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A Small Marquetry Box From The Tahan Company, Purveyor To The Emperor.

500 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Wood marquetry



Description

A small rectangular box made of thuja burl, amaranth, and cut and engraved brass marquetry, a Parisian piece by the Tahan workshop from the Second Empire period. Low in height, it features a very slightly domed lid. Its oak frame is entirely covered with veneers, with an exterior design combining panels of thuja burl with amaranth borders and backgrounds. The thuja burl, with its reddish-brown tones and dynamic pattern, is cut into scroll-shaped reserves set against the amaranth. This amaranth veneer also forms the dark background against which stands out a marquetry of cut and engraved brass, composed of scrollwork, palmettes, and foliage motifs. Two large brass compositions span the lid and extend, with their overhanging sections, onto the sides and front of the box. Their design stylizes

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the hinge mechanism of antique chests, whose long metal fittings served both to articulate and reinforce the lid. This decorative approach reflects the historicist style of the Second Empire and reinterprets the design language of precious boxes from the 17th and early 18th centuries. The tones and pattern of the thuja burl visually evoke the tortoiseshell used on certain antique boxes, while the hinges and metal ornaments are here rendered as cut and engraved brass inlay. A brass cartouche is set in the center of the lid. Brass fillets complete the composition and highlight the various veneer panels. The interior is veneered with mahogany, while the interior edges are veneered with amaranth. Several grooves bear traces of a former compartmentalization that no longer exists: this arrangement featured a large rectangular compartment at the bottom and two smaller compartments at the front. This layout, combined with the box's particularly flat shape, suggests it may have been intended to hold game tokens or small gaming accessories, though its original function cannot be determined with certainty. The lock bears the engraved mark: "TAHAN Fr DE L'EMPEREUR" Jean-Pierre-Alexandre Tahan (1813-1892) ran one of the leading Parisian firms specializing in small cabinetmaking and luxury items in the 19th century. During the Second Empire, the firm produced, among other items, boxes, caskets, travel sets, and decorative furniture, combining cabinetmaking, marquetry, and metalwork in an eclectic style. The firm participated in the major exhibitions of the 19th century, notably in London in 1851 and at the World's Fairs in Paris in 1855 and 1867. Its works reflect the era's taste for reinterpreting various historical styles, adapted to 19th-century techniques and uses. Comparative bibliography: Christopher Payne, **Paris: The Quintessence of Nineteenth-Century Furniture**, entry on Pierre-Lambert Tahan and Jean-Pierre-Alexandre Tahan, pp. 532-534. Dimensions: Width: 20 cm Depth: 12.5 cm

Height: 4.6 cm