



PROANTIC
LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

Triumphant Bacchus, After The Antique



8 500 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Bronze

Width : 15,5 cm

Height : 56 cm

Description

Triumphant Bacchus, after the antique. Bronze. France. Before 1797 or 1800-1810. 22 x 6.1 in. "This statue is one of the most beautiful we have of this deity," writes Clarac about a marble sculpture of Bacchus, which he describes as follows : "The son of Semele, standing and completely nude, leans with his left arm on an elm trunk entwined with a vine. His head, perfectly preserved, is crowned with ivy leaves and adorned with the Bacchic band or crédemnon; his hair falls in long curls over his chest; the softness of his gaze, the grace of his features, his delicate and rounded forms, everything in this figure contributes to expressing that voluptuous languor which the ancients made the distinctive characteristic of Bacchus." Like the *Richelieu Mercury*, the *Bacchus*, an

Dealer

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Decorative art of the 18th and 19th centuries

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Antonine-era antique marble derived from a Praxitelean model, was likely sent from Rome in 1633 to decorate Cardinal Richelieu's château in Poitou. In 1748, Louis-Armand de Vignerot du Plessis, Marshal of Richelieu, had a group of about a dozen sculptures moved to Paris, including the famous Mercury and the even more renowned **Slaves** by Michelangelo. In 1792, the Bacchus was "practically unearthed from the home of Richelieu's heiress, rue de l'Union, Faubourg du Roule" by Alexandre Lenoir, who noted: "[the Bacchus] was in pieces and on the verge of being sold for a pittance, along with Michelangelo's two Slaves." The Richelieu Bacchus, then known as Triumphant Bacchus, was seized and transferred to the Central Museum in May 1797. The marble had already undergone significant restorations : during the first restoration, likely carried out in Rome before 1633, the form of the Bacchus was reconstructed, if not reinvented, from ten antique fragments. Alexandre Lenoir, noting that "this figure, now in the Central Museum of Arts, has suffered greatly from ancient and modern restorations," commissioned a new restoration by Jean-Joseph Foucou before the marble entered the Central Museum, that is, before 1797. During the restoration of the marble, Foucou added a pinecone to the top of what should be a thyrsus, given the tradition of Dionysian attributes. This addition appears in an illustration in Alexandre Lenoir's *Description historique et chronologique des monumens de sculpture, réunis au Musée des monumens français* in 1798, which would date this marble -- exhibiting the sobriety of a Directoire-era bronze -- before 1797, had the Italian sculptor and restorer Mariano Giosi not, in turn, removed the thyrsus finial added by Foucou during a third restoration. It is therefore difficult to pinpoint the exact period of this bronze: it does, admittedly, share more than a family resemblance with the few known bronzes modeled by Foucou under Louis XVI, notably the superb series of four candelabra from the Hôtel

de Brunoy, whose patinated bronze figures are attributed to Foucou. However, it is possible that the bronze was cast after the marble's restoration by Mariano Giosi in 1800: the praises of Clarac and Visconti, as well as Lenoir's efforts to have it included in the Central Museum, indicate a clear intent to present the Richelieu Bacchus as one of the jewels of the Museum of French Monuments, that is, the Louvre, so that it could rival the galleries of the Uffizi or the Vatican. However, the fame of the Richelieu Bacchus was short-lived: either it was overshadowed by the seizure of the finest antique marbles from Florence in 1802, or the enthusiasm of curators like Lenoir and Visconti was not passed on to the next generation. It is therefore also possible that this bronze, potentially unique and based on a rare model, is later than the few known bronzes by Foucou and results from a prestigious casting, in a limited number of high-quality copies, decided at the very beginning of the Imperial period to promote what was then considered one of the finest jewels of the antique collection at the Museum of French Monuments. Sources Frédéric de Clarac, *Description du musée royal des antiques du Louvre*, Paris, 1830 ; Jean-Luc Martinez, *Les antiques du Musée Napoléon*. Edition illustrée et commentée des volumes V et VI de l'inventaire du Louvre en 1810, Paris, 2004 ; Dagman Grassinger, "Apollo und Bacchus, die 'Bild-schönen' Jünglinge", in *Römische Götterbilder der mittleren und späten Kaiserzeit*, Paderborn, 2015 ; Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, *Un musée révolutionnaire. Le musée des Monuments français d'Alexandre Lenoir*, Paris, 2016.