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Claude Mathieu and Joseph Coteau

A Louis XVI ormolu astronomical Vase Clock "Pendule a cercles tournants"
Claude Mathieu (1722 – Paris – 1812) and **Joseph Coteau** (1740 – Paris – 1801)

Paris, 1778

59 x 34 x 30 cm

Signed by the clockmaker Claude Mathieu and the enameller Joseph Coteau, Paris, and dated 1778.

Case: neo-classical urn cast with fruit and foliage swags, revolving hour and minute bands with individual enamel chapters, the time shown by a salamander tail, the plinth base with ribbon-tied swags and rams' head side mounts on a bronze socle. The white enamel calendar dial signed "Mathieu fecit" below rolling moon phase, outer concentric rings for the days of week and months of year with their number of days, date aperture with silvered ring, outer zodiac ring painted in gilt-framed roundels

interrupted by green enamel jewellery, signed on reverse "Coteau / le 1. juillet 1778", ormolu hands.

The movement with back-to-back twin barrels, anchor escapement and countwheel strike on bell to base, indirect bevel gearing to chapter bands above and trip lever to further single barrel movement for calendar advance; pendulum.

This superb clock displays the virtuosity and innovative decoration of Joseph Coteau (1740 – 1812), possibly the most famous enameller of his days, who supplied dials for the greatest clockmakers of France. Born in Geneva, he became "maître peintre-émailleur" at the Académie de Saint-Luc in Geneva in 1766. By 1722 he was installed in Rue Poupée, Paris. Beyond his enamel dials, Coteau was a skilled miniaturist, discovering a new method for gilt-decorated enamels „d'appliquer solidement l'or marié avec les émaux de toutes couleurs sur la porcelaine", such as is seen on the enamels on this clock which cleverly mimic porcelain plaques. Coteau worked closely with the Sèvres factory in developing their 'jewelled' porcelain, and his name first appears in the kiln records of Sèvres in 1780.

A near identical clock also signed Mathieu and Coteau was delivered for the furnishings of the Michel Palace built by Emperor Paul I. at St. Petersburg in 1798 and is today in the Kreml-Palace, Moscow.

Prov.: Private Collection, Vienna

Lit.: Winthrop Edey: French Clocks, London, 1967, p. 67.,

Jean-Dominique Augarde: Le ouvriers du temps, Geneva, 1996, p. 205.,

Klaus Maurice: Schöne Uhren des 17. – 19. Jahrhunderts, p. 80 ff.