

GALERIE LAMY
CHABOLLE



Paperweight with Clasping Hands

Patinated bronze, *nero di Belgio* and *giallo antico* marbles,
pietre tenere

Rome

1820–1850

12 x 18 x 12.5 cm (4.7 x 7.1 x 4.9 in.)



Several paperweights featuring this same motif of clasped hands have been associated with the Neo-Gothic and *Troubadour* styles; consequently, they have been attributed to the Bourbon Restoration, specifically the reign of Charles X. While the sober and masterful bronze casting does indeed seem to belong to this period (the second quarter of the 19th century), the stylised laurel friezes and acanthus leaves decorating the cuffs refer instead to an ancient model.

This style draws from Roman votive or utilitarian bronzes, of the kind of Roman votive hands or of the beautiful *nucifrangibulum* in the Archaeological Museum of Taranto. It reproduces the motif of the *dextrarum iunctio* — the joining of right hands — ancestor of the modern handshake and a gesture that, in Rome, solemnised a symbolic and at times legal union, whether between legitimate spouses or the Augusti of the Tetrarchy.

The bronze hands rest on a plaque of *pietre tenere intarsia*, with a core of *nero di Belgio* and *giallo Antico* marble, which further supports the hypothesis of a production from the Grand Tour industry.

The casting of the bronzes (actually a brass with a dark patina) is of high quality; the backgrounds were matte-finished with a *mat à la pointe*, and the veins of the acanthus leaves are, overall, elegantly chased. The *giallo* marble shows some chips and minor losses.

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