

PATRICK JEFFERSON



EARLY GEORGE III SPIDER GATELEG TABLE

England *circa* 1765.

Height 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (64cm)

Width 30 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (78cm)

Depth 31 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (79.5cm)

The moulded edged top veneered on oak, with rule-jointed drop leaves, raised on slim columnar-turned gates, legs, and stretchers, raised on slightly flared feet; the timbers untested; in good condition; small repairs and wear consistent with age and use.

The first tables of this form were supplied from the late 1750s by Thomas Chippendale, which may include the tables and a related towel-airer for Dumfries House in 1759 (Christie's London, *Dumfries House*, 12-13 July 2007, vol. I, lot 37; vol. II, lots 207, 208), and certainly the '2 neat Mahogany Spider leg Tables of good wood' to Sir Edward Knatchbull for Mersham-le-Hatch in 1768.

This example is a sophisticated refinement of the genre, where the understated form belies the high attention to detail. The turned base is of solid walnut, rather than the usual mahogany, however the slender dropleaf top is veneered in transverse cuts of a richly figured, so far unidentified, timber that appears to be olive. Sourced primarily in the Mediterranean, olive (*Olea europea L.*), was a primary furniture wood from c.1660-c.1720, typically obliquely cut as 'oysters' to exhibit the rich figuring, and still often misidentified as walnut, which it rivalled – sometimes exceeded – in value. Indeed, recent research has established that olive wood furniture mostly appeared in high status inventories, many within London (Adam Bowett, *Woods in British Furniture Making 1400-1900*, Kew 2012, pages 173-175). Although the choice of olive appears most unusual at this date, Chippendale, together with other major London cabinetmakers, used exotic imported timbers to embellish furniture, choosing rare and often unidentified hardwoods for table tops and crossbanding, including such curiosities as 'pidgeon wood', 'Guadalupe wood', 'Nutmeg wood', and 'Allegozant'.

£8,500

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