

A set of four Italian carved and gilded wood armchairs, each with a round back richly carved with laurel leaves and a twisted ribbon motif, centered on top by a swag-draped medallion with a lion mask, and at bottom by a bucranium, above a serpentine slip seat, flanked by foliate carved armrests supported by balusters, the apron carved with a twisted ribbon motif and leaves on the edge, and centered by a medallion with a male portrait in profile, on tapered fluted legs. The chassis padded back and seat upholstered in brown silk

Rome, Beginning last quarter XVIII Century .

Height: 46,85 in. (119 cm)

Width: 28,34 in. (72 cm)

Depth: 27,55 in. (70 cm)

Comparative Literature:

- Alvar González-Palacios, *Il Tempio del Gusto: Roma e il regno delle due Sicilie*, Vol. II, Milan, 1986, p. 84, fig. 162. (fig.5); fig.161 (a pair of related Consoles tables in The Wallace Collection, London).
- Alvar González-Palacios, *Arredi e ornamenti alla corte di Roma*, Milan, 2004. p. 217.
- Enrico Colle, *il Mobile Neoclassico in Italia*, Pag.34.

Probably part of a larger suite, these elegant armchairs exemplify the Roman interpretation of the Neoclassical idiom, heavily influenced by the designs of the architect and draughtsman Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1788).

The present suite of armchairs is stylistically related to a group of Roman Neoclassical console tables commissioned for the Santacroce-Altieri Palace at Oriolo Romano, Viterbo, and still in situ. The console tables present comparable elements to the present armchairs, such as the medallions with male portraits in profile (probably to be identified with the Roman Caesars), bucraniums and similar carved frames (figs.1–3).

The furniture for Palazzo Santacroce-Altieri was designed by Giuseppe Barberi (1746–1809), the architect in charge of the renovations of the palace in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. A group of drawings by Barberi record a series of designs for furniture and interiors, some of which are particularly close to the present armchairs, especially in the style of the carved decoration and in the structural solutions to reconcile seating, arm and back supports (fig. 4).

A Neoclassical console table recently appeared on the antiquarian market also presents comparable elements to the present pieces, such as the medallions with male portraits in profile and the supporting legs (Christie's London, The Collector, 19 May 2021, lot 48).

The present suite of armchairs are characterised by the graceful union of Neoclassical decorative motifs inspired by antiquity, the fanciful inventions of the artist's genius, and elements still characteristic of the Baroque period surviving to this late date, like the linking between the back and the seat.(Fig.5)

Conditions:

In overall good conditions. Joints sound and sturdy. Evidence of old, very minor wood worm, which appears to be no longer active. Old, minor marks and chips to the gilding, consistent with age, left as is in order not to alter the historic gilding that presents a nice patina, especially on the arm rests.



(Figs.1-3) Console tables at Palazzo Santacroce-Altieri, Oriolo Romano.



(Fig.4) Giuseppe Barberi, design for railings or other decorative elements, c. 1775-85, pen, ink and ink wash on paper, 196 x 162 mm (The Smithsonian Institution). Compare the drawing to the armrests of the present pieces.



(Fig.5) Lord Acton Collection in Florence