Metamorphic Library Steps And Table

Sold

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REF: 30253

Height: 73 cm (28.7")

Width: 87 cm (34.3")

Depth: 50 cm (19.7")

Description

Victorian Metamorphic Side Table / Library Steps.
An unusual Victorian mahogany hall table that neatly converts into a pair of library steps, attributed to François Hervé. The rectangular moulded top has two treads to the reverse, and enclosing a lift up folding three step ladder, the top hinging to release the mechanism which converts it into a pair of library steps. Altogether there are five leather covered steps with gilt tooling. The table has two brass swan neck carry handles (one either end) and is raised on square section legs. The only exterior evidence of the table's hidden use are the visible hinges on one short edge and a brass button catch on the opposite side. When the catch is released, the table top hinges open so that one end rests on the floor revealing the two treads, each step with rounded front edge. The easel step ladder lifts up from the table base to create the five-tread step ladder.

Size shown is when it is a table, when as a pair of steps the measurements are 127½ cm high, 137 cm wide by 50 cm deep.

The below text is taken from the V & A website as are the copy of the two photographs.
The eighteenth century saw the development of many new ideas for furniture to make the libraries of town and country houses more comfortable and more efficient. New designs for reading chairs and library steps were particularly numerous and some of the more ingenious ideas were patented. In 1774 the London cabinet maker Robert Campbell (working 1750s to 1780s) patented designs for both chairs and tables that could double as library steps. One of his patent tables can be seen at Saltram House in Devon, which is owned by the National Trust. This table in the V & A collection is a development from that patent but adds a full hand-rail and ingeniously places the lower steps on the underside of the table top, accessible when it is hinged out. The maker, François Hervé was known to have worked for some of the most fashionable clients, including the Prince of Wales, but surprisingly little is known about his life.

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