

ROGER GODCHAUX

LE TOOMAI DES ÉLÉPHANTS or "Le Retour de Chasse au tigre" (1928 or before)

Bronze, richly shaded black patina.

H : 57,5 cm, L : 70,5 cm, D : 22,7 cm

Lifetime cast signed "Roger Godchaux", numbered "2/15", old edition by "Susse Frères Éditeurs Paris" (mark and seal), with "cire perdue" inscription and stamped "Bronze" and "2" near the seal.

Circa 1932

Other exhibition references: Salon des Artistes Français, 1932 (n°3760)

Bronze à patine noire richement nuancé.

H : 57,5 cm, L : 70,5 cm, P : 22,7 cm

Épreuve ancienne signée «Roger Godchaux», numérotée «2/15», édition ancienne de «Susse Frères Éditeurs Paris» (marque et cachet), avec l'inscription «cire perdue» et estampillée «Bronze» et «2» en regard du cachet.

Circa 1932

Autres références d'exposition : Salon des Artistes Français, 1932 (n°3760)



It was from the mid-20s that Roger Godchaux became interested in elephants after working a lot on wild animals. As a faithful disciple of A.-L. Barye, he studies pachyderms in particular both at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris and at the Strassburger circus where he carries out numerous sketches. It goes so far as to measure each part of the animal. Godchaux, who owned more than thirty pieces of the master, nourished a great admiration for Barye.

He exhibited for the first time a small elephant at Salon des Animaliers in 1928 which was immediately bought by the French State (Cholet Museum, inv. P.8501). He is particularly fascinated by the Asian elephant, a hard-working animal that puts its energy at the service of the human being. He depicts this collaboration between man and animal in various small, highly expressive scenes, such as the Cornac lavant un éléphant, the *Éléphant et son cornac*, where the Indian stands holding the elephant's trunk in his right hand, and in small reliefs imbued with monumentality: *l'Éléphant avec cornac marchant et l'Éléphant monté par un cornac*. In 1927–1928, he also created large-scale models, including the *Retour de chasse*, depicting an elephant mahout carrying the carcass of a tiger on his back, and, most notably, the most monumental work in his series on elephants : *Toomaï des éléphants*. The mahout sits at the level of the animal's ears with a smiling child in front of him, whom he holds protectively on his stomach with one hand. In this scene, Godchaux presents us with a benevolent and peaceful image in which the gentle inertia of the walking elephant is complemented by a happy father-son relationship.

Our example dates approximately from this period of time and is associated with the taste for Orientalism very fashionable during the Art Deco period. He probably takes his inspiration from the *Livre de la Jungle* by Rudyard Kipling which left its mark on an entire generation of artists.

The edition of this model began with a few numbered artist's proofs numbered, as one we sold with the mention "3^{ème} épreuve" (third cast made in 1928, given to the Newark Museum, USA). Subsequently, the sculptor collaborated with the Susse foundry to produce a limited edition of 15 bronzes. Our bronze, made during the life of the artist, bears the number "2/15" at the very beginning of this edition.