

La Pendulerie



Bréant - Coteau

A Rare White Marble and Gilt Bronze Turkish-Style Lyre Antique Clock with Visible Movement, Louis XVI period

Circa: circa 1785

Jacques-Thomas Bréant

The enamels by Joseph Coteau (1740-1801)

Paris, Louis XVI period, circa 1785

Height 62 cm; width 32.5cm; depth 13.5cm

The round white enamel dial, with delicate bell motifs under gold and polychrome canopies, is signed "coteau". It features a blue enamel cartouche bearing the signature "Jacs Breant à Paris", and partially reveals the movement, while indicating the Roman numeral hours, the Arabic numeral five-minute intervals and date, and has a central seconds hand. The white Carrara marble lyre-shaped case is adorned with finely chased gilt mounts in the Oriental style, with motifs such as vegetation, pineapples, hanging draperies, cut-out friezes of stylized motifs, tassels, olive-shaped beads, and beadwork, among other things. The clock is surmounted by a fine male figure dressed and coiffed in the Oriental style, who is holding an umbrella and sits on a cushion that rests on an entablature decorated with scallops, under which is fixed the oscillating bimetallic pendulum.

HISTORICAL

According to Svend Eriksen, the first true lyre clock model is in the Royal Swedish Collection (see *Early Neoclassicism in France*, London, 1974). In France, the general makeup of the lyre clock changed very little since its creation, which is thought to have taken place in the late 1750s or the early years of the following decade. However, while the form of lyre clocks did not significantly evolve, the materials used, as well as the ingenious and complex movements, underwent considerable changes, reflecting the changing tastes of connoisseurs and demonstrating the extraordinary skill of clockmakers of the time. The great majority of known models have a dial that is set within a bronze lyre-shaped frame, and are surmounted by a sun mask or eagle's heads; certain clocks have Sèvres porcelain cases (for several such clocks, see P. Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age au XXe siècle*, Paris, 1997, p. 224-227; and Y. Gay and A. Lemaire, "Les pendules lyre", in *Bulletin de l'association nationale des collectionneurs et amateurs d'horlogerie ancienne*, 1993, n° 68, fig. 53 and 62). Subtly blending the characteristics of lyre and skeleton clocks, the present example is extremely elegant. It stands out from other examples due to the quality of the chasing of its gilt bronze mounts and its unusual Turkish-style composition. The "à la turque" decorative style seems to have appeared in the early 1780s and was initially appreciated only by a handful of important collectors of the day, including the Count d'Artois who employed it for his Bagatelle pavilion (see the exhibition catalogue *La folie d'Artois*, 1988, p. 93, 104 and 105). Among the rare known examples of this type of clock, a similar model, today only partially preserved and lacking its movement, is in the Musée des Arts décoratifs in Paris (illustrated in L. Metman, *Le musée des Arts décoratifs, Le bronze, 2ème album*, Paris, circa 1910, plate CXVI, fig.1046).

Artist description:

Jacques-Thomas Bréant (1753-1807)

Born in Paris, he began as an *ouvrier libre*. In 1783, the year he became a master, he was established in the Enclos Saint-Martin-des-Champs. In 1783 his workshop was in the rue Saint-Martin; in 1786 he opened a shop in the Palais Royal; in 1795 he was in the rue du Temple. Among his clients were the Duke d'Orléans, the Marquis de Laval, de la Rochebrochard, d'Aulany and d'Amenoncour, the Countesses de Fautoas and de Vascoeil, the Count de Villefranche and Messieurs Michau de Montaran and L'Espine de Granville, however he went bankrupt in 1786, and again in 1788. In 1788, several case makers and enamellers were listed among his creditors, including the bronziers P. Viel, N. Florion, E. Blavet, A. Lemire, P. d'Ecosse and J. B. J. Zaccon, the gilders C. Galle, J. P. Carrangeot, L. Le Prince, and the enamellers Merlet, Bezelle, Barbichon, as well as the renowned Joseph Coteau.