



Set Of Four "transition" Gilt Bronze Three-light Wall-lights



18 000 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Width : 45 cm

Height : 40 cm

Depth : 30 cm

Description

Set of four three-light wall sconces in gilt bronze. Gilt bronze. France. 40 x 45 x 30 cm (15.7 x 17.7 x 11.8 in). The design of this set appears to be inspired by forms widely disseminated by the ornemaniste Charles Delafosse toward the end of Louis XV's reign. Though undoubtedly later in date, these sconces exhibit the ornamental and at times contradictory elements that are hallmarks of the *goût grec* (Greek taste), a style Delafosse himself helped to popularize. This stylistic synthesis is evident throughout the composition. The central stem of each sconce is garnished with luxuriant acanthus leaves -- the so-called 'acanthe qui panache' (pluming acanthus) noted in the inventories of the Garde-Meuble de la Couronne -- which are a frequent motif in the furniture mounts of the Louis XV period. In

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contrast, the three light arms emerging from this foliage are sober in design, terminating in wide drip-pans embellished with garlands and gadrooning, motifs that would become typical of the Louis XVI style. The composition is itself a testament to the so-called Transition style, which formed a bridge between the Rococo extravagance of the Louis XV era and the more architectonic forms of the Neoclassical Louis XVI style. Indeed, to borrow a term from the historiography devoted to late 18th century furniture, the design can be understood as a form of *rocaille symétrisé* (symmetrized Rococo) : the backplate's finial, still clearly indebted to the Louis XV style, is asymmetrical (with the sconces conceived as opposing pairs), while the remainder of the composition is strictly ordered, creating a strong symmetry around the central stem. This stands in stark contrast to the fluid, almost invariably asymmetrical light arms of the high Rococo period, such as those designed by Meissonnier, Pineau, or Caffiéri. The fire-gilding and finishing are of the highest order, and the chasing of the guilloché-patterned nozzles rivals that seen on the most exceptional examples from the 18th century. The wall lights were adapted and drilled for electricity at the end of the 19th century, but their assembly shows that they were not originally designed for this purpose.