

# La Pendulerie



**Duke d'Angoulême's Factory**

**Rare Paris Bisque Porcelain and Matte and Burnished Gilt Antique Mantel Clock "Cupid Shooting his Arrow", late Louis XVI period**

Dihl and Guérhard Porcelain Factory, known as the "Duke d'Angoulême's Factory"

Paris, late Louis XVI period, circa 1790

Height 50 cm; width 31.5cm; depth 18.8 cm

The round white enamel dial indicates the Arabic numeral hours and fifteen-minute intervals by means of two pierced gilt bronze hands. The hour and half-hour striking movement is housed in a magnificent gilt bronze and Paris bisque porcelain case. The clock is surmounted by an allegorical figure representing Cupid among clouds, kneeling on a plinth with canted corners, with one knee on the ground and his quiver with arrows at his feet. He is about to shoot an arrow. The group rests upon an architectural case that is decorated with canaux, with protruding corners and tapering side columns decorated with piasters, leaf garlands, and laurel leaf seeds that terminate in lion's paw feet. The case rests on a quadrangular base with reserves framed by bead friezes, and is supported on four leaf and seed-wrapped ball feet. The clock is elaborately decorated with motifs painted in shades of gray, against yellow grounds or framed by spandrels, bead friezes, and panels with leaf frames, with weapon or musical trophies and valences supporting vases with flowers and fowl. The three sides are decorated with floral and foliate motifs, and the façade features a shell inscribed: "Mre Guerhard et Dihl a Paris".

## HISTORICAL

This magnificent clock is an example of the extraordinary creativity of the Parisian clockmakers of the last decades of the 18th century, who were able to create extremely original work of exceptional quality, using the most luxurious and precious materials. The sculptural treatment of the Cupid figure, the subtlety and elegance of the painted motifs, and the exceptional gilding and chasing of the bronze mounts, are characteristic of the esthetic and technical perfection achieved by the great Parisian artisans of the late Louis XVI period. It was produced by the celebrated factory of the Duke d'Angoulême, which was named for the aristocrat who became its protector as of 1781. The Duke entrusted the factory's running to Christophe Erasmus Dihl and Antoine Guérhard and his wife, Louise Françoise Madeleine Croizé. Under their direction the factory became the main rival of the Sèvres porcelain factory during the final years of the 18th century and during the reign of Napoleon I. After the fall of the monarchy the factory created new models, including unglazed groups or figures. These were especially popular when mounted as "large clocks made of fine bisque porcelain" (*Dictionnaire universel de la géographie commerçante*, Tome V, p. 325, cited by R. de Plinval de Guillebon, *Les biscuits de porcelaine de Paris XVIIIe-XIXe siècles*, Editions Faton, Dijon, 2012, p. 199).

The present clock is exceptional due to its very rare design. Among the rare identical examples known, one clock, whose dial is signed "Jacob à Paris", was sold at auction in Paris by Me Couturier-Nicolay, on April 26, 1989, lot 48 (illustrated in P. Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age à nos jours*, Paris, 1997, p. 341, fig. A). A second, formerly in the Berthe Fontana collection, was sold in Paris, Hôtel Drouot, Me Lair-Dubreuil, March 15, 1922, lot 56.