A pair of Irish George II walnut side chairs

Sold



REF: 1161

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Height: 99 cm (39")

Width: 62 cm (24.4")

Depth: 59 cm (23.2")

Description

A pair of Irish George II walnut side chairs, the splayed backs with double scroll top rail carved with acanthus decoration, with three carved foliate motifs linking the vertical bars of the splat, the drop-in seats covered in fine mid 18th century petit point needlework decorated with flowers on a hazel-coloured ground, the plain seat rail on boldly carved front cabriole legs with acanthus leaf and a vertical string of pearls flanked by pierced scrollwork ears, on ball and claw feet and swept back shaped legs.

These exquisitely carved walnut side chairs exemplify Irish mid?18th century craftsmanship, reinterpreting with a markedly more sculptural and expressive vocabulary, models of chairs produced in London during the same period. The overall profile comprising a shaped top rail, pierced foliate splat and acanthus carved cabriole legs terminating in ball and claw feet, corresponds closely to the Irish George II tradition documented in both urban and provincial workshops during the period.

The top rail, carved with a stylised floral cresting, demonstrates the Irish preference for bold, rounded relief carving rather than the flatter, more linear treatment typical of English makers. Below, the splat is pierced and carved with interlaced foliate motifs, a pattern that appears in several Irish sets of the mid?18th century and reflects the local enthusiasm for organic, almost Baroque forms. This approach diverges from the more geometric or strapwork based splats seen in London examples, underscoring the autonomy of Irish design even when drawing from designers such as Thomas Chippendale.

The front legs, carved with deep acanthus leaves to the knees, descend into robust ball and claw feet of a type strongly associated with Irish production. Irish feet of this period are typically more bulbous and assertive than their English counterparts, with pronounced talons and a rounded ball; the present examples conform to this typology. The rear legs, raked and shaped, further support an Irish attribution, as their stance and weight differ from the more restrained English pattern.

Comparable chairs appear in Irish country house collections, including Malahide Castle and Leixlip Castle, and in documented sets sold through Christie's and Adam's of Dublin. The Knight of Glin and Peill illustrate related examples in their seminal publication, Irish Furniture (2007), noting the characteristic Irish tendency toward "a more exuberant and sculptural interpretation of Chippendale's designs." [1] The present chair aligns closely with this description, combining Chippendale derived structure with carving that is unmistakably Irish in spirit.

The chairs represent well?preserved examples of mid?century Irish craftsmanship and contribute to the broader understanding of regional variations within the Chippendale tradition.

The drop?in seats are covered in exceptionally fine English petit point needlework, executed with a stitch density and chromatic subtlety characteristic of mid?18th?century domestic embroidery at its highest level. Petit point, worked at a markedly higher stitch count than gros point or tent stitch, permits the rendering of motifs with painter...

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