

La Pendulerie



Cressent - Guyot

Exceptional Boulle Marquetry Rococo Antique Wall Cartel and Bracket in Gilt Bronze and Brass on Tortoiseshell, early Louis XV period

Circa: circa 1730

André-Georges Guyot

Case by Charles Cressent

Paris, early Louis XV period, circa 1730

Total height 129 cm; width 47 cm; depth 19 cm

The round copper dial, adorned with delicately engraved motifs, is signed "Guiot à Paris" in a round enamel cartouche. It indicates the Roman numeral hours on twelve enamel cartouches and the five-minute intervals along its outermost border, by means of two polished steel hands. The waisted case is made of finely chased gilt bronze. The clock is surmounted by a lightly draped putto figure that is seated among the clouds and extends his arms to his right. He rests upon an arched capital that is embellished by a cabochon-centered interlace frieze that terminates in volutes and contains a pierced decoration with flower blossoms radiating outward from a large, stylized flower. The movement, also signed "Guiot à Paris", is flanked by C-scrolls adorned with gadrooned friezes and flower and leaf swags, which extend downward to the four curved feet that are decorated with wide applied palm leaves, which rest upon quadrangular entablatures supported on spheres. Underneath the dial, a magnificent female mask whose tresses are tied under her chin, surmounts a three-lobed motif with a shell that emerges from a C-scroll decorated cartouche; it is surrounded by latticework motifs centered by flowers. The sides of

the case are of Boulle metal marquetry and feature engraved brass motifs on a colored tortoiseshell ground. The clock rests on a bracket that is also made of finely chased bronze and features rococo motifs including large asymmetric shells, leaves, C-scrolls, volutes, crouching winged dragons, and sunflowers. The bracket terminates with a shell motif; it is centered by a large rococo motif with a medallion from which a lion is about to spring.

HISTORICAL

In the mid 1730s, Charles Cressent created a type of very elaborate cartel that became one of his most successful models. The design features palm feet adorned with flowers and a female mask with a shell headdress flanked by pierced latticework motifs. Alexandre Pradère, who has closely analyzed Cressent's work, has called this style "premier modèle". Later, the cabinetmaker-sculptor revised the style, working in a rococo manner that was called "second modèle", which was adopted several decades later by Saint-Germain (see Charles Cressent, sculpteur, ébéniste du Régent, Dijon, 2003, p. 176-183). Here, we are concerned with the "premier modèle", which is that of the present clock. It became a huge success among collectors of the time, and Cressent produced several variations of it, which were designed to be placed on brackets. Three main variations are recognized.

The first type of bracket is centered by a mask of Boreas blowing on feathers. One example of this model is known, whose movement is signed "Etienne Lenoir"; it was formerly in the collection of Farmer-General Marin de la Haye, and is today in the Musée Condé in Chantilly (see Anne Forray-Carlier, *Le mobilier du château de Chantilly*, Editions Faton, Dijon, 2010, p. 49, catalogue n° 7). A second example was acquired at auction in 1975 by the Musée national du château de Versailles (illustrated in Pierre Verlet, *Les bronzes dorés français du XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1999, p. 283, fig. 315). This might well be the clock that was delivered to the Château de Versailles in February 1745 by the clockmaker Jean-Baptiste Baillon for the chamber of the Infanta Maria Theresa Rafaela of Spain, the wife of the French Dauphin. The clock was described as follows in the *Journal du Garde-meuble de la Couronne*: "N°42. A lovely gilt bronze ormolu clock made by Jean-Baptiste Baillon, whose dial is of enamel and whose hands are gilt bronze, supported by two consoles accompanied by palms, in the center of which is a female mask: on the sides there are ornaments of mosaic and two flower bouquets: the summit is crowned by a Cupid holding a scythe in his hand: the bracket is also of gilt bronze, embellished with shells, flowers, feathers, two dragons and a mask of Boreas, the height is 4 pieds and the bracket is 14 pouces wide." (Archives Nationales, Maison du Roi, Série O/1/3313, folio 172).

The second type of bracket is less common; only three examples are known. The first of these, now lacking its movement, and featuring a bearded satyr mask, is in the Musée des arts décoratifs à Paris, Larcade bequest of 1938 (illustrated in Alexandre Pradère, *Charles Cressent, sculpteur, ébéniste du Régent*, Editions Faton, Dijon, 2003, p. 180, catalogue n° 202B). A second clock, which formerly belonged to the Groves Foundation, is in the Minneapolis Institute of Art (illustrated in J-D. Augarde, "Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain bronzier (1719-1791), Inédits sur sa vie et son œuvre", in *L'Estampille/L'Objet d'art*, n°308, December 1996, p. 69, fig. 9).

The third type, which features a lion that appears to emerge from stylized motifs, is the same model as the present clock, and appears to be the oldest, stylistically. Four examples of this type are known today, among which one is in the Musée des Arts décoratifs in Paris (see H. Ottomeyer and P. Pröschel, *Vergoldete Bronzen, Die Bronzearbeiten des Spätbarock und Klassizismus, Band I*, Munich, 1986, p. 79, fig. 1.12.6). A second is in the Musée du Louvre in Paris (see D. Alcouffe, A. Dion-Tenenbaum and G. Mabile, *Les bronzes d'ameublement du Louvre*, Dijon, p. 68, catalogue n° 29). A further version of this bracket, in which the lion is replaced by a rooster, is known (see T. Dell, "The gilt bronze cartel Clocks of Charles Cressent", in *Burlington Magazine*, April 1967, p. 213, fig. 36).

Artist description:

Charles Cressent (1685-1768)

One of the finest French ébénistes, Charles Cressent was also one of the first to use elaborate gilt bronze mounts of great sculptural quality on furniture with relatively simple wood veneers, during the Regency and Rococo period.

The son of the sculptor François Cressent and the grandson of a maître ébéniste and sculpteur, in 1714 Cressent was elected a member of the Académie de Saint-Luc. Soon afterward he began working for Joseph Poitou, ébéniste to the Duke d'Orléans; in 1719 he married Poitou's widow, subsequently inheriting the latter's business and his title of ébéniste to the Duke. After his father's death Cressent succeeded him as sculpteur du Roi to Louis XV. But his dual role as ébéniste and sculptor created difficulties with the guild of fondeurs and doreurs; Cressent contravened their regulations by making bronze mounts for his furniture and by supplying cases to bronziers.

Cressent's patrons included Louis XV, King John V of Portugal, the Elector Charles Albert of Bavaria, the duke de Richelieu, the Duke d'Orléans, Mme de Pompadour, and her brother the Marquis de Marigny.

Today Cressent's work is found in the world's greatest collections: the Wallace Collection and Waddesdon Manor in England, the Residenz Museum in Munich, the Musée du Louvre and the Bibliothèque National in Paris.