



PROANTIC

LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

Pair Of "claw-foot" Candlesticks With Antique Masks, Attributed To Claude Galle



8 000 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Bronze

Height : 33 cm

Description

Pair of "claw-foot" candlesticks with antique masks, attributed to Claude Galle. Chased, parcel-gilt bronze. France. ca. 1809-1810. h. 33 cm (13 in). The presence of similar candlesticks in Russian collections such as the State Historical Museum in Moscow, referenced by Sychev, has long supported the hypothesis of a Russian origin. Yet their ornamental repertoire, and more decisively the quality of their casting and chasing, make a French attribution at least as plausible on stylistic grounds, and even more likely in terms of execution. The discovery of an 1810 order placed with Claude Galle for a "paire de flambeaux, à griffes tige à pans bronzée, dorée au mat" intended for a room above the Grand Maréchal's apartments at the Grand Trianon, lends further weight to this hypothesis. Neither Ledoux-Lebard

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nor Ottomeyer and Pröschel, however, appear to have noticed that these candlesticks -- recorded in Versailles inventories from 1818 to 1894 and still held in the château's collections -- now form a near pair. The bases, though bearing the same sequence of inventory marks from the Bourbon Restoration through the late 1894, differ in size, profile, and ornament. The claw feet, their crowning, the moldings, and the nozzles are likewise dissimilar. Only the octagonal shaft -- the tige à pans bronzée mentioned in the 1810 order -- is identical on both. On stylistic and technical grounds, it may be argued that the candlestick bearing the inventory number T 1040.1 is the original piece delivered by Claude Galle in 1810. Its claw feet are more crisply modelled and finely chased ; the junction with the shaft more harmonious ; the proportions more coherent. Its pendant, by contrast, displays numerous signs of later restoration : ill-fitting pearl or gadroon friezes, truncated and poorly modelled claws, an oversized collar obscuring the claw mount, and a decorative scheme on the nozzle inconsistent with the rest of the design. These restorations must have occurred between the original delivery and the 1818 inventory, as the altered elements already bear the stamp of that year. The only elements likely to have remained intact -- the claw feet and the patinated eight-sided shaft -- are identical to those of the present pair, whose chasing even surpasses that of the original parts of the Galle-delivered example. The antique-style female masks, though absent from the Grand Trianon candlesticks and unmentioned in the 1810 order, do appear on other known works by Galle and represent a rarer ornamental variant. A comparable model, with a hexagonal shaft, had in fact been delivered by Ravrio to the Garde-Meuble in 1809. Anne Baylet, citing a pair acquired through the merchant Darrac for the apartments of Empress Marie-Louise of Austria at the Palais Rohan in Strasbourg, observes : "Candlesticks, with plain or faceted shafts like these, carried by paw feet,

were produced in many variants. This is a simple model, generally not selected for the Empress's personal apartments, which were typically reserved for more exceptional pieces."Several versions of these faceted claw-footed candlesticks were thus evidently conceived and supplied by Parisian bronzesmiths. Ottomeyer and Pröschel have in fact published comparable examples from a commercial catalogue -- unfortunately anonymous -- dated around 1810. The present pair would appear to represent the most richly ornamented and finely finished version of this model type, whose simplest known variant may be that intended for Marie-Louise's apartments in Strasbourg. While the diffusion of such models does not in itself confirm their attribution to Claude Galle, it does tend to rule out a Russian origin. The period of their dissemination coincides almost exactly with the ???????? ?????? -- the "bronze prohibition" enacted under Alexander I between 1810 and 1815. It is unlikely that such French models would have circulated during this embargo, or that they would have been suddenly revived and copied by Russian bronzesmiths after the fall of the Empire.

Sources Denise Ledoux-Lebard, *Le Grand Trianon. Furniture and Works of Art*, Paris, 1975; Hans Ottomeyer and Peter Pröschel, *Vergoldete Bronzen*, Munich, 1986; Arcadi Gaydamak, *Russian Empire. Architecture, Applied Arts and Interior Decoration. 1800-1830*, Moscow, 2000; Igor Sychev, *The Russian Chandeliers. 1760-1830*, Leningrad, 2003; Marie-France Dupuy-Baylet, *De Bronze et de cristal*, Dijon, 2020.