

artsOLUTION

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A Rare Regency Period Amboyna Elliptical Tripod Table Designed by George Smith

REF955

English, circa 1805

Height: 30 in (76 cm)

Width: 33 ½ in (85 cm)

Depth: 25 in (63.5 cm)

£ 32000

DESCRIPTION

The elliptical top veneered in densely figured amboyna, crossbanded in purpleheart and bordered by an ebony and pierced brass moulding. The triform base headed by a reeded and gilt boss with three sweeping supports over a tripod platform base, veneered with amboyna with a central carved patera with scrolled sides and painted flowers over carved and ebonised paw feet.

This table closely follows the celebrated designer George Smith's drawing for a 'Dejeurné Table' from 1805, plate 82 in his *Collection of Designs for Household Furniture*, published in 1808.

The table is veneered in highly prized amboyna wood, a particular rarity in the early nineteenth century. Amboyna takes its name from Ambon or Amboina, a tiny island in the Moluccas, which first achieved fame in the Western world as a source of cloves, mace and nutmeg and other foreign rarities. Therefore, despite its small size, Amboina had strategic, commercial and geographical significance for those involved in the spice trade. The rarity of this wood, combined with the extensive and dangerous sea voyage to retrieve it, made the burr exceptionally expensive and incredibly sought after. The earliest reference to 'Amboina' wood in an English context occurs in the customs returns for 1730 and 1731, when a little over four hundred weight was imported by the East India Company. The valuation at about £1 per hundred weight before shipping and duty, made it slightly dearer than ebony, and considerably more expensive than rosewood.

This table is a remarkable survival as it has retained its original finish, resulting in a glorious untouched patina. The original provenance was George Howlett of 193 Clapham Road, London as can be seen on an inscription on the top of the boss connecting the base to the top. 193 Clapham Road was described as a large house with grounds when it was purchased by Charles Haddon Spurgeon for £4000 in 1877. The house which then stood in a largely rural location was turned into a home for orphans.