

# ADRIAN ALAN

*Fine Art & Antiques*



**François Linke (1855 - 1946)**

## **An Important Pair of Louis XV Style Gilt Bronze Mounted Marble Top Commodes**

Circa: Circa 1891

96 x 133 x 59 cm (37<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 52<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches)

France

1891

Signed Linke to the right-hand espagnolettes, the locks stamped L. Vasseur/Paris. The bronze mounts stamped to the reverse 'FL'.

The serpentine marble tops above conforming bombe cases set with three drawers with scrolling foliate encadrement, the corners mounted with male and female espagnolettes, on splayed legs with shell capped scrolled sabots. Designed circa 1891, these commodes formed part of the furnishings of Linke's private apartment at the Quai Henri IV, on the right bank of the Seine in Paris.

Linke Index Number: 245.

Linke Title: Commode Louis XV à trois tiroirs avec marqueterie violette

The original design for this model of commode started out as an early example of the collaboration between Linke and Leon Message, inspired by a smaller commode of similar spirit as shown in Message's personal sketchbook (illus. C. Payne, Linke, pl. 85). However, the Blue Daybook drawing shows the fully developed commode with the distinctive winged foliate handles that Message favoured. It might be assumed that this device is Message's idea of an amusing play on his own family name, the wings being the attributes of Mercury the messenger.

This model of commode was produced in two sizes and in several variations. Besides this marquetry version a bulrush marquetry model and a plain veneered model were offered. The bulrush version is illustrated in: Adrian Alan, Vol V, p.60-61.

### **Literature:**

Payne, Christopher. François Linke 1855-1946, The Belle Époque of French Furniture, Antique Collectors' Club, (Woodbridge, UK), 2003; pp. 68-9, pl. 65.

Adrian Alan Ltd, Fine English & Continental Furniture & Works of Art, Vol. V, (Cambridge, UK), 2006;

### **Artist description:**

François Linke (1855 - 1946) was the most important Parisian cabinet maker of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and possibly the most sought after cabinet maker of his period.

He was born in 1855 in the small village of Pankraz, in what is now the Czech Republic. Records show that Linke served an apprenticeship with the master cabinetmaker Neumann, then in 1875 at the age of 20 he arrived in Paris where he lived until he died in 1946.

It is known that the fledgling Linke workshops were active in Paris in the Faubourg St. Antoine as early as 1881, and during this time he supplied furniture for other more established makers such as Jansen and Krieger.

The quality of Linke's craftsmanship was unsurpassed by any of his contemporaries and reached its peak with his spectacular stand at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900, where his Grand Bureau took the gold medal. He gambled his fortune and reputation on this stand, exhibiting several breathtaking items of furniture with sculptural mounts of the most exceptional quality and proportion. His gamble worked and his reputation was established to such an extent that Linke continued to be the pre-eminent furniture house in Paris until the Second World War.

As the Art Journal reported in 1900 on Linke's stand:

The work of M. Linke ... was an example of what can be done by seeking inspiration amongst the classic examples of Louis XV and XVI without in any great sense copying these great works. M. Linke's work was original in the true sense of the word, and as such commended itself to the intelligent seeker after the really artistic things of the Exhibition. Wonderful talent was employed in producing the magnificent pieces of furniture displayed....

The formation of Linke's distinctive style was made possible by his collaboration with the sculptor Léon Messagé.

Together Linke and Messagé designed furniture for Linke's 1900 exhibition stand, with exuberant allegorical figures cast in high relief, that exemplified Linke's ability to seamlessly merge the different mediums of wood carving, bronze and marquetry into a dynamic unified whole.

Today Linke is best known for the exceptionally high quality of his work, as well as his individualism and inventiveness. All of his work has the finest, most lavish mounts, very often applied to comparatively simple carcasses of quarter veneered kingwood or tulipwood. The technical brilliance of his work and the artistic change that it represented were never to be repeated.