

SA1197902

A Masterpiece of Victorian Toleware: "Esther Accusing Haman" – Attributed to H. Meeson

Price

GBP 1,200

| USD \$1,636 | EUR 1,400

Item Reference: SA1197902**Date of manufacture: 19th Century**

Dimensions

Height = 3.5 cm (1.4")

Width = 55.5 cm (21.9")

Depth = 76.5 cm (30.1")

Description

This monumental mid-19th-century English Toleware (painted metal) tray represents the absolute zenith of Birmingham's japanning industry. Measuring an impressive 76.5 cm, this "Grand Butler's Tray" is not merely a utilitarian object but a sophisticated work of academic art, designed to serve as a centrepiece in a high-status Victorian interior. Technique and Historical Context English Toleware of the mid-Victorian era (circa 1840–1860) reached a level of aesthetic perfection that rivalled fine gallery paintings. Unlike more common papier-mâché, this tray is crafted from heavy-gauge sheet iron. The process involved "japanning"—applying multiple layers of asphaltum-based black lacquer, each kiln-fired at high temperatures to create a luminous, glass-like and incredibly durable surface. This stable substrate allowed master painters to use delicate oil glazes that would have been impossible on less rigid materials. Artistic Merit and Attribution The central narrative composition, "Esther Accusing Haman", is executed with extraordinary painterly finesse. The theatrical use of chiaroscuro (light and shadow), the fluid rendering of heavy crimson drapery, and the psychological...

Internal Ref: B1647

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