

# ADRIAN ALAN

*Fine Art & Antiques*



**François Linke (1855 - 1946)**

## **A Louis XV Style Gilt-Bronze Mounted Bureau Plat**

Circa: French, Circa 1890

French, Circa 1890

103 x 193 x 80 cm (40 1/4 x 76 x 31 1/4 inches)

kingwood gilt-bronze

The lockplate stamped 'CT LINKE SERRURERIE PARIS'

A Louis XV Style Gilt-Bronze Mounted Bureau Plat by François Linke.

The rectangular top inset with a green leather writing surface with gilt-tooled border, within a gilt-bronze surround above three frieze drawers, the back with simulated drawers, on cabriole legs headed by figural busts 'têtes des guerriers antiques' and terminating in acanthus-cast sabots

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French, Circa 1890.

This palatial bureau plat is inspired by a famous model made by Charles Cressent (1685-1768) around 1740-45. The model is known as the 'bureau aux guerriers', referencing the busts to the corners which are sculpted as soldiers. The most famous example is in the Salon Doré at the Elysée Palace in Paris - where it is used by successive Presidents of France. Another, with cartonniere, was sold from the première vente de Cressent in 1749 and again in the second sale in 1757, lot 116, entering the collection of the duc de Richelieu before selling lastly, in 1788, to Lord Willoughby in London and passing by descent to Grimsthorpe Castle, Lincolnshire, where it remains. A third example formally belonging to the Princess Trivulzio and later to Baron Nathaniel de Rothschild and is today in the

## Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon.

In the 19th century the model was revived and interpreted by the premier haut-luxe cabinetmakers of the time and versions are known by Henry Dasson, Alfred Beurdeley and, as here, François Linke.

### **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.