

La Pendulerie



Robin

Important Rosewood Veneer, Amaranth and Gilt Bronze Longcase Regulator, early Louis XVI period

Circa: 1776

Robert Robin

The counter enamel signed by enameler Elie Barbezat and dated 1776

Case stamped Balthazar Lieutaud

Important Rosewood Veneer, Amaranth and Gilt Bronze Longcase Regulator

Paris, early Louis XVI period, 1776

Height 229 cm; width 51 cm; depth 29.5 cm

Stamped: B LIEUTAUD on the back of the case

The white enamel dial, signed "Robin à Paris", indicates the Roman numeral hours and Arabic numeral five-minute intervals by means of two pierced gilt bronze hands; the seconds are indicated by a central hand. A second round dial indicates the equation of time, i.e. the difference between true time - or solar time - and mean time. The façade also features a barometer that measures atmospheric pressure. The counter enamel is signed by the enameler "Barbezat" and is dated "1776". The movement, with a bimetallic pendulum and large bob, bears a thermometer indicating metal dilation. It is housed in a

rosewood-veneered case with amaranth wood frames flanked by bands of lighter colored wood. The case is elaborately decorated with finely chased gilt bronze mounts including plain frames, matted reserves, friezes, molding decorated with stiff leaf motifs, plain medallions, ribbon-tied laurel toruses, and olive and laurel branch spandrels. It is surmounted by a concave entablature that surmounts an interlace frieze centered by rosettes, and is topped by an armillary sphere set on a molded pedestal.

The unusual design of this important longcase regulator was created by cabinetmaker Balthazar Lieutaud during the early years of the reign of Louis XVI. The cabinetmaker, who specialized in clock cases, produced several comparable pieces featuring variations in the chased gilt bronze mounts. One such model was in the collection of Joseph Bardac (sold Paris, Me Lair-Dubreuil, December 9, 1927, lot 118). A second example, surmounted by the figure of Father Time, is in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (illustrated in O. Bracket, *Catalogue of the Jones collection*, V&A Museum). Three simpler examples are illustrated in Jean Nicolay, *L'art et la manière des maîtres ébénistes français au XVIIIe siècle*. During the 18th century, a similar regulator belonged to the well-known scientist and aviation pioneer Jean-François Pilâtre de Rosier (1754-1785): "A clock bearing the name of the Robin, clockmaker in Paris, striking the hours and half hours, marking the seconds, and containing a barometer, in its square rosewood-veneered case, with enamel dial and gilt copper ornaments, 1800 livres".

Balthazar Lieutaud (died 1780)

Was one of the most important cabinetmakers of the reign of Louis XV and the early neoclassical period. He came from a dynasty of Parisian furniture makers, being the son and grandson of cabinetmakers. He became a maître in March 1749 and opened a workshop in the rue de la Pelleterie, and then the rue Denfer. He specialized in regulator and cartel cases, as well as ebony clock bases with gilt bronze mounts, which were made by the finest chasers of the day, such as Charles Grimpelle, Edme Roy, and Caffieri the younger. Today, examples of Lieutaud's work may be found in the most important private and public collections, including the Musée National du Château de Versailles, the Wallace Collection and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and the Frick Collection in New York.

Artist description:

Robert Robin (1741-1799) is one of the most important Parisian clockmakers of the late 18th century. Having received the titles of Valet de Chambre-Horloger Ordinaire du Roi et de la Reine in 1783 and 1786, he had an extraordinary career, distinguished himself by his exceptional contribution to the progress of time measurement during his lifetime.

In 1778 the French Académie des Sciences approved two of his inventions, one of which led to the construction of an astronomic clock representing a meridian drawn on a pyramid, which was acquired that year by the Menus Plaisirs on behalf of Louis XVI. Robin published a "Description historique et mécanique" of the clock. He constructed astronomic mantel regulators with compensation balance, which the Marquis de Courtanvaux, one of the period's most important connoisseurs of precision horology, was among the first to acquire. During the Terreur he made decimal watches and clocks. He is recorded successively at the Grande rue du faubourg Saint-Honoré (1772), rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois (1775), rue Saint-Honoré à l'Hôtel d'Aligre (1778) and in the Galeries du Louvre in 1786.

Robin housed his mantel regulators in sober, elegant cases that were remarkably modern in style. He worked with excellent artisans such as Robert and Jean Baptiste Osmond, Pierre Philippe Thomire, E. Roy, J.L. Beaucour, P. Delacroix, François Rémond, Claude Galle, Balthazar Lieutaud, E. Levasseur, J.H. Riesener, Jean-Ferdinand Schwerdfeger and Adam Weisweiler for his cases; Barbezat, Edmé-Portail Barbichon, Dubuisson, Cave, Merlet and Coteau for his dials, and the Richards and the Montginots for his springs.

Robin's sons, Nicolas Robert (1775-1812) and Jean-Joseph (1781-1856), were both fine clockmakers who continued their father's business.