



Marble Lion Heads - Italy - 16th Century



12 000 EUR

Period : 16th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Marble

Width : 15 cm

Height : 27 cm

Depth : 16 cm

Description

These two marble protomes depict majestic lion heads, sculpted in very high relief, bordering on the round and architectural ornament. Dated to the end of the 15th or the beginning of the 16th century, these fragments bear witness to an ancient artistic heritage renewed during the Renaissance, particularly in commissions for civil or religious buildings. Originally, these protomes were placed on sarcophagi or sacred buildings, participating in the ancient tradition of funerary decoration where the animal, and more specifically the lion, plays an apotropaic role. Sculpted partially up to the bust, they are used as a decorative motif and had the primary function of repelling malevolent spirits and protecting the deceased in the afterlife. These fragments represent two roaring lions, in an imposing and

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expressive frontal manner. Their snouts are turned up, suggesting sharp fangs and a half-open mouth that accentuates the underlying threat of the two felines. The thick lips reinforce this effect of tension. The meticulously sculpted pupils translate a piercing gaze and evoke the constant vigilance of these guardians of the place. Their manes sculpted strand by strand in a subtle play of curves and counter-curves deploy a moving density that adds splendor to the whole. During the Renaissance, the appearance of gargoyles and other animal figures in religious buildings is a direct lineage with this type of protome. The Italian definition of "gronda sporge" - projecting gutter - reinforces this continuity between utilitarian and sacred art. The mouth is hollowed out with a piercing, and suggests that the head was used as a fountain element during the 16th century. The water, guided by the lion's mouth, then becomes a vector of symbolic purification: it drives out impurities and wards off dark forces. Thus, these marble lion heads reflect the symbolic richness and spiritual depth of Renaissance art. By blending naturalism, architectural function and expressive power, they embody an art in the service of protection and grandeur. Through their imposing presence, they still affirm today the timeless strength of the lion as a sacred guardian and emblem of power.

Dimensions: Left lion: H. 26 cm. x W. 15 cm. x D. 15 cm. Right lion: H. 27 cm. W. 15 cm. x D. 16 cm (without base)