



**A LACQUER WRITING TABLE**

**England, circa 1810**

Following the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, English decorative arts manufacturers faced strong competition from a flood of stylish imports—especially from France. This writing table serves as a telling example of how British craftsmen responded to these foreign influences.

Its elegant sofa table supports echo the refined lines typical of Sheraton's earlier designs, while the gracefully arched stretcher adds to the sense of lightness and balance. What sets this piece apart, however, is its rare use of Chinese lacquer as a decorative veneer—an unusual feature in English furniture, and one that reflects the French fashion for exotic materials.

The fascination with Chinese motifs in early 19th-century England can be seen as a continuation of the mid-18th century Rococo enthusiasm for the whimsical and exotic. This taste was strongly reinforced by the Prince of Wales, whose decoration of the Brighton Pavilion in 1802 popularized the fantastical, "uncouth" aesthetic that evoked the opulence and splendor of the East. While lacquer was frequently used to embellish cabinet doors or chair backs, the application of curved lacquer veneer, as seen on this table, is exceptionally rare in English furniture of the time.

One notable London cabinetmaker, John McLean, advertised himself as a specialist in elegant Parisian-style furniture after relocating his workshop to Upper Marylebone Street in 1809. Although this table cannot be definitively attributed to McLean, its design closely aligns with pieces known to come from his workshop. Features such as the finely polished gilt-bronze mounts and the perimeter gallery around the writing surface are hallmarks of his craftsmanship.

A very closely related table was sold Sothebys New York, *Tom Devenish: The Collection, Highly Important English Furniture*, 24 April 2008, lot 17. See also a pair of rectangular center tables with trestle supports formerly in the Collection of the Earls of Warwick, Warwick, Castle, sold Sotheby's, New York, October 11, 1996, lot 400.

A very fine and rare Regency period gilt-brass mounted lacquered writing table in the manner of John Mclean. The rectangular top with a pierced brass gallery and inset leather top above two frieze, on splayed legs ending in brass box castors. The surfaces of the writing table decorated with lacquer panels depicting Chinese lakeside landscapes and characters on a brown background.

**Literature:**

*Mallett Catalogue*, 1997, pp.74-75

Height: 2' 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" in (77 cm)

Width: 3' 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" in (107 cm)

Depth: 2' 0<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" in (62 cm)

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U09.101

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