



The Spirit Of Dance - Monumental Bronze Sculpture By Jean-baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1875)



48 000 EUR

Signature : Jean-baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1875)

Period : 20th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Bronze

Height : 105.5

Description

Three years after surprisingly winning the commission for the Paris Opera House--today known as the Palais Garnier--Charles Garnier entrusted one of the four major sculptural groups for its façade to his former classmate from the Petite-École and Prix de Rome laureate, Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux. After several proposals and many modifications, Carpeaux began work in 1868 on the stone version of *La Danse*. His intention was to embody the very essence of dance--movement, joy, and exuberance. This sculpture immediately stood out among the more traditional architectural elements. The *Spirit of Dance*, the central figure in the composition, quickly became an icon of this monumental work. Undecided on the gender of the "Genius of Dance," Carpeaux chose the body of Sébastien

Dealer

Chastelain & Butes

Art of the 19th century- Animalier bronzes

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Visat, a 20-year-old carpenter, for his healthy and slender physique. The figure's radiant smile was borrowed from Princess Hélène de Racowitz. This unique combination resulted in a form brimming with life and delicacy--one of the most brilliant syntheses in Carpeaux's career. The figure is depicted in a whirling, triumphant pose, arms raised and holding a tambourine, symbol of music and celebration. His joyful expression and wind-swept hair convey a sense of freedom and ecstatic movement, contrasting sharply with the more rigid academic sculpture of the Second Empire. Upon its public unveiling on July 27, 1869, the sculpture caused an immediate scandal. The press condemned this "wild dance of naked bodies" as indecent and offensive to public morality. One month later, the controversy still raging, a passerby hurled a bottle of ink at the sculpture, leaving a visible stain on the stone. The rejection deeply affected Carpeaux. When Napoleon III, bowing to public pressure, considered having the sculpture removed, Carpeaux was devastated. Fortunately, the outbreak of war in 1870 prevented the removal, and the sculpture was spared. This cast bears the prestigious mark of the Syndicat des Fabricants de Bronze, allowing it to be dated between 1909 and 1911. In 1909, Albert Susse was elected president of the Syndicate and worked to establish legislation protecting fine art bronze. He was joined by his son Jacques in 1904 and retired in 1911--bracketing the production date of this edition. This seal attests to both the provenance and exceptional quality of the casting. Measuring 105.5 cm, this bronze is the largest of the known reproductions of *The Spirit of Dance*. Its monumental size makes it an exceptional and rare piece, produced in very limited numbers. Most other reductions are significantly smaller, making this version especially sought-after by collectors and museums. The scale allows for full appreciation of the details in the modeling, facial expressiveness, and the virtuosity of the drapery, all echoing the power of the original stone

version. The original work still graces the façade of the Opéra Garnier in Paris, and various bronze and plaster versions are held in prestigious museum collections: Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Petit Palais, Paris; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes; The Louvre, Paris; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Today, The Spirit of Dance is regarded as one of the masterpieces of 19th-century sculpture, symbolizing the full expression of movement and vitality. Its influence can be seen in Art Nouveau, Symbolist sculpture, and even anticipates the expressive force of Rodin's work. With its unmatched dynamism and sculptural audacity, Carpeaux left a lasting mark on the history of art, inspiring generations of sculptors to capture the very soul of human movement.