

**A Russian ormolu and *alabastro tartarugato* Tripod Gueridon with sheep's heads, Saint Petersburg, ca. 1785, made by the Russian Imperial Workshop named the "Bronzespedition", by Italian craftsmen and most probably designed by Vincenzo Brenna (Florence 1745 – 1820 Saint Petersburg)**

(Forthcoming study by Dr.Hans Ottomeyer, available on application)

Height: 28,34 inc. (72 cm)

Diam.: 24,40 inc. (62 cm)

Missing the wheels originally placed beneath the monopodiae.

## Literature:

- Katharina die Große, Kassel, Staatliche Museen, and exhib. catalogue, 1997, edits. H. Ottomeyer e. a., Pp. 346, Bronzekunst, cat. No. 619 console table with malachite top, cat. No. 619, 611 bronze vase and interior design
- Vergoldete Bronzen – Meisterwerke aus Zarenschloss Peterhof, exhib. catalogue, Iphofen 1998
- Ottomeyer, H.; Pröschel, P., Vergoldete Bronzen – Bronzearbeiten des Spätbarock und Klassizismus, München 1986, chap. 4, Style étrusque
- De Reyniès, Nicole, Le Ameublement Domestique, vol. 1, Paris 1992, chap. IV, pp. 284
- Chenevière, Antoine, Russian Furniture. The Golden Age 1780 – 1840, London 2001, p. 259

The present table is an example of the rare type of *gueridon à l'antique*, characterised by a second, smaller top placed among the three monopodiae. It is made in the *style étrusque ou arabesque*, a style that appeared in Europe between 1777 and 1800, to later develop into the Romanesque style, adopting chimeras as decorative motifs. This style first became popular in Rome, but spread quickly to London (Robert Adam, James Stuart, Nicholas Revett), Paris (Charles-Louis Clérisseau, François-Joseph Bélanger, Jean-Démosthène Dugourc) and Saint Petersburg (Cameron, Giacomo Quarenghi, Vincenzo Brenna).

The gueridon is supported by three 'English rolls', an eighteenth-century invention that allowed the heavy table to be moved without having to be lifted. The top is made of a newly identified kind of Russian aragonite, also known as Tufa/ Aragonite Sinter. It is an outstanding example of Russian bronze-work made by the Imperial Workshop in Saint Petersburg in about 1790, under the reign of Catherine the Great (1729–96). Comparable bronzes, combined with Russian Baikal

lazurite, can be found in the so-called lapis lazuli hall of the Palace at Tsarskoje Selo, near Saint Petersburg. This exquisite piece of imperial quality might have left the Tsardom as a diplomatic gift.

The Russian Imperial Workshop, the so-called *Bronzespedition*, was founded in Saint Petersburg in 1770, and employed among its designers the Italian architect Vincenzo Brenna. Brenna designed the first tables with malachite tops in the Etruscan style in 1770 for the Ostankino Palace, commissioned by Count Pyotr Scheremetjew (1713–88). The interiors of the Ostankino palace are characterised by a decorative scheme closely derived from Brenna's designs and the furniture presents the same decorative motifs of the present gueridon.

A student of Giacomo Quarenghi (1744–1817), Vincenzo Brenna came from Rome to Warsaw, where he was commissioned designs for the Royal Palace and met the patronage of Count Stanislaus Potocki (1755–1821). He first arrived in Saint Petersburg in 1783–4, commissioned with works for the Pawlowsk Palace by Crown Prince Paul (later Tsar Paul I, 1754–1801). He worked at the Pawlowsk Palace until 1797, and at the Michaels Palace from 1796 to 1802, when he retired with a pension for his Royal commissions and moved to Dresden, and the Russian court turned to the Parisian Martin-Eloi Lignereux (1751–1809).

The present gueridon has been examined by Dr H. Ottomeyer, author of several standard works such as *Vergoldete Bronzen*, who is writing an expertise confirming that "all parts are old and original. The gueridon shows in all parts traces of aging caused by use, cleaning and humidity, which are coherent and bear witness to its authenticity."

