

E M I L E - A N T O I N E B O U R D E L L I

BEETHOVEN A LA COLONNE aux yeux fermés (1901)

Studio plaster known as "à bon creux" signed in relief "Bourdelle" in the mould.

H : 62,4 cm, L : 32 cm, D : 28,3 cm

Artist example detailed on the base front with autograph writing "Moi, je suis Bacchus... le nectar délicieux, Beethoven", dedicated on the base on the left "A Mlle Henriette Charasson, très sympathiquement, E.A.Bourdelle", example reworked by him (with letters by the sculptor for the commission).

Made in 1910



An emblematic model in the corpus of Bourdelle, the *Buste de Beethoven* has become the iconic portrait associated with the illustrious composer. Beethoven is to classical music what Homer was to literature, a myth where the artist transcended the physical abilities of man to deploy his Art. Beethoven thus becomes a figure of Art for Art, a model for artists. Bourdelle, who had been working on the subject since 1902, achieved his first public success with this portrait, which he presented at the Salon des Beaux-Arts in 1902, before the *Herakles*. The artist will create several versions ranging from mask to complete head with pedestals or columns. In our model, he chooses to attach a high geometric base to the head that gives amplitude to the subject and contrasts with the nebulous lines of the hair, which symbolizes intellectual genius.

The Beethoven Bust in this pedestal configuration will occasionally be used for plasters with musical consonants and dedicators, offering beautiful blank surfaces of expression, as was the case for our bust.

The letters that accompany our plaster shed new light on Bourdelle's view of his editions of Beethoven. We learn that the sculptor entrusted the exclusive sale of the Beethoven on a column in bronze to the editor Hébrard around 1908. It also shows the desire to sell few plasters or at high prices (about 200 francs) to promote the sale of bronzes to allow a conservation in a sustainable material of the model. A bronze example of Beethoven with column, melted around 1903 is in the collections of the Musée d'Orsay (inv. RF 1395)

Our plaster example bears a relief signature, like the one at the Musée Bourdelle in Paris (inv. n. 14451) and is dedicated to Henriette Charasson.

HENRIETTE CHARASSON (1884-1972)

Born in 1884, Henriette Charasson is a woman of letters from Le Havre. She began her career as a journalist during the First World War by writing in the newspaper *Action Française*. It was after this that she published her first poems and books, devoted to well-known period figures (*Colette*, 1921; *André Gide*, 1922) but also to the themes of Maternity and Religion. She published until the mid-1950s. She was married in 1920 to journalist René Johanneau, a close friend of Charles Péguy.

The commission to Bourdelle comes when she was just 24. The sculptor, who thanks her for her admiration and congratulated her on her own works, agreed to hand her an exceptionally plaster of his *Beethoven*.