



Wallet With Combination Lock Invented By l'Abbé Boissier - Paris, Circa 1785



6 500 EUR

Signature : Attribué à Leprince de Beaufond

Period : 18th century

Condition : En l'etat

Description

Attributed to Leprince de Beaufond, rue des Deux Écus, supplier to the royal family---A seminal invention in the history of portable securityRare pocket wallet with mechanical combination lock, illustrating one of the earliest known applications of a coded locking system integrated into a personal object.The invention belongs to Abbé Boissier, prior at the Célestins de Sens, whose device was awarded a prize by the Société d'émulation de Paris in 1778. From 1780, the manufacture of the locks was entrusted to Leprince de Beaufond, a Parisian craftsman established on rue des Deux Écus and supplier to the royal family.In the context of the final years of Louis XVI's reign, these objects testify to a growing interest in the protection of personal effects and sensitive documents, among an elite

Dealer

Collection

Collection

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concerned with confidentiality. A comparable example, attributed to Queen Marie-Antoinette, is documented in the national archives with its order slip.---

DescriptionDimensions: Closed wallet: 16 × 11 cm
Circular padlock: 4.5 cm diameter
Materials: Russian garnet leather on rigid core, structured flap.
Interior: Two gusseted compartments in green silk, hand-sewn, showing an even patina of use.
Mounting: Solid silver circular padlocks with three registers, entirely hand-worked by engraving and chasing.
Decor: Fine-executed fleur-de-lys motifs, emblem of the French monarchy.
Mechanism: Combination system via three concentric discs with Indo-Arabic numerals, requiring precise alignment for opening.
Integration: Closing device fully integrated into the wallet's structure.---

Historical significanceThis portfolio lies at the convergence of several major fields:- History of techniques: prefiguration of modern mechanical combination systems- History of French luxury : high-end Parisian production under the Ancien Régime- Political and social history: object linked to the aristocratic sphere and privacy practices---

RarityEighteenth-century combination-lock wallets are extremely rare. Examples retaining their original mechanism, silver mount and leather are exceptionally few.---

ProvenanceFormer private collection. Documentation prepared with the assistance of Mr. Olivier Cauquil.