

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Rene-Michel Slodtz, called Michel-Ange SLODTZ (Paris 1705 - Paris 1764)

An Urn Flanked by Two Chained Lions

Pen and brown ink.

A faint offset of a standing draped figure in red chalk on the verso.

Signed *M.a. Slodtz* at the centre left and numbered 39 on the verso.

208 x 144 mm. (8 1/4 x 5 5/8 in.)

Watermark: Fragmentary coat of arms.

Alongside Edme Bouchardon and Augustin Pajou, Michel-Ange Slodtz may be regarded as one of the finest sculptor-draughtsmen of the 18th century in France. As his friend Charles-Nicolas Cochin, writing in 1765, noted of Slodtz, '*he was an excellent draughtsman, not that his forms were always pure and correct; but his drawings, like all his works, are full of grace.*'

As one scholar has noted of the present design for a sculpted urn by Slodtz, '*The motif of the captive lions is undoubtedly a flattering allusion to the might and power of the prince or monarch who commissioned the design.*'

A weak copy of the present sheet appeared at auction in Germany in 2014 and 2015.

Exhibitions

London, Colnaghi, *Old Master and 19th Century Drawings*, 1999-2000, no.24; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, *Splendor and Elegance: European Decorative Arts and Drawings from the Horace Wood Brock Collection*, 2009, no.89.

Literature:

Clifford S. Ackley, 'Master drawings from the collection of Horace Wood Brock', *The Magazine Antiques*, February 2009, p.58, illustrated p.53, fig.3; Clifford S. Ackley, 'The Intuitive Eye: Drawings and Paintings from the Collection of Horace Wood Brock', in Horace Wood Brock, Martin P. Levy and Clifford S. Ackley, *Splendor and Elegance: European Decorative Arts and Drawings from the Horace Wood Brock Collection*, exhibition catalogue, Boston, 2009, p.92, no.89, illustrated p.93.

Artist description:

The youngest member of an artistic dynasty of sculptors, René-Michel Slodtz was known throughout his career by his childhood nickname of Michel-Ange. Although he only won second place prizes in the Prix de Rome competitions of 1724 and 1726, he was permitted to study as a pensionnaire at the Academie de France in Rome in 1728. The director the Academie at this time was Nicolas Vleughels, of whom Slodtz sculpted a portrait bust in 1736. As Vleughels praised the young artist, in a letter of 1735 to the Duc d'Antin, 'Slodtz is and will be a very skilled man, and draws better than sculptors usually do.' Slodtz also designed Vleughels's tomb in the Roman church of San Luigi dei Francesi. After leaving the French Academy, Slodtz established a successful studio in Rome, receiving important portrait commissions from both Roman patrons and French visitors. His works were characterized by excellent craftsmanship and a particular fluency in the handling of marble. Around 1740 Slodtz received two of his most important Roman commissions; one for a funerary monument to the Cardinal de La Tour d'Auvergne and his predecessor Archbishop Montmorin, intended for the Cathedral of Vienne, and the other a statue of Saint Bruno for St. Peter's in Rome. Between 1745 and 1746 Slodtz sculpted a monument to Marchese Alessandro Gregorio Capponi for the church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini.

In 1746, after eighteen years in Italy, Slodtz left Rome to return to Paris. However, he was never quite able to emulate his Roman success, partly due to the opposition of the influential Comte de Caylus, who instead favoured the work of the sculptor Edme Bouchardon. Agrée at the Académie Royale in 1749, Slodtz was never admitted as a full Academician. Among his few important public commissions in Paris was the funerary monument dedicated to the curé Jean-Baptiste Languet de Gergy in the church of Saint-Sulpice, completed in 1757. Much of his later career was taken up with smaller-scale, decorative commissions, such as bas-reliefs for the portico of Saint-Sulpice and for the Place de la Concorde in Paris and the renovation of the choir of Bourges cathedral. Appointed dessinateur de la chambre et du cabinet du Roi in 1758, Slodtz provided designs for picture frames and furniture for the Menus-Plaisirs du Roi, as well as designing funerary monuments, though on a smaller and less elaborate scale than those executed at the peak of his career. Among his students were Hubert Robert and Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, as well as the sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon.