

MACKINNON FINE FURNITURE



QUEEN ANNE GESSO SCONCES

England, *circa* 1710

In the far darker candle-lit interiors of the early eighteenth century, necessity usually drove the choice of materials for lighting fixtures like sconces. More expensive examples would incorporate mirrors, but even those that did not would usually be made of a reflective material such as brass or silver. It is striking, therefore, to see a surviving example of sconces that incorporate other surfaces, as on the present pair. The fine quality of the silkwork is in keeping with the prominence it would have been given: in place of the reflective qualities of a brass or silver backing, the silkwork was chosen for its spectacular decorative potential, and would have benefited from the warm candlelight and the glimmers of the burnished sections of the giltwood frame.

Though rare, there are some other examples of sconces that similarly incorporate contemporary silkwork panels for decorative purposes. Another pair in gilt wood is pictured in H. H. Mulliner, *The Decorative Arts in England*, London, 1923, fig. 61, which also have elegant carved crests with burnished areas of high relief. These examples incorporate contemporary Vauxhall bevelled plates to protect the satin panels. A single two-light giltwood example, with an embroidered panel of a genteel

pastoral scene, is pictured in L. Syngé, *Art of Embroidery*, Woodbridge 2001, p. 231, fig. 223; they are illustrated on the opposite page to an image of another pair of early-eighteenth-century sconces, which have needlework panels but plain frames (fig. 222). A marvellous pair of sconces in walnut, in which the two needlework panels depict the same scene but with figures attired in different colours, were in the collection of Judge Untermeyer, illustrated in Y. Hackenbroch, *English and Other Needlework Tapestries and Textiles in the Irwin Untermeyer Collection*, London 1958, pl. 150, fig. 181. Finally, a single example with a walnut frame is pictured in R. W. Symonds, *English Furniture from Charles II to George II*, London 1929, p. 136, fig. 83.

An exceptionally rare and important pair of Queen Anne gilt gesso and silkwork sconces, the arched acanthus-carved crestings and foliate mouldings enclosing early-18th-century silkwork panels, between oak and acorn carved uprights, with scrolled apron supporting brass candle arms.

Exhibitions

Art Treasures Exhibition, New York, 1967.

Grosvenor House Art and Antiques Fair, London, 1996.

Literature:

Comparative Literature:

Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, *Art Treasures Exhibition catalogue*, 1967, illus. 229.

H. H. Mulliner, *The Decorative Arts in England 1660-1780*, 1923, fig. 61.

R. W. Symonds, *English Furniture from Charles II to George II*, 1929, p. 136, fig. 83.

Percy Macquoid and Ralph Edwards, *The Dictionary of English Furniture*, 1954, vol. III, p. 50, fig. 15.

Yvonne Hackenbroch, *English and Other Needlework Tapestries and Textiles in the Irwin Untermeyer Collection*, 1955, pl. 110.

Lanto Syngé, *Art of Embroidery*, Woodbridge 2001, fig. 223.

Height: 2' 1³/₄" in (65.5 cm)
Width: 0' 10¹/₄" in (26 cm)

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