

La Pendulerie



Cronier - Osmond

An Exceptional Gilt Bronze Mantle Clock in the form of a Neoclassical Lidded Vase with Matte and Burnished Finishing, Transition period

Circa: circa 1770

Antoine Cronier

The Case Attributed to Robert Osmond

Paris, Transition period between Louis XV-Louis XVI, circa 1770

Height 65.5cm; width 28 cm; base 25.6 cm x 25.2 cm

The movement is housed in a neoclassical case shaped as a classical lidded vase made of finely chased gilt bronze with matte and burnished finishing. The time is indicated by two silvered copper cercles tournants, one indicating the Arabic numeral five-minute intervals, and the other the Roman numeral hours alternating with stylized four-leaf clovers; the upper band is surmounted by the signature of the clockmaker: "Cronier à Paris", which is engraved in the bronze. The time is indicated by the tongues of two snakes with finely chased scales, which are coiled around the body of the vase and lid. The vase has a truncated oval shape, its lid terminates in a seed finial that emerges from a bouquet of finely detailed leaves; its applied Greek handles are adorned with mille-raie patterns and a laurel-leaf swag; the lower portion of the vase, adorned with lambrequins, is supported on a molded pedestal that is decorated with ribbon-tied reeds. The base, in the form of a truncated column with wide fluting; the base, with plain toruses, features a plain torus, surmounted by a cavetto molding with reserves and rosettes. It is decorated with fringed draperies that hang from pastilles. The base is quadrangular.

HISTORICAL

The remarkable design of this important mantel clock, and the exceptional quality of its chasing, gilding, and matte and burnished finishing, offers a perfect illustration of the neoclassical decorative style that was begun in the mid 18th century due to the influence of a group of important Parisian collectors, including the Count de Caylus and Ange-Laurent Lalive de Jully. The style came about as a reaction against the rococo models popular during the reign of Louis XV, which were considered to be old fashioned; the rococo style had dominated the French decorative arts for several decades. The neoclassical revival, called “a return to classicism”, was influenced by the archeological discoveries made in the ancient Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, near Naples. The fabulous discoveries that were made there continued to influence French and European decorative arts for several decades.

This is the context within which the present clock was made. Its elaborate neoclassical design, its size – very large for a “vase” type clock – and the fact that very few identical clocks are known, make it one of the most spectacular vase clocks of the period. Its design seems to have been influenced by the work of Jean-Louis Prieur, and in particular by a drawing by Prieur that is today preserved in the University of Warsaw. In addition, a vase-form clock that is adorned with figures, and whose body is quite similar to the present example, is on display in the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon (see H. Ottomeyer and P. Pröschel, *Vergoldete Bronzen, Die Bronzearbeiten des Spätbarock und Klassizismus, Band I*, Munich, 1986, p. 167). However, despite these similarities, the present clock most closely resembles several pieces by the famous bronzier Robert Osmond, who made a specialty of clocks shaped as classical vases. It is particularly close to a model in the Zähringer Museum in Baden-Baden (see P. Verlet, *Les bronzes dorés français du XVIIIe siècle*, Editions Picard, Paris, 1987, p. 110, fig. 131).

To the best of our knowledge, only four other identical clocks are known today: the first, signed “Lepaute”, was offered at the 19th century sale of the sumptuous collection of William, 12th Duke of Hamilton in Hamilton Palace (sold Christie, Manson & Woods, 17 June to 20 July 1882); it appears to be the one described in an important collection during the second half of the 18th century: “A vase-shaped clock, with square handles, laurel garlands on fluted columns, truncated with draperies, all in ormolu gilt bronze. Turning dial. Two snakes bearing the minutes hand. The movement is by Lepaute”.

The second, whose bronze is engraved with the name of the clockmaker Furet, is illustrated in P. Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age au XXe siècle*, Les éditions de l'Amateur, Paris, 1997, p. 284, fig. B. The third, which combines gilt bronze and white marble, and features several decorative variations, is in the Louvre Museum in Paris (illustrated in Tardy, *La pendule française, 2ème Partie: Du Louis XVI à nos jours*, Paris, 1975, p. 289, fig. 5, and in E. Niehüser, *Die französische Bronzeuhr, Eine Typologie der figürlichen Darstellungen*, Editions Callwey, Munich, 1997, p. 263, fig. 1292). A fourth clock of this type, which is identical to the present clock, is part of the horological collection of Pavlovsk Palace, near Saint Petersburg, formerly the summer residence of Tsar Paul I. It also bears the signature of clockmaker Antoine Cronier engraved in the bronze and has been attributed to the bronze caster Osmond (see *The State Culture Preserve Pavlovsk, Full Catalogue of the Collections, Tome X, Métal-Bronze, Volume I, Clocks, regulators, cartels, Saint Petersburg, 2011, p. 24, catalogue n° 7*).

Artist description:

Antoine Cronier (1732 – after 1806)

Born in Paris on 13th January 1732, he was the son of Françoise née Boulard and Charles Crosnier, a maître-menuisier. In 1745 Antoine Crosnier began an apprenticeship under Nicolas Pierre Thuillier and by 1753 was working independently of a guild, i.e. as *ouvrier libre*; he was received as a Parisian maître-horloger in 1763.

By 1759, Cronier, who was one of the principal clockmakers of the second half of the 18th century, opened a workshop in the rue Saint-Honoré, 140. For the cases and bronzes of his clocks, he called

upon the best artisans of the time, including the renowned bronziers Robert and Jean-Baptiste Osmond, Edmé Roy, René François Morlay, Nicolas Bonnet and François Vion. He used cases made by the cabinetmakers Jean-Pierre Latz, Balthazar Lieutaud and François Goyer, and employed the gilder Honoré Noël and the tapissier Nicolas Leclerc.

During the 18th century, certain of his pieces were mentioned in the collections of the maréchal de Choiseul-Stainville, the Duke des Deux-Ponts, the marquis de Sainte-Amaranthe, and the Prince Belosselsky-Belozersky. Today his clocks are preserved in many prestigious private and public collections, including the Nissim de Camondo Museum in Paris, Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire, the Residenzmuseum in Munich, the Residenz Bamberg, the Palazzo Reale in Turin, the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels, the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Huntington Collection in San Marino, California, Dalmeny House in South Queensferry and the Pavlovsk Palace in Saint Petersburg.