

Verre Églomisé Balloon Madame Blanchard Champ-de-mars
Napoleon Marie Louise 1810

Sold



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REF: 11482

Height: 62 cm (24.4")

Width: 46 cm (18.1")

Depth: 2 cm (0.8")

Description

Verre églomisé of the balloon ascent made by Madame Blanchard from the Champ-de-Mars to celebrate the wedding of Napoleon and Marie Louise on 24th June 1810. Inscribed ' Ascent made by Mme Blanchard. From the Champ-de-Mars for the nuptial Ceremonies of Napoleon & Marie-Louise June 24th 1810. Published as the Act Directs by J. Burford. ' In a brass frame which has the patina of bronze. Sophie Blanchard b. 1778, France; d. 1819, Paris Jean-Pierre Blanchard made the first balloon flights in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland. In 1793, with President George Washington watching in the crowd, he made the first balloon flight in the United States. But by 1804, Blanchard's career was in decline, until he met the 26-year-old Sophie. The novelty of a "bird like" female balloonist helped Revive Blanchard's career.

They married, and Sophie became his partner, making all business arrangements as Blanchard's health began to fail. After Blanchard's death in 1810, Sophie made her first solo ascents. As Richard Holmes writes in his book *Falling Upwards: How We Took to the Air*, Sophie caught Emperor Napoleon's attention, and "was asked to contribute to the celebration mounted by the Imperial Guard for Napoleon's marriage to the Archduchess Marie-Louise of Austria. From then on she became a fixture at the imperial court, with propaganda as well as entertainment duties. On the birth of Napoleon's son in March 1811, she took a balloon flight over Paris from the Champ de Mars and threw out leaflets proclaiming the happy event. She again performed at the official celebration of his baptism at the Chateau de Saint-Cloud on June 23, with a spectacular firework display launched from her balloon. In the same year she climbed so high to avoid being trapped in a hailstorm that she lost consciousness, and spent 14 1/2 hours in the air as a result." Sophie Blanchard adopted "distinctive outfits," writes Richard Holmes, "which could be seen from a considerable distance. Her dresses were always white cotton. Most importantly, she wore a series of white bonnets, plumed with colored feathers." See engraving by Jules Porreau. The petite balloonist enjoyed great success. She even survived Napoleon's exile: While the emperor had named her aeronaut of official holidays, after his defeat King Louis XVIII was so impressed with Sophie that he appointed her "Official Aeronaut of the Restoration." For nine years, Sophie put on brilliant displays. "Her small balloon lifted more and more complicated pyrotechnical rigs," writes Holmes, "with long booms carrying rockets and cascades, and suspended extended systems of Bengal lights, all of which she would skillfully ignite with extended systems of tapers and fuses." Sophie Blanchard died on July 6, 1819, while making an ascent over the Tivoli Gardens. (Library of Congress) On July 6, 1819, as Sophie began one of her regular night ascents, her fireworks display ignited the hydrogen in her balloon. As the balloon collapsed, Sophie fell to her death. Holmes includes an account written by John Poole, an English tourist who witnessed the event: I was one of the thousands who saw (and I heard it too) the destruction of Madame Bl...