

**A LARGE OVAL GILD AND REPOUSSE LEATHER MEDALLION
DEPICTING LOUIS XIV**



FRENCH SCHOOL

LATE 17TH CENTURY, CIRCA 1690

DIMENSIONS :

HEIGHT WITH FRAME : 40 ³/₄ IN ; WIDTH WITH FRAME : 35 ¹³/₁₆ IN

PROVENANCE : PRIVATE COLLECTION

27, Quai Voltaire, 75007 Paris

This rarely-seen oval gild and repoussé leather medallion depicts the King Louis XIV (1638-1715) in profile, bust-length, aged to about fifty years, in the flower of his age. He wears an armour decorated with a grotesque mask at the level of a pad surrounded by an elegantly draper and a delicate lace ruff tied around his neck.

His portrait stands out on a background decorated with fleur-de-lis, emblem of the French Royal family, which is surrounded by a frieze of olives and small coins clearing corner-pieces ornamented with rosettes.

Our medallion is exalted by his richly carved original frame from 17th century consisting of acanthus leaves rolled up a steam rhythmed in angles by stylized flowers.

The King is represented in a time which he developed a large politic, military and cultural influence beaming on the Europe and the both of a French style. The force of the “Roi Soleil” is really good developed in this medallion by the haughty posture of the monarch.

The magnificence of the wig, the majestic head carriage with forehead and chin raised, the fine drawing of his armour, reinforce the feel of force and pride emerged from our medallion.

Three virtually similar medallions in repoussé leather, depicting Louis XIV, are kept in French public collections and have quite similar sizes but our medallion owns his original frame.

One is kept in the Museum of Versailles castle as we can see on the below picture in Figure 1.



Fig.1. Anonymous, Louis XIV's profil, repoussé leather, circa 1685-1690, 83 cm x 66 cm, Versailles, châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Inventory number MV8603

The second is located on the antechamber of Villars in Vaux-le-Vicomte castle (Fig.2).



Fig.2. Anonymous, Louis XIV's portrait, repoussé leather, circa 1690, Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte

Finally, the third is situated in the Museum of the decorative arts in Bordeaux and it was from 1692 (Fig.3).



Fig.3. Attributed to François Girardon, Louis XIV's portrait, repoussé leather, circa 1692, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux, Inventory number Bx M 11228

Moreover, another repoussé leather portrait depicting Louis XIV is kept in the Getty Museum collections in Los Angeles, United States (Fig.4).



Fig.4. Anonymous, Louis XIV's portrait, repoussé leather, circa 1690, Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Our oval portrait is the only portrait known to have a smooth background totally covered with fleurs-de-lis, an original gilding and frame from 17th century contrary to these public models mentioned above, which have lost its frame in course of time. Therefore this is an exceptional piece of considerable interest to Art History and for connoisseurs from Grand Siècle.

The originally model could be attributed to the French sculptor, Jean-Louis Lemoyne (1665-1755), son of the painter Jean Lemoyne and pupil of the famous sculptor, Antoine Coysevox (1640-1720). He was received to the academic school of Bordeaux in 1692 with the presentation of a carved walnut portrait depicting Louis XIV which could correspond in our model, now disappeared.

The authorship of our model could be also to the First sculptor of Louis XIV, François Girardon (1628-1715), received at The Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1687. He worked to the decoration in the Apollon gallery into the Louvre then for Versailles.

With Coysevox, he was the most famous sculptor of Versailles for the important and high-quality production.

In 1687, he gave a marble medallion depicting Louis XIV to his home town of Troyes. He is very similar to our portrait because we have the same style in the lace ruff and also the same haughty head carriage. But we see a variance in the grotesque mask at the level of the pad. He is now on the chimney in the Great Salon of the Town Hall.

The representation of the Louis XIV's portrait in bust-length became extremely successful during 17th and 18th centuries because works of art celebrated and immortalized the King. Thus, we see his portrait on different materials as glass, bronze, silver (numismatics) or leather.