

La Pendulerie



Thomire

Exceptional Finely Chased Gilt Bronze and Patinated Bronze Antique Clock representing Apollo travelling through the Zodiac, Empire period

Circa: circa 1805

Pierre-Philippe Thomire

Paris, Empire period, circa 1805

Height 77.5 cm; width 74 cm; depth 22 cm

The dial of this spectacular clock represents the wheel of a quadriga chariot drawn by four spirited horses driven by Apollo (or Phaeton, depending on the interpretation), with his cloak floating in the breeze. It is elaborately decorated with motifs such as garlands, palmettes, leafy scrolls, griffons, an archer's bow, and a lyre. The arch of the Zodiac is adorned with superb floating gilt bronze clouds; its surface features gilt bronze symbols of the astrological signs, against a bronze-coloured patinated ground. The green marble base is highlighted by a frieze of stylised leaves and by motifs representing stars and phases of the moon, centered by a mask of Apollo from which sunrays emanate. The clock rests on four finely chased lion's paw feet.

HISTORICAL

This clock is remarkable for its unusual subject and for the extraordinary quality of its chasing and gilding, which testify to the immense talent of the bronzier who created it in the late 18th or early 19th century, Pierre-Philippe Thomire. The attribution to Thomire is confirmed by a note in the inventory drawn up in 1829, after the death of gilder Pierre-François Feuchère: "n° 69. Clock, Apollo's chariot travelling through the Zodiac, bronze and matte gilt, silvered clouds, stepped griotte base ornamented by the moon phases. The model is by Thomire; the retail price was 1500 francs". Thomire produced two variations with differing proportions, the first with two horses, and the second, much larger, with four horses. Very few examples are known to exist. One clock, with two horses and silvered clouds, is illustrated in G. and A. Wannenes, *Les plus belles pendules françaises de Louis XVI à l'Empire*, Florence, 2013, p. 354. Three clocks with quadriga chariot are recorded: the first, probably formerly in the Russian Imperial Collection, was sold in Berlin by Rudolf Lepke in February 1929; the second, whose movement was replaced by Vulliamy, is in the Royal British Collection (see E. Niehüser, *Die Französische Bronzeuhr*, Munich, 1997, p. 32); a further example, ordered in Paris in 1798 by Tsar Paul

I for the Saint Michael Palace in Saint Petersburg, is in the Hermitage Museum (illustrated in M. Gay, "Présence horlogère française à Saint-Pétersbourg", in ANCAHA, Spring 2008, n° 111, p. 15).

Artist description:

Pierre-Philippe Thomire (1757-1843)

Having become a master founder on May 18, 1772, he was the most important Parisian bronzier of the first quarter of the 18th century and the early years of the following century. Initially he worked for Pierre Gouthière, chaser-founder to the king, and as of the mid-1770s he worked with Louis Prieur. He later became one of the official bronziers of the Royal Sèvres Factory, creating bronze he bought the stock of Martin-Eloi Lignereux and became the main supplier of bronze furnishings for the imperial palaces. He also had a number of wealthy several of Napoleon's marshals. He retired in the mid-1820s and died in 1843.