



Gaston Jolly - Directoire-period Skeleton Clock With Date Display - Paris, Circa 1795-1799



3 450 EUR

Signature : GASTON JOLLY

Period : 18th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Bronze

Description

A rare and elegant Directoire-era portico clock in finely chased and gilded bronze, housing a remarkable skeleton movement with date display, signed Gaston Jolly, one of the great Parisian clockmakers of the late 18th century.

Inspired by ancient architecture, this clock perfectly illustrates the neoclassical taste that flourished during the Directoire period. Its elegant structure rests on four tapered columns joined by delicate laurel garlands suspended from superb, finely chiseled ram's heads. The side posts are topped with elegant ram's hooves, while the dial is surmounted by a rich decoration of palmettes and acanthus leaves. The piece as a whole displays a remarkable balance of proportions, characteristic of the finest Parisian works of this period.

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The beauty of this clock lies in its skeleton movement, deliberately left exposed to reveal its mechanical finesse. Very much in vogue at the end of the 18th century, this type of movement was a true showcase of the watchmaker's talent, with every wheel, every pinion, and every lever contributing as much to the clock's aesthetics as to its function. These pieces, which were particularly costly to produce, are now among the most sought-after models by connoisseurs of French clockmaking.

The movement features a date display, a complication that was relatively uncommon in clocks of this era. The date is indicated by a hand moving along a scale from 1 to 30, a system traditionally adopted by the great clockmakers of the late 18th century. More elaborate than a classic movement, this mechanism demonstrates a high level of technical mastery and lends this clock a particularly special horological appeal.

The movement is signed Gaston Jolly, whose real name was François-Pierre Jolly, who was certified as a master clockmaker in Paris on May 6, 1784. Based on Rue des Arcis, he quickly established himself as one of the capital's most renowned clockmakers. His movements, recognized for their precision and quality of craftsmanship, were used in luxury clocks crafted by the finest bronze casters of their time. His works are now held in several public collections and regularly appear in the most prestigious international auctions, making his signature a sought-after mark among collectors.

In fact, we have found an identical example, signed by the same clockmaker, that sold for EUR4,200 excluding fees at public auction, confirming the interest these rare portico-style clock with date display generate.

Our example is presented in exceptional condition. The mercury gilding retains a beautiful freshness, and the bronze parts have preserved all the finesse of their chiseling. The enameled dial is in excellent condition, and the movement is in perfect working order.

The glass globe visible in some photographs can be provided with the clock only if it is picked up in person. Due to its extreme fragility, shipping it safely is unfortunately not feasible.

Thanks to the quality of its craftsmanship, the elegance of its design, the rarity of its skeleton movement with date display, the signature of a great Parisian watchmaker, and its remarkable state of preservation, this clock is a beautiful example of French clockmaking from the Directoire period.