

La Pendulerie



Bourret - Houdon

Rare Gilt Bronze Antique Mantel Clock “The Kiss”, Louis XVI period

Circa: 1785

Noël Bourret Rare

After Jean-Antoine Houdon

Paris, Louis XVI period, circa 1785

Height 46 cm; width 26 cm; depth 15 cm

The round enamel dial, signed “Bourret à Paris”, indicates the Arabic numeral hours and five-minute intervals by means of two pierced gilt bronze hands. The gilt bronze neoclassical case is very finely chased. The dial is framed by chased foliate spandrels. The case, in the form of an antique milestone, is flanked by two magnificent mermaids who support the entablature, which is adorned with egg and dart friezes, beading, and stylised leaves. On it stands the sculpture “The Kiss”. It stands on a pedestal, around which are four doves and two flaming tripod incense burners, which are decorated with spiral fluting and the heads of lions holding chains in their mouths. The plinth is adorned with beading and a frieze of stylised flowers. It is set upon a rectangular base with rounded corners, which features interlace leaf friezes and is raised upon six finely chased toupie feet.

HISTORICAL

This rare model is mentioned in several 18th century documents. One clock, probably identical to the

present model, was offered at the sale of the collection of a certain Monsieur Tricot in 1793: "N°211. A clock that strikes the hours and half hours, with date, by Bourret; It is set on a high square base and is surmounted by an elaborate pediment decorated with egg and dart motifs, supported by two naiad caryatids with fish tails; the stepped base is adorned with water leaves and interlace motifs, the white marble base is raised upon ball feet. The upper portion of the clock represents Mark Anthony and Cleopatra kissing, after Houdon. The sculpture is set upon a column, with four doves, and on either side a cassolette. This magnificently executed clock is finely matte gilded; with a glass dome. Height 17 pouces, width 10 pouces". Today only a few identical clocks are known. Among them, one example with a red griotte marble base, whose dial is signed "Robin à Paris", was formerly in the Fabius Frères collection (illustrated in Tardy, *La pendule française, 2ème partie: Du Louis XVI à nos jours*, Paris, 1975, p. 255). A second example, whose dial is signed "Bourret à Paris", is illustrated in Giacomo and Aurélie Wannenes, *Les plus belles pendules françaises, de Louis XIV à l'Empire*, Editions Polistampa, Florence, 2013, p. 245. A third clock, also signed Bourret, was in the Jean Gismondi Gallery in Paris (illustrated in J-D. Augarde, *Les ouvriers du Temps*, Genève, 1996, p. 286, fig. 219). One further such clock, with patinated mermaids, is in the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.

Artist description:

Noël Bourret (1755-1803)

One of the most important Parisian clockmakers of the late 18th century and the early 19th century. While active only a short time, from 1790 to 1802, Bourret became quite well-known and acquired a wealthy French and international clientele. In 1800 he sent the equivalent of 7000 francs worth of goods to Monsieur de Mirepoix in Saint Petersburg. In the early 19th century, he retired and went to Martinique to deal in exotic goods. He died there on August 30, 1803.