

# ADRIAN ALAN

*Fine Art & Antiques*



**François Linke (1855 - 1946)**

## **A Louis XV Style Petit Corner Vitrine**

Circa: Circa 1890

114 x 65 x 42 cm (44<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 25<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

France

1890

The gilt-bronze mounts stamped to the reverse 'FL'. The back of the lock stamped 'C.T. LINKE'.

A Fine Louis XV Style Gilt-Bronze Mounted Petit Corner Vitrine by *François Linke*.

This well proportioned corner vitrine has a shaped brèche d' Alep marble top above uprights headed by finely cast and chiselled gilt-bronze foliate mounts, framing a single shaped glazed door with a gilt-bronze frame. The door opens to a mirrored interior with two shelves and the vitrine is raised on gilt-bronze mounted cabriole legs.

A notable feature of Linke's work, perhaps even more of a guarantee than a signature, is his use of a concave scallop-shell or coquille, which features at the base of the door. The distinctive shell, as designed by Linke's sculptor Léon Messagé, is held by delicate tendrils of acanthus quietly moving on to the glass surface, implying the shape of a crab.

This rare and charming display cabinet is so very clearly from Linke's workshops with his stamp on the mounts and the lock by his younger brother Clément that no further evidence is necessary. However the fact that there is no original photograph shows that despite being the most extensive archive of any world class cabinetmaker of any era, the Linke archive is not complete and that there will certainly be more discoveries to be made.

**Literature:**

Payne, Christopher, François Linke, (1855 - 1946), *The Belle Époque of French Furniture*, Antique Collectors' Club, (Woodbridge), 2003; p. 208, pl. 228.

### **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.