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An Exceptional George III Lacquered and Brass-Mounted Black and Gilt Japanned Serpentine Commode

REF819

English

Attributed to Pierre Langlois

The ormolu mounts attributed to Dominique Jean

Height: 32 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (83 cm)

Width: 55 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (141.5 cm)

Depth: 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (67 cm)

DESCRIPTION

The shaped serpentine top decorated with an arrangement of oval panels of Chinese lacquer, depicting scenes of animals, birds, foliage and buildings, bordered by a running cable design in gilt japanning. The edge finished in a finely chased ormolu moulding.

The two serpentine front doors, opening to reveal an arrangement of eight drawers and sides veneered in panels of Chinese lacquer depicting a landscape of villages, bridges and lakes, with an applied ormolu beaded moulding.

The projecting angles and serpentine apron decorated with gilt japanning with applied foliate mounts of acanthus, anthemion and bellflowers, raised on shaped feet with further mounts.

This Chinese lacquer and japanned commode is part of a highly distinguished group of virtually identical commodes, with two pairs supplied to Uppark, Sussex, commissioned by Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh, and at least three to Ragley Hall, Warwickshire, in the collection of Francis Seymour, 5th Marquess of Hertford. All sharing the same serpentine form, and sides with shaped aprons and similar lacquer panels made from imported Chinese screens, framed with distinctive brass or ormolu mounts, they are undoubtedly by the same cabinet-maker.

A similar pair is the celebrated Ashburnham lacquer commodes, supplied to John, 2nd Earl of Ashburnham for his residence in either Sussex or London, which were sold in 1995 for £496,500. (Christies, London, 16th November 1995, lot 67).

Pierre Langlois

(1754-1810)

This magnificent and rare commode shows an extraordinary combination of imported Chinese lacquer panels together with exquisitely cast and chased ormolu mouldings of the highest quality attributed to Dominique Jean. It conforms closely to the work of Pierre Langlois, the craftsman of French descent who, by 1760 had established himself at Tottenham Court Road near Windmill Street.

The date corresponds closely with the marriage of Dominique Jean to Pierre Langlois' daughter, Marie Francoise in 1764. It is known that after the marriage, Jean provided mounts for his father-in-law and worked from premises next to Langlois, in Tottenham Court Road. He also employed Langlois' son Daniel, in 1771.

Pierre Langlois was a leading exponent of the French style of cabinet making in London. Little is known of his early life and origins, but it is likely that he came from France and settled in London some time before the start of the Seven Years War in 1756. It is known that he began working from his Tottenham Court Road premises in 1759 where he continued to trade until 1781.

During this time in his career, Langlois established himself as one of the leading-cabinet makers in London. The high point of his career was during the 1760s and 1770s when his popularity reached its peak and it was during this time he produced his finest work and that he attracted the attention of some of England's foremost patrons, with his fashionable clientele including commissions from the Duke of Bedford, Lady Louise Conolly, the Earl of Coventry and Horace Walpole.

Langlois is specifically celebrated for his commodes of this time and developed a highly distinctive style of workmanship and design, which was markedly French in character. His trade card tells us that 'he makes all sorts of fine cabinets and commodes, made and inlaid in the politest manner with brass and tortoiseshell.'

