Beat: Arts

THE WRITING TABLE OF LOUIS XV AT THE PETIT TRIANON

CREATED BY EBENISTE JEAN-HENRI RIESENER

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USPA NEWS - On 12 December 2023, the French Auction House Pescheteau-Badin, with the Assistance of Expert Pierre-François Dayot, presented the Louis XV Writing Table created by Ebéniste Jean-Henri Riesener for the Petit Trianon in 1771, at Auction at Hôtel Drouot (Paris).

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Sold for €195,000 (including Buyer's Premium) by Auctioneer Brice Pescheteau-Badin to a French Bidder in the Room, the Writing Table was immediately pre-empted by the Centre des Monuments Nationaux for the Hôtel de la Marine. It will thus be returning to the Place de la Concorde where it was kept for Several Years, probably until the Time of the Sales held during the Revolution in 1793.

When Marie-Antoinette moved to the Petit Trianon, the "Coffee Room", where this Piece of Furniture was located, was remodelled and the Staircase and Wood Panelling removed. As Louis XV's Writing Table no longer fit in, it was sent to the Garde-Meuble de la Couronne (formerly the Hôtel de la Marine) in 1776. In 1788, Marc-Antoine Thierry de Ville d'Avray, Commissaire Général de la Maison du Roi, decided to reuse the Table for his Own Personal Use and asked the Great Cabinetmaker Guillaume Benneman to undertake its Restoration.

- Description:
* A Louis XV Sycamore and Bois Satiné Gris Writing Table with Geometric Trelliswork Marquetry, opening with one Drawer with a Marquetry Frieze depicting Child Astronomers, the Sliding Drawer revealing a Writing Tablet concealing Three Compartments containing Four Solid Rosewood Drawers, the Rectangular Top surmounted by a Three-Quarter Pierced Gallery Top, raised on Four Tapering Square Section Legs terminating in Square Section Moulded Sabots, the Underside bearing the Number painted in Ink: N°2605 (Trace of a Mechanism to operate the Drawer now missing).
* By Jean-Henri Riesener and Guillaume Benneman (as restorer).
* Stamped Guillaume Benneman.
* Period Louis XV, delivered to the Château du Trianon in 1771, then largely restored in 1788 under the Direction of the Garde-Meuble de la Couronne.
* Height: 76.5 cm, Length: 96 cm, Depth: 63 cm.

- Origin:
* Delivered to Louis XV (1710-1774) by Jean Henri Riesener (1734-1806; made Master Ébéniste in 1768) for the Château de Trianon in 1771
* Conserved in the Hôtel of the Garde-Meuble de la Couronne in Paris between 1776 and 1786
* Restored and delivered by Guillaume Benneman (dies 1811; made Master Ébéniste in 1785) for the Apartments of Madame de Ville d'Avray in the Hôtel du Garde Meuble de la Couronne, Place de la Concorde in 1788, with an Antique Dealer on quai Voltaire in Paris, circa 1938, Sale Drouot 13 March 1974 Maître Jozon, previously in the Collection de Maurice Aicardi (1919-2007) in his Appartement at the Palais Royal in Paris.

- On 12 December 2023 at Hôtel Drouot (Paris):
* Assistance of Expert Pierre-François Dayot
* The French Auction House Pescheteau-Badin sold the Louis XV Writing Table for €195,000 pre-empted by the Hôtel de la Marine
* Estimated at €150,000 to €200,000, this Table was a Privileged Witness to the Final Years of the King's Life spent in the Company of Madame du Barry at the Petit Trianon. Later, with the Transformations of the Petit Trianon demanded by Marie-Antoinette, this Piece of Furniture joined the Garde- Meuble de la Couronne, where it was restored in 1788 by Guillaume Benneman.

- Riesener and Benneman, Two of the Greatest Ebénistes of the Crown
Jean-Henri Riesener (1734-1806) was Ebéniste de la Couronne from 1774 to 1785. Renowned for the Excellence of his Furniture and

the Refinement of his Marquetry, he was involved in the Completion of one of the most Beautiful Pieces of Furniture for the Crown, the Cylinder Desk for the Cabinet du Roi of Louis XV, begun by the other Great Ebéniste of the Reign of Louis XV, Jean-François Oeben. Guillaume Benneman (1750-1811) succeeded Jean-Henri Riesener from 1786 to 1792, and completed a Large Number of Commissions for the Royal Residences. When Marie-Antoinette moved into the Petit Trianon, the «Pièce Du Café» was redesigned; the Staircase and the Panelling removed. Louis XV's Writing Table no longer fitted in, and it was sent to the Garde-Meuble.

In 1788, Marc-Antoine Thierry de Ville d'Avray, Commissaire Général de la Maison du Roi, decided to recover the Table for his Own Personal Use. At the Time, the Price of Raw Materials outweighed that of the Cost of Labor. In the Interests of economizing, and following Standard Practice, Guillaume Benneman was charged with restoring the Table, that is to say, restoring it for its New Use. «The 18th Century restores, replaces and transforms. That is very much the Mindset of the Eighteenth Century,» concludes Pierre-François Dayot.

Source:
Viewing on Saturday 9 December 2023
By Auctioneer Brice Pescheteau-Badin at Auction House Hôtel Drouot (Paris)
With the Presence of Pierre-François DAYOT

Ruby BIRD
http://www.portfolio.uspa24.com/
Yasmina BEDDOU
http://www.yasmina-beddou.uspa24.com/

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:
United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com