

La Pendulerie



Arnoux - Osmond

Important Matte and Burnished Gilt Bronze Wall Cartel Known as “cartel à ruban du grand modèle” “Royal Model”, Transition Louis XV-Louis XVI period

Circa: circa 1770

Jean-François Arnoux

Case attributed to Robert

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Height 86 cm; width 46 cm; depth 14.5 cm

The round enamel dial, signed “Arnoux à Paris”, indicates the Arabic hours and five-minute intervals by means of two pierced gilt bronze hands. The neoclassical case is made of finely chased matte and burnished gilt bronze. The stepped bezel is adorned with grooved reserves and foliage. The clock is surmounted by a flaming classical urn with grooved decoration and rosettes. A long ribbon threaded through the handles of the urn cascades down on either side of the clock. Beneath the urn there is a female mask. The lower portion of the clock, whose central part is glazed to reveal the pendulum, is adorned with a laurel leaf garland. It is decorated with Greek key friezes and rosettes and terminates in a leaf finial.

The unusual design of this spectacular cartel is reproduced in a *Livre de desseins*, which is in the Institut d'Histoire de l'Art à Paris (illustrated in H. Ottomeyer and P. Pröschel, *Vergoldete Bronzen*, Band I, Munich, 1986, p. 184, fig. 3.8.8). The elegant and perfectly balanced model was created around 1770 by the bronze caster Robert Osmond; during the second half of the 18th century it became a great success among Parisian connoisseurs, and particularly with the royal family. Indeed, the clockmaker Lépine delivered one example in 1767, which was destined for the apartments of Madame Victoire in Versailles; a second clock was ordered several years later for the apartments of the Dauphin (the future Louis XVI) in Versailles. This is no doubt the example that is today in the Mobilier national in Paris (see the exhibition catalogue *Le château de Versailles raconte le Mobilier national, quatre siècles de création*, Paris, 2010-2011, p. 106-107). A few other identical models are known. One is on display in the Nissim de Camondo museum in Paris (see "L'ANCAHA au Musée Nissim de Camondo", in ANCAHA, winter 1999, n° 86, p. 38); a second clock is in the Stockholm National Museum (illustrated in Tardy, *La pendule française, 2ème parti : Du Louis XVI à nos jours*, Paris, 1975, p. 309).

Artist description:

Robert Osmond (1711-1789)

French bronze-caster Robert Osmond was born in Canisy, near Saint-Lô; he began his apprenticeship in the workshop of Louis Regnard, maître fondeur en terre et en sable, and became a master bronzier in Paris in 1746. He is recorded as working in the rue des Canettes in the St Sulpice parish, moving to the rue de Mâcon in 1761. Robert Osmond became a juré, thus gaining a certain degree of protection of his creative rights. In 1753, he sent for his nephew in Normandy, and in 1761, the workshop, which by that time had grown considerably, moved to the rue de Macon. The nephew, Jean-Baptiste Osmond (1742-after 1790) became a master in 1764 and as of that date worked closely with his uncle, to such a degree that it is difficult to differentiate between the contributions of each.

Robert appears to have retired around 1775. Jean-Baptiste, who remained in charge of the workshop after the retirement of his uncle, encountered difficulties and went bankrupt in 1784. Robert Osmond died in 1789.

Prolific bronze casters and chasers, the Osmonds worked with equal success in both the Louis XV and the Neo-classical styles. Prized by connoisseurs of the period, their work was distributed by clockmakers and marchands-merciers. Although they made all types of furnishing objects, including fire dogs, wall lights and inkstands, the only extant works by them are clocks, including one depicting the Rape of Europe (Getty Museum, California) in the Louis XV style and two important Neo-classical forms, of which there are several examples, as well as a vase with lions' heads (Musée Condé, Chantilly and the Cleveland Museum of Art) and a cartel-clock with chased ribbons (examples in the Stockholm Nationalmuseum; Paris, Nissim de Camondo Museum). A remarkable clock decorated with a globe, cupids and a Sèvres porcelain plaque (Paris, Louvre) is another of their notable works.

Specialising at first in the rocaille style, in the early 1760's they turned to the new Neo-classical style and soon numbered among its greatest practitioners. They furnished cases to the best clockmakers of the period, such as Montjoye, for whom they made cases for cartonier and column clocks, the column being one of the favourite motifs of the Osmond workshop.