

# ADRIAN ALAN

*Fine Art & Antiques*



## **Befort Jeune**

### **An Exceptional Pair of Napoleon III 'Boule' Marquetry Cabinets**

Circa: French, Circa 1860

French, Circa 1860

133 x 125 x 47 cm (52 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 49 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 18 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches)

Ebonised Wood Marquetry Inlay Brass Gilt Bronze

Stamped 'Befort Jeune'

An Exceptional and Highly Important Pair of Napoleon III Gilt-Bronze Mounted, Brass Inlaid 'Boule' Marquetry Ebonised Cabinets by Befort Jeune.

Stamped 'Befort Jeune' to the reverse of the gilt-bronze mounts.

This magnificent and very rare pair of Boule marquetry inlaid and ebonised side cabinets or 'basse de armoires' are by the important 19th century maker Mathieu Befort, (Befort Jeune), after the famous model by André-Charles Boule.

Each cabinet has an inlaid rectangular top with three lozenges above an egg-and-dart frieze and two panelled doors mounted with spectacular gilt-bronze figures of Aspasia and Socrates on a scrolling foliate ebonised ground. The figures are flanked by ribbon-tied medallions and centred by a projecting stile headed by a female mask mount and inlaid with vertical 'C'-scrolls and husks, the sides embellished with a pierced scroll and foliate mount and each cabinet raised on a plinth base with patera to each corner and set on gilt-bronze headed ebonised toupie feet. The cabinets retain their finely cast original keys and each opens to an interior fitted with two shelves.

The design for this exceptional pair of cabinets is based on a celebrated series of low armoires created

by André-Charles Boulle circa 1725, one of which is illustrated in A. Pradère, French Furniture Makers The Art of the Ébéniste from Louis XIV to the Revolution, London, 1989, p. 81, fig. 32. The figures of Socrates and Aspasia derive from Michel Corneille's painting of 1673 on the ceiling of the Salon des Nobles at Versailles.

Celebrating the glory of Louis XIV, depicted in the medals suspended on the front of the cabinet, the model enjoyed a renewed appreciation in the 19th century, which led to the production of exhibition quality examples, amongst which is the present pair by Mathieu Befort.

French, Circa 1860.

### **André-Charles Boulle**

André-Charles Boulle (d.1732), appointed 'Ebéniste, Ciseleur, Doreur et Sculpteur du Roi' in 1672, is among the greatest ébénistes of all time. His fame was such that his name has become synonymous with a whole generic furniture type.

#### **Literature:**

Ledoux - Lebard, Denise. Les Ébénistes du XIXe siècle, Les Editions de L'Amateur, (Paris), 1984; pp. 48-50.

#### **Artist description:**

Mathieu Befort (Befort Jeune) (1813-1880) is recorded as having worked in Paris from 1836 until 1880.

He was descended from a family of renowned ébénistes and was the son of the renowned cabinetmaker Jean-Baptiste Befort, known as Befort Père, who was of Belgian origin and renowned for having supplied furniture for the apartments of the Duc d'Orléans.

Father and son are noted for their interpretations of furniture by André-Charles Boulle and the creation of vernis marin and porcelain mounted furniture, often in the manner of Riesener.

The firm received a medal at the 1844 Exposition de l'Industrie Française, and earned Befort a reputation for the high quality of his work. As a result he became a purveyor to Napoléon III and Empress Eugénie.

#### **Makers Bibliography:**

Ledoux-Lebard, Denise Les Ebénistes du XIX Siècle, Editions de l'Amateur, (Paris) 1984, pps. 48-50.