Cassone Chest Cedar Azores 20 October 1592 marriage scrollwork mastic punchwork

Sold

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REF: 11367

Height: 79.5 cm (31.3")

Width: 182.5 cm (71.9")

Depth: 65.5 cm (25.8")

Description

Exceptional, Museum Quality, Portuguese, Cedar Cassone, Made For The English Market, Dated '1592 October 20' & Inscribed 'In God Is Al My Trust' This fascinating cassone is the most outstanding example from a small group of a rare, late-sixteenth century, cedar model most likely made in the Azores. It has exceptional decoration and authenticity, bears a precise sixteenth-century date, the motto 'In God Is Al My Trust', numerous monograms and symbols with a provenance dating back to the eighteenth-century. This cassone bears the date '1592 OCTOBER 20'. It is the only, known, sixteenth century chest to bear a precise date stating date, month and year. The only other, known, cassone in this group to be dated was one that HHM handled in 2009 which was inscribed '1596' on the inside of the top. Research is underway to establish any connection between this date and the Glendinning family or an historical event. This cassone is the only known example from this small group bearing an inscription. 'IN GOD IS AL MY TRUST' is the motto of The Worshipful Company of Pewterers, The Worshipful Company of Brewers, The Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers, and there is another City Companies with a similar motto as well as a few distinguished families.

This cassone, unusually, bears numerous monograms and symbols which have been added over time and tell the story of its ownership. This extent of characterization is believed to be unique on a piece of early furniture. The profuse ornamentation featuring mythical creatures, foliage, hearts and scrollwork on this cassone is the most outstanding of the group. The numerous heart motifs and symbolism demonstrate that this was a marriage chest representing love, union, abundance, guidance, protection, loyalty, fidelity, faithfulness, alertness, prosperity and wealth.

All the cassones within this small group bear finger joints, fluid, incised ornamentation filled with black mastic depicting mythical creatures, foliage and scrollwork and punchwork. As discussed overleaf they were either commissioned and imported from the Azores or made by craftsmen from the Azores who travelled to England. One of the cassones has an empty shield suggesting it was made in the Azores and exported for sale. The headquarters of the Provedoria das Armadas, a Crown institution responsible for the outfitting of Portuguese ships, was located on Angra do Heroísmo, on the island of Terceira. At that time this was an important hub for the vessels operating the India Run. "This island of Terceira is very rich, because of the great string of fleets, from the Castilian Indies, from São Tomé and from Brazil, vessels from India, galleons from Mina, and from many parts of the world, that regularly sail out of the port and bar of this city of Angra" . Felgueiras, 2002, note 17, 1611

In the most important source of documentation about the Azores during this period, the work Saudades da Terra (Livro Sexto, 1978, p. 40), Gaspar Frutuoso (1522-1591) refers to the existence of

"forty workshops of blacksmiths and metalworkers and seventy-two [workshops] of carpenters and cabinet-makers … who go all over Spain and to many other places overseas".

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