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Ceres (summer) And Vertumnus (autumn) - Terracotta, France, 18th Century



12 500 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Terracotta

Width : 14 cm

Height : 48 cm

Description

Ceres (Summer) and Vertumnus (Autumn) Design for a Pair of Candelabra

(?) Terracotta France Second half of the 18th century H. 48 cm; W. 14 cm This pair of terracotta figures depicts two full-length draped figures, each holding a cornucopia in their arms. The first, a female figure, wears a crown of wheat ears similar to those spilling from her cornucopia. These details identify her as the goddess Ceres, symbolizing Summer--the season of harvest. Her male counterpart holds a cornucopia brimming with autumnal fruits. This, combined with the youthful features of the figure and the draped veil over his head, identifies him as Vertumnus, the god of gardens and orchards, here personifying Autumn. The veil references the myth in which Vertumnus, in order to woo the nymph Pomona,

Dealer

**Galerie Sismann**

Old Master Sculpture

Tel : 0142974771

Mobile : 0614751869

33 Quai Voltaire

Paris 75007

disguises himself as an old woman to gain her trust. The cloth here alludes to the story's resolution, when the god reveals his true identity to Pomona--quite literally, "unveiling" himself. Highly valued in both ancient and classical art, the figure of Vertumnus enjoyed particular popularity in garden sculpture during the Grand Siècle. Much like our statuette, he appears veiled in a well-known version sculpted in 1696 by François Barrois (1656-1726), based on a design by François Girardon (1685), for the gardens of the Château de Versailles. That Vertumnus was part of a series of four seasonal figures, alongside Pomona representing Spring (Barrois), Ceres as Summer (Dumont and Coustou), and Winter (Raon). A plate from Charles de Clarac's publication on the Louvre's Museum of Antique and Modern Sculpture features this ensemble, suggesting that our pair may once have been part of a complete seasonal cycle, possibly accompanied by figures of Pomona and Winter. In our pair, Vertumnus's classically inspired profile--with its strong, straight nose--along with the gentle, idealized features and partially nude forms of both figures, echo the style of academic sculptors from the latter half of the 18th century, such as Guillaume II Coustou (1716-1777) and his pupil Pierre Julien (1731-1804). The generous proportions of our Ceres, for example, recall Julien's Three Graces, now housed in the Musée Cognacq-Jay, while Vertumnus's facial features are reminiscent of Julien's Bust of Albinus, likely created in the 1760s. Notably, each cornucopia in this pair features an opening at the top, suggesting that these works may have originally been conceived as models for a grand and decorative set of candelabra.