

MODERNIST 20TH CENTURY



Auction

05 December 2004
noon ct

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142

GIO PONTI AND PIERO FORNASETTI

Important sideboard

Fontana Arte | Italy, 1938 | Noche de Ferra wood, painted crystal, brass
40 h × 95½ w × 19 d in (102 × 243 × 48 cm)

This cabinet represents the first collaboration between Gio Ponti and Piero Fornasetti for Fontana Arte. This cabinet was revealed at the 1940 Milan Triennale in a special display illustrating new designs in glass. Ponti and Fornasetti are two of the pre-eminent twentieth century Italian designers, each contributing immensely to the history of architecture and design. Though their oeuvres differ, their creative genius is evident in all of their works. From Ponti's elegant forms to Fornasetti's illusionist renderings, they were each innovative creators whose work is still relevant today. The architectural lines and organic motifs of the cabinet make it obvious that their strengths compliment one another. This cabinet is a result of the very collaborative environment at Fontana Arte under the guidance of Gio Ponti. The relationship between Ponti and other Fontana Arte designers was mutually supportive and very creative. One way to understand the exchange is Ponti as architect and Fornasetti as decorator. This custom design is exemplary of Fontana Arte's high quality, high style approach to furniture design and use of only the most luxurious materials. This cabinet features crystal doors reverse painted by Fornasetti on a burl walnut structure designed by Ponti. The burl wood forms a nearly Baroque frame for the similarly styled paintings. The compositions are loosely rendered still lives intertwined with everyday items including fish, bees, flowers and umbrellas. By including

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these unusual images, Fornasetti blurs the line between art and life, allowing things we normally overlook to be displayed like an aesthetic object. Unlike Fornasetti's more recognizable style of tromp l'oeil, these paintings are more emotionally evocative with their vibrant colors and lines that only hint at real objects in space. Literature: L'Arredamento Moderno, Aloï, fig. 393 illustrated Il Mobile Italiano degli anni '40 e '50, Guttry and Maino, pg. 230 illustrated Lo Stile, Nella Casa e Nell'Arredamento, Ponti and Pagani, July 1941, illustrated Exhibited: Milan Triennial, 1940

Provenance: Private collection, South America Private collection, Milan

Result: \$240,000

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