Helen Of Troy, By Edward Arlington Foley



26 000 EUR

Signature : Edward Arlington Foley

Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Marble

Width : 42 cm

Height : 66 cm

Depth : 25 cm

Description

Helen of Troy, by Edward Arlington Foley.Carrara marble.London.1874.26 x 16.55 x 9.85 in. (66 x 42 x 25 cm).This bust of Helen of Troy bears the signature of a tormented artist. Edward Arlington Foley, who signed : "E. A. Foley. Sc. 1874.", was born in Dublin in 1814, trained at the Royal Dublin Society and under now-forgotten Irish sculptors, his kinsman Benjamin Schrowder and John Smyth. Unable to establish himself as a sculptor in Ireland, he soon settled in London, specialised in portrait busts, and began exhibiting at the Royal Academy in 1834, where "his busts, with several graceful ideal works, appeared almost every year down to 1873." Among the busts displayed at the institution's exhibitions are busts of Samuel Lover of 1839, now at the National Portrait

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Gallery, of the singer Catherine Hayes in 1855, which he sculpted and exhibited again in 1861, the nymph Oenone in 1869, Penelope in 1870, and a Morning Star in 1873, an allegory most mysterious and haunting inspired by Milton :"Hail bounteous May that dost inspireMirth and youth, and warm desire..."Yet Edward Arlington Foley took his own life the following year, in the month in May. The Annals of journalist Joseph Irving report that on May, 10,"Drowned in the Regent's Canal, Edward A. Foley, sculptor..."And a record from that year recounts that Edward Foley, who had recently taken to go on long walks late at night, left his home near Mornington Crescent shortly before midnight. A man saw him by the canal around two in the morning : he was seated on the railing of the Albert Road Bridge, his legs hanging over the waters. The man passed by, then heard a loud noise : Foley was gone, and he was dead by the time he was pulled from the water.A brief biographical note from the National Gallery of Dublin's archives, reveals that Foley, failing to pay child support, was imprisoned for debt at the end of 1873. Though Edward exhibited almost continuously at the Royal Academy, he seems to have always worked in the shadow of his younger brother, John Henry Foley, a full member of the Academy and arguably one of the most celebrated British sculptors of the Victorian era. The beauty of this bust is the work of an artist in dire and penniless.It is the scenes, highly celebrated in the first half of the 19th century, engraved by Tommaso Piroli after the drawings of John Flaxman to illustrate a 1805 edition of the Iliad and the Odyssey, that inform the iconography of this bust : when Aphrodite, disguised as a Phrygian servant and wearing the pilos, leads Helen into Pâris' chamber in the third book of the Iliad, Helen wears a veil over her hair and a diadem adorned with so-called 'Vitruvian' scrolls, akin to that of our bust. Flaxman's Penelope, by contrast, throughout the Odyssey, is crowned with a slightly taller

diadem featuring a frieze of anthemia.As Canova, who chose to depict Helen with the Phrygian pilos, Foley was fond of ideal heads. This is shown by his Penelope, OEnone, and Hermione -- from Shakespeare's Winter's Tale, not Euripides' Andromache -- exhibited at the Royal Academy. These Greek queens and deities allowed him to sculpt some ideal beauty, which is rare in Victorian statuary, where female portraits were, moreover, uncommon. Edward Foley had previously exhibited a Helen of Troy at the Royal Academy in 1866, though it is impossible to determine how that work differed from the present work.Thus, this bust of Helen of Troy, dated 1874, signed a few months at most before the sculptor took his own life, is most likely his final work. With this Helen, Foley puts to an end a series of ideal beauties begun eight years earlier with the same subject. It is arguably, as a matter of skill and technique, his most accomplished work : in a true feat of artistry, he managed to sculpt the sumptuous curls of Canova's Venus Hope, though half concealed beneath an ample veil. Helen's face, closely resembles another bust : his latest work preserved in public collections, that is a Portrait of a Young Girl dated 1873, held at the National Gallery of Ireland, which, like our Helen, reveals in the girl's face and the rendering of her clothing the ultima maniera of the sculptor.SourcesThe Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1873. The 105th., 1873 ; Joseph Irving, Supplement to the Annals of our Time, Londres, 1879 ; Algernon Graves, The Royal Academy of Arts. A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1904, vol. 3, London, 1905 ; Walter George Strickland, A Dictionary of Irish Artists, Dublin, 1913 ; John Turpin, "The Career and Achievement of John Henry Foley, Sculptor (1818-1874)", in Dublin Historical Record, vol. 32, n° 2, march 1979 ; Katherine Eustace, Canova. Ideal Heads, Cambridge, 1997.