

# MACKINNON FINE FURNITURE

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Giles Grendey

## **The Lazcano Palace Armchairs by Giles Grendey**

**England, *circa* 1730**

### **The Lazcano Suite by Giles Grendey**

These iconic chairs form part of the most celebrated and elaborate suite of English furniture from the eighteenth century. Commissioned from the esteemed cabinetmaker Giles Grendey, of London, this extensive suite comprises of at least seventy-seven pieces including tables, chairs, daybed, looking glasses, tripod stands, and several desks and bookcases.

The significance of this palatial collection of furniture is unprecedented, and it has been the subject of numerous publications on furniture history. Historian R.W Symonds described pieces from the suite as 'the best English cabinet-work' in 1935 and Christopher Gilbert further emphasized the suite's 'outstanding importance' in 1971. Today, many items from the suite are now represented in major museums around the globe, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Temple Newsam House, Leeds; and the Museo de las Artes Decorativas, Madrid.

This suite is acknowledged as one of the most important groups of English furniture of the 18th century ever made.

### **Giles Grendey (b. 1693 – d. 1780)**

Giles Grendey was a leading London cabinet-maker, born in Wootton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire.

Grendey was the apprentice to the London joiner William Sherborne, becoming a freeman in 1716. Taking his own apprentices by 1726, Grendey was elected to the Livery of the Joiners' Company in 1729. His first workshop was at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, and he moved to St. John's Square, Clerkenwell in 1772 where he developed a thriving export trade.

There is not a great deal of extant information on Grendey's English clients, however there is a bill from Richard Hoare of Barns Elms, Surrey that is dated 1723 and includes a chest of drawers, a 'Burow Table,' dressing glasses, chimney glasses, and a 'Wrighting Disk.' Lord Scarsdale of Kedleston Hall, perhaps the most prominent of his known patrons, acquired '1 Fine Jamai. Mahog. Plank' for £21 in 1762. He also provided furniture for Sir Jacob de Bouverie at Longford Castle and Henry Hoare at Stourhead, whose account books listed payments between 1746-56 for £46 for chairs.

Grendey was one of only a few English cabinetmakers to regularly affix trade labels to his furniture. This record helps to provide additional information on Grendey's clients and work. There are a few extant pieces that retain his labels, including a few pieces from Infantado Suite which also feature the stamped initials of workmen in Grendey's employ. His labels advertised that he 'makes and sells all sorts of cabinet goods, chairs, and glasses.'

According to R. W. Symonds, Grendey is the only English furniture maker of whom definite evidence exists of his thriving export trade. One record of his exportation of goods was reported in various newspapers on August 7, 1731 after a fire started on adjacent premises to Mr Grendey 'a Cabinet-maker and Chair-maker.' This devastating fire caused him to lose furniture to the value of £1,000, including one particular piece which was described as: 'among other rich and valuable Goods was burnt a Chair of such rich and curious Workmanship... it being intended, to be purchas'd by a person of Quality who design'd it as a Present to a German Prince,' which he 'had packed for Exportation against the next morning.'

Furniture made in London for the Spanish market in particular invariably displayed distinctive features that were designed to appeal to the Spaniard's love of opulence. Wealthy Spaniards showed an affinity for exotic lacquer-work in contrast to the more traditional English timbers of walnut and mahogany which were so popular with the home market. Giles Grendey and other firms involved in the export trade therefore produced japanned pieces as it emulated the appearance of lacquer. Scarlet was the most popular ground colour, generously enriched with gilt ornament and highlights in the Chinese taste.

Grendey's daughter Sukey married John Cobb, a cabinet-maker who partnered with William Vile and also served as a cabinet-maker for George III.

### **Chinoiserie and Decoration**

The design of the chairs, both in form and ornamentation, draws on inspiration from both Chinese and Roman sources, which were amongst the leading decorative aesthetics in the early Georgian period.

The love for all things chinoiserie followed the import of works of art from China and the East that

began arriving in large quantities during the reign of William and Mary towards the end of the 17th century. These wares including blue and white porcelain, lacquer cabinets and screens in particular were of course prohibitively expensive and only affordable by the extremely wealthy echelons of society. Local craftsmen and cabinet-makers tried to emulate the wares themselves – which without the appropriate ingredients and techniques proved impossible to do so exactly. The result became known as japanning. The fashion for japanning began in earnest following the publication of John Stalker and George Parker's publication, *A Treatise on Japanning and Varnishing*, in 1688, which as a guide offered a thorough description of the japanning technique as well as advising on decorative schemes to use. Grendey's chairs appear to draw direct inspiration from this treatise, including his skillful application of gold leaf highlighting areas and with gilded tones to simulate bas-relief.

The large-scale central figures and garden scenes enriched with animals reflect an English interpretation of Chinese imperial luxury. Drawings and records of visits to China in the late 17th and early 18th centuries came back to Europe and became source material for designers looking to evoke the Chinese aesthetic. In France, the Beauvais tapestry manufactory produced a series entitled *Histoire du Roi de la Chine*. The taste for chinoiserie designs in France, and abroad, expanded with publication *Livre de Dessins Chinois* in 1735 and a profusion of wallpapers designed with chinoiserie scenes at this time.

### **The Dukes of Infantado**

The Palace of Lazcano was built between 1620 and 1640 in Guipúzcoa, Northern Spain and is associated with one of the oldest noble titles in Spain, dating back to 1330 when the head of the family was created Señor de la Casa de Lazcano con Grandeza de España. In 1697, Don Juan Antonio de Arteaga acquired the Palace of Lazcano. It is possible that the suite of furniture was originally commissioned for the Palace of Lazcano, possibly for Don Juan Raimundo, 3rd Marqués de Valmediano (d.1761).

In 1891, on the death of the fifteenth Duke of Infantado, Don Andrés, a descendant of Don Juan Antonio Arteaga of Lazcano inherited the Dukedom, the inheritance tying the Dukes of Infantado to the Palace of Lazcano. The Dukedom of Infantado ('con Grandeza de España'), had been granted to Diego Hurtdao de Mendoza y Figueroa, son of Inigo Lopez de Mendoza, 1st Marquis of Santillana, by King Ferdinand VII and Queen Isabella, on 22 July 1475. They were one of the grandest families in Spanish history, and could count seven knights in the Order of the Golden Fleece and one Prime Minister of Spain. The family owned a number of important residences, including the Castillo de Manzanares in Castilla, and the Palacio del Infantado in Guadalajara.

The Infantado were perfectly positioned in the early 18th century to embark on the commissioning of such a magnificent suite of furniture. Don Juan de Dios de Silva y Mendoza (1672-1737), the tenth Duke, was one of the richest men in Spain at the time, and it is possible he could have commissioned the suite for his daughter, Maria Francisca Alfonsa de Silva Mendoza y Sandoval (1707-1770), the future eleventh Duchess, after her marriage in 1724 or on her accession in 1737. They may well have brought the suite with them when they inherited Lazcano in 1891.

The suite is recorded in a nineteenth century photograph of an interior of the Palace of Lazcano which was later reproduced in *La Casa del Infantado cabeza de los Mendoza* by Cristina de Arteaga (Vol II, Madrid, 1944).

## **Adolph Loewi**

In 1930, the German dealer Adolph Loewi (1888-1977), visited the castle and acquired a great deal of the collection, including fifty side chairs, twelve armchairs, two daybeds, two pairs of mirrors, a pair of candlestands, a card table, and a tripod tea table. From his shops in Venice and later in America, Loewi sold the collection to clients internationally. One of the greatest patrons was Walter Tower Rosen (1875-1951), who was an avid art collector. Rosen acquired thirty pieces for his Caramoor estate in Katonah, New York. The suite has since been widely dispersed with many pieces having been acquired by important museums and collections worldwide.

## **Current Locations**

Pieces from this exceptional suite of furniture can be currently found in major museums, including:

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

National Gallery of Victoria, Australia

Rosen Foundation, New York

Temple Newsman House, Leeds

Museo Nacional des Artes Decorativas, Madrid

## **SOLD**

From the collections of the Dukes of Infantado from the Palace of Lazcano, Northern Spain.

A highly important and exceptionally rare pair of George II scarlet japanned armchairs by Giles Grendey from the Lazcano suite, which is considered one of most important and iconic suites of English 18th century furniture ever made. Each chair with a vase-shaped back splat decorated with a chinoiserie figures in landscape scenes with scrolling foliage, birds, and strapwork. The bowed seat frames similarly decorated and with original cane-work seat. Raised upon two cabriole legs joined by a serpentine stretcher.

One chair with the original label to the underside of the seat frame reading 'GILES GRENDY, St John's

Square, Clerkenwell, LONDON, Makes and Sells all Sorts of CABINET GOODS, Chairs, Tables, Glasses, &c.' Each with the journey-man's initials 'HW' impressed to the back of the chair frame.

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C. Ordoñez Goded, 'Japanning en España. Un lote de muebles de laca color escarlata realizado por Giles Grendey'. *Revista de la Asociación para el estudio del mueble*, nr. 14. Barcelona, 2011, pp.14-21.

Height: 44.09 in (112 cm)

Width: 30.31 in (77 cm)

Depth: 24.02 in (61 cm)

### **Stock Number**

N06.105

5 Ryder Street - St James's - London, SW1Y 6PY

Phone: +44(0)20 7839 5671 Mobile: +44(0)7725 332 665

Email: [charlie@mackinnonfineart.com](mailto:charlie@mackinnonfineart.com) Web: [mackinnonfineart.com](http://mackinnonfineart.com)

