



Neptune domptant les flots ou Le Triomphe de Galatée (1843) Antoine Vechte, the Duc de Luynes and the Revival of Repoussé

• DIRK JAN BIEMOND •

One of the most important gifts presented to the New Rijksmuseum on the occasion of its reopening in 2013 was a large repoussé silver vase, *Neptune domptant les flots ou Le Triomphe de Galathée* (fig. 1). Made by an iconic nineteenth-century artist, Antoine Vechte (1800-1868),¹ the vase was regarded during his lifetime as one of his key works. Many of the obituaries published in the international press² recalled it as the starting point of a dazzling career and Vechte was revered as a new Cellini.³ The vase was added to the museum's collection thanks to the generosity of a private donor.

Vechte's work was at the heart of the nineteenth-century debate about the arts. At the moment when the distinction between the fine arts and the applied arts was formulated for the first time clearly and argued most forcefully, his work was regarded as the great exception to this divide. In the mid-1840s, famous critics like Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) and above all Théophile Thoré-Bürger (1807-1869), regarded silversmithing as an art form in its own right akin to sculpture, and Vechte as the artist who had restored it to its rightful place.⁴ They argued that he was different because he controlled every aspect of the creative process, and so combined the concept, the design and the execution in his own hands. A new gener-

Fig. 1
ANTOINE VECHTE,
vase *Neptune
domptant les
flots ou Le Triomphe
de Galathée*, Paris,
1838-43.
Silver, h. 68 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. BK-2013-3;
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ation of artists had to arise to revive silver as an art form. In the words of Thoré-Bürger, these would not just be designers, but 'true artists... who like M. Vechte invent in their heads, design on paper and sculpt in metal'.⁵

Thoré's point of view was accepted in the nineteenth century; the idea that an artist needed to control all processes fitted seamlessly into the prevailing romantic image of him as a creative genius, and the resultant notion that first and foremost a work of art reflects the artist's personal vision. What is distinctly unusual is that Thoré-Bürger associated artistry in silver with a single technique: embossing and chasing metal with hammers and punches. Silver can be worked in a variety of techniques, and virtuoso works of art have been produced in both cast work and repoussé work. But seen from the perspective of his ideas about painting,⁶ it becomes slightly easier to understand why the uniqueness and expressiveness closely associated with the technique of repoussé could count on a warm reception. In the centuries-old debate about colour versus line, Thoré-Bürger was a fervent and influential advocate of colour, chiaroscuro effects and the loose handling of the brush, which he considered artistically progressive.

These critics who specialized in painting were not alone in their views. As we shall see, they have to be viewed

in the light of the theories developed by nineteenth-century connoisseurs of the silversmith's art. One of them was Honoré Théodore Paul Joseph d'Albert, Duc de Luynes et de Chevreuse (1802-1867),⁷ who played a central role in the reassessment of the art of repoussé. The *Neptune domptant les flots ou Le Triomphe de Galathée* vase, commissioned by him, is the first nineteenth-century three-dimensional work of art executed entirely *en repoussé*, and it instantly became the beacon of a new movement.

De Luynes and the Revival of Repoussé

One important source for developments in silversmithing in the first half of the nineteenth century is a voluminous report drawn up by De Luynes on the occasion of the Great Exhibition staged in London in 1851.⁸ In the history of *l'orfèvrerie d'art*, which he wrote as president of the international panel of judges of the precious metals section, he covered the major trends, the most prominent artists and their most important works. In his overview De Luynes focused attention on the emergence and the domination of the large trend-setting workshops.

He contrasted mass production and the far-reaching division of labour it entailed with individually made pieces of silver embossed and chased with hammers and punches. In the distant past unique works of art with individual characters were created in this technique. He recorded with satisfaction that in the preceding decades a new school of artists in silver had emerged, new specialists in an ancient technique.

In De Luynes's case the references to the historic developments in the silversmith's art, and in particular to the central role of the technique of repoussé silver in classical antiquity and the Renaissance, have a strong foundation. In the early 1830s the author of the report was already a notable classical archaeologist with a great interest in historical techniques, particularly if they could be used for modern production methods.⁹ He made his collections of archaeological and modern *objets d'art* in his Paris home available to artists and scientists.¹⁰ As an active member of various archaeological and other societies he would undoubtedly have been aware of the most important acquisitions of the time: the famous embossed Roman silver (fig. 2), which had been

Fig. 2
Skyphos with Centaurs from the Treasure of Berthouville, Rome?, c. AD 50-75. Silver, h. 11.6 cm, diam. 15 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale – Cabinet de Médailles, inv. no. 567.





Fig. 3
Tazza (inside),
*Minerva Introducing
Painting with the
Muses*, Augsburg,
c. 1620.
Silver, parcel gilt,
h. 15.3 cm, diam. 18 cm.
Paris, Musée du
Louvre, inv. no. LP 19.
Photo: © RMN –
Grand Palais
(Musée du Louvre)/
image RMN-GP.

unearthed in France in the early 1830s and housed in museum collections,¹¹ and a repoussé coupe (fig. 3) attributed to the then idolized Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571) in 1832.¹² De Luynes himself owned a sizeable collection of embossed armour from the Italian Renaissance, some of which were attributed at the time to this old master.¹³ All these factors combine to explain De Luynes's predilection for metal in repoussé and his efforts to revive this technique in the silversmithing of his own time.

The importance of De Luynes's role in the development of silversmithing does not emerge explicitly from his own report, but can be deduced from a commentary written by François-

Désiré Froment-Meurice (1801-1855), one of the most distinguished French entrants at the Great Exhibition of 1851, at De Luynes's request.¹⁴ The commentary contains a wealth of information, but is interesting above all because it emphatically states that from around 1834 De Luynes personally initiated or commissioned almost all the major works. He specifically mentioned De Luynes's idea of supporting silver in repoussé by having a series of 'vases' made, with the one by Vechte as the highlight of them all.

The Duc de Luynes's Vases

De Luynes's initiative has to be seen against the background of the burgeon-



Fig. 4

CLAUDE-AIMÉ
CHENAVARD (model)
and FRANÇOIS
DURAND (execution),
vase *Le Triomphe
d' Amphitrite*, in or
before 1834.

Silver, parcel gilt.
From A. Chenavard,
*Album de
l'ornemaniste*,
Paris 1835, fig. 51.

ing interest in the Renaissance at that time. At the 1831 Salon, Claude-Aimé Chenavard (1798-1838) showed some designs for Sèvres vases in Renaissance shapes; and the bronze *tableau de table* he designed for the Duc d'Orléans in 1834 must have been impressive.¹⁵ A number of parcel gilt objects were made for the same client, among them a ewer with the *Triomphe d'Amphitrite* exhibited in 1834 (fig. 4).¹⁶ It is obvious that this is a first attempt. Whereas the model, the segmentation of the sculptural elements and the use of acanthus vines reference examples from the Renaissance, the strongly accentuated, horizontal jointing and the execution of the various details are still late Empire.

The vases made for De Luynes some years later marked the start of a new phase. From the visual language, the



Fig. 5

ADOLPH VICTOR
GEOFFROY-
DECHAUMES
(model) and CHARLES
LOUIS WAGNER
(execution), vase
*Tempérance et
de l'Intempérance*
Paris, c. 1837-39.
Silver, parcel gilt,
h. 62.8 cm.
Paris, Musée du Louvre,
inv. no. OA 12119.
Photo: © RMN – Grand
Palais (Musée du
Louvre)/Jean Gilles
Berizzi.

design idiom and the technique there is evidence of a deeper knowledge of the world of the sixteenth century, consciously used to create new works of art. The objective and the composition of the set are known thanks to the collector and art historian Eugène Piot (1812-1890).¹⁷ In 1844 he wrote that the vases were ultimately intended for Dampierre, the château that De Luynes had had extensively renovated from 1839 on, and that four vases in total were to be made.¹⁸ We actually know of two of them – *Tempérance et de l'Intempérance*, a large ewer completed in 1839 by Charles Louis Wagner (1799-1841) in the collection of the Louvre (fig. 5),¹⁹ and the vase, almost as large, made by Antoine Vechte in 1843 and now in the Rijksmuseum (see fig. 1). The two works were described by Piot and later by De Luynes as milestones in the development of silversmithing as an art form and they provide a unique insight into their ideals and their results put into practice.

Wagner's Contributions

The sculptures and reliefs on Wagner's first ewer depicted the merits of moderation and the dangers of excessive drinking. The Latin inscriptions explain the meaning of the different scenes. In this case plaster models have survived (fig. 6)²⁰ and it is clear that its

appearance was determined to a considerable degree by a young sculptor, Adolph Victor Geoffroy-Dechaumes (1816-1892). The models were then translated into silver in Wagner's workshop and finished. This last stage is important, because it is then that the various nuances in lustre, colour and detail can be introduced in the sculptural elements and the final elaboration of the ornament can be determined.

This ewer was worked on for at least two years. Accounts show that the sculptor received an initial payment for models in November 1837, and we know that the piece was completed in May 1839. We have more information about the pendant, which featured the myth of the water nymph Ondine from a novel by Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué (1777-1843) (fig. 7). It was commissioned in January 1840, the first wax model for the bas relief was submitted to De Luynes in July 1842, Geoffroy-Dechaumes completed the models in February 1844 and the ewer was finished in June 1844.²¹ The fact that some models could still be worked on at the last moment has to do with the technique used to make these vases. The process of refining the models could continue almost until the last moment because the foot, body, neck and handle were cast separately.

Compared with the ewer by Chenavard discussed above (see fig. 4), it is clear that both vases stem from the same source, but the execution is much freer. The model, the placement of the sculptures on the handle and under the spout and the broad relief correspond; in the ewers by Wagner and Geoffroy-Dechaumes the model is kept in balance by the sculptures and the stepped sections of the base. Naturalistically executed decorations are references to the world of the renowned silversmith Wenzel Jamnitzer (1507/08-1585) of Nuremberg.²² What was new was that all the elements were organized in a complex visual idiom around a single central theme – wine or water.



Fig. 6

ADOLPH VICTOR
GEOFFROY-
DECHAUMES,
*Model for the Bas
Relief* (fig. 5),
Paris, 1837.
Plaster, dimensions
unknown.
Paris, Musée des
Monuments
français – Cité de
l'architecture,
inv. no. MOU 9089.
Photo: © C. Lenfant/
CAPA/MMF-Fonds G.-D.



In his review of the two ewers in 1851, De Luynes stressed the collaboration between sculptor and silversmith, examining the different techniques employed. With regard to the vase completed in 1839 he praised Wagner as a pioneer and the first silversmith in modern times able to execute an important part in embossed and chased work. On the other hand there was also room for criticism, particularly when De Luynes compared these ewers with Vechte's creations: 'In his repoussé or cast vases he has never obtained the general effects of mass and composition to rival M. Vechte's works.'²³

Vechte's Contributions

We do not know when De Luynes commissioned Vechte to make the *Neptune domptant les flots ou Le Triomphe de Galathée* vase or how they came into contact.²⁴ Given the length of time that the preparation for the *Mythe de l'Ondine* ewer took, it must have been started around 1838. What we do know is that Vechte, too, made a three-dimensional model in plaster, which was discussed in detail in *L'Artiste* in November 1840.²⁵ It must have been almost the final version because the description of the model and the decorations correspond exactly

Fig. 7
ADOLPH VICTOR
GEOFFROY-
DECHAUMES
(model) and
WAGNER AND
MENTION
(execution), ewer
Le mythe d'Ondine,
1840-44.
Silver, parcel gilt
and patinated. From
*Cabinet de l'amateur
et de l'antiquaire*,
first series 3 (1844),
p. 266.

Fig. 8
Detail of the coat
of arms on the neck
(fig. 1).



with the finished result. Small changes were possible up until the last stage. The arms of Charles d'Albert, the first Duc de Luynes (1578-1621) (fig. 8) were added last. In April 1843 the shape of the escutcheon supporters had still not been finalized; in October of that year De Luynes reported to a friend that the vase was almost finished.²⁶

De Luynes undoubtedly played an important role in the creation of this piece. For example in April 1843 he personally made the first sketches for a new project to be commissioned from Vechte. They were then worked up into a design by the sculptor Jean-Jacques Feuchère (1807-1852). This ewer, completed by Vechte in 1847, depicted the excesses that drink could lead to: a drunken Bacchus adorned the handle; centaurs on the frieze overcome by drink fought with the Lapiths.²⁷ We only know of later variations of this ewer (fig. 9), so it not possible to ascertain the precise extent to which it was linked to Vechte's first vase.

Feuchère was probably also involved in the *Triumph of Galatea*, although his contribution was certainly nowhere near as great as Geoffroy-Dechaumes's in the ewers by Wagner. Whereas De Luynes considered the latter to be the result of a collaboration, he confined himself to a few words about the vases by Vechte with the observation that the elements which the artist had borrowed from Feuchère's drawings possessed a totally individual character, 'on anything he borrowed, from Feuchère's drawings or elsewhere, he put his own artistic and energetic stamp, always creating a whole by balancing the most vigorous groups with numerous details, to attract the viewer and rest the eye'.²⁸

Given that in all cases the same client outlined the general framework, it is not surprising that Vechte's vase displays similarities to the *Temperance* ewer completed by Wagner and Geoffroy-Dechaumes in 1839 (see fig. 5). The construction and sectioning of the foot and the positioning of the three-



dimensional sculptures follow the same pattern, and the high protruding handles with reclining female figures also correspond. The totally different effect that was achieved came about because Vechte used a different type of vehicle for his creativity – the sort of tall vase with a narrow base and two handles is reminiscent of a classical amphora – and above all because of his interpretation of it. As Vechte made the bottom-most joint between the base and the body extremely narrow, it seems as if the vase is made of two parts; the whole of the upper section hovers above the children's heads. The positioning of the handles at slightly

Fig. 9
ANTOINE VECHTE,
vase *Le combat
des Centaures
et Lapithes*, Paris,
before 1854.
From Henri Bouilhet,
Musée Rétrospectif,
vol. 2 (1910), p. 207.



Fig. 10

ATTRIBUTED TO
HYPPOLYTE BAYARD,
photograph of
*Neptune domptant
les flots ou
Le Triomphe
de Galathée*,
Paris, c. 1847.
Salted paper print,
189 x 129 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. RP-F-2013-127.

different heights gives the impression that the topmost part balances on a fountain of water. The fact that this positioning is original can be established from a number of photographs taken around 1847 (fig. 10).²⁹ The much more fluid organic effect of the vase as a whole is further reinforced by the way the reliefs and the partially freestanding sculptures are incorporated into the relatively flat parts. These areas are decorated with a partly mat pattern of vines in which there is always something new to discover. The longer you look, the more new creatures reveal themselves: children playing, Gorgon

masks and monsters. Even spiders seem to have spun their webs there (figs. 11-16).

The compositions and sculptures are part of a lavish and varied iconographic programme grouped around the theme of water. They can be identified with certainty thanks to the detailed comments about the 1840 plaster model and the descriptions of the vase written in 1844 and 1851. The central medallions on the body represent the title; the front shows the sea god Neptune holding the seas in check, the back has the sea nymph Galatea in triumph. Both stories have roots in classical literature. The

moment when Neptune warns the rebellious wind gods and commands the seas to abate comes from Virgil's *Aeneid* (book I, line 135). The scene of the sea nymph Galatea mirrors the description in Philostratus's *Imagines* (book II, chapter 18), in which her breathtaking beauty is used as a metaphor for the charm of the calm sea, praised by her retinue of tumbling children and various nymphs.

The contrast between the sea's dangers and its charms is elaborated in secondary scenes. The children around the base can use sea monsters as mounts; taming the octopi, dragons and dolphins has rendered them harmless. On the frieze above the medallions the fight with sea snakes and sea dragons is still in full swing.

Here Nereids (from Galatea's retinue) and mermen (Neptune's companions) fight the monsters side by side. The handles and the lid represent half-human beings, Sirens and the nymph Scylla. According to ancient Greek sources they were all daughters of the god Phorcys, the personification of the evil of the sea. According to *L'Artiste* the Sirens are shown in action, and they are on the point of devouring children. The nymph Scylla is on the lookout, ready to lure sailors to disaster with her irresistible song.

The programme and the references to classical literature would undoubtedly have been chosen by De Luynes. He was after all a classical archaeologist, who dealt with such things as iconographic problems in his publications,³⁰

Fig. 11
Back view (fig. 1).

Fig. 12
Side view (fig. 1).





Fig. 13
Detail of the
medallion on the
front (fig. 1).

Fig. 14
Detail of the
medallion on the back
(fig. 1).



Fig. 15
Detail of Scylla (fig. 1).

Fig. 16
Detail of the frieze
(fig. 1).



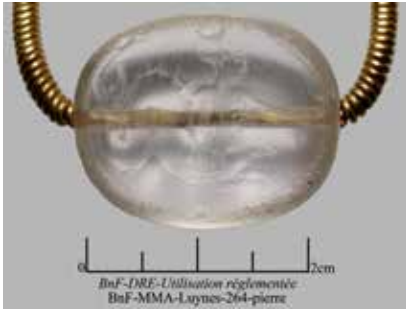


Fig. 17

Cameo with Scylla
from the De Luynes
Collection, c. 460 BC.
Rock crystal.
Paris, Bibliothèque
nationale – Cabinet
de Médailles,
inv. no. Luynes 264.



Fig. 18

MARCANTONIO
RAIMONDI after the
fresco by RAPHAEL,
The Triumph of Galatea,
c. 1515.
Engraving, 403 x 286 mm.
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. RP-P-OB-12.139.

Fig. 19

MARCANTONIO
RAIMONDI after
RAPHAEL, *Neptune
Taming the Waves*,
c. 1515-16.
Engraving, 425 x 335 mm.
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. RP-P-OB-12.146.

and it is therefore not without significance that some elements can be directly linked to antiquities in De Luynes's collection. For example it seems that the monstrous nymph Scylla, with a double fish tail and Phrygian cap, is based on a famous cameo he owned (fig. 17).³¹

It is clear that Vechte was inspired by a specific trend in the Renaissance, as Wagner and Geoffroy-Dechaumes were in their ewers. De Luynes maintained that the scenes in the medallions were based on prints by Marcantonio Raimondi (1480-1527).³² He was probably alluding to two famous compositions by Raphael (1483-1520) (figs. 18, 19), which were engraved by Raimondi around 1515; the titles of the prints are the same as those of the vase.³³ Parallels for the vines can also be found in





Fig. 20
Attributed to
MARCANTONIO
RAIMONDI,
*Sheet with Acanthus
Vines*, c. 1520.
Engraving,
162 x 118 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-P-2002-219.

Raimondi's work (fig. 20). If the scenes (see figs. 13, 14) are compared with the sixteenth-century compositions it is immediately obvious that Vechte drastically adapted them to suit his own purpose. He chose a different viewpoint for the main figures of Neptune and Galatea, for example, and he changed the number and type of secondary figures to such an extent that Raphael's compositions can only be recognized by the trained eye.

Certainly in comparison with the close collaboration between sculptor and silversmith that marked the earlier ewer by Wagner and Geoffroy-Dechaumes, the *Triumph of Galatea* is primarily the creation of the artist in silver himself, and to a far lesser degree that of the others involved, De Luynes and Feuchère. Vechte consequently

occupied a special position in De Luynes's argument. In his report he asserted that there was probably no one else in Europe like Vechte who was capable of executing works of art to his own design as the Italian Renaissance artists had done.³⁴

De Luynes naturally discussed Vechte's exceptional technical achievement in great detail. Unlike the ewer by Wagner and Geoffroy-Dechaumes, where only the bas-relief is executed in repoussé, Vechte's vase is made up exclusively of embossed and chased sections. This ambition brought various technical problems in its wake. The technical complexity of the project, particularly the almost free-standing sculptures on the foot, the handles and the cover was being stressed as far back as 1840, 'figures in three dimensions, totally executed in repoussé; of a complexity which even Benvenuto Cellini himself perhaps never tried'.³⁵ The method Vechte developed is described in detail in De Luynes's report, and even more emerges from a letter from Vechte himself, in which he justified the fact that his method was labour intensive and therefore expensive.³⁶ The approach Vechte had developed differed in several essential points from the methods of embossing and chasing silver described by Cellini, as De Luynes had already established.³⁷

Vechte began by working up his original sketches into a full-size, three-dimensional, highly detailed terracotta and plaster model. Then he finished the model and made negative moulds of brass or bronze for each part. One vase contained more than a hundred parts, which were formed separately, piece by piece, in the moulds designed for them. The greater the height of the relief, the further the silver plate is stretched and the thinner it becomes. However if the parts are to be soldered together, the thickness of the plate has to be uniform. This meant that Vechte was not able to use standard plate

material, but had to adjust the thickness of each part in advance. Lastly, the different parts were soldered together and the end result was finished from the outside with hammers and punches. Because the patination that was customary around 1840 was omitted here,³⁸ the compositions and the surfaces are defined solely by the different nuances in mat and polished finishes. This was a deliberate decision, as it meant that the quality of the repoussé work can be admired directly.

The wide range of height differences in the reliefs and the different types of sculptures gave Vechte the opportunity to explore the possibilities of his new technique. That it was more than a technical tour de force is evident from the way he deployed his resources. If the different scenes and reliefs are compared, it is clear that he was able to adapt his touch to the types of scenes and the emotions expressed in them. Looking at the main characters in the dramatic fight on the frieze at close quarters, one cannot fail to notice the differences between the expressiveness of the angular, contorted faces of the fighters, the charming, elegantly arched figures of the women in the handles and the tranquillity that holds sway in the acanthus vines. The differences in treatment explain why this work of art had such an impact when it was presented for the first time, and why according to Piot it had already caused such a sensation among connoisseurs and artists in silver alike in 1844.³⁹

Vechte and his Admirers

It is not easy to discover who the initial admirers were. Nineteenth-century biographers tended to focus on the artist himself and devoted scant attention to the network that had made the development of his unique talent possible. Over and above this, the points of contact in the biographical sketches have to be approached with some caution; both Piot and De Luynes used the information in 1844 and 1851 to

place Vechte in a unique position. When they are combined with other sources it becomes clear that Vechte's talent was recognized by specialists at an early stage. Key figures asked him to play considerable parts in important projects.

Vechte started out as a *ciseleur*, a now almost forgotten occupation that played a significant role in the production of works of art in metal. Traditionally there were specialists in every French workshop who worked with hammers and punches, removing sprues (the channels through which the molten metal is poured into moulds), smoothing away any imperfections and adding the final details.⁴⁰ There were celebrities among them, like Louis-Claude-Ferdinand Soyer (1785-1854),⁴¹ who trained Vechte until around 1826.⁴² During his years of training Vechte must have studied related techniques, such as inlaying precious metal in base metal and repoussé, embossing and chasing plates of silver in relief with hammers and punches. In the case of repoussé, unlike casting, the artist models the scenes and motifs out of metal sheet himself, which means that he can make more numerous and more subtle refinements.

To begin with Vechte used his talents to make copies and variations of historical works of art. For ten years they were bought by a Parisian dealer in antiquities, one Lhérie, who sold them as antiques. The shields and helmets were based on plaster casts of Renaissance masterpieces and compositions by Italian old masters, notably the painters and architects Raphael and Giulio Romano (1499-1546) and the printmaker Marcantonio Raimondi.⁴³ Because Vechte signed these works with the letter V, they can be identified as his.⁴⁴ Various examples were in museums and had been recognized for what they were quite early on, among them a pair of shields in the Museum Impérial (now the Hermitage) in St Petersburg identified in 1840,⁴⁵

and a large parcel gilt salver in the possession of the King of Prussia (fig. 21), noted in 1844.⁴⁶ This salver, decorated with Amazons fighting, was purchased in 1843 as a work by Michelangelo for 5,000 thalers (approximately 12,500 guilders, equal to 1,807,125 guilders in 2014). In view of the large number of reproductions made in the course of the nineteenth century, the salver must still have been considered as a masterpiece long afterwards.⁴⁷ As far as we can tell on the basis of the copies, the relief was less varied and not as organically developed as in the *Triumph of Galatea*. Whereas the figures fighting on the vase are shown in swirling motion, they still look like distinct elements on the dish.

The rapidity with which these works were 'exposed' says a lot about the international art world of the time, when the members met one another regularly in sale rooms and shared information. Something of this can be found in De Luynes, who tells us that this community of dealers and collectors was intrigued by a group of Renaissance works without pedigree, fetching high prices at sales. A few, privy to Vechte's secret, persuaded him to create only modern works of art in the future. Finally Vechte agreed: 'At last M. Vechte consented to cease hiding behind a century other than his own.'⁴⁸ De Luynes does not name those in the know, nor are they mentioned in other contemporary publications. In view of the type of objects being made in the 1830s, it goes without saying that we should look for them among the collectors of historic arms. Aside from wealthy collectors like De Luynes, an inventory drawn up in 1835 of the major private collections also names producers of modern ceremonial weapons like the gunsmith Henri Lepage (1792-1854), and Charles-Nicolas Odier (1789-1869),⁴⁹ the owner of a leading silver workshop.



Fig. 21

COPY OF ANTOINE
VECHTE, salver
*Le combat des
Amazones*,
before 1843,
the copy Germany,
in or before 1867.
Patinated cast iron,
diam. 66 cm.
London, Victoria &
Albert Museum,
inv. no. 945-1869.

It is clear from their joint involvement in one of the most high-profile commissions awarded in the late 1830s that Lepage knew Vechte well. To mark the occasion of the birth of the heir to the throne in 1838, the city of Paris decided to present a ceremonial sword to the newborn, the Comte de Paris (figs. 22, 23).⁵⁰ Lepage was given the commission for the steel blade and scabbard, which were inlaid with gold and decorated with gold reliefs respectively. The armourer called in the then still relatively unknown Vechte to emboss and chase those parts. The result was greatly admired at the time for its Renaissance idiom, the small-scale reliefs and the virtuoso execution of the whole piece. Unusually, not only the designer and the most important firms were given the right to sign; Vechte was the only craftsman given the opportunity to do so, on one of the reliefs on the scabbard. On the same occasion he would have come into contact with François-Desiré

Fig. 22

FRANÇOIS-DESIRÉ
FROMENT-MEURICE
ET AL., *Ceremonial
Sword and Scabbard
for the Comte de
Paris*, Paris, 1838-40.
Gold, enamel, steel,
rubies, diamonds and
pearls, 103.5 x 13 cm.
Paris, Musée
Carnavalet,
inv. no. OM 3242.
Photo: © Musée
Carnavalet/
Roger Viollet.

Fig. 23
JEAN-BAPISTE-
JULES KLAGMANN
(model) and
FOSSIN ET FILS
ET AL., *Hilt of the
Ceremonial Sword*
(detail of fig. 22).
Photo: © Musée
Carnavalet/
Roger Viollet.



Froment-Meurice, who coordinated all the different contributions to the ceremonial sword. In the years that followed he regularly called in Vechte. The silversmith showed various highlights at the 1844 applied arts exhibition, some of the chasing executed by Vechte.⁵¹

Eugène Piot (1812-1890) must also have been a good friend.⁵² This connoisseur, writer and collector often wrote about silver in *Le Cabinet de l'amateur et de l'antiquaire*, the magazine he founded in 1842. He used historical dissertations, among them a translation he made himself of Cellini's essay on silversmithing, as points of departure for his critiques.⁵³ Most relevant in this connection is a discussion about the works exhibited in the 1844 applied arts exhibition, in which he devoted considerable attention to Vechte.⁵⁴ His account takes the form of a passionate plea for the restoration of the position of the silversmith as an artist in his own right in general and



Fig. 24
ANTOINE VECHTE,
vase *Jupiter
foudroyant les Titans*,
Paris, 1844-47.
Silver, 75.6 x 29.8 cm.
London, The
Worshipful Company
of Goldsmiths.

repoussé in particular. Piot concludes his article with a twofold appeal: works of art in silver should be admitted to the Salons, the annual exhibitions of contemporary fine art, and the State should give commissions so that this art form, too, could play its full role.

Silversmithing as an Autonomous Art

Piot succeeded on both fronts: in 1847 and 1848 Vechte was given the opportunity to be the first silversmith to present his work at the Salons,⁵⁵ and after the revolution of 1848 he received a commission from the State.⁵⁶ The

step is unusual, but not as great as it appears at first glance. Models for works of art in silver were shown at the Salons by sculptors, and cast bronze vases they made were frequently seen there too. That both Thoré as well as Gautier reviewed works of art in silver exhaustively is extraordinary, but that they regarded it as a form of sculpture is to be expected. The fact that the critics used some of the same terms as Piot used in his argument is easily explained; from 1835 he shared a house with Gautier.⁵⁷ Undoubtedly they would have talked about it.

An analysis of *Jupiter foudroyant les Titans* (fig. 24),⁵⁸ the vase Vechte worked on from at least 1844, and Thoré's and Gautier's comments on it reveals exactly what these art critics appreciated. The subject depicted is usually part of the repertoire of the fine arts. Vechte chose the most important episode, the moment when Jupiter repels the besieging Titans with thunderbolts. Jupiter is seated at the top of the vase; the Titans attacking Olympus can be found in the handles and in the reliefs on the body. The cause of the fight – a fratricidal struggle – is depicted by the allegorical images around the base; hatred and discord are in their final death throes.

Thoré associates the composition with *The Last Judgement* by Michelangelo (fig. 25), a composition greatly admired in the nineteenth century. A comparison reveals that Vechte based the pose and the detailing of the crowning figure directly on the central figure in Michelangelo's work: Christ, disguised as Jupiter, appears on top of the cover. The Titans on the handles and in the reliefs are not quotations, although they are obviously related to Michelangelo's figures.

The use of a famous quotation was not condemned, but interpreted as a tribute to and a commentary on Michelangelo's masterpiece. By replacing the Christian content of the composition with a story with a



heathen subject, Vechte had demonstrated that Michelangelo's design idiom was not confined by the content: 'It is modern, yet it is timeless and therein lies its incomparable glory.'⁵⁹ Furthermore by changing the painting into a sculpture in silver he had created a *paragone in optima forma*.⁶⁰ The choice of the example, the transformation of the medium, and the virtuoso execution were used to enter into the dialogue with the fine arts employing the means of the repousseur in silver. This is why Thoré went into great detail about the subtleties and details that are possible in repoussé silver, but not in marble or cast bronze: 'The tiniest modulations of the skin, the roots of the hair, all the microscopic delicacies of the sharpest burin are obtained without dryness, and thus contribute to the perfection of these excellent bas-reliefs.'⁶¹

This and other publications spread Vechte's fame, although at that time it was still largely confined to the world of enthusiasts. For example, a Belgian reviewer asserted that Vechte's vase was certainly the most important masterpiece at the 1847 Salon, and that he fully understood why the art world had rallied almost unanimously behind Vechte's triumph, but that the public had yet to see the implications: 'the fact that France has a Benvenuto Cellini seems to leave the public indifferent'.⁶²

The Great Exhibition of All Nations

On 1 May 1851 when the doors of Crystal Palace were opened to the general public it was obvious for the first time how influential and how international the movement had meanwhile become. Various exhibitors showed works that were executed at

Fig. 25
NICCOLÒ DELLA CASA
after MICHELANGELO,
*Detail of the Last
Judgement*, c. 1550.
Engraving,
700 x 565 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. RP-P-39.003.



Fig. 26

C.M. FERRIER &
F. VON MARTENS,
photograph of *Jupiter
Destroying the Titans*,
1851.

Salted paper print,
207 x 153 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. RP-F-F25214-R.

least in part in the newly-discovered historical technique, and some even provided folders in which the Renaissance connotations were explained and De Luynes's project was mentioned.⁶³ The new trend was likewise visible in the modest Dutch entry; the Rotterdam silversmith Jean George Grebe (1803-1863) showed a goblet chased and embossed from a single plate, in a technique inspired by the works of the Van Vianen brothers, the seventeenth-century Dutch virtuosi in silver.⁶⁴

Vechte was the unquestioned star. His *Jupiter foudroyant les Titans*, one of the most photographed objects at the world fair (figs. 24, 26), was discussed in detail in the judges' report, and they gave the exhibitor, the British firm of Hunt & Roskell,⁶⁵ the highest possible award. Hunt & Roskell had bought the vase in Paris in 1844 and some years later had also secured the services of its maker. *Metal in repoussé* was not only judged in the precious metals category, it was also a separate sub-category in sculpture. Vechte was rewarded with the highest possible honour for designers, with the observation that 'no living artist has so fully entered into the spirit of the Italian style of the sixteenth century, commonly called the Cinque Cento'.⁶⁶ The final breakthrough meant that Vechte succeeded in interesting important clients like Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in his work,⁶⁷ and the recognition translated into the high prices paid for it. Whereas a rival like Morel received around 2,046 guilders (equal to about 296,670 guilders in 2014) for an embossed and chased silver vase in 1856, Vechte was paid around 16,275 guilders (equal to about 2,359,875 guilders in 2014), eight times as much, in 1861 for a slightly larger and more lavishly executed example.⁶⁸

Aside from Vechte's vases the most important object in repoussé at the world fair was a sculptural centrepiece on Francois-Desiré Froment-Meurice's stand (fig. 27). The iconography was determined by the well-known line of poetry 'Sine Cerere ac Baccho friget Venus' (love withers without bread and wine). Tritons and mermen carry a globe bearing symbols of the continents with a banderol of the zodiac on it. Putti with the attributes of love, music, harmony and plenty fly around the globe, and representations of the main figures from Terence's poem – Venus, Bacchus and Ceres – crown the work. The piece was given the highest possible

Fig. 27

FRANÇOIS-DESIRÉ
FROMENT-MEURICE,
*Centrepiece for the
Duc de Luynes, Paris,*
1846-49.
Silver, part gilded
and patinated,
105 x 75 x 61 cm.
Paris, Musée
du Louvre,
inv. no. OA 12518.
Photo: © RMN –
Grand Palais
(Musée du Louvre)/
Stéphane Maréchalle.



award by the judges,⁶⁹ and has recently been added to the Louvre's collections.

The object was the highlight of De Luynes's next project, a *surtout-du-table*, the completion of which would take almost ten years. The commission was agreed by De Luynes in 1846, and the first section – the centrepiece – was delivered in 1849. The designs and the models were made by a familiar name, the sculptor Jean-Jacques Feuchère. A team of chasers and embossers translated the models into silver using the method developed by Vechte.⁷⁰ De Luynes emphasized the close collaboration in his review, where he specifically stated that Feuchère had the direct supervision of the execution of the sculptures, and that the sculptor was very satisfied with the way his idea was interpreted. Froment-Meurice determined the overall image and coordinated the project as a whole. The approach is strongly reminiscent of the vases made earlier by Wagner and Geoffroy-Dechaumes (see figs. 5, 7), and there are parallels in the execution. For example, all the objects are patinated and part gilded, and have cartouches with the mottos in classical Latin. De Luynes maintained that these ewers and the centrepiece were outstanding examples of the capacity of the major workshops to produce 'une pensée générale' – a universal thought – in silver.⁷¹

In Conclusion

The fact that De Luynes had his monogram and the arms of a revered ancestor chased on the neck of *Neptune domptant les flots ou Le Triomphe de Galathée* is enough in itself to tell us that this vase was exceptional. Like the much simpler *Jupiter foudroyant les Titans*, this work of art should be understood as a vehicle for demonstrating the knowledge, creativity and virtuosity of the repousseur in silver.

Here the subject of the *paragone* is the work of Raphael. By choosing

principal scenes from the prints by Marcantonio Raimondi as the starting point, Vechte was reflecting an early nineteenth-century view that these reproductive prints of Raphael's works were to be valued as works of art in their own right because the forms based on classical sculptures were accentuated more strongly in them.⁷² This aspect was also emphasized by calling on the same classical writings for the subjects of the accompanying sculptures and reliefs that also served Renaissance artists as the starting points for their creations. The decision to execute the vase entirely in repoussé is also evidence of a special appreciation of antiquity; the three-dimensional figures were realized in the same way as in the Roman *skyphos* (see fig. 2). The fact that a coherent work of art was created despite the profusion of references is down to Vechte's execution: the organic design, the use of a wide range of different kinds of reliefs in different formats, and the endless variations in the finishing combine to produce a playful and spontaneous end result.

Viewed in this light, the contemporary criticisms quoted at the start take on a different meaning. Vechte's exceptional position and the nineteenth-century ideal of the artist-craftsman Thoré associated with it are understandable when they are set against the publications by Piot and above all by De Luynes. At that time works of art in silver were often the result of a collaboration of different specialists, in which invention, design, presentation drawing, model, execution and completion could be in several hands. Piot and De Luynes emphasize that the size of everyone's share could vary within that group. In his vase Vechte relished the starring role; the supporting parts in this case were taken by De Luynes and Feuchère. It was precisely because their contribution remained limited that Vechte's art was given the scope to shine.

NOTES

- 1 The most frequently used source for Vechte's life and works is H. Bouilhet, *Musée Rétrospectif. L'Orfèvrerie Française à l'exposition universelle internationale de 1900*, vol. 2, Paris 1910, pp. 204-12. Modern art historians approach this information with some caution (cf. A. Dion-Tenenbaum, *Orfèvrerie française du XIX^e siècle*, coll. cat. Paris (Musée du Louvre) 2011, pp. 297-98). In Vechte's case, Bouilhet uncritically adopted various assumptions from H. Marlot, *Notice sur Antoine Vechte*, Semur-en-Auxois 1908. The errors are tacitly corrected in this essay. Cf. B. Mundt, *Historismus, Kunsthandwerk und Industrie im Zeitalter der Weltausstellungen*, exh. cat. Berlin (Kunstgewerbemuseum) 1973, no. 208, and biography, unpagéd; S. Bury, 'The Lengthening Shadow of Rundell's, part III', *Connoisseur* 161 (1966), pp. 218-22, esp. pp. 221-22; and J. Culme, *Nineteenth Century Silver*, London 1977, esp. pp. 113-14. L. Southwick, 'The Sword of General Sir William Fenwick Williams', *Arms & Armour* 9 (2012), pp. 101-53 offers the most recent overview of the literature in English.
- 2 For example *The Art Journal* 8 (1869), p. 25, supplementary to *The Art Journal* 7 (1868), pp. 245-46; *The Illustrated London News* 53 (1868, 2), p. 362 (30 October 1868); l'abbé Collet, 'Antoine Vechte, sculpteur français', *Revue de la Normandie* 18 (1868), pp. 568-76; *Kunstchronijk* 10 (1869), p. 96. Obituaries are by definition unreliable; depending on the perspective of the writer old scores are settled or faults are glossed over. For the early years, 1830-50, the facts mentioned can only be used if they are confirmed by contemporary sources.
- 3 In the nineteenth century Cellini was regarded as the most important silversmith of all time. Thanks to such things as the opera *Benvenuto Cellini* (1838) by Hector Berlioz, his name was generally known to the public at large. Several publications about him appeared between 1770 and 1840 as well as translations of his treatises and, in particular, his autobiography. For an overview see A. Biancofiore, *Benvenuto Cellini artiste-écrivain: l'homme à l'œuvre*, Paris 1998, pp. 321-32.
- 4 The contemporary reviews are to be found in T. Gautier, *Le salon de 1847*, Paris 1847, pp. 218-19; and T. Thoré-Bürger, *Le salon de 1847*, Paris 1847, pp. 201-04.
- 5 'des véritables artistes, non seulement des dessinateurs, mais des praticiens qui, comme M. Vechte, inventent dans leur tête, dessinent sur le papier et sculptent sur le métal'. Thoré-Bürger, op. cit. (note 4), p. 204.
- 6 For Thoré-Bürger's views on painting, see above all F. Suzman Jowell, *Thoré-Bürger and the Art of the Past*, New York 1977 (diss. Cambridge). F. Suzman Jowell, 'From Thoré to Bürger: The Image of Dutch Art before and after the Musées de la Hollande', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 49 (2001), pp. 45-61, provides a summary and an overview of the recent literature.
- 7 F. Bodenstein, 'Luynes, Honoré d'Albert (duc de)', in *Dictionnaire critique des historiens de l'art actifs en France de la Révolution à la Première Guerre Mondiale* (2009), <http://www.inha.fr/fr/ressources/publications/dictionnaire-critique-des-historiens-de-l-art/luynes-honore-d-albert-duc-de.html>; J.L.A. Huillard-Bréholles, *Notice sur M. le duc de Luynes*, Paris 1868; J.D. Guignaut, 'Notice historique sur la vie et les travaux de M. le duc d'Albert de Luynes', *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 12 (1868), pp. 366-92. Guignaut, like De Luynes a Membre de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, is a reliable source; he met De Luynes in 1825 and worked closely with him. The recollections of the archivist Huillard-Bréholles should be approached with greater circumspection; from around 1852 he was one of De Luynes's protégés, see Guignaut, op. cit. (this note), p. 373.
- 8 H.T.P.J. d'Albert, duc de Luynes et de Chevreuse, 'Industrie des Métaux Précieux, Exposition universelle de 1851, Travaux de la Commission Française, I^{vième} groupe, XXIII^{ième} jury', *Travaux de la Commission Française sur l'industrie des nations publié par l'ordre de l'Empereur*, vol. 6, Paris 1854, part 3 (improved and expanded reprint of the 1851 report, see Guignaut, op. cit. (note 7), p. 376.
- 9 Results of the research into the composition of ceramic glazes from antiquity and the manufacture of damascus steel were published in 1832 and 1844 respectively: 'De la poterie antique', *Annales de l'institut archéologique de Rome*, Rome 1832, pp. 138-50; *Mémoire sur la fabrication de l'acier fondu et damassé*, Paris 1844. For a complete list of publications see Huillard-Bréholles, op. cit. (note 7), pp. 147-51.
- 10 In 1862 the archaeological collections were gifted to the French state and placed in the

- Cabinet de Médailles; see most recently C. Colonna, *De Rouge et de Noir: Les vases grecs de la collection De Luynes*, exh. cat. Paris (Bibliothèque nationale) 2013, and the literature mentioned there. The collections were kept in the hôtel De Luynes et de Chevreuse, 31-33 rue Saint-Dominique, Paris. The house was partially demolished in 1877 and completely demolished in 1900 (C. Sellier, *l'hôtel de Chevreuse ou de Luynes*, reprint of *Correspondance historique et archéologique*, Paris 1900).
- 11 In 1830 a significant quantity of Roman silver was discovered in Berthouville (Haute-Normandie), and housed in the Cabinet de Médailles in Paris. The most interesting objects are a number of drinking bowls with Centaurs, see J. van de Grift, 'Tears and Revel: The Allegory of the Berthouville Centaur Scyphi', *American Journal of Archaeology* 88 (1984), pp. 377-88. In 1836 a second discovery was made near Notre-Dame-d'Alençon (Maine-et-Loire), which was finally housed in the Louvre. For both see F. Baratte et al., *Trésors d'orfèvrerie gallo-romains*, exh. cat. Paris (Musée du Luxembourg) 1989, and the literature mentioned there.
 - 12 The 'Cellini coupe' (Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. L.P.19; D.876) was purchased by the Musée du Louvre in 1832 and was regarded as a work by Benvenuto Cellini in the nineteenth century. According to J.R. ter Molen, *Van Vianen, een Utrechtse familie van zilver-smeden met een internationale faam*, Leiden 1984 (diss. Leiden), vol. 2, no. 28, the about 1620 in Augsburg marked tazza could be a later copy of a Paulus van Vianen example, made in Munich around 1600.
 - 13 S.W. Phyrri and J.A. Godroy, *Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance: Filippo Negroni and his Contemporaries*, exh. cat. New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art) 1999, nos. 180, 184, 235, 239.
 - 14 Reaction by François-Désiré Froment-Meurice, dated 22 July 1852, included in full in P. Burty, *F.D. Froment-Meurice, argentier de la ville 1802-1855*, Paris 1883, pp. 7-15, for this information see p. 14. For Froment-Meurice see D. Alcouffe et al., *Trésors d'Argent. Les Froment-Meurices, orfèvres romantiques parisiens*, exh. cat. Paris (Musée de la Vie romantique) 2003.
 - 15 D. Alcouffe et al., *Un âge d'or des arts décoratifs*, exh. cat. Paris (Galerie nationale du Grand Palais) 1991, no. 136 (vase de la renaissance Chenavard, design January 1830, execution 1832); tableau de table, 1834-39, design by Chenavard, executed by the sculptors Barye & Klagmann, see *ibid.*, nos. 167-76, overall picture fig. 176a.
 - 16 Ewer, designed by Chenavard, executed by François Durand (1792-c. 1874), illustrated in A. Chenavard, *Album de l'ornemaniste, recueil d'ornements dans tous les genres*, Paris 1835 (reprint 1845), fig. 51. For Durand see Dion-Tenenbaum, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 277.
 - 17 The project is specifically discussed in E. Piot, 'Orfèvrerie', *Cabinet de l'amateur et de l'antiquaire, first series* 3 (1844), pp. 250-68, esp. p. 263 (Wagner/Geoffroy-Dechaumes, and p. 268 (Vechte).
 - 18 *Ibid.*, p. 263. For the restoration of Dampierre see T. de Luynes, 'Duban à Dampierre', in B. Foucart, *Felix Duban: Les couleurs de l'architecte*, exh. cat. Blois (Château de Blois) 1996, pp. 150-55. Parts of the restoration of the château were never completed, so it is not clear when the works of art were transferred from Paris to Dampierre. In 1905 Vechte's vase was in the Grand Salon at Dampierre, see A. Guérinet (ed.), *Le Château Historique de Dampierre: reproductions en Phototypie*, Paris (Librairie d'Art Décoratif) s.a., pp. 13, 14. The publication is not dated, but must have been published around 1905. In that year the book was mentioned in several magazines, among others in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* (1905), p. 523.
 - 19 A. Dion-Tenenbaum, 'Une aiguière de Wagner commandée par le duc de Luynes', in *Objets d'art. Mélanges en l'honneur de Daniel Alcouffe*, Dijon 2004, pp. 337-47; Dion-Tenenbaum, *op. cit.* (note 1), no. 123.
 - 20 In 2000 the Musée des Monuments français was given a set of five models: one model for the ewer without handle and spout, one for the frieze with plants and animals, one for the figurative frieze, one for the handle and one for the central figure on the front, *Vérité* (Dion-Tenenbaum, *op. cit.* (note 19), note 2). Since then a design has also come to light, see Dion-Tenenbaum, *op. cit.* (note 1), no. 123.
 - 21 For the ewer with the myth of Ondine see Dion-Tenenbaum, *op. cit.* (note 19), pp. 339-42.
 - 22 The artistic personality of Wenzel Jamnitzer was described for the first time in the late 1820s. For the nineteenth-century appreciation of his work see esp. E. Isphording, 'Wenzel Jamnitzer und sein Werk im Urteil der Nachwelt', in *Wenzel Jamnitzer und die Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst 1500-1700*, exh. cat. Nuremberg (Germanisches Nationalmuseum) 1985, pp. 191-206, esp. p. 193.
 - 23 'Dans ses vases repoussés ou fondues il n'a jamais obtenu des effets généraux de masse et de composition pareils à ceux des œuvres

- de M. Vechte.' De Luynes, op. cit. (note 8), pp. 68-69.
- 24 Bouilhet, op. cit. (note 1), p. 205, says Vechte was given the commission in 1836. Dion-Tenenbaum, op. cit. (note 19), p. 347, and op. cit. (note 1), p. 242, suggests that the definite commission was given much later, around 1843.
- 25 H. Delaunay (ed.), 'Beaux Arts', *l'Artiste. Journal de la littérature et des Beaux Arts*, second series, 6 (1840), pp. 342-43.
- 26 In April 1843 De Luynes sent various examples of standing and seated armed savages as examples for the supporters. The finished version shown here is of seated naked men. The details are described in letters from De Luynes to the gunsmith Henri Lepage (1792-1854) and his son-in-law Lepage-Moutier, and are mentioned by Dion-Tenenbaum, op. cit. (note 19), p. 343, notes 19, 20.
- 27 '... une aigière de très grande dimensions, dont le sujet décoratif était le combat des Centaures et de Lapithes, avec un Bacchus ivre sous l'anse, formée par un cep de vigne où grimpe un enfant pour presser une grappe dans la coupe du dieu' (De Luynes, op. cit. (note 8), p. 76). This vase was seen by Piot in Vechte's workshop in 1844 (Piot, op. cit. (note 17), p. 268), and in 1868 by Huillard-Bréholles (Huillard-Bréholles, op. cit. (note 7), pp. 89-90). The current whereabouts are unknown. The claim by Huillard-Bréholles that Vechte made an identical copy for Lepage cannot be verified. There were certainly variations; one was mentioned in Lepage's estate in 1854, probably the example that was in the possession of his descendants in 1900, see Bouilhet, op. cit. (note 1), fig. p. 207; Dion-Tenenbaum, op. cit. (note 19), pp. 345, 347, fig. 12 and note 25; Dion-Tenenbaum, op. cit. (note 1), p. 198, fig. 1. Vechte's rival Morel, who had worked with him on the example for De Luynes in 1847, made a variation prior to 1851; it was shown at the Great Exhibition in London and published in 1857 as a design by Vechte (cf. J.C. Robinson, *The Treasury of Ornamental Art*, London (Day & Son) [1857], fig. 35). For Morel see Dion-Tenenbaum, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 290-91.
- 28 'Ce qu'il prend à autrui, ce qu'il copiait sur les dessins de Feuchères, reçoit de lui un cachet d'art et d'énergie qui ne nuit jamais à l'ensemble et les groupes les plus vigoureux sont accompagnés d'accessoires et de détails qui occupent l'oeuil et le reposant.' De Luynes, op. cit. (note 8), p. 75.
- 29 One print in an album, *Dessins photographiques sur papier Recueil No. 2* (attributed to Hippolyte Bayard (1801-1887) or Nikolaas Henneman (1813-1893), Paris, c. 1847), Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. no. 84.XO.968.130. One variation now in the Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-F-2013-127.
- 30 Bodenstein, op. cit. (note 7).
- 31 For this cameo and its interpretation see M. Govers Hopman, *Scylla: Myth, Metaphor, Paradox*, Cambridge 2012.
- 32 'Un beau vase d'argent repoussé, orné d'un double composition empruntée aux gravures de Marc-Antoine' (De Luynes, op. cit. (note 8), p. 75).
- 33 For the relationship between Marcantonio Raimondi and Raphael see most recently L. Pon, *Raphael, Dürer und Marcantonio Raimondi: Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print*, New Haven/London 2004.
- 34 'Il n'en existe peut-être en Europe qu'un seul capable de composer et d'exécuter lui-même comme le faisaient autrefois les maîtres italiens, que Vechte' (De Luynes, op. cit. (note 8), p. 74).
- 35 'figures en ronde bosse, en argent repoussé; difficulté immense, que Benvenuto Cellini lui-même n'aborda peut-être jamais' (Delaunay, op. cit. (note 25), p. 343).
- 36 Dion-Tenenbaum, op. cit. (note 1), p. 244; the approach is confirmed by John Harrison (J. Harrison, *The Decoration of Metals: Chasing, Répoussé and Saw-Piercing*, London 1894, pp. 54-55).
- 37 For Cellini's manner cf. R. and M. Fröhlich, *Benvenuto Cellini: Abhandlungen über die Goldschmiedekunst und die Bildhauerei*, exh. cat. Basel (Gewerbemuseum) 1974, chapters 22 (vases) and 25 (full figure sculptures); for the main differences between Cellini and Vechte see De Luynes, op. cit. (note 8), p. 77. For the technical details see the condition report drawn up by Joosje van Bennekom, Sara Creange, and Jeroen van Halder on 19 July 2013.
- 38 As is evident from the photographs taken around 1847 (see fig. 9 and note 29) the current condition is the original.
- 39 Piot, op. cit. (note 17), p. 268.
- 40 The importance of *ciseleurs* as an occupational group can be inferred among other things from the fact that there were specialist handbooks in circulation for them, such as J. Garnier, *Nouveau manuel complet du ciseleur: contenant la description des procédés de l'art de ciseler et repousser tous les métaux ductiles...*, Paris (Librairie Roret) 1859.
- 41 For Soyer see É. Lebon, 'Répertoire', in *Le fondeur et le sculpteur ('Les Essais de l'INHA')*, Paris 2012.
- 42 Cf. Dion-Tenenbaum, op. cit. (note 1), p. 297.
- 43 Piot, op. cit. (note 17), p. 267.

- 44 O. von Falke, 'Silberfälschungen', *Belvédère/Forum: Kunst und Kultur der Vergangenheit; Zeitschrift für Sammler und Kunstfreunde* 5 (1924), pp. 1-6, provides an overview of the objects known at that time. Two embossed iron shields by Vechte, sold in 1836 as works by Cellini and Primaticcio to Charles Albert, King of Sardinia for 8,500 and 7,980 French francs respectively (one of them illustrated in Alcouffe et al., op. cit. (note 15), no. 298, fig. 298a) are still in the arms collection in Turin. For a helmet in the Royal Armouries see Southwick, op. cit. (note 1), p. 115, figs. 9a-d.
- 45 Delaunay, op. cit. (note 25), p. 343.
- 46 According to Harrison, op. cit. (note 36), figs. xxx and xxxi, and Bouilhet, op. cit. (note 1), p. 204, the design for this salver may have been made by Jean-Jacques Feuchère. The source for this is an article by Jules Janin, 'Jean Feuchère', *L'Europe artiste*, 10 April 1855, in which he states that several sketches found in Feuchère's estate were used in the production of 'fakes', designed by Feuchère and executed by Vechte. Six designs in Feuchère's estate are described as such by Janin, see J. Janin, *Catalogue d'objets d'art et de curiosité, meubles en bois sculpté, bronzes, marbres, porcelaines anciennes, livres d'art, médailles, vitraux, tableaux et dessins anciens, des écoles italienne, française et flamande, et d'une importante réunion de dessins, terres cuites et modèles de M. Feuchère*, sale cat. Paris, 8-10 March 1853, p. 23, nos. 37-40 (ex. RKD O-2501 – mf no. 305), all for shields. Only two of them are described with subjects: no. 40, 'Le combat des Amazones', and no. 39, 'Le combat des Centaures et Lapithes', both according to Janin bought by Russian collectors. Since the subjects differ from the Vechte examples known to have been bought during the nineteenth century by Russian, Italian and German collectors (note 44), and moreover Feuchère's drawings for official projects, like the centrepiece for De Luynes (see below) and the shield for Froment-Meurice (Piot, op. cit. (note 17), fig. xii) executed by other chasers and embossers, are not identified by Janin, his statements are to be treated with extreme caution, especially since his hypothesis is not supported by contemporary sources. As the designs themselves are not known today, it is impossible to link either of them to Vechte's Amazon salver, nor can the involvement of this sculptor be corroborated on the basis of this description alone.
- 47 As far as we know the original salver did not survive. In 1924 it was still in the Berliner Schloss. Mundt, op. cit. (note 1), unpagd,
- describes the publication history of this object at length. Copies of this salver were among others made in the iron foundries in Iserlohn, at least from c. 1867 onwards (Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. 945-1869), and by Elkington, Mason & Co, Birmingham, from c. 1851 onwards (M. Digby Wyatt, *The Industrial Arts of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2, London 1851, plate 138). For the information on Elkington I would like to thank Alistair Grant (University of Sussex, Victoria and Albert Museum), who is currently writing a thesis on this subject.
- 48 'M. Vechte consentit enfin à ne plus s'abriter derrière un autre siècle que le sien' (De Luynes, op. cit. (note 8), pp. 74-75).
- 49 Général Bardin, 'Recherches historiques sur les armures et les cabinets d'armes où elles ont été conservées', *Le Spectateur militaire: recueil de science d'art et d'histoire militaires* 19 (1835), pp. 170-79.
- 50 The design and the model for the hilt were made by Jean-Baptiste-Jules Klagmann (1810-1867), the execution of the hilt was awarded to the jewellers Fossin et Fils. The overall coordination was in the hands of Froment-Meurice. Paris, Musée Carnavalet, inv. no. OA 209; Alcouffe et al., op. cit. (note 15), no. 212; the design is illustrated in Alcouffe et al., op. cit. (note 14), no. 8, fig. p. 89. Initially the repoussé work of the hilt was probably also entrusted to Vechte. When Vechte had taken too long over his contribution and Klagmann had complained to Froment-Meurice (Alcouffe et al., op. cit. (note 14), p. 95), the latter brought in another embosser and chaser, Jean Valentin Morel. The extent of Vechte's involvement is specified in Delaunay, op. cit. (note 25), pp. 342-43.
- 51 According to Piot, Froment-Meurice sketched his designs himself and brought in specialists for the different sections. Their names are faithfully recorded by Piot and later by De Luynes. One example is the renowned Coupe des Vendanges, a first version of which was shown in 1844. The sculptor Geoffroy-Dechaumes supplied the models for the sculptural sections; the piece was rendered in silver by the silversmith Jules Wiëse (1818-1890) and the chasing was done by Vechte and Louis Augustin Mulleret (1803-1874) (Alcouffe et al., op. cit. (note 14), no. 13). How complex the division of labour could be is evident from another commission – a gold chalice intended for the Pope. Froment-Meurice must have made the first sketches; the visual idiom was determined by the client, a famous prelate; the reliefs

- and sculptures were modelled by a sculptor, Pierre Alexandre Schoenewerk (1820-1885), and the chasing was done by various specialists: Vechte, Joseph Fannièrre (1820-1897) and Mulleret (Piot, op. cit. (note 17), p. 260). The names are not mentioned in Alcouffe et al., op. cit. (note 14), no. 33bis.
- 52 For his biography see C. Piot, 'Piot, Eugène (1812-1890)', in *Dictionnaire critique des historiens de l'art actifs en France de la Révolution à la Première Guerre mondiale* (2010), <http://www.inha.fr/spip.php?article2492>; and *ibid.*, 'Eugène Piot (1812-1890), publiciste et éditeur', *Histoire de l'art* 47 (2000), pp. 3-17.
- 53 E. Piot, 'Benvenuto Cellini, traité de l'orfèvrerie, traduit de l'italien pour la première fois', *Cabinet de l'amateur et de l'antiquaire*, first series, vol. 2 (1843), pp. 241-317.
- 54 Piot, op. cit. (note 17).
- 55 In 1847: 'vase Jupiter foudroyant les Titans' (no. 2173); in 1848: 'coupe en argent, représentant l'harmonie d'Olympe' (no. 2350), 'non fini', and 'un plat en argent, représentant le frappe du rocher' (no. 2331).
- 56 This vase, entitled *du Paradis perdu ou de la Création*, was not finished until 1861, when it entered the collection of the Musée du Louvre (Dion-Tenenbaum, op. cit. (note 1), no. 212).
- 57 Piot, op. cit. (note 52).
- 58 *Jupiter foudroyant les Titans* has been in the collection of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, London, since 1890 (J.B. Carrington and G.R. Hughes, *The Plate of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths*, Oxford 1926, pp. 121-23, fig. 74).
- 59 'Il est moderne, quoiqu'il soit de tous les temps, et c'est là sa gloire incomparable' (Thoré-Bürger, op. cit. (note 4), p. 203).
- 60 For the concept and its execution in the fine arts see R. Preimesberger, *Paragons and Paragone: Van Eyck, Raphael, Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Bernini*, Los Angeles 2011.
- 61 'Les moindres inflexions de la peau, la naissance des cheveux, toutes les délicatesses microscopiques du burin le plus aigu, sont obtenues sans sécheresse, et contribuent ainsi à la perfection de ces excellent bas-reliefs' (Thoré-Bürger, op. cit. (note 4), p. 203).
- 62 'La France possède un Benvenuto Cellini, et le public ne s'inquiète pas' (Editorial Board, 'Salon de 1847, sculpture', *Revue de Belgique: Littérature et Beaux-Arts* 2 (1847), p. 274).
- 63 *Official descriptive and illustrated catalogue of the Great Exhibition 1851*, 3 vols., London (W. Clowes and Sons) 1851, vol. 1, stand 840 (E.A.A. Wagner, Berlin); vol. 2, stand 97 (Hunt & Roskell, London), stand 117 (J.V. Morel & Cie, London); vol. 3, stand 1720 (Froment-Meurice, Paris), the pamphlet published by Morel.
- 64 For a contemporary illustration of this goblet see R.J. Baarsen et al., 'De Lelijke Tijd'. *Pronkstukken van Nederlandse interieurkunst 1835-1895*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) 1993, p. 207, fig. 85c. The current whereabouts are unknown.
- 65 J. Culme, *The Directory of Gold & Silversmiths: Jewellers and Allied Traders, 1838-1914*, vol. 2, London 2000, pp. 245-46.
- 66 Royal Commission, *Reports by the juries on the subjects in the thirty classes into which the Exhibition was divided*, London (W. Clowes & Sons) 1852 (presentation copy), pp. CIII, CXIX, 513, 693, 738.
- 67 J. Marsden, *Victoria & Albert, Art & Love*, exh. cat. London (Royal Collections) 2010, no. 220; for subsequent commissions see Culme, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 113-14.
- 68 Dion-Tenenbaum, op. cit. (note 1), no. 97 (Morel vase), 4,400 French francs, and no. 121 (Vechte vase), 35,000 French francs, converted on the basis of the exchange rate on 6 May 1856 (*Rotterdamsche Courant*, 7 May 1856). A good method of calculating the modern equivalent is the rise in the price of a loaf of bread weighing 500 grams between 1856 and 2014. For a good quality white loaf one had to pay 0.035 cents in 1856, whereas such a loaf costs 2.30 euros (5.07 guilders) in 2014. Prices have therefore risen by a factor of 145.
- 69 De Luynes, op. cit. (note 8), p. 73; Bouilhet, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 251-60; Alcouffe et al., op. cit. (note 15), no. 275; Alcouffe et al., op. cit. (note 14), p. 39.
- 70 Mulleret and Fannièrre had previously worked with Vechte (see note 51). For the others, Jean Clément Dalbergue (1806-1884) and François Poux (c. 1802-1889), see Dion-Tenenbaum, op. cit. (note 1), no. 86. In his discussion De Luynes emphasizes that they had used the method developed by Vechte. De Luynes, op. cit. (note 8), p. 73.
- 71 De Luynes, op. cit. (note 8), p. 74.
- 72 For a recent summary of the discussion and an overview of the most important literature see Pon, op. cit. (note 33), pp. 1-15.