French Regency Period Bureau Plat



Paris, circa 1720/1725

Dimensions : Width 180 cm, Depth 85 cm, Height 74cm

At the end of the reign of Louis XIV, black desks adorned with gilded bronzes became the hallmark of power and success in Paris. These desks were manufactured to very different standards, depending on the client. The price of ebony, imported from America, led cabinetmakers to supply blackened fruitwood veneered desks, while ebony was reserved for a very wealthy clientele. Design and cabinetmaking also varied greatly, from functional desks - often with pedestals - produced in thousands - to the most elaborate desks with exceptional bronze trimmings in terms of pattern and chasing; a desk like ours must have cost a staggering amount in 1720.

This is one of the very first "flat" desks, with three in-line drawers in the waistband. This option, which became widespread after 1740, reduces storage volume but streamlines the line and gives full scope to bronze ornamentation. The central drawer is recessed, like an inverted projection, for greater user comfort and to give rhythm to the front. Another advantage of this recess is the positioning of the corner bronzes flanking the central drawer. The desk is veneered in the finest ebony, 95% of which is still original. Designed to be placed in the middle of a room, it is decorated identically on opposite sides, with three perfectly simulated drawers on one of the long sides.

Unlike conventional desks, this one is not adorned with copper fillet. The quality of the ebony and bronzes is sufficient to contrast the gold with the deep black, giving a pure, modern effect.

The bronze ornamentation is remarkable in more ways than one: The chasing is very fine for the period, and the models, which are unique, were created for this desk. They bear witness to the transitional period of the French Regency; the doe-footed sabots, the mascarons on the falls around the central drawer, and the spandrels on the top all belong to the decorative repertoire of the late Louis XIV period; but the exterior falls and the fixed pull handles already anticipate the Louis XV style. Finally, the foot line is superb. Thanks to very strong uprights, the top of the legs join the belt in a wide curve, while the

bottom part is slender. The rectangular top is sheathed in superb, custom-dyed leather from the famous Lemerle firm, decorated with small irons and gold leaf. The leather is encircled by an original bronze mould.

THE DESK IS MOUNTED ON SPRUCE, WITH OAK LEGS. THE DRAWER FRAMES ARE IN WALNUT AND OAK. THE VENEER IS EBONY. PERFECTLY RESTORED, THIS DESK REMAINS IN EXCELLENT CONDITION.