HOWGEGO
HISTORIC + MODERN

A rare mid-18th century, red-walnut, silver table

Sold

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REF: 10384

Height: 69 cm (27.2")

Width: 75 cm (29.5")

Depth: 47 cm (18.5")

Description

The rectangular, dished top with re-entrant corners. The shaped frieze with pull-out candle brackets, with brass knobs, on each side. Standing on slender cabriole legs ending in pad feet. Excellent configuration, colour and patina. The carcass pine. Minor repair to veneers. English, second quarter of the 18th century. This rare, early example was specifically made to hold and display the much prized tea and coffee equipage. It is stylistically simple, imitating a tray on a stand, and is heavily influenced by the lacquered tea-tables that were imported from the Far East at the time. Very few of of these early tea-tables survive, which is surprising given the quantities made. For example; a petition of the Joiners Company, dating from the end of the century against the importation of goods from the East Indies, states inter-alia that 6,582 tea-tables had been imported 'within these four years'.

In spite of the high prices, and heavy import duty, tea was a much-sought-after beverage, and was drunk in public places and fashionable houses. At first it was chiefly regarded as medicinal, being approved of by physicians as good for various ailments and 'for clearing the sight and expelling infection'. It was also recommended for curing drunkenness, 'Tea being friendly to the stomach and head'. Although coffee was first introduced as a beverage in England about 1650, it never obtained the same popularity as tea; and chocolate was regarded chiefly as a morning drink.

It became customary for the fashionable world to invite their friends to drink tea in each other's homes. The Duchess of Lauderdale's Private Closet at Ham House in 1679 contained 'a Tea-table carved and guilt' her tea being kept, together with sweetmeats, 'in a Japan box'. Lord Keeper Guildford's contemporary biographer adds that it was always the custom after dinner to retire with his company into a withdrawing room 'and the tea-table followed'. Cabinet makers quickly responded to the fashion for tea-drinking at home, which quickly spread to all classes, by turning their attention to the making of suitable ornamental tables

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