

LA JOUEUSE DE BOULES (1902)

Marble with colored waxes retouches

H: 82 cm, L: 40,5 cm, D: 32 cm

Polychromed example (hair, lips, masks, base ...)

signed «J.-L. Gerome» on the base side.

Circa 1902-1904

One of both marble examples identified in this condition and size

Three other marbles identified :

91cm high white marble uncolored

69 cm high with colored wax currently

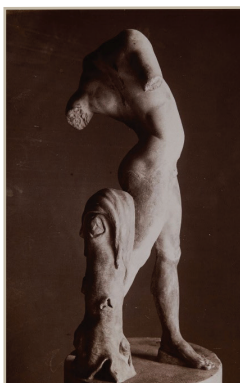
at the Fine Arts museum of Caen (inv. 309)

163 cm high Natural scale polychrom marble exhibited at

the Salon (sold at Sotheby's, 2021)



Jean-Léon Gérôme was born in Vesoul in 1824. Painter influenced by the diversity of eclectic movements, he used the modalities of history painting to propose subjects mixing orientalism and antiquity. He is the author of the renowned *Phryné devant l'aréopage* (1861) and the *Pollice Verso* (1872). On numerous occasions and because some of his colleagues already used his painted figures as models for their own bronzes, he tried modelling. This aspect seems to be enhanced by his marriage with Marie Goupil, from the family of the editor Alphonse Goupil, who will propose several of his bronze models as the Maison Siot later.



Antique fragment of a twisted faun, Rome, Museo Nazionale Archeologico.

Gérôme, initially known as a painter, was one of the great representatives of polychrom sculpture at the end of the 19th century, pushing his neo-classical approach towards the path of archaeological representation. At a time when scholars and artists understood that ancient statuary was far from being only monochrome, color is reintegrated into the creative process of many sculptors, such as Charles Cordier, who chooses specific materials, or Gérôme, who chooses the use of painting and colored waxes.

The *Joueuse de boules*, imagined in 1902, is one of the iconic models of Gérôme, at the junction of the ancient theme, with theatre masks at the feet of the figure (recalling of Pompeian masks); and realistic influences, by the raw treatment of the flesh, reinforced here by polychromy. The gesture of the body itself is a reference to an antique Roman marble while the game has no real reference. The red-colored hair and the whiteness of the skin obviously remind the *Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt* sculpted by the artist in 1895, at the beginnings of Art Nouveau.

Marbles by Gérôme are rare. For the *Joueuse de boules*, the life size colour example of the 1902 Salon was sold at Sotheby's New York in 2021 and a full-colour example, smaller than ours, is kept at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Caen (inv. 309). Another example is uncolored and unlocated.



Gérôme, *Portrait de Sarah Bernhardt*, c. 1895, polychrom marble, Paris, Musée d'Orsay, inv. RF 1393.



Gérôme, *Joueuse de boules*, c 1902, polychrom marble, Caen, Musée des Beaux-Arts



