the composition, details, and material throughout ongoing correspondence with Thomire.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it was Demidov who introduced the use of malachite into their collaboration. The unconventional construction of the pair of torchères at The Met makes it possible to reconstruct the early history of the pieces, which we know were originally part of a set of four pieces that were once housed at the Villa San Donato in Florence, thus aligning their provenance with the monumental vase on view in the galleries.

Documents in the Russian Archives confirm that the two vases at The Met were originally part of four Medici vases with twelve lights owned by Nicolai Demidov in the late 1820s. The origins of the four vases-torchères remained obscured until the discovery of nineteen letters in the State Archive of the Sverdlovsk Region (Ekaterinburg, Russia). The letters were written by Louis-Auguste-César Carbonelle, Thomire's son-in-law who took over the workshop upon Thomire's retirement in 1823 and was responsible for correspondence with Demidov.<sup>5</sup> The documents are dated 1822 to 1826, corresponding to the beginning of Demidov's Tuscan stay. In addition to Thomire and Carbonelle, the names of Francesco Sibilio, an antiquities dealer and *marbrier* based in Rome, and Solomon Levy, the Milanese-Parisian art dealer, also appear. We know that from about 1815, Thomire's workshop produced several malachite pieces destined for the market. In 1823, Carbonelle, corresponding on behalf of Thomire, asked Demidov to sell him some malachite for an ensemble comprising a clock and a pair of candelabra, demonstrating that Demidov had instigated the incorporation of malachite as a luxury material.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, in 1825, a suite of pieces (a pair of candelabra, mantel thermometer, and mantel clock) in gilt bronze with Russian stone was acquired for the English king George IV.<sup>7</sup> The correspondence makes clear that from the early 1820s after contact with Sibilio, the Italian marble specialist and merchant, Demidov changed the location of production.<sup>8</sup> The order now stated that after this period, all commissions undertaken by Thomire for Demidov would be finished in malachite in Rome, where Sibilio's marble workshop was based, and which Demidov deemed the highest quality.<sup>9</sup>

Cross-border collaboration took place between Demidov's suppliers uniting Russian copper and malachite mines with French and Italian producers. The commissions were complex, with Demidov functioning as both supplier and intermediary. An example of the complicated production process is illustrated by a sumptuous surtout made in 1822–24.<sup>10</sup> Thomire was responsible for designing the surtout, a decorative ensemble intended for a lavish table display, in Paris, with the final composition consisting of two circular plateaus, or platters, and one large plateau divided into five parts, all of which combined to reach a length of five meters. These large platters, along with a centerpiece that incorporated a tazza and base with bronze figures of four dancing women, two Medici vases, two tripods, and two cups on balusters, were all fashioned from malachite. Rather than producing the ensemble in



Paris, the surtout was first shipped to Sibilio in Rome, where the malachite components were incorporated, then shipped back to Paris so that Thomire's workshop could complete the gilt-bronze decoration. From Paris, the work was sent to Demidov in Florence, suggesting that the shipping costs must have added considerable sums to the already lavish price of the surtout.

While the example of The Met's Medici torchères were not as complex as the surtout, their production nonetheless depended upon considerable correspondence between Demidov and his respondents in Paris and Rome. The archival information allows for a detailed reconstruction to be made of the four malachite vases-torchères, illustrating the different stages of creation. In early 1821, Thomire et Cie signed an agreement for the execution of

A pair of medici vases, measuring 9 *pouces* in diameter at the bottom of their mounts and 18 at their openings, the said vases will be a limited size in order to be plated in malachite. The ornaments in gilt bronze, namely the feet decorated with a row of laurel leaves, in the midst of which will be a second row forming astragals, the mounts of the feet formed by a quarter-round egg and dart decoration, the bottom decorated with light ornaments, with palmettes. The body of the vessels will incorporate bas-reliefs, representing on the one hand the Sacrifice of Iphigenia and on the other the Bacchanals, above which is a grape vine, crowned by egg-and-darts, and a row of pearls.<sup>11</sup>

This description of the vases corresponds to the vases-torchères in The Met. It should be noted that the letter of agreement lists the dimensions of the pieces as 259.5 centimeters in height and 48 centimeters at the widest diameter. The variation in their actual dimensions (64.8 centimeters in height and 48.3 centimeters in diameter) is probably a result of imprecise measurements in the translation of *pouces* to meters, or a variation in scale in the process of production.

Given the widespread popularity of themes from the ancient world in the first half of the nineteenth century, the choice of the design for the bas-relief is not surprising. The two scenes were taken from designs on famous ancient monuments. The sacrifice of Iphigenia that appeared on the Medici vase was widely reproduced in the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, such as on the frontispiece of Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Vasi, candelabri, cippi, sarcofagi* (fig. 2). The bacchanalian scene came from the well-known Borghese vase; its relief was also reproduced by Piranesi (fig. 3). The easily recognized ancient motifs

belied the complexities of marketing malachite.

For Demidov was not only commissioning malachite objects for his own use, but also seeking to promote the material. Thus, dealers such as Levy played a key role in advancing his efforts to widen the market for malachite and the sale of certain pieces in Paris as well as London.<sup>12</sup> Levy's shop of curiosities and jewels, "Au bassin d'or," was located at 18, rue Vivienne in Paris.<sup>13</sup>

Documentation shows that there was an initial pair of vases produced primarily in Thomire's Paris workshop in early 1821, followed by the commission for a second pair, which involved the more complex model of production divided between Paris and Rome. Thomire's workshop delivered a first pair of the torchères to the shop at rue Vivienne shortly before August 21, 1821.<sup>14</sup> It was prominently displayed in Levy's shop. About October 17, 1822, they were viewed by the British ambassador, Sir Charles Stuart.<sup>15</sup> In February 1823, an individual named "Aldegonde" cited in a letter (assumed to be comte Charles Camille de Sainte-Aldegonde, whose daughter coincidentally brought about the end of Anatole Demidov's marriage to Princess Mathilde Bonaparte) is mentioned as searching for both of the vases, which ultimately remained unsold.<sup>16</sup> While the first pair was available for sale in Levy's shop, Demidov proceeded to order a new pair of vases based on the same model. In a letter of October 8, 1822, Carbonelle, Thomire's son-in-law and collaborator, wrote that he would send the design of the vases that were in Levy's shop and that the price of the bas-reliefs for those vases was 2,000 francs.<sup>17</sup> On October 23, Carbonelle sent Demidov the design of the Medici vases from Levy's shop and explained that only one design was produced because the difference between the two vases was only in the bas-reliefs (and the second vase featured the relief of the bacchanale).<sup>18</sup> In his next letter, from November, Carbonelle demanded an additional 500 francs for the bronze for the Medici vases.<sup>19</sup>

A principal difference between the first and second pair of vases was the creation of a wood model, made to scale, necessitated by Demidov's move to Florence and the construction of the Villa San Donato. In the letter dated October 23, Carbonelle promised to provide a model in wood to be reproduced exactly in malachite.<sup>20</sup> This was necessary because of the addition of Sibilio's workshop in Rome to the production process, which required a scaled model to add the malachite pieces to the vases. The correspondence indicates that Demidov was intending the vases for display in San Donato. Though described as a villa, San Donato was palatial in scale, having been constructed in the late 1820s to



fig. 2 Giovanni Battista Piranesi (Italian, 1720–1778). *Medici Vase*, 1778. Published in Piranesi 1778, vol. 2, pl. 57. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, transferred from the Library (41.71.1.13[57])

fig. 3 Giovanni Battista Piranesi. *Borghese Vase*, 1778. Published in Piranesi 1778, vol. 2, pl. 40. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, transferred from the Library (41.71.1.13[40])

1830s on land Demidov had purchased from the monks of the San Donato monastery near Florence. After his death in 1828, the property and collections were inherited by his son, Anatole, who had married and would later divorce Princess Mathilde Bonaparte. As will become clear, Anatole was responsible for the subsequent display of the malachite objects at San Donato, including the arrangement of two malachite rooms. One of them paired examples from the Saint Petersburg workshops with French Romantic paintings, and the other, known as the Sala degli Arazzi, held his father's malachite collection, including the Medici torchères.

By 1823, all of Demidov's malachite orders were produced in Sibilio's workshop. What is interesting to note here in Demidov's commission for the second pair of vases is the subject matter. Originally, each pair of vases featured an example of Iphigenia and the Bacchanals. After the sale of 1880, the four vases, commissioned at different times, were rearranged and sold off as pairs that featured the same motifs, in contrast to the original commission by Demidov.

On September 26, 1822, the Paris workshop received Demidov's order for the reproduction of the gilt bronze decorations for the two new vases.<sup>21</sup> It is probable that at this moment, the drawing of the vase with the exact outline was made (fig. 4). The Demidov papers list the measurements of the vases as 66 centimeters in height and 48 centimeters in diameter. The final size of the pieces was therefore identical to that of the vases in The Met. On March 12, 1823, the bronzes for the vases and their pedestals were sent to Rome. They appeared in the list of properties of Nicolai Demidov in Italy, dated September 23, 1823, as "two large Medici vases in malachite, similar to the vases in Levi shop" with a mention of payment to Thomire for the bronze ornament (2,500 francs) and for malachite mosaic (250 piastre).<sup>22</sup>

Although the pair at the Levy shop remained unsold, they were eventually sent to Demidov in Florence, traveling first to Marseilles via coach and onward to Livorno, where they were placed on a ship headed to Rome and Sibilio's workshop. Recorded as numbers 747 and 748 in the inventory of goods

shipped to Demidov—the “vases Medici malachite & bronze doré”—the pieces were listed alongside others restored by Sibilio, dated October 15, 1825: “Two small bases [pieducci] of malachite Medici vases restored as lights.”<sup>23</sup> A letter of July 12, 1825, from Sibilio to Demidov mentions work on this pair of vases and the pedestals.<sup>24</sup>

While the previous documents provide a clear itinerary for the vases from Paris to Rome and eventually Florence, less clear is the documentation regarding the completion of four pedestals with colored stone mosaic reliefs. However, we can assume they were included in the completion of Demidov’s spectacular collection of gilt bronze malachite and colored stone mosaic reliefs between 1821 and 1828. The bronze torchères were probably finished at the same time but we cannot be certain whether they were ordered by Anatole Demidov, the count’s son, at the time of his move to the Villa San Donato in the 1840s.

While it is evident that Nicolai Demidov was behind the commissioning and arrangement of the Medici torchères, his son played an equally important role in preserving his father’s legacy and discovering new markets for malachite. Four Medici vases with gilt bronze were mentioned in two documents listing the Demidov property in Italy. In the first, Nicolai Demidov’s will, they appear “from 639 to 642, Four vases Medici, in malachite, with gilt bronze ornament.”<sup>25</sup> The document is not dated, but it was certainly drawn up between 1824 and 1828, based on the list of dated works and the death of Demidov. Other papers, titled “Register of Valuables and Furniture Belonging to S.E. Mr. Demidov,” are signed and dated October 1, 1826. Items 639–642 are listed as “Four Medici vases, in

malachite with gilt bronze ornament,” from the “Salone verde.”<sup>26</sup> This most probably refers to the Palazzo Serristori, Demidov’s Florentine residence before the Villa San Donato. By contrast, the primary focus of the decor of one of the malachite rooms at San Donato was the ensemble formed in the 1820s by Demidov, which encompassed several pieces of architectural decor in addition to the vases. All the pieces of this suite were created in malachite and gilt bronze with the addition of colored stone mosaic reliefs, all of which was based on Demidov’s direct commission. Demidov’s preferences first appeared in the chimney-piece with ancient Florentine mosaic panels in Thomire’s Paris workshop. The ensemble was completed by the chimney garniture—an impressive clock with the figure of the Genius of the Arts and a pair of candelabra. The stone reliefs for the pieces were made by a Parisian mosaic artist, trained in Francesco Belloni’s workshop.<sup>27</sup> It seems that the four vases-torchères were created to complete the decoration in malachite and mosaic.

Importantly, Anatole Demidov sought to create continuity between the earlier malachite works commissioned by his father, displayed in one room, and the pieces made at the Saint Petersburg workshop, displayed in the separate, French salon-style malachite room that he added during his residence at San Donato. When visiting in 1858, the comte de Vandoni described the malachite in the first room, the “Galleria degli Arazzi” at San Donato, on display with Gobelins tapestries: “The room is called the Tapestry Gallery, because there are six beautiful tapestries from the old Gobelins manufactory, which decorate the walls. It appears to me however that the Malachite Gallery would be a more appropriate name, because this rare stone resides in this room like a master among its guests.”<sup>28</sup> In the second room, Anatole Demidov displayed malachite objects alongside paintings by French Romantics such as Eugène Delacroix and other artists, with whom Anatole was close friends. The use of malachite appears to be the connecting link between the two different “period rooms”: one belonging to the world of his father, who passed away in 1828, and the new vision that Anatole sought to support and champion as a collector and enthusiast of Romantic art.<sup>29</sup>

A crucial piece of evidence in tracing the provenance of the torchères is provided by a photograph taken in 1880 from the San Donato sale that took place in Florence, and displays of the vases in the villa. Although the condition of the vases prevents them from being assembled, a contemporary negative from the



*fig. 4* Drawing for a Medici vase, 1822. Paper, 26 × 18½ in. (66 × 48 cm). State Archive of the Sverdlovsk Region (GASO), Ekaterinburg



fig. 5 Vase-torchère with bacchanalia scene. Photograph negative, ca. 1880. Folder F.B.205.13, Collection of Fabio Bisogni, The Historical Archive, Berenson Library, I Tatti – The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Florence



historic image, first published in 1996, is now in the archives of I Tatti – The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies<sup>30</sup> (fig. 5). It shows the Medici vase with its twelve-part candelabrum bouquet, and the floral mosaic in the medallions that were described as “ancienne . . . florentine” in the French sale catalogue. The pieces from The Met have the bronze reliefs in that same place, but it is still possible to detect traces of the floral composition. It should be noted that the relief on the Demidov vase seen in the

photograph depicts a bacchanalian scene, after the relief of the Borghese vase. Furthermore, in the 1860s, the Demidov vases-torchères were captured in situ in a watercolor by Emanuel Shtekler (fig. 6). In this view of the Sala degli Arazzi in the Villa San Donato, we can see two of the malachite pieces, identical to the photograph. They are composed of the pedestal, plinth, and vase, decorated with gilt bronze details and reliefs. According to the description published in 1858, four identical vases-torchères were placed in this room:

Four large malachite vases, found symmetrically placed along the length of the wall, have bas-reliefs of pietra dura, each of which have a height of 9 *piedi*.<sup>31</sup> Each of these support a grand candelabrum.<sup>32</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Sala degli Arazzi was one of two “malachite rooms” in the Villa San Donato. The interior is completed by malachite tables, two important columns (now in the Wallace Collection, London), and sections of a sumptuous surtout (in various private collections).<sup>33</sup>

The final part of the story of the Medici torchères is their arrival in the United States. Art writer and collector James Jackson Jarves served as vice consul of the United States to Florence between 1880 and 1882, and donated a considerable collection of glass to The Met in 1881. From the Demidov sale in 1880, he acquired pieces for an American client, including paintings by Gabriel Metsu, Nicolaes Maes, Caspar Netscher, and François Hubert Drouais.<sup>34</sup> He also purchased four important Medici vases, although it is evident that by 1880, the year of the sale at San Donato, their provenance and connection to Nicolai Demidov had already been obscured, with the bronzes mistakenly attributed to Jean-Jacques Feuchère.<sup>35</sup> Listed in the sale, the vases were described as:

Four large and very beautiful Medici vases, in malachite, decorated with bas-reliefs, a crown of vines and handles in gilt bronze, resting on square socles offering on each face a hexagonal medallion with floral bouquets in old florentine mosaic relief. They are elevated on rectangular bases in malachite decorated in the same manner.

The bronzes were executed by Feuchère.

Twelve-light bouquets will be sold with each of these vases, which can be added at will.

The lot can be divided.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the misattributions, the description is very close to that of the torchères in The Met. It is also useful





fig. 6 Emanuel Shtekler (1819–1893). View of the Sala degli Arazzi in the Villa San Donato, Florence. Early 1860s. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (inv. N. ERR-719)

to note the size of the piece in the description: “Haut. total, 2 m. 05 cent.; Haut des bases, 1 m. 05 cent.” The pieces in The Met measure 108 centimeters for the height of the pedestal, and about 208 centimeters in total for the vase (64.8 cm), plinth (35.6 cm), and pedestal together.<sup>37</sup>

Twelve years after the San Donato sale, the vases appeared again in the sale of the collection of Robert H. Coleman, which took place in New York in November 1892.<sup>38</sup> Coleman was an iron processing and railroad industrialist as well as the owner of extensive farmland in Pennsylvania. He lost his fortune due to the financial Panic of 1893, and the construction of his large mansion in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, was never finished. The sale of his collection was organized in the hope of staving off the businessman’s complete financial ruin. Lot 137 of the sale lists a detailed description:

Pair of large and beautiful Medici vases, in malachite, ornamented with bas-reliefs in gilt bronze of vine branches, figures, etc., resting on square pedestals displaying on each face a medallion of flowers in antique

Florentine Mosaic; with square bases of malachite, ornamented in the same manner; the bronzes by Fenchère [sic], surmounted by candelabra of 12 lights each, in gilt bronze, decorated with flowers and fruit. No. 311 in San Donato Catalogue.<sup>39</sup>

Nearly an exact translation of the earlier description found in the San Donato sale, the preface to the sale catalogue explicitly made the connection between San Donato and the Pennsylvania industrialist: “This collection is chiefly composed of objects purchased at the sale of the collection of the late Prince Demidoff at the Palace of San Donato, by Mr. James Jackson Jarvis, the famous connoisseur and expert, at that time the representative of the United States at Florence. . . . This special collection was formed by Mr. Jarvis for Mr. Robt. H. Coleman, of Lebanon, Pa.”<sup>40</sup>

While we can thus trace the arrival of the vases to the work of Jarves, the question remains of how and exactly when the four vases were separated, and re-paired. A catalogue from a 1955 sale of furniture from a private collection at Parke-Bernet Galleries in



fig. 7 Page from catalogue of Parke-Bernet 1955, lot 457. Two Medici vases in The Met before the replacement of the *pietra dura* by bronze reliefs

fig. 8 Comparison of Parke-Bernet 1955, lot 457, and pieces in The Met

New York listed a pair of “Massive Empire Malachite and Bronze Doré Campana Urns and Pedestals, Fitted with Candelabra.”<sup>41</sup> The detailed description of the items was accompanied by a black-and-white photograph (fig. 7). This image offers a view of the *pietra dura* floral reliefs in the medallions on the pedestals and the bases, which were part of the original composition, changed to black marble reserves at a later date. The similarity of these vases with those from The Met is indicated by the bronze reliefs on the vases, and the reproduced composition of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. An additional piece of evidence is suggested by careful visual analysis of the malachite mosaic. With malachite, the irregular pattern of the stone and the type of the mosaic are a unique design that cannot be reproduced, especially at a large size, and thus function as the “fingerprint” of the piece. Comparison of the two pedestals in the 1955 photograph with images of The Met’s pieces leaves no doubt that they are one and the same item (fig. 8).

It is probable that Rodman A. de Heeren acquired two malachite vases from the 1955 auction. In 1964 the pieces were given to The Met and became part of the

permanent collection in 1983 after the death of De Heeren.<sup>42</sup> Although the vases were exhibited in 1990 in The Met’s exhibition “From Poussin to Matisse: The Russian Taste for French Painting,” they were not formally listed in the catalogue, but were displayed “in the entrance gallery to the loan exhibition.”<sup>43</sup> The same year, at the request of De Heeren’s widow, Aimee, the vases were loaned to her New York home for some years before returning to the Museum.

If The Met’s vases can be traced to the Parke-Bernet sale, then what became of the other pair? Related documents in The Met’s Archives provide some clues. The correspondence between Nicolai Demidov and Louis Carbonelle indicates that the pair was decorated with a relief of Iphigenia’s sacrifice, and with the bacchanalia from the Borghese vase. The photograph negative taken about 1880 shows this variation of the vase (fig. 5). In an undated postcard probably from the 1980s, the upper portions (the vase and socle) of part of the second pair are visible (fig. 9). The color postcard shows the *pietra dura* reliefs and identifies the clear-green color of the leaves, similar to those used in the pair of console tables





fig. 9 Postcard showing one of two Medici vases with *pietra dura* decorated pedestals, 1980s. Smithsonian Institution Archives



from the Demidov collection and now in a private collection, and also to the Genius of the Arts clock from San Donato now in the Château de Malmaison.<sup>44</sup> The text on the back of the postcard says that the vase comes from the Alfred Duane Pell collection. Notes on the copy in The Met's Archives indicate that the vase formed part of a pair that was exhibited in the 1984–85 exhibition “People and Places: Selections from the Collection” at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC. The *Annual Report for the Year Ended June 30, 1958*, of the United States National Museum, records the presence of the vases in the collection. Specifically, the report mentions the repair of “Two malachite vases and pedestals ornamented with gilt bronze, Italian, believed to have belonged to Prince Demidoff and Princess Mathilde Bonaparte.”<sup>45</sup> The Italian attribution, while

erroneous, nonetheless points to the links that persisted between the Demidov family and San Donato, inadvertently underscoring the complex international networks that connected the Russian malachite mines with the luxury workshops in Paris and Rome in the nineteenth century. Despite the large size of the vases, their present location, once at the Renwick Gallery, is still unknown. The newly found documentation linking the vases to Demidov's commissions for San Donato may well lead to the rediscovery of the lost works and complete the history of the four vases-torchères made for an exceptional patron with a distinct taste.

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## NOTES

- 1 MMA 44.152a, b; Remington 1945. See Zek 2008, 658.
- 2 Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, inv. 307.
- 3 The candelabra are located in The Met. Scholars had previously believed that they were lost.
- 4 See Budrina 2018a, 117–19.
- 5 Letters of Carbonelle to Demidov, 1822–25, box 1, folder 140, 316–51, Demidov family collection (102), State Archive of the Sverdlovsk Region (GASO).
- 6 Carbonelle to Demidov, May 29, 1823, box 1, folder 140, 316v, Demidov family collection (102), GASO.
- 7 The pieces are now in the Royal Collection Trust, United Kingdom: inv. RCIN 2731, inv. RCIN 2763, inv. RCIN 2762; Guitaut and Patterson 2018, 372.
- 8 Budrina 2019.
- 9 Demidov to Carbonelle, June 1827, box 2, folder 944, 48, Demidov family collection (1267), Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RGADA).
- 10 Budrina 2018b.
- 11 “Une paire vases forme medici, portant 22 pouces de haut sur 9 pouces de diametre en bas de leurs serré et 18 à leurs couronnements, les dits vases seront en taille restreint pour être plaqué en malachite. Les ornements en bronze doré savoir les pieds ornés de rang [*sic*] en laurier, en milieu des dites un second formant astragales, les couronnements des pieds formé par un quart de rond à oves avec feuilles rayés de coeur, les culots décoré d’ornement léger, avec palmettes. Les corps recevront des bas-reliefs, représentant l’un—le Sacrifice d’Iphigénie, et l’autre des Bacchanales, au dessus des quels régnent un pampre de vigne—couronne d’un quart de rond à oves, avec un rang des perles.” Agreement by Thomire et Cie with Nicolai Demidov, February 15, 1821, box 16, folder 149, 5, Demidov family collection (1267), RGADA.
- 12 Carbonelle to Demidov, May 3, 1816, box 2, folder 201, 2, Demidov family collection (1267), RGADA.
- 13 Business card of Levy’s shop, dated September 1825, box 2, folder 260, 97, Demidov family collection (1267), RGADA.
- 14 Levy to Demidov, August 21, 1821, box 2, folder 260, 12, Demidov family collection (1267), RGADA.
- 15 Levy to Demidov, October 17, 1822, box 2, folder 260, 28, Demidov family collection (1267), RGADA.
- 16 Levy to Demidov, February 7, 1823, box 2, folder 260, 34, Demidov family collection (1267), RGADA.
- 17 Carbonelle to Demidov, October 8, 1822, box 1, folder 140, 318, Demidov family collection (102), GASO.
- 18 Carbonelle to Demidov, October 23, 1822, box 1, folder 140, 319, Demidov family collection (102), GASO.
- 19 Carbonelle to Demidov, November 4, 1822, box 1, folder 140, 344, Demidov family collection (102), GASO.
- 20 See note 18 above.
- 21 Carbonelle to Demidov, September 26, 1822, box 1, folder 140, 350, Demidov family collection (102), GASO.
- 22 “Registre des objets appartenant à S.E. Mr. N.N. Demidov qui se trouvent actuellement en Italie,” September 23, 1823, box 1, folder 153, 11v, Demidov family collection (102), GASO.
- 23 “Due pieducci de Medici vasi di malaghita restaurato al lustre.” Sibilio, List of restored pieces, October 15, 1825, box 1, folder 140, 122, Demidov family collection (102), GASO. See also “Note de contenu des caisses expédiées à Marseilles pour S.E. M. De Demidoff,” ca. 1825, box 1, folder 140, 133, Demidov family collection (102), GASO.
- 24 Sibilio to Demidov, July 12, 1825, box 2, folder 400, 2, Demidov family collection (1267), RGADA.
- 25 Demidov, Testament [1824–28], box 1, folder 834, 67v, Durnovo family collection (934), Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA).
- 26 “Quatre vases forme medici en malachite ornés de bronze doré”; “Registre des objets précieux et meubles appartenant à S.E. Mr. Demidov,” October 1, 1826, box 1, folder 173, 10v, Demidov family collection (102), GASO.
- 27 Budrina 2013, 12–15.
- 28 “Sala detta la Galleria degli Arazzi, perchè ve n’ha sei bellissimi dell’antica fabbrica dei Gobelins, che ne adornano le pareti. Sembrami però che il nome di Galleria di Malachita sarrebbe più appropriato, imperrochè si rara pietra sta in questa sala come il padrone di case fra i suoi ospiti.” [Vandoni] 1858, 11.
- 29 The present author is writing about the two “malachite rooms” of the Villa San Donato for a forthcoming article, “‘Malachite Rooms’ of Villa San Donato,” to be published in a 2022 issue of *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University; Arts*. The author is also writing a book on the attribution and history of about one hundred malachite pieces from the early Demidov collection.
- 30 Tonini 1996, 97.
- 31 About 290 centimeters, probably referring to the total size, including the candelabrum bouquet.
- 32 “Quivi si trovano simetricamente disposti lungo le pareti quattro grandi vase della stessa malachite con bassirilievi di pitre dure, dell’altezza ciascuno di 9 piedi. I quali sostengono rispettivamente un gran candelabro.” [Vandoni] 1858, 11.
- 33 See Budrina 2018b and Budrina 2020, 22–23.
- 34 *Art Amateur* 1880, 99.
- 35 Annotated catalogue of San Donato sale 1880, 78–79, lot 311, owned by the Wallace Collection, London.
- 36 “Quatre grands et très beaux vases Médicis en malachite, ornés de bas-reliefs, de couronnes de pampres et d’anses en bronze doré, reposant sur des socles carrés offrant sur chaque face un médaillon hexagone à bouquet de fleurs en ancienne mosaïque florentine en relief. Ils sont élevés sur des bases carrées en malachite ornées de même manière. Les bronzes ont été exécutés par Feuchère. Avec ces vases seront vendus des bouquets de douze lumières chacun, en bronze doré, qui s’y adaptent à volonté. Ce lot pourra être divisé.” San Donato sale 1880, 78–79, lot 311.
- 37 Metropolitan Museum 2020.
- 38 Coleman sale 1892.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 19, lot 137.
- 40 *Ibid.*, [1].
- 41 Parke-Bernet 1955, 94, lot 457. I am grateful to Iris Moon and colleagues in the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts at The Met, who shared archival documents with me.
- 42 James Parker, interdepartmental memorandum to Olga Raggio, November 15, 1990, MMA Archives.
- 43 *Ibid.* See also Metropolitan Museum 1990.
- 44 Musée National des Châteaux de Malmaison et de Bois, Rueil-Malmaison, inv. MM40-4708382.
- 45 United States National Museum 1958, 48.

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GASO	State Archive of Sverdlovsk Region, Ekaterinburg
RGADA	Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts, Moscow
RGIA	Russian State Historical Archive, Saint-Petersburg

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