

ERNST HERTER

ACHILLE MOURANT (1881, plaster model)

International Exhibition Vienna (1882)

Bronze, richly shaded dark brown patina

H : 78 cm, L : 109 cm, D : 55,7 cm

Lifetime cast signed "E.Herter", located "Charlottenburg" and dated "1907" (tool marks in the bronze), "Guss Martin & Piltzing, Berlin N" for the founder.

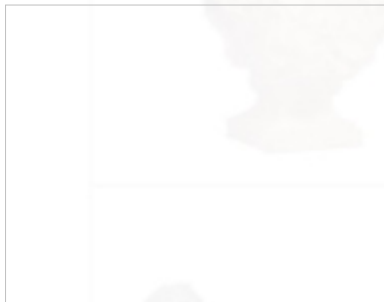
Cast in 1907

Provenance : Prince Georges de Grèce [Corfou (1869) - Saint Cloud (1957)], probably a gift from the Prussian Crown to the Prince Georges.



Achille Mourant (Dying Achilles) was created in 1881 by Ernst Herter, the official sculptor to Wilhelm I, King of Prussia.

This was the artist's major work, for which he sent a model to the Vienna International Art Exhibition in 1882; the Empress Elisabeth of Austria noticed it and commissioned a marble the following year. The marble was first installed in 1885 at Lainz Castle near Vienna. Then, in 1892, he was sent to Corfu for the Achilleon Palace, where he became the centerpiece admired in the gardens, including the Greek royal family, who already had their summer palace there.



Herter's sculpture is inspired by the *Gaulois Mourant* (Dying Gaul) in Rome's Capitoline Museum, but with the composition reversed, as if in a mirror. One might think this sculpture is in the spirit of neo-classicism, but it's more akin to the neo-baroque movement of the late 19th century, as the hero raises his head, trying to catch the fatal arrow with his heel in an attitude of extreme suffering... all the more so as the theatricality of the fall is underlined by pictorial effects such as realistic ground and the draping of the garment over the leg; not far from the Greek hero's reserve and pout of disdain...

The bronze we are presenting here is probably one of the most historic of this subject, after the two marbles, the Elisabeth and the second from the National Gallery, as it was cast in 1907, an important year for both Prussian and Greek courts. Indeed, 1907 was the year in which Wilhelm II purchased the Achileon Palace in Corfu from Elisabeth of Austria. 1907 was also the year in which its last owner, Prince George of Greece, son of King George I, married Marie Bonaparte, the emperor's descendant. Probably a crown-to-crown gift for an event, perhaps the marriage of Prince George of Greece, this work was cast by Martin & Piltzing which was the Royal Foundry of the Prussian Court. This is not an edition, but a confidential cast.