

# MACKINNON FINE FURNITURE



## A GEORGE III SATINWOOD BREAKFONT SECRETAIRE CABINET

England, *circa* 1770

This superb bookcase, designed in the elegant 'antique' style established by the country's leading neo-classical architect, Robert Adam (d. 1792) can be attributed to the fashionable Golden Square cabinet-makers John Mayhew (d. 1811) and William Ince (d. 1804) who were renowned marqueteurs, and ranked George III, the 6th Earl of Coventry, and the Earl of Kerry among their distinguished clients.

This attribution is based on a number of stylistic features. The form and ornamentation of this bookcase is closely related to a pair of satinwood, fustic, mahogany and amaranth marquetry bookcases supplied to Philip Stanhope, 5th Earl of Chesterfield (d. 1815), either for Chesterfield House, London, or Bretby Hall, Derbyshire (one of which was sold Christie's London, The Exceptional Sale, 10 July 2014, lot 33 £230,500). Although clear evidence for the relationship between the Earl of Chesterfield and the firm eludes us, these comparable bookcases were among several pieces sold from the Bretby heirlooms that can be attribute to the firm. The Bretby Heirlooms were sold Christie's London, 29 - 30 May 1918 (the bookcases were lot 136) and also included a marquetry commode of demi-lune form also attributed to Mayhew & Ince (cf. Lucy Wood, *Catalogue of Commodes*, London, 1999, pp. 203-209, no. 23). The Chesterfield bookcases and our bookcase use contrasting timber veneers to striking effect further highlighted with ebony stringing and engraving, all recognisable Mayhew & Ince traits. Additionally, both are inlaid with a similar sand-shaded demi-lune marquetry fan on the arched

pediment, ribbon-tied husk swags, and classical urns on the lower doors. The Vitruvian scroll marquetry on the lowers section can be found on a satinwood concertina action card table, circa 1775, attributed to Mayhew & Ince, now in the collections at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire (cf. H. Roberts, 'Nicely Fitted Up': Furniture for the 4th Duke of Marlborough', *Furniture History Society*, 1994, fig. 23).

However, an attribution to Thomas Chippendale is also plausible. The bookcase shares similarities to other documented Chippendale pieces including a commode supplied to Lord Lascelles for Harewood House, circa 1772, which has almost identical husk swags tied with ribbons and centred by a central husk wreath, another commode supplied as part of a suite of furniture by Chippendale to Denton Hall, circa 1778, also makes use of the same motif. Another interesting feature, although not unique to Chippendale's work, is the use of marbelized paper to line the sliding shelves to the lower section which is also seen on a 'commode clothes press' which he supplied to Nostell Priory, circa 1766. The swirled flower paterae and marbled paper lined trays in the lower section are also hallmarked of Chippendale's work. The inlaid urns on the panel doors relate very closely to the Denton Hall commode.

## **SOLD**

An important and very rare George III satinwood, amaranth and marquetry breakfront secretaire cabinet. The fan-shaped central pediment surmounting an upper section consisting of a central cabinet enclosed by two glazed doors and two side cabinets with glazed panel doors, the lower section with a central secretaire drawer containing an arrangement of shelves and pigeonholes and a gilt-tooled leather surface, above two panel doors enclosing three marble paper-lined drawers, flanked by two side banks of four drawers, on a plinth base.

The satinwood of superb colour and figuring throughout.

## **Literature:**

*Country Life*, "London Houses of the XVIIIth Century - No.1 Bedford Square - the Residence of Mr. G. D. Hobson, M.V.O.", 6 February 1932, pp. 150 - 156, illustrated twice

*Country Life*, *Late Georgian Furniture*, 8 July 1933, the bookcase prominently described

M. Jourdain, *English Decoration and Furniture of the Later XVIIIth Century*, (1760-1820), London, 1923, fig.401 (illustrated)

M. Jourdain, *English Decoration and Furniture of the Later XVIIIth Century*, (1760-1820), London, 1923, fig.401 (illustrated)

Lanto Synge, *Mallett's Great English Furniture*, Toronto, 1991, p.130, fig.147 (illustrated)

*Apollo Magazine*, 1975 - Mallett advertisement

*Country Life*, 10 July 1975 - Mallett advertisement

Christopher Gilbert, *The Life and Works of Thomas Chippendale*, New York, 1978, pp. 129,137, 230, 274)

Beard and Goodison, *English Furniture 1500 - 1840*, p. 229, fig. 4

Height: 8' 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" in (252 cm)  
Width: 7' 1<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" in (217.5 cm)  
Depth: 1' 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" in (53 cm)

**Stock Number**

R12.218

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