

Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



Carl Johann Steinhäuser (Bremen 1813 - Karlsruhe 1879)

Arminius and Thusnelda

Circa: 1845

Marble relief

63.5 x 97 cm

1845

Inscribed STEINHÄUSER FEC.

This highly important relief is by the eminent 19th century German sculptor Carl Steinhäuser. Steinhäuser was the son of a wood-carver and was self-taught in sculpture. He attracted the attention of Christian Daniel Rauch, who enrolled him in his sculpture class at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. In 1835 he went to Rome on a scholarship to study Classical art. There he met and became friends with Bertel Thorvaldsen and took over his studio in 1844. He produced popular sculptures such as the genre pieces *The Angler* (marble, 1841) and *Girl Holding a Shell to her Ear* (marble, c.1841–2; Potsdam, Orangerie). One version of his marble group *Hero and Leander* (1848) was selected by Frederick William IV of Prussia for the Orangerie in the Park Sanssouci at Potsdam (in situ). His sculpture was influenced by the Neo-classical style of Rauch and Thorvaldsen.

By the 1840s he had achieved success as a sculptor and Bremen, his native city, recognized this by commissioning from him such works as *Bürgermeister Johann Smidt* (marble, 1848; Bremen, Rathaus) and the monument to Wilhelm Olbers (marble, 1848; Bremen, Wallanlagen). In later years he turned from monumental projects and pleasant genre scenes to religious subjects. Because of his conversion to Catholicism, he was one of the few sculptors whose work reflects the spirit of the Nazarenes. From 1864 until his death he was a professor at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Karlsruhe.

This beautifully carved and wonderfully subtle Neo-classical relief tells the story of Thusnelda, the 1st century AD Germanic Princess who was a heroine of nineteenth-century German nationalism. She had been betrothed to another when she was abducted by Arminius whom she married. She would be delivered by her treacherous father, Segestes, to the victorious Roman army and brought to Rome by Germanicus. The latter celebrated his triumph in Rome in 17 AD and paraded her in the streets, alongside a great number of Germanic prisoners. Arminius would never see his wife again, nor his son.

Literature:

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B. Maaz, *Skulptur in Deutschland*, Munich, 2010, volume I, n. 93, p. 90, illus.