

M & J Duncan

ANTIQUES & WORKS OF ART

French Gilt Bronze Automaton Wallace Fountain Clock

£25,000



REF: 57

Height: 20.75 cm (8.2")

Width: 8.25 cm (3.2")

Depth: 8.25 cm (3.2")

Description

An extremely rare and particularly fine quality automaton clock representing the Wallace Fountains presented to the city of Paris by Sir Richard Wallace in 1872. Simulating water flowing down through the centre is a rotating twisted glass rod which is powered by a separate movement to the clock.

To the front of the fountain is a clock and a barometer and to the top is a beautifully executed cupola held aloft by the four goddesses representing simplicity; Temperance; Charity and goodness in gold, bronze and silver. Above this are four dolphins carrying a central spire.

The body of the clock features decorative gilded scroll-work to the four corners with bull-rushes to either side and fine silvered capitals. The mat gilded side panels have decorative raised silver and gilt decoration applied to them with the head of a sea serpent at the base from which his body rises up and is entwined around a central winged staff. Gilded cups on chains hang down alongside from the bowl of the fountain. The whole rests on a rouge marble base.

Sir Richard Wallace was a wealthy English philanthropist who was living in Paris at the time when it was being extensively transformed by the works of Baron Hausman. At this period France was recovering from its losses in the Franco-Prussian war and the supply of drinking water in Paris was limited by the destruction of its aqueducts. To try and ease this problem Wallace donated fifty drinking fountains to the city and commissioned Charles Labourg to design them.