

A museum quality, early-17th century, Antwerp, tortoiseshell & etched, ivory, walnut, table cabinet on an associated 18th century, walnut stand

Sold



REF: 10644

Height: 103 cm (40.6")

Width: 112 cm (44.1")

Depth: 32 cm (12.6")

## Description

The top, typically, has a pierced brass, three quarter gallery. The central door has magnificent, architecturally-inspired inlay revealing an interior of four drawers with a typical, descriptive narrative of country pursuits. There are four drawers either side and one below, each with geometrically inlaid panels faced with ripple moulding and interspersed with brass rosette studs. The sides have geometric inlay with exotic veneers. Standing on later bun feet. Repairs and replacements to some of the veneers and small losses commensurate with age. The stand with a single plank top standing on lyre shaped legs joined by replaced lopers and replaced stretcher.

Cabinet Length 112 cm., 3ft., 8 in., Depth 32 cm., 12 ½ in., Height 77 cm., 2 ft 6 ½ in.,  
Table Length 122 cm., 4 ft., Depth 56 cm., 1ft 10 in., Height 79 cm., 2ft., 7 in.,

Provenance : Private Collection, Bedfordshire & London

This table cabinet is typical of Antwerp cabinets dating from the first quarter of the 17th century. It exhibits the finest, etched work on the architectural columns and doorway, successfully creating the visual effect of depth, and the interior narrative scenes on the internal drawers. Tortoiseshell and ivory were exotic materials used in cabinet making of the time, and have been used lavishly to great effect in this piece.

In the 17th century the cabinet became the most highly prized single piece of furniture, a work of art in its own right which would further the dynastic and political interests of the absolute monarchies and aristocrats of the time. The status it enjoyed was never higher, and it became a showpiece both at Court and in the Great Houses of Europe.

The Cabinet was full of curiosities, where prized objects, wonders of art and nature, silver and gold objects, coins and medals could be stored safely under lock and key.

All of these treasures would be taken out carefully one by one to be viewed and discussed.

These cabinets were objects of desire, greatly admired, full of delight, wonder and amazement.

From 1596 records of ebenistes (cabinet makers working in exotic veneers) can be traced in Antwerp, which was an important centre for the arts. A new type of cabinet evolved here with frontal emphasis and decoration that relied on more exotic sources such as tortoiseshell, which became widely appreciated for its lustrous appeal, and for which Antwerp production was held in high regard.

The pictorial effect was favoured on Antwerp cabinets at the time, and the cabinet became the medium for exquisite, detailed paintings to be displayed. The taste for descriptive narrative was fulfilled, as in Italy, by etching ivory with black ink, the scenes reflecting not the dynastic ambitions of a princely house, but the more familiar and homely subjects of hunting and fishing, illustrating the contemporary interest in treatises on the subject such as G. Phebus's *Livre de Chasse* (Paris 1563) and P. de Crescenzi's *Librum Ruralium*

Commodorum (Milan 1541). Engravings by Hans Bol (1534-93) showing familiar country scenes also served as models for panels often used on table cabinets.