



**Small Salon Table "Malle"**

Circa: Circa 1780

68 x 52.5 cm

26.7716535433071 x 26.7716535433071"

Circa 1780

68 x 52.5 x 38 cm (26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 20<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches)

Attributed to: Louis Noël Malle

Sides and top decorated with landscape scenes

Small writing table, one drawer

Rosewood, various fruitwoods, gilt bronze

This elaborately decorated table à écrire, depicting a landscape view with a castle on a river with boats, is an excellent example of the "pictorial" furniture produced from the 1770s to the end of the Ancien Régime. As the scholar Geoffrey de Bellaigue has pointed out, furniture featuring these remarkable "paintings in wood" represented a coordinated collaboration between several artists and craftspeople. Typically, the tables themselves were based on engraved sources by famous artists, which were then transferred to wood by specialists such as Wolff and Gilbert for the Marchand-Merciers and Ébénistes. However, it is known that larger workshops employed their own marqueteurs and would therefore have carried out the process entirely in-house (G. de Bellaigue, "Ruins in Marquetry," *Apollo*, January 1968, pp. 12-16, and G. de Bellaigue, "Engravings and the 18th-Century French Marqueteur," *Burlington Magazine*, May 1965, pp. 240-250, and July 1965, pp. 356-363). This appears to have been the case for the workshop of Louis Noël Malle, who ran a thriving business on the Grande Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Antoine, combining furniture workshops with a shopfront from which he sold his productions. The *Almanach général des marchands* of 1772-74 lists Noël—as he was known among his contemporary cabinetmakers—among the most important marqueteurs working in Paris at that time. The Frick Collection includes a closely related desk by Malle, similarly paneled on the top and all four sides, featuring naive paintings depicting idyllic Italianate scenes with boatmen punting across a river. Focarino, ed., *The Frick Collection, An Illustrated Catalogue, V Furniture, Italian & French*, Princeton, 1992, pp. 359–370.

**Exhibition:**

This furniture was exhibited at the Exposition Chefs-d'oeuvre de la curiosité du Monde au "Musée des

Arts Décoratifs" in Paris in 1954.