A Hepplewhite period mahogany secretaire bookcase

£14,500



REF: 1184

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Height: 231 cm (90.9")

Width: 122 cm (48")

Depth: 59 cm (23.2")

Description

A late 18th century Hepplewhite period mahogany secretaire bookcase in the 'Grecian' manner, the straight cornice with striated veneer above oval glazed doors retaining the original glass, the astragal bars with contrast ebony inlay reflecting the idealised confronted spears on the front below, the central drawer veneered with an oval lozenge of flame figured mahogany and having a ring-bearing lion's mask handle, flanked by two doors that open to reveal deep drawers faced in mahogany with ebony stringing and gilt brass handles, the secretaire fitted with pigeon holes decorated with ogee fretwork and drawers, veneered in holly with further ebony decoration, the doors to the cabinet with projecting medallions of richly figured veneer set against quarter-veneered surrounds, fitted with four linen shelves faced in mahogany, standing on a shaped apron and splayed Grecian-scrolled feet with ebony inlay.

Having a Scottish provenance and possibly created by an Edinburgh cabinet-maker, this fine bureau-cabinet would likely have been made for a Lady as a marriage gift, to be used in her bedroom for storing fine linen, writing letters at her bureau and displaying books of poetry and prose in the glazed cabinet above. The mahogany surface is delicately inlaid with 'Etruscan' black ebony symbolising Minerva, the Roman Goddess of wisdom, the Arts and originally, of war. Trophies of confronted spears in ebony can be seen decorating the cornice and the sliding secretaire sides. The figured medallions on the doors are representative of Minerva's shields, standing out from the contrasting veneers behind and a Herculean labour is portrayed in the lion's mask handle, tamed with a ring pull through its nose.

My thanks to John Hardy for his help with this entry.

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