

Basic Detail Report

Title Side Chair

Date 1869-1870

Primary Maker Gustave Herter

Medium Rosewood, various exotic wood and ivory inlays, gilt paint, brocatelle, trim

Description Rosewood side chair in the Renaissance revival style, with a carved crest rail, turned upper stiles and a brocatelle seat cover, with elaborate inlaid and gilt decoration. The back of the chair is formed by a carved crest rail at the top between two turned stiles. The crest rail has an arch at the top center over two carved swan's necks, and an oval medallion superimposed over a horizontal rail. The medallion is inlaid with a band of light wood, an oval of dark wood, and light wood inlaid instruments and sheet music. Carved into the rail, on either side of the medallion, are a small recessed flower and leaf. Centered below the crest rail is a splat, consisting of floral brocatelle upholstered oval (upholstery is faded, trim is missing), surrounded by oval molding, and a squared off wooden frame. Below the splat, a horizontal stay rail extends between the two stiles; in the center is a block that is carved to imitate a geometric interlocking motif around the stile. Above the seat each stile is slanted back and turned with a ball-shaped finial at the top, over cylinder, baluster, ball, and block forms. These are decorated with bands of exotic wood inlay, carving to imitate acanthus leaves, with fluting, and with gilding to highlight the various carved ornament. Below the seat, each stile extends down to form a leg that is curved back. The seat is

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trapezoidal, with bowed front and side seat rails. The seat is upholstered with half over-the-rails floral pattern brocatelle (faded, trim is now missing). The front seat rail has a panel in the center inlaid with a geometric pattern of ivory, an unidentified blue inlay, and exotic light and dark wood inlays. This is flanked by a recessed panel outlined in the center with gilding. Each side seat rail has a recessed panel across its full width, also outlined in the center with a gilded rectangle. Where each stay rail meets a leg, a small knee bracket return is applied to the underside of the seat rail. This is carved with a larger scroll and a small scroll; the knee bracket returns below the back seat rail are not carved. Each straight front leg has a block at the top with gilded stop-fluting on the front and side, over a scrolled capital, a tapered, fluted, gilded column, over a bulb-shaped foot carved with leaves. Condition: The upholstery is badly faded; the trim is missing from around the edges of the upholstery. The finish and the gilding are lightly crazed. Design and Construction Details: The crest rail is carved from a solid piece of wood and tenoned into the cylindrical form near the top of each stile. The splat is tenoned into the crest rail above and down into the stay rail below. The marquetry, oval medallion with inlaid musical motifs is applied over the front of the stay rail and the top front of the crest rail. The stay rail is tenoned into the stiles. The turned upper portions of the stiles were formed from a block of wood with extra wood laminated at each side to form the furthest projecting portions of the turned elements. Each seat rail is tenoned into the tops of the legs. The back seat rail is constructed of a solid piece of wood. The projecting marquetry and molding on the side and front seat rails is

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applied to the surface of the rail that is tenoned into the legs. The knee bracket returns are glued to the underside of the seat rails and the sides of the legs. Each seat rail, and the front leg, extends higher to form a support for the edge of the upholstery. The remainder of the seat frame construction is hidden underneath the upholstery. Each front leg extends from the height of the seat down to the tapered foot; this is also formed from a single vertical block of wood with extra wood laminated onto the block to form the furthest projecting points of the capital. Upholstery (reupholstered in about 1880): The upholstery consists of a floral brocatelle (now faded) with metallic thread in a floral pattern that is applied to the oval front and back of the splat, and applied partially over-the-rails on the seat. A trim would have been applied to the upholstery, where it joined the chair frame (this is almost completely missing, although a few small pieces remain on the splat). The upholstery is supported by iron springs and other stuffing materials, over webbing, and a brown plain weave cotton fabric nailed to the underside of the seat frame.

Dimensions Primary Dimensions (overall height x width x depth): 35 5/8 x 17 x 20in. (90.5 x 43.2 x 50.8cm)