

Russian Furniture and Small Precious Objects

Selection from *A Taste for Splendor* (Catalogue entries 118-120; 157; 168)

The table below provides a quick-reference guide to the relevant catalogue entries. Continue scrolling to view the corresponding scanned pages from *A Taste for Splendor*.

Source: Odom, Anne and Liana Paredes Arend. *A Taste for Splendor: Russian Imperial and European Treasures from the Hillwood Museum*. Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 1998.

Image	Catalogue Entry	Object Name	Accession Number	Location
	118	Pair of Candelabra	21.191.1-2	Dining Room
	119	Armchair	32.16.4	Pavilion
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118 Pair of Candelabra

St. Petersburg², first third of 19th century

Lapis lazuli, gilt bronze

H. 41 in. (104 cm)

21.191.1-2

Marks: Stamped *No. 15* on each base

A group of friends gave Mrs. Post this pair of lapis lazuli and gilt bronze candelabra on her eightieth birthday.

Large sections of lapis were pieced onto an iron rod to create a lapis lazuli column that tapers upward toward a carved Ionic capital (see frontispiece). A winged figure of victory in gilt bronze stands on top of each capital. She supports a crown, decorated with a vine scroll, to which six candle holders are attached. The bases, with acanthus leaf ornaments, rest on four lion-paw feet.

Displaying Empire-style candelabra with sculpted figures remained a popular fashion until the end of the 1820s. Paris during the First Empire was still the leading center for making and gilding bronze, and as such it created models that were widely used throughout Europe. These particular victory figures seem to derive from French models,¹ but their manufacture might very well be Russian. Remarkable similarities exist between French and Russian bronzework of the Empire style, which might be explained by the presence of French bronze makers, such as Lancy and Chopin, in St. Petersburg at that time.²

The Soviet authorities sold this pair of candelabra and other objects from St. Petersburg palaces at a Lepke sale in Berlin in November 1928 (see p. 46). Eleanor Barzin, Mrs. Post's daughter, found them in Paris when her mother's friends were looking for a suitable birthday gift. [AO and LPA]

Provenance: Winter Palace (unverified); Lepke, Berlin, 6 November 1928, nos. 197 and 198, p. 58; J. Kugel, Paris, 1967; gift to MMP on her eightieth birthday, 14 March 1967

Literature: Lepke Kunst-Auktion Haus, Katalog 2000, Berlin, 6 November 1928, nos. 197 and 198

¹ Several girandoles and candelabra by P.-P. Thomire sport winged victory figures



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standing on a globe and supporting a crown with branches for candle holders. See Hans Ottomeyer and Peter Pröschel, *Vergoldete Bronzen*, vol. 1 (Munich, 1987), pp. 328–29.

2. See Leon de Groér, *Decorative Arts in Europe 1790–1850* (New York, 1985), p. 250.

119 Armchair

Russia, 1800–10

Painted wood, varnished silver leaf, silk
H. 35½ in. (85 cm), W. 25 in. (63.5 cm)
32.16.4

Carved from a single piece of wood, the front and back legs and supports of this Empire chair terminate in gilded eagles' heads that attach to the armrests. Carved and gilded feathers decorate the arms and back supports down to the chair rail, where they transition into a carved leg that ends in ball-and-claw feet. The chair rail ornament—a scrolling leaf-and-vine pattern created from a separate wooden piece—has been applied to the rail. A skirt of wood has been carved to imitate drapery with swags and a gilded fringe at the edge. Except for the eagles' heads and feathers, the chair's wooden parts are painted a cream color with gilded borders.

Bronze was seldom used in Russian furniture making, with carved and gilded wood appliqués being much more common. In a technique widely used by Russian craftsmen, such “gilding” was created by covering silver leaf with a layer of varnish, which results in a gold color.

This chair, one of a set of four,¹ is an excellent example of serf furniture making at its most inventive. Copying the latest styles from St. Petersburg was a common practice on country estates early in the nineteenth century. Wood was plentiful in these rural areas, while other materials, such as bronze for mounts, were scarce. This set of chairs shares similarities with the carved and painted wooden furniture and interior decorations produced at Ostankino, a Sheremet'ev summer palace on the outskirts of Moscow that was built and decorated by serfs in the 1790s.

Recent conservation of the chairs



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(see pp. 325–27) has revealed indications of several previous restorations. At some earlier time the chairs were coated with dark green paint, a color fashionable in the early nineteenth century. The most famous example of a set of gilded furniture painted this green color is the suite that architect Andrei Voronikhin created for the Grecian Hall at Pavlovsk. Much more elaborate in their carving, they too have front legs that end in eagles' heads, although the armrests assume the form of eagles' wings.² [AO]

Literature: Chenevière 1988, no. 179

1. Two more identical chairs that came from a Baltimore estate were sold at the auction house of C. G. Sloan and Company in North Bethesda, Maryland (10 and 11 December 1988).

2. See Chenevière 1988, nos. 152 and 153, and Kuchumov 1981, no. 28.

120 Round Table

Berlin, 1817

Porcelain: Königliche Porzellan Manufaktur
Hard-paste porcelain, gilt bronze
H. 31¼ in. (79 cm), Dia. 19 in. (48 cm)
33.225

Two paper labels: *Anichkovskogo dvortsu, Sobst. Ego Imp. Velichestva* [Anichkov Palace, Property of His Imperial Highness], *No. 9 Stol kruglyi* [round table], *No. 35 Kom. Krasnaia komnata* [Rm. Red Room] on one; *Muzei goroda* [city museum] 2119 on other; *No. 9 . . .* painted in red on table; *161* crossed off

This table was made to celebrate the engagement of Princess Charlotte (Alexandra Fedorovna) of Prussia to Grand Duke Nicholas (the future Nicholas I) in 1817.¹ The porcelain top (fig. 113) features their profiles at the bottom, while those of Emperor Alexander I, Nicholas's brother, and King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, Charlotte's father, are at the top. A replica of the so-called Marlborough

gem (now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), representing the marriage of Cupid and Psyche, decorates the table's center. This is all rendered in grisaille on brown to imitate the appearance of cameos set against a dark blue ground. The porcelain plaque is set in a frame of gilt bronze decorated with vine leaves on a stippled ground. Fifteen laurel wreaths, each with an eagle in its center, hang from the edge of the frame. The table top is supported on tripod feet, each with the figure of a winged victory at its top.

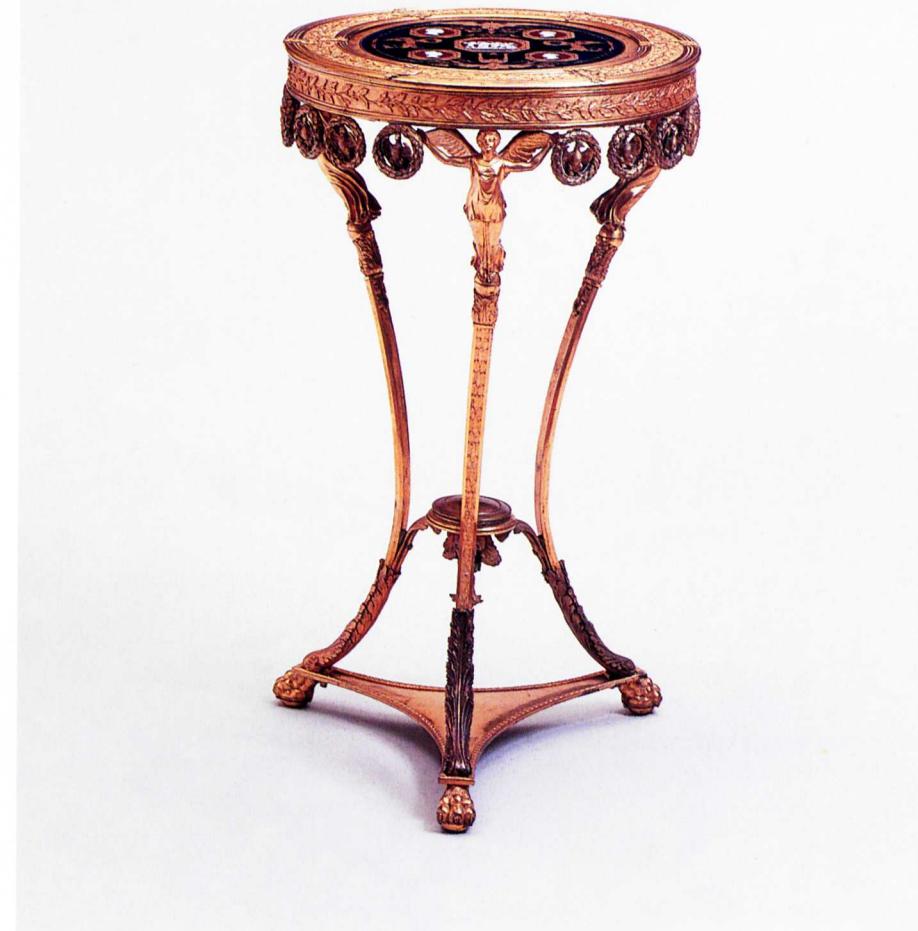
The unmarked porcelain top is almost certainly the work of the Königliche Porzellan Manufaktur (KPM) factory in Berlin. Stylistic parallels can be drawn between certain elements of this table and the Prussian service that was made at the KPM and presented to the Duke of Wellington at about the same time. (It is now on display at Apsley House, London).² The victory figures in ormolu on the Hillwood table closely resemble the biscuit victory models on Doric columns that were designed for the centerpiece of the Wellington Service (fig. 114).³ These figures are arranged around candelabra decorated at the base with eagles that were taken from a Roman model and are identical to the ones hanging from the top of the Hillwood table.

This table remained in the Anichkov Palace, the favorite residence of Nicholas I and Alexandra. Nicholas called it his "Anichkov paradise." Alexander III resided there while he was heir apparent, and it served as the preferred residence of the Dowager Empress Maria Fedorovna until the Revolution. In 1918 objects in Anichkov were reinventoried, and the palace was opened to the public as the City Museum. Beginning in the late 1920s objects were removed for sale or were transferred to other museums. [LPA and AO]

Provenance: Part of dowry of Princess Charlotte of Prussia, 1817; Anichkov Palace; City Museum; sold at Lepke, Berlin, 1928, lot 83; Museum Silver Shop, New York, 1957

1. Burkhardt Göres, director of the Palace Museums in Berlin, has been helpful in assessing the German origins of this table.

2. Simon Jervis and Maurice Tomlin (re-



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Fig. 113. Porcelain top

vised by Jonathan Vock), *Apsley House. Wellington Museum* (London, 1996), p. 194, pl. 79.

3. These figures were designed by the sculptor Schadow, who collaborated with KPM by supplying models for sculpture. See W. and I. Baer, *The Prussian Service: The Duke of Wellington's Berlin Dinner Service, 1817–1819* (Berlin, 1989) for a detailed account of this service.



Fig. 114. Victory figure designed for Wellington Service. Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London

In fact, this particular vase shares identical characteristics—from its shape and handles to the lower section of molded leaf ornament and the foot—with a vase of the same date that bears a portrait of philosopher John Locke (fig. 145).³ The portrait of Locke is still in the Hermitage collection, while the vase now belongs to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Both vases have a similar strapwork design worked out in tones of gray with gold. The Imperial Porcelain Factory exhibited the Locke vase in London at the International Exhibition of 1862. After that exhibition closed, Alexander II presented it to the South Kensington Museum. [AO]

Provenance: ALVR, Paris, 1937

1. Christie's, London, 29 June 1973, lot 23.

2. W. Martin, in *Gérard Dou* (Paris, 1911), considers number 264 to be the original, and that painting has the same provenance as the one sold at Christie's (illustrated here). Number 220 is thought to be a copy and was listed as having been in the Hermitage collection. That painting does not, however, appear in A. Somov, *Catalogue de la galerie des tableaux, deuxième partie, écoles niederlandaises et école allemande* (St. Petersburg, 1901). The painting on this vase must have been done from the copy. Three other versions of *The Herring Seller* are listed in Somov: numbers 904, 905, and 926.

3. *Art and Design in Europe and America 1800–1900* (New York, 1987), pp. 106–107.

157 Cabinet

St. Petersburg, 1873

Cabinet, attributed to Nichols and Plinke

Designer: Ippolit Antonovich Monigetti (1819–1878)

Ebonized wood, gilt bronze, lapis lazuli
H. 85 in. (216 cm), W. 43½ in. (109 cm),
D. 21½ in. (54.5 cm)

32.22

This ebonized wood chest with four doors is lavishly decorated in the neo-Renaissance style with gilt bronze mounts affixed to lapis lazuli panels. On the doors a framed and carved lapis oval is attached to the center of each floral and scroll design. Similar panels decorate the sides of the chest as well. At the top a medallion of gesso painted blue contains the interlaced initials *A* and *K*. Supported by two rampant griffins, the medallion is surmounted by the Cap of Monomakh, the old tsarist crown of Russia. The dates *1748 year 30 August* and *1773 year 30 August* are inscribed in Cyrillic on two gilded bands that hang below this medallion.

Alexander II and his wife Maria Alexandrovna presented this chest to Grand Duke Konstantin, Alexander's brother, and his wife Aleksandra Iosifovna, on their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Portraits of all four decorated the front panels when Mrs. Post found the chest in the Soviet Union. When it was delivered to Spaso House, the American ambassador's residence, the portraits had been removed. After Mrs. Post arrived in Belgium in 1938, she ordered Belgian lapis panels made to replace the missing portraits.

Ippolit Monigetti (see also cat. 152), court architect to Alexander II, designed this chest.¹ Born in Moscow, Monigetti trained at the Imperial Stroganov Institute for Technical Design. At the Academy of Arts he studied under the architect Aleksandr Briullov, brother of artist Karl Briullov. Skilled in combining ebonized wood with lapis lazuli and gilt bronze, Monigetti designed similar pieces of furniture for Empress Maria Alexandrovna to fill the Lyons Hall at Tsarskoe Selo.² This type of furniture was made in St. Petersburg at Nichols

and Plinke, which was known as the English Shop or *Magasin anglais* because it was managed by Englishmen. After the 1840s the store outstripped its competitors in production. In addition to furniture, Nichols and Plinke created table silver and gilt bronze mounts for porcelain into the mid-nineteenth century. The lapis lazuli panels were probably fashioned at the Peterhof Lapidary Works.

Grand Duke Konstantin and his family divided their time between residences at the Marble Palace in St. Petersburg and at Pavlovsk. Anatolii Kuchumov, curator of Pavlovsk, wrote to Marvin Ross that no record remained of the chest ever having been at Pavlovsk.³ Quite likely, then, it was used at the Marble Palace. [AO]

Provenance: Gift of Alexander II and his wife to Grand Duke Konstantin and his wife, 1873; purchased by MMP in Soviet Union, 1937–38

1. See V. N. Listov, *Ippolit Monigetti* (Leningrad, 1976), pp. 130–32, for a design of the chest. In the original design, the oval medallions in the center of each door are decorated with military trophies in gilt bronze on lapis lazuli rather than with the portraits that were ultimately placed there.

2. For examples see *Palaces of St. Petersburg* (Jackson, Miss., 1996), pp. 115–17.

3. Correspondence is now in Hillwood's curatorial files.



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Hermitage, for identifying the bust of Maria as the pair to the Hermitage's bust of Alexander III.

2. See I. N. Ukhanova, "Peterburgskoe iskusstvo reznoi kosti XVIII-nachala XX veka," *Teatrum machinarum* (St. Petersburg, 1993), no. 244, for the bust of Alexander III, and pp. 112–14 for more information about Seriakov.

3. Taylor 1988, p. 94.

4. *Nikolai i Aleksandra* (St. Petersburg, 1994), no. 38.

5. Ibid., p. 55.

168 Nest of Tables

St. Petersburg, 1882
Svirskii and Company
Designer: Nikolai Nabokov (1838–after 1907)
Wood
32.23.1: H. 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (71.5 cm), W. 32 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (83 cm), D. 23 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (60 cm)
32.23.2: H. 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (69.5 cm), W. 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (71.8 cm), D. 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (47.5 cm)
32.23.3: H. 26 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (67.6 cm), W. 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (65.5 cm), D. 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (41.3 cm)
32.23.4: H. 25 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (66 cm), W. 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (59.7 cm), D. 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (36.8 cm)
32.23.1–4
Marks: *S. P. Burg' / Svirskii i Ko / 21 Kazanovskaia* 21 stamped in Cyrillic; *N. Nabokov* and year 1882 burned in wood; *Anichkovskii / No. 158... / No MU... in Cyrillic on partially missing paper label¹*

An interesting combination of Western marquetry and Russian-style carving distinguishes these tables. The top of each table is elaborately inlaid with leaf scrolls in various colored woods. The center of each imperial crown is surmounted by a monogram that appears to be a free variation of the initials *MF* (in Cyrillic) for Maria Fedorovna (fig. 153).² Legs carved in the Russian style with a scrolling ornament descend to feet set at an angle. A cross rail and extensions to the foot provide additional support to the legs. Carved rosettes decorate the junctions of these parts.

These tables were made by the workshop founded by Nikolai Svirskii, a supplier to the imperial court and noted for its marquetry work.³ Its projects also included decorations for the imperial yacht *Polianaia Zvezda* (Polar Star) and for the imperial trains. Nikolai Nabokov, the designer of the tables, was a graduate of the Academy of Arts, an editor of an architecture and applied arts journal, and a teacher of applied arts. He supplied drawings to the furniture firms of both Svirskii and F. F. Meltsner.⁴

The tables were formerly in the Anichkov Palace, the last residence of Maria Fedorovna before the palace became the City Museum in 1918. Beginning in the late 1920s objects from the palace were sold or dispersed

to other museums. The tables next appeared in the catalogue of Russian objects that were offered for sale by Armand Hammer at Lord and Taylor in 1933. India Early Minshall, a prominent Ohio collector of Russian decorative art, purchased them from the Hammer Galleries in 1949.⁵

In 1972 Alexander Schaffer, proprietor of the gallery A La Vieille Russie in New York, sent photographs to Marvin Ross of another set of nesting tables with identical carved legs. Although the tops are veneered in different woods in quarter sections, the cartouche is similar and the monograms appear to be those of Maria Fedorovna. [AO]

Provenance: Anichkov Palace; Hammer Galleries, New York, 1933; India Early Minshall, 1949; MMP with ALVR, New York, acting as intermediary, 1956

1. The entry in Armand Hammer's catalogue of the Lord and Taylor sale says the Anichkov inventory number is 1585 and the second number should read *No. MUZEI goroda 449*.

2. One monogram in particular looks like O N for Olga Nikolaevna. Nicholas I's daughter Olga became queen of Württemberg. It is unclear why her cipher might appear on one table.

3. See *Historicism in Russia: Style and Epoch in the Decorative Arts 1820s–1890s* (St. Petersburg, 1996), p. 420. For a desk by Svirskii see p. 227.

4. I wish to thank Dr. Tamara Kudriavtseva of the State Hermitage for providing this biographical information.

5. These tables appear in a photograph, taken in 1951, of Mrs. Minshall's apartment in Cleveland. See Habsburg 1996, p. 97. Mrs. Minshall's Fabergé collection is now in the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Right: Fig. 153. Detail of largest table with cipher of *MF* in Cyrillic for Maria Fedorovna



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