

La Pendulerie



Vion - Poitevin

An Exceptional Gilt and Lacquered Bronze Antique Mantel Clock “The Trotting Horse”, transition period

Circa: circa 1775

Poitevin

Case by François Vion

Paris, transition period between Louis XV and Louis XVI, circa 1775

Height 33.5 cm; width 18.5 cm; depth 9 cm

The round white enamel dial, signed “Poitevin à Lorient”, indicates the Roman numeral hours and Arabic five-minute intervals by means of two hands. The gilt bronze case is finely chased and lacquered. The movement is housed in a drum case that is adorned with scrolls, tassels and fringe, a garland of leaves and flowers, and an urn with console feet and ring handles, which is set on a fringed saddlecloth on the back of a lacquered trotting horse that is standing on a naturalistic terrace with rocks and grass. The quadrangular base is adorned with laurel toruses and reserves with interlace friezes; it is centered by a painted vellum medallion depicting a young Cupid receiving a message from a dove, within a perspective landscape featuring a neoclassical altar. The clock is further adorned with rhinestones that frame the medallion, the ring handles and the handle of the surmounting urn, as well as the base, where they form a frieze and a ribbon tied in a bow above the medallion. The clock is raised upon eight flattened feet decorated with molding.

HISTORICAL

Clocks featuring animals that support the movements appeared during the reign of Louis XV and became quite popular during the second half of the 18th century, when the neoclassical artistic movement accompanied the renewal of the decorative arts. The present clock is exceptional due to the quality of its decoration, the rarity of the themes, and due to the fact that the preparatory drawing is preserved in the Institut national d'Histoire de l'Art in Paris. The fact that the drawing was included in an album of bronzier François Vion allows the model to be confidently attributed to that artisan (see H. Ottomeyer and P. Pröschel, *Vergoldete Bronzen*, Band I, p. 180, fig. 3.7.8). Among the rare identical models known today, which feature certain variations in their decoration, one example, whose dial is signed "Cartier à Paris", is pictured in G. and A. Wannenes, *Les plus belles pendules françaises, De Louis XIV à l'Empire*, Editions Polistampa, Florence, 2013, p. 277. A second clock, formerly in the Diette collection, is illustrated in Tardy, *La pendule française, 2ème Partie: Du Louis XVI à nos jours*, Paris, 1975, p. 232. A third example was included in the Rudolf Lepke sales, which contained many objets d'art from the former Russian imperial collections (sold Berlin, February 12, 1929, lot 87). One further such clock was offered in the sale of the collection of Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis (sold Sotheby's, New York, April 23-26, 1996).

Artist description:

François Vion (circa 1737 – after 1790)

Was one of the leading bronziers of his day who became a maître in 1764. He appears to have specialised in clock cases. As here, a number of these were supported by animals and in particular by a lion, as in the present clock. A number of his cases featured classical figures such as one representing the Three Graces housing a movement by Lepaute à Paris that was made for the Countess du Barry at the Château de Fontainebleau. (Musée du Louvre, Paris). The Musée Municipal, Besançon also owns a clock housed in a case by Vion surmounted by Venus and putti after a design by E-M Falconet, while the Wrightsman Collection in the Metropolitan Museum, New York owns a biscuit porcelain figure of Cupid by Falconet set on a gilt bronze base by Vion.