

AN UNUSUAL, BAROQUE, EBONISED BEECH ARMCHAIR WITH FORTY-FIVE DEGREE ELBOWS AND FEET AND TRANSITIONAL FEATURES

Sold



REF: 11379

Height: 126 cm (49.6")

Width: 74 cm (29.1")

Depth: 71 cm (28")

## Description

## AN UNUSUAL, BAROQUE, EBONISED BEECH ARMCHAIR WITH FORTY-FIVE DEGREE ELBOWS AND FEET AND TRANSITIONAL FEATURES

This armchair has many characteristic Baroque features and is transitional combining the latest French designs and comfort in seat furniture design with an ebonised finish to create a luxury item for the elite market.

Rectangular upholstered seat and similar back with a graduating rake for comfort, elegant sweeping scroll ended 45 degree, corner arms/elbows supported by fluid 45 degree corner 'horsebone' (broken 'S' scroll) front legs with long rectangular blocks for additional strength (possibly originally largely obscured by upholstery), ball and mushroom turned back legs for additional strength, joined by an unusual 'H' stretcher with a high 'horsebone' central stretcher prototype for French 'os de mouton' form with central finial, and more restrained 'horsebone' (broken scroll) sides.

The forty-five degree 'horsebone on the corners' at the elbows and feet date this armchair to post 1690 and marks an important state in English chair design. This form continued to be fashionable until circa 1710 and important sets of chairs survive at Drayton House, Northamptonshire, and others originally at Burghley on the Hill dispersed with part now at Het Loo in Holland and originally at Rushbrook Hall Suffolk dispersed part now at Treasurer's House York. The chair of State at Hatfield House supplied by Thomas Roberts for the Coronation of Queen Anne represents the pinnacle of the English horsebone chair. The stretcher is an unusual form suggestive of stretchers circa 1710-15.

Called BLACK GOLD in the 17th century ebony was the most expensive wood; an instantly recognisable, status symbol, only within the reach of Kings and the Aristocracy. Ebonised furniture imitated ebony which was valued for its colour and smooth, polished, texture imitating lacquer. In the 1690s it was advised that 24 coats of seed-lac were applied, each one being allowed to dry before the next coat was applied, then polished. The ebonising on this armchair has been repolished so that the lustre reinstates the original, lacquer effect finish creating a striking, luxurious finish.

RELATED TO : Sidechair V&A W.16-1911 1690-1705. Bowett, plate 8.8.

BIBLIOGRAPHY : Adam Bowett, English Furniture 1660-1714 From Charles II to Queen Anne (Woodbridge, England: Antique Collector's Club, 1988), pp 238-41. Pl 8:17-8.21 & 8.49-8.51.

Back height 127 cm. 50 inches, Seat height 47cm., 18.50 inches,  
Depth 71 cm., 28 inches, Width 66 cm., 26 inches

PROVENANCE : Private collection acquired to represent three different periods of European manufacture & collecting of ebonised furniture; the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries . This armchair Reputedly privately acquired in original untouched condition in 1950's from a grade 1 listed house now open to the public

-The 18th century armchair (LHS in photograph) demonstrates the revival of interest in ebony and ebonised pieces, stimulated by Horace Walpole's interest in 17th century ebony furniture believing it to be Tudor, as a luxury item for the elite market.

-The antiquarian stool demonstrates the revival of this taste in large, country house i...