

# R O S E U N I A C K E

## **An Important Japanese Export Nagasaki Lacquer Centre Table**

**Japan, circa 1850's**

**Provenance: The Royal House of Hanover. Inventory number 1705**

The large lacquered top with inverted corners having inlays of mother of pearl and gilt highlights illustration sprays of different flowers and berries. The legs with repeated decoration carved as stylized cloud motifs.

£45,000

Dimensions: 75 cm (29.5 inches) high by 181 cm (71.5 inches) long by 91 cm (36 inches) wide

Please see following page for further discussion of this important table.

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Incorrectly catalogued at the sale of the contents of Schloss Marienburg (Sotheby's, October 2005) this table's origins have been lost during the vast dispersal of the estate. However, there are various clues which enable us to piece together a possible arrival date at Marienburg and how this masterpiece of Japanese lacquer-work came into the Hanover collection.

The outstanding quality of craftsmanship exhibited in the piece is of primary importance. Most Nagasaki lacquerware is European in design and has the distinguishing feature of both pearl-white and back-painted abalone shell inlaid into the surface. The Hanover table, whilst European in scale, uses the Japanese fungus or cloud motif in the silhouette of the legs. An interesting and - to European minds - unnecessary decorative addition to the table is the continuation of the gilded outer edge of the legs underneath the feet of the table.

The decorative motifs covering the table are all life-like renderings of plant species, the most obvious Japanese plant being the Chrysanthemum; this particular flower is the Japanese Imperial Crest (Mon). Other plants include: Japanese Iris, Ivy, Cherry blossom, Peonies, Jasmin and Physalis Maple. The decoration to the table suggests two possible links as to its origin, either the piece was specifically commissioned by a member of the Hanover Royal family or it was designed and made as an example of the work that could be supplied by the particular Master lacquer craftsman in Nagasaki. The second option suggests that the table may have been exhibited at one of the European International Exhibitions of the mid-nineteenth century.

Another possible source of arrival at Marienburg may have been via a diplomatic gift. Other items sold at the Sotheby's sale included a micro mosaic tabletop from the Vatican workshops, embroideries centred by the Hanover cipher, examples of Berlin porcelain, amongst thousands of other lots. All these items, dating from a similar period of the nineteenth century are decorated with floral motifs of the very best quality, suggesting a rarified interest in all things botanical by a member of the family. Marienburg also had a substantial orangery.

Throughout the Nineteenth century various European cities hosted trade shows with representatives from all over the World; these fairs were opened by heads of state of the host nations; the benefits being the ability to purchase the very best on offer. During the early years of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, items of lacquerware were donated by Queen Victoria (1837-1901) and the Daimyo of Satsuma. A number of items of lacquerware were also purchased from the Japanese section of the 1867 Paris International Exhibition.

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