



Thomire et Cie, Moinet Ainé Hr.

Clock depicting Alexander the Great, by Moinet case by Thomire

Circa: 19th century

19th century

Gilded and chiselled bronze, rouge girotte marble

47 x 40 cm (18 1/2 x 15 3/4 inches)

In gilded bronze and “rouge Girotte” marble depicting Alexander the Great leaning on the dial with Roman numerals in an entourage of weapon trophies, the base decorated with shields, helmets and swords; The dial signed Thomire et Cie and Moinet Ainé Hr.

Period Restauration.

The collaboration between Louis Moinet (1768-1853) and Pierre-Philippe Thomire (1751-1843) is illustrated by a certain number of examples from the beginning of the 19th century, in particular with the famous clock given to Napoleon by the city of Lyon in 1806 (Speelklok Museum in Utrecht). A second example is the Minerve clock formerly kept at the White House in Washington and a third is the clock sold in Paris at Sotheby's on March 29, 2007, lot 117.

Pierre-Philippe Thomire, whose firm Thomire et Cie created this magnificent case, was the greatest craftsman of his time to work with gilded bronze. Having been patronized by Louis XVI and many members of the French aristocracy, Thomire's fame and notoriety was taken to even greater heights after the Revolution when in 1806 he became the first bronzier to be awarded a medal. Gold at the Exhibition of Industrial Products. In 1809, he won another gold medal and was also named the Emperor's engraver. Besides Napoleon, Thomire received many orders from the Emperor's family, then from Louis XVIII and many foreign royal courts.

In response to growing demand, Thomire became a partner and then, in 1804, bought the vast company owned by Martin-Eloi Lignereux, the famous merchant-mercier once associated with Dominique

Daguerre. Soon his newly named company Thomire-Dutermé et Cie was employing a workforce of around 800 people; she had a workshop on rue Boucherat and a showroom on rue Taitbout, from where Thomire retailed a wide range of decorative objects inspired by Antiquity: clock cases, candelabras, extravagant centerpieces as well as urns and monumental vases. Like many Parisian trades, his business encountered financial difficulties due to Napoleon's incessant wars. Soon after 1815 the association with Dutermé was dissolved and under its new name of Thomire et Cie the business once again prospered under the restored Bourbons. 1823 saw Thomire win a gold medal for sculpture in Paris as well as his retirement from the business although he continued to produce sculpture and exhibited regularly at the Paris Salon until 1834. His business was continued by his two sons-in-law then his grandson until 1852 although Thomire's legacy lasted much longer.

Louis Moinet, a highly esteemed watchmaker, inventor, scholar and manufacturer of precision instruments, who became president of the Société de Chronométrie in Paris. Born in Bourges, he spent five years in Rome where he studied architecture, sculpture and painting. As such, Moinet was well acquainted with the arts and, for this reason, he fully understood the aesthetic importance of each of his clocks. After his return to Paris, he became a professor of fine arts at the Académie des Beaux-Arts. He also continued his watchmaking studies in Paris and Switzerland. While in Paris, Moinet worked with the esteemed watchmaker, Abraham-Louis Breguet (1747-1823) as technical secretary. Breguet entrusted Moinet with his notes and drawings for publication. Moinet remained with Breguet until the latter's death but Breguet's treatise remained unpublished. In 1848, Moinet published his own treatise entitled "Nouveau Traité Général Astronomique et Civil d'Horlogerie Théorique et Pratique", which, according to Breguet's son, was based on his father's own work. A number of lawsuits ensued, which financially destroyed Moinet. However, this did not distract from his technical achievements. Among the many, he remade a Ferdinand Berthoud regulator almost in its entirety, invented many horological devices including an optical means for checking the shape of the teeth in clock and watch wheels and in 1851 presented a chronometer to the Great London Exhibition.

Moinet's reputation was such that he worked closely with such eminent men as the astronomer Jérôme Lalande, the watchmaker and magician Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin as well as the bronzier Pierre-Philippe Thomire. He and Thomire were responsible for making a number of very important clocks, including one for Napoleon Bonaparte in 1806, known as the Napoleon clock (National Museum Speelklok, Utrecht), which displays the phases of the moon at the inside of the day hand by means of a small ivory ball. Moinet and Thomire also collaborated on the creation of a multi-dial skeleton clock for the King of Naples as well as others for George IV of England and Tsar Alexander of Russia. While in Paris, Thomas Jefferson acquired a clock from Moinet housed in a figurative case from Thomire, who accompanied the US President for two terms in the White House. Because of this, when James Monroe became president, he also commissioned a clock from Moinet and Thomire in c. 1817.