

A close-up photograph of a dark-stained wooden cabinet. The image shows a brass hinge on the left, a decorative brass ornament with a central shield and leaf-like extensions in the upper right, and three vertical brass pulls at the bottom. The wood grain is clearly visible.

A Late Gustavian *Secrétaire en armoire* by Gustaf Adolf Ditzinger

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Daniel Seghers (1590–1661) and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger (1607–1678), *Flower Garland with the Standing Virgin and Child*, c. 1645–50. Oil on copper, 85.5 x 61.5 cm. Purchase: Wiros Fund. Nationalmuseum, NM 7505.

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**This late Gustavian writing desk** once belonged to Duke Fredrik Adolf (1750–1803), (Figs. 1–4). It was made by Gustaf Adolf Ditzinger (1760–1800), c. 1787–89 in what was formerly Georg Haupt's (1741–1784) workshop in Stockholm and was subsequently part of the neoclassical décor at the duke's *Lustschloss*, Tullgarn. This type of furniture, with its vertical drop-front desktop and cupboard doors below, was known in France as a *secrétaire en armoire* and in Sweden as a *sekretär* (secretary).

Sweden of the 1780s increasingly regarded secretaries and bureaus with slanted fronts as old-fashioned, with a vertical drop-front desk being preferred.<sup>1</sup> This change was driven by Haupt, who introduced several French types of writing furniture, with the *secrétaire en armoire* being the most common in France. A variant on high legs that had one or more drawers in the apron, called a *secrétaire en cabinet*, was also brought to Sweden by Haupt. This type seems to have been the one of the two that were most in demand.<sup>2</sup> In about 1800, the secretary became a common type of furniture in Sweden, thus replacing the sloping-fronted bureaus that had been the most popular.<sup>3</sup>

In 1776, Ditzinger, then aged 16, was taken on as an apprentice by Haupt and received his entire schooling there.<sup>4</sup> The workshop was relatively small, with only eight workbenches listed in the estate inventory, of which seven were fully equipped. Georg Haupt ran the workshop



Fig. 1 Gustaf Adolph Ditzinger (1760–1800), *Secretary (Secrétaire en armoire)*, Produced in what was formerly Georg Haupt's workshop, 1787–89. Birch, ebony, mahogany, sycamore and other woods, Carrara marble, gilt bronze, 146 x 126 x 62 cm (h x w x d). Purchase: Axel Hirsch Fund. Nationalmuseum, NMK 113/2019.





Fig. 2 Gustaf Adolph Ditzinger (1760–1800), *Secretary (Secrétaire en armoire)*, Produced in what was formerly Georg Haupt's workshop, 1787–89. Birch, ebony, mahogany, sycamore and other woods, Carrara marble, gilt bronze, 146 x 126 x 62 cm (h x w x d). Purchase: Axel Hirsch Fund. Nationalmuseum, NMK 113/2019.

for 14 years, before his sudden death in 1784. After Haupt's death, Sara Catharina Haupt (1759–1830), as the widow of a guild master, was able to continue running the workshop.<sup>5</sup> At this time, Ditzinger registered as a student at the preparatory school at the Academy of Fine Arts where, among others, young cabinetmakers were taught drawing.<sup>6</sup> In 1786, Ditzinger took over as foreman for Sara Catharina Haupt<sup>7</sup> and, three years later, in 1789, he married Sara and was able to take over the workshop in his own name.<sup>8</sup>

The secretary has several different types of wood veneer, but mahogany is the most prominent. The drop front, cupboard doors and the sides have friezes in paler wood and large fields of mahogany veneer. The use of mahogany increased at the end of the 18th century and, as tastes changed, intarsia became less and less fashionable in the 1790s.<sup>9</sup> The secretary's friezes in paler wood have strapwork with a shadow effect achieved through parallel veins of white and black ebony. This shadow work is common on Haupt's furniture.<sup>10</sup> The strapwork also has many similarities with the strapwork found on many pieces by Haupt.<sup>11</sup> The top of the upper section has a frieze of intricate fire-gilded bronze ornamentation, contrasting with the dark ebony background. The lobed acanthus leaves and the laurel leaves combine in an arabesque, with the laurel-wreathed head of the god Apollo visible in the middle. In Antiquity, Apollo was the god of light, the arts and poetry, and was a popular subject in art, sculpture and the applied arts in the latter half of the 18th century.

The corner fleurons are what most clearly link Ditzinger to the secretary. These are shaped like lotus flowers and are on the outside of the desktop and on the cupboard doors. Fleurons of this type are found on corners of the revolving front on Ditzinger's masterpiece, a cylinder secretary with an upper cabinet, produced in 1788.<sup>12</sup> However, they were not on the drawing for his masterpiece, nor were they in the sketch by Louis Masreliez (1748–1810)





Fig. 3 Gustaf Adolph Ditzinger (1760–1800), *Secretary (Secrétaire en armoire)*, Produced in what was formerly Georg Haupt's workshop, 1787–89. Birch, ebony, mahogany, sycamore and other woods, Carrara marble, gilt bronze, 146 x 126 x 62 cm (h x w x d). Purchase: Axel Hirsch Fund. Nationalmuseum, NMK 113/2019.





Fig. 4 Gustaf Adolph Ditzinger (1760–1800), *Secretary (Secrétaire en armoire)*, Produced in what was formerly Georg Haupt's workshop, 1787–89. Birch, ebony, mahogany, sycamore and other woods, Carrara marble, gilt bronze, 146 x 126 x 62 cm (h x w x d). Purchase: Axel Hirsch Fund. Nationalmuseum, NMK 113/2019.

upon which the drawing for the masterpiece was based.<sup>13</sup> The corner fleurons are again found on the small inbuilt book cabinets by Ditzinger from 1791 in the divan in Gustav III's pavilion at Haga.<sup>14</sup> The corner fleurons on the secretary contribute to it being attributed to Ditzinger, despite it being unsigned.

Tullgarn Palace was built in the 1720s and, after Gustaf III's *coup d'état* in August 1772, it was bought by the Estates as a *Lustschloss* for the duke.<sup>15</sup> Interior design work began in the 1780s and progressed in stages, with Fredrik Adolf being very involved.<sup>16</sup> He had an interest in art and was an honorary member of the Academy of Fine Arts.<sup>17</sup> The estate inventory from Tullgarn Palace states that the secretary was located in the big drawing room (also called the Red Salon) in the western corner of the first floor of the palace.<sup>18</sup> When the secretary arrived at Tullgarn Palace, probably soon after its completion, the furniture known as *secrétaire en armoire* had existed

in France since the 1760s. In Haupt's own production, there are details to show that such a piece was produced in the early 1770s.<sup>19</sup> Fredrik Adolf's secretary can thus be regarded as a high class, but hardly innovative, furthering of the development of the furniture type known as *secrétaire en armoire*. Some of this development, however, involved the ornamentation, where intarsia was losing its status to the advantage of pure mahogany.

#### Notes:

1. Bengt Nyström, *Svenska möbler under femhundra år*, Stockholm 2008, p. 139.
2. Lars Ljungström, *George Haupt: Gustav III:s hovschatullmakare*, Kungl. husgerådskammaren, Stockholm 2006, p. 56.
3. Nyström 2008, p. 96.
4. Torsten Sylvén, *Mästarnas möbler: Stockholmsarbeten 1700–1850*, Stockholm 1996, p. 93.
5. Ljungström 2006, p. 17.
6. Sylvén 1996, pp. 22 and 93.
7. Sylvén 1996, p. 93.
8. Riksarkivet, Jakob och Johannes kyrkoarkiv,

Lysnings- och vigselböcker, 1774–1793.

Ref. SE/SSA/008/E1/1.

9. Marshall Lagerquist, "Gustaf Adolf Ditzinger", in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/17556>, (accessed 7 July 2020).

10. Ljungström 2006, p. 51.

11. Ljungström 2006, p. 144.

12. Sylvén 1996, p. 89.

13. Louis Masreliez's sketch can be found in the Nationalmuseum's collection (NMH Eich 586/1890).

14. Information from Lars Ljungström, PhD, Senior Curator, The Royal Collections, on the inventory form, NMK 113/2019, for the Nationalmuseum Board meeting, 29 august 2019.

15. L. Stavenow, "Adolf Fredrik", in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/5574>, (accessed 7 July 2020).

16. Göran Alm, *Franskt blev svenskt: den franska konstnärslinjen Masreliez i Sverige under 1700-talet*, Lund 1991, p. 103.

17. L. Stavenow, "Adolf Fredrik", in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/5574>, (accessed 7 July 2020).

18. Riksarkivet, Stockholm: Kungligt arkiv, K 384, Hans Kungl. Höghet Hertigens af Östergötland Fredrik Adolf, bouppteckningshandlingar. Ref. SE/RA/710003/03/012/K 384.

19. Ljungström 2006, pp. 102 and 144.