

# *La Pendulerie*



**Laurent Ridel**

**Rare Gilt Bronze, Enamel, and White Carrara Marble Antique Skeleton Clock, Directory period**

Circa: 1795

Laurent Ridel (active circa 1790-1805)

The Enamels Attributed to Joseph Coteau (1740-1801)

Paris, Directory period, circa 1795

Height 53 cm, width 28 cm, depth 12 cm

The main white enamel chapter ring, revealing the intricately cut wheels of the mechanism, is graduated with the Arabic numeral hours, fifteen-minute intervals, and date, which are indicated by means of four hands, two made of pierced gilt brass and two of blued steel. A blued steel Breguet hand points to the days of the week and their corresponding Zodiac signs, along the outer edge. A third dial in the clock's upper portion indicates the phases and age of the moon on an enameled disk, featuring a grisaille-painted moon against a starry blue sky. The main ring dial reveals the eight-day movement through its centre, with outer count wheel, two barrels, a pin pallet escapement, and knife-edge suspension. The hours and half hours are struck on a bell. The pendulum features a magnificent Apollo mask with radiating sunrays.

The frame is painted on enamel with a dark blue ground, with swags of flowers and foliage, and features four oval medallions, two depicting doves and rose wreaths, and the other two decorated with scenes related to the theme of Cupid and Venus. A central cartouche bears the clockmaker's name: "Ridel à Paris". The clock is elaborately adorned with finely chased gilt bronze mounts. Surmounting it, an eagle

with spread wings, holding a thunderbolt in its claws, represents the god Jupiter. The frame is further decorated with cornucopias, fluting, beading, flower and leaf wreaths, and stylized rosettes and palmettes. The quadrangular white marble base is adorned with friezes; the one on the façade, after the sculptor Clodion, depicts putti among clouds. The clock is raised on four knurled gilt bronze toupie feet.

## HISTORICAL

Among the small number of known comparable clocks, one skeleton clock with enamels by Joseph Coteau is today in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris (illustrated in Tardy, *Les Plus Belles Pendules Françaises*, 1994, p. 206, pl. XLII). A second clock, also signed "Ridel à Paris", with enamels by Joseph Coteau that are dated 1796 and a similar Clodion-inspired frieze, is in the Musée François Duesberg in Mons (see Pierre Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la Pendule Française du Moyen Age au XXe Siècle*, 1997, p. 319, pl. B). A third clock is illustrated in Johann Willsberger, *Clocks and Watches, 600 Years of the World's Most Beautiful Timepieces*, 1975. One further similar clock, whose dial is signed Laguesse à Liège and whose enamels, dated 1796, are by Joseph Coteau, is displayed in the Pavlovsk Palace in Saint Petersburg (E. Ducamp, *Pavlovsk, Les Collections*, 1993, p. 186, pl. 17).

## Artist description:

Ridel

Laurent Ridel, one of the most important Parisian clockmakers of the late 18th century and the early years of the 19th century, signed his works "Ridel à Paris". Although the date at which he became a master is not known, we know he opened a workshop in the rue aux Ours and quickly became successful among Parisian collectors of luxury horology. Like all the finest clockmakers of the period, Ridel obtained his cases from the best artisans of the day, including the bronziers Feuchère, Denière and Deverberie, the enamellers Coteau and Merlet, and the spring maker Monginot l'aîné. He soon gained a wealthy and discerning clientele, among them Jean-Marie Chamboissier, the jeweler Louis-Nicolas Duchesne, and Mesdames de France - the daughters of Louis XV - for whom Ridel made a clock in 1789 that was intended for their palace in Bellevue.