

# La Pendulerie



**Saint-Germain - Masson**

**Rare Gilt Bronze Chinoiserie Antique Mantel Clock with Matte and Burnished Finishing, Louis XV period**

Circa: circa 1750

Denis Masson

The Case Attributed to Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain

Paris, Louis XV period, circa 1750

Height 32 cm; width 37 cm; depth 22 cm

The round white enamel dial, signed “Masson à Paris”, indicates the Roman numeral hours and the Arabic numeral five-minute intervals by means of two pierced gilt bronze hands. The rocaille case made of finely chased gilt bronze with matte and burnished finishing. It is housed in a drum case that rests on a stylized rocky terrace that serves as its base, with matted reserves, with a palm tree behind. To the right there is a magnificent female Chinoiserie figure dressed in an Oriental-style tunic; she wears earrings and is holding a slender branch in each hand. The figure is reclining on a wide, shaped, naturalistic terrace adorned with C scrolls, scrolling, and stylized leaves and rocks.

## **HISTORICAL**

The present clock, an example of the extraordinary popularity of Oriental and Chinoiserie motifs among connoisseurs in Paris and throughout Europe, is one of the most elaborate Parisian Chinoiserie creations of the reign of Louis XV. This model, whose composition is particularly elegant and balanced, was a great success toward the mid-18th century. It presents several similarities with some works by the bronze caster Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain, to whom we attribute it. Today, among the small number of known identical clocks that sometimes feature a “Chinese” figure with a “smoky black patina”, one example, with a dial signed “Galland”, was formerly in the renowned Akram Ojeh collection (sold Sotheby’s, Monaco, June 25, 1979). A second example, whose dial is signed “Musson”, was in the collection of Marquise Margaret Rockefeller de Larrain (sold Sotheby’s, New York, November 15, 1980, lot 77). A third clock, with a dial by Furet, appeared on the art market when the Elisabeth Firestone collection was sold (lot 873). One further such clock is illustrated in P. Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age à nos jours*, Les Editions de l’Amateur, Paris, 1997, p. 117.

The date at which the present clock was created suggests that it was made by the clockmaker Denis Masson, one of the most important Parisian horologists of the 18th century.

### **Artist description:**

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

He was probably the most renowned Parisian of the mid 18th century. Active as of 1742, he did become a master craftsman until July 1748. He became famous for his many clock and cartel cases, such as his Diana the Huntress (an example is in the Louvre Museum), the clock supported by two Chinamen (a similar example is in the Musée des Arts décoratifs in Lyon), as well as several clocks based on animal themes, including elephant and rhinoceros clocks (an example in the Louvre Museum).

In the early 1760's he played an important role in the renewal of the French decorative arts and the development of the Neo-classical style, an important example of which may be seen in his Genius of Denmark clock, made for Frederic V and based on a model by Augustin Pajou (1765, in the Amalienborg Palace, Copenhagen). Saint-Germain also made several clocks inspired by the theme of Learning, or Study, based on a model by Louis-Félix de La Rue (examples in the Louvre Museum, the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, and the Metropolitan Museum in New York). Along with his clock cases, Saint-Germain also made bronze furniture mounts, such as fire dogs, wall lights, and candelabra. His entire body of work bears witness to his remarkable skills as a chaser and bronzeworker, as well as to his extraordinary creativity. He retired in 1776.