Safe cabinet

Place of origin:
Britain (made)

Date: 1903-1904 (made)

Artist/Maker: Lutyens, Edwin Landseer Sir, born 1869 - died 1944 (designer)

Materials and Techniques: Oak, brass (?) hardware, iron

Museum number: LOAN:FWK ANON.1&1A-1982

Gallery location: Furniture, Room 133, The Dr Susan Weber Gallery, case BY11, shelf EXP []

Public access description

This cabinet was designed by the architect Edwin Lutyens and was intended to hold a steel, fireproof safe. In order to support the safe's weight (248 kg), the interior of the cabinet's stand was reinforced with metal braces.

It formed part of the fittings for Marsh Court, Kings Somborne, near Stockbridge, Hampshire, a house designed by Lutyens and built between 1901 and 1904. Marsh Court and its fittings were commissioned by Herbert Johnson (1856-1949) a stockbroker, adventurer and sportsman. However, Johnson's fortune, said to be £500,000 by 1900, was affected by the Great Depression and he was forced to sell Marsh Court for £60,000 in 1932.

Descriptive line

British 1903-4 designed by Edward Lutyens.

Metal, English 1900-10 from safe cabinet, des Lutyens. RP 81/2499

Eight brass screws and one steel rod (with screw thread and detached head), from safe cabinet British 1903-4 designed by Edward Lutyens.

Physical description

Safe cabinet.

Dimensions

Height: 139 cm, Width: 142 cm, Depth: 80.5 cm, Weight: 248 kg internal metal box, Weight: 190 kg cabinet

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Object history note

The safe cabinet was designed by Lutyens for Marsh Court, Hampshire, a house that he had designed for a stockbroker, Herbert Johnson (1856-1949). The house was built between 1901 and 1904 and Lutchens also designed stables (built 1905), a Great Room (built 1924-1926) and he also worked on the design of the garden with Gertrude Jeckyll in 1915.

Lutyens had been designing furniture from the 1890s and much of it turned to the exuberant baroque forms of the seventeenth century for inspiration. Architectural details in Marsh Court, such as the double-arched cresting of one of the bedroom overmantels, were echoed in the design of the safe cabinet. It also relates to some of the earliest pieces designed by Lutyens: the form of the stand is related to a walnut stand faced with vellum (private collection), illustrated in Lutyens: The work of the English Architect Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944), Exhibition catalogue, Hayward Gallery, London, (Arts Council, 1981) p. 78 no. 100, designed in 1896 to support a casket for his future wife Emily. The stand also relates to a pair of unstained oak dressing tables made in 1897 for 29 Bloomsbury Square, where Lutyens and his wife lived as newlyweds. The stretchers may be compared with those on a semi-grand piano, of which ten were made between 1903 and 1907, one of which is in the museum's collection (W.38:2-1984). The cabinet was designed to hold a safe (which survives), and to support its weight the legs conceal iron strips which form a supporting frame.

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O171526/safe-cabinet-lutyens-edwin-landseer/