

An exceptional Empire ormolu and Mont-Cenis cut-crystal twenty-seven lights chandelier in two rows, attributed to the Maison Chaumont.

Paris, early 19th Century.

Height: 72,83 in. (185 cm)
Diameter: 47,24 in. (120 cm)



The circular corona surmounted by palm-shaped finials above a cascade of drops and myrzas in cut crystal. The main ring, composed of a gilded bronze ornament with winged putti holding garlands of laurel on volutes, interlacing flowers, foliage and palmettes, issuing nine candle-branches, supporting nozzles with crystal drip-pans. From this ring descend short chains of cut crystal drops that join a second bronze ring adorned with applied reserves with leaf motifs and rosettes, to which are attached eighteen candle branches, below which the central shaft is encased in a 'tent' formed by strings of cut crystal drops, in the center of which a circular gilt bronze base cast with lotus leaves and palmette and foliate pendant. Few glass replacements.

Literature:

- M.F. Dupuy-Baylet, *L'Heure, le Feu, la Lumière: Les Bronzes du Mobilier National 1800–1870*, Paris, 2010, p. 211, note 116.
- J.P. Samoyault, *Musée national du Château de Fontainebleau : Catalogue des collections de Mobilier, Pendules et bronzes d'ameublement entrés sous le Premier Empire*, Paris, 1989, pp. 106–7, figs. 71–73.
- Hans Ottomeyer, Pröschel, Klinkhardt & Biermann, *Vergoldete Bronzen*, München, 1986, p. 358, pl. 5.II.2.
- D. Ledoux-Lebard, *Versailles, le Petit Trianon. Le mobilier des inventaires de 1807, 1810 et 1839*, Paris, 1989, p. 95, fig. 61.
- M.F. Dupuy-Baylet, *De bronze et de cristal*, 2020, pp. 290–1, no. 145. (Fig.5)
- C. Samoyault-Verlet, *Un âge d'or des arts décoratifs, 1814-1848*. Paris 1991, p. 517.

A masterpiece of monumentality brilliantly combining bronze and crystal, this chandelier is a representative example of the most accomplished and impressive lighting devices created under the Empire. It represents the upper end of the production and it was destined for an elite audience, spanning princely courts and the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie. In addition to its exceptional ornamentation of gilded bronze, it is the alliance between a crystal with a complex cut and finely

chiseled metal that makes the magic of these type of pieces. Few of these pieces have come down to us, especially with the original crystals.

The present chandelier is unquestionably French. If the crystal elements were probably supplied by the Montcenis manufactory, the overall design and composition is here attributed to the Chaumont manufactory, which collaborated with the greatest *bronziers* of the period, such as Pierre-Philippe Thomire, Claude Galle, and André-Antoine Ravrio.

These types of gilded bronzes and cut crystal chandeliers became widespread under the Empire, particularly thanks to the activity of the Imperial Crystal Factory of Mont-Cenis. This factory was the heir of the *Manufacture des cristaux et émaux de la Reine*, a glasswork workshop founded in Sevres in 1781, during the reign of Marie-Antoinette, by Mr. Lambert and Mr. Boyerthen. In 1787 the Crystal Factory was transferred to the hamlet of Le Creusot, near Montcenis, in Burgundy, due to the locality's abundance of coal. After other minor relocations and an interruption of the activity of the furnaces during the revolution, the factory resumed its activity and grew again under the aegis of its new director Benjamin-François Ladouèpe du Fougereais (1766–1821) and, in 1806, the crystal factory obtained the name of *Manufacture de leurs Majestés impériales et Royales*, producing a large quantity of cut crystals, many of which were used to make chandeliers.

The high quality of the glass drops and gilt bronze frame evoke the work of the Paris firm of Chaumont, which produced chandeliers often using crystal prism drops manufactured by the Mont-Cenis, which often collaborated with the greatest bronze workers of the time on projects including great chandeliers. The two firms collaborated on important Imperial commissions during the first decade of the 19th century, including several chandeliers supplied by Chaumont to Fontainebleau in 1809 (J.-P. Samoyault, *Musée national du Château de Fontainebleau: Catalogue des collections de Mobilier, Pendules et bronzes d'ameublement entrés sous le Premier Empire*, Paris, 1989, p.106–7, figs. 71–73) and one delivered by François Ladouèpe du Fougereais to the Petit Trianon in 1810 (D. Ledoux-Lebard, *Versailles, le Petit Trianon. Le mobilier des inventaires de 1807, 1810 et 1839*, Paris, 1989 p. 95, fig. 61).

For the quality of its execution and the choice of its ornaments, this chandelier is a perfect example of the production of the house "Chaumont, manufacturer of chandeliers and girandoles, gilded gold and matte gold; half-chandeliers to put on mirrors, garnished with rock crystals, Mont-Cenis and others [...]" (in M.F. Dupuy-Baylet, op. cit., no. 59, p. 118). Son of a master foundryman, under the Empire Jean-François Chaumont became a famous chandelier-maker, regular supplier of the *Garde-Meuble Imperial*, whose workshop was located in the Marais, 23 rue Chapon. Its activity continued under the Restoration and his son Gilbert-Honoré (1790-1868) probably took over around 1820, before joining forces in 1838 with Louis-Auguste Marquis to continue to supply bronzes to the Garde-Meuble Royal during the July Monarchy (in M.F. Dupuy-Baylet, op. cit., p. 254 and 277). Jean-François Chaumont died in September 1843 at 270 rue Saint-Honoré (IAD MC/RE/IV/16).

Several models of chandeliers delivered by Chaumont for the imperial residences are described as comprising crystals from the Montcenis factory (in J.P. Samoyault, op. cit., no. 70–74, pp. 105–108). It seems that under the aegis of the *Garde-Meuble Imperial*, Chaumont was led to work in concert with Benjamin Ladouèpe-du Fougerais (1766–1821), the administrator of the famous crystal works. The chandeliers resulting from their collaboration are characterized by their imposing dimensions, their basket-shape punctuated with circles and their large number of lights (from 24 to 50).

Some important pieces comparable to the present one are held in the collections of the Mobilier National and notably decorate four of the salons of the Elysée Palace. One of them, originally commissioned in 1813 for the great cabinet of the Emperor at the Palace of Monte-Cavallo, was installed at the Elysée Palace in 1820 when the palace was the residence of the Duke of Berry (in M.F. Dupuy-Baylet, op. cit., no. 59, p. 118).



Fig. 1 Chandelier with twenty-four lights on two rows, delivered at the end of 1809 by Benjamin-François Ladouèpe du Fougerais, for the Emperor's salon at the Grand Trianon, attributed to Chaumont Jean-François (now in Versailles, Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon).



Fig. 2 (Left) Château de Fontainebleau, Jean-François Chaumont et cristallerie de Mont Cenis.

Fig. 3 (Right) Chateaux de Fontainebleau, J.F. Choumont et cristallerie de Mont Cenis, for the appartement intérieur de la chambre de l'Empereur. A similar model, with 32 lights, is in Chateau de Compiègne, Chambre de l'Empereur, 1810.



Fig. 4 Chandelier with thirty-six lights, room of the Family of the Emperor, Grand Trianon, 1810, cristallerie de Mont-Cenis, châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.



Fig.5 On 11 October 1822, Chaumont delivered six chandeliers with Mont Cenis crystals to the Garde-meuble. They were sent to the first salon of the king in the Tuileries. They remained there until 1833. After returning to the Garde-meuble, they were sent to Saint-Cloud for the gallery and the billiard room. In 1840, four of the six chandeliers were returned to the Garde-meuble, which placed them back in the Tuileries in 1841. Three took their place in the officers' room, the last in the theatre's foyer. The four returned to the Garde-meuble (three in 1849). In 1855, the six chandeliers were present in the Garde-meuble. The chandeliers GML/10049/1 and 2 were placed in the Opera at the end of the 19th century, before being returned.