ANTOINE-LOUIS BARYE

ANGÉLIQUE ET ROGER sur le cheval hippogriffe (bouche fermée) (1844-1846)

(closed mouth) (1844-1846)

Final version

Bronze, richly dark brown patina

H : 51,7 cm, L : 68,2 cm, D : 28,2 cm

Early example «BARYe» (upper case «E» from the mould amended in lower case «e») - one of the first examples of the final version.

Circa 1844-1850



The literary narrative & other interpretations, sculpture and paintings.

In the literary narrative, it is the action of the Orlando Furioso's X-song that inspired painters, engravers and sculptors : indeed, in song X, Ruggiero, riding the hippogriff, saves Angélica chained to a rock on Eduba island where she was to be devoured by an Orc. First using without success his spear to free the princess, it is thanks to the Atlantean, his magical shield that blinds the monster, that he saves her, reinterpreting the iconographic motif of Perseus and Andromeda. He unchained her from the rock, removed her from the marine world (final version Barye) and carried her into the air, but his nobility faltered in the face of the beauty of his beautiful rider whom he then tried to possess. But, Angélique finally escapes him by using her ring of invisibility, which leaves the knight distraught in the middle of an indifferent nature...

Barye chose precisely to represent the moment just after the victory : the start of the couple on the hippogriff while sea, rock and orc are stille present. The latter, with his eye open but tetanized, remains defeated. The sword is still there, as are the shield and the magic ring, but the spear is lost...

Later in the narrative, we find pictorial representations of Eugène Delacroix, posterior to the group of Barye, where the couple moves away in the sky, but on a horse that is not an hippogriff...

If in the story, Roger acted as a hero to free Angélique, he remains no less animated by ulterior motives in front of the nudeness of his beautiful survivor. He tries to attack her in a grove, but, regardless of the fact that he gets into his armor by removing her, he finds himself trapped by his own imprudence, because Angélique suddenly disappears thanks to the magic ring she has worn at her mouth.

Barye has masterfully anticipated this outcome, because with the same hand that holds the ring, Angélique is already pushing away her beautiful savior... It is here that his talent and delicacy lies: having been able to convey the story in a condensed and complete manner, but above all credible within the constraints of sculpture.

The model and its evolution: the three versions

The creation of this group designed by Barye is evolutive and over a long period it seems. If the commission from the Duke of Montpensier for a fireplace set constitutes the starting point—well documented thanks to Gustave Planche[1] —, the original example of this clock has not been located, leaving a doubt on the exact example that was delivered to him and its casting date between 1844 and 1846.[2] Actually, the chronology is clearly outlined for the first four events identified:

* Clock version: BARYE 1 : Angélique (the magic ring on the right ring finger) and Roger (in armor) on a hippogriff horse (open mouth, tousled mane and tail to the wind), with parrot wings, are flying full sky, with the magical shield redeveloped of fabric on the right shoulder of the horse. The group is carried by a moutonnement of clouds integrated into a clock. Very ethereal, closer, with its romantic pendulum dial, to the object of decorative art than to pure sculpture, it seems almost unreal and bears the stamp BARYE 1 for the first example[3] ; it is perhaps or probably the commission of the Duke of Montpensier.

* Intermediate version : BARYE 2 and 3 : The clock and the clouds have disappaered : a pyramidal base is substituted for them, which gives a sculptural base to the hippogriff. She introduces éléments of the story, the sea and its foam, the marine orca[4] and the rock around which she wraps herself, tetanized by the light of the Antlantean. Two bronzes, stamped BARYE 2 and 3, are known for this intermediate state where the hippogriff retains the open mouth that always seems to split the air.

* Final version, from BARYE 4 : The sculptor gives up the open mouth of the previous state. The BARYE 4 example (Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York), the last to be stamped and numbered, presents on the same pyramidal base a hippogriff with a work of modelled again on the animal's coat, and especially the closed mouth.

After analysis, it seems that if the fantastic horse fit perfectly with the dynamism and unreality of the first aerial version, the sculptor, by bringing his subject back into the field of sculpture, felt the need to stabilize the whole and to confer on the hippogriff a form of organic truth: This group became the masterpiece of «classical romanticism» characteristic of the artist.

Stamp and numbering (1835-1850) : The innovation of Barye

With regard to the use of stamps and numbering, we have catalogued around fifteen models designed between 1835 and 1843 that have a unique editorial status: we only know their date of creation because it appears in the bronze mould stamped BARYE 1, before disappearing from subsequent editions.

Thus, the date appears only once on the 'Lion au guib (1835)' and on the 'Theseus Fighting the Minotaur, first version (1843)', with a good continuity of other models between these two dates. This correlation between date and stamp, prior to any association with en editor, therefore highlights the sculptor's personal initiative: it was indeed he who originated the numbering system in sculpture.

Furthermore, although research into this practice confirms that it does indeed establish a chronology of the examples, it is not systematic, as evidenced by gaps in the numerical sequences. Finally, there is no trace of numbering in Barye's account books at his editor Martin's after 1850, and it is completely absent when the sculptor returned to being his own editor.

This cumulative, non-systematic numbering began around 1835 and ended in 1850. Independently, we are not aware of any bronzes produced with a model date from castings made after 1843.

Our example : Artist example, chiselling by Barye:

In recent years, we have listed about twenty examples. Among the latter, we had the chance to acquire, between 1985 and 2026, six examples – mainly from the period 1857-1875.

This example, from a private European collection, circa 1846-1850, is therefore the oldest of this set. It has an atypical signature 'BARYe', where the capital 'E' of the mould has been repeated in lower case 'e'. This reminder of a youthful signature that we have never observed on this model is one of the reasons why we want to date it 'Circa 1844-1850'.

The surface quality is remarkable, particularly in the footprint of the horse's back thigh. The diversity and delicacy of modeling are astonishing, particularly on the legs of the hippogriff. Finally, its light patina reveals all the richness of the cast, clearly distinguishing itself from the often lacquered-like patinas of the period 1857-1875. The quality of this example, the importance of the model in the corpus of the piece (there are only about fifteen examples from that period,

which is approximately one every two years) and the fact that the sculptor was then in the prime of life, allow us to think, with the atypical signature, that it is an artist's example with a model retouched by Barye himself.

[1] G. Planche states that he was allowed to view the work during its creation, which possibly places his testimony in the period 1840–1844.

[2] The 1844 Maison Besse catalogue describes Roger and Angélique as 'a clock that he is finishing and that will be owned by the Galerie Choiseul within a month', without specifying its exact condition. The physical existence of a proof (whether or not it is a clock) is confirmed by the press in January 1846: first on 17 January in L'Illustration, then on 20 January in the Journal des Débats. It is in the latter article that Étienne-Jean Delécluze, describing the group of Roger and Angélique, describes the shop in the Passage Choiseul as a 'veritable museum', thus marking the public recognition of the work. Furthermore, in interviews with the founder Eugène Gonon and Alfred de Champeaux, there is mention of an unsuccessful attempt at lost wax casting – a 'failure' – in Barye's foundry (1838-1845). This can only refer, of course, to the first version, the clock for the Duke of Montpensier, which would logically have been cast using this technique, like most of the pieces in the collections of Louis-Philippe, his father, and the Duke of Orléans, his brother who died in 1842. This would place the failure in 1844.

[3] We examined it in 1992 and, from memory, it only bears this stamp, without a signature; this can be compared to the Duke of Montpensier's Theseus and the Minotaur from the same period, stamped 'Barye 2', which is also unsigned.

[4] One could also add the octopus, which appears very much alive and emphasises the immobility of the coiled killer whale.