



## A Mid 17th Century Antwerp Tortoiseshell And Inlaid Lacquer Cabinet On Stand



48 000 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Très bon état

Width : 122 cm

Height : 174 cm

Depth : 51 cm

### Description

A mid-17th century Antwerp red-tinted tortoiseshell, ebony, ivory and inlaid lacquer cabinet. Stand in ebonized wood and tortoiseshell veneer of later date. Dimensions: h. 174 cm w. 122 cm d. 51 cm. This rare cabinet we are offering, in addition to a breathtaking decoration of tortoiseshell, ebony and ivory, is adorned with inlaid lacquer, a specifically Antwerp technique that appeared in the mid-17th century and is found on a very small number of pieces of furniture and objects. Imitating Japanese lacquer, testifying to the close commercial links between Antwerp and East Asia, the inlaid lacquer technique consists of hollowing out the ebony wood serving as a base to a shallow depth in order to deposit the paste formed from shellac, dyes and binders in the hollowed spaces. This

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Old Masters from 16th to 18th century

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paste of various colors, yellow, red, green and blue, is then embellished with pieces of mother-of-pearl and marble chips. Once dried and polished, the resulting appearance surprisingly resembles hard stone marquetry and also evokes the art of scagliola. The predominantly floral and plant-based ornamental repertoire, dotted with arabesques, foliage, and scrolls, bears witness to the Antwerp artists' passion for flowers, particularly bouquets and tulips. This inlaid lacquer decoration was used primarily for cabinets, but also, more rarely, for small tables, chests, writing desks, and mirrors. It would appear, according to the archives studied by art historians, that the cabinetmakers who made the furniture prepared and applied the lacquer themselves, without using a specialized craftsman. Our rectangular shape cabinet opens with twelve drawers and two doors revealing a theater. Each drawer is adorned with an octagonal tortoiseshell cabochon in a wrought brass border on an ebony background decorated with a frieze of flowers and foliage in inlaid and colored lacquer, all highlighted by a double ivory and ebony fillet and wavy moldings. The top drawer, which takes the form of an intersecting pediment, is decorated with a complex of scrolls, foliage and flowers in lacquer inlaid on an ebony background, with a central inset veneered with tortoiseshell adorned with a tortoiseshell cabochon and flanked by two stylized volutes in gilded brass. The central doors, flanked by tortoiseshell veneered sheaths topped with gilded bronze caryatids, like the doors of a palace, reveal an interior theater: between two rows of drawers on each side, a space composed of mirrors and niches decorated with colored inlaid lacquer decorated with vases from which flowers spring, including stylized tulips, and scrolls, framed by carved and gilded wooden columns. The mirrors in the theaters of 17th-century cabinets serve to capture the light coming from outside to reflect it inside, but also to create a trompe l'oeil effect. To magnify the preciousness of the theater, the floor

is made of a checkerboard of ivory and tortoiseshell squares. The back of the doors is decorated with inlaid lacquer in a plain orange-pink color in compartments framed by double ivory fillets: vases filled with stylized flowers and stems, floral scrolls and leafy volutes. The sides and top of the cabinet are decorated with a sober and elegant geometric shapes in ebony veneer and ivory fillets. It rests on a later period base formed by a tortoiseshell veneer belt of trompe l'oeil drawer fronts, four tortoiseshell veneer sheaths at the front topped with gilt bronze caryatids and four blackened wood uprights at the back decorated with tortoiseshell cabochons, all joined by a scalloped blackened wood spacer. A collector's item par excellence, this ceremonial cabinet also had a representative role and reflected the wealth of its owner. Installed in reception rooms to amaze visitors, its contents were secured inside thanks to the locks on the drawers and the central doors were locked. The complex decoration, formed by the use of tortoiseshell cabochons, gives this piece of furniture with its strict lines elegant curves and a lively appearance. These inventive and rhythmic forms associated with the transparency and brilliance of the tortoiseshell on a red background, the refinement of the gilded bronze elements make it a piece of furniture whose appearance is close to a large-format jewel. The use of inlaid lacquer magnifies the whole with its colorful and sparkling appearance thanks to the mother-of-pearl inlays. Related works:

- o Tortoiseshell and inlaid lacquer cabinet, August Kestner Museum, Hanover, Germany, dim. 164.5 cm x 124.5 cm x 44.5 cm
- o Tortoiseshell and inlaid lacquer cabinet, Grimsthorpe castle, United Kingdom, dim. 135 cm x 105 cm x 45 cm
- o Victoria & Albert Museum, London, United Kingdom, dim. 167.4 cm x 141.2 cm x 45.6 cm (probably acquired by Earl Craven in the mid-17th century in Antwerp)

Bibliography: De Kesel, Wilfried and Dhont, Greet. Flemish 17th Century Lacquer

Cabinets. Oostkamp, ??Stichting Kunstboek  
bvba, 2012.