

ADRIAN ALAN

Fine Art & Antiques



François Linke (1855 - 1946)

A Rare Gilt-Bronze Mounted Mahogany Folio Document Cabinet

Circa: Circa 1900

162 x 102 x 36 cm (63³/₄ x 40¹/₄ inches)

Mahogany Gilt-Bronze

France

1900

Signed 'F. Linke' to front right side of the gallery. Stamped to the lock-plate 'CT.LINKE / SERRURERIE / PARIS / 2561'

A Rare Gilt-Bronze Mounted Mahogany Folio Document Cabinet by *François Linke*, with a unique Locking System by *Clément Linke*.

Linke Index No: 2561.

This rare folio document cabinet by Linke has a rectangular top surmounted by a pierced gallery with acanthus clasps to the corners and a frieze decorated with an exceptional gilt-bronze scrolling acanthus and laurel-wreath border. Below are two banks of folio drawers, each with drop-down peau begarée Havane leathered fronts with gilt tooling, above a further acanthus frieze and a pair of panelled cupboard doors framed by fluted pilasters. The cabinet is raised on tapering feet with fine fronded acanthus mounts.

The leather chosen for the drawer fronts would have been exceptionally expensive at the time of making, not only due to the fine gilt tooling, but because of the complicated begarée finish to the leather using an acid wash.

The cabinet employs a highly sophisticated locking system designed and made by Clément Linke, enabling the cupboard doors and the folio drawers to be secured with the turn of a single key.

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.