

April 20 - October 31 2003:

Empire-style mantel clocks: A golden dream in timepieces

Exuberant temporary exhibition with excellent choice of fire-gilded sculptural mantel clocks in French Empire-style.

Exhibition-Catalogue

**MUSEUM OF THE DUTCH CLOCK
(MUSEUM VAN HET NEDERLANDSE UURWERK)**

Kalverringdijk 3, Zaanse Schans
1509 BT Zaandam
Tel: (+31) 075-6179769
Fax: (+31) 075-6157786

© *Pier van Leeuwen*

EMPIRE

In 1804 Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself in Paris emperor of France.

He considered himself successor to the Roman emperor Augustus in his ambition to create an empire. They both lead a campaign in Egypt and derived images as obelisks and sphinxes for propaganda purposes.

The representative design during the empire period (1804-1814) was based on patterns from the ancient classics.

The most important designers from this period are the architects Percier et Fontaine. The most influential painter was Jacques Louis David (a.o. 'The Oath of the Horatii' 1784).

The empire style was followed internationally up to 1830, especially by rulers, like in The Netherlands Louis Napoleon, King of Holland from 1806-1810.

MANTLE CLOCKS (Pendulum clocks)

The word pendulum traces back to the Latin word "pendulum". After the introduction of the pendulum in 1657 by Christiaan Huygens the round pendulum movement with anchor escapement became standard one century later.

The Empire mantle clocks of which the movements are produced in series, have a classic shaped case. The cases and bases are richly decorated with gilded bronze mountings.

The materials which are often used are bronze (gilded or patinated), stone (marble, porphyry, alabaster) and wood (mahogany or fruit wood).

The best known bronzier from this period was Pierre Philippe Thomire (1751-1843). It was possible to cast the figures and mountings in larger quantities.

SYMBOLS

The classic scenes on Empire mantle clocks express high ideals. There are images that glorify the conduct of war (a.o. military trophies, mourning persons and victory geniuses).

Classic gods and goddesses like Apollo or Diana (sometimes in war chariots) were portrayed instead of Christian scenes. Greek muses represent the free arts and sciences like Urania represents the Astronomy.

After the Waterloo battle (1815) more elegant themes like "the temple of love" became popular.

TECHNIQUES

From the 17th century on, the practice of the applied arts was concentrated in Paris. During the Empire period there were between 40 and 60 workshops with founders, gilders, silverers and chasers in Paris.

The founder usually makes a wax model from a draft. From the wax model a negative plaster cast is made, which can be reproduced more often.

Using this plaster cast a mould is made, in which the bronze is casted. The bronze is finished by patinating the bronze with stain or by fire-gilding. In fire-gilding a mixture of gold and mercury (=amalgam) is put on the surface and by heating, the mercury evaporates and a mat gold layer remains, which can be browned to make it shiny.

By combining figures and mountings several versions of one design were produced.

1. Pendule 'borne', signed 'Dubuc Jeune', approx. 1804.

Patinated bronze with gilt-bronze appliques (h: 32 cm).
(Kjellberg, 371E)

The more simple mantelclocks from the time of Napoleon Bonaparte have the shape of a boundary-stone. This specimen has a mourning young woman in classical dress next to a smoky oil lamp. The resting warrior and mourning woman on both sides are identical to the gilt-bronze appliques on the obelisk clock (nr. 4).

Scenes like this glorify the conduct of warfare. Mantelclock nr. 11 is also signed by Dubuc Jeune. Jean Baptiste Charles Dubuc (+ after 1817) was working during the 'Consulat' and 'Empire' period. Around 1800 he was located in Rue des Gravilliers 20.

2. Trophy mantelclock, unsigned, approx. 1799-1804.

Gilt-bronze (h: 43 cm).

Particularly during the 'Directoire' period (1795-1799) and 'Consulat' period (1799-1804) prior to the 'Empire' period (1804-1814) the conduct of war dominated the visual language of the regime. By the campaigns against Italy and Egypt facings of (antique) military attributes as quivers, lances, drums, banners, helmets and cuirasses became the fashion. In palaces like Malmaison near Paris complete rooms were decorated as a copy of field-tents.

The so-called trophy mantelclock reminds us of Roman military trophies like that for emperor Augustus in the Horti Sallustiani outside Rome. The dial on the scutcheon is encompassed by two

winged thunderbolts with crossed flashes of light. These are the symbols of the Roman god Jupiter. The wings are those of an eagle, the heraldic animal of Jupiter, that reoccurs in the emblem of the Roman empire and that of Napoleon Bonaparte. The helmets on which the scutcheon rests are decorated with emblems of a five-pointed star and a scorpion. The mantelclock is crowned with a laurel wreath.

On the base is an applique of crossed feathers.

3. 'Pendule borne', signed Folin a Paris, approx. 1804.

Black marble with gilt-bronze appliques (h: 29,5 cm).

The dial on this mantelclock is encircled with acanthus tendrils and trumpet blowing fames with palm branches. They proclaim the glory/fame of the gods or heroes. According to the classic mythology the fallen heroes live on in an Elysium. The eternal glory was the highest honour a hero could obtain.

Underneath the dial there are two acanthus tendrils.

After his death Napoleon was entombed in a cenotaph in the Dome des Invalides in Paris.

Nicolas Allexandre Folin (approx. 1750-after 1815) was active during the French Revolution and in the Empire period. In 1783 he was located in Rue Salle au Comte, in 1793 in Rue Saint Martin.

4. Obelisk mantelclock, unsigned, approx. 1799-1804.

Patinated bronze with gilt-bronze appliques and patinated bronze

crowning on a base of yellow marble (h: 72 cm).

As emperor Augustus Napoleon took an obelisk as a trophy from his Egyptian campaign. This commemorative column is representative for the real 'Egyptomania' during Napoleon's government. Also the preference for sphinxes, the mythical creatures, existing of a woman with the lower part of the body of a lion, belongs to it. The interest for the ancient Egypt is described in the extensive 'Description de l'Égypte'. The gilt-bronze appliques on this clock represent a stylized army trophy with acanthus tendrils and swans, tracing back to the Roman art at the time of Augustus. The swan, associated with the sun god Apollo/Sol by the Romans became the favourite emblem of empress Josephine. Acanthus tendrils and swans were also on the Ara Pacis in ancient Rome opposite of the Egyptian obelisk, functioning as sun dial. Besides the acanthus tendrils and swans there are a mourning man and woman, two putti with a fire basin and an emblem with a quiver with a double bow and arrow. Another obelisk mantelclock by Antoine-André Ravrio (1759-1814), modelled after the obelisk on the Piazza del Popolo in Rome, also rests on reclined lions.

5. Sculptural mantelclock, 'The Oath of the Horatii', unsigned, approx. 1805.

Gilt-bronze on marble base (h: 67 cm)

Royal Collections, The Hague.

(Heuer/Maurice, 138; Ottomeyer/Pröschel, 367; Niehüser, 101; Jagger, 195; Kjellberg, 411F; Moormann/Uitterhoeve, 129; tent. Cat. 'Empire in het Paleis', 1983)

This sculptural clock set the fashion in the Empire period. The featuring scene is adapted from the painting 'The Oath of the Horatii' by court painter Jacques-Louis David of 1784. David painted more scenes from Roman history.

The group represents a scene from the early Roman history and forms an example of fidelity and spirit of self-sacrifice for one's fatherland. The episode occurs in the work the historian Livius wrote at the time of emperor Augustus.

The scene of the oath is written in the Roman history by C. Rollin. This sculptural mantelclock is from the Salon of Louis Napoleon in the Palace at Dam Square Amsterdam. As king of Holland from 1806-1810 Louis Napoleon decorated his palaces with Empire-style furniture. There are more Empire-style clocks in the Dutch Royal Collections.

On July 1, 1810 the Netherlands was incorporated in the French empire. Emperor Napoleon visited Amsterdam October 9, 1811 and stayed in the palace. In 1814 Willem I was crowned king of the Netherlands. Comparable versions of this sculptural clock are in the British and the Swedish Royal Collections and the previously Royal Collection Bavaria.

6. Sculptural mantelclock 'The astronomic lesson', signed L. Simon a Paris.

Gilt-bronze (h: 41,5 cm).

(Ottomeyer/Pröschel I, 374; Kjellberg, 398D)

Napoleon Bonaparte had great interest in science. This sculptural clock designed by Jean-André Reiche in 1807 shows two young women in classical dress (Astronomy and Geography or Urania and Klio?) sitting on Greek

seats on either side of an armillosphere. At the base in low relief a terrestrial globe with laurel branch, two putti and an emblem with compasses, protector, tripod, measuring staff and telescope.

7. Sculptural mantelclock 'The Astronomy', unsigned, approx. 1810.

Gilt-bronze (h: 37,5 cm)..

(Ottomeyer/Pröschel I, 375; Niehüser, 143-144)

This sculptural clock is designed by Jean-André Reiche in 1809 as an allegory of 'The Astronomy' (see nr. 6). Urania, muse of Astronomy, in classical dress, measures with compasses the celestial globe. At the base a putto with a telescope.

8. Sculptural mantelclock 'The music lesson', signed Kinable Palais Royal.

Gilt-bronze on green marble base (h: 51 cm).

(Kjellberg, 388B)

Erato (love song) is one of the muses together with Euterpe (lyrical poetry), Calliope Epic), Klio (Hystory), Melpomene (Tragedy), Polymnia (hymn of praise), Terpsychore (song and dance), Thalia (comedy) and Urania (astronomy) who lived on mount Parnassus under the leadership of Apollo, god of Arts, and inspired artists, poets and thinkers.

Ludwig van Beethoven originally dedicated his third symphony ('Sinfonia Eroica') to Napoleon Bonaparte.

The clock shows a harpist (the muse Erato or Terpsychore?) in classical dress between Amor with title page 'Bouton de Rose' (rose bud) with torch and bow on a seat on the left hand side and a tripod with musical score on the right hand side.

Beneath the dial there is a drapery with palmettes and a meander ornament. At the base two gilt-bronze appliques representing a lyre in the midst of two antithetic griffins and two Medusa masks.

Dieudonné Kinable (+ after 1815) was active at the end of the reign of Louis XVI. He distinguished himself particularly by skeleton clocks and lyre clocks. Between 1795-1806 he made 21 porcelain cases for the manufacture Sevres.

9. Sculptural mantelclock 'The library', signed Ravrio, approx. 1810.

Gilt-and patinated bronze (h: 53,5 cm).

Collection Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, Leiden.

(Heuer/Maurice, 134; Niehüser, 302; Haspels, 33; Smith, 88; Ottomeyer/Pröschel, 353)

The knowledge of the Greek and Latin language and history was for the literate Romans as the emperors Augustus, Claudius and Hadrian the foundation of cultural education. They founded several Greek and Latin libraries in Rome and the Roman empire. Louis Napoleon founded with his Royal Museum in the Palace at Dam Square in 1808 the Rijksmuseum. This after his brother whose Musée Napoleon founded in 1801 the Musée du Louvre.

The bronzier/fire gilder Antoine-André Ravrio completed several orders for Napoleon I as well as Louis Napoleon. Ravrio had a workshop in Rue Richelieu in Paris.

This clock was probably a gift from Louis Napoleon to his minister. Both book cases are filled with books of Homer and Empedokles and the Roman poet Ovid at the time of emperor Augustus. Between the cases

is a 'herme' with the bust of Aristotel, the famous Greek philosopher, or the historian Homer. Hermes were statue columns along the roads and arcades of ancient Greece. The Romans used such columns with busts of famous people like the 'Seven Philosophers' in libraries and gardens. The eagle on the column refers to the heraldic animal of Jupiter, adopted by both Augustus and Napoleon. Jupiter's other attribute, the thunderbolt, is pictured on the reading table. Behind this table a woman (muse) in classical dress is sitting pored over literature.

A comparable version of this sculptural clock is in the Collection of the Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle U.K.

10. Sculptural mantelclock 'The Library', signed L. Hoest, Rue de Fra. St. Honoré a Paris', approx. 1810.

Gilt-bronze (h: 44 cm).

(Niehüser, 301; Heuer/Maurice, 133; Tardy 2, p. 385.4)

This popular sculptural mantelclock shows two reading boys in classical dress in front of a book case. This clock lacks the prominent symbolism of the bigger clock by Ravrio (nr. 9) and was much sought after for desk and private libraries.

11. Sculptural mantelclock 'The Reader/Lectura', signed Dubuc Jeune, approx. 1810.

Gilt-bronze (h: 40 cm).

(Tardy 2, p. 363.3; Niehüser, 132-133)

This sculptural clock, entitled 'La liseuse' shows a young reading woman in classical dress. The reading woman (muse?) sitting on a Greek chair decorated with acanthus tendrils,

is illuminated by an oil lamp, symbol for alertness and circumspection.

The oil lamp has a bird's head shaped handle. The legs of the table have winged lionheads and claw-feet, as can be found on furniture of the Roman empire. Clock nr. 1 is also signed Dubuc Jeune.

12. Sculptural mantelclock 'The Reader/Lectura', signed Le Roy, approx. 1810.

Gilt-bronze on green marble base (h: 32,5 cm).

(Tardy 2, p. 363.2; Ottomeyer/Pröschel I, 374; Niehüser, 132-133; Nolte; Kjellberg 398B)

This sculptural mantelclock is a smaller and more simple version of nr. 11, after the design of Jean-André Reiche (19/2/1805) in the Bibliotheque Imperiale. The clock is a mirrored pendant of nr. 13. Another example of this clock is in the Collection of Chateau de Fontainebleau.

13. Sculptural mantelclock 'The Reader/Lectura', unsigned, approx. 1810.

Gilt-bronze on green marble base (h: 32,5 cm).

(Tardy 2, p. 363.2; Ottomeyer/Pröschel I, 374; Niehüser, 132-133; Nolte)

This sculptural mantelclock is a smaller and more simple version of nr. 11, after the design of Jean André Reiche (19/2/1805) in the Bibliotheque Imperiale. The clock is a mirrored pendant of nr. 12.

14. Sculptural mantelclock 'Diana's/Luna's' chariot', unsigned.

Gilt-bronze with enamelled dial on a green marble base (h: 49 cm).

Chariot clocks (*pendules au char*) are a special category sculptural clocks. In the *Iliad* by Homer the olympic gods are often portrayed in a chariot. This can be seen as a personification of the revolution of the planets. Diana was the Roman goddess of the hunt, identified with the moon goddess Luna.

Napoleon Bonaparte had a triumphal march in Paris in 1799 in imitation of the Roman emperors carrying art treasures as war trophies like the Laokoön group and the Apollo Belvédère from the Vatican.

Diana/Luna is portrayed with attributes expressing her double function. Her chariot is drawn by a pair of hounds. The rear end of the chariot has the shape of a deer's head. The spoked chariot wheel is the enamelled dial of the clock. Scenes of the Roman war god Mars were less popular during the Empire period. In addition to Diana/Luna chariot clocks more often show Apollo/Sol or Amor. Images of the goddess of the hunt Diana can be seen as alternative to those of Mars or Minerva.

15. Sculptural mantelclock 'Diana and Actaeon', signed Giradot Paris, Directoire.

Gilt-bronze on black marble base (h: 59 cm).
(Kjellberg, 336B;)

Diana, the Roman goddess of the hunt, is portrayed two times on this clock, on either side of a scene representing the hunter Actaeon. In the 'Metamorphoses' by the Roman poet Ovid this hunter is mentioned. Diana transforms him into a deer because he is watching her bathing. He is devoured by his own hounds. From Herculaneum a sculpture is known

from a deer attacked by hounds. This clock shows the peaceful scene where Actaeon is resting underneath an oak tree.

The antithetic representation of Diana is possibly symbolic for the double character of the goddess: both that of the chaste protector of the animal kingdom and revengeous goddess of the hunt. In the same way her twin brother Apollo is sometimes portrayed both like a salvating god of the arts and like the killer of the snake Python. In addition to the hunting attributes bow and arrows and feasant Diana is also shown with a crescent in her hair. The clock is resting on satyr's heads with hoofed feet, representing the nature god Pan. At the top of the clock a putto on a deer (Actaeon?).

16. mantelclock 'Ceres', signed Engaz a Paris, approx. 1795-1812.

Gilt-bronze (h: 46 cm).
(Tardy 2, p. 394.1; Niehüser, 63)

Ceres, the Roman goddess of the fruits of the field is portrayed with ears of corn and a sickle in her left hand, sitting on a double well. In addition to these attributes a sheaf of corn, a plough and crossed flails can be recognized. The emblem of two antithetical winged snakes on either side of a well indicates a relation with the underworld, to which Ceres' daughter Proserpine was banished.

Emperor Augustus ordered a relief on the Ara Pacis in Rome of the goddess Tellus, the comparable goddess of prosperity. Both representations can be seen as propaganda for the favourable influence of the empire on agriculture. Livia, the wife of emperor Augustus, was often portrayed as Ceres.

17. Sculptural mantelclock 'Amor and Aurora', signed *Ravrio Bronzier a Paris Mesnil Hr*, approx. 1810.

Gilt-bronze on red marble base (h: 54 cm).

(Niehüser, 81; 200; Heuer/Maurice, 155)

The Roman love god Amor attempts to stop the sunrise (Aurora) portrayed as a young woman dressed in a mantle decorated with stars. At her feet is a bow and a torch. On the red marble base is a gilt-bronze applique with a spreaded winged owl and poppy buds. Antoine-André Ravrio (see nr. 9) was one of the most famous bronzier/fire guilders of the Empire period next to Pierre Philippe Thomire (1751-1843), of whom a patinated version of this sculptural mantelclock is known.

18. Sculptural mantelclock 'Temple of Love', signed *P.re Delhorme a Lyon*, approx. 1810.

Gilt-bronze (h: 44 cm).

At the time of emperor Augustus a preference originated for idyllic rural scenes in literature and painting. The sculptural mantelclock 'Temple of Love' goes back to these pastoral representations of an arcadic country life, as described in "Eclogae" by Vergil or as pictured in frescos as in the villa of Agrippa Postumus in Boscotrecase near Naples.

A young sheperdess in classical dress is resting at a well with sheperd staff, a jar, a bird's nest and a sheep. Although already popular during the Empire period, the popularity increased after the down fall of Napoleon. During the so-called 'Restauration' period (1814-1830), during the reign of Louis XVIII (1814-1824) and Karel X (1824-1830) romantic sculptural mantelclocks were preferred.

19. Sculptural mantelclock 'Mother and Child', signed *Marchant a Tours*, approx. 1815.

Gilt-bronze on black marble base (h: 52 cm).

(Niehüser, 293)

This sculptural clock depicts a domestic scene; a sitting mother in classical dress playing ball and chain with a child standing on a stool. The chair has elbow rests as Greek sphinxes, as furniture from the famous Empire furniture designer George Jacob. Underneath and behind the chair there are a cat and a dog underlining the domestic atmosphere. On the base gilt-bronze appliques of a goat and jars. On either side two emblems can be seen with a Mercury staff with crossed cornucopias, symbols of trade and prosperity.

20. A pair of Empire candle sticks, 1800-1830.

Gilt-and patinated bronze

Literature:

Jean-Dominique Augarde: *Les Ouvriers du Temps* (1996)

J.J.L. Haspels: *Koninklijke Klokken in Paleis het Loo* (2003)

Peter Heuer/ Klaus Maurice: *Europäische Pendeluhren - Decorative Instrumente der Zeitmessung* (1988)

Elke Niehüser: *Die französische Bronzeuhr: Eine Typologie der figürlichen Darstellungen* (1997)

Pierre Kjellberg: *Encyclopedie de la pendule française* (1997)

Cedric Jagger: *Royal clocks* (1983)

Eric M. Moorman & Wilfried Uitterhoeve: *Van Alexandros tot Zenobia* (1989)

Michael Nolte: *Zeitgeschichten*

Hans Ottomeyer/ Peter Pröschel: *Vergoldete Bronzen - Die Bronzearbeiten des Spätbarock und Klassizismus* (1986)

A. Smith: *The country life international dictionary of clocks* (1988)

Tardy: *La pendule française 2e Partie* (1949)

Exhibitioncatalogues:

* La pendule a sujet du Directoire a Louis
Philippe

* Empire in het Paleis (Amsterdam 1983)