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Malachite



Malachite Room of Chapultepec Castle, 1775, Mexico.



Ornemental vases of the Malachite Room of Trianon, 1808, Versailles Palace.



Malachite Room of Trianon, 1808-1809, Versailles Palace.



Pierre-Philippe Thomire, Demidoff Vase, 1819, Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New-York.

The **malachite**, with its intense green due to its strong composition of copper, is a mineral much appreciated in the nineteenth century. Russia enjoys indeed important quarries which are known since the 17th century, including that of **Nijni Taguil**, discovered in 1835 and exploited by **Count Demidoff**.

Used in blocks to make small objects, malachite is not appropriate to the realize large works such as those that can be made in marble. This is why ***"Russian mosaic"*** was developed in the second half of the 18th century: slivers of malachite are clad to give the illusion of a block, enabling to display this extraordinary color on walls, columns, doors, and other elements of interior decoration. **The royal lapidary manufactures of Peterhof and Ekaterinburg** developed this art, which soon seduced the aristocracy.

Thus in 1775, the **Viceroy of New Spain (Mexico)** had the first the idea of a ***"Malachite Room"*** for his **Castle of Chapultepec.** The malachite of Siberia decorates notably an impressive Rococo door.

The new beauty of this refined art creates a craze that will last during all nineteenth century. France discovered this famous technique when, in 1808, **Alexander I of Russia gave Napoleon I some gifts in malachite** . Candelabra, large vases and a basin are installed in the Salon of the Emperor in Trianon, now known as the ***"Malachite Room"***.

The French craftsmen are then working on malachite, and during the Restoration, **Pierre-Philippe Thomire** produced several pieces, including the **large Medici Vase mounted in gilt bronze, commissioned by Prince Demidoff, and now preserved at the Metropolitan Museum in New York**.

In Russia, the discovery of the Nijni Taguil quarry in 1835 allows to think bigger for the monuments of Saint-Petersburg. Thus, malachite covers the **immense columns of St. Isaac Cathedra**l, and a new ***"Malachite Hall"*** is designed for the **magnificent Winter Palace** .
Indeed, the **architect Alexander Briullov** designed in 1839 a reception room for the **Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna**, wife of Nicholas I, with columns and a fireplace in malachite.
A true Russian treasure, numerous ornaments from paper-press to monumental vases adopt malachite, including a **large collection preserved in the Hermitage Museum** .

Circa 1860, this is probably what motivated **Mme de Païva**, of Russian origin, to **insert a malachite veneer on the fireplace of her room** in her famous Parisian mansion.

See also

The rocaille ornament and the Rococo style — Empire style — Gilt bronze

See our 19th-century objets d'art



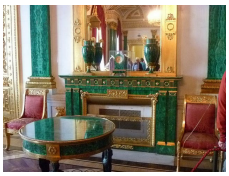
Nicolas Jacques, Music Box, 1825, Condé Museum, Chantilly.



Pierre-Philippe Thomire, Apollo Clock, Museum of the Malmaison and Bois-Préau Castles.



Konstantin Andreyevich Ukhtomsky, The Malachite Room of the Winter Palace, 1865, watercolour, Hermitage Museum, Saint-Petersburg.



Fireplace, table and pilaster in malachite in the Winter Palace, circa 1840, St-Petersburg.



Ivan Galberg and Felix Chopin, Tripod Vase, circa 1845, malachite from Iekaterinburg, Hermitage Museum, Saint-Petersburg.



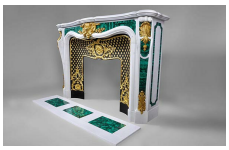
Malachite plated fireplace of the Païva Hotel, 1856-1866, Paris.



Fireplace of the Youssoupov Palace, circa 1860, Saint-Petersburg.



Ivan Kovshenkov, Portrait bust of Alexander II, Tsar of Russia, 1873, Hermitage Museum, Saint-Petersburg.



« Païva » Fireplace in white Carrara marble and malachite, Maison&Maison.