

La Pendulerie



Viger - Saint-Germain

**An Important Gilt Bronze Rococo Antique Wall Cartel with Matte and Burnished Finishing,
Louis XV period**

Circa: circa 1745-1750

François Viger

Case Attributed to Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain

Paris, Louis XV period, circa 1745-1750

Height 98 cm; width 59 cm; depth 17 cm

The round white enamel dial, signed "Viger à Paris", indicates the Roman numeral hours and the Arabic numeral five-minute intervals by means of two pierced gilt bronze hands. The plate is also signed and numbered "667". The movement, which strikes the hours, half hours, and quarters, is housed in a magnificent gilt bronze rococo case that is very finely chased, pierced and gilt, with matte and burnished finishing. The clock is adorned overall with flowering branches, leaves, seeds, asymmetrical C-scrolls, pierced reserves, scrolls and acanthus leaf volutes, which stand out against a ground of bordeaux-colored material covered with latticework mounts centered by engraved, stylized flowers.

The remarkable design of the present important wall cartel was inspired by the work of Parisian designers of the first half of the 18th century, which highlighted luxurious interiors entirely in the rococo

style popular during the reign of Louis XV. Its composition, made up of sinuous curves embellished with C-scrolls and foliage, is echoed in the small number of extant contemporary cartels. Among them, one example is in the Royal Swedish Collection (illustrated in J. Böttiger, *Konstsamlingarna a de Svenska Kungliga Slotten*, Tome II, Stockholm, 1900). A second clock is illustrated in P. Heuer and K. Maurice, *European Pendulum Clocks, Decorative Instruments of Measuring Time*, Munich; 1988, p. 38, fig. 48. A third example, whose dial is signed "Viger", is in the Historisches Museum in Basel (see Tardy, *La pendule française des origines à nos jours*, Paris, 1967, p. 188). Two further comparable examples, bearing the signature of the bronzier Saint-Germain, support our attribution of the present clock to that extraordinary craftsman: one is pictured in G. and A. Wannenes, *Les plus belles pendules françaises de Louis XIV à l'Empire*, Editions Polistampa, Florence, 2013, p. 85; the second, formerly on the Parisian art market, is illustrated in P. Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age à nos jours*, Paris, 1997, p. 96.

Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain (Paris 1719-1791)

A master founder in 1748, he was probably the most renowned Parisian bronzier of the mid 18th century. Active as of 1742, he became famous for his clock and cartel cases, including the "Diana the Huntress" cartel (one example is in the Musée du Louvre), the clock supported by two Chinamen (one example of this type of clock is in the Musée des Arts décoratifs in Lyon), as well as several animal-themed clocks, usually elephants and rhinoceroses. Around the late 1750s he played an important role in the renewal of the Parisian decorative arts and the development of the neoclassical movement. In addition to his clock cases, Saint-Germain also produced bronze furnishings, including firedogs, wall appliques, and candelabra, always with great creativity and demonstrating exceptional skill in the art of bronze working. He retired in the mid 1770s.

HISTORICAL

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Artist description:

François Viger (Dieppe circa 1708 - Paris 1784) an 18th century Parisian clockmaker. Exercising independently at first, he became a master in August 1744 and opened a workshop in the rue Saint-Denis. As Jean-Dominique Augarde aptly states: "the pieces made in his workshop are of exceptional quality". (*Les ouvriers du Temps*, Genève, 1996, p. 405). Viger ordered his clock cases from the best bronziers and cabinetmakers of the day, collaborating with such fine artisans as Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain, Antoine Foullet, and Jean-Baptiste Osmond. His work may be found today in important museums and private collections worldwide, including the Basel Historisches Museum de Bâle, the Wallace Collection in London, the Louvre in Paris, the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg and the Lazienki

Palace in Warsaw.