



IMPERIAL ART

Paris Beijing



Present watch with Emperor Napoleon's monogram. Circa 1811-1812

Round collar watch with an enameled dial with Arabic numerals, gold case adorned with fine white pearls, on the top of the cipher "N" under an imperial crown and in a wreath of laurels, on a blue enamel background, enriched on the circumference with a row of fine pearls; reverse decorated with gold stars on a radiant blue enamel background, enriched around the perimeter with a row of fine pearls. Bow number 47 / 8112.

Diameter: 35mm

Present watch with Empress Marie-Louise's monogram. Circa 1811-1812.

Round collar watch with an enameled dial with Arabic numerals, gold case adorned with fine white pearls on top of the cipher "ML" under an imperial crown and in a laurel wreath, on a radiant blue enamel background, enriched around the edge with a row of fine pearls; reverse decorated with a beaded bee in a laurel wreath on a radiant blue enamel background, enriched around the perimeter with a row of fine pearls. Bow number 61 / 8343.

Diameter: 35mm

These two jewels offered as a present by the Emperor Napoleon and the Empress Marie-Louise are among the most beautiful gifts made available by the House of the Emperor. Supplied by Maison Nitot, these small collar watches are found in the many orders of the Grand Chamberlain, as in 1811: *Twenty-six small collar watches, in enamelled gold, with surrounds, numbers, superb emblems and accompanied by their chains and keys.*

Watches of this type, on a background of blue, green, turquoise, or even coral enamel, were then invoiced, depending on the quality of the ornaments, enriched with pearls or brilliants, between 250 and 600 francs.

Marie-Étienne Nitot (1750-1809), moved to Paris in 1780 after having done his apprenticeship at Auber, at the time jeweller to Queen Marie-Antoinette. Its aristocratic clientele remained loyal to him until the French Revolution of 1789. It was then that the Nitot jewelry store really took off when, in 1802, he became the official jeweller of Napoleon I. With the help of his son François Regnault (1779-1853), Nitot created the emblematic jewels of the imperial period. The jewels of Napoleon's wedding with Joséphine de Beauharnais then with Marie-Louise de Habsbourg-Lorraine were made by

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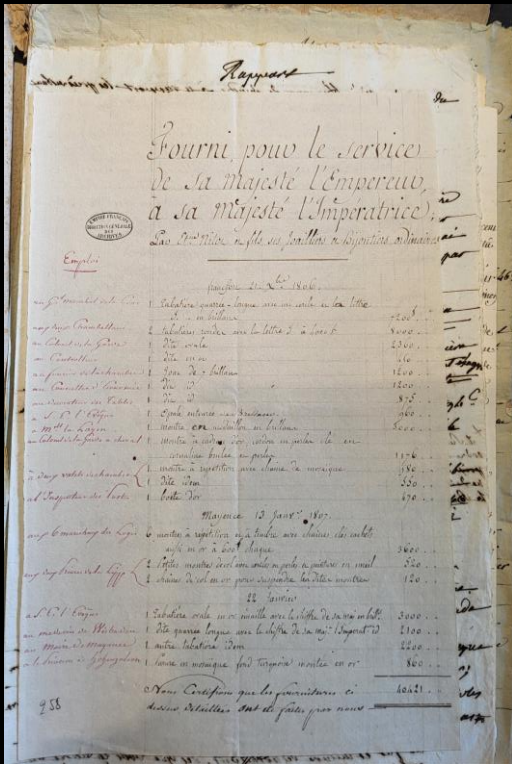
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Nitot. He will also design and set Napoleon's coronation crown, the handle of his sword as well as many other adornments for the court. François Regnault Nitot will take over the jewelry business from his father on his death in 1809 and will continue his activity until the fall of the empire in 1815. Napoleon's exile motivated Nitot to retire from jewelry. He therefore sold his business to his workshop chief, Jean Baptiste Fossin (1786-1848). Nitot's successors are now represented by Maison Chaumet Place Vendôme.

If Nitot was the official supplier of the House of the Emperor, for jewelry, he knew how to call on various major Parisian jewelry stores to subcontract orders, particularly in terms of goldsmithery and fine watchmaking. Several characteristics (dimensions, shape of the balance bridge, numbering typeface and placement of the lozenge die, on one of the watches, on the bottom of the interior cover, work of enamel and pearls) show here that our two watches were worked by goldsmiths-jewellers Moulinié & Bautte for the *Maison Nitot*. Having an address in Paris, reputed as a goldsmith, Moulinié and Bautte are also known for having offered gold snuffboxes with the same luxury as those offered by the goldsmiths Maguerite and Blerzy.



Born in Geneva, Jean-François Bautte (1772-1837) came from a poor family, which contrasted with the future destiny of the Swiss watchmaker-jeweller. Orphaned when he was still very young, Jean-François Bautte was quickly formed to the various trades of case fitter, engine turner, watchmakers, jewellers... A few years later, in the 1790s, Jean-François Bautte revealed his first creations and founded the Moulinié & Bautte factory in association with Jacques-Dauphin Moulinié (1793). In 1804, Jean-Gabriel Moynier joined forces with the two men and the factory took the name of Moulinié, Bautte & Cie. "Lover of shapes" as he liked to define himself, Jean-François Bautte almost naturally made "shaped watches" his specialty. Among his creations, there are watches with the appearance of miniature musical instruments, flowers, or animals, or even his famous model of watch in the shape of a pistol capable of diffusing perfume. Jean-François Bautte will also be the co-inventor of the extra-thin watch, another of his specialties.

National archives O2/31,
list of watches and snuffboxes supplied in 1806

Linked artworks

- **Napoleon's collar watch**, offered in 1813 by the Empress to Mademoiselle SOUFFLOT, daughter of a maid of the King of Rome. Napoleon Museum of

the Château de Fontainebleau, n°F1995.1.

Bibliography :

- Maze-Sencier. *Les fournisseurs de Napoléon Ier et des deux impératrices*. Laurens, Paris, 1893.

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