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FOUNDED 1744

Highly Important French Furniture  
including Property from  
the British Rail Pension Fund

LONDON

THURSDAY 24TH NOVEMBER 1988 AT 7.00 PM

FRIDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 1988 AT 11.00 AM



# Highly Important French Furniture

including

Property from the British Rail Pension Fund

## Days of Sale

Thursday 24th November 1988 at 7.00 pm

Friday 25th November 1988 at 11.00 am

In the Large Gallery

34-35 New Bond Street, London W1

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The illustration on the loose cover is Lot 29

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- 29 **The Highly Important Louis XVI Console Table made by Jean-Henri Riesener for Marie-Antoinette's Cabinet Intérieur at Versailles in 1781 probably after designs by Jacques Gondoin, with top and open shelf in griotte marble faced by gilt-bronze drapery, lambrequin and flowers, and with panelled back and square tapering legs also mounted with chains of flowers, 86cm high, 111cm wide, 24cm deep (2ft 10in, 3ft 7½in, 9¼in)**

*Provenance:*

Made for Queen Marie-Antoinette's Cabinet Intérieur at Versailles in 1781, moved in 1785 to the Château de St. Cloud.

Earl of Jersey

Baroness Renée de Becker

Mrs Deane Johnson, sold Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, 9th December 1972, lot 98

*Literature:*

Frances Buckland, *Jean-Henri Riesener, Ébéniste to the Court of Louis XVI*, Kunst und Antiquitäten, November/December 1980, illustrated pl. 20

(continued overleaf)



29 (detail of inventory number)

The present table bears the inventory mark No. 3099. Under this number in the *Journal du Gardé Meuble*, the following entry appears:

*Dudit Jour (24 Sept. 1781). Livré par le S. Riézener (sic) Pour Servir dans le Cabinet Interieur de la Reine au chateau de Versailles 3009 - une Table de marqueterie de 24 (sic) pouces de large 10 p. de profondeur et 32 pouces de haut a deux Tabelettes de marbre Griote d'Italie, les ornemens en bronze Cizelé et doré d'or moulu et Sont composés de chapitaux, cadres moulures chutes Guirlandes feuilles de persil festons draperies avec leurs cordons et glands.*

Jean-Henri Riesener, 1734-1806, was born in Germany, near Essen. He came to Paris and was apprenticed in the workshop of Jean-François Oeben, then *ébéniste du Roi*. Oeben died in 1763, and his widow chose Riesener as his successor. He was received *Maître* in January 1768, and married Oeben's widow later the same year. He completed Oeben's great *Bureau du Roi Louis XV*, made for the King's study at Versailles. This established his reputation and in 1774 he succeeded Gilles Joubert as *Ebéniste Ordinaire du Roi*, the foremost position for a cabinet-maker in France. During the following decade Crown expenditure on furniture was more than double that of any previous decade.

From 1770 onwards, Marie-Antoinette had continual alterations made to her *Cabinet-Intérieur* at Versailles, a room in which she seems to have taken particular interest and delight, and where she retired, sometimes with her close friends and intimates, to escape the rigours of formal court life. In 1783 the old panelling, dating from Marie-Leczinska's time, was replaced by new white and gilt boiseries designed by Richard Mique (1728-1794) and carved by Jean Simeon Rousseau de la Rottière and Jules Hughes. These boiseries still exist in the room for which they were made and the chimney-piece is in griotte d'Italie marble, the same as the top and under-tier of the present table, which stood opposite it, under a pier-glass. The designs for the room survive at Versailles, and in the accounts of the *bâtiments du roi*, the aforementioned sculptors received nine thousand livres for *arabesques en bronze doré au mat pour les glaces blanches du boudoir de la reine*. The table was almost certainly designed by Jacques Gondoin, dessinateur du mobilier de la couronne from 1769 to 1784, under the close personal direction of the Queen. Interestingly the furniture of the Cabinet Intérieur was changed according to the season and the present table was part of the Winter furnishings — in summer it was replaced by a carved and gilded wood console also with a griotte d'Italie marble top. During the summer months, the winter furnishings were kept in storage.

Among the identified pieces of furniture made for the Cabinet-Intérieur to have survived are a set of seats of different types and a screen by Gondoin, Foliot and Babel, delivered in 1779 (reproduced in Pierre Verlet, *French Royal Furniture*, 1963, figs. 30 A to H) from which a chair is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other items in private collections; a secrétaire à abattant by Riesener delivered in 1780 and transferred to Fontainebleau in 1785, now no. F300 in the Wallace Collection and reproduced in F.J.B. Watson, *Wallace Collection Catalogue*, pl. 86 (this is one of the pieces that Riesener himself bought from one of the Revolutionary sales. He paid 3500 livres for it. Reselling certain pieces he had bought, he certified that certain of them came from the Cabinet-Intérieur, certainly in order to enhance their value); an encoignure and a secrétaire à abattant also delivered by Riesener in 1783, and shortly removed to Marly, nos. F 275 and F 303 in the Wallace Collection, reproduced by F.J.B. Watson, *op. cit.*, pls 65 and 89 respectively; possibly a mechanical table also by Riesener made in 1781, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, reproduced by Pierre Verlet, *French Royal Furniture*, 1963, pls. 19 A, B and C.

On the eleventh of July, 1785, the present table was sent to help furnish the Queen's apartments at her newly acquired Château of St. Cloud (Arch. Nat. 0<sup>1</sup> 3559). The table does not appear to be included in the post-revolutionary sales at Versailles (Arch. Seine et Oise 2Q 70 & 71) It must have either been given away by the Queen or, more likely, retained in her own garde-meuble, for which no records survive, and then disposed of subsequently.

£800,000-1,200,000