Antoine-Louis BARYE (1795-1875)

THÉSÉE COMBATTANT LE CENTAURE BIÉNOR
sketch (1846-1848)

Bronze, *H : 34,2 cm, L : 37,8 cm, D : 11,6 cm*
Lifetime cast signed «A.L. Barye», Barye studio,
depositary [-editor?] mark «Edt Delesalle».
Circa : 1848-1857

Only two lifetime casts identified by us with the Delesalle mark, the other
being the «Thésée combattant le Minotaure» at the Louvre Museum.

At the end of the 1830s, Barye is mostly known as an animal sculptor. Concerned of being restricted to this field, he exhibits, at the Salon in 1843, a piece inspired by antique myths, *Thésée combattant le Minotaure*. However the modernity of the treatment and the entangled bodies displease the jury, that refuses him to exhibit his example.

Nevertheless, for his triumphant return at the Salon in 1850, the artist renews with mythological theme by successfully exhibiting the sketch *Thésée combattant le centaure Biénor*, that he was working on since 1846.

At the apex of his career, he realized the transposition into an in the round sculpture of the fight between the centaur and Theseus. His interpretation is the perfect opportunity for using dynamic contrasts, that Barye appreciates to the point of becoming characteristic of his romantic expression : oppositions in the shapes, the characters and movements.

Among the best artist examples, like this one, we can admire the delicacy and precision of the fingers, the clear disdain and the frowned eyebrows of the Greek hero, entangled in the fight, even if the outcome is obvious.
Our example is remarkable by the artistic intelligence used to highlight volumes with precise cuttings and by its perfectly preserved patina, a deep brown enhanced by beautiful lacquered depths.

The lifetime production starts at the beginning of 1850 with some rare artist examples editions until 1857, when Barye acquired his edition studio, the production barely increased. For this model, most of the casts were done after his death by F. Barbedienne, which makes our example a very rare one in lifetime cast.