

GALERIE LAMY
CHABOLLE



A Pair of Carcel Lamps by François-Nicolas Poupinel

Parcel-gilt bronze, glass

France

ca. 1828

h. 58 (cm) (22¾ in., without accessories); h. 82 cm (32¼ in., with accessories)



One of the two lamps bears, beneath its mechanism, the signature of François-Nicolas Poupinel, listed as a “maker of mechanical lamps, known as Carcel lamps, of elegant form” in the *Almanach des commerçans, banquiers, négocians, manufacturiers, fabricans et artistes de la capitale* of 1828. In 1842, Poupinel was granted a five-year patent for a type of piston lamp about which little is known — a system related to, though apparently distinct from, the Carcel lamps he had been manufacturing fifteen years earlier.



View of the mechanism and of the signature of François-Nicolas Poupinel.

The clockmaker Guillaume Carcel (1750–1812) had devised a lamp with a clockwork mechanism, patented in 1800 under the name “lampe Lyncomena.” The mechanism allowed oil to be continuously raised to the burner by means of a force pump driven by clockwork gearing. These lamps were costly, and met with little commercial success during their inventor’s lifetime. Carcel’s patent, however, having expired, the invention entered the public domain in 1816 and was there-

after freely adopted and refined, soon becoming a fixture of the grandest *bourgeois* interiors.

The year 1828, at which Poupinel appears in the *Almanach*, is consistent with these lamps' ornaments and casting. They display all the hallmarks of the Restoration style: their tall, lightly fluted columns, rising from a double base and crowned by foliate capitals, are partially gilt and patinated, and their bases adorned with elegant applied motifs of vases and trophies in gilt bronze. That the bronzes were chased in the manner shown here, that is worked with a *mat à la pointe*, speaks to the quality of finish expected of mechanical lamps in the first third of the 19th century.

The lamps do not appear to have undergone restoration but show some wear to the patina. Wear to the gilding is limited, though there are minor losses, notably to one of the applied vase motifs. The globes are old but may not original as they form a near-pair. The mechanism is in good condition but has not been activated.

LITERATURE

See Deflandre, *Répertoire du commerce de Paris, ou Almanach des commerçans, banquiers, négocians, manufacturiers, fabricans et artistes de la capitale*, Paris, 1828; *Catalogue des brevets d'invention, d'importation et de perfectionnement délivrés du 1er janvier 1828 au 31 décembre 1842*, Paris, 1843; Figuier, *Les Merveilles de la science ou Description populaire des inventions modernes*, vol. IV, Paris, 1870.

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