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Isidore Jules Bonheur (1827-1901) Bronze Hunting Group



3 900 EUR

Signature : Isidore Jules Bonheur (1827-1901)

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Bronze

Length : 58 cm

Height : 34 cm

Depth : 21 cm

Description

This bronze sculpture depicts a highly expressive hunting scene: a powerful wild boar charging forward while a hunting dog grips its neck in an attempt to restrain it. The work bears the signature of Isidore Jules Bonheur on the base, confirming it as an authentic creation by the renowned French animal sculptor.
The composition belongs to Bonheur's well-known repertoire of hunting subjects produced during the second half of the nineteenth century, when the artist created several dynamic groups illustrating confrontations between hunting dogs and wild animals. The presence of the signature, combined with the stylistic treatment and sculptural quality, situates the work within the tradition of nineteenth-century French animalier bronzes.

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The Artist

Isidore Jules Bonheur (1827-1901) was a prominent member of the celebrated Bonheur artistic family. Brother of the painter Rosa Bonheur and son of Raymond Bonheur, he devoted his career to animal sculpture. He began exhibiting at the Paris Salon in 1848 and later received several official distinctions, including recognition at the 1889 Exposition Universelle. Bonheur developed a reputation for his precise observation of animal anatomy and his ability to capture movement with convincing realism. He stands within the great tradition of French nineteenth-century animal sculpture alongside artists such as Barye and Mêne, while maintaining a distinctive style marked by energetic compositions and narrative intensity. His bronzes remain highly sought after by collectors.

Subject and composition

The sculpture captures a dramatic moment from the boar hunt, when the hound manages to seize the animal at the neck in an attempt to halt its charge. The boar, massive and powerful, continues pushing forward while the dog clings onto its back in a suspended, diagonal movement. The composition is carefully structured around dynamic diagonals that generate tension and movement while maintaining balance. The elongated naturalistic base reinforces the sensation of forward motion and anchors the entire group.

The sculpture is designed to be appreciated in the round, with each angle revealing a different aspect of the interaction between the two animals.

Modelling and chasing

The work displays exceptional modelling quality and refined surface chasing. The boar's coat is rendered with vigorous striated textures that convey the roughness of the bristles and the strain of motion.

In contrast, the dog's body is sculpted with smoother surfaces that highlight musculature and physical tension. This deliberate contrast of

textures is characteristic of high-quality naturalistic animal sculpture.
Particular attention has been given to the heads: the open snout of the boar, the tension in the dog's jaw, and the concentrated expressions heighten the dramatic effect of the scene. The naturalistic base is discreetly modelled, providing context without distracting from the central action.
Decorative presence and collecting interest
With its large scale and powerful composition, this sculpture has a strong decorative presence. Hunting scenes were highly appreciated subjects in nineteenth-century animal sculpture and remain particularly desirable for interiors inspired by Napoléon III taste or collections dedicated to hunting and animalier art.
Multi-figure animal groups are generally less common than single animal bronzes, making such compositions especially appealing to collectors. The sculptural quality, expressive modelling, and the artist's signature make this piece a representative example of the work of Isidore Jules Bonheur, celebrated for his vivid and naturalistic depictions of animals.
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