
Koopman Rare Art

Director's Choice – Timo Koopman
A Monumental George III Warwick Vase



London, 1818

Maker's mark of Solomon Royes & John East Dix

The detail and size of this Warwick Vase is exceptional. It is one of the earliest and largest examples known in silver. This commission pushes the boundaries of what is achievable and is an incredible triumph of the goldsmith. Measuring fifty-six centimetres or twenty-two inches in height, it weighs an astonishing 13,220 grammes or 425 troy ounces and 1 penny weight of silver. The vase has two large handles formed as interwoven vine branches, from which the tendrils, leaves, and clustering grapes spread around the upper margin and features classical Bacchic masks and associated emblems, such as the pine tip staff or thyrsus. The middle of the body encompasses the pelt of a panther, with head and claws, the cloak worn by Bacchus. Above are heads, all representing satyrs, except one, which is that of a female, traditionally said to have been substituted for a missing head and made by an Italian carver in the 18th century into the likeness of lady Hamilton; however, as the result of a supposed quarrel with her, the carver gave lady Hamilton's head a fawn's ear.

This monumental triumph rests on a square pedestal foot.



The Warwick vase

The Warwick Vase is an ancient Roman marble vase with Bacchic ornament that was discovered at Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli about 1771 by Gavin Hamilton, a Scottish painter-antiquarian and art dealer in Rome, and is now in the Burrell Collection near Glasgow in Scotland.

The vase was found in the silt of a marshy pond at the low point of the villa's extensive grounds, where Hamilton had obtained excavation rights and proceeded to drain the area. Hamilton sold the fragments to Sir William Hamilton, British envoy at the court of Naples from whose well-known collection it passed to his nephew George Greville, 2nd Earl of Warwick, where it caused a sensation.



David Allan (1744–1796), Sir William and the first Lady Hamilton in their villa in Naples, Oil on canvas, Oil on copper. Courtesy of Compton Verney Collection.

Restoration of the Vase

The design and much of the ornament is Roman, of the second century CE, but the extent to which the fragments were restored and completed after its discovery, to render it a fit object for a connoisseur's purchase, may be judged from Sir William Hamilton's own remark "I was obliged to cut a block of marble at Carrara to repair it, which has been hollowed out & the fragments fixed on it, by which means the vase is as firm & entire as the day it was made."

Needless to say, Sir William did not visit Carrara to hew the block himself. The connoisseur-dealer James Byres's role in shaping the present allure of the Warwick Vase is not generally noted: "The great Vase is nearly finished, and I think comes well. I beg'd of Mr. Hamilton to go with me the other day to give his opinion. He approved much of the

restoration but thought the female mask copied from that in Piranesi's candelabro ought to be a little retouch'd to give more squareness and character, he's of opinion that the foot ought neither to be fluted nor ornamented but left as it is being antique, and that no ornament ought to be introduced on the body of the vase behind the handles, saying that it would take away from the effect & grouping of the masks. Piranesi is of the same opinion relative to the foot but thinks there is too great an emptiness behind the handles.... It's difficult to say which of these opinions ought to be followed, but I rather lean toward Mr. Hamiltons."

Thus, it appears James Byres rather than Giovanni Battista Piranesi was put in charge of the vase's restoration and completion. Piranesi made two etchings of the vase as completed, dedicated to Sir William, which were included in his 1778 publication, *Vasi, candelabri, cippi...* which secured its reputation and should have added to its market desirability. Sir William apparently hoped to sell it to the British Museum, which had purchased his collection of "Etruscan" vases: "Keep it I cannot, as I shall never have a house big enough for it", he wrote.



Engraving of the Warwick Vase, 1821, intended as a craftsman's pattern

The Vase at Warwick Castle

Disappointed by the British Museum, Hamilton shipped the fully restored vase to his elder nephew, George Greville, 2nd Earl of Warwick, who set it at first on a lawn at Warwick Castle, but with the intention of preserving it from the British climate, he commissioned a special greenhouse for it, fitted, however, with Gothic windows, from a local architect at Warwick, William Eboral: "I built a noble greenhouse and filled it with beautiful plants. I placed in it a vase, considered as the finest remains of Grecian art extant for size and beauty."

The vase was displayed on a large plinth, which remains with it in the Burrell Collection, where it is also displayed in a courtyard-like setting inside the building, surrounded by miniature fig trees. The vase was widely admired and much visited in the Earl's greenhouse, but he permitted no full-size copies to be made of it, until moulds were made at the special request of Lord Lonsdale, who intended to have a full-size replica cast— in silver. The sculptor William Theed the elder, who was working for the Royal silversmiths Rundell, Bridge & Rundell, was put in charge of the arrangements, but Lord Lonsdale changed his mind, and a project truly of Imperial Russian scale was aborted. (Please see Christopher Hartop's *Royal Goldsmiths: The art of Rundell & Bridge* page 117 for a more accurate account).

The rich ornament, and the form, which is echoed in sixteenth-century Mannerist vases, combined to give the Warwick Vase great appeal to the nineteenth-century eye: numerous examples in silver and bronze were made, and porcelain versions by Rockingham and Worcester. Theed's moulds were sent to Paris, where two full-size bronze replicas were cast, one now Windsor Castle, the other in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Reduced versions in cast-iron continue to be manufactured as garden ornaments, and in these ways the Warwick Vase took up a place in the visual repertory of classical design. It was even the model for the silver-gilt tennis trophy, the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup won at the Australian Open.

After it was sold in London in 1778 and purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Warwick Vase was declared an object of national importance, and an export license was delayed. Matching funds were raised, and, as it was not of sufficient archaeological value for the British Museum, it found a sympathetic home at the Burrell Collection, Glasgow.



On display at the Burrell Collection near Glasgow



Giovanni Battista Piranesi found at the Pantanello, Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli, in 1770 (The "Warwick Vase"), 1773-78

By 19th September 1818 Solomon Royes and John East Dix entered a hallmark on their own. Solomon Hougham was a fairly prolific maker of smaller items such as sugar tongs. Solomon Royes was in fact Solomon Hougham's nephew as he was married to Solomon

Hougham's sister, Sarah. It is noticeable that Solomon Hougham went into partnership only 11 months before he died, at the age of 71. It would therefore be reasonable to assume that he handed over his business to Solomon Royes & John East Dix just prior to his death. Both Solomon Royes and John East Dix had been apprenticed to Solomon Hougham. Solomon Royes entered his mark alone on 22nd February 1820, which means that the partnership with John East Dix only lasted less than 20 months after Solomon Hougham's death.

Although not nearly the size of this week's Director's Choice we are extremely fortunate to also have an amazing set of four 'Warwick Vase' wine coolers by Paul Storr. Given the first silver versions for the Prince Regent were made in 1812 by Paul Storr, I feel these early versions dating to 1821 and by one of the greatest 19th century goldsmiths are worthy of note. Rundell, Bridge and Rundell's copy of this ancient work of art attracted considerable fame and continued to exert considerable influence in decorative art long after the firm closed.

It is so incredibly rare to find four such items surviving together and in the form of wine coolers with their original capes and liners which makes them all the more special.



The Quin-Spencer Vases
An Incredibly Rare set of Four George IV Warwick Vase Wine Coolers
By Paul Storr London 1821

The arms are those of Quin, Quinsborough Co. Clare, impaling Spencer for Lord George Quin who assumed the name of Quin in 1813, 2nd son of Thomas Taylour, 1st Marquess of Headfort and his first wife Georgiana Charlotte, 2nd daughter of George John, 2nd Earl of Spencer. He died in 1888.



Lord George Quin was born on 10 March 1792. He was the son of Thomas Taylour, 1st Marquess of Headfort and Mary Quin. He married, firstly, Lady Georgiana Charlotte Spencer, daughter of George John Spencer, 2nd Earl Spencer and Lady Lavinia Bingham, on 14 April 1814. He married, secondly, Louisa Mary Isabella Ramsden, daughter of Sir John Ramsden, 4th Bt. and Hon. Louisa Susan Ingram-Shepherd, on 9 December 1847. He died on 6 February 1888 at age 95. He was given the name of George Taylour at birth. In 1813 his name was legally changed to George Quin by Royal Licence.

For more information on the availability and price of any treasures we mention, please visit our website, email or call us.



All works shown, unless otherwise indicated, are available to view and purchase in our gallery located in 12 Dover Street, London, W1S 4LL

For all enquiries please do not hesitate to call or email on:
020 7242 7624 / info@koopman.art

 @Koopman.Art  @KoopmanRareArt  Koopman.art

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12 Dover Street
W1S 4LL, London
United Kingdom
Phone: +44 20 7242 7624
Email: info@koopman.art

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