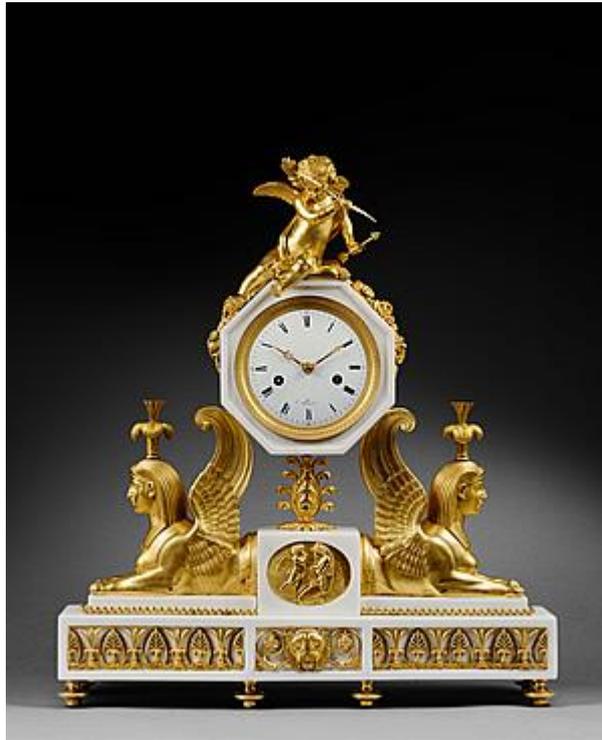


# *La Pendulerie*



**Gouthière**

## **Important White Marble and Gilt Bronze Sphinx Antique Mantel Clock, Louis XVI period**

Circa: 1785-1790

Attributed to Pierre Gouthière

Paris, late Louis XVI period, circa 1785-1790

Height 54.5cm; width 49 cm; depth 10.8 cm

The round enamel dial indicates the Roman numeral hours and Arabic fifteen-minute intervals by means of two pierced gilt bronze hands. It is housed in a magnificent neoclassical white marble and finely chased gilt bronze case. The movement is housed in an octagonal drum case that is surmounted by a winged Cupid who is sitting on a cushion and holds a bow in his right hand and an arrow in the other. Flower and leaf swags adorn either side of the upper case. The drum case issues from a gilt bronze leaf motif that emerges from a marble rectangle centred by a low relief medallion depicting Venus and Cupid. It is flanked by two lightly draped reclining sphinxes shown in profile, which are wearing plumed nemes headdresses. The clock rests on an oblong terrace that is decorated with a beadwork frieze; it is set on a quadrangular base with reserves featuring applied stylised palmette friezes and a lion's head issuing two leafy scrolls. The clock is raised upon six chased feet.

### **Provenance:**

Collection Charles de Beistegui (1895-1970), Château de Groussay

### **HISTORICAL**

An early example of Egyptomania in the France of Louis XVI, the present clock is one of the finest Parisian horological creations of its time. It was inspired by the work of designers of the period, and particularly an engraving by Jean-François Forty which is illustrated in P. Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age au XXe siècle*, Paris, 1997, p. 173, fig. C, and a drawing by the architect François-Joseph Bélanger (1744-1818) which shows a clock that was delivered in 1781 and was intended for the Count d'Artois's Salon in the Bagatelle pavilion. An "Artois model" clock is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (see H. Ottomeyer and P. Pröschel, *Vergoldete Bronzen, Die Bronzearbeiten des Spätbarock und Klassizismus, Band I*, Munich, 1986, p. 280, fig. 4.13.4). The present example, which is quite similar to Bélanger's drawing, stands out due to the exceptional quality of its chasing. That, as well as its unusual design, is the reason for the attribution to chaser-gilder Pierre Gouthière. It was very likely made on commission, no doubt for an influential Parisian collector of the late 18th century. Only a few similar clocks are known today. One of these, a clock that was formerly in the Fabius brothers collection, is illustrated in Tardy, *La pendule française, 2ème partie: Du Louis XVI à nos jours*, Paris, 1975, p. 237. A second clock, with white Carrara marble sphinxes, is in the Louvre Museum in Paris (illustrated in D. Alcouffe, A. Dion-Tenenbaum and G. Mabilie, *Les bronzes d'ameublement du Louvre*, Dijon, 2003, p. 208, catalogue n° 105). One further such clock is in the Royal British Collection (illustrated in C. Jagger, *Royal Clocks, The British Monarchy and its Timekeepers 1300-1900*, London, 1983, p. 155).

### **Artist description:**

Pierre Gouthière (1732-1813)

Was no doubt the most talented Parisian chaser of his time. He boasted, among his patrons, the Duke d'Aumont, one of the most important collectors of the second half of the 18th century. In 1767 Gouthière was named *doreur ordinaire des Menus Plaisirs du Roi*. The Menus Plaisirs was responsible for the commissions given by the King to various artists and artisans. The nomination greatly enhanced his reputation and won him a clientele of connoisseurs of rare and precious objects, including the royal family, the duc d'Aumont, important aristocrats such as the Marquis of Marigny, brother of the Marquise de Pompadour, Princess Kinsky, the King's mistress Countess du Barry, the Duchess of Mazarin, the Duke of Duras, the Duchess of Villeroy, and well-known financiers such as the wealthy treasurer of the Marine, Baudard de Saint-James, and the influential banker Thélusson.