

A white Carrara marble tazza, comprised of two parts: the upper section a broad cuppa with a beaded rim and two mascarons on either side, the lower section a flaring twist-fluted base, the shaft with a beaded border beneath the disc-shaped node above a laurel leaf frieze.

Attributed to Karl-Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841), circa 1810.

H 41.5 cm (16 1/3 in)

D 69 cm (27 1/8 in).

**Provenance:** English aristocratic collection

**Literature:** Cf. a design for a stembowl by Karl Friedrich Schinkel with a similarly broad cuppa (so-called Beuth-Dish) in *Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Geschichte und Poesie*, Berlin-Munich, 2012, cat. 173, illus. 3.

**Conditions:** Patinated and partially filled older crack (possibly caused during production) to the upper edge, circa 11 cm.

The present tazza represents an extremely fine example of Prussian Neoclassical sculpture. Its attribution to Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841) is supported by its studied design and exceptional technical virtuosity, which are consistent with a small group of securely-attributed works of royal provenance. Architect and painter, Schinkel worked from 1810 in the service of Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, supervising the construction and redecoration of not only royal residences, but also public buildings and even the city plan of Berlin. One of the most important figures of German Neoclassicism, Schinkel designed buildings and artworks inspired by the antique but infused with the grace of German Romanticism.

In the early stages of his artistic career, Schinkel undertook a Grand Tour of Italy (1803–05). During this journey he made several sketches of views and antiquities, through which he acquired his thorough familiarity with classical sources. Relevant for the piece presented here is a sheet in the collections of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin illustrating marble urns and tazzas in the Museo Pio Clementino in Rome and in the Museo Borbonico in Naples (inv. no. SM 10.70). Schinkel's time in Italy, and the many drawings he made there, had a considerable influence on his vase designs, seen in the *Vorbilder für Fabrikanten und Handwerker*, a sample book of designs for craftsmen published in Berlin between 1821 and 1837.



Our vase presents important similarities with a group of similar works designed by Schinkel and created in Carrara under the direction of Christian Daniel Rauch (1777–1857). The first of these was discovered around 15 years ago. Rauch's account book mentions a certain Francesco Menghi who was charged with carving the piece on 15th March 1824 after a design by Karl Friedrich Schinkel. The piece consists of two

parts, the broad bowl with its beaded rim and the twisted grapevine handles as well as the fluted base (fig.1). The basin was presented at the Academy exhibition in 1826, where Prince Wilhelm purchased it and had it carried to the crown prince in December 1826. It remained in the possession of his descendants until the auction of the Welf estate in 2005.

Another very similar basin was identified in the inventory of the New Pavilion in the Castle of Charlottenburg (fig.2). It was produced a year earlier (1825) for King Friedrich Wilhelm III. Both those pieces present stylistic elements identical with the present tazza, such as the use of white Carrara marble of exceptional quality, the extraordinary craftsmanship with the marble reaching only 3mm in thickness in some parts, and – above all – the beaded broad rim, a very original and technically demanding detail, which probably also derives from classical sources.



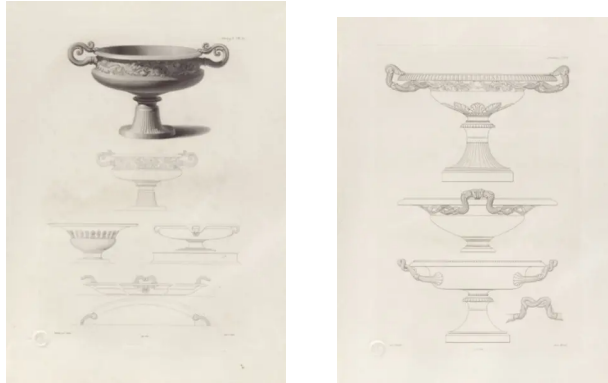
Fig.1 Christian Daniel Rauch after a design by Schinkel, tazza in white Carrara marble, c. 1826, Welf Estate auction 2005, present location unknown.



Fig.2 Christian Daniel Rauch after a design by Schinkel, tazza in white Carrara marble, c. 1825, Summer Pavilion, Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin.

A third smaller basin was made for Rauch's daughter, Agnes von Rauch. All these vases are mentioned in Rauch's second account book and all are identified. It is assumed that there was also a first account book, which has been lost, so that we have no information about possible further royal orders based on Schinkel's designs before 1825.

The tazza presented here is also very close to other designs by Schinkel. One page of his aforementioned sample book features a drawing of a vase with the same rim, a fluted base and a frieze of leaves encircling the base of the bowl (fig.3). Another page still features a vase with a very similar profile to the present tazza (fig.4).



Figs.3-4 Vase designs by by Karl-Friedrich Schinkel, two plates from *Vorbilder für Fabrikanten und Handwerker* (Berlin, 1821-37).

This work also references famous antique pieces without, however, being a direct copy – attesting to Schinkel's erudition and originality. The two masks in the lower section of the vase are the direct historical quotations in the design. They are a reference to the calyx krater-form vessel known as the Borghese vase in the Louvre museum, which features similar heads to similarly placed.



As far as the dating is concerned, it has been convincingly suggested Schinkel's early period, around 1810. It is not to be excluded that it was sent as part of the Italian delivery (from Carrara to Charlottenburg) containing the sarcophagus of Queen Luise. The history of the sarcophagus' delivery was an adventurous one, as the ship in which Rauch personally transported the finished object was captured. An English boat was able to regain the cargo and it finally arrived, damaged by salt water, in Charlottenburg in the spring of 1815. Unfortunately, it cannot be proven indefinitely that the basin was included in this particular order.

All that is known certain is that it comes from an English aristocratic collection, and its beauty and impressive level of craftsmanship suggest an illustrious provenance, perhaps a gift from a member of the Prussian royal family. It has been suggested that it could have been presented to Queen Charlotte (née Duchess Sophie Charlotte von Mecklenburg, Queen of England 1761-1818), a cousin of Queen Luise, who lived for many years at Kew Palace, where she established a beautiful garden, featuring many elegant plant pots.