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Bed State, 19th Century, English Charles II-Style, Upholstered in Blue

Sold

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REF: 11242

Height: 304 cm (119.7")

Width: 226 cm (89")

Depth: 210 cm (82.7")

Description

This bed typifies the expensive and sumptuous state beds that were the height of fashion in palaces and stately homes in the late 17th century. The bed was the centrepiece of the state bedroom, one of a series of rooms designed to show the wealth of the owner.

The silk damask hangings are in the most prized and expensive colour of the late 17th century, 'blue', brocaded with gold thread. Until the invention of Prussian Blue in the first decade of the 18th century, a very good fast blue dye could only be made from lapis lazuli, which was extremely expensive and consequently very few State beds are known to have been upholstered in blue. The color of the silk changes with the intensity of light and appears peacock green in very little light similar to the image below. I can provide a sample of the silk to illustrate this.

The oak and pine frame are typically upholstered entirely in silk damask. The cornice is surmounted with removable, finials decorated with gold braid. The cornice has characteristic, bold, architectural mouldings which are trimmed with gold braid to accentuate the form. The full length, deep pelmet is also decorated with gold braid to highlight the shape. The canted shape of the canopy inside the damask tester is accentuated by gold braid.

There is a single curtain at the back behind the headboard, and a pair of full length curtains beside which will be trimmed with fringe. The shaped headboard is accentuated by gold braid scroll decoration. There are another pair of full length curtains either side of the turned columns at the front of the bed which will be trimmed with fringe. The columns are decorated with gold braid wrapped around them. The box spring mattress is covered with a silk damask bedspread with a central, gold panel. The side rails are fully upholstered in silk damask and a shaped silk damask skirting attaches to this. Unusually, the bed stands on period bun feet which are removable.

The entire structure exactly corresponds with the fashion of the end of the 17th century. It is very hard to date these beds accurately as the timber is protected by the covering and does not oxidize so it is easier to date by the number of times it has been re-upholstered. This state bed was previously upholstered in a crimson, silk damask which had deteriorated completely, a process that would generally take 100 years and when removed the frame bore minute fragments of a blue silk damask which is why I have re-upholstered in this color.

The accounts of the upholsterers employed by the Crown contain several allusions to 'French four poster beds' at this time, and the description probably indicates that, if not actually imported, their design was based on contemporary French models. The names of several contemporary craftsmen who supplied furniture to the Royal palaces and great houses indicate their origin. The upholsterer Francis Lapierre, for example, in 1697 provided the State Bedroom at Chatsworth with a bed at a cost of £470. Related To: There are 3 known surviving beds with blue upholstery. The blue damask bed from Hampton Court, Leominster, which is Based Upon a design by Daniel Marot. This bed was donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (on display in Gallery 511...

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