



French Empire Period Walnut Secrétaire Desk, Circa 1810

5 850 EUR



Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Mahogany

Width : 135 cm

Height : 114 cm

Depth : 67 cm

Description

This elegant French secrétaire desk dates from the Empire period, circa 1810-1820, and represents a refined example of early 19th-century French cabinetmaking. Designed as both a functional writing desk and a visually structured piece of furniture, it reflects the neoclassical taste and architectural balance characteristic of the Napoleonic era. The desk belongs to a form traditionally known in French auction terminology as a "bureau à gradins," a stepped or tiered secrétaire design in which the upper drawers rise in gentle stages above the main writing surface. In English, this form is often described as a step-back secrétaire desk, a term that helps convey its elegant, architectural silhouette while remaining easy to understand for an international audience. The exterior is crafted

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from solid walnut, a noble hardwood widely used in France during the early 19th century. Walnut was appreciated for its strength, fine grain, and warm, natural tones, all of which are beautifully displayed here across the drawer fronts and side panels. The wood shows attractive figuring and a rich patina developed over time. The desk opens with a large pull-out writing drawer, revealing a red leather writing surface decorated with gilt tooling and corner motifs. Behind this surface, the interior is carefully arranged with small drawers and open compartments designed for correspondence and personal storage. These interior drawers are made from lemonwood (citronnier), a refined secondary wood traditionally used for interiors due to its pale golden color, fine texture, and smooth finish. The contrast between the lighter interior wood and the darker walnut exterior enhances both visual clarity and elegance. The piece stands on turned and spiral-fluted legs, a detail typical of Empire furniture, lending rhythm and lightness while maintaining a strong architectural presence. Original brass hardware and working locks remain in place, reinforcing the authenticity of the desk. The condition reflects normal age and use, with surface wear, minor scratches, and small marks consistent with a piece of this period. These signs of time contribute to its character without compromising structure or function. Elegant, practical, and timeless, this French Empire step-back secrétaire desk is a distinguished piece, equally suited to a classic interior or a refined contemporary space seeking a touch of historical depth.