Japanese Bronze By Kaniya Kuniharu: Seated Tiger



2 300 EUR

Signature : Kaniya Kuniharu ??? ????, (1852-1934)

Period : 20th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Bronze

Length : 31 cm

Height : 23 cm

Description

This impressive bronze sculpture of a seated tiger testifies to the artistic maturity of Kaniya Kuniharu, one of the greatest masters of metal casting during the Meiji era and the early 20th century. The powerful animal is depicted seated, its body slightly turned, its head raised in a gesture of alert vigilance. The composition captures a moment of contained tension: the tiger appears motionless, its gaze fixed beyond the viewer, expressing restrained strength rather than overt aggression. Kaniya Kuniharu ??? ????, (1852-1934) belonged to the generation of sculptors who transformed Japanese metalwork from a purely decorative craft into a fully-fledged sculptural art form. He was trained by two eminent masters: Takamura Koun, the renowned woodcarver who became a professor of sculpture

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at the newly established Tokyo School of Fine Arts in 1889, and Otake Norikuni. From his teachers, he absorbed a rigorous approach to anatomy, naturalistic observation, and sculptural structure--qualities that are clearly evident in his current work. The modeling of the tiger testifies to the talent of a sculptor of genius, at the height of his technical and artistic maturity. The musculature unfolds naturally beneath the skin: the shoulders and forelimbs express colossal strength, while the hindquarters, both relaxed and ready to pounce, are distinguished by subtle variations in surface treatment, contrasting with the finely worked texture of the mane and facial features. The expressive upward tilt of the head and the slightly open jaws give the animal an undeniably lively and alert presence. Kuniharu achieved significant recognition during his lifetime. He won several awards at Meiji-era exhibitions, including a first prize in 1894, and exhibited internationally, notably at the 1900 Paris Exposition, where Japanese bronzes were highly acclaimed. In 1907, he became one of the founding members of the Tokyo Chukin Kai, alongside the renowned sculptor Oshima Joun, thus confirming his role in elevating cast bronze to the highest form of sculptural art in modern Japan. The refinement and self-assurance of this tiger strongly suggest that it belongs to the later phase of Kuniharu's career. Born in 1852 and active until the beginning of the Showa era, the artist had, by the end of his life, achieved complete mastery of modeling and casting techniques. The mastery of form, the controlled yet expressive surface, and the monumental dignity of the composition testify to the work of a sculptor with decades of experience. It is therefore highly probable that this bronze represents a work from the last period of Kuniharu's life, when his style had reached its full maturity. Kuniharu's works are preserved in important collections, notably the Khalili Collection, where his bronzes are featured in the book "Splendors of Imperial Japan: Meiji-Era

Arts from the Khalili Collection." Within the broader context of Meiji-era sculpture, this sculptural synthesis stands as an eloquent example of the academic realism, traditional Japanese sensitivity to the representation of animal forms, and technical excellence that earned Japanese bronze sculpture international acclaim. The result is a work of serene monumentality: a tiger rendered with remarkable sculptural authority and psychological depth, embodying the pinnacle of Kaniya Kuniharu's long and brilliant career.