Cabinet - bargueno (vargueno)

Furniture Collection

Accession Nr.:	11235
Date of production:	ca. 1600
Place of production:	Spain
Materials:	chestnut; ebony; gilded wrought-iron mounts; ivory inlay
Techniques:	painted
Dimensions:	height: 160 cm width: 116 cm depth: 47 cm

Spanish Renaissance furniture art may be characterised by the development in stylistic history of the most characteristic piece of Spanish furniture, the vargueno or bargueno. As luxury furniture made for export, this type appeared in every part of Europe, giving an impulse to the development of craftsmanship locally. According to some assumptions, its name derived from a personal name, the name of a cabinetmaker or woodcarver in the opinion of others, it comes from the name of Barguas, the seat of a bishopric in the province of Toledo and one of the centres for the production of furniture of this type. The vargueno derives from the Moorish-decorated writing box whose front panel folded down and whose top could be lifted up, and from the late Gothic Catalan chest. The former was used for writing purposes and for the storage of paper and important letters the latter for the safekeeping of small items. Portable Spanish writing chests were placed on a stand or low cabinet. Sometimes the writing chest was placed on a low cabinet, a so-called taquillon, and had drawers or doors. The pull-down writing surface was supported by two small rods which could be pulled out directly underneath the writing chest by means of bronze or lathe-turned knobs. In its dismantled state, the vargueno could easily be moved, with the help of gilded iron handles at either end of its block-like chest part. When the writing flap, which is covered on the inside with coloured and embossed leather, is pulled down, the entire decorative richness of this piece of furniture vividly unfolds: embellished with small columns made of bone gilded and painted ledges and turned, balustered articulating elements, the doors and the front panels of the drawers astonish the viewer.

Literature

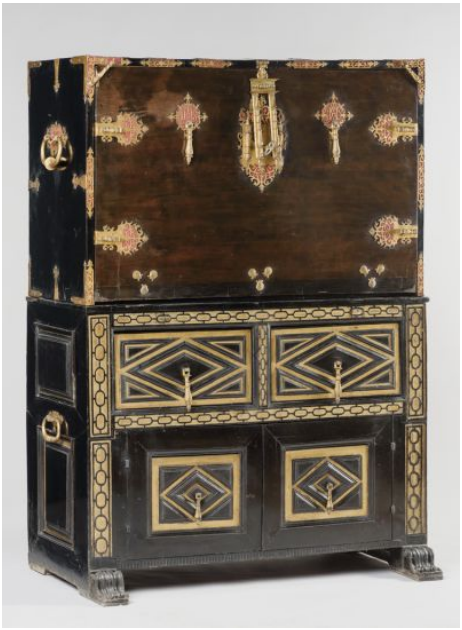
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