

ELEGANT PAIR OF PAUL SORMANI VITRINES

Parisian furniture designer Paul Sormani was counted among the most elite Parisian *ébénistes* (cabinet makers) of the late 19th century. His museum-quality craftsmanship is most evident in this remarkable pair of Louis XVI-style mahogany vitrines. Suitable for showcasing the most elegant collections, this magnificent pair is distinguished by flawless doré bronze decoration, the finest burl wood inlay and bird's-eye maple interiors. Sormani, a self-described maker of *meubles de luxe* (expensive, highest-quality pieces), based many of his works such as this on important Louis XV and XVI period designs. Each of these cabinets is signed "P. Sormani" on the lockplate and the pair remains in overall excellent condition retaining their original bronze gilding.

Sormani received enormous respect as one of Paris' finest *ébénistes* and showed his work at many of the world's leading exhibitions. At the *Universelle Exhibition of 1867*, he received a medal and was described in the *Exhibition Journal* as "...a distinguished *ébéniste* of Paris, whose works deservedly attracted the attention of the public, and received the marked approval of the connoisseur."

Circa 1870

41" wide x 13½" deep x 43¼" high

A resurgence in the popularity of 18th-century designs during the mid-1800s was driven in part by Napoleon III's new bride Eugénie de Montijo. Empress Eugénie, enamored with Marie Antoinette and the Louis XVI-style, decorated her homes using both original and contemporary pieces produced by French master *ébénistes*. Paul Sormani's work captured the Empress' attention and he soon became one of her favorite cabinet makers. Sormani was among a select few *ébénistes* who became masters of the Louis XV and XVI styles. A majority of their 19th-century pieces rivaled and often surpassed the quality and craftsmanship of their historic counterparts. Affluent Parisians were willing to pay a premium for these magnificent, high-quality revival pieces. Sormani's patrons commissioned some of the finest pieces of the period and his workshop remained in business for almost 90 years (1847-1934). After his death in 1877, Sormani's wife and son retained control over the business and continued to produce fine furnishings. Because of the long tenure of Sormani's business, it is often difficult to date many of his pieces, though it is widely accepted that the finest pieces, such as this remarkable pair of vitrines, were made by Sormani himself during the earlier years of operation.

References:

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