

A pair of rare and important Italian Rococo ormolu twin-branch Candelabra which can be transformed into single candle holders, each with two removeable arms in the shape of scrolling leaves, with refined *bobèche* in the shape of a blossomed flower, set onto a stem in the shape of a *torchon* with cartouches, scrolls, and shells, onto rocaille bases, onto moulded stands.

Attributed to Francesco Ladatte (1706–1787).

Turin, 1745 circa.

Height: 16  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (43 cm)

Width: 11  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (30 cm)



#### Bibliography:

- Angela Griseri, *Francesco Ladatte: un protagonista dello stile Luigi XV*, Antologia di Belle Arti, edited by Alvar Gonzales-Palacios, Studi sul Settecento III, Turin, 2003, p. 49, fig.6.
- Mario Tavella, *Due coppie di appliques in bronzo dorato di Francesco Ladatte*, Antologia di Belle Arti, edited by Alvar Gonzalez-Palacios, Studi sul Settecento III, Turin, 2003, p. 53.
- E. Colle, A. Griseri, R. Valeriani, *Bronzi decorativi in Italia*, Milan, 2001, Cat. 36, pp. 110–111.
- L. Malle', *Le Sculture del Museo d'Arte Antica*, Turin, 1965, pp. 234–235, tab. 284–285.
- V. Natale, et al., *Gli Splendori del Bronzo*, Turin, 2002, tab. 10, p. 107.
- Vittorio Viale, *Mostra del Barocco Piemontese*, Turin, 1963, tab. 298, for a similar pair of wall lights by Ladatte held at the Museo Civico di Arti Antica, Turin; tab. 21 n.107, for a similar pair of silver candle holders.

The distinctive shape of both the supports and the arms of the present pair of candelabra, with the distinctive movement of leaves and scrolls, is most probably the work of the Piedmontese bronze smith Charles-François Ladatte (1706–1787), first sculptor in bronze to his Royal Highness Carlo Emanuele III of Savoy. Born in Turin, Ladatte moved to Paris where he was receptive to the influence of Charles Cressent and Thomas Germain. He was made a member of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture of Turin in 1736. He was more than a mere bronze worker, however: he was a silversmith, a painter, a sculptor, and an academician. The creative fancy, the extravagance of design, the technical virtuosity, the sculptural qualities, and the refined international taste typical of Ladatte's production can all be found in the present pieces.

Ladatte's work rests onto the production of one of the greatest exponents of the Rococo style, Juste-Aurele Meissonnier (1695–1750), who also was born in Turin into a family of French silversmiths. After training in his family workshop and working and the mint of Turin, Ladatte moved to Paris around 1714. A few years later, Louis XV of France appointed him *dessinateur du Cabinet* and *orfèvre du Roi*. The French king must have appreciated Ladatte's fanciful inventions and his versatility, as he is recorded to have provided designs for ephemeral apparatuses, furniture, bronzes

and silver. Active as a silversmith, painter and sculptor, Ladatte overcame the rigid rules of symmetry, exasperating the Baroque style, designing objects with unbalanced surfaces, rounded and coiling shapes, shell-inspired motifs and fanciful vegetal elements. His Italian origin and training were probably at the base of the extravagance of his decorative style.

## Comparative examples:

Several wall lights by Ladatte are documented in the Royal Palace of Turin (Galleria del Daniel and in the Breakfast Room).<sup>1</sup>

A pair of wall lights sold at Sotheby's (13 June 2001, lot 251) and another pair recently appeared on the antiquarian market in Paris present similar elements on their arms as the present candelabra. The pieces all share the same treatment of leaves to create the candle-supporting arms, as well as a marked French influence (especially the production of Thomas Germain, Charles Cressnet and Jacques Caffiéri), the overall design, and the distinctive shape of the bases in the guise of flower petals meant to collect wax drops. In these pieces one can also clearly recognise the influence of the sculptor Simone Martinez, nephew of Filippo Juvarra, and of the architect Benedetto Alfieri, who was in charge of the renovation of the Grand Salon of the Royal Palace of Turin. All these elements suggest with confidence that the present pair of candelabra can be ascribed not merely to a Piedmontese workshop, but more specifically to the entourage of artists and craftsmen active at the Savoy court during the eighteenth century.

François Ladatte collaborated with Pietro Piffetti on many of the cabinetmaker's most important commissions such as, most notably, the Queen's Cabinet in the Royal Palace of Turin. The cartouche found on the stem of the present candle holders (fig.2) presents important similarities with the gilt bronze keyhole patches found on the commode by Pietro Piffetti of the Metropolitan Museum of New York, which are attributed to Ladatte (fig.1). It is important to stress that the gilt bronze patches found on the New York commode are extremely close to those of the Ashburton Cabinet, sold at Christie's London in 1992 (lot 166), and several other elements in gilt bronze firmly attributed to Ladatte.



Fig.1



Fig.2

<sup>1</sup> Tavella, op. cit; Viale, op. cit.

## Francesco Ladatte (1706–1787)

Works by Francesco Ladatte are extremely rare and most of his known pieces are documented at the Royal Palace of Turin. This great artist is known to have executed also terracotta pieces, sculptures and reliefs on a grand scale, as well as decorative pieces – as is the case here – and mounts for furniture.

Born in Turin on 9 December 1706, Ladatte moved to Paris in his youth following the court of Vittorio Amedeo di Savoia-Carignano. He undertook his artistic training in that city, where he changed his name from Ladetto into Ladatte. He worked first as a modeller in the workshop of Francois Lemoine, later under the brothers Nicolas and Guillaume Coustou, ending up to join with all probability the workshop of the goldsmith and bronze smith Thomas Germain around 1720.



Ladatte was very active in both Paris and Turin. If the *“liste des meilleurs peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs de l’academie royale de peinture et sculpture de Paris, année 1745”* documents him in Paris in that year, as working in the Paris residence of Vittorio Amedeo at the Hotel des Saisons, the same list presents a note on the margin reading that Ladatte was already in Turin. Similarly, the list *“de nos meilleurs artistes d’aujourd’hui en tous genres”* compiled by Bachaumont in 1748 bears a similar note next to Ladatte’s name, *“il est a Turin”*.

His reputation was unquestionably very high in the French capital, and his creations met the favour of refined connoisseurs. For example, Ladatte’s name appears in the catalogue of the collection of the Parisian banker Chevalier, baron du Châtelet, marquis de Rémovalle, seigneur du Franc-Alleu, noble de Saint-Romain Ange Laurent de La Live de Jully. In the catalogue, Ladatte is referred to as the François Boucher of sculpture (*Les graces de sa composition et la tournure agreable qu’il Donne a ses figures l’ont fait appeler le Boucher de la sculpture*).

At the French Academy he was awarded the second prize for sculpture in 1728, and the first in 1729. From Paris, he travelled to Rome to study and, in 1732, came back to Turin where he started working for the Savoy crown, being documented also as a bronze chiseller and creating mounts of supreme elegance. In that year (1732) he completes, together with Venasca, the bronzes for the library of the Queen’s Cabinet by Pietro Piffetti. Other payments from the Savoy Household to Ladatte are documented in 1734, year in which he moves again to Paris. He returned definitely to Turin in 1743. The following year he was appointed Royal bronze smith to His Royal Highness Carlo Emanuele III King of Sardinia. In 1748 he is recorded to be working with the silversmith Andrea Boucheron, and in 1778 he is appointed professor of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture of Turin.

*Carle Vanloo (Nizza 1705-Parigi 1765); Ritratto dello scultore Ladatte, 1744 circa, olio su tela, 117x88cm, Torino, Musei Reali-Galleria Sabauda, inv.103*