

La Pendulerie



Gille l'Aîné

Rare Gilt Bronze Mantel Clock with Allegorical Figure, transition between Louis XV and Louis XVI periods

Pierre Il Gille, known as Gille l'Aîné (1723-1784) Rare Gilt Bronze Mantel Clock with Allegorical Figure Paris, transition between Louis XV and Louis XVI periods, circa 1765-1770 Height 30.5 cm; width 30.5 cm; depth 13 cm

The round white enamel dial, signed "Gille l'Aîné à Paris", indicates the Roman numeral hours and the Arabic numeral five-minute intervals, by means of two pierced gilt bronze hands. It is housed in a finely chased gilt and patinated bronze architectural case. The movement is housed in a fluted cippus-shaped case, whose bezel is decorated with an interlace and egg and dart frieze; it is decorated with drapery and is surmounted by a rooster with outspread wings which stands on a mortuary head. A young child, who sits on a pile of books and holds a stylus in his hand, leans against the case as he examines a parchment roll. The oblong plinth rests upon a quadrangular base with protruding corners that are adorned with stylized rosettes and interlace and egg-and-dart friezes surmounted by scrolling foliage. The clock is raised upon four flattened ball feet.

The unusual, architecturally-inspired design of this clock is characteristic of the pieces produced during the final years of the reign of King Louis XV, which displayed a strict neoclassical style featuring classically-inspired motifs, generally associated with allegorical figures. The figure of the child in the present clock is identical to that of an ivory statuette by François du Quesnoy, which is in the Musée d'Ecouen (see M. Boudon-Machuel, François du Quesnoy 1597-1643, Paris, 2005, p. 351). This beautifully proportioned model was extremely popular among the important Parisian collectors of the late 18th century. Only a few similar models are known. Among them, one clock with a movement by Ferdinand Berthoud was formerly in the Georges Harth collection (see Tardy, La pendule française, 2ème Partie: Du Louis XVI à nos jours, Paris, 1975, p. 249). Two other clocks are known in which a celestial globe replaces the rooster. One, whose dial is signed "Ferdinand Berthoud", is in the Royal Swedish Collection (illustrated in J. Böttiger, Konstsamlingarna a de Svenska Kungliga Slotten, Tome I, Stockholm, 1900). A second clock, whose dial is signed "Lepaute à Paris", is in the Musée national du Château de Fontainebleau (see J-P. Samoyault, Musée national du Château de Fontainebleau, Catalogue des collections de mobilier, 1-Pendules et bronzes d'ameublement entrés sous le Premier Empire, RMN, Paris, 1989, p. 46). One further clock, in which the bronze caster has added a second child, was formerly in the Desurmont collection (sold in Paris, Hôtel Drouot, Me Ader, May 19-20, 1938, lot 165).

Artist description:

Gille l'Aîné à Paris

This was the signature of Parisian clockmaker Pierre II Gille after 1765. The son of a master, he himself became a master on November 18, 1746, opening workshops in the rue Saint-Martin, rue Saint-Denis and the rue aux Ours. At the start of his career he worked with his father, later founding his own workshop. He quickly became successful with important collectors. Among his clientele were the Marquis of Brunoy, Prince Charles of Lorraine, the Farmer-General Perrinet de Jars and the Duke de Gramont.