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A George II Carved Mahogany Armchair

REF1126

A Fine George II Carved Mahogany Armchair

English, circa 1760

The heart shaped back with pierced scrolled top rail with carved drapery and paper scrolls, the serpentine arms, carved with paterae and scrolled terminals. The upholstered seat covered in gauffered velvet and supported on cabriole legs terminating in scrolled feet.

Height: 36 3/4 in (93.5cm) Width: 24 in (60.5cm) D: 24 in (60.5cm)

£ 28000

DESCRIPTION

This chair is a simplified version of an important pair of mahogany open armchairs with pierced backs likely supplied by the London cabinetmaker William Hallett Sr. (c.1707-1781) to Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 4th Earl of Shaftesbury (1710-1771) at St Giles House, Dorset, in c.1745-46 (sold Christie's London, 5 December 1991, lot 63; £275,000). In the 20th century they formed part of the celebrated collection of Samuel Messer, one of several iconic collections of English furniture and clocks assembled under the guidance of the renowned historian R.W. Symonds. The Messer chairs share the same pierced serpentine back with identical moulded top rails with central beading and radiating vasiform splat with angled scroll edges on the shoulders, as well as similar moulded outward scrolling armrests.

The overall silhouette of the back is similar to chair designs published in the *First Book of Ornament* (1741) by the French-born painter and ornamental artist William Delacour (1700- 1767). It is likely Delacour was part of the St Martin's Lane Academy founded by William Hogarth in 1735, which is credited with introducing the rococo style into England through their meetings at a coffeehouse in Upper St Martin's Lane in London's West End. As such he was near important cabinetmakers and woodcarvers based in or near the same street, notably Thomas Chippendale and Matthias Lock, and also including Hallett, his apprentice William Vile and Vile's later partner John Cobb, who together formed a consortium known as the St Martin's Lane syndicate, to whom the authorship of this chair could be attributed. Interestingly, its design also recalls certain elements of a brass-inlaid padouk side chair now in the Victoria & Albert Museum (W.32:1-1959) attributed to John Channon (1711- c.1783), another furniture maker based in St Martin's Lane who, like Hallett and Vile, hailed from the West Country, and it is possible they may have collaborated professionally.