Emmett & White
ANTIQUES & INTERIORS

Metay & Mercier Mechanical Bellows, Paris, Circa 1870

£245

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REF: 4516

Height: 7 cm (2.8")

Width: 13 cm (5.1")

Depth: 43 cm (16.9")

Description

A rare and wonderfully inventive set of hand-cranked mechanical bellows by Metay & Mercier of Paris, dating to circa 1870. Combining polished brass with richly toned rosewood, this elegant 19th-century domestic apparatus is both a functional fireside tool and a highly decorative example of French mechanical craftsmanship.

Operated by a hand crank, the mechanism produces a controlled stream of air to revive a fire without the effort or disruption of conventional bellows. The long rosewood body is fitted with finely made brass components, giving the piece a refined, almost scientific-instrument quality. Its clever engineering and handsome materials make it a particularly appealing survival from an age that celebrated innovation in even the most practical household objects.

French makers of the period frequently brought exceptional attention to the design of domestic wares, and this piece is a fine example of that tradition. Rather than concealing its working mechanism, the design makes a virtue of it: the crank, brass fittings, and precisely constructed bellows create an object that is as engaging to watch in use as it is to display.

Remarkably, it remains in working order and is still "puffing away", adding an especially charming dimension to its appeal. It would make an unusual and characterful addition to a fireplace setting, library, country-house interior, or collection of antique scientific and mechanical objects.

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