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Antique Fine and Rare Roman Pietra Dura -Topped Mahogany Console Table in the manner of Francesco Sibilio

£25,000

An exceptional Pietra Dura side table, the rectangular top with navette shaped design, perhaps representing the *Occhio della Providenza* or 'All-Seeing Eye', the pupil formed of a star, the surrounding eye filled with coloured stones, the spandrels also in an extraordinary marble, possibly a kind of Sicilian Jasper, all within an outer porphyry border, the mahogany table stand with a drawer in the frieze raised on fluted Doric columns at the front and fluted Doric pilasters at the rear flanking a mirror-glass panel, raised on a stepped plinth base

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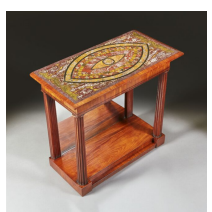
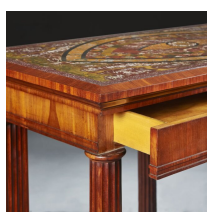
SKU: B4564
Depth: 48 cm (18.75 inches)
Height: 86 cm (34 inches)
Width: 96 cm (37.75 inches)
Year: Vatican Workshops, circa 1820/30





Reputedly acquired in Rome by Francis Charles Seymour-Conway (1777-1842), 3rd Marquess of Hertford, for St. Dunstan's Villa, Regent's Park. Hertford travelled frequently in France and Italy to alleviate his gout, and bought prodigiously on these trips. St. Dunstan's was demolished after a fire in the 1930s, and Barbara Hutton built Winfield House, now the American Ambassador to the Court of St. James's London residence, on the site.

Francesco Sibilio was a Roman craftsman and merchant active in the first half of the 19th century who's collection of semi-precious stones, hardstones and marble was well-known in its day. He was also considered one of the major experts in this field. Faustino Corsi in his treatise, *Delle Pietre Antiche,* Rome, 1845, records various pieces by Sibilio, and some particularly unusual stones were named after him in the 19th century.

Sibilio's technique of putting together soft-paste ancient glass and hardsones, such as porphyry and serpentine, is unique, though his inlaid marble designs sometimes seem to be inspired by the *Opus Sectile* of 1st century AD Rome. Two table-tops in this technique signed by Sibilio have been sold by Christie's - one dated 1823 as lot 267 on 11th May 2000; the second, dated 1824, as lot 123 on 11th June 1987. A table top by Sibilio in this technique, now in the Corning Museum of glass, was exhibited at the 1867 Paris Exhibition at which time it was ascribed by the Vatican to Giovanni Rossignani, who is recorded as one of the master craftsmen

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working in the *Reverenda Fabbrica di San Pietro*. Sibilio doubtless also had a workshop in the Vatican and, presumably, collaborated with Rossignani, though surprisingly little is known about his life. He certainly worked in just hardstones and, as exemplified in the present table, was famous for sourcing finely-figured examples of rare marbles.

Martine Newby in her 2003 treatise, *Francesco Sibilio and the Re-use of Ancient Roman Glass in the Nineteenth Century,* only gives a firm attribution of six table and gueridon tops to Sibilio (including the two signed examples cited above), so a panel that can be attributed to him is rare indeed - and perhaps rarer for being rectangular as all the aforementioned examples are circular.