Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Auguste Rodin (Paris 1840 - Meudon 1917)

Gustav Mahler

Circa: c.1911-14

c.1911-14
Bronze
34 x 24 cm (13 ³/▌ x 9 ¹/▌ inches)
Signed, Alexis Rudier founder and stamped 'A. Rodin'

This portrait bust represents the encounter between the greatest Romantic musician of the period, and the greatest sculptor of modern times. Mahler sat for Rodin in 1909, over a total of 10 days, at the behest of several of his admirers who had expressed a wish to own a bust of Mahler after his retirement from the Vienna opera in 1907. It was the founding member of the Vienna Succession, painter Carl Julius Rudolf Moll, Alma Malher's father-in-law, who first expressed a wish for Rodin to do a bust of Mahler. Yet the encounter between the two artists, both at the height of their glory at that time, was arranged only after great consideration by several parties. Namely by Paul Clemenceau (the brother of the statesman George Clemenceau), with his wife Sophie, and her sister Bertha Szeps, who both knew Rodin and Mahler, and may have hosted them both in Vienna, and also with the help of the composers wife, the previous owner of the present bust Alma Mahler.

Rodin made two preliminary studies over the 10 sittings. A rough and expressionistic version now known as ‘Model A’, and the present version known as Model B which is a more natural, veristic and smooth version, acknowledged as being closer to photographic portraits of the composer. Alma Mahler refused the 6 first busts of the ‘Model A’ type sent by Rodin and sent them back to Rodin who produced 6 bronzes of the ‘Model B’ type with a red marble cube.

Today there are at least 11 known bronze casts of Model B of which all, except the present cast, are in museums. The present bust is one of the finest examples of the Type B cast and on a par with the 5 earliest casts (now in the Belvedere Vienna, Munich Pinakothek, the Dresden Albertinum, NGA, Washington and the one in Mahler-Alfre Rosé Collection Ontario). Its quality is testified to by the fact that of these 11, the present cast was the one retained by the family, remaining with Alma Mahler herself, and descending to her daughter Anna Mahler. The bust subsequently entered the collection of the esteemed French politician, and President of France from 1974 to 1981, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1926-2020) before being acquired by the Daniel Katz Gallery. According to the foundry archives kept at the Rodin museum, 23 lifetime casts were made by Rudier of both Type A and Type B, and including the present cast. This corresponds with the known numbers of which there are 11 Type B casts and 12 Type A casts extant.

Provenance

Acquired from the artist by Alma Mahler (1879-1964), the wife of the composer

By descent to her daughter Anna Mahler (1904-1988)

Art market, London

Acquired by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1926-2020) from the previous owner around 1973-1974

and by descent until 2022

Literature:

Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, Rodin et le bronze - Catalogue des oeuvres conservées au Musée Rodin, éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 2007, a similar copy is described and reproduced volume II, pp 494-496.