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Castral Wedding Chest: The Judgment Of Paris, Late 16th Century

20 000 EUR



Period : 16th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Oak

Length : 147 cm

Height : 86 cm

Depth : 69 cm

Description

Important wedding chest in solid oak from the end of the 16th century. Its large dimensions of 147 cm in length and 86 cm in height make it a larger piece than a chest of drawers.

The ornamentation is composed of Christian allegories and mythological scenes in the spirit of the era interested in the study of antiquity. Our chest and its majestic order are similar to the chest of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris representing the death of Adonis on the facade but also to the chest of the National Museum of the Renaissance in Écouen with its sides from which faces emerge in relief. This piece is the result of a prestigious order intended for a noble family which, according to the customs of the time, had passed before a notary. The hutch

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presented several drawings and a final model was signed by the parties and initialed *ne varietur* by the notary.

The central cartridge panel depicts the mythological episode of the Judgment of Paris. The Trojan prince was chosen to judge who among three goddesses - Aphrodite, Athena and Hera - was the most beautiful. Each of the goddesses tried to seduce Paris by giving her gifts. Aphrodite promised him the love of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, who was already married to King Menelaus of Sparta. Athena offered him wisdom and victory in war, while Hera promised him dominion over all kingdoms. Ultimately, Paris chose Aphrodite as the most beautiful goddess, in exchange for Helen's love. This angered Hera and Athena, who supported the Greeks in the ensuing war, known as the Trojan War. This bas-relief representation highlights the attributes of the characters, notably the spear and shield of Athena, also called Aegis, decorated with the mask of Medusa. Cupid is also represented as well as a dog accompanying the Trojan prince, recalling the painting of *The Judgment of Paris* by Sandro Botticelli.

On the facade there are four large figures in high relief as well as two smaller figures in bas-relief represented in niches topped by birds. From left to right: the first armored character is Perseus, hero of Greek mythology who put an end to the life of Medusa. The grimacing face of the shield is the Gorgóneion, mask of the Gorgon, then given to Athena.

The female character holding a flower is the nymph Chloris, very fashionable during the Renaissance. It brings fertility.

The third character is one of the three allegories of the theological virtues: Charity. She is depicted with a winged cherub, holding the sacred heart of Jesus.

The fourth character is the allegory of Prudence, one of the four cardinal virtues. She is shown

holding her classic attribute, the mirror, in order to watch for dangers.

The fifth character is a rare and original representation. This goddess holding a snake in each hand comes from a Cretan cult from the Bronze Age, she is linked to femininity and the home.

The last character is Hermes, god of messengers, travelers, merchants, orators. We find his attributes: the Caduceus and the winged helmet.

The sides of this impressive piece are carved with large winged sphinxes watching over each side.

In the center, a face emerges from the composition, like the chest of the National Renaissance Museum in Écouen. The rear pillars are sculpted with female characters present to frame these superb monsters. Resting on a generous plinth with double molding and projection entirely sculpted with friezes and palm leaves, five finely sculpted lion's muzzles stand out and stare at the observer. The top of the chest is also richly worked with motifs including acanthus leaves on its double molding. Small interior box with flap for more precious objects. The original key is very representative of the virtuosity of the artisans of the Second Renaissance. The aesthetic is thought out from the ring to the bit, with this openwork cross and this very fine "comb" allowing the opening.

The Second Renaissance chest is an essential element of furniture, particularly among noble lineages. Chests featuring characters are part of the luxury models. The motifs of the rich sculpted ornamentation of our chest are originally borrowed from the Italian Renaissance following the French campaigns of Charles VIII (Furniture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in France by Jacques Thirion). This chest, with its symbols and allegories centered on passion with the love of Paris for Helen, the representation of fertility, the home, Prudence, was undoubtedly intended to be offered as a wedding gift in a

union of two aristocratic families in order to bring peace in the home and fertility to the couple.

Late 16th century period. Maintenance restorations including the sword of Perseus and the back of the tray.