

La Pendulerie



Bertrand - Rémond

Exceptional Antique Mantel Clock made of White Marble and Gilt Bronze with Matte and Burnished Finishing, Louis XVI period

Circa: circa 1785

Joseph-Charles-Paul Bertrand, known as Charles Bertrand (1746-1789)

The Bronzes Attributed to François Rémond

The Dials by Joseph Coteau and Edmé-Protail Barbichon

Most Probably Made under the Supervision of Dominique Daguerre

Paris, Louis XVI period, circa 1785

Height 54.5 cm; width 40.2 cm; depth 12.5 cm

The main white enamel annular dial, signed "Cles Bertrand Her de L'académie des Sciences", indicates the Arabic numeral hours, fifteen-minute intervals, and date by means of three hands, two of which are made of pierced and gilt bronze. There is a central seconds hand. The main dial is flanked by two auxiliary annular dials that are beautifully decorated with painted enamel. One, painted by Barbichon, indicates the days of the week, with cartouches containing mythological and allegorical figures relating to the planets. The other dial, by Coteau, features the annual calendar with its months and days, along with oval cartouches bearing the corresponding zodiac signs. The magnificent case is made of white Carrara marble and finely chased gilt bronze with matte and burnished finishing. The drum case that contains the hour and half-hour striking movement is surmounted by an urn containing a bouquet of flowers and leaves; it is supported by two eagles whose bodies are composed of acanthus leaves and stand on two legs. In their beaks they hold garlands that adorn the sides of the two subsidiary dials; they wear headdresses with a feather emerging from a bouquet of veined leaves. The

quadrangular base features concave molding that is adorned with a bead frieze; it is further decorated with slightly protruding panels that depict allegorical putti musicians among the clouds, treated in the manner of the sculptor Clodion. The clock is raised upon four feet with molded rings, which are decorated with fluting and leaves.

HISTORICAL

The present clock stands out due to the extraordinary quality of its chasing and gilding, as well as its highly original composition, which shows the influence of Parisian designers of the time. One of the most talented among them was Jean-Démosthène Dugourc (1749-1825). Dugourc was one of the main proponents of the new avant-garde tendencies that dominated the French decorative arts during the last third of the 18th century. The clock may be considered one of the masterpieces of Parisian luxury clockmaking in the final third of the 18th century. To date, no identical clock has come to light, which would suggest it is a one-of-a-kind piece, probably specially ordered by one of the important Parisian connoisseurs of the time. That hypothesis is further supported by the fact that Joseph Coteau and Edmé-Protais Barbichon, two of the finest enamellers of the day, also worked on it, which occurred very rarely. This collaboration may have happened at the request of the commissioner, probably a powerful man who may have been impatient to complete the furnishing and decoration of his luxurious home in Paris.

Artist description:

Joseph-Charles-Paul Bertrand, known as Charles Bertrand (Nettancourt 1746-Paris 1789)

One of the most important Parisian horologists of the reign of Louis XVI, he served his apprenticeship under Eustache-François Houblin, became a master on February 20, 1772, and opened a workshop in the rue Montmartre. Within a short time he became known for the excellence of his movements and was named Clockmaker to the Royal Academy of Sciences. Specialising in skeleton clocks and clocks with complications, he called on the best artisans of the period, among them Knab for the cases, Barbichon, Coteau and Borel for the dials, and Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain and François Vion for the bronzes. His wealthy clientele, composed mainly of financiers and influential aristocrats, included the Marquise de Lambertye and Harenc de Presle. For the latter he made a very fine vase-shaped clock that was sold in April 1795. It was described as follows: "A finely-shaped and elaborate vase, with handles formed of double scrolls and a lid decorated with rose garlands, surmounted by a pinecone, on the mid-portion of the vase and the band, there is roundel surrounded by imitation gems, with an enamel dial signed Charles Bertrand. The lower portion of the vase is fluted with a pedestal, resting on a truncated fluted column, the base with laurel toruses. Height 14 pouces, diameter 8". Today, several clocks by Bertrand are in important international museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Musée national des Techniques in Paris and the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore.