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EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY VASES  
IN THE WADSWORTH ATHENEUM

Linda H. Roth

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The Wadsworth Athenaeum is noted for its collection of eighteenth-century Vincennes and Sèvres; less well-known are important examples of nineteenth-century Sèvres. This article will focus on two pairs of vases - *vases étrusques à rouleaux* and *vases œufs* - made at the Sèvres factory during the second decade of the nineteenth century, each of which reflect a different strain of the neoclassical revival that swept Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The first pair of vases, The Departure for the Army and The Return from the Army (Plates I and II), were known at the factory as *vases étrusques à rouleaux*.<sup>1</sup> Each vase measures 27 ½ inches high (70 cm), making them the second size. The bulbous body has a domed stem with a stepped, round foot that sits atop a square, girthed base. The waisted neck is topped by a stepped rim. Large scroll handles rise from the shoulder and rest astride the vase's rim. Gilded relief masks adorn the scroll.<sup>2</sup> The terminals are covered with gilt-bronze sleeves and are flanked with molded swans' necks. The vases are covered with an olive-green ground color, called *vert de chrome*, which is derived from the metal chrome. According to the catalogue of the 1806 Exposition, chrome had been discovered by M. Vauquelin, and the Imperial Manufactory at Sèvres was the first to have made this color.<sup>3</sup> The first time it appears in the Sèvres documents appears to be in 1807 in the *Travaux des ateliers de decoration [Travaux]*.<sup>4</sup>

The front of each vase is decorated with three figures, two female and one male, one group depicting The Departure for the Army and the other The Return from the Army. They are not isolated in a reserve but were painted by a process known as *grattage*, where the reserve is eliminated and the figures are applied after precise areas of ground color are removed.<sup>5</sup> Below them is a gilded Greek-key border.

The reverse of each vase is decorated with identical gold anthemias and platinum scrolls. (Plate III) Adorning the shoulder is a wide gilded and striated band. Smaller platinum and gold anthemias, along with scrolling foliage and beaded chains, are featured on both sides of the neck. A band of alternating rosettes and bell flowers or lilies in gold and platinum creates an upper border on the neck, and an additional band of alternating waves and dots in gold adorns the lower step of the rim.

Documents in the Sèvres archives indicate that these *vases étrusques à rouleaux* were made between 1810 and 1811. Their first appearance in the *Travaux* seems to be when one was given in February 1810 to M. Godin l'aîné, ground color painter.<sup>6</sup> In that same month they were passed to the painter Georget.<sup>7</sup>

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The pair next appears in the documents in June 1810, when one or both were given to M. Boitel for gilding and platinizing.<sup>8</sup> Their progress is documented over the next several months until in the *Travaux* dated 1 January 1811 the pair are described again and in the margin it is noted that they are "*fait*."<sup>9</sup> Georget was paid for the first time in February 1811 and then again in March.<sup>10</sup> He appears to have finished the first vase in April 1811 and the second in May.<sup>11</sup>

The vases finally entered the sale room in July 1811, priced at 7,000 francs. They had cost the factory 4,124 francs to produce.<sup>12</sup> In the *Feuille d'appréciation* of 1809-1812 their costs are broken down into component parts.<sup>13</sup>

The *Livrées à crédit* show that the pair was sent to Jerome Bonaparte, King of Westphalia, in February 1812.<sup>14</sup> Jerome, Napoleon's youngest brother, served as an officer in Napoleon's navy until 1807. In July of that year former territories including the Electorate of Hesse-Cassel and the Duchy of Brunswick, as well as Western Prussia and Southern Hanover, were annexed by Napoleon and combined to create the Kingdom of Westphalia, part of the new Confederation of the Rhine. Jerome, only twenty-three years old, was named King.<sup>15</sup> He reigned for seven years, and while early biographers condemned Jerome as an extravagant, reckless philanderer, he was, in fact, a loyal and extremely useful ally to Napoleon.<sup>16</sup>

In August, just after Westphalia's creation, Jerome was married to Catherine of Württemberg, daughter of the King of Württemberg and niece to the Tsar of Russia.<sup>17</sup> After a three-month wedding trip Jerome and Catherine left for Westphalia, arriving in December. They spent their first night outside the capital of Cassel, at the former landgrave's country castle of Wilhelmshöhe (renamed Napoleonshöhe by Jerome). Upon entering Cassel the next day, they found the former palace of the Landgrave empty.<sup>18</sup> One of the first decisions made by the Royal couple was to establish an

important household; they therefore set about to redecorate the palace.<sup>19</sup> The French architect Grandjean de Montigny was hired to supervise the renovation and refurbishment of both Cassel and Napoleonshöhe, which took place between 1808 and 1813. While some of the furnishings, especially the bronzes, clocks, and porcelains, were supplied from existing stocks of the *garde-meuble*, and some furniture provided by Westphalian cabinet makers, the major furniture was commissioned directly from Parisian cabinet makers, most notably Bernard Molitor.<sup>20</sup> Evidence suggests that the couple ordered only the most up-to-date furniture, hangings, and decorative objects.<sup>21</sup>

In November 1809 Jerome and Catherine went to Paris for a family council at which Napoleon announced his divorce from Josephine. At that time the Emperor told Jerome that he would receive the additional territory of Hanover, which promised, at least on first glance, to increase Westphalia's revenues considerably.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps it was with a feeling of financial optimism that Jerome and Catherine visited the Sèvres factory at the end of 1809.

There is no evidence that Jerome actually commissioned the Wadsworth Atheneum's *vases étrusques à rouleaux* specifically, although his visit to Sèvres occurred on 30 November 1809, just before the vases were put into production.<sup>23</sup> A letter dated 1 December to Alexandre Brongniart, Director of the Sèvres factory (1800-1847), from the *Intendant Général du Ministre de l'Intérieur* indicates that Napoleon wanted Catherine to have something elegant from the factory.<sup>24</sup> In any case, Jerome eventually purchased the *vases étrusques* along with two *vases medici*, tortoiseshell ground; two *vases œufs*, also tortoiseshell ground; a *vase fuseau*, green ground with a portrait of Napoleon after Gérard; a *vase cassolette*; a chimney piece in black marble with figures and cameos in biscuit, incrustated in the marble with bronze; eight figures of "*grandes hommes*;" and a large *déjeuner*. Jerome's purchases totalled over 43,000 francs, the *vases œufs* costing the most at 14,000 francs.<sup>25</sup>

The vases probably were in the palace in Cassel until 1813, when Jerome and Catherine were forced to flee Westphalia. One biographer states that they left with 150 wagons

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of household goods in tow.<sup>26</sup> They spent the next few months in France, but began a protracted period in exile after Napoleon's defeat in 1814. It is unclear whether their porcelain traveled with them, for many of their personal possessions had been sequestered in France.<sup>27</sup> We only know that Jerome and Catherine spent many years moving from city to city, finally settling in Florence in 1821. Catherine died in 1835, having borne Jerome three children.<sup>28</sup>

In 1840, ever in debt, Jerome married his only daughter, Mathilde, to Count Anatole Demidoff, the famous Russian art collector. As part of the terms of the marriage, Demidoff, who was infatuated with the Bonapartes, seems to have purchased objects from Jerome's collection in order to alleviate the ex-king's debts.<sup>29</sup> Although the couple was divorced four unhappy years later, Demidoff kept many of Mathilde's and Jerome's objects, especially those associated with Napoleon. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the *vases étrusques* in the 1880 sale of the contents of Demidoff's palace of San Donato. They were purchased by someone named Jerves for 1,600 lire, and after that their history is unclear.<sup>30</sup> The vases were split up sometime between 1880 and 1919, as the Wadsworth Atheneum was given only one vase (*The Return*) in 1919 by J.P. Morgan, Jr. *The Departure* entered the collection of the Alliance Française in New York at an unknown date. The Alliance sold it at Christie's in 1994, at which time the Atheneum was able to reunite the two.<sup>31</sup>

The first mention of what must have been this particular model probably is an entry in the *Registres de couverte* for 27 July 1808: "*1 vase etrusque anses rouleau le g Denon ... bon.*"<sup>32</sup> Another early mention of the form is in the *Commande générale pour les tourneurs et mouleurs*, 1 December 1808, entry for 27 June: "*6 vases etrusques a anse rouleau ... 4 f (fait).*"<sup>33</sup> The model was made in several sizes, and the medallion in the volute of the handle could vary from one example to another.

References to *vases étrusques*, relating to different models, appear as early as the 1780s.<sup>34</sup> It was during this decade that a new, archeological style developed, when the models of both decorative and utilitarian wares were directly based on antique forms.

The most significant early manifestation of the “*style étrusque*” at Sèvres was Marie-Antoinette’s service for the dairy at Rambouillet, made between 1786 and 1787.<sup>35</sup> It might be said, in fact, that the predecessor of the *vase étrusque à rouleaux* of 1808 was Lagrenée’s *vase étrusque de la Laiterie*, designed for the niches in the rotunda of the Dairy.<sup>36</sup>

There also were other early nineteenth-century models called “*vases étrusques*.” In the “*Procès (?) d’encouragement des tourneurs de l’atelier [sic] de perfectionnement [sic]*” of 1805 there is an entry dated 28 November for *vases étrusque Denon*,<sup>37</sup> and mention on 1 January 1806 of “*deux vases étrusques de 50 cent. et décoré à la manière étrusque d’après les conseils de Mr. Denon*.”<sup>38</sup> There is also a shorthand drawing, in Brongniart’s hand, of a different *vase étrusque*, this one with a bulbous body, shorter neck, and angular handles contiguous with the rim.<sup>39</sup> It is nearly impossible to distinguish between all of these different models in the documents.

The model for the Atheneum’s *vase étrusque à rouleaux* has been attributed to the architect Charles Percier.<sup>40</sup> While there do not appear to be documents in the factory archives to confirm the attribution, plate 18 of Percier and Fontaine’s *Recueil de Décorations Intérieures* of 1812 (the plates first published in sheets of six beginning in 1801) shows a vase very close in design, albeit with different proportions, to the Sèvres vase.<sup>41</sup> (Figure 1) Percier certainly can be credited with the design of other vases during this period, so that it is likely that he had some input into the design of the *vase étrusque à rouleaux*.

In form the Sèvres *vase étrusque à rouleaux* is very close to that of an antique krater vase from the collection of Baron Dominique Vivant-Denon. This is evident from the shape of the body, the masked handles, and the detail of the swans’ heads around the neck. (Figure 2) Even more specifically, the design on the necks of the Wadsworth Atheneum’s vases recalls that on the krater, and the double palmette design on the side of the krater can be found on the reverse of the Atheneum’s Sèvres vases. (Figure 3)

Vivant-Denon, who during Napoleon's reign was the Director of the Musée Napoleon, had formed an extensive collection of antique vases, which had been bought for the crown in 1785 by the Comte d'Angivillier, *surintendant des bâtiments, arts et manufactures*. The collection was temporarily deposited at the Manufacture de Sèvres while waiting to be placed in a new gallery in the Louvre (a plan that was never realized). It had been purchased specifically as a means of changing the artistic direction of the factory, and to correct the "bad taste" evident in the preceding period of production.<sup>42</sup> It was viewed as an important potential source not only for Sèvres forms but also for decoration. In a 24 May 1786 letter to Antoine Régnier, then director of Sèvres, d'Angivillier wrote "*ces vases pourront donner de charmantes idées de décoration*."<sup>43</sup> Later, under Brongniart, Vivant-Denon himself became an artistic guide for the factory, utilizing his collection of antique vases to achieve a more accurate reflection of antiquity. He appears to have been consulted on matters of both model design and decoration.<sup>44</sup>

A drawing still at the Manufactory for decoration of a *vase étrusque à rouleaux*, second size, appears to be an interim step between the ancient vase and the Atheneum's (Figure 4): the double palmette is still on the side of the vase, and there is still a head rather than a palmette as the central feature of the neck. However, the floral swags on the neck, and the borders moving up to the rim, correspond to the Sèvres vase, as does the Greek key border below (although as yet in a different position). The use of gold and platinum are indicated on the drawing by use of colored washes.<sup>45</sup>

The scenes of The Departure for the Army and The Return from the Army were described by the factory as having been "treated in the manner of the figures from Herculaneum."<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the figural composition and style is reminiscent of the types of painted friezes found at Herculaneum and published in engravings in the eighteenth century, such as Ulysses and Penelope, another departure scene, which appeared in the second volume of Antiquities of Herculaneum, published between 1789 and 1807.<sup>47</sup> (Figure 5) In the engraving from Herculaneum, the figures are arranged horizontally across the picture plane, and background details have been eliminated. Only the barest



reference has been made to the setting, specifically the stool upon which Penelope sits.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, Georget has cast aside baroque conventions of space and movement and reduced the compositions of both paintings to simplified groups of three figures, arranged frieze-like across the picture plane. Furthermore, the figures are clad in antique costume and have been shown either frontally or in profile. Again, all details of background and setting have been eliminated.

Yet The Departure and The Return also reflect the style of the archetypal neoclassical painter, Jacques-Louis David, who, one must remember, was Georget's teacher. David also used frieze-like compositions and simplified, frontal and profile poses, while eliminating extraneous scenic detail, thereby forcing the viewer to reflect on the self-sacrifice and heroism of his protagonists.<sup>49</sup> It is possible, therefore, although so far unproven, that Georget's compositions were based on contemporaneous paintings by one of David's pupils, or were after prints of the period. Certainly, these painters also had been influenced by the paintings of Pompeii and Herculaneum, as well as by antique sculpture.<sup>50</sup> In addition, they were acquainted with red- and black-figured vase painting (which also relied on frieze-like compositions and a simplified figural style) through such publications as d'Hancarville's Collection of Etruscan, Greek, and Roman Antiquities from the Cabinet of the Honorable William Hamilton, first published in 1766-1767, and Wilhelm Tischbein's Collection of Engravings from Ancient Vases ... now in the possession of Sir William Hamilton, published 1791-1795.<sup>51</sup> David is known to have made drawings traced from d'Hancarville's Hamilton vase publication of 1766-1767.<sup>52</sup> Artists had such a wide variety of ancient sources drawn from that it is difficult for the modern scholar to distinguish the various stylistic influences. It is also possible that Georget absorbed the lessons of David and his school, and created these compositions independently. Georget also would have been familiar with the engravings after paintings at Herculaneum and Pompeii, and with engravings of Greek vases.

The Atheneum's pair of *vases œufs* (Plates IV and V) first appears in the Sèvres archives in the *Travaux* of 1809, as "2 vases œuf 3m gd sans anses fond vert de chrome figures colorées et gratées Georget," with Compiègne written in the margin.<sup>53</sup> They measure 29 ½ inches tall (75 cm). Again, Georget was the painter.

Bacchus and Ariadne is depicted on one vase, Ariadne holding her thyrsus, or staff tipped with a pine cone, and Bacchus his cantharus, or drinking cup. The figures on the second vase are Flora and Zephyr, respectively shown with ~~their attributes of flowers~~ and butterfly wings.

The flared neck of each vase is ornamented with a gold and platinum acanthus scroll, punctuated with anthemias (or lotus blossoms) and ears of wheat, and gold and platinum foliate bands above. Joining the neck to the shoulder is another gold and platinum band of alternating lotus and lilies (or bell flowers). The shoulder is decorated with grapevines and rosettes. Below the figures is a large, gilded border of laurel leaves. The stem is joined to the body with a gilt-bronze collar, and more foliate bands decorate the foot, which in turn rests on a square gilt-bronze socle. ~~The primary decoration on the reverse of the vases is an elaborate gold and platinum foliated scroll design, with an instrument in the center.~~ (Plate VI) All of the ornament appears to be based on antique or Renaissance designs.

The *vert de chrome* ground color was applied by M. Godin l'aîné between April and June, 1809.<sup>54</sup> The gilding and platinizing were executed by Boitel,<sup>55</sup> and both Mlle. Le Grand and M. Durosey contributed to the burnishing.<sup>56</sup> The handles were made by Pierre-Philippe Thomire, as indicated by an entry in the *Travaux* in 1810, describing “4 anses volutes ovale avec palmettes au bas.”<sup>57</sup> ~~When the vases entered the magasin de~~ *vente*, they were valued at 4,300 francs, and priced to sell for 6,000.<sup>58</sup>

The pair appears in the *livraisons à crédit* for June 29, 1810, as being sent by order of Napoleon not to the chateau of Compiègne but to Louis I, Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt.<sup>59</sup> Part of the Confederation of the Rhine, Hesse-Darmstadt was formerly a Landgraviate that Napoleon elevated to a grand duchy in 1806.<sup>60</sup> The Emperor may have needed a diplomatic gift on short notice and diverted this pair of vases for that purpose.<sup>61</sup>

It is not known how long the vases stayed in the Hesse-Darmstadt collection. Records in the Wadsworth Atheneum note that they were bought in New York City about 1848

by Joseph Sampson, and left by Sampson's wife to Mary Bushnell Cheney in 1870. They were given to the museum by her daughter in 1948.

The evolution of this form of vase at the Sèvres factory is difficult to document. The name *vase œuf* is found in factory records in the eighteenth century, beginning in 1766, and drawings of different egg-shaped vases date from 1784 and 1788.<sup>62</sup> None is close to the *vase œuf* under discussion. The latter seems to have appeared around 1802-1803, when a *vase œuf*, second size, entered the sales room.<sup>63</sup> The shape must have been well received, for several appear in the sales registers over the next ten years.<sup>64</sup> Among the buyers were Napoleon (at least five for Compiègne), the King of Saxony, the King of Westphalia (Jerome), and the Grand Duke of Würzburg.<sup>65</sup>

A possible design source for the *vases œufs* of this period is Percier and Fontaine's *Recueil de décorations intérieures*. (Figure 1) Plate 18 shows a vase from a house in Paris that is closely related in form and proportion to the Wadsworth Atheneum's example.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, there seems to be little doubt that the volute handles of the Atheneum's vases were directly inspired by the Percier and Fontaine design.

The elaborate gold and platinum design that decorates the reverse of the Wadsworth Atheneum's vases was taken, with minor variations, from the frontispiece of the second section of Percier and Fontaine's *Palais, maisons et autres édifices modernes dessinés à Rome* of 1798 (Figure 6).<sup>67</sup> The designer of the Sèvres decoration chose the top-center section of the frontispiece, which is described vaguely in the original publication as having been one of several antique fragments taken from different palaces.

A drawing at Sèvres by Claude-Charles Gérard, head of the painting studio, translates this design for the factory decorators (Figure 7). Other decorative elements that will eventually appear on the neck, stem, and foot appear on the drawing.<sup>68</sup> Gérard has modified the Percier design, elongating it with additional foliate elements on the central stem and spacing the *rinceaux* differently. The same design appears on the reverse of a pair of red-ground *vases Médicis* of the third size, dated 1809.<sup>69</sup>



Plate I  
*Vase étrusque à rouleaux*, 1811  
The Departure for the Army  
 Sèvres, hard-paste porcelain  
 H: 27½ in. (70 cm)  
 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut  
 Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, by exchange, 1994.40.1



Plate II  
*Vase étrusque à rouleaux*, 1811  
The Return from the Army  
 Sèvres, hard-paste porcelain  
 H: 27½ in. (70 cm)  
 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut  
 Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1919.87

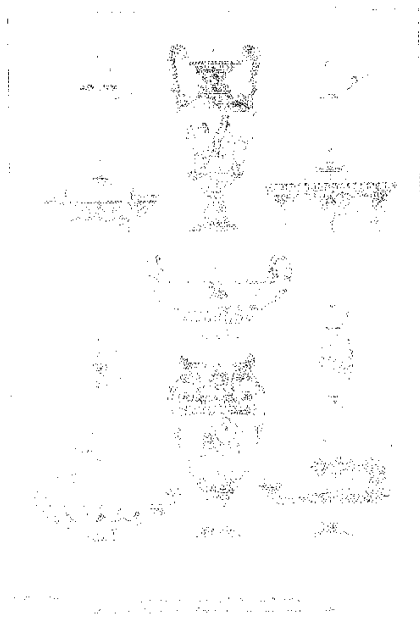


Figure 1  
*Vases, exécutés dans la Maison de M<sup>e</sup> à Paris ... Vases, Lampes et Cassolettes exécutés chez le Cit. à Paris*  
 from Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine, *Recueil de Décorations Intérieures*, 1812, Plate 18.  
 Engraving  
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1928 [28.40.1 (Plate 18)]



Figure 2  
 Volute krater, front view  
 Apulian, c. 360 - 325 B.C.  
 Musée national de Céramique, Vivant Denon Collection  
 © Photo R.M.N.

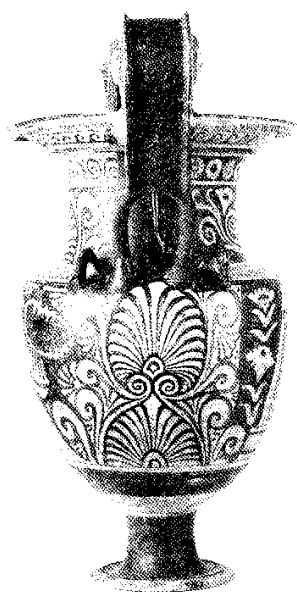


Figure 3  
 Volute krater, side view  
 Apulian, c. 360 - 325 B.C.  
 Musée national de Céramique, Vivant Denon Collection  
 © Photo R.M.N.

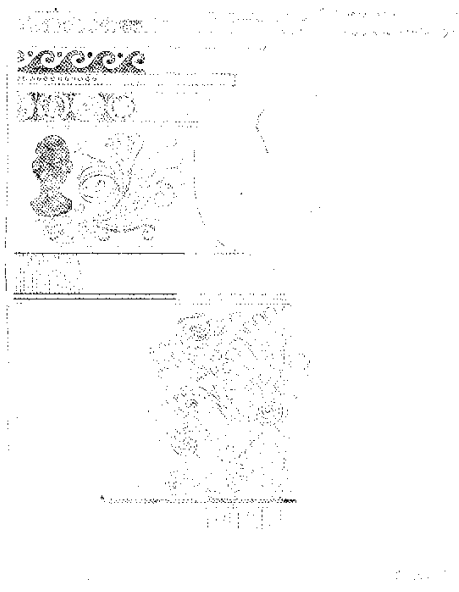


Figure 4  
 Drawing  
 Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, Archives  
 R 16, D 3, *Vases Etrusques 1800*, § 8 1809, n° 16  
 Cliché J.P. Harmond



Figure 5  
Ulysses presenting Penelope with his bow  
 from Tommaso Piroli,  
*Le Antichità di Ercolano*, Rome, 1789-1807  
 vol. II (of VI), Plate XXXVII  
 General Research Division  
 The New York Public Library  
 Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations



Figure 6  
 Frontispiece: *Palais et Maisons de Rome II<sup>me</sup>*  
*Cahier*  
 from Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine, *Palais, Maisons et autres Edifices Modernes, dessinés à Rome*, Paris, 1798. Plate VII  
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
 Rogers Fund 195 (52.519.121)



Figure 7  
 Drawing  
 Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, Archives  
 R 16, D 8, *Vases aufs*, 1800-1820, § 8, n° 20  
 Cliché J.P. Harmond



Figure 8  
Bacchus and Ariadne  
 from Tommaso Piroli,  
*Le Antichità di Ercolano*, Rome, 1789-1807  
 vol. III (of VI), Plate XX  
 General Research Division  
 The New York Public Library  
 Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

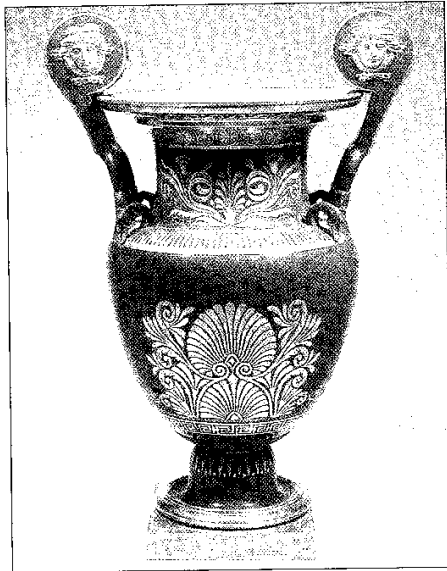


Plate III  
*Vase étrusque à rouleaux*, 1811, reverse  
 Sèvres, hard-paste porcelain  
 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut  
 Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1919.87

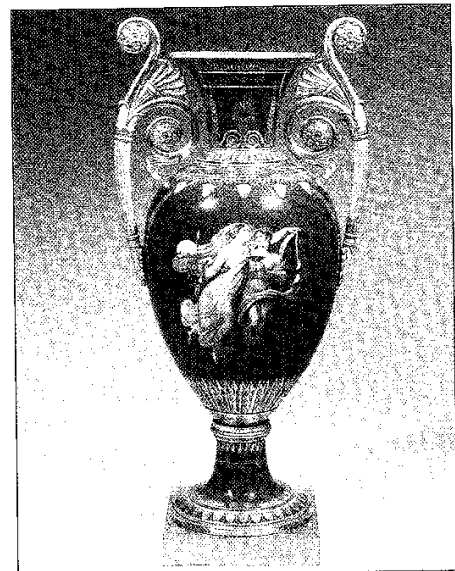


Plate IV  
*Vase œuf*, 1809  
Bacchus and Ariadne  
 Sèvres, hard-paste porcelain  
 H: 29½ in. (75 cm)  
 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut  
 Gift of Mrs. Henry B. Learned, 1948.109

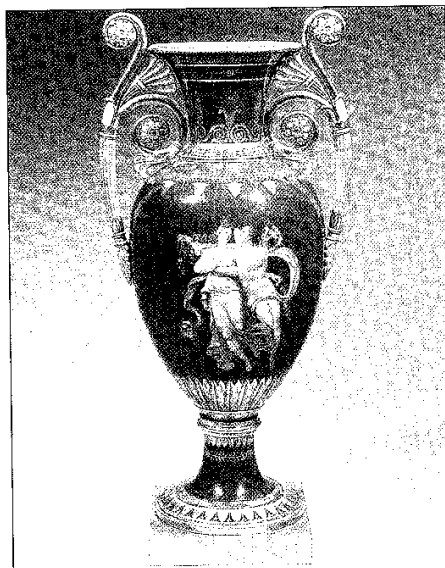


Plate V  
*Vase œuf*, 1809  
Flora and Zephyr  
 Sèvres, hard-paste porcelain  
 H: 29½ in. (75 cm)  
 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut  
 Gift of Mrs. Henry B. Learned, 1948.110

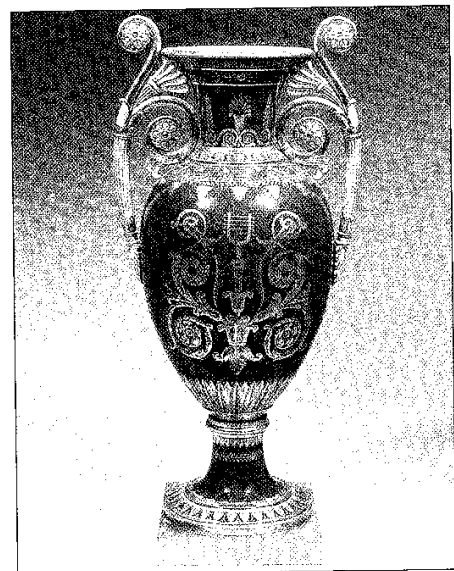


Plate VI  
*Vase œuf*, 1809, reverse  
 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut  
 Gift of Mrs. Henry B. Learned, 1948.109

Even more obviously than on the *vases étrusques*, the figures on the *vases œufs* are in the style of engravings after ancient wall paintings. These types of floating figures, depicting mythological characters or, more often, dancers, were found both at Herculaneum and Pompeii, as in the *Bacchus and Ariadne* illustrated in figure 8.<sup>70</sup> Neoclassical decorators of the late eighteenth century and the *premier Empire* used these floating figures in interior architectural schemes, especially in dining rooms and ballrooms, where they were considered to be an appropriate type of adornment.<sup>71</sup> Dancers can be found in the dining room at Malmaison, painted by Pierre-Paul Prud'hon's student Lafitte, and similarly painted muses appear in the music room of Queen Hortense's *Hôtel Beauharnais*. Pompeiian rooms were even the rage in Germany, where they can be found among other places in Gotha and Weimar.<sup>72</sup> It is not difficult to imagine Sèvres vases with floating mythological figures in the residence of the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt.

Again, as with the *vases étrusques*, *grattage* was employed to visually recreate the look of ancient painting (as transmitted through the engravings). In both the engravings and on the vases, the figures emerge directly from the background. Using *grattage* enabled the Sèvres decorators to more successfully recreate the silhouetted effect of the "Pompeiiian dancers," than if they had been painted on white reserves.<sup>73</sup>

The Wadsworth Atheneum's *vases étrusques à rouleaux* and *vases œufs* reflect the revival of classicism that began in the eighteenth century and reached its peak in the first decades of the nineteenth century. While each pair owes its shape and decoration to this revival, they are, in fact, very different in character: the *vases étrusques* are heavy in form and sober in decoration, while the *vases œufs* are more elegant both in form and decoration. These differences actually mirror two main currents of neoclassicism as it developed in the late eighteenth century (although it may be that this was accidental rather than purposeful).<sup>74</sup> On the one hand, there was the heroic, monumental style of Davidian neoclassicism (evident in the *vases étrusques*), where artists consciously chose somber designs and subjects as an antidote to the "vapid" and "frivolous" rococo style of the mid-eighteenth century. They attempted to reclaim the



tradition of classicism that began in antiquity and last flourished in the France of Louis XIV. On the other hand, the *vases æufs* reflect a more decorative facet of the classical revival, often characterized as the “*style étrusque*,” where practitioners utilized designs and motifs inspired by antiquity to decorate architectural interiors, furnishings, and decorative objects. These artists often relied more on late antique art for their models (especially designs from Herculaneum and Pompeii, which tended to be more elegant and decorative in nature) than on the more monumental works of earlier Greek art. This fashion was similar to the taste for *chinoiserie* that swept Europe in the eighteenth century — merely an exotic revival or, even, as one historian put it, “rococo sensibilities in antique guise.”<sup>75</sup> The *style étrusque* was epitomized by the work of Percier and Fontaine, whose interiors and published designs set the standard for decoration in the antique manner during the *premier Empire*.

Yet in one respect the antique or etruscan revival shared the Davidian sense of reform and moral purpose. Percier and Fontaine’s designs, for example, were created and published in the hope of reforming decoration. In the *Discours préliminaire* of their *Recueil*, they stated that their ambition was to contribute “to the dissemination and the upholding of the principles of taste that we have derived from ancient art, and that we believe are linked...to those general laws of truth, simplicity and beauty that should eternally govern every production in the realm of imitation.”<sup>76</sup> And we have already seen that D’Angivillier had specific goals of reform when he purchased the Vivant-Denon vases.

In the field of painting, there seems to have been an evolution in the neoclassical style from works reflecting Republican ideals of Spartan virtue and simplicity to, under Napoleon, more lavish visual creations based on Roman Imperial precedents.<sup>77</sup> In the production at Sèvres, both currents of neoclassicism were embraced; in some instances these currents actually merged together in one object. For example, monumental *vases Medicis* could be decorated with antique subjects in one case and with bouquets of flowers in another.<sup>78</sup> It might be possible to attribute subtle stylistic differences at Sèvres to the notion of suitability: what was appropriate decoration for the dining room and ballroom may not have been appropriate for the throne room.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps the Athenaeum’s *vases étrusques*, with their themes of military virtue and duty, stood

proudly in Jerome's council room, while the *vases æufs*, with their light-hearted mythological figures, were at home in Louis I's state dining room in Darmstadt.

Under the leadership of the Comte D'Angivillier as *surintendant des bâtiments, arts et manufactures*, the arts in France in general, and the production at Sèvres in particular, moved systematically toward neoclassicism. The technical and aesthetic achievements that followed the appointment of Alexandre Brongniart to the factory in 1800 reestablished Sèvres as an important creative force, and enabled the manufactory to make major contributions to the evolution of the Empire style. By utilizing new techniques and colors, and by consulting with such important artistic figures as Vivant-Denon and Charles Percier, Sèvres was able to produce works that were at the forefront of aesthetic expression. The Wadsworth Atheneum's Napoleonic vases are a testament to the factory's achievements during this period.

I would like to thank Tamara Préaud, Bernard Dragesco, and especially Cynthia Roman, for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

### Footnotes

1. The Return bears the following marks: stamped under the foot: "M.Imp.le/de Sevres/10" (in red); "ii j. B. T" (in gold); "as," in script, in ochre enamel; incised "9" (underlined twice); "a'o" (or u) in black; under the body: "36a D10." (in black). Due to repairs it is impossible to disassemble The Departure in order to find the marks.

2. One of the handles of the vase The Departure appears to have been replaced, as indicated by the difference between the moulding of its masks and that of the masks on the other three handles of the pair. A discrepancy in glaze color and texture between the handle and the rest of the vase also points to restoration.

3. See Brigitte Ducrot, *Porcelaines et Terres de Sèvres*, Paris, 1993, p. 11. According to Antoinette Fay-Hallé, Vauquelin actually isolated chrome in 1797 and it was first used as a ceramic color in 1802, probably by the Nast factory. (See Antoinette Fay-Hallé and Barbara Mundt, *Porcelain of the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1983, p. 14.)

4. Manufacture nationale de Sèvres [MNS], Archives de Sèvres [Archives], carton Pb 1, dossier [d.] 16, 1807. I would like to thank Tamara Préaud for bringing this citation to my attention.

5. The process seems to be the same as that known in the eighteenth century as *incrusté*. See Svend Eriksen and Geoffrey de Bellaigue, *Sèvres Porcelain*, London, 1987, p. 132; Rosalind Savill, *Catalogue of Sèvres Porcelain in the Wallace Collection*, London, 1988, v. 1, p. 49 and p. 55, note 47. In the *Travaux* of 1807, where *vert de chrome* first appears, *vases caraffes étrusques* are described as decorated with "Fd. vert au gd. feu figures colorées grates et peintes sur le fond par M. Georget. C'est un genre nouveau et qui doit produire beaucoup d'effet." (MNS, Archives, carton Pb 1, d. 16)

6. MNS, Archives, register Vj'17, f. 71, February 1810.

7. MNS, Archives, Vj'17, f. 1-1v, February 1810. Jean Georget was one of the factory's top figure painters in the early nineteenth century. Born in 1763, he was active at Sèvres from 1802 until his death in 1823. He was a student of Jacques-Louis David, and exhibited at the Salon from 1796 until his death. At Sèvres, Georget's work included many plaques and vases on which he copied contemporary paintings, such as the portrait of Napoleon after François Gérard that appears on a *vase étrusque carafe* of 1813 (MNS, Archives, register Vu 1, f. 2v, as noted in files at MNS, Archives).

8. MNS, Archives, register Vj'17, f. 42: [given and rendered] *1 vase Etrusq. rouleau 2me fond vert decore en or et platine 100 F. and 1 vase à rouleau fd. chrome pour le decord [sic] en or 100 F.*

9. MNS, Archives, carton Pb 2, January 1, 1811; also in carton Pb 2 at the end of January, in the *Travaux des ateliers: Notice des Principaux Peintres et doreurs et des principaux travaux qui leur sont destinés*, is the notation next to Georget: "2 vases étrusque à rouleau 2em[ ] gr. fond vert figures colorées n. 4;" in pencil in the margin, in Claude-Charles Gérard's hand is "Dorer en tr[a]in de pintr [peindre]." At the end of June they are listed among the *Objets qui seront termin[é] a des époques plus*

eloignes: “n. 4 2 vases dit etrusques a rouleau 2eme gr. fond vert, 3 figures colorées par M. Georget”(MNS, Archives, carton Pb 2, Travaux, end of June 1810); and on 1 July 1810 in the Travaux - grand pieces et vases, Grands pieces deverses: “n. 4 2 vases etrusque à rouleau 2eme gr. fond vert, sujet de 2 [sic] figures colorées ornement en or et platine Georget, Boitel” (MNS, Archives, carton Pb 2). In December 1810 Boitel was given “1 vase Etrusque a roulot [sic] 2eme gd.eur fd. chrome gratage des figures georget pour le decord [sic]” (MNS, Archives, register Vj’17, f. 43v).

10. MNS, Archives, register Vj’18, f. 1-1v: February: “Georget: 1er accompte sur la peinture des figures d’un vase à rouleaux fond vert (de mars 1810);” March 1811: “2e accompte; 1er accompte du 2eme vase etrusque a rouleaux pour l’ébauche avancée.”

11. MNS, Archives, register Vj’18, f.1-1v, April 1811: “1 vase étrusque a rouleaux 2me grandeur fond vert (de février 1810) pour le gratage et la peinture d’un sujet de trois figures représentant un jeune homme et deux femmes (le Départ);” May, 1811: “1 vase etrusque a rouleaux 2eme grandeur fond vert de février 1810, le 2eme.”

12. MNS, Archives, register Vu 1, f. 115v.

13. MNS, Archives, Pb 2, feuilles d’appréciation, 10 July 1811: “Pate 300; Fond 300; Dorure 2 fois 124; Or et platine 50; Peinture au sujet et le grat[y] 650; Brunis a plat 20; Do. des effet 20; Faux frais 500; montage et garniture 120; prix de fabrication 2,062; prix de vente 3,500.”

14. MNS, Archives, register Vbb 4, f. 7v, 13 February 1812: Pièces livrées à crédit sur ordre du gouvernement: “Livré à S.E.Mr. le grand chambellan pour S.M. le Roi de Westphalie ... 275-32 2 Vases etrusques fond vert figures coloriées le départ et le retour traités à la manière des figures d’Herculanum par Georget 7000 francs.”

15. There is a large bibliography on Jerome Bonaparte. See for example Owen Connelly, *Napoleon’s Satellite Kingdoms*, New York and London, 1965/1966, for a basic account of Jerome’s reign in Westphalia and for a good bibliography.

16. Jerome’s short reign did indeed produce fiscal disaster for Westphalia, but largely due to Napoleon’s excessive demands on that country’s resources. In spite of Westphalia’s financial difficulties, Jerome met all of his obligations to Napoleon. Westphalia supplied more troops per capita than any other satellite of France and supported more French troops on Westphalian soil than any other territory. According to Connelly, “there was no more competent man among the satellite rulers ... None was a better governor, lawmaker, administrator, or soldier. None was more useful or loyal to Napoleon; none more successful in keeping the loyalty of his people.” At the same time, it must be admitted that Jerome was personally extravagant and chronically unfaithful to his wife. See Connelly, pp. 222, 196, and 209.

17. Jerome had been married before, to a Baltimore woman, but this marriage was annulled on Napoleon’s orders.

18. F.M. Kircheisen, Jovial King: Napoleon's Youngest Brother, trans. H. J. Stenning, London, 1932, pp. 77-78.

19. Dictionnaire Napoléon, Paris, 1987, p. 970; Kircheisen, p. 78.

20. See Ulrich Leben, Molitor: Ebéniste from the Ancien Régime to the Bourbon Restoration, trans. William Wheeler, London, 1992, p. 62.

21. Leben, p. 65, and pp. 232-33, notes 108-113.

22. See Connelly, pp. 210-214; in fact, in exchange for receiving Hanover, Jerome agreed to house 6,000 more French troops, and assume Hanover's debts. Within a year Napoleon went back on his agreement with Jerome and annexed half of Hanover to France.

23. In a 1 December 1809 letter to the *Intendant Général de la liste civile de l'Empereur* Brongniart wrote: "*Je m'empresse de vous informer que S.M. L'Empereur a bien voulu honorer la manufacture de sa visite hier jeudi a 4h du soir. S.M. étoit accompagnée de S.M. le roi de Saxe, de LL.MM. le roi et la reine de Westphalie, de la reine de Hollande de la princesse Pauline. J'ai eu l'honneur de lui faire voir les travaux terminés des principaux travaux en train et notamment ceux qui sont exécutés en vertu des ordres de S.M. ...*" MNS, Archives, carton T. 4, L. 2, d. 4, *Lettres du Directeur à divers 1809*.

24. "*S.M. désire aussi que l'on porte de ..... chez la Reine de Hollande un beau vase avec son portrait; chez la Princesse Pauline un beau déjeuner et deux petits vases ornés de sujet de la table; chez la Reine de Westphalie quelque chose de galante...*" MNS Archives, T. 4, L. 2, d. 1, *Lettres et arrêtes de M. L'intendant général du Ministère de l'Intérieur*.

25. MNS, Archives, register Vbb 4, f. 7v-8, *Pièces livrées à crédit sur ordre du gouvernement*.

26. Kircheisen, p. 226.

27. In her letters, Catherine mentions both in 1814 and 1815 that her effects had been sequestered. For example, on 24 October 1814, she wrote to the Emperor of Russia from Trieste that "*J'ose donc prier Votre Majesté de vouloir bien donner les ordres à son ambassadeur à Paris de réclamer mes diamants et mes bijoux et de faire lever le séquestre sur nos effets.*" She wrote again to the Emperor of Russia in 1815 (n.d.) that "*le séquestre a été mis sur tout ce que nous possédions en France.*" See Cathérine de Westphalie, Correspondance inédite avec sa famille et celle du roi Jérôme, ed. by A. du Casse, Paris, 1893, pp. 117 and 180. Conversely, in her entry on Jerome in the Dictionnaire Napoléon, p. 971, Bernardine Melchior-Bonnet states that the couple "*passèrent alors de château en château, avec une importante maison et une domesticité considérable.*"

28. Jerome Napoleon Charles (1814-1847), Mathilde (1820-1904), and Napoleon (1822-1891).

29. See Joanna Richardson, Princess Mathilde, New York, 1969, pp. 35-36; Frances Haskell, "Anatole Demidoff and the Wallace Collection," Anatole Demidoff, Prince of San Donato, exhibition catalogue, The Wallace Collection, London, 1994, p. 19.
30. 15 March - 10 April 1880, San Donato (Pillet, et al), lot 120. An annotated copy of the sale catalogue is in the library of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.
31. Christie's, New York, October 25-26, 1994, lot 284.
32. MNS, Archives, register Vc 6. I would like to thank Tamara Préaud for this reference.
33. MNS, Archives, carton Pb 1, L. 1, d. 17.
34. See for example the *vase étrusque à bandeau*, model c. 1782; *vase étrusque Leriche*, c. 1788; *vase étrusque carafe*, model late eighteenth century.
35. For the most thorough discussion of this service and the "archeological" style, see Selma Schwartz, "The Sèvres porcelain service for Marie-Antoinette's Dairy at Rambouillet: An exercise in archaeological Neo-classicism," Bulletin of the French Porcelain Society, IX, 1992.
36. Schwartz, p. 19, and figure 2b, "I". An example dated c. 1794-1795 is on the Paris market (Dragesco-Cramoisan), with a *ventre de biche* or reddish-brown ground, decorated with Pompeian-style figures in the reserves. Another pair of this same shape, with a *bleu lapis* ground and gilding (probably dating between 1795 and 1805) is in the collection of the Palazzo Pitti, Florence (Inv. M.P.P. 1911, no. 24 in Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti, Porcellane dell'Ottocento a Palazzo Pitti, Florence, 1983).
37. MNS, Archives, carton Pb 1, L. 1, d. 14.
38. MNS, Archives, carton Pb 1, L. 1, *aperçu des travaux au 1er janvier 1806, atelier des tourneurs et mouleurs*, art. 2, no. 11.
39. MNS, Archives, carton Pb 1, L. 1, d. 14, 30 August 1806.
40. Marcelle Brunet and Tamara Préaud, Sèvres, des origines à nos jours, Fribourg, Switzerland, 1978, p. 250, caption for Pl. LXI; Tamara Préaud, "Sèvres: *Le vase du bivouac de l'Empereur*," in Revue de la Société des Amis du Musée National de Céramique, N. 2, 1993, p. 49: "*La forme de base en fut dessinée par l'architecte Charles Percier d'après un modèle antique en 1808/1809.*" Research files in the Sèvres archives attribute the design to Percier but cite no documents in support of this. A plaster model of a handle "*à rouleau*" (MNS, Archives, Tiroir 0.273) is labeled "*vase/Percier/Brumaire/an 13*" but the shape differs from that on the Atheneum's vases. There is a plaster model coinciding with the Atheneum's vases but the nineteenth-century label says only "*S 4 1808 N° 2/ vase imité de l'Antique/ Etrusque à rouleaux/ 2e gr.*" (MNS, Archives, Casier 273. My thanks to Tamara Préaud for this information.) The *Livre-Tarif illustré de la Manufacture* illustrates the *vase étrusque à rouleaux* (albeit with a different shaped handle) but with no mention of Percier (MNS, Archives,

register Y22, Pl. 33, n°5 1A). Lechevallier-Chevignard mentions the model as having been created in the same period as the *vase Percier* but does not directly attribute the design to the architect (Lechevallier-Chevignard, *La Manufacture de Porcelaine de Sèvres*, Paris, 1908, p. 138.). Frédérique Citéra claims that Percier “mise au point” or put in focus the form, based on the antique krater (see “Aux Origines du Néo-Classicisme à Sèvres,” *Estampille. L’objet d’art*, n. 253, December 1991, p. 63).

41. C. Percier and P.F.L. Fontaine, *Recueil de Décorations Intérieures*, Paris, 1812.

42. See Marcel Gastineau, “Denon et la Manufacture de Sèvres sous le premier Empire (1805-14),” *La Revue de l’Art ancien et moderne*, Part I, v. 63, January 1933, p. 26, note 1.

43. Cited in Citéra, p. 52.

44. For the most thorough account of the relationship between Vivant-Denon and the Sèvres factory, see Gastineau, “Denon et la Manufacture de Sèvres sous le premier Empire (1805-14),” *La Revue de l’art ancien et moderne*, Part I, v. 63, January 1933, pp. 21-42 and Part II, v. 63, January - May 1933, pp. 64-76; see also Citéra, pp. 52-67.

45 MNS, Archives, R 16, d. 3, *Vases Etrusques 1800*, § 8 1809, n° 16.

46. See note 13.

47. Tommaso Piroli, *Le antichità di Ercolano*, v. II (of VI), Plate XXXVII, Rome, 1789-1807.

48. It is important to note that the very fact that these are engravings after wall paintings changes the character of their presentation to the viewer: a linear black and white medium is used to describe color paintings. Thus the linear, two-dimensional nature of the wall paintings is overwhelmingly emphasized.

49. These simplified, monumental compositions, in fact, are characteristic of the heroic style of David in the 1780s, most perfectly expressed in his *Oath of the Horatii* of 1784, when the painter created dramatic works of art void of superfluous detail or unnecessary emotion, and used subjects from antiquity to explore the heroic aspects of contemporary life. For one of the best discussions of David and neoclassicism, see Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in late Eighteenth Century Art*, Princeton, N.J., 1967.

50. The most direct borrowing from ancient wall paintings (via engravings) must be Joseph-Marie Vien’s *Selling of Cupids*, exhibited in the Salon of 1763, which was taken directly from an engraving by C. Nolli in *Le Pitture antiche d’Ercolano*, III, Naples, 1762, pl. VII, p. 41. Anton Raphael Mengs painted *Augustus and Cleopatra* (Vienna, Czernin Palace) borrowing directly from Plate 14, in the first volume of the *Antichità*. For a discussion of the impact of Herculaneum on European artists, see Mario Praz, “Herculaneum and European Taste,” *Magazine of Art*, v. 32, n. 12, December, 1939, pp. 684-693, 727; Praz, *On Neoclassicism*, trans. Angus Davidson, Evanston, Illinois, 1969, pp. 70-90.

51. For a compendium of the major publications of ancient vases, see Rosenblum, Transformations, pp. 164-165.

52. Rosenblum, pp. 72-73; p. 73, note 1.

53. MNS, Archives, carton Pb 2, January 1 1809. Both vases are marked underneath, visible only when the gilt-bronze socle is removed. On the Bacchus vase, the mark of the Imperial manufacture is stamped twice in red, dated 1809, and in chrome appear the numbers "35.36". Incised in the glaze is "*vasse ouf 3 en T*" (in script). On Flora the Imperial mark is stamped once in red and "35.36." appears in green. "A.P." is incised. "35.36" (in green) also appears on the bottom of the body of the vase, where it meets the foot.

54. MNS, Archives, register Vj'16, f. 75v, April and May 1809.

55. MNS, Archives, register Vj'16, f. 40v, July 1809.

56. MNS, Archives, register Vj'17, f. 94 and Vj'17, f. 69.

57. MNS, Vj'17, *Travaux des ateliers de décoration, Mr. Thomire, modelleur, Siseleur, Doreur en Bronze: Ouvruyer Demendée a Mr. Thomire par Mr. Brogniart*, 1810.

58. MNS, Archives, register Vu 1, f. 93, No. 253-11. In the *Appreciation* for 2 May 1810 (MNS, Archives, carton Pb 2, L. 1, Jan.-July 1810), the cost of producing one vase was broken out as follows: *Pate fond et façon*, 600 francs; *Dorure*, 93; *Peinture*, 500; *or et platine*, 84; *1er et 2eme Brunis à plat*, 8; *Brunis des Effets*, 75; *autre*, 460; *Bronze*, 300. Each cost 2,150 francs to produce and was priced at 2,000.

59 MNS, Archives, register Vbb 2, f. 113, 29 June 1810.

60. Louis I, Grand Duke of Hesse, formerly held the title Ludwig X. He took on the French title in 1806 with Napoleon's blessing.

61. While we do not know Napoleon's precise motive for making this gift, it is true that in 1809, 5,000 Hessians fought with Napoleon against Austria. Perhaps a small token of appreciation was felt to be appropriate. See Helmut Berding, *Dictionnaire Napoléon*, p. 878.

62. See Adrian Sassoon, Vincennes and Sèvres Porcelain, Malibu, California, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1991, pp. 94-95.

63. Tortoise-shell ground, mounted in gilt-bronze, now at Château de Compiègne. See Ducrot, pp. 51, 460.

64. Even at this period there seem to be variations, both of handles and even of basic proportions. For example, the vase of c. 1802-1803 at Compiègne, cited above (note 63), is of more attenuated proportion than one dating c. 1804-1805, blue ground with imitation lapis gilding, also at Compiègne (Ducrot, p. 54). Both have variations of *anses à rouleaux*.