

# *La Pendulerie*



**Galle**

**Rare Gilt and Patinated Bronze Antique Mantel Clock with Matte and Burnished Finishing  
"Psyche and Cupid", early Empire period**

Circa: circa 1805

Attributed to Claude Galle

Paris, early Empire period, circa 1805

Height 54.5 cm; width 42 cm; depth 15 cm

The round white enamel dial indicates the Roman numeral hours and the Arabic fifteen-minute intervals by means of two blued steel Breguet hands. The hour and half-hour striking movement is housed in a finely chased gilt and patinated bronze neoclassical case, with matte and burnished finishing.

Surmounting the clock is a covered urn with a seed finial; it has Greek-style applied handles and a gadrooned belly. The urn rests on an architectural case flanked by dolphins whose tails terminate in scrolls adorned with rosettes, with ewers placed on steps and a fringed lambrequin that is decorated with palmettes and an oculus centered by the head of a putto that is looking mischievously toward the left. The sofa with curved armrests is elaborately adorned with applied palmettes, garlands, ribbon-tied crowns, a lion's head, flowers, and rhytons terminating in dogs' heads. The sides are decorated with tasseled trimming tied in a latticework pattern; the sloping rectangular legs are chased with stylized motifs. The sofa's thick mattress is adorned with a C-scroll frieze. On it lies a sensuous and lightly clad young woman, whose head is resting on her left arm and who holds a medallion bearing a profile in the other hand; she represents Psyche. At her feet, Cupid raises his right arm and holds his finger to his lips, in an allegory of Silence.

**HISTORICAL**

Due to its exceptional chasing and gilding and its original composition, this piece may be attributed to Claude Galle, one of the most talented Parisian bronze casters of the early 19th century. The subject was inspired by a horological model that was created during the reign of Louis XVI; one example is illustrated in Tardy, *La pendule française, 2ème Partie: Du Louis XVI à nos jours*, Paris, 1975, p. 243. The general design of the work, with a female figure reclining on an elaborately decorated couch, is featured in other Parisian creations of the same period, including a model that is illustrated in E. Niehüser, *Die französische Bronzeuhr, Eine Typologie der figürlichen Darstellungen*, Munich, 1997, p. 219, fig. 441. A second example, attributed to bronzier Pierre-Philippe Thomire, and which may be the piece that was in the bedchamber of the Empress in Malmaison, is illustrated in J-D. Augarde, *Les ouvriers du Temps, La pendule à Paris de Louis XIV à Napoléon Ier*, Genève, 1996, p. 174, fig. 139. A further example, depicting the wife of the banker Récamier in her home, is attributed to Claude Galle (see the exhibition catalogue "French Clocks from the Age of Napoleon", Phoenix Art Museum, 1998-1999, p. 31-32). One clock that is identical to the present one, with some variations in its decoration, was offered at auction in Munich in 1973 (Weinmuller Auktion, September 19-21, 1973, lot 500).

### **Artist description:**

Claude Galle (1759 - 1815)

One of the foremost bronziers and fondeur-ciseleurs of the late Louis XVI and Empire periods, Claude Galle was born at Villepreux near Versailles. He served his apprenticeship in Paris under the fondeur Pierre Foy, and in 1784 married Foy's daughter. In 1786 he became a maitre-fondeur. After the death of his father-in-law in 1788, Galle took over his workshop, soon turning it into one of the finest, and employing approximately 400 craftsmen. Galle moved to Quai de la Monnaie (later Quai de l'Unité), and then in 1805 to 60 Rue Vivienne.

The Garde-Meuble de la Couronne, under the direction of sculptor Jean Hauré from 1786-88, entrusted him with many commissions. Galle collaborated with many excellent artisans, including Pierre-Philippe Thomire, and furnished the majority of the furnishing bronzes for the Château de Fontainebleau during the Empire. He received many other Imperial commissions, among them light fittings, figural clock cases, and vases for the palaces of Saint-Cloud, the Trianons, the Tuileries, Compiègne, and Rambouillet. He supplied several Italian palaces, such as Monte Cavallo, Rome and Stupinigi near Turin.

In spite of his success, and due in part to his generous and lavish lifestyle, as well as to the failure of certain of his clients (such as the Prince Joseph Bonaparte) to pay what they owed, Galle often found himself in financial difficulty. Galle's business was continued by his son after his death by his son, Gérard-Jean Galle (1788-1846). Today his work may be found in the world's most important museums and collections, those mentioned above, as well as the Musée National du Château de Malmaison, the Musée Marmottan in Paris, the Museo de Reloges at Jerez de la Frontera, the Residenz in Munich, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.