



Porphyry Mortar



2 200 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Restauré

Material : Marble

Diameter : 12 cm

Height : 14 cm

Description

Red porphyry mortar - Presumed period 18th-19th century Imperial porphyry - a deep red material studded with white crystals - comes exclusively from the Mons Porphyrites quarry in Egypt, which was exploited since the Roman era under Domitian. Extremely hard, this volcanic rock could only be worked by the most experienced craftsmen, at the cost of considerable labor. It is precisely this rarity, combined with its color evoking blood and purple - a symbol of sovereignty - that made porphyry a material reserved for representations of emperors, imperial sarcophagi, or architectural elements of palaces and sacred buildings. Since the quarry was exhausted in the 5th century AD, all porphyry objects made after Antiquity--particularly in Byzantium, during the Renaissance, or in the

Dealer

Art Eclectisme

Grand tour, décoration, et archéologie

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Napoleonic era--necessarily came from blocks extracted during the Roman period, recovered and reused over the centuries. From the 18th century onward, this type of object became particularly sought after in the context of the Grand Tour, the long initiatory journey undertaken by young European aristocrats, particularly English, to complete their cultural education. Rome, Naples, and Florence were among the essential stops, where these travelers collected antique or neoclassical objects. Small porphyry objects, such as this mortar, were often acquired as a souvenir of this journey, testifying both to the traveler's erudition and his taste for classical aesthetics. Porphyry, difficult to work, was considered a noble material, and the Italian workshops of the time (particularly in Rome) produced many pieces inspired by Antiquity to meet this demand. This mortar could thus perfectly fit into the tradition of objects brought back from the Grand Tour, somewhere between a utilitarian object and a decorative work of art, to be displayed in a cabinet of curiosities or a scholarly library.