A Pair of Matthew Boulton Cleopatra Candle Vases

Circa 1770

4.25 x 4.25 x 10.75 in high (11 x 11 x 27.5 cm)

Each with a stamped three-step white marble pedestal decorated with medallions of Ceres. The stamped Greek fret frieze round the top of the pedestal, the stem with spiral flutes, the acanthus leaf cradle holding the blue john vase body, and, decorating the body, the laurel swags, pendants and flowers. With convex and fluted candle nozzle’s and cast, and later reeded, lids with finials.

Early in 1770 Boulton thought that the Dowager, Princess of Wales might be persuaded to buy a pair of Cleopatra vases, but his letter to his partner gives no clue about their appearance or function, apart from a hint that they were probably (on this occasion), candle vases. Later in the same year the Marquess of Rockingham bought another pair at a cost of £5 10s. 0d. Several Cleopatra vases were included in the sale in 1771 at Christie’s. The name was not used in the catalogue but it appears in the subsequent letter to William Matthews, which listed the unsold stock. This included 4 pairs of Cleopatra vases with philosopher pedestals.

Literature: