Bronze Bust Of Voltaire On A Turned Wooden Pedestal (1890-1900)



400 EUR

Signature : Antoine Houdon

Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Bronze

Height : 40,50 cm

Description

This refined bust depicts the French philosopher and writer Voltaire, with his characteristic deep-set eyes and subtle, ironic smile--a symbol of the critical spirit of the Enlightenment. The bronze is mounted on an elegantly contoured wooden base, which enhances the classical character of this magnificent piece. This striking portrait is based on the iconic, larger-than-life model created in 1778 by the famous sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon. Despite his frail health, the philosopher had agreed to pose. Because of Voltaire's frail health, the sculptor was able to hold only a few short sitting sessions. In order to perfectly preserve the anatomical details of the face, Houdon used plaster casts. Voltaire died barely four months after his first meeting with Houdon, thus transforming the latter's portrait

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into the definitive, posthumous likeness of the thinker.About the artist:Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741-1828) is considered the most famous French Neoclassical sculptor of the 18th century and is known as the sculptor of the Age of Enlightenment. Born in Versailles, he won the prestigious Prix de Rome at the age of twenty. During his stay in Italy, he studied classical antiquity and human anatomy in depth. Upon his return to Paris, Houdon established himself as a master of psychological portraiture. Unlike his contemporaries, who often idealized their subjects, he excelled at a highly refined naturalism. He was able to flawlessly capture in marble, bronze, and terracotta the fleeting features and unique character traits of his subjects. In his studio, he immortalized the greatest thinkers of his time, including Denis Diderot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Houdon's fame extended far beyond Europe. In 1785, he traveled to the United States at the invitation of George Washington to sculpt his likeness at his estate in Mount Vernon. With his plaster casts of Washington and his busts of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, he played a major role in shaping the historical image of the Founding Fathers. During the French Revolution, Houdon adapted his style to the new political reality. This led him to also create a portrait of Napoleon. He died in 1828 in Paris at the age of 87.