

A HIGHLY IMPORTANT PAIR OF ORMOLU-MOUNTED EBONY CABINETS BY BÉFORT JEUNE OF PARIS

Dimensions: H: 40 in / 101.5 cm | W: 45 in / 114 cm | D: 19.5 in / 49 cm

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A Highly Important Pair of Ormolu-Mounted Ebony Cabinets
by Béfort Jeune of Paris

Incorporating 18th Century Florentine Pietre Dure Plaques
Probably by the Opificio delle pietre dure

Likely a special commission and considered fine works of art, this exceptional pair of cabinets by the renowned Parisian cabinetmaker is a masterclass in craft and ingenuity. The pieces combine Florentine hardstone inlay with French wood marquetry, mother-of-pearl, and hand-chased fire-gilt bronze mounts, epitomizing late 19th-century furniture making.

Constructed primarily from ebony and dressed with ormolu mounts, supported on oblate bun feet and surmounted by their original brocatelle d'espagne marble tops with double-moulded edges, each cabinet of slight breakfront proportions, raised on a plinth support, the corners having free-standing

fluted columns with baluster bases and ormolu foliate capitals, the sides set with marquetry panels of floral still lives issuing from a vase and set within a marquetry and mother-of-pearl border, while the tripartite front of the cabinets display a total of 16 Florentine pietre dure hardstone panels, likely produced at the grand ducal Opificio delle pietre dure during the 18th century, the eye drawn towards the circular central panel and the large panel below it depicting a mother-of-pearl bowl overflowing with fruit, set within a hinged door opening to reveal a set of seven ebony ripple-moulded drawers, flanked by three hardstone panels to either side within marquetry borders; the frieze above centred with a very rare and unusual ormolu mount of bound captives among spoils of war, a recumbent lion and eagle with outstretched wings, symbolising the defeated nations of the Dutch Republic and Spain, respectively. The reverse of some mounts marked 'BJ' from the bronze master models.
The cabinets, French, circa 1840
The Florentine pietre dure plaques second half 17th century and later