Commode aux Oiseaux - Master pièce by Joseph SCHMITZ



Chest of drawers reproduced in the book "Le Mobilier Français du XVIIIème siècle" by Pierre Kjellberg, 1989 Edition, page 796

Paris, Louis XV Period

Dimensions : Width 150 cm, Depth 64 cm, Height 87 cm

Mastered in 1761, Joseph Schmitz worked in Paris during the reign of Louis XV. The care taken in his production explains the rarity of his works, which he supervised alone. In his reference work, Pierre Kjelberg chose to reproduce our commode to testify to "the excellent craftsmanship of Joseph Schmitz's furniture, luxuriously decorated with marquetry of flowers, birds, trophies...". Our piece of furniture can be compared with another remarkable commode by Joseph Schmitz in the Huntington Collection in San Marino, described by Pierre Kjelberg as "...decorated with a shimmering floral marquetry and a rich décor of rocaille and foliate bronzes forming a large central cartouche".

Our commode is an exceptional piece for several reasons: the width of large commodes in the 18th century was 130cm, whereas this commode measures 1.5 meters. With its classic depth and height, this commode has an elongated, extremely elegant line. What's more, this unusual size enabled Joseph Schmitz to create a lush décor without overloading his design.

The volume of the curves on this chest of drawers is astonishing, both on the front and on the sides. This model features two drawers without a crossbar, the lower drawer forming an apron whose generous dimensions are consistent with those of the commode. The design of the legs is sophisticated, to give the chest perfect proportions and create a continuous line with the cut-out belts.

The exceptional quality of the veneer is particularly noteworthy: numerous birds and insects have been positioned in a refined plant decor. The millimetric precision of the wood cuts ensures a rich,

meticulous design. Fillets, cartouches and reserves punctuate the composition, whose strong contrasts result from a wide variety of exotic woods: amaranth, rosewood, sycamore, light wood fillets and violet wood. The execution of the plant elements also uses the sand-burning technique, to shade the veneer elements and give depth to the marquetry. For the same purpose, a fine engraving, still evident throughout the veneer, was carried out by the cabinetmaker.

The rocaille bronze trim is chiselled to a high standard. And the gilding, most certainly original, is in rare condition. The bronze models are rich, but Joseph Schmitz wanted this relatively sober ornamentation for a piece of furniture of this level to leave its place to the exceptional marquetry. The marble top is a beautiful, carefully selected Aleppo Breche.

This commode has just been perfectly restored in one of Paris' best workshops. It is in remarkable condition, having retained almost all its veneer, all its structure, the gilding of the original bronzes and its marble. It is stamped on one of the oak jambs under the marble.