

La Pendulerie



Le Roy - Saint-Germain

Important Chased Gilt and Patinated Bronze Antique Mantel Clock "Allegory of Study", early Louis XVI period

Charles Leroy à Paris

Case attributed to Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain

Paris, early Louis XVI period, circa 1770-1775

Height 67.5 cm; width 46.5 cm; depth 23.5 cm

The enamel dial is signed Charles Le Roy à Paris. It has Roman hour numerals, Arabic minutes and seconds. The case is surmounted by a flaming antique urn; the bezel is formed by a finely chased suspended laurel torus. The dial is supported by a fluted column that rests on a base upon which is seated a classically dressed patinated bronze woman holding an open book, who represents an Allegory of Study. At her feet lie books and parchments upon which a proud rooster, symbol of vigilance, is standing. The gilt bronze base is decorated with rosettes and a geometric frieze with intertwined garlands; it in turn rests on an ebony or ebonised wood base ornamented with a stylised frieze similar to those employed by cabinet maker Philippe-Claude Montigny.

HISTORICAL

This clock is one of the greatest successes of the late Louis XV period and the early Louis XVI period. Its date suggests an attribution to Charles Leroy's son Etienne-Augustin Leroy.

Freely inspired by a model created around 1757 for the famous salonnière Madame Geoffrin, it was

used by one of the most talented bronziers of the day, Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain, who appears to have enlisted the sculptor Louis-Félix Delarue (1730-1777) for the design of the main group. In creating this clock, Saint-Germain demonstrated his adaptability and his willingness to embrace the aesthetic canons of the new neoclassical style. He made only a very few versions of the model, each with variations, skilfully combining ornamental motifs and thus rendering each “Allegory of Study” clock a unique work. Among the recorded examples, a nearly identical clock is in the Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon (illustrated in H. Ottomeyer and P. Pröschel, *Vergoldete Bronzen*, Band I, Munich, 1986, p. 161, fig. 3.3.5); another is in the Louvre (illustrated in D. Alcouffe, A. Dion-Tenenbaum and G. Mabile, *Les bronzes d’ameublement du Louvre*, Dijon, 2004, p. 125).

Artist description:

Etienne-Augustin Leroy (1737 – 1792)

Son of clockmaker Charles Leroy, he became a master horologist en 1758. The Leroy workshop, in the rue St Denis, worked for the Royal Courts of France, Sweden and Saxony. Etienne-Augustin Leroy became Clockmaker to the King. After his father’s retirement in 1770, he continued to use the signature “Charles Leroy à Paris”. Several clocks bearing this signature, almost certainly made by Etienne-Augustin, were in the French Royal collections before the Revolution.