

ADRIAN ALAN

Fine Art & Antiques



An Unusual Napoleon III Rococo Style Carved Giltwood and Vernis Martin Firescreen

Circa: French, Circa 1860

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110 x 66 x 42 cm (43 1/4 x 26 x 16 1/4 inches)

Giltwood vernis martin

An Unusual Napoleon III Rococo Style Carved Giltwood and Vernis Martin Firescreen.

This charming and rare firescreen is of rectangular form with a fine and expressively carved giltwood frame with a scalloped cresting and scrolling acanthus uprights mounted with a superb vernis martin painted panel of a cloud-borne Classical figure holding a caduceus in her hand with attendant putti, against a gold reserve framed by an asymmetrical rococo arbour of scrolls and floral garlands; the reverse upholstered in gold brocade and raised on acanthus carved scrolling feet.

The technique of Vernis Martin was perfected by four brothers who produced what is considered to be the finest form of European japanning, lending their name to what later became a generic term. The elder brother, Guillaume (d. 1749) and Étienne-Simon (d. 1770) were granted a monopoly for producing imitations of Chinese and Japanese lacquer in 1730, which was renewed in 1744.

Vernis Martin was developed from a varnish called cipolin. It is remarkably lustrous and fine in texture and produces an array of colours ranging from greys, greens and blues and enhanced by gold dust beneath the surface producing a sparkling finish. This lengthy process requires the application of as many as forty layers to be applied to the surface, each of which is then polished to result in the required depth and finish.

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