

A fine pair of Empire ormolu and patinaed bronze vases "aux amours".

Each of elongated ovoid shape with a waisted neck and gadrooned rim, decorated with anthemion and palmette bands and flanked by winged putti issuing from scrolling foliate handles above griffins and bearded masks, the waisted socle and spreading foot on a hexagonal plinth decorated with putti, scrolling foliage and exotic birds, above a stepped and moulded base, Attributed to Claude Galle.

Paris, Circa 1800

Height: 21 ¼ inc (54 cm)



These outstanding and unusually large vases can be attributed to Claude Galle (1759-1815), one of the foremost *bronziers* and *fondeur-ciseleurs* of the late Louis XVI and Empire periods, whose oeuvre included a number of similar vases, ewers and clock cases featuring comparable winged figures either surmounting or forming part of the handle. Likewise, Galle's works feature the same bearded Bacchic male mask heads as the present vases. The model incorporating an ovoid body on a splayed circular foot and surmounted by winged herm handles proved to be an enduringly popular one, especially for ewers (which unlike vases had only one handle). Examples of which can be found a pair at Pavlovsk Palace near St. Petersburg (illustrated in *"Pavlovsk: Le Palais et le Parc, Les Collections"*, 1993, vol. I, p. 121) and in the Mobilier National (illustrated in Marie-France Dupuy-Baylet, *"L'Heure, le Feu, la Lumière: Les Bronzes du Mobilier National 1800-1870"*, 2010, pp. 248-9).

Literature:

- Hans Ottomeyer and Peter Pröschel, *"Vergoldete Bronzen"*, 1986, p. 364, pl. 5.12.6 illustrating a pair of ewers with similarly styled winged female rather than putti herm handles by Claude Galle and p. 365, pls. 5.12.9, 5.12.10 and 5.12.11, respectively illustrating a pair of ewers, a vase-shaped clock and an urn (the latter two in Stockholm Castle) by Galle, all of which feature similar winged figures. And on the same page, pl. 5.12.12, illustrating a vase-shaped clock case by Galle with almost identical bearded male masks, in the Grand Palais Versailles.
- Arcadi Gaydamak, *"Russian Empire, Architecture, Decorative and Applied Arts, Interior Decoration 1800-1830"*, 2000, p. 237, illustrating a Russian silver gilt ewer in the State History Museum, Moscow that was inspired by the work of Claude Galle.

Claude Galle (1759-1815):

Claude Galle was born at Villepreux near Versailles, but moved to Paris in his youth to begin an apprenticeship under the *fondeur* Pierre Foy. In 1784 Galle married Foy's daughter. Following the death of his father-in-law in 1788, Galle took over the workshop, which he transformed into one of the finest of its kind with a workforce of about 400 craftsmen. Galle promptly moved the business to Quai de la Monnaie (renamed Quai de l'Unité) and from 1805 operated from 6 Rue Vivienne. First listed in the trade registers in 1784, he was received as a *maître-fondeur* in 1786 and promptly gained the first of many commissions from the Garde-Meuble de la Couronne under Jean Hauré from 1786–88. He is known to have collaborated with Pierre-Philippe Thomire, amongst others, and was responsible for the majority of bronzes d'ameublement supplied during the Empire to the Château de Fontainebleau. Other Imperial commissions included the supply of numerous vases, ewers, light fittings, figural clock cases and other fine bronze furnishings for the palaces at Saint-Cloud, the Trianons, Tuileries, Compiègne, Rambouillet palaces, as well as a number of Italian palaces including Monte Cavallo, Rome and Stupinigi near Turin. Yet despite numerous important commissions, Galle was often in debt, partly on account of his lavish life-style and also since many of his clients, such as Prince Joseph Napoleon, failed to pay him. After his death, Galle's business was reopened and prospered under his son, Gérard-Jean Galle (1788–1846). His work can be found among the world's finest collections including those mentioned above as well as the Musée National de Château de Malmaison, the Musée Marmottan in Paris, the Museo de Relojés at Jerez de la Frontera, the Residenz Munich and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.