

La Pendulerie



Mennessier

Rare Gilt Bronze Antique Mantel Regulator, Directoire period

Mennessier à Paris

Paris, Directoire period, circa 1795

Height 42.5 cm; width 26.5 cm; depth 17.5 cm

The enamel dial, signed Mennessier à Paris, indicates the hours, minutes and date in Arabic numerals, as well as the days of the week and the moon phases on a blue enamel ground studded with gold stars.

The superb glazed architectural case is in finely chased gilt bronze. The arched pediment is ornamented with gadrooning and beading, with four pinecone finials; a pierced and fringed drapery hangs under the dial; the sides are composed of finely fluted pilasters with moulded bases and capitals.

The stepped rectangular base is adorned with a pierced palmette and leaf frieze.

Exhibitions

Rive Gauche

HISTORICAL

The elegant composition of this mantel regulator bears witness to the aesthetic explorations of Parisian bronziers and clockmakers of the last quarter of the 18th century. As of the mid-century a new artistic current, encouraged by artists and influential collectors, drew inspiration from recent events such as the

discoveries of the ancient Roman cities of Pompey and Herculaneum. Enthusiastic collectors such as the Count of Caylus and Ange-Laurent Lalive de Jully gave a new impulse to the French decorative arts, still marked by the rococo style in vogue during the Louis XV period. Influenced by the forms and decorative vocabulary of Greek and Roman antiquity, the new Neo-classical style favoured pure lines and classical motifs such as the antique borne or cippus that gives its form to the present clock. The new style showcased the skill of the period's remarkable artisans, as well as the mastery of many different materials.

Among the comparable examples known, two slightly later models feature chasing of lesser quality. The first, signed Carcel jeune, is illustrated in P. Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age à nos jours*, Paris, 1997, p. 184; a second clock was delivered in September 1807 to the Fontainebleau Palace by Lepaute, uncle and nephew; it is still in the Fontainebleau collection. (see J-P. Samoyault, *Musée national du château de Fontainebleau, Catalogue des collections de mobilier*, 1. Pendules et bronze d'ameublement entrés sous le Premier Empire, RMN, Paris, 1989, p. 65, catalogue n° 26). An identical clock signed Revel was formerly in the collection of Peter Zervudachi; another signed Lepaute is in a private collection (illustrated in P. Heuer and K. Maurice, *European Pendulum Clocks, Decorative Instruments of measuring Time*, Munich, 1988, p. 65, fig. 108).

Artist description:

The clockmaker Mennessier is not mentioned in horological dictionaries and despite investigations in the Archives Nationales, we were unable to discover anything more about him. His promising career appears to have been cut short by the Revolution.