



Italian cabinet In Ebony And Engraved Ivory Marquetry - 17th Century



8 500 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Quelques manques

Material : Ebony

Description

This superb cabinet, made in Italy in the 17th century, is an exceptional testimony to the art of living and visual culture of the Baroque period. Mounted on an elegant 19th-century later console in ebonized wood with twisted columns, it rises like a miniature theater, combining cabinetmaking expertise, graphic refinement, and architectural ingenuity. The front of the cabinet, framed by ivory fillets delicately incised with foliate scrolls, is decorated with 21 visible drawers and conceals two secret drawers in the upper cornice, confirming the cabinet's precious and confidential vocation. Each of these drawers is decorated with a finely engraved ivory plaque, forming a veritable narrative frieze through which unfold secular scenes of astonishing iconographic richness. Unlike classical mythological

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representations, here it is narrative episodes inspired by daily life, travel stories, and a skillfully staged exoticism, which compose the universe of the furniture. On the plaques, we discover in turn: processions of horsemen crossing suspension bridges, panther hunting scenes, captures of exotic animals such as the lion or the dromedary, clashes between helmeted soldiers with raised halberds, orientalizing processions, or even female figures busy around a basin or a washhouse. Further on, dogs set on the trail of untraceable game, a hunter standing proudly before a slain leopard, or horses and their mounts standing still in front of Ottoman-inspired palaces. Each vignette is a painting in itself: treated with almost miniaturist precision, enhanced with black and reddish-brown ink, the engraving captures details of clothing, expressions, distant landscapes and imaginary architecture. We can see the clear influence of European engravings disseminated in the 17th century - notably those of Antonio Tempesta or Jan van der Straet - which fueled the imagination of humanist collectors eager for stories of the known and unknown world. The central compartment, hidden behind a door decorated with turned ivory columns and a broken pediment, reveals a small trompe-l'oeil architecture with a theatrical vocation: it in turn houses small secret drawers, testifying to the intimate and scholarly vocation of this type of furniture, reserved for precious documents, miniatures, medals, or rare objects. A collector's item par excellence, this cabinet offers both the rigor of Italian cabinetmaking, the virtuosity of an engraved decoration of exceptional finesse, and the inventiveness of furniture with secrets. A rare, precious piece with undeniable narrative charm, it appeals as much to the art furniture lover as to the erudite collector.