Wolfers Frères - Solid Silver Photo Frame, Naturalistic Art Nouveau, Circa 1900



3 400 EUR

Period : 20th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Sterling silver

Description

Wolfers Frères - Art Nouveau Naturalistic Solid Silver Photograph Frame, circa 1900
Solid silver photograph frame made by Wolfers Frères in Brussels, circa 1900, whose design and sculptural treatment strongly evoke the personal creations of Philippe Wolfers.
This museum-quality piece represents a particularly accomplished expression of Belgian Naturalistic Art Nouveau, both in the originality of its composition and the virtuosity of its execution.
Conceived entirely as a vegetal sculpture, the frame displays a profoundly asymmetrical composition in which branches, stems, foliage and flowers appear to grow freely around the photograph, unconstrained by any geometric structure.

Dealer

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The most distinctive feature of this work lies in its construction from cast solid silver, using a technique comparable to that employed in bronze sculpture. Unlike traditional silver photograph frames, generally made from sheet silver with repoussé or stamped decoration, this example possesses a genuinely sculptural structure, with substantial volumes and deeply modelled reliefs. This manufacturing technique is particularly evident in its exceptional weight of 410 grams for the silver structure alone, excluding the photographic support and other components. Such a substantial quantity of silver, concentrated in a frame of relatively modest dimensions -- 30 cm in height and 16.5 cm in maximum width -- demonstrates the importance placed on the quality of execution and the sculptural character of the object. This feature, highly unusual for a photograph frame of this period, further emphasises the extraordinary nature of its manufacture.

The uprights take the form of gnarled branches, their bark reproduced with remarkable naturalistic precision. Sinuous twigs emerge from them, extending and intertwining in an organic movement that creates a composition of exceptional freedom.

The lower section is adorned with an elaborate arrangement of holly leaves with sharply pointed edges and clusters of berries, rendered with striking botanical accuracy. The leaves extend in different directions, some projecting almost entirely free from the structure, enhancing the interplay of depth, light and shadow.

At the top, a particularly elaborate floral composition features large open blossoms, accompanied by buds and delicately intertwined stems. The principal flower, with its widely spread and curling petals, is executed in very high relief, approaching sculpture in the round. Its three-dimensional modelling further reinforces the sculptural character of the entire composition.

The contrast between the strength of the branches, the flexibility of the stems and the

delicacy of the flowers illustrates the mastery of naturalistic forms characteristic of the finest Art Nouveau creations.
The frame rests on two feet formed by extensions of the branches, perfectly integrated into the overall vegetal composition.
The stylistic influence of Philippe Wolfers is particularly evident in this work. The deliberate asymmetry, close observation of nature, freedom of design and, above all, the treatment of silver as a truly sculptural medium correspond closely to the artistic language developed by the designer in his personal creations during the Art Nouveau period.
Although bearing the maker's mark of Wolfers Frères, this frame may therefore have been executed from a design by Philippe Wolfers himself.
The complexity of its manufacture, the considerable quantity of silver employed and the absence of any comparable example identified to date in the relevant literature may also suggest a unique creation, possibly produced as a special commission.
Through its conception, execution and sculptural character, this work transcends the purely functional purpose of a photograph frame and belongs among the most ambitious expressions of Belgian Naturalistic Art Nouveau silverwork.
A museum-quality piece, combining a highly individual artistic vision, outstanding technical craftsmanship and considerable rarity.
Characteristics
Silversmith: Wolfers Frères, Brussels
Design: Probably based on a design by Philippe Wolfers
Period: Circa 1900
Style: Belgian Naturalistic Art Nouveau
Material: Solid silver, 800/1000 fineness
Technique: Cast silver, sculptural decoration in high relief and in the round
Decoration: Naturalistic branches, holly leaves and berries, open flowers and floral buds
Composition: Asymmetrical

Height: 30 cm
Maximum width: 16.5 cm
Weight of the silver structure alone: 410 grams, excluding the photographic support and other components
Hallmarks: Wolfers Frères maker's mark and 800/1000 silver fineness mark
Special feature: A particularly rare model, possibly a unique piece or a special commission