ANTOINE-LOUIS BARYE

DEUX CAVALIERS ARABES TUANT UN LION

Model from «La Chasse au lion»

Bronze, richly dark brown green red patina.

H : 36 cm, L : 38,8 cm, D : 20,8 cm

Lifetime cast signed «Barye» in the model, Barye studio (1857-1875 period).

Circa 1860



The « Deux cavaliers arabes tuant un lion » is a part of the « Chasse au lion » from the table centerpiece commissionned by the Duke of Orléans. The centerpiece which was composed of 5 major hunting scene groups by Barye, including the Lion's hunt, was set at the Tuileries Palace in the state dining room of Louis Philippe's son. That explains the profile point of view, double side views for this group, imagined to be seen from both sides of the table.

Barye kept the same view for the edited model, a composition with 2 main points of view. From one side, a rider, on a defeated horse, whereas the second one is over the lion. As usual with Barye, the composition, structured in a square, is easily readable and very clear from both sides. It has an almost mathematic balance between oppposition and complement with the dynamism of the horses and the riders. It reminds also Antiquity as it could have be seen on a metope relief of a Greek Temple.

For the edition, this model remains a mystery for us. It is certainly one of the most ambitious one from the Bronze collection by the artist, however we have identified nowadays only 10 lifetime casts, while there are hundreds of lions and

tigers and thousands of small rabbits by the artist. Then, this group cost only 350 French francs, while lions and tigers were about 100 F. francs and rabbits few francs. As a reminder, Delacroix sold easily his small paintings for 1.000 F. francs. The sculpture, harder to compose and more expensive to cast than the painting, was still the less valuable kind of Art at the time.

Then, when we have published our catalogue raisonné (Gallimard, 2000), we had identified 6 examples, including 5 in museum collections.

Twenty five years later, we have 11 ones as it could be seen in the following list, 5 in private hands and 6 in museums and we have been lucky to negociate 4 examples on the 5 currently in private collections.