



Neoclassical Civic Table Case. Alsace, Louis XVI Period



2 200 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Restauré

Material : Wood marquetry

Description

A marquetry table box in European (native) wood veneers--walnut, sycamore, stained maple, and plum--decorated on the lid with a neoclassical civic trophy: a bundle of arms, bow and quiver, beneath a striped tent with cords and tassels, encircled by a laurel wreath. This iconographic pairing of "tent + trophy of arms + laurel" is one of the most characteristic expressions of Rhenish neoclassicism around 1775, precisely the moment when Strasbourg, Colmar, Basel, and Baden produced--on paper as well as in furniture--a "Roman, civic, enlightened" interpretation of Enlightenment modernity. Alsace had been French since 1648, and neoclassicism there was a cultural language of urban erudition, not a rhetoric of war. On all four sides and on the lid, floral bouquets are framed by a series of Greek

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3 grande rue

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key lines--another structuring motif of the Neoclassical vocabulary. The flowers are engraved into the marquetry with a burin to achieve the desired effect. The lid is slightly domed--a legacy of early 17th and very early 18th-century chests. The base of the chest is finished with a walnut cyma molding forming a plinth, which elevates the object to the status of a piece of furniture, more refined than a simple functional chest. The corners are not sharp: they are molded with quarter-rounds veneered in plumwood, and the cabinetmaker has taken the skillful care to rhythmically punctuate this molding with the alternating heartwood and sapwood of the plum--a detail of craftsmanship, a detail of the trade--which is typical of a Rhenish workshop. Inside: old yellow paint, with a small inner box with a lid--a feature in keeping with the tradition of internal compartments, also found, on a much larger scale, in the large regional chests known as "salt chests." This is not a marriage chest, but what Enlightenment culture called a table chest: a chest placed on a surface, not a traveling one, kept on a secretary, a console, or a desk--an object belonging to an urban notable, a collector, or a learned society. The current lock is not original: it dates from after the 19th century. Condition: beautiful presentation; the chest has been perfectly restored: only a few minor veneer repairs, invisible from a viewing distance. Dimensions: Height: 19.5 cm Width: 40 cm Depth: 24.5 cm A piece perfectly situated in this very narrow moment when civic neo-classicism penetrates the urban productions of the Upper Rhine -- before the Directory codification -- and which embodies its most erudite and purest version.