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Rare Samson Porcelain Figures Of Venus And Mercury, Roman Mythology, C. 1850s



500 EUR

Signature : Samson

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Porcelain

Height : 15 cm

Description

Rare Mid-19th Century Samson Paris Porcelain Figures of Mercury and Venus, Roman Deities, c. 1850s. This rare pair of Paris porcelain figures by Samson et Cie, circa 1850s, represents Mercury, god of trade and communication, and Venus, goddess of love and beauty, from classical Roman mythology -- or Hermes and Aphrodite in the Greek tradition. Finely modelled and delicately hand-painted in soft pastel enamel colours with gilt highlights, these figures reflect the Historicist revival of classical themes that flourished in 19th-century French porcelain production. Mercury is portrayed nude save for a flowing yellow cloak, wearing his distinctive winged helmet, and leaning casually against a classical column. In his left hand he carries the caduceus, the herald's staff entwined with

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serpents, while a purse rests under his right arm, symbolising his role as patron of commerce. Venus stands gracefully atop a stylised scallop shell, modestly draped with flowing hair -- a reference to her mythical birth from the sea and an allusion to Renaissance interpretations of the goddess, most famously Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*. The figures stand on pierced Rococo Revival bases, enriched with soft floral accents and finely detailed gilded scrollwork. Each is marked on the underside with Samson's hand-painted six-pointed star or asterisk in underglaze blue, a typical mark employed by the manufactory during the mid-19th century.

Historical Background Founded by Edmé Samson in Paris around 1845, Samson, Edmé et Cie became renowned for producing high-quality porcelain pieces in the styles of earlier European manufactories such as Meissen, Sèvres, Worcester, Derby and Chelsea. Originally intended to supply reproductions for collectors seeking to complete antique sets, Samson's work quickly gained distinction for its technical skill and faithful interpretation of 18th-century designs. Pieces by Samson et Cie are typically marked with variations of underglaze blue marks, such as the star or asterisk, often subtly different from original factory marks. By the mid-19th century, the factory had established itself as a leading Parisian workshop, valued today for its fine modeling, vibrant enamels, and important role in the tradition of historicist decorative arts.

Measurements Height (Venus): 15 cm / 5.9" Height (Mercury): 14.2 cm / 5.6"

Condition Very good antique condition, with vivid colours, crisp modelling, and strong decorative presence. Venus is intact with no chips, cracks, or restorations. Mercury retains all major details, with only a small chip to the right wing of his helmet. Minor surface wear to the gilding, consistent with age and handling. Both figures present beautifully and retain excellent display appeal.

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