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An Italian ormolu-mounted Ebony and Pietra Dura casket from the Grand Ducal Workshops in Florence

under its director, the sculptor **Giovanni Battista Foggini** (1652-1725)

Florence, c. 1690

Pietra dura and gilded bronze

With inscription on underside „A(?)..Bishop of Lancaster“

25 x 44,5 x 36 cm

Decorated overall with various marble and hardstones, comprising amethyst, quartz, diaspora di Sicilia, giallo di Siena, moss agates, lapis lazuli, chalcedony, carnelian, jasper and other agate, within a Belgian black marble surround with ormolu fruiting branches.

The sophistication of this chest extends to the interior, which is veneered with olive and rosewood and contains another walnut veneered, removable box lined with crimson red silk.

The design of this impressive casket, richly mounted with semiprecious fruit, ormolu foliage and naturalistic pietra dura panels, closely relates in to the output of the Galleria dei Lavori or Grand Ducal Workshops, in Florence under its director, the sculptor Giovanni Battista Foggini, during the reign of Grand Duke Cosimo III de Medici (1670-1723).

Among the artists working at the manufactory, alongside the masters of flat art, there were also masters of relief, known as 'fruttisti', stone cutters who carved fully three-dimensional fruits in pietra dura, which grew out of plant festoons made of gilded bronze. These fruit works are among the most beautiful creations of the period and are characterised by their tremendous decorative effect, which is par excellence in the sparkling grapes made of amethyst.

Prov.: Private collection, England