

Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



François-Marie Poncet (1736 - Marseille 1797)

Portrait of a lady

Terracotta relief

Signed poncet f 1775

73 x 59 cm

Poncet studied at the Marseille academy before becoming a pupil of Etienne-Maurice Falconet at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris. In 1760 he left for Rome, where he would spend most of his career. There, maintaining some distance from the French Academy, he was in contact with British, German and Scandinavian Neo-classical artists. Little is known of his first 15 years in Rome but his election to the Accademia degli Arcadi in 1771 was a sign of his social success.

In 1775, the year during which he executed the present relief, Poncet travelled to Paris and stopped in Lyon, where he was received (reçu) as a member of the Lyon academy. During his journey he also went to Ferney near Geneva and made a striking bust of Voltaire (plaster in the Académie de Lyon, one of the marbles in the musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon). While he was in Paris he made portraits of the economist Turgot and Charlotte, Duchess of Albany, who was 22 at the time. According to the poet Chassaignon, he also realised the busts of the king's brothers and that of Marie-Antoinette. Except for the portrait of Voltaire, none of these likenesses are known today.

Poncet returned to Italy in 1777 and from then on established his reputation as an imitator of the ancients and enjoyed great success with international collectors. He left Rome abruptly in 1789, was

elected to membership of the academy of Florence in 1792 and in 1796 he was in Marseille. In 1800, three years after his death, the works remaining in his studio were sold in Paris.

On the present relief, the fine features of the sitter are represented with a remarkably delicate modeling while her profile is defined with a strong, almost graphic line. Her fantastical hairdo is rendered in a striking high relief.

Literature:

Related literature:

- Stanislas Lami, Dictionnaire des sculpteurs de l'école française au XVIII^e siècle. II, Paris 1911, p. 270
- Olivier Michel, 'François-Marie Poncet (1736-1797) et le retour à l'antique' in Lyon et l'Italie. Six études d'histoire de l'art, 1984, pp. 115-180