

# ADRIAN ALAN

*Fine Art & Antiques*



## **An Exceptional Exhibition Austrian Neo-Baroque Mahogany Bed**

Circa: Circa 1890

262 x 249 x 232 cm (103'1/4 x 98 inches)

Mahogany Bronze

Austria

1890

An Exceptional Exhibition Austrian Neo-Baroque Carved Mahogany Bed The Foot and Headboard Finely Carved With Figural Crests and Inset with Gilt-Bronze Relief Panels Depicting the Five Ages of Man and the Birth of Venus.

This large and impressive bed epitomises the grandeur and sophistication of the Austrian neo-baroque, with an emphasis on rich ornamentation and classical motifs that become a central feature of Imperial style in the late 19th century.

The bronze plaques with their sensuous iconography and the intricately carved female figures to the footboard however, hint at the forthcoming modernist aesthetic of art nouveau.

The bed is richly carved with a circular cresting flanked by lions and putti, above a rectangular headboard inset with a fine bronze relief panel depicting the Five Ages of Man and flanked by carved uprights, populated by expressive putti figures holding thyrsus staffs and pan like figures playing the pipes. The footboard is carved with out-swept scrolling corners and putti figures flanking a bronze relief panel depicting the Birth of Venus. It is surmounted by a lozenge shaped cresting with c-scrolls and acanthus and flanked by expressive recumbent female figures. The side rails are finely carved with reclining female figures playing lutes to the head ends and dancing putti figures to the foot. The rail is carved to the centre by fine musical trophies with C-Scrolls and acanthus.

The preference for figural decoration and rich ornamentation became a prerequisite of the Austrian Imperial Style, which flourished towards the end of the 19th century, drawing inspiration from Italian Baroque and classical Greek sources.

While the expressive carving draws direct comparison with early Italian baroque and baroque revival carving, its relaxed mannerist handling is distinctly Austrian in approach. This confident stylised

aesthetic is elegantly revealed by the sensual elongation of the carved female figures surmounting the headboard and by the exceptional relief cast bronze panels.

The finely cast bronze panels are an unusual addition to furniture of this type, their scale and quality emphasising the importance and ambition of the bed and almost certainly confirming it as a unique exhibition piece. The panel to the headboard depicts the Five Ages of Man in the classical Greek style, depicted with a wonderfully free amatory approach. While the panel to the footboard depicts the Birth of Venus, complete with with attendant putti and hippocampi; Venus, in this context representing the embodiment of divine love.

The architectural transformation of Vienna from the 1850's onwards saw the construction of an Imperial city dominated by Neo-Baroque and Greek Renaissance buildings culminating in the important public buildings and palaces along the Ringstrasse. The most important architect of this period was the Danish born Theophilus Hansen, responsible for amongst other buildings the Parliament and the Wiener Musikverein. Hansen also created a number of important Palaces and Castles, including a Palace for Archduke Wilhelm and the Palace of Herrnstein, for Archduke Leopold.

At Herrenstein as with many of his buildings, Hansen collaborated with artists and craftsmen to create a unified aesthetic, designing much of the furniture and fitments. The bed he created for Archduke Leopold draws many similarities with the present example. Although decorated in the earlier Neo-Grec style, the overall form of Leopold's bed, is closely related, a form characteristic of Austria and parts of Germany, with a defined rectilinear structure, embellished with sumptuous carving and dominated by high, round armorial crestings.

Given the lavish decoration and extraordinary quality of this bed, is likely that it may have been created as an exhibition piece or specially commissioned to furnish one the newly completed neo-baroque palaces on the ringstrasse.

Dimensions of mattress : W. 194 cm / 76 inches  
D. 203 cm / 80 inches