

# Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



**Attributed to Johann Georg Schnegg (1724 - 1784)**

## **Saint Stanislas Kostka**

Group in ivory, ebony and ebonized wood

55.3 cm high overall

Saint Stanislas Kostka (1550-1568) was a nobleman born at Rostków, Poland, who was beatified and canonized in the early seventeenth century for his exemplary piety. In order to gain entry to the Society of Jesus in Rome, Kostka travelled five hundred leagues on foot from Vienna, without equipment or guide. He is here depicted in the black habit of the Jesuits, with a youthful Christ child perched on his right arm. At his side an angel with an outstretched arm was holding out a now missing object, probably a lily or crucifix, the saint's attributes. On the front of the plinth an ivory relief depicts Kostka in the midst of his great journey, on foot as a pilgrim accompanied by an angel. Behind him lies an imaginary city resplendent with ancient ruins, a reference to the Saint's stopover at Dillingen, Bavaria. Stanislas entered the novitiate of Sant' Andrea al Quirinale in Rome but died 9 months later at the age of 18; in keeping with his iconography, he is here portrayed as an attractive youth. The gilt roccaille frame surrounding the relief features a horseshoe, an element of the Kostka family's arms.

Johann Schnegg was born near Imst in the Tyrol in 1724. He learnt his craft in the workshop of his father-in-law, J. G. Ziegler in Bayreuth, eventually taking control of the workshop in 1749. In 1761 he left Bayreuth for Potsdam, where King Frederick II invited the most gifted young sculptors in Prussia to work on the ornamentation of his Sanssouci Palace. Much of Schnegg's known oeuvre is there, and on neighbouring estates, where he carved large-scale statues and fountain groups. He also did a number of works in a smaller scale, combining wood and ivory, a medium favoured by many Tyrolean sculptors

at the time. His career is not known in great details as Schnegg destroyed all records and drawings of his works shortly before his death.

In the present work Schnegg's striking and elegant juxtaposition of ebony and ivory creates a figurative group of great clarity, beauty and luxury. He was clearly inspired not just by Simon Troger (1683-1768) and his popular combination of carved wood and ivory, but also possibly by the polychrome black and white marble statue of Saint Stanislas Kostka carved by Pierre Legros in Rome in 1703 (Sant' Andrea al Quirinale, Rome), which had been disseminated thanks to an etching by Jean Charles Allet of 1704.

Stylistically the present group compares very closely to Schnegg's The Archangel Michael Defeating Satan in the Princely Kunstkammer of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (inv. no. 4572). Apart from the obvious combination of ivory and wood, both groups share a meticulous attention to detail, with clinging drapery and a graceful serenity to the figures, despite their animated movement. A date in the later 1750s, when Schnegg was working in Bayreuth, has been suggested.

### **Provenance**

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- With Daniel Katz, from whom acquired in 1988 by - Barbara Piasecka Johnson
- Her sale to benefit the Barbara Johnson Foundation, 17 July 2014, lot. 1053

### **Exhibitions**

#### Exhibited:

- Warwaw, Royal Castle, Opus Sacrum, From the collection of Barbara Piasecka Johnson, April – September 1990, n. 73

### **Literature:**

#### Published:

- J. Grabski, Opus Sacrum, From the Collection of Barbara Piasecka Johnson, 1990, ex. cat., cat. 73, pp. 362-366