

ADRIAN ALAN

Fine Art & Antiques



Attributed to François Linke

A Fine Louis XV Style Side-Cabinet In The Manner of Charles Cressent

Circa: Circa 1890

98 x 130 x 50 cm (38⁵/₁₆ x 51¹/₁₆ inches)

Mahogany Gilt-Bronze Marble

France

1890

A Fine Louis XV Style Gilt-Bronze Mounted Mahogany Side-Cabinet In The Manner of Charles Cressent, Attributed to François Linke.

This fine side cabinet or 'Bas d'Armoire aux singes' has a Brèche d'Alep marble top above a pair of cupboard doors opening to an interior fitted with two shelves. The cupboard doors are mounted with fine gilt-bronze mounts depicting a charming scene of a tight rope walking monkey beneath a canopy and supported by monkeys playing musical instruments. The angles of the cabinet are mounted with finely cast acanthus espagnolettes and the sides with gilt-bronze encadrement.

A small number of signed examples of this model by François Linke are known, each of identical dimensions and ornamentation.

Charles Cressent (1685-1768) was a French leading ébéniste and sculptor of the late Régence and early Rococo periods, becoming a master sculptor in 1719. He worked as both ébéniste and sculptor to the Regent, Philippe II, Duc d'Orléans. His furniture was often decorated with plain veneers, usually of satinwood and amaranth, or veneers in patterns of parquetry.

Cressent was best known for the highly sculptural gilt bronze mounts that ornamented his furniture. In order to supervise production and guarantee the quality of his mounts, he employed master casters and gilders in his workshop. This practice broke the strict rules of the French guild system, and the guild prosecuted him for practising the two professions of cabinet making and gilding in the same workshop. In order to pay the resulting fines, Cressent was forced to hold sales of his stock. The catalogues from these auctions, which he wrote himself, provide important evidence to identify his works, as Cressent's furniture was always unsigned.

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.