

La Pendulerie



The Sacrifice to Love regulator clock, Directoire period

Finely Chased Gilt Bronze Regulator Clock

Paris, Directoire period, circa 1795

Hauteur 58.2 cm; width 33.5 cm; depth 23.2 cm

The enamel dial indicates the hours in Roman numerals, the minutes in Arabic numerals, the date and the seconds; its superb architectural case is made entirely of chased and gilt bronze. The bezel features a frieze with alternating animals and sun masks, and the arched cornice is decorated with a frieze of stylised leaves. Under the dial, a pierced drapery tied with cords is centered by an octagonal plaque depicting a vestal virgin making a sacrifice to Love, directly inspired by the work of the sculptor Clodion. It is further adorned with flower baskets, palmettes and scroll motifs. The glass panels of the case are framed by stylised motifs in gilt bronze. The angles present baluster-shaped torches with leaf decoration, set upon triangular antique-style pedestals with ram's head ornaments, which terminate in lion paw feet. The quadrangular plinth is adorned with a water leaf and acanthus leaf mount.

In 18th century France the support of wealthy and powerful patrons allowed artists and artisans to give free reign to their creative imaginations more than in any other period in the history of the decorative arts. Various circumstances combined to create a climate conducive to artistic creation, among them the fact that apprenticeship conditions were strictly regulated and one had to acquire great technical knowledge in order to become a master. This exacting and selective atmosphere allowed collectors and connoisseurs to satisfy their desire to commission and acquire rare and luxurious pieces that were often one-of-a-kind. In Parisian horology extraordinary technical progress was made by exceptional

clockmakers, resulting in perfect mastery of the art of time measurement. In the final decades of the 18th century this led to the appearance of a new type of clock, more sober in appearance, as the allegorical figures that were previously in vogue began to disappear, in favour of clocks like the present one, with glazed panels that showcase the beauty and complexity of the mechanisms.

The present clock was a product of this artistic and technical effervescence. Among the similar examples known to date, one should cite a clock pictured in G. and A. Wannenes, *Les plus belles pendules françaises*, Florence, 2013, p. 293; a second clock, signed Lepaute à Paris, was delivered in 1804 to Napoleon's cabinet in the Fontainebleau Palace, where it remains today (see J-P. Samoyault, *Pendules et bronze d'ameublement entrés sous le Premier Empire*, RMN, Paris, 1989, p. 66, catalogue n° 27). A clock identical to the present example is in the collection of the Marquis de Breteuil, in the Château de Breteuil (illustrated in *Bulletin de l'association des collectionneurs et amateurs d'horlogerie ancienne*, Summer 1997, n° 79, p. 6).