



After Houdon - The Kiss Given. Large 19th Century Terracotta.



1 490 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Terracotta

Width : 34 cm

Height : 47 cm

Depth : 18 cm

Description

Jean-Antoine HOUDON (1741-1828), after. The Kiss Given. Double bust in terracotta with a pinkish beige patina capturing, in a composition of ingenious formal hidness, the idyllic and caressing embrace of a couple of young lovers. Tenderly languid, her soft breast under her quivering throat, a young woman with a delicate face haloed with fine locks of hair escaping from a pearl-jeweled bun offers, with a childish voluptuousness, her lips to the languorous kiss of a young man. The latter, with an ephebic profile under his curly hair encircled by a knotted ribbon, presses his beloved against his chest with emotion. Knowingly arranged, fabrics envelop or isolate with their undulating drapes the protagonists of this timeless amorous exchange. Spread across their chests, an exquisite garland of

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spring flowers studded with rosebuds - a floral motif associated with Venus, mother of Cupid - "worthy embellishments of Love" seals the promises of their modest union. Dating from the second half of the 19th century, this patinated terracotta proof of great finesse of execution sensitively restores the original model (plaster) designed in 1772 for the reigning members of the Ducal Court of Saxe-Gotha by the eminent Parisian sculptor of the Age of Enlightenment Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741-1828) whose apocryphal signature our double bust known under the title of "The Kiss Given" bears, inscribed on the back.

Resting on a quadrangular base, a pedestal in the form of a fluted half-column enhances by its sober neo-classical silhouette the astonishing plastic quality of this sculptural work of a presence at once sensual and loving, languid and vibrant.

"Lean your lips on me; And that when leaving my mouth My soul passes back into you.":

Concerning this proof of J-A. Houdon's *The Kiss* described above, these elegiac verses* born from the pen of Denis Diderot (1719-1784), friend and zealous defender in his salon writings of the work of the master-sculptor, wonderfully echo this atypical composition (grouped busts, frontal staging intensifying the intimate scope of the subject) which, beyond the embrace of two young lovers offering themselves to their nascent sensuality, succeeds in fixing the moment so fleeting, so fervent of amorous emotion. Thus, *The Kiss* defies the centuries and, just as at the time of its conception (around 1772), thwarts the versatility of aesthetic inclinations.

Hardened by his exemplary academic training (Prix de Rome in 1761), J.A. Houdon presented in 1771 under the number 284 during his first participation in the Salons, alongside works (Morpheus, statue, plaster; Denis Diderot, bust, terracotta; Head of Alexander, medallion, etc.)

auguring his brilliant artistic career, "two heads of young men, one crowned with myrtle, the other encircled with a ribbon" (life-size sculpture in the round). In the latter, we recognize one of the constituent figures of the group bust designed the following year for the reigning members of the Ducal Court of Saxe-Gotha, who commissioned from the promising sculptor, at the joint request of their ambassador Baron van Grimm (1729-1804) and Denis Diderot, a votive monument to the glory of Louise-Dorothée of Saxe-Gotha (1710-1767) and her husband, Duke Frederick III (1699-1773). To everyone's surprise, the plaster version of *The Kiss Given* was well received and warmly praised within the enlightened Courts of Europe. Audacious, Houdon succeeded in this sculptural work in uniting ancient references (group of Cupid and Psyche from the Capitoline Museum in Rome, Roman copy of a Hellenistic work admired by Houdon during his stay in 1764-1768 at the French Academy in Rome), composition at once complex and of great readability, purity of volumes and piquant prettiness of details (floral garland with sentimental meaning) inherited from the delicacies of the reign of Louis XV. All crossed by this incomparable quivering of the material which breathes tenderness or vivacity into the works of the artist whatever the genre treated (allegories, portraits, ..). At the Salon of 1780, Houdon presented, under the title of *The Kiss Rendered*, a counterpart to his first *Kiss* transforming his young lovers into Faune and Faunesse: the embrace, from modest, becomes voluptuous, even passionate, under the pleasures of agape. During his lifetime, dignitaries of the French aristocracy or high finance such as the Duke of Chartres (Louis Philippe Joseph d'Orléans, 1747-1793), Jen-Girardot de Marigny (1733-1796) inquired between 1778-1779 from the artist whose reputation was acquired for marble versions of *The Kiss Given* and, from 1790, his student, the eminent chaser and founder Pierre-Philippe Thomire (1751-1843) distributed

in bronze "small nature" the model of his master (a copy with that of The Kiss Given is today preserved in the Wallace Collection in London, inv. S217 and S 218 as well as in the collections of the Mobilier National in Paris). The elegance emanating from this work did not escape the merchants of the time: renowned Parisian Master Watchmakers - A. Bouret, Dubuisson, Robin - signed around 1785 the dial of luxurious watch pieces topped with the now emblematic embracing couple of Houdon.

Alongside his Diane Chasseresse (1774), Les Baisers enjoyed a lasting legacy, particularly in the second half of the 19th century, a period during which renowned sculptors (A.E. Carrier-Belleuse) and experienced bronze art makers (Denière, L.Marchand, J.Graux) designed their own models through the prism of those developed by their illustrious predecessors or revisited for a clientele of amateurs fond of the great Masters of the 18th century (Clodion, Pigalle, Allegrain, Canova) "flagship" works that responded to the sensibilities of the time. Thus, Le Baiser donné was reproduced in various materials or integrated into art objects in the particularly refined neo-Louis XVI style.

*Denis Diderot, Chanson dans le goût de la Romance, in: Oeuvres complètes. Various Poems, Paris, 1875, Part 3, pp.60-62 or in: Couvreur, Manuel, Diderot Dictionary, Paris: Champion, 1999, p.103.

Related literature: Haskell and Penny, For the Love of the Antique, Paris, 1988;-Giacometti, Georges, The statuary Jean-Antoine Houdon and his era (1741-1828)- 3 volumes, Volume 3: Complete descriptive and analytical catalog of legendary, allegorical, genre busts, ..pp. 16-17, p.67.; - Lami, Stanislas, Dictionary of French Sculptors of the 18th Century, Paris, 1911.-Poulet A.L and Scherf G., Jean-Antoine Houdon, Sculptor of the Enlightenment, Cat. d'Exposition 2003-2004, n° 43, pp. 248-250;-Réau, Louis,

Houdon.Sa vie et son Oeuvre, Paris, 2 vols. 1964,
p.22, n° 54;-Tardy, La Pendule Française, 1975,
tome II: De Louis XVI à nos jours, p. 255

Marks and signatures: on the back, signature
intaglio in cursive letters: "Houdon".

Dimensions: H.: 47 cm;-L.: 34 cm;-Pr.: 18 cm.

Materials: terracotta with pinkish beige patina.

Quality work from the second half of the 19th
century.

Very good condition. Tiny chips on a petal of the
floral garland and the corners of the die of the
truncated column forming a pedestal. Small
localized dirt.