

Important "Arbalette" Chest of Drawers attributed to François Garnier



Early Louis XV period, circa 1730

Dimensions : H. 90 x W. 150 x D. 66 cm

This beautiful chest of drawers in king wood veneer has a curved front called "crossbow". This model was produced in much smaller quantities than the "tombeau" chests of drawers that appeared around the same time. Arbalet chests of drawers are generally more imposing with a width of 145 and even 150 cm instead of the usual 130 cm. They are also taller and their lines are often powerful and distinguished. The master cabinetmaker François Garnier was one of the first to make this type of chest of drawers, one of which is kept in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. He did not always sign his chests of drawers, since around 1730 the stamp (a tax created by Louis XV) was not yet compulsory.

As always, even on a rare model like the "Arbalète" chests of drawers, one finds different levels of quality. Our chest of drawers is veneered with a single superb precious wood, king wood. The apparent sobriety of the marquetry hides a complex frieze work, with multiple frames executed with a precision that attests to the work of a master. The king wood has been chosen without defect, and its superb reddish-brown colour brings out the exceptional quality of the finely chased and gilded bronzes. It should be noted that the bronzes have simply been cleaned and that, for once, their "Gold Varnish" is original.

This chest of drawers opens with five drawers on three rows, as a small drawer is hidden between the two upper drawers. The uprights are "pinched", sharpening the line of the furniture. The sides flare slightly outwards, which in 1730 was a great innovation, breaking with the still straight sides of the Regency.

The interiors of the drawers confirm an important order: the fine mouldings were executed in the finest walnut. The marble, with its double spout, is original. Veined with grey and brown, this "Rance de Belgique" was imported from Flanders.

This chest of drawers has just been perfectly restored. Its state of preservation is remarkable as almost all the veneer is original, as well as the bronzes and their gilding, the frame, the drawer interiors and the marble.

