

Press release: Arts Minister steps in to save rare £3 million Baroque Cabinet for the nation

- Cabinet valued at £3.3 million is one of four created between 1669 and 1687 by Rome's leading cabinet maker

Arts Minister Michael Ellis has placed a temporary export bar on a 350 year old Italian Baroque cabinet in an attempt to save it for the nation.

Giacomo Herman (1615 – 1685) was Rome's leading cabinet maker during the 1660s and 1670s and worked for successive Popes and a number of leading Roman families. The German furniture-maker was most active in Italy, having settled in Rome in 1655 where he entered the papal service.

Documented works of significance from this period are very rare. The ebony veneered cabinet, valued at £3.3 million, is one of four created in Herman's workshop between 1669 and 1678.

Arts Minister Michael Ellis said:

This intricate cabinet is an outstanding example of the work of 17th century Italian cabinet makers. I hope that a buyer can be found to keep it in the country so that future generations can admire it and learn about our rich heritage.

Veneered with lapis lazuli, a blue semi-precious stone, and jasper gemstones and mounted in gilt bronze, the cabinet includes 14 gouache miniature paintings depicting Roman basilicas and the city-wide processions that took place following the coronation of a new Pope.

The cabinet also features a clock by Giovanni Wenderlino Hessler and a virginal by Giovanni Battista Maberiani. It is supported by an elaborate carved giltwood table formed of two male figures, masks and scrollwork.

The other cabinets making up this series of works are now housed at the Chapel of the Virgin of Loretto in Krakow, Poland, and at Rosenborg Castle and Fredensborg Castle, both in Denmark.

The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA) made its recommendation on the grounds of its outstanding significance to the study of Baroque decorative art and cultural history.

Committee Member Christopher Rowell said:

This magnificent cabinet, surmounted by a clock and containing a virginal is one of four which were shown in 1669 to Cardinal

Giacomo Rospigliosi, nephew of Pope Clement IX, at the palazzo del Quirinale in Rome. The various components were put together in Rome by a German cabinet-maker, Giacomo Herman, who veneered the church-like façade of this cabinet with lapis lazuli and jasper, as well as covering the drawer fronts and the central niche with painted views of the Eternal City.

The cabinet has been recently reunited with its original cresting: a reduced gilt bronze copy of the Antique bronze equestrian statue of the Emperor Constantine, which Michelangelo placed in the centre of his Piazza di Campidoglio, Rome. Originally supported upon an ebony stand, the present gilded support is early-eighteenth-century Roman, carved with supreme skill and brio and covered with a veneered marble top, shaped to fit.

This is the only one of the set of four cabinets to have been acquired for an English collection. Indeed, this remarkable composite work of art may well have been in England since 1738, when a very similar cabinet was seen by the antiquary, George Vertue, at Cowdray House, Sussex. It is very much to be hoped that the funds will be raised for it to remain in this country.

The decision on the export licence application for the Italian Baroque Cabinet by Giacomo Herman will be deferred until 8 July 2019. This may be extended until 8 November 2019 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £3,300,000.

[Download images of the cabinet on Flickr.](#)

Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the cabinet should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.
2. Details of the cabinet are as follows: An Italian Baroque Cabinet by Giacomo Herman The cabinet recorded in 1669 as one of four cabinets from the workshop of Giacomo Herman in Rome. Height: 284cm; Width 172cm; Depth 72.5cm.
3. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.

4. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. www.artscouncil.org.uk.