

Justin Evershed-Martin

Fine Art and Design



A Vellum Low Table by Comte, after Jean-Michel Frank

An elegant and sophisticated low table of good scale, the vellum top in a mahogany frame supported by a gently scrolled 'x' formed base joined with a turned tapering stretcher. Retaining the Comte metal label.

Argentina, circa 1935

H 52.5 cm x W 50cm x D 120cm

(H 20 ½ x W 20 x D 47 ¼ in)

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Argentina, in the early 20th Century, was the one of the 10 richest economies in the world. Buenos Aires was known as the 'other' Paris and the artistic links between the two were well established. Maison Jansen opened its first office after Paris in Buenos Aires in 1905 and fed the taste for European interiors. This taste developed alongside that of the French themselves and the Art Deco style was gradually superseded by a more restrained and pared down aesthetic.

The originator of this shift was Jean-Michel Frank, arguably the most influential designer of his generation. He took the neo-classical proportions of the masterpieces of Louis XVI furniture and stripped them of their ornamentation. Combining traditional cabinet-making with rarefied materials such as vellum, shagreen, mica and leather he relied on a simplicity of line and a perfection of scale. Frank himself attributed his profound understanding of such furniture to his friendship with the Argentine patron of Picasso and so many other artists, Eugenia Errázuriz.

Frank had several prominent clients in the Americas, most notably the Rockefellers in the United States and the Born family in Argentina and a long established relationship with Ignacio Pirovano the proprietor of Maison Comte, with Maison Jansen the leading decorating firm in the country. His collaboration with Comte that begun in 1932 reached a peak when Frank was forced to flee France in 1939 and came to settle in Buenos Aires where he assumed the artistic directorship of Maison Comte. Though Frank tragically died on a trip to New York in 1941 his specific aesthetic can be seen on those pieces he is known to have designed and many others that are unable to be firmly attributed including the present table. Maison Comte closed in 1950.

