



E. W. Godwin an Important Anglo-Japanese Bookcase Painted by Henry Stacy Marks

Ref: NPV000683

Price on Application

MAKER	William Watt
DESIGNER	Edward William Godwin
PERIOD	Aesthetic Movement , 1870-1879
YEAR	1871
STYLE	Anglo-Japanese
ORIGIN	United Kingdom
MATERIALS	Paint, Walnut
DIMENSIONS	H: 85.5 in (217.17 cm) W: 39 in (99.06 cm) D: 19.5 in (49.53 cm)
CONDITION	Good

About this piece

This piece is being held for an exhibition dedicated to the furniture designed by E. W. Godwin, to be held at the Bröhan Museum in Berlin next spring.

Edward William Godwin (1833-1886) for William Watt

A rare and important Anglo-Japanese walnut bookcase, circa 1871. With brass handles and shield-style escutcheon, the lower cupboard with two sliding doors inset with painted panels attributed to **Henry Stacy Marks**. **Related Sales**

See Soros, Susan Weber, *"The Secular Furniture of E. W. Godwin,"* Yale 1999, p. 201, plate 321, for an illustration of a related example. See also Christie's sale *"Important 20th Century Design,"* 26th May 2005, lot 47.

Literature

In 1949, Dudley Harbron photographed and recorded a bookcase that he concluded had been made for Dr. George Bird, a friend of Ellen Terry (see Godwin's ledger for *17th September 1871*) and the father of Elfrida Bird, who married Luke Ionides. That bookcase, now cut-down, together with another corresponding example, was then in the possession of Mrs. Lewis Clarke, having been inherited from her grandfather, Alexander Ionides, son of Elfrida and Luke.

A third bookcase was known to have been in the possession of Mrs. Alecco Ionides at about the same time (Soros, p. 201). Despite Harbron's research and evident interest in these bookcases, they were poorly maintained by their owners, and two were thought to be destroyed (Soros, p. 201), whilst one of the examples had its shelved superstructure removed and discarded. Susan Soros notes that this cut-down version is in "stained oak," but one can clearly see in her illustration (Soros, p. 201) it is not made from polished oak at all, but exactly like the present example, made from walnut.

Both being made from walnut and both having identical measurements to their bases gives even more weight towards the most likely event: that only one of the three cabinets was completely destroyed, and the cut-down version is quite likely to be one of the two thought to have been destroyed, which it partially was. The present example is the only known example in existence to have emerged intact and is therefore unique.

The Bookcase

The painted panels to the cut-down 'Bird-Ionides' depict scenes from Greek antiquity. On the present version, there is a painted panel to one side, probably by **Henry Stacy Marks**; this attribution was made by Christie's Art Department and Susan Weber Soros, and it is in good condition.

The pencil and watercolour cartoon to the other panel, although quite faded and somewhat distressed, has the feel of **Edward Burne-Jones**'s work. Interestingly, the panels were originally believed to be executed by Burne-Jones, although Harbron in 1949 maintained the panels were painted by Charles Glidden, who died young at 20 years of age.

This panel has been attributed to **Henry Stacy Marks** by Christie's Art Department. **Henry Stacy Marks** is well documented to have painted for Godwin, to whom the panel of the present lot is attributed, and which is also in the Greek style. The figures in the painted panel are of two men helping an injured man, possibly having been in combat with the knight in the other panel, and again their attire also points to Greek mythology.

The opposite panel is quite different and depicts a prince or knight about to kiss a maiden or princess. She is looking into his eyes, reaching out and touching his arm, about to kiss. There is a sword lying at his feet, and his own sword is held to his waist or in his belt with the blade in view and the point to the earth. It looks as if there may be the tail of what could be a dragon adjacent to the sword, and possibly a person that may have been slain lying by the maiden. In the right-hand corner, there is a castle with a banner flying and a crescent moon beside it.

The Ionides Family

The Ionides family were probably the biggest and most generous patrons of the arts, building one of the most important and impressive collections in the late Victorian period. As refined collectors of art from the Aesthetic Movement, Ionides' pool of artists to choose from was thoroughly connected through his high-society circle of friends, which included **Edward Calvert** and **George Frederick Watts** (who painted their family portrait when Luke was a child), **James McNeill Whistler**, **Edward Poynter**, **George Du Maurier**, **Thomas Armstrong**, **Dante Gabriel Rossetti**, and **Edward Burne-Jones**. **William Morris**, **Philip Webb**, **Walter Crane**, and **Thomas Jeckyll**, all part of his circle of friends, were commissioned to re-decorate 1 Holland Park, their family home, which is all well documented.

Henry Stacy Marks (1829-1898) was a painter, watercolourist, and illustrator who worked as a muralist and decorator for **Burges**, Godwin, and **Waterhouse**. In 1869, Marks was commissioned by Godwin to execute an allegorical frieze to the dining room of

Dromore Castle, but due to the incurable dampness of Dromore's enormously thick walls, it never came to fruition.

Brass Lock Plates

An important point is that in the present example, there are two brass lock plates to the right-hand side: one in the middle of the central upright that runs through the middle of the bookcase side, and another one in the middle of the same central upright but located in the middle of the lower cupboard. These plates (one now missing) were used for joining two bookcases together and would have utilised a brass thumbscrew (also now missing).

The sides of this bookcase and the 'Bird-Ionides' bookcase are completely flat from top to bottom, which allows for them to butt up perfectly—a design detail that until now was unknown, and which gives even further strength to this present version being one of the very original pair.

Provenance

The present bookcase has a depositary label to the back of *Famine's*, Colchester, and handwritten "G. M. LAWRENCE." Mrs. G. M. Lawrence was the last owner of it. She was one of the last relatives of the Lawrences and passed away in her 90s in 2004. The Lawrence family owned a very successful lemonade and ginger ale company with factories and warehouses in Beccles, Bungay, and Halesworth, Suffolk.

It was removed from Mrs. G. M. Lawrence's house by Durrants Auctioneers, one of the original houses built by the Lawrences in Station Rd, Beccles. At some point in its life, it made the journey down from London to Colchester and spent some time there, although exactly where is unknown. It seems its next move would have been from Colchester to Beccles.

Measurements

The measurements of the cut-down version are identical to the lower half of this version. In Soros, Susan Weber, "*The Secular Furniture of E. W. Godwin*," the cut-down version measures 35 1/4" high, which is the very same height to the open area of this present version. Again, the depth and width of both of these examples are identical: 19" deep, 39" wide. The present version measures 89 1/2" high.