

A Russian ormolu and aragonite Tripod Gueridon with sheep's heads.

Saint Petersburg, ca. 1785

Made by the Russian Imperial Workshop named the "Bronzespediton", by Italian craftsmen and most probably designed by Vincenzo Brenna (Florence 1745 – 1820 Saint Petersburg)

Missing wheels originally underneath.

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

Height: 28,34 inc. (72 cm)

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

This pronk table derives from the rare type of the *table en gueridon à l'antique*, which is characterised by a second smaller tablar between the three monopodiae. It's made *in the style étrusque ou arabesque*, a grotesque style, which appears in Europe between 1777 and 1800 declining to Romanesque examples showing motifs with chimeras. This style comes up first in Rome and spreads quickly over London (Robert Adam, Stuart, Revett) and Paris (Clérisseau, Bélanger, Dugourc) to Saint Petersburg (Cameron, Quarenghi, Brenna).

The gueridon stays on three 'English rolls'; a unique construction of the 18th century to move the heavy table without lifting.

The top is made of a newly found sort of Russian aragonite, also known as Tufa / Aragonite Sinter.

In 1770 the so-called *Bronzespediton* was founded in Saint Petersburg. The Italian architect Vincenzo Brenna was working there as designer and created the first tables with malachite tops in the grotesque style, ordered by Count Scheremetjew for the Ostankino Palace in 1770.

Very similar compositions can be found in the interior of Ostankino which decline to designs of Brenna and which are in the same style and with the same motifs like the present gueridon.

Brenna came via Rome, where he studied with Quarenghi, to Warsaw. There he was commissioned by Stanislaus Potocki and participated in architectural works for the Royal Palace. Brenna worked for Crown Prince Paul in Pawlowsk and came in 1783/84 to Saint Petersburg. He was engaged for Paul in Pawlowsk until 1797 and for the Michaels Palace from 1796 to 1802. Commissions therefore were made over Martin-Eloi Lignereux in Paris. In 1802 Brenna retired with a pension from his royal orders and went to Dresden.

The present gueridon is an outstanding example for a Russian bronze-work made by the Imperial Workshop of Saint Petersburg about 1790, under the reign of Catherine the Great.

Comparable bronzes combined with Russian Baikal lazurite can also be found in the so called lapis lazuli chamber of the Great Palace of Tsarskoje Selo near Saint Petersburg, an ultimate fact that embeds this outstanding combination with that place.

This highly precious piece of imperial meaning might have left the Tsardom as a diplomatic gift.

The present gueridon after digital photos it will be examined soon by Prof. Dr. H. Ottomeyer, author of several standard works e.g. Ottomeyer/Pröschel, 'Vergoldete Bronzen', who will state in his forthcoming expertise if "All parts are old and original. The gueridon shows in all partstraces of aging caused by use, cleaning and humidity, which are coherent and bear witness for its authenticity."

Literature:

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