

MACKINNON

FINE FURNITURE



A GEORGE III MAHOGANY SERVING TABLE

England, *circa* 1760

Frances Elkins (1888 - 1953) was one of the twentieth century most prominent and celebrated interior designers, and the sister of architect David Adler. Born in Milwaukee, Elkins often visited her brother while he was studying the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. While in Europe, she met and was inspired by interior designer Jean-Michel Frank and sculptor Alberto Giacometti, both with whom she subsequently collaborated.

After her divorce, Elkins supported herself by decorating houses in California for her friends, and then subsequently hotels and clubs. She has a flair for mixing traditional elements such as carved mahogany Chippendale furniture, Queen Anne gilt gesso mirrors and lacquer screens with more modern items such as lamps by Jean-Michel Frank or Salvador Dali. As her reputation grew, her client base spread from Monterey to San Francisco and beyond, working for very prominent American clients including Edward Robinson and Marshall Fields. She often collaborated with her architect brother David Adler, adding unexpected elements and materials into his formal interior architecture, for example being one of the first to use all mirrored walls for bathrooms.

One Elkins-Adler collaboration was the Kersey Coates Reed House in Lake Forest, Illinois. The brief from the owner Helen Sheed Reed was "don't let us make this a stuffy house". Adler installed parquet flooring from a chateau in France owned by the Comtesse du Barry, lined the library walls with goat skin leather and covered the guest room walls with Chinese silk. Celebrated interior designer Mark Hampton referred to the library as "the most boldly stylish room I have ever seen in this country". The Kersey Coates Reed House is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Casa Amesti, Elkins own home in Monterey, is included in Thomas Jayne's *The Finest Rooms In America: 50 Influential Interiors from the 18th Century to the Present* (2010).

This magnificent blind fret carved Chippendale period side table is typical of the pieces of furniture that Elkins would source for her clients interiors.

The carved guttae feet on this table are a signature detail often associated with the firm of Royal cabinet-makers Vile and Cobb. Inspired by classical architecture, these feet feature small, drop-like or cone-shaped carvings mimicking the 'guttae' found under the triglyphs of a Doric entablature. Documented examples include those on a set of stools supplied by Vile and Cobb in 1753 for the Vyne, Hampshire and on the celebrated suite of carved mahogany seat furniture supplied to the Earls of Shaftesbury for St. Giles, Dorset around 1760.

A very fine and impressive large scale George III Chippendale period side or serving table in the manner of Vile and Cobb. The rectangular top with moulded edge above an sophisticated chinoiserie blind fret frieze and pierced corner brackets, supported on eight square legs carved to the fronts with blind fret work and to the backs with double ringed columns, terminating in guttae feet. The mahogany top later. Retaining the 1930s Christies catalogue entry affixed to the underside.

This impressive table design is derived from patterns for 'SideBoard Tables' published by Thomas Chippendale in his *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director*, such as pl. LVIII in the third edition of 1762. For plates LVI and LVII, Chippendale notes 'Two Designs of Side-Boards, with their Dimensions; but these vary according to the Bigness of the Rooms they stand in'. The present table would have been commissioned for a very grand room.

A table of similarly impressive size and format but uncarved was almost certainly supplied for Thomas Parker (d. 1795), 3rd Earl of Shirlburn Castle, Oxfordshire and sold by the late 7th Earl of Macclesfield.

Literature:

The table features in many publications on the work of Frances Elkins and David Adler:

A. O. Patterson, 'On the High Bluffs of Lake Forest near Chicago', *Town and Country*, 15 January 1934, pp. 24

S. M. Salny, 'Historic Interiors: Frances Elkins. A Surviving Example of the Noted Designers Work', *Architectural Digest*, July 1980, p. 89

S. M. Salny, 'Frances Elkins: A Forward-Looking Icon of European Chic and American Style', *Architectural Digest* (Interior Design Legends), January 2000, p. 167

S. M. Salny, *The Country Houses of David Adler*, 2001, p. 140

S. E. Cohen and S. S. Benjamin, *North Shore Chicago: Houses of the Lakefront Suburb 1890-1940*, New York, 2004, p. 281

S. M. Salny, Frances Elkins: *Interior Design*, 2005, p. 69

Height: 3' 0⁵/₁₆" in (93 cm)
Width: 8' 10¹/₁₆" in (270 cm)
Depth: 2' 6¹/₁₆" in (77 cm)

Stock Number

V03.38

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