
Koopman Rare Art

Director's Choice - Timo Koopman
Simplicity, Harmony & Restraint
A Pair of 18th Century Cassolettes



A Pair of George III Cassolette Candlesticks

London, 1778

Maker's mark of Robert Makepeace and Richard Carter

Height: to the top of the finial: 31.1 cm, 12 ¼ in.

Weight: 2,090 g, 67 oz. 4 dwt.

Today [TEFAF Maastricht](#) opens to the public, this week's 'Director's Choice' focuses on one of our highlights; A Pair of Exquisite Eighteenth Century Cassolette Candlesticks.

Following the incredible archaeological evidence gathered through excavations in Herculaneum and Pompeii, there was an eagerness to replicate the ordered simplicity of classical art and architecture. An association was formed between the moral purity promoted by the Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theories and the appreciation of nature, signifying wider cultural perceptions of artistic expression and personal character. This was reflected in the designs produced during this period. Despite the extravagance of rocaille design also remaining popular, neoclassicism coincided with an understanding that aesthetic harmony, achieved by considered and measured simplicity, was an authentic means of replicating virtue and purity of spirit.

The discovery and subsequent excavations of Pompeii had a profound impact on public tastes. Pompeii provided a glimpse into an entire city, from its architectural structure to the lifestyles of its inhabitants. In the 18th Century the search for moral purity was neatly pinned onto the virtues associated with the Roman Republic. Through emulating the forms, styles and designs of antiquity the innate goodness of man, as suggested by Rousseau, was thus made more tangible. The imitation of classical antiquity was assumed by France as a fresh cultural model and Britain, in turn, was greatly influenced by the French stylistic development - most especially within its silverware.

These exquisite cassolette candlesticks encapture this moment perfectly and as our Director's Choice this week will look to their design influence and sheer beauty. Each cassolette on cast triangular base with hoof feet, with ram's heads and acanthus angles, each side with guilloche borders centring bellflower swags and paterae, the knopped baluster stem with husk swags, with similarly decorated vase above, the reversable fluted cover with bud finial or part-fluted scone with beaded rim. The candlesticks fully hallmarked to their undersides.

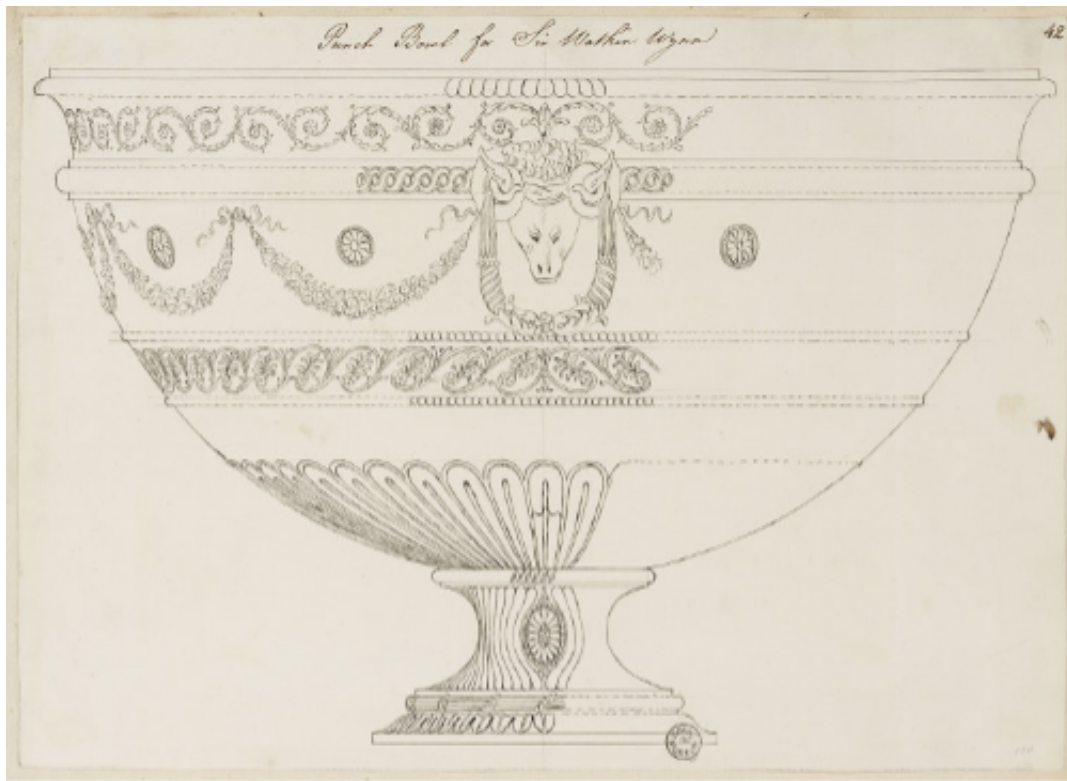
These elegant cassolette-form vases with concealed candle sockets are conceived in the neoclassical taste, popularized by architect designers Robert Adam and James Wyatt. They take their form, with the reversable candle socket, from French-fashioned perfume-burners or cassolettes which were much in fashion in England in the latter part of the 18th century. A contemporary view is provided in a letter to the Birmingham silversmith and entrepreneur Matthew Boulton (1728-1809), from Mrs. Montagu (d.1800), following the architect and designer James 'Athenian' Stuart's decoration of her London house in Hill

Street, "...my friends reproach me that I do not regale their noses with fine odours... The cassolettes used to make their entry with desert." (N. Goodison, *Ormolu: the work of Matthew Boulton*, London, 1974, p. 25).



It would appear that Mrs. Montagu had lent Boulton her Parisian cassolettes, as mentioned in a letter of January 1772: "I hope you will not imagine I pretend to give Mr. Boulton a pattern, an Athenian in the best age of the arts could only be worthy to furnish him with a model, but there is a prettiness of fancy in the cassolettes which improved into grace and good taste w'd render the sort of thing a beautiful addition to a table".

It was perhaps a pair of such cassolettes which inspired the design of the present cassolette candlesticks by Makepeace and Carter, leading London silversmiths, who created works in the style of both Robert Adam and James Wyatt. There is resemblance between these candlesticks and a tripod-form silver cassolette, or perfume burner, manufactured in 1779 by Matthew Boulton and John Fothergill now in the Temple Newsam Collection. It has been shown that this cassolette relates, albeit with numerous alterations, to a James Wyatt design for a jug and stand, which was copied into the Matthew Boulton pattern book (see James Lomax, *British Silver at Temple Newsam and Lotherton Hall*, 1992, p.101-4 and Frances Fergusson "Wyatt Silver", *The Burlington Magazine*, December 1974, pp. 751-55).



Adam volume 25/120 Purpose

[85] Unfinished design for a punch bowl, c1773, as executed

© Sir John Soame Museum

Elevation of a punch bowl with a socle base ornamented with a band of laurel leaf tips, a band of reed, a central patera set within strigilation, and a band of guilloche. The bowl is ornamented with gadrooning, a band of Vitruvian scroll enclosing anthemion and flanked by bands of beading, and a ram mask which forms the handle. The ram mask is flanked by festoons and rosettes, and above this there is a band of guilloche and a band of arabesques with rosettes.

This design of decoration closely follows that seen on the cassolettes.



Matthew Boulton Cassolette (or Perfume Burner)
Maker's mark of Matthew Boulton & John Fothegil
Temple Newsham Collection
(in part designed by James Wyatt) Birmingham 1779-80

The cassiolettes also share characteristics with the candelabra designed in 1773 by Robert Adam for Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn. John Carter executed the Adam design in silver in 1774 and both the candelabra and Adam's drawing are illustrated in Robert Rowe, *Adam Silver*, 1953, figs. 12 and 13. While considerably simplified in design, they share with the present lot a similar vase-form bowl, ram's heads and bellflower swags. It is interesting to note that the cassiolettes were manufactured by John Carter's younger brother or cousin, Richard Carter in partnership with Robert Makepeace, and that their partnership was

recorded the same day in which John Carter was noted as leaving the trade. Makepeace and Carter were in partnership for a short period between January 1777 and December 1778. It was Arthur Grimwade that suggested in *London Goldsmiths, 1697-1837*, London, 1976, pp.459-460, that Richard Carter was either the younger brother, or perhaps cousin of John Carter. John Carter had provided Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn with the famous set of four candelabra for his London house in St. James's Square. The candelabra of 1774 were to a design by Robert Adam, as were the Temple Newsam candlesticks he produced in 1767. These glorious candelabra formed part of Exhibition *The Classical Ideal English Silver, 1760-1840* that Koopman Rare Art hosted in 2010.



Candlestick for Sir Watkin Wynn, Bart., Adelphi, 18th January 1773, pen, pencil and wash, Robert Adam (1728-1792). A sketch, where the base has been simplified by substituting slender paw feet, has been added in pencil. Lent by the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum.



Three-light candelabrum from the Williams- Wynn service, silver, London, 1774-5, maker's mark IC, probably for John Carter II, retailed by Joseph Creswell, designed by Robert Adam (1728-1792). The simpler design was probably substituted on the recommendation of the silversmith. Lent by Lloyds Corporation.

Further parallels can be drawn between the pale blue and white painted carved wood candlestands designed for Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn by Robert Adam, which are now in the collection of the Victorian and Albert Museum, London (obj. no. W.36A-1946). Created to adorn the dining room of his London house in St. James's Square, they share the same concave triangular base inspired by Roman three-sided sacrificial altars.

James's Square. The candelabra of 1774 were to a design by Robert Adam, as were the Temple Newsam candlesticks he produced in 1767.



Williams-Wynn Candlestand

ca. 1771-1774 ©Victoria and Albert Museum

Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, for whom the candlestands were made, was a leading patron of arts and music. He admired the works of Giovanni Battista Piranesi, who dedicated to him his *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi, Sarcofagi* (1778), a collection of engravings of Neo-classical ornament. It is not known who made the candlestands, but Sefferin Alken (active 1744-1783) has recently been suggested.

For more information on the availability and price of any treasures we mention, please visit

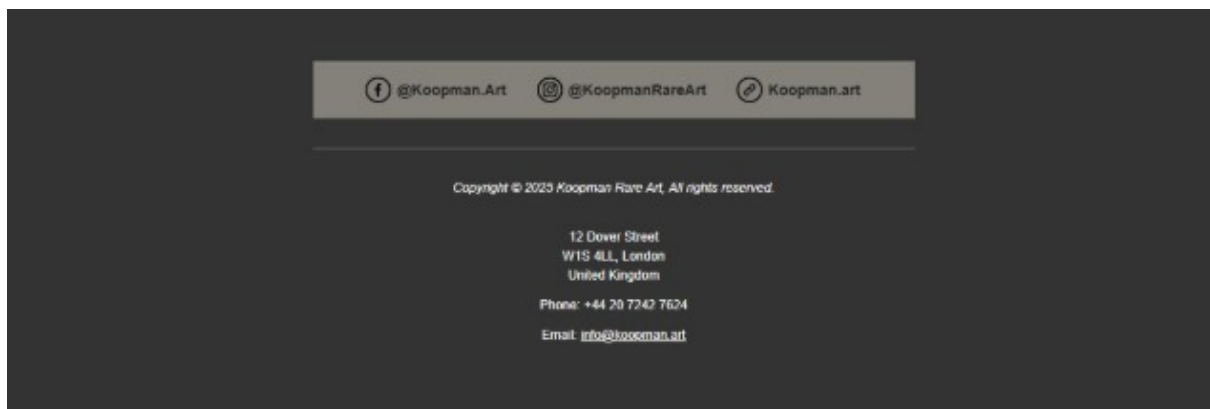
our website, email or call us.



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