

Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



Achille D'Orsi (Naples 1845 - 1921)

Head of a Carter

98cm high

Signed on base: Archille D'Orsi Napoli

Until recently unknown to the artist's bibliography, this monumental white marble head stands as a key work in D'Orsi's oeuvre, marked out by its size, medium, composition and quality of modelling.

The present work displays the head of a carter, denoted by his head gear and physiognomy, with a world-weary look and a humble honesty in his eyes. The strength and intensity of gaze suggests someone who knows the daily fatigue but moral dignity of hard labour.

On a colossal scale, the bust sits on an antique-style base and has the appearance of a classical fragment, explicitly referencing the Greek and Roman statuary of Pompei and Herculaneum near his native city of Naples.

Born in Naples in 1845, D'Orsi studied in the city under Tito Angelini and Tommaso Solari at the Academy of Fine Arts. He went on to become a key figure of the Neapolitan social realist movement that developed there, alongside Vincenzo Gemito.

For the first time in Italian sculpture D'Orsi's displayed the hardships of labour and work in the fields. His works were very much a continuation, and a sculptural embodiment, of the developments in French paintings of the period and it is likely he would have seen both Jules Bastien-Lepage's *Les Foins* and Jean-Francois Millet's *Vigneron au Repas*. These paintings show workers of the land with a vacant, worn out expression owing to a long days toil under the hot sun and display a great likeness to not only the present work, *Head of a carter*, but also his most celebrated work *Praximius tuus*.

Not only was it D'Orsi's new social realist approach that made a strong impact on critics but what really propelled him into a new level of acclaim was the originality of wedding it to a monumental Classical approach. By doing he posited these commonplace figures as great heroes of their day and suggested they should be recognised and lauded as such.

With this combination, the rarity of his marbles on this scale and the emotional intensity of the piece it can be considered one of his strongest and most moving works.