



**THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION CARVED
CABINET BY FOURDINOIS OF PARIS**

Dimensions: H: 93.5 in / 237 cm | W: 58 in / 147 cm | D: 21.5 in / 54 cm

10087



The International Exhibition Carved Cabinet
By Fourdinois of Paris

Presented at the 1862 World's Fair in London

Sculpted by the workshop's principal wood carver, Monsieur Megret, this unique and extraordinary ebony cabinet was repeatedly called a true masterpiece, "a work of the highest order," and earned Fourdinois the Grand Medal for Excellence of Design & Manufacture.

This ebony cabinet, as much a sculpture as a piece of furniture, is a tribute to the art of the sixteenth century.

"Soberness of ornamentation, simplicity of line, precision of workmanship, are all present in the beautiful cabinet." (International Jury of Class 30)

Standing nearly 8 feet tall, the inverted breakfront cabinet is enriched with incrustations of lapis lazuli, bloodstone and jasper, the interior front fittings relieved with the finest inlay of engraved ivory and delicately hand-chased silver masks. Supported on bun feet, the lower portion's central panel with a very finely carved bas-relief of the Rape of Proserpine, the four angles filled in with allegories of the Arts & Sciences flanked by side panels carved with arabesque reliefs in the Cinquecento style, also echoed in the frieze.

The upper portion of the cabinet represents figures of Apollo and Diana in the central panels, very finely composed and executed, while the side niches are furnished with statuettes of Mars & Minerva. The entablature set with a relief panel of the Allegory of Night above a carved grotesque mask. The centre of the broken pediment having a shield intended to receive a monogram or armorial bearings flanked by free-standing recumbent figures of Peace & Plenty.

French, circa 1862

Literature:

MAISON FOURDINOIS

One of the great nineteenth-century dynasties of furniture makers in Paris, the name of Fourdinois must rank as one of the noblest names. However, very little of their work is seen on the open market. A select handful of their work is in museums, for example two cabinet purchased by the V&A museum directly from exhibitions in 1855 and 1867.

Certainly active by the late 1820s, Fourdinois the elder had worked in the illustrious workshops of Jacob-Desmalter before starting out on his own, gaining official commissions such as a pair of vitrines for the French Emperor in late 1852. Descended from a family of woodcarvers, it is not surprising that Fourdinois repeatedly turned to Renaissance revival carved designs. In addition, their sumptuous furniture of the highest quality and luxury also combined the arts of gilt bronze, sculpture, and upholstery. Their carved cabinet at The Great Exhibition of 1851 was much acclaimed and purchased by the V&A. In 1867, the company was officially taken over by Fourdinois's son, although he was already involved in the business by 1862 when the ebony cabinet carved by Mr Megret won the grand medal of design and excellence.

The firm's clientele included patrons such as King Louis-Philippe, and supplied furniture to Compiègne and a Louis XIII-style suite at Fontainebleau. Other clients included the Baron & Baroness de Rothschild, King Alphonse XII of Spain, Abraham de Camondo, the comte de Nieuwerkerke, and the Imperial French State. Sketches also survive for the proposed interior of the Imperial yacht of Napoleon III.