

La Pendulerie



Molliens

Rare Gilt Bronze Antique Mantel Clock “Allegory of Love and Fidelity”, Consulate period

Molliens

Paris, Consulate period, circa 1800

Height 48.5 cm; width 32 cm; depth 11.5 cm

The white enamel dial, signed “Molliens à Paris”, has Roman numeral hours and quarter-hour graduations for the minutes, indicated by two gilt bronze hands. The finely chased gilt bronze case depicts a young boy symbolising the figure of Love. Dressed in a belted tunic, he holds a torch in his upraised right hand and a bow in the other, with his wings and a flaming torch lying on the ground behind him. A dog symbolising Fidelity walks by his side, his collar attached to the boy’s wrist. The quadrangular terrace, adorned with a fringed drapery in which the dial is set, is supported by four tapering spirally decorated feet. On either side stand “athénienne” tripods with masked monopodia legs and ram’s feet; they are centred by flaming braziers. The rectangular base with rounded corners features reserves decorated with striated motifs and scrolling foliage. The whole is raised upon six toupie feet that are finely chased with flowers and beading.

HISTORICAL

This clock’s subject is one of the favourite themes of Parisian bronziers and clockmakers of the final years of the 18th century and the early years of the following century. The iconography demonstrates collectors’ renewed interest for the allegorical clocks inspired by antiquity that had been fashionable at

the end of the Louis XV period, when Parisian decorative arts were renewed by the influence of the neoclassical style. This aesthetic trend, fed by the fascination with classical antiquity that developed during the reign of Louis XIV, encouraged by the mid-century archaeological discoveries of the ancient Roman cities of Pompey and Herculaneum, near Naples. Very few similar clocks are known; most feature small variations in their ornamentation. Among them, one example, featuring a patinated bronze dog, is illustrated in Pierre Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age à nos jours*, Les éditions de l'amateur, Paris, 1997, p. 334, fig. A. A second example is in the Museo de relojes du Palais de la Atalaya in Jerez de la Frontera (illustrated in E. Niehüser, *Die französische Bronzeuhr, Eine Typologie der figürlichen Darstellungen*, Munich, 1997, p. 225, fig. 556).

Artist description:

Louis-François-Amable Molliens

Was a clockmaker whose workshop was recorded as being, successively, in the rue Saint-Honoré around 1800, then in the passage du Grand-Cerf between 1806 and 1815 (see Tardy, *Dictionnaire des horlogers français*, Paris, 1971, p. 469). He was well respected and his clocks were acquired by important late 18th century and early 19th century Parisian collectors. Clocks signed by Molliens are mentioned in the probate inventory of Charles-Louis de Reconseille and the Napoleonic Marshall Louis-Alexandre Berthier, Prince de Wagram.