

Clocks and Barometers / Thu, 1st November 2018 / Lot 1150



LOT 1150

A George III ormolu mounted tortoiseshell ten-tune musical automaton table clock by James Cox, circa 1770-1780, with eight day three train fusee movement, the transverse mounted 5½ inch barrel playing ten tunes on thirteen bells via thirteen hammers, with strike to large bell on backplate, the backplate finely engraved with foliate scrolls, the circular enamel dial with black Roman hour numerals, outer Arabic minutes and inner Arabic date ring, inscribed 'James Cox London', flanked by subsidiary strike/silent and tune selection dials, all within a cast and pierced ormolu surround of rococo scrolls, flowers and two birds, above a painted and cut metal automaton parade scene of European figures, sheep and trees in a rural setting, the rectangular tortoiseshell veneered case with naturalistically entwined foliate scroll ormolu mounts overall, the bell top surmounted by an urn above opposing panels of an Eastern gentleman seated within a tent, cornered by four flambeau vases, the arched door below a king's crown and cornucopia cresting, the sides with arched fret panels, the base centred with fruiting vine above a repeated 'three drop' apron, raised on foliate scroll moulded feet, height 55.5cm. Provenance: consigned from the estate of a private collector, whose London home and contents remained largely untouched for decades. The majority of this collection is Chinese export porcelain of the 17th and 18th century, which is being sold at these rooms in a single-owner sale on 29th November 2018. Note: James Cox (circa 1723-1800) is best known for creating elaborate and ingenious automata and mechanical clocks, which he exported to China and other countries and also exhibited at his Spring Gardens Museum, London, between 1772 and 1776. A number of his clocks from the former Imperial Collection are now in the Palace Museum, Beijing. Among his best known works are the Peacock Clock, now in the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, and the Silver Swan, built in conjunction with John Joseph Merlin, which can now be seen at the Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, County Durham. Other works by Cox can be found in the British Royal Collection and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. For numerous illustrations and discussions of clocks and automata by James Cox and other celebrated makers, see 'English Clocks for the Eastern Markets' by Ian White. A clock with similar 'three drop' apron is illustrated on the front cover and discussed on page 220. We are grateful to Dr Ian White for his assistance while cataloguing this lot.

Estimate: £20,000 - £40,000

Condition Report

1150. This condition report is made by visual observation of the clock in its fully assembled state. No

dismantling has been done and this restricts the opinions formed.

Overall the clock is complete and it appears to be in excellent condition for its age. There are no missing parts, apart from the minor items listed below:

Case: the case is in a rather dirty condition and will require. There is very little damage to the case. There is one ormolu moulding missing from the lower left-hand side, although an identical moulding is on the right-hand side - which can be used as a pattern. There is a small slither of tortoiseshell detached from the case on the left-hand side of the rear door. The missing piece is inside the clock. Otherwise tortoiseshell in excellent condition. The front door lock requires some adjustment. Some mounts and moulding are slightly loose and one piece is almost totally detached. But overall it is in excellent condition considering its type and age.

Dial: there is a small amount of damage to the enamel around the winding hole at the 6 o'clock position. The oil painting that forms the automaton would benefit from a clean. The hands are all original and intact.

Mechanism: everything appears to be there. It is reluctant to run but if given a helping hand everything works. It is the writer's opinion that a thorough clean and probably the normal minor repair would bring this clock to full working order. The twin pull repeat strings are not present, but the holes are there.

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