anne•marie
monin

EUROPEAN LACQUER CABINET WITH CHINOISERIE DECORATION



Piedmont, Italy
Mid-18th century

Dimensions :
Height 180 cm – Width 101 cm – Depth 64 cm
Height 70 $^{55/64}$ in – Width 39 $^{49/64}$ in – Depth 25 $^{13/64}$ in















This European lacquer cabinet, executed in a Piedmontese workshop in the mid-18th century, is one of the most accomplished expressions of the Rococo taste at the court of Turin — and one of the rare lacquered pieces of this tradition to unite in a single object all the qualities that define the excellence of this art: the magnificence of the blue ground, the virtuosity of the polychrome chinoiserie decoration, and the ambition of a lacca a rilievo programme deployed across the entire upper body, making it an object of contemplation as much as of prestige.

The architecture of the piece is itself remarkable. The upper body opens with two doors on the front and one on each side — three decorated faces, the back remaining plain. On the façade, the two doors form a single, theatrical scene: to the left, a pavilion on stilts shelters ladies of quality beneath a red-flowering tree, beside a blue-and-white porcelain vase; to the right, a fantastic cavalcade features a grotesque figure — bare-chested, simian-faced — riding bareback on a large spotted feline, brandishing a whip in his raised hand, while a companion in a wide-brimmed hat holds the animal on a leash and raises a gilded ceremonial parasol. On the sides, an archer perched on a rock faces a figure in white robes near a balustrade; on the other flank, two women carry a bowl of red fruit through a fantastical garden. The lacca a rilievo motifs surge from the blue ground with an almost sculptural presence, their painted stucco silhouettes standing out like bas-relief figures against the deep lacquer sky. The interior answers this spectacular exterior with studied intimacy: the inner faces of the doors display large figures in lacca a rilievo on a yellow ground — to the left, a dignitary riding a fantastic beast beneath a tree of contorted branches; to the right, a figure in colourful dress beside an indeterminate creature.